


TAKEN FROM THE TALLEST OF THE TALL MEXICO



**The 19th-Century Mexico Sourcebook
for the World of Darkness**



TALES FROM THE TRAILS MEXICO

By James A. Moore

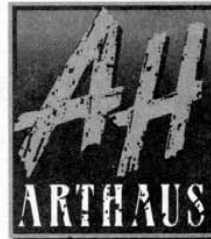




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TALES FROM THE TRAILS IN MEXICO

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LEGENDS OF THE GAROU

The Calm and the Storm that Follows

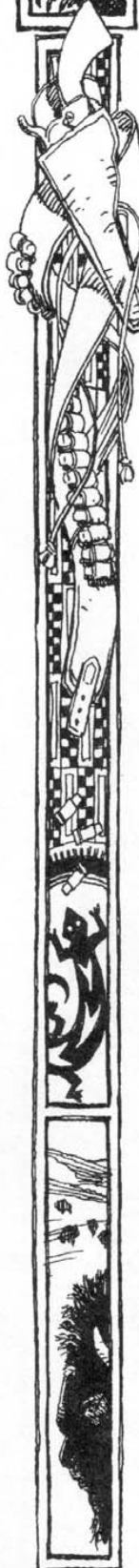
The boy ran into the cantina, his face covered in thick sweat despite the bitter cold outside. "They're coming! Just like you said they would, they're coming!" The boy was shivering, partially from the unexpected cold of the night, but mostly from fear.

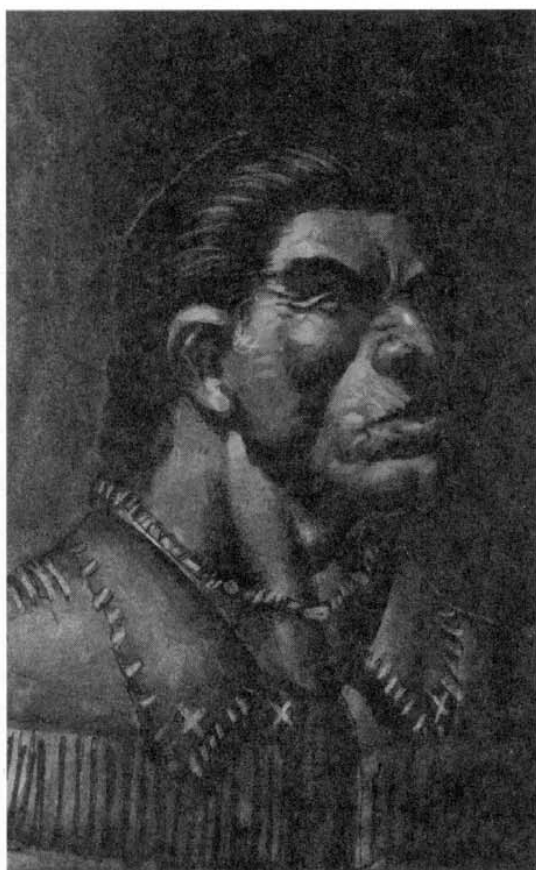
Santiago Del Rio nodded and spit a spray of tobacco on the dirt floor. "I ain't been wrong on these things, yet, boy. Don't see no reason to start makin' mistakes now." He looked around at his companions, a dour expression on his weathered face. "Everyone ready?"

Three braves stood up, curt nods their only acknowledgment that it was time to do battle. The barkeep promptly reached under the well-

polished wooden bar and pulled out a shotgun that looked like it was far past its prime. Throughout the cantina people stood and prepared themselves for war. There were some who looked eager — the ones Del Rio thought of as fools — and others who merely looked tired. Del Rio numbered himself among the latter group. Another night and another battle against the damned Ticks; it seemed his entire life these days was built around fighting back the vampires from the North.

There was a time, distant now, when his family had lived in what the Americanos called their own, the territory of Texas. He'd fought at the Alamo and a dozen other sites,





and all the way through the battles he'd been certain they would win. Then the vampires joined the fights, moving through the darkness of night and killing wantonly, destroying anything that looked like it might consider denying them what they wanted. Hell, he'd had his First Change back in those days. A brief smile played on his lips when he thought about the look on the Tick's face right before he bit the dead thing's face off.

But the time for reflection was past: The vampires were here now, ready to take more of his country from him, ready to kill and ravage anything that wasn't like them.

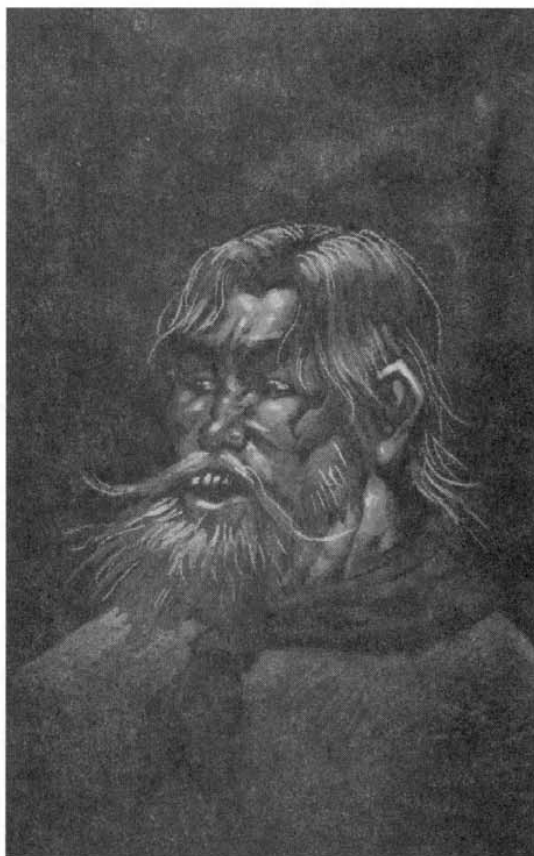
He'd had his fill of battles through the years, but this was an outrage.

Pushing past the doors to the tavern was an exercise in nerves: The cold outside wasn't natural. It shouldn't be cold down here; it should be warm and pleasant. Instead of the usual mild autumn heat, he was struck by a bitter freeze that sent plumes of white rising from his mouth and every part of his body that wasn't protected from the elements. Several of the humans around him gasped at the cold, which had gotten even worse since the night before.

When the snow first started early in the previous night they'd all been a bit surprised. Word had gone out that the Wendigo were responsible, but that was shut down quickly. Next everyone wanted to blame the Get of Fenris, at least until they realized that there weren't enough of them down here to make anything like this sort of weather.

And then Del Rio remembered the stories he'd heard of vampires that could change the weather: tales of hideous frosts and violent lightning storms. For all anyone really knew, the Storm Eater itself had brought the foul weather. Still, he was inclined to blame the Ticks. He'd dealt with their sort enough times to know they were capable of almost anything, and one sniff of the air was enough to tell him the freezing weather wasn't merely Earth-Mother getting an early start on the winter season. It stank of the unnatural.

Throughout the night that followed and all of today, the snow had kept falling, and everything was now covered in a heavy veil of white. It was beautiful in its way, but it would only make for treacherous footing in the coming fight. The only ones who seemed unfazed by the bitter cold were the Get and the Wendigo, and between the two tribes there were only three werewolves present for the coming battle.



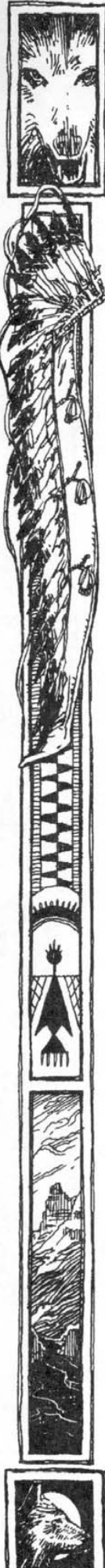
Marg Stonebreaker was old, but still carried himself with a warrior's pride. Autaqua and Walks-to-the-South were younger, but neither seemed like they were ready for a battle. He wondered why they'd chosen Mexico instead of the expanses of the frozen north, but never bothered to ask them what had driven them so far from their homes. Surely they had their reasons. The other Garou in the area included three Shadow Lords and two Bone Gnawers. The Uktena and Red Talons refused to deal with the Spaniards and Europeans. Seeing the ways in which the strangers had hurt them, Del Rio really couldn't condemn them. They'd promised to be nearby if the ones he'd gathered failed to kill the Leeches. He prayed they'd keep their word.

Virtually every adult or child capable of carrying a gun was there, and as a single unit they walked into the wintry blast and away from the edge of town. There was going to be fire and bloodshed, and no one wanted to risk the protection they had from the cold or burn the whole town down around them.

Del Rio led the force, and they followed him eagerly, glad to have an experienced gunfighter on their side. Beneath the snow that crept up to his mid-thigh, Del Rio felt the cold, level ground that marked the field where children had been playing only two days ago.

Not far away he saw the lights, fires moving in the hills. They were coming. It was time for battle. He spoke quickly, his orders caught up in the unseasonable wind. The humans took their places in the snow banks and the Garou stood in plain sight. This would be an ugly fight, and there would be little they could do to take the vampires off-guard. He had to hope that seeing a smaller number of people would mean the Ticks would be foolish enough to attack the easy targets, thus giving werewolves a chance to get the vampires in close combat. The vampires most surely had numbers, but with snow this deep and enough room, the Garou would have an advantage, especially if they waited to Change until after the battle had begun.

A moment later the enemy came into sight, and Del Rio grinned savagely. There were only seven of them, far less than he'd feared: The stories he'd been hearing had left him to believe they were traveling in groups of 20 or more. The riders came down the steep side of the closest hill, carrying torches and calling out with wild enthusiasm. Despite the raucous cries, no plumes of warm breath escaped their mouths. They were pale, dead things that refused to accept their demise, and they were monsters in the truest form. When they



were done with the town they would surely make the people here into more of their own as they spread further south to take Mexico.

Del Rio saw them coming and a second later felt the bullet slam into his left shoulder, missing his heart by mere inches. The impact spun him to the ground, where he sank beneath the ocean of snow surrounding him, exactly as he planned. Even as he fell he saw the others going down, heard their cries of pain and rage. He used those very same forces to help initiate the Change, and reveled in the familiar burning agony of muscles stretching around bones that were twisting into new shapes. He felt the inhuman strength take hold of him, marveled in the sudden warmth of fur stretching out to kiss the cold night air. The burning wound in his shoulder shrank to



nothingness, replaced by strong, solid flesh fully capable of breaking a man in half with ease.

Once again, he was reborn as something far greater than a human could ever be.



Del Rio erupted from the snow with a howl of rage that shook the white powder from trees for a hundred yards. He bared his teeth in a feral grin as he saw the faces of his undead enemies and prepared to rip them asunder. All around him his call of challenge was joined by others in a symphony of promised pain and revenge.

The riders stood where they had been before, not moving closer, and that was a bad sign. The horsemen, still in front of them, should have surrounded them by now, making them easy targets.

The leader of the seven grinned, his fangs glinting in the night. His long, scarred face was chilling. Del Rio stepped forward, ready to fight anyway, ready to kill his enemies and celebrate their deaths in song. In the distance, behind him, he heard Kinfolk cocking their rifles and knew they only waited for his command. He'd already told them to aim for the heads, as little else would hurt the Leeches.

"Y'all are pretty crafty, I have to give you that." The scarred man spoke softly, but his voice carried in the nearly complete silence. "With most folks that little trick might've worked, and you could be back in your houses." The smile left his face and the cheer faded from his speech. "But Boot Hill ain't most people." The vampire let out a whistle between his fingers that hurt Del Rio's ears and made him want to return the favor a thousand fold.

Before he could do more than step forward a single pace, the snow all around Del Rio exploded, revealing more of the vampires. Each of them had pistols drawn in white-crusted hands, and though the frigid weather must surely have slowed them, they moved



fast enough with the element of surprise on their side. Pistol fire ignited the darkness and Del Rio screamed in pain as the bullets tore into him. Something hot and hard punched through his ribs and exploded a lung. Another bullet shattered his right thighbone and yet another blew out most of his neck. The pain was excruciating, and he fell back into the snow with a startled grunt as his life's blood leaked away from him.

A moment later he tried to rise and failed. His wounds would not heal.

There was more gunfire, and then there was silence. The cold crept back into him as he felt his body shifting to its natural form against his will. Some time later, minutes, hours, Del Rio couldn't be certain, a well-worn boot pushed his face toward the heavens. The scar-faced vampire looked down at him from an impossible height and then suddenly loomed closer as he squatted.

"Thought you was still breathin'," he said in friendly, how's-your-life-treating-you fashion. "I know your face. You were Santiago Del Rio before we came along, weren't you?" He didn't wait for an answer, merely nodded as if he'd already received one. "Pleasure to meet a legend. I'll make sure you get buried proper. I'm Joe Hill, and I hunt your kind, so don't feel too bad about this. I just set you up so's we could knock you down. Heard there was a bunch of Lupines out this way."

Another voice spoke up, just as friendly and just as smug. "Here come the others, Boot. Wanna join us or are you having too much fun?"

Boot Hill looked away for a moment then grinned. "Ain't never havin' too much fun to kill a few more Lupines, Dawson, you know that!" He looked back at Del Rio with a broad, feral smile. "Don't you go nowhere. If'n you're still around when we're done with these, you can be my dinner!"

The gunfire started again, but Del Rio barely noticed. The cold was sucking away everything around him. When the silence came again, he was beyond feeling anything.

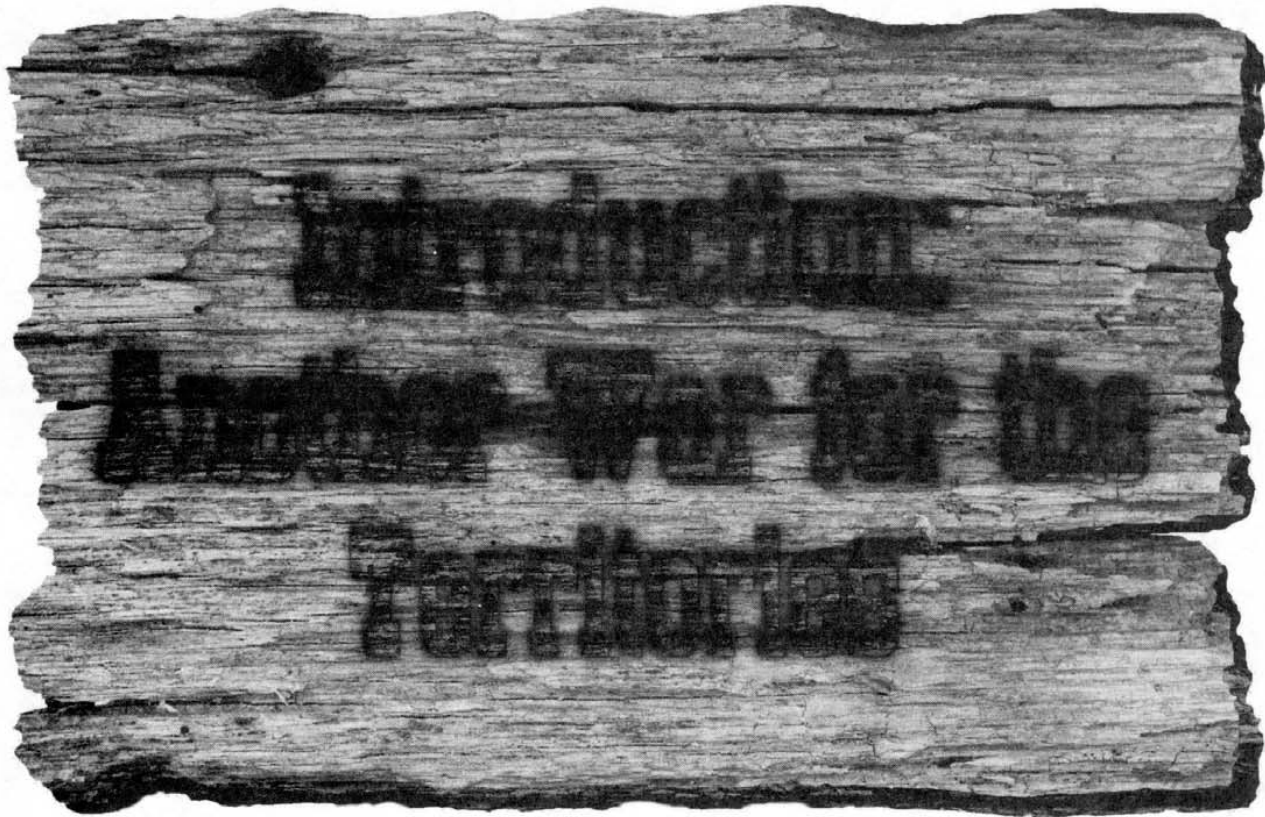
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Joseph "Boot" Hill looked down at his wasted meal and sighed. "Damn shame. I reckon he'd a made a fine meal. What with bein' a hero and all."

Beside him Jack Dawson grinned. "Ain't nuthin' to fret over, Boot. There's a few more of 'em who're still kickin' and growlin'."

"Yeah. There's always a few more, that's what makes it so sweet." He pushed back the jaw of Santiago Del Rio with the toe of his boot and smiled, then kicked the jaw hard enough to shatter it. "When are you morons gonna learn? Silver makes great bullets!" He laughed as he walked away, and behind him Del Rio's body stared sightlessly into the sky until the snow buried him under a shroud of white.






Mexico is a beautiful land, and that very beauty seems to be the curse that falls across her and scars her deeply. For as long as Mexico has existed, she has always been visited with strife and turmoil, pain and death. There seems to be no escape from the misery that is drawn to Mexico, no peace in which to admire her treasures and wonders.

The natives of Mexico have grown used to a certain level of disaster in the area, but what comes their way now is far worse than they've experienced in the past, and is only a hint of things to come. The Wyrms has found the pure land of Mexico and now jockeys to have its way with her.

For this battle, the heads of the Hydra have found a new use for an old pawn, one that continues to deny the Wyrms' very existence, all the while reveling in the very nature of the Corrupter. Vampires. Vampires have come to Mexico, seeking to claim the land as their own. Here they hope to build a new haven for their kind from which they can battle against others of their ilk — others who do not believe that humans are merely sheep upon which to feed, or that Earth-Mother's bounty is theirs to exploit. They are the Sabbat, and they have no mercy, no need for anything that does not give them pleasure.





Though past battles with strangers have cost the people of Mexico greatly, nothing that has come before can compare to what now moves toward them from the North.

As if that were not enough, the War of Rage continues in Mexico. The Wyrmbriber Garou come to claim what they can take by force, certain that theirs is the right way. The local Changing Breeds do not agree, and they fight to keep what they have long since come to think of as their own.

Darker still are the forces that have gathered in Mexico, shadowy, threatening things that have long been the secret rulers of the vast land. Ancient, sacred


rites have been perverted, twisted and warped to suit the needs of a few powerful beings who will use any means to keep what is theirs, even if they must destroy Mexico to save their base of power.

A storm is gathering, and it promises to blow harsher than any the land has yet seen.

Theme

The theme of *Tales from the Trails: Mexico* is simply one of innocence lost. Despite the long and occasionally bloody





history of Mexico, the Changing Breeds here have lived together in relative peace, each accepting that the others had a role in the cosmos. The few exceptions were usually destroyed with ease, or were crafty enough to hide themselves from the wrath of the others. That attitude has changed drastically in only a few decades, and many of the shapeshifters of Mesoamerica are beginning to recover from their shock well enough to feel the need for retribution and territorial war. The newcomers to the region are not quite prepared for the savagery of the locals, but what they lack in experience they more than make up for in numbers. While this second War of Rage keeps the shapechangers at bay, the Sabbat has come to claim the area as their own, and they are very determined to do so at any cost.

Mood

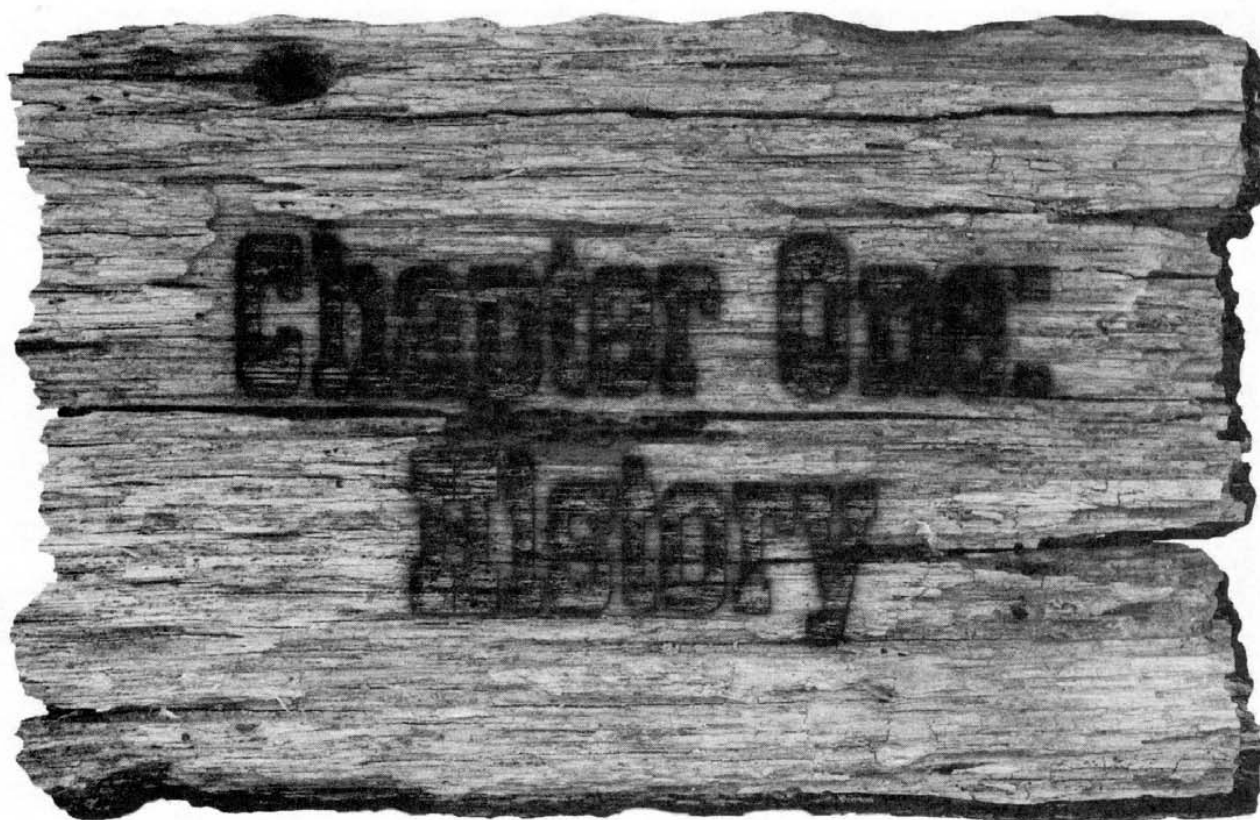
There is a war going on, several actually, in which there can be only one winner. The battle changes shape daily, and the factions move against each other both

directly and with Machiavellian subtlety. Paranoia is a rapidly growing problem, and the loss of trust even in those who have long been close allies is becoming a serious threat. The war is growing far more violent, far more dangerous with every phase of the moon, and the shifting patterns of chaos bring with them a desperation that borders on mania.

Who is truly a friend? Who is truly a foe? The Storm-Eater grows stronger every day, and its power is having unusual affects on the land. Dark things that should be long dead are coming back with a vengeance, and the Interlopers from the North are bringing the Wyrms' taint into a land that has long been free of the worst forms of corruption. It's not merely the mortals who present a problem any longer, there are other supernatural disasters building in the shadows, and strange machinations obscure the path to salvation from the growing storm.

Saddle up, gringo. You better be ready for it when it hits, 'cause there ain't gonna be nobody to cry at your funeral.






When the Land was Sacred

Been doin' some travelin' again, on account of it's what I do best. Lately I've been listenin' to my grandfather's advice. When I was younger he looked at me and said, "Laughing Manyskins, you can only learn the truth by askin' people. And you normally have to ask a lot of them, or you end up getting only part of the truth because everybody adds their own seasoning to a story, like when they make a stew." So I've been down to Mexico, and I've been listening and I've been watching. Settle on down here, make yourself comfortable, 'cause I've got a tale to tell you.

There was a time, long ago now, when the Land was sacred and untainted by the Interlopers. That's what the folks down Mexico way call the Europeans, Interlopers. The People knew their gods and those very same deities answered their prayers happily. Humans were scarce enough that there was no need to keep them from growing too far or too fast, and culling the herd was a simple matter.





What's that? Oh, I know what you're saying — "The Wyrn is everywhere." Well, that's true enough, but sometimes he's more in a place than he is at other times, and just now he's figurin' he's been away from Mexico a little too long. But I'm gettin' away from the story, the one I'm here to talk about. Seems Earth-Mother has her ways. She can defend herself to an extent, but she looks to her champions to do that, her guardians and defenders.


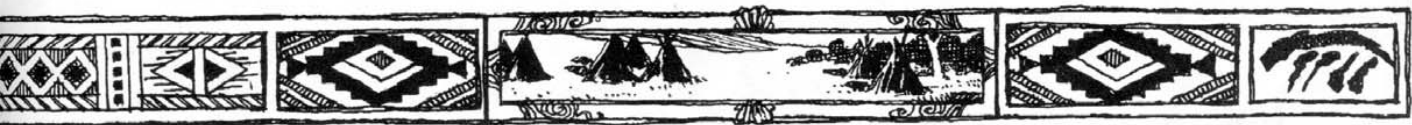
Anyway, back to my story. In time the humans began to settle in towns and in cities. They learned to cultivate their crops and farm the land, accepting the blessings of Earth-Mother without abusing her in response. In thanks they built stone temples to the gods, giving them names that were not the same as the Changing Breeds used, but were meant for the same beings.

The servants of Earth-Mother looked on, and were pleased. Perhaps there was some arrogance in their satisfaction, that wouldn't be impossible. Many took to working as the servants of these gods, answering the questions of the humans and reminding them of the proper path to follow, never truly revealing what they were. The humans accepted them, giving worship to their forms and offering sacrifices.

For a time these sacrifices were accepted as tribute, a replacement of sorts for the killings that once kept the humans from growing too vast in number. The people called themselves the Olmec, and they were encouraged to grow and to learn. They built many cities, the greatest of which was called Teotihuacan, "the City of the Gods."

Teotihuacan grew mighty indeed. Over 125,000 people dwelled within the city, serving Earth-Mother in her many disguises. But the people soon changed, believing less in protecting the Land and more in serving themselves. They began taking too much from Earth-Mother, replacing little and growing fat as a tick on the neck of a deer. With so many of them to feed, they began forcing their will on other tribes, expanding their influence over hundreds of miles and cutting away the trees in order to grow their food. Earth-Mother was not pleased, and told the Changing Breeds to speak with the humans, to warn them against their newly found ways.

The humans scoffed, ignoring their messengers from the gods and continuing in their folly. One of the greatest of the Mokolé, Queztalomic, Heart of the Sun, demanded that the humans surrender their leader for sacrifice. The ruler of the Olmec people, Malinche, a woman of great will and astonishing beauty, refused and sent her soldiers to destroy the messenger of the gods. Though the battle was fierce, they succeeded in killing the great Mokolé, offering him as the sacrifice instead of their queen.



When word of this deed passed among the Changing Breeds their rage was powerful. The Uktena, the Balam, the Mokolé and the Ananasi, the Corax, the Nuwisha and even the Camazotz all gathered together in a great moot and spoke of what to do. The decision was simple enough to make. They had failed in their duties and allowed the Olmec to grow too strong. The time had come to rectify their mistake and this they did with Earth-Mother's blessing.



Teotihuacan fell under the collective wrath of the Changing Breeds. Many of the humans fled, screaming into the distant jungles never to return. Many others died for their foolishness. Malinche, the dark queen of the Olmec was killed and carefully buried in the traditional way, her body left at the ruins of the City of the Gods as a reminder that the messengers of the gods should never be disobeyed.

With the death of Malinche and Teotihuacan came the death of the Olmec Empire. The people learned their lesson well, and all was forgiven.

Perhaps a trick, once learned, can never be unlearned. The next time the humans gathered together in great numbers they called themselves the Zapotecs, and they too built great cities. While the tribe thrived before the fall of the Olmecs, they became far greater when their neighbors to the north were vanquished. Many of the Olmecs went to the Zapotecs and joined them. The Zapotecs leaned away from the ways of Earth-Mother, and they soon learned the error of their ways. Without the aid of the Changing Breeds, they fought amongst themselves and squabbled a great deal.

Before they finally fell to their own dark desires, the Maya people gathered and began to build still another camp for the humans. They were wiser, and they listened to the messengers of the gods and were rewarded with the aid of the shapechangers. They grew wise and learned well the lessons offered them, soon surpassing the knowledge of the teachers in many ways. Still, the best efforts of the Mayans could not stop their great numbers from harming the land. Simply by gathering in such large herds, the humans began to deplete their resources. They had to choose between claiming more of the land for their farms — or starvation. Some choice.

Several of the leaders felt differently about what had to happen, and wars came to the once-peaceful Mayan Empire. Chac, one of the greatest of the Mayan leaders and kin to the Uktena, looked upon the damage they were causing Earth-Mother and fretted about what to do. The tribe fell upon itself in war, some using the combat as an excuse to seize the land




of others, some simply trying to do what was best for everyone. Chac contemplated the dilemma and asked the guidance of the gods. Unlike so many, he then listened to that advice. He called upon the Changing Breeds for assistance, and some of them agreed that his thoughts were sound. The Wolves, the Jaguars and the Lizards all helped him in his efforts to stop the war. Though matters did not change easily, in the end Chac managed to convince the remaining leaders that abandoning the cities and finding a better way to live with Earth-Mother was more sensible. The Uktena, Balam and Mokolé who stood with him might have been a very strong deciding factor in getting everyone to agree. The cities were surrendered to the Land, save for a few places where the foolish refused to agree and continued on as best they could.

What's that? No, the Nuwisha didn't get involved, nor did the Corax or the Camazotz. The Camazotz had already lost many when they battled the Olmec, and the Corax and Nuwisha had better things to do, other places to go. Besides, speaking for the Coyotes, war is not our way. It's often wisest to let the humans tend to themselves.

With their government in ruin and their cities forgotten, many of the remaining Mayans collapsed into separate smaller tribes. Those who chose to ignore the dictates of Chac and the messengers of the gods moved to the South and met other cultures, changing along the way. In time, the migrating remaining Mayans built their nation strong again, but wiser and with better care.

Meanwhile — and you knew there'd be a meanwhile — to the North grew another force. These fellas were far more warlike, ready to take what they needed by force. They called themselves the Toltecs. The Toltecs came in great numbers, killing many and forcing the rest into submission. This was not a quick and simple conflict, but took many years. They didn't so much conquer the tribes of the area as simply absorb them into their own growing culture. The Toltec adopted many of the Mayan ways and they too learned to live with Earth-Mother — in their own fashion. Being more aggressive than the Mayans, they spread out in far greater numbers and built outposts to protect them from other invading forces. Their power was so great that many of the lesser tribes paid them tribute as protection against being invaded and overwhelmed. In time they too began to look away from the simple bounties provided by Earth-Mother and began ignoring the wisdom of the Changing Breeds. They took much of the land for their farms, and they cut down great forests to make their cities. Foolishly, the Changing Breeds did not stop the trend before it was too late.



and Earth-Mother took matters into her own hands, or perhaps she had help from the Wyrn. A drought came far to the north of Mexico, driving thousands of people south to avoid the ravages of starvation.

The Wendigo, best known for staying in the far Northern reaches, came down into the land of Mexico for the first time, and with them came many of their Kin. There was no great war between the brother tribes of the Carou, but there were battles aplenty between the humans on both fronts. A little at a time, the remaining Toltec people moved to the south. Over the course of a decade the Toltec Empire collapsed under its own weight, and for a time there were no more great civilizations, there were simply the tribes who wandered the land. Even that changed quickly, as the people once again began settling in the rich land and cultivating their crops. The Changing Breeds soon learned that they had waited too long, they could no longer control the growth of the cities completely. Still, the city-states that rose were not empires and the Land was not abused as it had been before.

But as time passed, the remaining seeds of the great Toltec Empire grew another force, a gathering of tribes who called themselves the Mexica. They followed their leaders until they reached a place where their seers said the gods wanted them to be. They followed the dreams of the seers, who told them that they should not rest until they saw an eagle kill a snake upon a cactus that grew from a rock. This single image had been given to the seers, and when they saw the image made reality, the Mexica people stopped and settled in a vast valley with several large lakes, the most important of which was Texcoco. For a over a century the Mexica people lived in subservience to their neighbors, most especially the tribe called the Tepanec who dwelled in the city-state of Azcapotzalco. Though they lived well, they were considered inferior to their neighbors.

Despite their difficulties, the Mexica set about creating their own empire and joined with several of their neighboring communities in a pact of war. From this union the Aztec Empire was born, and from the beginning, something was wrong with the empire. Something about it was darker than any of the previous gatherings of the humans had ever been.



The empire grew very quickly, conquering all they came across and either absorbing their enemies or enslaving them. They spread across all of Mexico and into South America, as well as into the areas of Texas and Wyoming in the lands now called the United States. The greatest city of the Aztecs, Tenochtitlan, grew to a size never before seen in the Land. Over 200,000 people made the great city their home, and they built

massive temples to their gods, among them Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl. While the Aztec Empire was physically powerful, it called for changes in the ways the humans thought. Perhaps because the Changing Breeds had interfered in the past, the Aztec Empire felt the need to placate their gods with sacrifices. Huitzilopochtli in particular seemed to want all kinds of sacrifices — hungry fella, I guess. During the reign of the Aztecs, they sacrificed 80,000 captured enemies and slaves to their gods.

Not the greatest folk ever, but frankly, I've heard numbers from them Europeans' history that make the Aztecs seem a little better. Despite their often brutal and bloody ways, the Aztecs still managed to live in harmony with the Land. Many of the shapeshifters were unsettled by their violence, but most agreed the problem belonged to the humans alone. Earth-Mother did not call for the destruction of the Aztecs, and so they were left in peace, save for when their incursions took them to the lands sacred to the Changing Breeds. The Aztecs welcomed many of the shapeshifters, and in particular the Balam were revered. In many ways, all was good in the Land. At least that's what the Jaguars had to say about it.

But in this time a strange division occurred. Some of the priests among the Aztecs changed, growing hungry for power and making arrangements





with the gods for special compensation for their actions. Though none of the Changing Breeds knew of this, they were shocked when the secrets were revealed later. More shocked still, because these prayers of the priests had been answered by something, and that something could not have been the gods, who were merely other names for Earth-Mother.


Worse still, though the secret again remained hidden, some of the followers of these priests were shapeshifters. Some of the priests themselves were actually members of the Changing Breeds.

A cancer grew within the Aztec Empire, one that threatened to swallow the Changing Folk as well. Just as the factions within the empire began to realize there was a problem, the Interlopers came.

They came from Spain, bringing powerful weapons and a desire to conquer all they saw. The Aztecs heard rumors of these great warriors, as tales moved from the south speaking of the Interlopers and their attacks on the now distant Mayans. Though the Interlopers lost most of their battles, they continued to fight, seeking places where they could settle and expand their empire, a notion the Aztecs understood very well. The Emperor or the Aztecs, King Motecuzoma (That's Montezuma to the ignorant) the Second, ordered that his people greet the Spaniards when they came, offering them feasts and treasures if they would simply leave. It is said by some that he was not himself when this event occurred. Don't know what they mean by that. Wasn't us.

There had been tales by the priests that the Aztec Empire would fall when the god Quetzalcoatl returned to them. Though few can say the exact events, the Aztecs believed that another of their gods, Tezcatlipoca, had disgraced and angered Quetzalcoatl, which led to the great feathered serpent flying away to the East. The Mokolé say otherwise, they say that the great feathered serpent god never existed as they claimed, but that he was actually just the legend of Queztalomic, the Mokolé killed by the Olmec way back when. I guess that makes a certain amount of sense, seeing as the Aztecs' stories claimed the Wind God would come back some day and trash the followers of Tezcatlipoca. Seein' how the Changing Breeds came and trashed the Olmec's capitol as a way of sayin' they weren't thrilled with Queztalomic gettin' killed, I reckon that's a possibility.

Well, can you guess what happened when the Spaniards settled in and had themselves a feast, then got offered a great big pile of gold an' such to just leave? Nope — you're wrong. They left. But you're right too, 'cause they came back with reinforcements and a few cannons.



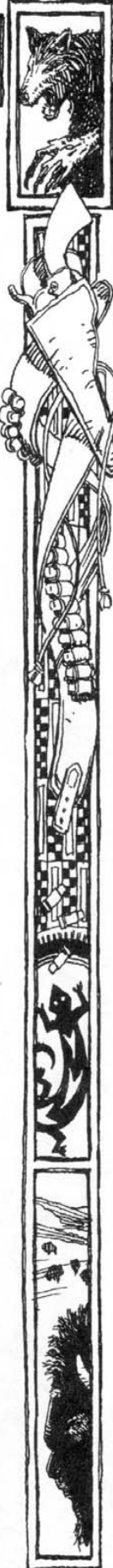

This time around though, the Interlopers got help from some folks calling themselves the Tlaxcalans. Among the Tlaxcalans there was a woman of great beauty and intelligence, who soon made friends with the Spaniards and told them just how to whup up on the Aztecs, who were constantly demanding tithes from their people and now and then dragging a few of them off to feed their gods. The woman's name might sound familiar if you've been paying attention. Her name was Malinche, and though she looked young and sweet, best I can figure is she was getting up in her years since the Changing Breeds had killed her a few centuries earlier. Seems she didn't like bein' dead, and she came back to life. Maybe she hadn't been able to build the Olmec empire by herself, and maybe the people she was hangin' around with weren't doin' too much better, but she saw an opportunity in dealing with the Interlopers and made the best of it. With her help Hernan Cortes was able to build his small army of around 600 into an army of five times that size.

Anyhow, best I understand it, ol' Motecuzoma thought the leader of the Interlopers, Hernan Cortes, was actually Quetzalcoatl come back from the East. So he pretty much gave up his entire empire to the man. Cortes was pretty grateful, I imagine, but he started looking around the great big city of the Aztecs and his eyes went wide. They had gold aplenty, which they would share, and they had some fine women, which they would also share, especially with one of their gods, but most of all, they didn't have the most important thing the Europeans could think of. They didn't have a church that worked the right way.

Why, them heathens actually had more than one god, and on top of that, they had a habit of cutting out the hearts of regular folk to feed to their gods. Seems there's a difference between killing in the name of the European god and killing for any of the others, so the Spaniards got nasty and started killing priests. Mind you, they still had time to take all the gold they could get their hands on. Just to make sure the Aztecs behaved themselves, Cortes captured Motecuzoma and had him locked up in a cell, but even before he was locked up snug and comfortable, the Spaniard made him swear allegiance to the King of Spain.

After a few weeks of gathering gold and feeling self-important, Cortes got notice that his old boss, the Governor of Cuba, a man named Velazquez, figured he wanted his share of the bounty, 'cause he'd financed Cortes in the first place. Cortes went off to explain the facts of life and left his second-in-command, Pedro de Alvarado, in charge of his newly claimed city.

Just to make sure the Aztecs knew who was in charge, de Alvarado killed a few hundred of their people while they were prayin'. That wasn't too smart. I mean, 300 or so men against 20,000, you figure out the odds.



De Alvarado and his men, along with their Tlaxcalan soldiers, found themselves surrounded by trouble. By the time Cortes came back, with his would-be jailers either drafted or dead, the situation was desperate. Even with 3,000 men at his beck and call, Cortes was havin' a bad time. He asked Motecuzoma to give the locals a little talkin' too and explain that Cortes was their friend, but it didn't go over so well. The locals threw rocks at their king, hitting him enough times to break a whole lot of bones. Adding to the poor man's troubles was the fact that he kept claiming the Spaniards would leave soon. What he didn't catch on to was that Cortes'd learned a bit of his language, enough to fear a double-cross, and even while he was talking he was getting stabbed in the back by his new buddies. The wounds were bad, but it still took him three days to die.

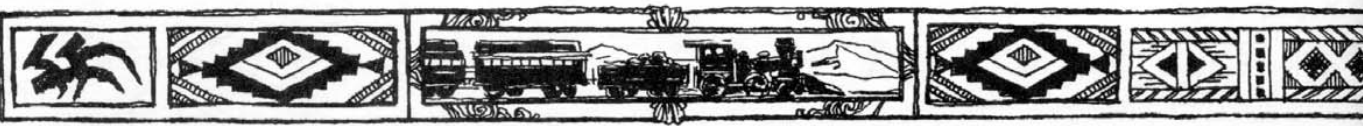
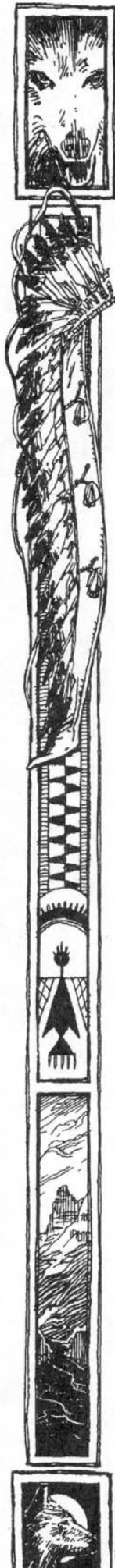
Well, that was a bad day for Cortes and his friends. The dead king's cousin took the whole thing a mite personally, and as he was the new king, he told his followers to get the interlopers gone. Some 800 soldiers later, Cortes got the idea and they ran like hell.

There's rumors that Cortes brought some powerful vampires with him when he came around the first time. Well, when he returned 10 months later, he brought even more of them. Nasty fellas who called themselves the Sabbat. Unlike most humans, the Sabbat didn't much care about what was left when they got finished. They suggested bringing a few surprises for the Aztecs, and supplied plague-ridden blankets and other "peace offerings" like more cannons and nightly attacks by the vampires. To make a long story short, the Aztecs fell and they fell hard.

Before the vampires could get too comfy, though, the Spaniards brought another nasty surprise: what the European Garou refer to as the Inquisition. Mortal monster hunters. The Sabbat ran to the north and the south like they had the Wyrn his own self nippin' at their cajones, and left the area alone. Can you guess what happened next? If you said "The European Garou moved in and made themselves at home," you're right. Truth of the matter is, least as far as I can figure, they came in with the Inquisition. Once it looked like the vampires had been taken care of, they began claiming everything as their own.

The Second War of Rage

A lot of what I say here is conjecture, and seeing as I'm Nuwisha, I just might add a bit of flavor here and there, just to keep things interesting — but not too much, as the truth is just a bit sacred to me. (Especially when you gotta keep it safe by tellin' some fella just the opposite.)





Near as I've been able to gather, the first of the European Garou over here were the Bone Gnawers. Seems like they're always the first, sort of like scouts for the rest of them. Rats on ships, one put it. Haven't been on any ships myself yet, so I can't speak for the truth of that comparison. Next came the Shadow Lords, and when they came they came in force. It was like a trickle in the north, where the "United States" is these days, but in Mexico, it was more like a hurricane.

The Shadow Lords came with every wave of Spaniards, and there were waves aplenty. Just as soon as Cortes came back, he started knockin' down everything that resembled Aztec stylings and began rebuilding it all in a way better suited to his people and their Church.

Might have been that the Changing Breeds would have gotten more involved if they hadn't been fighting among themselves. Not all of them, mind you: The Corax and Nuwisha just walked away from it, 'cause it involved humans and that was never our strength. The Ananasi just stepped away into the forests and watched, as they're liable to do, and the Camazotz whispered to Earth-Mother and waited for a response. The Uktena and the Red Talons fell to arguing over damn near everything, including the desires of the Red Talons to just kill all the humans and let the Earth-Mother figure out a better breed to take their place. It got so they couldn't get near to each other without some sort of bloodshed. The Balam blamed the Mokolé for everything going wrong, and the Mokolé took it personally. Now, when I say they were fighting, I think I need to clarify that a bit. They weren't killing each other off, they just weren't being real friendly to one another. There was a lot of arguing about this and that, and they pretty much agreed to disagree. That was made worse by the fact that some of each were doin' things a bit different from what they'd done in the past. Some had taken to the Aztec rituals of sacrifice with a vengeance, and they had no problem at all hunting down the Spaniards and cutting out a few dozen hearts. They also did their fair share of stomping on the locals who'd agreed to fight with the Interlopers against the Aztecs. It was an ugly, bitter war, and there were no victors, just lots of victims.

While they were going at each other like rabid Europeans, the Spaniards started explaining the facts of life to the natives and building their new towns. In no time at all, they'd settled on the ruins of Tenochtitlan and made a new city which they called Mexico City just as they called the land itself Mexico.

They set up new rules for the Aztecs to follow, and did their best to make them learn the Spanish tongue, though even today most still speak Nahuatl, the native tongue of the Aztecs. There might have been a problem with enforcing their new rules, but the Aztecs and others faced a serious problem



around the same time. The Sabbat's diseased blankets and the foul breath of the Spaniards themselves caused sickness to run across the Land. From what I understand, only about one in 25 of the locals survived the plagues that ran throughout Mexico. Same story as in the US, the Europeans brought death with them. Small wonder the Uktena and the Wendigo call them Wymbringers. Even without the foulness of their culture, they killed millions. Most of the locals were still in mourning when the orders came down, and without their gods to guide them, without even the "Messengers" they'd grown to trust, they felt abandoned.


So, it was into this mess that the Second War of Rage came across the borders of Mexico and started what the locals down here call the Burning Season. I guess maybe the Shadow Lords are a bit craftier than most would like to give them credit for, a little closer to the Wym than they'd like to confess. After they'd driven the vampires away, they sent their friends in the Church after the other Changing Breeds. A casual word here, a shred of evidence there, and suddenly the Mokolé and all the others discovered a nasty truth: Humans can kill the Changing Breeds a lot easier than most of them supposed.

You have to understand, they were used to spears and swords. Even after seeing Cortes and his men in action, they'd never imagined the sort of devastation the Inquisition could cause.

Whole villages were wiped out by fire, and when fire wasn't enough, they brought out weapons. A surprising number of those weapons were silver. The Shadow Lords used coercion and lies to get their way, where the Changing Breeds were used only to the way of the sword and the claw. It was more than just a battle for their own lives that the shapeshifters of Mexico fought, it was a war for the lives of their Kin as well. The Church and the Inquisition cut through the area like a bullet punches through rotted wood. Every time the Changing Breeds thought they'd won a fight, the Inquisition proved them wrong. Worse still, even when they did win, they soon discovered that the Shadow Lords were waiting, ready to finish what their puppets in the Church had started for them.

Want to know how they fought their great war? According to a few of the stories, and I am inclined to take them with more than a grain of salt, at least one band of the Shadow Lords used a cannon. They loaded it with silver shot and cut loose whenever they found a Mokolé too big and mean to take in a fair fight.

I guess they were a bit obsessed with owning the whole of Mexico and everything beyond it. I think maybe they would have just gone on and on with their ways, if they hadn't been taught a painful lesson. From what I hear, the lesson was one they've never forgotten.




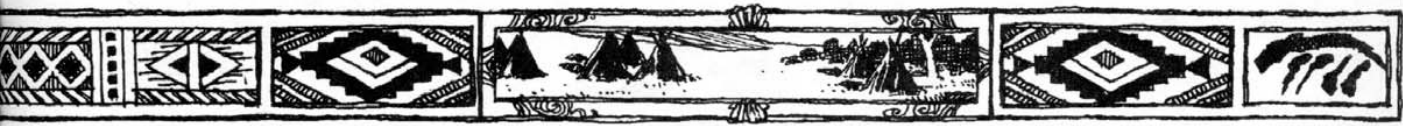
They killed the last of the Camazotz. There hadn't been many of the werebats left since they'd joined the other shapechangers so long ago in destroying the Olmec. Unlike the other Changing Breeds, they'd never recovered from the fight as well as maybe they could have. There's glyphs written down in a long forgotten place, carved into the stone where almost no one will ever see it. It's a confession of sorts from the leader of the murderous pack.

He was called Dark-Claw-of-Vengeance, and he was renowned for his ferocity in battle. I think, though I've no proof, that he was the main driving force among the Shadow Lords in their conquest of the Land. They found the last of the Children of Bat in the ruins of Teotihuacan, the city of the Olmecs. The Camazotz never spoke his name to them, nor did he offer any resistance. There were four of the Shadow Lords there that night, all of them seeking glory and honor. When they spotted him he was standing guard over the ruins, which to the Camazotz had become something sacred, a reminder of all that went wrong when the humans were left to their own devices. They thought he was one of their own, a werewolf gone to the Wyrn. They claimed he had danced the Black Spiral, and the nameless weribat claimed to know nothing of their accusations. Enraged by his "lies," they pointed to his ears and to his wings, exclaiming that these were the signs of the Wyrn. He said he heeded only the Earth-Mother, as was his sacred duty.

Perhaps they had learned a few lessons from their allies in the Church, or perhaps they taught those methods of forcing the truth to the Inquisition when they were younger. Using a silver blade, they cut the weribat again and again, removing thin slices from his ears and from his wings, pulling teeth from his mouth and tearing claws from his hands and feet. And when at last they had forced him to confess to consorting with the Wyrn, they ended his life by driving the silver blade deep into his heart.

The Mokolé say his scream has been heard twice. The first time the last of the Camazotz cried out, the ground shook and the sky rained blood for three days and nights. Nuwisha I've spoken to say the Umbra itself echoed with that scream, and that the great Bat who was totem and father to the Camazotz tore apart the great cave where it dwelled and remains buried beneath the ruins even to this day. Some claim it was the fearsome, grievous sound of his scream that drove the vampires from Mexico, not the Inquisition. Who am I to say otherwise? I was not yet born when the last of the Children of Bat died at the hands of the werewolves.

The confession of Dark-Claw-of-Vengeance claims that the sound left all four of the Shadow Lords there that night deafened, and that their fur turned white, as if they aged a hundred years in that moment. Earth-Mother



raged at the death of one of Her children, and Her rage was a fearsome thing. She wept blood and She shuddered in Her grief, casting down many of the buildings of the Pure Ones and the Interlopers alike. Whatever help She might have offered to those who suffered from the European plagues was lost in that moment, not because She was angry, but because Her grief was too great for Her to notice their illnesses.

A part of Earth-Mother died with the Camazotz, and the Shadow Lords knew then of their mistake. And in that moment, the Wurm did truly sink its vile teeth into the heart of the Land.

When the blood-storm ended, so too did the Second War of Rage pass from Mexico. Whatever had driven the Shadow Lords to kill all they saw was spent. Many of the Mokolé claim the Interloper Garou collapsed as one, all over the Land, and that when they rose again a fever had passed from them as surely as Luna changes her face. It was the Mokolé who truly stopped the war, for the Balam and the native werewolves alike wanted revenge. Even the cold, passionless Ananasi sought to destroy the Interlopers, but the Mokolé stopped them. They alone knew that the fever had passed, and that the Shadow Lords, for whatever reason, would fight no more.

It is said that the scream of the last Camazotz has been heard one more time: In Mexico, at least, they claim his scream was heard again at the very moment when the Storm-Eater awoke. I was not there, I cannot say.

Changing Times

Well, I reckon you already know must of what's been goin' on, but just in case I'm wrong, I'll cover the basics for ya.

Spain decided they owned the whole of Mexico for a long time. They taught their tongue to the locals and they made sure that only one god — theirs — was accepted at most dinner tables. Like I've said before and most likely will again, them Europeans love using their god as an excuse to make a mess of things.

They took to destroying everything that had ever been a part of the Aztec Empire. If it wasn't approved by the priests, and some times even if it was, they stole it, burned it or buried it. A few of the more tolerable priests actually hid the relics of the Aztecs from the Spaniards and recorded some of their knowledge, but a lot of it got lost to the humans.

They set up some new rules that are still goin' pretty strong today — most of which made being a Spaniard instead of an Indian the best way to get on with a comfortable life.



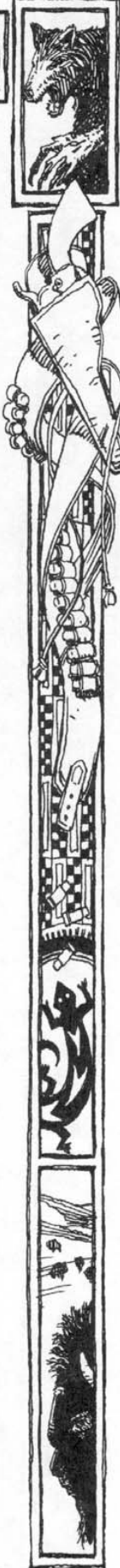
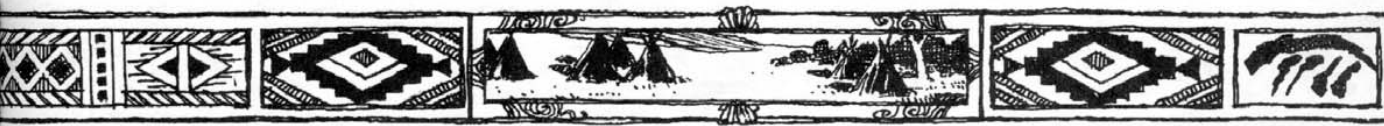
The Europeans brought in their own animals, cows and horses and sheep, and made sure they had plenty of grazing land. If that meant the farms of a few natives had to go, well, that's just the price of progress in the, Interloper way of thinking, I guess.

Now according to Spain, the natives of Mexico were free and entitled to wages. What that means is the word "slave" wasn't permitted. Not for the natives, at least. The dark-skinned people from Africa could still be owned, however, and they were. That's about all it means, too. Blacks was still slaves and brought in regularly to work in the silver mines and plantations. Lots of freed blacks came around, fleeing the United States and getting work from some of the Spaniards. They were often forced to work in the mines, too, but a few lucky ones got to work as taskmasters over the Indians. The natives got placed into the *encomiendas*, work camps where they had beds, clothes and food and maybe the occasional coin to spend on a Sunday when they had to go to their church and pray to the Spaniard's god. All of this meant they had to hire themselves out to the Interlopers if they wanted to make a living. They got paid a little and they worked a lot. There might have been a big problem with that eventually, but the Shadow Lords, of all people, reported the trouble to Spain and reformations came around. New laws were made to ensure that the *encomiendas* had to go. No new *encomiendas* could be built. Those that were already owned would be allowed to continue on until their owners died, but after that the holdings of that person became a part of the King's own property. That stopped real quick, just as soon as the colonists said they'd revolt if things stayed that way. No more of the labor camps were built, but those that were already there got to stay there.

Well, not having forced labor wasn't acceptable to the Interlopers, so they changed a few more laws until the natives had to surrender a certain number of people from each of their communities to work for the Spaniards. They got paid better, but the farms of the families weakened and Spaniards picked up property for a song. Then they changed the rules again.

Best way to own land—which is a notion I still find peculiar—was to be Spanish. Those who'd had claims on the ground before just lost out. Overseeing everything were the viceroys, who served as messengers for the Spanish king. Under them, and loyal to them as often as not, were the *Hacendados*, land barons by any other name. But bein' a strange and proud people, the Spaniards had to make additional rules for the people to follow. If you were born in Spain, you had more privileges. The lucky ones went under the name of the *Penisulares* and they commanded the most

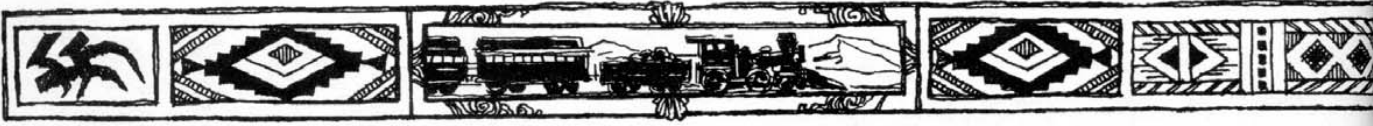





respect, even if they had to use force to make sure they got it. Under them, but still better than the rest of the locals, were the *Criolles*, most often the pure-bred children of the *Penisulares*. They were born in Mexico, so they weren't quite as good as the real Spaniards, but that sin was forgiven them because their parents were proper Spaniards. Somewhere above mud, but well below the *Criolles*, were the *Mestizos*, the folks who were part Spaniard and part native. They often got the scraps off the tables of the proper folks. Lastly, the descendants of the Aztecs and all the others were there, and they were allowed to live as long as they played by Spanish rules. If you didn't have land, you had to work for someone who did have land, and the only way you could call the ground your own legally was to be Spanish or of pure Spanish descent.

There was only one problem as far as the Spaniards were concerned, and that problem was the Holy Catholic Church. Seems it was okay for the Church to come in and save the souls of as many "heathens" as they could, but the viceroys weren't too keen on the notion of the Church owning land, even if they were Spaniards in most cases. They hated the idea so much that they decided to take the land from the Church and, after a good long run of fights, they succeeded. They allowed that a little land could be set aside for the actual houses of their god, but other than that, it was all taken away from the European shamans.

But they made a big mistake in the process. See, the Church was so good at converting — or killing — the locals, that most of the remaining ones were only too glad to fight for their saviors. Mighty hard to get cheap labor when everyone's fighting against you, even your servants. Still, following the notion that might makes right, they held onto the whole of Mexico for a few hundred years — until one of the padres, a man by the name of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, decided that maybe Spain wasn't doin' things the right way anymore. Seems that Spain liked to take lots of money from everyone for taxes, and then take all that money back to the homeland and keep it. Well, the natives got tired of that early on, but they weren't really ready to do anything about it. But when the priest, a *Criolles*, mentioned to other locally born Spaniards that maybe they should get a little something for all their hard work, the others agreed that maybe Spain was getting a bit too pushy with the money demands. Unfortunately, the padre trusted his fellows a bit too much, and when word got out about what he was trying to do, the Spanish government figured it was best to make an example of him. His attempt to free Mexico for the Mexicans failed and he was killed as an example to others.



You ever notice how sometimes people don't catch on real quick? The Spaniards had tried the same thing with Motecuzoma, and all they'd gotten for their troubles back then was an ass-whuppin'. Same thing happened again. It took over 10 years, but the people of Mexico finally convinced the Spaniards to call it quits, and the colony of Mexico became the country of Mexico. That was back in 1821 as the Interlopers count things.

They had themselves a party for a couple of years, but in the end, human greed got in the way again. There were too many people who wanted to be the chief, and not enough who wanted to be braves. If it wasn't one human claiming to be the new leader, it was two others gunning him down and making the same claim. Humans never get tired of killing each other.

Not too much later the Spanish the French and the United States of America all started takin' sides as to who was gonna be the new bosses. The French left early, because the Mexicans took offense to them. Hell, most of the Wendigo I know would agree with their assessment of the French, so it weren't no big loss in my eyes.

With so many roosters guarding the hen house, I reckon it was inevitable they'd let a few weasels sneak past 'em. While everyone was fighting over who got to be the boss of Mexico City, a few of the North American Interlopers decided it might be nice to move to the south and west and make themselves comfortable in the northern Mexico area of Texas.

Well, the Mexicans weren't having a bit of it. They sent their troops up into Texas to kick the hell out of those settling families, and ran home with their tails between their legs. Sixteen families had settled themselves in a new place and built themselves a small town called Nacogdoches. When the troops came up, the families beat 'em black and blue and then went about their business. A few months later, the Mexicans sent in more soldiers, and only four of the families got away to run back home to their own territories and explain what them bad old Mexicans had done to them.

Never a group to take no for an answer, the United States decided they couldn't have their neighbors to the south complaining about them, and started fighting for the rights of their citizens to settle anywhere they damned well pleased. This time around, they got help. Once again, the Sabbat vampires decided they liked the area of Mexico, and that maybe they could have fun feeding on the people down there, since much of the eastern part of the United States was getting too civilized for their tastes. They started "recruiting" new soldiers and making their way down toward Mexico for a return to greatness. It's still going on today, and it ain't looking good for anyone but the Ticks.

Right around the same time as all this was brewin' up, Texas and California decided they didn't want to be a part of Mexico anymore, most likely because all that fighting in Mexico City wasn't doin' them any good when it came to getting proper protection from any would-be invaders. Mexico didn't take the notion very well, and they started fighting more and more to make sure everyone knew they were still in charge. Naturally, in the interest of bein' good neighbors, the United States decided to help Texas and California stay free.

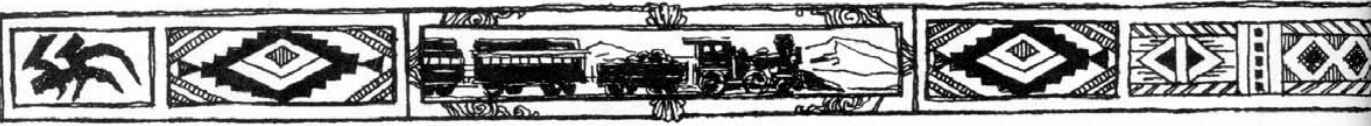

The humans can-American settled their dif- years after the started, when Winfield Scott Mexico City ing army in than a year went back new treaty and ship papers on Mexico. They about it, bein' ment of least partially therefore civi- tually paid owners before land. I reckon have found a stay for the



had their Mexi- War, and ferences ten whole thing US General came into with his invad- 1847. Less later, Scott home with a formal owner- over a third of were nice as the govern- Mexico was at European and lized, they ac- money to the stealing the my tribe could new place to 15,000,000

dollars the United States gave to Mexico. Instead we got bullets, fire and the occasional cannon blast. But I'm not bitter.

Mind you, a whole lot of the Mexicans are. On top of losing the war, they also lost a lot of land. All of Texas and everything all the way over to California was surrendered. Suddenly a lot of Mexicans weren't really welcome in their own homes anymore, and they got another taste of what it means to be an unwilling guest of the United States of America. Overnight you could add Mexicans to the list of people to be abused by the Europeans. There's been a lot of bad blood about it ever since, and there's a lot of Mexicans up around California who ain't real happy about it. They like



the idea so little that they like to return the favor by robbing the American settlers and the running across the border into Mexico proper, where they can't be punished legally. Always eager to try something new and fun, a lot of US citizens are doing the exact same thing, only they're motives seem more likely to be simple greed. There's a lot of people, human and otherwise, who are makin' good money by crossing after them and dragging them back for a fair trial and a hangin'. A lot of them don't come back at all.

That little line the Europeans draw on their maps is an interesting thing. To most everyone it means nothing at all, but to the law it means you can't chase after someone any longer. You risk invading a foreign country if you do, and if you're coming from the US over to Mexico at the time, you risk getting your fool head blown off for your troubles. There's a lot of bad blood between the neighboring countries right now, and not knowing where the borders are is a good way to get yourself killed.

Mexico is in a sad state as far as humans are concerned. No one really knows who's in charge, and there's lots of people who are willing to fight for the right to be the new ruler of the Land. For a little while, Mexico even had an Emperor, Augustin de Iturbide, a *Criollo* who was a major force in getting Mexico free from the Spaniards. That lasted about two years, then everybody got sick of him and killed him. After that there were about a dozen presidents who got nothing done, and Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, one of those presidents, declared himself the ruler of Mexico. That didn't work too well either. He got kicked out about four or five times and then got asked to come back again when the Mexican American war broke out. Santa Anna got to be the leader for a few years, but then they got sick of him again, and after a year or so of sneak attacks and little fights, he left Mexico, fearin' that his life would go the way of the Aztecs if he hung around any longer.

Well, that pretty much brings us up to date on Mexican human history. After Santa Anna, there was a man named Juan Alvarez who ruled while the new government got itself together. About a year later he was replaced by an election instead of an overthrow, and Ignacio Comonfort took office. With the help of others he made some reforms.

There's some say he was too nice for his own good. He wanted all men to be equal, and that was a sore subject for the Spaniards and their descendants, who were sort of fond of bein' the big bosses. Then he said the Church could only have enough land for their churches, and made it a law. That got pretty ugly too. Next thing you know, they're at it again, and the Changing Breeds are just sitting on their haunches and scratching their

A vertical decorative border composed of several distinct panels. At the top is a black and white illustration of a wolf's head, facing left, with its mouth open as if howling or baring its teeth. Below this is a panel featuring a jester or clown wearing a large, white, diamond-shaped hat and a ruffled collar, holding a long, thin object. The next panel down shows a row of sharp, white teeth or fangs. Below that is a panel with a black and white checkered pattern. The following panel depicts a stylized lizard or gecko. The final panel at the bottom shows a landscape with a path leading towards a large, dark, leafy tree.

A vertical decorative border featuring a wolf's head at the top, a jester with a diamond-shaped hat, a row of teeth, a lizard, and a landscape with a tree and a small house.

A vertical decorative border featuring a wolf's head at the top, a jester with a diamond-shaped hat, a row of teeth, a lizard, and a landscape with a tree and a small house.

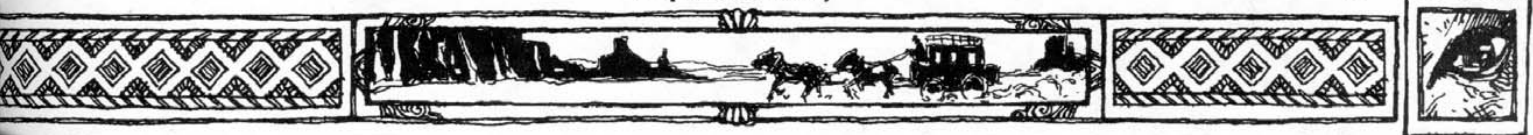
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Chapter Two: Geography



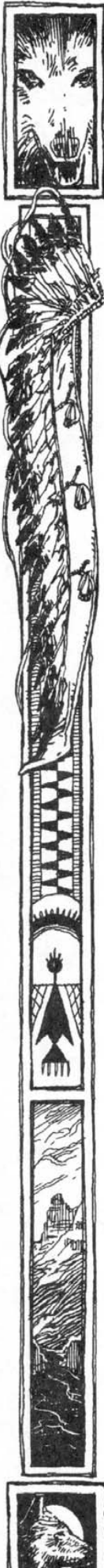
Mexico covers a great deal of land, sharing 1,900 miles of border with the United States and taking up over 761,000 square miles of the globe. The land ranges from arid in the northern areas, which only get around five inches of rainfall a year, to wet in the southern tips, which come close to the equator and receive 70 to 80 inches of rain in the same span of time. The temperature in most of Mexico is pleasant and comfortable throughout the year, with winter temperatures around 60 degrees and summer temperatures that seldom rise above 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

Several features in the lay of the land have exceptional impact on the lifestyles of the people living there, and bear mentioning.

The Central Plateau

The Central Plateau covers most of Mexico, from the border of the States all the way down to Tehuantepec in the far south of the country. The height of the plateau runs between 3,000 and 8,000 feet above sea level, which is one of the reasons so much of Mexico remains comfortably





warm instead of extremely hot throughout the year. The Sierra Madre mountains fork around the plateau, making it almost impossible to transport goods easily throughout most of Mexico. The mountains themselves rise to heights of over 17,000 feet at their highest peaks. While there are volcanoes within the mountain ranges, they have been dormant for a long while; only a major spiritual event would be likely to stir the wrath of these mountains.

The Pacific Lowlands

The lowlands run to the west of the Sierra Madre mountains all the way to the Pacific ocean. The lowlands receive a great deal of rainfall every year and are a prime location for farming. The land is very fertile, and growing quickly in human population. The Mokolé favor the region, and have made a point of watching exactly who and what comes to the territory they've claimed as their own. Though they do not seek to enforce any known rules, there have been a number of mysterious disappearances when the Mokolé have made requests of the farmers and then been ignored.

The Gulf Coast Plain

The Gulf Coast plain runs from the border of Texas all the way down to the southern tip of Mexico. The land is fairly dry towards Texas, but quickly becomes a trap of swamps and lakes. The northern area is fertile, but the low rainfall leaves most of the people living there with little to help them in their efforts to farm. Fishing villages are common along the shore,

but beyond that the region isn't hospitable enough to support human communities. Even so, there are a large number of visitors entering the area to avoid trouble with the US authorities.

The central portion of the plain is home to the heaviest population of Mokolé in Mexico. The deep swamps and harbors serve them well, though there have been numerous problems with the Rokea and the occasional pirate ship. The native Mokolé, by and large, consider the weresharks troublesome, and the two groups have been known to have mild feuds from time to time. The same area is also a haven for the Ananasi, though the fighting between different tribes of werespiders has left them little time to bother with any of the other Changing Breeds.

The southern portion of the Gulf Coast plain is the domain of the Balam, many of whom have moved into the rainforests, further away from European influences. The port town of Veracruz is located at the southernmost edge of the plain, and is growing rapidly. The Spanish population of the area is heavy, and the Balam do their best to ensure that no other Changing Breeds come to the city they've claimed as their own. They are failing, of course; the Ratkin recently found Veracruz and decided it's a great place to set up a network of information exchange and other, less savory methods of making money. Additionally, the Bone Gnawers have established themselves in the city, but seldom venture beyond the area on foot. Most prefer to risk the often-stormy sea than rather face the anger of the Balam.

The Yucatan Peninsula

The Yucatan Peninsula runs from the Gulf of Tehuantepec to the Gulf of Mexico, and ranges from dry lowlands in the north to heavy rainforests in the south. The land to the north has no rivers and is generally uninhabited by humans, with the exception of the town of Merida, where the Mayans once lived. The area was settled by the Spanish in 1541, and has become another of the larger port towns. South of Merida, the climate changes to a zone of heavy rainfall, and farming and cultivation of the land have been a way of life for centuries.

Isla Mujeres

Isla Mujeres is one of several islands of the Yucatan Peninsula that are a part of Mexico. In the distant past the island held a major Mayan city, where they gathered the salt which supplied much of the Empire with the rare mineral. Arguably the biggest mistake made by the Mayans on Isla Mujeres was in dealing with the Rokea in the nearby waters. According to at least a few of the Rokea, the Mayans did not show their kind the proper respect, and were taught a violent lesson which left only a handful of humans on the island.

While the other Changing Breeds might control the rest of Mexico, the Rokea, who have seldom bothered with the "Messengers of the Gods," hold a great deal of sway over the Caribbean Islands — including those claimed by the country of Mexico.

The Southern Highlands

The land directly to the south of the Central Plateau abruptly changes into the Southern Highlands, a range of high mountains, treacherously deep trenches and plateaus that few humans care to navigate. While the land is beautiful, with jagged cliffs running into the ocean and pleasant weather through a great portion of the year, there is little chance for farmers or others to make an honest living in the area.

Thought they are long gone now, the Camazotz once held the lands as sacred. Several packs of Red Talons make their homes in the Southern Highlands, further discouraging the occasional settlers in the area.

The Baja California Peninsula

The peninsula is almost 800 square miles, and is mostly beach surrounding large rocky surfaces that can't sustain a large community, though a few small fishing villages are scattered across the land. There is some vegetation, but most of the land is simply not capable of supporting agriculture. The one thing the Baja California Peninsula has going for it is that it connects directly to California and the US — an easy escape for many wanted-poster rejects from the US.



Major Settlements

Tijuana

Tijuana is virtually the first town most people from California find when coming to Mexico. It is a well-established copper mining community. The strong military presence here means that unless one treads very carefully there will almost certainly be trouble. Here, proudly waving an American flag is not a good way to win friends and influence people.

There is a pack of Bone Gnawers in the area and, like the rest of Tijuana, they are not known for tolerating strangers. As long as one behaves properly, there shouldn't be too many problems — that is, no problems except for the growing population of Sabbat who have made Tijuana their home.

Though they cause remarkably little trouble in the town, the vampires are known to haunt the roads leading to and from the area. They're also infamous for killing anyone who causes them the least amount of grief. Many of the travelers heading into Mexico via Tijuana never return — or when they do, they are not seen in the daylight. This sleepy town with a prominent military presence has become one of the top recruiting areas for the vampires.

Cuidad Juarez

Ciudad Juarez is connected to El Paso, Texas by one of the few bridges crossing the Rio Grande. The bridge is considered "no man's land" by the humans, but the Sabbat are not quite as easygoing about it. They

have numerous agents in the town who watch and report who ever comes into their territory. These ghouls have their orders and they follow them very carefully. Anyone suspected of being an enemy of the Sabbat is immediately arrested by the local police. Trials are quick and hangings are frequent. The Boot Hill Gang is fond of the town and often uses the bridge to make their getaways from Texas.

Despite the Sabbat's stronghold over the police, Ciudad Juarez remains a popular place for bounty hunters chasing after criminals. The unwary ones die quickly, but the more seasoned ones know that if they behave themselves almost anyone is likely to pass over the bridge.

Pitic

Pitic is a small town with grand ambitions. Situated at the joining fork of the Sonora and Gran Miguel rivers, the town has already established itself with the Americans, preparing for a railroad line to go from Texas into Mexico. Though the railroad is not yet completed, there has already been a population explosion in the area.

The city was originally established by the local Indians and though a few of European descent have all come into the area, it remains primarily an Indian-owned and controlled town. There is a very nice church in the Town Square, but a few of the more observant may notice that only a handful of the citizens ever attend Mass there.

To the east of the town are several hills where the locals mine for copper, gold and silver. Between their rich mining projects and the forthcoming railroad, the citizens of Pitic are all quite wealthy. Considering

the influence they are gaining and the financial power at their disposal, most of the supernaturals might find it unusual that there are no other beings in control of the area. The Sabbath stay away from Pitic since the last four groups trying to take the town failed to return. The Uktena refuse to speak of the place, though they do occasionally enter the town and speak with a select few. In exchange for leaving Pitic alone, they have been promised that their caern in the distant hills will remain untouched.

Many people have come to Pitic and a large number of them have stayed, finding employment and opportunity. If from time to time a few of them disappear under unusual circumstances, no one has made note of it more than once in public.

Hermosillo


Hermosillo is the closest town to Pitic and, while it is certainly as large, it does not prosper in the same way. Several battles have been fought at Hermosillo, most recently during the attempts by the French to interfere in Mexico and during the Mexican-American War. Oddly, as most of the people of Hermosillo will point out, none of the fighting ever made it to the neighboring town of Pitic. Or if it did, no one over there is talking about it.

With the railroads coming to Pitic, many of the people in Hermosillo are doing everything they can to attract some of the new industry in their direction. They've high hopes that a new company coming down to Mexico will make them a noticeable spot on the map. The Moonlight Canning Company of Topeka, Kansas,





The land around the city is heavily cultivated and well cared for. The Uktena and Shadow Lords, as well as the Bone Gnawers, have all been established in the area for generations, though they seldom agree on anything. Not far from the town, to the north, are the remains of a Nuwisha kiba. The kiba is avoided by all of the Garou, as it is said to be haunted by the ancestral spirits of the Nuwisha driven away during the second War or Rage.



Unsurprisingly, the Nuwisha still make full use of the sacred ground. Others who have tried their luck often find themselves hopelessly lost when seeking the kiba, and many claim they feel the eyes of the dead upon them in this place held sacred by the werecoyotes.

The Sabbat have made their presence known in the area, but to date their attempts to drive the Garou out or to gain a strong foothold in Nuevo Laredo have failed. Though the separate tribes of Garou agree on little, they are perfectly willing and able to join together when their enemies threaten the city.

Cluata-nol, the leader of the local Uktena has allegedly gained allies among the reclusive Ananasi who know how best to handle the Sabbat, and if the rumors are true, on how to handle the Interlopers.

There is a surprisingly large gathering of Ananasi to the south of Nuevo Laredo, many of whom make regular trips into town. Though such a collection of werespiders is rare in this day and age, the aging Uktena claims they once gathered in force almost everywhere. Most agree he's a little crazy, though none dare say as much to his face. Cluata-nol is adamant in protecting his sept from improper influences. Unlike many of the Uktena, he and his sept refuse to allow any other Garou to know the location of their caern or to use it for any reason.

Cajeme


Cajeme is the next major stop planned for the railroad in Mexico. The city is already growing in anticipation of the change, and several companies are plan-

ning to establish themselves in the area. At present the main industry of the town is cattle raised in the surrounding farmlands. Just recently several of the farmers have complained about odd cattle mutilations found among their stock. The hearts of several have been removed, and there are growing rumors that strange cat-men have been seen in the forests beyond the limits of human influence.

The Balam remain silent on this subject, save to mention that there are a few among them who have reverted to the "old ways" of the Aztecs. To date no Garou have managed to settle into the area. They tend to end up dead within a week or so. The same is true of the vampires.

Monterrey

Monterrey is another of the large mining towns in Mexico. In addition to silver, copper and gold mining, there are also several processing plants for the ores, which collect the ore dredged up from other mining towns and purify the metals. Monterrey is also one of the main headquarters of the Church, and of the Inquisition in Mexico. El Obispado, the Bishop's Palace is a major landmark of the area, and is the central headquarters for the inquisitors on the hunt for demons. The Sabbat have, so far, given Monterrey a wide berth, but that's bound to change in time. There are already several of the undead in the hills surrounding the town, but they have yet to make any serious attempts to attack.



The Garou in town are almost exclusively Shadow Lords. They do not trouble the Church, and the Inquisition, not knowing of their existence in the region, leaves them in peace.

Unbeknownst to the Sabbat and Shadow Lords alike, there is a rather large pack of Red Talons in the area. The Red Talons, like the vampires, are biding their time. Inevitably the calm of Monterrey will change into something else entirely.

Matamoros

Matamoros is a major port town, just across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas, with access to the Gulf of Mexico. Ships from Spain, the Caribbean Islands and virtually everywhere else find their way to the city and leave with many of the exports of Mexico. They also bring just as many imports along the way and a continuous flow of new people. Though the Sabbat has begun to infiltrate the area, the Camarilla has long since established itself in Matamoros. The war between the factions is exceedingly violent and frighteningly quiet. More importantly, other factions within the world of the vampires have made themselves known here. Garou are few in the city proper, but the Uktena and Bone Gnawers both have Kinfolk here and are always around should they be needed. For the moment the city has fallen to the vampires; the Garou feel the time has not yet come to take control and destroy the invading Leeches.


Culiacan

Culiacan was important to the Aztecs long before the Spaniards arrived. These days most people tend to think of it as another combination mining and farming community. It is also the home of a very powerful mummy, who makes her presence known when she feels matters are getting out of hand. A great number of the locals still follow the traditions of their ancestors, though they are careful not to let the Church know the truth of the matter. The Balam hold the area, and do not hesitate to hunt down and destroy anyone or anything that comes too close to discovering their secrets.

The Red Talons know the truth of Culiacan and avoid the town and its people. Though they might loathe the humans, they respect the Balam enough to stay away. The Uktena are welcome to visit, but not to stay in the area. As is the case with most of the native shapeshifters, the Interlopers are not welcome. A rather large gathering of Balam make that point very clear whenever the European Garou attempt to enter their territory.

San Luis Potosi

The Autonomous University of San Luis Potosi has rapidly become one of the major centers of learning in Mexico. The people of the city are among the most industrially minded, and already the Technocratic Union is gaining a powerful



foothold in the area. Industrialists have found a niche as well, and state-of-the-art smelting refineries and textile mills are becoming the main source of income for the people of the region. There are still farms aplenty, but the farmers here tend to grow cotton and tobacco rather than grain or other food crops.

The Sabbat is busy trying infiltrating the area, but isn't having much success. In addition to the Technocratic Orders who not only control but also protect the city, San Luis Potosi is the only city in Mexico with an open lodge of the Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon. Though the Society and the Technocracy do not see eye to eye, they have each decided that the threat of the Changing Breeds and vampires should be eliminated at all costs. A rather large gathering of men in town hunt down and destroy anything that smacks of the supernatural in the area.

Tampico

Tampico is one of the three largest port towns on Mexico's east coast. Like the other towns, the vampires and werewolves have both staked their claim on the territory. In this case, the Sabbat are winning the war, taking advantage of the open terrain to aid them in locating and ruining any places where the werewolves might reside. But that is about to change. The Mokolé have heard of the trouble in the region and decided that a little assistance is necessary. Several of the werealligators have recently relocated to the port town, and are beginning to coordinate their ef-

forts with the remaining Uktena. The Shadow Lords in the region have not yet learned of the shifting balance of power.

Guadalajara

Guadalajara is the second largest city in Mexico, and one of the highest in elevation. It lies to the west of Mexico City, at a much higher elevation — nearly 6,000 feet above sea level. The weather is mild year round and the farming is excellent. The University of Guadalajara is growing quickly, and many of the residents are of above average education as a result. Though far from completion, the railroads are coming to Guadalajara as well, and there are already several textile mills being built in preparation. Vampires have been seen in the area, but have not yet begun an earnest attempt to infiltrate the city: they're far too busy trying to claim Mexico City.

Many of the local humans claim that Guadalajara has a guardian angel, one who blesses the land with fertility and the people with good health. They are wrong, of course. What they have is a blessing from their ancestors, one of whom has simply chosen not to die. Malinche is old, though she hardly seems so, and she has made many mistakes in her life. For the time being she concentrates on doing all she can to protect the people of Guadalajara. Only time will tell if she is successful. The Uktena of the area know who she is and what she has done in the past. They also accept that almost anyone can change, given enough time.



Mexico City

Mexico City was once the capital of Mexico, but that has changed with Benito Juarez's presidency. The National Autonomous University of Mexico, established in 1551, sits to the south of the city proper, but is still heavily influential in the politics and philosophies of the upper class. At least as influential is the Catholic Church, with several cathedrals already established in the area. The city has grown and changed during the last 300 years, becoming one of the best-established locations of European culture in the Americas. Just the same, a great deal of the native culture has remained embedded in the people and their way of life.

Despite its decline in governmental status, the city flourishes, and its population is constantly rising. The textile industry is already well established and several canneries are endeavoring to succeed in the city. The country's mint and most of the established banks in Mexico have their roots here, and there is a thriving art culture that is unparalleled in the New World.


Unsurprisingly, the Ventrue and the Toreador, along with the rest of the Camarilla, have no intention of surrendering their beloved city to the Sabbat, despite the increasing number of renegade vampires that are showing themselves in the area. There is a war going on in Mexico City that makes the skirmishes in the rest of the country seem tame in comparison. While the humans go about their business and sleep in their beds, vampires of two

strongly opposed beliefs are fighting to win over the most deeply rooted vampire stronghold in the New World.

As elsewhere, the vampires are not alone in claiming the city. Though many have migrated further away from the center and travel greater distances to meet with their brethren, the Shadow Lords and the Balam both hold Mexico City as their own. The Second War of Rage may have ended for most of Mesoamerica, but it still rages on in Mexico City. Making matters worse is the fact that, for the first time in the history of Mexico, the Black Spiral Dancers are staking claims as well. There have only been a few minor conflicts to date, but an all out war for control of the territory is inevitable at this point.

On the mortal side of things, the politics are just as intense and often even more lethal. Though Mexico City is not the current capital of the country, few doubt it will be again in the near future. The Church, the politicians and the people on the street are all of differing opinions as to what will occur. The Church wants to reclaim its lands, the politicians can't decide on just how the country should be run, and the citizens of Mexico want an end to the ceaseless conflict between the republicans and the federalists. Public opinion on whether or not a strong central government is truly needed remains uncertain, but everyone agrees that Mexico wishes to remain free to make it's own decisions, despite the interest of the United States, the French and the Spanish. Soldiers walk the streets in force, carrying





sword and rifle and ready to break up any fights that start. They are also more than willing to use lethal force if necessary.

The Technocratic Union has finally taken an interest in the city as well, making themselves at home in the four universities and in the growing number of factories in the area. The Tradition mages who have long held a strong influence in Mexico are justifiably worried about what may come from the intrusions. Tensions between the two groups are quickly reaching the breaking point.

Mexico City has a long history. In the distant past the land it rests on was the capital of the Aztec Empire, Tenochtitlan. In that era Lake Texcoco was the source of water for thousands, and the cold waters received the blood of thousands more when the rains came and washed away the remains of human sacrifices. Even as the city grew larger and rafts that held still more buildings and more people covered the lake, it was used as a source of water.

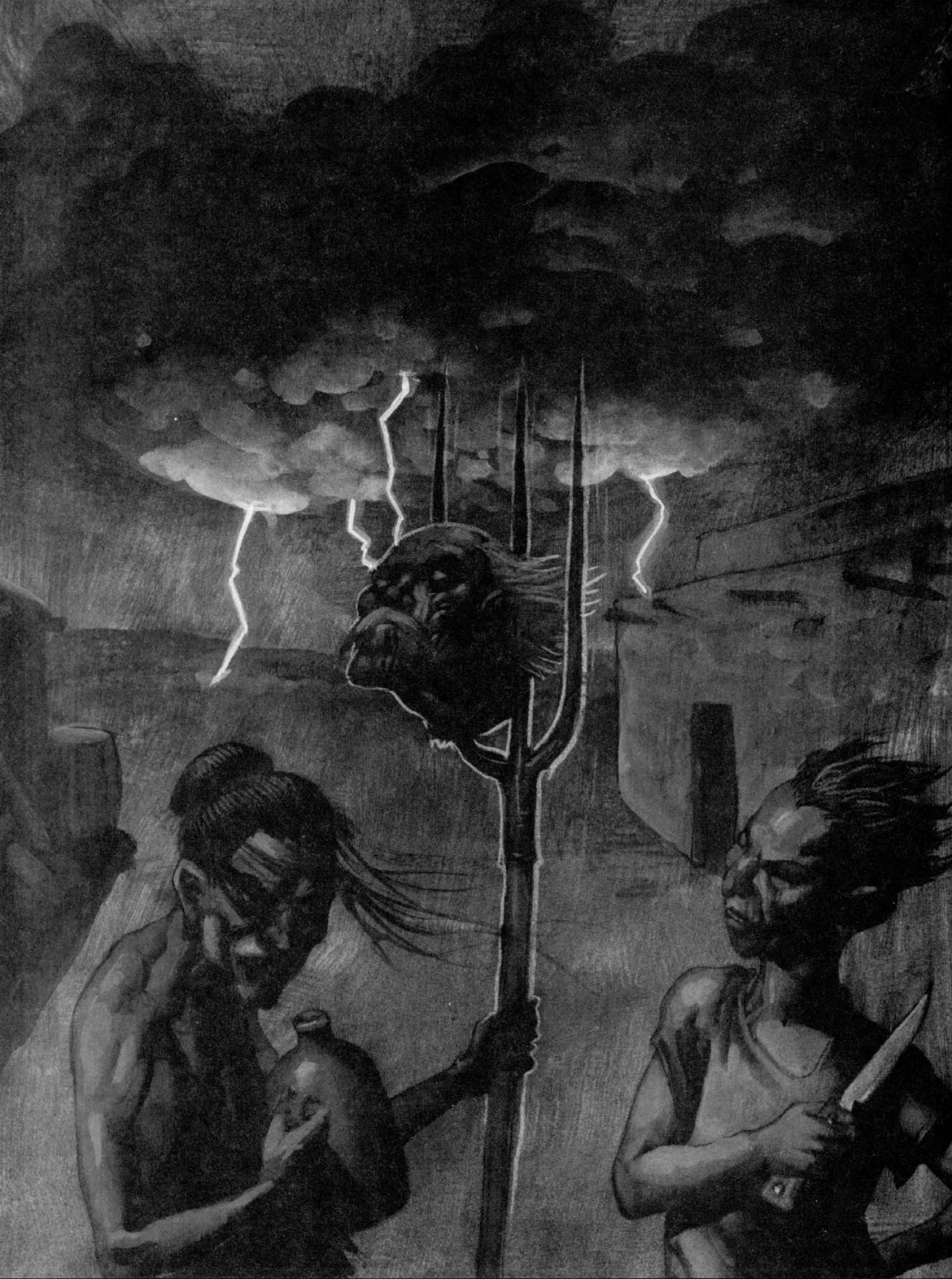
These days the lake is gone, covered by the new buildings of the Interlopers and buried along with the memories of ancient glory. Perhaps those waters, locked away from the light of the sun, remember something that no one else does, for most of the Garou and many of the other Changing Breeds feel that Mexico City cannot be saved. The Bone Gnawers still live in the city, but the Shadow Lords tend to do whatever business they must in the city and then leave.

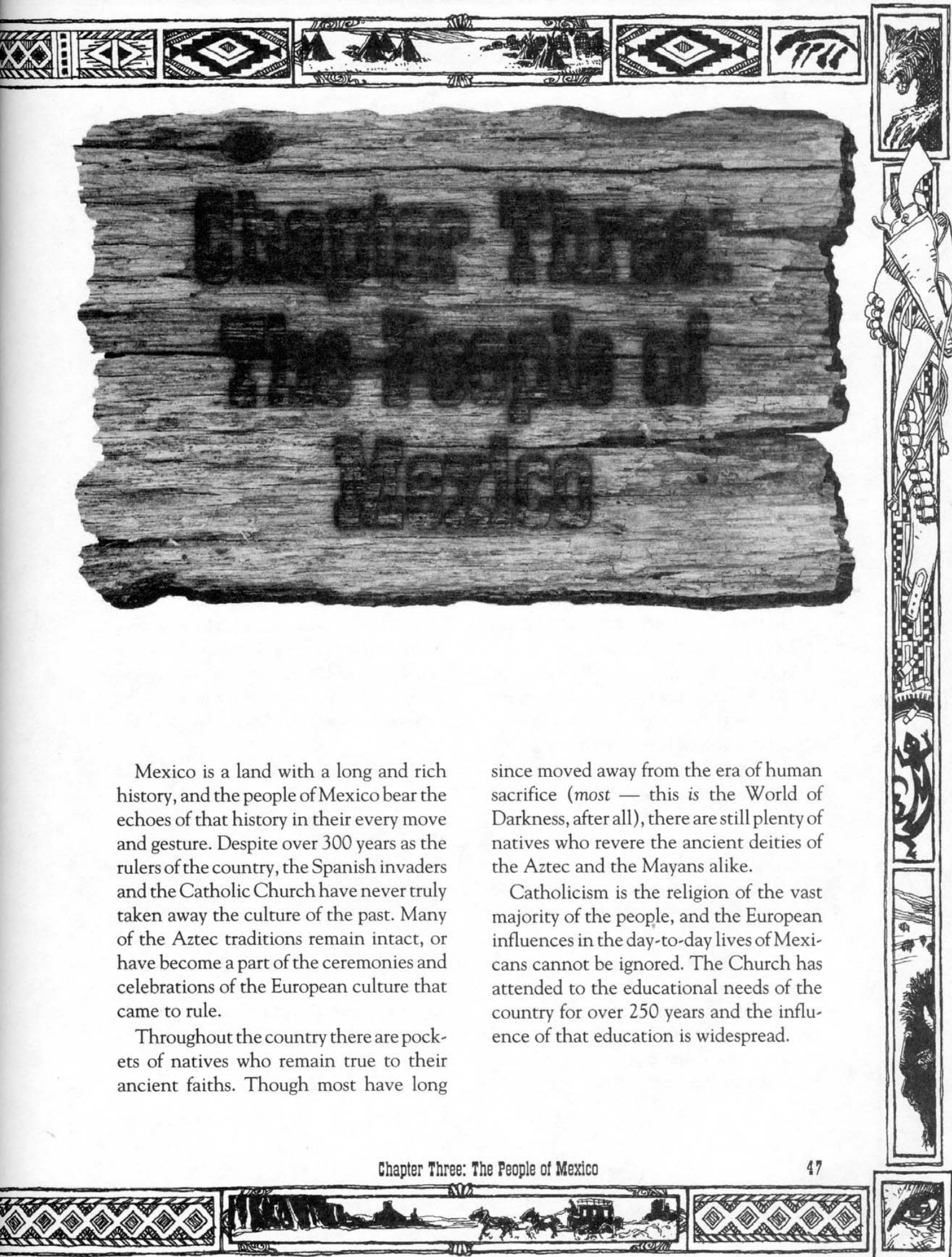
Many of the locals blame Maximillian, the Interloper who came on behalf of the French and decided to rule over Mexico.

He, with the blessing of the French government, tried to take control of the country, claiming Mexico City as his capital. Despite the complaints of the United States and Mexican governments alike, the French only surrendered their claim to the land in 1865. Maximillian refused to leave, believing that he had the blessing of the people of Mexico. Perhaps his death by firing squad, under the orders of Benito Juarez, finally made him see the error of his ways.

Still, many of the locals claim that nothing has gone right since Maximillian of Austria came to rule over them. Others accuse the Spaniards. Their destruction of the Aztec Empire led to the death of all that was worthwhile in the Valley de Mexico and ruined the land.

The only certain thing is that there is a presence in Mexico City. The dark force that seems to hover over the area is almost palpable, and the people — when they consider the idea at all — are uneasy with the notion. Whatever the case, Mexico City seems to draw trouble like a corpse draws flies. Though there are many places where the land is less well-defended and the obstacles are not as great, the Sabbat have concentrated their greatest forces within the Valley de Mexico and in particular on the once-capital of the country. Industrialists have begun to move in, and the people living in the city are finding jobs with ease, but there is still a feeling of dread, a sense that something bad is growing here... something inexorable.





Chapter Three The People of Mexico

Mexico is a land with a long and rich history, and the people of Mexico bear the echoes of that history in their every move and gesture. Despite over 300 years as the rulers of the country, the Spanish invaders and the Catholic Church have never truly taken away the culture of the past. Many of the Aztec traditions remain intact, or have become a part of the ceremonies and celebrations of the European culture that came to rule.

Throughout the country there are pockets of natives who remain true to their ancient faiths. Though most have long

since moved away from the era of human sacrifice (*most* — this is the World of Darkness, after all), there are still plenty of natives who reverence the ancient deities of the Aztec and the Mayans alike.

Catholicism is the religion of the vast majority of the people, and the European influences in the day-to-day lives of Mexicans cannot be ignored. The Church has attended to the educational needs of the country for over 250 years and the influence of that education is widespread.



turbulent history of the last hundred years and recent invasions by both the US and France.

The military forces in Mexico are tense and prepared to defend themselves from threats both real and imagined. In the past 40 years the soldiers in Mexico have fought among themselves and with two separate invading forces. The people of Mexico have lost land both in the north and in the south to invading armies, and the changing finances of a growing industrial nation are only adding to the chaos.

Adding to the sheer chaos are the supernatural forces at work in Mexico. The Camarilla has long been content to hold control over the cities and leave the wilder areas to the Changing Breeds. Though the shapeshifters have never been as comfortable with the notion, at least they understood the status quo well enough to survive their encounters with the vampires. But that's all changing. The Sabbat aren't merely sneaking into the cities and slowly seizing power, they're using the conflicts of the mortals to mask their actions. When the humans begin to work out their differences, the Sabbat are there to make matters worse. Relations with the United States, already very strained, are being made worse by the Sabbat. The rebel factions within the country are often merely people unsatisfied with the progress of the current regime, but they are also often the result of carefully orchestrated maneuvers by the invading vampires.


The Camarilla still has influence in many of the larger towns, but they have already lost a number of the smaller areas and they are still losing their Jyhad with

their longtime enemies. Both sides are glad to use human pawns in their conflicts, and the result is a steadily growing chaos in the cities, along with a fear of what waits in the areas between them.

Despite the fact that there are still large areas where humans remain only a minor nuisance, the Changing Breeds are growing very paranoid — not only about the vampires, but about each other. The days when the shapeshifters agreed on most things and worked together are long gone, but it has been only recently that the conflicts of their Kinfolk started adding to the differences. The political factions that affect the humans also affect the Changing Breeds. The War of Rage, though over, is still a sore spot for most of the Changing Folk, especially the Balam and the Red







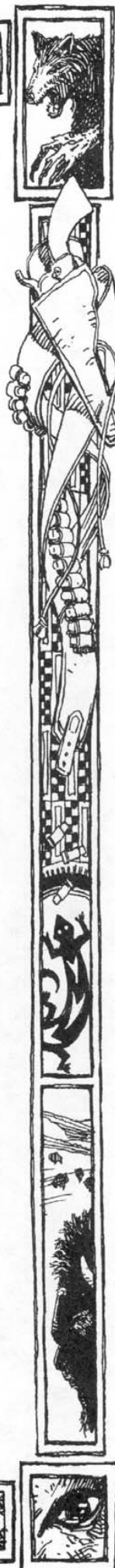
erals in places where the Mexicans never thought to look is taking hold, and the untamed areas of Mexico are rapidly getting more attention than ever before. New mining operations and the sudden loss of a third of the country's territory has changed the perspective of the Mexicans substantially. They once had more land than they knew what to do with, now they have less land than they feel they truly need.


Additionally, the United States has already been making connections in Mexico, seeking to gather more land, or at least its resources, now that the war is over. Gold fever has also blurred the lines around the border more than most are comfortable admitting. US citizens seeking gold have no reason to ignore the potential wealth of Mexico simply because a map tells them they can't dig where they please. Just as poachers have always found the best deer to hunt in forbidden territory, the miners tend to think the hills are a little shinier on the southern side of the border. The long forgotten rumors of El Dorado, the city of gold have come back into the light, and there are prospectors aplenty seeking to find out just where that shining legend might be hiding.

Put another way: both the Pure One Garou and the Wyrmbingers are beginning to think Mexico looks like a wonderful place to visit. This change in attitude is causing substantial waves in an area where the werewolves and other shapechangers thought they'd already figured out everything they needed to know about each other.

The Shadow Lords and Bone Gnawers have been prevalent for a long time, they have become a known and grudgingly accepted quantity. The other European Garou have never been around in Mexico in numbers worth noticing, but that's changing. The Iron Riders have taken note of the land to the south and are beginning to make their move into the territory. They're bringing railroads and telegraphs with them, and the human populace in many places couldn't be happier. The other shapechangers, however, are not amused by this sudden invasion. Even the Bone Gnawers and Shadow Lords are displeased by the sudden attention the territories they've long claimed as their own are getting. There are skirmishes starting up in the middle of Mexico, and they've been going on in the northern part of the country for several years already. Most of these are mildly muted by the threat of the Sabbat, but that doesn't mean they aren't happening. The fights are just more likely to be political rather than physical.

The Get of Fenris have already begun to look to the south, and seeing the battles against the Leeches have begun to consider expanding their field of operations. While there have been no major concentrations of the Get moving down to Mexico and staying as yet, it's not at all uncommon to see packs of the Get paying a visit to Mexico and checking out the strength of the various septs. One particular group, who merely call themselves the Bounty Hunters, have made a point of chasing the Sabbat packs they encounter across the border and into Mexico before putting an end to them. They are, for the most part,





seen as welcome aid by the Mexican Garou, but there are some who believe their intentions aren't entirely pure. While part of the group's appeal is that the pack is intertribal, there's no doubt that the leaders are Get of Fenris, or that they are just as savage and brutal as ever.

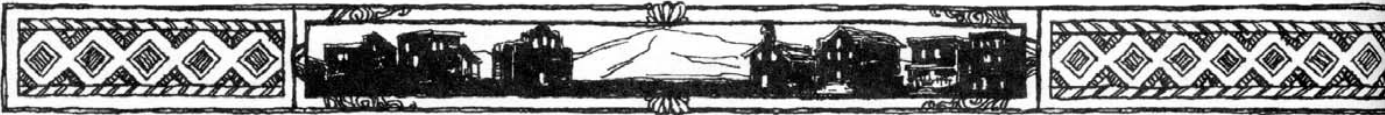
The Red Talons are not at all pleased with what they see regarding the newcomers from the US. Many of the feral Garou have heard tales of the bounty on wolves in the northern territories, and they look to the United States as an indication that the same hunts might well come to Mexico. The sad, bitter irony of the situation is that many of the Red Talons are making preemptive strikes against travelers from the US, and are likely to spur on the very problem they've been hoping to avoid. On the other hand, they've been instrumental in stopping a great number of the Sabbat vampires who would have already joined their undead brethren in Mexico.

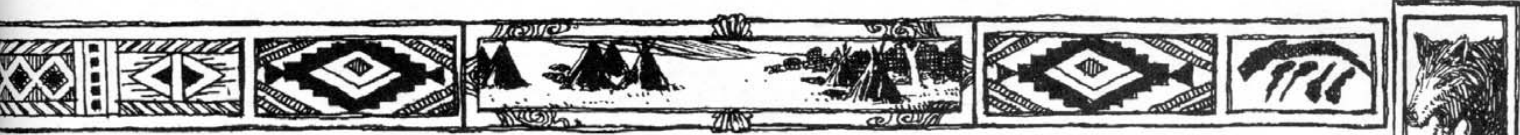
The Uktena of Mexico are rapidly learning that their tribal cousins from the States are not always as enlightened as they might hope. The differences in their cultures, while not as extreme as the differences they have with many of the European werewolves, are starting to show themselves. The Mexican Uktena are far more tolerant of the Europeans than are their US counterparts, and the tensions brought forth by arguing over how to deal with the Interlopers and whether or not there should be stronger retaliations against them have become both tedious and frustrating. More importantly, the continuing practice of certain Aztec rites is almost as unsettling to the United States Uktena as the accep-



tance of other human races into the tribes of the northern Uktena is to their Mexican Brethren. Unlike the Uktena in the United States, the southern Uktena have done all they could to avoid the mixing of racial bloods, going so far as to ostracize offspring of mixed heritage. The Mexican Uktena see the Infelizos as an embarrassment, and yet they see their northern cousins making more of the same wretched creatures and embracing them as family. The notion is scandalous to their way of life.

The Wendigo making their way into the Mexican frontier are no better. They bring with them the savagery the Uktena of Mexico had all but forgotten, and they also bring an unreasoning hatred for all that is European. There are some that can tolerate the Wyrncomers, but most would





rather destroy all of their white man cousins and risk the consequences. The sheer ferocity of their attitude unsettles the Uktena almost as much as the Wyrmbringers themselves do. And once again, there is a difference in philosophies. Like their Kinfolk and the humans of Mexico, the Uktena have accepted certain aspects of not only the Aztec faith but of the Catholic faith into their own. They are minor things, certain holidays and festivals that the Uktena participate in, but to the Wendigo, these small changes are a sign of weakness, a certain indication that the Uktena of Mexico have grown weak and possibly even corrupt. The totems of the Wendigo are not the totems of the Uktena — and in this case the differences in philosophies are all but intolerable to both sides.



The Silver Fangs have discovered Mexico as well, and they have a very simple philosophy that has begun to grow stronger in their hearts and minds: The failure of the Shadow Lords to drive the Sabbath from the land are evidence that the Shadow Lords are not strong enough to rule in Mexico. Though their overtures in the land of the Aztecs are not as blatant as many of their counterparts, there can be no mistaking the fact that they intend to set matters right.

The Silver Fangs are making their move, but they are doing so with a wickedly cold subtlety. Rather than openly assaulting the Shadow Lords' right to rule, they are currently using their influence with the other tribes to handle the matter for them. And they are using their human connections as well. Several of the manufacturing

companies from France and the US now taking an interest in Mexico are doing so with Silver Fang backing. While they use the Get of Fenris and the European Shadow Lords to make their more direct overtures, the Fangs also use their influence with the Bone Gnawers to add to the steady decay of the Shadow Lords' power base in Mexico. There have been no obvious overtures from the Silver Fangs, because they have not been needed.

Though there are many among the Shadow Lords who suspect that the late and unlamented Maximillian of Austria was the pawn of the Silver Fangs, they are wrong. The Silver Fangs have no desire to try anything quite that blatant at the present time. On the other hand, they see the Uktena in the area as a sign that they are on the right track. After three centuries of dealing with the Shadow Lords, the Uktena still remain, by and large, separate from the fold. They too must be taught the error of their ways. The Silver Fangs have designs for Mexico, and those plans do not include a continued place of leadership for the Shadow Lords. The Shadow Lords, quite naturally, have no intention of suffering the same indignities in Mexico that they were forced to suffer in other parts of the world. The Silver Fangs are not welcome, and they intend to make sure the so-called noble Garou understand that fact.

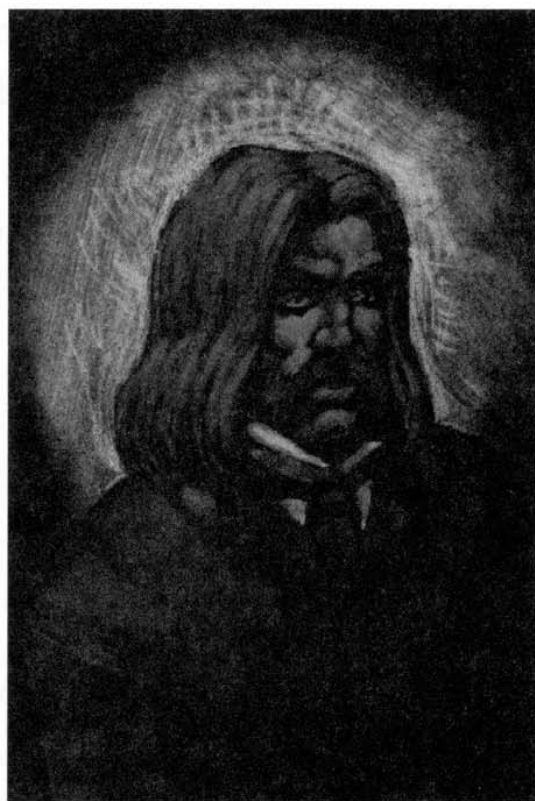
The Silent Striders remain, in Mexico as elsewhere, an enigma to the other tribes. Only a handful of Silent Striders have made their way to the area to date, though they have caused little difficulty along the way and are normally considered welcome



guests by those who've met their kind in the past. That too could change, however, now that so many of the Wyrmbringers are making their presence known.

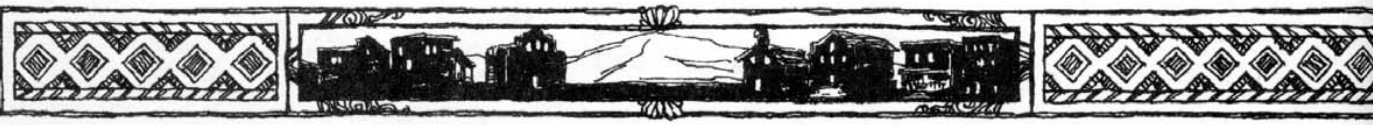
If the Silent Striders are a rare, the Stargazers are all but a complete unknown in Mexico. This, too, is rapidly changing. The few Stargazers who've come to Mexico are doing all they can to learn the history of the people and to study the cultures and ways of the other shapechangers in the region. There are few places where the Changing Breeds have ever managed to get along so well for so many centuries, all the while having a lasting impact on the culture of a people. The mysteries of the Mexican culture and its survival are an enigma they desperately want to understand.


Just as the Get of Fenris are making excursions into the Mexican territories, the Fianna are also making their presence known. The land is ripe with opportunities, and the Fianna are always looking for a few good times. As a result, many of the bards are rapidly discovering the benefit of living south of the border for long spans of time while they wait for the outrage over their last party to calm down. The Fianna have discovered something unusual in Mexico: a land where the poorest people still know how to celebrate when the time is right, and many of them are only too glad to share in the festivities. That a good number of their Kinfolk are also in the process of leaving the US due to territorial disputes and the occasional murder, is only added incentive. While not all of the Fianna are guilty of larceny or theft to ensure their continued happiness, the ma-



jority of the ones going down Mexico way are guilty of enough to get them in trouble in the States. There are, of course, exceptions, like the ones who simply want to see what life in Mexico is all about, or the ones who have discovered that the US is really a great deal smaller than they ever imagined. One of the main drives that keeps the Fianna going into Mexico is simply that one of their own was involved in the founding of Nacogdoches and the resultant war that changed the face of the US and Mexico alike. The grass, it would appear, continues to be greener in the next pasture — at least as far as the Fianna are concerned.

The Black Furies have long had a presence in Mexico, dating back to the times before the Technocracy and the Interlop-





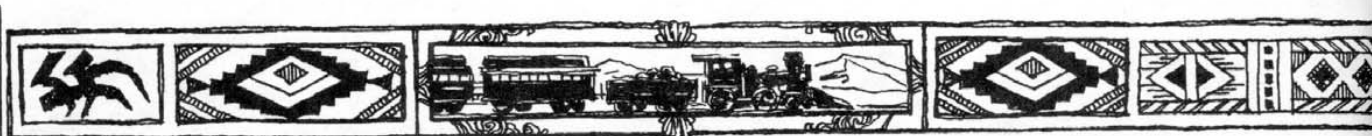
ers came. In the distant past a band of the Garou met with and joined forces with the archmage El Dorado. They faded from memory when he left the Gaia Realm, but they were remembered in myths far to the south of Mexico, where the Amazon River cuts across South America. They have come back to an extent, and they are working to make changes of their own in a society where women have almost always been second class citizens. Though they are not as active as the Get of Fenris or the Fianna, they are making their presence known again, and they are doing so with both honor and savagery. The strongest camp of the Black Furies in Mexico is the Freebooters, those Furies who seek out adventure and treasure. While a few of the more militant among them have begun forcing the notion of equality, most of the female warriors seem more interested in stopping the Sabbat and seeking the legendary Amazonian warriors who left their homeland of Greece over 500 years ago.

The Children of Gaia are making their way into Mexico as well, just as they have been for centuries. Despite the War of Rage and the atrocities committed so long ago, the Children of Gaia share the same concerns about Mexico that they have about the United States. There are simply too many conflicts between the tribes, and someone has to strive to calm them down. Who better than the Children of Gaia? Several packs of the peacemakers have come Mexico, and they are doing what they can to keep the boiling tensions between the other tribes from exploding into something far worse.

The Bone Gnawers have been in Mexico for as long as the Shadow Lords, but they have never been as explosive about it. With the expansion taking place in the US, that is changing. The Bone Gnawers of Mexico and the Bone Gnawers of the States have discovered a surprising secret—they are one of the largest groups of European Garou in West. They have also discovered that the Sabbat are starting a major run for the border and taking as much with them as they can in the process. The Gnawers were the first to realize the danger of the Sabbat and they are the most determined to eliminate it. On both sides of the border the Bone Gnawers are fighting hard to stop the expansionist tactics of the Sabbat, gathering together in packs and hunting down the vampires wherever they find them. The fighting is rapidly getting out of hand, and the tendency of the vampires to create more of their own from the poorer classes of people has become something of a personal slight in the eyes of the werewolf mutts. While the other tribes stick to their own agendas, the Bone Gnawers work are concentrating on the most important dilemma in Mexico, the destruction of a strange, sad innocence.

The Shadow Lords have, perhaps, the largest investment of energy regarding the expansion of the other tribes. They have held sway over the region for centuries, and they know that the Silver Fangs will soon do something to change the status quo if they haven't already begun the task. While the Bone Gnawers and Uktena of Mexico have remained separate from their US counterparts, the Shadow Lords have





worked hard to maintain contacts both in Europe and in the US alike. Their network of connections is heavy and they intend to use it to the best advantage in the territorial disputes they know are coming their way.

To date they've mercilessly worked on all fronts to keep the confusion strong among the human quarters, because if the human forces cannot unite and decide on a proper government for the region, the Shadow Lords can continue to foster to build their own methods of protecting their lands. The Uktena and the Mexican shapechangers are not a part of the equation as far as the Shadow Lords are concerned. They are known quantities, and arrangements have been made with most of them to keep a certain peace in the area. It is, ironically, their own kind they fear the most. The other European Garou are far more aggressive, far more determined to stake new claims and therefore a much deadlier threat to the Shadow Lord power base. Everything they strove to make their own over the centuries, the territory and position they've created for themselves, is at risk, and the descendants of the original conquistadors are determined to keep what they've made by any means necessary. They've even taken to dealing with Bone Gnawers, nauseating though they find the notion.

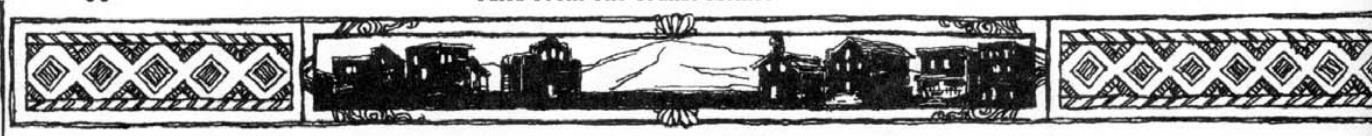
The expansion into Mexico has begun, and the Garou have begun to take sides in a battle that may or may not ever come to pass. The main difficulty comes from the simple fact that no one really knows who they can trust, while the other shapechangers watch and wait with bated

breath, uncertain as to whether or not they will have to fight another War of Rage against the Interlopers. Though there have been few conflicts so far, the Changing Breeds all know that the resurgence of Wyrmbriinger Garou into their area can only mean trouble.

Los Bestias de Mexico

The Ananasi have dealt with the Garou in the past, and they are not pleased by what they see happening. While the werespiders have always been distant from the other shapechangers, the gap between the Ananasi and other Changing Breeds has always been narrower in Mexico. Though never as intent on watching over the humans as their fellows, they too played a part in guiding and protecting the humans from their own follies.

But the Ananasi have problems of their own these days. They are fighting their own war, and it's getting very brutal. The Comanche Ananasi have come to Mexico as well, spreading through the Land and assaulting anything they feel should be crushed. One of their favorite targets to date are the solitary werespiders of Central America. The Comanche Spiders run in packs, unlike their brethren, and they are only too happy to use their unfair advantage. They have already made their presence known in northern Mexico and are well on their way into the jungles of the southern regions. What they have not prepared themselves for are the gatherings of the Weaver's Children who are preparing for them. Warned by the Corax and





the Nuwisha alike, the werespiders of Mexico are banding together in unprecedented numbers. The jungles of Nuevo Laredo have become a testing ground for a new philosophy among the children of Weaver and Wyld alike, and there is little doubt that the violence, once started will be severe. Most of the shapeshifters have left the area to the werespiders, though a few of the European Garou have mistaken this change in the area for a sign that the territory is ripe for picking. The arachnid population in the area has grown so heavy that many of the humans are leaving the area as well, certain that the spiders are a sign of evil sorcery.

There are rumors that a change is occurring within the Mexican Ananasi, a strange blend of both physical and mystical ener-

gies that could well lead to an entirely new breed of the werespiders taking control of the region and destroying anything at all that dares venture into their territory. The number one question most of the Changing breeds are asking themselves about the change is whether or not this is a sign of the Storm-Eater's growing power.

The Balam are having troubles of their own as well, and they are blaming most of their troubles on the Garou. The glory days of the past, when they were worshipped as Messengers of the Gods are gone, and the bitterness that came with the loss of their esteemed position has led to a dark seed of hatred within many of the great werecats. While most have continued practicing the philosophies they adopted when the Aztecs came into power, a few have perverted these ritual beliefs and fallen to the Wyrms. No less than two groups of Balam in Mexico are on a blood hunt for the enemies of their people, and they have chosen the Interlopers as the target of their ire. Unlike the majority of their kind, these Wyrms-riden werejaguars have taken to making sacrifices to their new, dark totems. They prefer to use Garou in their sacrifices, believing that the spirits of their enemies are the best way to satisfy the hungers of their new gods. Most agree that the Storm-Eater is surely behind their new powers, and that these *Gatos Nocturnos* — "Night Cats" — must be destroyed as they have fallen too far from the Wyld. The Balam prefer to handle the matter themselves, their wishes have been respected, so far. But the trouble coming from the north is beginning to wear on the



patience of the other Breeds, and if the matter is not resolved soon, there *will* be intervention.

Though rarer in Mexico than in the United States, the Pumonca have a small presence south of the border. They are also making it very clear that they do not like what they are seeing. Like the Wendigo, they are disgusted by the mixing of their Kinfolk with other breeds of humans, and the attitudes of the Balam are almost enough to make them attack on sight. So far they have only made a few serious attacks on other shapechangers in Mexico, but that's likely to change quickly. One recent encounter with the *Gatos Nocturnos* has left the few Pumonca who met them with a bitter expression and a desire to rectify a bad situation that looks like it's



only getting worse. Though there has been no confirmation of the rumor, several of the shapechangers coming from the US into Mexico are talking about a gathering of the werepumas who intend to come south and take care of any taint they find. If their own land is to be taken by the European soldiers, it could well be that they feel it's only right to return the favor in the south and stop the growing taint they claim they can see in the very air of Mexico.

The Corax of Mexico are watching and waiting, listening and talking among themselves. They see the changes taking place and are concerned, but as yet have not decided on the best course of action. Their brethren from the other side of the border are only too eager to share information, and both groups are taking notes and weighing the odds of what should be done about an area that has suddenly become a hotbed of political intrigue and murderous gatherings. So far the only thing they have decided on is that they don't like the growing numbers of Sabbat vampires moving into the area. While they are not actively attacking the undead, they are only too glad to let the Garou and the Balam know where the creatures are hiding. Their actions have been one of the saving graces for Mexico's shapechangers so far. But the question remains whether or not what they are doing is too little and too late.

The Ratkin have been in Mexico for as long as there have been established port towns in the country — and they've been invisible for all that time. They choose not to involve themselves in the squabbles of



the other shapechangers, preferring instead to make as comfortable a living for themselves as possible. In Vera Cruz and other similar locations they have established networks for spreading news and for gathering whatever items they might find useful. Their lack of involvement in the current state of affairs shouldn't be taken to mean that they are unaware of the situations tearing at Mexico's foundations. They are *very* aware, and have been ever since the Camazotz were destroyed by the Shadow Lords. The Camazotz were in some ways their cousins, and to some Ratkin's way of thinking the werebats were merely a part of the family they seldom encountered. They have done everything they can to make life inconvenient for the Shadow Lords ever since, but never in a way that could be traced back to them.

The Nuwisha are gone. There are a few scattered here and there, but events to the north have had a rippling effect in Mexico, and the werecoyotes have vanished from the Land. The few who have been encountered are often either too cynical and bitter, or simply too amused to do much of anything. If one were to ask a Nuwisha what he thinks of the current situation, the answer would almost universally be the same: "Let the Garou defend the Land they have taken from us. What they have planted must now be their feast." A few seem to have gone insane, taking extreme risks when facing enemies and either getting themselves killed or surviving stunts that should have left them dead. The only response they give to their irrational be-

havior is baffling to most. "The time of Xochipilli is upon us, and we shall play as he tells us to play."

The Mokolé are not taking what is happening to Mexico very well. They've begun acting almost as rashly as the Garou. Some of them seem content to rest in their swamps and wait out the changing times, but most have begun actively hunting down and destroying anything that smells of the Wyrn. More often than not, that means chewing apart a few vampires. But aside from the undead invaders, the Mokolé have started taking on Wyrn-tainted Bête as well. The Comanche Ananasi have discovered that the werecrocodiles are not to be trifled with, and they have learned to their chagrin that these monolithic preda-





The New House of Xipe Totec

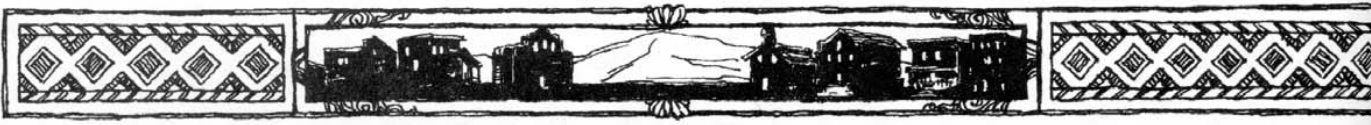
Many of the wraiths from the Flayed Lands fled back to their smaller realm upon seeing the great, malignant shape that rose in the North and poured down to cover all of Mexico. Some — either the truly demented or the amazingly brave — decided to stay. They stayed for two reasons: First, they hoped to see the great darkness swallow the Stygian forces that had overwhelmed them before; second, they hoped to find a new way to gain power, a new force to guide them in their cries for vengeance.



Though there were few in the mortal realms who remembered the Old Ways and still made sacrifices to aid these old ghosts, there were enough. When the Eater of Storms came, the essence of these sacrifices — the Pathos the wraiths of Mexico had used to feed themselves — rose quickly into the shape of the great beast where it was consumed. The wraiths were shocked, dismayed to see their traditional energies destroyed. Then the great force that covered the Land rewarded them, dropping a torrential red rain from the skies that fell only where the stragglers from the Flayed Lands stood.

The bloody red rains fell upon their skin and soaked in as if their bodies were sponges, and when the rain was done, they were transformed. The rain that fell held power, though it was none like they'd ever experienced before: It changed the way their spectral bodies looked and satisfied their craving for Pathos.

Seeing the power of the great, sentient storm that roars across the skies and rains down a thick red blood, some of the survivors of the conquest that happened in the Shadowlands as well as in the Skinlands, the wraiths swore fealty to the creature that gave them so much pathos. In honor of the past they named the entity Xipe Totec, convinced that the god of crops and war had come back for them, answering their prayers for vengeance at last.

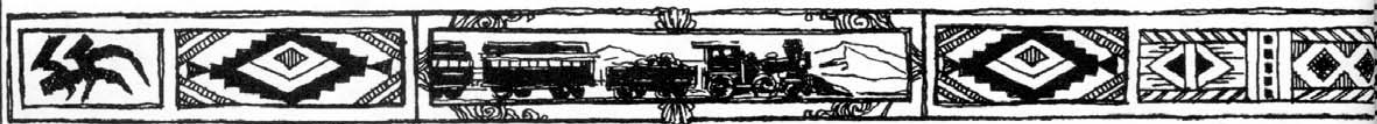
Xipe Totec listened to their prayers and found that in the changed wraiths he had new servants, new ways in which to spread his influence. He gave them power readily enough and in return they gave him loyalty and a willingness to come to his aid.





Their perceptions changed as well as their bodies. The followers of Xipe Totec discovered that they could look between the worlds with much greater ease and for the first time they understood that there were many who still believed in the old gods. These traditionalists were merely held back from the proper celebrations of the traditional ways by the descendants of the conquistadors. Using the great power of Xipe Totec, which the werejaguars called the Storm Eater, they spoke with a Balam who still continued with the ancient sacrifices of the Aztec and struck a bargain. They would aid him if he, in turn would help them with their needs. The werejaguar, Rides-the-Serpent, readily agreed and the plans of great Xipe Totec was set into motion. Rides-the-Serpent makes sacrifices every day, claiming Spaniards and other Interlopers who cross his path as the chosen victims of Xipe Totec. Using a blade that once did similar work in the Aztec Empire, he cuts the hearts from the victims and waits for them to die. He then places their bodies in shallow graves after placing the heart back in the chest. Per instructions he never waits to see what happens to the bodies. But he has noticed that the shallow graves are always empty the next day. He has also noticed that the wraiths do not allow him to be tracked, removing every shred of evidence where he has been. Rides-the-Serpent has learned that the old ways are the best, and he is actively converting others. His success has been frightening, and he now has both humans and Balam who are eager to follow him.

What only a few know is that Rides-the-Serpent is not the true leader of this cult, but rather the second-in-command. He follows another who advised him to accept the bargain offered by the House of Xipe Totec. There is a creature in Mexico who remembers the sacrifices of the Mayans, who was once the head priest to Mictlantecuhтли, not truly a god, but a being of great power. He faithfully followed the great being nonetheless, and in time he was rewarded with eternal life, though he remains uncertain just how or why this came to pass. From time to time he dies and dwells in a place with the true gods, beings of immense power like Xipe Totec. At other times he returns to his body and pretends to be merely mortal. Now he has discovered that Xipe Totec has plans for him, and he is prepared to aid in claiming Mexico for his new, favored god. Mictlan, the Black Shadow, is once again among the living. He intends to keep it that way, and to make all of Mexico his plaything. With the help of the wraiths and the *Gatos Nocturnos*, all joined together and worshipping Xipe Totec, he has no doubt he shall succeed.



tors take a lot of killing before they fall. In one recent battle a single Mokolé eradicated a pack of seven Ananasi by herself. While she was injured in the conflict, she recovered completely and has been seen hot on the trail of other Wyrmspiders. Unlike the Ananasi of Mexico, there has been little to prepare the Comanche Ananasi for the likes of the Mokolé and their brutal form of justice.

The time has apparently come for the descendants of Queztalomic to stop the follies of humans once again. The same is true of their intent for any followers of the Corrupter. Though most of the Mokolé remain in the southern parts of Mexico, a few have decided to move towards the United States and prepare for a proper stand. Few among the Mexican Bête are truly surprised to see the great lizards storming through even the arid desert, but the Interlopers have discovered a new reason to fear the creatures of Mexico, and the Sabbat has learned that the werewolves do not stand alone as the defenders of Latin America.

The Vampires

The Camarilla has been moving slowly and carefully in Mexico for centuries. They haven't been foolish enough to let the fires of the Inquisition know about them. They move carefully not only because of their past in Europe, but also because there are a few very old and very powerful vampires in Latin America who have made certain the peace was kept. There is a presence in the Valley of Mexico that has kept them at bay for as long as they have been in the area, and while it tolerates them to an

extent, whatever it is has driven off some of the most powerful Kindred ever to enter the area. That same force has kept them from going as far as they might have liked into the heart of Mexico and its allies have made their settling into the region a task. Recently everything has begun to change, and none of the changes are for the better as far as the Camarilla is concerned. One of the strongest Camarilla proponents in all of Mesoamerica, Melinda Galbraith, has suddenly turned her back on the Camarilla and joined with the Sabbat for reasons unknown to her brethren.

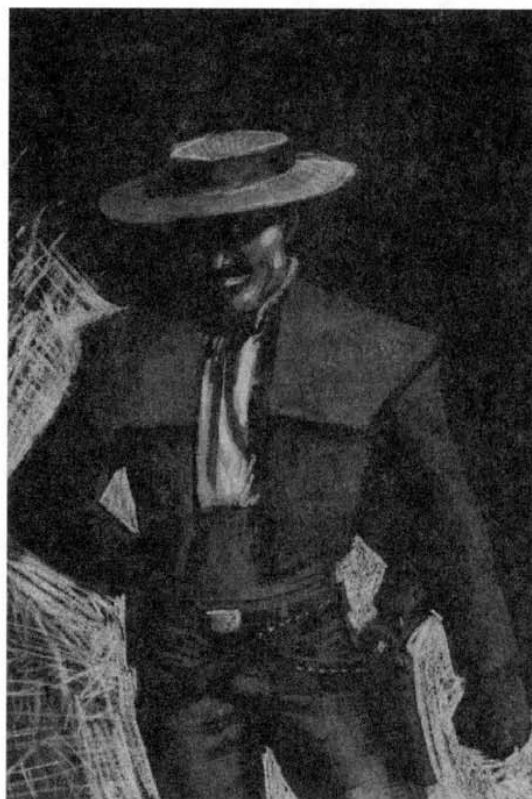
Galbraith's defection to the Sabbat has been more than an inconvenience: It seems to be the very catalyst that is bringing the Sabbat back into Mexico in force. She is gathering them to her like a magnet draws iron filings, and they are only too glad to come. The Sabbat feels that the Camarilla has too many places of power in the New World and has decided to take Mexico for its own.

It's a war they are winning through raw aggression and tactics that are anathema to the Kindred of the Camarilla. Where the Camarilla believes in using subtlety and influence among the human populace to get the job done, the Sabbat uses tactics that violate the very foundations of the Camarilla's structure. They aren't only breaking the Masquerade, they're actively hunting down and embracing anyone who might be of use to them in their war. From skilled soldiers to entire towns of people, no one is safe from their bloody recruiting methods. They even attempt to embrace the Garou they defeat, though the lack of success is quite disheartening.



Small towns and villages are one thing, but the cities of Mexico are quite another. The Sabbat is taking its time with the major populations, stealing a few people at a time and cursing them with life among the undead. They aren't merely creating cannon fodder — they are actively seeking new soldiers to fight in their armies, and in some cases to lead them. When they do come into a city and attack, they have dozens of vampires to pit against the small handful that might already be there, and they aren't afraid to make their presence known in any way they see fit.

The main thing holding the Sabbat at bay so far is simply that the Changing Breeds don't like them. There are a many places in Mexico that remain untamed by humans, and those areas belong by and large to the werebeasts. A dozen vampires might be enough to take control of a Camarilla held town or even a city, but getting a dozen vampires past the shapeshifters is not always an easy task. The Balam and the Garou, the Ananasi and the Corax, the Nuwisha and the Mokolé: They may not get along any more, but they are willing to set aside their differences long enough to wipe out a bunch of Ticks coming into mutual territories. The cities are falling to the Sabbat, and the ones that still stand are being assessed by the vampires who seek to rule over Mexico. But the losses they are taking at shapechanger talons are severe. Even for the Sabbat, the need to gain more forces is a serious challenge when the Changing Breeds have spotted them. For every dozen souls they Embrace, easily nine are being destroyed.



Unfortunately for the werebeasts, the battle is taking its toll. One vampire can conceivably make several new vampires in a single night, but the Changing Breeds are not as fortunate. When one of theirs dies, they all feel the loss. The shapeshifting races whose numbers were weakened by the War of Rage are now suffering the same sorts of casualties all over again, and they may all go the way of the Camazotz if they aren't careful.

To make matters worse, the Sabbat has found a secret weapon of its own in the campaign to take Mexico. They've discovered an ally they didn't think could ever be an ally — the Black Spiral Dancers. The Dancers are not strong in Mexico as a whole, but they have established a



powerful hive in Mexico City, and they are getting help from others of their kind. Many of the Black Spiral Dancers of the United States are coming down to Mexico, migrating even as the Sabbat are moving. They are glad for the opportunity to take the land by force, killing, converting or driving away the Garou who currently call Mexico their own.

The leader of the Black Spiral Dancers in Mexico is a gigantic freak, even by the standards of the Dancers themselves. Harzomatuili comes from Spain, and has been in Mexico since the time that the last of the Aztec cities were being sacked by the Spaniards. He made a pact with Melinda Galbraith over three centuries ago to aid her in exchange for vampiric blood to keep him young. Even with centuries of consuming her blood, he remains free of the Blood Bond. Despite this fact, their agreement has stood the test of time and he has worked with her on numerous occasions.

Now Galbraith has asked for his assistance, and Harzomatuili is only too glad to help. His brutally powerful body hides a sharp mind and his tactical skills are beyond reproach. While the Shadow Lords claimed the Land and battled with the Messengers of the Gods, Harzomatuili and his hive have worked slowly, carefully to gain influence and position among the werebeasts that turned to the Wyrms. The leader of the Black Spiral Dancers has managed to keep his presence a secret to most of the Breeds, and has managed to pervert some of the Balam, coercing them with promises of power and revenge against

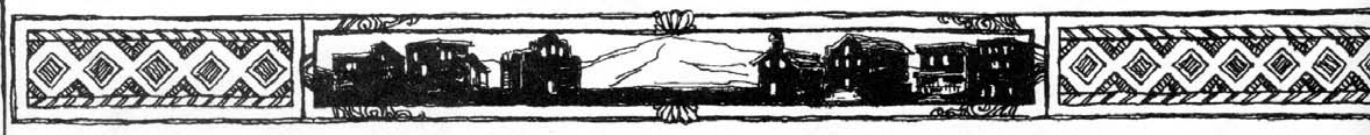
the Europeans. This is no idle boast; he has kept them as allies by delivering on his promises.



Though the Black Spiral Dancers have only made a few overt moves against the protectors of Gaia, those attacks have been extremely successful, and there can be little doubt that the actions of the Dancers will only become more blatant as Harzomatuili offers new domains to others from his tribe. Like the Sabbat, the Black Spiral Dancers have decided to claim Mexico as their own, and with the aid of the Storm Eater they just might have the power to succeed.

The twisted, corrupted Aztec ceremonies practiced by the Black Spiral Dancers and Night Cats have gained the attention of the great Bane moving over the Land, and their depraved prayers to the Wyrms have been answered. Strange powers are manifesting in the hands of these warriors of the Corrupter. They believe these new abilities, new Gifts and dark rites will be enough to win the war against the Wyld. They just might be right.

The Dead in Mexico

Mexico has a long tradition of celebrating the Dead. From the human sacrifices of the Olmec, the Maya and the Aztec, to the odd changes in the rituals of the Church in Mexico, there is and has always been a blend of reverence and fear for the departed. In Mexico, that's just likely the wisest way to handle the matter.





The Dead do not always rest easily, and in the places where the Aztecs walked and ruled, that's particularly true.

The Dark Kingdom of Obsidian, also called the Flayed Lands and the House of the Fifth Sun, remains a mystery to most of the dead, but the coming of the Storm Eater has changed that as well.

Most of the ghosts in Mexico behave much as they do elsewhere, but there are exceptions.

Bultos

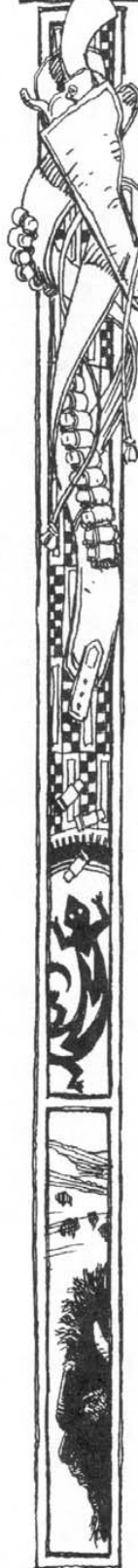
The Bultos, ghostly guardians of long-lost treasures and other lost secrets, remain where they are, waiting patiently for anyone foolish enough to take from them what is theirs by right. Bultos can materialize and defend their treasures, and they are seldom defeated without loss of at least a few other lives. They do not speak to the living, and they listen without response to the other wraiths of Mexico.

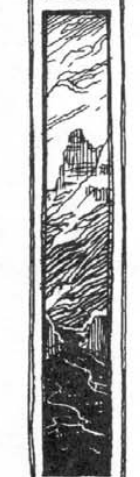
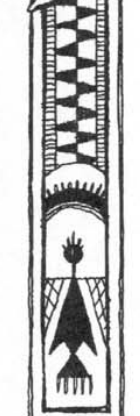
But there are some Bultos who have taken to answering the demands of another force, a powerful being called Mictlan, who has begun gathering their treasures together in certain special places and offering sacrifices to the Bultos in exchange for their cooperation. At least two locations in vastly different parts of Mexico are now under Bultos "protection." They continue to guard their relocated treasures, but now they grow stronger and they work to defend the mummy who in turn serves their needs.

The Flayed Ones

There is also another form of Restless Dead that is unique to Mexico, dreadful things that infest the bodies of those properly sacrificed to Xipe Totec. They are called the Flayed Ones, for their bodies often have long strips of loose-hanging skin and they bleed almost constantly. They are never seen during the daylight hours, or if they are, they look different. No one has yet seen one of the Flayed Ones after the sun rises, unless they met with the creature beforehand.

Injuries do not slow them, they tend to heal any wounds as quickly as a werewolf, and they have strength enough to make even the Changing Breeds fear them. Many use only their hands in combat, but some still carry firearms or knives, and they have never hesitated to use them when the opportunity presented itself. The Flayed Ones dress in current clothing and appear to be alive from a distance, but they have no heartbeats and the blood that spills from their wounds is diseased and cold. The very same blood is another weapon for them, for when the ichor from their flayed flesh falls into an open wound the infection that follows is capable of killing even a Garou. Some of them use this to their advantage by painting any weapons they carry with their own blood before going into combat. These creatures are loyal servants of the Black Shadow, and they are only too eager to aid him in his plans for the Interlopers.





The Days of the Dead

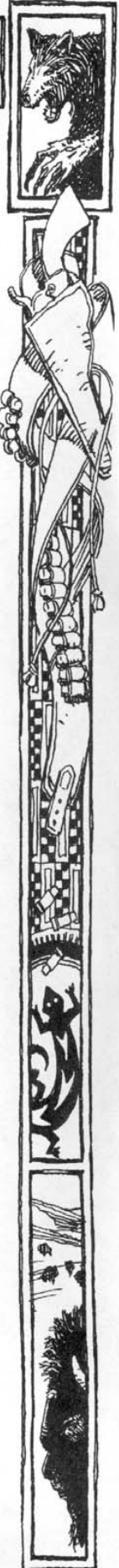

There are five days in Mexico during which the Dead pass from the Shadowlands into the Skinlands with ease. An odd amalgamation of the Aztec traditions and the Church's Eve of All Saints, these days are used to remember the Dead and to placate them. Families visit the gravesites of their departed, painting the headstones and decorating the ground beneath which their ancestors lie. They scatter flower petals from the graves to their homes and place feasts on a table where the dead can join them in feasting.

The First Day of the Dead is the *Day of the Orphaned Souls*, a time for remembering the Dead who have no families to mourn them. Most families place a feast on a table in front of their homes, and leave the dead to attend to the food by themselves. In many cases the food gathered for the Orphaned Dead is left in the local town square or placed in the church, where the dead can eat in peace.

The Second Day of the Dead is the *Day of the Unpardoned Souls*. Special breads are prepared and placed outside of homes for these, the victims of murders and violent death. The ghosts who rise on this day are seldom happy about their chance to return to the Skinlands; most seek only revenge. Between the special breads and the candies prepared for the day — candies often shaped like skulls and skeletons — the hope is that the foods offered outside the house will be enough to keep the ghosts from coming into the homes and getting their revenge against those who committed the crimes against them. Not surprisingly, it doesn't always work. Those who have killed in Mexico often find the second Day of the Dead an unpleasant time to be there.

The Third Day of the Dead, the *Day of the Children*, is a time for families to remember their lost ones. They attend to the graves of their departed during the day and spread trails of marigold petals to their homes, inviting the dead to feast with them. Calacas, the figurines of the dead are presented, representing every imaginable aspect of life from the Dead's perspective. Skeletal soldiers, farmers, priests and others are placed in the homes of the people and left as a reminder to the dead of what they did before in life.





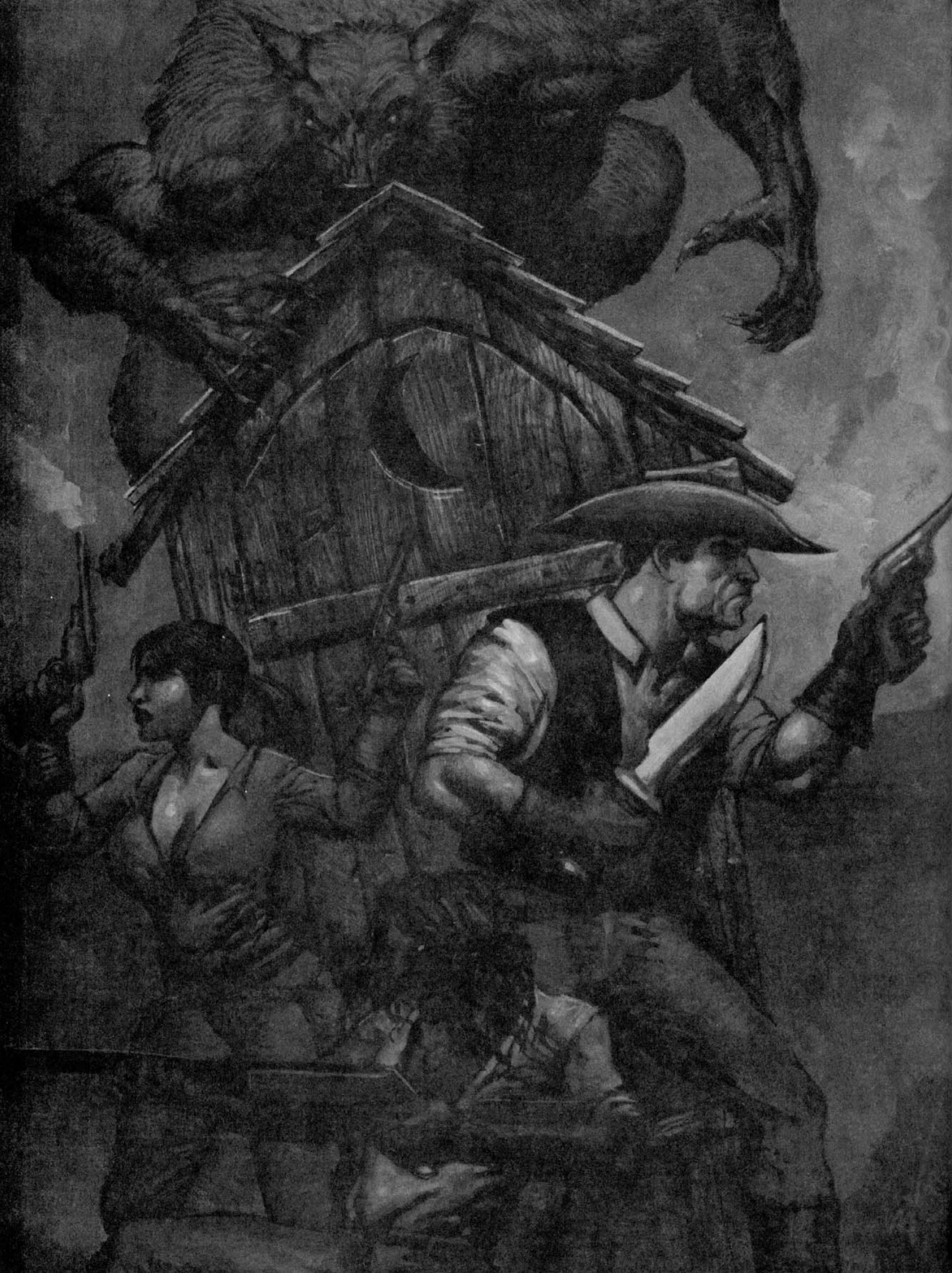
The toys of dead children are left in the yards, allowing them to play once again with the items that brought them joy. In many cases the living children play with the toys as well, and most claim to feel the touch of lost friends in the process.

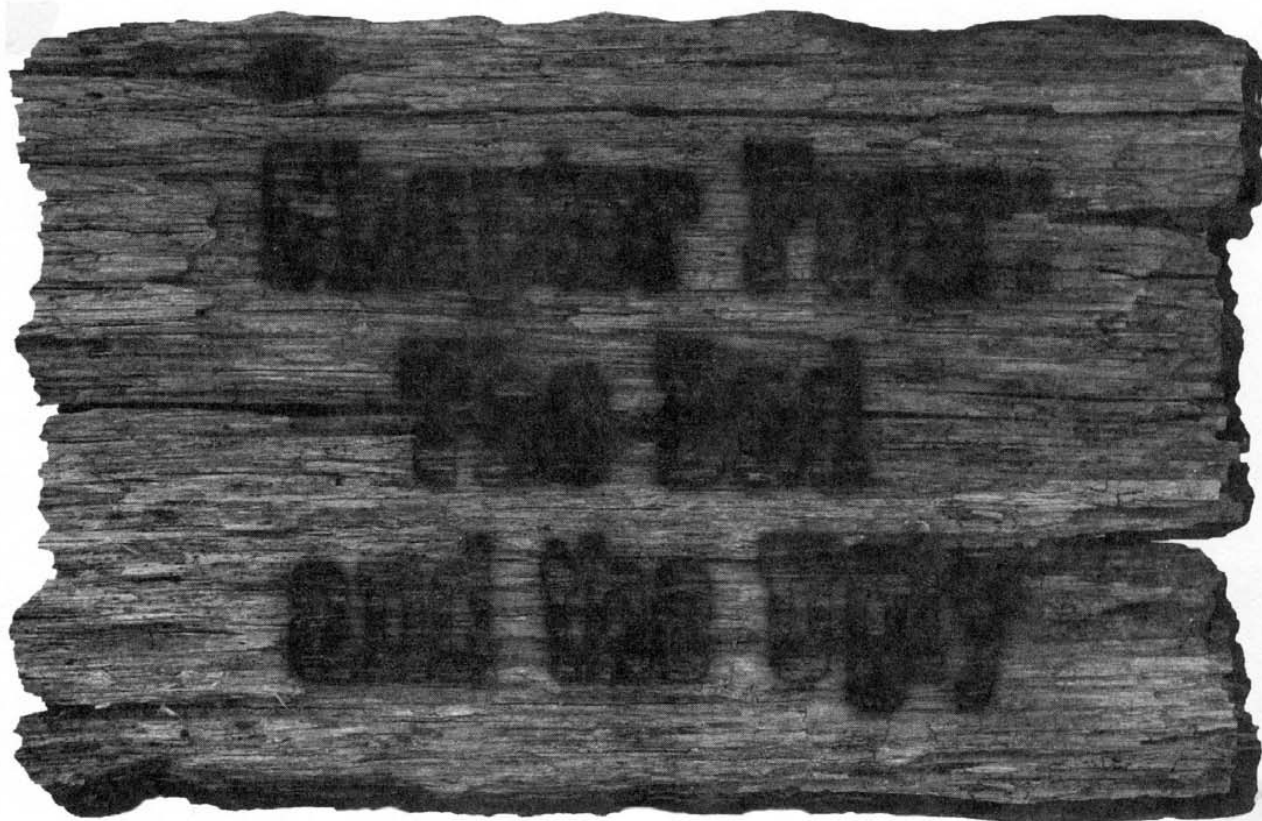
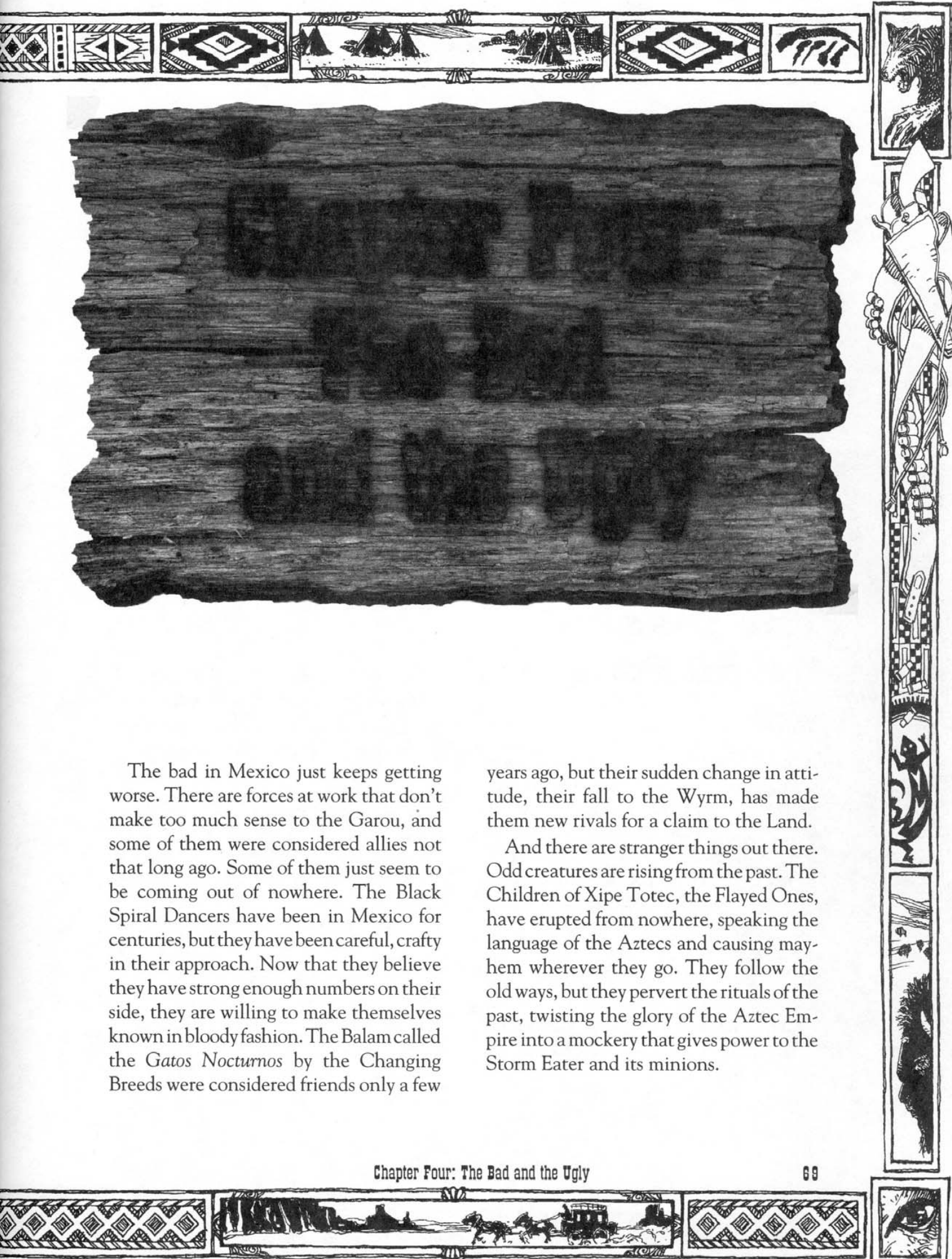
On the Fourth Day of the Dead the living attend church and pray for the souls of the departed. A feast is prepared for the loved ones who've gone before and left strictly for them. In many homes the living do not eat in order to allow enough food to placate the Dead for another year.

On the Fifth Day of the Dead the living dress themselves in costumes and roam the streets, doing all they can to scare the Dead back to their final resting-place. The priests in any given town go to every building in the town and bless the families living there while simultaneously trying to force the Dead out of the homes for another year. Long before it is over the celebration normally grows into a party, with dancing and in some cases even fireworks to scare the Dead away.

During these days many of the ghosts are simply happy to see their families again; others are not. Others make their own plans and act on them while they still can, before the Shroud closes itself for another year. The Days of the Dead are a time of remembrance of those departed, a time for celebrating life and defying death, and a time for spectral revenge.

[In game terms, the Days of the Dead are a time when the local Shroud drops by two points, or three wherever the celebrations are being performed properly. Needless to say, they are indeed five days of great wraithly activity.]



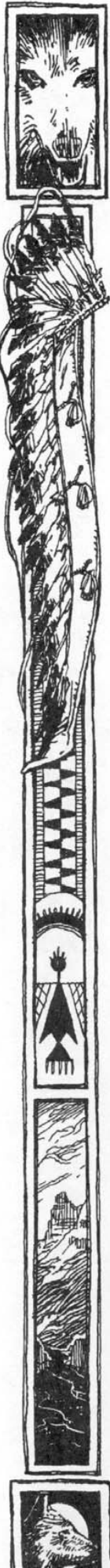


The bad in Mexico just keeps getting worse. There are forces at work that don't make too much sense to the Garou, and some of them were considered allies not that long ago. Some of them just seem to be coming out of nowhere. The Black Spiral Dancers have been in Mexico for centuries, but they have been careful, crafty in their approach. Now that they believe they have strong enough numbers on their side, they are willing to make themselves known in bloody fashion. The Balam called the *Gatos Nocturnos* by the Changing Breeds were considered friends only a few

years ago, but their sudden change in attitude, their fall to the Wyrms, has made them new rivals for a claim to the Land.

And there are stranger things out there. Odd creatures are rising from the past. The Children of Xipe Totec, the Flayed Ones, have erupted from nowhere, speaking the language of the Aztecs and causing mayhem wherever they go. They follow the old ways, but they pervert the rituals of the past, twisting the glory of the Aztec Empire into a mockery that gives power to the Storm Eater and its minions.





These problems alone would surely be enough, but something else has come as well, the army of the undead, the Sabbat. These vampires are not like the ones already in Mexico — they do not fear the Lupines, and they do not care if hundreds of their kind die in battle. They simply make more.

There seems to be a pattern to these strange forces gathering in Mexico, but the Changing Breeds have yet to discern what the pattern is, or how it might be broken. The Storm Eater, the great Bane that has troubled the United States, has made its presence known in Mexico, and the Garou and their cousins all feel the certain, cold dread that comes with knowing this is only the beginning of the darkness that covers the Land.

The Black Spiral Dancers

The Black Spiral Dancers have waited, moving slowly and carefully to spread their influence in Mexico. They have done so against almost every possible law of their own nature, working with a subtlety worthy of the Shadow Lords. In the past there was only one Hive of the Wyrms-Wolves in Mexico, the Hell-Pit Hive. They lurked in the shadows and caves beneath what is now Mexico City, reveling in the ruins of Tenochtitlan. They have made themselves at home, and they have dwelt with other, darker things that have guided them in their actions.

The chaos and erratic behavior of most Dancer Hives has been replaced by a cold, calculating organization that, if understood by most of the Garou familiar with their ways would send waves of terror running through the whole of the werewolf populace. They have broken the rules of engagement and made themselves work towards something greater than most Hives could ever conceive of. The reason for this is simple: The Black Spiral Dancers want a new homeland, and they have chosen Mexico.

The Hell-Pit Hive

The Hell-Pit Hive is the brain behind the careful growth of the Black Spiral Dancer population in Mexico. Long before the other hives that have moved down to the area were even considering the move, the leader of the Hell-Pit was planning for this time.

Through decades of careful work and sinister rituals, the Land has been “seeded” with places where the Wyrms’ corruption lay dormant and hidden, waiting to be awakened by the actions of the Dancers. Harzomatuli claims to be one of the Blessed of the Wyrms, a chosen warrior in the battle against the forces of the Wyld. He may actually be right in his beliefs. Against all odds he has maintained his growing network of tunnels and hives, keeping them a secret until he felt the time was right. There can be no doubt that something far darker than even his twisted intellect has been helping him along the way.

Harzomatuli

Background: Harzomatuli lived in Spain during his youth and traveled to Mexico not long after Cortes first made his presence known to the Aztecs. Though his Rage was great, some thing, some unknown force, bid him to be patient and take his time in spreading the influence of his tribe. Not long after he watched the fall of Tenochtitlan, he met with the vampire, Melinda Galbraith. Though they could hardly be called friends, they established a working relationship that was mutually beneficial. He aided her in keeping her haven safe and in handling the matters she found "distasteful but necessary," and she in turn gave him the blood from her body. He has not aged in over 300 years.

From her he also learned other things, skills which would never have been his if he had not carefully watched her at all times. He learned the subtlety of planning and the patience of an immortal. He learned to think far ahead of the present, and to plan for a future so far ahead of his own time as to seem impossible. That patience has paid off. His plans for Mexico have begun to bear fruit. From one single, quiet Hive of Black Spiral Dancers he has planted a dozen Hives throughout Mexico, most of which are unknown even now to the Gaian shapechangers. He has garnished the favor of the Storm Eater, and has learned rites that few have ever mastered. In celebration of all the Wyrms he has given him, he recently crafted a great silver sigil of the Wyrms and rested his face upon the metal until he could feel the pain



sear into the bones of his skull. Though his face has been hideously scarred by the action, he now knows that he must be chosen of the Wyrms — for even without the blood of the vampire he has conspired with over the centuries, he does not age.

Image: The leader of the Hell-Pit Hive is not a pleasant sight. In Crinos form he towers almost a full 12 feet in height, with a build that would put most grizzly bears to shame. His fur is mostly black with splatterings of gray throughout, and his features more strongly resemble those of a bat than of a wolf. His face is also hideously scarred, with the Garou glyph for the Wyrms covering him from his upper lip to his brow. He wears a jaguar-skull fetish around his neck and carries a very large weathered Baneklaive.



Breed: Homid

Auspice: Ahroun

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancers

Physical: Strength 5 (7/9/8/7), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 5 (7/8/8/7)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 0 (0/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 5, Larceny 4, Primal-Urge 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 4, Leadership 5, Melee 5, Performance 5, Ride 3, Stealth 5, Survival 5

Knowledges: Enigmas 4, Investigation 3, Law 2, Linguistics 5 (English, Nuatl, Pictish, Latin, French), Medicine 4, Occult 5, Politics 2, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 5, Fetish 5, Kinfolk 5, Past Life 5, Resources 5, Rites 5, Totem 5

Gifts: (1) Blur of the Milky Eye, Inspiration, Persuasion, Razor Claws, Scent of Running Water, Sense Wurm; (2) Curse of Hatred, Ears of the Bat, Horns of the Impaler, Spirit of the Fray, Staredown; (3) Disquiet, Foaming Fury, Skinglide; (4) Clenched Jaw, Crawling Poison, Wither Limb; (5) Balefire, Totem Form

Rank: 5

Rage 9, Gnosis 7, Willpower 8

Almatsa Dorotes

Background: Almatsa was once an Uktena, but she was not perfect enough even for them. She was metis, born of two foolish werewolves who could not control their passions. Though she was fierce in



battle and wise in the ways of the Garou, her tribe did not accept her as an equal. After years of being considered a second-class citizen by her own kind, she met and was seduced by Harzomatuli. Though she resisted at first, she eventually fell to his charms. When he recently scarred his face for the glory of the Wurm, Almatsa joined him.

Image: Almatsa would be a beautiful woman, if not for the brutal scarring across her face that is her metis mark. She is slight for a Garou, only around 8 feet in full Crinos and barely five feet tall in Homid. In human form she has dark skin and black hair, but shockingly blue eyes. In Crinos there is not a part of her that is not coated

in a thick black pelt. In lupus form her coat is even thicker, and her eyes maintain the distinctive blue.

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Galliard

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancer

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

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4 (3/1/1/1), Appearance 1(0/0/1/1)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Larceny 3, Primal-Urge 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Leadership 3, Melee 3, Performance 1, Ride 1, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 1 (Pictish), Medicine 3, Occult 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 2

Gifts: (1) Bane Protector, Beast Speech, Bite of the Bat, Cloud of Night, Create Element; (2) Curse of Hatred, Wyrn Speech

Rank: 2

Rage 6, Gnosis 5, Willpower 5


Barough

Background: Barough was abandoned at birth, left to die by his Shadow Lord parents. He likely would have died, too, had the fools not left him at the edge of the woods leading to Harzomatuli's main cave entrance. Rather than let the chilled wretch die, the Black Spiral Dancer took the infant in, and after feeding it enough to live, promptly danced the Spiral with it. Though Barough might have eventually

been a member of Garou society, what came back out of the Spiral with Harzomatuli belonged completely to the Wyrn. From his earliest days, the creature called Barough has been depraved and filled with a hatred for anything that looks too normal. In comparison to him, that means most things. The vast majority of his life has been spent in the caves of the Hell-Pit Hive, and most of the possessions he claims as his own have been found within the ruins of the ancient Aztec city.

Image: Barough is a very unpleasant sight in any of his forms. With his mangy gray hide, red eyes and malformed jaw, the Hive often sets him out front to intimidate their foes and rivals. Barough bears ritualistic scars, which he adds to every time he kills another enemy in battle. At present





there are 17 deep gouges across his chest. Each of these has been sealed around a bone tube, giving the illusion that he is wearing a partial chest plate. He is never without the long obsidian blade that he uses in every battle.

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Ahroun

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancers

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 1 (0/0/1/1)

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 5, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Primal-Urge 5

Skills: Melee 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Occult 1

Backgrounds: Totem 3

Gifts: (1) Bite of the Bat, Cloud of Night, Razor Claws, Sense Wyrms; (2) Curse of Hatred, Wyrms Speech; (3) Foaming Fury, Rattler's Bite

Rank: 3

Rage 7, Gnosis 6, Willpower 8

Th'lan Morg

Background: Th'lan Morg is the son of Harzomatuili, product of an encounter between a Red Talon female and the leader of the Hell-Pit. Once the hapless Talon had given birth, Harzomatuili fed her in small pieces to her son. Then he got creative in his depravities. By the time Th'lan Morg was old enough and experienced enough to dance the Black Spiral, he had already committed atrocities that marked him as lacking the subtlety of his father. Despite this character flaw, he has listened

to his father over the years and obeyed him. Fear is a great deterrent to foolish ambition. Morg is very proud of his features, and fancies himself an Aztec warrior. He seldom speaks any language save Nuatl, the native tongue of the Aztecs. He is fascinated by human society, and has made a point of learning how to fence. When he challenges anyone to combat, he prefers to use sword against sword. He always fences fairly and in the proper form. Should he have to use any other form of combat, he fights down and dirty.

Image: Th'lan Morg is young and strong. Aside from being completely hairless in all of his forms, he is quite attractive. Unlike the others of his Hive who have marred themselves with ritual scars or tattoos, his body is without extra markings. He always



dressess in the regalia of an Aztec warrior, and is quick to attack anyone who makes comments about the clothing he chooses. The headdress he wears bears the likeness of Quetzalcoatl. In Crinos his body develops scales, though they give him no extra protection, and his eyes take on a very ophidian appearance. Apart from his Toledo blade, Th'lan Morg carries a quiver of javelins, many of which are tipped with silver.

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Philodox

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancers

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Larceny 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Firearms 3, Leadership 2, Melee 4, Ride 3, Stealth 4, Survival 4

Knowledges: Culture 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 4, Linguistics 2 (Spanish, Pictish), Medicine 3, Occult 4, Rituals 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 4, Fetish 3, Mentor 3, Totem 4

Gifts: (1) Bite of the Bat, Razor Claws, Resist Pain, Scent of the True Form, Sense Wyrms; (2) Burrow, Ears of the Bat, Wyrmspeech; (3) Curse of Hatred, Skinglide; (4) Crawling Poison

Rank: 4

Rage 6, Gnosis 7, Willpower 5

Wardog

Background: Wardog was born to the Red Talons and taken by force from his pack. After vigorous torture and a great deal of persuasion, he danced the Black Spiral. Seldom has anyone come back from the trip into the Wyrms' personal hell with such an enthusiasm for the Corrupter. Wardog turned his back on the traditions of the Gaian Garou and surrendered himself as completely as he could to the ways of the Wyrms. His first task was to hunt down and eliminate his own pack, which he did with the help of the Hive. Since then he has gone on to revel in every torture he can imagine, and is eager to continue his examinations of the Black Spiral itself.

Image: Wardog would almost look normal, if not for the fact that he has tattooed the Litany of the Wyrms across every inch of his body. His passion for depravity makes itself clear in battle; when combat breaks out, he begins to drool almost constantly in any form he might be wearing. In Crinos he is just over nine feet in height, with a reddish pelt. He carries a very large ax; it's a woodsman's tool, and not originally designed for battle, but he's become quite adept in its use.

Breed: Lupus


Auspice: Ragabash

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancer

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 5 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 1 (0/0/0/0), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4



Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Primal-Urge 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Melee 2, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Medicine 2, Occult 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Pure Breed 3, Totem 3

Gifts: (1) Cloud of Night, Eye of the Hunter, Heightened Senses, Scent of Running Water; (2) Burrow, Hide in Plain Sight, Primal Howl, Scent of Sight; (3) Catfeet, Open Moon Bridge, Dust Squall, Icy Chill of Despair

Rank: 3

Rage 6, Gnosis 6, Willpower 8

Balam

There are many Balam for whom the notion of associating with the Garou — aside from the Uktena and the Red Talons — is abhorrent. The War of Rage is still fresh in their minds, and they view the destruction of the Camazotz not only as a hideous crime, but also as an affront against all that Gaia would want. They may have agreed with the Mokolé that the War would best be ended, but the truce they have is barely standing.

And then there are the Balam who are not as forgiving. The loose taklah (pack, or pride) of Bastet called the *Gatos Nocturnos* are decidedly in the latter category. Despite the fact that Balam normally work alone, preferring to share only their own company, the *Gatos Nocturnos* have banded together, forming a pride. They are united in their belief that the best way to protect the Land is to destroy the Garou and banish the Interlopers.

Their hatred has cost them far more than they realize. They have surrendered themselves to the Wyrms, though they are blind to that knowledge. Even if they were given proof of their own fall from grace, the *Gatos Nocturnos* would still consider the sacrifice worth the loss if it allowed them to rid Mexico of the Interlopers and their influences.

If any one single incident could be blamed for their fall to the Wyrms, it would be the accidental meeting between Mictlan and Rides-the-Serpent. The ancient mummy has found a perfect pawn in the Balam warrior, and has made the most of the werejaguar's own memories of the past.

Rides-the-Serpent

Background: Rides-the-Serpent earned his name when he was merely a cub, by inadvertently offending a Mokolé and having to defend himself from the retaliation of his new enemy. Though it took a great deal of doing, he proved himself worthy in the eyes of the other werejaguars by literally riding on the back of the enraged crocodilian until it exhausted itself. Most of the Balam believed he was destined for greatness. They were right — after a fashion.

Rides-the-Serpent would have been content to live as the other Balam, if it weren't for his constant visions of the past. He knows his ancestors were revered as Messengers of the Gods, all but worshipped by the mortals. To his way of reckoning, that should never have changed. His frustration with the Interlopers has grown over the years, and he has killed four Garou in his life — at least, four that others know of. After his meeting with Mictlan, a powerful

A Few Facts about the Balam

The Balam are traditionalists. Most of them continue to follow the traditions of the Aztecs, Olmecs, Mayans or Toltecs to one degree or another. Most still dress in the formal regalia of the South American and Central American Indians, and tend to live their lives as closely as they can to the ways of their ancestors. Remarkably few of them would even consider carrying a handgun, as that is rather radical in their belief. There are a few exceptions, but only among those who feel that the best way to fight fire is with fire.

The Balam are generally solitary, preferring to avoid other Changing Breeds, as they have little interest in the ways of others. While they will normally parley with the Uktena or the Red Talons, there are only a small handful who would consider the Interloper Garou as anything but a nuisance or a threat to their way of life. They are not now, nor have they ever been, very tolerant of the Interlopers.

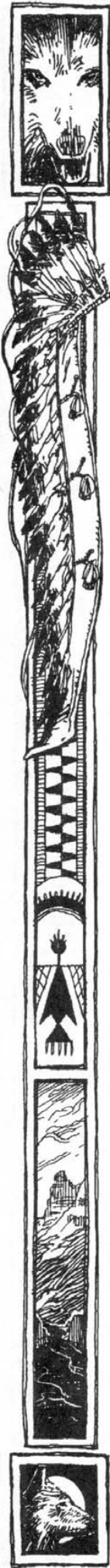
Unlike most other shapechangers, the Bastet learn their Gifts from each other, or by observing others using Gifts and then "swiping" them. It is not uncommon for a Bastet to have several tricks that are the equivalent of the Gifts employed by numerous Garou tribes. To keep matters simple and uncomplicated, the Gifts listed for the Balam characters in **Tales from the Trails: Mexico** are described in Garou Gift terms.

Bear in mind that only Bastet of Rank Four or more are able to step sideways at will. Many lower-ranked werecats can manage to do so in a ritually marked-off territory of theirs but cannot go beyond the limits of their "Den Realm" into the Penumbra. They also have individual, personal totems rather than pack totems.

Most of the Bastet have their own unique forms, not unlike the Garou stages of transformation, but with differences in the changes that take place in their Statistics. Below is a list of the changes that occur with the Balam, the werejaguars.

Balam Form Statistics

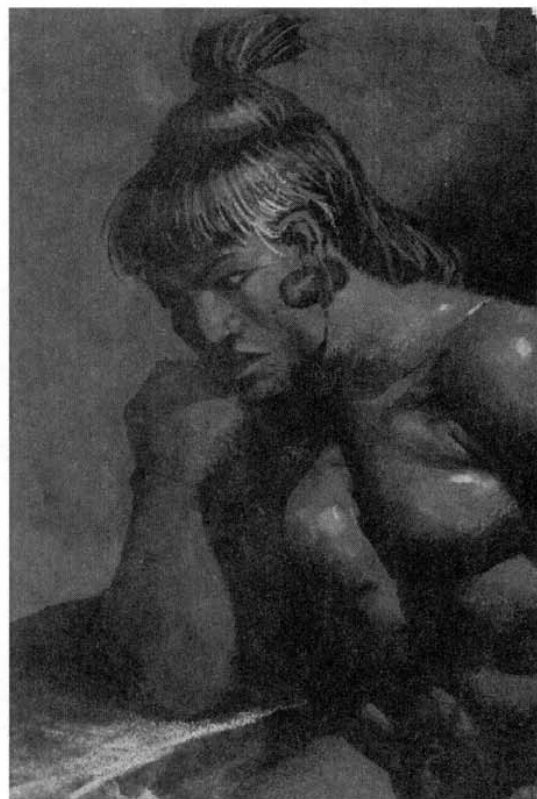
Sokto (Glabro)	Crinos	Chatro (Hispo)	Feline (Lupus)
Str: +2	Str: +3	Str: +3	Str: +2
Dex: +1	Dex: +3	Dex: +2	Dex: +3
Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: +2	Sta: +2
Man: -1	Man: -4	Man: -4	Man: -3
App: -1	App: 0	App: 0	



mummy that once befriended his ancestors, Rides-the-Serpent began to let his hatred of the Interlopers grow and fester like an open sore. In his anger and frustration, he foolishly let the Wyrms into his heart.

Rides-the-Serpent is a powerful figure in the prime of his life. His skills as a hunter are well honed, and his instincts seldom let him down. He has taken to sacrificing the Interlopers, both human and shapechanger alike, to the ancient gods of the Aztec people. He has never realized that he is feeding the Storm Eater instead.

Image: Rides-The-Serpent always dresses in the traditional regalia of his people. He is short and stocky, with hair that is starting to gray at the temples.



Were it not for the obvious madness in his eyes, it would be possible to think he was merely an eccentric who is trying to live in the past. In his Crinos form he tends to snarl constantly, enraged by the many things that have happened to the Aztecs over the centuries. He carries several weapons, but the one most likely to be used is the ceremonial dagger he carries for performing ritual sacrifices.

Breed: Feline

Tribe: Balam

Physical: Strength 5 (7/8/8/7), Dexterity 5 (6/8/7/8), Stamina 5 (7/8/7/7)

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4 (3/0/0/1), Appearance 4 (3/0/0/4)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Primal-Urge 4, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Etiquette 3, Leadership 4, Melee 5, Performance 3, Stealth 5, Survival 5

Knowledges: Culture 3, Enigmas 4, Linguistics (Spanish), Medicine 4, Occult 3, Rituals 4

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Fetish 5, Kinfolk 4, Pure Breed 5, Rites 3, Totem 4

Gifts: (1) Heightened Senses, Inspiration, Razor Claws; (2) Catfeet, Healing Sleep, Spirit of the Fray, True Fear; (3) Eyes of the Cat, Gnaw; (4) Lord of the Wilds, Stoking Fury's Furnace; (5) Song of the Great Beast

Rank: 5

Rage 9, Gnosis 7, Willpower 8

Matulo

Background: Matulo has hated the Spaniards since the day they killed his family. When he was only a child, his mother and father were accused of stealing from the family of an influential politician. They were killed for the offense, though they were innocent of any wrongdoing. The truth was much simpler than that — the head of the family wanted to sleep with Matulo's mother and took it poorly when she refused.

Matulo was left an orphan and lived in the streets of Mexico City for several years. He did not have a happy childhood, and as far as he was concerned, the Interlopers were to blame. It took remarkably little effort for Rides-the-Serpent to convince Matulo to join him in his quest to rid the land of the Spaniards and their vile influences.

Image: Matulo is abnormally hairy in all of his forms, looking almost shaggy even in Crinos. His face is handsome, save for the heavily scarred lower right side (a souvenir from his battles with the Garou). He wears a vest made of human skins, and tends to keep rotting mementos of his victims until they simply fall away. Unlike many of his associates, he uses firearms very proficiently and is never without his pistols.

Breed: Homid

Tribe: Balam

Physical: Strength 3 (5/6/6/5), Dexterity 5 (6/8/7/8), Stamina 3 (5/6/5/5)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 4 (3/0/4/4)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 1, Larceny 4, Primal-Urge 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Firearms 5, Leadership 1, Melee 2, Ride 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Law 1, Linguistics 2 (Spanish, English), Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics 1, Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Kinfolk 3

Gifts: (1) Jam Gun, Scent of Running Water, Spider's Song; (2) Catfeet, Man with No Name


Rank: 2

Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 5

Calls-To-The-Past

Background: There was a time when the Garou had almost convinced the old woman now named Calls-To-The-Past that they meant no harm, that they could be trusted. She was willing to believe that they really had mended their ways, and that she could bridge the gap between their races. Perhaps, just perhaps, together they could bring unity to all the skinchangers. She was a dreamer, and she had hopes that they could end the foolish war of silence between their people.

Then the Silver Fangs came. They came to the village she called home and they destroyed the entire settlement. Everyone there died horribly, except for her. She had the misfortune of living through the destruction of the village and fires that seared her skin and left her as close to dead as she had ever been. A long time passed before she could walk again. During the



time when she healed from the hideous injuries, she had ample opportunities to reflect on the soothing words of the Garou who met with her.

She does not know that the "Silver Fangs" she met were in fact Black Spiral Dancers. She would not care in any case. They are Interlopers, and they should be destroyed. Though she is far past her prime, Calls-To-The-Past is well versed in the ancient ways, she has studied the rites of the Aztecs and the ways of the Balam. She is a medicine woman, and her prescription for Mexico requires that the Interlopers be driven away or destroyed.

Image: Calls-To-The-Past is well beyond her prime, but is still a striking figure. Her hair has gone completely white and her skin is heavily wrinkled, but she stands



straight and proud. Her time as a servant of the Wyrms has done nothing to alter her outward appearance, save when she changes into Crinos, when she appears younger and her fur is completely black. She is serene, content in the knowledge that the ancient glory of her ancestors will soon return. And while she is most often seen smiling, that smile seldom reaches her dark brown eyes.

Breed: Homid

Tribe: Balam

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

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/1/1/2), Appearance 2 (1/0/0/2)

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 4, Etiquette 2, Leadership 3, Melee 2, Performance 2, Stealth 2, Survival 4

Knowledges: Culture 4, Enigmas 5, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 1 (Spanish), Medicine 4, Occult 5, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Fetish 4, Kinfolk 5, Pure Breed 5, Rites 5, Totem 3

Gifts: (1) Heightened Senses, Persuasion, Song of the Seasons, Spirit Speech; (2) Calm, Command Spirit, Sight From Beyond; (3) Foaming Fury, Pulse of the Invisible, Wisdom of the Ancient Ways; (4) Grasp the Beyond, Mold the Spirit

Rank: 4

Rage 4, Gnosis 10, Willpower 8

Skins-The-Foolish

Background: Skins-The-Foolish was born to fight, and as far as she is concerned, the best enemy to do battle with is anyone who doesn't follow the traditional ways of the Aztecs. She has a hatred for everything Spanish that goes back generations in her family, and sees no reason to resist her tendency towards violence where the Spaniards and their descendants are concerned.

Unlike the other members of the *Gatos Nocturnos*, she was not recruited. She came looking for the Night Cats and convinced them she was worth having around. Her ferocity has made her a valuable ally, but her occasional need to kill for the sheer sake of killing is a worrisome point to Rides-the-Serpent.



Image: Skins-The-Foolish is not a friendly individual. Though she is quite attractive, her stance and her expression make it clear that she is a warrior first and foremost. She dresses in traditional regalia and carries several weapons at all times, including a sword that was ancient before she was born.

Breed: Feline

Tribe: Balam

Physical: Strength 4 (6/7/7/6), Dexterity 5 (6/8/7/8), Stamina 4 (6/7/6/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 4 (3/0/0/4)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Intimidation 3, Larceny 4, Primal-Urge 5, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Melee 5, Stealth 5, Survival 3

Knowledges: Medicine 3, Occult 2

Backgrounds: Fetish 2, Kinfolk 5, Pure Breed 3, Rites 2, Totem 3

Gifts: (1) Heightened Senses, Jackrabbit Jump, Mother's Touch, Razor Claws, Resist Pain, Scent of Running Water; (2) Catfeet, Scent of Sight

Rank: 2

Rage 8, Gnosis 4, Willpower 6



The Vampires

Two things have stopped the vampires of the Sabbat from taking over the whole of Mexico: the Changing Breeds — who take great pride in destroying as many of the Ticks as they can — and the painful lack of organization within the Sabbat's ranks.

There're different types of vampires, not only in the clans they come from, but in the way they act. The few vampires that have existed in Mexico through the centuries belong to a group calling itself the Camarilla. Their philosophy is simple and their tactics are extremely subtle. They know they have time on their hands, and with but a few tastes of their blood they can bend the will of almost any mortal to their bidding. One drop of blood in a glass of beer or a pitcher of water is enough to start the process they call "Blood Bonding." Three drops of blood over three consecutive nights is enough to seal the fate of the victim. The victim might still have his own mind, but the vampire can influence his will, making him feel a need to be close to and even to protect the vampire. Needless to say, a Tick can pretty easily take advantage of that connection, reducing her vassals to little more than slaves. Using the Blood Bond, money and influence, as well as secrecy, the vampires of the Camarilla have managed to worm their way into mortal affairs over the centuries.

Odd though it seems, most of the Camarilla vampires take steps toward maintaining their humanity — or whatever semblance thereof they tend to have



in mind. They live among humans, seldom killing any if they can avoid it, and they hide their existence from the rest of the world. They're immortal so long as they drink human blood and protect themselves. For these reasons, over decades or centuries, vampires can all but control the tides of human history and government. They can be patient, because they do not need to fear very much in the world. Most of the oldest and most powerful vampires in the New World are members of the Camarilla.

The Sabbat, also called the Black Sabbat, is not of the same mind. They are rebellious, often much younger vampires, and they don't much care for the philosophies of their forebears. The Sabbat feels that they are superior to humans, seeing the mortals they came from as little more than a source of food and occasional entertainment. Where a Camarilla vampire might go out of her way to avoid killing a mortal, the Sabbat vampires revel in their power. They never hesitate to crush their enemies, and they don't think twice about committing atrocities upon those who are weaker than them, atrocities that would put even the Inquisition to shame.

The Sabbat feels it needs to make up for lost time, and what better way than to take what it wants by force? Rather than subtly working their way into a community, they are far more likely to destroy a town completely, or to make the humans of the town into more of their own kind, slaves to use in the war against the Camarilla.

The Sabbat knows no more about subtlety than they do about kindness. The way to win the war, in their eyes at least, is





to make enough soldiers to overwhelm any possible opposition. Should they lose most of their army in the process, they simply create more as needed. Those who perish in the war are not mourned — they were obviously too weak to survive the confrontation. Those who survive are looked upon as equals, having proven themselves in combat. Better living through forced evolution — that's the basic philosophy of the Sabbat. They consider themselves greater than mere mortals, and those who are lucky enough to join their ranks are also considered the superior race. They might not use those precise terms, but that's what it all boils down to in the long run.

The Sabbat have had enough of the Camarilla. They have been held back from having their own homeland, and now they will make one at any cost. Oddly, there was no consensus or council that sparked this movement — it merely started happening. From South America and North America alike, the Sabbat began moving toward Mexico. When the leaders of the Sabbat met and discussed the matter, they agreed the time had come to wage their war and began their plots to usurp the Camarilla's power in the area. Beyond that decision, they haven't made any true plans. The war is on, and when the Sabbat wins, then they'll work out the details of who will be in charge. In the meantime, the Sabbat moves in packs, much like the Garou themselves, and they attack as they will. Some are exceedingly violent, destroying entire towns; others merely gather their numbers together to attack the defenses of the Camarilla, killing the vampires

who established their bases of power. Whatever the plan, they fight with a savagery that rivals the werebeasts' own — and they have numbers on their side.

The Boot Hill Gang

The Boot Hill Gang is the most successful pack of Sabbat vampires roaming through Mexico. While they do not always stay south of the border, they spend a great deal of their time there. In addition to "recruiting" new vampires, they also make a habit of destroying anyone who bothers them too much. They've robbed banks, started riots and whipped up lynch mobs, and leveled entire towns in the pursuit of their goals.

What makes them worse than most of the Sabbat packs is that they actively hunt and kill any Garou they can find. This isn't business, it's a personal vendetta. Most of them have lost members of their previous packs to the werewolves at one point or another, and they've learned to understand the ways of the Garou as few others have. They know that silver is a weakness for the werewolves, and they carry large supplies of silver bullets for all of their weapons.

The Boot Hill Gang is on a mission to make Mexico safe for the Sabbat, and they're doing a fine job of it so far. They've killed over a dozen werewolves already, and they've created over 200 more vampires for the Sabbat between them. If there's any positive to that, it's that over 150 of those vampires they created have already met their deaths at the hands of the Garou.



Joseph "Boot" Hill

Background: Joe Hill loved the idea of being a gunslinger. He practiced daily on his farm in Texas, and he got very, very good. Then he went off to make a name for himself. But things didn't go as well as he'd planned. It got worse when Joe Hill made the mistake of taking offense to the bragging of one Bernard Del Gado, not realizing the man was a vampire. Tired of the man's prattling, he shot Del Gado in the chest. That doesn't do quite the same thing to vampires that it does to humans, and Joe got an unpleasant surprise. Before it was all said and done, Hill had been dragged behind a horse, whipped and beaten severely for his trouble. The vampire let him

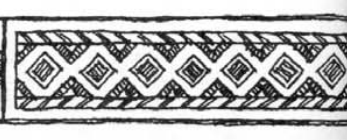
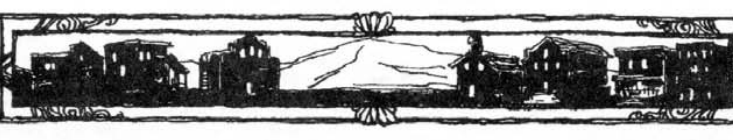
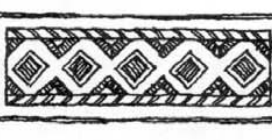
heal for a time and then Embraced him, turning the man into the monster he is today.

About three years later, Bernard Del Gado had the misfortune of meeting with a very angry pack of Garou. There were some questions about who would lead the pack after his demise, but Joe answered them himself, killing most of the rest of the pack. Only those who agreed to his being the new boss lived through the night.

Since that time he's been doing everything he can to promote the growth of the Sabbat, and in the process the nickname he was given — Boot Hill after the cemeteries in some of the larger towns, where boots are placed as the markers for the unknown when they are buried — has become something of a legend in parts of Texas and Mexico.

Joe's clan specializes in killing, and Joe himself is a rising star of the clan among the Sabbat. He and his gang are a threat to the werebeasts, but to the Sabbat they've become almost heroes, the subject of many tall tales and rumors. Despite being a ruthless killer, he tends to mimic many human traits, such as always tipping his hat to a lady, and holding the door for a lady as well. He doesn't spit in public and he always at least nods a greeting to those who notice him. That he might kill any of the people he treats properly is simply not important; manners are everything.

Image: Joseph Hill is quite tall, standing 6' 4" in height. He is as lean as he is tall, and dresses just as he should for the long trips he takes throughout the territory. His short-cropped brown hair is almost always hidden under a hat, and his blue eyes have



been known to stop a man cold when he locks eyes. Though his face is fairly handsome, he has a latticework of scars covering several portions from the time he spent being dragged behind a horse before he was Embraced.

Clan: Assamite *antitribu*

Generation: 7th

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 5, Larceny 3, Primal-Urge 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 5, Leadership 3, Melee 3, Ride 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Culture 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 1, Law 1, Linguistics 1 (Spanish), Medicine 2

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5

Powers: Joe has an effective Rage of 4 for the purpose of taking extra actions. His Stamina is increased by +4 as well and these dice can be used to soak aggravated damage. Use Lupus Gifts of levels 1-3 for the rest of his vampiric powers.

Gnosis 4, Willpower 8

Jack Dawson

Background: Jack Dawson made the mistake of getting “uppity” with one of his neighbors, and falling in love with the man’s daughter. Being part Indian and part black, he was not well received. The man arranged for Dawson’s murder, and then spit on the dying Texan before leaving him for the crows. But Dawson didn’t die all that easily.



Dawson lingered for a day in the hot summer sun — and was visited at nightfall. The man that came to him, a horrible-looking fellow calling himself some “baron” or another, offered Dawson a chance to take his revenge. Dawson took it. He drank the cold, lifeless blood the “baron” fed him and was changed. He became one of the baron’s own, a Samedi vampire. His sire stayed with him for several weeks, training him in the arts of the Samedi. He learned to speak with the dead, and to control them as well. He learned to hide his decaying form behind illusions, and he learned to be patient. Not much later he had his revenge against his murderers, and the Baron went his own separate way.



While Dawson doesn't follow the beliefs of the Sabbat, he does consider Boot Hill to be his good friend, and he rides with the Sabbat, at least for the time being.

Image: Jack Dawson looks like a mummified corpse with long dark curly hair — at least when he allows himself to be seen in his true form. Most of the time the only thing that remains unchanged is his hair, the rest of him looks like a young, handsome Mexican, with slightly darker than usual skin. He has no facial hair, and brilliantly white teeth. His clothes are functional, with little about them to make him stand out from anyone else in Mexico. He is never seen without his pistols in easy reach, and has been known to carry a rifle slung across his back. Unlike the perpetually scowling Joe Hill, Dawson always wears a pleasant smile, even when he's killing someone.

Clan: Samedi

Generation: 6th

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 5, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Larceny 5, Primal-Urge 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Firearms 5, Leadership 3, Melee 4, Ride 4, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Investigation 2, Law 3, Medicine 3, Occult 5

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 4, Mentor 5

Powers: Dawson has an effective Rage of 6 for the purpose of taking extra actions, and a + 3 Stamina which can be used to soak aggravated wounds. He can speak with the dead and disguise himself with ease. Use Uktena Gifts of levels 1-3 for the rest of his powers.

Gnosis 7, Willpower 8

Apache Jones

Background: The man called Apache Jones was born in Ireland, and worked on the railroads for several years. In his spare time he gambled heavily and did a great deal of bare-fisted boxing, winning more bouts than he lost. It was after winning a fight against a much larger man that he was attacked by a vampire who Embraced him and then fled into the night. After several close calls — like watching the sun rise the morning after he was changed — while he was learning to use his powers, Jones began to get the hang of being a vampire.

Unfortunately, he also got the attention of the local law, who took it upon themselves to send a posse after him. Like as not they'd have killed him that night, but the Boot Hill Gang rode into town just after the sun set. They followed his trail on a bet between Hill and Dawson as to whether or not they could find him before the posse did. Hill won the bet by killing the posse, and was so pleased with himself he offered Jones the opportunity to join them.

Apache Jones just keeps getting stranger: he used to answer to the name Walter, but has recently decided that he's an injun, and an Apache at that. He's taken to speaking in Pidgin English, imitating the



dialect of the Indians as portrayed in dime novels about famous gunslingers. Hill tends to look at the man as a mascot... a very big, very dangerous mascot, but a mascot none the less.

Image: Apache Jones is a big man, with all the personality of a cigar store Indian. He wears his hair braided and dresses in leathers. He also tends to speak Pidgin English despite the fact that he is very much a Caucasian. His brown eyes and mud-brown hair frame a face that looks like it saw a few too many fights before he was Embraced. His nose is slightly off to the right and his ears are cauliflowered from his years as a bare fisted boxer. Despite his comical appearance, he is a very able gunslinger and vicious in hand-to-hand combat.

Clan: Malkavian

Generation: 9th

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Larceny 2, Primal-Urge 3

Skills: Firearms 3, Melee 2, Ride 3

Knowledges: Medicine 4

Backgrounds: None

Powers: Apache Jones is a very big man. He has a +4 to his Stamina (which he can use to soak aggravated damage) and can use just about any Gift that directly affects the mind of an opponent.

Gnosis 3, Willpower 6

Lucy Markowitz

Background: Lucy Markowitz was born in New York City and married quite young. When her husband decided to move to the West, she wasn't thrilled with the decision. But being a dutiful wife, she obeyed his commands. They settled in Texas, and the Comanche took them within a week. Her husband and daughter were killed. Lucy was meant to be a slave, she gathered from another woman that they were to be sold to the Apache a few weeks later. She was not treated well by the Indians and took the first chance she got to run. She didn't make it far before the Sabbath showed up. She was Embraced and buried in the ground, forced to dig herself out of the





grave where they placed her. When she finally freed herself the need for blood was overwhelming and she killed and drained three men, gorging herself on the blood and then vomiting the fluid up, disgusted with herself.

That was two years ago. Since then she's come to embrace the lifestyle of the vampires, especially because to them gender means nothing. She is now an equal to men, and for Lucy that is a very powerful feeling.

Image: Lucy dresses like a man, but her figure tends to stand out just the same. She wears her black hair in a ponytail and does her best to look stern. She is sultry and beautiful, a fact that annoys her to no end, or so she claims. Despite her best efforts to look rugged, she still draws the eyes of men whenever she enters a room; the stupid ones make comments and soon after eat hot lead.

Clan: Lasombra

Generation: 10th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Larceny 3, Primal-Urge 5, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Firearms 3, Melee 2, Ride 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Linguistics 3 (French, Spanish, Comanche), Medicine 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3

Powers: + 3 Strength, + 3 Stamina (usable to soak aggravated damage). Use Ahroun, Shadow Lord and Silver Fang Gifts, levels 1 and 2.

Gnosis 2, Willpower 5

Janey Pickman

Background: Janey Pickman is something of a prodigy among her ilk. She actually sought out the vampires, having learned of them through stories her grandmother told her. She looked long and hard, often working on farms and even in factories while she did what she could to find them. When she finally located one, she started pleading for him to take her along, too. He decided to give her the chance — if she could survive the battles that were to come soon afterwards.



That suited her just fine. Janey proved to be tough as nails, and in battle she proved herself to her sire. He Embraced her soon afterward, and she's been devoted to her bestial undead "lifestyle" ever since. When her sire died in combat, she moved on, joining with Joe Hill and his gang. She has never regretted the decision.

Image: Janey is anything but soft. Her red hair and spattering of freckles might make one think she is delicate, unless she gives them a chance to look a little closer. Years of hard labor on the farm show in her corded muscles and lean frame. Despite the fact that she is, indeed, a vampire, she still has the remnants of her tan from when she was Embraced. She dresses in women's clothing, but has altered her dresses to allow her easy access to her six shooters.

Clan: Gangrel

Generation: 8th

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Larceny 3, Primal-Urge 4

Skills: Firearms 3, Leadership 1, Melee 2, Performance 2, Ride 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4

Knowledges: Culture 3, Enigmas 4, Investigation 4, Law 1, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 4

Powers: + 3 Stamina (usable to soak aggravated damage). Uses Metis and Lupus Gifts, levels 1-3

Gnosis 2, Willpower 9

Alejandro Aguirre

Background: Alejandro traveled through Mexico, Texas and even California, selling snake oil and every imaginable remedy for any ailment one could imagine. His potions killed far more than they cured. He had the luck to run across a man who promised to teach him real magic, if he would agree to learn it. When Alejandro nodded in agreement, the man attacked him. When it was over, Alejandro was a vampire, one of the warlocks who can use their blood to work great medicine. Though it's taken a great deal of time, he's mastered several of the powerful spells of his clan, and considers himself a true wizard. The other members of the gang might disagree, but he sure can summon up a nasty storm when he feels like it.





Image: Alejandro is vain and cocky to a fault. He dresses in the finery of Mexico's past and moves with the grace of a dancer. He is seldom without a smile on his face and a woman on his arm. Of course, the smile is fake and the woman is normally his next meal. His thick mustache is normally slightly hidden behind a fat cigar.

Clan: Tremere *antitribu*

Generation: 10th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Dodge 4, Intimidation 3, Larceny 4, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Crafts 4, Etiquette 3, Firearms 4, Leadership 1, Melee 3, Performance 3, Ride 1, Stealth 1, Survival 3

Knowledges: Culture 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Law 3, Linguistics 3 (English, Nuatl, German), Medicine 4, Occult 4, Politics 2, Rituals 4

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Fetish 5, Mentor 4

Powers: Alejandro can use Uktena and Wendigo Gifts, levels 1-4. He specializes in creating bad weather.

Gnosis 7, Willpower 7

Las Momias — the Mummies

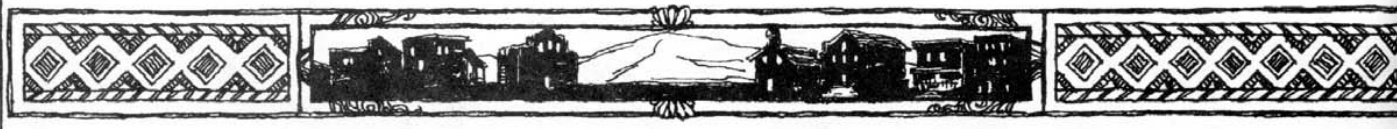
I've heard 'em called all sorts o' names. They're called the Reborn in some places; the Undying in others. Neither is exactly an accurate phrase, but they kinda suffice. These hombres are the rarest of the supernatural critters wandering around in the world, but



they're also among the most powerful. Mages, werewolves, vampires and all the rest can avoid death, but they'll eventually die anyway. Even the vampires have to watch out for physical injuries — a little sunlight or fire can make a Tick's dead state all too permanent. But the Reborn don't have to sweat that too much. Even if you kill 'em and burn their bodies and scatter the ashes, I reckon they'd make a comeback. It's their blessing, or their curse. Even death can't keep them down for long.

The story is that they exist all over the world, from Africa to China, and maybe even a few of them in Europe. But the only ones I've ever met or heard tale of personally are down in Mexico and South America. Here they call themselves the Xibalba, though I don't reckon I have any idea what that word means. Near as anyone can guess, they've been around for a few thousand years — or at least the earliest of 'em have.

The Reborn of Mesoamerica can normally look back into their lives and pinpoint the certain moments that changed them. For a few, that moment is defined as the exact instant they willingly died for their gods. For others, there are memories of struggling back from the realms of the dead and crawling back into their bodies. And in at least one case, the time of the great change happened sometime after being buried alive.

They came back from death and lived again, only to die later of natural causes, disease or accidents. And then they visited the realms of the dead, where they existed as spirits for a time, ghosts that could merely haunt the worlds of the living. And then they rose again.





The Reborn *can* die, and do so regularly. The difference is that they always come back.

The cycle is endless — birth, death, rebirth. The Reborn call their time among the dead the winter of their lives, content or dismayed by the knowledge that Spring will come again. When it does, they rise from death to walk among the mortals and the other denizens of the world.

There aren't many of the Xibalba in Mesoamerica, but their power is great, and they have influence over the people and the land that the vampires can only dream of possessing. They cannot change their skins, and have no superior physical strength, but they have magics all their own. Through powerful alchemies they can alter their bodies temporarily, and through the use of specially crafted amulets they can increase their physical and mental capabilities. Some, after spending a great deal of their time as spirits while their bodies were dead, have gained the ability to communicate with and even control the spirits of the dead.

The Xibalba are very different from one another. Some believe they are chosen by their gods to maintain the order of their world, as guardians of the ancient traditions and protectors of their own descendants. Others believe they are gods, trapped for a time in mortal flesh and released with each death they experience. None of them can provide any evidence for their claims beyond their own existence. Unlike the vampires and the shapechangers, the Xibalba have no one who came before them to guide them on


their ways. As a result they have each developed as an almost unique entity, linked to the others only by the fact that they share the same unusual fate.

The Xibalba have few meetings, save for planned occasions where a few acquaintances discuss the state of the world and exchange notes on how their lives have changed. They only have a few established rules for coexistence: They work together to keep others of the Reborn out of their domain, and they leave each other alone in most things. Beyond these simple guidelines, they have little to discuss. Each is too busy working on forging his or her own destiny.

Some have used their numerous rebirths in an attempt to reach spiritual and physical perfection. They seek to better their environment by means of their own experience, and work to guide humanity to the next step in the destiny they believe the gods have designed. Others choose instead to reshape the world in their own images, accepting that this is the reason they have been granted immortality. In some cases the images they would see reflected by the world at large are distorted and dangerous.

Malinche

Background: One of the oldest of the Xibalba is Malinche, a woman who once held power as a living god and ruled with impunity over the Olmec. When she was torn apart by the werebeasts for defying the will of the gods, she thought her life was over. She was wrong. Her body had been ritually prepared for burial, but with



her internal organs torn asunder and her body contorted into a position no living person could hold, she awoke to find herself in her tomb almost a decade after she died. Reborn into a tomb, with her only thoughts memories of her death and the fall of the Olmec people, she went insane with anger.

Over the centuries she learned powerful magics, and she learned the truth about the "Messengers of the Gods," the skinchangers who believed they had the right to control the lives and destinies of the human populace. She learned to hate the Changing Breeds and began searching for a way to destroy their control over the human race. In some places she failed; in others her tactics and plans helped break


the werebeasts' control over local humans. Her greatest success was in the destruction of the Aztec Empire, which she saw as corrupt: a product of the skinchanging beasts interfering in the lives of her descendants. But then the resulting chaos — the fall of the Aztecs and the rise of a foreign government in control of the Land — was enough to make Malinche change her ways. Though she seldom takes an active role in guiding humanity, she is now doing what she can to stop the Interlopers from growing in power.

Her discoveries of the changing face of Mexico have left her stunned. She is only recently returned from a journey to the places where the Dead dwell, and is still trying to regain her influence among the humans. For the present time she aids the Uktena in defending the city of Guadalajara from the vampires. She also tries to use her powers to make the Land prosper.

Though she has no job at the present time, Malinche has a remarkable amount of wealth hidden away in dozens of locations. She also has just as many places where she can hide herself if she should feel the need.

Image: Malinche has long dark hair and deep brown eyes. She is very obviously Mexican Indian, though she dresses in modern clothes. She looks much like she did at the time of her first death, and appears to be in her early 20s. Malinche stands five feet tall and is slight in build. Though she has changed her ways since she was once known as the Dark Queen of





the Olmec, she still carries herself like the ruler of a nation, and her face is still quick to take on a look of anger.

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Crafts 3, Etiquette 4, Leadership 5, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledge: Enigmas 5, Investigation 4, Linguistics 6 (myriad tongues), Medicine 5, Occult 5, Politics 2, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Fetish 5, Past Life 5, Resources 5, Rites 5

Powers: Malinche is a master alchemist, and can create potions for almost any situation. She is also adept at the creation of amulets. Her potions can add +5 to any Physical Attributes, though the effects wear off within a month of being imbibed. She has an arsenal of poisons, as well as potions that can heal even aggravated wounds. She can effectively create any fetish she might feel she needs, though they require time to craft properly. Amulets that she creates must be made for a specific person; should others attempt to steal or use these items, they simply do not work.

Gnosis 8, Willpower 9

Mictlan

Background: Mictlan once served as the high priest of a very powerful vampire: Mictlantecuhtli, the self-proclaimed god of death for the Mayans. He made thousands of sacrifices to his god, feeding him

the hearts and blood of the sacrifices in exchange for power. And then his god disappeared, leaving the werebeasts to lay their claims on the Mayans. The only problem was that the Reborn who calls himself Mictlan wasn't around for that last part. His own god killed him before disappearing.

Mictlan awoke to find himself in the afterlife, which was nothing at all like what his god had promised him. He wandered the Shadowlands for a long time, content to examine the underworld and learn about the truth behind the lies of the creature he'd worshipped. His faith was destroyed, but he managed to find a certain peace.

And then he was reborn, and everything he believed to be a lie was reconfirmed for him. His master had promised him eternal life, and he managed to grant it after a fashion. Ashamed by how he had acted and conflicted by his own beliefs of the past and his new ideology, Mictlan decided to rectify his error by making the greatest gift he could to Mictlantecuhtli, his vanished god. If he could not find the god of death, he would take his place.

Mictlan has dedicated himself to the destruction of every living thing, and he has grown in power by studying the ghosts and the heavens. He has worked in secrecy for centuries, manipulating the beliefs of the natives of Mexico and making sacrifices to his own honor. And he has recently found a new ally, a being of immense power who is willing to help him in his goals. That ally is Xipe Totec, better known as the Storm Eater.



Mictlan has great power in the Shadowlands, power he has collected by devouring the spirits of other ghosts to fuel himself and to honor his self-proclaimed destiny. But his power is even greater when he is alive, when he can control the dead and make them do his bidding. He has found others, pawns who serve him and help build his army of the Flayed Ones. If all goes as he wishes, he will be able to crush all of Mexico soon. After that — there is a world to remake.

Image: Mictlan is short and stocky, with a powerful frame that is in perfect condition. His hair is very long and straight, and his broad face is handsome in a way that intimidates rather than attracts. In the Shadowlands, when he is forced to abandon his body, he appears as a great black

cloud in the sky. The cloud is in the rough form of a man, and has eyes that constantly flash with energy.

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Larceny 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts 4, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Leadership 3, Melee 4, Performance 3, Ride 2, Stealth 5, Survival 2

Knowledges: Culture 3, Enigmas 4, Investigation 5, Law 3, Linguistics 7 (dozens of languages), Medicine 5, Occult 5, Politics 4, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Fetish 5, Past Life 5, Resources 3, Rites 5

Powers: Mictlan can control the dead, both the ghosts and the Flayed Ones. He has control over weather and can divine the future by reading the entrails of his sacrifices. He has created several amulets as well, including one that protects him from the Gifts of the Garou (+3 Difficulty to all attack Gifts used against him).

Gnosis 9, Willpower 9

The Flayed Ones

The Flayed Ones are unique to Mexico. They are the wraiths of the Dead who have been touched by the power of the Storm Eater and then placed into the bodies of the recently sacrificed. Though they appear perfectly normal under most circumstances, they are undead in their own fashion. Unless they are actually attacking an enemy, they have no noticeable



difference from any other human, save for their Wyrmtaint. When they reveal themselves, however, their horrible state of decay make them very obvious. When no longer hiding themselves, the Flayed Ones still look largely human — save for the lack of any flesh over their skulls and the long strips of flesh that hang from their bodies like the bandages on a Hollywood mummy. Of course, these are no Hollywood creatures; the Flayed Ones' fleshy wrappings constantly drip blood.

The Children of Xipe Totec are dedicated to destroying the Interlopers and reclaiming their land as their own. They work carefully to further the agendas of Mictlan, often imitating the people whose bodies and they now possess and spreading the word of Mictlan as a gospel or simply spying on the Reborn's enemies.

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Firearms 3, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics 2

Backgrounds: None

Powers: Though they are not Mockeries, the Flayed Ones have powers similar to the following: Claws and Fangs, Eyes of the Wyrmtaint, Immunity to the Delirium, Monstrous Strength, Poison Tumors.

Gnosis 4, Willpower 5



TALES FROM THE TRAILS MEXICO

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ISBN 1-56504-345-6
WW3705 \$14.95 U.S.



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