

BOOK OF THE WOLF



A Sourcebook for Werewolf: The Apocalypse™

BOOK OF THE WILDTM



*By Richard Dansky, Lisa Clark-Fleishman, Shannon W. Hennessy
and Rick Jones*



A.X.II

LEGENDS OF THE GAROU

The Birthing

She came to me, and I knew why before she ever spoke a word. I could see the shivering of her hands, and the cold sweat that covered her upper lip. The worry and fear that wrinkled her brow confirmed that she was scared to death about the revelation that had come upon her.

She wasn't the first child that I had seen in that predicament; they come all too often these days. Every one of them seems like a baby herself, young, unsure and frightened.

Nonetheless, she tried to act confidently, as if she knew exactly what she had gotten herself into. I almost laughed at her feminism. She was perhaps a year out of her First Rites, and already she was acting the part of a strong, individual woman. I invited her to sit, and she did so, fidgeting with the seam at the bottom of her shirt. She glanced up and realized that I was watching her, and she immediately clasped her hands together to keep them from moving.

I asked her if she would like some tea, and she shook her head. I could see her swallow her nausea at the thought of putting something in her stomach. There was a moment of silence, and so I finally asked,

"What can I do for you, Gail?" She paused for a moment, and finally mustered her courage to reply.

"I have heard that you are very wise in the ways of birthing. Is this true?" Her voice came out shakily, and she cleared her throat quietly.

I nodded. "That is true. Are you in need of someone like that?" A quick, affirmative nod was the reply. I wondered for a moment how old she was: sixteen, seventeen? I knew that she would become angry, defensive, if I dared to ask. In the eyes of her pack, she was a woman, with all of the privileges and responsibilities that came along with the title. In my eyes, she was a little girl who had bitten off more than she could chew.

"Have you spoken with your elders about this?" I persisted.

Again, she nodded. "They sent me to you."

"Have you told your mate?"

She made a careless gesture. "It's none of his concern."

"Are you sure about that?"

She gave me a look of warning, which, on her baby face, looked more like a pout.

"Very well, then," I commented. Gail wouldn't have been the first young Fury to immediately dismiss the father of her child out of her life. I suppressed a sigh as I handed her a pillow to sit upon to make her feel more comfortable. I asked her how far along she was; she told me a month or two, as far as she could remember. I wondered how it was that she couldn't recall the exact moment of her impregnation. None are as close to the cycle of life as the Furies, but she was young, and probably didn't think that she had time for such introspection. I asked if any of her kin knew of the good news, and she told me that she had not shared her secret with anyone, save her elders and myself. I questioned if she was ready to bring a child into the world, and she gave me another one of those disapproving looks that brought a smile to my face. After a bit of discussion, I told her that I would coach her through the miracle that had occurred to her. Gail smiled, but I could tell that she only did so because she thought it was expected of her. The thought of giving birth was almost more than she could handle. She had no concept of the importance of being a mother.

I wondered what her mother had been like, how nurturing and kind. Gail looked as if she had been beaten down long before she had ever seen any of the horrors that our people witness. She was in no position to bring another life into the world. There was no doubt in my mind that her poor babe would live a life of hardship as Gail's temper and frustration would manifest itself — if she didn't abandon the child to someone else's care, the better to pursue her Garou life. The expectations of her newly discovered self had driven her to become something long before she was ready.

But that is also rather common these days. I won't go into how I feel about the young Garou being forced into adulthood before they are prepared; these days the eldest amongst us say that it is a necessity. Instead, I will merely tell the tale of a young, frightened girl who looked for answers to questions that she could not even conceive.

At first, Gail suffered through my ministrations and questions about her condition. I understood that she truly wanted nothing to do with the pregnancy, but abortion is simply not an option amongst our kind. She seemed unusually morose, and I wondered if she would slip into Harano. The thought of that horrific fate for one so young sent a chill through my bones. I vowed that I would not let it come to pass if I could prevent it.

After a month of caring for her morning sickness, and aches and pains, I decided to address her situation

openly. "Gail," I asked, "how do you feel about the gift that Mother Gaia is going to grant you?"

She gave me that all too familiar insincere smile. "I am proud to bring new life to this world, that Gaia might bless her and continue the strength of our tribe."

I mused over her statement and wondered whom she had once heard that from. She was a miserable wreck and resented the swelling of her young body. She feared being left behind — her pack wouldn't have the luxury of waiting for her to give birth, and without a pack's constant presence, none of our kind are complete. To her, the pregnancy was a meaningless inconvenience, and worse.

"You seem overly tired," I diagnosed. "In order to keep your strength and your wits about you, we need to take action." Her head perked up, and she raised a questioning eyebrow. "I want you to close your eyes and relax for a bit. Focus on making your breathing slow and steady." Like a good pup, she obeyed, but I could tell this was neither relaxing nor beneficial to her. I tried to give her different focus points, but she continued to fidget, as if her worries and frustrations ambushed the corners of her mind.

I continued to meet with her over the next few weeks, and there was no improvement in her meditations, or her attitude. She began to grow plumper, and tried to hide this under baggier clothing. I asked about her diet, knowing that she was not eating what was healthy or necessary despite what she told me. I needed to take a different approach. Gail would never gain acceptance, much less joy, from the miracle within her if she did not change. I told her of the great happiness that comes from being a mother, I spoke of the thrill of watching a child grow, I talked about many things, but nothing seemed to touch her. I could feel my own frustrations build as time went on. Her elders would call upon me and speak of her growing depression, asking if I could give her a remedy. I tried every herbal cure that I knew of, to no avail. I spent many nights pondering over what could be done to improve her situation.

Gail came to me one day, and I checked her physical condition. A frown covered her face, and when I asked what was wrong she claimed that she was merely tired. I looked her straight in the eye and said, "I refuse to help you any further if you do not speak the truth with me." I might as well have slapped her across the face. Her cheeks turned red as she swallowed her anger. "Gail, this should be the most exciting time in your life. Not all creatures are as blessed to feel the growth of life like you can."

Gail spat, "If this is good luck, I hate to see what bad luck is like." I grimaced at her bold statement, "What do you mean?" I carefully asked.

"It's like this," she started, "I don't even know why I am doing this. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but now I despise it. It disgusts me. *Look at me!*" she exclaimed, pointing to her rounding belly. I could see how the years of growing up in human society had damaged her vision of what a beautiful woman should be.

"I can't run," she half-sobbed. "I can't fight. I can't shift any more, not even to smell a track. They won't let me go with them. I'm stuck in this human form, and it's so ugly and useless now! I—"

I felt my own anger rise and she abruptly fell silent as the tension entered my face. I closed my eyes for a moment to consider her words. She sat as silently as a mouse.

"You're a selfish brat," I finally commented, "no better than the vain women that you curse for their shallow world view."

"I don't have to take this," she said as she started to rise.

"You *will* sit until I dismiss you," I ordered. She blinked in surprise, but her butt immediately found a seat. "I'm going to explain to you why you are nothing but a little girl playing grown up." Her face was positively crimson, but she remained motionless.

"With the exception of your sisters, no other being on the face of Gaia has the capacity to marvel at birth like you do. But instead of praising our Mother for what has been bestowed upon you, you curse it and wallow in self-pity. You wonder if men see you as the attractive young flirt that you were. You starve yourself and your child in an effort to prevent the growing of your body. You hide yourself in embarrassment, hoping that no one's eyes will rest upon you for too long. You resent your packmates for being concerned for your safety. I pity you. Perhaps it would be best if you ran away and stuffed your babe in a garbage pail like young human girls do." My tone was scathing, and her frown trembled as tears threatened to fall.

"Why are you being so cruel?" Gail accused.

"Why do you deny your birthright?"

Gail remained silent for a time; her pride wouldn't allow her to cry. I could see her struggle to save face.

"I want to tell you a story, the tale of your legacy."

I sat down across from her.

• • •

Long ago there was a turmoil amongst our people, and the One Tribe split into many. As the new septs

grew, all of them sought a way to please Mother Gaia, to comfort the tears that she shed at the dissolving of the union of the Garou. Some tribes chose the warrior's path, others became leaders, or lords of great territories. There was one young Garou who wandered from place to place, looking for acceptance, finding none. She saw the great deeds that the tribes performed in homage to Gaia, but she felt that their ways were not hers. She became discouraged that she could not find a way to please the Mother of us all. For years she wandered, finding no solace to the empty aching that filled her bones. She found a village of humans who had not been touched by the Impergium. There she stayed for a time, tending to the needs of those people and letting them tend to hers.

Still, she felt an emptiness within her, and the winds whispered to her, beckoning her to wander more. So with heaviness in her heart, she parted ways with the village, looking for the path that Gaia called her to. She found herself in the Umbra, which in those times was more confusing than what we know now. There were almost none of the constricting bands of the Weaver, and it was a time before the Wurm grew brazen in his madness. It was the ultimate wilderness filled with wonders unimagined by Garou today. The Umbra was the mighty kingdom of the Womb of our Mother. Life filled the very air in those days. Rather than rejoice at what she saw, she felt alienated and abandoned. She feared that she would never find that which would bring her peace. Certainly Gaia frowned upon her. What great acts could she perform that others of her kind had not?

She called out to our Mother for guidance. "How can I serve you when I don't understand what you require? Is there no way for me to honor you?" Grief filled her, and she lamented for the passing of a moon, refusing to eat or sleep. She lay upon the ground, ignoring the curious spirits that swirled about her. Finally the hollow pit of her stomach called to her, and her instinct drove her to find nourishment. As she hunted, she came across a glade where game was plentiful. She gave thanks to Gaia as she found a meal. As she filled her belly, she noticed that the place seemed different than any other she had ever encountered. Her senses amplified as she looked about. Every hair stood on end as she lifted her nose to scent what was wrong.

All of the beasts and plants sang their stories to her. In that moment she knew the terror of a young bird, testing its wings for the first time. She felt the discomfort of a fern that was nibbled upon by a rabbit,

and the pain of a stag that was taken down by a creature mightier than it was. She sat, dumbfounded by the humming that threatened to deafen her. Every living thing spoke to her, and she understood in that moment the cycle of creation intimately. Like a lover's whisper, it thrilled her soul in a way that those of other tribes would never know.

She grew drunk with the Wyld spark that had come to her. She understood the pangs and ecstasies of creation; she could *feel* them in her very soul. The newfound knowledge threatened to drive her into insanity as her mind whirled with the infinite possibilities of creation. She laughed and cried at the same time, as the sensation began to carry her away.

The beating of her own heart thundered in her ears like a metronome, the giddy sensation of the blood that flowed through her veins made her dizzy. It was then that she noticed something amiss. As she strained to hear, she came to a sudden revelation. She was a part of the great cycle as new life nested in her own womb. She marveled at how she could not have known before as she reached to nurture the babe that rested within her body. A tiny heartbeat shadowed her own as it grew second by second, waiting for its time to be born.

She had never heard anyone speak of the sanctity of insight or the humbling nature of creation. She wondered why no one had ever taught her such things, and as she pondered the issue before her, she felt a veil lift before her. Beneath the structure of all of the creatures of the glade, she could see the swirling of a strange, amorphous energy. It danced through the trees and tickled the wind. It was everywhere, whirling about as it fed an intangible meal of vivacity to the very land itself.

What a precious thing, the diversity of life! It was then that she knew what she must do.

Breathless with excitement, she hurried from the glade to share her newfound discovery with her people. She came upon the first sept, and explained to them what she had come to know. They merely looked at her with confusion. Didn't all creatures give birth? Why was she any different? She tried to explain how she felt, and they mocked her. She traveled to the next sept, and they also laughed at her revelation. It was then that she realized that there would be no one who would understand the miracle of birth as she did. This caused her a great sadness that there would be none who would come to know what she had. Discouraged, she sat to contemplate these things when she heard a barely whispered voice speak to her. It

said, 'I understand, as will my daughters, and their daughters, and theirs also.'

She then knew how it was that she would be able to honor Mother Gaia, by venerating the Womb of our Mother. And so, through the ages, the unshakable, absolute understanding of the start of life has been passed from mother to daughter amongst our tribe. We nurture it, we tend to it, and we let it thrive.

In these days of uncertainty, distractions threaten to choke the thread that ties us to the Womb of our Mother. But if you sit silently and listen, you can hear it draw breath, waiting to whisper secrets to your ears.

• • •

I looked up from my tale, and saw that Gail's hands curled around her belly. A look of guilt crossed her face as she realized the sacrilege that she had committed against Gaia's gift to us. Silent tears rolled down her baby cheeks and her lip curled into a pout. For a time, she could not bring herself to look up. She had been terribly shamed by her actions.

"Now do you understand what it is to truly be a woman of this tribe?" I asked quietly. She nodded her head, her throat too tight to reply aloud. "Don't grieve about what is past," I offered gently.

"I didn't know...."

I moved to her side and placed a comforting arm around her. I knew how she felt. I had once been a brash young Fury, full of the feeling of invincibility that the discovery of the gift of our Gaian blood provides. It would not be until many years later as I grew wiser that I would realize that purging the minions of the Wyrms wasn't the most important thing. No matter how great the warrior is amongst us, no matter how learned the Theurge or how kind the healer; none understands the seasons of creation as well as the mothers of our tribe.

Without that understanding, our people are most assuredly doomed.

Gail would birth her baby that autumn. A beautiful young girl, born under the full light of Luna. I smiled at the challenges that her mother would face as she grew. As I handed Gail her child for the first time, I saw a look in her eye that had not been there before. There was no doubt in her mind that she had given Gaia the greatest praise, the most precious homage, the most sincere respect by bringing life to this seemingly hopeless world.

It was in that moment that Gail became a woman. It was in that moment that I felt a renewal of hope. Creation must always go on.



Credits

Authors: Richard Dansky, Lisa Clark-Fleishman, Shannon W. Hennessy and Rick Jones

Developer: Ethan Skemp

Editor: Aileen E. Miles

Art Director: Aileen E. Miles

Art: Richard Kane Ferguson, Jeremy Jarvis, Jeff Rebner

Cover Art: Richard Kane Ferguson

Layout, Typesetting & Cover Design: Aileen E. Miles

Mea Culpa

Apologies to Jeremy Jarvis, whose name was accidentally omitted from the Rokea artists' credits. He is responsible for the fine-looking sharks found in Chapter Four: Secrets of the Deep in Rokea as well as the fantastic bestiary illustrations in Chapter Three: Wyld Children of this book.

— Aileen E. Miles, Art Director



735 PARK NORTH BLVD.

SUITE 128

CLARKSTON, GA 30021

USA

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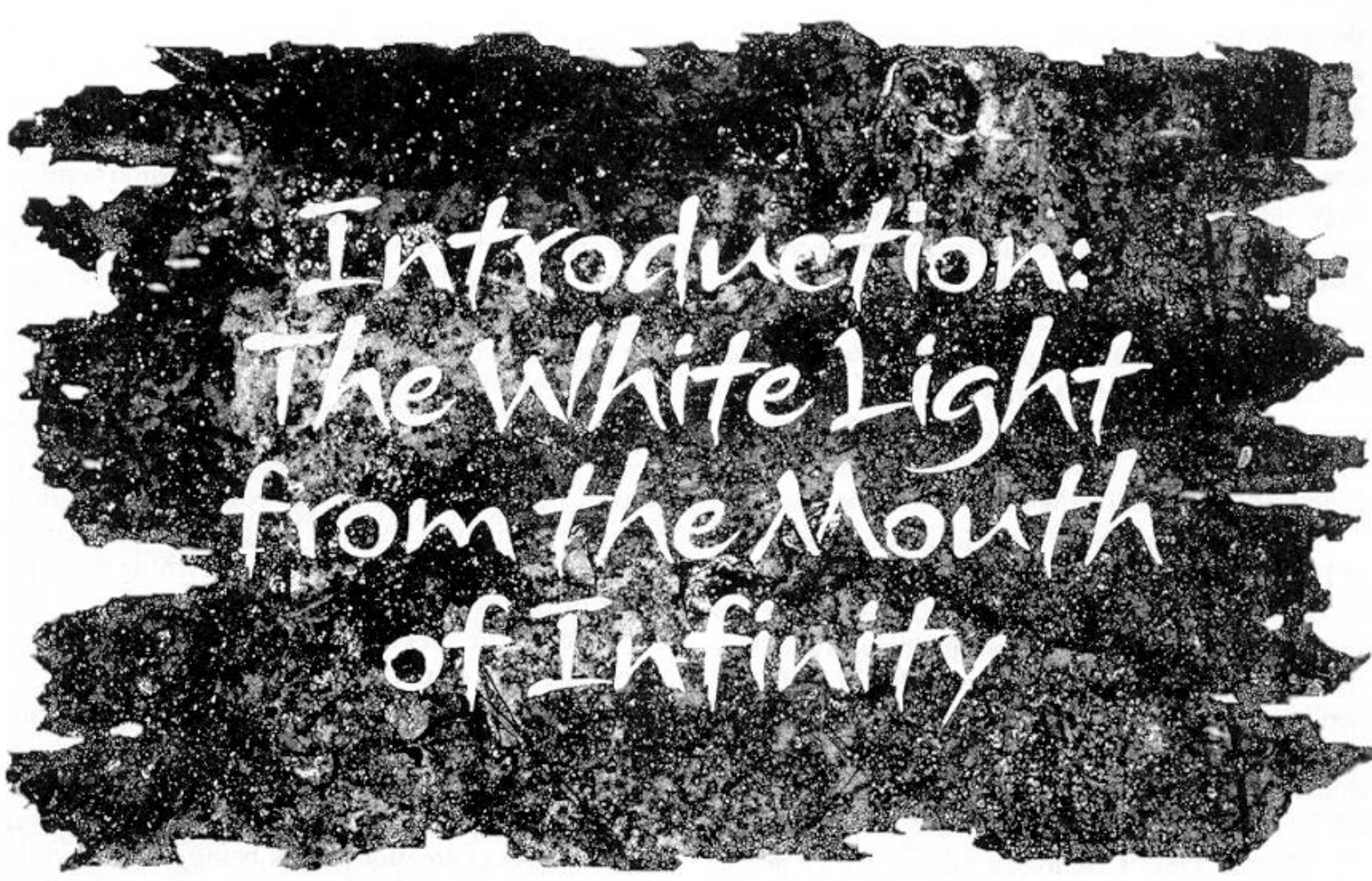
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Introduction: The White Light from the Mouth of Infinity

Have you ever gone walking through the woods alone and near dusk? During that time towards the end of the day when everything seems to turn blue for a few moments? When you do take that walk, do you ever feel like you are not wanted? Like a stranger in a familiar yet strange land? Are you an interloper? Do you hear the groan of the trees, and the rustle of underbrush? And when you sense the sudden stillness of the canopy above you and the sudden silence of the otherwise conversational katydids, do you know somewhere inside of you, when the alarms of adrenaline and instinct go off like klaxons, that you are not at all welcome where you tread?

You're not alone. The Garou feel it, too.

How to Use This Book

Book of the Wyld is a resource designed to help the Storyteller better understand and effectively use what is quite possibly the most heavily debated enigma surrounding the cosmology of the Garou: the Wyld. Due to the very chaotic nature of what the Wyld is, it can at times be a difficult hurdle for a Storyteller to leap, and even more difficult for players to relate to when playing in a chronicle that involves elements of this most elusive member of the Triat. While this book

attempts to capture some semblance of a defining mood for the Wyld, Storytellers are encouraged to experiment. The Wyld is, in but a word, possibility. To attempt to break the very source of universal chaos, change and possibility down to its most basic components is next to impossible. Chaos, change and possibility mean just as many different things to different people as they do to the different tribes of the Garou Nation and the collected Changing Breeds. Each tribe and Breed believes they know what the Wyld is and that the definition they support is the correct definition. And they're *all* right... to a degree.

The information in this book is not presented as an iron-fisted, non-negotiable and writ in stone set of rules and regulations regarding the Wyld. Rather, it is meant to aid you in your quest to understand the Wyld. It is meant to show you the Wyld as a universal force that can directly and indirectly affect the world in which the Garou live (and die). At the very least this book should serve to dispel a few misconceptions that even the most hardened veterans of **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** might hold regarding the basic nature of the Wyld. Storytellers are encouraged to take the material provided in this book and use it as a foundation for developing even more philosophies regarding

the Wyld. Given the number of shapeshifters out there who all have their own ideas, the more the merrier. Take what you need, leave what you don't need for others to assimilate into their differing visions. Always remember that the very essence of the Wyld is, by and large, possibility. When you're dealing with the universal source of possibility, chaos and constant change, literally anything goes. You can most certainly adapt one, a few or all of the ideas in this book to suit your needs as a Storyteller for applying the Wyld to your own, private World of Darkness.

Legends of the Garou: The Birthing sets the stage for this book with a brief glimpse at why the Garou still venerate the Wyld — rightly or wrongly.

Introduction: The White Light from the Mouth of Infinity, is the basic introduction to this book and seeks to dispel the frequent misconceptions that old and new **Werewolf: the Apocalypse** players and Storytellers may hold regarding the Wyld. In addition, here you'll find a basic explanation of the Wyld's importance to the Garou Nation as well as its relationship to Gaia, and a basic overview of how a Storyteller might use the Wyld in his chronicle.

Chapter One: Cosmology takes a glance at the metaphysical aspects of the Wyld, both historically and currently, particularly from the perspective of the Changing Breeds most interested in the Wyld's welfare.

Chapter Two: The Great Wyld World examines Wyld places of low Gauntlet in the World of Darkness. This chapter also attempts to give examples of manifested pockets of Wyld energy throughout the Tellurian. The mystery and unpredictable nature of these places bundled with the utter lack of any semblance of order have a decided effect on the world and its denizens.

Chapter Three: Wyld Children is the "Wyld Bestiary" of sorts, this chapter offers storytellers the means and the methods to employ minions of the Wyld in their chronicles. Information concerning gorgons, spirits and other resources for personification of the Wyld in your chronicle are available in this chapter.

Chapter Four: A Handful of Chaos is the Storyteller's assistant for sifting through all this information and distilling it into a chronicle. It presents information concerning historical chronicles, using guest stars with Wyld ties, alternate settings, and guidelines for the psychological effects of exposure to the Wyld.

Finally, **Chapter Five: Tools of Creation** details the cogs and sprockets of Wyld mechanics. For dessert, enjoy the included Wyld fetishes and rites, guaranteed to add a little randomness to your chronicle.

Basic Use of the Wyld *Fundamental Chaos*

First off, it's important to clarify that the Wyld and Gaia are not the same entity. Yes, some Garou or other members of the Changing Breeds do associate who they are and what they do with the universal force of creation; they feel a connection to the Wyld because of their ability to shapeshift, to go beyond the "laws" of the material world. But shapeshifters are Gaia's children first and foremost.

Gaia, as the shapeshifters understand Her, is life — the whole of everything experienced and all that is known by every living being, both in the physical world and in the Umbra. Though the Tellurian is technically larger, encompassing everything from the heart of the world to the furthest star visible in the night sky to the very air we breathe, Gaia is so much larger than the planet Earth.

Gaia is, by some definitions, the personified sum and order of causes and effects; the power which produces the phenomenon known to the Garou as the Triat. She is all of the collected agencies that carry on the processes of creation and of being in total, while the Triat represents the detail of Her power. While it is uncertain as to whether or not there is an intelligence (alien or otherwise) inherent to any single member of the Triat, it is *absolutely* certain that Gaia is not only intelligent, but also very much sentient — even though Her sentience is on a much greater scale than any mortal can really understand.

Other modes of thought place Gaia below the Triat, claiming that the Triat is responsible for all the Tellurian, and Gaia is merely a local "awakened spot" of the universe. (If this is true, then the Garou had best hope that the Wyrms' corruption is merely a local problem — because if the Wyrms are the size of one-third of the universe, there's no possible way they can prevent it from destroying the world once it's ready.)

But no matter the truth, it's very clear that the Triat and Gaia are not the same thing. The Wyld may be an agent as well as a personification of but one of Gaia's abilities or, if you prefer, a spiritual representation of the more primal forces that serve Her as a whole. It may also be greater than Gaia, the creative force from which Gaia came. Either way, it isn't Gaia. It's something else.

The Wyld is the fuel on which nature thrives. It is, however, *not* nature. Nature is tangible and comprehensible. The Wyld is neither of these things; however, nature could not exist without the Wyld.

The Wyld provides the raw force that becomes life as we understand and perceive it. As creatures of nature,

our affinity with the Wyld on a practical level is quite simple; without the Wyld we would not exist. The very essence of our forms and the forms of all other living things *within* the whole of creation are sculpted from the energies commanded and provided by the Wyld.

What the Wyld Does

Man has attempted to harness and control the raw forces of nature and subdue that which he feels lies within his dominion since he learned to sharpen spearheads and cook food with flame. The farther along this path of existence that man has traveled throughout his tenure on earth, the more polluted the path has become with the carcasses of that which he has destroyed in ignorance. Balance might have flourished at some point throughout all that is Gaia, but it has long since been lost and, at least where mankind is concerned, forgotten for the most part. Creation is corrupted from within; the force of order has, in a fit of narcissism, gone quite mad. The Wyld's energies are less and less prevalent in the Tellurian as its Triatic counterparts run roughshod and unchecked, and this is the overwhelming theme where the cosmology of **Werewolf** is concerned; the epoch of imbalance haunts Gaia and all that reside within Her embrace.

The Wyld creates and the Wyld fights to survive against the constant onslaught of the now mad and unchecked Weaver and the insane and corrupted Wurm. Nothing else, it could be argued, matters to the Wyld... if anything can be said to "*matter*" to a collective group of universal forces and phenomena. Without the Triatic force of balance — the Wurm — the Wyld is forced to wage what could be perceived as a guerrilla war against the Weaver's virtually inescapable Pattern Web. The Weaver's web tightens around the whole of creation as it grows more and more powerful century after century with the assistance of mankind, but the Wyld's fluidity allows it access through the small gaps betwixt the strands. The Weaver sets static limitations on every creature that walks, crawls, swims or flies, and the Wyld introduces mutation, adaptability, evolution and chaos. The Wyld is both creator and remaker, and there are many times that the lines blur between these two distinct abilities.

How does this matter to the sheer might of the Weaver? Why is the Weaver so intent on subduing and, in some cases, obliterating the Wyld? Quite simply, because the Weaver is completely unable to perform the tasks assigned to the Wyld. If the Weaver cannot control the potential of all that she attempts to add into her Pattern Web for her own needs, then she will eliminate that which she cannot control from the entirety of the universe by changing the rules. The Weaver is mad with jealousy over the Wyld's ability to

create at a whim and to disregard the rules that the Weaver applies to the entire universe while doing so. Like a spoiled, self-centered child, the Weaver is constantly trying to bully that which she covets from her sibling, in some cases with the use of extreme and brutal force. While some isolated camps of Gaia's fangs or their shapeshifting cousins may claim loyalty to the Wyld and champion its will, believing that the Weaver is directly responsible for the ills suffered by Gaia, the Wyld is neither ally nor enemy to any creature or being. The Wyld simply is. It always has been and will always fight with unrivalled ferocity to ensure that it always *will be*.

In a roundabout way, however, the Garou seem to hold the same values that one might apply to the Wyld. Therefore the answer to the question "Do the Garou serve the Wyld?" is both yes and no depending on perspective. The very fact that the Wyld is the fountain from which life, creation and change flow makes it sympathetic to the Garou as a people. While there are certain Garou who do boast that they are champions of the Wyld, the Wyld does not choose sides, *per se*. It simply is. Conversely, if the Wyld is possibility, then it is also *hope*. Hope is, sometimes, all that the Garou have to keep them fighting their war to preserve Gaia.

This being the case, it's easy to see how and why some Garou sincerely believe themselves to be champions of the Wyld. Some would even point out that in their attempts to set the universe aright, the Changing Breeds must serve the Wyld because it needs them the most. If the tables were turned and the maddened Wyld were on the brink of overwhelming the beleaguered Weaver, we might be hearing tales of the Garou being "champions of the Weaver."

A good analogy for the Wyld is a virus; a virus does not choose the vessel that it infects, it simply does what it does without conscience or regard to the vessel. It fights to survive and it replicates itself as quickly as possible in an effort to maintain its existence for as long as possible. A virus is neither intrinsically good nor evil. These are human concepts that cannot be applied to the universe or to a single aspect of the greater whole of nature. The Wyld regards humanity and the Garou — if at all — as nothing more than vessels created by and fueled with its energies. Unlike Gaia, the Wyld does not love, nor does it hate. The Wyld *feels* no more pain or sorrow at the loss of a Garou pack than a human being might feel during the shedding of a few thousand dead skin cells.

It is also fairly important to note that a universe without the Weaver would be nothing more than a swirling lava-lamp of chaos and anti-form. For the energies produced by the Wyld to be of any signifi-

cance or use to Gaia, and hence, the universe, they must have form and function. They must be able to maintain and hold their shape and purpose within nature. While the Weaver has no ability to create in the same sense as the Wyld, the Wyld has no ability to specify what it is that it's creating. Nor can it give its creations a place in the universe among the other creations that store small particles of its essence and life force. The conflict that exists between Weaver and Wyld due to the Wyrms' corruption of the balance is one of complete and total frustration on the part of the Weaver and one of seeming desperation on the part of the Wyld. Whether or not this is truly the case has been argued for centuries not only among the Tribes of the Garou Nation, but among all the Fera who acknowledge the Triat.

A Whisper to a Scream

One need not go on a vision quest or a life-long pursuit of the hidden glades of distant shores to find evidence of the Wyld in the Tellurian. The Wyld is all

around and everywhere. Every drop of water consumed by every living thing and every molecule of oxygen exchanged for carbon dioxide contains the energy and essence the Wyld. While there is no doubt that the Wyld thrives in areas of lower Gauntlet, the Wyld's fluidity allows it the continued ability to squeeze through the strands of the Pattern Web. Despite the overall loss of its dominion in the physical world, the Wyld still manages to hold on in the Umbra. Even in the near-absolute stasis of a refrigerator, molds, fungus and bacteria grow and, in more unsanitary conditions, even thrive.

The Wyld is, quite literally, everywhere in the World of Darkness in some form or another.

The strength in which the Wyld manifests itself in the World of Darkness, however, is a whole different ballgame. The Gauntlet has established quite a fortress for the Weaver, and the Wyld loses more and more of its ability to manifest directly in the world with every strand spun by its orderly sister

Personification

It's next to impossible for us, being creatures of emotion and reason, to comprehend the thought processes (if any can be said to exist) of a collected phenomenon. And a collected phenomenon is pretty much what the entirety of the Triat are. The Weaver does not sit giggling to itself in the center of a giant spiderweb made of calcified souls. The Wyrms doesn't necessarily "have it in" for the Wyld or for the Garou for that matter. By the same token, it is important to understand that while we creatures of emotion and reason are but few and finite in the grand scheme of that which is nature (and hence, Gaia)... the Wyld is eternal. For all we know, emotion and reason are nothing more than quaint traits possessed only by mortal beings. There's no way to even begin to explain how something that possesses the abilities and traits normally attributed to the Biblical Judeo-Christian God truly behaves, or more importantly, guess at what it might think or remember about itself and others.

Remember that this is a game. It's all about fun. Some Storytellers might choose to manifest the Wyld directly into a story as a whirling dervish of blood, shit and bones that screams like a banshee before it ginsus everyone in the Hive. Others might wish to represent the Wyld as the sheer force of hope and rebirth, or the coquettish nymph of inspiration and passion. Some might see the Wyld as far more belligerent than is presented in this book, while others might think that we've used silk cords to tie

down the ideas presented here so as not to bruise the delicacy of that which is the Wyld.

No one is wrong. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to manifest or personify the Wyld. If you don't at least make some effort to do so, your players will have no common point of reference for what it is that they're fighting for or against where the Wyld and its minions are concerned.

Do what you know and interpret the Wyld as you see fit. Use this book as a guideline, or orchestrate your own Triat based on your own philosophy of life, the universe and everything. The interpretations of the Wyld given here and the personifications that might be attached to the Wyld throughout this book are meant only to serve as a blueprint for the overall concept of the Wyld in **Werewolf: the Apocalypse**. They are not, as has been stated, absolutes or the "only" way things can be done.

The Wyld is, if nothing else, *possibility*. It can be anything. It can think anything. It can create at will as easily as it can rend reality from underneath your feet and throw you headlong into the full moon above if your Storyteller so desires. Anything is possible where the Wyld is concerned, and we highly recommend that you explore as many different possibilities as you are able. The only boundaries of what the Wyld is, or is not, are those imposed by your own imagination. That is the only true guideline to what the Wyld can or cannot do in your World of Darkness.

to reinforce the barrier betwixt the physical and the spiritual every passing day. While the Weaver has yet to learn the pattern by which the Wyld itself may be woven into her web, the Wyld has been forced into relying on subtlety and isolation if the footholds it establishes in the physical world are to last very long at all. Thus, it has become increasingly rare throughout the past century to locate a Threshold of significant power or importance.

How the Wyld manifests in the World of Darkness that you create for your **Werewolf** game is going to depend a lot on how you want the Wyld in the spotlight. The Wyld can be a master of stealth and subtly or it can be the sheer force of chaos. The following are a few basic examples of how the Wyld might manifest in a chronicle. Thresholds, which are powerful pockets of Wyld energy in the physical world, will be covered in a later chapter.

- **Spirits:** As with the Wurm and the Weaver, the Wyld has a host of spiritual servants that it can call on in times of need. These spirits are legendary among the Garou as being some of the most unpredictable denizens of the Umbra and are often quick tempered. Keep in mind that the spirits of the Wyld are

but distant cousins (if related at all) to those of Gaian affinity. The prospect of introducing your werewolves to alien spirits who can act as friend, foe or both depending on their mood can offer a whole new set of challenges to both veteran and beginning players, and as the Storyteller, you get to bring life to your own spiritual creations. Specific Wyld-spirits are covered later in this book, and the creation guidelines and mechanics for spirits can be found in **Werewolf:**

**t h e
Apoca-
lypse,**
pp. 234-
240.

- **Natural Disasters:** When the Wyld strikes out at the Weaver in wrath, the energies produced often cause unfocused side-effects that can manifest in the physical world in the form of sandstorms, mudslides, brush fires, hurricanes, typhoons, blizzards or flash flooding. Not every natural disaster that occurs in the World of Darkness can feasibly be blamed on the Wyld; sometimes bad weather is just bad weather. However, certain storms, especially those which seem to defy the very laws of natural science or that have "a mind of their own" are commonly charged with spiritual energy. More often than not, these storms are born in the Umbral Realm known as Flux.

Using the Wyld

Why is the Wyld important to the Garou? Why should the Garou care about the Wyld?

Simple; without the Wyld, there is no Gaia. That would tragically be the end of the story. Gaia could no more survive the strangulation of complete separation from the Wyld than a man could survive being hanged. Gaia needs the Wyld. If the Weaver is Gaia's skeleton, and the Wurm Her failed and now cancerous immune system, then the Wyld is most certainly

Her nervous and circulatory systems. The Wyld supplies the raw force of life that Gaia needs to remain, well, alive. This is the attitude that many of the tribes of the Garou Nation have adopted where the preservation of the Wyld is concerned, and while it is somewhat different from their normal battleground against Apocalypse, it is the very same war.



If you'll pardon us the geeky *Star Trek* reference, said show mentions the concept of IDIC: "Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations." This philosophy basically works on the premise that as long as there are an infinite number of variables in the universe, then the adage of "anything is possible" is indeed correct and very much founded in solid logic.

As has been said before at least twice, the Wyld is possibility. It is the constant variable. It is chaos and change and fluidity and perpetual motion. The Wyld is IDIC. Where there is the Wyld, there is possibility. Where there is possibility, there is hope. For many Garou, this hope may even encompass the staving off of Apocalypse or more importantly, victory for their people should the Apocalypse be unstoppable. This motivation alone, when whispered in the ear of a player's character as she holds a dying Corax in her arms, is profound. If shouted at the next Grand Moot by a sept's most revered Theurge, it should be more than enough to spark the interest of your players where chronicles involving the Wyld are concerned. Imagine the Renown a pack would receive if they won the trust of the Wyldling spirits of Tombstone Lake?

On the flip side, the Wyld can be a formidable antagonistic potential as well. Being a force of change, possibility and chaos is not without its dark side. There are most certainly instances of the Wyld manifesting in the World of Darkness in a manner quite similar to the fire and brimstone God of the Old Testament with all of the resulting suffering, death and destruction. Remember, while Gaia may have picked favorites among Her children depending on individual perception, the Wyld has no bias towards that to which it lends its energy. The presentation of the Wyld as nothing more than the force of change, unhindered by any delusions of human morality or conscience is certainly a foil worthy of the Garou and for testing the mettle of your players' allegiances to Gaia, the Wyld or otherwise.

The fluidity of what the Wyld is and what it represents makes it an excellent resource for experimentation within your games. Unbridled chaos or unrelenting persistence, birth and life or absorption and reconstitution, the Wyld is all of this and more. In the end, it is up to you and how you meet the needs of your players and the story you create for them.

Mood

Hope

Even in darkest hours of Gaia's final nights, there is hope. One of the most dangerous enemies a werewolf can face is that of Harano, and as long as there is the

hope for something better at the end of the long road, it is an enemy that can be defeated. Without hope or possibility, some would argue, there is really no reason to play **Werewolf: the Apocalypse**. Without hope, the War of Apocalypse has already been lost. Without hope, Gaia is already dead. Games that use a quest or a mission as their cornerstone seem to work best using the mood of hope. Perhaps a forgotten prophecy regarding the return of the Gurahl has been discovered, and it mentions a valley deep within the Rocky Mountains into which bears wander, but from which they never return?

Fury

The Wyld strikes back at the constant spinning of the Weaver from time to time. When it does, it seems to explode in a rush of energies that we would probably interpret as pain, anger and frustration. Sometimes even the best-intentioned Garou end up in the right places at the wrong times and bear witness to the *true* face of rage.

Horror

Let's face it, many of the things that would make a brave human break out in a cold sweat and start whimpering won't do much to faze a veteran Garou. An experienced group of **Werewolf** players have been through the wringer in their time and have seen just about everything, and through the trials and tribulations of their characters' lives, they've become confident in their abilities as well as their position as Gaia's defenders. But what happens when they actually come face-to-face with the maddening, alien flux of a manifestation of creation and possibility itself? What happens when, despite their strength, cunning and renown, they fall into league with spirits and beings that regard them as little more than just another group of creations, if they "regard" them at all? The horror of the Wyld is that it can do *anything*, it can be *anything*, and its only predictable quality is that it and its minions are completely unpredictable. How horrified would it be for a pack of Garou to learn that their packmate was just dissolved into primordial ooze by what they *thought* was a Maeljin Incarna, but what was in actuality a Wyld-spirit of notable power? What about the packmate that was "just there a minute ago!" who disappears into the knee-deep foliage of a town completely overrun by Virginia creeper or kudzu?

The Wyld is well suited for horror because the players will never know exactly what to expect. As a Storyteller, paranoia and horrific unease can be a powerful ally.

Glossary

Abscess — Garou terminology for a Wyld Threshold that forms within the bawn of a Caern or Hive.

Gorgon — A Wyld-spirit bound into a physical host; the “fomori” of the Wyld.

Threshold — A hole punched through the Gauntlet where the Wyld maintains a sway over the physical world.

Wyldling — A spirit of the Wyld; also used as a general term for the Wyld’s various children and servitors. Not to be confused with “Wylding,” an Umbral domain of the Wyld.

Additional Resources and References

Many of the following resources and references can be accessed in a public library, on the Internet, or even at a local neighborhood video store. These resources and references are a good direction in which to start moving if you’re uncertain about what exact manifestations or role the Wyld might take in your chronicle. They can also provide more detailed information or serve as inspiration for a chronicle centered around or featuring the Wyld and its minions.

Books

Sacrament by Clive Barker

The Wendigo and The Willows by Algernon Blackwood

The Dark Music by Charles Beaumont

Mythago Wood, *Lavondyss*, and *The Hollowing* by Robert Holdstock

Hogfather by Terry Pratchett

Movies

The Perfect Storm, 2000, directed by Wolfgang Petersen

Deep Rising, 1998, directed by Stephen Sommers

Outbreak, 1995, directed by Wolfgang Petersen

Pet Semetary, 1989, directed by Mary Lambert

Swamp Thing (save your breath — we know), 1982, directed by Wes Craven

The Day of the Triffids, 1962, directed by Steve Sekely

Online

The Encyclopedia Mythica

<http://www.pantheon.org/mythica/>

The Creation-Evolution Encyclopedia

http://www.pathlights.com/ce_encyclopedia/Index.htm





Chapter One: Cosmology

History

Ancient tales sing of times unimagined by the modern world. For the Garou, these stories are incomplete fragments of their history. Often confusing and contradictory in nature, legends of the beginnings of the Universe speak of the entities that created the sum of everything in existence. Many appellations have been hung on the myriad conceptions of what might be the grand creators of All. Every culture has given a name to the Supreme Being, or beings that they believe gave birth to life as we know it. The Garou simply call them the Triat.

Though so many legends are passed down through generations of singers and tale-tellers, the accurate accounting of the beginning, if one ever existed at all, has been lost in the sands of time. Now only shards of half-remembered stories remain. No known written record of the beginning can settle the dispute, and so the Changing Breeds constantly debate which tales have greater veracity. Many legends have points of similarity, and these are often regarded as truisms, though there are certainly no absolute truths concerning creation mythology.

Limitless Possibility

The Wyld is the ultimate incarnation of chaotic origin. It gathers, expels, and reabsorbs energy in a dazzling maelstrom of primordial effluence. The Wyld is pure, infinite possibility. In essence, it is the force of creation distilled. The Wyld's influence in the Triat is of monumental importance. Were it not for the Wyld's constant birthing of new matter, the Weaver would be left without the raw materials she would need to better add order and structure to Gaia; and the Wurm, having nothing to balance, would lie still. Stagnation is not balance. More importantly, if not for the Wyld, Gaia would surely die.

If, as some theorize, the Weaver is Gaia's mind, reasoning, logic and stability, and the Wurm Her immune system turned caustic and cancerous, then the Wyld is not only Her life's blood, but the heart that pumps it. In a great macrocosm the Triat functioned as the cycle of birth, life and death repeated through the ages. This was a Golden Age for all things in the Tellurian. The spirit and material worlds were one, and everything lived in synchronicity. The Triat understood that their well-being was reflected in the

thriving world as each of them performed their respective duties establishing symmetry for all things.

While the warring of its siblings has largely driven the Wyld from the modern world, its presence can still be felt. The Garou understand the agony that the Wyld suffers as the entity's influence is chipped away from the physical realm, one day at a time. But werewolves can still feel the Wyld's puissance on the Earth. Even as the Weaver forges a seemingly calcified reality in the cities, the Wyld causes molds to spore, buildings to be infested with rodents that chew at their foundations, and roads to crack as weeds force their way through the cement.

Nor is the human population exempt from the acts of the Wyld. As the Weaver creates new technology to lengthen lives, the Wyld creates new viruses to feed off their human hosts. Because of the overly destructive acts of the Wurm, the Wyld retaliates against its entropic sibling as well. Every time a forest is decimated, new growth can be found the following season. When rivers and lakes become poisoned, flora and fauna adapt to survive the changes. The Wyld acts in the only way that it knows how to when a part of it is destroyed—it changes and starts anew. The Wyld also has an influence on the metaphysical aspects of creatures on the physical realm. Brilliance, creative talents and epiphanies (for good or ill) are born of the Wyld's chaotic nature. Raw talent and intellectualism are a reflection of the Wyld sparking the imagination and potential of physical creatures. Instincts, premonitions, and gut feelings all find their start in the Wyld's whirling vortex of creation.

Does this make the Wyld a kind entity? Absolutely not. The Wyld plays by the rules of nature, which can be very cruel indeed. Only the strongest survive, and since the Wyld fights in a many-fronted war, it is going to act in the only way that it understands. Much like a cornered animal, the Wyld relies on a feral viciousness (if such words apply to an entity of its scale), readying to take down as many of its enemies as it can before it meets its demise. The Wyld's instinct to survive at any cost supersedes ties to its siblings as it attempts to absorb and reform anything that is a threat to its well-being.

The Golden Age

Galliards sing ancient legends of a mythical age when balance and harmony ruled the realms of Gaia. The length and duration of the Golden Age is somewhat hazy; certainly no written record hails from these times. The birth of the Garou Nation and the rise of the other Fera societies are said to have been events of the Golden Age. Some Theurges claim that each werewolf holds an ancient memory of those times, buried deep within their souls. They claim that this collective unconscious remembrance is a gift of hope from Gaia. Others scoff at such an idea, claiming that even if such times existed, they are so far gone that even Gaia Herself couldn't remember them.

The Golden Age has been described in many ways, but in every version of the legend, one point is always the same: it was an age of perfection and unparalleled unity. The physical and spiritual were one, and all things prospered under Gaia.

Paul,

I know that Dr. Nelson has been a long-time colleague and good friend to you. I implore you, for his sake, to encourage him to quit distributing these blasphemous "historical" essays. At best they are fiction, and are more likely to be seen as heresy. Read these pages that I have sent. I know that the good doctor means well, but for Gaia's sake, he's signing his own death warrant.

*Regards,
Sandeep*

I've long studied the history of our people. What I have always found most curious are the tales and legends that speak of the way we were in the period before what we now know as the Modern Age. Not much information is available concerning the Nation prior to the severing of the Umbra from the material world. What little remains can be found in the fragments of half-remembered songs and weathered pictograms left by our ancestors. Nonetheless, I have dedicated my life to the pursuit of understanding the hows and whys of what might have happened to not only our culture, but to Gaia in times long gone.

I have created many hypotheses and theories about what is euphemistically called The Golden Age. I assure you, none of my findings are widely accepted, let alone popular. Many a Keeper of the Ways has nearly come to blows with me over my postulations. While I despair at this conflict, I can at least appreciate their passionate desire to keep their version of our history alive. So, as I share with you what I think makes the most sense about what occurred many millennia ago, I ask only that you read with an open mind. I have traveled far and wide to collect the information that I will impart to you. Remember that before you dismiss my words as those of a prattling old fool.

Most of our people know that the Nation has existed for longer than recorded history. Of course, the challenge with oral history is that it leaves our beginnings open to revisionism. While this may make for a great legend, it does not preserve the facts. As a social scientist, and historian, the truth of the matter is what I seek. I believe that our people found their first homes in what has been termed "Pangaea," not to be confused with the spirit realm of the same moniker. It's my belief that Gaia created this place approximately 10 million years ago, although I understand that popular science would not follow the same time line. Nevertheless, it was during the first million or so years that our Great Mother crafted the lands that we would inherit. Part of this creation period was most assuredly spent in the development of spiritual entities, or caretakers, which we now refer to collectively as the Triat. While many subscribe to a "Big Bang" theory of spiritual creation, I believe that Gaia carefully crafted those beings that would have certain duties, taking great care and time to assure that Her vision would come to fruition. But I digress.

Pangaea was the first face of Gaia, and it is in this place that the first of the shapeshifters were born.

Pangaea was one large landmass, a single island surrounded by a great sea. The spirit world was intrinsically connected to the land. There wasn't a Gauntlet at that time, or if there were, we can assume that it was the equivalent of a sheet hanging over a doorway. During this period our people would learn to communicate. Certainly the first methods of expression were primitive and crude, but as time passed we would evolve and become more sophisticated. According to my research, it would have been approximately 5 million years later that the period known as the Golden Age would have begun.

Many poets have glamorized the Golden Age, and it was most likely a spectacular world during those days. What we do know from countless songs and legends is that during this Age, there was no distinction between the spirit and static world. What I have discovered in my travels is that the Golden Age may not have been so glorious. Little known pictograms in various locales throughout the Realm and the Umbra portray a brutal and bloody lifestyle for the creatures of that era. Ritual slayings and territorial contests may have decimated entire physical and spiritual societies. This was the time when Gaia may have experienced the first Great War.

The upheaval of a divided population most certainly caused pain and suffering for Gaia. What the exact cause of the rift, or the Severing, might have been is open for debate. It's my view that Gaia ordered Her caretakers to solve the problems of all of the warring factions. The Triat's logical conclusion would have been to split the various beings apart. The Severing would not only divide the spirit world from the physical, but would also break apart the landmass known as Pangaea into the continents that we know today.

The Severing was most assuredly a sudden occurrence. Millions most likely perished as the land was uprooted and the Gauntlet was formed. Those that remained would have been forced to depend on one another for continued existence, thus bringing an age of peace back to Gaia.

Gaia's chief protagonist in the Severing must have been the entity that we call the Wyld. As Gaia sought to create a new environment where strife was not as prevalent, it only makes sense that She would have chosen Her most powerful creator servant to change the face of the land. The loss and destruction that occurred would have been a side effect to the birth pangs that created the world as we know it now.

The Severing

Something horrific occurred that would change everything; The Severing.

Theurges entertain many theories about the exact cause of the Severing, but its effects on the Tellurian were devastating. The spirit world abruptly separated from the material world effectively cutting off all physical creatures, save the Changing Breeds from the only reliable source of spirituality. The Wyrms and the Weaver began a constant battle for control as the Weaver tried to shape the material world into its vision of stasis. The Wyrms began to consume and destroy more as the friction between the two entities began to escalate. The Wyld paid the price, as the ensuing war would slowly exile it from the physical plane.

Some say that the Severing is the fault of the ambitious Wyrms. In its jealousy of Gaia, it began to consume all things that She had created in an effort to claim Her power. The Wyld stood against the selfish destruction, and began to birth new creations to combat Gaia's losses. The Weaver then became enraged by the chaos created by her two siblings and wove a fabric that would forever bind spirits to an incorporeal world and forever blind physical creatures to the universal consciousness that they had known.

Others claim that the Severing came about as a result of the rise of cruelty in the world. As the many creatures of Gaia began to evolve, contests arose over the control of territories, despite game being plentiful. As acts of malevolence and selfishness increased, all creatures began to suffer horribly as physical brutality took a toll on the spiritual aspect that tied all beings together. If the worlds had remained together, so the story goes, the circle would have continued until the whole world was an Atrocity realm on Earth. The result was a collective self-preservation defense mechanism, or the Severing.

No matter the cause, the effects of the Severing still ring in the modern world. Spirituality, spontaneous acts of faith, visions, and other metaphysical beliefs have become a barely remembered piece of the past. The average citizens of the World of Darkness hardly pay lip service to spiritual beliefs. While religious traditions might be a quaint study, it's largely accepted as fact that God must be dead. Hope, beliefs, and morality have given way to material devotions. The bottom line needs to be appeased more so than any ancient God. Those who do not give homage to the Almighty Dollar are sacrificed as the gears of a cold, static society grind forth.

It's no wonder that the Garou fight an uphill battle.

The Gauntlet

The rise of the Gauntlet was akin to a door slamming shut in the face of the Wyld. While the Wyld still peeks through the keyhole, its production in the physical world has been seriously stunted. The effects of this are noticeable to those who know where to look. Concrete and steel have covered fields of green that once were. Air conditioning regulates the hot summers, and furnaces take the chill out of winter air. As more aspects of the physical world become regulated, the Wyld struggles against oppressive inevitability. There are places that the Wyld slips under the doorsill that is the Gauntlet. The pooling of Wyld energy in the physical world is referred to as a Threshold. As millennia have passed, Thresholds have become increasingly rare, and many modern werebeasts have never even seen one. The Gauntlet acts much like a dam that holds the influence of the Wyld at bay. As the Final Days draw near, the Wyld beats upon the wall that separates the spirit and physical worlds with angry fists.

Someday the dam will crack.

While the Wyld is weak on the physical plane, it maintains its strength in the Umbra. The Umbra is not nearly as restricted by the static constraints that the Weaver has placed upon the physical world, and there the Wyld can still perform its duties as a creator with less interference from its siblings. Wyld places abound in the Umbra, if one knows where to look. It is in these places that the Wyld builds energy and power for its eventual return to the face of Gaia.

The Gaian Connection

"Blessed are those who serve the Mother from which we came. May She whisper wisdom to our ears, bring joy to our hearts, and hope to our souls."

— Black Fury prayer

Often those who do not understand the relationship between the Wyld and Gaia muddle the distinction between the two. They are two separate entities. They are neither ally nor enemy, rather they need one another for their continued existence. Gaia provides the Wyld's creations with something that its Triad siblings have failed to — spirituality. The infinite combinations that exist from the individuality of having a soul strengthen the Wyld. The birthing of new life prevents the calcification and decay that threatens to strangle Gaia. Songs tell of the Wyld being the

The Final Day

As told by Alo, Red Talon of the Northwest.

Transcribed by Mourning Star, Keeper of the Ways for Grandfather Thunder.

Let me tell you of the way of things to come. Can you not smell the death in the air? It comes for all of us! The greatest of storms breach the horizon, and yet we do not see. The winds that carry the sands that shall strip the flesh from our bones have begun, yet we do not feel. The great predator hunts us, yet we lie on our bellies, headless of the danger.

Lift your noses! Perk your ears! Understand that the Last Great Happening is upon us all. I tell you of a day when the sun will not rise, and Luna will grow dark. All things will know the truth in that powerful final moment, and they will cry out for something to save them. Their howls will be a thousand shrieks of terror, and not even the mightiest of Warriors will overcome the great wave that will cleanse this dirty place.

Once there was a great Mother. The time came that She would take a mate, but there was none to be had. She gave a great howl to the wilderness, and from that place came our Wyld Father. Father saw how Mother could give his children something that he could not, a love for life. She infused them with hope and joy, and these new traits pleased Father greatly and he gladly became Her mate. They rejoiced in all that they created. They would sire many things, beautiful and wondrous. Their packs would grow strong and thrive.

From that same great wilderness that Father had appeared would come his sister and brother. They too wished a home in that blessed place. With open arms Mother would welcome the siblings of Her mate.

For a time, Father's brother and sister would acknowledge the authority of the One True Leader. Then they became jealous and wondered why they could not be the Alpha. They made challenges, and Mother proved Her worth. Father held his tongue at

this defiance. While it hurt him to see his mate hurt thusly, it was the way of things in those times.

As the seasons would pass, the disputes would become more frequent, and Father's brother and sister would blindly attack his mate. It was with great anger that Father stepped in and growled at their lack of subservience. They lowered their noses to the ground for a time and acted as they should have, but their scheming went on.

Father's sister whispered a treachery to her brother one day. She said that she would have a cage of the strongest stone constructed around Father as he slept. It would be then that the two would be able to slay Mother and take Her spot as the leader of the pack. And so this is what they did.

Father woke in darkness, and from beyond the walls he could hear the injured wails of his mate. He began to pound on the walls, but to no avail for his traitorous siblings had made them too strong. He ordered his brother to free him, but his words fell on deaf ears. His mate's cries became more pitiful as he clawed at the walls, seeking freedom. He howled an oath to his brother and sister that if they should slay his mate, that he would visit his vengeance upon them tenfold.

Father's promise has gone unheeded, and Gaia continues to die. If She dies, we shall all follow. Not because the Weaver will freeze our souls, not because the Wyrms will bring vile pestilence, not even because our True Mother will have passed. We shall perish in the most horrible of ways as we stand before the Wyld's righteous rage when he breaks free of the confines that his brother and sister placed upon him.

So why do we continue to ignore what is to happen? When will Father Wyld know release from the prison that holds him? Do you hear his howls as I do? He demands that we conquer those that threaten his mate. He requires our sacrifice to return him to Gaia. On that day that our true Mother and Father will be reunited. Only on that day shall we ever know peace.

cosmic Father, much as Gaia is the Mother. Some say that Gaia and the Wyld are lovers, or friends, or even equals. This is not the case. Gaia relies on each member of the Triat equally. The only difference between Gaia's relationship with the Wyld and its siblings is that the Wyld struggles for renewal. The Weaver concerns herself with providing order at all costs, and the Wyrms in its madness strives to consume. Neither concerns themselves with the equilibrium that Gaia requires to survive. The Wyld is the only member of the Triat that fights to return the circle of existence to the way that it once was by virtue of circumstance. The Wyld's actions could actually be seen as causing imbalance if it were to run amok, much as the Wyrms has. The Wyld does not create for Gaia out of a sense of loyalty, or morality. In fact, the Wyld has no sense of compassion for Gaia, it simply acts in the only way that it knows how.

Long discussions regularly break out amongst the most philosophical shapeshifters, discussions about whether Gaia came first, or the Triat. Certainly there are enough valid points to make a logical argument either way. Most Garou would vehemently state that Gaia is the Mother of creation, although other Fera might not agree with that point of view. As the issue of "who came first" will most likely be a debate of the chicken and the egg until the final day, it would be imprudent to say that a single member of the Triat is more powerful than Gaia, or vice versa. Each entity has a specific role in the workings of the Universe, each as important as the next. Without all of the components, mass chaos would surely come to pass.

The Madness of the Wyld

Madness is a term that is frequently associated with the Wyld's siblings. The Wyld is quite mad, but not from insanity. While it is impossible to even guess at the motives of an entity as ever-changing as the Wyld, there is little doubt by those in the know that the Wyld is filled with rage. Why this is the case is anyone's guess. Theories abound; the most popular is that the Wyld is striking out in some blind attempt at self-preservation. As the Wyrms and Weaver spin out of control, the Wyld grows more brazen in its efforts to restore balance.

Mistakenly, many think that the Wyld has Gaian (or even Garou) interests at heart. In reality, the Wyld has only the Wyld's interests in mind—whatever those are, for they're surely incomprehensible to beings living on a mortal scale. The Wyld has no concept of morality, right or wrong, fair or unfair; it merely knows

that there must be balance for it to survive. Survival is all that matters.

In its fight for continued existence, it knows no mercy and offers no quarter. Its alliances are fleeting and fragile, and those who believe that they can turn to the Wyld as a patron often find out too late that their lives are meaningless in the Wyld's grand scheme of things.

Daddy's Little Girl

The chattering of half a dozen rats threatened to drive Shelly mad as she made her way through piles of trash that covered the floor of the dank alleyway. "Jez, you there?" She called out cautiously. The young Gnawer had met the Ratkin only a short time before and she wasn't accustomed to the company that he kept. Nevertheless, he always seemed to tell a good story, and she was always on the lookout for a new tale to pass along.

Shelly called his name again, and she heard his sharp voice reply, "Yeah, I'm comin'." She watched as he appeared from behind a beat-up dumpster. He tossed an empty bottle of cheap liquor onto a pile of garbage and moved her way. She tried to make small talk, but Jez wasn't in the mood. "What do ya want?" He sounded rude as it got, but Shelly had come to accept that it was just his way.

"I thought maybe we could trade a story or two, if you wanna," she said cautiously. His moods could change rapidly, and she didn't want to risk angering him.

"Sure, sweetcheeks. Have a seat," he gestured to a pile of trash. Shelly opted to lean against the alley wall instead. Jez settled on a half-broken crate that was supported by an old, rusted out paint can.

"I could go first this time," she offered.

"Naw, I ain't in the mood for it," he interrupted. "But I'll tell ya one that'll knock your socks off." Shelly nodded and waited for him to light a half-smoked cigarette.

"See, it's all about the Pretty Girl. Everything is. You know the kind that I'm talkin' about. She's so perfect that you can't think of one flaw. The Pretty Girl defines everything on this planet. Everyone measures himself or herself against the Pretty Girl. Women want to be like that chick. They wanna walk, talk, eat, fuck, and shit like she does. Men are worse. Their obsession with the Pretty Girl opens up all kinds of doors for evil to walk into their hearts. They wonder, 'Can I get her? Will she want me? Who do I have to kill to be with her?'"

See, the Triat works like this: They're all fightin' about the same thing. What's that, you ask? Well, I'll tell ya. It's all about the Pretty Girl. See, everybody knows one, right? And everybody reacts a bit different to one. Think of the guy who falls into lust with her. Then she snubs him, and

now instead of lovin' her, he hates her. He wants her dead, at all costs. Then you got the Jealous Bitch, and she can't stand that the Pretty Girl is more beautiful than she is. It ain't that the Jealous Bitch ain't pretty, but you gotta wring your ass outta the couch pretty early in the morning to catch up with Pretty Girl.

But see, here's the thing, every pretty girl, no matter who she is, or where she is, or what society or culture, has a daddy. Daddy don't give a fuck about the Jealous Bitch, or Spurned Lover. All that Daddy cares about is his precious little bundle of joy. All Daddy cares about is seeing his little one thrive and grow. And when he hears her cry out in pain, he doesn't respond, he RE-ACTS! Nothing is safe from Daddy's wrath when he hears his baby weepin'. He'll stomp a mud hole in yer ass and walk the sonafabitch dry.

Every time he hears his baby wailin', his fury multiplies and he looks for the most immediate path to take towards her oppressor. The path of least resistance if you will. Like fucking lightning!"

Jez clapped his hands together so quick that Shelly jumped almost to her feet. He laughed as he took a drag. "Wait, there's more," he promised.

"Problem is, there's a lot more resistance than there used ta be. Now don't be thinkin' that Daddy can't get through anymore to save his girl, he does. Trust me, I wasn't born with this scar on my face. Sometimes

just bein' around when Daddy comes lookin' for Jealous Bitch or Spurned Lover is dangerous for bystanders. It's best ta just stay outta Daddy's way. See, if someone even hurt a hair on my little one's head, I'd ravage 'em till I was knee deep in their blood, shit and bones. That's how our anger is. We got that from the Pretty Girl.

"Now, can ya imagine what Daddy's rage is like?"

Shelly interrupted, "What are you trying to say?" Her face was contorted in confusion. Jez took one last drag off his smoke as he threw it to the ground in frustration. The rustling of rat feet on the pavement was the only sound as an uncomfortable silence filled the air.

"Damn kids," he finally muttered, "want everything spelled out for ya." Shelly cringed a bit.

"It's like this, kid. Daddy doesn't see his baby's flaws. She's perfect in every way. In fact, Daddy don't see flaws at all, he only sees potential. If his little girl gets smothered by Jealous Bitch and Spurned Lover, we're all goners, and that's a promise. Daddy will unleash a beatin' like the world has never seen. See, his baby is the Daughter of Hope, and once that's gone, ain't none of us got a chance. He'll blast us all into oblivion. Maybe if hope is gone, oblivion is a better place".

Shelly let the tale absorb for a minute. "But I thought that...."



"It don't matter what you think!" Jez cut in angrily. "Shit's rolling downhill, and you and me, and everyone else is standin' at the bottom. Only thing you gotta think about is what you're gonna do between now and the end ta make sure that Pretty Girl don't hurt so bad. That's all you gotta think about. Now, get outta here, you're bothering my friends."

Shelly looked down and saw dozens of rats crawling around his feet. She tried to act nonchalantly as she walked towards the street. She heard Jez' mocking laughter as she took her last two steps from the alley at a run.

Aspects of the Wyld

By virtue of its nature, the Wyld is a harsh master. As such, its followers in the spirit realms not only reflect its tendencies, but can also take them to extremes. Wyld-spirits are by far the most chaotic entities in the Umbra. Unpredictable, spectacular, and highly dangerous to those that do not have intimate knowledge of their *modus operandi*, most werewolves steer clear of these beings. Whispered tales warn those who would attempt to summon Wyld-spirits without proper precautions being made beforehand. Even the most enlightened of Theurges don't possess a firm grasp on the nature of these beings. They simply do not conform to anything resembling rational behavior. Summoning these spirits is perilous at best, and damning to the Garou who is ill prepared to receive that which she has beckoned.

Much like stars and planets move across each other's sectors of the sky, Wyld-spirits have shifting, overlapping identities. As a result, Wyld-spirits aren't often classified as individual personages, but rather as a fluid component that reflects the complex, often confusing, state of the Wyld.

The various spiritual children of the Wyld are sometimes viewed as multiple facets of the same spiritual force. While heated debates have raged about the exact form and function that Wyld children serve, one thing is certain, what might be a truth today can change tomorrow. There are no hard and fast rules concerning Wyldlings, and they are often awe inspiring, and terrifying at the same time. Neither beneficial nor malign, Wyld-spirits simply do what they do.

The Brood of Teyacapan

Leave your arrogance behind, son of wolf. I have no use for it in this place. I have heard of your boasts, and it is said that your knowledge in the ways of the Other World is great. I say that you know nothing. Does your pride

make you look away in anger, or is it my visage that disturbs you more? Come now, certainly I am not the first metis that you have encountered. Ah, it's my eyes? Like the eyes of a lab rat, you think? Pardon my amusement; you would not be the first to be unsettled by my very gaze. I am called Tonalztzin Metzli, or Sun Moon in your tongue. A strange dichotomy, no? Perhaps I came to be called this because of my albino nature; maybe it was because I have been blessed by the Earth Mother to learn of all things in her realm. My name is not important; what is important are the teachings that you have come to absorb. Listen well, proud wolf. I will explain to you things unimagined by your structured thinking.

In the time before time, the air was sterile and cold. From the darkest void came The First. As She looked about the universe, She saw nothingness, and this created a sadness in Her heart. She wept three tears. The first tear splashed upon Her body, and from that came a spark of life. The second mingled with the first, and another child was born. The third was cried most bitterly, and so that tear also became a child to the Mother.

The Mother of All Things saw these things, and She felt a great joy. Now She would not freeze in loneliness in the bitter void from which She had come. She nurtured Her triplet children and thus the age of the First Sun began. She called Her children Teyacapan, the first born, Tlaco, the middle born, and Xoco, the youngest. It was a time of great happiness for the Mother and Her children. She taught them the ways of things. Her first child would be the bearer of fruit. Teyacapan felt a great pride at being chosen to be most like the Mother. The eldest child would create many beings so that Mother would be pleased. Mother rejoiced in the creation, but saw that Teyacapan's creations lacked purpose and direction, and so they would never grow to have children of their own. Mother told Teyacapan this and said that She had an idea of what could be done.

Mother called Tlaco to Her and explained that Teyacapan's creations were too confused, and could birth no children of their own. Tlaco rejoiced at Mother coming to her, and said, "Then I shall give them order and reason, and Teyacapan's children will thrive." Thus began the Second Sun. Teyacapan and Tlaco worked together to appease their Mother. The First smiled upon this initially, but then became worried as Her children's creations continued to spread and overpopulate. Mother called together Her two eldest and told them of Her worries, and the youngest, Xoco spoke aloud, "Mother, fear not. I know a way that will balance the children of Teyacapan and Tlaco." And so Xoco would be the bringer of winter to all things. And so as the seasons turned, the Third Sun would rise.

Mother watched the creations of Her children grow, thrive, and die. As time would pass, another great sadness would weigh heavily upon Her heart. For millennia untold Mother grieved unexplainably as She watched Her children form the Universe. No matter how hard they tried, the three could not cheer their Mother. They worked to make fantastical things that would bring a smile to the heart of Mother, but to no avail. Worried for the First, the triplets came to Her and spoke at great lengths about what to do.

Finally Mother spoke. "Teyacapan, you give life to that which was once nothing. Tlaco, you see that life has an order so that it grows and thrives. Xoco, you bring an end to the old so that the new may live on. My children, you do these things, and yet something has been missed."

The three looked from one another to their Mother, and finally Tlaco replied, "What could we have missed? There is a reason to all things, why are you not pleased?"

Mother cried out, "Can't you see that there is no spark? Your children are nothing more than animations of the void from which I came!"

Tlaco became enraged by Mother's words and shouted angry things as Teyacapan and Xoco cowered in fear. Tlaco explained how everything had a time, a meaning, and a precise purpose. Mother shook Her head sadly at Tlaco's rage.

"Worry not, my logical one. I will do a thing that shall bring the circle around." And with a grand gesture, Mother gave a piece of Her soul to all things. Her children watched in horror as they saw The First shrink away into nothingness. They began to wail, thinking that all was lost. Then a billion chattering voices spoke to them at once, and they felt Mother speak to them from all of the beings that they had made. She said to them, "I am now the sum of what you have created, my children. I reside in everything that you have done, and everything that you will do. I only ask that you be the caretaker to me, that I have been to you."

And thus the Fourth Sun rose.

For a time, a Golden Season shone upon the Tellurian. Mother spoke to the hearts of men and beasts as She rested in the warmth of the Earth. Her children did as She had bid them to and worked in harmony. Mother grew drunk in Her happiness and cried from joy. As Her tears fell to the ground they separated into many small drops. Out of the Earth rose the little children of Mother and She would call them Nexcoyomeh, Her wolf sons. But Tlaco still felt the sting of her Mother's harsh judgment. The splinter of malcontent grew into a thorn of resentment as she pondered time and time again how Mother could not

see that all had been perfect before. Tlaco saw that Mother's presence in all things made them unpredictable. Beings did not act as they should have, they grew to have personalities and differences. Tlaco watched as Mother mocked her from Her slumbers, and this made Tlaco grow cold and vengeful. Tlaco went to her sister Teyacapan and tried to explain why things were wrong to no avail. Teyacapan was too much like Mother and would not listen for she rejoiced in the change of all things. Tlaco next approached Xoco, convinced that her youngest sister would see the folly of Mother's ways, but Xoco was content to be the bringer of winter and wanted nothing of Tlaco's plotting. Tlaco grew bitter, as her alienation was complete. It was then that Tlaco vowed that the sum of All would conform to her vision.

Full of jealousy for her carefree sisters, and rage for her Mother, Tlaco made a plan that would force them to recognize her greatness. She would poison the pulque of her siblings so that they would fall into a great sleep. Then she would change things to the way they had been before the setting of the Third Sun. First, she called her younger sister Xoco to her. Tlaco offered the drink to her sister and watched as her eyes grew heavy. Too late Xoco understood the betrayal and with clumsy arms fought back. Tlaco banded Xoco's arms and legs together so that she would never escape. Tlaco then hid her sister away in the deepest of caverns so that none would ever find her.

Teyacapan heard the cries of her youngest sister and knew of Tlaco's treachery at once. She demanded that Tlaco release Xoco at once. Tlaco laughed at Teyacapan, calling her foul names. Teyacapan vowed to find Xoco, no matter the cost. As Tlaco saw the look of resolve in her sister's eyes, she felt a fear in her heart. Teyacapan, who had been the mother to many lesser creations, trembled with rage at Tlaco. The two fought with frightful abandon. The Earth shook as Teyacapan stormed against Tlaco. The middle sister saw that she could not defeat the many faces of her sister, anymore than she could defeat the whistling wind. So, Tlaco devised another kind of prison for her eldest sister. Luring her far away from the Earth, Tlaco tricked Teyacapan into entering a temple made of stars and swirling clouds. Teyacapan became distracted by the wonder of the newfound place and soon lost the trail of Tlaco.

Tlaco closed the door of the temple and whispered a curse that her sister would never again walk the grounds of her new, orderly world. As a great lock slipped into place the shrieks of all things could be heard. Tlaco blinked in surprise as the One world became Two. Her curse had been more

powerful than she had thought. Tlaco reveled in her own magnificence. Now the beasts would no longer listen to the whispers of Mother, now things would act as they should; now the flaws of her Mother and siblings would be corrected. From the temple of the Sky, Teyacapan howled in rage, and from the caverns beneath Xoco grew mad in the darkness. The Fifth and last Sun had risen.

Mother woke from her great sleep, and saw that Tlaco stood over Her. "Where are my other daughters?" Mother asked. Tlaco smiled scornfully. "They are dead to you, Mother. I am all that is left. I am greater than thou, and I shall rule this place as it was meant to be." The Mother of All Things wept once more, and from Her tears came the sorrow and rage that would become our own. Mother spoke to us, for none of the other creatures could hear Her pleas. She charged us to reunite Her with her lost daughters, that things might be as they were in the Fourth Sun.

I have spent my life looking for Teyacapan so that she might know that her Mother seeks her still. In that time I have found many of Teyacapan's sons and daughters. I try to convey that Mother misses her, and wishes to hold her close to Her

breast once
more.

Teyacapan's broods are wily spirits at best. They wear many guises and hold many names. I will teach you what I have come to know. I cannot say that my truth is absolute; I am sure that there are others. Certainly the Tellurian is large enough to hold my words and the seeming contradictions of those spoken by Garou who seek what I seek. Listen carefully, son of wolf, and find your own truth.

Much like a fever in the body, or the swelling of an infected wound, spirits of the Wyld can overcompensate in their mission to restore their patron to health. Sometimes the result of their actions is only a momentary adjustment that quickly snaps back to the previous way of things. Rarely, Wyld-spirits may cause a long-term change that slowly swings the pendulum of balance back to center.

Those attuned to the ways of the Wyld can see its children in the parking lot of an industrial complex, as well as in the heart of a rainforest. Those who summon Wyld-spirits successfully understand that they must not only work with them, but minister to, attempt to heal, and integrate them back into a form and function that best serve balance. Only in this way can a shapeshifter hope to call upon Wyld-spirits without the risk associated with beings that are so innately volatile. Failure to act properly with respect to the chaotic nature of Wyldlings can open a door of negative and often fatal consequences.

In many ways, spirits of the Wyld reflect a sort of polytheism. Much like a prism that changes appearance depending on the light that it is exposed to, Wyld-spirits change and overlap identities depending on the stimulus that is being focused through them. It's partly because of this flux, or at least so say some Theurges, that there is no clear hierarchy of Wyld factions. Instead, Wyld scholars classify Wyld-spirits into aspects in a desperate attempt to understand the mind-boggling variety of the Wyld's spawn. These aspects are groupings of Wyld-spirits in accordance with certain traits that they display. They aren't hierarchies by any means — simply labels used to try to communicate the spirits' nature to other shapeshifters. A grand legend may be told of the greatness of a particular Wyldling from a certain aspect, only to be contradicted with a tale that claims that the spirit in question belonged to a different aspect. Both versions may be completely factual. Wyld-spirits change names and faces so frequently that it is almost impossible to give them a definitive classification or taxonomy. Nonetheless, the shapeshifters have divided Wyld-spirits into broad categories for the purpose of understanding them.

And yes, it is somewhat ironic that some scholars of the Wyld should try to use the power of Naming, no matter how lightly and loosely, to attempt to understand Wyld-spirits better. For this reason, the following aspects are hardly common usage among all Garou, even all scholars of the Wyld — some suggest that in even trying to classify the Wyld's brood, one weakens the spirits themselves.

Mammatus

Mammatus are Wyld-spirits of the air. Many are cloudlike in appearance, although in a constant state of flux. Sometimes Mammatus are as benign as the cotton candy-like cumulus clouds seen on bright summer days. Other times they are as terrifying as a typhoon, and often more dangerous. There is no apparent rhyme or reason to their actions, and it's impossible to predict their future behavior based on past events. Much like the atmospheric condition that their name is derived from, it is hotly debated amongst the Garou exactly what the appearances of these spirits signify. Some claim that when Mammatus appear, a violent spiritual storm is sure to follow. Others scoff at this idea, claiming that Mammatus are merely the bringers of the rain that nourishes Gaia and all of Her creations. There is certainly enough validity in both arguments to make a solid case either way.

One thing that is clear about these air-spirits is their potential to wreak havoc in the physical world by causing the skies to grow dark with vicious storms that produce torrential downpours that can be devastating to the inhabitants of the affected area. In the Umbra, the Mammatus are even more unpredictable. They can create fog that can cause a pack to lose its way, or obscure an object or place that would otherwise be in plain view. Finding oneself surrounded by Mammatus is generally enough to set one on edge. Nerves fray; tempers flare, and reasoning skills become muddled.

The origin of the Mammatus is as mysterious as their function. Very few have actually studied these particular spirits. Those that have generally come away with more questions than answers. Communication with a Mammatus is confusing and unsettling at best.

Empyros

Kalomi breathed a sigh of relief as the blistering heat that had assaulted her senses on the other side of the Gauntlet ceased and she found firm footing in the Penumbra. In the physical world, Pele surged down the Big Island, bringing fire and brimstone towards the village that she had once called home.

Kalomi felt obligated to witness the burial of her birthplace by the volcanic river of red that burst everything in its wake into flames. She suppressed an urge to frown at what seemed like an unfair twist of fate. The people of her village would be without homes, without livelihoods. The inviting sands of the nearby beaches would become stone coasts. The place would soon be a wasteland.

Instead, Kalomi tried focused on how refreshing it was to be away from the intense nature of the lava flow. She wandered about, lost in thought. On this side of the Gauntlet, the landscape had already started to take on the look of lava rock. She walked on the smooth surface, feeling the grit beneath her feet. The land was black as far as she could see. Something stood out against the darkness, catching her eye. She cautiously moved towards the distraction.

Growing from the stone was a single Ohia tree. In the physical world, this spot was still covered in red, but here there was a sign of new life. This made Kalomi laugh, even as she cried. Even in the face of destruction, life went on.

Fire has long been the cleanser of nature. Even as volcanic eruptions and wildfires peel life off the face of Gaia, the ashes leave behind a thick layer of nutrients from which new organisms feed and grow strong. The Empyros are the ultimate purifiers of the Wyld. They produce intense heat, which engulfs a

target causing it to explode into flame. From the ashes, new life is born and thrives.

Empyros may look like the tiny flicker of a candle that burns low, or they may be as grand as a tower of lava spewing from an active volcano. Like most Wyld-spirits, the origin of the Empyros is unknown, though whispered legends say that they reside in the Deep Umbra where they gather the energies through which they fulfill their tasks for the Wyld. Despite their fiery nature, Empyros seem strangely devoid of any emotion. They simply do what they are best at, which is cleansing the old so that new life may thrive. There is no pleading to be done when an Empyros arrives to perform their duty. The best course of action is to stay out of their way.

No one knows why Empyros attach themselves to a particular locale. They are as likely to cause a forest fire as burn an apartment complex to the ground. Firefighters find that trying to battle an inferno caused by this aspect to be nearly impossible. Empyros can cause blazes that rage on for days.

Many Garou find it tempting to try to summon an entity from this family of spirits to use against their enemies. While on occasion this can be an effective tactic, when you play with fire long enough, you most definitely get burned.

Terrene

This aspect of Wyld-spirits is generally associated with the geological phenomena that occur on the face of Gaia. Earthquakes, mudslides, the formation of continents and their subsequent dissolving back into the ocean have been attributed to this family of spirits. It is said that these spirits inhabit everything from the most fertile ground to the murky sands that hide beneath the sea.

In reality, these spirits are charged with forever changing the face of Gaia so that the curse of stagnation will not smother their territories in the physical realm. Despite that, Terrene visits to the physical world have become increasingly rare. The rise of the Gauntlet has prevented all but the most powerful from entering Gaia.

Although their potency can be great, they are often unfocused in their tasks. Aspect scholars theorize that the Terrene were the first Wyld-spirits to be born. They point to the capricious beginnings of the Universe where every physical body was in a constant state of flux. In the Penumbra the effects of the Terrene can be more readily seen. While the Penumbra often

mirrors the physical plane, these earth-spirits have had an easier time rearranging the shadow of Gaia.

The Terrene wear many faces. They can resemble worker ants as they burrow through the dirt to create small hills, or they might appear like the golems in legends of old. Terrene seem to be the most methodical of all Wyldlings. They alternately build and destroy, continuously altering the grounds that they touch.

Atlaua

Seventy percent of the face of Gaia is covered in water. Therefore it's no surprise that Wyld-spirits have chosen to take this ever-changing form. The greatest strength of the Atlauans is that they can never be contained. Eventually they will erode away any entrapment that has been placed upon them. They are ultimately free spirits who roam with seeming aimlessness through the Umbra. Fluid in nature, Atlauans can easily blend into any environment, whether it is a great ocean or the trickle of a drainpipe.

Like other Wyldlings, Atlauans are neither good nor bad. Their presence may be as nourishing as a spring rain, or as deadly as a torrential flood. Some Theurges claim that the Atlauans are actually Mammatus, but as with anything concerning the Wyld, there is no conclusive proof that such a view is true; a Wyld-spirit might "be" a Mammatus one day and an Atlauan the next, for that matter. Of all aspects, the Atlauans most easily slip through the Gauntlet. Because of this, they are perhaps the Wyld's most effective terrestrial minions. Slowly they change the face of Gaia, altering everything from shorelines to the foundations of high-rises. The effects of their presence can be seen in every corner of the Tellurian. There is no place that Atlauans can't go if they so desire, and there is no refuge from the slow, persistent work of this aspect.

Passions

Muscles stretched to their fullest as the ground raced beneath Ming's paws. Fur lay flat against his body as he leapt a fallen tree. He would never be able to explain why every cell of his body felt exhilaration when he ran, but nothing else in life thrilled him as thoroughly as the sensation of a full-out sprint.

Lust, fear, anger, joy: emotions that are so primal they seem to stem from nowhere. Spirits exist that reflect these base states of mind. Passions are flickers of the millions of emotions that occur in the creatures of the Tellurian. It has been theorized that Passions merely absorb the state of mind of whatever creature

they come across. Legends of great heroes inspired by one Wyld Passion or another circulate throughout the Garou Nation.

Passions come in many flavors, ranging from positive to negative. Epiphanies and intuition are sometimes credited to the work of the Passions. The exact function of these spirits remains a mystery, as does their origin. Whispered rumors say that Passions are expelled directly from Flux and attach themselves to the first suitable host they encounter causing a brief, but very noticeable difference in the mindset of their chosen being.

The appearance of Passions varies as widely as the emotions they provoke. They may look like a red haze, or an innocent babe. Because of this, Passions are very easily misidentified. Passions form a temporary symbiotic relationship with their chosen host. They may bring great benefit to those whose lives they touch, or they may plunge their victim into a helpless depression.

Catastrophes

In the times that Gaia cries loudest, and equilibrium has been tossed aside, the Weaver and the Wyrms shudder as the Wyld unleashes its dogs of war upon their creations. Catastrophes are the unfocused anger of the Wyld that manifests in the Tellurian. They are spirits that have one specific purpose, to decimate and reabsorb anything that gets in their way. Like a tornado cutting a swath through the land as it randomly takes its course, Catastrophes spare nothing in their path.

Catastrophes are most often seen in the Umbra where the Wyld has the most sway. Sometimes a Catastrophe is as minor as a tremor, but other times they can be more devastating than the most violent natural phenomena. They are more of a "felt" spirit than a "seen" spirit. Even humans know that there is something amiss when a Catastrophe is near. The wind becomes still, the temperature drops, dogs bark and goose bumps rise.

Not surprisingly, there is no warning when a Catastrophe comes to perform its duty. The best course of action is to run from them. No Garou in a sane state of mind would try to summon a spirit from this aspect. They are far too unpredictable — and uncontrollable. Like Passions, this family of Wyldlings is thought to be expelled directly from Flux. After they wreak havoc upon an area, they return with the energy that they have collected and deposit it back into their home

realm to be absorbed and reincarnated into a new form that can better serve the Wyld's needs.

The Nameless

By far, these are the most unknown of Wyld-spirits. Ancient tales tell of a time when Gaia with the help of the Weaver began to name things. While names gave power, it also restricted the potential of every creature. The legends say that there was a group of spirits who refused to be named, and hid deep in the Umbra to retain their ancient power. They came to be called, the Nameless, the Anonymous, the Unbidden, the Unnamed and more.

No one is sure of the exact nature of the Unknown, what their agenda might be, or even if they exist at all. Rumors have circulated throughout the Changing Breeds about these particular spirits, but those who have heard of them, generally dismiss the Nameless as a fairy tale designed to warn ambitious pups that might try to summon something beyond their understanding. Some say that the Nameless are ferocious and vengeful spirits holding hatreds that are millennia old due to their exile after the Naming of All Things occurred. Another theory surmises that the Nameless are impossible to summon; after all, if even Gaia doesn't know the true name of a creature, how can a Garou even hope to call upon it?

The Mouth of Infinity

The Umbra is a place of wonder, mystique, terror, and horror. One misstep can land an unaware Garou in a position of grave danger. Some of the most awe-inspiring places are also the most deadly. There are many Wyld influenced realms that silently lie in the spirit world. Throughout the Near, Middle, and Far Umbra the Wyld performs its duties as it fights to maintain the balance that it requires for survival. Some Wyld influenced areas are a virtual haven for weary Garou, and some are chaotically nightmarish hellholes that are avoided by any creature that has an ounce of common sense.

Purely Wyld places in the Umbra are difficult to find, due to the fact that they frequently seem to change location. Time and space are often distorted making it impossible to navigate some areas. One great legend tells of Auser Ma'het, a Silent Strider who wandered into an untamed Wyld Realm, only to return decades later, un-aged. Such Rip Van Winkle tales circulate throughout the Garou Nation, though the accounts always seem to be third hand — "I knew of a pack, who knew of a pack..."

Wyld Realms are often localized phenomena. Like a super cell racing across the land, their appearance can be brief, but devastating. Also, since Wyld Realms constantly float across the sea that is the Umbra, it makes finding them a daunting task. The following are some known Wyld-influenced realms.

The Tale of Auser Ma'het

There are a million roads, my friend. Each of them belongs to us, it's our way. Long ago, one of our brothers set upon a path that called to him. He was called Auser, and his sacred duty to Gaia was to find the old truths and pass them back to his people. So, off he set, wandering near and far in search of ancient lore.

As the story goes, Auser traversed the Umbra and came upon a hidden moon path. In his curiosity, he decided to take the unknown road, thinking that wherever it came out, there was a good chance he'd learn something that nobody else had known for a long time. As he traveled, the path became twisted and confused, it splintered off into different directions, and he soon found himself lost. He knew that there was no turning back, so he pressed forward and finally came across a land that looked much as ours did before everything changed. Auser rejoiced in this, thinking that he had found a homeland. He stayed, and learned of the people. "Perhaps," he thought, "this can be the anchor to my travels."

And so he lived there for a time, but then he began to notice that things were not as they seemed. Temples changed locations, people changed faces, and the language became foreign. These things confused and frightened Auser as more and more of that place became unstable. He decided to return home and tell his fellows of what he had seen.

It was a long and arduous journey for him, but he did return. He first noticed that the Umbra did not seem right as he approached his birthland. There were markings of the Weaver, and he could see much evidence of the Wyrms' passage. Auser became angered as he thought that the land of his people was coming under attack. He struggled through the Gauntlet and ran, howling a warning cry to the desert.

There were a few of our kind who heard him, and rushed to see what sort of peril the Strider was in. They saw him running across the sands, as if the Wyrms himself were in pursuit. They could sense nothing out of the ordinary, but readied themselves for whatever might come.

Auser stopped before them, panting and speaking gibberish things. He claimed that the world was under

attack by Weaver and Wyrms minions, that the Umbra was flooded with them. He was panicked, and those who found him couldn't get much useful from him. They asked him from whence he hailed, and he claimed that the land that he stood on had been his birthright. No one present knew his name, or the names of any that he called friend or ally. Auser's speech was strange, and those who found him had a difficult time understanding his words. Finally they decided that he must have suffered from exhaustion, and so they decided to take him to a home that he might find some rest.

As they approached a city, Auser stopped dead in his tracks. The place was well lit, and there were all of the wonders of modern technology to be seen. He began to wail, as if Gaia herself had passed on. He fell to the ground, praying to whomever might listen to grant him mercy and let him escape the nightmare that he had entered.

His rescuers did not know what to do. Thinking that he had fallen into Harano, they took him in and attempted to care for him. The days passed, and Auser spoke even more strangely of how this was not the real world, and that his caretakers were not real either. Slowly, Auser slipped from this world into the next. I can only hope that he has found rest there.

Afterwards, those who had found him would discover who Auser was, and how he had disappeared one hundred years before. No one is sure where he may have wandered in the Umbra, but assuredly it cost him his sanity.

Or perhaps the culprit was what we have become.

Flux

Gather, that I might tell you a tale of hope and wisdom. Many of our kind say that the battle is for naught. They cry for things not yet lost, I tell you! I know, for I have seen the despondency that plagues us. I have tasted of its bitterness; I have felt the poison in my very being. I looked about and saw the face of Death gazing at me, beckoning me to give in to my weakness. I screamed to Gaia for answers. She was silent.

I could take no more, and so to the spirit world I ventured looking for my own answers. For how long I wandered I cannot say. Grief covered my eyes with visions of barren wastelands and whispered lies of despair into my ears; but take heed, brothers! I have seen a place that will be the salvation of us all! I have walked its lush ground and breathed the fragrance of life as it once was. By the grace of Gaia I found myself in the soul of the Wyld. I stared about in wonder. I felt how our ancestors must have before the world was wicked.

But even as it was a world of awe, it was a place of strangeness. Uncontrollably my body raced through all of the guises with which Gaia has blessed us. Perhaps for the first time in my life I truly felt what it was to be one of us. As I absorbed the sensations I could feel my consciousness reach for a greater awareness. Thoughts whirled through my head, each one more brilliant than the last. It was as if I could be a god. Then I understood; the comprehension was not of my own making, but created from the bosom of the Wyld as it sparked to life parts of me that had lain dormant. I could feel it reshape me into something else as the energies flowed through me. A part of me resisted the change. It would have made me like the star that shoots across the sky, glorious and splendid for a moment, and then lost forever.

I stumbled away from the place and was found many days later.

I was quite mad.

For many moons I did not speak as my mind tumbled chaotically over what I had experienced. There are many things that I do not understand about what occurred, but I know this, there is a place where possibility originates. The Wyld is not dead to us! It seeks out our vitality to carry on in the missions of our Mother Gaia.

Where there is life, there is hope.

There was a time before time when the Wyld provided unlimited creation to Gaia and its siblings. The creation of the new, and the recycling of the old provided the Universe with the materials to evolve. In the End Times, such expulsion

of energy is warped, calcified and stifled in the Tellurian. Flux is the last great bastion of creation at its most base form. Flux is thought to be located in the Near Umbra, although finding it is a challenge that most Garou would not undertake.

The only thing that is known about Flux is that it is chaotic, and chaos is unpredictable. The Garou cannot even begin to fathom complete disorder or true chaos and universal lawlessness. They can't think that way. They are simply too rational. All living things learn through experience and repetition. The very state of chaos is that nothing the same will ever happen twice. Snowflakes are chaotic; no two will ever be alike. Even the most identical of twins are never exactly the same. No creature is ever born the same, or dies the same, even though there may be similarities. Flux is perpetual change.

To try to explain Flux in finite terms would be impossible. Flux is to the Wyld what Malfeas is to the Wyrms. It is a place where none but the Wyld hold dominion, and those seeking entrance into Flux with cause to harm anything that is of the Wyld end in agony. For those that fear or hate that which is of the Wyld, Flux is a nightmare realm of unnatural landscapes that shift and buckle formlessly in and out of one another like a lava lamp of spiritual energy. For those who venerate the Wyld and act as an ally to that which the Wyld charges with its needs, Flux is a miracle realm



where anything can and does happen. Impossibility becomes a formless and fluid reality.

Flux itself is a living entity. It is the heart of the Wyld, the last grand stronghold of unbridled Wyld creation. Natives of the realm are always in a constant state of evolving and devolving. Nothing remains the same in Flux. It is widely accepted theory that Flux has gateways that lead to the Wyld Reaches in the Aetherial Realm. These pathways are thought to be the super connectors that allow the Wyld to feed raw energy to the universe itself.

Pangaea

I blinked in surprise. Everywhere that I looked was a lush wonderland of tall grasses and mighty oaks. There was not a single sign of civilization as far as I could see. The sky was the deepest of blues, and gone was the perpetual yellow haze that hangs in our world. This was the place that I had heard described so many times, but who could have known it would be so amazingly wonderful. I vowed to never leave. Certainly this was where I belonged. I could hear rabbits scatter through the underbrush, and my instincts kicked in as I ran after one, chasing it through grass and trees. In its panic, it darted between two of the largest pines I had ever seen. I started to change course to intercept it on the other side when I heard a wet, crunching noise. I halted in my tracks. Something had caught my lunch. I carefully stepped around the colossal trunks and immediately wished I hadn't. I have never been a fan of paleontology, but I immediately recognized the kind of creature that I spied upon. Unfortunately, it saw me too. For a brief moment, I could feel my machismo rise. I am Garou! Why would I run from an overgrown lizard?

Thank Gaia that my common sense overrode my stupidity. I fled from the beast like the rabbit had fled from me. I could hear the pattering of its quick feet behind me as it thrilled in the chase as I had moments before. I ran, ears back and tail flat. I darted in and out of the different foliages but my pursuer would not give up. I saw a grove of trees across the plain that I had not noticed before and I put all of my strength into getting there. Mid-leap I shifted and grabbed a hold of a branch. I scrambled up the tree like a scared cat. At the bottom, the predator clawed at the trunk and howled at me in anger because I had denied him a meal. I am sure that the sight would have provided a hearty laugh to my sept as I sat atop the tree, shivering like a little girl. While the land was unbelievable, I felt a sensation there that I have never known — here I was prey.

Pangaea is a wild and untamed representation of what prehistoric Gaia was like many millennia ago. It is a land where game is plentiful, and so are the

predators. Prehistoric creatures wander the land filled with vegetation no longer seen in the modern world. Dinosaurs, dire wolves, woolly mammoths and other creatures are just a few of the beasts that exist there. Pangaea is heavily Wyld influenced, and because of this a Garou's mindset can be radically altered after entering the realm. Base instincts rise to the surface, pack mentality becomes stronger, and survival of the fittest rules all.

The realm is primal, fierce, and very deceptive. Time becomes meaningless; a few days can easily stretch into a few weeks. The land is full of earthquakes, lava flows and sudden weather changes. Those who are not well acquainted with the skills necessary to survive in the wild can find their stay very short indeed.

The majority of the creatures that inhabit Pangaea are spirit ephemera, though they seem to be very physical in nature. The crystal-clear seas team with mythical monsters thought to exist only in fairy tales. Wyldlings pervade Pangaea, and because of their influence the land has a tendency to frequently change and shift. Only the most perceptive can navigate through the lush forests and mountainous terrain that covers the realm with any sort of certainty. There are also Wyld caerns located in Pangaea. Although they are not as powerful as caerns located in the physical realm they still serve as connections to Gaia.

Those seeking the realm will find that the closer they get, the more convoluted their travel seems to become. This is due to the high discharge of Wyld energies from the realm. There are also paths leading from Pangaea to other Wyld sub-realms. The sub-realms of Pangaea are often similar to the realm itself, and act as a launch pad for reaching other locations in the Umbra.

Charybdis

I was young, back then, and I became lost in the Umbra. I wandered aimlessly for what seemed like years. I will not recount the nightmarish things that I came across, but they were many. I feared madness would overtake me, and that I would never again know the sweet security that our Mother Gaia provides.

As I wandered aimlessly, I looked into the sky, and I saw a great swirling vortex. It seemed like a great drain had opened into the sky, swallowing everything that came near. In my insanity, I thought that I stared into the mouth of the Wyrms, and I drew my klaive, ready to battle the damned thing. It was then that I heard a voice, laughing at my folly. I turned, my muscles tense, and my temper flared. Before

me stood a woman of many faces, and my eyes could not comprehend what she truly looked like. First she was young, then old. Desirable — then repulsive. I shook my head in an effort to clear my mind.

"What do you seek here?" she asked.

I became confused and disoriented as I looked from the vortex to the woman with many faces. The ground itself seemed to grow soft beneath my feet, and my tongue could not form a reply. It was as if my very thoughts were being taken before they could form.

I did not understand what I saw. She seemed to feel this from me and shook her head sympathetically. "You do not belong here." My head grew heavy, and a great sleep overcame me. I woke in a familiar Glade, and found my way home. I have thought many times about what it could have been that I saw, or who the woman might have been, but to this day, I am still not sure.

Charybdis is the ultimate reclamation station for the Wyld. It absorbs matter and energy that is channeled to Flux for absorption and re-creation. Seen as a huge swirling mass, it silently moves across the Deep Umbra, picking up anything that gets in its way. No one knows what the heart of Charybdis is like, as no one has ever dared to venture into it.

The realm has been seen by relatively few shapeshifters. Those who speak of it frequently have memory gaps, ranging from seconds to days of time lost after their encounter. Some say that the realm has guardians, although depictions of the spirits seen ranges greatly. Learned Theurges have theorized that Charybdis is not actually one phenomenon, but a collection of multiple vortices that traverse the Umbra in order to feed new energy and matter to Flux. Charybdis is so magnetic that it permanently alters the Umbral grounds that it passes through. Theorists cringe at the thought of what might happen if Charybdis were to breach the Gauntlet and enter the physical realm. Even a temporary rift would spell disaster for any given area. Charybdis seems to appear randomly in the Umbra. While evidence can be found of its passing, actually finding the realm can be a challenge that only the most spirit-savvy would want to undertake.

Rumors claim that Charybdis grows in the Final Days, and that eventually it will swallow everything in existence as the Wyld fights to bring about the balance that has been lost. Wyldlings will not speak of Charybdis, though they most assuredly know of it and its ultimate purpose in the plans of the Wyld.

The Nasty Truth

Umbral storms caused by Weaver/Wyld clashes tend to be at their worst in places where the two opposing energies are the strongest. The Old West was a fine example, as the vast expanses of Wyld energy came into contest with the Weaver-spirits that rode the rails westward. Now as the demands of a bigger, better, faster society drives Weaver expansion to every corner of the globe, Wyldlings dig in their collective heels to try to staunch the flow of calcification. Fierce spirit contests arise, Umbral storms are born, and the Broken Lands are the result.

Umbral storms affect the area on the physical side of the Gauntlet, as well as ravage the battleground in the Umbra. In the physical world, people become more temperamental. A peaceful demonstration might inexplicably turn into a riot, road rage becomes more prevalent, and suicide hotlines ring off the hook. Also, the rapid spread of illness can strike the area, creating an epidemic. The Storms are so fierce in the Umbra that moon bridges can shatter, well known Glades can be demolished, and the Gauntlet becomes strained.

If the battle reaches a fevered pitch, it can actually shred the Gauntlet to an effective level of 1. When that occurs, the area becomes a Broken Land, at least until Weaver-spirits can take control and repair the Gauntlet. Depending on the ferocity of the storm and the devastation it's wreaked among the local Weaver-spirits, this can take a disturbing amount of time.

Umbral storms can vary in length and size, though they tend to be very localized. Some are not unlike enduring an actual physical storm; others are so ferocious that they inflict damage on anything caught in their path. Some Uktena theorize that Umbral storms are particularly damaging to humans in the spirit world, such as spirit-walking mages — perhaps that's why the sorcerers have been seen much less frequently on the other side of the Gauntlet in recent years.



The Broken Lands

A fairly new development in the Umbra, the Broken Lands reflect the onslaught of the Weaver's influence on what used to be Wyld controlled territories. They are quite rare, although certain catastrophes or other Umbral upheavals can increase their frequency, much as the ravages of the Storm Umbra did during the time of the American West. Broken Lands are places where the Gauntlet has worn down to such an extent that the spirit and physical worlds are one. While this might sound like the paradise that the Garou would hope for, it is far from pleasant. Broken Lands are confusing, scary places. There are inherently unnatural. Taxicabs share the same streets as tarnished knights on horseback. A hallway that seems to lead left really goes to the right. Creatures that should be terrifying to mundanes, such as Banes or Pattern Spiders are regarded with as much attention as a stray dog would be. There is no rhyme or reason in such places. The inhabitants not only don't see the strangeness, but they simply don't care. It's as if the world has always been that way.

Broken Lands are disturbing, and unsettling. As with other Wyld Realms, the passing of time is never a constant. Witnessing such a place can cause a Garou to have a crisis of faith. If the Broken Lands are an accurate representation of what it would be like for the Gauntlet to be brought down, who would want to live in a world such as that?

Broken Lands are the result of Umbral storms, themselves caused by Weaver and Wyld-spirits warring for dominance. These battles become so fierce that it actually tears holes in the Gauntlet, thus rejoining the spirit and static worlds. Broken Lands reside on both sides of the Gauntlet, as they intermittently switch from one side to the other and back again. There is nothing wondrous about Broken Lands. Most Garou feel disturbed, disheartened, and frightened at what a world such as that would be like.

Pocket Realms

In the various levels of the Umbra, there are many areas of Wyld energy that have coalesced into pools of chaos. These sub-realms are often small, but very

intense wells of Wyld energy. The areas surrounding such places are frequently filled with Wyld-spirits who seem to feed off of the maelstroms.

Many of these sub-realms act as gateways to the larger Wyld-influenced areas, although using one as a method of travel is a roll of the dice. There's no certainty where a Garou might end up — none whatsoever. Pocket Realms also have a tendency to disappear and reappear in different locations. This is because they form, dissolve, and reform in different areas of the Umbra. Their formations are completely random, and if they were to form in the middle of another Realm, the results would be devastating as they warped and absorbed whatever they came in contact with.

Pocket Realms can be found anywhere in the Umbra, and they can lead to anywhere in the Tellurian. They can be reflections of past events, or potential futures. Some Pocket Realms revolve around a certain emotion or mood. While one particular Pocket Realm might embody the horrific aftermath of a violent battle, the next may be the gentle mirror of peaceful utopia.

Pocket Realms have various spiritual inhabitants, ranging from the mundane to the outrageous. These miniature realms manifest suddenly, and disappear as quickly as they become established. Storytellers should feel free to use Pocket Realms not only as gateways to larger, more established Realms, but also as echoes of legends, dreams, and life experiences.

Fallen Realms

With the ever-increasing friction between the members of the Triat, the Wyld has lost grounds that were once firmly in its domain. Such places are strange and haunting, not unlike an ancient cemetery. The most commonly known places are petrified forests. In days long past, these places were virtual havens for Wyld-attuned beings. Songs tell of myriad once-mystical and wondrous places from which Wyld influences have long since been banished. The rise of the Gauntlet left such places prone, and the Weaver's minions were quick to capitalize on the undefended land. Perhaps as a reminder of its superiority in the physical world, the Weaver turned all living things to stone. Today, the calcified trees stand as gravestones and silent testaments to what Wyld domains on the face of Gaia were like. Garou do not visit such sites regularly, as they are a disturbing reminder of what has been lost in the Modern Age.

Such places can be found throughout the Tellurian. They range from barren lands made infertile by the

Wyrms, to empty vacuums that sit devoid of any structure in the Umbra. Remnants of spirit battles can sometimes be found at such sites. While it can be difficult to reconstruct what might have happened, even the most novice investigator can gather that the conflicts were fierce, and that by the time a fallen realm had been plundered, there were no Wyldlings left to tell their respective tales.

Fallen realms have become more prevalent in recent days. What isn't known is the exact number of Wyld realms that have fallen under attack. Such a count would be difficult due to the fluctuation of the locations of Wyld controlled areas. Fallen realms generally repel most creatures due to the atrocities that have occurred in them. They are dark, unnerving remnants of what happens when forces of the Triat clash.

What the Wyld "Wants"

There were no men in sight as the pack gathered under the full light of Luna's face. A single wolf sang to the night as the others sat in a circle around him. The howls were low and sad as he shared the tale of his people with a young wolf who had just joined the pack.

"Our enemies prey upon even the mightiest hunter among us. We feel the end even more severely than any of the others who share our blood."

The wolf paused in his howls as he eyed those in his pack. He continued, but his song took on an angry tone, "The Weaver beings build and build, killing the Mother as surely as the corruption of the Wyrms seeks to do. Crushed between the two, the Wyld suffocates as the others strangle him and the Mother in their territorial contest. Why do they hurt that which is not theirs to injure? Why do they hunt that which is not theirs to kill? These are questions that our more human brothers would try to answer. But I am not one of those creatures, and neither are you, pup. Because of their human sensibilities, our Garou brothers have betrayed themselves to the forces that created them. They have forgotten the ways of old when everything was sacred and all followed the cycle of the seasons."

The pup lowered his head in submission, and for a moment the forest was silent. The old wolf sat straight and growled in a quiet, dangerous tone, "But you may ask yourself this: Is the rage that wells in your heart, as you see what has become of us, yours? Is it that of Mother Gaia crying at what has come to pass? Or, is it the Wyld screaming out in fury as those who should be Her allies enslave, degrade, and destroy Her? Whose anger is it? It is of no matter anymore. I say let it come, let it give us strength

that our brothers do not possess. Let it see us through this endless winter."

The complete lack of symmetry in the Triat has driven the Wyld to the edge. The rage of the Wyld at the actions of its siblings is unparalleled. The Wyld needs to be healthy and act freely in accordance with what it knows. As its creative abilities become stymied, it strains against circumstance to return the Tellurian to what it once was. Balance matters to the Wyld, because it requires balance to survive. In the end analysis, survival is all that matters. The Wyld would without remorse absorb and reform every being on the face of Gaia to bring about equilibrium. The signs are clear to those who know how and where to look; the final days are here. But while the Garou Nation assumes that the Wurm will consume, degrade, and destroy Gaia, or that the Weaver will crystallize everything in a calcified web of stagnation, they ignore the warning signs of the enraged Wyld.

Plagues, earthquakes, hurricanes, and other natural disasters are the warning shots of the Wyld across its siblings' bow. Nevertheless, the Weaver and the Wurm continue their age-old battle, heedless of the consequences.

The Wyld will be the great equalizer, one way or another.

What does this mean for Gaia? The Wyld has no desire to destroy Gaia. The fact is that the Wyld depends on Gaia's spirituality to provide the vital spark of true, meaningful life, which in turn causes the Wyld to thrive. However, in its anger, the Wyld would sooner absorb and recreate a new environment where it is free to continue its efforts as a creator unhindered.

Few Garou understand where the true peril that everything faces comes from. Elders aren't inclined to listen to tales of the End coming about as the actions of anything other than Wurm-the-Destroyer or Weaver-the-Mad. The state of affairs on Gaia is merely symptomatic of what is occurring in the Umbra amongst the members of the Triat. In spite of the Gauntlet, the Weaver and



the Wyrms play a dangerous game of one-upmanship on the physical plane while trying to further their objectives. As the Wyld is more-or-less trapped in the Umbra, its effects in the physical world are limited, so it builds its strength in the spirit realms.

On occasion, the Wyld does go on an all-out offensive against the Weaver, and it's not unlike a fire hose being pointed at a spider web. However, because of its very nature, it is hard for the Wyld to remain focused in its tasks. It is also important to understand that if the Wyld 'wins' its eternal struggle against the Weaver that even the most agnostic or atheist person would consider the resultant reality to be some sort of Hell on Earth.

The true loss in the contest for control has been the Wyrms. Theoretically, the Wyld understands that without the Wyrms, there can never be peace with the Weaver. If there is no peace with the Weaver, then there can never be balance. If there is no balance, the Wyld will perish.

It is not ready to roll over and die.

As things currently stand, the Umbra is the Wyld's battleground. The Wyld uses guerilla-like

tactics against its siblings, striking unexpectedly, with varying degrees of success. Still, the Wyld fights to gain footholds in the physical world. As the Apocalypse draws near, the battle for balance grows more violent, encompassing more ground, and becoming more dangerous for those caught in the crossfire.

Few shapeshifters truly grasp the cosmic war that brews in the Umbra. Mortal beings could only begin to guess at the rhyme and reason behind the power plays of the Triat. While some philosophers might point to jealousy, greed, or lust for ultimate power as the cause of strife, the inner workings of the Triat are far beyond a werebeast's understanding. While the Garou work to strengthen the Wyld's presence in the physical world, the Wyld sees their alliance as incidental. The Wyld would not mourn the loss of a million Garou, anymore than a person mourns the loss of a million skin cells when they scratch their arm. The servitude of any given shapeshifter is convenient, but certainly not necessary in the end analysis. This can put those who venerate the Wyld into precarious, and sometimes dangerous positions as they fight not only the "enemy", but struggle to avoid friendly fire as well.



Chapter Two: The Great Wyld World

The Wyld is not one to play favorites among the Garou Nation; some Fera or tribes may venerate the Wyld on a more personal and spiritual level than others do, but the Wyld takes no notice. There is no "chosen tribe" for the Wyld, nor is there a specific "chosen shifter." While the minority of Gaia's inhabitants, or a very select few, may be well adapted to thrive and survive within the torrential currents and squalls of chaos, the masses never are and never will be. This truism applies to the Garou Nation and the rest of the Fera as well. There may be a few individuals among the menagerie of the Changing Breeds who can peacefully coexist with the truly Wyld and, in some cases, even form symbiotic relationships with the unknown and incomprehensible spirits and totems of the Wyld. Even so, the majority of the Changing Breeds simply knows and accepts that it is wise to remain out from under the feet of gods.

Black Furies

"The Wyld is dying. Man is killing her."

— all-too-common Black Fury complaint

As he strode the ancient streets of Athens, he ignored the throngs of people teeming around him. He did not stop to appreciate the monuments or the relics of a long-dead

society. He came seeking power, and he wasn't going to leave without it. He was confident that his soon-to-be mentor would be unwilling to share, but that didn't matter. He had a way of acquiring information from even the most uncooperative of subjects.

A small cobblestone street led him to his destination. He paused outside of the small home that he was fairly certain would become either a cache of knowledge for himself, or a torture chamber for its inhabitant. He smiled briefly at the thought as he skipped up the stairs and cheerfully knocked on the door. An elderly woman answered the door, and gave him a friendly grin.

"Come in," the woman beamed through laugh-wrinkled eyes as she pulled the door farther open. "I have been waiting for you." She stepped aside, allowing him entry to her home. He frowned at her statement, but stepped through over the threshold. He was greeted by the scent of fresh moussaka cooling on the kitchen counter.

The old woman shut the door firmly behind him, looked briefly out the window onto the street below, then drew the shade. The woman carried on casually as she pulled two plates from her cupboard to serve her newfound guest. He watched her with the uncertainty of a seasoned warrior who never underestimated his foe, waiting for the weapon to be drawn. When no weapon appeared short of a serving ladle,

he wondered if he had somehow mistakenly come to the wrong place.

"You look famished," she commented, carefully filling his plate. "Why don't you have a seat, and stay awhile." Her smile was almost grandmotherly.

No, he thought to himself. She is definitely Garou.

"I am, in fact, hungry," he replied in cold dismissal. "But I don't want any of your food." He knocked the plate out of her hand, sending it tumbling to the floor.

The woman shook her head, smiling in an almost condescending disappointment. "So angry..." she muttered. "Alright, sweetheart. Have a seat, and tell me why you came here."

Her behavior was not at all what he had expected, and he didn't like surprises. Gutting her where she stood briefly played through his mind, but then he remembered that he needed the information he had come for, and opted for a post-conversational kill.

"I want you to tell me about—"

"No, you don't," the woman interrupted as soon as the words had left his mouth. "Because you simply can't understand. What you want is beyond your grasp." She shook her head sympathetically and shrugged her shoulders.

"You don't even know what I want! How...?" His voice raised as his blood began to boil. His fingers dug into the edge of the table, which splintered in his hands like balsa. She gave him what almost appeared to be a friendly admonishment, but for some reason it stopped him in his tracks. "Sit down, Cevin. Let's talk about this," she gestured to a chair.

How does she know me? he wondered. Once again, he gave brief consideration to the image of turning her into a bloodstain on the floor, but decided to humor her for a bit, if for nothing else but to make the denouement of the evening all the more sweet. There was nothing that this old bitch, even if she was a full-blooded Garou, could do to harm him. He turned a chair around backward and sat across from her and smiled the smile of a fox in a hen house.

"So, you have come seeking answers about the Great Mother," she started.

"I don't need to know anything about Gaia," he snarled in return, as if the very mention of the name begat an acrid taste in his mouth.

"I am not talking about Her. You're very impatient, Mr. Frigg." Another warm smile punctuated her little revelation, as if she were praising a toddler.

Cevin chuckled in disgust. Well, isn't she a keeper. She knows my whole name.

"Why do you think that you are fit to understand what you have come seeking?" She asked.

"I want..." he paused, clenched his teeth, and continued. "No, I need to know. You will tell me, old woman.

This is not some Rite of Passage that you're overseeing. The speed and clarity of your forthcoming with the knowledge I require will be directly inverse to the amount of pain I will inflict on your addled, withered body if you try me any further." Cevin could feel his blood pressure rise. He didn't like to be toyed with. He was well aware of the pride and courage that the Furies would display even in the face of death or violation, but that didn't make her behavior any more acceptable. He refused to be the plaything of an old woman, Black Fury, Black Spiral or whatever.

She laughed, and Cevin burned at the condescension he heard in her laugh. It was as if she fancied herself an adult laughing at the folly of a child.

"I'll tell you then, but don't throw a fit when you don't understand."

"Are you calling me stupid?" he growled. His eyes burned with an almost toxic green luster beneath his darkening brow.

"Not at all, Cevin. It's more like this; men are too complicated. You have to think things through and make rational, logical decisions." She paused. "Hmm. For example: What is important in life, Cevin? Food and drink? Women? Do the Dancers still have a problem with women making them nervous?" The woman winked and smiled briefly. "Is it power you want, Cevin, or control? Does a man truly understand love? No! In his logic and reason he claims to, but what creature that really feels it would do what has been done to our Mother."

"You diseased old crone." Cevin's baritone growl hummed with a near-insane thrumming. "I am not interested in your speeches about romance, or your personal philosophies regarding misogyny."


"I know that you say that, but we both know that isn't true, is it?"

Cevin laughed, meaning for it to sound mocking, but instead his laugh had an almost pathetic ring in his ears. "You speak of love? That fancy is long gone to me, crone. There is no right or wrong when your mother glares back at you in hatred of what you've become through her allowance and misgivings. There is only rage. There is no good or evil, there is only survival." He paused to see if he was having an impact, "In the end, there is no salvation. There is only the illusion of salvation. That is all that matters. Love is a punchline to a wretched joke."

"Let me ask you this, pup: Have you ever birthed? Have you ever carried a child in your womb, worried and prayed for that child every day and night until you finally held it in your arms?"

His voice was a near shout. "Are you blind as well as stupid, old woman?"

"Have you ever cried tears of pain and joy at the same time?"



Cevin bared his teeth. "I don't cry. And my patience is running out. You...."
"Do you feel the need to comfort a crying child, or do you shy away in discomfort?"
"Children find me to be frightening, as if I meant them harm. Can you imagine?" He half wondered if this demented creature would catch his sarcastic tone. She certainly wasn't living up to her reputation for wisdom.

"As I should?" She offered him another smile. "Men react, Cevin. Women respond."

Cevin sighed through his teeth. One last chance, he mused to himself. I'll humor you for just one more breath before your dining room becomes my abattoir. I have no idea why I'm being so generous; it's not even as if you're sharp enough to appreciate it.

His lip curled. "What's the difference, old woman? If someone strikes at you, are you not to return the blow? Is not vengeance as sweet as victory? How should I know what it is like to birth? Why should I care?"

His voice grew cold. "I would have enjoyed your riddling games if they'd been more incisive, but you shouldn't try to play New Moon. You're no good at it. Now we play my game. You will teach me to speak the tongue of the Wyldlings so that I might nurture my Hive back from the chaos that threatens its sanctity. Time

is of the essence in this matter, and yours is running out like quicksilver. I give you my word — and I do value my word, no matter what you may think of me — that you will be spared any unnecessary amount of pain afterwards."

"It's not in a man's nature to nurture. It's in a man's way to give... or to take, but never nurture."

Cevin stood over her, and looked her in the eye. His vision had turned red. "Dammit, I said we're done with riddles! Tell me what I want to know. I must have access to the power of your legends, Fury. I must have the means to fight that which threatens my Hive and while I won't kill you to get it, I swear by

Erebus that I'll make you beg me to if you refuse to give me the weapons to fight the Wyld." The last word was more growl than anything else.

"You take things," she persisted, "and you give things, but do you ever nurture things?"

Cevin hurled his head back and stared blankly at the ceiling. "This is by far and away the most fucked up conversation I have ever... You've seen this before, Half Moon. You've watched the Wyld consume with indifference. I've heard the songs. I've followed the myths of Miria. I know you know how to fight this. TELL ME."

"Have you ever made anything grow?"

"Grow? No! That is not what I do. The end is all that matters."

She shook her head sadly. "You wish to understand a power that you are not prepared to comprehend. You can't even begin to understand the miracle of creation, when the only thing in your field of vision is death."

For some reason, Cevin felt her words twist inside of him. He sensed a long forgotten emotion try to struggle to the surface, a muffled scream inside himself briefly echoed through his soul... and then vanished.

"Cevin, we're not getting anywhere with this. The more angry you become, the less of your wits you have about you. You need to leave now." She rose from her chair and carefully guided him to the door. "We're done talking, and all the talking in the world couldn't hope to change your heart."

Cevin stood slowly, as if lifted from his seat and pushed his chair under the table, hanging his head in obedience. "I... I should... kill you before I leave," he mumbled without meeting her gaze as she opened the door for him.

"I know you think you should, Cevin, but I'm not going to let you kill me today. Today, you're going to think about what I said, and tomorrow, perhaps, you'll be a little wiser for it. Regardless, you're going to leave Athens tonight and never, ever return here. Do you understand?"

Cevin walked from the house slowly, wrapped in a hazy buzzing that he couldn't quite pin down. He felt as if he was suddenly lost, or that he had forgotten his wallet. As he walked away from the quaint Athens townhouse with the smiling, old woman in the doorway, he somehow felt through his dreamlike fog that his actions did not quite match his desire. Tomorrow would bring a new sunrise over the Mediterranean, and Cevin Frigg would wake from nightmare-laden slumber and blame jet lag for his complete and total inability to remember exactly why he had come to Athens, and would also fear ever returning for that which he failed to obtain.

When a Garou visualizes a "defender of the Wyld," almost immediately songs and stories regarding the heroism and courage of the Black Fury tribe enter her mind. Many (particularly the Furies themselves) believe that no being understands and comprehends the

intimate relationship between an individual and the cycle of life and death better or more personally than a female. If this is in fact the case, the Black Furies are an excellent example to prove the point as fact.

On a societal level, the Furies have founded an entire belief system based on uncompromising respect for and service to the Wyld. The Wyld completes the trinity of the powerful female forces they recognize — only Luna and Gaia are more prominent in the tribe's faith. The Black Furies seem to have a very deep understanding of the Wyld's relationship to Gaia and what the Wyld does regarding Gaia's continued survival. They seem to accept that Gaia is the sum of many, many parts that work together in various cycles of harmony and symbiosis, and that the Wyld is the force that propels these cycles to continually spin on the axis of the universe.

For millennia, the Black Furies have striven to take charge of the rare caerns devoted to the Wyld itself. In modern days, the Furies also possess, defend and maintain the greatest — quite possibly the only — Wyld caern active in the physical world: the island of Miria in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey. Quite possibly the tribe's most sacred place in all the world, Miria is held under strict rule and tight guard by the Sept of the Bygone Visions and their Totem, Themis the Dream-Weaver. While only Black Furies are permitted to reside within the caern, females of the Garou Nation (with the exception of Shadow Lords and Get of Fenris) are allowed to visit the caern occasionally. Access to the caern is virtually impossible at best and suicidal at worst via sea or air, so moon bridge travel is the most practical means for anyone that is welcomed by the Sept of Bygone Visions to actually get to the island. Entrance onto Miria is granted only through the Sept's permission or invitation, and uninvited guests that have attempted trespass through Hecate's Gate on the island have found themselves trapped in the nightmarish, limbo Totem Realm of Themis, who guards the Moon Bridge entrance.

Red Talons

"Wilderness is not the same as chaos."

— Crookpaw, Red Talon sage

The Red Talons, by sheer nature of who and what they are, not only within the crisscrossing of Gaia's ecosystems, but within the Garou Nation as well, have what might be considered a unique relationship with the Wyld and its associated influences on the Tellurian. For the Talons, the Wyld is release. It is a constant reminder of a time when wolves ruled the forest and men knew better than to stray too far from the warm, soft places where they reside within the Weaver's webbing. The world was strong and healthy back in the

Originally presented in *Caerns: Places of Power*:

Sept of the Bygone Visions

Caern: The island of Miria

Level: 4

Gauntlet: 3

Type: Wyld

Tribal Structure: Only Black Furies are allowed to join the caern.

Totems: Themis, the Dream-Weaver

The Caern of Miria is small in numbers, with only five permanent members (powerful Furies of each auspice) and an additional five to ten rotating guards. The sept leader is Iona Kinslayer, an aged but still strong Galliard who earned her stripes in the Second World War. The lupus Warder is the Philodox Kyra Firefoot; the sept's ambassador is a charming Ahroun named Kelonoke Wildhair. The sept's resident Theurge is actually a metis male, Teiresias, whose health is beginning to fail; tribal rumor has it that Sister Judith Paws-of-Light, the renowned healer and warrior, may be called on to replace him when he can no longer carry out his duties. The sept's Ragabash is rarely there, and there's some dispute over who exactly it serves that role — the most popular theory is that Julisha of the Thousand Masks calls Miria her home when she's between assassinations.

days that the Wyld was in full vigor — hence, to the typical Talon mindset, strengthening the Wyld is a direct way to help Gaia regain her health once more.

Many Theurges within the Garou Nation support a theory that states that as the Black Spiral Dancers have fallen heart, body and soul to the Wyrms of corruption and destruction, the Red Talons too serve a different master in the modern nights: the Wyld. Some even speculate that the Talons have, over the centuries, become "Wyld-tainted" to some degree or another. The Red Talons, however, do not apologize for what they are or for what they have become in response to the myriad changes they feel they have been forced to endure since the end of the Impergium.

It should also be noted that not many Red Talons who have heard the theory of their "fall" to the Wyld do much more than snort or chuckle at the notion. Whether the theories are true or not, the Red Talons maintain a healthy respect for the Wyld for the most part as a tribe and aren't commenting too much on the speculations of their brothers or sisters.

The Voice of the Wolf

"Men are too complicated. They must think things through, they confuse themselves with things that do not matter. What matters? Food in your belly? A strong bitch with whom to mate? What matters is the cold winter that you can feel settle in your bones as the leaves turn.

"The men do not feel it. They cannot. They are deaf to that which calls to them. They do not understand that which is natural to us, to a wolf. They are blind, and crippled.

"Who then, is the lord of the land? The sheep-man that watches over the heads of his livestock counting them — one... two... three... — the numbers of the Weaver pollute his mind. The sheep-man only covets that which he has stolen and now guards.

"Is the lord of the land the wolf who stalks the night in search of the warm, steamy red water that tickles the snout as it bubbles and pulses from the torn flesh of a righteous kill? No. The lord of the land is the hunger of the land. It makes the sheep-man defensive of his flock and it drives the wolf in the forest to spill the blood of that which it can overpower.

"The lord of the land is the hunger of the Wyld. He is the appetite of Gaia.

"We are but servants of this hunger. To deny it is to deny being a wolf. To deny the hunger of Gaia is to challenge the alpha of the universe. Gaia's appetite must be sated. The hunger of the land, the Wyld, must be fed. If it is not, then Gaia will surely starve to death and whither away. We love the Mother, and Her death brings the death of us all.

"Does a man understand love? No! In his logic and reason, he claims to, but what creature that truly feels love would do what man has done to our Mother? Does a man know respect? Of course not, otherwise the healthy would survive, and the diseased would be culled. Does a man understand honor? There is no honor in weakness.

"Men... even our Garou brothers and sisters and packmates... speak of right and wrong, of good and evil. There is no right or wrong when your belly growls at you in hatred. There is no good or evil in the kill. There is only survival. Survival and hunger. Evil and goodness, right and wrong... these are the words of men, words that the Weaver bitch taught to her offspring. These are words her offspring say to themselves at night over folded hands in the hopes that they will sleep more deeply and not be jostled by the cry of that which lies beyond the safety of her webs.

"We sleep at night with full bellies and clear consciences by refusing to deny the hunger of the Wyld."

— Sings-to-Smoke, Red Talon Galliard

Black Spiral Dancers

The fallen tribe is anathema to the Wyld. Where the Wyld represents hope and possibility, the Black Spiral Dancers champion despair and destruction of all things. There is, quite possibly, no greater enemy to the Wyld in the realm of the physical than that which is represented by the tribe of the Wyrms. While the Weaver seeks to subdue and control that which is of the Wyld, to regulate it in form and fashion, the Black Spiral Dancers and the minions under the command of the Wyrms seek only to destroy it.

Many Black Spirals argue that without the Wyld's influence on the Tellurian, the Weaver would have nothing with which to weave the Pattern Web where the Wyrms have been imprisoned. The tighter the Weaver spins her web, the more damage she does to the Wyrms and the more dense its bonds within her web become. Whether this ultimately proves to be philosophical dogma or irrefutable, cosmological fact, the Black Spiral Dancers are, for the most part, united by a singular belief: the Wyld must be silenced in order for the Wyrms to prevail. And since the Wyrms' triumph is the only way for this world to be remade into something fresh, the Wyld's creations *must* be undone.

It should come as no surprise, then, that many of the Thresholds that have manifested themselves in the past millennium have done so in the aspect of Abscesses that use Black Spiral Hives as their foundations. For the Black Spirals, this is not only a spiritually expensive phenomenon, but ironically enough, a confusing one. A Black Spiral Hive is, quite possibly, more suitable for a Wyld Abscess than a Gaian caern in that chaos and lawlessness are everyday fare. The Wyld's apparent response to the Black Spiral Dancers is simple: it seems to use the fallen ones' tactics against them. While the Wyld can be thunderous, direct and unstoppable, it can also be subtle and silent. "Corruption from within" is a tactic that, while accustomed to using, the Black Spirals find themselves hard pressed to defend against. When the pitmasters of a Hive finally realize that the Wyld has taken hold of it and is seeking to assimilate its energy for its own needs, it is normally far too late for anything short of the complete destruction of the Hive to do any sort of good.

Only the strongest and most unified Hives stand a chance against a Wyld Abscess. The majority of Hives that come under direct assault from the Wyld do not survive; totem spirits are dispelled via massive Wyldling assault. Banes are drained of their Essence, Black Spirals of their Gnosis, and the Wyld's need for survival becomes a most chilling vendetta against those who would elate in its complete destruction. While

this might seem a glorious victory for the Wyld, it is a Pyrrhic one at best. Having been ousted from their homes, the Black Spiral Dancers normally seek to befoul and stain new lands for their uses, or worse still, Gaian caerns to corrupt for their own ends.

The results are a vicious cycle that does little more than fuel the bonfires of Apocalypse, bringing the Garou Nation closer and closer to the brink of total annihilation.

The Other Tribes

It's virtually futile to try to generalize how the other tribes view the Wyld within their tribal societies (as opposed to the general Garou beliefs and each werewolf's personal take on the philosophy). Once you get past the absolute basics of Garou belief (Gaia is good, the Wyrms is diseased, etc.), opinions start varying widely from sept to sept, even from pack to pack. Nonetheless, a few patterns are perceptible, no matter how faint.

The Bone Gnawers may live at the intersection of Weaver Avenue and Wyrms Boulevard, but that only intensifies their understanding that they *need* the Wyld. The surge of life and creativity the Wyld provides is part of what keeps the Bone Gnawers going despite the long odds they face. However, that doesn't mean the Gnawers are likely to kiss the Wyld's butt. They'll defend a Wyld pocket, particularly an urban one, with their lives, but don't ask them to perform any gussied-up rites of worship for it or anything.

The Children of Gaia basically follow the Garou Nation party line where the Wyld is concerned; they perceive it as important, and the only member of the Triad to still deserve their support, but it lacks Gaia's grace and is therefore a tenuous ally. The Fianna feel much the same way; although some Fianna like to draw links between the legendary fae folk and the Wyld, there's no particular evidence to convince the entire tribe to champion this correlation.

The Get of Fenris are not generally great Triadic philosophers. To their minds, one of the Triad has gone berserk, the other is the Enemy they were born to fight, and the third needs to be protected until the war's over — what more needs to be said? Fenrir tend to prefer associating exclusively with Gaian spirits; they simply can't trust any of the others, Wyldlings included. There's a war going on, and it's foolish to waste time on diplomacy with spirits that don't likely understand the concept.

On the other hand, the Glass Walkers are a little cool about the thought of defending the Wyld as it is. The average Walker hears members of other tribes talk about "strengthening the Wyld," and since those plans usually mean trimming back the Weaver in less than gentle ways, he gets a little nervous. The Glass Walkers

in general prefer to focus their efforts on understanding the Weaver so that they might reach her and heal her — and the more extremist pro-Wyld philosophies don't seem to take those ideas into account. As a result, although the tribe persistently counsels that the Wyld should be defended, they prefer to take a more restrained approach to the tactics involved.

Though the Shadow Lords may like a solid hierarchy with clear laws, they are remarkably pragmatic about working for the benefit of the Wyld or its children. Like the Get, they tend not to trust the Wyld's servants too far — but Shadow Lords are well used to working with people (or entities) they don't trust. The Silent Striders, along similar lines, are very good at seeing the big picture and recognizing the Wyld as something that must be protected. They carry news of endangered or newly discovered Wyld places just as they carry news of caerns or Wyrms attacks, usually to the people that can do the most with the news.

For their part, the Silver Fangs are the very picture of the Garou Nation's general attitude — sworn to defend the Wyld against its siblings' depredations, sometimes missing out on the differences between the Wyld and Gaia, usually acting out of duty rather than genuine love for the Wyld. They usually leave actual Wyld-related duties to those of other tribes, particularly Furies and Talons; the Fangs tend to feel that it's best for each to serve according to their talents.

As might be expected from their heavy interest in spirit lore, the Uktena have so many different philosophies and theories concerning the Wyld that they don't have much of a common opinion at all. Tribal opinions seem to range from modest pragmatism to outright fanaticism — legend holds that a number of Uktena have "fallen" to the Wyld, abandoning their tribal ties to serve their new master. The Wendigo, on the other hand, don't spend so much time singling out Wyld places to defend; the tribe's troubles with their lupine and human Kin take precedence.

Finally, the Stargazers support a philosophy of balance in all things. Their devoted opposition to the Weaver on all levels — even on the plane of thought itself — makes them vigorous defenders of the Wyld by default. The tribal elders have taken this philosophy with them to the Beast Courts, where they currently compare their findings with those of the hengeyokai. The final key to the problem of the Triat's imbalance, they say, may already have been found — it just remains to identify and unite the pieces.

The Fera

The moon shone down onto the dark expanse of Curzon Park through the haze of humidity that draped

Calcutta in a warm, damp, curry-scented fog on a nightly basis. Niha's heels made the sound of a glass bottle tapping on stone as she slowly made her way through the winding pathways of what the locals knew as "Rat Park." It was not at all a misnomer. Niha saw and heard several of the chittering creatures, some as large as small house cats, darting in and out of the bushes which lined the path before her as well in the trees which obscured the moonlight above her. This was only her second time inside the park proper. She'd asked Willard to meet her elsewhere in the future after he'd set their first meeting here; of course, he ignored her. Niha wasn't happy about that. The sounds created by the countless vermin of the park, coupled with the unmistakably human smells of the city which surrounded the park, set her nerves on edge and tended to disorient her senses. Even relying on her extrasensory birthrights, Curzon Park was difficult to contend with. Motion was all around her; at least a thousand rats of varying size and shape were surrounding her at all times and scurrying hither and yon throughout the underbrush and canopy of the park's grounds.

The Mont Blanc in her right hand felt warm and seemed to vibrate slightly as the canopy above her thickened, blotting out even more of the bright moonlight. He's here, and he's very close, she thought to herself as she approached the center of the park where an ancient fountain gurgled and spat. No less than two dozen rats swam and wrestled in the fountain's reservoir, darting in and out of the smelly water like pigeons in a birdbath.

Willard sat on the opposite side of the fountain, facing her. She noted that even in the near total darkness of the park, broken only by sporadic reflections of moonlight in the fountain's water, he wore sunglasses. Niha stepped past the fountain and the bathing rats, clearing her throat softly before she spoke.

"Have you seen the sun lately?" The young woman's words rolled off her tongue in a virtually flawless English accent. She smoothed her skirt and crossed her legs, settling comfortably onto the bench next to Willard.

"Not since I was a child," replied the man sharing the bench with her. He folded the newspaper he'd been reading into quarters and set it on his lap in a crinkling square. "How are you, Niha? You look absolutely radiant. It's been far too long."

Niha shifted in her seat as she kicked softly at a rat that seemed to take an interest in the buckle of her heel. She felt the sensation of an army of crawlerlings shift through her belly as the handsome, rugged, virtually "John Wayne" American next to her smiled widely, his eyes rolling across her form slowly and deliberately through the black morass of his shades.

It took her all of three seconds to acknowledge that he had made the comment simply as a means to provoke her in some manner or another. She didn't have the time or the

inclination for chitchat, and even the articulation of a smile was something Niha found awkward. "Thank you, Mr. Willard," she responded with a small, coquettish smile and a mocking slow-motion bat of her eyes.

Willard smiled. "Oh, never mind them. The ornery ones'll try to snatch anything that's shiny. The ones that sniff at you from a distance though, they're the ones you want to watch. It's their way of checking you out, Niha. They want to know your deal. They can smell that something's... well... off."

Niha unzipped a sleek, black, eel-skin day-planner that she balanced in her lap with tiny yet elegantly elongated hands. "I believe that the first order of this meeting should be the settling of old business on your part, Mr. Willard? The final, agreed upon amount was something to the tune of..."

"Seven." Willard reached to his side, arching himself towards Niha to retrieve his own day planner. "Seven for third and fourth quarter. And I also brought the proposed expansion area of the initial acreage on CD for you. I really think you and your people should take a look at it."

Niha frowned. The expansion of the Nahadjipur Acreage to the west of Calcutta's suburbs had already encompassed two thirds of the Nahadjipur marshlands. Endron Chemicals International had sponsored the purchase of the marshlands through both hook and crook and the puppeteering of Rakthavira Industries.

The marshlands were home to some of the most numerous, stalwart and venomous species of insects and arachnids on earth and were becoming a testing ground for the "next generation" of genetic pesticides. These pesticides would benefit the endeavors of "safe agriculture" worldwide, and India's small sacrifice of the Nahadjipur Marshlands would bring billions of American and Eurodollars into the sub-continent's economy as a result. Niha, however, saw only loss in the equation. Her home was vanishing, thousands of gene-

based poisons had been unleashed on the marshlands, and she was running out of money. Benjamin Willard was an excellent businessman, an exceptional information broker, and a studied and experienced political lobbyist when he needed to be — but he was also incredibly expensive to retain. Niha's trade agreement of information for favors had long since caught up with the amount of effort and risk she was asking Mr. Willard to undertake on her behalf, and now she was in a deficit from the business side of things.

Willard pulled his sunglasses from over his eyes as Niha began scripting a check. "Niha, I'm honestly trying to do everything I can. The HAZMAT bill took center stage in Parliament, so a lot of the petroleum-based pesticides have stopped, but if your associates don't at least add an ounce or two of grapefruit juice into this and start taking an aggressive attitude towards their response to the development project...."

Niha snorted. "Please. Nahadjipur was consecrated in the name of the Goddess to the spider five thousand years before your ancestors had a word for "spider," Mr. Willard."

Niha's gaze became cold towards the man beside her, her tone followed. "It is my home."

"Easy, Niha. Hear me out. I'm not giving you a lecture; I'm trying to help you. We both know how important the marshlands are. I won't even pretend to downplay what's at stake here. We're not just talking about your home or another rainforest on the brink, here...."

"Are you questioning my ability to comprehend the issues that demand my involvement, Mr. Willard?"

"Not at all." Willard's face twitched slightly as he spoke. "The fact remains that you've done all you can do, Niha. Now... I just think it's time to do it my way."

"And that would be what? Burning the marshlands to the ground in order to kill the workers who are cutting it down with chainsaws?"

"Ooooh. Attitude." Willard's twitching became a dedicated sneer. "Did I mention you look absolutely delicious, Niha?" Willard shot Niha a sideways glance and a twitching smirk. Niha's eyes focused on the ground which seemed to slowly sway and chitter



as a result of the assembled multitude of rats before her, sitting at attention before her in the moonlit street of the breezy park, as though assembled for the Nutcracker Suite.

"I'm listening." Her voice had lost all inflection.

"Niha, you can't do this by yourself, and I can't do it all with money and the little politicking I have access too." Willard's face lost its twitch, and with it, the rats before him seemed to ease into a more relaxed demeanor. "You've always been a great business associate. I couldn't coordinate the information between here and Europe without you, and I don't want to lose you. Don't confuse the motives or means of the majority with those among the majority who are the exception to the rule, Niha. The preservation of the marshlands is as important to me as it is to you, if not more so. Why do you think I've been paying your bills for what seems the better part of the 21st century?"

Niha brushed a stray lock of her hair behind her ear and faced Willard. "What do you propose, Mr. Willard? We've done everything we can do short of wholesale slaughter. We've watched over fifty species of moth poisoned to extinction. We've watched three species of aphid mutate into... something else... whose milk is like acid to the ants who consume it. We can't..." Niha paused, taking a breath. "We can't keep up, Benjamin."

Willard placed his hand on hers. "I propose you make what peace you need to make with those you owe it to in order to let myself and my people onto the marshland unhindered."

Niha's face seemed to waver for a moment. Not that he had ever believed it possible, but Willard honestly thought she looked as if she were about to cry. "We move in quiet, we do what needs to be done by any and all means necessary all at once in one, loud, coincidental bang. There's a time and a place for subtlety and then there's a time and a place for boom-boom, Niha. You're stretched to the limits out there. Your subtlety has

mortified into construction workers coming back into Calcutta with stories of the spider goddess murdering their foremen." Willard chuckled as he lit a cigarette, breathing deeply and then exhaling with a smile.

"That's no good. It's only a matter of time before someone catches on. It's only a matter of time before the marshland starts to defend itself. That could be even messier and bring a bigger, nastier element into the drama. Leave the fighting to the fighters, Niha. We make sure there's no one left. No witnesses. No development. No equipment. Nothing but the marshlands and those who gave it to us as intact as is absolutely possible. Nothing else. Boom-boom, Niha."

Niha blinked. "I can't... the marshlands are our home. I cannot expect you to send people to die..."

"Hey," Willard interrupted. "Ain't a one of us that doesn't understand what it means to be one of us."

Ain't a one of us who don't know what it is that we're fighting for, Niha. Let's cut all the bullshit and call it what it is; the marshlands are the doormat of the Wyld. We get it just as well as you do, so don't you go worryin' about us. We might not look like a whole lot, but we've got fangs. 'Sides, we make awful martyrs."

"Mr. Willard... while I won't attempt to lie and tell you that your proposition isn't in some manner... relieving... I simply cannot afford to..."

"Nope. This one's on me in the spirit of friendship and diplomacy, sugarbuns. Something I don't get to practice very often in India. Here's the deal... you send some of yours to help mine watch over the park... keep the right ones in and the wrong ones out... and we'll call it even."

When all's said and done, what ends up happening in the marshland will



read in the papers as some sort of eco-terrorism gone wrong. Maybe it'll even catch the attention of some of the heavy-hitters back west or in Japan and we'll get some reinforcements. Regardless, even if we can't save the whole of the marshlands, we can salvage some of what's left. That's better than nothing."

This time Niha's smile, although brief, was sincere. "Then I believe that we have a deal of a sort, Mr. Willard." Niha reached over, extending a hand to the man beside her. Willard smiled, lowered his sunglasses over his eyes, slowly leaned forward and kissed Niha gently on the tip of her perfect nose.

"And I also get to kiss you on the nose." Willard's grin looked almost razored; his sunglasses reflected the full moon above them. He stood and walked away, leaving Niha alone on the bench in the depths of the park. The assembled horde of rats followed him silently and slowly into the depths of the park's streets. "You've got a week, Niha. Call me. If you need to find me again before then, you've got my pen."

Niha clutched the Mont Blanc in her hand and looked up at the moon, which seemed to have parted the Calcutta mist as well as the canopy of Curzon Park, sighed and smiled as she closed her eyes for a moment. "We make awful martyrs." She whispered the words to herself, opening her eyes to behold a lone rat, pink eyes glowing in the moonlight as it stared at her from a tree branch.

Niha stood and exited the park in the same direction she came in.

Ratkin

"We have preserved the true force of the Wyld, raw energy returning into the world. Whenever man grows too strong, we are the ones who must hamstring him to correct the balance, just as we did in the springtime of the world."

Once upon a time, the Ratkin were charged by Gaia to curtail and keep in careful balance the overall growth and prosperity of human civilization and influence throughout the world.

That was a long time ago, and the War of Rage changed all of that for the Ratkin forever.

Believing themselves forgotten at best and betrayed by Gaia at worst during the atrocities spawned by the War of Rage, the Ratkin have since turned their allegiances more towards the cleansing, galvanizing forces of the Wyld than those of Gaia. Although created by Gaia, the Ratkin possess, quite possibly, the most intimate link with the Wyld of any of the Changing Breeds. During the War of Rage, the majority of the Ratkin who were able to do so retreated to the spirit world and hid for their lives against the seemingly unstoppable rage of their murderous Garou cousins. Many Ratkin believe that due to this residence in the Umbra, they have developed a genetic predisposition for the universal force of chaos and change and are the chosen vessels of its energy.

If the Wyld has a "chosen people," as any Ratkin will tell you, it is the children of the Momma Rat.

The Ratkin believe that their Rage is actually the driving strength of the Wyld coursing through their being and that their actions are the will and desire of the manifestation of change. This being the case, many of the factions which exist within Ratkin society have adopted what might be considered extreme or even terrorist attitudes to further their causes. For many wererats, very little matters save for whatever will best suit the Wyld's survival where the physical world — and humanity in particular — is concerned.

The Ratkin are, by nature, Darwinists. They believe in the survival of the fittest in its purest form. Swarms regularly purge the weak and diseased and rat mothers devour the sick and weak of their newborn litters in an effort to ensure that the Swarm is as strong as it can possibly be based on the numbers that its living area affords it. Ratkin see the world of men as a direct affront to the survival of the Wyld. Humans as a whole currently exist in numbers far greater than the world on which they live can support. Many among the Ratkin seek to bring about the destruction of the civilization of man, and with it the webs of the Weaver and all of the machinations that limit the Wyld and retard its ability to manifest in the physical world.

Only through the downfall of mankind and the dismantling of all that which the Weaver has wrought with its stale sense of order and calculated predictability will the Wyld be able to restore that which was before. When mankind is fallen and the Weaver's order is in disarray, the Wyrms will grow weak, having lost its most potent agents in humanity's demise... and when that happens, the true War of Apocalypse will begin. The Ratkin are very confident in their ability to achieve victory against the Weaver and Wyrms for the Wyld, and they're very comfortable with the position they will hold in the war's aftermath as the champions of the Mother's World.

Given the fact that most Ratkin populations easily outnumber the Garou populations in any given urban environment and with the powerful ally of the Wyld standing behind them, organized, fanatical and disciplined in practice, the Ratkin are many ways the literal Army of the Wyld.

A more in-depth and detailed look at the wererats' particular philosophies concerning the Wyld and "what needs doing" can be found in the Changing Breed Book: Ratkin.

Ananasi

"Without Gaia, there is no home for Ananasi to return to."

While the Ratkin and Black Furies are more militant in their crusades for the continued survival of the

Wyld, for the Damhàn, violence is rarely the method of choice. The factions within the Ananasi dedicated to preservation of the Wyld assert that their actions elicit change in order to stave off the debilitating results of stagnation. Their spider-folk sisters refer to this spiritually specialized faction of Ananasi as *Kumoti*.

The *Kumoti*, like all Ananasi, lack Rage. They employ patience, consistency and attention to detail in place of anger. They also boast an overall awareness and understanding of the natural order of things, an order that is found even in the swirling madness of what appears to be absolute chaos. This approach has not only been successful, but also in many ways far more effective in its subtlety than the methods employed by their Ovid contemporaries.

While the *Kumoti* do not claim to elicit purely positive change, they are quick to point out that any change, even one that might have a negative effect over the long term, is preferable to the alternative. Even disruptive or destructive change, they say, is superior to the outright destruction offered by the Wyrms or the suffocating laws championed by the Weaver.

Evolution is, by far, the subtlest if not most powerful weapon available to the *Kumoti*. Through conscious effort on the part of the Ananasi, entire species of insects within an ecosystem can be altered in a relatively short period of time. The order and stasis exemplified by insects, even in the wilds of nature, is a portent of the Weaver and, therefore, a bane to the existence of the Wyld. By manipulating the basics of the food chain within a specified area, the *Kumoti* can force a species of insects to become more aggressive in regard to their hunting practices. Breaking from their scientifically accepted and catalogued habits and defying the very laws that the Weaver has set for the species, the Wyld achieves a victory.

In the places of the world where the Weaver's strands are thinner, the rural areas and farmlands of the world where humans insist on making their presence known, the *Kumoti*'s methods are minor in practice while remaining significant in their end result. Farmers find themselves overwrought with pestilence from locusts to boll weevils to mosquitoes as the *Kumoti* of the area cease hunting insects. Cattle grow ill and thin from loss of blood as the Ananasi feed from them instead. As an almost self-contained mini-Triat of their own, the *Kumoti* strive to maintain as much balance as is possible with the Wyld's best interests in mind. The patient *Kumoti* effectively protect and promote some of the most secure and powerful Thresholds in the entirety of Gaia.

A more in-depth and detailed look at the duties of the Wyld-dedicated *Kumoti* "auspice" can be found in the *Ananasi* sourcebook.

Can Someone "Fall" to the Wyld?

It's a valid question. After all, if shapeshifters can fall to the Wyrms (the most obvious example being the Black Spiral Dancers) or to the Weaver, it would make sense that a shapeshifter can become too unbalanced and tumble away from Gaia into the Wyld's embrace.

Though such a "fall" is possible, it's also rarer than one might expect. Simply put, the Wyld isn't what it used to be; it's much harder to stumble across a pocket of concentrated Wyld energy than it is to find a cesspool of Wyrms emanations or become snared in the Pattern Web. The closest thing to a group that's gone over to the Wyld is the Ratkin, and that took generations upon generations of Wyld-related activity. Since spirit possession is right out (Wyld-spirits don't care to possess sentient beings), that means that a "fall" to the Wyld is probably best left to the Storyteller's discretion. If it seems like it should happen to make the story better, it happens.

What effects would too much "Wyld-taint" have? For starters, the character would begin to give off a faint spirit-scent of the Wyld. This is detectable only with the appropriate Gift, but it's real and present.

Mental instability is also a very real possibility. Not to say that logic and reason are "of the Weaver," but if the Weaver is naming personified — the effort to understand, sort and codify the universe — then the Wyld by contrast must be something completely unlike naming. The Wyld resists attempts to catalog, dissect and label its creations; exposure to enough of that resistance in distilled spirit format could easily break down a person's ability to see the world through the lens shared by most rational beings.

One particularly attractive option might be to make the character subject to Rapture — a kind of Gnosis-frenzy that currently afflicts the Ratkin. In essence, whenever the character gains Gnosis or becomes involved in a *truly* freakish and supernatural happening, he must make a Gnosis roll as if testing for frenzy. (The difficulty is subject to the Storyteller's discretion.) If successful, the character becomes subject to a series of visions that may color his actions — for example, he might start hallucinating that spiders are crawling all over the cars in the street, and feel compelled to destroy the cars in order to frighten off the spiders. For more ideas on Rapture, check out the *Ratkin* sourcebook.

Thresholds: Bastions of the Wyld

threshold — *n* 1: the starting point of a new state or experience; 2: the smallest detectable sensation; 3: the space in a wall through which you enter or leave a room or building; the space that a door can close.

As has been said before, one doesn't have to go far at all to find evidence of the Wyld in the World of Darkness. But very rarely, one can find so much more. Although they are awfully rare, particularly in these modern times, Thresholds are the manifestations of pure Wyld energy and influence that ooze underneath the doorsills of the Gauntlet that lock it out of the physical world. An acreage of creation infused on both a cellular and spiritual level with the Wyld, a Threshold is either a portent of the pure fury of the Wyld, or a wheezing death rattle in the nights before Apocalypse.

Not unlike a rushing river, the Wyld's energy still endeavors to pour forth from Flux and take the path of least opposition that can be negotiated on its way through the Umbra and into the Realm. However, if the Wyld's emanations are the unstoppable force, then the Gauntlet is most certainly the immovable object. The Wyld cannot destroy the Gauntlet outright. The sheer force required to do so could very well spell destruction for everything that the Wyld has ever created, and in effect, would be the equivalent of committing suicide on the part of the Wyld. In order for the Wyld to manifest itself within an area of the physical world, it must wait for the opportunity. When a weak point is discovered in the Gauntlet, or if an area of low Gauntlet can be found where the Wyld can manifest easily, it does so quickly and quietly at first, waiting to establish a beach head. More often than not, these ejaculations of energy punch holes through weak points in the Gauntlet that separates the spiritual world from the physical. Once a foothold is gained, however, the Wyld's minions defend it with ferocity unparalleled even by Garou standards.

Thresholds and the Ciarou

Thresholds are an essentially "new" phenomenon in the grand scheme of things where the Changing Breeds are concerned. While there is a very good possibility that Thresholds have manifested throughout the ages, only the tightening and intricacy of the Weaver's Pattern Web have made them somewhat more obvious than they have been in the past, which isn't much at all. Not many werewolves are able to sing the songs or tell the tales of their encounters or experiences with Thresholds. Thresholds are rare occurrences to begin with and seldom manifest in areas

of even moderate traffic. When encountered by the Garou or other werebeasts, Thresholds radiate a sense of the beyond, of something alien to the world that they inhabit. Something not quite holy, but at the same time magnificent. Something much, much bigger and profound than just the ground on which they stand impresses a decidedly belittling feeling on most Garou... and that's no small feat.

The Wyld Made Manifest

All Thresholds possess Gnosis and most possess Rage, which may be assigned and regained as the Storyteller sees fit. In some cases, the Storyteller may even allot the Threshold the ability to frenzy as Garou. They aren't precisely intelligent as we might understand it—but they are certainly *aware*. Although most Thresholds possess Rage, they are not in any way adversely affected by silver weaponry used against them. A Threshold's Rage is a gift of the Wyld, not of Luna.

Additionally, the Storyteller also determines health levels afforded the Threshold—if health levels are indeed the best way to measure the anomaly's strength. Almost all Thresholds are essentially manifestations of the Wyld through a natural formation—a bit of land. The exceptions are dynamic anomalies, which tend to manifest as abnormal weather patterns or animals—but dynamic anomalies are quite rare by compare to stationary Thresholds, which are rare enough as is.

They vary in size, shape and ecology, but most Thresholds can withstand ungodly amounts of punishment. The destruction of a Threshold, while possible, is usually only achievable via the complete and utter defilement or destruction of the land in which it has manifested, i.e. toxic waste, drilling, strip mining, radioactive exposure or massive and unrelenting fire.

Threshold Creation

Thresholds form as a result of the Wyld fighting tooth and nail to do what it does: survive and place into motion the forces of primal creation and unknown possibility. To this end, Storytellers are afforded a vast and virtually limitless set of possibilities when dealing with the creation of Wyld Thresholds. Thresholds are places where anything can and normally does happen. There are no rules, no rhyme or reason to these places, and often the very laws of nature and science are violated by the immense spiritual footstep of the Wyld in the physical world. Due to the very nature of these places, Garou seldom allow humans anywhere near them if they can help it. To do so risks the possibility of provoking the spirits that inhabit the Threshold, which can lead to any combination of nastiness where humans and Garou are concerned.

Thresholds can be said to have sentience, but not on any level that's conceivable by a human being or even most shapeshifters for that matter. Some Garou claim to know the secrets to rituals and Gifts that allow for a better understanding of that which is Wyld. However, to actually understand what it is that the Wyld or those that serve the Wyld are thinking would require the ability to think on the same wavelength as that which is considered to be the manifestation of primal chaos and eternal possibility. The ability to do so might call one's sanity into question. As we've already discussed, in order for us to better relate that which is Wyld to our players, we must assign it at least the sentience necessary for our players to understand what we're doing when we introduce the Wyld into our games.

Threshold Powers

All Thresholds possess powers afforded them by the Wyld. The following is a list of suggested powers that can be assigned to Wyld Thresholds, but are by no means absolute in regards to the powers a Threshold can exercise in its defense, or in some cases, offense. It cannot be said enough: Thresholds are *excessively* rare. No two will ever manifest in the same manner or, in effect, be exactly alike. Storytellers should feel free to empower the Thresholds they create in any manner they see fit regardless of whether or not the following powers suit their needs. The following powers serve merely as a guideline. Remember; with the Wyld, *anything* is possible!

- **Animal Kinship** — The Threshold has the power to influence and communicate with animals on an instinctual and primal level, including lupus Garou. The animals view the Threshold as a territory that requires their protection and will aid in the preservation of the Threshold by any and all means available to them. This power is similar to the Philodox Gift: King of the Beasts.

- **Animal Summons** — (Cost: 1 Gnosis) The Threshold has the power to summon animals to itself via the manipulation of their primal natures. Animals who respond to this summons are inclined towards the defense and preservation of the Wyld, even if they would not be so on a normal basis.

- **Animate Self** — (Cost: 1 Willpower) This power allows a normally inanimate Threshold to become animated. Most do so only for brief periods of time, while others remain animate in an effort to keep mobile. An "ambulatory" Threshold becomes so in order to preserve itself from the onslaught of the Weaver and Wyrms, an assault that it might be unable to resist were it to remain stationary.

- **Aura of Discord** — The Threshold radiates a spooky, disconcerting air of chaos and uncertainty to all

within its presence, including shapeshifters. The Threshold makes a resisted Charisma + Empathy roll versus each affected individual's Willpower; victims who fail are unable to remain in the immediate area of the Threshold for longer than one scene. Most Thresholds that possess this ability tend to radiate this aura at all times.

- **Awaken Wyldling** — (Cost: 1 Gnosis) The Threshold has the power to awaken Wyldling Spirits. Its effects are the same as the Rite of Spirit Awakening with the exception that it is exclusive to Wyldlings and takes only one turn to use.

- **Bellow of the Wyld** — (Cost: 1 Gnosis) The Threshold has the power to summon Wyldlings of varying degrees of power to itself as a provision for its defense. Vortices, gorgons, or even a group of Wyld-leaning Garou or Fera may be summoned by the use of this power. The actual result of the summons is based solely on the Storyteller's discretion.

- **Command the Earth** — The Threshold can cause the very earth to move as it commands. This power may be used to form sinkholes, mudslides, tectonic tremors and other land-based phenomenon. The cost varies by the region affected; the broader the area, the higher the cost. A sudden earthquake would cost 2 Gnosis while a sinkhole would cost only 1 Gnosis.

- **Curse of Babel** — The Threshold can interrupt all ability for any and all living things to communicate with one another. Speech becomes incomprehensible gibberish, a wolf's howl becomes distorted and ineffectual. Confusion, disorientation, frustration and fear are the end result when communication breaks down for the creatures within the Threshold who possess the ability to do so.

- **Curse of Gaia** — (Cost: 4 Gnosis) The Threshold is capable of working a permanent change on a person or object, a change so dramatic it may be directly antithetical to the natural order. Although the change is not in itself malevolent, it may be considered a "curse" — the Wyld-energies that sustain the curse are so unstable that something will eventually go wrong. A Threshold with this power might bring a corpse back to a semblance of life — life as a gorgon, devoted to the Wyld's cause rather than any ties to the deceased's family or friends. Or it might offer perpetual youth and beauty — by transforming intruders into stone statues that never erode. This power is typically used to ward off intruders, or to turn them into servants. The exact nature of the curse is subject to the Storyteller's discretion.

- **Discorporate** — (Cost: 3 Gnosis) The Threshold may make a directed attack against a single target, unleashing raw bands of chaos onto a target's form, challenging the laws of nature (whether those laws be

physical or spiritual) which govern the target's existence. The resultant damage is three health levels of non-soakable aggravated damage per attack.

- **Enchanting Voice** — The Threshold is able to produce some sort of noise, whether a murmuring of the wind in branches or a chorus of animal calls, entrancing any that listen. If the Threshold succeeds at a Manipulation + Expression roll (difficulty of the listeners' Willpower), any listeners must stand entranced until the Threshold finishes its song or until they are roused violently. Some Thresholds have been known to use this power to defend themselves by hypnotizing intruders and holding them in thrall until they dehydrate or starve.

- **Gnosis Drain** — The Threshold may drain the Gnosis from any vessel to feed itself, including (but not limited to) caerns, Changing Breeds, talens and fetishes. In order to do so, the Threshold makes a resisted Gnosis roll against the target. If the Threshold succeeds, the target loses one Gnosis point per success for the rest of the scene. For every two points drained, the Threshold gains a temporary Willpower point, but it loses any points exceeding its maximum at the end of the scene.

- **Heart Sense** — (Cost: 1 Gnosis) The Threshold can look into the soul of an individual and see which member of the Triat, if any, holds the greatest sway over him. With the addition of a Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 7), the Threshold can also see and interpret the past lives of the individual (if any), any guilt, any dreams, desires, covetousness or despair and may recognize the true form of a being. Each success on the roll increases the amount of information garnered by the Threshold.

- **Lord of the Land** — The Threshold knows all that transpires of interest to it within the immediate area of itself. This could be as large as a three-mile radius around the Threshold or limited only to the Threshold proper.

- **Migration** — (Cost: Special) The Threshold may temporarily infuse its energy and spiritual essence into a living creature or creatures for the purposes of travel from one location to another, causing no adverse effects to the host(s) whatsoever. This power costs the Threshold one Willpower point to initiate, one point per day of travel, and one point to disembark from its host(s). Birds, insects, fish and migratory herbivores are the most common recipients of this power. In the event that the Threshold attempts to use Migration through beings of higher sentience (wolves, humans) a contested Willpower roll is made at a difficulty of 7. Failure means the Threshold remains in its current location and costs it one permanent point of Willpower.

- **Plant Animation** — The Threshold is able to animate the vegetation in its immediate surroundings to varying effects. Tree limbs might club invaders (with an effective Strength of 7), or vines and bushes might entangle attackers (with the rough rules effects of the Level Four Red Talon Gift: Quicksand).

- **Reshape Object** — As the Level Three homid Gift.

- **Silent Enigmas** — The Threshold communicates telepathically when necessary. Language is no barrier to communication. Due to the nature of Thresholds, however, its "conversation" may well be interpreted as nonsensical or a series of riddles. With the use of this power, the Threshold can understand all languages and can communicate, if it so chooses, with all living creatures.

- **Spirit Charms** — Some Thresholds have the ability to use certain spirit Charms, such as Possession, Break Reality, etc. The Threshold may or may not attract the spirits whose powers it possesses. Only Thresholds who possess Umbral Passage can access this power. The Threshold's Gnosis is used to power the Charms it possesses.

- **Spirit Drain** — As the Level Four Theurge Gift.

- **Strange Senses** — The Threshold possesses senses that cannot be described or in any way comprehended by humans or animals. These senses allow the Threshold to sense things which others cannot, such as emotions, invisible things, the Dark Umbra and the astral plane.

- **Summon Vortex** — The Threshold may summon Vortices from the Deep Umbra to itself in times of dire need. A single success is required on a Gnosis roll (difficulty 8) to bring one of these alien maelstroms — heralds of the Wyld's fury and unpredictability — screeching from the depths of that which lies beyond the Pattern Web to the defense of the Threshold which summoned it. A Threshold may summon a number of Vortices equal to its permanent Willpower rating.

- **Surreal Presence** — This power makes the Threshold difficult for most living things to tolerate for prolonged periods of time. A foreboding sense of unreality or strangeness permeates the air of the Threshold and everything within its boundaries. The Threshold's physical landscape changes daily, albeit subtly and those who find it once find it excessively difficult to find it again. Most living things, including shapeshifters, find the Threshold unnerving and, in many ways, unfriendly and wrong.

- **Umbral Passage** — The Threshold can roll Gnosis to pass the Gauntlet, just like a Garou stepping sideways. Since a Threshold is a manifestation of spiritual energy that asserts itself in the physical world, it does not actually shift that which it has possessed

into the Umbra with it. Rather, the entirety of the spiritual energy that is the Threshold retreats back into Flux from whence it came, leaving the land which it inhabited in exactly the same state it existed before its arrival. However in some special cases, or in times of dire emergency when the Threshold is in grave danger, it may simply break itself into a menagerie of Wyldling-like spirits in its retreat to the Umbra.

- **Wyldkin** — All Thresholds, regardless of the nature of their manifestation, possess the Wyldkin power due to the fact that they *are* a manifestation of the Wyld in the physical world. Thresholds are capable of creating elements and may possess a full arsenal of the charms available to Wyldling spirits, including but not limited too Break Reality. All Wyldling spirits regard the Threshold as sacred and hallowed ground and devote themselves to its protection even at grave cost to their personal well-being. Thresholds also have the ability to summon Lesser Wyldlings (Charisma + Expression, difficulty 7). One spirit is summoned per success, and the Threshold may command a number of Wyldlings equal to its Willpower rating.

Manifestation

So how does a Threshold come into being? What determines it? What's the catalyst? The trigger? Because of the infrequent manifestations of Thresholds as well as the inherent difficulty of studying them up close and first hand, there are varying theories.

Perhaps the catalyst and the triggers are massive destruction of creation and everything that holds a spark of the Wyld's energy within it spontaneously combusting under the fetid breath of the Wurm. The Wurm's assault on the creations of the Wyld is genocidal and cruel in virtually every aspect. When something dies because it has reached the limits of what it is physically capable of based on the form and function that the Weaver has assigned to it, we normally refer to its death as one of natural causes. When the Wurm gets a chokehold on a creation of the Wyld, however, the limitations applied to it by the Weaver be damned — it will die horribly, painfully and in less dignity than it deserves. Guaranteed. If the creation is corrupted and warped by the Wurm, then it becomes a shadow of its former self. The corrupted creation is a mockery of its own limitations and designs, the pawn of future destruction of that from whence it came, in service to the universal force of destruction. It makes perfect sense that the universal force of possibility and creation, the force of life itself, would have an incomprehensible survival instinct. That force would seek to replace that which it lost in order to perpetuate not only itself, but also the whole of that which it has created and the macrocosm that it fuels.

Perhaps the catalyst and the triggers are massive calcification and brutal subjugation at the busy hands of the Weaver. The Weaver's seemingly anal-retentive approach to enforcing an order of complete stasis upon the entirety of Gaia is coming to a head. The Weaver's influence is everywhere throughout creation. Humanity has subconsciously seen to it that they are never too far away from the Weaver that she cannot hear their cries when the defenders of Gaia and the unbridled forces of the Wyld come for them. With the lacerations it receives from the insane and entrapped Wurm to contend with on top of its constant efforts to hold off the increasingly complicated and intricate strands of the Pattern Web, the Wyld flails and swats at the Gauntlet from the Umbra in the realm known as Flux. When it can get through, it spouts like steam from a geyser in some cases, or like magma from a volcano in others. The intensity of the Wyld's focus when creating a Threshold in the physical world therefore would greatly depend on the overall amount of stress that the Wyld was *feeling* at any particular time, or how much *importance* the Wyld placed on the formation of a particular Threshold.

Perhaps the truth of the matter is that it's both of the aforementioned reasons and a number of reasons that neither Garou nor human can possibly comprehend in their completeness. One thing, however, is certain; as unfathomable as it might seem, the Wyld *can* be destroyed, and if this happens, so too will Gaia be destroyed. For as much as the Wyld is a force at work for and within Gaia, Gaia cannot live without the Wyld.

If the Wurm completely destroys the entirety of creation, there will be nothing but stillness. If the Wurm succeeds in destroying every last spark of Wyld energy within Gaia, there will be no more renewal, no more birth, no more possibility, no more hope.

No more anything.

The only word cold enough to describe what the result of the death of the Wyld would be is *oblivion*.

If the Weaver eliminates the Wyld's ability to manifest its energy within the Tellurian, then Gaia's physical side will surely die. Since the spirit cannot live without the body where Gaia is concerned, again, this spells the end of Gaia and the beginning of the Apocalypse.

The following examples are offered only as a guideline or rather, a fundamental outline you might wish to follow when creating Thresholds for your own World of Darkness:

Sour Burial Grounds

Threshold Type: Animate Land (Burial Grounds)

Physical: Not Applicable

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4 (Alien), Wits 5

Talents: None

Skills: Survival 7

Knowledges: Enigmas 7, Triatic Lore 3, Gaian Lore 3

Powers: Curse of Gaia (Animate the Dead), Command the Earth, Lord of the Land, Plant Animation, Spirit Sense, Strange Senses, Surreal Presence, Wyldkin Rage 8, Gnosis 10, Willpower 10

Image: The Sour Burial Grounds keeps to itself and seldom stirs from its sleep. It is, however, disturbed from time to time by both human and Garou intruders. Located behind a massive acreage of dead or near-dying cypress trees and thick, thorny underbrush, the Sour Burial Grounds reside atop what appears to be a dais constructed of river-smoothed and intricately stacked obsidian and granite stones. At the top, amongst the gravestones of the burial mounds, the air is still and it is said that you can hear your own heartbeat echo clockwise from mound to mound if you stand in the center of the dais and face the full moon. The ground is hard-weathered and cracked earth. No grave deeper than a foot or so could be dug at the top of the dais now; sparks fly from the ground whenever any attempt is made to pierce it.

Roleplaying Hints: The Sour Burial Grounds are forbidden to intruders, and the only time they will stir is

to protect themselves from outsiders who might bring other outsiders with them. The burial grounds are a collection depot for Wyld-energies that somehow resonate strangely with the energies of death. Lesser Wyldlings flitter and spark in the Umbra around the Burial Grounds in and out of the dais, dropping off energy which is collected and processed back into the Wyld.

History: The Sour Burial Grounds became a Threshold for the Wyld when an entire tribe of Native Americans were massacred here by US Cavalry while performing funeral rites and dedicating their fallen back to the earth from whence they came. The tears shed by the tribe's spirits over their cold and rotting bodies lowered the already low Gauntlet in the area to virtually non-existent, and the burial grounds have served as a supernatural memorial to renewal through destruction ever since. Visitors to the area of the Threshold are few and far between, but they do come. When they do, it is normally to investigate the legend

of the burial grounds that states that those who are buried in the shallow and hard-packed earth around the dais can be brought back from the dead.

The Burial Grounds are generally regarded as a place of



sinister and malignant spiritual energy by the Garou who know of it, and as a place of evil where the dead can be made to walk by human beings who have heard the legends of the place.

The Fountain of Youth

Threshold Type: Wyld Fount (Artesian Wellspring)

Physical: Not Applicable

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4 (Alien), Wits 5

Talents: None

Skills: Survival 7

Knowledges: Enigmas 5, Triatic Lore 3, Gaian Lore 4

Powers: Curse of Gaia (Transformation), Lord of the Land, Mask Presence, Plant Animation, Heart Sense, Silent Speech, Spirit Sense, Surreal Presence, Wyldkin Rage 8, Gnosis 10, Willpower 10

Image: Sought by the Spanish explorer and Conquistador, Don Juan Ponce de Leon, until the day of his death, the legendary Fountain of Youth has bubbled in a secluded clearing in the northeastern quarter of the Florida Everglades since before even the Florida Mokol  can remember. Encircled by a perfect circle of six-inch diameter bamboo that reaches high up into the canopy of the clearing, the bubbling spout of the Fountain of Youth sputters and gurgles a stream of crystal clear water which seems to glimmer in both sunlight and darkness alike. Although human or Garou eyes seldom see it, the unnatural beauty of the place entrances the occasional visitor and the paradisiacal panorama provided by the fountain and its wetland oasis surroundings. However, the visitor is eventually unnerved by the strange, surreal vibrations of the place and its fauna and compelled to return whence they came.

Roleplaying Hints: The Fountain of Youth is a Wyld Fount. As such, the water which is produced by the fountain is literally saturated with Gnosis and raw, Wyld energies. From this fount, the Florida Everglades draw a very large portion of their spiritual as well as physical energy, and the clearing in which the fountain is situated is absolutely rife with Wyld spirits and animate plants. In the Umbra, the Fountain of Youth is a well-protected and maintained birthplace for myriad Water and Plant Naturae.

The legends surrounding the Fountain of Youth that was de Leon's life's obsession are true... in a sense. Intruders into the clearing in which the Fountain of Youth is located find the fountain surrounded by extremely large, extremely sturdy chutes of massive bamboo. The only way the water that flows from the fountain can be collected from the fountain itself is through this perfect circle of bamboo that acts as a

barrier to protect it from outside molestation. The only way that characters will find into the perfect circle is by cutting through the bamboo barrier, and if they decide to do so, they will release the Wyldlings that live within the chutes. Characters who drink from the water of the Fountain of Youth without first obtaining proper permission from its spirit guardians will be transformed into plants by the spirit guardians and the Fountain itself. The fantastically beautiful flora of the swamp clearing which harbors the fountain are the recipients of the fountain's promise of immortality as well as uninvited guests who dared defy the look but don't touch restrictions of the Threshold.

The Symphony of Frogs

Threshold Type: Dynamic Anomaly (Occurrence)

Physical: Not Applicable

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4 (Alien), Wits 3

Talents: Expression 4

Skills: Animal Ken 5

Knowledges: Enigmas 7, Triatic Lore 3, Gaian Lore 4, Rituals 5

Powers: Animal Kinship, Animal Summons, Aura of Tranquility, Enchanting Voice, Mask Presence, Surreal Presence, Curse of Babel, Wyldkin Rage 0, Gnosis 10, Willpower 10

Image: The Symphony of Frogs is a dynamic anomaly among Wyld Thresholds, which means that it can happen at any place of low Gauntlet at any given time without warning if the Wyld chooses to manifest its power in this manner. The Symphony is thought, by those who have experienced it, to be a vanguard or trumpeting of the Wyld to all living creatures within hearing distance of the songs played through the croaking and chirping of frogs. It is said that the closer to the central formation or manifestation of the Threshold that one travels, the music of the frogs becomes not only louder, but also comprehensible. Many Garou legends regarding Wyld Thresholds and Abscesses begin with tales of the deafening Symphony of Frogs, which went on for nights before the nameless ones came....

Roleplaying Hints: The Symphony of Frogs is the harbinger of the Wyld and herald of its manifestation in the Tellurian. The Symphony is nothing more than a massive amphibian cacophony of singing frogs who have been invested with the breath of the Wyld and who can, through their singing, convey messages from the Wyld to any living creature within earshot of the music. Many theorize that this song of the night is the Wyld's warning, while others heed it as a blessing and welcome it among the Garou and Changing Breeds.

The Symphony can be used as an excellent means of communicating the will of the Wyld or those that serve the Wyld to players. A variation on this Threshold would be the Dance of the Rattle; where desert or dryer mountain climates may be the setting for the story or chronicle, substitute rattlesnakes for frogs. The movie *Natural Born Killers* by Oliver Stone has an exceptional scene involving the two main characters surrounded by striking rattlesnakes in the desert after they've accidentally killed a local shaman, and is a great visual reference for the Dance of the Rattle.

[Note: In the World of Darkness and in the real world, frogs are in serious trouble, as their habitats are gobbled up to provide scenic housing or their prey insects are destroyed to make life more convenient for local humans. Storytellers planning to use the Symphony of Frogs might be well-advised to casually point this out to the players in advance. When the characters start hearing a chorus of frogs in a place where frogs are no longer so numerous, they're sure to be unnerved — as they should be.]

Abscesses

Caerns are, by design, areas of exceptionally low Gauntlet. This being the case, there is always the chance that the Wyld may seek to use a caern as a Threshold. The Black Spiral Dancers' term for this occurrence, which has cost them more than one Hive throughout the centuries since their inception, is an Abscess. It has been thought, by and large, that the formation of an Abscess was Gaia's weapon against the fallen tribe. It's easy to see how the Dancers might see an Abscess' formation as a massive attack of sorts from the Umbra, meant to bring a Hive solidly to its knees in vengeance for its very existence. However, as more recent events have proven, the Black Spiral Dancers are not the only tribe whose caerns are susceptible to Wyld incursion and assimilation. As Apocalypse approaches, areas of low Gauntlet become rarer and rarer. Only a small percentage of the earth exists outside the Pattern Web. Being opportunistic in its will to survive in the physical world, the Wyld takes what it can get when it can get it from whom it can take it — including the twelve tribes of the Garou Nation.

When an Abscess forms within a caern, the chaos and possibility that make the Wyld what it is begins to alter the caern as a whole. Totems may cease to commune with the caern's inhabitants due to spiritual interference from the Wyld presence; friendly spirits may become less frequent in or around the caern, or may disappear from the caern altogether. Even the physical geography of the caern might subtly shift over time. Eventually, if an Abscess goes untreated or if it succeeds in assimilating the caern for its own purposes, in a

manner hostile to the caern's totem spirits, the caern will completely and effectively close and become a strange and alien place even to those who opened it. Two caerns were noted to do this very thing during the 1800s, when the American West was wracked by the troubles of the Storm Umbra; only now has the actual process of a forming Abscess been cited as the source.

Unlike Gaia or Gaian spirits, the Wyld does not play favorites, nor does it discriminate. The Wyld — if it could be said to have thoughts or feelings at all — seems to treat and value all places of low Gauntlet in the world with the same enthusiasm. The most corrupt and tainted Hive can be used as easily as any Gaian caern where the purposes and motives of those that serve and are empowered with the Wyld are concerned. And once an Abscess has manifested within a caern or a Hive, there are very few options available to the incumbent inhabitants.

• **Co-existence:** The most beneficial option available to a caern suffering from a possible Abscess is peaceful coexistence and mutual symbiosis for the purposes of preservation with the minions of the Wyld that work to assist in the manifestation of the would-be Threshold. If a caern's inhabitants are willing to share the bawn of their caern with the unknown and intangible and are willing to make what peace they can with the spirits that serve the Wyld, then bargains may be struck and borders and boundaries established soon after. This can assist the caern as well as the sovereign Threshold and their respective inhabitants in both defense and guaranteed preservation. The Caern of

Storyteller's Note

The formation of an Abscess within a Garou caern is an exceptional tool to use in the event that you are running a chronicle where the pack has grown far too reliant on their caern for support and have started to take the boons offered by association with a caern for granted or become complacent in their duties to their caern. On the other hand, it's also a great tool to center a chronicle. A group of Garou would receive both tremendous renown as well as higher status within werewolf society if they were to ally themselves with a sept that needed their assistance in cleansing an Abscess from their caern. Alternatively, they might gain even more renown and strength were they to succeed where another sept failed and was destroyed by the formation of an Abscess within or around a caern. Keep in mind, however, that while a Threshold is rare, an Abscess is virtually unheard of.

Miria, protected by the Black Furies, is an excellent example of the co-existence of a Garou caern and a Wyld Threshold — of course, Miria was a caern of the Wyld before the actual Threshold began to manifest itself. Caerns dedicated to other ideals might have a worse time of it, as the caern totem is displaced and the local spirit landscape thrown into disarray, perhaps never to return to normal.

- **Abscission:** Inoculation or severing of the Abscess is another option, albeit a violent and normally excessively costly option. While the Wyld can manifest itself in an effective manner in the Realm given the opportunity, the process is normally slow and consistent rather than direct and alarming. In its initial stages of manifestation, the vanguard of Wyld-spirits and other minions who would seek to aid the Abscess' creation are, while not helpless or by any means weak, few in number. Spirits allied with the inhabitants of a caern, along with the caern's totem spirits and the caern inhabitants and protectors themselves, can normally mount an extremely effective force before the Abscess can make an attempt at the absorption of a caern. This option, however, never comes without severe risk to those seeking to confront the Wyld's forces toe-to-toe.

- **Avoidance:** Many respected Garou Theurges that have studied the fairly recent phenomenon of the formation of Abscesses agree that the best protection against spiritual and physical absorption by Wyld forces is by practicing spiritual solidarity within a caern. Awareness and communion with a caern's spiritual inhabitants can make more than a healthy, happy home for the Garou who protect and serve it, it can also promote safety against assault from the Wyld forces seeking to use the Caern as a foundation for a Threshold.

While many Garou concede that the phenomenon of Threshold manifestation in the world is absolutely necessary in order for the continued survival of Gaia, they also agree — unanimously — that Thresholds cannot be allowed to form at the expense of Gaia's most sacred of places. The list of enemies the average Garou caern can possess at any given time grows daily, and the Wyld is far too potent an enemy to add to that roster. Communication and fellowship with a caern's spiritual inhabitants can create somewhat of an early warning web for the caern in both the Realm as well as the Umbra.

Garou of a caern who maintain constant correspondence with their spirit allies as well as the myriad servants of their totems not only strengthen the caern as a whole and overall, but they can also see the fluidity of the Wyld churning towards them well in advance of the formation of an Abscess.

Rite of Abscission

Level One

This rite is very, very new; only in recent years have the Garou learned enough about Abscesses to be able to find a defense against their formation. Affording the caern the spiritual fortification it will need to defend itself, this rite is not only dangerous to the ritemaster, but to the caern as a whole if not performed properly and to exact detail. Ideally, the master of this rite should be the same person that opened the caern in the first place. If this is impossible, the ritemaster must call out to the spirit of the werewolf who opened the caern and ask for strength and wisdom, offering up a gift of some sort or another in trade. Normally a chalice containing a small amount of blood from each member of the caern's Garou inhabitants is a worthy sacrifice, although the carcass of a Wurm-minion, collection of talens or a greater fetish may also suffice depending on the nature of the caern's spirit.

After the sacrifice is made (if necessary), the ritemaster must walk from the heart of the caern to the westernmost border of the caern's bawn at sunset and back again while the moon of her auspice is in apogee. This walk is performed while reciting the litany of every werewolf who has died in the defense of the caern since its opening. When the ritemaster returns to the heart of the caern, she must call out to the caern's spirit, re-affirming her sept's dedication to the caern in her solicitation for strength.

System: In order to initiate the abscission of a caern, a character engages in a resisted, extended roll of Perception + Rituals (Difficulty 7). The number of successes needed equals 10 minus the caern's level.

The character is opposed by the mounting intensity of the forces of the Wyld that seek to manifest within the caern in an effort to create a Threshold. The dice pool of the would-be Threshold is the level of the caern. The difficulty of the would-be Threshold is the character's Gnosis score, while the number of successes needed by the Threshold equals the character's Willpower. The first one to garner the necessary successes wins.

If the character wins the contest, the caern's spirit has heard her call and marshals its spiritual as well as physical forces and allies in defense of the caern. The results of this call to battle are left to Storyteller discretion. If the character loses the contest, however, the opposite effect occurs; the Wyld's forces rally to attack the caern's inhabitants and the Abscess begins to manifest completely throughout the caern; assimilating, draining and destroying all that seek to impede its progress.

The Storm Eater

"There are no happy endings...
because nothing ever ends."

— Peter S. Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*

There is a very good reason that songs sung of Thresholds and Abscesses are so few and far between — the Storm Eater.

A particularly dangerous byproduct of the formation of an Abscess or the manifestation of a Threshold is the attention it attracts. If the Wurm and Weaver were not bad enough, the legendary Storm Eater developed quite an appetite for Thresholds countless millennia ago when it first manifested itself in what were once known as the Pure Lands. Garou have not sung tales of the Storm Eater since sometime around the late 1800s — partly out of shame, but also for fear that naming the spirit might awaken it once again. In ages before the first European Garou set foot in what is now the continent of North America, the Uktena, Croatan and Wendigo created a great net with the energy of their caerns to trap the Storm Eater. While the trap succeeded for a time, the loss of the Croatan tribe to the Eater-of-Souls and the subsequent fall of dozens of caerns freed the ravenous Storm Eater once again. The tightening intricacy of the Weaver's Pattern Web, the Wurm's incessant corruption and defilement of the land and people and the loss of more caerns every year to the Black Spiral Dancers whittle away at the Wyld's presence in the Realm and at Gaia. The past hundred years and the dawn of a new millennium have done nothing but intensify the hunger pangs of the Storm Eater as well as the ferocity with which it seeks to sate its appetite.

Many Garou believe that the Storm Eater was once a mighty Bane that devoured a great avatar of the Weaver, perhaps a Stasis Vector Geomid or the like, and that in doing so added the strength of the Weaver to itself. Others believe that the Storm Eater is a champion of the Eater-of-Souls, gathering as much as it can as fast as it can in an effort to revive its master for another direct assault on Gaia. Others fear that the Storm Eater is a more ancient force, a long-forgotten enemy of Gaia from the First Times. A spirit, perhaps. An aspect of Gaia's rage that was driven insane by the



unfathomable fury and pain of its birth and ran screaming into the darkest corners of creation that it could find, devouring all that stood in its path.

Whatever the Storm Eater is, one thing is certain: nothing escapes it.

Pattern Spiders splinter and shatter before it. Banes howl and dissolve into oily, black sludge in the gale of its breath. Wyldlings, often regarded as the mightiest of spirits, bend and break like matchsticks as their essences are sucked into the swirling fury of the Storm Eater, their strength nothing more than fuel for its frenzy.

Thresholds are a special delicacy for the Storm Eater, and given its hatred and propensity for vengeance where the Garou are concerned, Abscesses are even better.

History

To attempt to assign a date to the Storm Eater's birth is nigh impossible. It is believed that the Storm Eater existed in the Pure Lands before the arrival of the three native Tribes of Garou from across the Bering Strait. Where the Storm Eater came from is of secondary concern to the Fera next to the destruction that follows in its wake. For millennia, all that the Garou knew for a fact about the Storm Eater was that to challenge it or to confront it directly was a folly which ended in destruction, regardless of the nobility of intent when doing so. However, while the Storm Eater could not feasibly or easily be destroyed, it *could* be stopped, or at least, delayed. On December 28, 1890 thirteen separate septs of the Western Concordiat united to perform the Rite of the Still Skies; a powerful rite of binding created and taught to the Two Moons Pack (who in turn taught it to the Garou) by an unknown Incarna. The rite is a success. A victory is won for the Garou, but a Pyrrhic one at best. In order for the Rite of the Still Skies to work its magic on the Storm Eater, thirteen of the mightiest champions of the Garou — one from each of the then 13 tribes — were called to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to power the rite. Nonetheless, the rite and the sacrifice of some of the mightiest Garou heroes of

their era imprisoned the Storm Eater miles below the surface of the earth.

That was then. Times are changing.

The Present

While imprisoned, in anguish, kept warm only by its hatred, the Storm Eater was far from destroyed. One hundred and eleven years later, the skies have changed. The stars are no longer in conjunction.

In 1999 the "Eye of the Wyrn" appeared for the first time in the Umbra. A flickering, sickly red star, which was foretold in obscure prophecies, has loosened the bonds which still hold the Storm Eater imprisoned within the cavernous, magma-forged labyrinth of Gaia's underbelly and all but negated the Rite of the Still Skies. Vastly less powerful than it has been in the past, the current incarnation of the Storm Eater is still formidable even by the standards of the heartiest septs. It has splintered off small portions of itself that actively seek out pockets of Wyld energies to devour. These pseudo-avatars drink all the Wyld power they can, then rush it back to the main body to feed the Eater itself. Unless the Garou are able to check this process, it's only a matter of time before the Storm Eater breaks free for a second — and perhaps final — time.

Again the Garou will be forced to make all but impossible choices regarding their caerns, the Wyld, and the threat of that which has returned.

Again it begins.

Thresholds and Abscesses are the Storm Eater's meat and drink. Garou caerns that coexist with the forces of the Wyld within their caerns effectively flag their bawns as potential targets for the Storm Eater. Garou who seek remedy for their caern's dilemma through the Rite of Abscission effectively reduce the Wyld energies that desperately attempt to manifest themselves in the world and hence, weaken Gaia and strengthen the Wyrn and Weaver. All the while the Storm Eater is getting stronger.

If — or when — it breaks free, it will be nothing less than Apocalypse.



1054X



Chapter Three: Wyld Children

No moon shone down in the night. The stars themselves hid behind rumbling clouds. The two werewolves padded over the rocky plains, one slightly behind the other. The lead wolf hid a limp that the trailing wolf pointedly ignored.

The trailing wolf spoke in the language of Garou as they approached the foot of the mountain. "I don't like this, Grandmother. Not a bit. It feels wrong. Never mind all the stuff I've heard about... them. I'd feel a lot better armed..." She continued under her breath, "A tank'd be nice."

The leading wolf slowed her pace. "Child, when you get to be my age, which I sometimes doubt will happen, you will realize that things are both more simple and more complicated than we wish it. Like it. Don't like it. I don't care. You shouldn't care. This is a duty that must be done, and one that you will come to do once I have passed into the Goddess' arms."

"I hate it when you talk like that. You're not gonna die—"

The leading wolf interrupted, "And I see you have also talked to the Fates about this. Please, ask them when my other grandchildren are going to call. It's not as if I don't have a telephone. I even have e-mail. I taught your father better than that, you know. He calls."

"Grandmother..."

"Quiet now, we're almost to the cave mouth." At the base of the mountain was a cave, large and foreboding, even to the two bold Garou. The elder Garou stopped with her granddaughter still a step behind her. The wolf stood up on two legs, becoming a graceful old woman. Her hair was a gray as her wolf's coat, but she stood up straight and her dark blue eyes glittered in the starlight. A heartbeat later another woman stood up, one step behind. Her eyes glittered as well, though she looked from side to side, checking their surroundings.

"This is an old place, a place of the Wyld. A place to be held sacred by all of Gaia's chosen. What have we to fear on this hallowed ground?" asked the elder.

"Was that a rhetorical question or do you want the full list?"

"And what do you fear, little one?" boomed a deep voice from inside the cave.

The younger Garou started at the clamor. Fur started to ripple across her skin.

"Hold, granddaughter. Calm your rage. She is the one we have come to meet."

The young woman shook herself and the change reversed itself. A nudge from her grandmother prompted her to say, "Sorry."

"No apologies were necessary, last heir of the Hesperides. We must all be careful these dark days. The Eye of the Dissolver is open. These are dangerous times. Where once Ladon was attended by packs of Children of Pegasus, now there are the two of you." As the voice spoke, a dragon—for there could be no other word to describe it—lumbered from the cave. It towered above the two women. The dragon shifted forward on four legs. It craned its long neck up, and looked about. Then it looked down on the two werewolves. "Care is no crime as long as it does not dissolve into fear." She paused and the dragon's body shrank, collapsing down into that of a woman, just on the verge of middle age. Her skin was two shades lighter than midnight but her eyes shone with the dragon's fire. In her hand she held a golden apple. "This night, I am Ladon, guardian of the sacred tree. I remember the songs you sang to me. I remember the dances. I remember the Wyld for it is in me."

The older woman produced a knife from her cloak. "This night, I am Medusa. I carry the songs of old in my heart. My feet know the old dances. I revere the Wyld for it is in me." She handed the knife to the dark woman, who cut the apple in half. The woman calling herself Medusa accepted her half, divided her half again, and the three ate under the stars.

The three sat on the rocky ground, the young woman helping her elder to sit. "This night, I bring Redsong, the flesh of my flesh to our gathering, so that she may sit in my place in the years to come."

"I recognize your flesh. I will remember her in times to come, from now until this world ends." A beat passed, and the dark woman smiled. "Now tell me how brightly the Wyld burns in the world."

Medusa replied, "The gorgons have not only returned, but their numbers grow with every day. In the chaos of the past year, their return has gone unnoticed, for now."

"Wonderful," said Ladon. "This could not be better news."

The young Garou interjected, "We've seen what we believe is some new kind of gorgon. A human, imbued with powers we haven't seen. They mostly hunt the bloodsuckers, but some of them hunt Garou too. They appeared soon after the red star appeared in the Umbral sky."

"No, the Wyld would never choose a human for its blessings. The Wyrms and Weavers have corrupted humans too much. These humans are something else. They are the return of an old power, but they are no gorgon." Ladon drew herself up and spoke with a teacher's voice. "The Wyld chooses gorgons among the untainted spirits. The plants and the animals, the earth, wind and water. They are chosen for the blessings of the Wyld. They are the true gorgons. The humans paid your varna an unexpected compliment when they mistakenly called the first of your kind 'gorgons' after the name you gave to the chosen of the Wyld."

"Let's begin, Ladon. These old bones are not made for sitting all night on rocky ground."

Nemesis

Medusa cleared her throat and began.

"In the land called America, in a province called Oklahoma, the humans breed dogs for pets. Rather than finding animals that need homes they go to a shopping mall and purchase them, as if they were just a pair of pants or a bauble to put on their mantels. Pet store animals are mass-produced by a 'puppy mill.' The humans who breed these dogs keep them in conditions one would not wish upon a dishonorable enemy. A hunting dog, bred to range in the woods for prey lives in a dirty cage, five paces square. An animal bred for human companionship remains alone, fed by a machine on a timer. The animals receive no medical care. The owners take pups from their mothers and force the females to breed, again and again.

"One spring night, in cage number 216, a male Weimaraner wept. They are beautiful dogs, loving, kind and gentle. He would have made some human family happy, perhaps even connecting them with Gaia's love. But his food machine stopped working days before. He had eaten his own refuse in a vain attempt at sustenance, but eventually, he collapsed from starvation. The howls of hundreds of animals in pain drowned out one pathetic death cry.

"But the Wyld heard his prayer. Life flowed back into his veins. His sores closed up, but were not forgotten. He was bigger, stronger, faster than he had ever been before. More powerful than any of his breed ever have been or ever will be. He heard the call, and understood the price he must pay.

"The newspapers called it an act of animal rights activists. The local sept assumed it was a Bone Gnawer pack, looking out for their mongrel Kin. The Bone Gnawers didn't know what caused it, but they soon took up the example set to them. Soon, other puppy mills faced the rough justice of the Garou, before our common foes started setting traps at the mills. But many dogs are free, and many children, Kin and otherwise, have new companions to teach them of the Wyld, and how to care for it.

"But the abuse goes on, and we cannot save them all. If the Wyld could wave its hands—not that it has hands—

Real-World Note

Puppy mills are not some sick creation of the World of Darkness. They are real horrors that should be stopped. Don't buy pets from pet stores, or from breeders that don't go out of their way to prove that they take responsible care of their animals. Go to the local SPCA and adopt a pet, or contact a local animal rescue organization. For more information, check out <http://www.peta.com>.

and save every creature in need, the world would not be in such pain. It is up to us."

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6, Perception 4 (Tracking), Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Primal-Urge 4, Survival 4

Rage: 6; **Gnosis:** 6; **Willpower:** 4

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Strength +3 Bite, Strength +2 Claw (lethal damage)

Powers: Open Seal (as the Ragabash Gift, only for getting to the animal's abusers), Regeneration, Sense of the Prey (as the Ragabash Gift, again, only for getting to the abusers)

Image: The animal chosen as a Nemesis looks as it did before, but all of its wounds are healed. There is one important difference in appearance. No tame animal ever possessed the wild eyes of a Nemesis. A pampered house pet has the eyes of a vicious predator.

Background: Nemesis are supercharged animals, picked by Wyld-spirits because of their maltreatment at the hands of man, whom the spirits perceive to be agents of the Wyrms and Weaver. The Wyld's power fills them up, healing their wounds and bestowing upon them the power to take revenge upon their abusers. They hunt down their abusers and tear them to shreds. Unable to live for long away from the Wyld, the gorgon leaves the area, unerringly headed for the nearest Threshold where it returns to the Umbra, taking the animal with it.

Storytelling Notes: A Nemesis spirit can possess any animal, though the above stats are for a typical abused household pet. There have been Nemesis dogs, cats, birds, as well as more exotic species such as lab rats, circus elephants or British foxhunt foxes. Garou might take the appearance of a Nemesis as a pointer to investigation. While animal rescue may not be as "sexy" as ripping the legs off a Nexus Crawler, it is worth Renown in its own right.

Undergrowth

Redsong waited for her grandmother to finish, then cleared her throat.

"In Houston, Texas, people were building a new subdivision. That's a bunch of houses outside the city, allegedly safe from the dangers of the city. Anyway, they really weren't counting on other dangers. A Glass Walker pack was keeping an eye on the builders, because they thought the company was a front for one of the Wyrmbusinesses. Something like building tainted houses as housing for fomori or something like that. Anyway, they discov-

ered that someone else was monkeywrenching the site. Bulldozers broke down. Concrete slabs cracked. A workman went missing. That sort of thing. They didn't know what was causing it until they stayed there overnight.

"The grass did it. Grew up into big, nasty looking stuff overnight, did its business and retreated before sunrise. Their Theurge got too close to the Undergrowth's central root, and well, it mistook him for one of the workers.

"They call the Theurge 'Stays-On-Concrete' now."

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Perceptions 3, Wits 1

Abilities: Alertness 5, Brawl 3, Primal-Urge 3, Stealth 3

Rage: 3; **Gnosis:** 4; **Willpower:** 5

Health Levels: Vine: OK, -1, -2, Incapacitated; Core Body: OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Vines Strength +1. The barbed vines grapple a target. If they successfully grapple the target, they will then attempt to pull the target underground. This requires three successes on an opposed Strength roll. If the Undergrowth succeeds, the target is pulled under and cannot breathe. (See **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, page 188.)

Powers: Sense Wyrms (as the Metis Gift), Sense Weaver (as the Glass Walker Gift).

Image: A normal patch of ground, until it strikes. Then thick, ropy vines, complete with barbed thorns, erupt out of the ground. The vines can reach anywhere in a 20-yard radius from the core of the plant. If the core is exposed, it resembles a large tulip bulb, about six feet across.

Background: Undergrowth is a term for a Wyld-enhanced plant. The core of the gorgon remains six to ten feet underground. Small shoots, resembling local grass and weeds, lurk on the surface, acting as sense organs. The shoots give the gorgon the ability to sense light and movement. Through the shoots the gorgon can perceive in 360 degrees for a distance of about 40 yards from the core. It also possesses eight to ten ropy vines, which it uses to grab prey.

Storytelling Notes: Garou may find themselves having to defend Undergrowth from attackers. While it is certainly easy to tear a construction crew limb from limb, preserving the Undergrowth and the Veil at the same time may prove more difficult.

Uncegila

Medusa looked to her granddaughter approvingly. "Well spoken, Redsong. You will make a fine Medusa yourself one day — though you may wish to use fewer colloquialisms. English is not Ladon's native tongue.

"In Alaska, the Wendigo have rediscovered the Uncegila. The warming of the world's waters freed the

beast from its confinement in the icy prison the Weaver had set for it centuries ago. Its hunger has not abated during its centuries of imprisonment. Today it swims the cold waters of the Raspberry Strait, hungry for prey. The Wendigo feed it, braving the rough seas in kayaks. They have taken to capturing whaling ships, killing the crew and feeding them to the Uncegil.

Attributes: Strength 10, Dexterity 2, Stamina 12, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 5 (bite), Intimidation 6, Primal Urge 5, Survival 2

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -2, -4, -4, -4, -4, Incapacitated

Attacks: Bite for Str +2 damage. Swallow attack: after a successful bite, the Uncegil can swallow its prey. The target has a number

of turns equal to their Stamina before they begin to suffocate. The consumed prey must do at least 3 levels of aggravated damage to escape.

Powers: Regeneration (1 health level every other turn to damage caused by natural attacks. The Uncegil can-

not regenerate damage that stems from any worked tools [simple clubs are not enough; the material must be forged or otherwise manufactured] or

Worm-corrupted entities), Swimming Speed of 26 knots

Image: The Uncegil resembles a Plesiosaur, which had a long neck and four paddle-shaped flippers. Unlike the Plesiosaur, it is approximately 50 feet long and has sharp teeth.

Background: The Uncegil was once a favored child of the Wyld. Through the grace of the Wyld it survived the destruction of the dinosaurs. However, as the influence of the Weaver fell over the Pure Lands, the Uncegil fell asleep. It recently broke

free of its icy prison, and is hungry after its long sleep.

Storytelling Notes: The Wendigo are not the only entities interested in the Uncegil. The Wendigo's attacks attracted the attention of others. Agents of DNA, on the lookout for cryptozoological finds like the Uncegil, now hunt the creature, as well as the Wendigo who protect it. The DNA agents carry the latest weapons as well as special Weaver-tech (see *Book of the Weaver*, pp. 48-61). Those interested in crossover chronicle hooks may wish to use Men in Black from *Mage: The Ascension*, instead



of DNA. Lastly, the whole situation could be complicated even further by agents of Project: Twilight (see Project: Twilight).

Ogopogo

Redsong continued, "The Uncegila is not the only water gorgon returning. The Ogopogo, kin to Uktena, swims the rivers of the world again. It's pretty pissed off about how polluted the rivers are. Not that I blame it. It's been yanking crewmembers off decks and sending barges to the bottom, but that only makes the rivers more polluted."



She paused and looked thoughtfully, "I think that it might end up killing itself trying to preserve its home."

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 8, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Athletics (swimming) 4, Brawl 4, Primal Urge 3

Rage: 5; **Gnosis:** 5; **Willpower:** 3

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Bite Strength +3; Poison: does 3 levels aggravated damage if the bite succeeds; Swallow: after a successful bite, the Ogopogo can swallow its prey. The target has a number of turns equal to their Stamina before they begin to suffocate. The consumed prey must do at least 3 levels of aggravated damage to escape.

Powers: Regeneration (not from toxic damage)

Image: The Ogopogo resembles an enormous water moccasin. It is 24 feet long and has the nasty disposition of its natural cousin.

Background: The Ogopogo once swam the rivers of the world. The Nagah once revered it as a symbol of the Wani made manifest, a sign of the unity of river and serpent. The current Ogopogo was once a normal water moccasin that was transformed by a Wyld-spirit.

Storytelling Notes: The Ogopogo is a potent gorgon, but it is in desperate danger. The river it lives in (one conveniently located for individual chronicles) is being polluted by various industries. It is unable to pass by the outflow pipes, and cannot leave the water. It has taken to attacking whatever river traffic passes by. Unfortunately, this has only made its situation worse. It must be moved to a less polluted river, or the polluters must be made to clean up their acts. In this case, the polluters are not some arm of Pentex or other evil conspiracy. The polluters are normal human beings who care more for their profit margins than they do the water. Storytellers who feel they should add as much chaos as possible should not forget that the Nagah view the Ogopogo as sacred.

Crossbreed

Medusa smiled. Her granddaughter, though much too informal for such a gathering, was learning. The fear in her eyes was gone. Someday, perhaps Gaia's Warriors and Memory could come together to do more than fulfill a compact forged centuries ago. In all her years, she had only seen two Mokolé, both of them taking on the role of Ladon. She doubted that she would ever look upon another Fera. This saddened her. Could the old wounds be forgiven?

"Apologies. This old head sometimes loses track of where it is. A traveling friend of mine saw a Crossbreed in South Africa. It was made up of equal parts cheetah and antelope. It was beautiful, he said, and ran faster than the wind. Reports of others flow in as well."

Crossbreed: Cheetah/Antelope

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Athletics (running) 5, Brawl 4, Primal Urge 4

Rage: 4; **Gnosis:** 4; **Willpower:** 4

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Claw (Strength +1), Bite (Strength +1), Leaping Impale (Strength +3)

Powers: Speed Beyond Thought (as the Silent Strider Gift)

Image: The strength and speed of the cheetah, merged with the size of the larger African antelopes. It also has the horns of an antelope, which it can use in combat as no antelope can.

Background: The antelope/cheetah currently wanders the fields of Africa. It's looking for something, though the Garou do not know what that purpose is (nor do the Bastet). Should the Swara discover the Crossbreed, they will likely strike it down, assuming it is some sort of abomination.

Crossbreed: Rattlesnake/Falcon

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: Athletics 4 (flight), Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Primal Urge 3, Stealth 5

Rage: 2; **Gnosis:** 5; **Willpower:** 3

Health Levels: OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

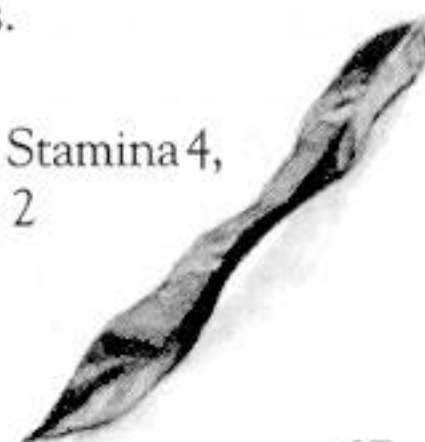
Attacks: Bite (Strength +1), Poison (3 levels aggravated if the Bite succeeds)

Powers: Flight 20 yards/turn

Image: A rattlesnake with wings. It resembles a small feathered serpent, though it has the plain brown coloration of its two halves.

Crossbreed: Tiger / Wolf

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 2



Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Primal Urge 3, Stealth 4
Rage: 4; **Gnosis:** 4; **Willpower:** 3
Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, -5, Incapacitated
Attacks: Bite (Strength +2), Claw (Strength +3)
Powers: None

Image: The strength and power of the tiger, with the cunning of the wolf. So far, only one Tiger/Wolf has been seen, but a pack of such creatures would be a true terror to behold.

Background: Many so-called experts assume that Crossbreeds are the result of the same process that created the Chimaera. Those experts are unaware of the true source of the Chimaera as a creation of Pegasus to teach the Black Furies a lesson (see *Axis Mundi*, page 78). However, under rare circumstances, the Wyld encourages two "genetically incompatible" animals to breed. No matter what the combination of animals may be (or even the method the two species use to breed), the mating breeds true with a single offspring, which grows to adulthood in a matter of days. Crossbreeds act as protectors of an area neglected by other guardians of the Wyld. The birth of a Crossbreed is seen as an ill omen that the Weaver or Wurm is coming.

Storytelling Notes: A werewolf pack could be called in to investigate a Crossbreed's activities. These gorgons generally appear for a reason, though only a few rare Garou know enough of gorgons to divine said reason. After slaying a "hideous monster," the Garou may find themselves having to finish a Crossbreed's task for it.

Ardens

Redsong looked to her grandmother. Her time is coming soon, she thought, and I do not know if I can do this without her. And I do not trust this lizard before me. Why is it that I was told that they are of the Wurm? Grandmother tells me to trust this one. Some Furies say these creatures are the very image of the Wurm. Some would kill me for even speaking to it. I don't sense the Wurm here, but some fomori can mask their corruption. Goddess, give me clarity. And soon, please, if you don't mind.

"Some forests, those not yet wrecked by men, grow together. In a couple of cases, it's not just vines and moss linking the trees together. It's the Wyld. The trees grow together in the Umbra too, and their spirits fuse. The forest itself becomes one enormous living thing. And they're smart too. I mean, they're not just trees anymore. They can't move or throw apples at you, like in that movie I saw as a kid. But they can think their green butts off.

They'll tell you stuff, if you know what questions to ask. And they know all sorts of things. Spirit lore, and the like."

Attributes: Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 1

Abilities: Alertness 4, Area Knowledge 5, Etiquette 4, Enigmas 4, Expression 1, Spirit Lore (Nature Spirits) 5

Gnosis: 8; **Willpower:** 10

Health Levels: Each tree destroyed reduces an Attribute or Ability by one. Once all of the Attributes and Abilities have been reduced to zero, the Arden reverts to a normal forest.

Powers: Assess Character, Call of the Wyld (as the Galliard Gift, though the sound resembles wind howling in the trees as opposed to howling of wolves) Create Wind, Forest Sense, Wisdom of the Ancient Ways (as the Philodox Gift).

Image: A cluster of trees, grown together with vines and overgrowth linking the trees together. The site is generally quite beautiful. It pleases all five senses. Many animals make their homes in the Arden, though they do not eat the plants that make it up.

Background: Ardens are repositories of Wyld knowledge. The trees and bushes remember ancient ways in their roots and branches. Each of the trees grows into the other, much like a Banyan tree. However, no tree, bush or vine is strangled by the combination. They grow together and thrive. Some Black Fury septs have Ardens in the bawn of their caerns.

Storytelling Notes: Garou may use Ardens as information sources. Others may have to protect the trees from loggers or other developments.

Charms and Gorgons

Many gorgons possess powers previously described as Spirit Charms (see *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, page 237 and *Axis Mundi: The Book of Spirits*, pp. 156-158). If the Charm is listed as costing Power or Essence, assume it costs either a point of Gnosis for more spiritual powers and Rage for physical powers.

Wyld Worms

"The Wyld Worms are growing again," said Medusa. "And my heart grows glad with them," replied Ladon.

"For centuries, we had only had a handful of Wyld Worms in our care. But recently, one has grown so large that we could safely divide it in two. Both halves are doing fine. We tested the new half on a recently purchased tract of land. The previous owners had dumped oil and other chemicals rather than recycling

them. But the Wyld Worm didn't notice. In three days, the ground was clear.

"We are hoping that, if they continue to grow, they can be used to purify Wyrms-tainted lands."

Attributes: Just about none. It's a big worm.

Abilities: See Attributes.

Gnosis: 4

Health Levels: OK, Squished

Powers: Wyld Worms have a natural ability to cleanse areas. They are able to eat mild toxins and turn them into useful products, doing the work of earthworms, but much better and much more quickly. If Wyld Worms have tilled the area being treated, the difficulty of a Rite of Cleansing is reduced by two.

Image:

A foot-long earthworm. The untrained eye might mistake them for small snakes or large slugs.

Background:

The Wyld Worms were once part of the natural cycle of life. The Wyld Worms consumed the detritus left behind in the Wyrms' wake. It would ignite the area with the spark of the Wyld, allowing the area to grow anew. Since the Wyrms' capture by the Weaver, the Wyld Worms

have suffered, slowly dying off down the years. The Black Furies (and some Children of Gaia) secretly tended the Wyld Worms, hoping they would someday thrive again, and return to their sacred purpose.

Storytelling Notes: The Wyld Worms are a sacred possession of the Black Furies. As such, the enemies of the Furies might attempt to take them. It could be Silver Fangs who want to "rescue" the Worms, or Black Spiral Dancers who wish to toss the Worms into the Abyss.

The Cow

Redsong looked at Ladon. Why did she say almost nothing? Wasn't she supposed to do something other than listen? "There's another gorgon. The Cow. We don't really know what The Cow is supposed to do.

It just eats and looks

at you with a total lack of thought in its eyes."

"It is a cow, granddaughter," said Medusa.

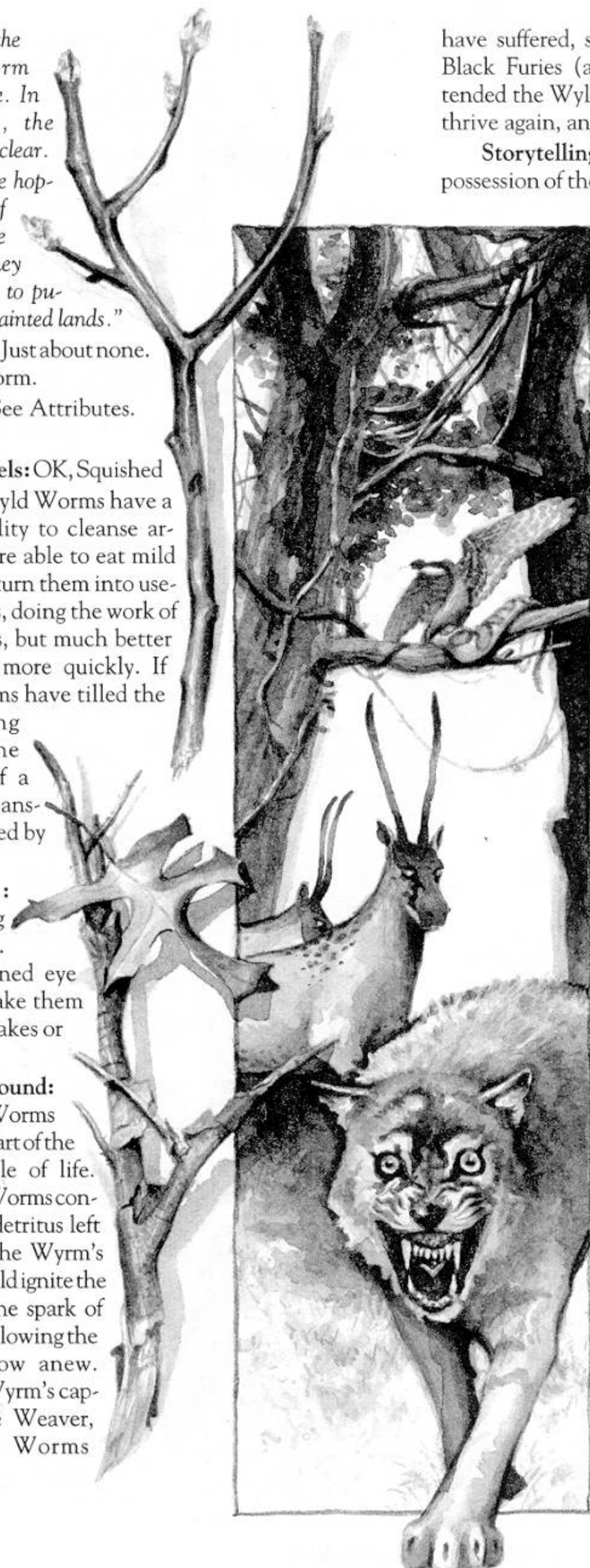
"Cows are not too bright."

"Yeah, well, it can enter the Umbra. We've seen that." Redsong looked off into the distance, her eyes reading her notes. "And nothing

seems to hurt it. But we don't know what it is supposed to do. Why would the Wyld make a cow a gorgon?"

"The ways of the Wyld are not for us to question or even understand. The Cow has a purpose. You just don't know what its purpose is."

"Do you know?" snapped Redsong angrily. Days of following a



cow... a cow munching its way through the natural world as well as the spirit world flashed back to her. This surely was not what Gaia had planned for her. She was to sing songs of glory and honor. Not herd a cow, that was for sure.

"Granddaughter," cautioned Medusa.

"I do not know either," replied Ladon. "Perhaps it is to teach young Garou patience. Continue," she said, gesturing to Medusa.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Perception 1, Intelligence 7, Wits 1

Abilities: Enigmas 5

Gnosis: 8; **Willpower:** 10

Health Levels: Infinite. The Cow is effectively indestructible. Any attack in the physical world causes it to immediately step sideways (no chance of failure) into the Umbra, or vice versa. Those who attempt to lie in wait for it on the other side of the Gauntlet are stymied, as The Cow simply disappears, reappearing at a safe point in the Umbra.

Attacks: None. It could theoretically step on or even trample someone, but it doesn't seem to ever even want to try.

Powers: The Cow can step sideways instantaneously, no matter how high the Gauntlet. It does this automatically when in danger, seconds before a blow lands. It is also immune to all Gifts (or other magical abilities, including the Delirium) that affect normal animals.

Image: It's a cow. It always looks calm and somewhat bored



by everything. It stares at supernatural beings, even invisible or hidden ones, though it never does anything about it. Its milk is tasty, though not magical in any way.

Background: The Cow has been around as long as recorded history. The oldest tales of the Garou tell of a hungry Bone Gnawer chasing The Cow for weeks, trying to catch and eat it. Eventually, the Bone Gnawer collapsed from hunger and had to be nursed back to health. In the sixth century

BC, a Stargazer traveling in India saw The Cow worshipped as a god. In the old west, a Silver Fang rancher from Colorado tried to catch The Cow for his herd. While away, his herd was stolen by human cattle rustlers. Those who try to catch The Cow never succeed. Those who try to kill it often end up dead by embarrassing means. Those who try to understand it go mad.

Storytelling Notes: The Cow is either the most important thing in world, or perhaps it's a joke. Nobody knows what The Cow is for, and it's not telling.

The Roaring Creek

"In the Appalachian Mountains, a creek babbles down through the mountains. In the ancient times, it was a place holy to the lost Croatan. The Croatan knew that this was a hungry creek. They could see how the creek wanted to

be larger, to cut a bigger swath through the land. It could wear down stones faster than any other creek. The Croatan gave sacrifices to the creek, and defended it from the Mockeries. In return, the creek would send them fish to eat. It would let the Croatan and their Kin drink from it and use its water, for the water was pure.

"But then the Croatan left this world, sacrificing their lives for the good of the land. The Gurahl took care of the creek as long as they could. But when the Europeans came to the New World, they chased the Bears away. The Get and their Kin dammed the river, thinking it just a place where the bears chose to fish. They made a mill. They never bothered to listen to the river. Eventually, the river went to sleep.

"But it woke up. The Get had moved on, but their Kin continued to come by, having picnics or fishing or swimming on hot summer afternoons. The river, angry at being caged, is slowly regaining its magic. The dam is wearing down. Sharp rocks, cut by the river, slice open the feet of the Kin. The fish only bite toes now. The river knows that the blood of the Garou runs thinly through the veins of the Kin, but a pair of hunters, trespassing on the land, 'slipped on a wet rock' and fell into the creek. The creek realized that it didn't need help for its sacrifices. If the Garou would not feed the creek, the creek would have to make do on its own. We fear the Get will hear of this, and do something to the gorgon creek."

Attributes: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 1

Abilities: Local Area Knowledge 6

Gnosis: 8; **Willpower:** 5

Health Levels: Only dams or pollution can harm the river.

Attacks: Nothing overt. It can cause someone to slip on a wet stone while crossing. Roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) to cross the stream when it doesn't want him to cross. A person could fall into the creek and hit his head. Roll Stamina (difficulty 8) to soak the 2 health levels of damage. On a botch, the person falls unconscious and starts to drown (see page 188, *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*).

Powers: Break Reality, Field Sense, Flood

Image: The Roaring Creek appears to be a normal creek. However, on a close inspection (Perception + Survival or Primal Urge, difficulty 7), one would notice the creek has recently expanded and the rocks

and other natural phenomena of the river are more worn than they perhaps should be.

Background: A Wyld-spirit bonded with the creek in ancient times. The spirit saw the creek rolling over the land, constantly changing its shape. The spirit recognized the changing nature of the creek, and bonded with it. However, the spirit was a hungry spirit and wishes for the river to grow.

Storytelling Notes: The creek offers a good opportunity for packs of Garou to test their non-combat abilities. The innate martial virtues of a 900-pound engine of destruction aren't of themselves very useful for helping a creek thrive. The creek is not in danger from pollution, but it needs to break free of the dams to restore its full power.

The Lightning Bugs

Redsong noted, "It's not just the rivers, plants and animals. We've seen insect gorgons as well."

"A group of campers were out in the woods of Maine one night. One of them went off to mark a tree. Off by himself, he saw a firefly light up. And then another and then another and another. Their lights reminded him of a Christmas tree. They danced for him, and entranced him. His breathing slowed, and he did not care when they landed on him. He did not care when they started biting him. More and more bugs jumped on his body, eating his flesh."

"His friends never found what was left of him. We made sure of that."

Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 5, Stamina 1, Perception 4

Abilities: Empathy 3

Health Levels: Attacking the swarm is like attacking an Ananasi in Crawlerling form. Individual insects are easily destroyed, but it is next to impossible to destroy the mass of them without using a flame-thrower or similar tactics.

Attacks: Swarm Bite (2 damage)

Powers: Hypnosis

- **Hypnosis:** The swarm rolls 6 dice (difficulty is the target's Willpower) in a roll opposed by the target's Willpower (difficulty 6). If the target gets more than three net successes, she realizes something is wrong and can try to flee. If the swarm gets more than three net successes, the target is immobilized. If the swarm gets more than five successes, the target will not notice the stinging bites of the swarm.

Image: A swarm of lightning bugs, dancing in a hypnotic pattern.

Background: The lightning bug swarms live near populated areas, in forested places that are typically used for camping and hiking where people do not wish to travel too far from their safe homes. The swarms pick out lone hikers or campers and consume them, leaving nothing behind. Eventually, the place develops a reputation as "haunted" and people start leaving it alone.

Storytelling Notes: Sometimes, people don't take the hint the Wyld is giving them. The disappearance of a young child has galvanized the community into action. The lightning bugs may be discovered, and the Garou must decide whether to protect a swarm of sacred, child-eating bugs or normal people.

The Gruff Goat

Medusa smiled, "The Cow was not the only barnyard animal gorgon we have seen. The Gruff Goat is back as well."

"In England, farmers saw a goat eating the tailpipe of a car. In France, the Gruff Goat chewed open a hole in a fence, allowing a bunch of sheep to escape into a nearby forest. In Germany, the Goat took a bite out of a hunter's rifle."

"Wherever the Goat goes, it eats."

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Perception 2, Wits 1

Abilities: Primal-Urge 2, Stealth 3

Gnosis: 5; **Willpower:** 8

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Bite (Strength +4 damage. The Gruff Goat can consume anything; it can bite through and digest anything that it can put in its mouth. Eating Wurm-tainted things requires a point of Gnosis.); Horn Butt (difficulty 7, Strength +5 damage, requires a running start)

Powers: Step Sideways

Image: The Gruff Goat looks like a normal goat, though very well fed. Like The Cow, it tends to stare at supernatural creatures suspiciously, though that could be paranoia on the part of people staring at the Goat. Unlike The Cow, the Goat has a temper. People who attempt to push it around get butted or eaten.

Background: A Wyld-spirit fused with a normal goat. The purpose of the goat is a mystery second only to that of The Cow.

Storytelling Notes: A few packs call Goat sacred, and those who follow it as a totem work to protect the Goat. However, the Goat doesn't like being protected much, and it tends to eat its way out of captivity.

The Statue of the Monkey King

"We've freed the Monkey King," said Redsong.

"And how was the Monkey King imprisoned?" asked Ladon, an eyebrow arching.

"Two groups of Japanese Glass Walkers were feuding over some high-tech company. To force one group to sign

over some stock papers, a rival pack snuck into the first pack's caern and stole their statue of the Monkey King. It was the first pack's totem. A nasty gang war erupted. Some Freebooters I know heard about the gang war and decided that neither pack deserved the Monkey King. He's supposed to be free, after all. So they used the confusion to nab the statue. It was happy to be set free, but it didn't want to come with the Freebooters."

"Did it return to the Glass Walkers?" asked Ladon.

"Not that we know of. The Freebooters were taking the statue to Ecube when it escaped. It got loose somewhere between Kyoto and Athens."

"Good," said Ladon. "The Monkey King should be free. That is its nature."

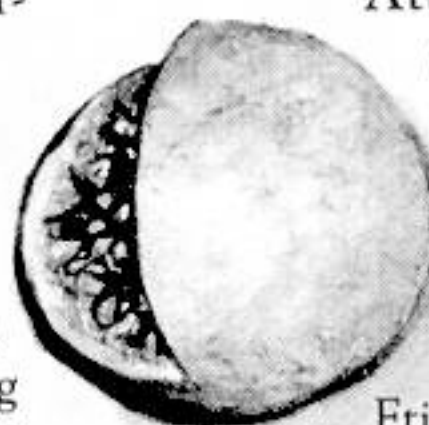
"But we were going to protect it," protested Redsong.

"As were the Glass Walkers who revered it."

"But they're Glass Walkers. They reek of the Weaver."

"Indeed," said Ladon. "I am so glad to see your concern. The Monkey King is free. That is what matters."

Redsong grumbled, but looked to her grandmother to continue.



Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4 (nimble), Stamina 5, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (cunning), Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 1, Expression 4, Melee (staff) 4, Occult 4, Performance 5, Subterfuge 5

Rage: 2; **Gnosis:** 6; **Willpower:** 7



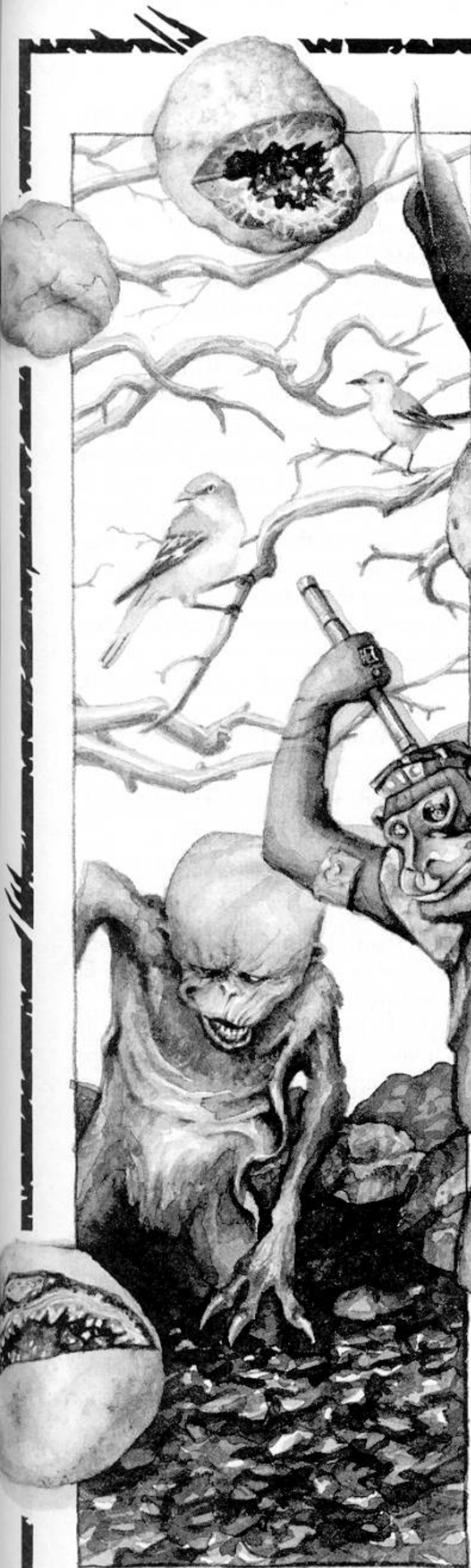
Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Stone Fists & Feet (Strength +2), Staff of the Monkey King (difficulty 5, damage Strength +1)

Armor: +3 to soak rolls from its stone form

Powers: Blissful Ignorance (as the Ragabash Gift), Create Element (as the Metis Gift), Doppelganger (as the Glass Walker Gift), Leap of the Kangaroo (as the Lupus Gift), Open Seal (as the Ragabash Gift)

Image: In his natural form, the statue of the Monkey King appears to be a stone statue of a monkey (about the size of a small child), with a bronze head and iron shoulders. Its eyes are made of crystals. His staff can shrink to the size of a toothpick or grow to the size of a telephone pole. However, the statue can change its appearance or turn invisible, so it does not always resemble its natural form.



Background: As a tribute to the Monkey King, the finest artisans of Beast Courts of Asia made this statue in his image. The Monkey King himself added a piece of his essence to the statue, giving it life and a copy of his personality. Down through the centuries, the statue provided guidance to the Beast Courts before a pack of Glass Walkers following the Monkey King as a totem came to China following a dream. The Glass Walkers convinced the statue to come with them, and it has remained with the Japanese Glass Walkers until recently, when a gang war in Kyoto led to the statue being kidnapped by Black Furies. It escaped the Furies and is now slowly making its way overland to its home in China. However, the Beast Courts, both packs of Glass Walkers and the Black Furies are chasing the statue. The statue finds this to be a fine game.

Storytelling Notes: The statue has a sense of humor about all this, but will not allow itself to be imprisoned again.

Rorg's Hungry Children

Medusa said, "Rorg, Incarna of Turog, has sent his Hungry Children out from his world to ours. In Colorado, a pack of Furies reported that the Hungry Children broke free in the Rocky Mountains. The avalanche that followed killed seventeen skiers and three members of the Mountain Rescue Society who tried to help the trapped skiers. When the thaw comes, the bodies will not be found. They took care of that. People do not need to ask what sort of creature eats men and leaves stone shards in the bite wounds."

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

Abilities: Athletics (rolling) 3, Brawl 3, Stealth 4

Rage: 7; **Gnosis:** 5; **Willpower:** 5

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Overbear (damage Strength +2), Bite (damage Strength +4)

Powers: Stone hide (+4 to soak), Rolling (12 yards/round), Flight (20 yards/round)

Image: When dormant, a boulder. When active, a flying boulder with a huge mouth and rows of sharp quartz teeth.

Background: Rorg's anger has grown with the advent of Anthelios. He sent his Hungry Children from the Asteroid Belt to the mountains of the world. There, they cause avalanches and eat people or machines. So far, no one has seen the Hungry Children in action, except for one UFO hunter, who mistook the flying rock for a flying saucer. His picture of the "saucer" has led to numerous UFO hunters to come to the area. Once the

Hungry Children eat the first UFO-ologist, even more will arrive, hoping to be "abducted by the mothership" as well.

Storytelling Notes: Fighting Rorg's Hungry Children is an almost certain way to draw the ire of the Red Talons. Helping them will draw other attention.

Mockers

"We've seen a nasty gorgon bird," said Redsong. "It's been seen in Canada, though it may be in other places too. A gal I know named it the Mocker. It looks like a mockingbird, but a little bigger. It talks too. But it's not a mimic like a parrot or a mynah bird. It starts talking, but its voice is hypnotic. It drones on and on like a telemarketer. Listen to it too long and you zone out." Redsong snapped her fingers. "And once you're under, it can do whatever it wants to you. You're in its power. And did I mention it's a carnivore?"

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Empathy 4, Expression 4

Rage: 1; **Gnosis:** 3; **Willpower:** 3

Health Levels: OK, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Beak (Strength +1)

Powers: Flight, Hypnosis, Sense Weaver (as the Glass Walker Gift)

• **Hypnosis:** Roll contested Manipulation + Expression vs. the target's Willpower (difficulty 7). Once hypnotized, the Mocker can implant one post-hypnotic suggestion for every two net successes it gets on the opposed roll. If hungry, it tells the target to close his eyes and block his pain centers. It then starts eating.

Image: The Mocker is an innocuous enough gorgon; it looks exactly like a normal mockingbird.

Background: The Mocker lives in deep forests of Canada. It uses its ability to sense the Weaver's influence to find its prey. If nothing tainted by the Weaver is nearby, it eats as a normal bird. But once it finds suitable prey (and mankind seems to be what it has a taste for), it will use its hypnotic ability to separate out weaker members of human "herds" and consume them.

Storytelling Notes: The Mocker generally ignores Garou (except for Glass Walkers). Mockers have a special taste for Ananasi, and enjoy hunting them.

Isnashi

Medusa looked to her granddaughter. "We're not in a hurry, Redsong. This is a telling of tales, not a quick summary. What sort of Galliard will you be if you rush through to the coda?"

"Sorry, Grandmother," replied Redsong, chastised.

"Don't be sorry. Do better." Medusa looked to Ladon and continued, "in Peru, the Isnashi has returned. And it

hunts once more. By night, it strikes. One of our Kin, Rosalinda Vega, says the Isnashi eats her flock. We repaid her for her loss, but the Isnashi is going to continue to hunt, drinking the blood of its prey."

"Like a damn Leech," muttered Redsong.

Medusa blanched. "We are speaking of a gorgon, a holy creature of the Wyld. Not some pathetic creature cursed by Weaver and Wyrn. The Isnashi is—"

"A bloodsucker," interrupted Redsong. "A bloodsucker that's eating the flocks of Kinfolk. If Maria had not sensed it for what it was, her pack would have—"

"Done a great wrong," interrupted Medusa. "The Wyld is not Gaia. But we defend Gaia by defending the Wyld. If the world were different, perhaps we would be speaking of the fomori as the last defenders of the Wyrn."

Heresy, thought Redsong, though she knew better than to speak her mind. She let her grandmother continue, while dark thoughts raced through her head.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 4

Abilities: Animal Ken 3, Brawl 3, Primal-Urge 3, Stealth 4

Rage: 4; **Gnosis:** 3; **Willpower:** 4

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Bite (Strength +3), Claws (Strength +1)

Powers: Nightvision, Patagia, Regeneration

Image: The Isnashi resembles El Chupacabras (the legendary goatsucker of Mexico and Central America). It is the size of a small child, with an enlarged head and sharp claw-like hands. It has vestigial wings like those of a flying squirrel. Unlike El Chupacabras, the Isnashi is covered with hair.

Background: The Isnashi is a nocturnal hunter. It preys on herd animals these days, finding them to be easy prey. They sneak up on their target and drop down from a tree branch (or perhaps a nearby roof, though the Isnashi generally avoid civilization). They then latch onto their prey and bite into an artery. They drain their prey of blood and then leave.

Storytelling Notes: The remains left behind by Isnashi feedings can resemble a vampire's feeding. An Isnashi who has come too close to civilization may attract the attention of not only the local Garou population, but that of the local vampires.

Goblins

Medusa looked to her granddaughter. Once, when she was Redsong's age, she met her first Ladon. It was a spiritual experience that she never forgot. The sins of the past could be put aside, and maybe, just maybe, the future could be made brighter. "In the Appalachian Mountains, the Goblins once again roam free. Once, in 1955, they

came out of hiding and terrorized a few Kentucky farming families. They are loose again. As before, lights in the sky welcomed the arrival of the Goblins. As before, they dance in the moonlight. As before, they attack those that attempt to harness the Wyld."

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4 (quick), Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4 (trickster), Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Performance 3, Repair 4, Stealth 5

Rage: 1; **Gnosis:** 4; **Willpower:** 3

Health Levels: OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Bite/Claws (Strength +1)

Powers: Blur of the Milky Eye (as the Ragabash Gift), Create Element (as the Metis Gift), Leap of the Kangaroo (as the Lupus Gift), Regeneration, Speed of Thought (as the Silent Strider Gift)

Image: The Goblins are three feet tall, with silvery skin. They have long arms that reach all the way to the ground, with sharp claws at the ends of their four fingers. Their eyes glow yellow in the night, and their heads are oversized with long pointed ears that stick out from the sides of their heads. All Goblins look and smell identical. They can easily tell each other apart, but to the human (or wolf) senses, they appear the same. They will often use this to their advantage, using the confusion to make their numbers seem larger or smaller.

Background: The Goblins are a force of chaos, spirits of the forest melded with small creatures. Their job is to scare people away from Wyld places. They do so with the reckless abandon of hyperactive children. Goblins can be found on the outskirts of cities, or at remote homes in the wilderness, where humanity attempts to tame the wild. Goblins love to scare their foes. Goblins run in large packs, though they usually use stealth and trickery so that an opponent only sees at most one or two at a time. They will try to convince their foes that a single Goblin can be all over the place.

Storytelling Notes: Goblins may also decide some Garou (especially those with strong Weaver influences) need a kick in the pants. The Goblins are rather like cartoon tricksters, not trying to hurt anyone so much as bedevil them. The Nuwisha find the antics of the Goblins hysterical, and often try to emulate the Goblins' antics. Goblins do not appreciate the imitation, and sometimes turn on Nuwisha, starting a "battle of the gags" that would make the battles of the Coyote and Roadrunner look like a reasoned debate.

The Evolving

Redsong, her face now calm and her voice steady took up the storytelling. "The Wyld is a force of change, of growth, of evolution. The humans with their tales of

Darwin and science don't see the whole story. Evolution is the spark of the Wyld that causes us to grow. Millennia ago, the Wyld lit that spark in apes, forcing development. That spark is once again lit, and brighter than before.

"In Africa, hunters whisper tales of beast-men. Some of these tales are the handiwork of the," she paused and her voice took on a note of distaste, "Bastet. Others are the Mokolé. Still others the Ajaba. But some of these tales come from another source.

"The Wyld has fanned its spark in other animals. A tribe of mountain gorillas has gone through a hundred centuries of change in a single generation. They aren't using tools, though. I guess the Weaver hasn't noticed them yet. We've got spirits monitoring the tribe, but at the rate they're evolving, they may catch up to man in a few generations.

"What happens then?"

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1 (a rare Evolved will have an Intelligence of 2), Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Rage: 1; **Gnosis:** 1; **Willpower:** 4

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Simple hand to hand attacks

Powers: Regeneration

Image: The Evolving resemble cavemen, though they are not nearly as evolved as *Australopithecus africanus*. They live a primitive hunter/gatherer lifestyle, with a single alpha-male leader. Right now, another generation is being born, and the children of this generation are more intelligent than their parents. Though each generation is more evolved than the previous, the Evolving live a normal lifespan of 30 years.

Background: In Kenya, the Wyld touched a tribe of mountain gorillas, as some believe the Wyld touched mankind's ancestors millennia ago. These gorillas grow in intelligence and sophistication with every passing generation.

Storytelling Notes: The Evolving may prove to be a divisive issue for the Garou. In time, they may come to equal mankind in intelligence. So far, the Wyld protects them from the Weaver and Wyrms. This race may end up far different from man and Garou. Should the Weaver touch these creatures, will the Garou decide once again to start the Impergium as they did in the past?

Mothman

"The Mothman returned," said Redsong.

"That's not his name," said Medusa. "He is the Night Watcher."

"Well, he's the Mothman now," retorted Redsong.

"An explanation, please," asked Ladon.

"In 1966, the Moth— Night Watcher came out of hiding for some reason. The people there called him 'the Mothman.' We had investigators in the area, but so did Weaver agents. Drones, we think, dressed in black. Tried to cover up the sightings. Eventually, Mothman went back into hiding." She started at her misnomer.

"Names are unimportant. Tell me the tale, Redsong," said Ladon.

"The Mothman..." Redsong shot a glance to her grandmother. "The Mothman comes out at night. People see it on lonely roads. Its presence causes things to break. Weaver-stuff, that is. it gives people nightmares. Animals fear it, as well they should. It flies by night, looking for whatever caused it to wake up. It will stop sometimes, landing outside houses or by stopped cars. It uses the eyes the Wyld gave it to look into people's souls. Its gaze hypnotizes, and its screech causes strong men to weep."

"And once it's done, it goes away. But it's back now. Not in West Virginia now. But it's active. And it's searching again. We don't know what for, yet."

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 4 (eerie), Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Athletics (flight) 4, Empathy 4, Enigmas 5, Intimidation 4, Primal Urge 4, Stealth 4

Rage: 2; **Gnosis:** 6; **Willpower:** 7

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: clawed feet (Strength +1)

Powers: Airt Sense, Break Reality, DreamSpeak (as the Galliard Gift), Flight (27 yards/round), Howl of the Banshee (as the Fianna Gift), Icy Chill of Despair (as the Shadow Lord Gift), Paralyzing Stare (as the Shadow Lord Gift), Regeneration, Sense of the Prey (as the Ragabash Gift), Sense the Unnatural (as the Lupus Gift), Sense Wurm (as the Metis Gift), Sense Weaver (as the Glass Walker Gift), Step Sideways

Image: The Mothman stands about seven feet tall and is covered in short, gray fur. It is humanoid with two human-like legs. It walks with a shuffling gait. It has long wings instead of arms, with about a 15' wingspan. It doesn't have a head, as much as its eyes and mouth are

at the top of its torso. The eyes of a Mothman are large, about the size of baseballs, and they glow dark red in the night. When it flies, it simply stretches out its wings, not needing to flap them to gain speed or altitude.

Background: The Mothman is an agent of the Wyld. It comes out of the Umbra for reasons only it knows. Its semi-public appearance in the 1960's was to destroy an important creation of the Weaver's: a suspension bridge. The bridge was a creation of Drones as a home for Weaver-spirits. People hypnotized by the Mothman often have dreams of the Mothman's duty. When the Mothman first appears, it does not yet know its exact purpose. It only knows where it must be. It will spend weeks or even months, searching for the exact construct of the Weaver that it must destroy. Once it has found its elusive target, it spends a period of time using its Break Reality power to create small flaws in the structure. It also damages other places in the area that are strong in the Weaver, to allay the suspicions of the Weaver-agents in the area. Eventually, these small flaws add up, and the structure itself crumbles, as the Silver Bridge over the Ohio River collapsed in December of 1967, killing 46 people. The Mothman has a rudimentary conscience, and will sometimes use its DreamSpeak Gift to warn people of the impending disaster.

Storytelling Notes: The Mothman is a creepy creature out of UFO mythology. Player Character packs seeking the Mothman should be treated to the best tropes of the UFO/conspiracy theory. The Men in Black are best represented as Drones (see **Book of the Weaver**). For those in a crossover state of mind, the Men in Black who hunt the Mothman can be the Men in Black from **Mage: The Ascension** (see **Guide to the Technocracy** for more information about the Men in Black).

Thunderhead

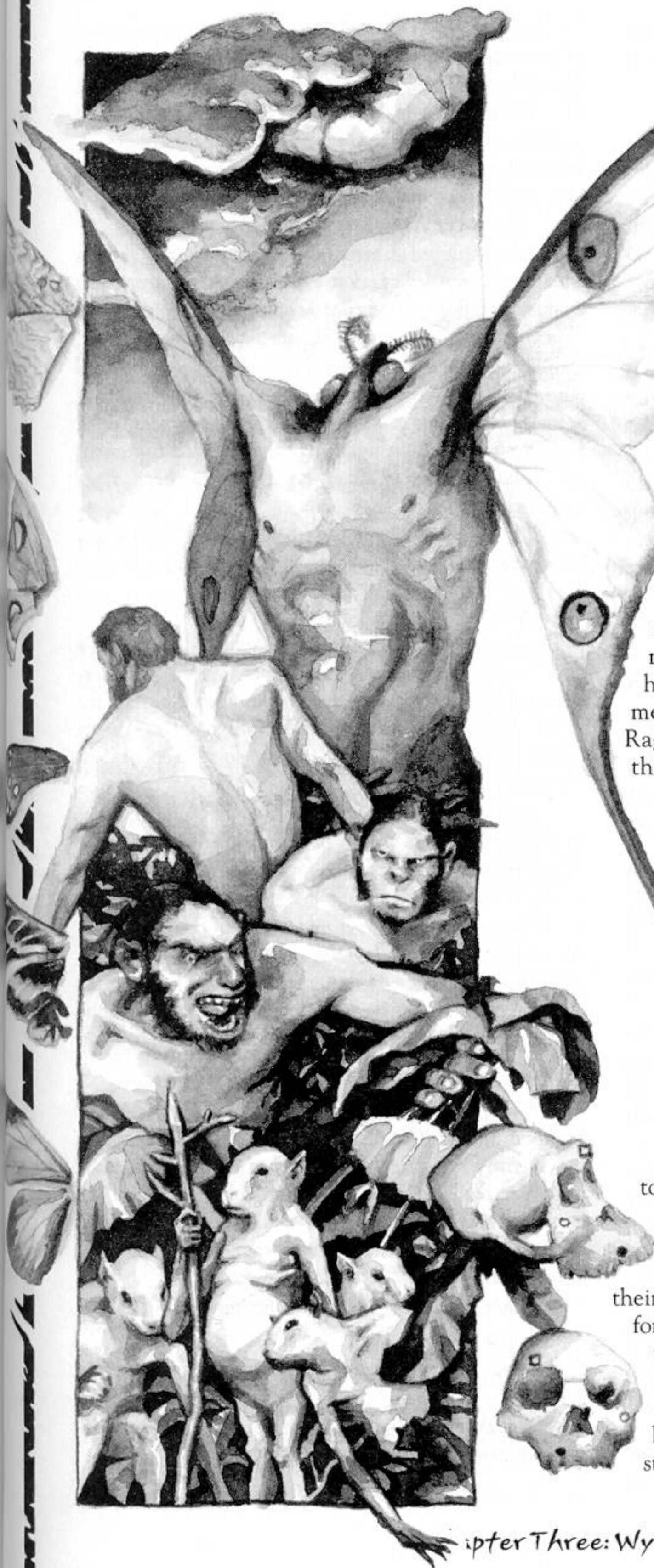
Medusa said, "You are doing better, granddaughter."

Redsong smiled a private smile. "Thank you, dear grandmother. I hope to follow your path."

Medusa continued, "The Thunderhead has been the hardest gorgon to track. While men count every gust of wind across the face of Mother Gaia with their radar and their 'Doppler 2001', tracking the Thunderhead proves difficult. It follows some storms, but breaks with one to join another."

(Depending on the weather system the Thunderhead has joined with, its Rage, Willpower and Health Levels vary.)

Weather System	Rage	Willpower	Health Levels
Light Rain	3	6	OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated
Storm	4	5	OK, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated
Thunderstorm	5	4	OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated
Tornado/Hurricane	6	3	OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, -5, Incapacitated



We have only seen it a few times, though we are working on better ways to track it. A weather balloon, perhaps."

Attributes: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Empathy 3, Enigmas 5, Science (meteorology) 5, Spirit Lore (air spirits) 5

Rage: 3-6; **Gnosis:** 6; **Willpower:** 3-6

Health Levels: See below

Attacks: See Powers.

Powers: Cloud Body, Create Wind, Disorient, Flood, Freeze, Lightning (Blast), Shatter Glass, Swift Flight, Updraft (as appropriate for the weather system with which the Thunderhead merges)

- **Cloud Body:** Only a few forms of attack can harm a Thunderhead. Wym-tainted attacks such as Balefire disrupt the cloud's form. Additionally, wind or spirit-based attacks harm the cloud's form. Cunning players may use scientific methods to harm a Thunderhead. The Storyteller should use her best judgment in those cases and reward creativity. Use the Rage as Stamina for purposes of soaking attacks that would damage a Thunderhead.

Image: A Thunderhead is a cloud. It can be sometimes picked out in a cloudy sky, moving against the wind. The kind of cloud it is depends on the local weather, though once merged with a storm system, it can increase or decrease the strength of a storm.

Background: A Thunderhead is a creation of sky spirits who wish a permanent home away from the Umbra. Since their first appearance, they have flown over the Earth, picking up knowledge of sky spirits. In ancient times, Garou would climb mountains to get a chance to speak to a Thunderhead. Nowadays, different opportunities, from parachuting to airplanes, make it easier for a Garou to speak with a Thunderhead. They tend not to like airplanes, but will sometimes use their wind powers to keep a parachuting Garou inside it for a time while they converse. Those who displease the Thunderhead find their chute snarled. Some Garou have survived a fall from the heavens after a displeased Thunderhead spilled their parachute, but those who really irk a Thunderhead end up struck by lightning once they hit the ground, to

accentuate the storm's point. Thunderheads suffer damage from air pollution, and try to stay away from populated areas.

Storytelling Notes: The Thunderhead offers a rare opportunity for Garou, a chance to wander about in the physical clouds. Garou often go into the Umbral skies for adventure, but the physical skies offer a different challenge. Confronting a Thunderhead, either in search of information about air spirits or in an attempt to convince it to water a Kinfolk's crops, gives a chance for Garou to stretch their wings, in a literal sense.

• • •

With that Redsong stood up, then assisted Medusa to her feet. Redsong bowed to Ladon. "And now, our tales are told. This night, we thank you, blessed Memory. This night, the old songs remain young."

Ladon remained sitting, and looked at Redsong. She knows, thought Redsong. She knows what I'm thinking. Damned Wyrms creature. She knows what I'll do after Grandmother passes. Redsong felt the rage boil under her skin. Her fingers flexed.

"I do not think this night is over yet, warriors of Gaia," said Ladon.

"Why is that?" asked Redsong, trying to keep her voice even.

"Because what is the use of Memory, if no one ever learns from it?"

"She is not ready," interrupted Medusa. "She is still young. Her next—"

"Not ready for what?" demanded Redsong.

Ladon smiled enigmatically. "Neither glory nor honor." She turned and started walking into the cave. "Follow me, Redsong. Follow, if you dare."

Redsong snarled, "I dare." She shifted into wolf-form and followed the dragon into the cave.

Ladon looked back at the wolf following her. "The myths call us collectors. Of gold. Of precious stones. But we are truly the collectors of memory. We remember the times long past. I remember my ancestor carving out this cave with his claws in the times before man stood upright." A light shone from up ahead, flickering on the cave walls. I remember a time of balance between Deviser, Designer and Dissolver. I remember a time when this was a sapling." She gestured to the young wolf. Up ahead, the cave tunnel opened up. Stars flickered on the walls of the cave. The moon's light, beaming down through a small crack in the roof, lit up the room like a million candles. In the center of the cave was a tree. It nearly filled the immense cave with twisting branches. The tree was golden. Golden apples hung from golden limbs, surrounded by golden leaves.

"Behold, the true tree. Keeper of knowledge. The true source." Ladon went to the tree and plucked an apple from a

low-hanging limb. "The apple we shared this evening had fallen on the ground. This one comes straight from the limb." She offered the apple to Redsong. "Straight from the Wyld. Take. Eat. This is the Wyld." She looked at Redsong knowingly. "Unless you are afraid. Don't think I don't see the fear in you, little wolf. I remember that look. It was the look in the eyes of your sisters when they came for us. Understanding erases fear." She held forth the apple again. "Understand."

Redsong swelled up to the massive Crinos form. "I'm not afraid," she growled. Ladon looked up at the werewolf, unimpressed. Redsong snatched the apple from Ladon's hands. "I'm not afraid of anything." She ate the apple in one bite.

The walls of the cave melted before Redsong's eyes and she was left standing alone. Rainbows of color rocketed around her, shifting and changing. Her keen senses reeled from the overload. Instinctively, she reverted to human form, and curled up in a ball, hands over her head. Eyes squeezed shut.

"That is foolish of you, little wolf," said Ladon's voice. "Now it is time for me to speak, and you to listen."

Wyld Spirits

Ladon's voice burned through Redsong like dragon's fire. "You believe because you have chased the Thunderhead and fostered an Arden that you know the Spirits of the Wyld. Perhaps you watched a Vortex shred a Pattern Spider, or even saw a Color String on some deep Umbral journey. You know nothing!"

"I tell you now the Wyld is not something one catalogs, or shepherds. If you are to be Medusa in the upcoming Wonderwork of the Dissolver, you must understand. You must change."

The cacophony waned and Redsong could stand to open her eyes. Ladon stood before her, on a small island of earth floating in space. Redsong lay in front of her, floating in space. Surrounding the pair were shifting polychromatic clouds. "Here begins the lesson."

Sparks

"Look, stripling. Learn," said Ladon. With a wave of her hand, the mists coalesced. A glowing streak of energy appeared in front of Redsong. It bobbed in front of her head, no bigger than her human fist. Its color shifted as she watched, never remaining one shade for more than an instant. It bounced in front of her, never able to keep in the same place. The dance fascinated Redsong.

"What, what is it?" she asked hesitantly.

"It is a Spark."

"Some sort of lightning elemental?" asked Redsong hesitantly.

"Not that sort of spark. It is a spark of inspiration. A spark of new ideas."

"In ancient times, the Sparks were large enough to blind if you looked at one directly. The Sparks inspired men to use fire. A Spark watched as a water-spirit helped Great Song of the Morning, and thus your kind learned of fetishes."

"So they know everything?" asked Redsong.

"No, they merely give others a push, helping them to realize the truth inside themselves."

Willpower 3, Rage 1, Gnosis 6, Essence 10

Charms: Airt Sense, Inspire, Materialize, Re-form, Swift Flight

• **Inspire:** The Spark gives a touch of inspiration to those it decides to help. No one can force a Spark to Inspire him or her. The Spark rolls Gnosis (difficulty equals the Gauntlet rating). If successful, the target of the inspiration comes up with a good idea. The idea is generally a solution to a puzzle or problem the target had been worrying about. Most often, the subject had all of the pieces necessary to solve the problem, but required a change of perspective to arrive at the solution. Storytellers may use Sparks to assist players stuck on a certain problem.

Image: Sparks are small glowing orbs of light. They shift through colors incredibly fast and cannot stay in one place.

Background: Sparks are free-floating pieces of creative energy. Some of the Wyld's energies are devoted to the growth and change of physical entities. Sparks, on the other hand, change ideas.

Storytelling Notes: In ancient times, Garou searched the Umbra for Sparks, hoping to use them to spark their ideas or give solutions to difficult problems. Their inspirational abilities were so renowned that Garou and mages, hoping to harness the power of new ideas, hunted them almost to extinction. Because of this, they avoid Umbral travelers and rarely show themselves. However, they do still fulfill their destined function, and occasionally bless worthy supplicants with new ideas.

Vectors

The Spark slowly faded away. "What now?" asked Redsong.

"Tell me, do you know physics?" asked Ladon.

"I never finished high school," confessed Redsong. "I read a lot, though."

"Then maybe you will know the answer to this question: what do you call something that has no mass, and only direction?"

"Alapsed Catholic?" asked Redsong. Ladon looked at her disdainfully. "Hey, I know seventeen ways to kill someone with my pinky finger and, more importantly, over three hundred of my people's ballads. I don't need to know physics."

Ladon glared at Redsong. "Then know this." A beam of light shot out of the mist, lancing over her shoulder towards

Redsong. In a fraction of a second, the beam changed direction. It continued to move, never slowing down, only shifting its path. "This is a Vector spirit. Not all elementals represent physical things like fire or water. Some of them embody ideas. The Wyld gave us concepts as well as things."

"A Vector never stops moving. It can change its speed or direction, but it remains constantly in motion."

Willpower 9, Rage 2, Gnosis 6, Essence 17

Charms: Airt Sense, Materialize, Re-form, Swift Flight

Image: A Vector looks like a beam of light. It can travel as fast as light, or as slow as a walk, though it tends to hate such sluggish speeds. Vectors prefer to move as fast as they can, which is considerable. They will talk with travelers in the Umbra, but only if the person wishing to speak with them makes the effort to keep up with them.

Background: Vectors are "concept spirits," akin to some of the inhabitants of the High Umbra. Vectors are spirits of motion. The Silent Striders often learn travel Gifts from the Vectors.

Storytelling Notes: Vectors know quite a bit about the Umbra. They travel faster than lightning through the spirit worlds, rarely slowing down. They can be useful, if somewhat flighty sources of information about the spirit world. Vectors have seen just about everything, though they don't pay close attention to their surroundings, focused only on the joy of motion.

The Echoes

The Vector continued away from Ladon and Redsong. "Perhaps you should go back to school. Learn useful things. More than killing." She gestured and the mist parted. In the distance was a hill of dark red dirt. A slow progression of animals walking two by two walked over the hill. "In times past, only a few creatures crossed over the hill at a time." Ladon whistled and a pair of small forms just walking over the hill turned to Ladon. "Now it is a regular progression." The two forms scampered over to the pair of shapechangers.

"Monkeys?" asked Redsong.

"Miss Waldron's red colobus monkeys, to be precise. They lived in the forests of West Africa. No human had seen their like in close to a decade. You will not see them again. The last of that breed in the world just died."

"We were the last pair, when once there were many," said the male, his voice high and clear. "My mate carried our child, and the last hope for a new generation. A human, stomping through the woods and reeking of dead berries, killed my mate with his lightning stick. He didn't even eat her. I died soon after. I knew I was the last, so why linger on?"

"Extinct," whispered Redsong.

"Not entirely," said Ladon. "Their spirits linger on. But they will dance in the forests again. Their echoes

remain here. The unique light of the Wyld in each species cannot be extinguished. That last flickering light lives on. And we remember them." Ladon looked to the pair of monkeys. "And we will never forget you. Now join the other echoes of life. I will come later, and hear your songs." The pair walked away gracefully.

"Who did this?" demanded Redsong.

"Does it matter?" asked Ladon.

"I'm going to kill them," snarled Redsong. "Poachers!"

"And once they are dead, they can return to the forests of Earth?" asked Ladon.

"Enough with the Yoda crap. I want them to pay."

"Not that I am a blessed Warrior of Gaia, but would it not make more sense to protect the remaining species, instead of indulging in mindless vengeance?"

Redsong looked down at her feet, then at the slow progression of animals walking over the hill. A pair of manatees swam towards the top. Redsong looked away, rubbing her eyes.

Willpower 5, Rage 1, Gnosis 4, Essence 10

Charms: Airt Sense, Armor, Realm Sense, Re-form, Tracking (depending on the animal)

Image: Echoes resemble a specific extinct animal, one male and one female of the breed. They appear as idealized instances of the animal.

Background: Each species of animal carries in it a piece of the Wyld. When that species becomes extinct, that piece returns to the Umbra, to a special realm populated by extinct breeds. In this realm, they cannot be destroyed. Griffin, the mighty totem obsessed with punishing the extinction of animals, often comes to the Realm of Echoes to take a tally. Legends say that when Griffin's count reaches a certain number, the Apocalypse will commence. Echoes cannot leave their Realm.

Storytelling Notes: The Echoes remain as a powerful reminder of the stakes for which the Garou fight. Each loss of a species diminishes the spark of the Wyld in the world. In addition to the spark of the Wyld in each of the Echoes, they also contain the race memories of their entire species. They remember everything that happened to their species, and are willing to share information with others on occasion.

Sands of Time

Ladon gestured and the mists closed over the portal to the hill. "I suppose you know what this is," said Ladon. She pointed below the two of them.

Redsong looked down. "A beach," she said tentatively.

"And what is on a beach?"

"Sand."

"Correct."

"So it's a sand-spirit. What is it, some kind of earth-spirit?"

"How literal of you. The ancients used sand to count the passage of time."

"Yeah, hourglasses and stuff."

"They did this because they knew a bit of the truth." Ladon held out a small dark seed. "Watch." Ladon tossed the seed into the patch of sand. In an instant, the seed grew into a tall apple tree.

"Wow. We could use that on farms," said Redsong. The leaves on the tree suddenly turned brown and fell from the branches. "Or not." Before her eyes, the tree rotted and died.

"The Wyld is a force of change. As is time," said Ladon.

Willpower 5, Rage 7, Gnosis 6, Essence 18

Charms: Age Reality, Airt Sense, Materialize, Realm Sense, Re-form

• **Age Reality:** The Age Reality works just like the Break Reality Charm. However, the Age Reality effect is limited to aging effects. Rather than creating a door in a wall, the Sand spirit could cause the wall to crumble with age.

Image: Sands of Time appear as a cloud of sand. Sometimes the sand "rests" as a pile of sand, but it can awaken in an instant.

Background: Philosophers among the Garou believe that time itself is a creation of the Wyld. The Weaver would have frozen time in a single moment, and the Wyrms would have simply ended it. But the Wyld saw time as a force of change. The Sands of Time are among the oldest of the Wyld-spirits.

Storytelling Notes: A few rare Garou know of the Sands of Time. In ancient times, the Garou used the Sands (and the proper rituals) to help their crops grow. Another legend says that the Fianna used the Sands to properly age their brews in seconds. Either way, those who wish to use time as a weapon may seek out the Sands of Time.

Unravelers

Ladon gestured and the fog closed beneath them. "Neat stuff," said Redsong. "I can think of a few things I'd wish old age on. But can it reverse time? Un-age people or, uh, things."

"You think of your grandmother. That is good. And a good question. Sadly, no. The Sands can accelerate aging, but cannot reverse it."

"But is there a spirit that can?"

"Do you think eternal youth would be a good thing?" asked Ladon, arching an eyebrow.

"I... I don't want my grandmother to die."

"That is not what I asked. I asked if eternal youth would be a good thing. If living forever were such a blessing, why do the vampires call it 'the curse of Cain'? Whatever that means."

"Because they combust in the sun and stuff? No, I know. I know. Eternal youth wouldn't be a good thing."

"Your wisdom grows, Redsong," said Ladon. "The only thing that is constant in the world is change. There is a reason for that."

"However, while I know of no way to reverse the aging process, there is a Wyld-spirit that has powers akin to that."

Ladon gestured and the mists began spinning. A small tornado appeared in front of her. But as Redsong looked more closely, she could see that the tornado was really "unspinning." Rather than sucking in the stray mists that surrounded the two of them, it expelled them. "This is an Unraveler. Do you have something manufactured with you? Something you will not miss?"

Redsong reached into her pockets and pulled out a coin. "Will a penny do?"

"Yes; toss it into the Unraveler." Redsong did as asked, and threw the penny into the vortex. A moment later, small lumps of metal struck the ground. "Copper and zinc, I believe."

Redsong picked up the tiny hunks of metal. "Cool."

Willpower 3, Rage 5, Gnosis 4, Essence 15

Charms: Airt Sense, Materialize, Re-form, Unravel

- **Unravel:** The Unraveler's sole power is to reduce manufactured items into their raw components. A glass becomes a pile of sand. Clothing becomes cotton fibers. Steel becomes raw iron and carbon. To Unravel something, the spirit rolls Rage against a difficulty of the Gauntlet rating. This power does no good against living things, only manufactured items. In ancient times, the Unraveler had even greater powers, and reverted living things to their primal essences. If the item is a fetish, the unraveling process frees the spirit trapped inside.

Image: An Unraveler is a swirling anti-vortex. It resembles a small tornado, filmed and then shown backwards.

Background: Garou sages believe the Unravelers to be the Wyld's "eraser." Not willing to hand over broken creations, the Wyld created the Unraveler to return creations to their natural states, so the Wyld could start over again. Others believe that its power is for freeing things from the forms the Weaver has frozen them in.

Storytelling Notes: A few monkeywrenchers tried to bring an Unraveler with them into a Magadon plant, but the high Gauntlet made it difficult for the spirit to use its powers. However, Unravelers are useful in the hands of those that wish to destroy items that

cannot otherwise be unmade. They simply bring the item with them into a low Gauntlet area and let the Unraveler do its work there.

Origami

As Redsong watched, the Unraveler unspun itself. "Are you summoning all these spirits here, or is this some kind of illusion?"

Ladon replied, "Millennia ago, your kind slew our kind. Memories were lost forever. Excuse me if I do not tell you my secrets."

Chagrined, Redsong answered, "Fair enough. What's next?"

The mists rearranged themselves once again. A flat white sheet appeared in front of Redsong. As she watched, the sheet began folding in upon itself. It started as simple folds, but quickly accelerated into faster and more complex shapes.

"Origami," muttered Redsong. "It looks like Origami."

"Then call it that."

"What does it do?" she asked.

"It folds itself. It changes. Does it need to do more?"

"But why is it here? Never mind. More Yoda," muttered Redsong.

"Just because we watch these spirits does not mean we understand them. Our purpose is not understanding or naming. We remember. And that is enough."

Willpower 5, Rage 2, Gnosis 9, Essence 16

Charms: Airt Sense, Materialize, Re-form, Shapeshift

Image: The Origami spirit appears as an ever-folding sheet of white light. Though its size changes due to whatever shapes it may assume, it tends to appear as man-sized.

Background: The Origami-spirit's function is unknown to Garou. It can be found in remote areas of the Umbra, sitting in one place and changing shape constantly. At random times, it will revert to a large sheet of light and begin the changing process once again. Stargazers will often travel the Umbra, looking for Origami-spirits. They often meditate in the presence of an Origami. If they successfully roll Charisma + Meditation (difficulty 7) while meditating on the shape of an Origami, they temporarily gain one dot of Enigmas for every success rolled.

Storytelling Notes: Garou seeking the answers to troubling metaphysical questions may seek out the Origami in the hopes of attaining insight by meditating on its ever-shifting form.

Serpentines

The Origami folded itself into mist and vanished. Ladon reached into a thick bank of fog and pulled. The cloud stretched like taffy. With her other hand, she chopped

through the strands of mist and grabbed the now free end. With an end in each hand, she twisted the mists until it became a staff. "This should appear familiar to you." Out of another cloud slithered two snakes made of green light. They wrapped themselves around the staff.

"A caduceus," whispered Redsong.

"Exactly."

Willpower 4, Rage 1, Gnosis 8, Essence 14

Charms: Airt Sense, Curing, Healing, Materialize, Realm Sense, Re-form

• **Curing:** Like the Healing charm, the Curing charm allows Serpentine to cure diseases as well as heal wounds. The spirit rolls its Gnosis against a difficulty 4 for normal diseases, difficulty 7 for life-threatening diseases, difficulty 8 for normally incurable diseases and difficulty 9 for supernatural diseases. (Note: vampirism is not a disease.)

Image:

Serpentines appear as snakes made out of shimmering light. Serpentine are always found in pairs. They are actually the same spirit in two bodies, and always act in unison.

Background: Serpentine are healing snakes, as the ancient Greeks and Native Americans believed. In ancient times, healers would bind Serpentine into fetishes.

Storytelling

Notes: Storytellers could use a quest for a Serpentine in order to send characters into the Umbra to cure a sick



friend or ally. A more evil suggestion would be for a sick enemy of the pack to blackmail them into recovering a Serpentine.

Howlers

Ladon paused and sniffed the air.

"What is it?" asked Redsong.

"I thought I perceived something. But no matter."

A piercing shriek cut the air. "What was that? Was that what you smelled?"

"No to the latter. It is your next visitor." Another scream crashed in their ears. Redsong winced in pain. "The Howler."

A third cry sounded. Redsong fell to her knees. "What is it screaming about?"

"It screams because it is the Howler." Another below sounded, this one softer, from farther away.

"I would let it approach closer, but you would do me no good deaf. How would you learn?" she asked rhetorically.

Willpower 5, Rage 8, Gnosis 2, Essence 15

Charms: Airt Sense, Blast (Sound) (in addition to causing damage, the shriek causes one round of deafness for every level of damage caused), Create Wind, Materialize, Realm Sense, Re-form, Shatter Glass

Image: The Howler is a small spirit, no larger than a small bird. It looks like a small lizard with an enormous mouth. When it screams, the mouth expands to ten times the size of the body.

Background: Little is known of the Howlers. They are old spirits, appearing in ancient legends of the Garou. It is believed the Howlers may have been al-

lies of the White Howlers, but since the fall of the Howlers, they tend to avoid the Garou. They are known to despise the Black Spiral Dancers, but then, many spirits share that sentiment.

Storytelling Notes: Many assume, due to the similarity in names, that the Howler is connected to the White Howlers. The actual connection is left up to the individual Storyteller, but if one can brave the deafening bellow of the spirit, it might have information on the lost Howlers, for those interested in that sort of thing.

Gyres

"Is the next one going to be so noisy?" asked Redsong.

"No. The Gyres never speak."

"What's a Gyre?"

"A Gyre is a symbol. An abstract representation of an ideal. The ideal that nothing ends."

"Everything ends," said Redsong. "If the world wasn't going to end—"

"The world is not going to end."

"Oh, well, that's a relief. I guess I'll book my vacation then."

"Gaia give me patience. I will tell you something few Garou know. The world will not end." She looked to Redsong and continued, "The world will change. You fight to decide the shape of the next world. If the Wyrms win, it will be an age of darkness and destruction. If the Weaver wins, it will be an age locked in stone, where nothing will ever change."

"And if the Wyld wins?" asked Redsong. "What then?"

"Then there is hope." Ladon reached into the mists as she had before. This time, rather than pulling out a staff, she spun the cloud into a circle. "Behold the Gyre, the Ouroboros."

Willpower 5, Rage 2, Gnosis 9, Essence 20

Charms: Airt Sense, Armor, Cleanse the Blight, Healing, Materialize, Realm Sense, Re-form

Image: The Gyre appears as a circle. Sometimes it looks like a ring of fire, other times it appears as a serpent eating its own tail. Whatever the form, it remains a perfect circle.

Background: The Gyre is a potent symbol of rebirth and renewal. It has inspired Garou in Harano to once again take up the cause.

Storytelling Notes: Happening upon a Gyre in the Umbra is a rare and portentous occasion. It is generally taken as a sign of change and rebirth. They often heralded the birth of ancient Garou leaders.

Chatterer

Ladon pulled a small trinket from her robes. "What's that?" asked Redsong.

"The ear bones of an owl, preserved in amber." In the distance, a breeze carried a faint noise to the pair. "You will be able to see the Chatterer, but not hear it."

"Why can't I hear it? The Howler freakin' deafened me and you didn't object to that."

"Because, if I decide to return you to your grandmother, I do not want you to be insane." The noise grew, sounding like harsh laughter mixed with the screech of nails on a chalkboard. "One cannot hear the voice of the Wyld and remain sane. Do not speak to the Chatterer. Do not make a sound. The talen will protect us for a short time, but its power is not infinite. The Wyld's power is." Ladon whispered to the charm of amber and bone, then crushed it in her hands.

Noise ended. Redsong looked to the distance, where the sound had been coming from. The mists parted as if afraid of what was coming. She saw the Chatterer. It was like an enormous slug, the size of a large horse. It was covered from tip to tail in mouths. Thousands of mouths. Each of them speaking, singing, laughing, crying, mocking. Redsong had walked into a Hive. She was no untested cub. And this scared her. She held her breath, afraid to breathe.

Willpower 5, Rage 8, Gnosis 8, Essence 25

Charms: Airt Sense, Materialize, Re-form, Scream of the Wyld, Shatter Glass, Short Out, Umbraquake

• **Scream of the Wyld:** This feared ability is possessed solely by the Chatterer. Its thousands of mouths sing in chaotic harmonies that drive anyone who hears them mad. Anyone hearing the Scream of the Wyld must roll Willpower (difficulty 9). If they succeed, they suffer from an immediate fox frenzy and a bout of temporary insanity for 10 minus Willpower days. (See Chapter Four.) Those who fail are afflicted with a form of insanity permanently (though spending a point of permanent Willpower can drop the effect to a temporary bout lasting 10 minus Willpower months). If they botch, they become a gibbering incoherent mess, incapable of any movement or coherent thought for the rest of their natural lives.

Image: An enormous gray slug, covered in mouths. Some mouths are human. Others animal. Others... something else.

Background: The Wyld created the Chatterer out of rage and despair when the Weaver trapped the Wyrms in its webs. It wanders the deepest recesses of the Umbra, screaming out its rage and anger.

Storytelling Notes: The Chatterer is an exceptionally nasty spirit. It can be used as the focus of a story without ever actually appearing. Perhaps an ally or even a mentor of the player characters accidentally heard the scream of the Chatterer, and has temporarily (or worse, permanently) gone mad. The players must stop their friend, without harming them, and then find some way to reverse the madness.

Twisters

Once the creature passed, Redsong's hearing returned. She turned to Ladon. "That was... awful."

"The Wyld is not always pretty flowers and dew-eyed, harmless rabbits."

"Hey, I know that. I've seen some really nasty gorgons. I get the picture. But that was—"

"The second most fearsome Wyld creature I have witnessed."

"Second? Second?!"

"Calm yourself. Look to the Horizon."

"Is that the first?"

"No. It is Change." Redsong could hear the capital letter when Ladon spoke. In the distance, an immense whirlwind blew. "It is called the Twister. Whatever it touches is changed. Sometimes in the body. Sometimes in the mind. Sometimes in the spirit."

Willpower 8, Rage 8, Gnosis 9, Essence 27

Charms: The Twister's set of Charms changes with every passing second. Whatever other powers it possesses, it always has the Break Reality charm.

Image: A whirlwind of wind and energy.

Background: In ancient times, the Twister took the remains of things destroyed by the Wyrms and changed them into something new and different. When the Weaver trapped the Wyrms, the Twister lost its purpose. It now randomly wanders in and out of the Umbra. In the past, it has been responsible for rains of toads and transporting people halfway around the world.

Storytelling Notes: The Twister gives player characters the opportunity to have a different sort of adventure. Many foes of the Garou can be fought. With a Twister, all they can do is get out of the way. It gives the players a chance to "fight" a (super)natural disaster, something that takes more than claws and klaives to defeat.

The Nameless

Redsong asked Ladon. "If that was the second nastiest, what is the worst?"

Ladon looked over at the young werewolf. The fear in her eyes was almost gone. Instead, a new light shone. The light of the Wyld. "I will tell you."

"The most terrifying spirit of the Wyld has no name. It cannot, for names give order and reason to a thing, be it a person, a werewolf or a spirit. The Ones-Who-Have-No-Name cannot be named. Their power is too great. They have no limits. They have no boundaries. They are the Wyld incarnate."

Ladon looked to the horizon. "The humans have told tales that when mortals looked into the faces of their gods, they burst into flame, or they went mad. Or some other

unspeakable ending happened to them. Those tales touch what it is to know the nameless.

"I carry a memory in my mind: the memory of Kasara, one of our greatest heroes. Once, the forces of the Designer attempted to capture one of the Nameless, to force a name upon it. From the distance, she watched and saw the Chaos Monitors try to snare it in their webs. Terrible forces made war that day. They swarmed all over the Nameless' protean form, trying to force it to keep a single shape. In the end, the Nameless was injured, dying. Its powers were waning. So it did the only thing it could. It chose the smallest of its foes, a tiny Pattern Spider. It took the Spider's name from it."

"That was the last thing Kasara ever saw. In that moment, a fundamental force of creation was unleashed. The bond between a creature and its name is more difficult to sunder than the forces holding matter together. A philosopher would say they are the same thing. The Nameless One died, but it died free."

Willpower 9, Rage 10, Gnosis 9, Essence 30

Charms: All non-Weaver/non-Wyrm charms, Taking The Name

• **Taking The Name:** This is the Nameless One's ultimate power, the one it reserves for a last-ditch effort. By taking the name from an entity, the Nameless One looses the internal spiritual forces that hold a creature together. In effect, it is splitting the spiritual nature of a thing, much in the way an atom bomb splits an atom. The result is an enormous destructive explosion, on both the spiritual and physical planes. The Nameless One expends all of its remaining Essence, and rolls that dice pool in a roll opposed by the target's Willpower. If the target gets more successes, it survives the onslaught, and the Nameless One perishes. If the Nameless One gets more successes, it dies, but in the process of removing the target's name, the target explodes in a burst of primal energy. The explosion is akin to a nuclear weapon's detonation. The Storyteller should use her best judgement as to how that affects anyone in the area, but instant death is a pretty clean way to go.

Image: A shapeless entity, unable to hold a single form. It constantly moves and undulates in chaotic pattern. Just as it cannot hold a single shape, its size also varies from as small as a person to as large as a house. It has seven limbs, then none. It has no eyes, then ten thousand.

Background: The Nameless are some of the Wyld's most powerful spirits, created millennia ago before the Weaver had named everything. When the Weaver began naming things, the Wyld hid some of its creatures, knowing that giving these spirits names would sap their powers. The Wyld also gave them the power to take away something's name, knowing that should

the Triat go to war some eon, that it would need such powerful creations.

Storytelling Notes: The Nameless are rare and powerful spirits, not something one would encounter except in the deepest reaches of the Umbra, far from the Weaver's webs. They travel up and down in the Umbra, never visiting the same place more than once. Their power makes them a tactical threat in the war of the Apocalypse, one that all forces would wish to control. Naturally, it's impossible to control them. They think on levels other creatures cannot comprehend.

Children of the Muses

"Sounds awful," said Redsong. "What're you going to show me next?"

"I tell you this so that you may trust me. I tell you this because I can still dream of a better future. I will show you the most precious thing I know."

"Look, I'm... I'm sorry," stammered Redsong.

"A good start, young one," continued Ladon. "I don't think I remember hearing that in a long time. You give me that which I will now share with you. Behold!"

The mists that surrounded the two women swirled faster and faster. As she looked, Redsong could see the mists breaking up, splitting into shapes. As she watched, the changed in colors, sparkling and flashing. The beauty caused her to smile; the first one that had cracked her face in a long time. "What are they?"

"The Wyld is a force of creativity. It is more than the birthing of new creatures. It is the birthing of new ideas. The creation of thoughts not yet conceived in the hearts of humankind. It is hope."

As the spirits danced in front of her, they started to sing in the language of spirits. Redsong fell to her knees, entranced by the lights and sounds. "It's beautiful."

"Thank you," whispered the spirits in harmony. "We see the beauty in your soul blooming forth. We are happy. Use the gift we give you." The spirits spun themselves around Redsong. Her eyes glowed with the light of the spirits, and then they flitted away.

Redsong gasped, "The song. It's beautiful. It's all in my head now. They wrote a song for me?"

"No, child. You did. They merely... helped. They are the children of the Muses."

"Thank you, Ladon," said Redsong.

"Thank you, Redsong. Now return to your grandmother. Remember the Wyld, for it is in you."

"I will."

Willpower 4, Rage 5, Gnosis 8, Essence 18

Charms: Airt Sense, Materialize, Muse, Re-form

• **Muse:** By spending a point of Essence, the Muse can temporarily lend a point of Performance to the target.

This can be used to create a new work of art, be it a song, a dance, a poem or a story. Any form of expression.

Image: The Children of the Muses appear as misty balls of light. To some, they appear as beautiful women, made of light and the voices of angels.

Background: The Muse spirits are ancient allies of the Black Furies. They believe that the Muses taught the first Medusa how to sing, and gave other ancient Fury Galliards the inspiration needed to invent music, dance and poetry. Other Garou believe that, while Muses certainly do inspire artists on to greater works, that people (Garou and humans) invented art itself.

Storytelling Notes: Galliards often search for Muses in the Umbra. However, the Muses choose their beneficiaries well. Unscrupulous artists, (including more than a few Garou) have attempted to capture Muses to force them to give them ideas. They can be imprisoned in fetishes and forced to give their gift of inspiration. Black Furies who hear of this give new meaning to the term "bloody vengeance" for those who try such things.

...

Some time later, Redsong walked out of the cave, head held high. "Greetings, Grandmother."

"You seem well, granddaughter."

"I am well. I see things so much more clearly now." Redsong looked to the sky, hearing the song in her heart. The clouds parted as the two werewolves walked. Millions of stars sparkled in the clear night sky. Redsong looked with her inner eye, and could see the red star, pulsing in the night. "I revere the Wyld, for it is in me."

Two werewolves padded back over the rocky plains, side by side.

Creating Gorgons

Although the various gorgons we've listed in the chapter are a good start, it wouldn't do to get too reliant on them. After all, the Wyld is meant to be infinitely creative — so it would seem silly that only a few breeds of Wyld-critter are commonly seen. Sure, gorgons are so rare that unless a chronicle is focused on the Wyld, it's unlikely that a pack would see even half of those listed here. But new and different are keywords when it comes to the Wyld; hence, these guidelines for gorgons of the Storyteller's own devising.

The most important thing when creating a gorgon is to get the feel right. A gorgon should *never* come across as "a different flavor of fomor;" that defeats the whole purpose. Where fomori should be disturbing in an unsettling, malicious way, gorgons should be disturbing because of their surreal, not-quite-right quali-

ties. They should seem vibrant and chaotic, yet not so alien that they seem to have no place on the planet.

As you may have already noticed, a number of gorgons draw their inspiration from critters out of real-world folktales, from the strange beasties out of Appalachian mountain-folk stories to urban legend. There are plenty more stories where these came from; such tales feature everything from hoop-snakes to huge carnivorous terrestrial shellfish that imitate small cabins to lure in prey. (No kidding.) Obviously, some would make better gorgons than others, but for sheer weirdness, these stories are hard to beat. Browse around in the folktale section of a bookstore or library sometime; you might be surprised at what you find.

Base Form

Gorgons are never created from human stock; perhaps it's a result of humans falling too far from the Wyld's influence, or perhaps the Wyld just refuses to deal with the Weaver's pet monkeys. (Similarly, the Wyld refuses to create gorgons from anything "too like" a human; that means no gorgons that were once changelings, undead, mummies or whatever.) This does cause a bit of a difficulty when it comes time to assign the base Traits of the form.

One potential source for base forms is the listing of animals in the **Werewolf Storytellers Companion**; this is a good start for a gorgon that used to be a raven, wolf, alligator or other "interesting" animal. The Storyteller should assign three (or perhaps more) extra dice to the animal's Attributes, to represent the extra ability that the spirit imbues.

When dealing with the inanimate made animate, however, things get much more difficult. How much Strength should an oak tree have? How much Charisma? Here the Storyteller may simply have to guess-timate. A quick-start rule of thumb might be to assign a gorgon Strength and Stamina levels based on its weight according to the Feats of Strength table (**Werewolf**, pg. 197). For instance, if a gorgon's base form were a statue weighing 1200 pounds, it would have an effective Strength and Stamina of 9. Its Dexterity score would depend on its degree of actual animation (if any); its Perception would depend on the senses available to it, and so on.

Most gorgons should also have a Gnosis Trait; unlike fomori and Drones, they are rather closer to the energy of the spirit world. Willpower would also be helpful. Again, use the gorgon's nature to help determine the rough starting point; a stone should probably have very high Willpower to represent its durability, while a body of water should likely have high Gnosis, given the mystical qualities we associate with water.

Ultimately, it probably *will* come down to guess-work. But that's just fine. If the numbers seem screwy once the gorgon goes into action, chalk it up to a "rushed design" and remember what you'd want to change for the next time. Even if you use the same "type" of gorgon twice, they still don't have to have the same Traits. It's the Wyld we're talking about, after all.

Powers

The real difficulty lies in giving gorgons actual powers. This difficulty doesn't stem from a lack of choices — far from it. *Anything* can wind up as a gorgon power, so long as it doesn't reek too strongly of Weaver or Wyrms abilities. Gifts, Charms, fomori powers, fetish abilities — you name it, the Wyld can probably do it. The only limitation is that powers of creation and alteration should predominate, and powers of outright corruption, total destruction, preservation or calcification should probably not appear at all. So where to start?

Gorgons, never being created from human stock, are naturally not subject to the Delirium. They likely inflict lethal damage with their attacks, unless the Storyteller feels their natural weaponry is sufficiently (read: supernaturally) potent to cause the kind of massive tissue trauma that merits aggravated damage. In most cases, gorgons should be able to soak bashing, lethal and aggravated damage equally; the exception would be gorgons that have no particular excuse to be resilient, such as the cheetah/antelope crossbreed mentioned earlier in this chapter. (The tiger/wolf, however, as a nasty killing machine, should probably gain the ability to soak all forms of damage equally.)

A gorgon should have a number of powers based on its rarity, theoretical purpose and general place in the "hierarchy" of Wyld servitors. In other words, its powers should depend on its dramatic utility. A massive beast meant to threaten an entire town should probably have seven to ten powers; a harrying nuisance needs only one or two, if any. Again, there's no right answer, so relax and have fun.

The following fomori powers from the **Werewolf** rulebook (pp. 276-278, briefly summarized here) are exceptionally useful for creating gorgons. Note that some of their abilities should probably be given to certain types of gorgons for free; it would be silly for "Armored Hide" to count as one of the powers given to a gorgon whose host body is made of rock.

- **Armored Hide** (3 extra soak dice, may soak aggravated damage at difficulty 6)
- **Berserker** (gains Rage trait of 5)
- **Bestial Mutation** (+2 to each Physical Attribute, Appearance drops to 0)

- **Claws and Fangs** (bite or claw attacks inflict Strength + 1 aggravated damage)
- **Extra Limbs** (3 bonus dice for grappling)
- **Gift** (may take one Level One or Two lupus, Ragabash, Theurge, Black Fury or Red Talon Gift)
- **Regeneration** (as Garou for bashing and lethal damage; can heal one aggravated health level per day)
- **Twisted Senses** (may peer across the Gauntlet; roll Perception vs. Gauntlet rating)
- **Unnatural Strength** (+4 Strength)

In addition, here are a few more powers that work awfully well for gorgons.

- **Bulky** — The gorgon is unusually large for its former breed. It gains three additional health levels, two at the OK level and one at the -1 level.
- **Charming** — The gorgon gains two extra dice of Charisma and Manipulation, and Expression 4. This is often paired with another power (such as a Gift) that can take advantage of the gorgon's charm.
- **Plasmic Form** — The gorgon can transform itself into a gooey, liquid mass. While in this state, it cannot be affected by physical blows, cuts or other kinetic-based attacks — only attacks such as fire or Gift use can hurt it. It is also able to seep through any opening the size of a keyhole or larger.
- **Resilient** — The gorgon's spirit nature runs strong within it, making it highly resistant to damage. The gorgon may soak bashing, lethal or aggravated damage, all at difficulty 6.
- **Step Sideways** — The gorgon is able to step sideways, just as Garou do.

Sample Gorgon — Sewer Gator

A fairly simple creation, this gorgon is an example of the Storyteller taking an urban legend and tying it deeply into the Wyld. The inspiration comes from the concept of the "urban Wyld," of things and places close under humanity's noses and yet still untamed and dangerous.

A variant of Sewer Gators has appeared before, one tied to the Leeches of the city sewers. However, this particular urban legend was chosen for a couple of reasons. For one, the gorgon version benefits from a credible extra level of intelligence that an actual supernatural animal wouldn't possess; this gives the beast a greater potential to be a cunning stalker, rather than adhering to a simple "lurker" hunting style. What's more, its potent spirit power makes it a much greater threat to a solitary werewolf — and its ties to the Wyld make it a potential threat to any shapeshifter character who coats himself too much in the Weaver's energies.

The base statistics were taken from the *Werewolf Storytellers Companion*; the Storyteller chose to augment the critter's Dexterity and Intelligence, to make it a more effective stalker. The Storyteller also decided that it should have only moderate Gnosis, to reflect its aptitude for combat, but that its Willpower should reflect the legendary stubbornness of alligators.

Finally, the Storyteller chose powers to beef up the Sewer Gator's combat ability, as well as the Gift: Blur of the Milky Eye to make it even more frightening in its "stalker" role. The Armored Hide power adds to the alligator's existing two-die armor rating, making it a nastily resilient brute. The Storyteller decided that the Gator's bite should do aggravated damage on account of its sheer nastiness, but that the tail should only be upgraded to lethal (from the bashing damage a normal crocodilian would inflict). Finally, the Storyteller decided that the Sewer Gator should be able to soak all forms of damage equally well. With that, a particularly brutal twist on an urban legend is born, and the Wyld is that much better-equipped to further its purpose in the urban underground....

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Stealth 3

Rage: 5; **Gnosis:** 4; **Willpower:** 7

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Powers: Armored Hide, Berserker, Bulky, Gift (Blur of the Milky Eye), Unnatural Strength

Armor: Five soak dice

Attacks: Strength +1 bite; Strength +2 spin (damage inflicted every turn + drowning effects); Strength + 1 tail lash (lethal)

Image: Unsurprisingly, the Sewer Gator looks much like an American alligator, only greatly increased in size. Its eyes burn with surprising energy, and its tail twitches even when it's standing still. When it moves, it explodes into action.

Background: The Sewer Gator is born as a response to the stifling energy of the Weaver in the cities; it lurks underneath the innermost city blocks, where law and order are at their weakest. The Sewer Gator is a relentless hunter, and is quite fond of human flesh. It may have been noticed by a nest of Ratkin, who in all likelihood would "adopt" it as an avatar of their patron Wyld, potentially feeding it "offerings" of captive enemies or trying to lead it to intruders.



Chapter Four: A Handful of Chaos

What is the Wyld?

Yes, we've spent the last few chapters telling you roughly what purpose the Wyld serves and how it works in the World of Darkness. But is the version we've presented the one you want to use? That's the question you have to answer before you begin storytelling the Wyld as a major player in your chronicle. What is it, what role does it play in your game, and how does it interact with the characters?

First of all, you need to establish which aspect or aspects of the Wyld you intend to highlight in your chronicle. Why are you using it, and to what end? Is it on the characters' side, fighting against them, or a mysterious third player off in the distance? How involved will it be? Is there something it wants, and how can the characters change its role? Figuring this out goes a long way toward determining what you can use for antagonists and allies during the course of the chronicle, as well as laying ground rules for settings and locations.

That being said, the Wyld is perhaps the most difficult member of the Triad to quantify and work into a game, and doing so well takes a lot of work. Then again, if it were easily tamed and pigeonholed, it wouldn't be Wyld now, would it?

Things to Bear in Mind The Wyld Is Unpredictable

At its most basic level, the Wyld is generative chaos. In other words, it has no rules, because really, what rules are there to the idea of creation? However, it's one thing to state that the Wyld has no rules, quite another to display this in a roleplaying game that is bound by, well, a set of rules.

The great advantage of the Wyld's chaotic nature is the sheer freedom that it allows a Storyteller. After all, it can bring forth anything, in any form, for any purpose. Any monstrous or beatific hybrid, any creature or effect from imagination or nightmare — they can manifest from the creative principle, and that's enough reason for them to exist in a Wyld-based chronicle. On the other hand, just because the possibility is there doesn't mean that exploring every nook and cranny it presents is necessarily a good idea. New antagonists for your players' characters are one thing; new antagonists that look like homicidal snack foods or befanged teddy bears (Why? Because they can!) is entirely another, inferior one.

The Wyld Is Not Nice...

...nor should it be expected to be. The Wyld serves its own interests. It is entirely capable of gratitude, kindness and gentility, but also just as capable of cruelty, vengeance and even fatal indifference. Expecting the Wyld to behave in human, or even Garou fashion is a mistake. It has an agenda that transcends any pack's plans and schemes, and takes what steps are necessary to enact that. While Garou that are instrumental to the Wyld's schemes may be protected and rewarded, expecting such behavior is a foolish and dangerous habit to get into.

Furthermore, assuming that the Wyld is going to do the sensible thing and protect its assets isn't necessarily the wisest idea either. Logic and uncontrolled expression have never had that good a working relationship. In other words, the only thing to expect is the unexpected.

The Wyld Is Not Here for Your Benefit

The Wyld does not exist to help individual werewolves, or even whole packs out. Indeed, the express opposite is the case. Characters who lean too heavily on the Wyld for assistance should discover that they're not necessarily worth the Wyld's time if they keep asking for favors. After all, it's hardly in a position to be handing too many of them out, and it's not going to waste its time with those who can't help themselves.

The Wyld Is Vital

This can be taken in two ways, both of which are important. The first is that the Wyld is indeed vital to the universe as a whole; without it, there is only stagnation and decay. That means that no matter how badly the Wyld or its minions behave, Garou still have a certain responsibility to keep it around and healthy. Depending on how a chronicle progresses, characters may find themselves in a position where they're forced to defend something that's treated them poorly — or else suffer greater consequences.

The other meaning is that the Wyld is, in a very real sense, alive and ever-changing. Expecting the Wyld to show the same face every time it makes its presence known is foolish. The Wyld has an infinite number of ways in which it can express itself, and Storytellers should feel free to take advantage of this. Presenting players with a wide array of expressions of Wyld nature can keep them on their toes, and make the characters start to take a much harder look at their

Shattering Preconception

It can be very easy, given the current state of the Triat, to think of the Wyld as "the good guy" among the three forces. After all, the Weaver is busily trying to ensnare all of reality into neat, ordered packets, and the Wyrms' minions, well, they speak for themselves. That leaves the rapidly vanishing Wyld as the victim of this play, the tragic hero whose moral rectitude goes unquestioned because the bad guys want to put an end to it.

Now, there is a certain validity to this viewpoint, and a great many successful **Werewolf** chronicles can be run using this as the underpinnings. Few people are going to argue against the idea that fomori are mean, evil and nasty, and deserve to be summarily removed from the food chain. However, this is certainly not the only way to look at **Werewolf** cosmology, and if you limit yourself to that approach, you're cutting yourself off from a great many potential stories.

A further concern is your players' approach to the cosmology. If they lock onto the notion of Wyld-as-good-guy and refuse to look at any alternative perspectives, you may face rebellion when you unveil the Wyld's nastier side. After all, "that's not the way it's supposed to be," in their minds, and there's every chance they'll dig their heels in and refuse to deal with situations that don't fit their preconceived vision of the way the world works. This can be problematic, to say the least.

It's a good idea, therefore, to warn your players going in to keep an open mind. If you can, use some foreshadowing techniques demonstrating that unrestrained growth and chaos can have a down side — kudzu and cancer are both prime examples. And don't be afraid to make the characters pay for stubbornly adhering to their prejudices about the Wyld in the face of available evidence. The werewolf who's so sure that the Wyld is his ally, even in the face of a ravaging, chaotic monstrosity, deserves to take it on the chin, if not in the shorts.

surroundings. Also, it reinforces the notion of the Wyld as generative chaos — if it appears in the same form every time, there's nothing particularly Wyld about it, is there?

And Finally, the Wyld Is Not Gentle

Yes, the Wyld is perfectly capable of creating meadows of rolling green hills and gentle flowers. It can make cuddly bunnies and beautiful butterflies. It can do all of these things.

Just don't think that's all it can do.

The Wyld is, after all, about an utter absence of boundaries in the face of the creative impulse. It's about unrestrained creation.

And while part of the spectrum that covers includes the nice, pretty,

friendly, gentle stuff, there's a whole lot more out there that falls into the Wyld's bailiwick. After all, unrestrained growth is, in some circles, just another name for cancer. Watch the uninhibited reproduction of kudzu strangle a forest. Check out a coast that's been overwhelmed by an uncontrolled plankton bloom — also known as a red tide. Creation without limits can be profoundly vicious, nasty and ugly. Willfully turning a blind eye to this aspect of the Wyld can have extraordinarily painful consequences for characters, and can

drastically reduce the number of story options available for Storytellers.



Mood and Theme

Trying to establish a single mood or theme for a Wyld-based chronicle is, by definition, problematic. More than any of the other aspects of the Triat, the Wyld is multifaceted, and resists being boiled down to single-word concepts and themes. Instead, there are myriad themes and moods that can be extracted from the notion of a Wyld-centric chronicle, each of which is valid and sustainable.

If the Wyld Is Nurturing...

...then the mood of the game can be a gentler, more fragile one. Themes of protection, of generation — say, if the pack has to protect a rare, fledgling spirit or a representative of a new species that the Wyld has just brought forth — are central to this kind of chronicle. There are still plenty of opportunities for savage combat in chronicles of that sort, but in those instances the scrum revolves around protecting something from harm. The pack may even develop feelings of tenderness towards whatever — or whoever — they're supposed to be protecting, which can certainly suffuse the mood of the game with positive feeling. Of course, it can also bring in nearly unprecedented levels of anxiety if that object of affection is threatened, but such moments serve as stark relief to the overall mood of the game. Most games don't need this particular focus, given that Gaia usually fills the role of "nurturing spirit patron," but it might be an interesting twist to a game that features no Gaia *per se*, but rather just the Triat....

If the Wyld Is Savage...

...then your players are in for it. If your chronicle deals with the uncontrolled, cancerous aspect of the Wyld, then you're working with themes of rampant growth and suffocation, of swarming and overwhelming life. The mood of such games should often be frantic, as the pack races to avoid being overwhelmed or subsumed. With the Wyld's propensity for popping up in every corner and cranny, there should be an element of paranoia to the game as well. The players will never know where the next threat is coming from or where a safe place to rest can be found, and a steadily quickening pace of assaults can help accelerate this shift in mood nicely. Use the limitless possibilities of the sorts of things that the Wyld can come up with to keep your players off-balance and their characters nervous. If they don't know where it's coming from, what's coming or when it's coming next (not to mention how many are coming, how many waves there are and what it's going to take to stop them), sooner or

later they're going to wind up in a nicely frantic headspace — and that's what this aspect of the Wyld is all about.

If The Wyld Is Subversive...

...then the mood can alternate between the examples laid out previously, or go down a whole new path of paranoia and suspicion. What's really going on? What's going to come crawling out of the woodwork once the Wyld's plans come to fruition? And who's side is it going to be on? The themes for a chronicle of this sort are edgier, mostly related to discovery, realization and investigation. As the pack slowly unravels what the Wyld's influence really means (regardless of whether it's the major player or just a secondary plot influence), the decision of whether to support or block its aims can serve as a major focus for roleplaying. And each new bit of evidence can stir up the debate that much more, with offers being made under the table pro and con, and the pack's trust of one another potentially becoming a casualty of war....

Chronicles of this sort can be very difficult to balance, and can easily slide into one of the other two types mentioned. However, for as long as you can maintain your balance on the narrative tightrope, with the characters not knowing what the Wyld's role is or if they should be trying to stop it, the intensity of this flavor of game can be very satisfying indeed.

The Wyld as Ally

It is more traditional for Garou to look to the Wyld as, if not an ally, then at least not an enemy. Garou are the protectors of the Wyld, at least as things stand, and as such there is a natural ease about creating stories wherein the two are working toward the same end. This gives both you, as Storyteller and your players a more familiar toolkit to work with, and allows for fast, accessible stories.

The questions you need to ask if you're Storytelling from this angle, however, are "What does the Wyld get from the relationship?" and "What do the Garou get?" If it's nothing more than "They're together because they're supposed to be," then you need to dig a little deeper. Decide for yourself why the Wyld wants this particular pack working for or with it. Figure out what the pack gets by doing so, whether it be instruction, completion of a quest assigned to them, or just the simple satisfaction of having put a dull stick in the Wyrms' eye. And if there are strong motivations on both sides, then your story is that much tighter for it.

Active Ally

If there's one thing the Wyld should probably not be, it's passive. If the Garou are going to be scrapping with minions of the Wyrms and Weaver, odds are that at least some of the scions of the Wyld are going to want to be in there, getting a piece of the action themselves. Mind you, this may not always be what the Garou want. After all, there's no guarantee that the Wyld's help is going to be all that beneficial. In fact, it just might cause more trouble than it's worth.

Then again, the pack might be going up against something too big for them, and the assistance of one of the powers of the Triat just might come in handy. Asking for it, though, could be just as dangerous as what they're up against without it. Even with the Wyld on your side, it's never easy.

Story Ideas

- **The Great and Powerful Oz** — The Wyrms and the Weaver don't play fair. If they did, the Triat wouldn't currently be in the situation that it's in. As a result, there's every chance that a pack is going to be faced with something that is, to put it bluntly, way out of their league. If they try to go it alone, they're going to get squashed like bugs.

In other words, they need help, and the likeliest place to turn is the Wyld. However, that doesn't mean that the Wyld is going to be waiting with figurative open arms, ready to pile the pack up with all sorts of metaphysical goodies. Instead, it's possible that the Wyld (or the powerful Wyld-spirit to whom the characters are appealing for aid) will want some sort of proof of intention and capability. That means going out and performing some sort of quest for the Wyld, which can be potentially as arduous as the task the characters are requesting help for. It can also serve as an extended story-within-a-story, one which can get so involving that the characters can find themselves concentrating on it to the detriment of their original purpose. But whether they realize that in time or not is a whole other set of stories....

The help that the Wyld gives doesn't have to be in a predictable form, either. In fact, your players might be disappointed if it is. Anything from fetishes and talens to knowledge of rites and Gifts to allies (expected and otherwise) can fit the bill. So can bits of useful knowledge, connections to other Storyteller characters or groups, or even directions to a place that might hold the key to ultimate victory. Then again, the Wyld's help might take the form of a surprise to everyone involved, even the Garou, and how they react to that can springboard a whole new story as well.

- **House of the Spirits** — Working with the Wyld doesn't necessarily mean wading hip-deep in gore, a gorgon at your side. Instead, a spirit-based approach can work as well. The pack could be working with Wyld spirits to reclaim an area infested by the Weaver's influence — but on the condition that they do so without causing Wyrms-friendly carnage. Perhaps the Garou are clearing Umbral pathways of the undue influence of other members of the Triat, or maybe they just have some Wyld spirits to placate for accidental outrages committed in the past.

This sort of story can serve as nice counterpoint to more action-oriented chronicles, and a reminder that the Wyld does indeed have facets besides the obvious. It also encourages characters to take alternate approaches to problems, ones that might come in handy in future storylines. After all, rending everything in sight isn't always the solution.

- **Butt Kicking** — Then again, sometimes rending everything in sight is the right thing to do. There's nothing wrong with a straight-ahead, pedal to the metal slugfest where the characters are going toe to toe with fomori and other minions of the Wyrms. After all, who doesn't love a good brawl once in a while? Kicking monster butt is fun, ecologically sound and a good release for tension, after all. There's certainly also nothing wrong with giving the pack some help in a situation like this. After all, the Wyld has very good reason for wanting various Wyrmspawn dead, so it only makes sense for it to help out when the fur starts flying.

The trick is to avoid using the Wyld as a *deus ex machina*, obliterating the opposition because the fomor hasn't yet been spawned that can stand up to a power of the Triat. That doesn't mean, however, that it's fun for your players to stand there and watch the Wyld blow all of the bad guys away. Instead, the assistance they get should be scaled to the situation. Maybe it's a talen or two that can turn the tide in a tight spot, or an extra bit of Gnosis that comes out of nowhere (but which makes the Garou in question beholden to the Wyld...). Then again, maybe it's an actual ally — a Mokolé who comes crashing out of the bush to lend a hand when things seem blackest, or another character that attaches herself to the pack "coincidentally" just before the ruckus starts. But as long as it's the pack doing the brunt of the work, not the Storyteller character, then the balance is fine.

Object of Protection

With the Wyld in such a precarious position, it's no wonder that, on occasion, Garou are called upon to protect specific aspects or manifestations thereof. In

many ways, this is the classic Werewolf plot — defending a wild place against those who would ravage it. Then again, just because it's something intrinsic to Werewolf doesn't mean that it has to be bland. Protection can be accomplished in all sorts of ways.

Story Ideas

- **Guarding the Fragile** — Here is where low comedy and high adventure can combine. If the pack is given the task to guard an individual, rare species or other creature/spirit/whatever beloved of the Wyld, all sorts of strangeness can ensue. Depending upon how dim or innocent you want to make the object of protection, it can constantly wander into all sorts of misadventures from which the pack must extricate it. These can range from the wacky (say, if they're guarding a surviving mastodon that decides to charge into a supermarket and start gorging itself on the produce aisle) to the more action-oriented (a young man with a great destiny ahead of him is seduced/lured off by minions of the Wyrms). Either way, the pack's work protecting something that may not want to be protected — and that may not realize it needs to be — can be a never-ending series of adventures.

- **The Last Wyld Place** — Somewhere, there's a Wyld place. Beautiful, remote and untouched by human hands, it pours forth its radiance into the world.

And now the minions of the Wyrms are coming for it, with only the Garou standing in their way.

This sort of story may be practically the archetypal Werewolf plot, but there are plenty of variations that can be worked in to create something unexpected. What if it's a mistake by one of the charac-

ters that allows the minions of the Wyrms to uncover this treasure? What are the consequences of failure? How do the Garou try to defend this place — stand-up defense or guerrilla warfare? And what happens if they lose? The consequences — for both the Wyld and the Garou themselves — could be dire. Not only have they lost something of value to the Wyrms, but disappointed Wyld spirits may come looking for vengeance.

- **Help Me!** — Imagine this scenario: The pack is minding its own business when suddenly a dying, tattered spirit of the Wyld manifests to them. With its



last few words (or gestures, or other metaphysical means of communication) it imparts to them the knowledge that something has gone horribly wrong... and then passes on. This sort of story is more of a detective mystery than anything else, as the pack needs to piece together what is happening, where it's happening and what they can do to stop it. What the clues are, however, is up to you. Friendly (and unfriendly) spirits, enforcers warning the pack to back off and so on — all of the elements of mystery fiction can be worked into this sort of tale.

The Wyld as Enemy

The Wyld is no one's friend. While it may aid Garou in their attempts to rein in the Wurm, it is certainly not a force for good, truth and beauty that can be relied upon to work and play well with others. It, like the other two legs of the Triad, is an elemental force, a ravening, mindless thing that ideally, is held in check only by the equal and opposite appetites of the Wurm and Weaver. Current circumstances may have the Wyld back on its heels a bit, but that doesn't mean that its got a sweet disposition, or that it is bound to be nice.

In other words, the Wyld can make a cracking good bad guy.

Why the Wyld?

The best reason to use the Wyld as an antagonist in your chronicle is "why not?" For one thing, using the Wyld as a villain can do wonders to shake up a chronicle — for good or for ill, there are only so many fomori you can send your characters after before you run the risk of routine setting in. Throwing a Wyld-based opponent against the pack when the players are expecting same old, same old is going to throw them for a loop. It might even get the characters thinking about their allegiances and worldview, and that can lead to some very interesting roleplaying as well. After all, a Garou who's spent her entire life defending the Wyld places but who nearly gets eviscerated by an angry gorgon just might reconsider her career choices. And even if she doesn't think about it consciously, her relationship to the Wyld — and to the universe around her — is bound to change in subtle, yet fascinating ways.

Furthermore, by its very nature the Wyld gives a Storyteller a whole new arsenal of tools to play with.

Throwing the embodiment of creation up against the characters means that you can pull all sorts of things out of your hat and have them all be entirely justified. After all, that's what the Wyld does.

Outright Opposition

Nothing says that Garou are only allowed to slug it out with fomori. With the limitless powers of creation at its disposal, the Wyld can spit out limitless varieties of gorgons and other entities to confound characters. Furthermore,



Garou used to tangling with minions of the Wyrms are unlikely to be prepared for the sorts of strategies that the Wyld and its offspring can throw at them, meaning that what looks like a simple brawl can harbor deadly surprises.

Story Ideas

While it's always possible to run a "classic" Werewolf story using the Wyld as villain (scratch "fomor," insert "gorgon" and away you go) there are other possibilities to consider. Here are a few.

- **This Land Is My Land** — The pack is entrusted with the mission of finding a Wyld place for some reason, such as seeking aid for a caern or the knowledge of a particularly elusive Wyld-spirit. However, just because the pack is looking for the place doesn't mean that they'll be welcomed there. The guardians of the site have all sorts of nasty surprises planned for visitors. And if the Garou think they're going to be welcomed with open arms, they're in for a terrible surprise...

- **Encroachment** — The Wyld has decided that it's strong enough to take back a particular patch of terrain that someone else has a claim to. It might be a city park (or even a city block), it might be the area surrounding a caern or it might be a place that a pack stumbles onto entirely by accident (say, a large chunk of forest that's gotten a bit wilder than the Parks Service could reasonably expect), but in any case the Wyld's not letting go without a fight. And if the Garou decide that the time's not quite right for this sort of thing, well, then the Wyld will turn on them, too.

In this sort of chronicle, it is entirely possible that the pack will go along with the Wyld in this scenario, at least for a while, until they see exactly what unbridled Wyld actually means. Conversely, they could find themselves in the middle of a three-cornered fight as minions of the Wyrms and Weaver arrive to try to cauterize the infection. Choosing sides, and the consequences thereof, could have interesting repercussions.

- **Creeping Vengeance** — One or more of the characters has done *something* to offend the Wyld dreadfully. Perhaps they've mistreated a Wyld spirit, perhaps they've desecrated a Wyld place or allowed enemies to despoil it, or perhaps it's something a character's great-great-grandfather did. Regardless, the Wyld wants payback, and its servants are afflicting the characters with increasing frequency and ferocity. Characters who aren't in the direct line of fire may want to back away. Conversely, they may choose to help fight back, in which case they're now on the hit list as well. Can the Wyld or its offended minions be assuaged, or is it a fight to the death? And what if this is all a setup — who stands to benefit, and how?

On the other hand, maybe the pack has a bone to pick with a powerful Wyld spirit, and decides to go after it no-holds-barred. What sorts of obstacles will get thrown in their way, and what sorts of unlikely allies will they pick up in the process? This sort of story provides opportunities for questions of allegiance, and seeing whether the end really does justify the means. If you're just getting help from a Wyrm-spirit briefly, does it really taint you? It's for the greater good, after all....

Treachery

There's nothing that says the Wyld can't be sneaky, subversive or downright tricky in its dealings with characters. After all, it's not in a position to win too many slugfests, so it has to resort to other tactics. There's no reason those won't work on the Wyld's putative allies as well as its enemies.

The fact that many Garou feel that they're on the same side as the Wyld (whatever that means) also means it's that much easier for the Wyld to trick, subvert or betray them when it suits the Wyld's purposes. Doing so will probably get the characters (if not the players) extremely angry, and move the Wyld from hidden adversary to overt one (see above). However, the events leading up to the first treachery, the hints and allegations and the slow buildup of tension can make for a wonderful set of stories.

Story Ideas

- **Guinea Pigs** — Maybe the Wyld's come up with something new in its war for survival — but it wants the pack to serve as a live-fire test. All of a sudden, they've got new Gifts and fetishes to try, but they're not quite sure what exactly they all do. The results can range from spectacular to catastrophic to bizarre at your discretion. However, it's likely that what happens after the surprises are uncorked will be more interesting than what comes before. And that's assuming that the Wyld *wants* the team to come back in one piece....

- **Infection** — Even spirits of the Wyld like to have a little insurance, and sometimes friends, lovers and Kinfolk make the best kind. What happens if they're tainted by the Wyld, transformed into gorgons or otherwise compromised as hostages? The Garou may have to play along for now, but can they find a way to turn the tables? And what if their loved ones can't be saved — how will other Garou react to a sudden vendetta against the Wyld?

- **A Little Too Friendly** — The pack forms an alliance with the Wyld against a Weaver encroachment. With the help of Wyld spirits, the characters are able to win victory after victory — but somehow, the Wyld's assistance seems to be more trouble than it's worth. The spirits get out of hand, vital clues seem to

get destroyed in the fighting, and so on. Is the Wyld playing both ends against the middle? Or is it just Wyld spirits' basically uncontrollable nature that leads them to dangerous excesses? Should the characters act? What are the consequences if they're wrong? And even worse, what if their suspicions are correct? Will there be any way out?

• **Freshly Bred Fanaticism** — The plight of the Wyld is serious. Very serious. As a matter of fact, it's the sort of earth-shattering crisis that tends to make people fanatics. And the Wyld itself isn't above giving rightful concern a little helpful boost to turn sensibly allied Garou into slaving maniacs who will brook no interference with their holy crusade.

When this sort of thing happens to an entire pack, it's one thing. When it splits a pack down the middle, it's entirely another — and much uglier — one. Will the characters turn on one another, and if so, who's cheering them on? Will the unaffected characters attempt to "cure" their packmates? The cure could, in this case, be worse than the disease, especially with the other characters fighting them tooth and nail. (After all, you don't have a lot of other options for help when your problem is the Wyld.) And if the entire pack eventually succumbs, what happens next? After all, there just might be a reason the Wyld wants the characters entirely under its thumb, and that isn't necessarily good news.

Using Other Critters

Without a doubt, Garou fit into the Weaver-Wyrm-Wyld idiom better than any other denizens of the World of Darkness. With that in mind, however, it is certainly possible to bring in elements of other games to spice things up on occasion. This isn't to say that a merry band of Garou, vampires, changelings and slightly disheveled mummies are going to go traipsing down the Yellow Brick Road in search of the Wyld's magic whatsis, but rather that the unpredictable nature of the Wyld offers excellent opportunities to use the rest of the World of Darkness to good effect in a Werewolf game.

Vampires

Leeches are antithetical to the Wyld on a deep and abiding level. There is nothing creative or generative about vampires (regardless of what the Elysium crowd might say.) They cannot create or bring forth new life; at best they can preserve things unnaturally. And at worst, they are degenerative, parasitic and withering, everything the Wyld stands in opposition to.

In other words, you're not likely to find them as helpful allies of the Wyld any time soon. They do,

The Metaplay Cha-Cha

Remember, where the Wyld is concerned, no one can know what's coming next. Furthermore, where the Wyld's influence abounds it should be impossible to figure out what a potential antagonist does, which offers a nice way of preventing players from hearing your descriptions, whipping out a copy of *Vampire*, and making educated guesses as to the stats and abilities of what they're dealing with. As far as the characters are concerned, even if it looks like a Leech and smells like a Leech, it isn't necessarily a Leech because Gaia only knows what might have been done to it. (And yes, this does give you *carte blanche* as a Storyteller to add new powers to a seemingly familiar sort of boojum, strip old ones away, or otherwise improvise to your heart's content. When you're dealing with the Wyld, nothing should be predictable.)

however, make useful antagonists if handled properly. It is unlikely that a Leech is deliberately out to destroy the Wyld; 99 out of 100 vampires, minimum, have no idea what on Gaia's green earth the Wyld is. Rather, they're looking to extend their power, limit Garou ranges, take advantage of power sources and otherwise further their own interests. The effect they have on the Wyld is coincidental — but that doesn't make it any less horrific. Mind you, that doesn't mean that every corner of the globe is buzzing with vampires chipping busily away at the Wyld. Rather, a single Leech at the center of a far-flung web of corruption, destruction and intrigue makes for an excellent — and rare — antagonist.

On the other hand, a daring Storyteller can easily play with what happens if the Wyld sinks its claws into a vampire and turns the creature to its own purposes. The image of what once was a vampire, now shot through with curling vines that emerge from its mouth and eyes, should be enough to make any Garou pack think twice about what they're dealing with.

Mages

Mages and the Wyld have an uneasy relationship at best. While certain flavors of magic-worker tend to work in at least some harmony with the Wyld, others view creative energy as a resource to be tapped, appropriated and used for their own ends. Needless to say, this latter approach is not terribly Wyld-friendly, and mages with this attitude are best used as dangerous, unpredictable antagonists (though should the pack decide to educate one of these willworkers as to the error of his ways, things could get very interesting very quickly). They're likely to view Garou protecting the

Marauders

One might suspect that mages who dwell in a realm of madness and possibility might have some affinity for the Wyld, and vice versa. One might even be right. But the combination of an erratic, unpredictable sort of Storyteller character with an erratic, unpredictable primal force of nature is something that is best dealt with carefully, as the mix can be explosive. The Wyld might decide to feed a great deal of power to a Marauder, or to subsume her entirely. The only rule ought to be that the combination is never safe to be around.

Wyld as nothing more than obstacles on the way to an ultimate goal, and to be dealt with accordingly. After all, it's what the mages are doing that's important, or so runs the logic. As a result, they use whatever it takes to dispose of those "obstacles" — for the greater good, of course — and cost be damned. Chronicles that feature mages of this sort should be tightly focused. After all, the wizards know exactly what they're after and probably have at least some idea of what they're up against, which is more than can be said for the Garou in the situation. Also bear in mind that the pack may well be the mages' target, as opposed to an incidental annoyance. After all, if they're all that's standing between a bunch of mages and some raw power, odds are that the mages want to take care of business as quickly and permanently as possible. (Note: This general approach also works if you feel like using Technocrats; simply replace "use" with "destroy" when referring to the aspects of the Wyld the mages are after, and you're pretty much set.)

It is also entirely possible to work mages into a game as allies. There are certainly wizards out there who are at least sympathetic to the Wyld, and who can be brought in as allies, sources of information and otherwise friendly Storyteller characters. However, the fundamental difference in aim should always be readily apparent to those who are looking for it. No matter how chummy a mage gets with the pack, he's got his own way of looking at things and his own agenda. Any Garou who get fooled into thinking "he's on our side, all the way" are liable to pay for their mistake, sooner or later.

Other Critters

The World of Darkness is, to put it mildly, crowded with many other species of supernatural beings, which range in power from potentially annoying to earth-shatteringly dangerous. There's a time and a place for them in a chronicle, but they should be used sparingly,

and to good effect. Saying that the Wyld allows all possibilities is one thing; running down a laundry list of non-Garou beings is entirely another — much too predictable — one.

Now Is Not the Time: Alternate Settings

Just as there are no limits on pure Wyld, there shouldn't be any limits on the setting for a Wyld-themed game. As the Wyld's position relative to the rest of the Triat has shifted over the centuries, new vistas have opened up for storytelling chronicles with a decidedly different twist. You should feel free to essentially cherry-pick history to find the right balance and Wyld flavor for your chronicle if you so choose. There's absolutely nothing that says you can't turn your players loose in any time period that looks like it might be fun — past, present, or even future. And if it doesn't work, you've also got plenty of wiggle room for finding a more amenable setting.

After all, you're dealing with the Wyld here. It *will* find a way.

The Past

The story of history is the story of the Wyld's gradually eroding influence, marked by brief renaissances and savage defeats. The further back one goes, the stronger the Wyld influence in the setting is likely to be, though this is by no means an absolute correlation. It's entirely possible to set a low-Wyld game deep in the past — say, inside the walls of Jericho, or among the cities of the Incas — or to have a high-Wyld game near the present (Africa during the heyday of European colonization, for example). But with all of history to choose from, odds are pretty good you'll be able to find a setting that has just the right blend for what you intend.

The Impergium

During the Impergium, the Garou and the Wyld worked hand in paw, so to speak. With humanity and its tendencies toward both relentless patterning and fouling its collective nest penned up, threats to the Wyld's supremacy come more from purer manifestations of the Wurm. As such, chronicles set in this time can play up either the pure fun of monster-hunting or the tensions between tribes and Fera that eventually resulted in the War of Rage.

Many of the questions that apply to doing an alternate Earth chronicle also apply here. Without human civilization to riff against, the Garou have to make their own conflicts, stories and so forth. Unless, of course, those humans start getting uppity....

On Doing Your Homework

Between *Werewolf: The Dark Ages*, *Werewolf: The Wild West*, *Wraith: The Great War*, *Mage: the Sorcerer's Crusade*, *Blood and Silk* and the various other historical White Wolf products, there is all sorts of game-friendly historical setting material out there ready to be exploited for your game.

That being said, the list of available books is very small indeed when one considers the vast scope of history. The sheer mathematical unlikeliness that one of those books will match the period you want to use means that you're probably going to have to do some legwork on your own if you want to have a historical setting that's convincing to your players.

Unless, however, you have a gaming group that consists in whole or part of history Ph.D. candidates, however, you don't have to show up for each session with enough notes to bury your players alive.

Make sure you've done enough research to depict the time and place accurately — 2nd Century Romans wearing full plate mail, for example, is a bad idea — but there's no need to get absolutely every detail down. Few, if any, of your players will care exactly which strains of wheat are being grown, what precise shade of purple someone's tunic is, and what the going rate for an amphora of Thessalonian wine is down to the last quarter-denarius. Instead, they'll most likely want the mood and feel of the place and time, enough detail to give them a feeling of being there but not so much that they're strangled by the need to obsess over every last detail. There's no excuse for not doing some research — trying to convince your players that you're doing a historically accurate game of the Aztec empire in the year 500 BCE bends credibility a bit too far — but it's just as bad overwhelming them with detail as not giving them enough. Just make sure you have the basics covered, know what directions you're likely to extrapolate in, and make sure you've got your sources close at hand in case things jump off in an unexpected direction. You'll never make everyone entirely happy — there's always someone who'll be upset because you introduced the wrong strain of wheat into Dacia — but you can tell a pretty good story in the meantime.

Classical Greece

With Maenad rites and Dionysiac abandon, the Black Furies' demarcation between the Wyld and the city is clearly drawn in classical Greece. With such furious pressures on either side of that boundary, however, the tension is constant and palpable. Wyld places abound in the mountains outside the *poleis*, and journeying to them for oracles is considered entirely reasonable behavior. On the other hand, bringing that influence back inside the city, except within the bounds of festival, is another matter entirely. Statues of a god, called *hermoi*, look after travelers at crossroads, but the lands beyond the roads are considered Other.

Garou characters at this time move, like their human peers, between the two worlds. However, they do so more frequently and easily than do even their human Kinfolk. The ease of that transition may well make things uncomfortable for the Garou, or it may make them revered. And while there may be respect for the boundaries between city and Wyld, there's none shown by the Wurm. The landscape abounds with bad men and worse creatures, Procrustes and his ilk, and with the unyielding city on one side, the pressure from the burgeoning Wurm on the other can make a pack's place in Hellas perilous indeed.

Imperial Rome

Whither went the legions, went the roads. Whither went the roads went the Pax Romana. And whither went the Pax Romana, went the Weaver's webs, in many cases for the first time. While certain tribes (such as the Warders of Apes) benefited from and appreciated the Roman approach to things,

Hellas at War

Beset by internal strife and relentless assaults by the Persian Empire, Classical Greece was generally not a place of peace and gentle good-feeling. Myths from the period are bloody and violent, the history even more so. It's entirely appropriate, therefore, to get a pack caught up in anything from the battle of Thermopylae to the Peloponnesian War to the slaughter of the Melians. Choosing sides, however, might be difficult.

Recommended reading for this sort of chronicle includes both Herodotus and Thucydides, the finest fantastic and military historians of the period. Mixing and matching the two often works well within the fantastic context of *Werewolf*.

there with the legions' push into previously wild territories came the first intimation of trouble to come. In the Germanic forests, the Get serves the Wyld's ends by protecting the caerns of the Schwarzwald. Further east, incursions into other wooded places bring the Shadow Lords into the

fray, while in Egypt and Albion the native Garou find varying degrees of accommodation and conflict with the Roman interlopers.

At this point, allying with Rome might seem like a good thing to the Garou. After all, there's still an enormous amount of Wyld out there, and while the Roman influence may be "civilizing" in a Weaverish way, it's certainly good at stamping out the Wurm wherever it finds it. However, corruption lives where you find it, and the Wurm's tendrils can wrap around the Imperial palace as readily as a subterranean hive. While the Warders are desperately trying to reform the rotting thing that wears imperial purple, the other tribes harry the borders. And to the far north of Hadrian's Wall, something profoundly evil is stirring, as the White Howlers start down their fatal road. The best Wyld-themed games for this era can probably be set on the uneasy border between Roman territory and the domains of the Wyld, with no guarantees as to which side of the proverbial fence the pack is on.

The Fall of Rome and What Came After

With the fall of Rome and the chaos that followed, the so-called Dark Ages were a good time for the Wyld. As cities were abandoned or shrank, aqueducts collapsed and roads were overgrown, the Wyld took back its own. Here and there, outposts of civilization held out against the rising



tide. The darker side of the Wyld became apparent, as hand in hand with the Wyrms, it tore down the evidence of the *ancien regime*. And Garou who had come to an accommodation with the Roman system suddenly found themselves and their Kinfolk imperiled by the very thing they were supposed to protect.

The feudal age (more properly covered in **Werewolf: The Dark Ages**) that followed slowly reversed that trend, but only over centuries. The Wyld still dominates most of Europe, and steadily tries to reclaim the rest. And while the Red Talons might pitch in wholeheartedly, other tribes — particularly those whose homid members bear some affection for the cities of the era — might wonder how far they can support the Wyld's campaign.

The Emerald Isle

Ireland in particular offers a unique Wyld/Weaver dichotomy at this time. While the Irish monasteries are doing essential work preserving culture and history that would otherwise be forgotten, outside is a Wyld paradise. Can the Fianna in good conscience support both? And what about the Norsemen?

The Renaissance

With the dawning of the Renaissance, the tide turns on the Wyld's campaign to reclaim the landscape. Slowly but surely, the telltale signs of retreat become apparent. Agriculture becomes more regulated, travel becomes more civilized and the map has fewer and fewer areas marked "Here be Dragons."

Unfortunately, the same can't be said for places on the map where the Wyrms are active and expanding. While trade with the East over the Silk Road is burgeoning, corruption flows with it. The cities' hearts grow ever darker, and with the first stirrings of mass production, the fouling of the waters begins in earnest. Combating this, however, means diving into the worst parts of the infant urban sprawls, and dealing with what they find there among the tanneries and slaughterhouses.

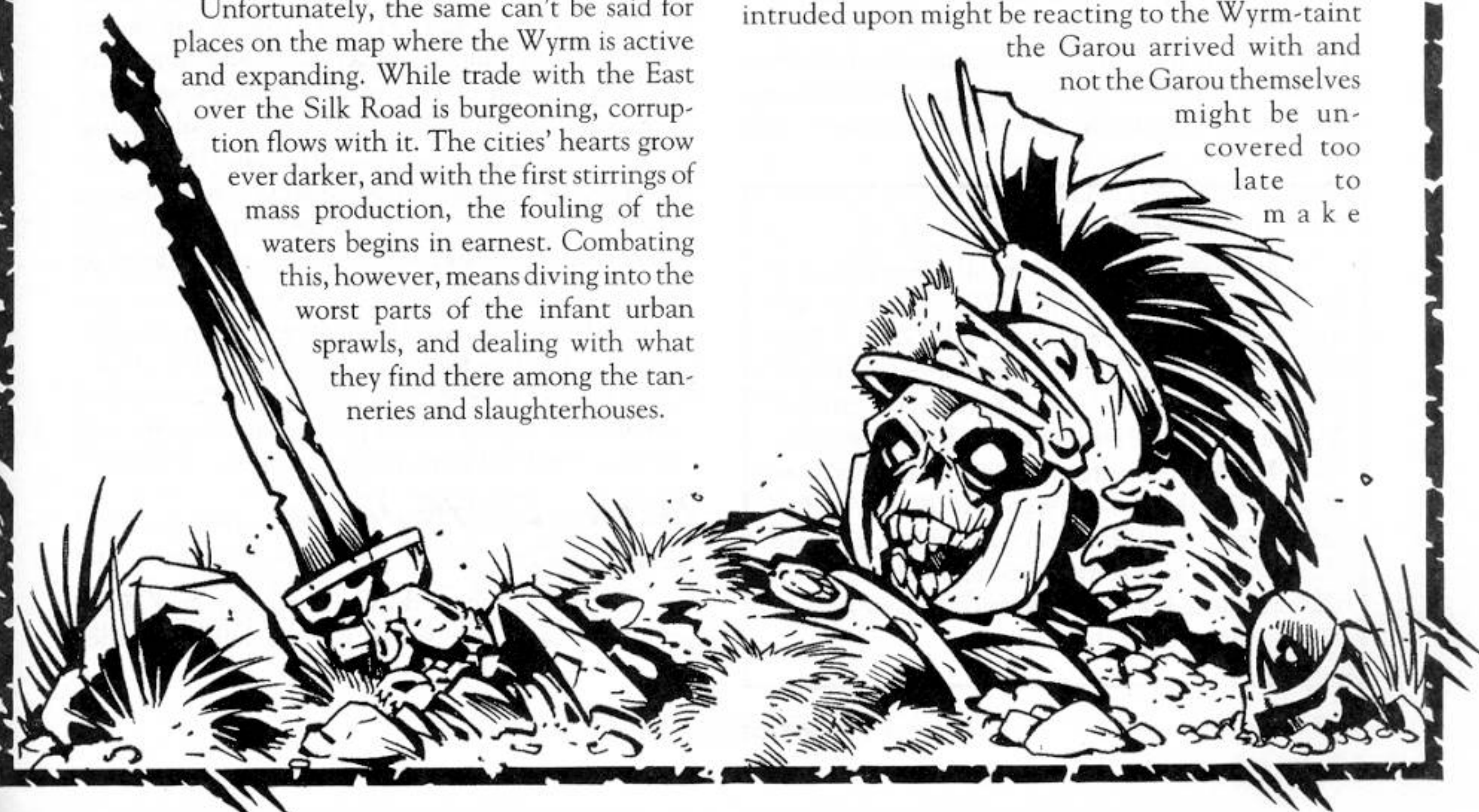
The Age of Exploration

With European explorers opening the door for colonization in every corner of the globe, areas that had previously been the purview of the Wyld became new battlegrounds in the war with the Wyrms. While European Garou may not be servants of the Wyrms themselves, they're certainly traveling in company with such. Thus, for the first time open Garou-on-Garou warfare can be seen sparking into life. And while travelers of the Silent Strider persuasion may be inclined to be circumspect in their travels, Get and certain of the other, more aggressive European tribes are liable be less polite about setting up camp on someone else's turf.

Of course, this is also the timeframe for the Croatan's last, desperate sacrifice. While that may not be a story everyone wants to tell, there's certainly plenty of room for the intrepid Garou explorers who first come upon the evidence of what happened — and who just might, by their investigation, undo all the good that was done.

Still, the New World was not the only theater of exploration. With Portuguese traders heading around the Cape of Good Hope, there's renewed contact between Garou and the shapeshifters of the East. Africa is being colonized as well, and it's entirely possible for Garou to have been part of any of those expeditions. Fighting the sea and the elements, meeting strange spirits (and Garou) and uncovering the secrets of new lands is certainly enough adventure for anyone, particularly since the current residents of those new lands are liable to take to the intrusion unkindly. (The fact that those who are intruded upon might be reacting to the Wyrms-taint

the Garou arrived with and not the Garou themselves might be uncovered too late to make



any difference....) And since the characters are invading Wyld lands, they might find themselves under some very unpleasant scrutiny from that particular power and its minions.

On the other hand, there's every opportunity for a game on the other side of the equation, playing Pure Ones or other indigenous Garou facing an influx of Wyrmscomers. While the tide of history may be inevitably rising, there's still space for individual battles to be fought, lost or won along the way.

The Industrial Revolution

With factories belching filth into the skies and rivers, with pollution befouling lands hundreds of miles from the toxic mills, with patterns of railroads and factories divvying up the landscape into neat chunks and strip mines tearing huge gashes in the Earth, this was perhaps not the best period for the Wyld. While the notion that the entire landscape of Western Europe and the United States turned into one stench-breathing row of factories and sludge is something of an exaggeration, the scale of the assault on natural resources was something only rarely seen before in human history, and never for this long a period.

With the drive for more raw materials to feed the machines, new regions are exposed to the Western world for the first time. With the miners, loggers and other settlers goes the Wurm, and by now the colonial spirit has been replaced in many Garou by the realization that what is being lost is irreplaceable. In some cases, this realization comes too late — the Second War of Rage leaves a bitter legacy in North America, and the Bunyip suffer their fate — but in others the war that had been fought against the Wyld in many cases is now fought for it. As Shadow Lords and others try to make allies of former enemies, the Wurm continues to sow discord among its foes. And with the Weaver spinning its webs over

the traditional homelands of many of the tribes, things aren't any better — or safer — there.

At this point, the Garou are caught between hammer and tongs, in a trap partially of their own devising. Suddenly, the Garou have gone from hunter to hunted, and there's no place to run. And with the cities and railroads hemming them in, with the war for the disappearing Wyld places heating up elsewhere and with the realization that they're pretty much without any allies any more, the Garou are in for a desperate time.

The Future

Who knows what comes next? Not humanity, not the Garou, perhaps not even the Triat. But if you feel like taking a stab at it, the possibilities are there. Perhaps the Wyld has made a stunning reversal, and the ruins of old cities dot the landscape. Perhaps the Wurm has won, and in a post-apocalyptic hell, the Garou must defend the last few flickering sparks of the Wyld. It's up to you.

Other Worlds

If you're going to get creative with the Wyld and explore alternate time periods, why not go all the way and look at alternate histories? It's entirely in the spirit of the Wyld to build a universe where the Triat is balanced differently than it is in the World of Darkness, just to see what might happen. Such a setting could be useful for either a one-shot session or a continuing chronicle, but the possibility is something that might be worth exploring.

The most likely candidate for this sort of chronicle is a world wherein the Wyld, not the Wurm or the Weaver, has run amok. Such a place would most likely be primarily wild places, vast, brooding forests and swamps seething with life. Settlements would be few and far between, and towns would be walled for protection against whatever creatures might come lumbering out of the wood. Sea travel would be beset by unnamed and unnamable things boiling up out of the deeps to prey on fragile ships.

In other words, you'd be looking at what could be a very good setting for heroic fantasy — with a twist. Replacing the stereotypical fighter/mage/cleric/thief combination with a Garou pack means that the old dungeon crawl just turned into a whole new ballgame.

Hashing Out the Setting

How Wyld Is It?

The first thing to decide is exactly how Wyld your new campaign world is. Are animate vines

The Rest of the World

Obviously, you're not at all limited to just Europe and Eurocentric historical chronicles. It's a big world out there, and the members of the Triat were in play throughout. The conflict between Weaver and Wyld was just as fierce in the cities of Mesoamerica as it was on the Peloponnesus, the Pure Lands were certainly not entirely free of Wurm taint throughout recorded history, and so on. There are certainly myriad stories out there that can be told in settings and regions other than the ones listed above. The fault is ours for not having room to list them here.

knocking at the town gates, or are there some reasonably large civilized areas? Once you get that balance worked out, you can start plotting out the rest of how this world fits together.

The next thing to decide is when precisely this world's history diverged from the World of Darkness', or if it's another world entirely. The former gives you a great deal of source material to play with, not to mention interesting setting material. Just imagine if your world is really overrun by the Wyld, and the characters find themselves hacking through dense jungle to uncover... the Pyramids at Giza. No doubt your players will be suitably shaken up, even if their characters have no idea what to make of it.

On the other hand, the latter means that you can go wild with geography, history and pretty much every other aspect of the world (though it's recommended you leave basic **Werewolf** cosmology intact) to your heart's delight.

The Other Two

The next step is deciding how much of a foothold the rest of the Triat has in this world. How have the other two aspects attempted to fight back? How much influence does the Weaver have — this tells you how many towns there are, how big they are likely to be, and so forth. This also dictates your level of technology. If you're at a level of Weaver involvement that dictates a Bronze Age level of technology, your town sizes and amenities, weapon choices, road systems and so on are going to be very different than if you examine something closer to stereotypically medieval. (It also limits the sorts of Weaver-spirits and Gifts you're liable to run across — take a look at **Werewolf: The Dark Ages** for an idea of what you're getting into.)

Then again, how is the Wyrms taking this? Are there subterranean places dedicated to its influence, filled with ravening monsters and other forms of foulness? Does it have worshippers, and what do they look like? Are there dead zones that the Wyrms has claimed for its own, harsh and sterile? Answering these questions goes a long way towards defining the map of your new chronicle setting, and lets you extrapolate details from there.

Who's the Good Guy?

In canonical **Werewolf**, the characters' allegiances more or less lie with the Wyld. It's the weakest member of the Triat, the one that most needs defending, and so on. None of that holds water in your new setting, however, and you'll need to rethink what your characters' overriding mission is. Now it is still entirely possible they'll be tied to the Wyld in a sort of Impergium-styled mission of containment.

On the other hand, it's also likely that they're tied to the fragile Weaver, whose works are always in danger of being overwhelmed by the ravening forest. In that case, the pack is liable to be working at clearing out Wyld-spawned monsters, protecting towns and cities in an effort to nurture the Weaver's influence, and so forth. Expeditions to deal with the worst, most cancerous Wyld infestations are a possibility, as the pack ventures forth under the eaves of the forest to strike at its monstrous heart.

Then there's the third possibility, that the Garou in this world are aligned with the Wyrms against the overwhelming power of the Wyld. While this may seem like a bad or even heretical idea, it can make a certain amount of sense. Destruction does have its place, and the Garou certainly are equipped to be engines of destruction. Indeed, they might even regard that as being their natural role, fighting back the relentless assaults of the uncontrolled Wyld.

(Mind you, allying with the Wyrms, even in an alternate world, may rattle some of your players' cages. Then again, that may be a good thing.)

What's Out There (Real World Division)?

A Wyld-enhanced setting offers plenty of opportunities for changing the local ecology. Odds are you won't want to populate the place with too many fomori, but you've still got plenty of gorgons to play with. What about natural animals? Dinosaurs are a natural possibility; in a world where the Wyld is unfettered there's no reason for extinction (a toy of the Wyrms) to have claimed anything you don't want it to. If you want to fill your seas with trilobites and your beaches with dimetrodons, go for it — it makes sense in context.

But that's just the beginning. You might want to consider extrapolating history and coming up with the new species that might have arisen given a fresh chance, fewer catastrophic meteorite impacts and a couple of million years to work with. There's no reason not to fill your world's skies with smarter, faster descendants of pteranodons or have a race of intelligent dinosaur descendants out in the uncharted wilderness. And what about other branches on the human family tree, like Neanderthals? Are there Neanderthal Kinfolk out there, helping to produce a different breed of Garou?

There's also the possibility of hewing closer to standard fantasy themes and using such relatively well-known creatures as dragons, unicorns, sea bishops and so on. This can metamorphose your game into something more closely approximating classic high fantasy, but there's nothing that says your pack can't run into

a tyrannosaur one week and a dragon the next. It's a big, Wyld-infested world out there, and it makes sense to cram every nook and cranny of it full of (not necessarily friendly) life.

What's Out There (Spirit World Division)?

A different world needs to have a different spiritual landscape and ecology as well. This doesn't mean you have to rebuild the cosmology brick by brick, and repopulate the heavens with entirely new spirits, but it probably is worth re-examining what's out there, who's out there, and what the Garou's relation to it all is likely to be.

In an alternate world with an overwhelming Wyld presence, the chances are good that other realms are going to be altered as well. Without a prevalent and corrupt Wyrms influence, Malfeas and the Atrocity Realm are liable to be greatly altered, if not reduced. Other sections of the Umbra may be clear of Pattern spirits, but overwhelmed by scions of the Wyld, and so on. If your players are going to want their characters to go there (and they will), you need to be prepared for it. That includes everything from how hard it is to reach the Umbra (it seems likely that it will be easier, and that in some places there might be no barrier at all) to what's infesting Umbral pathways to what new realms have been created by the inhabitants and history of this alternate Earth.

By the same token, you need to think about spirits. The supernatural ecology is bound to be different. New species means new spirits (and new potential totems). A lower technology level means that many familiar spirits aren't going to be around — just ask the local Glass Walker equivalents. Be sure to populate your heavens with spirits whose presence makes sense, and to establish what their relationships are with both the Triat and more familiar denizens of the spirit realms. Again, you don't need to do a giant chart keeping track

of every supernatural being out there, but it does make sense to be aware of and write out the differences.

What Are the Garou Up To?

It's entirely possible to plug standard Garou society into your alternate world. A caern is a caern is a caern, and the same sorts of jobs have to be done no matter where you are. On the other hand, it's also possible that there are profound differences. Are the Silver Fangs still in charge? Are they in better or worse shape than they are in the World of Darkness? What about the lost or fallen tribes? If the Wyld is the threat, what are the local equivalents of Black Spiral Dancers? What happened to the Croatan and the Bunyip (or did anything happen to them at all)? What sorts of Rites are the Garou performing, particularly if their allegiances lie with the Weaver or the Wyrms.

These questions can run on *ad infinitum*, but you'll want to map out at least the basics before you begin play. You'll also want to let your players in on the changes, so they don't feel betrayed when they assume that things are as they are listed in **Werewolf Revised**, and instead get an unpleasant surprise.

Other Breeds

Depending on how detailed you want to get in your world building, you may also find yourself considering the other Changing Breeds. How do they deal with the Garou here, particularly since your new world's werewolves don't necessarily share the same bloody history as the World of Darkness'. Was there a War of Rage in this world? If so, who survived? The answers you come up with may surprise you.

This also means that you may well have Changing Breeds in your game that are extinct in canonical **Werewolf** — or which never existed. Extreme caution is recommended in such cases, lest your players abandon their Garou en masse to play were-megatheriums or something equally outré.

Kinfolk and Related Species

The last question you have to answer before turning your players loose in your new world is how the Garou interact with humans, wolves and Kinfolk. Are humans kept herded and penned up, à la the worst excesses of the Impergium? Are there communities of Kin that the Garou guard, separate from mere humanity? Indeed, in a world gone Wyld, is there a détente between the Garou and normal humans, with the former serving as heroes to and protectors of the latter? It's easy to imagine a feudal society with the Garou at the top, acting (and demanding the privileges of) nobles from a frightened populace. On the other hand, the ancient prejudice of humans could be in place here

The Monster Roster

Remaking the world also means finding new places for everything dwelling in it, including vampires, mummies and so on. It's recommended that you downplay the role these other supernaturals play in a Wyld-themed setting, if for no other reason than that this sort of thing really is Garou-centric. Also, the effort of rethinking the Technocracy, Camarilla, etc. for your setting when other beasts are liable to be bit players, if at all, is probably not the best use of your time as a Storyteller. Focus on the important stuff, i.e. the Garou, and if the situation demands, you can always add the rest of the menagerie later.

as well, with the Garou caught between hostile towns and the unwelcoming forest.

And what of the wolves? If the wilderness is too thoroughly infested with the Wyld, are the packs safe, or are they hunted on their home territory? Are there safe preserves, or do the Garou need to go into the perilous wild to protect their Kin? The answers are, quite literally, out there.

Stories for Another World

Werewolf is, on many levels, a game about archetypes and symbols. That allows it to mesh nicely with heroic fantasy, a storytelling form that also relies heavily on those tools. (A quest is a quest, after all, regardless of whether it comes from a Rank 5 Theurge or an old man in a tavern who needs some brave adventurers.) And since a Wyld-dominated world is an excellent setting for that sort of thing, all of the elements are in place for the aforementioned high fantasy campaign.

That does not mean, however, that you are limited to basic fantasy plots like the dungeon crawl or the monster hunt. Instead, the Garou mythology allows ample opportunity for more quest-driven stories, with elements of vision and spirituality. The trick is to remember to retain the essential nature of Werewolf in this context, rather than trying to map tribes and auspices onto weary stereotypes. The player who decides that his Red Talon Ahroun is semantically equivalent to an axe-swinging Fafhrd knockoff is missing the point.

Pack, tribe and auspice give you tremendous flexibility to tell uniquely Garou stories within a

Mirror, Mirror, Mirror

One of the most time-honored storytelling tropes involves taking a bunch of characters and dropping them into a world that is not their own. This works just fine for an alternate Wyld game, but you'll probably want to map totem allegiances, etc. onto the ones that are available in this new world. You should also make a list of what Gifts, rites and so on don't work in your new setting and be prepared for player reaction when a favorite trick doesn't work.

One suggestion is to have curious spirits approach the newcomers and give them a brief primer — and maybe some fetishes to tide them over until they figure out what's what here. Another is to have them stumble across a caern, and be "educated" by the local sept. However, nobody says that the lessons are going to be easy — or gentle.

Oops. We Did This?

Juxtaposing your Wyld world and the World of Darkness can make for some interesting chronicles. A classic storyline can involve a pack finding a way to reach back through time to mitigate the Wyrms' influence. The end result, however, can be this world of rampant growth and mad change, and the pack should realize quickly that the cure could be just as bad as the disease. Can they set things right? Should they even try?

In the opposite direction, you can set up the pack as natives of this sort of world trying desperately to rein in the Wyld. Unfortunately, however, their efforts result in the World of Darkness as we know it, which is no place for a pack of Garou from this alternate history.

fantasy-styled setting. You may well feel the need to send your pack off to clean out the local subterranean monster hive, but odds are they're doing it for a reason — spirits have demanded it, a Theurge has given it to them as a quest, it's to clear out a patch of Wyrms' taint that's a little too strong for even this setting — and not just to rack up gold, magic items and so forth. Think about why your Garou are going forth into this world of the Wyld on a quest, what their motivations are as Garou instead of brave adventurers. Think about why they're going (other than "because it's there"), who wants them to go, what aspect of Garou society demands that they go, and what rewards they might get for succeeding.

Can You Play With Madness?

*Oh little hand in my hand,
all the madness in the world is on the move*

—French, Frith, Kaiser and Thompson, "Drowned Dog Black Night"

Madness goes hand-in-hand with chaos, even creative chaos. Garou who deal too closely with the Wyld, or who deal with it too long, are therefore tempting fate. Close association with the Wyld has its costs, not the least of which can be a Garou's sanity. And when a werewolf loses her grip on reality, the results can be devastating for all concerned — the character, her pack, her Kinfolk and anyone who makes the mistake of getting in her way at the wrong time.

Take This Seriously

Madness is not cute, funny, or otherwise something that should be played up for humor value. Instead, it is a fundamental shift in the perceptions and behaviors of the victim. Its mildest manifestations can be disturbing, its most severe deadly. The pile of bones discovered out in the woods behind your quiet neighbor's house, the sudden disappearance of a stressed coworker who's "on personal leave" with no further explanation — these are the real effects of madness, not a sudden compulsion to stomp around in bunny slippers and speak in bad faux-kiddie talk.

So if you're going to include madness as part of your chronicle, treat it respectfully. Research the particular flavor of mental illness you're working with and do it right — pop culture versions of Multiple Personality Disorder, schizophrenia and so on are often about as accurate as one might suspect. Get the symptoms and effects right, and then extrapolate outward to demonstrate how they might impact someone who can turn into a nine-foot tall killing machine at the drop of a hat.

And above all, be prepared to drop the story element if including it bothers one of your players. You never know whom mental illness has touched, directly or indirectly, and the comfort level of your players should always take precedence over any in-game aspect of play.

Going Mad

In an age when both humans and canines have their own therapists, it is inevitable that some Garou are going to fall prey to mental illness. Integrating that into gameplay, however, can be difficult, particularly the beginning stages.

Causality

Close proximity to manifestations of the Wyld is a prime cause of mental illness among Garou. The mind can be looked at as a device that imposes patterns on the world so that the body can categorize, deal with and react to stimuli. Even the most Weaver-phobic Garou must admit that on some level; it's as basic as the fight/flight response or the classification of any other creature into friend or foe.

The Wyld, needless to say, doesn't like patterns. And so, any werewolf who spends too long under the Wyld's aegis runs the risk of having his own pattern-making synapses neatly fried. The result may not be intentional. After all, it's hardly in the Wyld's best interests to have its best defenders at less than 100% capacity. However, it does happen, and often it happens sooner rather than later.

Not all Garou who suffer from dementia do so as a result of the Wyld's direct influence — there's plenty of stressors, genetic predispositions and chemical imbalances inherent in the Garou heritage and lifestyle already — but it is entirely plausible to suggest that the Wyld is a major contributor. It is more likely, if a Garou goes mad, that his illness will be blamed on the Wyld than on any other factor.

Sadly, those assigning the blame are often right.

Seeds and Weak Beginnings

Garou driven insane by the Wyld are generally the victims of an ongoing process. One of the unfortunate byproducts of dealing with the Wyld is dealing with its creatures and conceits, none of which are constructed to help an individual hold onto his sanity. It's not uncommon for Wyld-spirits to deliberately, if not maliciously, torment a werewolf, and that sort of "play" is often enough to drive the target to the edge. What happens, then, when stronger manifestations of the Wyld get involved? When the scenery changes subtly, day to day or hour to hour because of the Wyld's influence, how can a werewolf trust his senses? And if he can't trust his senses, what can he trust? Garou who spend too much time near places sacred to the Wyld often slowly lose their trust in anything and anyone, returning from such places sullen, paranoid, jumpy or delusional, and in some cases that's the best they can hope for.

In worst case scenarios, the Garou may be infected with some aspect of the Wyld. More than one werewolf has found herself looking at life through a Wyld-tinged haze of possibilities, colors, shapes and sounds. And while the view afforded by such is fascinating, it inevitably divorces the Garou in question from those around her, her responsibilities and duties, and eventually reality.

Treatment by the Pack

In general, a Garou's pack will stand by her even in this travail. That's the theory, in any case, and it holds up rather well. Many packs have undertaken healing quests on behalf of a packmate who's fallen prey to one form of dementia or another. Such quests are often long, difficult and dangerous, but once the pack accepts one, it is extremely unwise to stop. Abandoning a member of the pack to madness is likely to anger the pack's totem. Furthermore, a pack to which a mentally ill Garou belongs often suffers the loss of some renown, and occasionally acquires a reputation for being cursed.

For some reason, dementia also seems to run in packs. It's not at all uncommon for multiple Garou from a single pack to succumb, which adds a certain urgency

to those healing quests as well. Current thinking is that the contagious nature of madness within a pack is due to the work of malicious Wyld-spirits, but regardless of the source, it's still something to be avoided.

Treatment by the Sept

A Garou who is incapacitated or otherwise hindered by a mental affliction is a liability to the sept. In some cases

she is reassigned to duties that her current state allows her to uphold; in others she is isolated, ostracized or in rare cases, banished. It depends on the nature of the sept itself and which totem it is dedicated to. Grandfather Thunder, for example, has no use for the ill in his caerns, and the mentally ill are sometimes driven summarily forth. If they recover on



their own, they are welcomed back, but if not, nature takes its inevitable course.

The nature of the dementia also helps determine what happens. A Garou suffering from a bipolar disorder may run his septmates ragged during his manic phase, and simply be left alone during the depressive. A werewolf with a relatively mild syndrome such as kleptomania may find himself tolerated within the sept (as long as he doesn't pinch anything from a particularly burly Ahroun, who's liable to pound him into paste as a result), and certain disorders may actually prove serviceable. A Garou with an obsessive-compulsive disorder related to, say, neatness may be put to work walking the bawn, because he's going to notice anything amiss or different instantly (at least in theory; the reality can be somewhat stickier).

On the whole, though, mental illness makes Garou extremely uncomfortable. They prefer physical or spiritual foes, ones that can be vanquished through force of will or force of arms. The insidious nature of mental illness, however, makes it difficult for the Garou to combat. As such, they prefer not to deal with it whenever possible, much to the detriment of the sufferers among them.

Treatment by the Tribe

Much like septs, different tribes have different reactions to mental illness. They range from a possessive, occasionally smothering care for the sufferer (Children of Gaia and Uktena, for example) to out-

right shunning or brutal attempts at cures (Red Talons and Get of Fenris) to an embarrassed deliberate blindness to the condition (Silver Fangs). The treatment really does vary from tribe to tribe, with the only constant being that each tribe feels that the others are doing things incorrectly — perhaps fatally so.

Flavors of Madness

The official diagnostic guide of mental illness is slightly smaller than a compact car and nearly as heavy. That's because there are a great many varieties of psychiatric disorder, each with its own pathology, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment techniques and so on. What follows is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to the contents of that book and how each affects Garou. Rather, it's a quick skim of some of the better known mental illnesses and how they affect Garou.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a biologically based disorder that afflicts up to 1.5% percent of the American population over the course of their lives. Symptoms include both "positive" and "negative" ones. The former category includes thought disorder (an inability to think clearly or logically, often marked by use of disconnected or nonsense language), delusions and hallucinations. Negative symptoms include apathy, withdrawal and so-called flat affect (lack of emotional response). Curiously enough, most outbreaks of schizophrenia occur in late adolescence or early adulthood — the same time as the First Change.

While negative symptoms can lead a Garou down the road to Harano, the positive ones are the ones that cause trouble for everyone. This is perhaps the most terrifying form of insanity to afflict a Garou. A delusional werewolf who sees enemies everywhere *will* do her best to destroy them, and with the powers and strength at her disposal odds are she'll do a fairly thorough job. If she thinks her thoughts can be heard by those around her (called Broadcasting) she may start taking steps to hide those thoughts — which could end in disaster. A sufferer from paranoid schizophrenia may decide her packmates and Kinfolk are conspiring against her, and choose to flee — or retaliate.

Hallucinations are also a serious concern. If a Garou sees fomori peeking out from every window, sooner or later she's going to start smashing those windows to get at the (nonexistent) fomori hiding behind them. If she decides that innocent bystanders are also fomori, the carnage could be unthinkable. And if her packmates decide to try and stop

Up the Dosage

Many mental disorders are treatable with medication. Ritalin and Prozac are part of our daily vocabulary. Studies show that many children being medicated for "hyperactivity" show no actual signs of any abnormality, but potential problems are being medicated away anyway. With that in mind, one must ask the question: How does this stuff affect the Garou?

The answer is, sadly, hardly at all. A werewolf's metabolism isn't a human one; it's designed to flush foreign agents of any sort as quickly as possible. That includes drugs, both harmful and beneficial. The end result is that medications that can control or ameliorate psychiatric conditions have little to no effect on Garou. The amount of, say, Prozac required to have any lasting effect on a werewolf metabolism is so large that initial ingestion may well prove poisonous. On the other hand, taking a normal, human dose will have barely any impact at all.

her, she may well decide that they, too, have gone over to the enemy.

Most schizophrenic conditions are not quite this severe, but even mild ones can play hob with a Garou. Visions or sounds that aren't there can make a character hesitant when he really does hear or see something—or make his packmates reluctant to believe him. If his gut screams at him that the little old lady is Wyrmtainted, even though his mind and senses tell him that she's not, he's going to stop trusting his gut. And in a life-or-death situation, that could be fatal.

Multiple Personality Disorder

MPD, and not schizophrenia, is the correct term for the (extremely rare) condition whereby an individual develops multiple, distinct personalities. Usually one personality (not always the original one) is dominant, but the other or others can emerge from time to time, often as a result of stress. These additional personalities need not share age, gender, race, orientation or any other element with the original personality, and are often aware of one another.

What this generally means for a Garou is trouble. Not every one of a Garou's personalities may know what he is, how to trigger the Change or use Gifts, or otherwise function. And as stress can trigger the emergence of a different personality, it is entirely possible that a particularly intense combat could allow a personality with no notion of what he really is to become dominant, which could prove fatal for both the Garou and those depending on him to pull his weight in a fight. A Crinos form controlled by a persona with no concept of how he suddenly became a monster is a disaster about to happen. In extreme cases, some of the Garou's personalities could even be susceptible to the Delirium, which would be both surreal and potentially catastrophic.

On the other hand, additional personalities sometimes have surprising knowledge resources at their disposal. A Garou whose personalities are at least conversant with one another might be able to draw upon this well of knowledge, though it's hardly something to rely upon.

On occasion, the disparate personalities can be reintegrated. In game terms, this can be attempted through healing quests (often one per persona), allowing the spirits to judge each personality. Note that a reintegrated personality is not simply a return to the original, base persona. Rather, it is an integration of all of those extant into one, though some of them may not be evident in the final accounting.

Alternate Garou Personalities

It is entirely possible for a Garou with MPD to develop multiple Garou personalities instead of human ones. (To date, there's little evidence to support the notion of MPD in wolves, and as far as **Werewolf** is concerned, this is strictly a human-style affliction.) Additional Garou personae need not share breed, auspice or tribe with the base personality. However, this does not mean that the character can swap personalities and suddenly start using a different Tribe's Gifts. While an additional personality may display an uncanny amount of knowledge about his tribe, he does not have access to that tribe's Gifts—and he may not know how to use the base personality's powers.

Knowledge of Rites can, however, be possessed by an alternate personality, with the caveat that none of a Garou's other personae can be of higher rank than the base one. In addition, fetishes and talens that are bound to a particular persona may or may not work for a different one. It depends on how the spirits are feeling.

Amnesia

Contrary to popular belief, amnesia is rarely, if ever caused by the impact of a frying pan, anvil or other heavy object to the back of the head. (Disorientation and memory loss caused by that sort of trauma are more properly ascribed to concussion.) Instead, it is a result of stress, and it often results in the afflicted individual losing some or all memory of the areas of her life related to the most pressing stressors. In many instances, the victim picks up and builds a new life with striking similarities to her old one. Her personality doesn't change, and memories of survival skills, etc. don't vanish. Instead, it is details, names and faces that are simply gone from memory. Sometimes they can be brought back, sometimes they can't, and often a victim is astonished when her former loved ones track her down with incontrovertible evidence of who she used to be.

For Garou, the impact of amnesia is obvious. Sept and pack responsibilities, not to mention knowledge of Gifts, rites and so forth, are most likely to be blocked out by the affliction. Those responsibilities are likely to be abandoned without warning, meaning that they will go untended until someone figures out that there's no one doing them any more. The results of this abandonment can only be imagined. The amnesiac

werewolf, however, is likely to begin a new life somewhere else with no idea of what she really is. In many cases, it is highly likely that the victim will subconsciously choose lupus form; life as a wolf being inherently less stressful than modern human existence in most statistical samples. She will most likely forget she is Garou, though it's entirely possible that she will remember that and not her name, tribe, rank and so forth. However, even if the victim does forget what she is, the Wyrms won't. Others who know how to look will recognize her for what she is, even if she herself doesn't. And as such, she is liable to be the target of attacks that are utterly incomprehensible to her, signals and approaches from spirits and Garou that make no sense (and which may convince her that she's going insane in an entirely different direction) and so forth.

What is less likely is that amnesia will strike during a stress situation, say, the performance of a rite. Instead, it will generally strike without warning at an unexpected moment. The causes of amnesia are usually incremental, not sudden, and it is the weight of accumulated incidents, not one shock, that triggers the syndrome. It should be noted, however, that a particularly traumatic single experience can cause amnesia, though often such cases are related to the incident in question, as opposed to a general erasure of the victim's personal history.

A healing quest or the aid of spirits can be used to restore a werewolf's memories once they've vanished in this way, though there are times when it may well be better to let the victim be. In addition, it is well known that Corax and Mokol  have rites for working with memories that may well be efficacious — if they are willing to share.

Bipolar Disorders

Dealing with extremes of behavior both manic and depressive, bipolar disorders are relatively common among Garou. As the latter state is often linked or even confused with Harano (see below), bipolar disorders are well known and feared in the Garou Nation.

In manic state, someone with bipolar is filled with boundless energy and enthusiasm. The flip side is the

depressive phase, in which the sufferer has little or no energy, no interest in accomplishing anything and so forth. While a werewolf in manic state — and his unnatural energy level may initially be welcomed by his sept, it isn't long before someone figures out what's what. A Garou in manic phase is liable to launch multiple ambitious projects simultaneously, leaving them half-finished. He's also liable to go charging off into the teeth of danger heedlessly, convinced he can whip a Nexus Crawler before breakfast. This lunatic bravado renders plans useless because the manic character will just charge in, regardless of the danger. It then becomes his packmates' job to watch his back, and more often than not they're the ones who pay the price.

The switch to depressive phase, however, is swift and devastating. Suddenly the Garou is convinced of his own powerlessness. Nothing seems worth doing, not even the rites necessary to maintain the caern. If called on to fight, he does so half-heartedly and ineffectively. Spirits will sense this as well and be uncomfortable around the character, which can only lead to a deepening depression. It can also make life hard on the rest of the pack if the character refuses to participate in duties and quests, or comes along and operates at such a reduced efficiency. The situation is a catch-22, however, as leaving the afflicted Garou behind is liable to worsen his condition, but taking him along creates unfair and dangerous burdens for everyone else.

Depression and Harano

Harano is a form of mental illness with which the Garou are intimately acquainted, much to their sorrow. Essentially a species-specific form of depression, Harano occurs when a werewolf "realizes" the hopelessness of his — and all of the Garou Nation's — situation. What follows is an abandonment of hope, a spiral into depression and loss of the will to live. Garou cannot be cozened, cajoled or otherwise rescued from Harano; they need to fight their way out on their own. Other Garou know that, and leave well enough alone.

Unfortunately, Garou psychiatry has not advanced to the point where the average werewolf can tell the difference between Harano and ordinary depression. Victims of the latter are thus treated like the former, which means that many otherwise treatable Garou are left to their own, inadequate devices.

Phobias

Phobias are irrational, immobilizing terrors. Common ones include the fear of heights, fear of insects or spiders, fear of crowds and so forth. However, there are as many phobias as there are things to be afraid of out there. After all, they are *irrational* fears, which means that anything can spark them.

Story Hook

Running across an amnesiac Garou and returning her to the fold makes for an interesting twist on the "discover the lost cub and bring her into the tribe" storyline that is often a part of many chronicles. After all, who knows what secrets the victim has worked so hard to forget — or what caused her to forget them? The answers could be terrifying indeed.

A werewolf with a phobia is highly unlikely to admit his terror even to his packmates. The sort of fear a phobia represents is antithetical to the Garou ideal, and much of the time a Garou thus afflicted will do anything to cover up his weakness.

That means, of course, that when the phobia does eventually come to light, the results are generally devastating. If a plan to infiltrate an Endron refinery depends on split-second timing and one pack member is hiding behind a dumpster because he saw a large, hairy spider, it's suddenly a lot less likely that the plan

will succeed, and a lot more likely that the rest of the pack is suddenly in a great deal of trouble.

The Rest of the Lesson

As noted above, this is hardly an exhaustive list of mental disorders and how they affect Garou. There are myriad other problems that characters may be so unlucky as to develop that can affect a chronicle. Should (and only if) the situation demand it, a Storyteller should feel free to inflict anything she wants to on her hapless players. However, it's best to do at least a modicum of research on the topic first, so as to be able to present the material accurately.





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Chapter Five: Tools of Creation

Wyld Fetishes

The Wyld can occasionally be generous. There are many and various gifts that it can bestow on its erstwhile allies, the Garou; gifts of varying potency and use in the war to preserve the Wyld itself.

That being said, the Wyld is also extremely fickle about where it bestows its favor and in what fashion it does so. The following Wyld fetishes are “true” Wyld fetishes — they are not reproducible by the Garou, and attempts to fabricate them always end in failure. Instead, they are simply found. Sometimes they appear, sometimes they are transmogrifications of perfectly mundane items, and sometimes an emissary of the

Wyld delivers them by hand (or claw, or tentacle, or so forth). Some last for centuries and are handed down within a sept; others crumble to dust after a single use. The only guarantee is that there are no guarantees with gifts from the Wyld.

Most Wyld fetishes are either animal-shaped or somehow related to animal or plant life. Often, they are effigies of some sort of living creature.

Curiously enough, all Wyld fetishes are automatically attuned to the Garou who finds them, but can't be passed to another. It would seem that the Wyld likes to personalize its gifts.

Note

It may be more useful to think of Wyld fetishes as multiple-use talens than as fetishes proper. After all, the Garou does no binding of spirits and is simply an end-user in the process. A Garou attempting to recreate a Wyld fetish is most likely going to meet only with frustration and a total lack of results. If he's really unlucky, he'll attract unwanted attention with his efforts, and then things could get really ugly. Having the Wyld peering over your shoulder while you're experimenting is never a good idea.

Glass Mites

Level One, Gnosis 5

Glass mites aren't alive in any strict sense of the word. They simply mimic that state remarkably well. Glass beads no more than a half-inch in diameter, a handful of mites will sit comfortably in a leather pouch for days or even years until needed. However, once they are activated it is both time-consuming and difficult to recapture them.

Once triggered, glass mites animate into a frenzy of sound and motion.

Spread out on the ground and infused with Gnosis, they swirl into a hovering cloud of multifaceted annoyance. While they don't actually attack a particular target, they will torment a chosen victim through distraction, getting underfoot, high-pitched chittering and so forth.

Systems: Any victim of an infestation of glass mites is at a +1 difficulty to perform any action, +2 for anything involving concentration. This lasts until the energy infusing the mites drains out or they get bored and wander off. Either is liable to take between one and eight turns.

A victim of glass mites will appear to be flailing at nothing, jumping at shadows and generally acting very strangely. However, anyone seeking to take advantage of this by attacking the victim immediately scatters the glass mites, and releases the target from his torment.

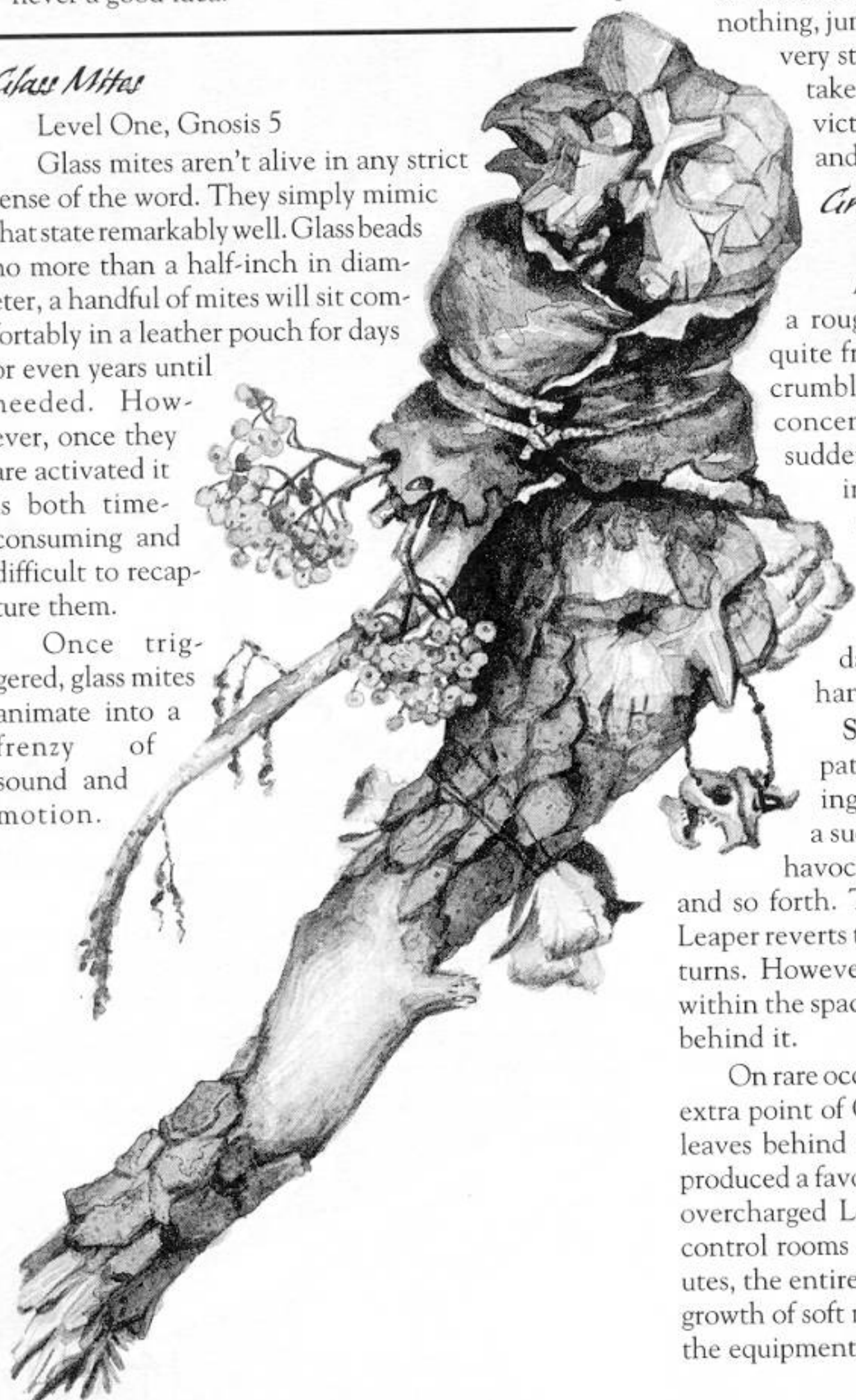
Green Leaper

Level Two, Gnosis 4

A Green Leaper is nothing more than a roughly frog-shaped lump of moss. It's quite fragile, and must be kept moist lest it crumble to dust. However, when a Garou concentrates and turns the Leaper loose, it suddenly looks much more frog-like and indeed becomes animate, leaping from surface to surface in a random pattern. This includes living creatures, and more than one Pentex goon has been unnerved by the sight of verdant growth emerging from his gun hand as he watches.

Systems: Where the Leaper lands, a patch of moss immediately starts growing. While this may not seem like much, a sudden lush outgrowth of moss can play havoc with electronics, computer equipment and so forth. The moss is easily removed, and the Leaper reverts to its original, inanimate state after six turns. However, it can jump up to a dozen times within the space of a single turn, leaving quite a mess behind it.

On rare occasions (and with the expenditure of an extra point of Gnosis), the patch of moss the Leaper leaves behind starts to spread rapidly. This fact has produced a favored monkeywrenching tactic: shoving overcharged Leapers under the door into server or control rooms and turning them loose. Within minutes, the entire room is liable to be covered in a thick growth of soft moss, which needless to say, doesn't do the equipment any good at all.



Swarmbags

Level Two, Gnosis 4

Simple cloth pouches, tied and knotted with leather thongs — swarmbags don't look like much. True, they do have something of an unpleasant consistency to them, but until thrown they are inert lumps and nothing more. The shapeshifter lucky enough to be granted these talents usually finds between four and a dozen.

Once they are tossed at an enemy, however, swarmbags become an entirely different proposition. On contact (a Dexterity + Athletics roll, difficulty 5 is required to score a direct hit), the bag bursts open as a swarm of crawling, biting creatures erupts and frantically scurries about whatever — or whomever — the bag has hit.

Systems: Without a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 7), the target immediately ceases whatever he was doing and starts trying to sweep the bugs off of himself. Doing so requires 2 successful Dexterity rolls (difficulty 6), giving the werewolf who tossed the swarmbag in the first place at least one clear shot. Even those targets who make their Willpower rolls are at +1 difficulty for all actions until the bugs are either scraped off or fall off of their own accord.

The contents of a swarmbag are a mixed lot: insects, arachnids, worms and less identifiable creatures. None are venomous, but some bite (albeit for no damage). The creatures swarm for up to 6 turns after being hurled at a target, and they will not infest anyone or anything except their original victim.

Only one Swarmbag can be thrown at a time, though enterprising Garou have attempted double-barreled action in the past.

The Bent Vine

Level Three, Gnosis 5

The Bent Vine is nothing more than a withered and dried piece of kudzu with a glyph scratched painstakingly into it. No more than three inches long, it's utterly unremarkable to look at. However, when dropped on soil of any sort, the Bent Vine springs to life as a positive hydra of greenery. If it's brought in contact with vines that already exist, it stirs them into a frenzy of explosive growth. The resultant wave of vines is aggressive, dangerous and inclined towards grabbing anything nearby for purposes of pulling bits of it in multiple directions. As a result, Bent Vines make excellent cover for a Garou looking to beat a hasty retreat in the face of aggressive pursuit.

Systems: A Bent Vine has a Strength of 4 and a Dexterity of 5, and can make up to a dozen attacks per turn. The Vine itself must land on either soil or plant

matter to be effective, but once it is activated, the monstrous growth is almost instantaneous. A contested Strength roll (difficulty 6) is needed to tear loose from a clinging vine, but as up to five vines can nab a Garou-sized target at once, it's entirely possible for someone to get overwhelmed, quickly.

There are no degrees of aggressiveness for Bent Vines. Once they are called forth, they are mindlessly ferocious. Furthermore, they make no distinction between friend and foe, and a Garou who stops to watch his handiwork runs the risk of getting a little too close to the action.

Bent Vines last for five turns, though the investment of a point of Rage can double the duration.

Cold Ichor

Level Three, Gnosis 6

Cold Ichor occasionally manifests itself in the dew off certain species of tree found near Wyld places. The fluid is an iridescent, almost glowing green that easily catches the eye, and it collects in just a few leaves at a time. Garou who recognize the liquid for what it is harvest it very carefully, or else give the tree producing it a wide berth. Cold Ichor can be stored very easily in glass or ceramic, and it is neither caustic nor acidic. Until used, it will sit quiescently in whatever container holds it, perhaps glowing faintly in the proper light.

Garou who harvest Cold Ichor, however, are very careful with it, and will wash themselves thoroughly after even coming near the stuff. It's simply too dangerous to treat with anything other than extreme caution.

System: What Cold Ichor does is dramatically accelerate cell growth in anything it touches, once activated. Both plant and animal matter are affected, succumbing to rampant, uncontrolled growth that can have absolutely dire consequences. External contact tends to produce huge (usually benign) tumors; internal use can produce something best described as an extremely accelerated cancer. The actual effects are variable (and their game effects are left to Storyteller discretion), but drinking something that's been laced with Cold Ichor is almost always a very bad idea.

Note that the substance also produces massive sudden growth in plant life as well, which is useful for rapidly camouflaging a cache with overgrowth and suchlike. For some reason, Cold Ichor is much less destructive to plant tissue than to animal, though caution in using it is still an excellent idea.

The effect of Cold Ichor is almost instantaneous, though it only lasts for a minute or so. However, in most cases a minute is more than enough.

Ded Bugz

Level Three, Gnosis 6

While it's not necessarily the most attentive member of the Triat, the Wyld does keep up with the times. It also, if this fetish is any indication, possesses a mediocre-to-poor sense of humor. Ded Bugz are almost exactly what their name would suggest, insect cadavers tucked into grass-and-straw versions of themselves. (Purists suggest that this is related to the custom of the wicker man; cynics note that it's difficult to carry around dead bugs without squashing them beyond recognition. The Wyld itself is mum on the matter.) No more than an inch or two long, these fragile contraptions nonetheless can be quite effective.

System: A Ded Bug randomizes numbers and fries systems. It's excellent for wiping disks and otherwise making computer equipment emphatically unserviceable. The Bug does not emit an electromagnetic pulse. Rather, it tells all of the local ones and zeroes that they have the opportunity to mix themselves up again, as it were, effectively fragging any sort of storage medium. All that's required for this effect is for the Garou possessing the Ded Bug to place it on top of the system, disc or other item she wants randomized, and then to concentrate on the target item. The one caveat is that the Ded Bug must be in perfect condition for it to function, which means that the Garou toting this item around must be extremely cautious.

Ded Bugz do not, however, work on living tissue, though trying to fry someone's mind with one is a good way to get various Wyld-spirits very irritated.

Wyldflute

Level Three, Gnosis 6

A Wyldflute is a variation on the panpipes, and looks about as threatening. A non-Garou playing one is liable to get a series of toots and whistles, nothing more. A Garou who's in the know, however, can get something far more impressive.

System: The Wyldflute, when played for effect, instantly instills a single emotion at fever pitch in all that hear it. The unfortunate thing is that the emotion instilled is random from listener to listener. One may feel joy, another terror, a third inchoate rage. The effect is, as one would expect of a gift from the Wyld, totally without rhyme or reason, and the end result is often pure chaos.

A successful Willpower roll (difficulty 7) enables a listener to resist the effects of the Wyldflute, though another roll must be made for every minute that the flute's music can be heard. Note that the Wyldflute must actually be played for its powers to

have any effect. Random huffing and puffing doesn't get the job done.

Birnam Sands

Level Four, Gnosis 7

Birnam sands don't look like anything spectacular. Indeed, they resemble nothing so much as a handful of yellowish dust, marred with occasional sparkles that the untrained eye might take for flakes of mica or quartz. Close examination, however, reveals that the shimmers actually move throughout the sand at a pace just short of a blur.

What the Birnam sands do is quite remarkable. A pinch of the dust, properly activated and sprinkled in a circle around the base of a tree, is enough to convince the tree to pick up its roots (temporarily) and go walking in a random direction. Needless to say, a hundred-year old oak tree gallivanting about using its roots for legs can do quite a bit of damage, and when a particularly crafty werewolf gets a whole grove up and stomping around at once, the results are usually quite impressive. The effect of the sands lasts up to a half an hour, and while the trees seem to be utterly chaotic in their motion, they always somehow manage to avoid colliding with one another or with the Garou who turned them loose. Said Garou's companions, however, may not be quite so lucky.

When the effect of the sands wears off, the trees re-root themselves comfortably and stably in their current positions. Left behind are gaping holes in the earth and torn-up sod where they once stood, but anyone looking at the trees' new positions would have sworn they'd been there for years.

System: Generally a small handful of the sands can handle between one and five trees, a medium one between five and 10, and a full pouch up to 20 trees. There are songs of legendary Garou spreading enough of this material around to wake entire forests, but the amount of sand needed to accomplish that feat is simply mind-boggling.

The Garou who wakens the trees will not be harmed by them. However, she also has no control over them; the best she can do is stay out of their way. Awakened trees have no apparent sight or hearing, but they can respond to a threat. Anyone attempting to cut down or otherwise harm a rampaging tree is liable to be trampled by several tons of very angry wood. However, even just a blundering tree is liable to do a lot of damage to buildings, cars and whatever poor souls get in its way.

Like all other Wyld fetishes, Birnam sands are found, not made. Occasional upwellings can be discovered near Wyld places, but such fountains are

always brief, and always vanished upon a return visit. Essentially, the Garou who is lucky enough to find such a deposit (assuming he knows what he's found) can take as way as much as he can carry at the time, but that's all. Upwellings of Birnam Sands are only found by solitary Garou, for some reason. Attempts by a werewolf to inform others of his find inevitably produce nothing more than barren patches of sand and faint echoes of mocking laughter.

Primordial Slime

Level Four, Gnosis 5

Primordial Slime is possibly the Wyld's ugliest creation, and there's plenty of competition for that title. A dull greenish-black in color, it has the consistency of vomit and a stench to match. Only glazed ceramic jars will hold the stuff safely, though Glass Walkers swear by Pyrex lab glassware. In any case, it's vicious stuff, but thankfully not at all common.

Where the stuff comes from is unknown, and very few Garou are at all eager to find out. Even the name is something of a mystery. According to lore, a young Glass Walker Theurge saw it for the first time and commented derisively that it looked like the primordial slime back before life had dragged itself into existence. The story was passed around and the name stuck, but the laughter at the tale has always been just a little bit uneasy.

System: Primordial Slime's one great attribute is that of transmogrification. Brushed onto any non-living surface (only a brush made from Garou hair will do; anything else is changed instantly), it changes that surface into another substance. While the Slime is incapable of transforming inorganic matter into living tissue, it can turn a brass padlock into chalk, a length of rope into steel cable, or a stone wall into cheese. However, it can also turn that stone wall into strontium-90 or glass — the effect is totally and utterly random.

The only other limitation on the use of Primordial Slime is that something that has been changed once cannot ever be affected by the liquid again. This makes its use a gamble, and never something to rely on.

Stone Kettle

Level Four, Gnosis Variable

Contrary to its name, the Stone Kettle is not, in fact, made of stone. Usually it's blackened iron, sometimes wood, but always deceptively rough-hewn. There's only the vaguest glimmer of anything supernatural about the kettle (which, in truth, looks

exactly like a cheap piece of cookware), and only those looking hard will notice that the battered pot is more than it seems.

For while a Stone Kettle can be used as simply that, it also can perform a few other, more interesting functions. With just some boiled water and a stone, a Garou who knows what he's doing can use the Kettle to boil up vapors, stench, clouds and suchlike to suit his purposes. If he doesn't know what he's doing, however, he just might brew something with unexpected — and dangerous — consequences.

System: Unless the werewolf working with Stone Kettle invokes the Wyld beforehand, it functions as just an ordinary pot. Anyone attempting to activate it without doing so is liable to get nothing more than several helpings of granite-flavored broth, and that's if he's lucky. If, however, the werewolf knows his business and does things properly, he can cook up practically any sort of cloud within reason. The type of fog to be summoned must be specified beforehand — if it is not, the exact sort of foul smoke that comes out of the kettle is left to Storyteller discretion. However, it is unlikely to be helpful to the Garou wielding the ladle, or even safe.

A Wits + Rituals roll (difficulty 6) is necessary to summon forth the kettle's contents. The more successes, the greater the volume of cloud summoned and the longer it lasts.

Gnosis Rolls for Summonings from the Kettle

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4 | Fog, Cold wind, a faint, pleasant aroma |
| 6 | Stench-laden fogs, Icy winds, Smoke |
| 7 | Clouds thick enough to make those trapped in them choke, |
| 9 | Clouds thick enough to make those trapped in them ill |

Note: The Kettle costs an additional point of Gnosis to activate for each level of fog created.

The uses of the Kettle are limited only by the Garou's imagination, and the fact that under no circumstances will the Kettle brew up something that is an actual poison. The first time a Garou attempts to do so, the Kettle will shatter.

Venomous Swarmbags

Level Four, Gnosis 6

These are identical to regular Swarmbags, except that the creatures released are all venomous to a greater or lesser degree. While it is unlikely that any given bite will be deadly, there is always that chance....

Willowhip

Level Five, Gnosis 5

Appearing as nothing more than a green, leafy coil of willow branch, a Willowhip is surprisingly deadly for something so innocuous-looking. Extending up to 18 feet in length, the Willowhip is used exactly like a bullwhip, though to much greater effect.

System: When a Willowhip wraps the arm or leg of an opponent, it does not release. Rather, it grows — encasing and mummifying the victim in green willow wood in just three turns. When the process is completed, the Willowhip breaks off at its normal length.

A Strength roll (difficulty 8) is required to break free, but that just undoes one turn's worth of growth. A victim who is completely encapsulated needs three successful rolls to break free. While the mummification process is happening, the Garou who possesses the Willowhip cannot take any other action involving the whip. If she does so, the process aborts instantly.

Once a victim is mummified, he is completely immobilized. On a botched Strength check, he begins to suffocate, and unless freed within five turns, he will asphyxiate.

Rites of the Wyld

There are relatively few rites strictly associated with the Wyld itself. After all, the notion of the rite involves a certain formality, which is at odds with what the Wyld stands for. That being said, there are exceptions to every rule.

Wyld rites tend to be passionate, energetic and loud. They may have set starting points, but they generally run until the participants drop from sheer exhaustion. Furthermore, such rituals are not gentle. There is every chance of bloodshed (intentional or otherwise) during the frenzy, and passersby that stumble across this sort of thing are unlikely to get out with all of their limbs intact.

Rite of Unsalting the Earth

Level Two

Perhaps the gentlest Wyld rite, this serves to reconsecrate barren ground to the service of life and growth. Originally used to restore cropland salted by the Romans, the rite is used more frequently these days to reclaim lands that have been tainted with pollution or paved over and subsequently abandoned.

The rite itself is rather lengthy, beginning with chanting as two Garou stride the perimeter of the area to be affected. One carries a bowl of water, the other a

bowl of blood (chicken blood is usually sufficient), and they sprinkle this on the ground as they walk. Ideally, the water and blood will run out as the Garou meet back at their starting point. According to tradition, if they run out beforehand, the rite is doomed to failure.

Any other Garou then cross the boundary of blood and water and make a ritual furrow from one end of the field to the other. No tools can be used in this labor, or else the entire effect is spoiled.

System: If the rite is performed properly, the site becomes much more Wyld-friendly and fertile, and may well actually produce life come springtime. In addition, Wurm- and Weaver-creatures find themselves at a +1 difficulty on all rolls while in the newly consecrated area, and this effect lasts for a year and a day.

Rite of the Fertile Season

Level Three

Performed on the day the last snow melts, the Rite of the Fertile Season exists to ensure fertility for all things — plants, animals and those humans and Garou indulging in hanky-panky. Kinfolk are welcomed, nay, demanded at the performance of this rite, which generally grows carnal before much time has passed. A bacchanal of wine, carnality and passion, the Rite of the Fertile Season has been described as a party with occasional bits of chanting, and that's fairly close to the truth.

The Rite, however, is not outsider-friendly. Anyone accidentally intruding has an equal chance of being swept up in the madness or being torn limb from limb. Resisting the ambiance is a sure way to meet an untimely fate, while giving in to it can have unexpected consequences.

Systems: The Rite of the Fertile Season makes anything exposed to it more fertile — almost. (Metis remain as sterile as ever; a simple rite isn't good enough to undo one of Gaia's heaviest decrees — or curses. Most septs won't allow metis anywhere near the rite, anyway, feeling that their sterility might offend the Wyld-spirits that empower it.) Enterprising young Garou have begun experimenting with bringing everything from window boxes full of cannabis to crystal growth experiments to the rite, to see how far its power extends. The traditional use of the rite, however, is to ensure the next generation of the Garou Nation. With the Apocalypse straining at the seams, however, some septs have set this rite aside, concerned that there won't be time for the next generation to reach childhood before the war reaches its peak.

Storyteller Note

Some of your players may be uncomfortable with playing out this rite, even with discreet and tasteful fades to black. Others may note that it's unlikely to have any immediate play impact. However, the rite is very useful for setting up storylines — the prophesied child who must be born, the growth experiment that gets out of control — and fits very nicely into a chronicle in that respect. (This is particularly true of historical chronicles, when the Apocalypse isn't looming over the players' heads, and there will probably be time for the prophesied child to reach adulthood.) If your players are uncomfortable with the rite, that's one thing, and their sensibilities should be noted. If, however, they don't think anything storywise can come of the rite, feel free to prove them very, very wrong.



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