



A Storytelling Game of Death and Damnation

Do not go gentle into that good night... – Dylan Thomas

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#### Dedication:

For Joseph Campbell, teacher, philosopher and scholar of the world's mythos.

"The conquest of the fear of death is the recovery of life's joy. One can experience an unconditional affirmation of life only when one has accepted death, not as contrary to life, but as an aspect of life. Life in its becoming is always shedding death, and on the point of death. The conquest of fear yields the courage of life. That is the cardinal initiation of every heroic adventure — fearlessness and achievement."



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#### **Tumorous Excrescence**

I can't feel you anymore

I can't even touch the books you've read

I followed you beneath the stars

Hounded by your memory your god is dead and no one cares And all your raging glory drowning in his own hypocrisy But now I'm finally free and if there is a hell, i will see you there I kiss good-bye the howling beast burning with your god in humility That separated you from me will you die for this? You'll never know the hurt I suffered. - nine inch nath, heresy Nor the pain I rise above

And I'll never know the same about you,

But soon we'll be together

In the clasp of oblivion.

# This Immortal Coil

Death is but a stepping over, a passage through the Shroud. The moment of death is a rite of passage marking the end of one journey and the beginning of another, a path available to us at any time.

The thousands of things undone, the millions of roads not traveled, the longings and regrets; they do not die with the body. Instead they linger on and take a life of their own. They become ghosts. They become shadows.

Trapped between this world and the next, wraiths are lost in the immortal gloom of damnation. Held together out of pure misery, they are trapped by their past, their longings and their fear.

Many are the products of sudden, violent or cruel deaths. They are bound by a sense of crucial deeds undone, of unsaid words breaking in their hearts, of a life cut short by Fate. Others are consumed by a tragic longing for happiness and fulfillment denied them in life. A few are driven by bitterness, anger or passionate ideals.

They all have some essence of meaning left to express or excise. All existence is expression, especially in the Underworld, and the dead fight to survive. Clinging to whatever shreds of memory and passion they have left, they build castles out of flotsam in an attempt to keep the foul waters of Oblivion out. They are hermits and artisans, forever polishing memories until purity exerts its own small resistance against the force of entropy.

Transcendence of any sort requires passage into the Void, the very heart of Oblivion. The inner darkness of the Shadow must be embraced, nihilism denied, fear spurned and passion embraced. The past must be abandoned; the future must unfold. Those who do not do not grow, who cannot overcome pain, who do not feel, or who do not exalt in their own existence despite the fear are swallowed whole by the darkness.

Prelude

#### To XPONOS.

Wrath The thin

with the proper that S might, in Death, return your friendship in Rife. S implore you to attend these words, if you have any love for me. You cannot imagine what an Rerculean labor it is, in my present condition, even to grasp a pen. S should as easily, in the happier days of our acquaintance, have dug a tunnel through the Alps with my have hands.

Fou shall find herein the answers to many of the matters in whose contemplation our wastrel band sought amusement and distraction how we burned to know these terrible mysteries! S must assume that our two dear friends have passed through before me. S seek them fervently, but without hope — for it would be easier to find a single ship upon the ocean, without knowledge of its course or speed, than to find a single certain soul in this infernal realm.

Understand, too, why S take such pains to set down these words S write from no mealy-mouthed spirit of repentance, nor get from any sanctimonious concern for the souls of others. Though your soul is dear to me, S do not contest your mastery of it. Key purpose is simply that you should know — that your discovery of these dire mysteries should not be hard and sudden, as mine was, but should rather allow you leisure to weigh up the knowledge and prepare yourself. Then, my dear Keary, you may do as you please. Your friend, who thinks of you now more than ever.



## To the modern reader:

rectings to you, whoever you may be and however you may have come upon this tract.

Many years have passed since I first set down the bulk of the matters that are now in your hands, and the dear friend to whom they were first addressed is now with me in

the Underworld. It was she who prevailed upon me to take up the pen once more — or, to eschew poetic license momentarily, to turn to a Babbage device, whose delicate electrical mechanism is far less taxing to influence than the movement of an all-too-solid quill.

In the interim since my earlier writing, much has changed, both here in my Underworld abode and in your world. I have been able to observe both worlds through these changes, and by wit and good fortune I have survived. These changes have necessitated the revision of the work you now hold, for the original contained much that was outdated to the point of being dangerous, or that had been proved by painful experience to be half-truth or falsehood. Moreover, I had been forced then by the labor of writing to omit much and curtail much else, which had been of great value to my dear Mary. The electric writing machine having reduced my pains from Herculean to merely arduous, I am inspired to improve the original, in accord with my first intent.

There are other matters, too, that I must add, for they speak of hope and comfort to which I was blind at the time of

my first writing. Having been served and succored by these welcome discoveries, I may not deny such rare consolations and remain true to my purpose. There are appalling and rerible things I must disclose, and I do not paint them fairer than they are; I pray that, despite a melancholy nature much enlarged by recent experience, I may do similar justice to those more hopeful matters. It is a job half done that warns against the pitfalls of evil, yet overlooks the shrines of sanctuary and the paths of redemption.

It is also true that I have been changed by my experiences ultra funera. I must admit to new motives for wishing my knowledge upon others. It is my sincere hope that you may profit by my labors, and that I, in my turn, may profit from your profiting. You shall understand all in time...

For now, though, I humbly entreat you to read on; set incredulity aside, for I have written nothing but that comes from my own experience, and all of which I should greatly have valued knowing at my own entry into this existence.

Forgive me that I do not identify myself. I no longer have need or cate for literary fame, copyrights and the rest. More immediate to my case is the opposition of certain powerful interests in mindo mortuum to the education of the living in these matters; for the newly arrived and ignorant soul is both currency and prey to many, and they will not look kindly upon my spoiling their trade, their sport and their table.

May chains not bind you, nor Oblivion whelm you. May you Transcend.

## Beyond the Shroud



t was the fashion, in the days of my young manhood, that those who pretended to wit should affect a fascination with Death. We were the youth of a gilded age: idle, rich and much given to whims and fancies, which we indulged unstintingly. Yet we were stalked forever by the spectre of en-

nui. Strong drink and bad company provided a modest frisson; aether, opium and the like gave somewhat more; but nothing could stave off forever the prospect of being faced with the worthlessness of our own lives. Emptiness yawned upon us from all sides; what more natural response, then, than that we should distract ourselves from our inner abyss by contemplation of its legendary progenitor? Here, I maintain, lay the seed of that mania called Gothic. Science and Reason starved the soul to feed the intellect; and seeing all romance and mystery ruthlessly excised from the universe, those of red blood revolted against this gray new world of atoms and treatises. To some, the spiritual *necrophilia* we pursued offered a potential sanctuary, where mystery might yet prevail and the world might be not entirely ruled by niggardly bookkeepers. Others sought a means to be thought wicked, and therefore romantic and interesting. Yet others proclaimed themselves the vanguard of Reason, probing the mysteries of Death that it, too, might be reduced to rules, processes and theorems. It is the nature of adventurers ever to seek the farthest frontier.

## The Journey into Death



pon the occasion of my own passage, I must admit that I felt a delicious mixture of fear and anticipation — those dread mysteries of Death, which I had so long contemplated, were about to open themselves to me, and I wondered and trembled in equal measure.

These feelings departed utterly, however, as I crossed the threshold and emerged into the Underworld. The sensation was somewhat like being under water; both sight and sound were distorted, and I found myself hampered in movement. I even sought to hold my breath for fear of drowning, until I found that I no longer needed to be supported by respiration. Afar in the distance, I beheld a cold, white radiance, and some instinct bade me tarn my steps toward it.

All this I discovered in an instant, but there were more secrets yet to behold.

Shapes moved in the void around me, but I could neither distinguish their forms not fathom the words borne on their shrill and disrorted voices. I was as helpless as a newborn, and my composure quite deserted me in the face of their clutching, poking and shrieking. My movement and senses were impeded by some soft and translucent covering upon my head, which hung down to some extent all around my body. This the creatures quickly dragged from me, and, shuddering, I beheld their true forms.

No demons from the Pit were these, merely souls like my own, kept in an approximation of human likeness as much by accustomed habit as by design of Nature. Had they been horned and fanged, with leathern wings and barbéd tails, I declare the prospect would have been less horrible.

I quickly apprehended that these beings had lain in wait for my passing, and each was set upon enslaving me for its own ends. The traffic in souls is not exclusively an earthly vice, and one so black as my own, evidently, had especial value. How that knowledge would have swelled my living vanity! But now, helplessly pulled and scratched, grasped and prodded, as these fiends contested my soul, I would have endured a lifetime's leaden virtue for but a single chance of escape. Through the rising madness, I conceived the prospect of my soul being torn asunder, like a rabbit contested by a pack of hounds.

Finally, the strongest prevailed, and I was enslaved. I endured and witnessed many terrible things during my captivity, but I do not propose to tell them here. For now, it suffices that I was able to survive destruction, and by a mixture of strength, guile and undeserved good fortune I ultimately escaped my bondage. In the process I learned much about the nature of the Underworld, its inhabitants, and the territories upon which it borders: of these last, your own mortal world is but one, and in many ways it is the least typical.

Portions of this knowledge cost me dearly, and I would not have others, perhaps less able, pay in the same kind as I. Beware, though, for my knowledge is by no means complete, and may not be thoroughly accurate. In the Underworld, truth is as murable as any other substance.

# Our Wretched Lot



o be a wraith is to be forever near to those things one held dear in life, yet eternally banished from the pleasure of them. What an exquisite torture it is, to see daily the faces of those one loves: to watch them as they confront the buffets of mortal fortune; to see age spoil their looks and wither their

limbs; to witness their joys and their woes — but forever to be an unseen audience, denied congress with them more surely than a theatre-goer is prohibited a part in the doings upon the stage. One can neither celebrate their joys nor commiserate on their misfortunes; one can only watch, and watch.

For even though, with some learned skill and no little exertion, one may occasionally manifest physically or quasiphysically, such manifestations are met invariably with incomprehension and fear, at least among the living. Fear among the dead is a different matter entirely — indeed, nearly an emotion unto itself.

And the fear that haunts the dead is no less terrible a torture than this cut-off imprisonment, which both offers and denies those things one loves. The fear that haunts the dead is everlasting and unabating, for it is the fear of Oblivion, the almighty death-within-death. Even in death we cannot escape the black spectre of nothingness: The weight of this terror hangs upon us always.

Oblivion's evil blight is incarnate in our fellow spirits. We poor lost souls feed and prey upon each other without ceasing, and fear to trust one another completely. Friendship of the type known to the living, offering consolation for life's misfortunes and shared strength in the face of hardship — such fellowship is made almost impossible by conditions in the Underworld. Each poor wraith must look to its own strength and well-being, and place no trust in offered solace from another.

Over years and decades of wandering some of us do form lasting alliances and associations (we call such groups Circles),

# Oblivion's Consuming Shadow



ear of that without is fully matched by fear of that within, which the Restless call the Shadow. In the living world, the light and dark sides of the being are held in a kind of halance by the exigencies and requirements of the flesh. They are forced into a necessary truce by the mutual need for physical

sustenance and the other necessary things of mortal life. But when the soul is stripped of its fleshly raiment, the two halves of mortal nature are no longer restrained, and the darker half

but seldom arises the warm and spontaneous friendship between two like-minded individuals who still breathe the sweet air. Thoughts of betrayal and its consequences are never far from our minds, making fear a prison for the soul as sure and inescapable as any iron bars.

may war openly upon the nobler aspect of the spirit, unabated by any demands of flesh or society.

The Shadow finds sympathy in its surroundings and draws strength from the darkness and misery around it. Bereft of joy and light, the nobler spirit falters unless sustained by exceptional character, and it may wither altogether unless the most careful and devoted steps are taken to maintain it. Such a state of affairs may be seen among certain types of lunatics in the living world; in the Underworld, it is the lot of each unhappy ghost.

#### **İmmaterial** Plasm



t is the nature of wraiths that we are insubstantial — yet we have existence, so we must surely have substance of a kind, even if it be only a kind of substance. That substance we call *plasm*, for it is nothing that might be described by earthly science's regimen of solid and fluid matter, but some-

thing between, or outside, or altogether otherwise.

The plasm of a wraith's corpus maintains, for the most part, a similar shape to that of the flesh; it is the form by which the spirit is accustomed to recognizing its identity, and is maintained through habit. Certain wraiths, however, have learned the art of shaping their own plasm — and sometimes that of others — to make its appearance what they will. By this art they can disguise themselves, and some may cause objects of plasm to be shaped like earthly clay into such forms as they desire. All things in the Underworld are composed of some plasm or another, just as all things in the world of the living are based upon some variety of matter.

Because we are insubstantial, it may be supposed that we are invulnerable to material influences — able to walk through walls and suchlike, just as the scribblers of the "penny bloods" prescribe. Alas, it is but a portion of the truth, allowing, by unkind Fate, all of the hardships to the poor wraith, while denying most of that which would be useful or comforting about such a state of affairs.

As I have already noted, plasm is kept in its accustomed shape by habit, and may be altered by force of will, if one should have learned the discipline of doing so. The will, it seems, is master of the plasm, yet it may not be the entire servant of the consciousness. It is obvious to the rational mind, for instance, that to walk through a wall of stone is impossible; the mind has carried this knowledge throughout life, and brought it to the Underworld with the rest of its baggage. Thus, a wraith may be initially prevented by a physical barrier, unless this remembered knowledge is suppressed by the mind and replaced with the new wisdom that plasm may not be halted by matter.

This is a slight matter; by applying a little concentration, one may overcome the resistance of matter if the mind he set upon the task. More treacherous, though, are those occasions where the mind is taken unawares, and the unconscious part of the spirit reverts to the teachings of life for want of other guidance. A fall, a speeding train or a gunshot are sudden things, and unless the mind be relaxed during the instant of their striking, then harm they will most surely accomplish, for the mind would have it so.

Yet it is not simply and entirely so — for how simple, then, for the poor, tortured spirit to find surcease in self-destruction, by leaping from the same bridge, perhaps, that had witnessed the extinction of the flesh. Though plasm is vulnerable, it is not destructible by such mundane causes. The extinction of the spirit is a greater task, de quem plus infra, and more terrible in its ramifications than mere earthly suicide.

How is it, further, that an unwelcome blow may strike as solidly as if in life, while the touch of a dear one — so earnestly and ardently desired — is ever denied the poor spirit? It is the most miserable part of our dismal existence, that we may forever see those we love, yet neither touch nor hold converse with them.

The Wretched Bondage



ot all sonls — nor yet the majority — are trapped in the misery of the Underworld and obliged to endure the existence of wraiths. Those of us who wander the shadows are imprisoned by forces from within ourselves, making our own dungeon by clinging fast to the living world.

The ties that bind as in our miserable condition, we shades have named Fetters. You already know this, dear reader, but know not your knowledge: for are not ghost stories of all kinds and origins filled with Fetters, by which the poor spirit is held back from its proper rest? Consider the ghost of the miser who cannot leave his gold, or that of the mother who watches over her children, or the murdered spirit who haunts the murderer, or the evildoer held in the place of some dark deed — all these are Fetters. When aware, the living mostly shun the touch of the dead, for they are fearful and distrustful of those things that emerge from behind the veil. The will must be bent to accept the possibility of touch, just as a wraith's will must be bent to accept the harmlessness of a bullet, before any touch is possible. It is a wretched business,

Fetters are the cables that hold a wraith in the Shadowlands, and betimes they are the anchors that hold a wraith's senses from dissolving into the chaos of the Tempest. They make us what we are.

A Fetter is an anchor as much as it is a jailer. Without such a focus to shape one's existence, the dreary passing of the years and the disorienting madness fundamental to Underworld existence wear away at the soul, causing the wraith to lose identity and existence until — so the current wisdom has it the un-Fettered wraith may be plucked from the Shadowlands and hurled into the rolling, desperate heart of the Tempest. Though the plight of the wraith in the Shadowlands be wretched, yet it is far preferable to the hellish chaos of the Tempest.

### **Relics of Life Forlorn**



e bound to certain places, persons or objects in the living world, so too may an object be transubstantiated into the Underworld with its owner. Such objects are called relics, for they are the residue of the goods with which the living soul surrounded itself.

Relics are not so easily obtained these days as they were in former times. Antique belicfs held it natural that a portion of the dead one's goods would accompany the spirit to the next world, and the bereaved were wont to equip the tomb with provisions for the journey and existence to come. I have trod the deck of a dragon-ship burnt in Oslo-fjord ere I was born, and heard the soothing notes of lyres immured with Ozymandias.

In these enlightened times, the living are not so solicitous of their dead, and many are now thrust through the Shroud with little more than they took from the womb. Yet, it is possible for a favorite object to pass through with its owner and be of service in more than one existence. When a thing is so familiar through accustomed use that its owner takes it without reflection to be an inseparable part of his identity, then it may, by that token, manifest in plasmic form along with its owner.

### The Underworld



here to begin? The Underworld is such a place as to beggar the imagination, and even such an art as my own — for false modesry is of no value where I now reside — cannot speak the unspeakable, nor enable even the most agile of living minds to conceive that which is inconceivable save

through personal encounter. And yet, I must try.

Science would have us believe that the world — I speak now of your world, where the sun is warm and the grass is green — consists of matter and energy alone, and all the substances and forms to be found therein are of the same components,

### The Shadowlands



he Underworld is inconceivable in its vastness — greater than worlds, it is an anti-Universe. Whatever is not of the Universe is of Oblivion. Just as the Earth is but one small part of the Universe, so there is a small part of the Underworld that corresponds unto and impinges upon your liv-

ing Earth. The regions of this weird territory are the abodes of the bulk of Fetter-bound wraiths, and are known as the Shadowlands.

The Shadowlands lie, as it were, athwart and amidst the living, material world and derive much of their form from it. Perhaps, at this point where Universe and anti-Universe converge, each takes on something of the other's nature; such philosophical conjectures, however, are of little interest to those who must endure here.

You already know of the Shadowlands, but by another name. It is where those wraiths who are forbidden free passage to the Hereafter most often dwell, and it is from hence that a wraith may see into the living world, and perchance speak unto the living as well, if both wraith and living auditor have the necessary talent.

This is the domain to which Earthly spirit-mediums refer when they speak of the Ether or the Astral Plane. Many take

differing only in proportion and arrangement. Some go further, saying that matter is but a form of congealed and solidified energy, which may be revitalized by the splitting of its atoms. Imagine, therefore, a world which is based nor on energy but entropy — where negativity alone holds sway and governs the myriad forms of existence. Such, 1 am sute, is the way in which Science would describe the Underworld.

If it is true that space and time, matter and energy, may be reduced to equations and proved by mathematical proofs to be one identity, then the Underworld is surely the final ending of the universe, which amuses itself while awaiting its appointed task by manifesting as a place rather than a moment.

it to be the whole of the Underworld, but they are deceived. Few living souls even suspect the terrific realms and wastelands that lie beyond these borderlands; and of those few, the greater part have left their reason in payment for their knowledge.

The Shadowlands are well named indeed, for they cling to the outlines of the world of flesh, aping it as a shadow apes its caster. Rooms, houses, and even whole cities exist in the Shadowlands, occupying the precise space and dimensions as their earthly counterparts; while they are not slavish facsimiles of their earthly originals, they are recognizable. They are dismal places, though, utterly lacking in light, joy, and anything that might gladden the heart.

It is said among such creatures as myself that Oblivion takes unto itself the negative forces from your living world by some form of magnetic attraction, and, having taken, congeals them from force to matter, with which it builds itself; if this is so, then it would surely account for the Shadowlands. Just as the page of a book takes only the ink and the letters' shape from the printer's plate, so the Shadowlands take only what is gloomy and squalid from the living world, retaining somewhat the form of it.

# Shadow and Substance



hough the Shadowlands abut the realms of the living, communion from one into the other is possible only rarely. The restless dead may observe the living world, and may even travel through it by traveling through the corresponding Shadows — but to make oneself seen or heard by the living is an undertaking

of great difficulty. To touch or move a material thing is harder still. A fantastic effort of will is required to effect material change in the living world — so much so, that such efforts are often clumsy and imperfectly directed. How many poltergeists are but poor wraiths, frustrated in the effort to perform some simple task! Of thave I dreamt, in breathing days, that I moved as a ghost through some familiar scene, observing all but unable to make myself known to the friends and loved ones upon whose lives my gaze alighted. How many times has that dream repeated itself in waking experience, and how bitter were my tears, that dripped not on but through the hands and faces that I sought to embrace with fingers of mist! Over time I learned the discipline of mind required to touch, but it was an arduous and bitter road. I declare it cost me less effort in life to swim the Hellespont in crippled parody of Leander, than it does now to do so slight a thing as turn the page of  $\pi$  book.

### Haunts and Nihils



here are, however, some few places where congress between the worlds is less arduous. Just as the living are attracted to certain places in their world — bright cities, great mountains and fashionable spas, for example — so the dead congregate in certain areas, which are known in *lingua mortuum* 

as Haunts. These places so strongly retain the substance of death that they begin to shape their living counterparts instead of merely imitating them. A living place that corresponds to a popular Haunt is possessed of a certain aura of dread and gloom, by which the more sensitive of living souls can know with unspoken certainty that they walk among wraitbs. Occasionally the Shroud between the worlds is ruptured somewhat in these places, and the dead may manifest to living senses there.

These are the haunted places I sought out in my brash youth, thinking to hold congress with the dead and learn all the dread secrets of Eternity. How much more foolish I must now own myself, having trod those gloomy halls as a wraith, and having seen with dead eyes the deluded folly of other ghosthunters!

If a Haunt is a place where the diaphragm separating life and death stretches thin, then a Nihil is a pinprick in the veil, through which sight, sound — and, betimes, other things may pass without hindrance. Nihils are holes in the fabric of our reality, wells that plunge directly into the depths of the Tempest. Entropy is drawn through a Nihil by the influence of Oblivion just as water is drawn by gravity through a hole in a leaky bucket. Nihils are the caves from which no explorer returns, and the pools which antique Sibyls scry. They are tinged with terrfble mystery and unexplained events, especially appearances and disappearances. Fear them, for they are doorways with two sides — and it is as bad to be drawn in as it is to confront what may emerge.

# Citadels and Necropoli



et it is not to be supposed that the land of the dead depends solely upon the land of the living for its form and disposition. There are, indeed, many instances where the reverse is the case, and such is the verity of the *Necropolis*, the city of the dead.

The dead remain unchanged from their former habitudes in many particulars. They dwell near one another, seeking safety in numbers and the protection of stronger fellows. Their villages and cities overlap the cities of the living almost without exception, for the living are the source of their wealth and sustenance. The Necropolis, *quam supra scripsi*, bears a certain kinship to the fleshly city whose space it occupies; but it is an equal partner in the matter of form and likeness.

How often, dear reader, have you traversed the gloomy, fetid streets and alleys that lie at the decaying heart of a great city? And how often, in such places, have you felt the thrill of nameless dread — though no mortal cause be apparent — and reckoned yourself in a grim charnel or a ghostly ruin, but for the deposition of your waking senses? At such times, you may warrant, you have trod the earthly shadow of a Necropolis. The presence of the dead is almost rangible in such places, and seeps into the living world, shaping things to its own dismal likeness.

When you find yourself in such a place, draw your garment closer about you and move on, being thankful that you behold only your own side of the mirror. For had you the sight of the dead, you would behold worse sights than ever the walls of the thieves' kitchen witnessed, and plots that would shame to maiden blushing the bloodstained palaces of perfidious Byzantium.

The Haunts in a Necropolis may be many, but all are linked by the kinship of city street and district boundary. Over all stands the Citadel, the *acro-necropolis* where dwell the Hierarch Anacreons who rule in the name of the Deathlords. 'Tis not inevitably so, for some few Necropoli fly the banners of Renegade or Heresy, but by far the greater part is held in the mailed fist of the Hierarchy. Of those that are otherwise, the majority differ only in the colors they fly.

voyagers spun of Hyrcan wilds, or glittering Cathay, or yet of fabled Eldorado. These stories caution the boldest heart, for

they may more likely he true than not. The strange beasts and

rude customs that confronted explorers were trainmeled at least

by physical law and rule of Nature; those discoveries that may

await a ghostly Pizarro, Cook or Polo in the Tempest need have

no such limitation. Few care to travel within the Tempest, for

it is a dangerous business

### The Eternal Depths



here is much in the Underworld besides the Shadowlands; indeed, whole other continents lie amid the vast uncharted ocean of the Tempest. To the inhabitants of the Shadowlands, though, these are mysterious and distant places, consisting for the most part in rumor, heatsay and superstition.

Wilder tales are told of islands in the Tempest than ever living

# The Roiling Tempest



he Tempest forms the greater part of the Underworld, and it is greatly feared. I have endured its fury but once, and wish that I may never have to do so again. Only my desire for an end to this bleak existence would prompt me to front the madness again, and even the prize of Transcendence

is presently an insufficient lure to overcome my hesitation. Res ipso, plus postea — I run ahead of my dissertation, and must return to the task at hand: my geographia inferna.

Yet some there are who make their dwelling in the Tempest. Their motives may not be fathomed by a rational mind, yet perhaps they find in its chaotic wildness some harmony to match their own troubled spirits. These spectres, as they are known, are held in great awe and trembling. They are strong, to survive their chosen abode, and may easily overcome the poor spirits who dwell in less perilous climes. Worse, having become accustomed to their hellish abode, their reason is completely fled, so that none can tell what any such being may choose to do. Many and terrible are the forms of these creatures, though there is none but whose *corpus* is the essence of kindliness compared to its inner nature.

Worse, though, than the dwellers in the Tempest are the great Maelstroms that it spawns: tidal waves from the great whelming ocean of the Tempest, which sweep from time to time into the Shadowlands, bringing madness and disaster in their wake. Whole realms may be swept away by Maelstroms, and even the living world suffers great and unnatural catastrophes when they appear. Atlantis, Pompeii — even the Great Flood itself, some say — were but ripples of the Maelstrom, the living mirrors of worse things afoot in the Shadowlands.

There are, however, a number of Byways through the Tempest, like roads penetrating the dark and dismal forests of the Balkans. They may be traveled with greater safety than the Tempest itself, but that comparative is all that may truthfully be said in their favor. Like living roads, they are haunted by brigands who seek to prey on unwary travelers; it is nor uncommon, either, for the beasts of the forest to emerge onto the road, and these beasts are not the gentle wolves and bears of the living world. They do not shrink from the crack of a horse-

whip or the report of a pistol, and may not be evaded by abandoning a horse or two to sate their hunger. The urge to travel is a perilous one, and best left unconsummated save at the most pressing need.

# The Far Shores



his matter I hesitate to place before you, for it has much of legend in its nature, and it is a thing I have not tried by personal experience. To my shocked and jaded mind, it seems, like earthly legends of Paradise, to have much wistfulness in its nature, and

little in the way of established fact. It is held as common knowledge among the dead, however, and for that reason I shall not omit its mention.

It is said that there exist a great many realms, floating like islands in the turbulent ocean of the Tempest. I shall have more to say about certain of them in time. Those that share the title of the Far Shores are worthy of mention, because it is held by some that they are the legendary afterlife, as it is taught by religious authorities.

The Hereafter of every faith known to the living may be found somewhere in the Tempest, it is claimed, and some others beside. Here may be found all of the hells, and heavens too, of every race and creed. There are those who go so far as to assert, indeed, that these realms are created and sustained by the belief of those souls who seek and find them, and by no other force.

My rational mind counsels me to beware of trusting in such rumor, yet I cannot resist the delicious irony that all those human faiths, which have expended centuries in warfare and dogmatic persecution, bankrupting nations and slaughtering unnumbered souls to prove the rightness of their teaching and the falsity of their enemy's creed — each and every one of these religions, I say, is right, and none is wrong! Seek and ye shall find, indeed! Surely this is a thing that deserves to be truthful, whatever may be the actual particulars.

#### Stygia



mong all the realms in the Underworld, the greatest is that of Stygia. Founded, according to tradition, by Charon himself, it is the seat of the Deathlords, and its power looms over the world of the dead as that of marbled Rome once o'ershadowed Europe. The safest and most numerous Byways

through the Tempest are those that conduct the traveler to the gates of Stygia, for they are oftmost traveled, and most assiduously maintained.

Moated round the Realm of Stygia is the Sea of Souls, a vast and terrible miasma that rivals the nightmare visions of Bosch. For a sea of souls is truly what it is — a horrid and pathetic sight, but as sound a defense against the raging Tempest as any bastioned wall. Beyond this vast and hapless bourne lie the dread walls of Stygia, where none tread willingly.

The noble design of Charon is marred since his absence, and the waypost has become a prison. The Dearhlords hold a vast captivity of souls, whose presence sustains and strengthens the realm, and feeds the power and ambition of their accursed jailers.

That much is known of Stygia, and for my part, it is all I care to know. Once through those dread gates, it is said, all hope flees, and an eternity of enslavement beckons, save for those who have achieved sufficient status in the Hierarchy. Only the Ferrymen walk toward Stygia undismayed, and even they are cautious.

# The Legions of the Damned



he mention of Ferrymen reproaches me, that I have gone so far in my discourse without any but the most personal and subjective explanation of the state in which I find myself, nor yet have I essayed the predominant thinking among my incorporeal fellows about why and how it has come to be so.

# Those Who Guide



he lore of the dead affords especial respect to those called Ferrymen, for they have it in their power to conduct the departed soul to safety, avoiding the thousand hazards of the Underworld and the deadly intentions of slavers and others of whom I shall write anon.

You already know their names: Anubis, Hermes, Brunhild and her sisters — and many besides, whose names are presently unknown save to living scholars and dead priests. It is said that Charon, who begat the Hierarchy and carved some order from the chaos of the Tempest, was the greatest of the Ferrymen during his time. Though now, it is said, Charon is missing, and his order begins to crumble. If that is so, then the future shall be a dreadful one indeed. The Ferrymen travel freely through the Underworld, suffering hindrance from none. It is said that their journeying maintains in some part the Byways that traverse the Tempest, just as frequent traffic keeps a road from growing over with weeds and becoming lost. They own no master but their own appointed purpose; that is rare indeed among the dead, and speaks more eloquently of their power than any other matter could essay. They are feared and even hated — for the souls they claim are prevented from entering the currency, as it were, of the unquiet dead — yet respect for their power stays every hand from opposing them. Those who will pay the price may travel with a Ferryman, but these hardy voyagers travel where they will, and may lead one to one's destination by a circuitous route of years or centuries, or never arrive there at all.

# Those Who Rule



ome cons past, as tradition has it, great Charon founded the realm of Stygia, which is the greatest of the realms in the Underworld. Its influence extends beyond its borders in the manner of an earthly empire, and its ruling Hierarchy is a power that none may trifle with. The Lords of

Death owe fealty to Charon, but since his disappearance none can say what they may do. Their Legions have been more active of late, that much is certain, and their abuses more widespread.

Like any empire of mortal history, the Hierarchy rules more through fear than mild persuasion, and is based more upon the profits of trade and the spoils of war than upon enlightened philosophy and high moral principle. The vassals of the Hierarchy are enthusiastic slavers of souls, and punish others who engage in that trade; they rule, and deny others the right to rule themselves, calling them "Renegades" and "Heretics." They are the enemies of all freedom.

That much, I know. Much more I have heard, though as rumor and hearsay only. I shall not trouble you with unreliable tales, having completed my main purpose in describing the Hierarchy. *Id est*, that any who love freedom should fear and shun the Deathlords and their minions, for though their slavery offers protection from many of the Underworld's perils, it does not grant protection from themselves.

## Those Who Revolt



here are many who accuse the Deathlords of doing away with their master Charon to free their hands in the pursuit of power. Many sought to dissociate themselves from the Hierarchy upon his disappearance; many more, who had never submitted to the Hierarchy's rule, saw the opportunity

to turn this schism to their own advantage, and joined in the great rising against Stygia which took place some twenty-five years ago. Not since Greece tose against the Turkish yoke had I witnessed such scenes of valor, sacrifice and betrayal; it was a terrible war, and one I scarcely escaped intact.

The Renegades, as they termed themselves, were crushed beneath the Legions' iron heel, but not all were destroyed, and when cells of dissent and rebellion flare up from time to time and place to place, they adopt the name of the Renegades almost as a touchstone. They are scattered, poorly organized and diverse in the extreme; beneath the Renegade banner, bandits rub shoulders with dreamers, and lunatics with revolutionaries.

Many Renegade groups exist in the Shadowlands. Some, indeed, have infiltrated the Hierarchy and work at its ruin from within. This circumstance makes the minions of the Deathlords ever more prone to wreak painful destruction upon any poor unfortunate suspected of collusion with the rebels. Make caution your watchword: some Renegades are true champions of freedom, aiding the needy and protecting the weak; others are no more than swaggering bravos, ready to rob, betray and enslave the unwary.

# Those Who Hope



have already alluded to the common belief that the Far Shores, if they exist, are thought to be composed of pure faith, rendered tangible by the nature of the Underworld and the quantity of souls devoted to the idea of their reality. Heretics seek to employ this peculiar law of their surround-

ings by creating a belief and fostering its growth into a stable realm. Such an operation is onerous indeed, for the belief-foundation must be pure and constant if the resulting edifice, as it were, is to have any hope of stability.

Some of these Heretics, as they are dubbed, espouse their creeds because of natural sympathy, others because they dread the alternatives: unceasing wandering in the Shadowlands, eternity under the Deathlords' yoke, or a perilous journey through the Tempest toward a possibly nonexistent refuge.

I have found Heretics to be more reliable hosts and better allies than either the Hierarchy or the Renegades; once apprised of the nature and tenets of their belief, one may more safely trust in the course of their behavior, because both zeal and pragmatism urge them to faithful observance.

Like the Renegades, the Heretics are treated without mercy by the Hierarchy, and it is whispered that friendship with Heretics can alone be sufficient grounds for discorporation at the hands of the Hierarchy.

# Those Who Learn



or all the power and *hubris* of the Hierarchy, there are other social bonds among the dead where all may mingle as free equals. Though the Stygian Guilds are not what they once were, those to whom they open their doors may be of any background; ability is the only qualification, not wealth,

position or allegiance. What a brave world might be wrought among the living, if all education were apportioned thus! The guilds were once the greatest of powers in the Underworld. Formed by Charon to help organize wraiths in the chaos of the early days, only they could read terms to the Hierarchy, for they had the greatest power — that of knowledge, and its withholding — to which even the sternest tyrant must bend the knee. But that day is long past, and now the guilds are but reflections of their former potency. They are no longer formal organizations, but simply casual affiliations of kindred souls, joined in common spirit and identity. As among the living, so among the dead there are seekers after hidden truth and delvers into secrets, and of such minds are the guilds now composed. Each guards, teaches and builds upon its own especial branch of that which passes for Science among the dead. In some enlightened Citadels, those who still call themselves guildmasters sit alongside Anacreons, and add their wisdom to government. Elsewhere, the tyrants detest them, and those openly of guild affiliation must fear, for the prospect of their wrath is no longer grim. The perfect land of philosopher-kings is as far from my world as it is from yours, and the lore of the guilds has been stolen from them. The guilds are now, by necessity, hidden and secret, its members making no claim of their allegiance.

#### De Natura Animorum



o the living, a soul is an intangible thing, whose price is often cheap and whose very existence is frequently debated in this age of Science. It is only after death that the soul's true value becomes apparent, for souls are both material and currency in the world of wraiths. The stability and strength of a

realm depends, in large part, upon the quantity and character of the souls that dwell there, and the power of an individual, as on Earth, is measured in the number of souls under command.

The more powerful denizens of this place can shape souls, melting them together like copper and tin, and pouring them into objects of some power. Stygian iron is said to be made from the residue of this repulsive process; it is the only substance that may bind the shifting plasm of a wraith's corpus, and is highly prized by slavers.

The poor alloyed souls are bound together in their new form, and their vital spark drives the object in performance of its purpose. The Deathlords oftentimes sound great gongs forged from thousands of compounded souls; their keening is terrible to hear.

Just as the living make their settlements close by the things from which they can draw value — mines, good tillage, fishing grounds, trade routes — so do the dead abide close by the places where souls are wont to cross the divide. Hospitals and

Like Timacus at Plato's knee, I have learned such things from the guild wraiths as have sustained me when this drear existence had else been insupportable. Among them I have found the closest sympathy to my own inclinations. For those who have aught about them of philosophy, reason, or justice, the guild haunts are havens amid the grim world of the dead.

Their discipline is less indulgent than I had found at Cambridge, but the matters that they teach are infinitely more worthwhile. And more than once have they offered sanctuary from those who would have done me harm — a sanctuary which is not to be despised or despoiled.

places of burial are as granaries to them, and even the living may sense their presence there.

More assiduously sought are those other places of death: places of execution, dark alleys where secret murder is done, mills and mines where disaster looms, and many other such dismal spots. Here, the Reapers — for such do they call themselves — exert every atom of their influence, like fishermen casting and raising their trawls, to tip the earthly balance toward catastrophe and reap the resulting bounty.

Wars and massacres are great attractions, if ephemeral ones. Great caravans stalk the Shadowlands behind living armies, in carnival mood like rustic fairgoers as they anticipate the coming slaughter. Great celebrations follow the carnage and its feast of souls, like the Faroese festivities upon the coming of migrating whales. It is a fierce holiday.

Should some sudden and unforeseen catastrophe occur, the word goes out like news of gold; a great rush of wraiths contests the prize, and devil take the hindmost. This happens but rarely, however, for the harvesters of souls keep close watch upon the living, and disasters are anticipated almost without exception. Indeed, a great many are planned and engineered, as surely as the natives of America drove buffalo over cliffs to fornish their banquets.

Indeed have I painted a shocking picture. Only the goddess of Truth could induce me to place such dystopian visions before you, and only Truth may justify my deed.

# Servitude and Liberty



lavery is the inevitable fate of most of the souls who enter the Underworld. Mazed as they are by death's touch — many not apprehending their true situation — they are seized upon avidly by those awaiting them. Derestable as slavery is to any rational being, yet in the Underworld it can betimes

be preferable to freedom

By ancient and unbreakable tradition, the wraith who tears the plasmic Caul from a newly arrived soul claims the right of guidance and is dignified with the title of Reaper. Part master and part godparent, the Reaper must guard its new possession well. Not only must thieves be thwarted, but the newfound wraith must be ensured of a good condition, and so maintained, like bloodstock, as to hold or increase in trading value. Illtreatment is not in the Reaper's interest.

Liberty, by comparison, is filled with terrors. Weak and ignorant, one is cast unprotected into a world of predators. Everyone one meets is a potential slaver, and only by superhuman force and guile may liberty be maintained. Though the enslaved may dream of freedom, they have no cause to envy its conditions. However, to be enslaved, as among the living, is to entertain the hope of liberty in some degree. Those enslaved to the Hierarchy seek liberty in rank, aspiring to the lofty post of Anacreon or Deathlord. Others, likewise, seek to advance their situation. Few seek escape, for to escape is to forsake all protection and essay a world of unthinkable perils.

Those souls harvested by Renegades chafe less in their confinement, for like the rational and humanistic thinkers of my own lifetime (by whose souls no few groups, I may say, have been founded), the Renegades preach greater respect for the individual, placing mutual benefit and willing cooperation above the commandments of main force. Their devotion to the practice of their philosophy is, as in life, somewhat variable; but the newfound are accorded some few personal rights, by which measure their lot supersedes that of the enslaved.

As for those taken by Heretics, their condition depends upon their own inclinations. Those who are disposed, by natural philosophy or willful intent, to believe and serve the faith of their captors may hope to prosper; those who cannot or will not bend to its dictates may be traded to other masters and an uncertain fate.

#### Transcendence



ow that I have drawn the horrors of the Underworld in such stark and terrible colors, it will not astonish the reader to learn that the main preoccupation of many Restless is to escape their lot. The possibility of such a task is that which lightens this dreadful existence, and it is desired as fervently as the prayerful

desire Heaven's grace. Such, indeed, it may be called among some philosophies, though its commonplace name is Transcendence — a word embodying all that is bright, hopeful and inspiring in this dreary and horrific place.

In part, Transcendence is the throwing off of those Ferters that bind the soul to the world of the living, and thus to the Shadowlands. Just as no un-Fertered soul can be imprisoned there, none with Ferters may hope to escape.

But there is more to this Transcendence than the fulfillment of one's remaining ties to Life; indeed, the severing of Fetters alone is a certain guarantee of destruction. Loosed from its anchor, an un-Fettered soul may be sucked into the madness of the Tempest, there to perish or suffer a worse fate. Before Transcendence may be attained, the spirit must be at peace with itself, and possessed of an inner tranquillity that will see it safe and undismayed through the journey to Transcendence.

The inner darkness of the Shadow must be confronted, embraced and brought into harmony with the nobler passions; all conflict and pain must be smoothed away, leaving the soul tranquil and untroubled; regrets and dreams must be unburdened from the spirit by fulfillment — in short, every atom of ill-feeling and negative thought must be cleansed, leaving Oblivion no fingerhold to snatch hope away.

Transcendence is a spiritual journey as well as a literal one — if any thing or place in so fantastical a world as this may be dignified with the quality of being literal — and is no less arduous and no less fraught with peril than the pilgrimages of bygone days, through wild forest and hostile desert to the great shrines of the Holy Land.

For all that, it is no less possible; I have witnessed the Transcendence of more than one whom I called friend, and with tears of joy pledged myself to the same course. I still entertain hopes of reaching that blessed state in time, thus ending my miserable sojourn in this cheerless world. For I have seen those who deny or reject the hope of Transcendence, and cling to the Underworld as their only reality — and I would not be as they are, for any prize.

Heaven help us all.

# Valediction

t is finished; I have set down these matters as best I may. If you attend them closely, these writings may one day serve you better than the truest friend, and save you from all manner of horrors. I pray that it may be so

It may be that the things set down here appear too fantastical for credence, and that you are inclined to attribute them to the ravings of a lunatic or the nightmares of opium. When I walked in the flesh, much that is here would have beggared even my imagination, for all of my brief lifetime's delving into Death's mysteries.

Yet many things are here which will not be strange, if you will only look at them anew. Try these writings against the

ghost stories and old wives' tales of your native land and you may be assured of finding correspondences. How could it be otherwise, when these tales are all rooted in the same reality? Let these be my witnesses, and warrant to the veracity of the rest of the work, for all that is here is true, by my own experience.

Once more I wish you well. Perhaps we may even meet, here in the Underworld; though I do not wish it upon you. For now, salve atque vale, and if you wish to oblige me, treat well those you may meet who are possessed of gentle and compassionate souls; for without the selfless entreaties of one such creature to soften my selfish heart, you would have remained ignorant, and been thrust into the Underworld as ill-prepared as I.

# Being and Nothingness

A life which disappears once and for all, which does not return, is like a shadow, without weight, dead in advance, and whether it was horrible, beautiful or sublime...means nothing. — Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being

The stench of Death taints everything we say and do. Life is so often pointless and devoid of meaning, little more than a journey into Oblivion. The pain just won't go away.

Our fear of death turns life into a nightmare. The terror of mortality stains our temporal existence so much that we fail to live. It so torments us that escape becomes paramount. We find refuge in copious quantities of entertainment, drugs and sex. Some find it in death itself...

We are cowards, too afraid to stop running and start asking questions.

The fear of death sustains a whole host of terrors and cravings. The most overwhelming fear we have feeds on our feelings of incompleteness and inadequacy. We resent our inability to embrace life as we should, and we loathe the hold that our fear of death has over us.

We so seldom do what is fulfilling. We are socialized to follow the dictates of others, and suppress our own natural desires and impulses. As we grow older, we become more and more resentful. We watch our dreams slip away from us, and our cowardice haunts us to the end of our days (and beyond). The icy touch of fear sits on our shoulders, but seldom do we realize what it is we fear.

It is death, of course-the immortal fear of nothingness

We are, all of us, both shadow and light, animal and human, body and mind. The mind can reason, the body cannot — yet the body still can sense and react. However, it possesses its own logic, which does not always juxtapose with the logic of the mind. The body exists in a different world from the mind, a realm of instinct and emotion.

Animal existence is based on patterns. Survival and reproduction are the purposes of these evolutionary programmed patterns. Change in a pattern signals danger. Change in a hunting pattern, sleep pattern, eating pattern, mating pattern or migration pattern can signal the arrival of a predator, a rockslide or a sudden lack of food. To an animal, change is a warning that death lurks around the corner.

Our animal bodies continue to react in this way, even when we know that death is nowhere near. Any sort of change can evoke this instinctive fear. The mind can repress it, ignore it or even prompt the change out of spite, but the animal/body/ shadow always makes itself felt. Fear is a part of life; it is survival.

. Animals are survival machines, each creature the pinnacle of evolution, each possessing a profound capacity for fear. Each of us is here because every fiber of our being is infused with a will to fight or flee at the slightest hint of trouble. What was once our salvation is now our damnation.

In the modern world, death — but try telling that to your body. Knowing who jumps out at you doesn't stop the adrenaline rush. The fears of the body clash with the aspirations of the mind and will. We kill our aspirations and hopes out of fear, fear that death is coming.

We choose incompleteness and inner dissatisfaction over the irrational terror of death. In doing so, we become less whole. We give up on life and embrace nihilism. We embrace nothing, oblivion itself. The tragic irony of our lives is that we die without ever having lived. Such a waste. What a pity.

Our vehicle in this game for exploring the theme of lifein-death and death-in-life is the hollow, unliving ghost. The metaphor is complete. If you are missing something inside of you, you're a walking ghost. If you are missing everything but the last shred of your identity, you are nothing but a spectre. If you are missing even that, you are gone. You are nothing. Oblivion has swallowed you whole.

To understand this game, you're going to need to explore your own fear... and your own death. Its not a very pleasant subject, but then again, neither is a life lived in fear. So deal with it. Get a grip on your fear...

Prelude







# Chapter One: Introduction

He who pretends to look upon death without fear, lies. — Jean-Jacques Rousseau



e are all, at one level or another, game players and storytellers. Through our games, we transcend our daily routines; through our stories, we feed the spark of wonder inside us all. Through both, we express our talents and, in the process, entertain ourselves and our companions.

The book you hold in your hands is both a game and a vehicle for storytelling. It will allow you to assume the role of a wraith — a tortured, passionate creature trapped between death and life. You'll have the chance to tell stories about your struggles. In the end, this game is more about you than it is about ghosts, for the stories come from what is within you.

Although Wraith is a game, it is more concerned with storytelling than it is with winning. Wraith is a tool enabling you to become involved in tales of passion and madness. If you've never done this kind of thing before, you may be confused by the whole premise of a storytelling game. Once you understand the basic concepts, however, you'll find that storytelling isn't all that strange. Indeed, it is something you've done all your life.

You are going to weave wondrous tales — stories of fragile hope and intimate tragedy. The heart of the stories is you: the wraith. These stories will likely capture your imagination and involve you far more deeply than any play or movie does. This is because you're inside the story as an active participant, not just an observer.





hroughout the inhabited world, in all times and under every circumstance, the myths of man have flourished; and they have been the living inspiration of whatever else may have appeared out of the activities of the human body and mind.

— Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces

Long ago, before movies, TV, radio and books, people used to tell each other stories: stories of the hunt, legends of the gods and great heroes, or gossip about the neighbors. They would tell these stories aloud, as part of an oral tradition of storytelling — a tradition that has largely been lost.

We no longer tell stories — we listen to them, passively waiting to be picked up and carried to the worlds others create. We have become slaves to our TVs, permitting an oligarchy of artists to dictate our culture to us.

It need not be this way. Storytelling on a personal level can once again become a part of our culture. This is essentially

Chapter One: Introduction





what Wraith is about: not stories told to us, but stories we tell others. Through the game and art of collaborative storytelling, we create new stories and claim the ancient myths and legends for our own.

Storytelling allows us to understand ourselves by giving us a tool with which to explain our triumphs and defeats. By looking at our culture, our family and ourselves in new contexts, we can understand things we never before realized. Storytelling is entertaining because it is so revealing, and exhilarating because it is so true. Our fascination with stories has a purpose to it: of that there is no doubt.

#### Roleplaying

Wraith is not only a storytelling game, but a roleplaying game as well. You not only tell stories, but actually act through them by assuming the roles of the central characters. It's a lot like theatre, but you make up the lines.

To understand roleplaying, you need only think back to your childhood and those wonderful afternoons spent playing Cops 'n' Robbers, Cowboys and Indians, or Dress-Up. What you were doing was roleplaying, a sort of spontaneous and natural acting that completely occupied your imagination. This play-acting helped you learn about life and what it meant to be a grown-up. It was an essential part of childhood, but just because you have grown up doesn't mean you have to stop.

In Wraith, unlike pretend, there are a few rules to help you roleplay. They are used mainly to avoid arguments — "Bang! Bang! You're dead!" "No I'm not!" — and to add a deeper sense of realism to the story. Rules direct and guide the progress of the story and help define the capacities and weaknesses of the characters. The essential rules for Wraith are described in Chapter Four.

Wraith can be played with nearly any number of players, but roleplaying games in general are best when there are six or fewer players. The mystery and flavor are diminished when players must compete for attention.

#### The Storyteller

Wraith is structured a little differently from the games with which you might be familiar. In the first place, there is no board involved. Second, one player needs to be the Storyteller the person who creates and guides the stories.

Being the Storyteller is a bit like playing the Banker in Monopoly<sup>™</sup>, but bears greater rewards than a handful of play money. The Storyteller describes what happens to the characters as a result of what the players say and do. She decides if the characters succeed or fail, suffer or prosper, live or die. Storytelling is a very demanding task, but it is equally rewarding, for the Storyteller is a weaver of legends.

The Storyteller's primary duty is to make sure the other players have a good time. The way to do that is to tell a good tale. Unlike traditional storytellers, however, the Storyteller doesn't simply tell the story. Instead, she creates the skeleton of a story and then lets the players flesh it out by assuming the roles of its leading characters. Storytelling in Wraith is a careful balance between narration and adjudication, between story and game. Sometimes the Storyteller must set the scene or describe what occurs, but mostly she must decide what occurs in reaction to the words and actions of the characters. She must be as realistic, impartial and creative as possible.

As the Storyteller, you are in charge of interpreting and enforcing the rules, yet you are also an entertainer — you must struggle to balance your two roles. Most of this book was written to help you do just that. It won't make being a Storyteller easy, because it never will be easy, but it will make you better at it.

The role of the Storyteller is explained in much more detail in Chapter Three.

#### The Players

Most Wraith players will not be Storytellers. They will instead assume the roles of the central characters in the story. Being a player does not require as much responsibility as being a Storyteller, but it does require just as much effort and concentration.

As a player in a Wraith chronicle, you assume the persona and role of a ghost, whom you invent and then roleplay over the course of one or several stories. The life of your character is in your hands, for you decide what the character says and does. You decide which risks to accept or decline. Everything you say and do when you play your character has an effect on the world.

The player must also be an actor. As an actor, you speak for your character and act out whatever you want your character to do or say. Whatever you say, your character says, unless you are specifically asking a question of the Storyteller or are describing your actions. By announcing and describing to the other players what you are doing, you become a part of the ongoing story.

As a player, you try to do things that allow your character to succeed and thus "win the game." This strategic element of the game is essential, for it is what so often creates the thrill and excitement of a dramatic moment.

Often, after describing the actions "you" want to take, you must make dice rolls to see if your character succeeds in doing what you have illustrated with words. Your character's Traits — numeric descriptions of her strengths and weaknesses dictate how well your wraith can do certain things. Actions are basic elements of Wraith, for they describe how characters change the world and affect the course of the story.

Characters are central to a story, for they alter and direct the plot. Without characters, you can't have a story. As the story flows, the characters, not the decisions of the Storyteller, direct and energize the progress of the plot.

To some extent, each player is an assistant Storyteller. Players should feel free to add ideas and elements to the story, although the Storyteller may accept or reject them as she sees fit. In the end, a good story is the most important goal. Players, characters and Storytellers work together to make a story come alive.

#### Characters

Many different elements compose what we like to think of as the "self" — too many, in fact, to separate or identify. In truth, we really don't know who or what we are. We wear many masks. It is from this essential diversity of self that our desire and ability to pretend to be someone else originate.

Characters are the literary versions of real people — they are not real, but they do capture some aspects of reality. Only when you enter the world of the story can your characters become complete. They are real only with you as the animating force — the soul, if you wish. Never treat your characters as projections of yourself (even if that's all they are). Treat them as unique individuals, as works of art, or as fragile expressions of your poetic sensitivity. You must treasure the characters that you create.

Wraith characters are easy to create. It takes less than half an hour to choose all the Traits that describe your character. It takes more time and effort to turn this collection of numbers into a living, breathing (or, in this case, unliving and unbreathing) character. You must reach deep inside yourself to find enough that is real and true to produce a complete character. The Frankenstein monster was easily assembled from available body parts; it was the breath of life that proved difficult.

Character creation is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

### Winners and Losers



here is no single "winner" of Wraith, for the object is not to defeat the other players. To "win" at all, players need to cooperate with each other. Because this is a storytelling game, there is no way for one person to claim victory. From the beginning, Wraith characters are damned to

wander the Shadowlands, a dismal world beyond the living, but outside eternity. The malevolent force known as Oblivion softly creeps beneath the surface of the Shadowlands, while mad ghosts and nightmare creatures overtly threaten the char-

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acters. With such powerful forces arrayed against you, the true measure of success in Wraith becomes survival.

If, however, a character has some overwhelming motivation (such as a need for vengeance), accomplishing this goal also becomes a measure of success. Stories and extended chronicles often come to conclusions that either benefit or harm the characters. If the players can turn stories to their characters' advantage, they have "won," at least for the moment. When a group of wraiths manages to track down a corrupt politician who has threatened or destroyed people or places that the wraiths hold dear, those wraiths have "won" a temporary victory. If that politician has powerful friends among the occult underground, however, attacking that politician may be a dangerous exercise in the long run. A "victory" under these circumstances can become worse than defeat.

In order to achieve even partial victory, the characters must usually become friends, or at least watch out for one another and have a modicum of trust in each other. The World of Darkness is so dangerous that trustworthy allies are essential. A divided group will not survive for long.

#### Playing Aids

For the most part, Wraith was designed to be played around a table. Though the game does not require a board, a number of props require a table to use properly. Dice, pencils, paper, and photocopies of the character sheet are the only other things you will really need. The dice required are 10-sided; these you can purchase in any game store. The Storyteller may also want to have paper on hand in order to sketch out a setting (making it easier to describe to the players), as well as a few other props to show the players what the characters see (photographs, matches, scarves — anything to make the experience more vivid).

#### Live-Action

Live-Action roleplaying can be the most dynamic and fun part of playing **Wraith**. Live-Action roleplaying is similar to improvisational theater: the actors (the players) act through the scenes created and introduced by the Storyteller. This creates a much more intense and immediate storytelling experience.

Players in a roleplaying game generally describe what their characters do and even say. During Live-Action roleplaying, however, players actually do what their characters do and say what their characters say (within limits). They can stand up, walk around, hold up a letter, shake hands, or rush to a window to see what is going on. Of course, imagination is still important, and the Storyteller may still interrupt the action to describe objects and special situations.

No dice are used during Live-Action sessions; alternate rules, like those given in White Wolf's Mind's Eye Theatre line of Live-Action products, take the place of dice when needed. For the most part, everything is decided through acting. The Storyteller simply uses the characters' Traits to decide how well the characters manage to perform certain mechanical actions (such as picking a lock). The Storyteller must also decide how the other Storyteller-run characters react to the players' characters.

#### Rules

You must follow a few basic rules to ensure that Live-Action roleplaying progresses smoothly and safely. These rules must be obeyed if you intend to run any Live-Action roleplaying at all. Safety is always a primary concern.

• Don't Touch: A player should never actually strike or grapple another member of the troupe. No sort of combat should ever be performed — that is one thing you should leave for the dice to decide. Live-Action playing involves only talking, not fighting. If players or Storyteller assistants get too rambunctious in their roles, the Storyteller should call a time-out from the acting and remind everyone of the rules of play. Repeat offenders should be asked to leave, or the action should be returned to a table and conflicts should be resolved through dice rolls.

• No Weapons: No props can be used if they must touch another player to be effective. No real weapons of any sort can ever be handled at any time during Live-Action roleplaying. Not even toy guns can be used. The "no touch" rules must always be in effect.

 Play Inside: Play inside your own home or in whatever private area the game normally takes place. Make sure that everyone else in the area understands what you are doing. Never perform Live-Action if passersby may be confused or frightened by the event. If you play outside, such as in the woods behind your house, make sure privacy is maintained.

 Know When to Stop: When the Storyteller calls for a time-out, all action must immediately stop. Even during Live-Action (especially during Live-Action), the Storyteller's word is final.

#### Wraiths



ou would know the secret of death.

But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?

The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life.

For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one. — Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

Wraith: The Oblivion

Though death terrifies us, it also fascinates us. Throughout history, man has glorified death, wrapping his fear in a rich tapestry of rite, pageantry and destruction. Science strives to stay the Reaper's hand, while art and faith seek to draw back his awful hood and touch his pallid face.

Death, in Wraith, is not an ending; the moment of death is simply the end of one journey and the beginning of another. The majority of souls pass on quickly, presumably into either Transcendence or total Oblivion. Wraiths, however, are the spirits of the dead who have tragically lost their way on that road. They are mired in their pasts, their memories, and their unfulfilled deeds. Wraiths' overpowering Passions allow them to cheat death. Indeed, they forbid them from the final sleep. Some wraiths are driven by bitterness and anger, while others pursue ideals so powerful that even death cannot deny them. Some are driven by a longing for fulfillment denied them in life, while others cling to the Earth in terror of what might wait beyond.

These Restless find themselves trapped in the Underworld, a spiritual half-world between the living lands and an unknown eternity. Here, they are surrounded by a persistent vision of decay. Though wraiths may temporarily manifest themselves in the physical world, or even possess mortals, they are doomed to wander forever, fettered to the world they left behind.

Many wraiths are the products of sudden, violent or cruel deaths, deaths that came before they had a chance to resolve important life issues. Such wraiths may dwell briefly in the Underworld before they accept death and pass on. Player character wraiths, however, have profound Passions and Fetters that bind them to their lost lives, and are likely to remain in the Underworld for a long time.

#### The Underworld

Between life and death, between Transcendence and Oblivion, lie Stygia, the Shadowlands and the Far Shores. These spiritual reflections of mortality, collectively referred to as the Underworld, tantalize wraiths with reflections of the life they have forever lost.

Very few dead actually end up in the Underworld; wraiths disagree as to why this may be. Some say that the Underworld is merely a waiting room for unbelievers, a temporary way station between Earth and eternity. If this is true, some wraiths have been waiting for quite a while, with no end in sight. Other wraiths postulate that most human souls simply pass straight into Oblivion, the embodiment of nothingness that tinges the very air of the Underworld. If this is true, then hungry Oblivion has grown fond of the taste of souls; each year, more mortals fall into the Void. Some optimistic wraiths postulate that reincarnation exists; one Heretical sect even embraces Oblivion as the wellspring of reincarnated souls. The possible truth behind this idea would be cold comfort to the wraiths; the karmic



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wheel, if such exists, has left them behind, stranded in the Underworld.

Whatever the nature of the Underworld may be, wraiths are stuck with it. Though the Restless are not without power, only Transcendence or Oblivion allows them to leave the Underworld forever. And no one who has embraced either option has returned to tell of it. Fear, then, binds the Restless to the Underworld: fear of judgment or annihilation.

#### Wraith Characteristics

Wraiths have certain innate abilities. Systems for these abilities are given on pg. 124.

#### Deathsight

Wraiths see a world tinged by death everywhere they look. Oblivion's influence colors the Shadowlands; a new sports car appears scratched and dented, statues appear chipped and crumbling, and people close to death have a corpselike pallor. Wraiths can see the degree to which Oblivion has affected someone or something. With this insight, the Restless may assess an object's weak spots or a living person's general health.

#### Lifesight

Wraiths are also able to perceive the life energy in all beings. A wraith can interpret the "life aura" of a being, thereby determining that being's mood, identity and level of hostility. Even the most shallow, transparent person usually has several different colors composing his aura. The colors of the aura may shift in a predictable cycle or completely at random, according to the current emotional state of the character. Few auras remain one clear color for long; shades of intent and emotion can lighten, darken or mix an aura's hues.

#### Heightened Senses

All wraiths are hypersensitive to sensory input. A wraith can hear a whisper a block away or read a license plate off a speeding car with ease. The flip side of this is that they are often startled by loud noises or dazzled by bright lights.

#### Insubstantiality

Wraiths have the ability to pass through solid objects in the Shadowlands. However, to do so requires the wraith to expend a small amount of her essence, or Corpus. In this way, wraiths can pass through walls, people, or barrages of machinegun fire relatively unharmed.

#### The Shadow

In death, there is no place to hide from the dark side of the soul. All that is feared, hated, suppressed and denied takes on a sentience of its own in the Underworld. This sentience, called the Shadow, is the bane of Restless existence. Thanatos, the death-urge, the siren song of Oblivion, forms the dark side's lifeblood. Goodness, hope, power, sheer will — all fall before the Shadow. The Shadow does not always rule a wraith, but it forms an inextricable part of her being. It is not a crazed creature, but a malicious, malevolent and subtle force. The Shadow is the core of a wraith's unconscious; as such, it has access to all of her powers, memories and associations. It is the most terrible enemy a wraith can have.

It will plot and scheme. It will whisper and torment. And in certain circumstances, it will take on a life of its own, becoming a demon whose only motivation is its own destruction as a release from its own pain. The Shadow's ultimate goal is to force its host to embrace Oblivion.

Many Wraith tales revolve around combating the Shadow, stopping its plots before it goes too far. In the end, every wraith contains within herself the seed of her own tragic destruction; all are driven toward Oblivion.

#### Transcendence

A life perhaps was spurned, who knows? A chance at happiness was there and given up, And yet finally, at whatever price, This THING grew out of it, not easier than life And yet completed and so perfect — as if It were no longer too soon to laugh and soar.

- Rainer Rilke, "The Lace II"

To deny that something exists beyond the Underworld would be to close one's eyes out of fear of truth. Many deny it anyway, claiming that only Oblivion waits for the unwary. Other Restless believe that even the Underworld is but a purgatory through which they must pass before attaining a higher state. Wraiths refer to this other state as Transcendence. Passing from the Underworld into Transcendence requires the surrender of the self and the embrace of all the lessons of life and death.

Does Transcendence lead to a final Heaven or Hell? Is the result a new incarnation in the karmic cycle? Or is the whole idea a sham, some Shadow's way of feeding Oblivion? No one knows. Transcendence is a one-way voyage to an unknown destination. In any event, reaching Transcendence requires passage through the Void, the core of Oblivion. The thought of the Void paralyzes most wraiths with fear.

Needless to say, most wraiths do not seek Transcendence. In fact, they dread it. Some call Transcendence "Judgment," a final accounting to some higher power for the things they have done. Few Restless would stand naked in Divine Light willingly; most feel beyond redemption. Given the choice, they would remain bound to Fetters for all time. Better the damnation they know than the mystery they fear.

Wraith: The Oblivion



#### Do Not Go Gentle

Wraith is a game about death, loss, isolation and identity, but it is also about human interaction and emotion. In playing Wraith, you will be confronting the darkness within you as well as the darkness around you. Oblivion gradually consumes the Underworld, but characters can make a difference. They can fight the forces of Oblivion within themselves as well as those around them in the realms of the dead.

#### Lexicon

The Underworld contains many strange phenomena, and the unfortunate denizens have adapted or invented a variety of words to describe the bizarre features of their new "lives."

#### **Common Parlance**

Angst: The power of the Shadow.

Arcanum, The: A dangerous group of occult investigators and hunters. Caveat anima!

Artifact: An object that has been altered to give it special powers.

Byways: Paths through the Tempest.

Caul: An ectoplasmic covering that shields a wraith during her larval period. In some ways, it protects her, but it also warps her perceptions until it is removed.

Charon: The founder of the Hierarchy. Charon has been missing for decades.

Circle: Any group of wraiths.

Citadel: An individual stronghold within a Necropolis.

Cohort: A Circle of Hierarchy wraiths. The traditional starting number of members is 10, but attrition and Transcendence take their toll.

Corpus: The spirit body of a wraith.

Cult: Any of hundreds of Heretic sects espousing a particular path to Transcendence.

Deathlord: One of the seven leaders of the Hierarchy. Domain: A large territory held by a wraith or group

of allied wraiths. Doomsday: When Oblivion shall overcome all of reality, and the end of time will come — or, alternatively, when the dead will walk the Earth.

Drone: A wraith who has lost its sentience and identity.

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Enfant: A recently deceased wraith. An Enfant is partially amnesiac, and a Caul covers his face, altering his perceptions of whatever he encounters.

Far Shores, The: Distant realms in the Tempest, often corresponding to mortal beliefs about the afterlife.

Fetters: The ties that bind a wraith to her old life and the living world.

Gang: A Circle of Renegade wraiths.

Guild: In times past, an organization that taught a particular Arcanos to its members. The guilds were disbanded by Charon.

Harrowing, The: The nightmare ride through the Tempest that periodically torments his existence and occasionally overcomes him.

Harvest: To gather the newly deceased, either as Reaper and mentor or as slave trader.

Haunt: A place in the Shadowlands where death has a presence and wraiths are more at home.

Hierarchy, The: The largest organization of wraiths in the Underworld. The Hierarchy was originally formed by Charon to assist wraiths in attaining Transcendence. Over the centuries, however, it has become corrupt and twisted.

Heretics: Those who believe that yet another , better afterlife awaits wraiths who Transcend their current wretched state. Hell: Any of countless realms claiming to be the original, real, honest-to-goodness, actual Hell — there are so many that they are known collectively as the Thousand Hells, or simply "the Thousand."

Host: A person possessed during Puppetry.

Legions: The army, police and enforcement arm of the Hierarchy.

Lemure: A young wraith, only recently deceased.

Maelstrom: Terrifying storms that occasionally envelop the Shadowlands; they are to the Tempest what Jupiter's Red Spot is to an earthly hurricane.

Malfean: An elder spectre or beast of the Void.

Mask: A Stygian artifact worn by many wraiths in order to conceal the true self.

Necropolis: A city of the dead. Necropoli reflect the cities of the living and occupy the same "geographical" location.

Nephandi: Mages who have turned to Oblivion.

Nihils: Pits in the Shadowlands that lead into the Underworld, usually dumping the wraith straight into the Tempest.

Oblivion: The negation of all things. Like total entropy, Oblivion, in its purest form, is an ordered state. The Void is its physical manifestation (or lack thereof).



Wraith: The Oblivion

Obolus: The Underworld's basic unit of currency, forged from the souls of the dead.

Pathos: Emotion; the "food" of the spirit world.

Plasm: Any ectoplasmic substance; the spiritual stuff that makes up wraiths and their belongings alike.

Projectors: Living travelers in the Shadowlands.

Quick, The: Another term for the living.

Reaper: The wraith who first removes the Caul from an Enfant.

Relic: An ectoplasmic object brought by a wraith from the living lands.

Renegades: Wraiths who have banded together to overthrow the Hierarchy. Their individual motivations vary.

Restless, The: Another term for wraiths in general.

Shadow, The: The darker half of a wraith's personality. It must be mastered before the wraith can Transcend; conversely, it may eventually gain mastery over the wraith, forcing her to embrace Oblivion.

Shadowlands: The aspect of the Earth inhabited by wraiths. From here, wraiths can (with some difficulty) interact with the living or meet with Awakened creatures. The Shadowlands form an outer "shell" over the rest of the Underworld.

Slumber, The: The sleep cycle of wraiths.

Spectre: A wraith whose Shadow has become dominant.

Stygia: The largest realm in the Underworld. It is the home of the Hierarchy.

Tempest, The: The eternally raging storm of the Underworld — it hinders passage between the inner realms and the Shadowlands, and collects the nightmares and memories of those who pass through it.

Terminals: Small, rundown realms in the middle of the Tempest that serve as way stations for those traveling to Stygia. Terminals are grim, Kafkaesque places where Ferrymen rest and unruly passengers are sometimes abandoned.

Thrall: A wraith in subjugation to another of its kind.

Tithe: The amount of Pathos due a wraith from a Fetter or a haunt.

Transcend: To leave the Underworld completely and move on to whatever awaits beyond.

Underworld, The: The land of the dead. It includes the Shadowlands, the Tempest, the Void, and all the realms therein.

Void, The: The nothingness at the heart of the Tempest. See also Oblivion.

Wraith: A spirit who has died but remains attached to the living world. Wraiths are also known as ghosts or "the Restless."

#### Old Form

Advocates: Powerful wraiths of a Heretic cult dedicated to recruiting souls for a realm in the Far Shores. They are persecuted and hunted by the Hierarchy.

Agency, The: Nickname for the bureaucracy of the Hierarchy.

Arisen, The: Those who have passed on to Transcendence.

Consort: The host possessed by a Puppeteer.

Eidolon: The higher, more enlightened aspect of a personality.

Legacy: A Fetter with powerful personal ties to a Restless soul.

Onyx Tower, The: Charon's palace; also used to describe the goal of becoming one of Charon's servants.

#### **Vulgar** Argot

Body Snatcher: A wraith who possesses the living.

Boo Job: Any attempt to scare off the living.

Boojum: A generic word used to describe hostile creatures and/or Tempest dwellers.

Brain Sucker: A wraith who uses Phantasm or the lesser Puppetry powers.

Creepshow: The Tempest.

Doomshade: Slang for spectre.

Dothead: A wraith who was a hanger-on in life, following fickle fashion and fads without real contribution.

Flesh Freak: Derogatory term for a Skinrider.

Hellbound, The: Nickname for a wraith thought to be well on his way to domination by his Shadow.

Juice: Pathos.

Meat: Mortal flesh.

Meat-Chains: The human body (which ties down the spirit).

Mitty: A wannabe who never was — wraiths who never fulfilled their dreams while living.

Molemen: Derogatory term for those who claim to have experienced the "tunnel of light."

Scrooger: Slang for a wraith who uses Phantasm frequently. Skinlands: The physical world in which mortals re-

side; therefore, "Skinlanders" are the Quick.

Stormrunning: Traveling in the Tempest.

Tag: Using Arcanos on other wraiths for practice or for nonlethal duels.

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# Chapter Two: Setting

Think you God built this place, wishing man ill And not lusts uncontrolled or swords unsheathed? Not God, my friend. The truth's more hideous still: These halls were carved by men while yet they breathed. — Alan Moore, "Amongst the Dead Men," Swamp Thing



he world of Wraith is a dark reflection of our own. Here, beauty and corruption stand out in greater contrast; everything is monolithic, majestic and altogether twisted. Though faith and human spirit remain strong, greed and despair seem stronger still; many revel in the flames of the last days.

The world of Wraith is a world of darkness, where ghosts walk and the night laughs.

Superficially, the World of Darkness resembles our own: the same bands, books and movies distract their audiences; pollution slowly rots the ozone layer; and all the familiar landmarks remain in place. In the World of Darkness, however, the supernatural lies close to the surface, barely hidden by the night's shadows. Everyone can sense its influence, though few understand what they feel.

The lands of the dead certainly contribute to the ambience of the living world (called the Skinlands by wraiths). The echoes cast by the Underworld leave their mark upon the Skinlands. Player characters, the Restless, are products of both worlds.

This chapter describes Wraith's setting in detail: from the cosmology of the Underworld to the geography of the Shadowlands. Setting, however, is more than simply maps and places. The dead have a culture and society of their own, one that mirrors the living world in strange and twisted ways.

# The Gothic-Punk World of the Living



he night is my companion, and solitude my guide.

— Sarah McLaughlin, "Possession" The world of Wraith is not our own, though the two milieux resemble each other in many ways. The World of Darkness reflects and embodies the passion and

decay beneath our civilized veneer. We all feel drawn to the romance, terror and mystique of death. Here, in the Gothic-Punk world, we can explore that mystique in a setting woven from our darkest dreams.

Chapter Two: Setting




Externally, little differs between our world and the World of Darkness — the established religious, social and political institutions are much like those we know. The World of Darkness, however, is a *film noir* environment — the cities are labyrinthine and gloomy, the bureaucrats are corrupt, and the important people have skeletons in their closets. Ghosts are not folklore — they exist, though few mortals ever see them.

"Gothic" describes many of the world's physical features — massive, brooding, dark and ominous. The sense of oppression and conspiracy is much greater here, and everything seems to be done with an ulterior purpose in mind. Buildings are huge, looming edifices, often encrusted with gargoyles and other statuary. Houses often stand for centuries, giving many suburbs a "haunted house" ambience. Corporate and government agents are faceless and impersonal, dressed severely in black suits and ties. Institutions of all types are more conservative and resistant to change. Fashion and society have a medieval veneer, and superstition is rife.

"Punk" is the other-half of the equation. The counterculture of the cities, sick of the oppressive physical and social tableau, rebel with words, dress, music and often violence. The downtown cores of the cities are filled with underground clubs, street gangs and bands inciting aggression and revolution. Constant rain and fog blanket the cities. Crime is depressingly common, and people generally seem tougher and more cynical than in our own world.

Though the dead can and do touch this living world, they exist in a spirit landscape pervaded by decay. They can leave this land for short periods of time (if they have the powers to do so), but sooner or later they must return to the Shadowlands. They are visitors among the living — observers, occasionally catalysts, but ultimately strangers.

Each troupe will have different preferences for the setting's mood. Some will prefer brooding Gothic ambience over harsh Punk rebellion, while others will want things the other way around. The Storyteller should feel free to use whatever Gothic or Punk elements she prefers, to whatever degree she desires. Wraith is, however, largely a game of mood. Without a suitably tense, strange atmosphere, the game can lose much of its flavor.

In the end, you must decide what Gothic-Punk really means. The tone and mood are subtle and impossible to describe fully in words. It is up to you to imagine things as you wish, and to create the world of your dreams.

# Aspects of the Underworld



here is a dreadful Hell, And everlasting pains; There sinners must with devils dwell In darkness, fire, and chains.

> Isaac Watts, Divine and Moral Songs for Children

"The Underworld" is a collective term describing the sunless lands of death. The Shadowlands, Stygia, the Far Shores and the Tempest are geographical locations (if the afterlife can be said to have a geography), while Maelstroms, Nihils, Necropoli and Haunts are aspects of these larger locations. Oblivion, the end of all things, pervades the Underworld; everything in these haunted realms bears death's mark.

# Atmosphere: A Hope in Hell

There is both great passion and crushing sorrow in the Underworld. To the souls trapped here, the afterlife is dim and painful. Yet beyond the pain, hope beckons. The Shadowland purgatory is dangerous, ugly, and filled with reminders of the unfulfilled lives wraiths have left behind. Nonetheless, consciousness and identity live on, and where there is survival, there is hope. Spirit form allows the dead some abilities unknown to mortals, and wraiths possess unique and cogent insights into reality. Willpower and the human spirit can engender hope, strength and defiance, even when faced with nightmarish despair.

# Cosmology

Darkness, darkness Be my blanket Cover me with the endless night Take away the pain of knowing.

- The Youngbloods, "Darkness, Darkness"

The Underworld — comprising the Shadowlands, the Tempest, Stygia and the Far Shores — is the netherworld inhabited by the dead. The Shadowlands, the Far Shores and Stygia roughly correspond to "continents" and "islands"; the Tempest, a seething sea of nightmare, divides and separates these realms. Oblivion, the incarnation of nothingness, waits below the Tempest's surface. Oblivion is the aspect of reality from which all destructive energy stems, the place where entropy deposits the energy that it steals. This lightless void personifies annihilation, the obliteration of every recognizable thing and every shred of identity.

As the essence and source of entropy and death, Oblivion is not so much the ultimate source of evil as it is a fundamental element of reality. Along with the other great forces of nature, Oblivion fills a necessary role in creation — the destroyer of substance. All things must come to an end: the corrupt must be cleansed and the old must give way to the new, which eventually becomes old and must give way in turn. Existence is a cycle, and Oblivion is the catabolist of that cycle.

The Underworld, crafted as it is from the death of all things, bears the perpetual stain of Oblivion. Everything in the dead lands reflects the passing of its living counterpart. To the Restless, all but the strongest sources of life appear to be dying: flowers seem withered, paint peels on crumbling walls, and sick or corrupted mortals wear their approaching death like invisible masks. This has always been true; as Oblivion expands, however, the taint of death has darkened the Underworld to hues even the most ancient wraiths have never seen. And because most ghosts died without truly having lived, the obliteration of everything left is the worst nightmare a wraith can imagine.

# Souls: The Font of Power

Souls, it is said, are the atoms of reality, the fundamental building blocks upon which everything else is constructed. Everything in the Underworld is, to one degree or another, composed of souls. Thus, souls form the backbone of Underworld trade. The Restless harvest new and old souls alike, hoarding them for smelting, conversion, labor or as simple status symbols. The darkest days of Rome or the American South cannot compare with the brisk trade in souls that drives the Underworld.

Indeed, this institutionalized trade in souls forms the bedrock of Stygian economics. The system has been in place for too long and means too much to too many for reforms to have much effect. Most power and influence in the Underworld are measured in souls, and such power is not an abstract social concept — it is a very direct and measurable commodity. Souls are energy, pure and simple — the almighty gold of the Underworld.







### The Shadow Trade

Most souls disappear upon their mortal body's death. Some of these souls are believed by some wraiths to Transcend; many plunge directly into Oblivion. Other souls — Enfants — wander a bit, their energy ripe for picking. Wraiths known as Reapers snatch up the majority of these Enfants for one purpose or another. Only a fortunate few retain the presence of mind to find their way without help. It is from the second group that Stygia and its outlying colonies ply their trade.

Weak and unfortunate Enfants end up in a slaver's shackles. Even experienced wraiths must take care to avoid back-alley ambushes or judicial sentences of slavery. Enslaved souls are herded like cattle, branded, and dragged off into servitude at some Citadel or foundry. Really unlucky souls end up in the furnaces of Stygia, where they are smelted into goods for other, more powerful wraiths.

Only relics, artifacts and Stygian goods have substance in the Underworld. Holdovers from bygone lives are scavenged in Necropoli. Stygian goods must be smelted from souls. Though relics and coins comprise a small portion of the Underworld economy, trade between Stygia and the outer Citadels is conducted primarily with souls, exchanging goods for "raw materials" to make more. Building stone, metals, and even coins are formed from the plasm of luckless wraiths, and this reprehensible trade lines the coffers of wraiths who have not quite accepted the fact that they are dead.

Soul-slavery is by no means universal; most Restless with any ability or intelligence can avoid the harvesters, and some Necropoli have even forbidden the traffic of souls within their boundaries. Trade there is done only by coin, service or relic barter. Nevertheless, even the most humane among the Restless turn a blind eye to the source of their goods and money. It is a gruesome irony that so many of the dead seem unable to shrug off their mortal habits. Although they have no need for wealth or material goods, they continue to subjugate each other for the chance to amass status and treasure. Old habits die hard, even after death itself.

Sages and poets among the dead speculate that the traffic in souls has an older, less materialistic purpose; keeping Oblivion at bay. Belief, it is said, guides reality. The universe, then, is guided by thought and faith, not by gods, science or random chance. According to this concept, Oblivion feeds in a spiritual void. As faith is replaced by apathy, darkness grows. Therefore, strong ideas backed up by potent faith can turn the tide of Oblivion. There is great controversy over this heresy among the Restless, and few outside the Heretics place much stock in it. Nevertheless, many wealthy wraiths stockpile bound souls in the possibility that the theory is correct, indoctrinating their Thralls in any number of beliefs.

The shadow trade is discussed more extensively on

Wraith: The Oblivion

# A Barrier of Souls

Oblivion, we may say, is nothing less than the triumph of unbelief. When the people trust in nothing, annihilation prospers. When faith in God is replaced by skepticism, Oblivion grows. Faithless souls fall into the Void, to be devoured by nothingness. We have seen the result, my cousins: the waxing of Oblivion. When we believe in nothing, nothing is what we receive.

At one time, Charon and the Lords of Death kept the darkness in check, managing the cycle of birth and death, maintaining the balance. But Charon is gone, and the Lords fight among themselves. The Void consumes the unbelieving souls that fall from the faithless Earth, and Oblivion reaches from the Tempest to infect what it once cleansed. Warped creatures emerge from the chaos, preying upon wraiths and even mortals! Maelstroms sweep across the mightiest realms within the Underworld, scouring even Stygia itself.

The only way to fight Oblivion, my cousins, is through belief. The will and the spirit, it is written, shape the very stuff of the cosmos. The more souls who believe in a reality, any reality, the better the storm can be weathered. Those who exist in a realm peopled with those of strong will and faith will weather the storms that sweep away all else. Our salvation, then, is through belief: our own and that of our Thralls. We who control the will can keep the Tempest from our gates. All others will perish.

- Grand Harvester Montcrief, Magister of Advocates

Layers of the Underworld



he darkness always teemed with unexplained sound — and yet he sometimes shook with fear lest the noises he heard subside and allow him to hear certain other fainter noises which he suspected were lurking behind them.

 H.P. Lovecraft, "The Dreams in the Witch-House"

The Underworld is known by many names— Hades, Niflheim, Inferno, Feng-Tu, the Afterlife. Though these names have been given to the dead lands in general, many realms bearing those names exist beyond the Tempest. Indeed, the Underworld is not one single place; it is a multifaceted dimension made up of innumerable realms and domains.

The "structure" of the Underworld defies simple geography; some modern wraiths think of the Underworld in terms of outer space, viewing the various realms within it as planets and solar systems. However useful such a metaphor may be, it cannot hope to explain the scope or substance of this enigmatic "place." According to ancient myth, the Underworld has layers like an onion. Only the most powerful Restless can journey to the inner core. The living exist on the outer skin of this onion, but the inside contains the dead. The outer layer is called the Shadowlands. Wraiths can exist here as ghostly observers, viewing a world they can never again truly inhabit.

Just beneath the Shadowlands is the Tempest, which surrounds and pervades all the other aspects of the Underworld. Deep within the Tempest, virtually indistinguishable from it, lies the Void, the heart and soul of Oblivion. It has no dimension or physical existence; it is simply the final abyss of destruction.

On the distant shores of the Tempest are said to lie the various Far Shores: the hells, heavens, and places of refuge. Also within the Tempest is the realm of Stygia, home realm of Charon and the Hierarchy of Death. Stygia is the political and economic center of the Underworld.

# The Shadowlands

Gonna give up life in this netherworld Gonna go up to where the air is clean.

— Siouxsie and the Banshees, "Overground" The Restless call their version of the real world the Shadowlands. This gloomy realm, though physically similar to the Skinlands, lacks the vitality of the living world. Chilling and barren, the Shadowlands mirror the material world from a twisted yet often morbidly beautiful perspective.

Although barriers and hazards are quite real to wraiths in the Shadowlands, mundane objects remain immaterial. Without the use of Arcanos, ghosts cannot even open a door or touch a living loved one's face. Walls confine wraiths as they would any living thing, although they can pass through them with little effort. The Shadowlands epitomize the tragedy of the Restless; the living world exists for them, but they do not exist for it.

Everything mortals can see, wraiths can witness as well. They watch TV in mortals' living rooms, attend meetings, and witness deaths. However, wraiths can see what the living cannot — the patterns of death and life in everything living. People and things that are very close to death are marked by it, and wraiths can perceive this.

# The Shroud

During the time now called the Sundering, a barrier of disbelief and fear divided the lands of the living from those of the dead. This barrier, called the Shroud by many Restless, isolates death from life. Because of this Shroud, historians say, the living fear the dead, while the Restless envy the living and their world of sensation and warmth.

The Shroud is strongest in places where life and reason have banished random chance and mystery. Laboratories, fac-









tories, and classrooms have potent "walls" against the supernatural, while places strong in passion or mystic faith — seance parlors, graveyards, and homes with small children or troubled adolescents — have thinner barriers. On certain days of the year, the Shroud weakens worldwide. The Restless celebrate their greatest holidays during these times.

#### Haunts

Haunts are earthly connections between the worlds of the living and the dead. Great passions — terror, agony, betrayal, lost love — have weakened the Shroud so completely in these places that the Shadowlands and Skinlands nearly overlap. In Haunts, more than in any other places, wraiths feel at home.

Ironically, the darkest emotions thin the Shroud most readily. Loss and torment of all kinds seep through the membrane and soak into the very essence of the place where they transpired. Ghosts, many of whom may have died near the Haunt itself, journey through the Shadowlands to savor these passions and to touch the living world again. Back alleys, battlefields, morgues, graveyards, crumbling houses, serial killers' torture rooms, accident-prone crossroads or treacherous curves, bars and nightclubs where despair and desperation gather all of these locations make good Haunts.

Many wraith groups seek out a common Haunt; once there, they stake their claims and hold them against all comers. Visitors, both living and dead, are usually discouraged. In the living world, Haunts seethe with gloom and despair; people avoid them unless they're depressed, insane, or just plain stupid. In the Shadowlands, Haunts are prime real estate, and the "owners" guard their territory well.

Domains (see pg. 42) are almost entirely based around Haunts; the more powerful the Haunt, the more important the domain. While the buildings and streets around the Haunt might be patrolled, the only thing of true import is the Haunt itself.

# The Tempest

There were days when you peered into your self, into the secret places of your heart, and what you saw there made you fair with horror. And then, next day, you didn't know what to make of it, you couldn't interpret the horror you had glimpsed the day before. Yes, you know what evil costs.

#### - Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit

The Tempest is the nightmare realm of chaos and shadow that stirs beneath the Shadowlands. Distance and space are meaningless there, for the Tempest is created by the ever-changing visions and fears of those trapped within it. Indeed, the Tempest has no set reality or substance; those who are embraced by it create their own rules. Wayfaring through the Tempest is an exercise in confrontation with demons both within and without. Even wraiths find the Tempest distasteful. It is dark and extremely cold. Howling winds lash through the area. Only Spectres — insane and Shadow-consumed wraiths — choose to exist within the Tempest. Echoes of past evil and passion assume a nightmarish reality. A murder scene might be continually reenacted by Drones, or a house long demolished in the real world might still stand, a shadow of its former existence.

Those who venture into the Tempest often receive snatches of memories: clues regarding Fetters, whispered admissions of terrible guilt, visions of past lives, and the like. These fragments of thought and memory come from agonized souls. In some ways, the Tempest is actually made up of the essences of weaker souls who did not have enough will to cling to wraithdom.

There are places of semi-constant reality within the Tempest, not the least of which are the realms of the Far Shores. More familiar to wraiths are the Byways: "roads" and "rivers" that can be used to cross the Tempest in some degree of safely. These Byways connect realm to realm and are used by most travelers in the Tempest. The greatest of these Byways is the River of Death, the source underlying mortal legends of the River Styx and the like.

At the very center of the Tempest lies the Void. The Void is the source of Oblivion as well as its resting place. Those souls not ready for their final dissolution find the Void nearly impossible to reach; those souls with nothing left to "live" for find the Void nearly impossible to avoid.

#### Nihils

Step on a crack, break your mother's back ....

— Childhood saying

Things fall apart. Oblivion extends its tendrils from below, probing the world for cracks, flaws, fissures, imperfections. Like a cancer infecting a pure cell, Oblivion gradually infects the world with its darkness.

Such infection sites often manifest in the Shadowlands as whirling pools of pitch-black darkness leading into the Tempest. These tumors on the face of the Shadowlands are called Nihils, vortices of nothingness eroding the world. Those who stare too deeply into them experience powerful hallucinations of overwhelming despair and pain.

Usually Nihils are very small — tiny little cracks — but some have circumferences equal to those of large pits or even railroad tunnels. Nihils can form on the surfaces of pools of water, in shadowy corners, in elevator shafts and under manhole covers — anywhere that leads down. Some Nihils don't exist permanently, but intermittently appear — perhaps randomly, perhaps in a cycle.

Things dropped into a Nihil fall into the Tempest. Spectres are often attracted to Nihils and feed off of them. It is said that one can yell into a Nihil and sometimes be heard down

below, though doing so is considered extremely unlucky. Things have been known to crawl up in reply...

#### Maelstroms

Black wind come carry me far away.

- Sisters of Mercy, "Temple of Love"

Periodically, vast storms known as Maelstroms emerge from the Tempest and wash over the Shadowlands. Sweeping away all those not properly sheltered or bound in Stygian chains, Maelstroms reaffirm the almighty power of Oblivion. These storms are feared not only for their destructive power, but also for the terrible Spectres they bring with them. In many ways, a Maelstrom is as much an invasion as a storm, for the invading souls pillage and destroy all they encounter. Only if the invaders are fought and bested can the storm be calmed.

Maelstroms resemble massive, roiling storms. Their impenetrable black mists constantly whirl and seethe; things, faces or beings can often be seen within. The storm's "inhabitants" often seem to scream in time to the roar of the storm's winds. A Maelstrom's fog contains motes of soot and skin, and is greasy and slightly nauseating to any who breathe or touch it. The stench of the fog is difficult to remove, often clinging to a wraith's Corpus for months or even years.

In the Skinlands, a Maelstrom often heralds a particularly bad storm or other natural disaster. Seldom is the Maelstrom's passing unnoticed by the living. Among wraiths, Maelstroms have assumed vast cultural importance. Maelstroms are used to mark "eras" in the Underworld; time is typically counted from the last Maelstrom.

# The Far Shores

Across the vast expanses of the Tempest are said to exist other realms, supposed refuges from Oblivion. Although all wraiths have heard rumors of the Far Shores, and many believe in them, few know these realms' true nature. Those who are cognizant either aren't talking or can't be trusted. Most travelers from the Far Shores are interested in buying, stealing or converting souls to take home.

According to legend, the Far Shores exist beyond the Tempest, though most wraiths believe they are actually realms within it. They are the Hells and Heavens, the Valhallas and Nirvanas of countless cultures. They are the afterlives created for, and perhaps by, lost souls. Many claim that the Far Shores are not the abodes of true gods but are instead fortresses created to protect souls from the ravages of the Tempest.

It is interesting to note that many realms claim to be the original Hell, and many beings refer to themselves as Shaitan, Lucifer or Satan. In fact, there are so many of these realms that they have come to be known, collectively, as the Thousand Hells. However, none has conclusively proved itself the true Inferno of Dante or the Bible. There are an equal number







of Heavens, each claiming to be the true divine summit. The rulers here, though often mighty, have yet to prove their omnipotence...

# Stygia

Deep within the Tempest lies Stygia, the capital of the Underworld. Most Byways through the Tempest terminate at Stygia, just as once all roads led to Rome. Stygia is also the abode of the Lords of the Hierarchy, and thus the wraiths' political center.

When the legendary Charon still ruled, Stygia was a clearing house for souls, but it is now more of an urban wasteland. The temples of the various realms of the Far Shores still stand, but all are locked and vacant. Now Stygia teems with millions of tortured souls and is made powerful by their presence.

Few have ever ventured to Stygia and returned, but it is said to be a vast city, full of towering, gothic structures reminiscent of medieval Rome. Legend has it that Stygia is actually a filthy, labyrinthine warren. Only the most elite members of the Hierarchy can freely move among the uppermost levels, which are said to be as awesome and beautiful as the lower levels are loathsome and ugly. Wraiths hate and fear Stygia and dread being sent there in chains as thralls.

# Necropoli

In most human cities there is a barren, rusted section, where miasmal odors befoul the air and even the poor do not venture. Here is the Necropolis, the City of the Dead, where Nihils sprout and wraiths cluster.

A Necropolis is a colony of Stygia. It is the political and social center of local wraith existence. The politics and intrigues inherent to existence in a Necropolis occupy much of the attention of those wraiths dwelling within it.

Most wraiths native to a given Necropolis will know one another by either name or reputation. To a stranger, however, a Necropolis is a wasteland of crumbling buildings, dark streets and peering eyes.

# Domains

Necropoli are divided by areas of "turf," or domains, which are claimed by one wraith Circle or another. Many Circles claim the Skinlands and Shadowlands around their Haunt; though the Hierarchy doesn't always recognize these boundaries, its minions are wise to consider them in their actions. Many Legionnaires have found themselves devoid of support when they wandered from Hierarchy-controlled streets into the back alleys of the Renegades.

# Citadels

The strongest and largest Haunts in a Necropolis are known as Citadels. Citadels form the political and social centers of the Necropolis. They often resemble fortified medieval cities, complete with a thriving commerce and permanent residents. Of course, they don't actually have walls, but they are nonetheless strong points within the Shadowlands.

A Citadel is usually based in a large, abandoned building or complex of buildings. Old warehouses, burned-out tenements, strip-mined earth and refuse dumps are typical Citadel sites. Such Haunts are strong enough to resist Maelstroms. They serve as safe points for hundreds or even thousands of wraiths during the deadliest storms. Furthermore, in times of danger, the Citadels are the only fortifications against the mighty armies of the Tempest. Only those loyal to the Hierarchy, however, are given refuge.

Citadels are nearly always under the control of the Hierarchy, but are not under the influence of one particular Legion. Various Legions constantly vie for control of the Citadels, and often one or another has dominance.

The Hierarchy sets out beacons, often chained Thralls who have been Moliated into flaming torches, to mark the boundaries of the Necropolis and to establish the sphere of influence of a Citadel. These beacons are commonly used navigation points and are sometimes the only lights available.

Some Citadels charge tariffs and fees for admission. Most simply require a wraith to possess a Hierarchy brand or be accompanied by someone who does.

# A Revision of the Imperial History of Stygia



y most Gentle Lords of Death, I have set my pen to paper in the language of English kings, in order to explain the passing of the ages in as clear a manner as I can.

I have stood in the shade of Cairo's pyramids, listened to the comedies of Aristophanes, heard the music of King Solomon's court, and

witnessed wars beyond number. I have viewed the wars of Athens and Sparta, of Rome and Carthage, of France and Prussia, of the Colonies and England, the War of 1812, the American Civil War, the great World Wars, and the war in Vietnam. I have lived through the five Great Maelstroms. In that time, I have seen and heard much. Allow me, if you will, the liberty of revealing this knowledge in my favorite fashion: through the telling of the story of it. Chide

# The River of Death

Many have speculated about the River of Death and its origins. Certainly, from the very first times, rivers have been important to humanity. The fact that the River of Life flows on to become the River of Death is not suprising to most.

Of course, many think that the River of Death is the same river that is discussed in myths and legends as the River Styx. Certainly, the River of Death has been called the River Styx or the River Lethe in the past, but apparently many Far Shores realms claim to have a "River Styx" or a "River Lethe" in them.

Some say that Fate Herself actually created the river, either with her tears or by weaving together a few raindrops. The fact that the river flows through much of the Tempest makes it a highly sought-after Byway. Secret coves along the river make ideal hideouts for the Hierarchy's foes.

Recently, the Hierarchy has been patrolling the river in an effort to purge the spectres, Renegades and Heretics that have since taken it over.

me not for my minor embellishments: these too are part of the recording of History, as I see it.

Now, may it please ye Dread Lords ...

# The Dark before Time

There is a time known as the Dark before Time, the period of Thanatic history that precedes Charon. The legends about this time claim that life and death composed but one realm, where land and spirit were overlaid. All was well: there was no death. But that perfection was lost as the two realms split during what we now call the Sundering. Thus, there came to be the realm of the Living and the realm of the Dead.

In the Land of the Dead, also called the Shadowlands, the Lady of Fate emerged from darkness and found the headwaters of the River of Death as it flowed away from this world. Reading the skein of Fate, she foretold the coming of Charon, who would lead others to the Far Shores.

During this time, the Malfeans, dark beasts of fiercest destruction, horned and frilled and scaled and roaring with hunger, rose from the Utter Darkness beneath the Shadowlands and begin to burrow great tunnels, ultimately boring a dread Labyrinth that wound its way into the heart of Oblivion.

# The Coming of Charon

Charon strode out of the gloom of the Dark Times when Athens was still new. The Lady of Fate welcomed him and wove for him a boat made of reeds. He took to poling this reed-boat down the River of Death, exploring it. Charon, who would one day be Stygia's Great Emperor, explored the marshy backwaters of



the river. Eventually he came to the place where it ran into the great Sunless Sea, a cavernous place where the Sea of Souls ebbed and flowed. There, at the delta where the river entered that starless void of water, Charon discovered the Isle of Sorrows, a particularly hilly and rocky island just offshore.

The Lady of Fate appeared to Charon and said, "Behold! After you come the masses of the dead, who will walk the Shadowlands with neither guidance nor light if you do not aid them. And among them you will find the Restless; they, like you, are still fettered to life. Learn the power of life, that you may use it even in death. You may take your tithe from the dead as they offer it, to brighten your existence in this gray world. Above all, help others to find the true light within, so that they may pass from this place and cross the Sunless Sea to the Far Shores, where they may find their rest."

Charon, taking this to heart, presented himself to the mass of souls who still wandered the Shadowlands, and they acknowledged him as leader. He led them toward the great Sunless Sea, where he instructed the souls how to make their own reed boats from the reeds growing among the great swamps of the river delta. During those days, the Sunless Sea was placid and calm, and the souls made their way across its waters without incident.

Other Restless who came to Charon were taught to pole the depths of the river, and how to navigate the river's twists and turns. A few refused the duty of carrying the dead to their final resting place, instead departing to brood in forgotten places. Some decided to watch over the living, becoming guardians for specific families or people. During this time, it is said, many souls took flight across the Sunless Sea, being so light that they could soar across the waters; others found their own way to the Far Shores.

Charon bore a special love for those who helped him bear the dead on their reed boats. These he named his Ferrymen, and the Ferrymen began meeting at the Isle of Sorrows to discuss their work and lend each other aid. They performed minor jobs for one another in exchange for relics and light that they gleaned from the recently dead. The Ferrymen, realizing that the Restless could wreak much evil in the world they had left, swore to protect the living from the dead.

# Charon's First Ferrymen

Charon's Ferrymen are legendary in the Underworld. Ferrymen do not wear masks as Charon's Hierarchy are wont to do: instead they draw dark cowls over their heads. Ferrymen are known both for their prowess with the Arcanos and for their physical prowess.

It is considered extremely bad luck to stand in the way of a Ferryman: they are usually given free rein throughout the Underworld. More than one hapless wraith has been saved from ravening Spectres by the timely arrival of a Ferryman.

Wraith: The Oblivion

The Ferrymen were soon forced to uphold their vow. From the depths of the vast Labyrinth bored by the Malfeans periodically erupted a variety of bizarre beings. These beings, collectively named "Spectres," displayed a venomous hatred for living and wraith alike. Spectre eruptions, while not nearly so numerous as in later days, were a constant threat.

Eventually, several Ferrymen decided to embark across the Sunless Sea on a voyage of discovery to find the Far Shores, where so many had already traveled. Each of these wraiths, collectively called Shining Ones because they lit the way for others, sought his own Far Shore.

Shortly after the Shining Ones' departure, Charon was visited by the Lady of Fate. Soon thereafter, he descended into the Labyrinth by way of the Venous Stair, a marble opening to that foul place. He carried with him only his scythe and a single lantern, and went alone into the darkness. We do not know how he fared in the darkness, but he was gone for many years. Even during this time the Ferrymen continued their sojourns up and down the River.

When Charon emerged from the Labyrinth, he brought with him an ancient smith-wraith named Nhudri. Nhudri was well versed in smithing, and used for his material the stuff of souls.

### The Venous Stair

The Venous Stair is a great opening in the ground, blocked by a basalt boulder. It is so named for the many lines of black veins that run through its pale-pink marble. The Stair is the closest Labyrinth opening to the gates of Stygia... just a short journey to the south. It has been the site of many battles against erupting spectres.

It is rumored that Charon has occasionally used the Labyrinth to reach the Shadowlands when the other Byways were closed. One of the most common Stygian curses is, "By the Venous Stair..."

Then Charon sounded the great horn at the Isle of Sorrows and summoned the Ferrymen to him. He told them that while in the Labyrinth, he had confronted the Utter Darkness, the deepest Shadow. He had seen Oblivion itself, and it was growing. Charon chided his Ferrymen that he had seen wayward souls, souls who had not been collected by a guide, falling into that pit. Each soul fed that foul blackness, as rot feeds a fungus. There was genuine concern among the Ferrymen, many of whom set off to the four directions looking for aid against the growing threat.

As if in answer to Charon's revelation, the Shining Ones returned shortly thereafter, reporting that they had feasted in the Halls of the Dead and that the Far Shores were real places. Following charts that they had made, Charon set off on his boat across the Sunless Sea.

When the Roman Republic was finally established in the living world, Charon returned from the Far Shores with seven

# Nhudri, Grand High Artificer

Many stories have mentioned Nhudri, but few-have described him completely or well. From these accounts we know a few things about him. Nhudri was rescued from the deepest parts of the Labyrinth by Charon. He apparently had been set to work by the Spectres, forging chains and other forms of metal for some unknown but undoubtedly dark purpose. Nhudri claimed to be one of the first smiths in the world, and had to be taught to speak Charon's native tongue of Greek (although he later found English to be more to his liking).

Tapestries and art depict Nhudri as a man of middle height, with long black hair (which is wrapped in a complex knotwork pattern whenever he is forging), black eyes, and a gentle demeanor. Nhudri still wears the shackles that he wore originally, but his legs move freely, and the chains connected to the shackles hang down at his sides. His arms are strong and bandy.

Nhudri is known for his gentle but gruff demeanor, his pride in his works, and his ability to make something out of everything placed before him. He loves tinkering with new artifacts or relics, and constantly seeks out antiquities to buy from Ferrymen and other wraiths who visit Stygia. Nhudri often makes purchases through his black-liveried apprentices.

signs that he had gleaned from the Shining Ones who had become custodians of those places. By these signs Charon was gifted with the authority to judge the disposition of souls. He placed the signs into a great iron tablet and made this the cornerstone of a new city.

Using stones garnered from the fallen temples of Greece and Israel, from the lost city of Atlantis and from the destroyed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Charon built his city in the fashion of Athens and the new Rome: beautiful structures symmetrically arranged on the hills of the Isle of Sorrows, with cleared roads, an aqueduct, and monuments to fallen and lost Ferrymen. Charon donated the lantern that he had used in the Labyrinth to serve as the city light, and it shone from the tallest monument. In the manner of the Roman Republic (which Charon studied for several years), he instituted the grand Republic of Stygia, with the city of Stygia as its capital.

The Stygian Senate consisted of seven senators, each given charge over different parts of the world's Restless. These senators were seven of Charon's most trusted lieutenants. Charon set himself up as Consul of the Senate. The senate's first act was to grant the Shining Ones land near the docks to build their temples, which would serve as clearing houses for the dead.

The senate received emissaries from the Dark Kingdoms of Ivory and Jade, places much like Stygia that handled the dead of Africa and the Far East. At the time Stygia was at







# The Dark Kingdoms of Ivory and Jade

Obviously, Africa, the Far East, and many non-Western cultures have different ideas about death. The so-called Dark Kingdoms are to those lands as Stygia is to Greece, Rome, Europe, and later, America.

The leader of the Dark Kingdom of Ivory is the Ivory Queen, a beautiful woman with a powerful leopard always at her side. She is the most powerful wraith affiliated with the continent of Africa. The Jade Emperor is the ruler of the Dark Kingdom of Jade: he is unknowable and does not personally interact with Stygia, instead sending his emissaries to Stygia on a beautiful jade barge. He is the most powerful wraith associated with the continent of Asia.

Several Heretics and Renegades throughout the years have been revealed as spies for the Dark Kingdoms of Jade and Ivory: indeed, during Colonial times (see below), Stygia and the Dark Kingdoms had several skirmishes and a few major battles. The Dark Kingdom of Obsidian (see ) was also destroyed during this time.

peace with them, though this was not to last. The senate likewise sent Stygian emissaries to the Dark Kingdoms.

Charon began to tax the dead for the good of all the dead, requiring two coins for passage down the River of Death. Those who could not pay were asked to give up their eyes or hands. That story soon spread, and few in those days died without the death-price of two coins being pressed into their eyes.

Charon began to use the metal gleaned via his corpse-tax to forge the first Stygian weapons and armor. He authorized Nhudri, the Grand High Artificer of Stygia, to design and build Kyklops, the first forge in Stygia. The first three things forged of Stygian steel were Siklos, Charon's blade; Lumen, Charon's lantern; and the Masks of the Senators. Finally, after taking a piece from all the Senators' Masks, he created Charon's Mask.

Charon ordained the wearing of masks because, in that time, no one could predict how long a wraith would survive against the growing forces of Oblivion. Charon wanted to be able to maintain the Republic of the Dead apart from the personalities of his senators, and the Masks of the Senators were a way to associate the office not with the wraith, but with the duties of the office.

Now, in those days the Tempest was nothing but a great Darkness that surrounded all. This Darkness was inky black, solid, devoid of light, but turgid, not the roiling chaos that it is now. With Nhudri's help, Charon set about building a great system of roads through the Darkness, roads that did not depend upon the vagaries of the River of Death. Charon was determined to save all of creation from the power of Oblivion, which had begun to manifest itself. Spectres and beasts ever crawled out of the deep places to torment the unwary and attack the unready. Charon's roads would provide his Ferrymen ready and easy access to the Sunless Sea through a straight line, not a crooked river choked with Spectres.

During the great Pax Romana, Charon's roadbuilders spread far and wide, building a network of roads through the Darkness. This network was truly expansive, connecting the Shadowlands of such far-off places as Britain, Gaul, Mauretania, Rome, Thrace, Galatia, Damascus, Armenia and Tanais. Wherever Rome went, Stygia followed. As Roman legionnaires died during the wars of conquest, many became soldiers in the Stygian militia, protecting the Ferrymen as they went about their business of gathering souls. Ferrymen regularly embarked from the quays of Stygia, departing for the Far Shores of the Norse, the Celts, the Gauls, the Romans and others. Anyone who died found a ship waiting.

It was also during the Pax Romana that Charon discovered the horses that lived in the great Slough of the River of Death. These wild steeds had somehow been caught in the ancient Sundering. Some say the horses had been intended as a gift from Poseidon to his brother Hades, but had broken free, swam the Styx, and now ran wild in the Darkness. Charon coveted these beautiful, pure, milk-white horses, with their long, flowing black manes and blood-red eyes. With the help of Nhudri, he created the tools necessary to tame his own. Soon Charon had personally tamed 13 death-steeds, which he presented as gifts to all the Ferrymen who wanted them.

After spending many months talking with philosophers and listening to the greatest minds of Rome, Charon introduced the doctrine of "Lux Veritas," the Light of Truth. He felt that Stygia had both a right and a responsibility to preserve the greatest thoughts and works of humanity. He gave word to all his Legions and minions to bring to Stygia any antiquity of merit, where it would be safely hidden in vaults deep beneath the Senate.

But all was not well in Stygia. Charon's increasingly authoritarian rule, coupled with the deaths of various rebels and martyrs in the living world, produced a class of dissatisfied malcontent wraiths. These wraiths, known as Renegades, defied the authority of Charon and his minions.

Renegades began to harry the Ferrymen on the roads as well as on the River of Death. In response, Charon mounted

#### Stygian Metal

The iron, steel and other metals of the Underworld are usually made of an alloy composed of "death-metal" or "death-ore" and spiritual matter. Furthermore, Stygian steel melds the stuff of Oblivion into the iron, making it bite deeply into the Corpus of the wraiths it wounds.

Unlike Corpus, Stygian metal is not easily molded. It must be worked in a specially designed forge and tempered in soulfire. Nhudri was the first wraith to discover how it is worked, alloyed and forged.

# The Treasures of Stygia

The troves of Stygia are rumored to hold many wondrous and magnificent artifacts from throughout history: from fragments of the True Cross to scrolls from the Library of Alexandria. Through his doctrine of "Lux Veritas," Charon has at times authorized the destruction of important documents and artifacts in the living world in order to claim them for Stygia.

Also included in the Stygian archives are thousands of pages of post-mortem writings from some of the greatest minds in history. These are scribbled on thin, fleshlike paper pulped from the bark of trees found in the great swamps. Writings from Aeschylus, Cicero, Virgil, Nietzsche, Shakespeare, Byron, Thoreau and Poe, as well as many undiscovered great poets and writers who gained posthumous recognition, can be found here.

several soldiers to act as escorts for the Ferrymen. He called these soldiers his Equitæs, much like the Roman cavalry.

As Rome began to fall, Stygia felt the dissolution. Christianity was spreading in the living world, and suddenly many Fishers (as they were called by Charon's Legions because of the fish symbol they used to signify themselves to each other) began appearing in Stygia. Building vessels from the flotsam lining the shores of the Isle of Sorrows, the Fishers set off for their own Far Shore, a place they called "Paradise." None of the Shining Ones had ever heard of such a place, but the Fishers had faith in its existence.

At about this time, Stygian wraiths began to notice more and more Spectres along the roads, in the Shadowlands, along the riverbanks — everywhere. Wherever Spectres went, chaos, Oblivion, destruction and confusion followed in their wake. They skinrode wild bands of barbarians, particularly a tribe called the Vandals, and attacked Rome itself. In the battle that ensued, the Vandals were slain. The wraiths of the dead Vandals, upon seeing Stygia, thought that they were being brought to another version of Rome in the afterlife. Accordingly, they attacked it as well. Although they were repelled by the organized and better-armed Equitæs, the subsequent siege laid by the possessing Spectres tested the defenses of Stygia to their limit. Charon himself was often seen on the battlefield, his scythe cutting a swath through the armies of the dead.

Then, in A.D. 476, Rome fell. Simultaneously, the darkness of the great Labyrinth seethed and hissed. Sentries at all the portals of the Labyrinth rang their great gongs, trying in vain to warn Stygia of the approach of the greatest disaster ever to befall the City of Death: the first and greatest Maelstrom. It erupted from the Labyrinth, wracking the Darkness, flooding into the Shadowlands, and pouring down the River of Death. It screamed across the Sunless Sea. The roads crumbled and cracked.



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But Stygia was hit hardest. A coordinated attack by the Spectres coincided with the first Maelstrom, and the city was invaded. Charon's palace, the Onyx Tower, erupted in flames. Only through the masterful strategy and tactics of Charon was the City of the Dead saved. Nonetheless, the Ferrymen were decimated, the Legions were left in tatters, and the Senate building was destroyed. Many wraiths turned Renegade, living like predators in the Darkness.

The living world likewise suffered. Barbarians and brigands ran rampant over Rome's fallen glory. Soon Rome was but a distant legend spoken of by peasants as they cowered in their huts.

Charon realized that only a strong leader could prevail in the years to come. Taking a cue from the Caesars of the living world, Charon appointed himself Emperor. He retained his seven Senators, but renamed them, dubbing them Deathlords. The Ferrymen immediately took issue with this: they felt that Charon had overstepped the authority vested in him. They would not serve an Emperor. In a rage, Charon banished them, telling them that they would have to survive the Darkness alone if they would not serve Stygia.

Many years passed, and Stygia was slowly rebuilt. Storms wracked Stygia, and only the presence of the Equitæs kept the roads from falling completely to Spectres and other baleful creatures. Wild Renegades, seeking to hide from or defy the power of Stygia, built villages and towns along the river and the roads. The power of the Shining Ones waned as belief in the pagan gods died; conversely, the Fishers convinced ever-increasing numbers of dead to travel with them on their one-way journey to Paradise.

During this time, some wraiths began employing Arcanos to scare and dominate mortals. Many took the shapes of monsters and demons, manifesting to fearful peasants and demanding tribute. The Renegades were the worst of these malefactors.

Finally, after centuries of effort, the last of the Maelstromspawned Spectres were destroyed or driven into the Labyrinth once more. Now there was time to recognize the honor and glory of those who had fought for Stygia. Charon instituted

#### The Dark Ages

During the Dark Ages, wraiths skinrode, materialized, and otherwise inflicted themselves on humanity. Because there was very little organized resistance to their doing so, they continued unabated until the Church established itself. Once that occurred, many wraiths were cast out of their hosts and warded from churches consecrated on holy ground.

Still, even then, wraiths manifested as demons and had truck with mortals that way, beguiling them into worship. Some of the mortals who consorted with these diabolic fakes went on to summon real Infernal powers, whether from the Thousand Hells or elsewhere.

### The Code of the Dead

Also called the Code of Charon, the Dictum Mortem is a series of exacting laws that Charon created in response to the abuses that wraiths visited upon mortals during the Dark Ages. Only a few Magistrates know the entirety of the Codé: it is a commonly quoted thing, but few have even read it completely, for copies of it are not widely available.

Even so, the Code changes on a regular basis, and the Stygian Hierarchy cares fiercely about it. Unfortunately, Hierarchy agents in the Shadowlands don't have time to enforce it, let alone read and understand it, and as long as they continue to supply souls to Stygia, this is not likely to change overmuch.

the Imperial Order of the Sickle and named several Equitæs to its ranks. It is still the greatest honor that Stygia can bestow to a wraith.

During this time, Charon rebuilt his great palace and set about recovering some of the antiquities that were lost. As the fledgling Church of Christianity struggled through its early years, Charon ordered a great sea-wall built around the Isle of Sorrows to protect it from future great Maelstroms.

Also during this time, Charon created the Dictum Mortem, the Code of the Dead, to counteract the Dark Age wraiths' horrific abuses of power. Though mainly designed to protect the living from the dead, the Dictum Mortem also made it absolutely clear that only Charon and his designates were empowered with the authority to gather and dispatch souls.

As for the Fishers: they soon made their presence known. Into Stygia's harbor triumphantly sailed the Fishers' Golden Ship, a marvel of shipbuilding whose home port was the Far Shore of Paradise. The Fishers brought with them building materials to construct a massive temple on one of the hills of the Isle of Sorrows. They demanded that Charon tithe to their temple, but he refused, saying that he served Death, not the Far Shores. Instead, he made the Fishers a counteroffer: if they would donate to him 10% of the relics they collected, he would provide them with the souls of those who sought Paradise. This was agreeable to the Fishers, although they never stopped attempting to convert Charon to their beliefs.

Stygia became an excellent walled city in the grand tradition of Paris. As the Crusades began in the living world, Charon once again had the resources to send his Equitæs (now known as Knights) out on the roads, The whole network of paths was cleared and repaired, and new roads were created to connect the newer, swelling cities.

Stygia has often been called the City of the Dark Echoes, because it is similar, but never quite like the living world. Little in life affects the City of the Dead. Still, the Crusades did not go unnoticed. Many Legions followed the crusading armies, collecting the dead of both sides for transport to Stygia. It was



not an uncommon occurrence for the Knights of the Sickle to have to break up post-mortem fights between the shades of Moors and Christians, even as they waited to be judged in their respective temples.

The number of wraith-Knights became staggering during the Crusades, as many crusaders left behind lovers, wives and family whom they cared for and who bound them to life as Fetters.

Once again proving his knowledge of his own citizens, Charon changed his imperial rulership to a more feudal style. He created what he termed the Hierarchy, whereby wraiths could know their place in the Shadowlands and in Stygia. The topmost rung comprised Charon and his seven appointed Deathlords. Below them stood the Legions and the Knights, followed by the Freewraiths. At the bottom came the Thralls, wraiths who had for one reason or another been bound in chains of Stygian metal. Thralls became widely used as both slaves and currency.

In response to this, the Fishers appointed their own Knights, called Crusaders. Tensions between Stygian Knights and Crusaders began to mount.

Just as the feudal system was based on agriculture, the Hierarchy was organized on the collection of souls. Freewraiths watched for and gathered newly arrived souls, while Knights protected the Freewraiths from Spectres and Renegades. Many Freewraiths became masters of various Arcanos involving the soul trade. These Freewraiths organized into guilds after Charon discovered the mortal guild system.

Charon proved to be a wise ruler. When the Black Plague struck, the Hierarchy was firmly in place. At first there was only a trickle of souls from the terrible sickness. Then the roar of the Second Maelstrom heralded the thousands of souls claimed by the Black Plague.

This time, Stygia held against the Maelstrom, and the roads stayed open. The soul trade was brisk. Accordingly, Charon sought to further the building of the Stygian Kingdom

# The Many Faces of Charon

I must say that Charon seems like a Renaissance man of the ages. He is competent, capable, understanding of many philosophies and means of statecraft, but incredibly flexible and able to change his entire approach to government should it prove to be unfeasible.

Many throughout the ages have wondered if the wraith behind Charon's Mask has remained the same through the ages. While it's true that he has consistently displayed accurate memories of the ancient world, Charon has from time to time exhibited radical shifts in personality and mannerisms.

Whether or not Charon is one man or many, not just any wraith can wear his Mask, as you shall see.



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by increasing taxes against the Shining Ones. Especially did he tax the Fishers, who had grown powerful.

Finally, the Archbishop of Stygia, leader of the Fishers, presented himself to Charon and demanded that Charon reduce the fee placed on the souls his agents collected for the Fishers. Charon responded by disbanding the Crusaders and doubling the fee. For many months there was darkness on Fishers' Hill as the temple stood deserted. Crusaders still retained their mounts and openly wore their crosses.

At the urging of the Archbishop of Stygia, and with the help of many Shining Ones, several former Crusaders attacked Charon's palace guard. Unfortunately for them, they had been betrayed by one of their fellows, and several Knights lay waiting in ambush. Defeating the Crusaders, Charon made an example out of them by hanging them on burning chains from the highest monument.

Nor did Charon stop there. He sacked the Fishers' temple, in the process discovering great troves of relics and artifacts that had not been passed along to him. He sent his most trusted Knights to the Far Shores to speak with the Shining Ones there, and issued an order that all Shining Ones were to depart Stygia with the next tide.

As Stygia's tide-gong struck, every single boat, skiff, and raft was employed in the great Evacuation. Clutching all that they had, the Shining Ones piled on this ramshackle fleet and took to the Sunless Sea. The only lights left on the banks of

#### Time in Stygia

A note to those who have not yet visited the City of the Dark Echoes: because there is no sun, time in Stygia is measured by the tides of the Sunless Sea. A complex waterclock ticks off the seconds and minutes and sounds the hours. There are two tides every Stygian "day." The water clock is known to be accurate to within three seconds of the living world's time.

the Isle of Sorrow were the conflagrations of the temples, which Charon's minions blasted with the fires of Outrage.

Even as the Shining Ones left, Charon's emissaries returned from the Far Shores. They bore horrific reports of realms where the dead still waited for relief — where they were herded into great antechambers and forgotten — where petty dictators in the shapes of gods and devils bound souls in eternal torment or demanded unquestioning obedience. None had reached the promised lands. None had found Transcendence.

Charon appeared on his balcony and read aloud the Proclamation of Reason, highlighted by these words: "Because the Shining Ones have no love for the dead, I will not harbor them. Because they do not care for their protector Stygia, I will not care for them. Because they seek only to fool, cajole and proselytize, I will no longer listen to them. Because they do not truly believe, I brand them Heretics."

# The Order of the Unlidded Eye

My lords, I do not have the ink to express the greatness and valor of the Grim Riders. They are perhaps the most staunch supporters of the Hierarchy. I admire the singleminded tenacity with which they hunt the Heretics and Renegades. It is wise that they carry their own lanterns with some of Charon's Lux Veritas burning within: the Light of Truth illuminates all false shadows and causes Truth to be revealed.

The Renegades shiver in fear when they see their scythe-swords, my lords, and it would be meet if these gray riders would find their way to the Shadowlands. Some of their gentle mercies would bring the Necropoli in line.

Thereafter, the Heretics were prevented from entering Stygia and were constantly hunted by the Hierarchy wherever it stretched. Taking a cue from the Inquisition now taking place in the Sunlit Lands, Charon formed his own Inquisition to root out Heretic influence in Stygia. He even gave the Inquisition its own Equitæs (called "Grim Riders" by some, but officially designated "The Order of the Unlidded Eye") to carry out this mission.

For several years Charon did not prevent the dead from leaving on their own to find the Far Shores. It was a fool's voyage, however, as the Second Maelstrom had transformed the Sunless Sea into a place of strange currents, even stranger beasts, and chaotic weather.

The trade of souls began to suffer: there was no room in Stygia for more souls, and Charon was loathe to continue to send souls to the Far Shores after hearing the reports of his agents. Stygia became a refugee camp as the souls of the dispossessed and the abandoned swelled in number. Renegades walked among them, sowing seeds of rebellion and dissent. All grew quiet in the City of the Dead.

Meanwhile, some of the Heretics left Stygia altogether. By riding along with the explorers of the late Middle Ages, these Heretics found their way across the great area of Darkness in the Shadowlands corresponding to the Atlantic Ocean. Thus was the New World discovered and, soon after, colonized and explored.

During the early 1500s, the Renegades made their move. They stormed the Onyx Tower and made off with many antiquities, including the legendary Spear of Longinius, said to be the spear that pierced the side of Jesus Christ as he hung on the cross. Only through the sacrifice of some of Charon's favorite Knights were the Renegades pushed back.

Soon thereafter, the Third Great Maelstrom blanketed Stygia. This Maelstrom wasn't so intense as the other two, but much more pervasive. It saturated the Darkness completely. Wraiths stopped referring to the area as the Darkness and began referring to it as the Tempest, for it had become a place of continual storms and wild chaos. During this time the Freewraiths' guilds attempted to seize power in a weakened Stygia, but this revolt was put down. In retaliation, Charon ordered all the guilds disbanded. He immediately trained his Legions to do the same thing that the guilds did, but later reemployed guild members when it became clear to them that Charon would not allow them to reform.

The Third Great Maelstrom changed the face of the Shadowlands. No longer were there any impassable places dominated by the Darkness. Quite clearly, there were now two levels to the Underworld. The "uppermost" level comprised the Shadowlands, the areas closest to the Sunlit Lands; "below" them, through the Tempest, lay Stygia, the Isle of Sorrows, and the Sunless Sea. The safest ways to Stygia were via the roads, for the River of Death had become choked with Renegades and Spectres. Additionally, a power called the Shroud separated the living world from the dead lands. This Shroud limited the power of Mystery: the power of magic, of wraiths' Arcanos, and of spirits and faeries. Many magical places were lost, and many wraiths in the Shadowlands retreated to their Haunts, where the Shroud was still thin.

Once again, instead of admitting defeat, Charon surprised all around him by responding to the impending Age of Enlightenment. Where once Stygian steel was given only to the Knights of the realm, Charon began arming his Freewraiths and other supporters with swords made of the material. The

# The Dark Kingdom of Obsidian

Stygian Heretics arriving in the New World soon discovered the Dark Kingdom of Obsidian, ruled by a mighty wraith named Ix Chel. The wraiths of this land were strange and powerful, and they battened on blood sacrifices offered by the native Mayans and Aztecs.

It was here that the Heretics committed their greatest crime. Desperate for a realm away from the stifling rule of Stygia, and fearful of the strange practices of the New World wraiths, the Heretics invaded the Dark Kingdom of Obsidian. Xenophobia and distrust were strong, and the various atrocities committed by both sides opened cracks in the very earth of the realm, exposing the Labyrinth. In the end, after decades of brutal struggle, the Heretics defeated Ix Chel and his indigenous wraiths, hurling them into the heart of the Void. Thus was an entire race destroyed.

Or so it was thought until recently. In the past several years, the ears of the Deathlords have been troubled by reports from various outlying realms — reports of savage attacks by ferocious, feather-clad spectres wielding obsidian blades and strange Arcanos. Of late, these attacks seem to have increased, and to have been staged closer and closer to Stygia itself. A few older wraiths whisper of Ix Chel's vengeance...



Grand High Artificer designed a wicked crossbow that fired three quarrels in rapid succession, and began to experiment with explosives and muzzle-loading guns.

Charon himself moved through the streets of Stygia, making Thralls from what he called the "wastrels": the shiftless dead who had no purpose and provided no help to Stygia. Soon these Thralls were hard at work toiling at the Venous Stair, mining Stygian metal from the bedrock of the Labyrinth itself. Despite the vigilance of Charon's Legions, many Thralls were devoured by Spectres rising from the deeps. Thralls who survived often faced an equally grim fate: they were reduced to ore for Stygian metal once they became useless. The Industrial Revolution had come to Stygia.

Thralls became the foundation of Charon's new ideas on how to deal with the dead: although he could no longer house the dead, he could definitely utilize them and, in the process, perhaps provide them with the purpose they needed to make eternity pass a little easier. He promised the Thralls freedom if they worked hard in the Labyrinth and served Stygia well.

Furthermore, the spirit of imperialism infected Charon. Instead of trying to run everything from Stygia, Charon sent trusted wraiths to the Shadowlands to set up smaller versions of Stygia, which Charon called his "Necropoli." Necropoli were purposefully located in abandoned sites within living cities, near population centers where the dead could be more easily collected. Charon hoped to establish permanent colonies and thereby ease Stygia's overcrowding.

During this time Charon minted the first deathcoins, also called oboli. This was because it was easier to trade deathcoins than it was to trade Thralls, which had been the former standard unit of value.

By expanding the road system to connect with the New World, Charon was finally able to send wraiths to places like New Amsterdam and Boston. Wars were fought in the New World between Stygian colonists and the established Heretic settlements. Also, during this time the rampant colonialism of the British Empire (followed closely by the Hierarchy) brought

# The Fifth Legion

The Fifth Legion, also called the Legion of the Black Hawk, was the Legion sent to establish the first Necropolis, in New Amsterdam. It was initially ambushed in the Tempest by Renegades, but regrouped quickly and gained the Shadowlands. There it fought for several days against Renegades and flushed out the area's Heretics. The Legion established its Citadel against great Heretic resistance and thus began the invasion of the Shadowlands.

Members of the Fifth Legion all wear the Black Hawk's Mask, also called Hood, and it is said that the legion's Anacreon actually has an onyx raptor that rides with him into battle. The Fifth Legion was later instrumental in spreading the Hierarchy's influence across America. the Stygian Empire into conflict with the Jade Emperor to the east and the Ivory Queen to the south. After bitter struggle, a mutual agreement was reached. This compact gave the Hierarchy custody of the souls of the European dead, but left the indigenous dead alone.

Hierarchy, Heretics and Renegades battled constantly during the War between the States. The Ivory Queen demanded the souls of the dead children of Africa who had been enslaved in life, and Charon allowed her minions to travel with the Hierarchy's forces as they moved south. As a result of this, the Ivory Queen later took control of New Orleans and forbade Hierarchy and Renegade alike from admittance. To this day, Charon's Hierarchy does not operate in the Shadowlands of New Orleans.

As the Victorian Age blossomed, Charon's Hierarchy worked like clockwork. Souls were loaded onto carriages, which would then travel along the roads to Stygia. Here, souls would be separated and awarded to the Deathlords according to the manner of their death. Charon encouraged the Necropoli in their collection of souls by sending Stygian artifacts to the Anacreons of the Citadels.

During the 19th century, Charon learned how to solidify the essence of the dead and transport this energy, in a plasmic form, throughout his Hierarchy. More and more Thralls were reduced to nothing in the fires of Kyklops, and the tailings of the Venous Stair mine became great hills on the coastline.

The first ships forged from Stygian iron were launched from the quay on the Isle of Sorrows. These black ships knifed through the black waters, patroling the headwaters of the River of Death, sinking Heretic blockade runners and watching for Renegade attacks.

More and more people began to die without belief, falling immediately into Oblivion, which had grown stronger and stronger as the Industrial Age seeped into people's souls. The Shroud soon became so strong that wraiths could barely affect the Skinlands except in areas where they had established Haunts or Fetters. Charon, noting this, began recruiting his Hierarchs from local people, people who had Fetters where he needed them.

Finally, late in the 19th century, the Deathlords and Charon made a frightening discovery: they could no longer travel to the Shadowlands. As they neared the Shadowlands, they began to discorporate. Investigation soon revealed that their Fetters had long since been destroyed. Even Charon, the mythical Grim Reaper, could not stay long in the Shadowlands.

The inability of Charon to interfere directly in the Shadowlands prompted the formation of a hegemonial government among the Necropoli. Stygia was the center of everything, and the Citadels were rather like the colonies that the British had established all over the world: each was ruled by a local Anacreon. These Anacreons were virtually autonomous as long as they continued to supply Stygia with souls and upheld the Code of Charon.



During the Victorian Era, many great inventors were born and died. Charon claimed more than a few for his own, and soon knowledge of new technology like the repeating revolver and the steam engine was taken by Nhudri and incorporated into the artifacts of Stygia. Thus were railroads laid in the lands of the dead. Although Charon still preferred the reliability of Mortus, his horse, the new rail lines were obviously useful more useful, perhaps, than the roads, for it was more difficult to ambush a rapidly moving train along a track.

In America, the frontier was opened up. Charon asked his two greatest Legions, the Grim Legion and the Skeletal Legion (purveyers of violence and pestilence), to travel along with the pioneers and leave Citadels wherever settlements were made.

At the turn of the 20th century, things looked well for the Hierarchy. Stygia's control over metal and manufacturing ensured that its satellite Necropoli sent a steady supply of souls. Stygia became increasingly isolationist as the Citadels took more responsibility and more power in the Shadowlands.

When, in 1914, the First World War broke out, the Hierachy became a soul-collecting machine, using its new railroad to carry the incredible number of souls gathered during that time. The First Consul of War and the First Consul of Pestilence were actually summoned to the court of Stygia on charges that they had instigated the concept of trench warfare and influenced the mortals into using mustard gas just so they could gain more power. They were cleared of the charges, but to this day the Inquisition of Charon continues to search for possible clues that they violated the Code of Charon.

The city of Stygia outgrew the Isle of Sorrows. Iron bridges spread out to the shore, and the surrounding Iron Hills soon bore the weight of great iron towers and buildings. Rail lines were laid in a cleared area away from the Iron Hills, and temporary housing for souls was thrown up there: great warehouses for the dead. Renegades occasionally attacked the railyards, trying to abduct gangs of shuffling, confused young soldiers for their own armies.

After the war, the Hierarchy made sure that Haunts in France and Germany were protected or rebuilt. Everything seemed fine; certainly the mortals were celebrating the end of the war.

Then the Fourth Great Maelstrom struck. The carnage of the Great War blossomed into the deadly Maelstrom, which the Hierarchy in the Shadowlands survived only by huddling in their Citadels. Stygia, though awash in the chaos, did not suffer a scratch. Its iron towers were polished to mirror-brightness by the skirling winds.





#### Mother of Storms

A sobriquet used for the Fifth Great Maelstrom is La Madrino Tempest, the mother of storms. This is because it flayed the Shadowlands for days with thousands of smaller Maelstroms, sending many souls screaming into Oblivion. In the days before Madrino, a Maelstrom was a rare event. Now, smaller Maelstroms erupt on a regular basis. My lords, the Shadowlands are a dangerous place in these modern times. Although there has not been another Great Maelstrom in many years, I fear to the core what might come if another rears its head.

Still, Spectres took advantage of the chaos to infiltrate the empire to an unprecedented degree. Rising from the deepest pits of the Labyrinth, they followed the roads to the Necropoli and began inserting themselves in secret places amid mortal cities. They began to Skinride people in America, taking advantage of the Citadels' laxer vigilance: this resulted in several rampant crime waves and many dark doings in the back alleys of the industrialized cities during the '20s.

No event caused Spectres more glee than the Great Depression. Spectres reveled in the misery caused by poverty, and the Hierarchy had its work cut out for it dealing with the flood of starved, dispossessed, and destitute dead while trying to root out the Spectres. Charon offered a bounty of 30 oboli to any wraith or wraiths who brought him the ears or other important parts of slain Spectres. It was discovered that Spectre teeth were particularly hardy and hard to fake: they became the standard. Many wraiths became what are known as Doomslayers, professional bounty hunters who hunted down Spectres and turned in their teeth for oboli.

Meanwhile, in Europe, Spectres gleefully flocked to the Nazi regime in Germany, gorging on the hate and terror. Although we are fairly sure that Hitler himself was not a puppet of the Spectres (rather, we believe him to be a purely human foulness), several of Hitler's top aides were influenced and regularly possessed by the Spectres of Berlin.

When World War II began, Charon finally saw a chance to make war on the Jade Emperor, who had denied Charon an entire section of San Francisco and threatened to usurp sections of Stygia. One of the reasons that the conflicts in the Pacific were so bloody and destructive was that, right alongside the mortals' carriers and battleships, the iron cruisers of Stygia's Legions battled the junks of the Jade Emperor.

Still, the War of the Dead paled in comparison to the devastation wrought by the Atomic Age. When Fat Man and Little Boy were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a great roar reverberated from the depths of the Labyrinth. The Fifth Great Maelstrom boiled up out of the depths and spat its destructive force throughout the Shadowlands. The Fifth Great Maelstrom was the most widespread of all. The possibility of global destruction had become a reality, and the repercussions in the Underworld were devastating. Travel to and from Stygia was rendered impossible, and wave after wave of Spectres hurled themselves at the Hierarchy's Necropoli. The Citadels in the Shadowlands became isolated outposts battling for survival.

Stygia itself suffered the worst catastrophe. A great Malfean, a reptilian horror named Gorool, rose up out of the Sunless Sea and threatened to consume Stygia completely. Every ship that went out to challenge it was smashed and its crew devoured. Charon knew that he alone stood a chance against the foul thing. He hung his great Mask in the throne room of his palace, retrieved Siklos, his blade, from the armory, and piloted a single skiff into the Weeping Bay to attack the thing. The battle is, to this day, depicted in tapestries and murals throughout Stygia.

Charon drew the great beast away from Stygia and opened a whirlpool in the Sunless Sea. Charon flung himself down into the midst of the whirlpool and was followed closely by the hungry Gorool. Neither rose again. In a single instant, the greatest ruler of the Restless vanished from knowledge.

Seperated as it was from Stygia, the Hierarchy in the Shadowlands had to try to continue on as best as possible. During the '50s, as part of a radical program, the Hierarchy recruited some Renegades to aid them in rooting out Spectres. Several times during the decade, Spectres sought to cause intercontinental thermonuclear war and were rebuffed.

The '60s were a time of great change. In addition to the changing morals of the day, people started experimenting with altered states of consciousness. Spectres are believed to have had a hand in the bloody war in Vietnam: it was started over a triviality and fought in a very controlled fashion. Spectres were

# The Restless

My lords, the mortals have developed many mechanical conveyances during the time that we have observed them. You surely have heard tales of the great flying coffins they trust to shuttle them from place to place. I myself have never flown on such a thing, although I shudder to think what the sensation must be like. Because the mortals have begun moving around quite a bit, certain recently deceased Restless have Fetters scattered across the world. These newer wraiths had best be brought firmly to heel by the Hierarchy; otherwise, we shall soon know the pleasure of dealing with attacks from all over the world by Renegades who have Fetters in Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Sydney, Honolulu, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Dallas, New Orleans, Atlanta, Montreal and Oslo. Call them Vagabonds if you will, my lords; it's true that they wander quite frequently. But you must know that they are both a threat and a source of great strategic power, as the mercenaries of old used to be.

often seen laughing with glee in the jungles of Cambodia as more and more young soldiers were killed.

By this time, Hierarchy agents had stopped trying to dominate their Necropoli. The Spectre threat was pervasive, and any and all wraiths were needed. The Hierarchy had developed a kind of attitude that could best be described as "don't ask, don't tell." Many Shadowlands wraiths were not even registered with the Hierarchy, especially in America, where the Anacreons did not believe in impeding a wraith's personal freedom. Groups of dispossessed wraiths began shuffling from city to city as the first Vagabonds.

The '70s saw the continuation of the Cold War and countless Spectre incursions. During the '70s, Stygian agents repaired the shattered roads and rails, allowing renewed communication with the Shadowlands. Charon was still missing, and the Deathlords had, in his absence, assumed control in a great and powerful oligarchy. This, as you know, was a masterstroke of diplomacy and statecraft. Everything was to continue on — business as usual.

My lords, you have often expressed your displeasure at the relatively low number of souls that the Hierarchy in the Shadowlands sent to Stygia during the '70s and '80s. Whether this indicates a rebelliousness on the part of the Citadel Anacreons or a lack of wraithpower needed to gather souls efficiently in the Shadowlands is unknown.

I must speak now of the current day, my lords, and for posterity I will record what I know of the current and most recent situation.

As you know, my lords, the Hierarchy of the Shadowlands has recently devolved into an almost anarchic mass of selfinterested Anacreons who rule to further their own personal power. I am reminded, my lords, of the Roman leaders in Britain toward the end of the Roman Empire. These so-called Hierarchs have adopted the policy of "might makes right," for the reputation of the Hierarchy is insufficient to instill correct behavior among the Renegades, Heretics and Vagabonds of the provinces.

Also, my lords, it is well known that the Hierarchs of the Shadowlands seem to ignore the Code of the Dead in many cases, especially when dealing with the Children of Caine (the vampires, my lords — a most foul and perverse race). I have even heard rumors that certain Hierarchs have begun working with vampires, performing services for the "undead" in exchange for the safe-keeping of their Fetters.

The weather of the Shadowlands these days is atrocious. The Tempest seethes with Spectres. Maelstroms continually arise, and although the Citadels still keep the ravages at bay, many souls are lost to Maelstroms on a regular basis.

In the cities, poverty, race bias and class struggle have wrought a deadly legacy: many violent deaths have resulted in the creation of more wraiths. In fact, several Necropoli harbor gangs of wraiths that owe allegiance to no faction save themselves.







# The Silken Bonds of Death

Because we are often lonely spirits, we wraiths sometimes seek the company of others who, because of their nature, cannot step fully into the light of day. The Children of Caine are also expatriates from the Sunlit Lands, and there is something comforting in their vital, yet dead presence. Still, I have seen them when they wake from their peaceful quiescence and have watched the crimson flood that soon follows. They seek to control all they know, and have tried time and again to enslave our fragile kind for their plots. The Restless would do well to truck quietly and carefully with them, for all their pleasant company.

Above all, beware that branch called Giovanni! Its members have learned foul Arcanos enabling them to bind and sear us! Caveat anima!

With no disrespect, great and Dread Lords, the Heretics and Renegades still operate relatively unhindered in the Shadowlands. Because of the fact that the roads, the rails, and the river are all blocked, and because the Fetters of life bind the wraiths who now live there, there is no good solution except to continue to send weapons and soulfire to the Shadowlands.

Although the end of the Cold War substantially reduced the threat of absolute nuclear holocaust, conflicts like the Persian Gulf War and diseases like AIDS still provide endless hours of amusement to the foul Spectres who feast on such carnage.

My most majestic Lords of Death, I have but a few more pieces of information to impart to you:

It is said that the Lady of Fate's mark has been seen on some new wraiths.

The Ferrymen have been seen in the Shadowlands.

Some souls are dying with such violence that they instantly become Spectres.

And, it is whispered that Charon has been sighted in Atlanta, Chicago, San Francisco, Edinburgh and other places, although these rumors have by no means been substantiated.

I was greatly sorrowed to learn of the disappearance of Charon's Mask. I do hope every effort is being made to secure its return.

I do hope that the general nature of this history does not offend you. I enjoy writing these histories to show myself how things have changed as we learn more about them.

With utmost humility, I proffer my deepest gratitude. Your Eternal Servant, Herodotus

# The Restless Dead



eath followed by eternity...the worst of both worlds. It is a terrible thought.

 — Tom Stoppard, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

# Death behind Life

Wraiths see death in everything. They do not see things in the physical world as they appear, but as they someday will be. A person about to die might appear cadaverous, with hollow eyes and jaundiced skin; a car destined to crash will appear dented in advance. Much of the world seems decayed or near collapse. Billboards are tattered, roads are potholed, paint is peeling, metal is rusting, buildings are crumbling. To the Restless, much of the world is already dead.

The hazards of the Underworld add danger to despair; soulslavery, intrigue and looming Oblivion take their toll on the Restless. Worst of all is a wraith's eternal struggle with her Shadow. In the Underworld, there is no place for a wraith to hide from her darkest aspects.

These threats to mind, soul and sanity are the lot of every wraith, from the youngest to the most ancient. Still, hope remains. The wandering souls retain their identity and can acquire great power and wisdom if they seek it out. After all, Oblivion notwithstanding, they have all the time in the world.

### Life in Death

For all the suffering and corruption of the Shadowlands, the agony of existing beyond life, and the perils of the afterlife, the immortal spirit continues to burn in Restless souls. Though many wraiths have given their afterlives over to hopelessness, revenge and trafficking in souls, others have used their continued existence to rediscover the passions they avoided in life. Some wraiths pursue enlightenment; death has torn a veil from their eyes and proved that there is something more to creation than simple existence. Others glory in their newfound powers. Freed from mortal constraints, they take advantage of their insights and abilities to explore, experience and prosper.

Great wealth and power may be acquired among the Restless if one is ruthless enough to take it. Many among the Hierarchy have spent their afterlives making up for opportunities they never took while alive. Some wraiths find themselves gifted with potent mystical powers (called Arcanos); others simply wheedle, betray or enslave their way to the top. Many Restless embrace the pursuit of material gain as their purpose for existence. Others of like mind hop "Skinrides" on the living, saturating themselves with vicarious thrills, or pursue some agenda left over from life. The afterlife can be an adventure if one can supersede the gloom and sidestep the pitfalls.





More circumspect wraiths use their insights and Arcanos to learn from their mistakes. Like the Skinriders, these Restless possess mortals and live again through them. Unlike their wilder cousins, these ghosts try to recapture the pain and joy of life, if only for a short while. By traveling the living world again, fulfilling some last mission or savoring the taste of life, such wandering souls learn more about creation than any mortal ever could.

# Metaphysics: The Rules that Bind the Dead

Luminous beings are we - not this crude matter.

- Yoda, The Empire Strikes Back

Alone, even in a crowd. Dead, but able to touch and sense the living. Real, but intangible.

Wraiths hang suspended between life and eternal death, and this half-existence dominates their perceptions. In the world, but not of it, the wraith reaches out from the other side of the mirror and tries to pierce that cold barrier. Like a drowning man struggling to break through the sheet of ice under which he is trapped, the wraith struggles to touch — if only fleetingly — our world.

This is not easy. The laws of reality apply in a different manner to wraiths than they do to humans. Objects in the real world may impede or even harm wraiths (albeit slightly); conversely, wraiths are largely unable to affect the real world. Wraiths are ghosts, and this fact changes all the rules.

There are, however, numerous ways that wraiths can sidestep the rules. All Restless can briefly discorporate, passing through solid objects (or letting them pass through instead) with minimal effort. Moderate levels of Arcanos allow vastly increased control over the physical world. Because wraiths are formed of spirit-matter instead of flesh, most pain or damage inflicted on them is minimal. A car speeding through the living world will only slightly harm a wraith, though some forms of damage (Spirit magick, Stygian darksteel or raw Oblivion) can inflict lasting harm.

On the other hand, wraiths affect one other as if they were still living, and Underworld surroundings that mirror the physical world have as much substance for the dead as they do for the living. And in the Tempest, nearly anything goes...

# Social Status

The dead can be as hidebound and status-conscious as the living. The myriad social and class distinctions among the Restless amply demonstrate this truism. For the most part, wraiths are distinguished by a combination of age, arcane power, and freedom of movement. Gaunts, who are able to leave the Shadowlands and return at will, are accorded considerably more





respect than Drones, who have practically no sentience left at all. While Enfants and Drones have the most to fear from the soul trade, all but the most powerful wraiths must beware the slavers' chains.

Although social mobility and interaction are not unknown among wraiths, most wraiths ally only with those of similar status and trust only those who have proved themselves. Gaunts are particularly notorious for their cliquishness. In general, the whole system of status is maintained by the Gaunts of the Hierarchy, who demand considerable respect from those under them.

### Enfant

Enfants are the recently deceased who have not yet joined wraith society. Typically they are only a few days or weeks old. Enfants wear a plasmic Caul, which obscures their thoughts and vision and induces a dreamlike state. Until this Caul is removed by another wraith, they do not have full vision in the Shadowlands.

#### Drone

Drones are wraiths who, having lost all touch with their mortal identities, mindlessly Haunt their Fetters. Drones have neither sentience nor willpower. Many still manifest the marks of their death, or endlessly reenact their demise.

#### Thrall

Thralls are the slaves of another wraith, held in bondage by "manacles of subjection." Some Thralls have been captured and enslaved; others have been sentenced to Thralldom for their crimes. A few Thralls have even sold themselves voluntarily to pay off debts. (Though indentured servitude is supposed to last for a limited duration, many Thralls find that escaping such a contract is much harder than they thought it would be...)

Thralls wear leg manacles and cannot travel freely. Some variants of the Code of Charon declare that no Thrall shall be tormented or abused. Such prohibitions are widely ignored, and abusers are rarely challenged or punished. Thralls' Shadows often take great delight in the suffering their hosts' psyches endure.

#### Lemure

Wraiths who still hold most of their Fetters are considered quite young. Lemures are the most common wraiths found in the Shadowlands. They are manipulated and abused on a regular basis by the "old hands." Most Wraith player characters fall into this category.

#### Domem

Domem are older wraiths who no longer possess Fetters and cannot return to the Shadowlands once they leave them. Because of their limited mobility, Domem are not as respected as Gaunts. Many Domem are created as a result of their Fetters being purposely destroyed. Most Domem flock to Stygia, where they serve the Hierarchy bureaucracy.

#### Gaunt

An old and powerful wraith, typically one who controls or influences an entire Necropolis. Not only have Gaunts managed to maintain Fetters in the Shadowlands, but they have traveled deep into the Tempest — possibly even to a Far Shores realm. Feared and respected, Gaunts are the only wraiths who know the truth of what lies within the Tempest.

# Reapers

A Reaper is a wraith who collects an Enfant, removes its Caul, and persuades it by means fair or foul to accompany him. Each Reaper faces a moral choice: will he take care of his Enfant and see that it safely completes the transition to the Underworld, or will he sell it to the highest bidder? Will he help it, or find a way to bind it to his service?

All wraiths are interested when someone dies, for souls are the gold of the Underworld. Some stake out turf in hospitals, homeless shelters, jails, and retirement homes, while others ride atop ambulances or police cars. Some wraiths are frightening Reapers, imprisoning and enslaving all the souls they obtain. Many, however, act as guides, teaching their charges the intricacies of the afterlife.

It is not uncommon for wraiths to watch after loved ones, meeting them after their deaths to provide a safer and kinder passage into the Underworld than they would otherwise experience. A few try to convert the Enfants to their particular cause or faith, torturing them if they refuse. Others adopt the Enfants into their own Circle, treating them as kin.

Traditionally an Enfant owes his Reaper a great deal for his service. It is dishonorable to ignore the debt, and even more dishonorable to harm the Reaper. Of course, this is not the case if the Reaper was abusive or caused the Enfant harm.

# Possessions and Trade

You can sell one another for fifteen cents Well bye-bye mother, it's common sense.

#### - Sisters of Mercy, "Doctor Jeep"

Because wraiths can only rarely cross between the living and dead worlds, they hunger for the things they see but cannot have. Accordingly, a thriving economy has developed in



the lands of the dead. This "shadow trade" resembles the triangle trade of early America. Raw materials — souls — and relics are harvested in the Shadowlands and traded in Necropoli for material goods made in Stygia.

Wraiths cannot touch normal objects from the living world without using a degree of power. However, relics — items incarnated into the Underworld — can be used freely and are thus highly prized by wraiths.

Most goods in the Underworld are made from souls, smelted and shaped by the arcane secrets of the Artificers. Because of the weird magics and secrecy involved, distant Stygia has a monopoly on such goods. Many Thralls or harvested souls end their afterlives as building stones or Stygian coins.

The demand for goods creates a corresponding demand for souls; while strong or clever wraiths can avoid this fate, the weak or unwary end up bound for the furnaces. New souls are gathered in the Shadowlands and shipped through the Byways into Stygia.

Some modern wraiths are repelled when they discover the true nature of Underworld goods. Barter for service is the preferred method of exchange among these dead. The remnants of Stygia's guilds are strong proponents of the barter system.

#### Souls

The great Underworld commodity is souls, for souls are the raw materials from which all the goods of Stygia are manufactured. Souls are utilized in all things, from Citadel walls to Legion weapons to paper for books to Moliated torches. Some decadent wraiths even distill souls, drinking them like fine wine.

#### Relics

Relics are objects from the real world that have been destroyed and now exist in the Shadowlands. Relics no longer exist in the physical world, but possess substance in the spirit world. Though most relics fade away sooner or later, they form an important part of Underworld trade. All Underworld goods other than relics must be smelted from souls in Stygia.

Not just any destroyed object can become a relic. Only objects that had great personal significance to their owners are thus consecrated. The life-force (soul, if you will) imbued by such care allows the object to exist in the Underworld.

Nor are all relics created equal. The potency of a relic depends on its "freshness" and the importance its owner placed on it. A teddy bear that was treasured in childhood but thrown away when that child grew up will become a weak and ephem-





eral relic at best. Only truly treasured goods become potent or long-lasting relics.

Most relics are fairly innocuous but useful items: toys, jewelry, a wedding dress or the first issue of *Detective Comics*. Powerful relics — guns, cars, computers, etc. — exist, but are rare and highly expensive. Examples of potent relics include a hacker's custom-built computer, a restored vintage car, and Dirty Harry's favorite Magnum. Such relics need more emotional investment to function in the Underworld, and soon fade away in any case. Ancient relics, like the sword of Uther Pendragon, exist for centuries, but modern relics tend to fade after a few years. (Perhaps modern objects mean so much less because modern mortals possess so much more.)

Most wraiths possess relics of one sort or another. Some wraiths still possess the objects that were buried with them, but this practice is not widely known in the modern era. More often, wraiths enter the Shadowlands with an item or two if those items "died" with them, like the restored '57 Chevy totaled in its owner's fatal accident. Enfants with relics often have to fight to keep them: a "donation" to one's Reaper is a common occurrence.

#### Soul-Forged Goods

By the use of various Arcanos, souls may be smelted and catabolized into a substance called plasm. This plasm, given form, is the only substance with permanent shape in the Underworld. Goods, therefore, must be forged from smelted souls to have tangible and lasting form.

Skilled smiths can shape plasm into any form or texture desired. However, the techniques of smithing are difficult to master; only the Stygian Artificers know all the secrets of soulforging.

Soul-forged goods function like normal material objects. Stygian coins and chains are crafted from plasm, hence their value and mystical properties. Because of the skill required to make such goods and the high cost of the souls used, soulforged items are scarce and expensive.

Some Stygian items emit sounds from time to time. The smelting process is irreversible, so no one really knows whether or not the transformed wraiths are still self-aware. Many suspect that they are. No one really wants to find out.

# Artifacts

Artifacts are objects that hold arcane powers. There are two types of artifacts: those from the living, made from relics; and those of the dead, made from souls. Both types are unique items, and each has its own powers and limitations. Artifacts are outrageously expensive, but are sometimes bestowed as signs of favor or rewards for service.



#### Multitudes of the living are needed to invest a Skinlands artifact, and the item must be destroyed on Earth before it can pass through the Shroud. The True Cross, the Maltese Falcon and Jack the Ripper's knives are good examples of this type of artifact. Relic artifacts are almost never given away and are deeply prized by any wraith lucky enough to own them. Unlike many lesser relics, they never fade.

Master Artificers, it is said, invest part of their essence into artifacts created in the Underworld. Masks of office, potent weapons and special tools are built to specification and sold for very high prices. To obtain such an item, a wraith must perform some great service or take it from its owner. Such artifacts are neither common nor easily concealed; indeed, many can be traced by the essence within them.

# Guilds

Guilds were once fraternal organizations uniting those who pursued mastery in certain Arcanos. After a series of uprisings, Charon disbanded the guilds and divided trade among the Legions according to an elaborate code. Since Charon's disappearance, these trade articles have been changed or ignored. In the current economic void, barter for services has regained its old importance. Though the guilds are still officially illegal, the services they offer — built around specialized Arcanos are in high demand. The guilds may yet make a comeback.

More than anything else, a guild is simply a way to teach and pass on the secret knowledge inherent to certain Arcanos. All guild agents are independent operatives, with no formal responsibilities. Though some wraiths who excel in a given art are not guild members, most are.

# Important Items

Certain items have special importance among the dead, a social significance above and beyond the item's purpose.

#### Weapons

Archaic weapons are widely used throughout the Underworld; modern weapons require a wraith to prime them with his own essence, so guns, vehicles and explosives don't work cheaply or well. Swords and armor, however, can be crafted from plasm with little effort, and have a mystique and flair that more utilitarian weapons lack.

Highly ornate and stylish weapons are prized badges of office and wealth. Some ancient weapons have passed through the Shroud after their destruction, becoming relics or even artifacts.

# Oboli (Stygian Coins)

Underworld coins, or oboli, are minted from souls. The disconcerting feel of Stygian coins dissuades some Restless from carrying or exchanging them. Nevertheless, they remain legal tender for most debts.

Stygian coins often utter faint wails or sighs. Older ghosts seem not to notice, but more sensitive wraiths have been known to drop their coins and run when they discover the true nature of their cash. Rumor has it that oboli have Shadows; this has added to the currency's decline in recent years.

# Manacles and Chains

Chains are seen throughout the Underworld; indeed, one of Stygia's many sobriquets is the "City of Chains." Chains are used to control and bind wraiths. They are also used as symbols of authority, are worn as ornamentation by Hierarchy types, and are used to bind artifacts and thereby prevent their theft.

Chains and manacles are actually artifacts created from discorporated souls. It is said that those unfortunate wraiths who are eaten by the lieges of Stygia are actually excreted in the form of chains. The chains of the Underworld are well and truly hated by Renegades and most Lemures.

#### Masks

Masks are a fundamental element of wraith society. Not only are they symbols of high station, but they hide a wraith's true face from others. Many masks are artifacts forged by Nhudri himself. Possession of a mask by one not authorized to wear the mask is a crime punishable by discorporation.

# Life among the Dead



t was the best of times and the worst of times, and it was all of them at once.

— Alan Moore, "Revelations," Swamp Thing # 37

Like the human society it mirrors, the Underworld has its politics: the establishment, with its rules, stability and com-

merce; the rebels, with their spirit and fractious vision; and the faithful, whose fervor and belief inspire the society to greatness or drag it to tyrannical depths. Old habits are indeed hard to break.

This is not to imply that all wraiths belong to some societal group; in death, as in life, most just fall between the extremes that drive the body politic. But as the modern world grinds forward, engendering Restless in ever-increasing numbers, the extremes of Stygian society affect the urban Shadowlands of the newer wraiths.





For the most part, the society of the Restless mirrors the most influential ages of its history. Until the era of Classical Greece, Stygia did not exist; other, less established realms flourished, creating the foundations of the Far Shores. Even now, the models from which legendary Charon took his establishment — the European systems of confederation, feudalism, and mass industrialism — provide an odd contrast to modern Western thought. Ages collide in an increasingly overcrowded urban sprawl. Although there are still far fewer Restless than mortals, thousands of years add up. Many Restless souls have passed beyond the Underworld (to either Transcendence or Oblivion), but many others have stayed behind. Some of these wraiths are old indeed, and hold very strange beliefs.

# Circles

Circles are tightly knit groups of wraiths that have banded together for mutual defense against slavers and Spectres. The circle is the fundamental unit of Shadowlands wraith society. In many ways, a wraith's Circle takes the place of family.

Members of a Circle are bound together by the Haunt (or Haunts) they all share. Most Circles have fewer than 30 members, but seldom fewer than three or four.

Some wraiths are not members of a Circle, either because they are the only survivors of their respective Circles or because they never joined one in the first place. Such loners typically amount to little and quickly fall into Oblivion.

# Factions

Three major political factions fight for dominance over the Underworld. With the removal of Charon's stabilizing influence, their battles have grown increasingly bloody. Additionally, each faction is fractured internally by dispute.

The faction called the Hierarchy insists that it represents the authority of Charon, now departed or slain by the Malfean Gorool. Its minions demand respect and obedience from all wraiths. The Hierarchy is the most stable and reliable faction, but also the most confining and orthodox.

The Renegades are composed of anarchists and Hierarchs who broke away from the fold. While once motivated by political idealism, most now seek nothing more than personal gratification. The Renegades are wild and free, but can't be trusted for anything. At best, they are divided by deep philosophical and political differences; many are thugs who care only for themselves. They roam the Shadowlands freely, but must do so covertly.

The Heretics are those wraiths who still seek a higher state, whether in the Far Shores or elsewhere. Composed of many disparate cults, they occasionally cooperate to oppose the oppression of the Hierarchy and the self-centered violence of the Renegades. More often, they battle each other. Above all else, the Heretics seek converts. Unfortunately, many Heretics are the dupes of Malfean Spectres or the "gods" of the Far Shores.

# Intrigue

Oh children don't you weep and moan Children save your breath You'll draw a pretty pension When your daddy meets his death.

- "Hard Times" (Traditional Ballad)

Politics and intrigue are even more convoluted in the Underworld than in the lands of the Quick. Rather than engaging in all-out war with other factions, wraiths commonly turn to subterfuge and espionage to combat their enemies, as each seeks to collect as much power and influence as possible to stave off the inevitability of Oblivion.

Because wraiths with different masters and allegiances so often form alliances to achieve common goals, there are nearly always several different hidden agendas within every treaty, negotiation and mission. Betrayal and suicidal acts of vengeance are common.

# The Hierarchy



hile artists and rebels may thrive on chaos, the majority of people (and wraiths) prefer order and stability. Even after death, many souls crave a familiar routine, a system of trade, and some degree of order. They want to follow a set pattern, not wander off on their own. The world of the liv-

ing is frightening enough; most Restless seek shelter in numbers when faced with the gloom and terror of the Shadowlands. The Hierarchy answers their needs.

The Hierarchy is the name by which Restless refer to the vertically integrated institution of wraiths directly bound by oath, loyalty and submission to Charon's Deathlords. Its reach extends throughout the Underworld, in fealty if not in fact. The Hierarchy's vassals receive information, authority, resources and protection in return for service to the Hierarchy, but must obey their superiors' orders without question.

Now the foundations of the Hierarchy are crumbling; with Charon gone, the system has fallen into a loose confederation of powerful Cohorts and warlords, all paying lip-service to a leader who no longer exists. With the passing of Charon's influence, Hierarchy leaders in the Shadowlands often make their own rules, keeping up appearances in case anyone from Stygia stops by. Though many Anacreons have pledged their fealty in exchange for shipments of precious Stygian metal and occasional protection, they can't be bothered with insignificant rules and customs.

The last century has seen an increase in tensions between the distant land of Stygia and the more independent Necropoli.







While the former supports a labyrinthine network of old souls, titles and traditions, the Necropoli bear the stamp of the modern world. Even cities ruled by overlords who died centuries ago have had to change with the times.

The political structure of the Hierarchy is as convoluted and insensible as any creation of the living. The webs of intrigue, alliances and deal-making are too complicated for even intimate participants to comprehend fully.

# Deathlords

The seven Deathlords were each given a realm from which to govern their Legions. The seven realms of the Deathlords (Fate's realm is rumored to lie on the Isle of Eurydice) are all located within the confines of Stygia upon the Sunless Sea. From these bases the now-masterless Deathlords often make war on one another.

The Deathlords combat one another in the Shadowlands as well, seeking as many new souls as they can. They have gone so far as to meddle in worldly affairs, thereby affecting how people die and in what numbers.

# Fallen Angels

Originally, the Deathlords were appointed to their positions by Charon. They were to serve as spiritual guides in roles similar to elder Ferrymen. It is ironic that wraiths who were originally placed in their positions of power to aid other wraiths now strive to prevent that very transformation.

All Deathlords currently strive to collect as many souls, and thus power, as possible. The Hierarchy feels that even those who think of themselves as Heretics or Renegades fall under their jurisdiction and are therefore subject to their rule. Anyone who captures wraiths from outside the Hierarchy and brings them to the applicable Deathlord is well rewarded.

# Legions

Each Legion has its own style, techniques, artifacts and special capacities.

- · The Seat of Silence
- held by the Quiet Lord
  - Overseer of the victims of Despair
- The Seat of Golden Tears
- held by the Beggar Lord
  - Overseer of the victims of Mystery
- The Seat of Thorns
- held by the Emerald Lord
- Overseer of the victims of Happenstance
- The Seat of Burning Waters
- held by the Smiling Lord
  - Overseer of the victims of Violence

- The Seat of Shadows
- held by the Ashen Lady
  Overseer of the victims of Old Age
- The Seat of Succor
- held by the Laughing Lady
  Overseer of the victims of Madness
- The Seat of Dust
- held by the Skeletal Lord
- Overseer of the victims of Pestilence
- The Seat of Fate
- held by the Ladies of Fate
  - Liege of the Hands of Fate

# Deathmarks

Long ago, the Ferrymen noted that most wraiths were adorned with peculiar marks that could be perceived only by those with the Arcanos of Fatalism. These marks could be classified on the basis of the patterns they made upon the Corpus. Those who could discern the marks stated that they resembled birthmarks seen on the living, although they varied much more in color and texture: some were seemingly carved into the wraith's Corpus, while others were sharply raised like scars.

Eventually the Ferrymen noted a connection between the type of person the wraith had been while alive and the pattern of the marks. Experimenting, they noted that the marks reflected the way the person had led her life while among the living, and thus showed what her individual path to Transcendence entailed.

Prior to the great Evacuation, when Charon banished the Heretics to the Far Shores, the Hierarchy utilized deathmarks as a means of interpreting which group of Shining Ones the wraith should join in her efforts to pursue Transcendence. In recent times, the Hierarchy has all but ignored deathmarks, preferring to classify souls on the basis of how they died rather than how they lived.

Ever since the Heretics were banished from Stygia, the Hierarchy has begun visibly branding wraiths in ways that resemble deathmarks, in apparent mockery of the way in which they used to classify souls. Because they now divide souls based on how the person died, they use this method of branding to mark souls as the property of one Deathlord or another. Those who wish to demonstrate their loyalty to the Hierarchy Moliate themselves in elaborate patterns to proclaim their obedience to their Lord or Lady.

# Patrols

Many Lemure Circles in the Hierarchy are formed into loose units of multitalented wraiths; these units, known as patrols, are the backbone of the Legions. Once they were merely

another arm in the great bureaucracy of the Hierarchy. In recent years, however, some patrols have grown more autonomous and have begun to demand increasing freedom and power. Indeed, many Shadowlands patrols have become virtual mercenaries.

This increased autonomy enrages and frustrates the Deathlords, but there is little they can do. Instead, they work covertly to manipulate the Circles through bribery, blackmail, coercion and infiltration.

# Barghests

The Deathlords turn certain wraiths into bloodhounds, or barghests as they are most often called. Barghests are wraiths who have been Moliated into monstrous shapes and "lobotomized" by the grafting of a specially prepared muzzle of Stygian iron to their Corpus. The wraith who holds the corresponding "whistle" for a brace of barghests controls their actions. Barghests are animalistic and feral, but have extremely keen senses.

Braces of barghests search the Shadowlands for wraiths (or other beings) who bear significant amounts of Oblivion taint. When barghests catch the scent of a tainted being, they emit a terrible, gleeful baying. Certain sensitive mortals can even hear this baying through the shroud that separates the Shadowlands from the Skinlands.

# Ranks of the Legion

## Legionnaire

Legionnaire is the lowest rank, and the starting point for every member of the Hierarchy. Legionnaires do not usually have regular duties, but are summoned to a Citadel and assigned duties as needed. Successful completion of such duties is the only way to rise in rank. Legionnaires are encouraged to recruit new members, and many use their Circles to help carry out their missions. Patrols are formed primarily of Legionnaires.

#### Centurion

Centurions are the leaders of Hierarchy patrols. Centurions have a great deal of power over those they meet. Their positions are constantly challenged by those beneath them, however, and Centurions must rise in rank quickly or risk being cast aside.

### Marshal

The next most powerful rank is that of Marshal. Marshals are placed in charge of a certain area around a Citadel. Often based out of a smaller Haunt, a Marshal may have a number of patrols under her authority. Appointed by the Anacreon of





the Citadel, Marshals are somewhat more secure in their positions than are the Centurions.

#### Regent

A Regent rules a number of the perimeter Haunts around a Citadel and is based in one of them. More of a senior Marshal than anything else, a Regent organizes and coordinates the activities of the Legions in that area.

# Overlord

Overlords are based directly out of their Citadel and are the personal assistants of the Anacreon. Overlords are responsible for many of the strategic decisions faced by their Legion.

#### Anacreon

The highest rank in the Shadowlands is that of Anacreon. Each Anacreon is the leader of a Legion in a Citadel. A council of seven Anacreons governs each Citadel. The Anacreon appoints all lesser ranks in her Legion. Anacreons receive artifacts and coins directly from Stygia in exchange for the Thralls they send there, and personally dispense Stygia's bounty to those under their command.

# Justice System

The Hierarchy has its own system of laws. The laws protect as well as punish, and the majority of the Restless quietly obey the dictates of the Deathlords without incident.

Those who do violate the laws may be called to stand trial before a Hierarchy magistrate. In theory, it is possible to appeal a judgment to a "higher" magistrate, although this is normally only permitted to wraiths with some degree of status within the Hierarchy. In some cases, a judgment may be appealed to the Hand of Fate, in which case the Hierarchy almost always accepts the alternative judgment. This normally only happens in cases where the jurisdiction of a case does not clearly fall to one or another Deathlord, although certain cases have proved to be exceptions.

# Crime and Punishment

Justice is meted out in the Shadowlands just as it is in the lands of the living. However, because it is virtually impossible to kill a wraith permanently, and exiling someone to the Tempest only strengthens Oblivion, executions of any sort are simply not practical. Some of the more common methods of punishment are described below:





 Enslavement — The most common form of punishment is enslavement of the offending wraith. Chains are placed around the offender, effectively making her the Thrall of another wraith.

• Torture — Far surpassing anything imagined in the living lands, wraithly torture is designed to mark the offender. While wraiths easily heal most ordinary wounds, marks inflicted by devices of Stygian metal are infinitely more painful and are extremely difficult to heal. Of course, because wraiths are creatures of spirit, the most lasting pain involves mental anguish...

 Imprisonment — Often the Hierarchy incarcerates criminals in Shadowlands reflections of prisons used by mortals, with reinforced walls and bars made of Stygian metal.

 Branding — Branding is a way to mark criminals, thereby both ostracizing the criminal and deterring others from committing the same crimes. Serious criminals are branded upon their foreheads.

 Discorporation — Certain criminals are taken to Stygia and hurled into the Artificers' forges, where they are smelted into goods.

# Renegades

T'was hard the woeful words to frame To break the ties that bound us But harder still to bear the shame Of foreign chains around us And so I said the mountain glen I'll meet at morning early And I'll join the bold united men While soft winds shake the barley.

— "The Wind that Shakes the Barley" (traditional) Renegades are those who oppose, deny or rebel against the Hierarchy and everything it stands for. Not surprisingly, they are constantly hunted by the Hierarchy. Over the years, however, Renegades have carved out their own niche in the Shadowlands.

The term "Renegade" is a general one, loosely encompassing all who act against the Hierarchy. There are nearly as many Renegade ideologies as there are Renegades. Indeed, the very antiauthoritarian nature of Renegades makes cooperation within their ranks difficult and sporadic. Renegades act alone or in small gangs, and fight each other as often and viciously as they do the Hierarchy.



In general, Renegades lead a perilous existence. They often fall prey to Spectres and other Tempest beasts. Renegades must remain mobile, and thus most Renegade Haunts tend to be short-term hideouts. Only a few secret Haunts have lasted for any length of time, and the locations of these safe havens are known only to the most trusted members of each faction.

Until the last few years, the Hierarchy dealt effectively with most active threats to it by the Renegades. However, recent internecine Hierarchy conflicts and Spectre incursions have occupied the Deathlords' attention, prompting a resulting increase in Renegade terrorism.

Many Renegades have infiltrated the Hierarchy, using a facade of respectability to cover acts of subversion and sabotage. Indeed, large numbers of Renegades have joined the Stygian Legions, and wait only for the signal to strike...

# Heretics



ain is each threat or supplicating prayer; He drives them exiles from their blest abode, To roam a dreary world in deep despair — No friend, no home, no refuge, but their God. — Lord Byron, "Elegy on Newstead Abbey"

Many wraiths have founded their own groups based around common beliefs and the search for Transcendence. Called "Heretics" by the Hierarchy, these wraiths follow faiths dedicated to some higher ideal, force or place. Many Heretics will go to extreme lengths to gain new converts for their cults, using their powers to perform "miracles" and promising fabulous rewards.

The only thing the majority of Heretic cults share in common is a deep-seated antipathy for one another, for they all compete for souls, both living and dead. However, in their collective persecution, they have learned to work together. The Deathlords are greedy, and are content with nothing less than all the souls in existence. In order to combat them, the Heretics have no choice but to cooperate.

# Problems for the Hierarchy

The Hierarchy's problems with Heretics continue to grow as more and more Lemures put their faith in these cults. Such wraiths are often contemptuous or even hostile to the Hierarchy. Furthermore, it is whispered that some within the Hierarchy are secretly Heretics themselves.

The Hierarchy maintains a firm stand against heresy, stomping it out ruthlessly. However, most Hierarch leaders have neither the resources nor the inclination to implement the policy fully. Most ignore all but the most blatant affronts to the Hierarchy, preferring to keep the peace and not squander their strength. They believe the real enemy to be the Renegades.

Wraith: The Oblivion

10

#### Being a Heretic

A wraith is initiated into the sacred mysteries of his chosen faith after proving himself in some way. In return, the wraith is expected to serve the cult faithfully. Service may mean performing strange missions, capturing Thralls, assassinating enemies, or recruiting others. Good service is rewarded with increasing status and power.

Some Heretics lose their faith and end up leaving their cults. Many are recruited into other cults. Others attempt to start their own radical fringe cults so they can acquire power for themselves. Many ex-members simply depart to other Necropoli, though most exist in constant fear of being hunted down by the Hierarchy's barghest packs.

# Outsiders

### errymen



hat beck'ning ghost, along the moonlight shade Invites my step, and points to yonder glade? — Alexander Pope, "Elegy"

The Ferrymen are the travelers of the spiritual seas, the pathfinders through the Tempest, the wardens of the Byways, and in some ways the spiritual guides to all in

the Underworld. For aeons their self-appointed duty has been to guide those souls who were ready to cross the dangerous expanse of the Tempest and arrive at their just destination. It is not easy to obtain a Ferryman's aid, but once one accepts a wraith as a traveler, he will protect his charge at all costs.

The Ferrymen divorce themselves from the petty conflicts of other spirits. They constantly travel between the Necropoli, journeying from realm to realm, never ceasing their endless travels. Not even the Hierarchy disturbs the Ferrymen in their self-appointed duties, for their assistance is often vital to navigate and maintain the Byways through the Tempest.

Ferrymen do not always take what the traveler would consider to be the most direct route. Still, in the Shadowlands, where uncertainty is everywhere and truth is rare, Ferrymen have an extremely high reputation for honesty and honor.

There is always a price for their assistance: often a task or a promise, sometimes a relic. Those who break their promise to a Ferryman are marked and will never again be assisted by another Ferryman.

Ferrymen are fearsome warriors, for they must be able to defend themselves from the creatures of the Tempest that increasingly infest the Byways. The Ferrymen are responsible for maintaining the roads and paths leading from the Shadowlands to Stygia and the Far Shores. With the tides of Oblivion at the flood stage,



these roads and paths are threatened by fiends, monsters, and Maelstroms, and everyone values the Ferrymen for their ability to find their way through the Tempest without harm.

It is said that the Ferrymen seek to guide wraiths toward Transcendence, serving as Mentors to those who prove worthy of their aid. Still, most wraiths' only contact with these enigmatic guides is in their roles as pathfinders and guides through the Tempest.

# Spectres

Many wraiths succumb to temptation and allow their Shadows to consume their souls. These wraiths, known as Spectres, are able to exist in the Tempest without being discorporated. They not only survive the chaos, but prosper from it. Spectres have fully accepted their Shadows and exist only in that mode. Needless to say, they are extraordinarily dangerous.

Most wraiths know Spectres as shadowy, monstrous entities, possessing terrible cunning and ferocious power, who periodically emerge from the depths of the Tempest. They are why so many fear to travel the Byways of the Tempest.

Spectres are able to communicate empathically with the Shadows of wraiths, and sometimes directly speak to them. They often seem to know everything about a wraith — every weakness, every Fetter. Some Spectres are even able to evoke a wraith's Shadow and use its influence to weaken their prey. Though much fearful legend exists concerning the Spectres, they aren't quite so insane as other wraiths think, and possess the rudiments of a society. Moreover, many still have Fetters, which allow them to enter the Shadowlands at any time.

There are various species of Spectres. Some are listed and briefly described below.

#### Shades

Shades are monstrous, twisted, crazed creatures of Oblivion. The Corpus of a Shade is generally mutated beyond human ken. Their presence is considered an abomination by all "civilized" wraiths.

#### Malfeans

Malfeans are Spectres who have achieved incredible power and might by consuming lesser beings. They are the rulers of the Tempest, and are to be feared. Different Malfeans tend to dominate various regions of the Tempest, shaping it to their whims. Woe to the wraith who has one of these fearful creatures enter his Harrowing!

Some Malfeans have even deluded Heretic cults into worshipping them as gods. These Malfeans are particularly dangerous, for they have minions and emissaries in the Shadowlands.

More information about Spectres is included in the Appendix (pp. 231-233).



# Chapter Three: Storytelling

I once dreamt I was telling stories and felt someone patting my foot in encouragement. I looked down and saw that I was standing on the shoulders of an old woman who was steadying my ankles and smiling up at me.

I said to her, "No, no, come stand on my shoulders, for you are old and I am young."

"No, no, "she insisted, "This is the way it is supposed to be." I saw that she stood on the shoulders of a woman far older than she, who stood on the shoulders of a woman even older...

-Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Women Who Run with the Wolves



Do you remember swapping tales around a campfire or at a party, trying to tell the scariest ghost story? Deep inside us all lurks the urge to weave a tale that can scare our friends — and ourselves — half to death. The urge to fascinate is as deeply imbedded as the urge to tell stories, and no

subject is more fascinating than a glimpse at our own mortality.

Wraith is a storytelling game that allows us to create our own ghost stories, stories in which we play the ghosts. Wraiths — and, by extension, the game — are metaphors for ourselves. By setting ourselves inside the World of Darkness for an evening, we can look into a funhouse mirror that reflects the darkest aspects of our world. The stories to be found here are macabre indeed, but in the end, they are just tales — ghost tales, if you will. When we press our faces to this ghostly mirror, the reflection we see is still our own. It's distorted, perhaps, but recognizable. The Storyteller's job is to hold that mirror before the players and give them a long, scary look.

If you're new to storytelling games, playing or running a game may seem awkward at first. We have become used to having our entertainment provided for us in nice, neat packages. Wraith requires you to be your own entertainer and to take an active hand in group storytelling. This chapter presents guidelines, thoughts, hints and techniques for running your own Wraith game. Players and Storytellers alike will profit by reading it; the quality of any Wraith tale depends as much upon the players' talents as those of the Storyteller.

Chapter Three: Storytelling


# The Storyteller's Role



t's not the tale; it's he who tells it. — Peter Straub, Ghost Story

Most stories are passive. One taleteller addresses an audience, which listens or watches for as long as it finds the presentation entertaining. Movies, TV, live theater and even books are examples of

this: a story is conceived, created and given to its audience for their amusement.

Storytelling games like Wraith, however, are different. Here, the "audience" participates with the Storyteller to create a story from their collective imaginations. Each player takes a part and influences the final shape of the story. Storytelling games are active entertainment, interactive and original, as opposed to passive. The synergy inherent to play produces a story greater than anything a single Storyteller could create.

Players create the story's characters, but the Storyteller creates the world. This is a challenging job. Guiding a group of players through a collaborative myth can be an intimidating and occasionally frustrating endeavor. Fleshing out a world, creating and playing a host of secondary characters, arbitrating rules and crafting scenarios can be difficult tasks. Nonetheless, the chance to make a dream come alive is well worth the trouble. While the other players carve their niches in the world, you give them the world itself.

Wraith has a number of elements to help the beginning Storyteller find her voice: a sample chronicle (given in the Appendix), a detailed setting chapter that outlines the fundamental differences between our reality and the world of Wraith, a system of rules designed for simplicity and elegance — and this chapter. This chapter outlines the techniques of effective storytelling, provides some brief rule-related hints, and discusses storytelling elements peculiar to the world of Wraith.

While the suggestions given in this chapter will help the Storyteller juggle her various roles, bear in mind that Wraith is, first and foremost, a game. It can be scary, enlightening, thrilling, heart-rending or exhilarating, but if it isn't enjoyable, it isn't worth playing. The first rule is to have fun — be fair, be creative and take chances. The second rule, however, is to remember that the tale is the thing: bogging a game down in arguments and needless complication robs it of its magic. You and your players should enjoy telling ghost stories together. If the game is aggravating, boring or frustrating, why bother? Story comes first; rules come second.

In fact, the third rule is that there are no rules — only guidelines. Enjoy!

## Entertainment

It's a lot like life, and that's what's appealing If you despise that throwaway feeling from disposable fun, Then this is the one.

-Depeche Mode, "Master and Servant"

Though a Storyteller will have many motivations, her overriding goal should be to entertain her players. Game time is an investment of sorts — you and your players could be watching a movie, going on a date, playing softball or just hanging out. By spending time on your game, your players are making an investment. Their good faith and your work and skill will hopefully pay off for all of you. After all the hard work that goes into preparing a game, nothing is more satisfying than watching your players have a genuinely good time. The pleasure of a job well done is your reward.

Storytelling is a chance to show off, an opportunity to display your creativity to your friends, and a way to have them share in a common experience. Sometimes, however, the desire to showboat or to please one's friends grows too strong. You can go too far to please your players, watering down the game just to make them feel important, or, conversely, lord your position over them. Either technique can lead to problems.

When everything proceeds correctly, your players will guide their characters through a richly woven story to eventual success. Adversity and setbacks abound, especially for the Restless, but the characters should succeed at some of their planned goals, even in the face of tragedy and fear. Balancing a chronicle's problems and perils with the players' abilities and desires takes practice, but the more seamlessly you balance these elements, the more exciting and powerful your stories will become.

## Using the Rules

The Storyteller rules system is designed to elevate drama and action over dice and charts. As a Storyteller, you should bear simplicity in mind. Trying to create a set of rules to cover every contingency and possibility would be a thankless and unrewarding task (not to mention an impossible one); trying to run a game while holding your place in half a dozen different rulebooks is difficult at best.

Accordingly, Storyteller flexibility and judgment are important; as Storyteller, you must be the final interpreter of the rules and must decide in a practical way how those rules apply in her game. Fairness and consistency are crucial. You must act impartially and reasonably for everyone involved if you're going to wield that power.

You will sometimes be obliged to invent new rules, or even break old ones. Twisting or breaking rules is often necessary to tell the best story. To maintain your players' trust, however, you should avoid breaking the rules on a regular basis. While throwing an occasional wrench into the works is appropriate for Wraith, changing the rules too frequently without good reason simply undermines the stability of the world you are trying to create. You may decide to change the rules permanently in some way, but everyone should know when the rules have been changed.

It is important that you develop the style of storytelling that best suits you and decide what you need to do to make it work. Do you like to try to structure things as much as possible, following the rules and creating a clear, consistent world for your characters; or do you prefer to wing it, rarely consulting rules or character sheets?

Your style will most likely fall somewhere between these two extremes; this is entirely up to you. It is nearly impossible to guess your style of storytelling before you actually begin to play; styles are developed through trial and error. Only experience will tell what works best for you. Leave yourself room to move, but be consistent.

# Elements of Wraith



e're so engaged in doing things to achieve purposes of outer value that we forget that the inner value, the rapture that is associated with being alive, is what it's all about.

 Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth Wraiths are both heroes and antiheroes: while the stereotypical hero embod-

ies virtue, courage and hope, wraiths are often dominated by greed, cowardice and despair. The existences of many wraiths are ruled by greed for souls, fear of Oblivion and the desire for Transcendence. Many among the Restless, however, resemble heroes in the classic sense; like a hero of myth, the wandering soul stands out from the common mass, descends (literally) into the Underworld, faces and combats the dark side of herself, and hopefully comes away better for the trial. Dreary afterlives are for Drones and Thralls; a Wraith character looks death in the face and laughs.

A number of elements must be juggled within a game of Wraith; many themes and ideas are unique to tales involving the Restless. Horror, terror and romance require special handling to be effective in a game. Atmosphere and suspension of disbelief are all-important tools. Without these elements, Wraith becomes just another game — fun, but ultimately shallow.

Theme

A unifying theme or collection of themes is central to storytelling games. Wraith has many themes — alienation, terror, transcendence and defiance are but a few. Themes fo-

Chapter Three: Storytelling





cus the attention of both the players and the Storyteller toward a shared vision, turning a simple exercise in intrigue or mayhem into a story with resonance and meaning.

A theme is a unifying idea or concept behind a story. One tale can have many themes, while an extended chronicle can have a single underlying idea. A chronicle about tracking a serial killer may cover a lot of ground through different stories. Each of these stories will have a central theme; one may center around a mother-daughter conflict, while the next concentrates on recurring nightmares. The themes of the stories within the chronicle will vary, but vengeance, the central theme behind the scenario, colors the chronicle as a whole.

The themes below merely scratch the surface of the game. This list is by no means complete; you will, within your own games, create greater and more varied themes than we could list.

 Isolation — Many among the Restless exist as bitter exiles from a life they never lived to begin with. Death has forced them to learn about life, and now it's too late to go back. While a wraith may Embody or Skinride for a short time, she is trapped between the Oblivion she fears and the life she can no longer enjoy. Many ghosts become brutally materialistic, hoarding and enslaving their own kind to compensate for the things they can no longer touch. Others just sit and watch as the living world goes by without them.

Wraith players will probably take a more active role in their afterlives than many ghosts do. They must defy the loneliness felt when nothing can be trusted and everything seems to die before their eyes. Characters must fight to overcome their isolation and make a difference, both in their world and the world of mortals.

• Fear — What could be a more natural theme for a ghost story than fear? The living have traditionally been afraid of restless spirits. Why? Is this an uncertain fascination with death itself, or the dread that those spirits may be angry with us for living when they do not? What fear, then, drives a ghost? The fear of death is gone, but terror remains. Why?

Most wraiths exist in fear — fear of each other, fear of loneliness, and, worst of all, fear of annihilation, of the destruction of their identity. Oblivion and Transcendence are two halves of the same coin: either one may mean the dissolution of the wraith's personality. Torment, to many modern people, is preferable to obliteration. Some people would rather burn in Hell forever than leave their identity behind.

• Inner Conflict — The wraith's worst foe is her Shadow, the epitome of everything she suppresses, hates and fears about herself. When you're dead, there's nowhere to hide from that aspect of yourself. Just as ghosts are trapped outside of life, they are, in many ways, trapped inside their own heads. Will the wraith succumb to the temptations of the Shadow or hold fast to her beliefs?

 Defiance — A defiant attitude is often useful in the world of the dead. With so many souls wrapped up in their own misery or in chains held by others, each wraith must either take control of his own destiny or fall into slavery. Wraiths continue to exist in defiance of death itself; most characters will want to rebel against the rigid systems and soul-slavery of the Underworld as well, pursuing their own goals in the afterlife.

• Triumph — Eventual triumph over death, despair and the Shadow offers a long-term goal to Wraith players. Defeating agents of the Hierarchy or Renegades, besting Spectres or killing your murderer all qualify as small triumphs. Larger triumphs include finding Transcendence by coming to terms with yourself, battling your inner Shadow and winning, and refusing to succumb to despair despite the pain that the afterlife may bring.

## Suspension of Disbelief

The Restless, by their very nature, raise certain questions and require careful handling. Suspension of disbelief, the prime element of any story, is especially important in a **Wraith** game. If your ghosts seem ridiculous or inconsistent, your game will suffer for it.

Setting a believable scene is essential; if you can get your players to accept the reality of the Underworld, the odd features composing it are easy to swallow. Consistent internal logic is vital to believability; all things should work the same way all the time unless there is a compelling reason (like the warped reality of the Tempest) why they do not.

Establish a reality to suspend your players' disbelief. Consistency excuses a multitude of sins.

## Tragedy

I act the role in classic style of a martyr Carved with a twisted smile, To bleed the lyric for this song To write the rites to right my wrongs An epitaph to a broken dream To exorcise this silent scream

A scream that's borne from sorrow.

- Marillion, "Script for a Jester's Tear"

Although the point of most roleplaying games is to be heroic and triumph against overwhelming odds, occasionally you may wish to tell a very dramatic and, from a storytelling standpoint, satisfyingly tragic story. Tragedy is often handled poorly, but this is because many people think that it is simply a story about sad circumstances. This is not true. A tragic story is about a character with a deep character flaw who, because of this flaw, makes one critical mistake and then, at some point (usually when it is too late), realizes what that mistake is and why he made it. He then changes and, for better or worse, goes on to meet his fate. He faces his fate with dignity, courage and strength, and in the end, we admire and empathize with him.



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To tell a good tragedy, you must understand it in the literary sense, not the colloquial sense.

A tragic story can be just as beautiful and as uplifting as a heroic one. Even if you don't tell a tragic story, you can add elements of tragedy in your main story: regret, loss, fatal flaws and missed chances are the meat and drink of a good Wraith story.

#### Horror and Terror

Though the names are often used interchangeably, horror and terror are different emotions. Each has its place in Wraith.

• Terror — Terror is the intellectual idea that something is wrong and it's going to get worse. Most terror operates within the boundaries of what an observer will accept; it is an apprehension that has begun to take on substance. When a shadow on the wall seems not quite right, a character (or a player) can feel terror.

Terror implies that all is not yet lost. While a roller-coaster ride evokes thrills of terror, there is still a safe zone. The cause of terror need not be an overt threat of physical violence. It's much more subtle than horror, and can be far more effective. The anticipation or dread of some disaster is often more compelling than the disaster itself.

 Horror — Horror is the almost physical revulsion that comes when safe boundaries have been shattered. Squeamish people may be horrified by the sight of blood; stronger minds and stomachs might give way under truly repulsive acts or unthinkable revelations.

Violation is the key to horror — physical violation (assault, mutilation and raw grossing-out), mental violation (things that must not and should not be) and emotional violation (utter betrayal or abandonment) all overstep the boundaries that players or characters have set. Storytellers must take care when aiming to horrify a player rather than a character. Horror is only entertaining when it's consensual (see *When to Stop*, below). If terror is a roller-coaster ride, horror is what happens when the car jumps its tracks and falls...

#### Romance

The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.

- Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love

It is all too easy to dismiss romance as an option for storytelling. Many people view romance as cheesy or sappy. Still, Wraith provides a wealth of romantic possibilities: if you do not explore at least some of them, you will be selling yourself (and your stories) short.

Take heart. Many people prefer romance when it is presented subtly rather than overtly. Don't rush a romantic plotline on your characters — it will feel forced, and one thing that romance should never be is forced.



When running romance, it is best to understand what motivates the characters and try to create Storyteller characters tailored to their desires. Be sensitive to the players' wishes. Just because a character loved someone in life does not mean that the feelings remain in death. You should explore how the character feels about his former loved ones. Show the wraith how a loved one is affected by death. Be patient — no matter how much you may like romance, you may never be able to interest your players in it unless you can be patient with them.

If the player is amenable, you can play wonderfully romantic stories involving longing across the chasm of death, of a living lover essentially willing herself to die for her lost love, of the pain stemming from a fallen love and how the lover who is left behind remembers his former love. You can also move these stories beyond the traditional tragic ghostly love story by giving the lovers time to be together through powers like Phantasm and Embody.

Even more beautiful are two who fall in love after death. The inherently tragic nature of their love adds to the story: will Oblivion erode the love they have woven from darkness? Often, romance and tragedy combine to produce stories of unsurpassed beauty and pain.

#### knowing When to Stop

A funny thing happens when people tell stories together. They take risks, let themselves go, and evoke aspects of themselves that they suppress in daily life. This can, in moderation, be a great thing. Everyone needs a release. But taking risks in a social situation leaves many people feeling exposed. Players can take offense and become disturbed by imaginary things. Roleplaying is cathartic; that is to say, it brings up and purges deep feelings and impulses. Catharsis is healthy, but leaves that person feeling more vulnerable than usual. This is especially true when dealing with horror and fear. It's fun to walk along that tightrope. Falling can be another thing entirely.

Gaming is a wonderful way of facing fear and frustration head-on. Through our characters, we can live vicariously, examining things we fear to touch and performing deeds we wouldn't dare attempt in real life. Sometimes, though, the line between fantasy and fear blurs, and a good Storyteller knows when that line is fading

# Chronicle



chronicle is a series of interconnected stories with common characters and a central idea. If a story is a chapter in a book, than the chronicle is the book itself.

Individual stories are obviously important to a storytelling game, but the chronicle provides a backdrop and foundation to the tales

## The Nature of Fear

Part of the fun of playing Wraith is that you can expose yourself to horrific and terrifying stories. We all like to be afraid when we are in control of the situation: we go on roller-coaster rides, watch scary movies and listen to ghost stories on a regular basis. It's important for your Storyteller to know what frightens you, the player, so she can decide what to include in her Wraith stories. Still, exploring what makes you afraid can be uncomfortable.

You should always realize that a roleplaying game is a consensual activity: you consent to play, and your Storyteller consents to tell the story. You can withdraw that consent at any time, however; this is what makes playing with fear fun rather than unpleasant.

It is suggested that you develop some means of communicating with your Storyteller when you feel that the fearful qualities of your game have come close to the limit of what you find comfortable — after all, this is just a game, and you should not have to sit through something unpleasant if you do not wish to experience it.

For example, Brenda is deathly afraid of spiders. Her character, Jamie, may not be. Still, because Mark knows that Brenda is afraid of them, he will try and put them into the story at some point. There comes a scene in the chronicle where Jamie is in a Harrowing and must cross a spiderweb-filled room while thousands of spiders crawl all over her. Mark begins describing the spiders - their chittering voices, clicking chelicerae and spindly legs and, although Brenda is grossed out, she is still having fun'. Then Mark describes how a large spider comes out of nowhere to bite her on the leg and start spinning a cocoon around her character. Brenda can't take any more of it. "Safeword," she says, and Mark knows to stop going for the gross-out. Of course, lamie is still wrapped up in a cocoon and must somehow be rescued. Because Brenda trusted Mark not to go too far with her fear of spiders, and because Mark respected Brenda's use of a safeword, everyone was able to relax and have fun.

Remember: exploring fear can be a lot of fun, but only if all involved give their consent. If you feel as though you don't properly understand the nature of giving consent, then you shouldn't bring a player's real-life fears into a game of Wraith.

as a whole. A strongly constructed chronicle can help players suspend disbelief by providing a vivid setting for their imaginations. A good chronicle is memorable, enjoyable and meaningful. By setting your stories inside a world, you and your players create mythology.

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## Creating a Chronicle

Begin brainstorming for your chronicle long before your players create their characters. The sharper your ideas and overall concept from the outset, the better everything else will work later. It can be time-consuming to create a Wraith chronicle, but the work you do at the beginning will pay off throughout future play sessions.

Laying the groundwork is a good place to start. Establish your setting, antagonists and overall theme at first, then work outward from there. Be flexible; your ideas will change as you go on. Let them.

Where will your chronicle take place? Would you prefer a town, a city or some rural area? Will your characters remain in the Shadowlands for the most part, or do they possess Arcanos that allow them to travel into the living world? Is your chronicle set around a Necropolis; if so, which one? What is it like?

Once you establish your setting, you need to decide what connects and unites the characters. At this point, you should develop the primary antagonists of the players — memorable adversaries have distinct personalities and motivations. Finally, decide the general direction and theme that you would like the tale to take. Don't be too rigid in this. Your chronicle will take some surprising turns.

#### Setting

While Chapter Two of this book provides a basic setting and background, the tasks of mapping and populating the local Underworld fall to you. If your game begins, as many do, in the Shadowlands, decide on a location where you want to set things and think about the dark reflection of that location in the Underworld. How old is your setting? Is it dying in the living world? What are some local landmarks? Where will your characters begin?

Some places will become common sites in your story the chapel near one person's grave, a library, the back alley where another character died, and so on. Most of these locations will tie into the group's Fetters, but other sites will become important after their deaths. Familiar places anchor the chronicle at certain points and keep the players involved in a cohesive story. You need to make these places come alive for the players; until the players can understand and envision their setting, the characters cannot fully exist.

#### Characters

The characters are the most important elements of a chronicle and need to be the focus of every story. As such, player involvement in creating the chronicle is paramount to success. This may seem obvious, but it is all too easy to fall into the trap of designing a seemingly wonderful chronicle that does not involve the characters as its protagonists. Most character groups will revolve around their Circle; player characters tend to find safety in numbers, and this is doubly true in **Wraith**. Your players may be united by a common cause of death, a single Fetter or a compelling purpose. This unifying thread will give all of you a springboard from which to launch your chronicle. Establishing the nature of the Circle ahead of time will save you a lot of trouble in the long run.

Get involved in character creation; telling your players what to do isn't a good idea, but a guiding hand will ensure that the pieces fit together smoothly. Depending on your chronicle, you may even have to dictate some aspects of character creation, but be careful to explain, at least vaguely, why such directives are important to the chronicle.

#### Antagonists

The opponents the characters face in the course of a chronicle are very important. Antagonists provide a foil for reflecting what the characters strive to attain; on a more immediate level, they add excitement and conflict to the chronicle. A great villain can make all the difference in a beginning chronicle, while a weak one may spoil the most elaborate of tales.

Nothing holds a chronicle together, story to story, better than a good villain — an individual (or close group) the characters know is malevolent or evil. During the course of the chronicle, the characters should confront the same villain(s) time and time again. This provides continuity to the chronicle as well as a familiar face that the players may well love to hate. If the same villain or group can be found opposing the characters at every turn, you will heighten the players' involvement.

The most important antagonists the characters face, however, are their own Shadows. Turmoil within the individual is a central theme in Wraith. Each Shadow should have a distinct nature — they are not merely "bad angels" on their Psyche's shoulders, but the summation of all that is most frightening in that character's soul. Shadows must have depth, complexity and motivation. Villainy is not caricature; the most memorable villains are the ones who are the most human.

## Title

Almost every book, play, movie, poem, painting and sculpture has a title; you may want your chronicle to have one as well. Give your chronicle a title and have the players put it on their character sheets. The title of the chronicle may be as elaborate or as simple as you want, and the title itself may foreshadow things to come. A title like "The Laughing Darkness" may suggest more ominous things to your players than you yourself had in mind.

# Approaching the Chronicle



here are two basic types of plotlines story-driven and character-driven.

With a story-driven plotline, the Storyteller creates the story of the antagonists. She determines who the antagonists are, what their goals are, and how they plan to achieve those goals. Independent of the

characters, the antagonists of the piece pursue their own ends, which lead them into conflict with the group.

Story-driven plots hinge on the characters' reactions to their antagonists. Stopping their enemies should be in the Circle's best interests. The chronicle ends with the success or failure of the antagonists' schemes.

Story-driven plotlines can be easy to run because the Storyteller doesn't depend on the players' decisions to advance her chronicle. If the group doesn't act, their enemies grow stronger.

The biggest danger of designing this type of plot is balancing the villains and the player characters. If the antagonists are too powerful, the game can become frustrating. In story-driven plots, the Storyteller must give players opportunities for success. Let them have a few chances to stop Enfants in the service of the enemy or crush some ghost-hunters. Otherwise, players may decide that they don't have a chance and refuse to confront their persecutors. As a general rule, an enemy's plan should have three or more things that could go wrong. Also, it is easier to upgrade enemies than downgrade them.

Despite the advantages of the story-driven plot, most beginning **Wraith** chronicles are character-driven. In a character-driven plot, the focus shifts to the player characters. The Storyteller tries to manipulate the characters into pursuing a set of goals. The Storyteller should sketch out some motivations for the characters. If, as a Storyteller, you don't know what a particular character wants in life, ask the player. Good players recognize the potential for a plotline and tend to follow it if they are given the right reasons. This type of plot gives the players great freedom in dictating the pace of the chronicle. It works well for quests, where the characters have to find an object or person, or accomplish a task. Strong Storyteller-run allies help a Storyteller influence this type of chronicle, especially if the Storyteller controls a character that is a Circle member.

For designing a character-driven plot, a Storyteller first determines the goal and then comes up with reasons for the characters to pursue it. There are two ways to motivate characters — positive reinforcement (the carrot method) and negative reinforcement (the stick method). To keep the players moving toward a goal, vary the use of these methods depending on what gets the most response.

The carrot method involves offering the characters a reward if they pursue the goal. The players see something they



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want and decide to go after it. Let the players make the decision you want them to make, but don't force them to do it. Make notes on a few possible carrots.

The stick method causes the characters to suffer in some way if they don't pursue the goal. The punishment does not have to be directed at the characters themselves. Often, it works better if Contacts. Thralls or mortal friends suffer instead of the characters.

Once you've determined the goal, you need to create obstacles to impede the characters' path. Obstacles include enemies, but they can also include terrain, lack of knowledge or lack of power. Individual stories in a character-driven plotline can center around overcoming these obstacles.

## **Chronicle Concepts**

Chronicle concepts define who the characters are and what situations they will encounter. The best way to keep your game interesting is to start it off interesting, so it helps to choose a concept with lots of plot hooks that intrigue both you and your players. A few of the possibilities are listed below.

The True Believers

The Circle works for one of the three major factions of the Underworld - the Hierarchy, the Heretics or the Renegades - and believes strongly in its cause (or pretends to believe). The characters are on the low end of the totem pole, and they're sent on the dirtiest jobs and the most hopeless assignments. Depending on the attitude of their superiors, this could be a glorious campaign to set things right and improve the world, or near-torment at the bottom of the bureaucratic ziggurat. Though the characters may have access to greater resources than freelancers or neutrals, they also must keep their faction's ends in sight ... which may make it difficult to tend to their own Fetters and Passions.

Because of the "go there, do this" slant to the situation, this may be a good beginning chronicle: straightforward instructions and clear goals are helpful when learning a new game. Once the characters and players gain confidence, the concept may become limiting. They can then easily strike out on their own - working for or against their organization - and shake up the game a bit.

Keep in mind that there are more forces in the World of Darkness than just the Hierarchy, Renegades and Heretics. Vampires, werewolves and mages are all known to contact the Restless at times and might offer relics or protection in return for services rendered. In addition, other creatures of the Umbra have unknown powers and incomprehensible motives that could engender very...unusual...assignments.

Staying Neutral

Why fight; you're already dead. The characters may avoid conflict as much as possible, whether because of idealism, pacifism, cowardice, or other interests. This is not easy. Aside from



the fact that no one around them is likely to stop their intriguing, the characters may find themselves under fire in turf battles to test their neutrality, or even to test the strength of Gangs and Cohorts without fear of retaliation by more powerful allies. Their friends, whether few or many, will find it difficult to help them without compromising their own positions. Eventually, they could become respected for their stand and sought after to arbitrate disputes, but status of that sort will come slowly, if at all.

Of course, the Circle might avoid direct loyalties just to play all ends against the middle. Some spies and freelancers do this. Watch out — double agents and mercenaries are what the VIPs call "expendable."

#### The Guardians

Home is where the heart is, and the wraiths of this chronicle are out to protect what they love, no matter what. They have living relatives and friends — strong Fetters — and now that they *know*, firsthand, what the afterlife holds, the characters seek to prevent both supernatural and mundane forces from disturbing what they hold dear.

This kind of chronicle allows plenty of detective work, strong roleplaying opportunities and crossover stories. Be careful not to limit the game to "what's bothering our living friends this week?" One mysterious phenomenon in the neighborhood could easily fuel session after session. And don't forget: the Underworld isn't likely to leave the characters to their own devices for long.

#### Transcendence

The Underworld is a waystation between this life and the next, and the characters just want to move on. They may know (or think they know) exactly what needs to be done, or they may spend their time desperately seeking that information.

The characters' battle to conquer their Shadows will probably become a major theme of the chronicle, so be prepared to explore the darker half of the game extensively.

Of course, if the characters are still seekers, they may cover the length and breadth of the Underworld following up clues and leads concerning Transcendence. Ferrymen are rumored to know a clue or two, some of the agents of the Far Shores insist that they know bits and pieces, and the Circle might contact stranger things as well.

#### Espionage

In an intrigue-filled society like that of the Restless, good agents are in constant demand. Early in their afterlife, the characters in this type of chronicle are "recruited" by the intelligence-gathering division of the Hierarchy, the Heretics or the Renegades. Now, with a little experience under their belts, they start to receive more interesting assignments. The entire Circle could be sent on a variety of missions: infiltrating one of the other factions, "assassinating" or capturing important figures, executing terrorist-style missions, or acting as normal "citizens" and keeping their eyes open. In a more difficult scenario, they could be double agents. They can be honorable or entirely dishonest, and they may not even understand which side they work for...

Again, if the Storyteller is willing to run crossover games, the characters could easily become involved with other Awakened creatures. Keeping tabs on the vampire prince of a city is a more-than-full-time job... as is spying on the Glass Walker werewolves on behalf of a Hierarch.

#### Babes in the Woods

The characters are among the extremely recently deceased and have little or no memory of their past lives. As new arrivals, they know hardly anything about the Underworld, either. This is a problem.

Young wraiths might be under the care and tutelage of a more experienced wraith or under indoctrination by a fanatical branch of the Hierarchy, Heretics or Renegades. The personality — good or bad — of their Mentor(s) will be very important to the chronicle. Conversely, they could be trying to make it on their own, figuring things out as they go along.

This approach is one of the simplest for new players; no one has to know anything more about the game than is necessary for character generation. If the characters are complete amnesiacs, everything can be discovered as the game progresses, and the players will learn things just as their characters do.

#### Historical

Not every character in Wraith died yesterday, of course. The Circle could well be composed of people from any time and place, bound together through similar Passions and Fetters (freedom, justice, homelands).

Another option is moving the setting itself back in time. In the French Revolution, for instance, the spirits of guillotined aristocrats might unite for vengeance or to make amends for their families' corruption. Middle-class ghosts continuing the fight would harass them, their ancestors would order them about, and the peasantry would make claims upon them for protection or retribution. All this would add to the ordinary hazards of the Underworld.





eath loves a shining mark, a signal blow. — Edward Young, Night Thoughts Each Wraith session is a separate story. You, as the Storyteller, must have a firm idea about where and how each story begins and what texture you want it to have. Once the game begins, you and your play-

ers will hopefully take the idea and run with it from there.

Do not try to decide absolutes concerning what will or will not happen in your story. Few things are more irritating to

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a player than a storyteller who pulls the game along a predetermined path regardless of what the players want or do. Try not to force your players into any situation they try to avoid unless you have some reason to frustrate them or some plan to reward them. Stories ideally begin with an idea and grow outward through the efforts of everyone concerned.

The story concepts below may give you a few ideas for your game, but only you know which concepts work best for you and your group. Feel free to experiment; storytelling, unlike board gaming, is freeform, not rigid.

#### Story Concepts

Swift as light and as cheering was the idea that broke in upon me. "I have found it! What terrified me will terrify others; I need only describe the spectre which had haunted my midnight pillow." On the morrow, I announced that I had thought of a story.

- Mary Shelley, Introduction to Frankenstein

Listed below are a number of concepts that you can use as seeds to create your own stories. Read these concepts, pick out the ideas you like the best, and weave a story from what you get.

#### Getting across Town

For one purpose or another — the reason isn't necessarily important — the Circle is in one place and their goal is somewhere else entirely. This is where the fun begins. As if the Underworld is out to get them, one disaster after another crosses their path. With a little luck, the characters can make it to their goal...and hope that whatever they needed is still around.

#### On the Home Front

Sometimes the story comes home to the characters. Perhaps their Haunt is in danger, or their loved ones are under attack. The Circle is forced on the defensive, trying to stay one step ahead of their enemies — and the enemies they see may not be the real threat. While the characters are trying to prevent the Hierarchy from taking over the neighborhood, the Heretics may be convincing their allies that holy war is the key to salvation. Meanwhile, crazed Spectres threaten to destroy the lives of the living. Can the characters figure out who is behind this madness? Only time will tell.

#### The Maelstrom

In the midst of an ordinary evening, bells ring out from the towers of the Necropolis in which the characters live. The alarm is a warning that comes perhaps once in a decade — a Maelstrom is coming. Old souls head for their Haunts immediately, knowing that the storm travels faster than a wraith can run. The panic is incredible, and no one seems to know when or where the thing will surface. If the characters have a strong Haunt, will they reach it in time? If they have no safehold, where will they go? And wherever they end up, will their shelter last the night?

After the Maelstrom, assuming the characters survive intact, how will the Shadowlands appear? The survivors may spend many months cleaning up the mess and searching for the lost. Besides the changes in their own world, some horrible event was surely the spark for the devastation — Maelstroms often begin with death in huge numbers — and Fetters can be completely destroyed in riots, fires, war or other disasters.

#### The Harrowing

Try though the characters might to avoid it, eventually at least one of their number will be taken by the Tempest. This nightmare ride is fast, terrifying and confusing, and makes for excellent story material.

Even if only one member of the Circle is being Harrowed, the rest of the troupe doesn't have to sit on the sidelines. The characters may play the Shadows of those affected, and the experience may provide countless extra characters for the others to enact.

#### Mystery

A mystery may start as something small, but quickly assumes an importance and relevance to the Circle. Dark secrets among the wraiths of the Circle or their associates are excellent ways to begin a mystery, but murder is the classic device. Perhaps one of the living is found decapitated in the character's Haunt. Will the police arrive at all? Has the spirit become a wraith, and if so, how is he taking this? It's very easy to rope the characters into the plot from here, particularly if their living Fetters are under pressure as witnesses or suspects.

#### The Boo Job

Yuppies move into your Haunt. Sound familiar? Whether the threat is from the upwardly mobile, from nice folks trying to clean up the neighborhood, or from bulldozers clearing out the local eyesore, there's something breathing down the characters' necks. Now the characters have to get the living out of there, by hook or by crook. Can they be scary enough to rid themselves of these pests?

#### Freelancing

The characters are approached by higher-ups willing to pay well for services rendered. They might be asked to hunt down a Spectre, track down a wraith's Fetters, or carry messages from Necropolis to Necropolis.

This could be as straightforward as it seems. If the Storyteller wishes to make things tricky, however, the characters could find themselves embroiled in local politics. Are they being framed? For whom are they actually working? Was the mission as simple as it seemed? Did the characters sign anything to guarantee completion of the task?

#### Raiders of the Lost Afterlife

There's an artifact out there — a famous, powerful one, and the race is on to get to it before someone else does. In fact, everybody wants it, and the characters have stumbled on an important clue to its location. Now, not only must they rush to find it, they must also dodge all the other competitors.

Even if the Circle gets this amazing thing, they still have to figure out what to do with it. Escaping the other searchers

with the mysterious object intact won't be easy. What if it's huge? What if it's fragile? It may even be an obnoxious wraith imprisoned long ago and transformed into a mere object...

## Setting the Stage

Storytelling is a lot like theatre; setting the stage allows your audience to step from the real world into another one, leaving everyday concerns behind. This approach, also used in magic and religious ritual, helps prepare both your players and yourself for something different, something "other." Changing your mindsets from "daily life" to "storytime" frees you to create together. Removing distractions, if only for a moment, can make a world of difference in your game.

Storytelling games are usually played indoors at a table in the kitchen, den or living room. There should be chairs for all the players, and refreshments if the gaming session is to last awhile. You should also consider any props you might need, any modifications to the room to set the mood for the gaming session, and any special provisions necessary for Live-Action if your story will involve it.

It's hard to get into a ghostly mindset in the afternoon. Wraith games should ideally take place at night, possibly in a room lit by candles or dim light. Music can add a great deal to the atmosphere, as long as it is appropriate and not distracting. A moment of silence, the lighting of a candle or even a concise phrase (like "and it begins...") can set the tone for the game. This kind of "once upon a time" introduction can go a long way toward establishing the right mood.

Before you begin a new session, make sure that there are no loose ends from the last session, such as character experience or rule interpretations. Once you are ready to begin, you might tell the players the title of the new story, if you've given it one. Remember that the most important line is the first line; hook your players at the beginning of each game session and draw them along as you go.

# Conflict



ll literature is concerned with two things: sex and violence.

 Dr. Kenneth Campbell, from a lecture on Western dramaturgy

Conflict is dynamic; through struggles both internal and external, your tales and characters progress. By providing your

characters with an obstacle to overcome, whether it's a char-



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acter, a situation or an institution, you give them motivation and purpose.

Internal and external conflict are both important in Wraith; internal battles with the Shadow contrast with the external threats from the Hierarchy, soul-slavers, Heretics, Renegades and other assorted factions. No matter which side of the fence your players choose, their characters will feel enemies breathing down their necks (so to speak). While stories that move from one fight scene to the next quickly get boring, tales with no direction, conflict or struggle meander listlessly before falling into a rut.

Conflict provides energy and direction for a story — it provides the characters with someone to fight. The battles may be emotional, philosophical or brutally physical, but conflict of some kind or another is vital to a continuing chronicle. Conflict propels the story by involving and motivating the characters on an emotional level. If you give them someone to hate, they'll be far more interested in what's going on. Though the characters might not start as the primary participants in the conflict, they will quickly become involved by being enveloped in the struggle. Simply make it impossible for them to remain neutral.

#### · Circle vs. Hierarchy

The colossal bureaucracy of the Underworld is much like certain unscrupulous governments in the Skinlands. Calling the Hierarchy corrupt is an exercise in understatement, and the characters will often find themselves pitted against its minions and its dictates, even if they work for it. Existing within its labyrinthine internal politics is almost as dangerous as resisting its enforcers. Though the Hierarchy does offer some small protection from the tribulations of the Underworld, its power is often used for tyranny, and the Circle would do well to avoid its direct attention.

#### Circle vs. Heretics

The religious cults of the dead can be just as fanatical and oppressive as any followed by the living. Although many of these groups are well-intentioned and basically benevolent, the rest are as dreaded as any goons of the Hierarchy. Rumors of brainwashing, deportation and the outright severing of Fetters abound. If the characters are marked as valuable potential converts, the evangelical furor over their beliefs might even become violent. If more than one sect is after the wraiths, a minor holy war could spring up on the spot.

#### Circle vs. Renegades

You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs, and you can't have a revolution without a little bloodshed, or shredded plasm, as the case may be. If the characters try to oppose the Renegades' plans, the rebels may take steps to clear them out of the way. Even as innocent bystanders, the Circle may be in danger as the silent war continues around them. Totally neutral characters can still come under fire if they get a reputation (deserved or not) for assisting other factions. Player character Renegades may find it difficult to obey orders given them if their personal goals fail to conform to those of their allies. In any case, care should be taken when dealing with these unpredictable guerrillas.

#### · Circle vs. Circle

Conflict between groups may take place on a much smaller, more personal level, of course. Circle vs. Circle conflict is all too common in the fight for the Shadowlands' scarce resources. The issue could be as simple as right-of-way through a gang's territory, or as complex as members of opposing groups sharing the same Fetter. If the other Circle has friends in high places, it may rapidly become difficult to resolve the differences between them. Both sides could seek impartial arbitration (if such a thing exists), but there's no guarantee that either will abide by the decision.

#### · Wraith vs. Wraith

Imagine being murdered and discovering that your killer has finally been executed and revenge is yours — if you can find her. The reasons why one wraith might trouble another are as numerous and complex as in real life, but with the elements of death and eternity thrown in, even minor slights can take on obscene importance.

Of course, wraith vs. wraith might be a positive challenge: two rival Sandmen could strive to put on the best dream-plays for the Living, or famous historical swordsmen might duel in the Necropolis streets, or adolescent wraiths could vie for the best trick on Halloween. It all depends on the intent of the participants.

#### · Wraith vs. Vampire

As the movers and shakers behind much that is wrong with the World of Darkness, vampires may be the indirect cause of many wraiths' deaths, particularly those who dwelled in cities while living. Any wraith out for justice or reform will have to bypass the Leeches one way or another.

Or the vampires may come to them first. The Tremere (sorcerer vampires), the Samedi (hideous zombie-kin vampires), and especially the Giovanni (necromancers) all have interest in information from the Underworld, and most would have no qualms about binding wraiths into positions of servitude.

#### Wraith vs. Werewolf

Although the Garou are aware that ghosts exist, they tend to avoid contact with them. Wraiths are unlikely to meet most tribes of werewolves unless they make a special effort to do so. Unfortunately, such an effort is almost certainly unwelcome. The Restless believe that Spectres attack werewolves whenever they can, as part of some unknown plot of Oblivion. Because Garou seemingly can't tell wraiths apart from Spectres, werewolves' antagonism is understandable.

#### · Wraith vs. Mage

These magickal, reality-shifting idealists work with wraiths more closely and more often than any other Awakened creatures in the Umbral Realms. Many of them can see and hear the Restless if they make the effort. Quite a few of them are aware of the situation in the Shadowlands and will trade favors and assist the wraiths in their goals. However, less scrupulous mages are not above enslaving wraiths, binding them into magickal objects or even distilling them for their Pathos. The knowledge gained by the first group often falls into the hands of the second, forcing entire Necropoli to submit to the whims of wizards.

#### · Wraith vs. Supernatural

Depending on what other supernatural elements you choose to include in your chronicle, other forces may also oppose the characters. Besides regular vampires, werewolves and mages, there are mummies, changelings, the animated dead, shapeshifters and gargoyles, just to name a few.

#### · Wraith vs. the Quick

Most of the wraiths who inhabit the Shadowlands are more concerned with getting *into* contact with the living than worried about what might happen when they do. The Quick don't tend to notice them, and unless the wraith needs to talk to someone, this is pretty convenient.

Despite this, there are many organizations whose sole purpose is to gain knowledge about the afterlife and the Restless, and their reasons are not usually good. The best of these groups wish only to prove the existence of wraiths; the worst are out for the power they represent or the opportunity to destroy the "creatures of evil."

#### · Wraith vs. Shadow

The most important conflict in Wraith is that between the Shadow and the Psyche. The darker side of the self is in constant battle for dominance, and this struggle is the source of much of the drama inherent to the game. This is a more intense, more frightening area of the chronicle. Be careful when you explore it, particularly if the player is at all like his character.

#### · Wraith vs. Self

Not every internal struggle need be between Shadow and Psyche, of course. Even a well-balanced person can have doubts and crises. The "better" half of the personality, because it is usually the more self-critical, is quite prone to this. Naturally, any moment of indecision or worry could leave the Psyche open to the Shadow's persuasion...

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The characters do not realize who their enemy is, or who seeks their destruction. This makes it all the more terrifying.

#### Wraith vs. Spectre

Oblivion is a powerful enemy, and many are not strong enough to withstand it. These lost souls, called Spectres, wander the Shadowlands, leaving destruction in their wake; they fill the Tempest to bursting with their grotesque selves and their nightmarish collection of dead memories. Wraiths fear Spectres both for their actual, horrifying acts and abilities and the final horror they represent: the negation of the Psyche. They have completely lost the battle with Oblivion, but are too strong or useful to be completely consumed, and this is the worst fate most Restless can imagine. Nothing can be more frightening than recognizing an old friend's face with a Spectre's eyes.

#### Sanity vs. Madness

Wraith lends itself easily to this kind of conflict. The Underworld is not kind to the weak-minded or the deranged, although it is possible that this kind of person may Transcend very easily. Those who arrive slightly cracked had better mend quickly or move on...the Shadow can subvert most kinds of madness.

# Advanced Techniques



o what are we going to do for the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him? ... I swear it's the only alternative I can think of.

#### Tennessee Williams, The Glass Menagerie

The following techniques are extremely difficult to utilize properly, but can be very rewarding if done well. These advanced concepts must be carefully planned and executed with grace and finesse to work effectively. If you employ them correctly, however, you will create a story your players will never forget.

#### Dream Sequence

Used properly in a storytelling game, the clichéd dream sequence can become a powerful device. The dead do indeed dream, and their visions are rarely pleasant. Wraiths with the Phantasm Arcanos may even enter and alter the dreams of mortals.

The technique, as its name implies, is simply a dream that is either shared by all the characters or is specific to one of them. In the dream, the characters are either themselves or caricatures of themselves. Even if the dream is that of only one character, the other players may still participate in the dream by assuming the roles of the other people, creatures or even settings in the dream. The player or players need never know whose dream they have entered, but the story of the dream should always be important to the overall theme of the tale.

While playing out the dream sequence, you must determine how much latitude the characters have within the dream. This spectrum of Storyteller control over the dream sequence ranges from a minute description of the dream to simply throwing the characters into a dream and describing what appears while giving players control to do as they will.

Storyteller-controlled dreams are good for foreshadowing upcoming events or for establishing symbolism within the story. The character's Shadow may begin to gnaw at the Psyche by appearing in dreams and driving sleep away. Such an invasion may precede an all-out assault or may come to nothing. Keep your players wondering.

Remember that when storytelling a dream sequence, the action and settings should be dreamlike. Characters disappear and reappear from the dream, events happen with no logical order or flow, settings change instantly, and the dreamer feels extreme emotions that do not necessarily correspond to what is happening in the dream.

### Flashback

While a dream is concerned with how an aspect of the present relates to the current story, a flashback is concerned with how an aspect of the past relates to the present. Flashbacks are common around Fetters, and vivid memories of the moment of death Haunt many of the Restless.

The events of the flashback, or at least its outcome, should be pretty well dictated by the Storyteller, even if the flashback does involve the players' characters. Even though they are not in control, players will often enjoy flashbacks that give them a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes incidents that spawned the events they are currently tackling.

There are other, more dramatic uses of flashbacks, but these should be used less often. For example, a flashback to a certain player character's past can be used to introduce a Storyteller character from the player character's childhood, or a loved one, or a killer whose face the ghost still cannot see...

## Symbolism, Motifs and Icons

One of the tricks you can steal from moviemakers is the use of symbolism, motifs and icons. This must be done subtly; if you put heavy-handed symbolism into stories, it will feel heavy-handed and ruin the effect.

You must introduce a symbol by dropping it into the background of your setting: street names, places, people, the names

of stores, graffiti on a wall, a tapestry that's hanging in the Citadel's main hall. Once you introduce the symbol, keep it in mind and mention it once in a while when the thing represented by that symbol appears in the story.

For example, let's say you decide that fire is a major symbol for the rebellion against authority in your setting. Let's say your characters rebel against the Hierarchy by seeking the Heretics in their area. When they return from their fateful meeting with the Heretics, they may pass by a burning building.

A motif is a symbol that recurs throughout the chronicle, and its meaning changes as the chronicle continues. If it rains in the same "fire" chronicle, it could mean that the Hierarchy has taken power once again. At the end of the chronicle, however, perhaps the Renegades take control after a particularly destructive coup. The rain, now gentle and cleansing, could symbolize a purge of the city as a whole.

Below are some sample symbols to start you thinking; you will think of many others as well:

Fire: Wildfire destroys; the heat of a forge can temper strength; the flame of a candle is meditative; the warmth of a hearth can convey safety.

Rain: This can be dreary and depressing, or cleansing and nourishing.

Flowers: Rosemary and forget-me-nots show remembrance, roses speak of love, and lilies beautify death.

Chains: A visible representation of loyalties and alliances.

Masks: This can be an outward sign of duplicity and deception.

Mirrors: They may reflect the truth, or a twisted version of it.

Mazes: These embody confusion, as well as a challenge to be mastered and overcome.

Birds: Canaries, crows, eagles and robins are all used as icons. Birds are legendary carriers of the soul, and also serve as spies and watchers.

Crossroads: Often haunted, crossroads can represent a decision or a turning point in life.

Colors: Each color has countless meanings; for example, green is sometimes represented as the color of death, sometimes as the sign for life and growth.

## After a Story

Say good-bye to all this... and hello to oblivion.

- Riff Raff, The Rocky Horror Picture Show

After a story's conclusion, you should consider the impact of the story's events upon the larger chronicle. Because stories often end in an unexpected manner, it is important for you to determine how to reroute the chronicle into the plotline you desire or replot the chronicle based upon the new developments. Remember that you are weaving a great novel, and no author knows for certain what every detail of his finished novel will be before he begins writing it. Also, writers don't have to compensate for player decisions.

The other important thing to do before you begin designing the next story in the chronicle is making notes of any new settings or characters that were introduced into the chronicle. Large chronicles can spawn casts of hundreds of major and minor Storyteller characters and scores of important settings. To keep your sanity, it's best to find a way to keep track of everything as it develops in the chronicle. Notecards (one 3" x 5" for each setting or character) work well because more information can be added to them later and they're easy to file, but most of us can only aspire to be so organized.

## Ending a Chronicle

Ending with a strong conclusion is as important as any other part of a chronicle. Even if a chronicle continues for several years, there is something magical about the moment that all (or most) of the various interconnected stories juxtapose in a great climax. The final session of any chronicle should be an event to remember, so make the extra effort to make the climactic event something special.

After the climax, it often helps to wind down the action with a bit more storytelling in the same setting. Characters can say any necessary good-byes or return things to a normal state after vanquishing a villain. Once that's finished, it's time to begin planning the next chronicle.

Of course, there is nothing that says you have to start from scratch each time. If you want to continue on with the same characters and setting, you can take these elements in new directions. Players can become attached and accustomed to their characters, and it's satisfying to experience the growth and development of a single character through several chronicles.

However, don't limit yourself to continuing what has come before. Some players may want to try a fresh perspective and create new characters, while others in the group keep their established characters. Also, perhaps one of the players would like to switch roles with the Storyteller so that she may design and run the next chronicle. The storytelling troupe may also wish to consider integrating the new Wraith chronicle with elements from one of White Wolf's other storytelling games such as Vampire: The Masquerade, Werewolf: The Apocalypse or Mage: the Ascension.

Chapter Three: Storytelling







# Chapter Four: Rules

Rule number six: there is no rule number six. — Monty Python's Flying Circus



Il games have rules. Some have only a few and are fairly simple, such as Chutes and Ladders. Others have many and are extremely complicated, like bridge. Wraith has something in common with both types — it has only a few simple rules, but these few rules have a large number of permutations. You need only learn

the basic rules, but their permutations evoke the flavor of the game, allowing it to simulate the complexity of real life. This chapter provides the basic rules of **Wraith**; you decide which permutation to use.

Rules are like the myths that shape and describe a culture. They define what is important and delineate the possibilities of existence. Though these rules may seem somewhat strange and exotic, they really aren't all that complicated. Once you understand them, you'll understand how to play this game. Just concentrate on learning these basics; everything else will come naturally.

## Time

Devouring time, blunt thou the lion's paws, And make the earth devour her own sweet brood; Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws, And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood. — Shakespeare, "Sonnet 19"

The first thing you need to learn is how time passes in Wraith. There are five different ways to describe time, progressing from the smallest unit to the all-encompassing one. • Turn — One unit of time within a scene, anywhere from three seconds to three minutes in length. A turn is enough time to take one action (discussed below).

 Scene — One compact period of action and roleplaying that takes place in a single location. A scene is made up of a variable number of turns (as many as it takes to complete it); it can also be completed strictly through roleplaying, which requires no use of turns.

 Chapter — One independent part of a story, almost always played in one game session. It is made up of a number of scenes connected by periods of downtime.

 Story — A complete tale, with an introduction, buildup and climax, that often takes several chapters to complete.

• Chronicle — A whole series of stories connected by the lives of the characters and perhaps a broadly conceived theme and plot. It is simply the ongoing story told by you and the players.

## Actions

Besides acting out their characters' speeches and conversations, players will want their characters to perform (or at least attempt to perform) actions they describe to the Storyteller. An action can be anything from jumping over a gorge to glancing over one's shoulder to check for pursuers. The player tells the Storyteller what her character is doing and details the procedure she uses.

Chapter Four: Rules





Many actions are automatic - for instance, when a player tells the Storyteller that her character walks across the street toward a warehouse. All the Storyteller needs to do is keep track of where the character is and what she is doing. However, certain actions require a dice roll to determine success or failure.

## **Rolling Dice**

There is always chance in life. There's a chance you'll win the lottery, a chance you'll be audited, and a chance you'll die in a plane crash. Chance plays a role in Wraith as well. However, Wraith players use dice to simulate the duplicity of Lady Luck.

Wraith requires the use of 10-sided dice, which you can buy in any game store. If you are the Storyteller, you will want a lot of dice, at least 10, all to yourself. As a player, you'll also want dice, but you may share dice with other players.

Whenever the success of an action is in doubt, or the Storyteller thinks there is a chance your character might fail, you will have to roll dice. This gives your character an opportunity to let weaknesses and strengths exhibit themselves, thereby revealing something of the character's true nature to both you and the other players.

## Ratings

A character is described by her Traits - the innate and learned abilities and aptitudes she possesses. Traits are defined by numbers; each Trait has a rating from 1 to 5, which describes the character's ability in that particular Trait. A 1 is lousy, while a 5 is superb. This scale of 1 to 5 is the "star" rating system made famous by movie and restaurant critics.

The normal human Trait range is from 1 to 3, with 2 being average. However, exceptional people can have Traits of 4 (exceptional) or 5 (superb), or even have a zero in a Trait (which is extremely rare, but not unheard of).

- Abysmal x
- Poor
- Average
- Good
- Exceptional
- ···· Superb

For each dot your character has in a particular Trait, you get to roll one die. Thus, if you had four dots in Strength, you would get to roll four dice. If you had one dot in Perception. you would only get to roll one die. However, you almost never simply roll the number of dice you have in an Attribute, which defines your intrinsic capabilities. Usually you get to add the number of dice you have in an Attribute to the number of dice you have in an Ability - things that you know and have learned.

So if the Storyteller wants the players to roll to see if they notice the patrol car creeping up behind them, he would have them roll Perception + Alertness — an Attribute + an Ability. Each player would take as many dice as she had dots in Perception and put them in her hands. Then each player would add one die for each dot in Alertness.

These dice are collectively called the Dice Pool. A character's Dice Pool delineates the total number of dice a player may roll in a single turn — usually for a single action, although a player can divide a Dice Pool in order to allow her character to perform more than one action. When rolling for a Trait such as Willpower, which has both a permanent and a temporary score, a player almost always rolls a number of dice equal to the Trait's permanent rating (the circles), not its current score (the squares).

Certain actions don't require or even have an appropriate Ability. An example of this is when a player soaks damage from an attack. In such cases, the player only uses an Attribute, rolling the number of dice listed for that Attribute — in this case, Stamina.

There is absolutely no situation where more than two Traits can combine to form a Dice Pool. Only one Trait can be used if it has a potential value of 10 (such as Willpower or Angst). This means that a Trait like Willpower can never be combined with another Trait. It is generally impossible for a normal human being to have more than 10 dice in a Dice Pool.

## Difficulties

I always try to do six impossible things before breakfast. — The Red Queen, Alice in Wonderland

Now you've got to figure out what you need to look for when you roll the dice. The Storyteller assigns each task a difficulty rating, a number that quantifies the challenge posed by the task. A difficulty is always a number between 2 and 10. You need to roll that number or higher on at least one of the dice in your Pool in order to succeed. Each time you do so, it's called a success. If the difficulty is a 6, and you roll 2, 3, 5, 6 and 9, you have scored two successes. Though you usually need only one success to succeed, the more successes you score, the better you perform. Scoring only one success is considered a marginal success, while scoring three is considered a complete success, and scoring five is a momentous event.

- Difficulties
- 3 Easy
- 4 Routine
- 5 Straightforward
- 6 Standard
- 7 Challenging
- 8 Difficult
- 9 Extremely Difficult

Degrees of Success

One Success Two Successes Three Successes Four Successes Five Successes Marginal Moderate Complete Exceptional Phenomenal

You can see that if the difficulty is lower, it becomes easier to score a success, while if it is higher, it becomes more difficult. The Storyteller will assign high difficulties whenever the action you have decided to take is difficult, and will either let your character do something automatically (because her Attributes and Abilities are so high) or assign a low difficulty if the desired action is particularly easy.

Though they are not on the list above, you, as the Storyteller, can also assign difficulties of 2 or 10. However, these should almost never be used. Difficulty 2 is so pathetically easy that you might as well let the player succeed without wasting time on a roll. Difficulty 10 is so difficult that there is an equal chance to botch (described below) as there is to succeed, no matter how many dice the player rolls. A 10 is pretty near impossible. On the rare occasions when you do announce a difficulty of 10, be sure you realize how impossible you are making the chance of success. If a player ever rolls a 10, the result is automatically a success, no matter what.

Unless the Storyteller says otherwise, the difficulty for a particular task is always 6. This is the standard difficulty; 6 is assumed if a difficulty number is otherwise unstated.

## The Rule of One

The last thing you need to know about rolling dice is the "rule of one." Whenever you roll a "1," it cancels out a success. It completely takes it away. You remove both the "success" die and the "1" die and ignore them. If you roll more "1's" than you do successes, a disaster occurs; something called a "botch" takes place. Don't count the "1's" that canceled out successes, but if even a single "1" is left after all the successes have been canceled, a botch occurs. Getting a single "1" or five "1's" has about the same result in most cases; the circumstances surrounding the botch determine if it is catastrophic or a minor mishap. If there aren't any "1's" or successes left, you've simply failed.

## Automatic Successes

You don't want to be rolling dice all the time; it can get in the way of the roleplaying. Wraith employs a very simple system for automatic successes, allowing players to avoid making rolls for actions their characters could perform in their sleep.

It works like this: if the number of dice in your Dice Pool equals or exceeds the assigned difficulty, your character succeeds automatically. Such a success is considered marginal (the

Chapter Four: Rules



equivalent of scoring only one success), so a player will sometimes want to roll anyway in an attempt to gain even more successes. For very simple and often-repeated actions, however, automatic successes can eliminate a lot of wasted time. (Note that certain actions, such as combat, are always problematic and should not be handled with this system.)

The automatic success rules can be used to eliminate dice completely. In such situations, automatic successes aren't a matter of choice. Either you are good enough to succeed or you are not. It is simple, but so was Cops 'n' Robbers, and we liked it just fine. The story was what was important; the rules didn't matter.

This simple system even has a twist, making it not quite so black-and-white. A Willpower point (see pg. 99) can be spent to earn an automatic success. You won't want to do this often, but for certain actions, it can be very advantageous to do so. Of course, the Willpower expenditure only counts for one success if multiple successes are required.

When we play, we usually combine dice rolling and automatic successes. During most scenes — especially when we're deeply involved in the story — we don't even roll dice, preferring to roleplay through scenes without interruptions. However, when we get in the mood for *playing-a-game* rather than *telling-a-story*, we make lots of dice rolls and add many complications to the rules.

## Complications

You may have already realized that it is quite easy to score a single success, even when you roll only one or two dice. You have a 75% chance for a marginal success when you roll only two dice and the difficulty is 6. While that may sound too easy, there are various ways to complicate matters, some of which are discussed below. For troupes heavily into roleplaying, simple rolls and automatic successes are enough. Generally, complications are needed only if the players or you want a break from the roleplaying, if you want a realistic result, or if you want to make a game out of the scene. Complications add drama to the story, evoking passion and focusing events.

#### Extended Actions

In order to succeed fully, you will sometimes need more than one success — you will need to accumulate three, or seven or even (rarely) 20 successes. An action that requires only one success is called a simple action. An action that requires more than one success is called an extended action.

An extended action allows you to roll over and over on subsequent turns in an attempt to collect enough successes to succeed. For instance, suppose your character is climbing a tree. The Storyteller announces that when you roll a total of seven successes, your character has climbed to the top. She'll get there eventually, but the more times you roll, the more chances your character has to botch and injure herself. If she is attempting to climb down the tree because it is on fire, the amount of time it takes becomes exceedingly important.

During an extended action, you can keep trying to obtain successes for as long as you want, or at least until you fail to score even one success. If you botch, your character may have to start over from scratch, with no accumulated successes. The Storyteller may decide not to let the character try again at all.

This type of action is more complicated than a simple action and should not often be employed in the middle of intense roleplaying. As the Storyteller, you decide what type of action is appropriate. A little bit of experience will serve you well when employing these rules.

#### **Resisted Actions**

Sometimes you will act in opposition to another character. Both of you make rolls, with a difficulty often indicated by a Trait of the other character, and the person who scores the most successes succeeds. However, you are considered to score only as many successes as the amount by which you exceed your opponent's successes. The opponent's successes eliminate your own, just as "1's" do. Therefore, it is very difficult, and rare, to achieve an outstanding success on a resisted action. Even if your opponent cannot beat you, she can diminish the effect of your efforts. During actions that are both extended and resisted, one of the opponents must collect a certain number of successes in order to succeed completely. Each success above the opponent's total number of successes in a single turn is added to a success total. The first opponent to collect the designated number of successes wins the contest.

#### Teamwork

Sometimes characters can work together to collect successes, most often during an extended action. At the Storyteller's discretion, two or more characters can make rolls separately and combine their successes. They may never combine their separate Traits for one roll. Teamwork is effective in some circumstances, such as when engaging in combat, shadowing prey, collecting information and repairing devices. During others, it can actually be a hindrance, such as in many social actions (where it can confuse the subject).

The chart below may serve to dispel your confusion regarding some of the different types of rolls that can be made.

#### Trying It Again

It can often be frustrating to fail. If you are having trouble with your computer and can't figure out the source of a system error, then you're in for a frustrating time. This annoyance is reflected in Wraith by increasing the difficulty of any action if it is tried again after it's already been failed.

Whenever a character attempts an action she has previously failed, the Storyteller has the option of increasing the



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difficulty of the action by one. Consider a character who tries to intimidate someone. If the first attempt failed, it's going be harder the second time around, so the difficulty is one greater. If tried a third time, then the difficulty is two greater. In cases like this, though, the Storyteller might simply rule that the character cannot even make another try — how do you intimidate someone who has already called your bluff?

Other examples of when to use the rule are picking a lock (Repair), scaling a wall (Athletics), and remembering a word in a foreign language (Linguistics).

Sometimes the Storyteller shouldn't invoke this rule. A notable example is during combat. Missing someone with a first gunshot doesn't necessarily mean that the gunman is frustrated and has a better chance of missing again. But after the gunman has missed a couple of times, especially if they are easy, close-range shots...

Other examples of when not to use the rule are seeing something out of the corner of the eye (Alertness) and dodging an attack (Dodge).

## The Golden Rule

Remember that in the end there is only one real rule in Wraith: there are no rules. You should fashion this game into whatever you need it to be — if the rules get in your way, then ignore or change them. The true complexity and beauty of the real world cannot be captured by rules; it takes storytelling and imagination to do that. Indeed, these rules are not so much rules as they are guidelines, and you are free to use, abuse, ignore and change them as you wish.

## Try İt Out

Well, that's it. These are the rules. This system for dice is all you really need to know in order to play this game. All the other rules are just clarifications and exceptions. So long as you understand what's been discussed here, you won't have any difficulty understanding anything else. If you don't think you've caught everything, just read the above again; you'll find it makes more sense the second time around.

Now go ahead and make a few rolls, using the example character from the other page. Cassandra is attempting to es-

Chapter Four: Rules





cape a group of Hierarchy Legionnaires. She crouches down behind a low wall, hoping that they will run past without seeing her. The Storyteller assigns a difficulty of 7 to this feat, and decides that the appropriate roll is Dexterity + Stealth. Take two dice because of Cassandra's Dexterity Attribute of 2, and one extra die because of Cassandra's Stealth Ability of 1. You should now have three dice in your hand — not a lot, but at least you have a chance. Go ahead and roll the dice. Look to see how many successes you have, making sure to take away a success for every "1" you roll. Did you make it, did you fail, or did you botch? The more successes you get, the better you hide. Only one success might mean that you barely made it under cover in time. Two might mean that you manage to crouch under a little overhang. Three might mean that you're totally silent and quiet, in which case you've fooled the Legionnaires.

Next, try out an extended and resisted action. An example of this is an arm wrestling match. It requires an indefinite series of rolls, each with a different difficulty. You need to accumulate five successes more than your opponent in order to win. A botch eliminates all of your accumulated successes.

 First roll: Each player rolls Strength; the difficulty is the opponent's Dexterity + 3 (speed is important at first).

 Second and third rolls: Each player rolls Strength; the difficulty is the opponent's Strength + 3.

Fourth roll (and all subsequent ones): Each player rolls
 Strength; the difficulty is the opponent's Willpower.

## Examples of Rolls

Following are some examples of rolls, to provide you with some ideas about how to incorporate these rules into your roleplaying. Please note that each Attribute can work with each Ability, so there are 270 potential types of simple rolls that can be made. Admittedly, you will not often roll Stamina + Computer, but it might come up.

You are protecting your Fetter late at night. Roll Stamina
 + Alertness (difficulty 7) to stay awake and alert.

• A Spectre rises out of the gloom and floats quietly behind you; roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 9) to notice its approach.

 A tough Renegade refuses to take your commands. Roll Strength + Leadership (difficulty 7) in an attempt to dominate him physically and get him to do what you say.

 Can you convince the gathering crowd of Restless to follow you? Roll Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 7) as you attempt to give an off-the-cuff speech. You'll need four successes to convince them completely.

 A Hierarchy Centurion is attempting to command a group of wraiths to come with him. Roll Perception + Leadership (difficulty 6) to see how good a leader he is. If you score five successes, you'll know his exact rating.

## The Character Sheet

On the next page we have provided you with an example of a complete Wraith character sheet. The character is a recently deceased wraith, or Lemure, named Cassandra, and the examples throughout the book will use her as their subject. The following is a quick look at the Traits that describe her.

 Nature and Demeanor: A description of the personality of a character. The Nature is her true personality, while the Demeanor is the facade she presents to the world.

 Chronicle: The title of the series of stories and the world in which the character exists.

• Advantages: This category is divided into three subcategories. Arcanos are the mystical Traits that define the powers of a wraith. Backgrounds detail the character's social and material advantages. Passions and Fetters describe the ideals that are important to the character and the ties that bind her to the world of the living.

 Combat: This is a place to list combat statistics for various weapons.

 Pathos: The amount of mystical power at the disposal of the wraith, used for performing Arcanos.

• Corpus: The essence that forms a wraith's "physical" body. Corpus measures the character's health.

 Experience: Here you record the experience points awarded by the Storyteller, which you can later spend to improve your character.

• Willpower: A measure of the character's self-confidence and determination.

Abilities: The innate aptitudes and potentials of a character.

 Concept: The overall image of the character: who she was in mortal existence.

• Haunt: The residence of the character, where it is easier for her to perform her Arcanos.

 After being questioned for hours by Hierarchy Inquisitors, roll Stamina + Subterfuge (difficulty 8) to see if you can maintain your story successfully. Obtaining five successes allows you to convince them fully.

 You threaten the young wraith by trying to lift him up by his collar; roll Strength + Intimidation (difficulty 8).

 Yelling and screaming at the Harbinger, you try to get him to go faster. Roll Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty 6).

• You ask a series of rapid-fire questions in order to discover what threats will intimidate the subject. Roll Wits + Intimidation (difficulty 6).

 You're trying to calm down someone you're Skinriding: roll Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 6).

		The Oblivion	IM		2
me: Cassandra		Nature: Visionary		life: Artist	
iver: Meg		Demeanor: Rebel		Death: Random Violence	
ironicle: Atlanta		Shadow: Leech		Regret: True Love	
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 You're trying to stop a car that's careening out of control. Which engine part should you destroy with Outrage? Roll Intelligence + Repair (difficulty 6).

 You try to decipher what's wrong with the car engine from the strange sounds it's making. Roll Perception + Repair (difficulty 6).

 You're trying to make a mask out of a collection of trivial Relics. Roll Intelligence + Crafts (difficulty 6).

 You're want to impress the Heretic priest with your weaponmaking skill. Roll Manipulation + Crafts (difficulty 7).

• How long can you remain motionless in the bushes as the two guards chat for hours on end? Roll Stamina + Stealth (difficulty 7). Each success indicates the passing of 10 minutes.

 You attempt to follow the paper trail to the person who gave the order to destroy your Fetter. Roll Intelligence + Bureaucracy (difficulty 7).

 Wouldn't you love to have that "Condemn" order lost in the paper glut? Possess a clerk and roll Manipulation + Bureaucracy (difficulty 6) to do so.

 Can you find the clues the police missed at the scene of your death? Roll Perception + Investigation (difficulty 8).  Where should you search for your killer? Roll Intelligence + Investigation (difficulty 6).

 While riding the electron highway, you get lost in the Internet. Roll Perception + Computer (difficulty 6) to figure out where you are.

 You're trying to tell another wraith how to get what she wants from a computer. Roll Manipulation + Computer (difficulty 7).

• Breaking into the computer system takes a long time, and you're fighting off fatigue as you do it. Roll Stamina + Computer (difficulty 6).

• While adrift in the Tempest, you discover a realm that you've never before seen. Roll Intelligence + Enigmas (difficulty 9). If you score three successes, you might be able to tell whether it's dangerous to remain.

 A Heretic comes to you and offers aid — if you care to listen to his sermon. Roll Stamina + Enigmas (difficulty 7) to stay awake.

 Where's a good place to find a consort? Roll Intelligence + Streetwise (difficulty 6).

 What language is he speaking? Roll Intelligence + Linguistics (difficulty 7).

## Game Terms



bility: A Trait that describes what a character knows and has learned rather than what she is. Examples are Intimidation, Firearms and Occult.

Action: An action is the performance of a consciously willed physical, social or mental activity. When a player announces

that his character is doing something, he is taking an action.

Advantages: This is a catch-all category that describes the Arcanos, Backgrounds, Passions and Fetters of a character.

Arcanos: The mystical abilities of wraiths.

Attribute: A Trait that describes a character's inherent aptitudes. Attributes are such things as Strength, Charisma and Intelligence.

Botch: A disastrous failure, indicated by rolling more "1's" than successes on the 10-sided dice rolled for an action.

Character: Each player creates a character, an individual she roleplays over the course of the chronicle. Though "character" could imply any individual, in Wraith, it is always used to describe the players' characters.

Corpus: This Trait measures the degree to which a character is wounded or injured.

Dice Pool: This describes the dice you have in your hand after combining your different Traits. It is the maximum number of dice you can roll in one turn, although you can divide these dice between (or even among) different actions.

Difficulty: This is a number from 2 to 10 measuring the difficulty of an action a character takes. The player needs to roll that number or higher on at least one of the dice rolled.

Downtime: The time spent between scenes when no roleplaying is done and turns are not used. Actions might be taken, and the Storyteller might give some descriptions, but generally time passes quickly.

Extended Action: An action that requires a certain number of successes for the character to succeed.

Pathos: The raw power of emotion used by wraiths to perform Arcanos. Points: The temporary scores of Traits, such as Willpower, Pathos and Corpus— the squares, not the circles.

**Rating:** A number describing the permanent value of a Trait; usually a number from 1 to 5, though sometimes a number from 1 to 10.

**Refresh:** When points are regained in a Dice Pool, it is said that they are being "refreshed." The number of points regained is the "refresh rate."

Resisted Action: An action that two different characters take against each other. Both compare their number of successes; the character with the most wins.

Scene: A single episode of the story; a time when and place where actions and events take place moment by moment. A scene is often a dramatic high point of the story.

**Shroud:** The difficulty to perform some Arcanos in a given area of the Shadowlands; this begins at a base of 10 during the day and 9 at night. Various factors (Fetters, Warding, etc.) can modify a Shroud score.

Simple Action: An action that requires the player to score only one success to succeed, though more successes indicate a better job or result.

Storyteller: The person who creates and guides a Wraith story. The Storyteller assumes the roles of all the characters not run by the players and determines all the events beyond the control of the players.

System: A specific set of complications used in a certain situation; rules to help guide the rolling of dice to create dramatic action.

Trait: A Trait is any Attribute, Ability, Advantage or other character index that can be described as a number (in terms of dots).

**Troupe:** The group of players, including the Storyteller, who play Wraith — usually on a regular basis.

Willpower: One of the most important Traits is Willpower. It measures the self-confidence and internal control of a character. Willpower works differently from most Traits — it is often spent rather than rolled.

Chapter Four: Rules





# Chapter Five: Character

Teddy was sniffing glue — he was 12 years old Fell from the roof on East Two-Nine Kathy was 11 when she pulled the plug On 26 reds and a bottle of wine Bobby got leukemia — 14 years old He looked like 65 when he died — he was a friend of mine Those were people who died — died... They were all my friends — and they died... — Jim Carroll Band, "People Who Died"



efore you can begin to play Wraith, you must create a character. Wraith, however, is not like make-believe; you don't just make up a character as you go along (though the Storyteller is regularly faced with that challenge). A certain amount of work is involved — characters are built,

not born. Building a compelling yet honest character is a creative struggle.

This chapter describes how to create a unique character, beginning with a general concept and translating this concept into numbers that can be used in the game. This process is very simple; players can easily figure it out for themselves. However, the Storyteller should have a good grasp of the process in order to answer the players' questions accurately and succinctly.

The numbers on the character sheet may not seem particularly evocative. It is hard to imagine a novelist describing a character by saying, "She has a Charisma of 4." However, these ratings make it simple to describe the strengths and weaknesses of a character. More importantly, these numbers allow the random factor created by dice to be employed in relation to the character's Traits. A strong wraith has a better chance to snap her manacles than a weak wraith does.

Character creation usually follows a pattern from the general to the specific. First, you develop a general concept of who and what your character is — is she more socially or mentally developed? Then, you get specific by selecting the ratings of your Traits — how effective are your Charisma, Manipulation and Appearance? Do not use this process to create the "best" possible character; that defeats the purpose of making up a genuinely interesting individual. These numbers are intended to enhance roleplaying, not to open an avenue to some mythical character Hall of Fame.

Character creation is a lot like cooking: you've got to gather the ingredients, stir them together, and then let the mixture bake for a few hours. You start by deciding what kind of character you want. Are you going to play a street-hardened punk or a rich and somewhat spoiled debutante? Are you a precocious child prodigy, or did the secrets of life reveal them-

Chapter Five: Character



selves somewhere in the Appalachian Mountains? The background and personality of your character are the essential ingredients of his persona. From your basic concepts, you can then start to work out the details, such as Attributes and Advantages.

# **Getting Started**



ou need to be aware of five concepts before you begin to create your character:

 You can create a character of nearly any age from any culture or nation; however, you begin the game as a relatively inexperienced and unsophisticated wraith who has only recently died. Your charac-

ter probably knows relatively little about wraith society unless she was instructed by a Mentor or a Reaper, the wraith who discovered and initiated her.

• This character creation process was designed as much to help you define your character as it was to provide you with a means of interacting with the rules. The process of creating a character is meant to help you more accurately focus the concept of your character. Remember that a character cannot exist only as numbers; your roleplaying must shape and define an alter ego.

 This character creation system is a purchase system with absolutely no dice rolling involved. By choosing Traits from a variety of lists, you decide who your character is. You will receive extra points called "freebies" at the end of the process, which you can then use to add dots to any Trait, so do not agonize over all your choices. Nonetheless, even with freebie points, you probably cannot buy everything you want.

• Most Traits are rated numerically from 1 to 5. This system is similar to the "star" system used to rate movies, restaurants and hotels. One dot in a Trait indicates poor or novice ability in that Trait. Two dots indicate an average Trait, while a rating of 5 indicates that you are among the best in the world. Traits are based on an average human range.

• It is a good idea for your group to discuss the nature of their Circle before anyone creates characters (see *The Circle*, below). It is your responsibility to create a character who belongs in the group. The characters in the Circle should be bound together by more than happenstance. Although it is okay to have a pair of characters tied together by nothing more than the strings of Fate, it's more interesting to play characters who know each other. Make sure your character has at least one feature in common with every one of her compatriots, whether this feature be a Fetter, a Passion or an enemy. If your character doesn't fit in and disrupts the story as a result, you won't have as much fun, and your Storyteller may decide that you have to create a new character.

## Role of the Storyteller

As the Storyteller, your role is to guide the players through the character generation process. After your players arrive for the game session, you need to introduce them to the basic premise of the game and describe the rules system. Your main goal should be to make character creation as easy as possible.

Pass out the character sheets and give the players a minute to look them over and ask questions. Then go through the character creation process step by step, filling in all the details of the characters' Traits.

It is sometimes advisable to spend an entire game session creating characters. This ensures that the players don't feel rushed and that they take the time to create real and provocative characters, not paper-thin stooges. In fact, you may encourage your players to come to the character generation session with a fairly developed idea of what kind of characters they'd like to play.

Once you are done with the practical details, you can spend the rest of the session running preludes for the characters. A prelude is a form of abbreviated storytelling in which you tell the story of a character's mortal life and death. Preludes are the players' introduction to the chronicle as well as their characters, so make them memorable. Preludes are described at the end of this chapter.

## Step One: Concept

You begin by formulating a basic concept for your character. Only a vague idea about the character's life is needed. As the chronicle develops, you will flesh out your character by roleplaying. You can create a character from any culture or nation. In any case, you have been dead less than 30 years.

There are three basic questions you must ask: who were you in life, how did you die, and why can't you let go?

#### Life

How did you live your life? What did you do? Pick someone relatively mundane and normal, though famous dead may be acceptable if the Storyteller allows. Here are some ideas:

 Criminal — You were a jailbird, Mafioso, cat burglar, drug dealer or petty thief.

 Cop — You were a beat cop, detective or maybe just a pencil-pusher.

 Politician — You were a judge, a mayor, a grass-roots organizer, a union official, a senator or just a wannabe lawyer.

• Faithful — You may have been pious, but you didn't wind up where you expected.

 Drifter — You were a hobo, a cowboy, a theater tech, a pilgrim, a hooker or simply homeless.

 Dilettante: You lived in a state of hedonistic excess or mind-numbing apathy.

 Cultist — As a member of a cult, you subsumed to own desires to its needs.

 Punk — You were born and died on the wrong side of the tracks.

Kid — You died long before your time.

 Artist — You left behind your vision, your unfinished masterpiece, your magnum opus. Wonder if anyone'll ever notice?

 Professional — Work was your life; now you wonder what you missed.

 Tabula Rasa — A blank slate. Perhaps you never lived at all — or perhaps you have forgotten everyone who ever meant anything to you.

#### Death

The manner in which you died is vital to describing your reaction to death. How did you die, and what was the cause? When did it happen? Why did it happen? Here are some ideas:

 Old Age — Though you lived a full lifespan, you weren't ready to die.

War — You died on the fields of "glory."

Overdose — The road of your excess lead to death.

 Random Violence — You were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Suicide — Your cries for help fell on deaf ears.

Murder — You were prey for a dark predator.

 Disease — After much pain and suffering, you succumbed to your terminal illness.

 Domestic Violence — You were a casualty of an ageold cycle of shame, hate, pain and rage.

Car Wreck — It all happened so quickly...

 Mystery — You have no idea how it happened — or perhaps you don't want to know...

 Freak of Nature — You were hit by lightning, or perhaps a shark ate you.

#### Regret

Why does your character tenaciously cling to life, fiercely denying death, even after the breath has left her body? What did she leave behind? What words were unspoken, what deeds undone? In what way did she never truly live? What does she regret about the way in which she lived? Here are some ideas:

Destiny — You never fulfilled your destiny.

 Unrequited Love — He never looked twice at you well, by God, he will now!

 True Love — You left someone behind whom you value more than anything.



Chapter Five: Character

 Vengeance — Your last thoughts were, "I'm going to get you back, you bastard!"

 Mission — You had a duty to perform, and you failed to do it.

 Theory — You never proved your theory or published your ideas — and maybe someone else will steal them!

• Success — You had everything — and now it's all gone.

 Children — You didn't leave anyone behind to remember you.

 Legacy — You didn't leave anything of lasting value to the world.

 Failure —Indecision, distrust, low self-esteem: call it what you will, but you failed.

Pleasure — Life was a banquet, and you ate oatmeal.

 Travel — You never took that trip to Brazil or the Scottish Highlands.

Sin — The chains of guilt still weigh heavily on your soul.

 Bad Blood — You never made peace with your son before you died — and now it's too late. Or is it?

#### Nature and Demeanor

Now you need to choose personality Archetypes that describe both the internal nature and external attitude of your character.

Your character's Nature is the most dominant aspect of her true personality. The Archetype you choose for your character's Nature describes the character's most deep-rooted feelings and beliefs about herself and the world; it also provides the primary means by which she regains Willpower. Choosing a Nature helps you describe who your character really is on the inside.

You should also choose a Demeanor to describe the personality your character pretends to possess. This is the role she plays to the world, the facade she presents to it. The Demeanor should probably, though not necessarily, differ from the Archetype you have already chosen as the character's Nature. Whatever you choose is only the character's typical pose; people can change Demeanor as quickly as they change mood. You may change your character's Demeanor at any time, allowing her to adapt to different people and different situations. Demeanor has no practical effect on the rules, but it serves as a useful guide for roleplaying.

Some examples of personality Archetypes are listed below.

## Step Two: Choosing Attributes

A character's Attributes are part of his intrinsic makeup. Although the character no longer has a living body, he still has a form in the afterlife. This form, or Corpus, fits the Personality Archetypes

Architect: You are unhappy unless you are creating something of value.

 Avant-Garde: The new and different are the keystones of your existence.

• Bon Vivant: You seek the good things in life — even after death.

• Bravo: You are something of a bully; you like to be feared.

• Caregiver: Many need your love and protection, and you need them to need you.

• Child: You never grew up, and want someone to take care of you.

• Conformist: A follower at heart, you find it easy to adapt, adjust and comply.

 Conniver: There's always an easier way — which usually involves someone else doing your work.

• Critic: Nothing in life or death is perfect, and you take great delight in pointing out flaws.

• Curmudgeon: You are a real sourpuss and cynic to the Nth degree.

· Deviant: You're just not like anyone else.

• Director: You hate chaos and are forever taking charge to set things right.

 Fanatic: You have a cause, and it gives your life meaning.

• Gallant: You are as flamboyant as you are amoral.

• Jester: Always the clown, you can't take life, or death, seriously.

• Judge: You seek justice and reconciliation.

· Loner: You are forever alone, even in a crowd.

Martyr: You need to be needed and enjoy being morally superior.

 Rebel: No need for a cause; you rebel out of habit and passion.

 Survivor: You struggle to survive, no matter what the odds.

• Traditionalist: You prefer the orthodox and conservative ways.

· Visionary: Wisdom is your quest, insight your key.

character's self-image and retains many of his traits from life. Attributes still answer questions such as: How fast are his reflexes? How attractive is he? How long does it take him to understand new ideas?

First, you must prioritize the three categories of Attributes — Physical, Mental and Social. Choose in which of these categories your character is good (primary), in which he is average (secondary), and in which category he is poor (tertiary). Is



your character more physical than social — is he more brawny than gregarious?

• Physical Attributes — The Physical Attributes describe how strong, nimble and sturdy your character is. They are the primary Attributes of an action-oriented character — the Physical Attributes concern the strengths and weaknesses of the body. Strength measures a character's lifting power and how much damage she can inflict in basic hand-to-hand combat. Dexterity rates a wraith's speed and agility. Stamina measures a character's constitution and resilience.

 Social Attributes — Your character's Social Attributes measure her ability to relate to, motivate, and manipulate others. Charisma indicates personal magnetism and charm. Manipulation measures a character's ability to talk her way into and out of situations. Appearance describes how the character looks and carries herself.

• Mental Attributes — These Traits represent your character's thought capacity, and include such things as memory, perception, learning potential, and the ability to think quickly. Perception describes the wraith's observation skills. Intelligence represents memory, reasoning and learning potential. Wits measures a character's reaction time and ability to think on her feet.

Your character concept may help suggest Attribute priorities, but feel free to pick any scheme you please. For now, your character conception should be very general — paint a broad, sweeping outline instead of concentrating on little details.

All characters start with one dot in each Attribute. Your priority selection determines how many dots you get to spend in each category. You may divide seven dots among your character's primary Attributes, five dots among her secondary Attributes, and three among her tertiary Attributes. Thus, you may choose to add seven dots to your wraith's Physical Attributes, five to her Mental Attributes, and only three dots to her Social Attributes. You may divide the dots among the individual Attributes as you see fit — you could assign all three of your Social Attribute dots to Charisma, one dot to each of the three Social Attributes, or two dots to one and one dot to another.

Later in the character creation process, it will be possible to increase some of these ratings, so don't worry too much about your choices. Let your intuition guide you.

Note: The space after each Attribute (and Ability) is for you to fill in a specialty, a subcategory of the Trait in which the character excels. Specialties are fully explained in the Chapter Six; for now, concentrate on choosing your ratings.

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## Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Abilities delineate what your character knows rather than what he is; they describe the things he has learned rather than the things he can naturally do. All Talents, Skills and Knowledges are Abilities.

Each Ability you character possesses is assigned a rating representing the character's aptitude in that particular area. The number is used to determine how many dice you roll when your character attempts to use an Ability.

Abilities are divided into three different categories: Talents, Skills and Knowledges. Each type of Ability has different characteristics.

 Talents describe intuitive Abilities. Talents do not need to be practiced *per se* and cannot be studied or learned from a book; they are most often gained through direct experience. Is your character self-taught; does she possess a lot of common sense?

 Skills are Abilities learned through rigorous training of any sort. This category includes any ability that must be learned step by step through actual practice, but can be taught or studied (unlike Talents). Is your character good at learning things from daily (or nightly) practice?

 Knowledges include all the abilities requiring the rigorous application of the mind. These Abilities are generally learned through school, classes, books and teachers, but can also be picked up through experience. Is your character educated; does he have a good memory?

You prioritize these Abilities just like you prioritized the Attributes. You decide how to rank your Talents, Skills and Knowledges, choosing in which category your character will be above average (primary), in which she will be average (secondary), and in which she will be below average (tertiary).

You get 13 dots to spend on your character's primary category, nine for the secondary category and only five dots for the tertiary category.

However, there is one additional restriction: you cannot give your character more than three dots in any one Ability (later, however, you can use your "freebie" points to gain four or even five dots in an Ability).

## Step Four: Advantages

You do not prioritize or rank the different categories of Advantages. You instead have a designated number of dots to assign within each one. Though this number is fixed, you can purchase additional dots later with "freebie" points.



#### Arcanos

Characters may choose their Arcanos — the special secrets and powers of the Restless. A character begins with five dots in Arcanos, but she may purchase more Arcanos with freebie points. A beginning character cannot have more than three dots in any one Arcanos.

#### Backgrounds

Every character gets seven dots to allocate among Background Traits. You have only seven dots to allot and your Storyteller may restrict access to certain Backgrounds. Your Background Traits should be compatible with your character concept.

#### Passions

Wraiths are creatures of passion, and as such, they need reasons to exist beyond death. Each Passion consists of a concise statement of a goal (i.e., protect my daughter, avenge my death, etc.), followed in parentheses by the emotion that corresponds to it (Love, Anger, etc.).

Each character has 10 points to assign to Passions. After you have chosen and listed all of your Passions, assign a rating from 1 to 5 in each Passion, thereby delineating how strong the Passion is to you. Difficult or general Passions ("Help others find faith," "Give hope to my children") should have higher ratings than simple tasks ("Recover my body," "Protect my motorcycle").

Passion ratings may not exceed 5. For more information, see Pathos and Passions on pp. 136-137.

#### etters

Fetters are the people, places and things that tie you to the real world. They are your strongest connections to your mortal life, and they bind you to the Shadowlands until you are able to resolve them. Fetters represent the people, places and things with which (or with whom) you have "unfinished business." Fetters are listed in the same manner as Passions. Unlike Passions, however, Fetters are tangible, material objects.

Each Fetter also receives a rating from 1 to 5. This rating is based on the importance of the Fetter or its connotation. Some Fetters may be mysterious — why is that locked room in the sub-basement of the IBM Tower so important to you?

Fetters and Passions can be related, though they do not have to be. For example, you might have a "gold engagement ring: 2" as one of your Fetters, and a Passion to "Avenge the deaths of my girlfriend and myself (Revenge): 4."

Fetter ratings may not exceed 5.

## **Character Creation Chart**

- Step One: Character Concept
  Choose concept, Nature and Demeanor
- Step Two: Select Attributes

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (7/5/3)

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

#### Step Three: Select Attributes

Prioritize the three categories: Talents, Skills, Knowledges

Choose Talents, Skills, Knowledges (13/9/5)

Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Arcanos(5), Backgrounds (7), Passions (10), Fetters (10)

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record beginning Pathos ( 5 + Memoriam + freebies ) and Willpower ( 5 + freebies )

Spend "freebie points" (15)

## Step Five: Finishing Touches

Often, the most important stage of character creation is applying the last touches — the little details and flourishes that complete the character. In this step, you gain your 15 "freebie" points, enabling you to add more dots to any of the Traits on the character sheet. Before you spend these points, however, you must record the base scores for your character's Pathos and Willpower.

#### Pathos

The Pathos rating measure the pool of energy generated by Passions and used by wraiths to perform Arcanos. Starting Pathos equals 5 plus the number of dots the wraith possesses in the Memoriam Background. You can add additional points to your starting total by spending freebie points. The Pathos Pool cannot exceed 10 points.

### Willpower

The Willpower Trait rates how much self-control a wraith has, including the degree to which she can resist and control her Shadow. Willpower is essential for controlling the actions of your character, especially in times of stress.

Chapter Five: Character


A wraith's Willpower rating starts at 5 and can be increased with freebie points.

#### Freebie Points

You can spend freebie points to raise any Trait on your character sheet. Extra dots cost different amounts depending on the Trait in question (see the chart below). Freebie point expenditure may raise an Ability over 3, but may not raise any Trait over 5.

Freebie points may also be used to subtract Shadow points from the Storyteller, thereby reducing the overall power of the character's Shadow (see Chapter Seven: The Shadow) on a

Attributes - 5 points per dot	
Arcanos - 5 points per dot	
Willpower - 2 points per dot	
Abilities - 2 points per dot	
Passions - 2 points per dot	
Backgrounds - I point per dot	
Fetters - 1 point per dot	
Pathos - 1 point per two dots	

one-for-one basis. The Storyteller normally designs the aspect of your character; spending freebie points against your Shadow is a sign to the Storyteller that you would like him to hold back on articulating your character's dark side. You can also gain up to seven extra freebie points by allowing the Storyteller to also use those points when creating your Shadow.

All starting wraiths have 15 freebie points. You can spend them according to the following chart:

# Spark of Life

There are some other details of a character you should consider. The following details will help to make your character a complete and unique person. You do not necessarily need to write these things down, but you should certainly think about them, not only now, but throughout the career of your character. If you are running your character through a prelude, wait until you are done before attempting to complete this aspect of your character.

#### Appearance

Wraiths tend to assume a Corpus that in some way reflects their self-image. For example, a wraith may appear as she did at the moment of her death, or in the prime of her life, or at the time she suffered most deeply. Some wraiths use their knowledge of Arcanos to shape their bodies into monstrous or beatific forms (thus playing the "devil" or "angel") — but this often serves to empower the Shadow. You should turn the relevant Traits of your character — such as the Social Attributes





and concept — into aspects of appearance. High Intelligence can become a clear, piercing gaze. A Dilettante concept could translate into stylish and expensive clothes. In this way, you can make your character's Traits more tangible and interesting. It's better roleplaying to say, "There always seems to be a sneer of disdain on my face," than to say, "You can tell I'm very condescending."

# Specialties

You may wish to give your character specialties in her Traits. Each Trait with a rating of 4 or higher can be given a specialty. Though most players select specialties for their Traits during play, you can pick them immediately. Specialties are particular aspects of Traits at which your character is especially good. Simply fill in the space next to the Trait with an appropriate specialty; suggestions are made with each Trait in Chapter Six. Though primarily used for roleplaying, specialties can lower the difficulties of dice rolls to perform certain feats.

# Quirks

By giving your character quirks, interesting personal details and anecdotes, you can add a great deal of depth and interest to him. Write a few sentences on the back of your character sheet describing the strange and possibly interesting things that define your character. A quirk could be a twisted sense of humor, a gentleness toward animals, or a habit of grunting when answering yes to a question.

# The Circle

Before anything else can begin, everyone must agree on a concept for the Circle and a theme for the chronicle. While in many cases the Storyteller will have prepared a background setting with a niche ready for the characters to fill, the players need to be aware of and interested in the situations into which their characters will be thrust.

# Example of Character Creation



eg is going to create a Wraith character. Using the outline, Meg begins the process that will turn her idea into a full-fledged character.

# Step One: Concept

First, she must come up with a character concept. Meg wants to play a female character, so she uses that decision to limit her concept choices. She rejects stereotypical female characters: a prostitute, a housewife, an executive. She wants Once the player has created a character, the Storyteller will create a Shadow for that character. Details of Shadow character generation are detailed on pp. 175-182.

to play someone very different from herself, someone who can say the things she normally can't — someone who can speak out. Meg chooses a street poet concept. Her character lives on the street, often homeless, but she has an inner fire that inspires scathing poems about the things that affect her life. She wants to contrast this character's alley-cat beginnings with a high-class name; Cassandra comes to mind.

Meg ponders for a moment about Cassandra's Nature and Demeanor. These two Traits will help her nail down Cassandra's personality more easily. The Nature is Cassandra's deep-rooted psyche, the part of her that affects all her thoughts and actions. Meg decides that Cassandra is a Visionary: she sees beyond the city streets and the corruption around her to something greater for herself and her family. To the world, Cassandra projects a hardened, Rebel Demeanor. She puts on a big show of rebellion; deep inside, however the revolution she wants to lead is one of the soul. She developed the Rebel Demeanor in order to stay alive in her tough neighborhood.

# Step Two: Attributes

Now Meg must choose Cassandra's Attributes. She prioritizes her categories in the following way:

Social is Cassandra's primary category, because her experience as a street poet has given her the interpersonal skills to get her point across.

Physical is Cassandra's secondary category, because, well, it's tough growing up as the only girl in a family full of boys. The street is better than any fitness spa.

Mental is Cassandra's tertiary category, because the education in her area is lousy, and because she is so often lost in poetic reverie that she fails to notice impending danger.

Dividing Cassandra's seven Social points, Meg assigns her a 4 Charisma (three points plus the one point free for each Attribute), a 3 Manipulation, and a 3 Appearance (all of these are necessary for her to get people's attention, create poems that will affect people, and draw people into her vision).

Two of Cassandra's five Physical points are spent on Strength, giving her a respectable Strength of 3. She spends one point on Dexterity and two on Stamina, giving her a Dexterity of 2 and a Stamina of 3.

Finally, two of Cassandra's three Mental points are spent on Wits, and the last is allotted to Intelligence (Meg feels Cassandra would have more sense than smarts). She worries about the one point in Perception, but plans on doing something about that deficiency when she spends freebie points (see below).

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# Step Three: Abilities

Next, Meg has to prioritize and pick Cassandra's Abilities. She decides Cassandra relies primarily on her innate Talents to survive on the street (this becomes her primary Ability category). Skills are also important to street poets (especially Performance, because Cassandra is a performer as well as a writer), so that is her secondary category. Cassandra's education has been sporadic and spotty, so Knowledge Abilities become her tertiary category.

Meg has 13 points to spend on Talents. She immediately spends two points on Alertness (good for spotting people who are following you, or for noticing when someone is paying attention to you). She spends a point on Dodge (always good to have) and two points of Brawl (a couple of years fighting your brothers will teach you at least that much). Cassandra needs to know how people feel, so Meg spends two points on Empathy. Street poets obviously need to have something to say and the ability to say it well, so Meg spends three points on Expression. Finally, Meg puts two points in Cassandra's Streetwise (easy to explain with her street background) and one point in Subterfuge, to demonstrate Cassandra's understanding of how to manipulate language.

Meg has nine points to spend on Skills. She gives Cassandra ratings of 2 in Meditation (she's got to have some way of keeping her peace in a violent world... perhaps she prays or just walks to meditate), 2 in Leadership (she used to boss her brothers around), 1 in Firearms (she learned how to shoot a gun from her brothers), and 1 in Stealth (her time on the street has taught her the necessity of discretion). She finishes off this section by taking a Performance rating of 3, because she wants to be entertaining while she screams her poetry at people.

Finally, Meg represents her haphazard, mostly librarygained education by spreading out her five points among Politics, Computer, Law, Linguistics and Occult.

# Step Four: Advantages

Now Meg moves into wraithly matters. She must pick from a large number of Backgrounds, and she only has seven points to spend. Meg doesn't want to play an unrelentingly dark character: she's interested in playing a "vigilante" kind of wraith who takes care of the people who were important to her in life. Accordingly, she picks two points of Eidolon immediately; she wants to be able to dispel her Shadow if she needs to protect someone. Meg figures that most of Cassandra's neighborhood remembers her: her poems are written on city walls all over the place, and every time someone looks at one, she gets more Memoriam. Thus, she gives Cassandra a Memoriam rating of 2. Meg decides that Cassandra kept her favorite pair of rollerblades even beyond the grave, so she lists Relics 1 on her sheet. Meg also decides that, of the three factions in Wraith, she likes the Renegades best, so she gives Cassandra one dot in the Renegade Background. This doesn't mean she's a Renegade herself: she just knows a few. Finally, for one point, she purchases the Haunt Background. Cassandra's Haunt is Cafe Inferno, a trendy coffee shop in Atlanta.

Now, Meg turns to Passions. She has 10 points to spend: this is where she can really say a lot about her character. Meg takes a moment to think about her character. What things are important to her? What things drive her? The first thing that pops into Meg's head is that Cassandra left behind a lover when she died: Cynthia. This forms her first Passion: to protect Cynthia. Simple enough... and Love is a perfect focus for the Passion. Because this is the major drive for her character right now, she assigns three points to it. Meg asks David, the Storyteller, whether this is okay, noting that this Passion has as its focus the protection of one of her Fetters. David decides that it's okay, but suggests that she purchase some non-Fetter-related ones next. So, Meg decides that Cassandra was killed by a gang of thugs who took issue with something she said or wrote. This forms her next Passion: "Get back at the gang," which is associated with Revenge. She rates it at 2, spending two more Passion points. She decides to invest two points in a Passion to keep writing and creating; the affiliated emotion is Pride in her work. Meg also decides that some sleazy publisher took pictures of her graffiti-poems and compiled them into a book that hit the bestseller list. She decides to write down a Passion of "Ruin the publisher who stole my work," with a focus of Hate and a rating of 2. Finally, with one point left, Meg adds a little bit of humanity to her character by having one of her Passions be "Get back her favorite pen," an easily accomplished Passion with a focus of Envy.

Next, Meg has to choose Arcanos. There are so many... but Meg decides that Cassandra wouldn't obsess on just one. Her "look it up yourself" mentality would prompt her to learn a little bit about a lot of Arcanos. So, she divides her five Arcanos points among Argos, Puppetry, Phantasm, Lifeweb and Embody. Even though she spreads out her Arcanos points in this fashion, it shouldn't weaken Cassandra overmuch: a broad base of knowledge can be a good thing in the Shadowlands.

Meg must now choose Cassandra's Fetters: the things that bind her to the living world. She has 10 points to spend. David warns her not to make her Fetters too tough. First Meg chooses the Macintosh computer in her community center, something that could be destroyed rather easily. This is the tool on which Cassandra composed much of her poetry. She assigns it a rating of 2. Next, there's Piedmont Park, a big enough (and permanent enough) Fetter, rated at 1. (She used to love to rollerblade there... but she was also attacked there once, and she did fall in love with Cynthia there...) She asks David if she can make Cafe Inferno a Fetter, since it is her Haunt as well. David agrees, because he's already decided that the Circle

will be centered around Cafe Inferno. Meg spends four points on that Fetter, giving her a considerable advantage using Arcanos there. Finally, she makes her mortal girlfriend Cynthia a Fetter, rated at 3.

Now Meg must assign her Willpower and Pathos scores: easy enough. Cassandra, as a wraith, starts with a Willpower rating of 5. Because of her Memoriam, she starts with a total Pathos rating of 7.

# Step 5: Finishing Touches

Finally, Meg gets to spend Cassandra's 15 "freebie" points. Meg decides Cassandra should be a bit more perceptive than she is, so she spends five freebie points to raise Cassandra's Perception to 2. She wants to excel in Expression, so she spends two more points to raise it to 4. Meg also spends two freebie points to raise Cassandra's Alertness rating.

Meg wants another Memoriam dot, so she spends another freebie point to get it. David says that Cassandra can't have rollerblades unless she spends another freebie point on the Relic Background. Finally, Meg blows the last 4 points on Willpower: Cassandra's going to need it. Thus, Cassandra's total Willpower is 7.

While this officially ends the character generation process, Meg decides to flesh out Cassandra a little more. She writes a brief paragraph describing her (at Appearance 3 she's pretty, but not exceptional), writes a little about Cafe Inferno, and describes the relics that Cassandra possesses (perhaps deciding that the rollerblades are not as useful as, say, a flashlight and a cigarette lighter).

Meg decides to go ahead and assign Cassandra's specialties: she lists the specialty of Charisma as "guts" and the specialty of her Expression as "street poetry."

Meg decides that Cassandra has, as a quirk, the habit of pointing at people to whom she is speaking. Additionally, her very expressive nature means she gestures a lot when she talks.

And there it is: a completed character. Now David will take Meg and Cassandra through a prelude to flesh out Meg's ideas about her character.

The Prelude

Now you are ready to play your character, even though she is not complete. The prelude is the name for this first session. In the prelude, the character's last hours of life are reenacted, and her journey into death begins.

The prelude is essential to the development of a Wraith character. Once the player and Storyteller have roughly sketched out who and what the character is, they roleplay the journey from life into death, including the character's initial experiences in the afterlife.



Chapter Five: Character





The player may wish to sketch out the character's life in only the broadest strokes, playing out and detailing particular moments but describing little of the context in which they fit. Remember, too, that a wraith is "reborn" into the afterlife and typically remembers little of her past life. Details about a character's past may thus be discovered throughout the chronicle.

If it is difficult for a player and Storyteller to run a prelude, then they should simply talk about relationships and Fetters, and discuss the character's life and death.

# Death: The Beginning

The prelude begins with the death scene. If a Storyteller wants, a few minutes or hours of life before the character's imminent demise may be played out, but very little information should be given to the player. Some players may not even realize exactly how their characters die.

Then it ends. The character is dead. Most Storytellers will want to give their players a sense of the sudden shock of the death blow, the helplessness, the cold, the slow cessation of bodily processes, the brain cells expiring, one by one, for five minutes after the body has passed the point of no return.

Some wraiths-to-be then undergo out-of-body experiences. The Storyteller may let a player view his corpse and the people around it. Sometimes, the new wraith may "wake up" at his own funeral, perhaps seeing his friends and relatives in mourning. Some wraiths experience a "tunnel of light," while others go directly to the Underworld with little pomp and circumstance.

# Wandering

During this time the Storyteller may have the character relive events from his life. These scenes should be quick and nebulous: for example, a memory of spending time with a lover, but no recollection of his name or what became of him.

These "snapshot" scenes have two purposes. First, they let the Storyteller and player feel out the character and her reactions to certain events. Second, they give the Storyteller an opportunity to plant seeds that she can harvest for later storylines or subplots in her chronicle.

# Questions and Answers

Described below are some questions that should be answered by the end of the prelude. If there is no time for a full prelude, you should at least make an effort to answer these questions. It often helps to write out the answers, even if you have undergone the full prelude.

With each question we list what sorts of things the player should ask himself, as well as some advice to the Storyteller on how to run the prelude in relationship to the question.





#### . How old were you when you died?

Were you in the prime of life, a child, or very old? This can determine your physical appearance in the Shadowlands.

#### · What was your family life like?

In the World of Darkness, many families are not the healthiest of institutions. Were you wounded by your family? Did you wound them? Were they supportive, caring and loving? How many brothers and sisters (and stepbrothers and stepsisters) did you have? Did your parents divorce? Did you have a stepmother or stepfather? Were you an orphan?

#### What was the most shameful thing you've ever done?

This could be as innocent as stealing a candy bar (not likely) or as terrible as murder. Think about this one long and hard: it will shape the way your Shadow operates.

#### What was the best thing you've ever done?

Even Hitler painted roses. Even if you were a psychopath who brutally killed many before your demise in the electric chair, what good thing, what single moment of humanity did you exhibit? If you were not so awful, what feat was your shining moment? Did you save a homeless shelter from being closed? Represent someone *pro bono* for her divorce out of an abusive marriage? Give your last dollar to a starving child?

#### · What places were important to you in life?

Even aside from your Fetters, this can tell you a lot about your character. Was there a favorite hangout as a teenager? Did you build a treehouse as a child? Did you love to go to a specific movie theater? Was a particular restaurant your favorite? Did you love a particular park? All of these things can shape your character's development and provide sources for Fetters.

#### · How did you die?

Okay, so you've chosen your death... but how did you die? Explain in detail... or are you still unaware of how you died? Was there a funeral? Were you buried or cremated? What was placed in the coffin with you? Where are your ashes now? Who mourned you? Who didn't? Did your loved ones carry your memory around like a stone around their neck, or did they quickly forget you?

#### · How long have you been dead?

How many years? Who remembers you (if anyone docs)? Have you lost any Fetters to the ravages of time or vindictive wraiths? How well do you know the local Necropolis? Do you

know the political lay of the land? Do you hold seniority over anyone in your area?

#### How did you meet the rest of your Circle?

Were you brought together by a Reaper, or did you just meet by a quirk of fate? It is important to determine how you relate to the rest of your Circle. What do they think of you? What are your jobs and perks in the Circle?

 What was your first run-in with other Underworld dwellers like?

Did you run into a horde of ravening spectres? Were you the target of a slaver? Did a Heretic attempt to convert you? You should take into account your Hierarchy, Heretic or Renegade Background when answering this question.

#### • What do you do for fun?

This is very important: death is depressing. It's nice to get out and have some fun from time to time. Do you skinride people while they make love? Do you watch TVs that are left on in department stores, relying on your unearthly senses to listen through the glass? Do you play tricks on mortals, making them do silly things? Do you use your Phantasm to tell stories to other wraiths? Do you amuse yourself by stealing socks from laundromats or dice from roleplaying games (damn, you *still* don't have a life, do you)? Do you enjoy making serious people laugh and funny people serious? It's important to lighten the mood of a Wraith story from time to time, and this is one way to do it.

#### Where is your favorite Haunt?

This is some place affiliated with you or your Circle. You hang out there. Stories can start there. It should be interesting enough to generate a few story ideas, but not so important that you can't venture beyond it.

#### Where does your Circle meet?

Does your group have a penchant for dangling off of skyscrapers, or meeting on the tracks of a subway (just don't touch the third rail)? Do you like to meet in the mayor's office after hours, or in a back alley someplace? After all, the world is your playground: you can meet anywhere. Where will you go?

#### What motivates you?

What drives your character, makes her laugh, makes her cry, makes her angry, makes her desire, makes her afraid? What gives her hope? In what does she believe? Once you know these things about your character, you can begin to structure her creation.

Chapter Five: Character



# Chapter Six: Traits

What a piece of work is man! —William Shakespeare, Hamlet



n Wraith, Traits are the basis of a character — they describe, conjure and delineate who and what a character really is. They enable you to detail your character's strengths and weaknesses, allow you to translate the character into game reality by using dice, and, most importantly, help you

focus and understand your character.

A character's Traits describe only the general parameters of her abilities. The essence of the character is created through roleplaying and imagination. Traits in **Wraith** are intentionally left sketchy — at least the number-crunching part — so you will not concentrate on the character sheet too much. What is only crudely established during character creation becomes fleshed out in play. Don't look at your Traits thinking you have a complete character. Your roleplaying will create your character.

# Personality Archetypes



here are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life. Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution... representing merely the possibility of a certain type of perception and action.

—Carl Jung, Collected Works, Vol. 9

Personality Archetypes are a way of defining wraiths' personality. Characters do not, in fact, fit into such neat and tidy categories. Archetypes are the templates for an infinite number of different personalities, and should not be seen as absolute standards. These personality Archetypes are examples of the variety of personalities that can found; they are intended to guide, not restrict.

The psychologist Carl Jung discovered the concept of archetypes as a way of describing any concept that resides in the collective unconscious of humanity. He believed that such complex symbols couldn't be rigidly categorized, but he did give names to some of the archetypes. Nonetheless, in order to incorporate the concept of archetypes into our systems, a modified version of this idea is used to describe personalities, so remember to take the following guidelines with a grain of salt.

The key to the use of Archetypes is the interaction between the character's Nature and Demeanor. Nature is the true personality of the character, that which she is but may not reveal to others. Most people, not wishing others to know them intimately, create facades behind which they can hide their true selves. Such facades are known as Demeanors. A character's Demeanor may be as consistent as her Attributes or may change from minute to minute. An extraordinarily open, honest or simple-minded individual may have the same Demeanor and Nature.

Archetypes have a practical impact on the game, for each Archetype provides a different way to regain Willpower points. The Nature of the character is thus vital in regaining Willpower. The procedure works like this: the player notices her character may be able to regain Willpower because of her actions or the situation — this varies from Archetype to Archetype. She asks the Storyteller if she can regain Willpower, and the Storyteller either accepts or rejects the request. If the Storyteller deems the request valid, he awards from one to three Willpower points depending on the nature of the character's actions. The Storyteller shouldn't reward a character if he thinks the player is performing the action merely to regain Willpower.

The Storyteller should also encourage players to develop their own Archetypes, thus giving players the opportunity to create truly unique personalities.

Storytellers should also see pp. 177-179 for descriptions of Shadow Archetypes.

# Architect

Your sense of purpose transcends your own needs; you try to create something of lasting value for those who come after you. People need many things, and you gain satisfaction by providing whatever you can. You are the type of person who makes an effort to build something of value: to found a town, create a company or in some way leave a lasting legacy.

 Regain Willpower whenever you create or establish something of importance or lasting value.

# Avant-Garde

You must always be in the forefront. You must always be the first to break the news, learn the new dance, display a fashion trend, or patronize a new discovery in the arts. New discoveries are your life, and you devote a great deal of time and effort to keeping up with things. Nothing pains you more than hearing secondhand news. If you're not in the front, you're nowhere.

 Regain one point of Willpower whenever you are the first with a piece of news or other significant discovery.

# Bon Vivant

Life and afterlife are pointless, shallow and meaningless — so have as good a time as possible. Rome may burn, but you shall drink wine and sing songs. You are a sensualist, sybarite and party animal; the words austerity, self-denial and self-discipline have no place in your life. You much prefer the concept of instant gratification. Still, you don't mind a little hard work as long as a good time awaits you upon completion. Most Bon Vivants have little self-control, for they so dearly love excess.

— Regain Willpower whenever you have a truly good time and can fully express your exultation (or perhaps even more points if you enjoy an especially fun night).

#### Bravo

You are a bully, a ruffian, a tough, and delight in tormenting the weak. Things must always go your way, and you do not tolerate those who cross you. Power and might are all you respect; indeed, you heed only those who can prove their power to you.

You see nothing wrong with forcing your will upon others. There is nothing you like better than to persecute, antagonize, heckle and intimidate those whom you hold in contempt. The emotions of kindness and pity are not completely foreign to you, but you hide from your own sense of weakness through cruelty to others. While most Bravos despise the weak, a few become their protectors.

Regain Willpower whenever you intimidate or physically force another person to do what you wish.

# Caregiver

You always try to help those around you and struggle to make a difference in the needs and sorrows of the unfortunate. People around you depend on your stability and strength to keep them steady and centered. You are the one to whom people turn when they have a problem.

— Regain Willpower whenever you successfully protect or nurture someone else. This protection can be as small as a smile of support or a shoulder to lean on at an appropriate moment. You must help the other person in some way, though he need not acknowledge it openly.

# Child

You are still immature in personality and temperament: a kid who never grew up. Though you can care for yourself, you prefer the security of being watched over by others. Often you seek out someone to look out for you — a caretaker of sorts. Some see you as a spoiled brat, while others see you as an innocent cherub unaffected by the evils of the world. This is a very common archetype for wraiths who died when they were young and subsequently matured mentally, but not emotionally.

-Regain Willpower whenever someone does something to help you with no apparent gain for herself.

# Conformist

You are a follower. Taking charge is just not your style. It is easier for you to adapt, attune, adjust, comply and reconcile yourself to the new situations in which you find yourself. You flit to the brightest star, the person you feel to be the best, throwing your lot in with her. It is difficult and distasteful for you to go against the flow or to rebel. You hate inconsistency and instability, and know that by supporting a strong leader, you help prevent chaos from occurring. All stable groups need some kind of Conformist.

 Regain Willpower whenever your group accomplishes something because of your support and aid.

# Conniver

What's the sense of working hard when you can get something for nothing? Why drudge when, just by talking, you can get what you want? You always try to take the easy way out, the fast track to success and wealth. Some people might call what you do swindling or even outright theft, but you know that you only do what everyone else does; you just do it better. Additionally, trickery is a game, and you derive great pleasure from outwitting someone. Connivers play many roles, so you may be a thief, a swindler, a street waif, an entrepreneur, a con man or just a finagler.

 Regain Willpower whenever you are able to get your way by tricking another person into doing as you wish.

# Critic

Nothing in the world should be accepted without thorough scrutiny and examination. Nothing is ever perfect, and the blemishes must be pointed out in order for the good to be truly recognized. Your standards are high for everything, and you insist on their being met. You encourage the same ideals in others because low standards reduce the quality of life for everyone. They'll thank you later, once they discover the pu-



rity of your perspective. You seek out and expose the imperfections in every person or thing you encounter. You are never satisfied with anything that is less than perfect, unless it is yourself — after all, you're not a perfectionist.

 Regain one point of Willpower whenever you discover a significant imperfection that others overlook.

# Curmudgeon

You are an irascible, churlish person at heart, taking everything seriously and finding little humor in life (though you may have a wickedly barbed wit). Cynicism is your middle name; it is the tool with which you judge everything in life. You have a very well-defined understanding of how things really work, especially when they involve the circus of human endeavor. The foolish actions of others have long since ceased to surprise you.

— Regain Willpower whenever someone does something stupid, just like you predicted. You must predict it either out loud to the other characters or in private to the Storyteller.

# Deviant

There are always people who don't fit in, and you are such a miscreant. Your beliefs, motivations and sense of propriety are completely antithetical to the status quo. You are not so much an aimless rebel as an independent thinker who does not belong in the society in which you were raised. You don't give a damn about other people's morality, but you do adhere to your own strange code of conduct. Deviants are typically irreverent, and some have truly bizarre tastes and desires.

 — Regain Willpower whenever you successfully thumb your nose at wraith society and its precepts without retaliation.

# Director

You despise chaos and disorder, and tend to take control and organize things in order to suppress anarchy. You like to be in charge, live to organize, and habitually strive to make things work smoothly. You trust your own judgment implicitly and tend to think of things in black-and-white terms: "This won't work"; "You're either for me or against me"; "There are two ways to do this — my way and the wrong way."

 — Regain Willpower when you are allowed to lead a group and accomplish some significant task.



# Fanatic

You are consumed by a cause; it is the primary force in your life, for good or ill. All your physical, mental and emotional resources are directed toward your cause; in fact, you may feel very guilty about spending time on anything else. You let nothing stand in your way — nothing that you cannot overcome, in any case. You and those around you may suffer, but your cause is everything — the end justifies the means. Before the game begins, make sure you describe your cause and define how it may affect your behavior.

 You regain Willpower whenever you accomplish an act that furthers your cause.

# Jester

You are the fool, idiot, quipster, clown or comic, forever making fun of both yourself and others. You constantly seek the humor in any situation, and strive to battle the tides of depression inside yourself. You hate sorrow and pain, and constantly try to take others' minds off the dark side of life. Sometimes you'll do nearly anything to forget pain exists. Your particular brand of humor might not always impress your friends, but it makes you feel better. Some Jesters manage to escape pain and are truly happy, but most never find release.

 Regain Willpower when you raise the spirits of those around you through the device of humor, especially when you escape your own pain in the process.

# judge

As a facilitator, moderator, arbitrator, conciliator and peacemaker, you always seek to make things better. You pride yourself on your rationality, your insight and your ability to deduce a reasonable explanation when given the facts. You struggle to promote truth, but you understand how difficult it can be to ascertain. You respect justice, for that is the way through which truth can reign.

In your view, people are resources, albeit ones that are difficult to manage and employ. You hate dissension and arguments, and shy away from dogmatism. Sometimes Judges make good leaders, though a lack of vision can sometimes cause them to maintain the status quo instead of searching for a better system.

 Regain Willpower when you are able to separate the truth from a web of lies, or when you convince disputing individuals to agree with your judgments.

# Loner

You are always alone, even in the midst of a crowd. You are the wanderer, hunter and lone wolf. Though others might think of you as lonely, forsaken, isolated or remote, in truth you prefer your own company to that of others. There are many different reasons why this might be so: you don't understand people, you understand people too well, people dislike you, people like you too much, or you are simply lost in your own thoughts. Your reasons are your own.

— When you manage to accomplish some significant task on your own, without the aid of others, yet which still aids the group in some way, you regain Willpower based on the significance of the achievement.

### Martyr

All possess the martyr instinct, but few act upon it. Even fewer live the life of a Martyr. You, however, are such a one. Your desire for self-sacrifice stems from a low self-esteem, a feeling of a lack of control, or a profoundly developed sense of love. You are able to endure long-lasting and severe suffering because of your beliefs and ideals.

At worst, a Martyr expects sympathy and attention because of his suffering, and may even feign or exaggerate pain or deprivation. At best, a Martyr willingly suffers injury or even death rather than renounce his religion, beliefs, principles, cause or friends.

 Regain Willpower when you sacrifice yourself in a real and immediate way for your beliefs or another individual.

# Rebel

You are a malcontent, iconoclast and free-thinking recalcitrant. You are so independent-minded and free-willed that you are unwilling to join any particular cause or movement. You are just yourself and only desire the freedom to be yourself. You do not make a good follower and aren't usually a very good leader either (unless your followers are willing to go wherever you lead). Your insubordination against authority occasionally reaches the point of stupidity.

 Regain Willpower whenever your rebellion against the status quo turns out to be for the best.

#### Survivor

No matter what, you always manage to survive. You can endure, pull through, recover from, outlast and outlive nearly any circumstance. When the going gets tough, you get going. You never say die, and never give up — never. Nothing angers you so much as a person who doesn't struggle to make things better, or who surrenders to the nameless forces of the universe.

 — Regain Willpower whenever you survive a difficult situation through your own cunning and perseverance.



# Traditionalist

You are an orthodox and conservative individual. What was good enough for you when you were alive is good enough for you now. You resist change of any sort. You especially oppose change for the sake of change — what point is there in that? You may be seen by some as a miser, a reactionary or simply an old fogy. You always strive to preserve the status quo.

 — Regain Willpower whenever you are able to protect the status quo and prevent change.

# Visionary

Very few are brave or strong or imaginative enough to look beyond the suffocating embrace of society and mundane thought in search of something more. Society treats such people with both respect and contempt, for the Visionary perverts as well as guides society.

You may be a spiritualist, shaman, New Ager, mystic, philosopher or inventor, but whatever you are, you are always looking for something more. You see beyond the bounds of conventional imagination and create new possibilities. Though you might have your head in the clouds and are often of an impractical bent, you are filled with new ideas and perceptions.

— Regain Willpower whenever you are able to convince others to believe in your dreams and follow the course of action outlined by your vision of the future.

# Attributes

raiths are no longer real, at least as we understand the term. Every wraith has a Corpus and sentience, which are the manifestations of their presence in another form of reality. Attributes now serve as descriptors of their continued state of existence.

Attributes are based on self-concept, on how the character sees himself. A wraith's body and general capabilities are based on habit and expectation, and are as firm and unchang-

ing as real-world Attributes.



#### Specialties

For each Attribute and Ability Trait rated 4 or higher, a player can select a specialty. A specialty is a particular subcategory that a character is capable of perform-

ing with additional proficiency — a character may be able to drive very well, but may be particularly adept at off-road maneuvers.

A specialty allows the player to reroll 10s scored on actions directly involving the specialty. The player gets to keep the success indicated by the 10, and may subsequently try again for another success, rolling another die for each 10 obtained.

# Physical Attributes

Physical Attributes determine the raw external power of the wraith as manifested in the wraith's actions. They are the easiest to define and thus the easiest to comprehend.

#### Strength

This Attribute defines a wraith's raw might. It represents not only physical strength, but also force and capacity to cause damage. It is used to determine the base number of damage dice rolled in any attack.

Strength is used when a wraith attempts to lift, carry, push, heave or break something. Strength is also used when attempting to make any sort of jump or leap.

Specialties: Strong Grip, Massive, Husky, Able-Bodied, Hearty, Powerful, Wiry, Large

- Poor
- Average
- ••• Good
- •••• Exceptional
- ••••• Outstanding

#### Dexterity

This Attribute defines a wraith's capacity to perform complex activities. It represents physical speed, grace, precision and the ability to perform intricate or subtle actions. Dexterity defines the wraith's control of her Corpus.

Specialties: Smooth-Motioned, Lithe, Steady, Deft, Graceful, Nimble, Athletic, Catlike Reflexes, Swift, Sure-Footed, Fleet-Footed, Light Touch

- Poor: You are butterfingered, so don't use a chainsaw.
- Average: You can chew gum and walk at the same time.
- Good: You have excellent raw athletic potential.
- Exceptional: You can juggle five knives.
- Outstanding: You can juggle five knives while blindfolded.

#### Stamina

The Stamina Attribute defines the wraith's steadfastness. It represents not only physical endurance, but also determination, ruggedness, concentration and desire to win. It reflects a wraith's understanding of her limitations.

Specialties: Tireless, Enduring, Tough, Determined, Aggressive, Tenacious, Stalwart, Durable, Forceful, Dedicated



- Poor: You are frail in constitution and appear weak.
- Average: You seem to be moderately healthy.
- Good: In life, you were in good shape, the result of regular exercise. Your spirit is vigorous.
- •••• Exceptional: You could run a marathon.
- Outstanding: You could survive in the heart of a Maelstrom (well, maybe...).

# Social Attributes

A wraith's Social Attributes not only represent her ability to interact with others, but also define her sense of self-worth and confidence. They define how the wraith perceives herself in terms of her surroundings and how she fits into the scheme of things.

Social Traits are vital in determining first impressions, leadership ability and the nature of a wraith's interactions with others. Combined with Physical Attributes, they define the wraith's presence.

# Charisma

Charisma defines a wraith's raw magnetism and strength of presence. It also represents boldness, bluster, and how interesting the wraith is to others. Charisma reflects a wraith's power to convince others to put their faith in him. In many ways, it is analogous to Strength and is used in any attempt to influence someone overtly.

Specialties: Smooth, Eloquent, Outgoing, Captivating, Charming, Regal, Genial, Well-Mannered, Urbane, Sophisticated, Rustic, Gracious

- Poor: Others avoid being around you.
- •• Average: You are likable.
- ••• Good: People trust and confide in you.
- •••• Exceptional: Something draws people to you.
- •••• Outstanding: You could lead a nation.

#### Manipulation

This Trait defines a wraith's cunning. Manipulation represents insidiousness and precision in social dealings. In many ways it serves as "social stealth," unlike Charisma, which takes a more head-on approach. It defines a wraith's understanding of others. Manipulation is used in any attempt to influence someone subtly.

If you fail a Manipulation action, and the target realizes what you were trying to do (you botch, for instance), she may well be



angered. People are manipulated all the time and usually ignore it. However, if the fact is brought to their attention, it can be very disturbing. Manipulation can net great results, but it is risky to perform openly. Characters with high Manipulation ratings are not overly trusted by those who know them best.

Specialties: Glib, Expressive, Cunning, Persuasive, Smooth, Silver-Tongued, Bravado, Ingratiating, Eloquent, Blarney, Double-Talker, Sophist, Witty

- Poor: You express yourself in as few words as possible.
- Average: Others might believe you.
- ••• Good: You'd make a good lawyer.
- •••• Exceptional: You should run for office.
- ••••• Outstanding: You could sell ice to an Eskimo.

#### Appearance

A wraith's Appearance Trait, unlike that of mortals, is based upon her sense of self-worth. The wraith's Appearance reflects her satisfaction in being herself and how she wants others to see her. A high Appearance Trait does not necessarily indicate beauty, but attractiveness (the two are not always the same).

Appearance is vital in any social situation where words are not exchanged. It is more important than you might think offhand; your impressions of another are heavily affected by that person's looks, no matter how open-minded you are.

Appearance is often used by the Storyteller to judge roughly how others react to you upon a first meeting. Thus, it can affect all other Social rolls you make involving that person (in some cases, your rating determines the maximum number of successes from a Social action that can actually be applied, making it impossible for an ugly person to achieve anything beyond minimal success).

Specialties: Bold Demeanor, Alluring, Captivating, Sexy, Luminous, Honest Face, Imposing, Dignified, Pleasing, Handsome, Beautiful, Gorgeous

- Poor: You tend to attract the hostility of others.
- Average: You are easily ignored, for you fit in so well with the crowd.
- Good: You have a pleasing appearance, and people treat you well.
- Exceptional: You are good-looking enough to be a model and are given respect and attention because of it.
- Outstanding: Others' first reaction to you is either awe, intense jealousy or complete solicitude.

# Mental Attributes

The Mental Attributes represent a wraith's total mental capacity, including such things as memory, perception and the ability to learn and think. They represent the wraith's actual sentience and senses of internal and external understanding.



#### Perception

This Trait defines a wraith's awareness of reality. It represents insight into others, sensitivity to one's surroundings and intuition. In some ways, Perception represents wisdom in that those with low Perception ratings isolate themselves from their environment and are thus incapable of growth. It is used whenever a wraith attempts to detect something.

While Perception is sometimes used consciously, such as when you search for something, it more often works intuitively — you simply notice something. At base, Perception is a sensitivity to the world, an open-eyed quality common among children (for whom the world is a boundless and mysterious place) and seldom present among the most jaded.

Perception is used to see if you have the insight to understand or be aware of a certain fact or concept. It can help indicate your degree of alertness to ambushes, the subtext of a Hierarch's speech, or the subtleties of color in a painting. All wraiths are extremely sensitive to their surroundings, but only Perceptive wraiths are alert and insightful enough to realize what is happening around them.

Specialties: Insightful, Attentive, Patient, Probing, Keen-Eyed, Intuitive, Visionary, Astute, Apprehensive

- Poor: You are blind to anything but the obvious.
- Average: You are unaware of the subtle interactions that occur around you.
- Good: You are aware of moods and textures.
- Exceptional: You are constantly alert to the nuances of life.
- •••• Outstanding: You can find a needle in a haystack.

# Intelligence

The Intelligence Trait defines a wraith's understanding of reality. It represents the ability to perform complex, cerebral activities. Intelligence is used whenever analytical tasks are performed.

Intelligence represents both your memory and your ability to learn and think. It is important when using Abilities that require complex thought processes. Some people describe Intelligence as a person's quickness of mind or judgment, but it is more than that — it is the facility for understanding and the capacity for reasoning and evaluation. Intelligence rates an individual's depth and flexibility of thought.

Specialties: Discerning, Creative, Knowledgeable, Pragmatic, Astute, Brilliant, Bookworm, Clear Thinker

- Poor: IQ 80
- Average: IQ 100
- ••• Good: IQ 120
- •••• Exceptional: IQ 140
- ••••• Outstanding: IQ 160+

#### Wits

The Wits Attribute describes a wraith's ability to react quickly and correctly to new situations, as well as her overall sharpness of mind and cleverness. In the simplest of terms, it measures how quickly (as opposed to correctly) a wraith thinks. A more complex view incorporates Wits as a shrewdness, sagacity and capacity for understanding problems in the most basic terms.

Those with low Wits are occasionally unable to take appropriate actions because of surprise (like a deer caught in the glare of headlights). A low Wits can indicate that you are more easily tricked and fooled than most people, for you are a gullible and unsophisticated student of human (and wraith) nature. If you have high Wits, you are able to react quickly to new situations and are seldom caught off guard by sudden changes in events. Whatever else happens, you are able to keep your Wits about you.

Specialties: Clever, Shrewd, Sharp, Practical, Wily, Level-Headed, Creative

- Poor: You send money to televangelists.
- Average: You know when to bet or fold in poker.
- Good: You are capable of handling L.A. rush hours (without shooting anyone).
- •••• Exceptional: You could be a stand-up comic.
- Outstanding: You have a supercomputer for a brain — it's fast.

Abilities

# Talents

alents are untrained and intuitive Abilities. Talents can almost never be studied or learned via training (though a few, like Brawl, are exceptions), but can be learned through direct experience — usually during a story. If your character takes an action using a Talent he does not possess, there is no effect on your roll. A number of dice equal to the base Attribute is rolled. Talents are such natural and intuitive Abilities that it is assumed everyone has some small capacity for each one.



Alertness

Over the years, you have become practiced in noticing all that happens around you, even if you are not actively concentrating upon the surroundings. You are a

capable bodyguard, for you have learned how to stay alert over a long period of time. Alertness simply indicates your awareness of the world around you. It describes how much attention you pay to things other than the rumblings in your ectoplasm



or the doubts in your mind. Alertness relates to the physical world.

A wraith can hyperattenuate her senses at will. Sometimes using Heightened Senses to sense things in the physical world requires a roll of Perception + Alertness.

- Novice: You tend to be alert to changes, moreso than most.
- Practiced: You are watchful and very attentive to your surroundings.
- Competent: You are highly vigilant.
- Expert: You are a truly cautious individual and rarely let down your guard.
- Master: You notice everything that goes on around you.

Possessed by: Watchmen, Hunters, Bodyguards, Reporters, Burglars

Specialties: Bodyguarding, Traps, Ambushes, Forests, Crowds, Noises, Paranoia, Spectres

#### Athletics

This Ability describes your general athletic prowess and assumes a familiarity with most sports. It is used to see if you can jump across a chasm, swim through a storm, throw a football, vault a fence or climb a tree.

Athletics concerns complex motor actions. Physical actions requiring only one type of motor action, such as lifting, do not use the Athletics rating, nor do athletic actions already subsumed by another Ability.

- Novice: Little Leaguer
- Practiced: High school jock
- Competent: College Varsity player
- ••• Expert: Professional athlete
- Master: Olympic gold medalist

Possessed by: Professional Athletes, Enthusiasts, Dancers, Jocks, Kids

Specialties: Mountain Climbing, Acrobatics, Dancing, specific sports

#### Awareness

This Talent represents a character's ability to detect things that are not of the physical world. All wraiths have the ability to sense the presence of death (using Deathsight) and the presence of supernatural creatures (using Heightened Senses). Sensing things that are not of the physical world often requires a roll of Perception + Awareness.

- Novice: You see strange things out of the corner of your eye.
- Practiced: Odd things are revealed to you.
- Competent: All things have a deathly aura that you can easily identify.

- Expert: You could find a lucky four-leaf clover in seconds.
- ••••• Master: You see the bizarre everywhere.

Possessed by: Paranormal Investigators, Gypsies, Psychics Specialties: Animals, Magic, Supernatural Creatures

Brawl

You know how to fight bare-handed. This Ability includes such maneuvers as punching, kicking, grappling, throttling, throwing and gouging. Brawling can get quite ruthless, but generally is a nonlethal form of combat.

- Novice: You know what to do, but you haven't had much experience.
- Practiced: You know where to hit people and make it hurt.
- Competent: You can choose your barstool.
- Expert: You are a black belt martial artist.
- Master: You could be a Golden Gloves boxing champion.

Possessed by: Martial Artists, Soldiers, Thugs, Police Officers, Bouncers

Specialties: Armlocks, Boxing, Wrestling, Karate, Judo, Tai Chi, Grappling, Throws, Showing Off

#### Dodge

The most effective way to win a fight is not to be struck. Becoming proficient in the Dodge Talent is a very wise choice. Your rating in this area describes your ability to avoid both melee and missile attacks; this includes diving for cover and ducking punches.

- Novice: You hit the ground if someone screams, "Duck!"
- Practiced: You have no problem finding cover in a firefight.
- Competent: You're always the last one out in dodge ball.
- · · · Expert: A lucky shot may land once in a blue moon.

••••• Master: You can nearly sidestep gunshots.

Possessed by: Criminals, Street Fighters, Military Personnel, Bouncers, Boxers

Specialties: Leap, Sidestep, Duck, Cover, Dive

#### Empathy

You understand and can sympathize with the emotions of others, and are thus able to respond to them appropriately. Often you can discern the motives behind a person's actions simply by listening to him. You can also detect when you are being told lies.

All wraiths have the ability to sense basic emotions. Lifesight usually requires a roll of Perception + Empathy.



- Novice: People tell you their problems at parties.
- Practiced: Occasionally you get sympathetic pains from feelings without being attuned to them.
- Competent: You have an amazing insight into the motivations of others.
- Expert: No lies ever get past your scrutiny.
- Master: You often finish other people's sentences.

Possessed by: Actors, Mediums, Above-Average Salesmen, Pick-Up Artists

Specialties: Emotions, Truths, Personalities, Backgrounds

#### Expression

The Expression Ability represents your ability to get your point across through speaking or writing, whether you're writing a book or debating social issues. Characters with high Expression are unforgettable, but only in their ability to convey their feelings; intelligent or meaningful expression is the purview of other Traits. Expression at its highest form can be art.

- Novice: Tabloid reporter
- Practiced: College debate team captain
- ••• Competent: Successful comedian
- •••• Expert: Best-selling novelist
- ••••• Master: Shakespeare

Possessed by: Orators, Politicians, Novelists, Actors, Demagogues, Protesters

Specialties: Poetry, Impromptu, Radical, Innuendo, Meetings

#### Intimidation

The art of intimidation takes many forms, ranging from a subtle suggestion to outright physical damage. Each method of intimidation has its time and place. People with high Intimidation ratings seem to radiate auras of authority.

- Novice: Six-year-olds give you the right of way.
- Practiced: You win an occasional staredown.
- Competent: Your gaze is very unsettling.
- •••• Expert: You would be an above-average drill sergeant.
- Master: You can make vicious animals turn tail and run.

Possessed by: Businesspeople, Bouncers, Military Personnel, Mobsters

Specialties: Veiled Threats, Political, Military, Social, Overt Violence

#### Streetwise

The streets (whether of the Skinlands or the Necropoli) are a major source of information and money, as well as bigtime trouble. The Streetwise Talent has a variety of uses. First and foremost, Streetwise allows you to blend in with the local scene without drawing attention to yourself. Gossip, felony, theft and street slang are also imparted through this Talent.



- Novice: You know who sells drugs.
- Practiced: You are considered cool by the populace.
- Competent: Member of a prominent gang
- Expert: You have spent most of your life on the streets.

 Master: If you don't know it, it hasn't been said.
 Possessed by: Gang Members, Winos, Reporters, Homeless People, Detectives

Specialties: Picking Pockets, Drugs, Fencing, Slang Terms

#### Subterfuge

You know how to conceal your own motives; moreover, you know how to decipher the motives of others and how to use those motives against them. The secrets and intrigues of others interest you, and you work at understanding their weaknesses. A command of this skill makes you the ultimate conversationalist, or the ultimate spy.

- Novice: A few white lies never hurt anyone.
- Practiced: You can pick someone up in a nightclub.
- Competent: You could be a criminal lawyer.
- Expert: Amway salesmen have nothing on you.

••••• Master: Perry Mason wishes he had it so good. Possessed by: Lawyers, Con Men, Casanovas, Politicians Specialties: Finding Weaknesses, Seduction, Little White Lies

#### Other Talents

Search, Guile, Intrigue, Instruction

# Skills

Skills are Abilities that are learned through apprenticeships or rigorous training. If you try to perform a feat involving a Skill but have no rating in it, the difficulty increases by one. You are simply untrained in the techniques of that Skill and thus have a harder time accomplishing the task than someone who has at least some idea of what he is doing.

#### Crafts

This Skill imparts knowledge of master artisan techniques — woodworking, leatherwork, glassblowing, gem cutting, etc. You can make functional objects from various substances; the quality of these objects depends on the number of successes you roll.

- Novice: High-school shop class
- Practiced: Apartment handyman
- Competent: Professional work
- Expert: Specialist
- ••••• Master: Master artisan

Possessed by Theater Technicians, Handymen, Girl Scouts, Artificers

Specialties: Cooking, Carpentry, Blacksmithing, Leatherworking, Jewelry, Sewing, Origami, Stonemasonry

Wraith: The Oblivion

#### Drive

You can drive a car and perhaps other vehicles as well. Simply because you have a Drive Skill does not mean that you are familiar with all land vehicles. Your difficulty may be raised or lowered depending on your general experience with a particular automobile.

- Novice: You can drive an automatic automobile.
- Practiced: You can operate a manual/shift transmission.
- Competent: Commercial trucker (except around Stonegate Industrial Boulevard)
- •••• Expert: Formula One car driver
- ••••• Master: L.A. traffic is a cakewalk to you.

Possessed by: Truckers, Race Car Drivers, Stunt Drivers Specialties: Curves, Ice, Sudden Storms, Stick Shifts

#### Etiquette

You understand the small nuances of social life and are able to conduct yourself in a manner that is both unobtrusive and gracious. You understand how to make your way through human and wraith society. Your specialty is the culture with which you are most familiar. You use Etiquette during actions such as dancing, seduction and haggling. Etiquette is also used when engaging in diplomacy.

- Novice: You know when to shut up.
- Practiced: You know not to wear paisley at a black-tie dinner.
- Competent: You know which spoon is used to eat soup.
- Expert: You can get along with just about anybody.

••••• Master: You could prevent World War III. Possessed by: Diplomats, Idle Rich, Executives

Specialties: Business, High Society, Street Culture

#### irearms

Skill in Firearms means that you have a broad knowledge of all guns, from a simple .22 to an Ingram Mac-10 machine gun. Firearms Skill does not include the ability to operate heavy machinery such as tank guns and other artillery weapons. However, the Firearms Skill does include the ability to repair them.

- Novice: You've had one or two lessons at the gun store.
- Practiced: You do all right at a firing range.
- Competent: You can pull off a few gun tricks.
- •••• Expert: You're cool and steady, even under pressure.

 Master: "Do you feel lucky? Well, do ya, punk?" Possessed by: Gang Members, Police, Criminals, Soldiers, Hunters

Specialties: Rifles, Handguns, Pistols, Machine Guns, Sprays



# Leadership

You can get people to follow your lead and obey your orders by exerting authority and by example. Leadership isn't so much knowing the techniques of getting people to follow you as it is being the type of person people will follow. Leadership is often used in conjunction with Charisma.

- Novice: You could coach a Little League team.
- Practiced: Your voice is a dominant one; you can demand silence.
- Competent: You are an effective leader in times of strife.
- •••• Expert: You attract followers without really trying.
- Master: You are a Napoleon, a Charon or a Hitler...

Possessed by: Politicians, Military Officers, Gang Leaders, Executives, Police Officers

Specialties: Commands, Oration, Compelling, Friendly, Noble, Military

# Meditation

Meditation is the Skill of calming the emotions, controlling the mind, and relaxing the physical body. Meditation is usually performed while seated in a special position, like the lotus position, but with practice, it can be performed in a variety of situations or positions.

Meditation can be used to isolate the mind from distractions, allowing a character to focus on matters of importance. Meditation can also be used to catch up on lost Slumber, a Stamina + Meditation roll (difficulty 8) determines how many effective hours of Slumber are gained per hour of meditation.

- Novice: You can sit in one spot for awhile with out fidgeting.
- Practiced: You can sit and attain a peaceful state of mind.
- Competent: You can relax in any position.
- Expert: People have to go out of their way to break your concentration.
- Master: You could stand on your head in gunfire and approach inner calm.

Possessed by: Martial Artists, Monks, Athletes, Psychologists Specialties: Relaxation, Focusing, Memory, Zen, Centering

#### Melee

The ability to fight with a weapon is a valuable skill in the Gothic-Punk environment. Proficiency in this Skill allows you to use hand-held weapons. Knives, sai, saps, tonfa and swords are examples of the types of weapons covered by the Melee Skill. This Skill is almost archaic in mortal society nowadays because of the prevalence of firearms, but keep in mind that the same is not always true in Stygia and the Far Realms...

- Novice: You've taken a six-week course in fencing.
- Practiced: You have military training.
- Competent: You draw byes in kendo tournaments.
- Expert: Any weapon is deadly in your grasp.
- ••••• Master: Bruce Lee with a pair of nunchuka

Possessed by: Police, Fencers, Kendo Enthusiasts, Thugs, Gang Members

Specialties: Swords, Axes, Rapiers, Knives, Clubs, Disarm, Ballestra, Florentine

#### Performance

You are able to perform artistic actions, such as singing, guitar playing and acting. You know the minutiae of what to do and how to do it. Your specialty is the type of performance on which you concentrate, more than likely the first type of artistic expression you ever pursued. Writing and speaking are not covered by Perfomance; they rely on the Expression Ability.

- Novice: You can play bass in a garage band or act in a college play.
- Practiced: You can eke out a living on the club circuit.
- Competent: You can get a movie or record deal.
- Expert: You regularly make the pages of People.

Master: Your work will be remembered through the ages.
 Possessed by: Actors, Musicians, Karaoke Regulars, Mimes
 Specialties: Hardcore, Villains, Guitar Solos, While Drunk

#### Repair

You are able to repair simple or complex devices of all sorts. Such devices include doors, cars and even computers. Mastery of this Skill means that you are a jack-of-all-trades. This Skill covers everything from simple carpentry to mechanics. Of course, proper tools are always needed.

- Novice: You can assemble ready-made kits.
- Practiced: You could wire a house.
- Competent: You save quite a few dollars in mechanics' fees.
- Expert: You are able to repair personal computers within minutes.



••••• Master: If it's broken, you can fix it.

Possessed by: Handymen, Carpenters, Electricians, Mechanics, Husbands

Specialties: Wood, Computers, Electronics, Engines, Automobiles, Electricity

# Stealth

Stealth is the ability to sneak about or hide without being seen or heard; it is often rolled against another character's Perception.

- Novice: You can hide in the dark.
- Practiced: You can hide in the shadows.
- Competent: You are an accomplished hunter.
- Expert: You can walk silently over two inches of dry leaves.
- ••••• Master: Ninja clan leader

Possessed by: Criminals, Spies, Reporters

Specialties: Prowl, Hide, Lurk, Shadows, Crowds, Crawling

# Other Skills

Piloting, Cooking, Boating, Archery, Disguise

# knowledges

Knowledges include all the Abilities that require rigorous application of the mind, not the body. Accordingly, Mental Traits are used to modify Knowledge rolls. Though the ratings discuss Knowledges in terms of college degrees, school is not the only way to gain Knowledges — it is simply the most common. These are scholastic abilities for the most part, but self-study or tutoring is also possible.

If you do not have a Knowledge, you cannot even attempt a roll involving it. There are exceptions, however, such as when the Storyteller rules that the roll pertains to trivial information that anyone has a chance of knowing.

#### Bureaucracy

This Knowledge includes the ability to make your way through the political system, in the Shadowlands or in Stygia. The Knowledge also includes the ability to run a bureaucracy, which of course presupposes at least a rudimentary sense of organization. In fact, this Knowledge can be seen as the chief organizational ability in the game.

- Student: You have good organizational ability.
- College: You understand power structures and can intuitively sense who is in control.
- Masters: You can perform stalling tactics indefinitely.
- Doctorate: You can perform supervisory administrative duties.
- ••••• Scholar: You could obtain a meeting with the President of the United States.

#### Computer

You understand how to operate and program computers. You may also be able to design your own system. If you wish to break into a computer system, you need this Knowledge.

- Student: You can boot up a video game.
- College: You made at least a B in Data Processing 101.
- Masters: You are a competent programmer and can design your own software.
- •••• Doctorate: You make a living scamming Ma Bell.
  - Scholar: You're on the verge of creating Artificial Intelligence.

Possessed by: Programmers, Data Processors, Gamers, MUSH Coders, Students, Hackers

Specialties: Hacking, Virus Programs, Retrieving Data

#### Enigmas

Puzzles and problems occupy your imagination — in fact, you may even enjoy being perplexed. Solving riddles of all sorts is a passion, and this interest has given you a knack for piecing together and remembering information vital to many kinds of problem-solving.

The Enigmas Knowledge assists players in solving the mysteries created by the Storyteller. It is essential for divining secret pathways to lost realms, answering the riddles of mystical guardians, or riddling for one's soul against a malevolent Malfean.

- Student: You can put together a 100-piece jigsaw puzzle.
- College: You can guess the outcome of a mystery novel.
- Masters: You can do Rubik's Cube in an hour.
- Doctorate: You'd have whipped Gollum without hobbit trickery.

Scholar: You understand the deepest mysteries.
 Possessed by: Crossword Puzzle Devotees, Zen Enthusiasts,
 Game Players, Mystics

Specialties: Ancient, Riddles, Visual, Verbal

#### Investigation

You are trained to notice all sorts of details that others might miss. High levels of this Knowledge allow you to function as a detective. This Knowledge provides an ability to find clues, perform forensic analysis and predict crime patterns.

- Student: Amateur detective
- College: Police officer
- Masters: Private detective
- Doctorate: FBI, CIA, KGB, MI5, Interpol agents
- ••••• Scholar: Sherlock Holmes

Possessed by: Detectives, Insurance Investigators, Reporters, FBI Agents, Intelligence Agents

Specialties: Search, Prowl, Tail, Detective Work



#### Law

The law is not a thing to trifle with, and those with knowledge of the law are well able to use it to their advantage. If you ever want to get out of jail, this Ability is essential.

- Student: Practical knowledge, police officer
- College: Prelaw, beginning lawyer
- ••• Masters: Lawyer, full partner
- •••• Doctorate: Judge
- ••••• Scholar: Supreme Court Justice, Death Lord

Possessed by: Police, Lawyers, Judges, Detectives, Criminals, Legislators, Hierarchy Advocates

Specialties: Courts, Contract, Litigation, Criminal, Police Procedure, Hierarchy

#### Linguistics

It is assumed that you can speak your natural language, but you must purchase any other languages that you wish your character to speak. Each level of Linguistics allows your character to speak another language fluently. Linguistics also gives a character an understanding of the structure of language, which is in turn the basis of thought. With this Ability, you can identify accents or read lips.

- Student: One additional language
- College: Two additional languages
- ••• Masters: Three additional languages
- •••• Doctorate: Four additional languages
- ••••• Scholar: Five additional languages

Possessed by: Travelers, Scholars, Diplomats, Interpreters Specialties: Curse Words, Technical, Diplomatic, Political

#### Medicine

Medicine is the study of the human body and the techniques used to cure its ills. While a wraith's body is different, an understanding of mortal health and biology can often be of use in dealing with the Quick. The Medicine Knowledge includes the knowledge of the structure and functions of the body, the use of medicine, and the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

- Student: You know the basics of setting bones or preventing a stroke.
- College: You have paramedic-quality training.
- Masters: You are a doctor and can diagnose and treat diseases.
- Doctorate: You can perform surgery.

••••• Scholar: You are a specialist of great renown. Possessed by: Paramedics, Doctors, Nurses,

Specialties: Pharmacy, Paramedics, Emergency Care, Disease, Neurosurgery

#### Occult

You are knowledgeable in all areas of the occult. This understanding of the more sinister side of the world includes knowledge of curses, voodoo, magic and mysticism.

- Student: You've dabbled, but aren't in the know.
- College: You're starting to know what's going on.
  Masters: There are more than ghosts out there, and you know a lot about the other residents of
- the World of Darkness.
- Doctorate: You can separate truth from fancy.
- Scholar: You have been fully initiated in many of the great mysteries.

Possessed by: Weirdoes, New Agers, Occultists, Scholars, the curious

Specialties: Ghosts, Magick, Psychic Abilities

#### Politics

This Knowledge provides a familiarity with the political structures of the day, including an understanding of who is in charge and how that person got there. It represents an understanding of both human and wraith politics. This can be an essential Ability when attempting to deal with mortal authorities in any way.

- Student: Protester or casual observer
- College: Campaign worker or political science major
- Masters: Campaign manager or speech writer
- Doctorate: Politician
- ···· Scholar: Machiavelli

Possessed by: Lobbyists, Politicians, Lawyers, Protesters Specialties: Neighborhood, City, Congress, Elections, Oration, Radical

#### Science

You have at least a basic understanding of physics, chemistry, botany, biology, geology, astronomy and other sciences. Your Knowledge deals with the useful applications of science. Higher levels almost invariably involve specialization in a particular field.

- Student: You can make smoke bombs with a chemistry set.
- College: You understand the major theories and applications.
- Masters: You could teach high-school science.
- Doctorate: You might win a Nobel Prize someday.
- ••••• Scholar: Albert Einstein

Possessed by: Engineers, Researchers, Inventors, Technicians, Pilots

Specialties: Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Relativity, Nuclear Physics



### Other knowledges

Psychology, Bureaucracy, Finance, Art, Philosophy, Theater, Journalism, Military Science, Genealogy, Geography, History, Theology, specific area of knowledge/trivia

# Backgrounds

To last an eternity requires an eternity of preparation. Only excellence counts; only achievement endures.

- Baltasar Gracian, The Art of Worldly Wisdom

Background Traits provide a character with special advantages and reflect a wraith's social status and position in society. The player must develop reasons why her character possesses a certain Background. Where did you meet that person? How did you come into possession of that relic? What did you do to gain your position with the Heretics?

A Storyteller may call for a Background to be rolled with an Attribute, such as Charisma + Status to determine if the Centurion obeys your orders, or Intelligence + Memoriam to recognize that mysterious woman who visits your grave every other Wednesday.

Backgrounds do not increase through experience points. A wraith may gain and lose Backgrounds as the result of a story. For example, if you lose your artifact in the Tempest, it is lost. If people stop remembering you, your Memoriam score decreases. Some Backgrounds may not be appropriate to your chronicle; ask your Storyteller.

# Allies

Allies are wraiths who aid you but are not members of your Circle. Allies are generally friendly with you, although some may only be your Allies because they owe you favors. Having an Ally (as opposed to having a Contact, below) means that you can call upon that wraith for aid; you should, however, be aware that your Ally will sometimes ask for your help as well. One does not boss one's Allies around: they are equals and friends, and must be treated as such.

As the chronicle progresses, Allies who began as weak characters may die or increase in power. You should take the time to describe your Allies carefully: they can be the source of many story ideas.

- A single Ally of moderate power
- Two Allies, both of them of moderate power
- ••• Three Allies, one of them quite influential
- •••• Four Allies, one of them very influential
- ••••• Five Allies, one of them extremely influential

#### Artifact

Everything that is ever lost eventually ends up somewhere in the Underworld. The Hierarchy sends scouts throughout the



Chapter Six: Traits



Underworld looking for long-lost artifacts of yore; many of them return with fascinating treasures. Additionally, the Grand High Artificer and his elite band of artisans have discovered means of imbuing powers into the very material of the Underworld.

The most common form of artifact is one that magnifies an Arcanos of one or more kinds. A few artifacts are magical simply in the sense that they actually operate like they did in life without using Pathos to fuel them: a remote control that changes a TV channel, a garage door opener that opens garage doors, a handgun that shoots bullets without needing to be reloaded.

See Artifacts in the Appendix.

- One level of Artifact
- Two levels of Artifacts
- Three levels of Artifacts
- Four levels of Artifacts
- Five levels of Artifacts

#### Contacts

Even as a wraith, you know people from many walks of life (or death); together, these disparate persons form a network of information and help that may prove useful.

The player must decide where his Contacts lie: in the living world or in the Shadowlands. This determines whether his Contacts score applies to wraiths or to the Quick. Players who want Contacts in both the living world and the Shadowlands should purchase this Background twice.

Major Contacts are not only beings you can manipulate or bribe to get information, but friends whom you trust implicitly to provide you with accurate information (in their areas of expertise). You should describe your Major Contacts as complete characters, either as the chronicle progresses or beforehand.

You also have a number of Minor Contacts spread through the area. When you wish to get in touch with a Minor Contact, make a roll using your Contacts rating (difficulty 7). Each success means you have successfully located one of your Minor Contacts; of course, you may need to bribe or even intimidate him into giving you what is needed.

- One Major Contact
- Two Major Contacts
- Three Major Contacts
- Four Major Contacts
- •••• Five Major Contacts

### Eidolon

Your Eidolon represents your higher self. This Background measures how spiritual you are (note that "spiritual" does not necessarily mean "good"). Just as your Shadow tempts you toward Oblivion, your Eidolon gives you the resolve to fight the Shadow. Unlike your Shadow, your Eidolon does not communicate with you; it merely provides you with an additional bit of resolve against the Shadow.

Wraith: The Oblivion

For each dot you have in the Eidolon Background, you may add one additional die per session to any roll to resist the Shadow's powers, ploys or tricks, including Thorns. These dice may also be added to Willpower rolls.

It is a good idea to use your Eidolon dice sparingly during a session, applying the extra dice only when absolutely necessary. You may choose to roll only one Eidolon die if you wish. Eidolon dice do not accumulate over several sessions, but you do regain your full total every game session.

- You hear vague whispers from far away.
- You know that there is something guiding you.
- You feel that your Eidolon has a sentient identity.
- · · · · You have sensed the presence of your Eidolon.
- ..... You have seen your Eidolon in a dream.

#### Haunt

All wraiths create hiding places for themselves, called Haunts. A Haunt is a secure haven unknown to the Hierarchy, Heretics or Renegades. It can be a forgotten drainage ditch, an abandoned car, a set of catacombs beneath a cemetery, or the basement of an old house. Wraiths viciously guard their Haunts. Many times, entire groups of wraiths share a Haunt, guarding it against all intruders.

The Haunt's rating is subtracted from the area's Shroud; it is established by pooling the number of dots that each of the founders of the Haunt possesses (maximum 5). Members of a Circle usually share one Haunt in common, but also know of each other's private Haunts. Haunts are places of spiritual power: working the craft of one's power is easier there. If the wraith who "owns" a Haunt passes into Oblivion, however, the power of the Haunt will die as well. The Shroud will re-establish itself around the area.

If you want both a communal and a private Haunt, you must purchase this Background twice. A Haunt is approximately 10 square feet for each point in this Background.

- You have a small closet, a back alley, or some other tiny, out-of-the-way place.
- You have an apartment-sized personal Haunt.
- You have a large personal Haunt or several smaller personal Haunts.
- You have discovered a small but very powerful personal Haunt that is easily hidden.
- You have more hiding places than a cockroach.

#### Mentor

Powerful wraiths sometimes choose to aid Enfants, molding them into allies for the future. These lieges, or Mentors, have their own personal reasons for aiding the young and weak. Some want reliable underlings; others try to fulfill their Passions through altruism.

The Mentor Background can also reduce the experience point cost when learning new Arcanos. If a character wants



to learn a new Arcanos possessed by her Mentor, the player may roll a number of dice equal to the number of dots in Mentor; each success subtracts one from the number of experience points needed to learn the Arcanos.

- Mentor has little power but is occasionally helpful.
- Mentor has some degree of status; her advice is sparse, but useful.
- Your Mentor knows a great deal and shares much of this with you.
- A wise old Gaunt has chosen to pass on his knowledge to you.
- If your Mentor doesn't know it, then few if any among the Restless do.

#### Memoriam

Funerals, memorials, tombstones, monuments, days of remembrance, wakes, Memorial Day, flowers on a gravestone, books dedicated "in loving memory," a place set at Thanksgiving for a longdeparted family member — it would seem that all these forms of remembrance are more for the benefit of the living than the dead. And yet, the Restless benefit greatly from those who remember them — quite literally. The emotional energy of the living, as expressed in their thoughts, words and deeds, is transmitted into a wraith's Lifeweb. Memoriam represents the amount of "emergency" Pathos that a wraith can siphon per session. In dire straits, a wraith who has already received her Pathos for the chapter can roll her Memoriam rating (difficulty 8). The number of successes equals the amount of Pathos points she instantly gains. If this roll botches, her Memoriam rating reduces by one: the dead can only steal so much before the memories of the living diminish.

Note that famous people transcend the 1 to 5 scale for Memoriam: Elvis, for example, has an 8 Memoriam (if he is indeed departed...).

- Only one person remembers you well.
- A few close friends remember you.
- Your family remembers you fondly.
- A large organization (the Rotarians, a gang, a church congregation, a small cult) remembers and reveres you.
- A building or some other permanent public facility has been dedicated to you; people use your name on a daily basis.

#### Notoriety

Although the dead are usually neither concerned nor impressed with the mass of the living, tales of the living occa-





sionally filter even to the Underworld. Of course, fame among the Restless takes a different hue than it does among the living: one never knows who will be noted in death and who will fade immediately into obscurity.

Certainly, one way to attract the attention of the dead is to cause many deaths, although creating great beauty or causing great sorrow are also noteworthy among the Restless. Notoriety can win a wraith instant support in the Shadowlands; Storytellers may allow a wraith to make a Notoriety roll to see whether a complete stranger has heard of him.

As with Memoriam, certain wraiths transcend this scale: Adolf Hitler, for example, no doubt would have a Notoriety of 8 or 9 (and thousands of enemies on arrival...).

- A few local wraiths are impressed with you.
- You're well known in your Necropolis.
- You are recognized by many in the Shadowlands.
- You are quite famous; everyone knows something about you.
- Like Jim Jones, John Wayne Gacy and David Koresh, you were despised from the first day of your death.

#### Status

Status represents a wraith's social standing within one or more of the major social groups of the Underworld: the Hierarchy, Heretics and Renegades. To possess Status implies that one has earned the group's respect through demonstrating loyalty to the ideals of the group. With beginning characters, Status can mean that one of these three factions has marked the character for recruitment and will pressure him to join.

It is possible to have more than one Status Background, reflecting Status within two or more separate groups.

- Familiar: The group members are familiar with your name and face, although you are still not\_ trusted with secret information or responsibility.
- Proven: You have proved yourself to the group members, and they trust you to a certain extent. The group's leaders haven't yet heard of you.
  - Respected: You are respected by the group's members and have earned the attention of the local leaders of the group. Still, you are not yet in the inner circle's trust.
  - Trusted: You are trusted by the leaders of the group and are regularly given secrets and information. Although a few group members may still doubt your sincerity, no one is willing to voice them.
    - Loyal: You have proved yourself loyal to the group. The other group members trust you without question, and the group leaders have no qualms about revealing potentially damaging information to you. From time to time, you will be trusted with secret duties and/or given special equipment and aid.

#### Wealth

In days of old, the Ferrymen would carry a departed soul to the afterlife for the small sum of two coins pressed into the corpse's eyes upon death. This is no longer the case. The cost of dying has gone up.

Now the Ferrymen do not honor the oboli of Stygia, the coins that have the Mask of Charon imprinted on one side and the High Court of Stygia on the other. There are denizens of the Shadowlands who do, however. The Hierarchy uses Stygian coins as the currency for its soul-economy. Souls, relics, artifacts — all have a price.

The base Stygian coin is called an obolus. Oboli are often broken into half-oboli, quarter-oboli, and even a "drachma," which is just a sliver of an obolus. The obolus is made of Stygian iron, and each obolus piece will mystically merge with other obolus slices. Therefore, two half-oboli will huddle together and eventually merge to form an obolus. Likewise, a collection of drachma will eventually melt together and re-form into a contiguous coin.

There is currently no known way to debase the obolus, although the Renegades have been looking for an Artificer who can do so.

A wraith's Wealth Background indicates three things: how many oboli she has at the beginning of the chronicle, what kind of wraithly resources she has available, and how much credit wraith merchants are willing to extend to her. Obviously, characters who are very new should not be allowed to take this Background, as its possession implies that a wraith has spent some time formulating a method by which to receive regular wealth.

- You have no source of income, but own a cache of valuables that might be cashed in at some later date. You start with two oboli.
- You are a reasonably well-off wraith, and you get a few oboli now and then through performing various services. You start with three oboli.
- You have a small savings of oboli and a regular clientele. You start with five oboli and receive half an obolus per story.
- •••• You have a cache of valuables and have found a surefire way to make oboli. Other wraiths work for you and give you a portion of their proceeds. You start with six oboli and receive one obolus per story.
- ••••• You have a regular source of income and several caches of valuables. You start with seven oboli and receive three oboli per story.

#### Corpus

A wraith's Corpus Trait represents the solidity of his form. Wraiths feel pain and can be "physically" hurt in the Underworld. Most wraiths' Corpuses appear similar (though not identical) to their earthly bodies. As a wraith's Shadow grows stron-

# The High Cost of Dying

 Below is a listing of prices for various Hierarchy goods in the Underworld.

Thrall, strong.	2 Ob	
Thrall, weak	1 Ob	
common relic	1/4 Ob	
uncommon relic (not a gun)	1/2 Ob	
uncommon relic (gun or bullets)	2 Ob	
rare relic (small)	5.Ob	
rare relic (large)	8 Ob	
common artifact	6 Ob	
uncommon artifact	10 Ob+	

ger, the appearance of the Corpus becomes more twisted. All wraiths begin with 10 Corpus Levels.

The Corpus track on the Wraith character sheet lets a player record the character's injuries and their effects. Each wound causes the loss of one Corpus Level. Check off Corpus Levels as the character loses them, so the last check made indicates the character's current Corpus Level. As the character regains Corpus Levels, erase the check marks.

Think of Corpus as a spectrum. At 10 Corpus Levels, the wraith is "solid" and healthy; if but one is left, the wraith is nearly incapacitated and largely insubstantial. As a character suffers more wounds, he travels down the spectrum, eventually reaching zero Corpus. Loss of all Corpus Levels indicates that the wraith has discorporated completely, plunging into the Tempest (see pp.184-186).

As the wraith heals, he removes these checks one by one until he is again at full Corpus.

There are two basic ways to lose Corpus: from combat and other violent interactions with Underworld denizens or phenomena, or from interaction with the world of the living.

In combat, each success on an opponent's damage roll indicates a loss of one Corpus Level. If an opponent scores two successes, the player checks off two Corpus Levels. How and when Corpus is lost in combat is explained on pp. 225.

When dealing with the real world, it is assumed that one Corpus Level is lost every time the real world "violates" the space occupied by the Corpus of the wraith. A Corpus Level is lost whenever a living person would have been hurt, impaled on or juxtaposed by a real-world object. For instance, if a door suddenly opened while a wraith was standing in front of it, a Corpus Level would be lost. Only one Corpus Level is lost per event, and it is assumed that the wraith becomes Incorporeal during that turn.

Corpus is so easily regained, and so difficult to lose, that wraiths are able to take tremendous punishment and still keep coming back for more. They are not confined by the same harsh rules that restrict humans.



# etters

Fetters are material objects binding a character to reality. They are, in fact, part of what makes a lost soul a wraith. Each Fetter represents something, someone or someplace that was important to the wraith in life. The shot glass at your favorite bar may be a Fetter, but it probably represents more than might be immediately apparent; perhaps you spent much of your time drinking there, ignoring your family life. Your favorite tennis racket may symbolize your dream of becoming a star athlete or simply of getting a life outside your job. Take great care in choosing your Fetters, for they can provide a wealth of information about your character, as well as myriad ideas for potential plots.

If all a wraith's Fetters are destroyed, he can no longer visit the Shadowlands for extended periods of time. He may remain in the Shadowlands for a maximum of (Stamina x 2) minutes.

### **Resolving** Fetters

Because each Fetter represents something left unresolved or undone in the wraith's life, it is possible to go back and set aright unfinished business. If a wraith can discover and come to terms with whatever meaning a Fetter held for him in life, it will no longer prevent him from moving beyond the Shadowlands. A wraith who has resolved all her Fetters can journey to Stygia and the Far Shores without fear of being stranded there. By using Argos to traverse the Tempest, she can pass back and forth between the Shadowlands and the rest of the Underworld with relative ease. But once her Fetters are destroyed, either due to malicious intent or the ravages of time, she can no longer return to the Shadowlands. For this reason, a wraith who possesses resolved Fetters is highly prized by agents in Stygia and the Far Realms.

# Passions and Pathos

If I only could, I'd make a deal with God, And I'd get him to swap our places. Start running down that road, Start running up that hill, Start running up that building, With no problem...

- Kate Bush, "Running Up That Hill"

Wraiths are driven by emotion; for them, passion is the essence of existence. Without passion, life is nothing. Even beyond death, a wraith can focus her passions and thereby change the world around her. A wraith's Passion Traits embody her desire to feel as she did in life. Desire can overcome anything, even death.

As stated in Chapter Five, a player must assign 10 points of Passions to her character. Each Passion has a rating of 1 to 5. The emotion that underlies a passion is written in parentheses to the left of the rating. To recharge her Pathos Pool via a Passion, the character must usually evoke that emotion in



someone else or find someone who is experiencing that emotion. Sometimes a wraith will change the environment to evoke the desired emotion in spectators.

In any scene where a character can sympathize with the emotions of the living, the player rolls a number of dice equal to the number of dots in that Passion (the difficulty of this action is usually 8). For each success, the wraith gains spiritual power, called Pathos.

Some examples of Passions are: Love, Anger, Faith, Hope, Envy, Lust, Pride, Sorrow, Pain and Greed.

The Pathos Trait represents a wraith's attunement to the real world. By understanding the essence of life, the wraith gains strength, allowing her to interact with the world around her. For wraiths, power is found in passion and purpose. Specifically, Pathos points are used to fuel wraiths' Arcanos. Pathos can also be used to heal injuries (see *Healing* on pg. 198).

Pathos is fleeting, however. The capricious whims of passion can lift a wraith to an epiphany of bliss when she least expects it. It can also abandon her in her time of need. A wraith often draws upon her Pathos, and as a result, the level of a character's Pathos can change significantly during an adventure. The maximum Pathos rating is 10.

Drawing Pathos from pure emotion can be difficult. Feelings are sometimes unfocused, and sympathy is not always complete. However, a wraith can become even stronger when passion is directed toward a purpose. For instance, a wraith may be driven by love, but her power will be greater if her reason to go on depends on saving her lover from danger.

Examples of purposes are:

mples of p	purposes are:
Anger:	Fight injustice
	Avenge your death
	Punish a type of criminal
	Overthrow a corrupt leader
	Fight the criminal syndicate that destroyed you
Love:	Find a new owner for a cherished item
	Protect your daughter
In feel free	Express unrequited love
	Help your true love find someone else
Greed:	Possess a particular valuable item
	Serve the Hierarchy for payment
	Protect the family fortune
Lust:	Experience gratification you never knew in life
	Live vicariously through your ex-lover
Faith:	Become a martyr for a cause you know is right
	Foster belief in a higher power
	Help your family to keep their faith
Hope:	Protect the oppressed
	Protect a homeless shelter
	Prevent suicide
Sorrow:	Make your Haunt a place of remorse

Sorrow: Make your Haunt a place of remorse Give grief to your enemy In any scene where a wraith works toward fulfilling a purpose, the Storyteller will request the player to roll against the Passion. If, in a scene, the purpose is specifically addressed, the difficulty is 6. For instance, if a wraith has the purpose "Protect my love," she will gain Pathos by defending him when he is attacked. The purpose does not have to be completed; the character need only work toward it. When a wraith strives to fulfill her desire, she bolsters her reason for existence.

It is also possible to gain Pathos by addressing a purpose in a general sense. For instance, a wraith may be driven by the Passion "Avenge my death (Vengeance)." If the character specifically played through a scene wherein she came closer to finding her killer, the difficulty, as stated above, would be 6. On the other hand, if the wraith acted as a vigilante, protected the innocent or persecuted a serial killer, the wraith would be fulfilling the purpose in a general sense, not a specific one. The task is similar to the specific purpose (avenging the character's death), under similar circumstances, yet still draws upon the Passion that underlies it (vengeance). Addressing a purpose in a general sense instead of a specific one raises the difficulty to 7.

As stated before, if the character is attempting to draw upon undirected emotion — that is, the Passion that underlies a wraith's purpose — the difficulty is an 8. Some wraiths can also force emotions on others through specific powers, such as via the Arcanos: Keening. A wraith may feed on these feelings, but the difficulty is 9. Finally, if an emotion is feigned or insincere, the emotion is not strong enough to give the wraith power. A Passion roll is thus impossible.

In any Passion roll, if the scene involves a wraith's Fetter or Haunt, the difficulty of the roll is reduced by one.

Obviously, this is subjective. The wraith will not always be able to work specifically toward her purpose. After all, although she can fight to maintain her ties to her former life, she has other concerns: the stability of her Circle, politics in her Necropolis, and so on. In addition, purposes are sometimes completed. If a wraith seeks to protect her mortal lover, and he dies, she will no longer be able to fulfill that specific purpose. She must, in that case, either seek situations similar to the ones that sustained her or live on pure passion. Purposes, however, can change subtly throughout a wraith's existence. Even when a purpose is gone, the passion that underlies it will always remain. True passion never dies.

#### The Price of Passion

Living a passionate life does have its drawbacks. If a wraith cannot find fulfillment, she will find frustration and pain instead. If a character botches a Passion roll, she gains one point of Angst.





Arcanos



h, what a world of profit and design Of power, of honor, and omnipotence, Is promised to the studious artisan!

- Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus An Arcanos is a spiritual art, one that has

to be taught or learned. Using Arcanos, wraiths may perform a variety of supernatural actions. Because wraiths are beings of spirit, it is a simple matter for them to manipulate the things of the spirit world. Furthermore, over the years, many wraiths have developed their arts to grant them power over the human mind, emotions, and the spirit of death itself. Some wraiths may even touch the living world with their arts, although this can prove quite difficult.

All Arcanos vary subtly among wraiths, depending on how they view themselves and their art. Because of this, each wraith may have a slightly different interpretation of an Arcanos. In fact, many wraiths have discovered new aspects of their Arcanos, new ways to manifest their spiritual energies. Such experimentation can be dangerous, but can prove extremely fruitful.

The Storyteller may allow players to invent new uses for an Arcanos. The Storyteller should examine a player's proposed use of an Arcanos and compare it with the other arts of that Arcanos. If the Storyteller deems that the use is appropriate and that the character has the required level of ability in the Arcanos, the player may bring the new art into play.

If the character had time to research and study this new use of an Arcanos, then the Storyteller should assign a difficulty and an amount of energy appropriate to its level. Conversely, if the new use was created "on the fly," the Storyteller may assign a higher difficulty and cost. Keep in mind as well that the arts listed here have been tested over time — who knows what side effects or other dangers could be discovered through experimentation?

Each Arcanos is divided into several arts of increasing erudition, which become available to the wraith upon learning the secrets of that Arcanos. As the wraith delves further into the mysteries of the Arcanos, he begins to learn greater arts related to the Arcanos. Knowledge of the lesser arts still remains, though some of the greater arts render the lesser ones obsolete.

A wraith studying a given Arcanos must first learn some of the basics associated with that Arcanos. Each Arcanos has one or more basic abilities associated with it, which the wraith may use when the Arcanos is first bought.

# The Body of Truth

Part practical craft, part spiritual path, an Arcanos is as much a way of thinking as it is a tool or art. As its name implies, an Arcanos is a collection of secrets, mysteries and enigmas. Many of these secrets are useless unless they are paired with some inner quality of the self.

In game terms, this is represented by the fact that a player must pair an Attribute with an Arcanos in order to make an Arcanos roll. The effect of the pairing is determined by what Attribute and Arcanos are used, plus a few other considerations, such as whether a Fetter is present, whether the wraith is enacting the Arcanos inside a Haunt, and what fuels the art (either Pathos or some other power).

# The Seed of Power

Wraiths must harness their Pathos in order to affect both the living world and the Shadowlands around them.

System: Pathos is gained from a number of sources. See Pathos, pg. 136-137.

# The Chains of Life

Because Fetters are essentially metaphysical chains binding a wraith to her past life, it is easier to affect the living and the living world within the boundary of a Fetter's influence.

**System:** If applicable, the rating of a Fetter can reduce the difficulty for an Arcanos. The Fetter must be used as part of the crafting of the art. Roll the rating of the Fetter versus a difficulty of 6; for each success, the difficulty of an Arcanos is reduced by one for the duration of one scene. (Storytellers who like "crunchier" rules will alter the difficulty of the Fetter roll by 1 or 2 depending on how well the Fetter is integrated into the crafting.) The difficulty of an Arcanos roll cannot be lowered to less than 4.

# The Shroud of Death

The power of the living to deny the power of death is great. This protective barrier is called the Shroud, and it inhibits wraiths from affecting the living world. The Shroud is often weaker around Haunts. Haunts are places affiliated with death, and they often act as a "universal Fetter" for all wraiths:

System: The Shroud is everywhere. For wraiths, the Shroud is usually rated at 9. Sometimes — at night, in certain cities, or on special holidays — the Shroud drops to 8 or 7. The Shroud is often lower within a Haunt. A Haunt will reduce the difficulties of all Arcanos performed within it by 1 per level of the Haunt. Note: the rating of the Shroud can never fall below 4.

# The Mark of Power

In order to learn an Arcanos, a wraith must internalize the secrets and mysteries that make up the body of the Arcanos teachings. These secrets mark her in many different ways — ways that are recognizable to other wraiths. Certain wraiths even gain deathmarks (see Chapter Two) as a result of their studies.



System: A simple roll of Perception + the appropriate Arcanos (difficulty 7) allows a wraith with a specific Arcanos to sense whether another wraith knows the same one.

#### Reality

The effect of a Haunt and a Fetter can be cumulative, but even then, the difficulty for an Arcanos roll cannot be less than 4. In addition, the Automatic Success rule (see pg. 93-94) does not apply to Arcanos.

# Guilds



n medieval times, wraiths organized into guilds based on the Arcanos to which they had devoted themselves. This is no longer the case. Charon once insisted that his Legions should learn Arcanos, and he actively discouraged the teaching of Arcanos outside of the Hierarchy. However, the guilds were dis-

banded centuries ago.

Still, the tradition of the guilds remains, if only in the sense that wraiths who master certain Arcanos often share the same qualities, have similar values, and share ethics. If you show yourself to know Argos, people will probably call you a Harbinger whether or not you choose to acknowledge that title is up to you.

A few guilds were never sanctioned by the Hierarchy. These were the Haunters' Guild, the Proctors' Guild and the Puppeteers' Guild. The Chanteurs, Masquers, Oracles, Spooks and Sandmen, while never quite respected by the Hierarchy, were tolerated. The Artificers, Monitors, Usurers and Pardoners were firmly controlled and sanctioned by the Hierarchy.











o you trust me?" I asked her. I held out my hand. "Do you want to see beyond the darkness?" She nodded slowly, and took my hand... Argos is the knowledge of the secret pathways through the Tempest and how to traverse them. It also allows a wraith to "swim" in the Tempest's dark fluid.

This Arcanos is used to travel through the Tempest quickly and efficiently. Argos enables wraiths to travel into, out of, and through the Tempest and to find Byways allowing relatively safe travel to other realms within the Underworld.

Storyteller Notes: Argos governs movement in the Tempest. A wraith with no Argos Arcanos will float aimlessly and can only spend one Pathos point to change his direction. Floating about in such a manner is quite dangerous: Spectres (especially Shades; see the Appendix) are constantly on the alert for a lone wraith who has floated into their area. Without knowledge of Argos, it is nearly impossible to find a Byway (although it is possible to follow someone else onto one). For additional information on the Tempest, see *The Tempest* in Chapter Two.

Feel free to allow one character to "carry" the rest of the group along with her; as long as others do not resist the power, they can be swept along just by holding hands with the Argos user. You may, however, wish to increase the difficulty of Argos actions in this case.

# Harbingers — Argos

Seemingly stricken with a kind of wanderlust, Harbingers tend to make nightly excursions to far-off places and return before the sun rises. Many former guild members still work for the Hierarchy, carrying important messages from Stygia to the Shadowlands and back. Even though the guild is defunct, it is considered bad manners and bad luck to hinder a Harbinger in his duty.

In the past, Harbingers were honor-bound to rescue wraiths caught in the Tempest: recently, however, Spectres have begun mimicking lost wraiths in order to lure Harbingers into traps, and so this custom has been, for the most part, suspended.

The typical Harbinger is very quiet, controlled and calm and moves swiftly wherever she goes. One can identify a Harbinger by looking into her eyes: because of the amount of time spent in the Tempest, a Harbinger's eyes become jet-black over time.

### **Basic Abilities**

Tempestpeek: This art allows the wraith to peer into the Tempest and see if anyone (or anything) lies in wait there. She may see and be seen by beings nearby in the Tempest, and may communicate with them as well.

System: In order to peek successfully into the Tempest, a wraith must roll Perception + Argos (difficulty 6). The number of successes indicates the clarity of the wraith's vision. A botch causes the wraith's mind to play tricks on her: she sees something in the Tempest that isn't real.

Tempest Threshold: In order to enter or leave the Tempest, a wraith must usually find a Nihil large enough to pass through. Use of this art allows a wraith to open a doorway into the Tempest and enter it. The doorway, usually small and circular in shape, closes up immediately after he passes through.

System: The player must roll Strength + Argos (difficulty 7) to open a threshold.

Orienteering: The Tempest is an alien and dangerous environment where distance and time have little bearing. This art allows a wraith to determine his location in the Tempest and to find his destination. Orienteering allows a wraith to travel to his chosen destination along the quickest and easiest path (usually a Byway), avoiding as many obstacles as possible.

Travel through the Tempest using Orienteering alone is a dangerous undertaking and is usually attempted only by the most foolhardy. However, Orienteering is excellent for finding one's way out of the Tempest should one be stranded there by some mishap.

System: The player must roll Perception + Argos (difficulty 8). Because time and distance are nebulous in the Tempest, the number of successes gained indicates the length of travel time.

1-3 successes	Standard travel time
4 successes	Half standard travel time
5 successes	One-quarter standard travel time

Failure indicates that the wraith has gone in the wrong direction and may become lost. If the Storyteller chooses, this could become an adventure. If the player botches, the wraith is heading into certain danger: a nest of Spectres, a Maelstrom or some other hazard.

Track: This ability allows a wraith to track another wraith who has gone into the Tempest. In order to have any chance

of success, the target wraith must be followed immediately after disappearing into the Tempest.

System: The tracker must roll Perception + Argos (difficulty 6). This difficulty increases by one for every turn elapsed between the entry of the quarry and the pursuer. Of course, if the quarry is aware of his pursuer, he may attempt to evade her by making a Dexterity + Argos roll (difficulty 6). Each success scored subtracts one from the pursuer's successes.

#### · Enshroud

Because those with Argos must avoid the hazards of the Tempest, they first learn how to move through it unseen. This art allows the wraith to wrap herself in dark shadows and thus move invisibly through both Tempest and Shadowlands. When first evoked, this art causes the wraith to vanish suddenly from view. The wraith is thereafter cloaked in shadows.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Argos (difficulty 7). The number of successes equals the number of turns the character can remain Enshrouded. The character can attempt another use of the art as soon as she feels her first evocation fading, although this costs more Pathos and renders the wraith momentarily visible. The character can use no other Arcanos except Argos arts while maintaining Enshroud; otherwise, the effect is broken.

#### " Phantom Wings

This art allows a wraith to fly in both the Tempest and the Shadowlands. This flight resembles gliding and is not very fast (about as fast as a normal human can run), but it allows the wraith to gain access to otherwise hard-to-enter areas. Wraiths may also use this art to hover.

System: The player must roll Stamina + Argos (difficulty 6). The ability to fly lasts one turn per success gained. The Storyteller may require Dexterity + Argos rolls to avoid collisions and to stay aloft in certain turbulent areas (i.e., above a Nihil, or in certain areas of the Tempest). Note that a character must be Incorporeal in order to fly while in the Shadowlands (see *Corpus States*, pg. 197-198).

# ••• Flicker

The wraith uses the temporal and spatial distortions of the Tempest to her advantage when employing this art. This allows her to move short distances very quickly. Generally these minijumps must be within line-of-sight. This art may also be used to surprise an opponent by flickering out and appearing behind him.

System: The player must roll Dexterity + Argos (difficulty 6) when attempting to use this art. If successful, travel time is reduced by one turn per success gained. For example, if Mary was trying to run down the block, and the Storyteller decided that it would take five turns for her to do so, she could



roll three successes using Flicker and thus reduce the "travel time" to two turns rather than five.

If the desired destination is out of sight, but within a city block, Flicker may still be attempted, but at difficulty 8, and failure is considered equivalent to a botch (see below).

A botch obtained while attempting Flicker indicates that the character has become stuck in the Tempest and may not use this art to emerge. Note that when this art is used, the character does not need to use the Tempest Threshold ability to enter or exit the Tempest; entry is considered to be automatic.

Each use of Flicker costs 1 Pathos.

#### ···· Jump

This art allows the user to travel to any of her Fetters far more quickly than she could in the Shadowlands. Any amount of distance may be covered when using this art, but the destination must be one of the wraith's Fetters.

It is rumored that some extremely powerful wraiths may use the Tempest to travel to any location in the world, in the blink of an eye, without having a Fetter present at that location.

System: The player must roll Stamina + Argos (difficulty 8). As stated above, each level of the destination Ferrer reduces the difficulty by one. Each success gained reduces the travel time at the Storyteller's discretion (five or more successes usually allow nearly instantaneous travel). As with Flicker, the character need not use Tempest Threshold to enter or leave the Tempest.

It costs 3 Pathos to use this art.

A failure when attempting to use this art indicates that the character has become lost in the Tempest. A botch means that the character has become stuck in the Tempest and may not use this art to emerge: he will instead have to open a threshold (as in *Tempest Threshold*, above).

#### ····· Oubliette

Wraiths known to possess this art are universally feared by others, for this art grants its possessors great power over other wraiths. By simply focusing her will on another wraith, a user of this art may banish another wraith to the Tempest.

Alternatively, this art may be used to hold someone, preventing him from escaping into either the Tempest or the Shadowlands.

System: To use either function of this art requires a roll of Strength + Argos. In both cases, the difficulty equals the target's Willpower. The target may also make an opposed roll using Willpower if he so chooses.

A wraith who is banished to the Tempest may utilize any Argos Arcanos he possesses; however, if he does not possess Argos, he is subject to the usual effects of being lost in the Tempest. In addition to being banished to the Tempest, the character suffers the loss of one Corpus Level (from the violent nature of the banishment).

When a wraith attempts to hold another character in either the Tempest of the Shadowlands, the number of successes gained indicates the number of turns during which the target is trapped. Once the power is in effect, the user need only maintain a minimal level of concentration. She may take other actions, though they may (Storyteller's discretion) suffer a penalty. It costs 3 Pathos to use this art.





hink of the power of the Shadow: dark, allknowing, perverse. It is the ultimate enemy. You must steel yourself against its lies! Listen to me! You must see the truth. Listen to my words.

Castigate is one of the few tools that wraiths have against the Shadow and its

growing power. Those who learn it also learn what causes the Shadow to become active, as well as what drains the Shadow of its malevolent power.

Each Pardoner must learn his own way of Castigation: physical punishment, ritual purification, sermons, insults, taunts, quiet embraces, gentle words, drumming, exertion and sensory deprivation have all been used to draw out the Shadow and drain its power. The most common way of Castigating the Shadow is by gaining knowledge of the nature of the Shadow being Castigated and specifically targeting it through a kind of dialogue. This dialogue has come to be known as the Devil's Dialectic.

Storyteller Notes: Castigate gives a wraith some small degree of control over Shadows, both her own and those of others. It also gives the wraith a great deal of insight into the Shadow. The Storyteller should make sure that players do not abuse this power. All dealings with the Shadow should be dangerous; even when the character has some degree of control, there should be a modicum of uncertainty.

#### Pardoners - Castigate

The Pardoners' Guild was the closest thing to a religious organization that Stygia ever had. Because getting rid of one's Angst was so important to the Stygian Empire, there used to be branches of the guild in every colony. Charon himself is rumored to have had his own personal Pardoner, whom he retained long after the guild was disbanded.

Even today, when the guild has been disbanded, no Hierarchy Centurion will arrest a Pardoner for hanging out his iron lantern, marking that he is "in business." Sooner or later, everyone needs a Pardoner.

Because of the nature of their work, older Pardoners have an almost religious or spiritual mindset when speaking of Castigation, while newer wraiths (especially former psychologists) speak of the Shadow in psychological terms. One can tell a Pardoner by the black stains on his fingers, which arise from touching or otherwise interacting with others' Shadows.

#### **Basic Abilities**

Soulsight: By looking carefully at another wraith, the user may peer deeply into his soul and see the inner darkness. This allows the user to measure the power of that wraith's Shadow, and to see how close the Shadow is to consuming him. The user may only look at another's Shadow in this way, not her own.

> This art may also be used to sense the presence of Spectres, especially Doppelgangers (see the Appendix), because the Shadow is so strong within them.

System: By rolling Perception + Castigate (difficulty 8), the user may determine the strength of another wraith's Shadow. The Storyteller will describe the strength of the Shadow as weak, nominal, fairly strong, strong or eminent depending upon the character's current Angst score. Additional successes may give the user further insights into the nature of the character's Shadow.

A failure means that the user cannot see the Shadow (perhaps her own Shadow clouds her eyes). A botch indicates a radically wrong reading.

Bulwark: The wraith can briefly protect herself and others from the ravaging effects of a Maelstrom. It is as if she throws up a shield against the onslaught of the storm, causing the Maelstrom and its Spectres to roar past unheeding.

System: To erect a Bulwark, the player must roll Stamina + Castigate (difficulty of the Maelstorm's rating + 3). The character must spend 1 Pathos for each level of the Maelstrom she is resisting, though she may extend this protection to anyone she touches.

#### Coax

Those with this art have more control over their own Shadows than most wraiths. They are able to draw on the power of their Shadows with considerably less risk.






System: By rolling Charisma + Castigate (difficulty 6), a wraith may modify the number of Shadow Dice (see pg.183) that he chooses to use for any given task. Normally the Shadowguide offers the player a fixed number of extra dice. Every two successes gained with Coax allows the player to add or subtract one die.

Though it does not cost anything to use this power, an Angst point is gained each time it is used.

#### · Dark Secrets

By examining another wraith's Shadow, the Castigator may learn the wraith's dark secrets. This is not always easy, for the Shadow may feed the Castigator false information. Only the most discerning individuals are able to glean much truth from the Shadow; of course, the weaker the Shadow, the easier it is to manipulate.

System: By carefully examining the Shadow within another wraith and rolling Perception + Castigate against a difficulty equal to the target's Willpower, the Castigator may learn secrets about that character. The player of that character (or the Storyteller) must answer one question per success gained. Half-truths and cryptic responses are allowed (the Shadow is a master of deceit). The target character may elect to have his Shadow make an opposed Angst roll.

Each use of this art costs 1 Pathos.

# ··· Purify

Through force of will, the Castigator may slowly and carefully break the power of another wraith's Shadow. This is done by ravaging the Shadow in a manner chosen by the Castigator. Each Castigator has his own methods by which he purges the Shadow from another. These methods range from sermonizing to actual flagellation.

System: When using this art the Storyteller rolls the character's Charisma + Castigate (difficulty of the subject's permanent Angst score). (The Storyteller is aware of the subject's permanent Angst score.) The subject may assist by spending a Willpower point to aid the Castigation. The number of successes rolled indicates the amount of temporary Angst the subject loses. The subject suffers one Corpus Level of damage for each point thus removed. The Castigator will receive a temporary point of Angst for each "1" he rolls.

#### ···· Casting Out

By exerting her will, the wraith may cast out and forbid the presence of any Spectres in her immediate area. If she is in a structure, it immediately becomes protected from Spectres. This art drives out all Spectres currently manifested in the area, as well as Spectres in hiding. For some reason, this art has no effect on Doppelgangers. System: The player rolls Charisma + Castigate (difficulty 7). The number of successes indicates the number of turns the ward lasts. If a Spectre is already present, a roll must first be made against its Angst rating in order to banish it. The Spectre may resist with an Angst roll.

#### ····· Defiance

The wraith who possesses this Arcanos is able to stand against her own Shadow, defying its power over her. Whenever the Shadow attempts to take control, the wraith may attempt to suppress it. She may also attempt to do the same to another's Shadow. System: When a character's Shadow attempts to take over her character, the player may attempt to defy the Shadow by rolling Charisma + Castigate. The difficulty equals the character's current Angst. Each success reduces the character's Angst by one, and the Shadow may not make a resisted roll. If this art is used to defy another wraith's Shadow, the difficulty equals the subject's current Angst + 3.

A failure adds one to the character's temporary Angst. A botch causes the character to add one permanent Angst.





to intense sensory input and focusing on that input. After a while, however, this input is not needed. Examples of such sensory input are: looking at oneself in a mirror; focusing on something cold, hot, sharp, or hard; or listening to a very soft or very loud

here...there it is again. Do you feel it? A

pinprick, nothing more. But a real touch, a

the physical world. This is forbidden

knowledge, as Charon's Code prohibits in-

terfering with the living world. Still,

Embody is the power to manifest in

real feeling. Exquisite, isn't it?

Storyteller Notes: Going from the Shadowlands to the living world is like going from a numb, cold wasteland to a

While a wraith is using an Embody art that allows him to manifest physically, he is far more susceptible to harm. Any damage done to him is applied as though he were a mortal. (Note that a Materialized character will suffer Dice Pool penalties for his wounds. See Health on pg.200.)

wraiths have been using this Arcanos for millennia.

warm, balmy climate. The changes are superficial, but in-

Wraiths learn Embody by exposing their fragile forms

For example, while roaming the Shadowlands, a wraith named Jason encounters a vampire who is aware of his presence. The vampire pulls out a pistol and fires in Jason's general direction. With a lucky shot, he hits Jason. Because Jason is immaterial, he only suffers one Corpus Level of damage, even though the bullet passed right through his chest (the vampire scored five successes). However, if Jason had been Embodied, he would have suffered a number of Corpus Levels equal to the number of Health Levels the shot would have inflicted on a mortal.

The difficulties of all Embody rolls equal the local Shroud rating. Embody has very little use in the Tempest.

#### Proctors - Embody

credibly exquisite.

The Proctors' Guild was never a part of the Hierarchy, although the Hierarchy often used it before it was officially disbanded. The Proctors operated in the living world, performing the complex actions that could not be accomplished with Outrage (although many knew that Arcanos as well). Although forbidden by Charon's Code to interact with mortals, they frequently ignored the Code and did what they pleased. For a time, Centurions were appointed to hunt down Proctors and enthrall them. Now, the Hierarchy has bigger fish to fry, although a particularly blatant transgression will still raise the Hierarchy's ire.

One can tell a Proctor by the strange patches of light and dark on his body, marks of too many passings through the Shroud.

#### Attunement

Embo

After successfully manifesting in a particular fashion to a person, the wraith can invest Willpower to create an attunement to that person. Each time the wraith successfully appears, she may invest one point of Willpower. This represents a process of identifying with the Consort. The closer a wraith was to an individual during life, the easier it is to become attuned to that person. Attuning to a stranger costs five points of Willpower. Attuning to a close friend may only take two or three points. Once the attunement is established, all difficulties when Embodying to that person (and that person alone) are reduced by three. Additionally, there is no Pathos cost when using Embody to appear to that person.

The side effect of this is that only the attuned person can see and sense the wraith — other mortals may think that the subject is crazy. Conversely, a single person who believes in the wraith can foster others' belief, facilitating attunement to those people.

#### **Basic Abilities**

Ghostly Touch: The wraith may extend just a whisper of a touch to the material world, about as strong as a finger descending on a keyboard. The wraith must focus all of her attention in order to make even the lightest touch.

System: The character must roll Strength + Embody (difficulty of the local Shroud) in order to use this art.

Maintain the Material Form: Though this art gives the wraith no new abilities, it allows the wraith to maintain an Embodied form for a longer duration.

System: The player must roll Stamina + Embody (difficulty 7). Each success may be added to the number of successes already gained for the Embody power being used.

This art costs one point of Pathos to use and one point of Pathos per success gained. If the player botches, not only does the roll fail, but the Embodied form instantly dissipates.

#### · Whispers

The wraith may make her voice heard in the living world. The wraith's voice is no louder than a whisper. (It is not necessary to use this Arcanos to speak to supernatural or magical creatures, only beings affected by the Shroud.)

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Embody. The difficulty equals the local Shroud. One short sentence may be spoken per success gained. A botch means that the wraith has lost her voice in the Shadowlands for a scene: it got stuck in the Shroud when she projected it there.

This art costs 1 Pathos to use.

#### " Phantom

This art allows the wraith to manifest as an intangible, translucent figure. He appears to hover just inches off the ground and has only barely discernible features.

Mortals who see the wraith will become intensely afraid and act accordingly. The moment the wraith vanishes, mortals will begin to doubt what they saw, and will soon rationalize away the fact that they saw anything at all. (See *The Fog*, pg.205)

System: The player must roll Charisma + Embody (difficulty equal to the local Shroud). The number of successes indicates the number of turns during which the character may remain manifested. A botch means that the character immediately dematerializes and vanishes into the Tempest.

The character may also try to scare any mortals who perceive him by rolling Manipulation + Embody (difficulty equal to the target's Willpower). This roll may be modified if the character has used Moliate or some other Arcanos to modify his appearance.

This art costs 1 Pathos to use.

#### ··· Statue

This art allows the wraith to become solid for a period of time. When materializing in this form, the wraith appears as an idealized version of himself. He cannot move, speak or simulate breathing; he may be touched, but his flesh will feel cold and hard, like smooth marble.

Statue is often used to hide in a crowded area (wraith or Spectre pursuers in the Shadowlands often overlook a Statued wraith — for example, if they're looking for a wraith, they may miss the "mortal" sitting quietly by the fireplace).

System: The player must roll Stamina + Embody. The difficulty equals the local Shroud. Each success on the roll indicates how many times the character can be touched, or how many scenes he can remain manifested, whichever comes first. A failed roll results in one temporary point of Angst as the



character's separation from the physical world grows stronger. A botch indicates that the character becomes a Phantom for a few seconds, then fades away. All damage suffered is calculated as if the wraith were mortal (see Storyteller Notes, above).

This art costs 1 Pathos to use.

## ···· Life-in-Death

When this art is employed, the wraith appears as a some what abstract form of her mortal self. Her appearance is based on her (now somewhat spotty) memory of her past life's body. The wraith's Psyche tends to idealize its former form, so a wraith using this form will usually appear more beautiful than she was in real life. When she materializes, it is as a dark-haired, muted person (black skin has a grayish tinge; white skin appears deathly white) - very similar to a Blood Doll or goth.

Superficial examination will not detect anything amiss. Someone who knew the wraith in life may notice a slightly altered appearance. People may notice that the wraith's hands are cold and that she seems to be dreamy and detached -this is because the wraith must exert constant concentration to maintain this form.

System: The player must roll Manipulation + Embody (difficulty of the local Shroud) to assume this form. The number of successes indicates the number of scenes the character may remain manifested. This art is only usable if the character currently wears a humanlike form - if she has been Moliated into something monstrous, this art will not work. If the player This character must spend 3 Pathos points and 1 Willfor Appearance while in this form. While in this form the character takes damage as if she were mortal (see Storyteller Notes; Willing above).

A botch causes the character to appear briefly as a Phantom and then vanish, bestowing one point of Angst.

This art costs 2 Pathos.

#### ····· Materialize

Through the use of this art the wraith can assume a nearly human state. Everything about him appears human: he can breathe, his flesh is warm, and he will bleed if cut. Many wraiths are overwhelmed by sensation the first time they assume this form, especially if they have been dead for a long time.

While in this form the wraith can do anything he could do while he was still alive - the only drawback being that time is limited, as it takes an incredible amount of concentration and Pathos to maintain this form.

System: The player must roll Manipulation + Embody to assume this form. The difficulty of this roll equals the current Shroud

If a character is attuned to the person viewing him, he may manifest for one hour per success. Otherwise, each success allows the character to exist for as long as it takes to draw one breath. During this breath he may speak, or move, or kiss, or embrace, or attack. When in this form a the character is subject to damage as if he were a mortal (see Storyteller Notes, above).

A botch causes the character to fall immediately into the

power point to enact this art.



his is the Two of Skulls, signifying indecision. Reversed, it suggests a choice you made in life which you now regret. Crossing it is the Five of Bones, symbolizing manipulation through rebellious power. Perhaps you're being influenced by the Renegades, no? Your secret is safe with me. Ah! The Monument. Very interest-

ing — everything disintegrates around you as the Monument falls...

Wraiths use this Arcanos to sense and read the mark of fate on a soul. Of course, because all wraiths have yet to meet their end, their fate is not yet decided. Still, a wraith may use Fatalism to peer into another wraith's past or look forward into the (possible) future.

Contrary to popular belief, Fatalism actually works fairly well in the Shadowlands.

Storyteller Notes: The arts of Fatalism can in many ways be among the most powerful of the Arcanos. Great care must be taken to ensure that this Arcanos is not abused. These arts should never be used frivolously. Fate can be a dangerous thing to trifle with, and the wraith who overuses this art may find herself permanently entwined in the strands of fate.

# Oracles - Fatalism

Oracles are often found traveling with bands of Sandmen, Chanteurs, and even Spooks, because they find it safer with others around. They don't advertise their profession: rather, they wait for others to come to them. They do not give advice to people who do not ask.

The Oracles' Guild was at one time universally hunted by the Hierarchy because the Grand High Oracle, Serena, once told Charon that he was fated to be destroyed in the Tempest. Since Charon vanished, however, the Hierarchy has stopped its persecution of the Oracles. Many years ago, it is said, the Oracles served the Lady of Fate directly.

One can tell an Oracle by her gaudy dress and tendency to inscribe symbols of Fate on her forehead and arms.

#### **Basic Abilities**

Kismet: This art allows a wraith to perceive the role of fate with regard to a specific situation or person. People with great destinies or those for whom fate has a special role seem to "shine" slightly brighter than people who are playing a lesser role: they are easier to pick out in a crowd. System: By rolling Perception + Fatalism (difficulty 6), a wraith can sense whether something is more or less important in the "overall scheme of things." In game terms, this art allows a character to discern the Storyteller characters and other players' characters in a particular scene.

#### · Fatal Vision

The wraith can read a person's deathmarks. These marks, borne by wraiths and mortals who are soon to die, tell something of how that individual died or is fated to die. Deathmarks generally appear on mortals shortly before they die, though they may appear earlier on one who is fated to die a particularly tragic death.

> System: The player must roll Perception + Fatalism (difficulty equal to the subject's Willpower). If this ability is used prior to a use of Interpretation (see below), each success adds one die when using that art. Fatal Vision also indicates whether the target has been subjected to Fatalism in the past.

A botch indicates that the character has misread the subject's deathmarks.

#### • Danger Sense

At this point the wraith has become so attuned to the webs of fate that he can sense faint vibrations along the strands, thereby gleaning warnings of imminent danger.

System: Whenever the character is in imminent danger, the Storyteller may roll the character's Perception + Fatalism (difficulty 6). This difficulty may be raised or lowered depending on the nature of the danger. Each success increases the amount of forewarning the character receives generally one turn per success.

#### ... Interpretation

Through various means of divination (relics, Tarot cards, the I Ching, astrology or crystal pendulums), the Fatalist can interpret a person's fate or discover something about his past. This art may be attempted without the use of any paraphernalia, though doing so is considerably more difficult and is generally attempted only by a master or in the most dire circumstances.

System: The player must roll Manipulation + Fatalism (difficulty equal to the subject's Willpower). Both the Fatalist and the subject may spend Willpower on the roll. For each success gained, the character may ask one short question about





manner. Attempting Interpretation without the use of any divinatory tools increases the difficulty by two.

This art costs 2 Pathos.

# ···· Lachesis' Measure

A wraith who has mastered this art can sense how the fate-twines of the wraiths around her interact and interweave, where they should be going, and where they are going now. This panoramic vista gives the wraith an objective view of her situation, perhaps providing new insight into it.

System: The player using this art must roll Perception + Fatalism (difficulty 6). The number of successes indicates the amount of information the Storyteller will bestow. The Storyteller can use this art to impart information that the character has somehow missed or provide guidance concerning her future course of action.

Use of this art costs 2 Pathos.



A wraith with this level of Fatalism has begun to learn to manipulate fate itself, but only in a minor fashion. Fate seems to smile upon the character, and everything she does seems much more auspicious.

System: At the beginning of each story, the character may roll Wits + Fatalism (difficulty 6). The number of successes equals the number of "1's" (potential botches) that the player may ignore for the duration of the story. This does not, however, apply to Harrowings (see pg. 184-191). This art may only be used once per story.

It costs 1 Willpower point to activate this art.

# İnhabit



uring my life, I never cared for people. Machines were my passion. Gears and circuits and later microprocessors: these were my treasures, my favorite works of art. Now I know what it's like to fly through the wires, to feel my tires burning down the road, to stand firm as the wind lashes my brick sides...

This art allows the wraith to inhabit an object, extending his Corpus to suffuse every atom of the object. In time, the wraith may become attuned to an object and be able to animate it. If the wraith claims an object that is subsequently destroyed, it immediately becomes a relic.

A wraith with this Arcanos may infuse relics with his own power and knowledge by Inhabiting them, imbuing them with Arcanos, and spending Corpus and Willpower to fix the powers in place, although this can take a lot of time to accomplish.

Storyteller Notes: All difficulties in this section are based upon the local Shroud rating unless otherwise noted.

# Artificers - Inhabit

The Artificers' Guild used to be one of the richest guilds in Stygia: this is because its members were paid to forge Stygian weapons, make relics, and create Stygian artifacts. Nhudri, the Grand High Artificer, was the first member of this guild. Since the time of the guilds, the Artificers' Arcanos has begun to be restricted in the Shadowlands. It is illegal to teach Inhabit in many areas. Now Artificers are looked upon as tinkers and mechanics, not the grand designers they once were.

One can identify an Artificer by the reddish heat marks on his body (from working with soulfire).

# **Basic Abilities**

>

Sense Gremlin: A "gremlin" is a slang term used to describe wraiths that inhabit machines. By carefully examining an object or machine, a wraith may determine if it is currently inhabited by a wraith.

System: The player must roll Perception + Inhabit (difficulty 6). Only one success is needed to determine whether or not something is Inhabiting a machine, though more may be necessary to determine the Inhabiting creature's exact nature (and number, if there are more than one). With three or more successes, the wraith can sense whether a machine has been Inhabited in the near past.

#### Surge

By use of this art the wraith can create a temporary short in electronic circuits, thus temporarily cutting power to an electronic device. The wraith actually passes his hand briefly into the machine, thus disrupting the flow of electrons. This may permanently damage certain electronic devices, such as computers, especially if they are not equipped with surge protectors.

> System: The player must roll Wits + Inhabit (difficulty of the local Shroud). The number of successes equals the number of things that may be affected at once.

# " Ride the Electron Highway

By slipping into wires and possessing electrons, a wraith may move at near-light speed across international communications networks and computer satellites. Within the Electron Highway, everything appears as tunnels, barriers and gateways of light. Of course, the wraith must overcome these barriers, filters, gateways and other boundaries before he can slip into the world's computer systems.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Inhabit (difficulty of the local Shroud). Once the character is on the Electron Highway, he must roll Intelligence + Computer in order to find his way around. This may be an extended action depending on how far the character desires to travel. Additional rolls may be required if the character is trying to access information on a high-security computer system. Once the character is on the Highway, all difficulties are set by the Storyteller.

The wraith may also communicate with anyone who is online, or with other wraiths Inhabiting a computer, by rolling Manipulation + Computer. The difficulty is based on how "far away" the receiving parties are: 4 if they are on a local net, 6 if they're on a node across the country, or 8 if they're across the ocean. Communication may be maintained indefinitely and is unaffected by the Shroud, because the user will think the wraith is a mortal typing away at the other end.

Note that wraiths without the Computer Knowledge will find this art extremely unpleasant to use — although just about anyone can find his way through the telephone system. Navi-



gating through the telephone system requires simple Wits + Alertness rolls (difficulty 5).

This art costs 2 Pathos to use, plus 1 Pathos per additional wraith transported.

#### ··· Gremlinize

This art allows a wraith to possess machines and make them do her bidding. In order to have complete control of the machine, the wraith must first attune herself to it. If the wraith is not attuned, she may only cause minor effects, such as turning it on or off — she has no real control over it.

System: The player must roll Dexterity + Inhabit (difficulty of the local Shroud). Minor effects may be made with just this roll, but to exert any true control, the wraith must use appropriate abilities (such as Drive) to make the machine do her bidding. Each individual effect must be rolled for separately, unless the item has been attuned to the wraith.

It costs 3 Pathos for the character to Inhabit a piece of machinery, plus 1 Pathos per effect evoked.

#### ···· Claim

This art allows the wraith to Inhabit an object and mark it as her own for one scene. While the wraith Claims an object, her senses are as normal as they are in the real world — but they are spread out over the entire object that the wraith Claims. Thus, a wraith Claiming a house can see, hear and feel everything that occurs within it, to it, and around it. While Claiming an object, the wraith may control the object to a slight degree.

System: The player must roll Strength + Inhabit (difficulty of the local Shroud). The number of successes indicates the maximum size of the object that can be Claimed. Only one success is needed for a small object like a phone, while five successes are needed to Claim a house.

If the object is destroyed while the wraith is Claiming it, she may expend Willpower and Corpus to form it into a relic. One Willpower and one Corpus must be expended per success required to Claim the object in the first place.

This art costs 2 Pathos to use.

#### ····· Empower

This art allows a wraith to invest one of his Arcanos arts into a relic, thus making that Arcanos available to another. This creates a form of disposable artifact. Generally, the relic used must be of a shape appropriate to the type of Arcanos with which it is invested: one cannot usually invest Outrage in a teddy bear, for example.

System: To Empower a relic the player must roll Wits + Inhabit. The difficulty is equal to the local Shroud: because of this most wraiths choose to go to their Haunts to use this art. The number of successes indicates the highest level of Arcanos that







may be invested into the relic. Next, the wraith must "use" the Arcanos while focusing his will on the relic; a successful roll must be made, using any appropriate Pathos, etc., although no lasting effect occurs because of it. At this point, the Arcanos is imbued within the relic. Next the character fuels the relic with Pathos. The maximum number of Pathos that may be spent equals, the initial number of successes gained. The character must choose what "activation action" — a spoken phrase, a gesture, etc. — is required to release the art within the artifact. Finally, the wraith "seals" the artifact with three Pathos points.

Thus, a disposable artifact is created. The artifact will expend one of its Pathos points each time it is used (and the user must also pay the appropriate price for each use, whether it be spending Pathos or Willpower or gaining Angst). Once all of the Pathos points invested in the artifact have been expended, the Empowered object becomes a normal relic once more

Example: Alex, who knows Argos at 3, wants to place the art of Flicker into a relic of a silver police whistle he owns. He

goes to his Haunt and Inhabits the object with the intent to Empower it. His player rolls Wits + Inhabit (seven dice for Alex) against a difficulty of 5 (the local Shroud), and scores four successes: plenty to Empower it with Flicker. After focusing his power of Flicker onto the whistle, Alex invests five points of Pathos (meaning that the power can be used five times). Finally, he decides that the whistle must be blown in order for it to be used. He invests three more Pathos into the whistle, thereby sealing it.

Now, Alex gives the whistle to Wendy, who may use it by blowing the whistle. Because Alex's Argos of 3 is "inside" the whistle, Wendy's player must roll her Dexterity + the whistle's Argos. She must spend a Pathos point to use the art, and one of the "charges" inside the artifact is used up, thus leaving it with three charges.

Items so created cannot be "recharged" but can be remade using new relics. Note: there is no known way to make a relic into a germanent artifact through the use of this art.









ll around you reverberate the songs of the dead. You hear them echoing in high cathedrals, in darkened auditoriums, in your own sleep. All around you wail the songs of the dead: dare you not listen? Listen to what has been sung since their death!

The Arcanos of Keening allows wraiths to infect others with deep and abiding emotions. Although songs are just songs, Keening lets the feelings in its practitioners' songs seep through the Shroud and affect even the living. They also have no small effect among the dead.

Note that it is not absolutely necessary to sing or play music to utilize this Arcanos: although the Arcanos is taught through song, it may be transmitted by any number of methods. If a wraith wishes, she may attempt to weave her Keening into spoken words or dance movements, although the difficulties of all Keening rolls are increased by one.

Storyteller Notes: The feelings evoked in victims of Keening are artificially created. Wraiths can gain Pathos from these feelings, but the difficulty for the Passion roll is 9. Causing one mortal to feel an emotion that then causes other mortals to feel the same way can allow a wraith to gain further Pathos.

Allow music to affect the way you run your game. You may wish to allow players with Keening access to a CD player so that they can play music appropriate to the kind of emotions they are broadcasting.

### Chanteurs — Keening

The Chanteurs have long provided music for the dead. They were among the first wraiths to bring music into the Underworld, and they are a very proud and arrogant lot. Even when they were disbanded they retained considerable political clout in Stygia — this is because the Stygian nobles would do anything for entertainment, and for a time Chanteurs were considered to be the only acceptable entertainment.

All Chanteurs play a musical instrument. Even if a Chanteur performs a cappella, she still employs a noisemaker of some kind: a tambourine, finger cymbals, or drumsticks.

# **Basic Abilities**

Perfect Pitch: Perfect Pitch is the ability to sense when someone else is using Keening to influence or manipulation emotions. System: The roll is Perception + Keening (difficulty 6). It can be resisted with the Sotto Voce ability, below.

Sotto Voce: This ability allows a wraith to conceal the presence of Keening in normal speech or normal singing.

System: The roll is Manipulation + Keening (difficulty 6). It can be countered with the Perfect Pitch ability:

If someone with Perfect Pitch is trying to detect Keening done by someone with Sotto Voce, compare the two rolls; whoever scores more successes wins.

#### • Dirge

This allows a wraith to amplify or provoke "dark" feelings in listeners: lust, fear, anger, hate, despair, frustration or cynicism. Many wraiths use Dirge as a means to repel mortals from their Haunts.

> System: The roll is Charisma + Keening (difficulty 8). The number of successes determines the depth and duration of the feeling: five successes are sufficient to cause a feeling that lasts for an entire week.

Note that wraiths are not as affected by this art as mortals are: this is because Dirge draws upon knowledge of death and the feelings of death. For wraiths, the number of successes on the roll indicates how many turns they will feel a specific emotion.

This art costs 1 Pathos.

•• Ballad

This art allows a wraith to inspire "lighter" emotions: love, affection, faith, trust, inspiration, enthusiasm, cheer or loyalty. Many wraiths use this art to help protect their Fetters and influence other wraiths into doing their bidding.

System: The roll is Manipulation + Keening (difficulty 8). The number of successes determines the depth and duration of the feeling: five successes are sufficient to cause a feeling that lasts for an entire week.

With wraiths, who are not as easy to sway as mortals, the successes equal the number of turns that the wraith feels the emotion. Many wraiths seek out Chanteurs in order to feel earthly emotions again.

This art costs 2 Pathos.

··· Muse

This art allows a wraith to inspire someone into believing an idea is her own. Many former musicians enjoy visiting liv-

ing musicians and influencing their music styles, although this art is often put to more direct use as a means of manipulating other wraiths.

System: Roll Manipulation + Keening (difficulty 7 or the subject's Willpower, whichever is higher). The number of successes on the roll indicates how well the subject interprets the suggeston: three or fewer successes indicate that she gets the gist of it, but puts her own influence into it; four successes indicate that she will follow the inspiration as long as it is not directly harmful; five or more successes indicate that the subject will do whatever the Chanteur wishes.

Note that this art works just as well on wraiths as it does on mortals.

This art costs 3 Pathos.

#### ···· Crescendo

The wraith brings to bear a massive musical assault that can actually cause harm at close range. It may also be used to call out to other wraiths in the Shadowlands; the sound can be heard over a great distance.

System: Roll Stamina + Keening (difficulty 8). The number of successes on the roll equals the amount of Corpus damage the Crescendo inflicts on every wraith in normal hearing range. This damage may, of course, still be soaked, and it is not aggravated.

If used while Embodied, this art causes listeners (including vampires, werewolves, ghouls, etc.) to be gripped with a terrible fear that actually causes their hearts to palpitate for a split second. This inflicts one Health Level of damage per two successes on the roll. Victims may still attempt to soak this damage.

This art costs 2 Pathos plus 1 Pathos per success.

#### ····· Requiem

This art allows the wraith to infuse her target with pure emotion. The target's mind and soul are assaulted with the essence of a particular feeling — light or dark.

System: Roll Strength + Keening (difficulty 7). This art can be resisted with a Willpower roll, but only if the subject is prepared for it. For each success scored by the attacking wraith, the subject is paralyzed for one turn by the emotion: unable to move, act, speak or even defend himself. If the emotion is a dark one, this art can inflict lasting mental damage: if five or more successes are obtained, subtract points from one of the character's Mental Attributes or otherwise simulate insanity. Even if the emotion is a pleasant one, it can have a profound effect on the subject; he may become an "emotion junkie," willing to do anything to feel the "ecstasy" again.

This art costs 3 Pathos plus 1 Pathos per success. If the emotion is a dark one, the Shadow receives 1 Angst per success.







ou knew in life that everything was interconnected. Me, you, her ... we are all part of the same system, the same web. We must understand what holds us to this life so that we can search for the means to free ourselves to Transcend.

Lifeweb enables a wraith to recognize, explore and understand the links she has to life and the living world. Lifeweb also enables the wraith to sense and even affect her Fetters from a distance.

Storyteller Notes: A wraith using Lifeweb can feel the energy of her Fetters. Sometimes this is even possible if the Fetter is far away if the wraith can draw upon her "sixth sense." By keeping her sixth sense dedicated to a specific Fetter, the wraith may "keep watch" on that Fetter specifically. She may simply choose to wait for any information to come in through the Lifeweb and send her senses there to follow up on it immediately. She may also use this affinity to touch people, places and things as temporary Fetters in order to watch over them.

# Monitors — Lifeweb

The Monitors are central to soul-gathering. Even though their guild was disbanded, many Monitors were inducted right into the ranks of the Legions and made a part of the Hierarchy.

Monitors are fiercely protective of their profession and, although they will teach others the basics of their Arcanos, will not reveal the higher arts without being certain of their students' trustworthiness. This is because they consider themselves guardians of the dead, making sure that no more souls seep into Oblivion.

One can identify a Monitor by the fact that he never closes his eyes, not even when Slumbering.

# **Basic Abilities**

Locate Fetter: This ability allows the wraith to "check up" on her Fetters. By drawing upon her affinity to that object, she may scan the Fetter's surroundings and possibly even sense its distance and direction.

System: The player must roll Perception + Lifeweb (difficulty 6). The number of successes indicates the number of Perception + Alertness dice that can be used to scan the surrounding area. The player may also roll Intelligence + Lifeweb to get a general sense of how far away a Fetter is and in what direction it lies.

#### Sense Strand

By closely examining the energy surrounding another wraith, the wraith can detect the relationship between a wraith and his Fetters. This art may also be used to sense whether something is the Fetter of another wraith and, if so, to identify the wraith using the Fetter.

System: When his character is examining another wraith, the player must roll Perception + Lifeweb (difficulty 8). Each success allows the player to discover one clue about a Fetter possessed by that wraith. This involves confronting the subject. On a roll of Perception + Subterfuge, the target will realize she is being scrutinized and is allowed a Willpower roll to resist this invasion of her privacy.

If the character is examining an item to determine whether or not something is a Fetter, the Storyteller should roll Perception + Lifeweb for him (standard difficulty, assuming the item is a Fetter). To attempt to trace a Fetter in either location, the player must roll Intelligence + Lifeweb. The number of successes indicates the degree of accuracy with regard to both distance and direction. A Fetter may be examined once per wraith per

# Web Presence

day.

The wraith may now affect the area surrounding one of her Fetters without actually being there. If successful, she may use an Arcanos, make any kind of roll involving Mental or Social Attributes, or openly communicate with any wraith there.

System: The player must roll Charisma + Lifeweb (difficulty 8). This art costs 1 Pathos per turn of use.

# ··· Splice Strand

Through use of this art, the wraith may make some person, place or thing into a temporary Fetter. This object must be touched in some fashion (through Embody, Outrage or Inhabit), at which point the wraith develops an emotional affinity to that object. This affinity can be maintained on a day-to-day basis, but only one Fetter can be maintained using this Arcanos.

System: The player must roll Manipulation + Lifeweb (difficulty 7). The new Fetter has a rating of 1.

The affinity initially costs 1 Pathos and continues to drain 1 Pathos per day that it is maintained.

#### ···· Sever Strand

This feared power allows the wraith to separate another wraith from his Fetters. In order to use this art, the wraith must be in the presence of the Fetter to be severed. Through the sheer force of his will, he may separate the victim from his Fetter.

System: Once a Fetter has been identified and the character is in its presence, the player must roll Strength + Lifeweb (difficulty equal to the Fetter owner's Willpower). This initial roll may be resisted by Willpower.

A wraith who has had a Fetter severed by this Arcanos may attempt to reestablish it through two means. The first option is simply for the wraith to expend one *permanent* Willpower point while she is in contact with the Fetter. The second is for either herself or another wraith to use Splice Strand to reconnect the link. This does not apply to threads severed by Harrrowings. By spending a Willpower point the wraith can make the effect of Splice Strand permanent, but only if the object was formerly one of the wraith's Fetters.

This art costs 2 Pathos and 1 Willpower to use.

#### ····· Soul Pact

By using this art, a wraith can claim a mortal soul for his own, but only if the mortal is willing. This art is usually evoked as part of a contract whereby a mortal promises his soul in exchange for the wraith's help. Thereafter, while the mortal lives, he becomes a Fetter of the wraith.

System: The player must roll Charisma + Lifeweb (difficulty equal to the subject's Willpower).

This art costs 9 Pathos to use. The target will then be a one-point Fetter.









ou think that the undertaker did a good job? Honey, I can make you look more beautiful than you've ever been. Or more disgusting. Need a couple of arms for that boo job? No problem. How about some hideous scars? Easy. What about an extra nose or two? Hey, what are friends for? Really, hon, you need to

just relax and let me take care of you.

The art of Moliate, also called Soulshaping, is the power of moving, shaping and reforming the stuff of wraiths, called plasm.

Plasm is malleable. Shapers know how to make it beautiful, how to make it glow with an inner light, and how to make it look human again. By burning Pathos and employing the arts of Moliate, a wraith causes the Corpus under his fingertips to flow freely for a brief second, just long enough for the wraith to grab it and shape it to her heart's desire.

Storyteller Notes: This art can be used to inflict aggravated damage on a wraith's Corpus.

#### Masquers - Moliate

One of the most important guilds in Stygia, the Masquers were spies, artisans and secret assassins. Because many wraiths enjoy taking on powerful-looking forms, the Masquers' Guild used to resemble a house of fashion, offering wraiths a wide variety of body shapes and visages. Furthermore, because of their ability to change their shape, Masquers were often employed as spies or assassins, especially because they didn't need to carry a weapon with them.

Masquers care more about the art of their work than the practicality of it: they will do better work, even in Martialry, if they can add their own unique flourishes. Just about every Citadel has a former Masquer working for it.

One can identify a Masquer by her extremely malleable form and by the fact that she seems to be a little too perfect. Occasionally, two Masquers who work well together will adopt the exact same visage.

# **Basic Abilities**

Shapesense: This ability allows the wraith to detect whether or not another wraith has been Moliated, and if so, in what manner. System: The player must roll Perception + Moliate (difficulty equal to the original shaper's Dexterity + Moliate). The number of successes indicates how much information about the Moliated wraith is gleaned, possibly even giving the Shapesenser an idea of the wraith's original form.

Glow: This ability allows the wraith to cause himself or others to glow with an inner light. The color and intensity are up to the wraith.

System: The player must roll Charisma + Moliate (difficulty 7). The number of successes indicates how many scenes the glow lasts.

This art costs 1 Pathos.

Return of Death's Visage: This ability allows the wraith to return to her original state, as she looked after her death.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Moliate. The difficulty is based upon how much the wraith has changed (or been changed) since her death (drastic change 10, moderate change 8, minor change 6). Each success indicates how accurately the wraith assumes her original shape.

It costs 1 Pathos to use this art.

#### Imitate

A wraith with this art may change her visage to mimic another's. This is easiest to do when the wraith is looking at the face to be Imitated, though it may be done from memory. This art does not allow the wraith to change her overall Corpus, just her face.

System: The player must roll Dexterity + Moliate. The difficulty is variable: 5 if she can see the face, 8 if going by memory. If the wraith has a skinmask (see *Rend*, below), the difficulty is only 4. The number of successes indicates the difficulty of penetrating the disguise.

This art costs 1 Pathos to use.

# • Sculpt

Using this art, the wraith may temporarily grow another limb, sprout new sensory organs, place markings or patterns on himself, or cause parts of his body to glow or change color. As long as there is not a dangerous effect associated with the change, it remains in the province of Sculpting. Of course, one may argue that having multiple arms allows more attacks; this is patently untrue. The wraith has the same physical capabilities regardless of the number of appendages, and unless a

wraith understands Martialry (listed below), he cannot actively use new appendages.

System: The character may choose to Sculpt either himself or another wraith. The player rolls Manipulation + Moliate (difficulty 7). The Storyteller must decide how many successes are required. The effects of Sculpting are permanent (until negated with a further use of Sculpting). This art cannot cause damage; it just changes the shape of the Corpus already there.

This art costs 1 Pathos to use. The subject of the Sculpting loses a Corpus Level.

Sculpt may also be used to heal aggravated damage: a wraith may use Sculpt to replace the lost Corpus "slots" that were damaged through aggravated wounds, allowing the recipient to refill those "slots." One success per aggravated wound must be obtained, and use of the art in this fashion costs 1 Pathos plus 1 Pathos per success.

#### ··· Martialry

This art allows the wraith to create weaponry and armor from his Corpus. The weapon takes the place of one of the wraith's arms or legs and is automatically shaped to be usable by one who knows how.

When a weapon is formed by use of this art, the chosen limb forms into the shape of the desired weapon, hardening as it does so. Creation of armor causes the wraith's Corpus to thicken and harden, assuming a mirrorlike sheen.

System: In order to create weaponry, the player must roll Intelligence + Moliate (difficulty of his Stamina + 3). Each success allows the weapon to inflict an additional die of damage: it doesn't particularly matter what form the weapon takes, although many wraiths adopt swords for ease of use.

To create armor, the player must roll Stamina + Moliate (difficulty of his Strength + 3). Each success adds one die to the character's soak roll, but each success after the first adds to the difficulty of any roll involving Dexterity (the armor is stiff).

Note that the wraith may only create weapons from his own Corpus, not that of others, and that the Melee Skill is needed to wield a formed weapon properly.

This art costs 3 Pathos to use, plus 1 Pathos per success gained.

#### ···· Rend

This terrible art allows Shapers to inflict tremendous damage on the Corpuses of other wraiths. Use of this power causes another wraith to be literally torn apart. Some wraiths use this art to remove another wraith's face — a humiliating thing in wraith society. Once removed, this face is called a skinmask and can be helpful when using Imitate (see above).

System: Before this art can be used, the character must contact his intended target. Generally he must make a normal attack roll, though the art can be brought into play if another







comes into contact with him. The player rolls Strength + Moliate (difficulty of his opponent's Stamina +3). Damage dice equal the character's number of successes plus one per point of Pathos spent. If five or more successes are gained, the wraith may remove a portion of his opponent (face, hand, foot, or even just gouge out a large portion of Corpus). Damage inflicted by Rend is aggravated.

This art costs 1 Pathos to activate. Additionally, the character gains 1 Angst per use of this art.

# ····· Bodyshape

At this level of ability, the wraith can transform her body's entire shape and appearance. The wraith can try to emulare another being or anything else she desires, from a chair to a refrigerator. Although Corpus can be very malleable, there are limits; the relative volume of the desired form should be roughly equal to the wraith's normal form.

System: The player must roll Wits + Moliate. The difficulty depends on what the wraith seeks to emulate. Trying to emulate another person is difficult (difficulty 9), while trying to appear as a greasy spot on the floor is very easy (difficulty 5). Whole-body changes can only be held for a limited amount of time before the wraith is forced back to her original form (one scene per success).

This art costs 1 Pathos to make the initial change, plus 1 Pathos per turn spent in the form.



ou think it's easy, pushin' that, liftin' this? It's not. Oh, no — but now, this is fun. Watch me make it go BOOM!

Many wraiths may still affect the living world. One of these ways is the Arcanos of Outrage. Outrage is the manifestation of a wraith's will as kinetic force.

Storyteller Notes: All Outrage arts are violent or physical in one way or another. They should be roleplayed with much groaning and grunting, as it takes this kind of nonverbal communication to focus one's energies properly.

All difficulties are based on the local Shroud.

#### Spooks - Outrage

The Spooks have always been troublemakers and poltergeists, responsible for causing trouble wherever they go. Of all the guilds, this was a guild in name only. They were a group of rowdies and miscreants.

Former Spooks are often found in the darkest parts of the city, causing fights and setting fires. They enjoy scaring people with their Arcanos.

Spooks like to carry things that can pound on other things, like hammers or rocks. In medieval times, the Spooks' Guild was paid by the Artificers to aid in the creation of relics.

One can identify the average Spook by his broad shoulders, his massive chest and the surly expression on his visage.

#### **Basic Abilities**

Leap of Rage: As a side effect of learning to focus his will into the real world, the wraith discovers that he can control his own movements, both in and out of the Shadowlands. By use of this art, the wraith can make incredible leaps and jumps.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Outrage (difficulty of the local Shroud). If this art is used in the Tempest or the Shadowlands, the difficulty is 6. The number of successes gained can be added to any successes scored when making a jump or leap.

#### Ping

At this level the wraith is just beginning to learn to manipulate objects in the living world. This art can be used to move something very small (such as a bottlecap) just a little bit. It can be just a slight brush, a push, a lift or some other movement.

System: The player must roll Strength + Outrage (difficulty of the local Shroud).

This art costs 1 Pathos to use.

#### ·· Wraithgrasp

This art allows the character to affect the living world in a more direct fashion. Though this power may only be used to lift things, quite a bit may be lifted through use of this art.

> System: The player must roll Strength + Outrage (difficulty of the local Shroud). This art allows the character to lift something with a Feat of Strength (see pg. XX). Note that objects may only be lifted; they may not be moved in any other way.

This art costs 2 Pathos to use.

## ... Stonehand Punch

This art allows the wraith to affect the living world in a violent, physical manner. The wraith may strike a target of his choice.

System: The player must roll Strength + Outrage. The difficulty is the local Shroud. Each success inflicts one Health Level (or Corpus Level if the target is another wraith) on the target.

This art costs 2 Pathos per use.

## ···· Death's Touch

This art allows the wraith to manipulate objects in the real world. The wraith may type, tie shoes, etc., by using this art. Alternatively, the wraith may create friction, thereby starting fires in the living world.

System: The player must roll Dexterity + Outrage (difficulty of the local Shroud). The number of successes indicates





the delicacy and control of the wraith's touch, as well as how long the power lasts— up to one minute per success gained.

To start a fire, the wraith rolls Strength + Outrage (difficulty 8). The number of successes indicates the heat and extent of the fire.

This art costs 3 Pathos to use.

#### ····· Obliviate

This truly hideous art allows a wraith to destroy something or someone, banishing it to Oblivion. If used to destroy an object in the living world, that object vanishes into Oblivion, unless it was inhabited by a wraith. In that case, it become a relic. If this art is used on objects in the Shadowlands (including relics), they are immediately banished to Oblivion.

When this art is used on another wraith, it inflicts aggravated damage. A wraith who is reduced to zero Corpus through this means is immediately forced into Oblivion. Living creatures merely suffer Health Levels, although if a mortal is killed through this power, his soul descends immediately into Oblivion.

System: The player rolls Strength + Outrage (difficulty of the local Shroud, unless the character is attempting to affect another wraith, in which case the difficulty is the target's Stamina +3). Each success inflicts one level of aggravated damage; this damage cannot be soaked.

This art costs 3 Pathos to use. In addition, the wraith gains 1 Angst each time this art is used.

# Pandemonium



#### ights! Camera! POLTERGEIST!!!

Pandemonium, also called the Wylding, is a power of pure chaos. It cannot be controlled, but it is very effective in tampering with the living world. Those wraiths who use it develop an unsavory reputation: dabbling in the Wylding is not conducive to

maintaining one's sanity.

Storyteller Notes: Although the Fog cloaks most of the effects of this Arcanos, it often causes considerable problems with local mortals. People tend to freak out when clocks start running backward, ghostly lights dance and whirl, and amphibians rain down in gelid torrents.

However, the effects of most of these arts vanish into nothingness quite quickly, leaving no lasting effects, and people don't tend to believe wild-eyed derelicts who claim they saw ghosts. Although photography and video equipment record effects that directly affect the living world, most are quick to disbelieve what they see. After all, video effects are easy to fake...

The difficulty for any Pandemonium effects is the local Shroud, unless stated otherwise. The Fog prevents people from remembering the exact details of what happened: see the Fog Chart on pg. XX.

# Haunters - Pandemonium

Closely allied with the Spooks' Guild, the Haunters were somewhat misanthropic: they viewed themselves as exterminators who would rid buildings of "human pests."

Now Haunters are considered quite insane, because their arts require them to evoke and witness mind- and reality-altering effects. Many of them develop quirks reflecting their shaky sanity: the habit of giggling too much, the tendency to use the royal "we," etc. They are generally high-strung and easily irritated.

One can identify a Haunter by her odd mannerisms and the fact that she often wears voluminous black cloaks.

# **Basic Abilities**

Sense Chaos: The wraith is highly attuned to the forces of chaos and the Shadow. By concentrating, the wraith is able to tell if a particular event has been caused by Pandemonium, or if something has been touched by the Shadow. This art is even useful in determining if a mortal has been tampered with in some manner by a wraith or Spectre.

System: The player must roll Perception + Pandemonium (difficulty 7).

#### • Weirdness

The wraith can cause something strange to happen to one individual: he suddenly feels a hot flash, or his hair rises, or he suffers a momentary hallucination. Only one individual at a time may be affected by this art.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Pandemonium (difficulty of the local Shroud).

This art costs 1 Pathos.

#### · Befuddlement

Through use of this art the wraith can cause her subject to become confused. The subject will become momentarily disoriented and unaware of who he is or what he is doing.

> System: The art may be used on a mortal or another wraith. The player rolls Intelligence + Pandemonium (difficulty of the target's Willpower). The effects last for one turn per success gained. The subject of this art must make an Intelligence roll (difficulty 8) each turn to think clearly or act decisively.

This art costs 1 Pathos to use.

#### ··· Dark Ether

Through use of this art, the wraith may affect currently existing weather-related or light-related environmental conditions in a small area. She can make the area bitterly cold or blisteringly hot, painfully bright, or impenetrably dark. She can cause blue-white arcs of electricity to dance about the room, or floating globes of light to shimmer into being. She can make the air dry and biting or as heavy as a wet wool blanket; she can also produce mists and fogs.

System: The player must state what effect she is attempting and roll Intelligence + Pandemonium (difficulty of the local Shroud). The number of successes indicates the degree of variance and the duration of the effect. Five successes on the roll create sufficient turbulence to inflict one level of damage (Health or Corpus) upon beings in the vicinity. Generally, however, this art is meant to terrify, not injure.

This art costs 1 Pathos to evoke and 1 Pathos per turn of maintenance.

···· Foul Humour

With this art, a wraith may cause foul vermin and substances to manifest in a small area. He can evoke a plague of





locusts, a rain of frogs, a nest of black snakes, a pack of rats or a web full of spiders. Alternatively, he can evoke blood (dried or wet), gore, acid, slime, flesh or other noxious substances. The wraith accomplishes these feats by using Pathos to channel his very Corpus through the Shroud.

System: The player must state what effect he is attempting and roll Intelligence + Pandemonium (difficulty of the local Shroud). The number of successes indicates the extent of the manifestation (and how much the Storyteller will elaborate on the description). At the end of the effect, the manifestation usually vanishes, although traces of it may remain, especially if the roll scored five or more successes. Note that anything damaging created with this power inflicts one die of damage for every two successes on the creation roll.

This art costs 4 Pathos plus 1 Corpus per success.

# ••••• Tempus Fugit

Through this art, a wraith may change the speed at which time passes, or may distort the distance of an area. Thus, she can accelerate time or make it pass very slowly; she can make the distance across a foyer seem like a mile or the distance across a ballroom seem like one step. The wraith, however, cannot reverse time.

System: The player must state what effect she is attempting and roll Intelligence + Pandemonium (difficulty of the local Shroud). The number of successes indicates the amount of temporal or spatial change permissible in the wraith's immediate vicinity.

Each success alters the flow of time by one turn. This can be attempted once per scene. For instance, if a wraith was slowing down time for a victim and scored four successes, an action normally requiring one turn would last for four turns. If she was speeding up time, anything requiring four turns could be done in one turn. (Note: this will not add to the number of actions the target gets from Celerity, Rage or Effects of the Time Sphere. It can, however, prevent them...) This art also works in the Shadowlands (difficulty 7).

This art costs 4 Pathos.

By rolling Dexterity + Pandemonium (difficulty 7), a wraith may focus the time/space distortion on herself alone and thus gain an extra action per turn for each success on the roll. This application of the art costs 2 Pathos to use, and the effects last for one scene.

# Phantasm



ome with me on wings of dream. I can take you anywhere you want to go — would you like to have dinner with Marlene Dietrich? Sip cappucino on the canals of Mars? Walk with me through the Elysian Fields? I promise to have you back before you wake.

Phantasm is the knowledge of mortals'

dreaming souls. While asleep, mortals' souls rest lightly in their bodies. It is relatively easy, for those who know what they are doing, to slide a soul out of a mortal shell and bring it along on journeys through the Shadowlands. The sleeper doesn't remember the journey completely — at best, he remembers a vague nightmare or a good dream.

Storyteller Notes: Phantasm offers the Storyteller the opportunity to involve normal people directly in the story. While the events of a Phantasm-controlled dream are not real to the dreaming soul, they do have an impact on life and perceptions. Sometimes these dream-journeys cause a person to reconsider his life and perhaps change it.

The dreamer translates the landscape and denizens of the Shadowlands into comprehensible symbols. Of course, the wraith can change elements of the dreamer's dream through use of the Lucidity art.

For all intents and purposes, a dreaming person is a wraith with a very solid Corpus that can only be damaged by special artifacts or things that inflict aggravated wounds on wraiths. If attacked, a dreaming soul returns immediately to her body, slipping through the Tempest, and "wakes up" (in most cases, though there are rare occasions when the dreamer does not make it back). Causing permanent damage or death to a dreamer through use of this Arcanos is only possible at the highest levels of the art.

# Sandmen — Phantasm

Sandmen are the actors and playwrights of the Underworld. Their troupes roam the Underworld, travelling from Necropolis to Necropolis with their plays and entertainments. The fact that their guild was disbanded meant nothing to them: they do what they do not because of some guild, but because it is what they love.

One can identify a Sandman by his tendency to dress incongruously, with clothes woven from wisps of previously inhabited dreams.

## **Basic Abilities**

Sleepsense: The wraith may observe the dreams of a mortal. She may use this ability to determine where a mortal is in his sleep cycle: REM sleep (dreaming), deep sleep (not dreaming) or transition. This art may also be used to experience the subject's dream.

System: The player must roll Perception + Phantasm (difficulty 6). Each success allows the wraith to view the mortal's dream for one turn.

#### • Elysia

By gently taking the soul of a sleeping person into her hands, a wraith can pull it out. This causes no lasting damage to the soul. Once freed, the wraith may carry the dreaming soul along with her.

> System: The player must roll Dexterity + Phantasm. The difficulty depends on the subject's current sleep cycle (see *Sleepsense*, above): REM sleep (6), transitional sleep (7) or deep sleep (8). Each success allows the mortal to stay one scene in the dreamscape.

If the subject is watching television or under a similar hypnotic state, he may be affected by Elysia; the difficulty is 10, however, and at least three successes are required. This number is deducted from the number of successes for duration.

This art costs 1 Pathos.

•• Lucidity

This art allows a wraith to change aspects of a mortal's dream. For example, a dreamer dreams of being in a thunderstorm, adrift on a boat in the middle of the ocean. A wraith could use this art to change the thunderstorm to a calm day, or the boat to a raft, or the ocean to a desert. If a wraith using this art changes enough aspects of a dream, she can effectively take it over and guide its path, going so far as to change a pleasant dream to a nightmare or vice versa.

System: The Storyteller must first decide how drastic the change is and assign an appropriate difficulty. The player must roll Manipulation + Phantasm. For each success, the change is more vivid and permanent. If the roll botches, the dreamer is drawn into the wraith's Shadow and experiences its tender mercies via an extremely intense, sanity-threatening nightmare.

This art costs 2 Pathos.



### ··· Dreams of Sleep

This art allows the wraith to cause other wraiths to fall asleep and dream in the manner of the living.

System: The player need make a roll only if the wraith is unwilling. In this case, the player rolls Charisma + Phantasm (difficulty of the wraith's Willpower). The target may also resist using a straight opposed Intelligence + Subterfuge roll.

This art costs 1 Pathos.

# ···· Agon

This is a direct means of ripping a mortal's soul from his sleeping body. This method is extremely painful and often destructive to the mortal.

System: The player rolls Strength + Phantasm (difficulty 8). The number of successes on the roll indicates the number of Health Levels the dreamer loses upon awakening. It also indicates the number of scenes during which the wraith may hold the dreamer's soul. The dreamer may resist by using Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty 8). Agon sometimes becomes an epic contest between the living and the dead. If the wraith botches, the dreamer's soul has somehow been harmed: he may become neurotic or suffer a recurring nightmare.

This art costs 3 Pathos, and the wraith's Shadow gains 1 Angst per use. Botching will bestow two points of Angst.

# ••••• Phantasmagoria

The wraith may weave her Pathos (and Corpus) into illusions. These illusions are not solid to other wraiths (although they can still be dangerous) unless the wraith has invested Corpus into them. A wraith can weave illusions in the living world if the wraith first Embodies there. The illusions can affect all five senses, although they last for only a short amount of time.

System: The roll to create an illusion is Charisma + Phantasm (difficulty 6). The number of successes on this roll equals both the number of successes required (on a Perception + Alertness roll) to see through an illusion and the number of turns the illusion lasts. In order for an illusion to become quasi-material (and thus dangerous), the wraith must invest at least one level of Corpus into the illusion's "body." The number of Corpus Levels invested indicates the amount of damage the illusion can take before being destroyed. Corpus cannot be replaced in an illusion once it is damaged: another Phantasmagoria attempt must be made to recreate it.

If the illusion is of a dangerous or damaging nature, the player may roll Dexterity + Phantasm (difficulty 7) as an attack roll. The victim may dodge the attack. The damage roll is Strength + Phantasm (difficulty 7), bestowing one point of damage for each success. The victim may soak the damage.

This art costs 3 Pathos to use, plus 1 Pathos per turn.



# Puppetry



re you so naive as to think that humanity has directed itself over the course of history? Why do you think there was no nuclear holocaust during the Cold War? Certainly not because of peace-loving military officials. We pull the strings, and they dance for us — because Charon himself couldn't have kept Oblivion

at bay if those nuke mushrooms had blossomed. It may have been against his Code, but I personally don't think he would have minded.

Puppetry is the forbidden art of possession. Of all Arcanos, it is the one Charon specifically said was the province of his Deathlords and the Hierarchy alone. Nonetheless, an entire subculture of wraiths are addicted to this Arcanos' power-tripping ways. They love the experience of feeling alive again. They love the power they have over their hosts, even after their hosts are hospitalized for mental illness.

Storyteller Notes: While inhabiting the body of a subject, the wraith is not considered to be "in" the Shadowlands. He is safe from the ravages of that place. However, he takes damage whenever his host takes damage.

Note that unless the wraith is in direct control of the body, you should use the host's Physical Attributes and Talents. The Puppeteer is just a hanger-on.

#### Puppeteers - Puppetry

The ultimate secret weapon, the Puppeteers were more of an elite group of equals than a guild. Charon himself used their services on more than one occasion, although he obviously loathed them. The Puppeteers were never a part of the Hierarchy, but were obviously sanctioned by it.

Puppeteers believe themselves responsible for the wellbeing of mortals and often go to great lengths to ensure that other wraiths aren't causing unnecessary deaths in the living world. Still, many Renegade Puppeteers feel the exact opposite: that mortal bodies are theirs to use and abuse.

One can identify a Puppeteer by his accent and strange mannerisms: Puppeteers tend to pick up many strange accents and habits when skinriding different people.

#### Attunement

In order for a wraith to perform some aspects of Puppetry, he must first prepare a Consort. To prepare a Consort, the wraith must spend a considerable amount of time skinriding the individual, spending a point of Willpower each time. This represents a process of identifying with the Consort over time. Five points of Willpower are required to prepare the average Consort. If the Consort is a close friend, two or three points of Willpower will be sufficient. The Skinrider must succeed at each of the lower levels of Puppetry before attempting a higher level. Once the Storyteller deems the time is right, the wraith must expend a permanent Willpower point,

#### at which point the subject becomes a Consort. Basic Abilities

Detect Possession: Not only does this ability allow a wraith to detect the signs of possession, but to sense if a mortal has been attuned for the purpose of using Puppetry.

System: To detect a current possession, the player rolls Perception + Puppetry (difficulty 7). To detect the subtle signs of past possession, the difficulty is 9.

The Skinrider may resist current detection by using Appearance + Subterfuge (difficulty 7) or Appearance + Puppetry (difficulty 6).

#### • Skinride

Before the wraith may attempt to control a mortal in other ways, the wraith must first learn the art of skinriding. Skinriding is essentially the ability to slip into the mortal's body, thereby temporarily joining with her. This is a very basic level of possession; in effect, the wraith is simply along for the ride, and the host is moving of her own free will, carrying the wraith along. However, all other uses of Puppetry first require the wraith to Skinride the host.

If he so desires, the wraith may attempt to implant a oneword suggestion or simple impulse. This suggestion or impulse cannot be contradictory to the host's Nature or very dangerous.

System: In order to have his character enter a host's body, the player must roll Dexterity + Puppetry (difficulty of the subject's Willpower). The roll indicates how many successes are needed for another wraith to wrest the wraith out of the host's body.

This art costs 1 Pathos.





# " Sudden Movement

The Puppeteer may now send an impulse directly to an arm or leg and take fleeting control of it. This art may be used to force someone to pick something up without knowing exactly why.

System: The character must first Skinride the host. The player then rolls Strength + Puppetry (difficulty of the subject's Willpower). The victim is allowed a resisted roll of Willpower. The number of successes indicates the degree of control the character has.

This art costs 1 Pathos per use.

# ··· Master's Voice

The Puppeteer briefly overrides the speech centers of his host and causes her to speak. The voice produced when using this art is a bizarre hybrid of the wraith's and host's voices.

System: The player must roll Intelligence + Puppetry (difficulty of the subject's Willpower). The Puppeteer may speak for one breath per success gained.

This art costs 1 Pathos to use.

## ···· Rein in the Mind

This more powerful possession allows the Puppeteer to control a host without her realizing it. In order to do this, however, the Puppeteer must have attuned her as a Consort (see Attunement, above).

The host remains semiconscious throughout the process and will emerge from the possession when the Puppeteer finally releases her. Once released, she will immediately try to rationalize her actions. This isn't always possible, and many hosts have sought mental health professionals, testing and therapy. Note, however, that any pain felt by the host is felt by the wraith also: electroshock therapy has been extremely useful in throwing a Puppeteer out, though nothing prevents him from coming back.

System: The player must roll Manipulation + Puppetry (difficulty of the subject's Willpower or the local Shroud, whichever is higher). The number of successes indicates the number of scenes during which the Puppeteer may control the host. By spending a Willpower point, the host may make a Willpower roll to thwart the possession (each success versus a difficulty of the Puppeteer's Manipulation + Puppetry indicates one fewer scene the Puppeteer may remain in control).

This art costs 4 Pathos to use and bestows one point of Angst.

## ····· Obliterate the Soul

After long-time use of Rein in the Mind, a wraith may begin to live full-time within a host's body. The host's personality is subsumed, eaten by the Shadow of the possessing wraith. Whenever the wraith leaves a body that has been so possessed, it becomes catatonic — sitting about listlessly, with no will of its own. Master Puppeteers typically exploit and destroy mortals for their own survival.

System: If the character has a Consort who has been conditioned through long uses of Rein in the Mind, the player may roll Strength + Puppetry (difficulty equals the subject's Willpower or the local Shroud, whichever is greater). When the wraith totals enough successes to equal the host's Willpower, she can destroy the soul of the host and live full-time as that person. It should be noted that a body that does not contain its original soul will slowly start to decay. One week after removing the soul, the body will begin to rot. For this reason, most wraiths who possess this art use it only in dire circumstances. Note that this form of possession only works on mortals and is completely ineffective against supernaturals.

This art can only be employed once a month, on the new moon: if a wraith doesn't Obliterate the Soul the first time, she must wait another month to try again.

The wraith must spend 5 Pathos and 2 Willpower to evoke this art, and she gains a number of Angst points equal to the host's original Willpower.





upply and demand. It's simple economics. You need, we provide. You don't ask us where we get the juice, and we won't ask what you're planning to do with it. Fair? I thought so.

Usury is the art of exercising the power that death has over life. Through it, wraiths can gain life energy — Pathos. Every day,

the Quick die a little more. Usury is just the process of speeding the arrival of the final breath.

Some believe that the Shadow is the channel for this art. Indeed, Usury embodies the process of speeding decay and death, and many Usurers find themselves filled with Angst on a regular basis. Through this Arcanos, the wraith infects a living person with minute quantities of death, thereby stealing some of his life. It is also used to steal other wraiths' Corpus.

Storyteller Notes: To employ Usury, the wraith using it must somehow touch the subject's body or Corpus. Where mortals are concerned, this is done through Puppetry (entering a mortal and using the art on him), Embody (materializing and touching someone), Inhabit (being inside something that is in contact with the subject) or Phantasm (touching the dreaming soul). The life energy stolen in this fashion appears as an arc of light that dulls and grays as it enters the wraith.

#### Usurers — Usury

At one time, the Usurer's Guild had considerable political clout in Stygia. The Usurers made a bid to take over the government of Stygia and were thus cast out along with the rest of the guilds. For this reason, the Usurers must conduct their business in secret. In order to reach a Usurer of some renown or power, a client must first follow a series of directions leading her on a somewhat unorthodox wild goose chase. If nobody follows the client (and if the Usurers decide her intent is good), then the Usurers will see her.

One can identify a Usurer by her tendency to speak in precise, numerical terms, as well as by the scales she carries, which allow her to keep track of the balance of energy transferred.

# **Basic Abilities**

Usury

Assessment: The wraith can sense the amount of life (or, conversely, the amount of death) within an individual. He can gain a general sense of that individual's Stamina, Health and Corpus. By looking at wounds, he can tell how grave they are. This ability has an adjunct use: the wraith can use it to sense the presence of life energy within an area.

System: The player must roll Perception + Usury (difficulty 6). The number of successes indicates the accuracy of the reading.

#### • Transfer

The wraith may transfer her own Pathos to another, if she so desires. Alternatively, the wraith may use this art to steal Pathos from another wraith. To use this art successfully, the two wraiths in question must be in contact at the time of the transference. The energy manifests as a glow that infuses the wraith receiving the Pathos.

System: The player must roll Manipulation + Usury. If this art is being used to transfer Pathos, the difficulty equals the amount of Pathos the receiving wraith currently has. If the art is being used to steal Pathos, the difficulty equals the subject's Willpower. The number of success indicates how many points of Pathos may be transferred.

# . Early Withdrawal

By merely touching a subject (living or wraith), the Usurer may siphon life energy from the subject. In order to drain energy from the living, the wraith must physically contact the chosen individual through some means, generally through use of the Embody Arcanos.

System: Once the subject has been touched, the player rolls Manipulation + Usury (difficulty of the opponent's Willpower). The number of successes indicates the number of Health or Corpus Levels stolen. These levels are immediately marked off on the subject's sheet and added to the Usurer's sheet. The wraith may only steal Health or Corpus Levels up to his maximum Corpus. Once the Usurer has reached his maximum Corpus, this ability becomes useless — unless the character possesses the Exchange Rate art (see below).



#### ··· Charitable Trust

This art allows the wraith to heal a mortal or another wraith by infusing her with his own Corpus. The subject is held close to the mouth of the bestowing wraith and receives the Corpus as a ghostly breath. The wraith need not be manifested in any way to use this art upon mortals.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Usury (difficulty equal to the injured character's current Health or Corpus Levels). For each success rolled, one Corpus Level may be transferred to the subject. A botch on this roll means that the flow of Corpus reverses: see the Early Withdrawal art, above.

This art costs 1 Pathos to use.

#### ···· Exchange Rate

Though a wraith can convert his Pathos to Corpus (see Healing, pg. XX), Corpus always remains the same. With this art, a wraith may now convert Corpus into Pathos. He may simply convert his own Corpus, or he may use this art in conjunction with Early Withdrawal (see above).

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Usury (difficulty 6). Each success allows one point of Corpus to be converted into Pathos.

#### ····· Investment

Through use of this art the wraith may use relics as reservoirs to store Corpus and Pathos for future use. The wraith must first own a relic in order for this art to be used; by focusing his will upon the relic, the wraith may channel energy into it, where it is then stored. This bottled Pathos is accessible to anyone who knows the sigil or command phrase with which the wraith seals the relic.

System: The player decides how many Pathos or Corpus points she wishes to invest, and then writes down that number. The player then rolls Intelligence + Usury (difficulty 7). For each success, one point of Pathos or Corpus is invested. All excess points "gambled" are lost. Once successful, the character must seal the relic by spending a Willpower point and assigning a sigil or command that must be used when the energy within the relic is to be tapped. Only one type of energy may be stored within a given relic. Note that soulfire is created in this fashion: this art is required to recharge empty soulfire crystals.









# Chapter Seven: Shadow

You may never understand how the stranger is inspired, For he is not always evil, and he is not always wrong... —Billy Joel, "The Stranger"

# Duality



here are two main aspects to a wraith character's personality. The first, the Psyche, is usually the dominant side of a wraith. The Psyche represents the force of will and the source of identity. A wraith follows his Psyche by being true to himself and acting in accordance with his inner

beliefs (his Nature). The Psyche trusts, believes, creates, hopes and dreams. The Psyche, however, cannot exist on its own. Every character has a dark side as well.

Wraiths call this inner darkness the Shadow. Usually, this is the repressed, hidden side of a wraith. The word "evil" does not entirely fit; the phrase "dark side" is far more appropriate. It is the negative image of the Psyche. From the viewpoint of the Shadow, darkness is a source of strength. The Shadow feeds doubt, resistance, antipathy and the subconscious. From the viewpoint of the Psyche, the Shadow is a force of destruction, not creation. It is the deathwish, the shard of Oblivion in any wraith, threatening to consume everything a wraith holds dear. Both of these interpretations, in a sense, are true.

The "character" played by a Wraith player is the Psyche aspect. When desperation and suffering grow strong enough, however, the Shadow side of the wraith emerges. This Shadow side is a separate character, complete with its own Traits and character sheet, and is usually not under the player's control.

This chapter describes how the dark side of a character is developed. The Psyche is created by the player with the help of the Storyteller; the Shadow is created by the Storyteller with the help of the player. The rules presented in this chapter enable the Storyteller to define and delineate the Shadow.

#### Shadowguide

The Shadow is an intelligent force. It does not mindlessly plod along: even the most alien Shadows have plans, cycles, cunning tricks and brilliant insights into the Psyche.

To represent this, another player in the troupe assumes the role of the character's Shadow. This player is called the Shadowguide. Thus, each **Wraith** player actually controls two characters: her own character and another character's Shadow. The Shadowguide roleplays the subconscious urges of a char-

Chapter Seven: Shadow





acter. The Shadowguide will often whisper hints and promises of power, trying to trick the player into self-destructive actions.

Any roleplaying game is played by consensus. The Storyteller usually decides which player will represent which Shadow. However, a player can feel free to choose her own Shadowguide. All players must be comfortable with the final decision. The Shadowguide assists in developing the character as the game progresses.

It should be noted, however, that during periods when the Shadow directly dominates (as opposed to influences) the wraith, the *player*, not the Shadowguide, controls the Shadowridden character.

As a Shadowguide, you have a degree of power... and a degree of responsibility. You must become familiar with the wraith whose Shadow you control. This doesn't necessarily mean that you should memorize the character sheet, but you should definitely be familiar with what the Psyche of your Shadow can do. You also need to understand the tools you have at your disposal.

Finally, you must know when to stop. You must understand when to ease back, when to cease your spiritual assault on your poor target. If the Shadow is always active and always trying to do harm to the character, the story will suffer. If you are too vicious, the person playing your Shadow may eventually find it necessary to show you that turnabout is indeed fair play...

Overall, you must realize that, even though you are playing an entity of darkness and destruction, you are playing an intelligent entity who realizes that small victories, gathered over time, are worth more than a single triumph. The work of the Shadow requires patience, cunning and insight. Use finesse.

And above all else, everyone involved must remember one thing: it's only a game. The Storyteller is responsible for preventing the Shadowguide from abusing his position; if need be, she will occasionally intervene and guide a character's Shadow herself.

# Shadow Character Generation



'm harboring a fugitive, a defector of a kind She lives in my soul and drinks of my wine And I'd give my last breath to keep us alive — Indigo Girls, "Fugitive"

After a player has finished all the other stages of character creation, the Storyteller

begins to develop the character's Shadow. The Storyteller must give depth to each character in his game. He must make the "light" in his game brighter by contrasting it against the growing darkness he evokes.

# Step One: Concept

Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt Til my bad angel fire my good one out.

-William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 141"

The Storyteller and the player need to pick a concept for the Shadow. This represents the general personality of the Shadow, but also says something about the personality of the character. Try to determine exactly what about this character will make it unique. What secrets will trouble and torment the character throughout the game?

An excellent time to develop these ideas is during a character's prelude. By understanding the forces and desires that drove a character through life, the Storyteller will gain an understanding of what motivates the character not just in death, but toward death. The Shadow is the incarnation of the Psyche's nightmares.

Below are listed several Shadow Archetypes. Some of them are variants of existing Psyche Archetypes (it's even possible, in some cases, for a character to have the same Archetype for the Demeanor, Nature and Shadow). The ones listed below are only a sampling. Feel free to develop unique Shadow concepts in addition to the ones provided.

# Shadow Archetypes

These Archetypes mainly apply to the Shadowguide. As he deceives and corrupts, the Shadow develops its personality and methods. The Archetype can also be helpful to the player when roleplaying through periods of Catharsis.

# The Abuser

This Shadow represents the battered "inner child" who has come full circle, grown up out of her terrible beginnings to inflict more pain on others. She is alternately childlike and rage-filled, caring and terribly abusive. Mostly she is chaotic and nearly impossible to second-guess. Like the Perfectionist, the Abuser makes impossible demands; unlike him, however, she never expects the character to fulfill them. She hopes the character will fail — failure gives her an excuse for her cruelty.

When dominant, this Shadow uses her power to abuse others: mindlessly lashing out, demanding servitude, or methodically inflicting pain and suffering. She wishes the whole world to suffer just like she does.

#### The Director

This Shadow is aloof and quiet. He seems mild-mannered enough. Indeed, he is quite gentlemanly and presents a strong facade of honor. He is the master manipulator. Your secrets are the keys with which he gradually unlocks ironies and inner doubts. The Director's ultimate goal is to shatter your will with terror in one fell swoop. He enjoys watching as you stumble into trap after trap that he's laid for you, and loves your surprise and incredulous disbelief when he shows you what you have become.

This meticulous, terrifying Shadow subtly evokes dark elements here and there, seeds of the soul that eventually blossom into something truly horrific. Like a demented game-show host, he pulls back one curtain after another, revealing weaknesses that you never even knew you had.

When in power, this Shadow quietly prepares his next series of traps. He also enjoys mind games, forcing others to confront their own weaknesses.

# The Freak

The Freak knows all your secrets and gets a perverse kick out of them. It enjoys making you do what you most loathe. When it whispers to you, it makes you feel like you are all alone, like you are the only one who would ever do the things you've done. At the same time, however, the Freak gives you permission to do horrific, terrible things. The Freak takes pleasure in your shame.

When the Freak is in power, it often tries to shame its host. It will force the host to indulge in many terrible acts. Moreover, the Freak takes almost as much pleasure in dredging up others' perversity and exposing it to the world.

# The Leech

This Shadow is the hole inside you, a pit of raw need dug by neglect and hate. This Shadow needs love, sexual fulfillment, goods, food, attention — everything. The Leech threatens to consume everything around you, including yourself. This Shadow often acts like a lost child, a creature worthy only of pity, dwelling within you and constantly pleading for help. In truth, it is in control, driving you to Oblivion with its voracious appetites.

When in power, this Shadow attempts to gain sustenance from others at any cost. It thinks nothing of using, ruining and discarding others. The world owes the Leech, and the Leech will lash out spitefully if rejected enough.

#### The Martyr

The Martyr wishes only to quit its existence as soon as possible. He may try and drag others down with him, but his main goal is to force you to embrace Oblivion, to complete the process of death. He always seeks to die again and again. The Martyr often uses your faith and altruism as levers, offering glorious, fulfilling sacrifice for the greater good. But the preaching it offers is false, leading only to annihilation.

When this Shadow is in power, it will immediately place the host in the most dangerous situation it can. It will also

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proselytize to other wraiths about the futility of continued existence and the need to sacrifice oneself for a higher goal.

#### The Monster

The Monster is a foul and unknowable thing. You can't begin to understand what it wants, or why. It is mindlessly destructive, lashing out at everything around it.

When this Shadow is in power, it will mindlessly attack anything in its path. It seeks to destroy and will not cease destroying until it destroys itself in the process. It is also verbally abusive, spouting obscenities at anyone within earshot.

# The Parent

Overprotective, loving and caring, this Shadow wants to keep you nice and neat and clean. She wants you to love only her. She wants you to listen to her, and if you don't listen, she'll make you feel guilty for not listening. She's only thinking of your best interests, anyway. She knows your dirty thoughts and vile secrets, but she still loves you (though no one else could ever love such a monster...). She tries to improve your self-esteem, but can't help "accidentally" reminding you of how you've failed. She will help you, though. Really. After all, aren't you her precious baby?

When in power, this Shadow often seeks to "protect" other wraiths and instill guilt for the things they've done. She will also attempt to destroy any and all relationships the host has.

# The Perfectionist

This Shadow sets limitations and goals that far exceed your capacity to accomplish them. Then, when you inevitably fail, he criticizes your every flaw with all the tact and restraint of a drill instructor. He knows every weakness in you and never lets you forget any of them. Even your successes could have been better. He offers you the hope of improvement one day, but it is generally a false one.

When in power, this Shadow tries to damage its host, believing that it is worthless and weak. Additionally, it will often castigate other wraiths around it.

# The Pusher

The Pusher is your buddy, your pal. Like Mephistopheles, he is helpful, solicitous and charming. He's always ready to offer assistance — for a price. He may even give you credit... after all, what are friends for? "Don't worry, be happy": that's the Pusher's creed. He wants you to have fun. As much fun as you can afford...

When in power, the Pusher will attempt to place the host in great danger or privation, forcing the host to call on the power that only he can offer.



#### The Rationalist

This Shadow is the reasoning, thinking person's Shadow. She calmly discusses your situation with you, gently explaining why you should do what she wants and offering totally logical reasons for so doing. Of course, her logic is designed to lead you down the path to Oblivion.

She never openly confronts you. Instead, she riddles your mind with doubts — doubts that only she can allay. This Shadow has a sensible, rational answer to everything, and offers you the protection of denial as well: certainly, the thoughts gnawing at you are silly guilt feelings instilled by a repressive upbringing. Certainly, the thoughts, words and deeds this Shadow has instigated haven't really hurt anyone *too* much...

When in power, this Shadow creates conditions that prove her various postulates. She also "advises" other wraiths, trying to trick them into "logical" behavior.

# Step Two: Angst

"Life," said Marvin. "Don't talk to me about life."

— Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy The Shadow is powered by a Trait called Angst. This Trait represents and quantifies a wraith's pain, alienation, self-doubt and frustration. The higher the Angst rating, the more powerful the Shadow.

The Angst rating always starts equal to or less than the character's initial Willpower. Roll a number of dice equal to the character's Willpower (difficulty 6). The number of successes indicates the number of "permanent" Angst points the character has at the start of the game.

Angst represents the stress and repressed emotion inside a wraith. Angst also determines the strength of the Shadow. The Shadow may spend Angst points just as the wraith spends Willpower.

Unlike Willpower, however, temporary Angst can exceed the boundaries of its permanent score. When a character's temporary Angst exceeds his permanent Willpower, the Shadow can attempt to overpower the Psyche and usurp control of the wraith. If the Shadow possesses 10 points of temporary Angst while it is dominant over the character, the Shadow trades all its temporary Angst for a point of permanent Angst. The character is one step closer to Oblivion.

During play, Angst can increase and decrease without the player's knowledge. The idea is that the player should never really know where her character stands. Some Arcanos give the Shadow temporary Angst points. The Shadow also has weaponry of its own, called Thorns; certain Thorns provide temporary Angst. Finally, the Shadow has its own Dark Passions. If the wraith fulfills the purpose or inflicts the passion of a Dark Passion on a mortal creature, she can quickly sate herself with larger amounts of Angst. During play, the Shadowguide must keep track of the character's Angst score. She will also need to know the player's permanent Willpower score. The Storyteller may choose to keep track as well, but she will usually be too busy telling the story. The player will always know her Willpower score, but will never know her Angst score.

# Step Three: Dark Passions

Next, the Storyteller must choose the Passions of the Shadow. Define the Shadow's Passions (or "Dark Passions") in the same way you define the Psyche's Passions: each Passion consists of a brief, one-line description of the Passion, followed by the appropriate emotion. You should use the Passions of the Psyche as a guide, because Dark Passions are generally opposite from those of the Psyche. Still, feel free to make parallel or completely unique Passions as you see fit. The Storyteller assigns seven points of Dark Passions when designing a Shadow and the palyer can spend freebie points to raise them during character generation. Fulfilling a Dark Passion will give the character pure Angst. See Dark Passions, below.

# Step Four: Freebie Points

The Storyteller has 10 freebie points to spend on the Shadow's Traits. These freebie points can be used to raise the Angst score or purchase Thorns. Note, however, that a Shadow's permanent Angst score can never initially exceed the character's Willpower, although temporary Angst can be as high as 10.

Permanent Angst - 5 points per dot

(cannot initially be higher than permanent Willpower)

Temporary Angst — 2 points per dot

(cannot initially be higher than permanent Angst)

Dark Passions - 1 point per dot

(maximum of 10 dots)

Thorns - listed individually below

#### Thorns

In the end you will submit — It's got to hurt a little bit.

- New Order, "Perfect Kiss"

Thorns are special qualities that the Shadow possesses. These qualities are totally under the control of the Storyteller, not the player.

Spectre Prestige: 1 point/level — The Shadow is respected among Spectres and will often be aided by them. Treat this as Notoriety for the Shadow.

Dark Allies: 1 point/level — The Shadow regularly communicates with Spectres in the area. Treat this Thorn as if the


Shadow had the Allies Background, applicable only the region's Spectres.

Tainted Relic: 1 point/relic — The Shadow has an important relic that manifests only when it is in power. This relic could be a mask, a weapon or some other item. The character should be able to recognize its origin if it is described to him or if he sees it in a mirror. The manifestation of this relic demonstrates to others in the wraith's Circle that the Shadow is in control.

Infamy: 1 point/level — People curse the character's name as they lie down to sleep. The Infamy Thorn causes a kind of Memoriam to collect at the character's Fetters. Only the Shadow can benefit from this energy. Whenever a wraith Slumbers, the Storyteller rolls a number of dice equal to the Shadow's rating in this Thorn (difficulty 6). For each success, the hatred of the living conveys one point of Angst to the wraith. The maximum rating of this Thorn is 5.

Death's Sigil: 1-3 points — The Shadow causes the character to manifest a distinctive feature that accompanies her wherever she goes. This can be anything from the sound of rushing wings that announces her presence to glowing hellfire that drips from her and covers everything she touches. This sigil even colors her Arcanos effects, and makes it quite easy to perceive her presence and track her movements. The sigil can be "turned off" by the character by expending one Willpower per Thorn point spent on the sigil. Shadow Traits: 2 points — You can buy one dot of any Attribute or Ability that the Shadow can bestow as a bonus to the Dice Pool for that Trait. You must specify the Attribute or Ability when the Thorn is bought during the creation of the Shadow. The character may access the Shadow Trait at will, but the Shadow gains one temporary Angst each time the character accepts help and makes a roll using the Shadow Trait.

Aura of Corruption: 2 points — The Shadow warps the character, making him distasteful to other wraiths: perhaps he stinks terribly, or his voice is grating, or his body or countenance is disfigured, or he has a monstrous form, etc. The difficulties of all rolls involving social interactions with other wraiths are raised by two. This Thorn can be purchased only once.

Shadow Call: 2 points — The Shadow has the power to summon Spectres by calling to them in the Tempest. By spending an Angst point and succeeding in an Angst roll (difficulty 7), the Shadow can summon Spectres. The number and strength of the Spectres are determined by the number of successes on the Angst roll. The character must be in the Tempest to use this Thorn.

Pact of Doom: 3 points — The Shadow can make a pact with its host, granting increased knowledge of Arcanos in exchange for greater control. Each pact spells out the host's duties and exactly how much Arcanos knowledge is granted. A pact cannot be forced on a character — she must accept it



knowingly. When a pact is made, the Shadow gains a number of permanent Angst points equal to the level or levels of Arcanos it teaches. A Shadow doesn't have to know the Arcanos to teach it: it may simply access that information from the body of arcane knowledge all creatures of Oblivion can access. This Thorn can be purchased only once.

Tainted Touch: 3 points — Whenever the character touches something or someone, there is a chance the thing or person will become tainted with Oblivion. Roll three dice (difficulty 6). The number of successes equals the number of Angst points or Health Levels that the Shadow inflicts on the target. The character can fight this Thom by spending a Willpower point and making a Willpower roll (difficulty 6); the number of successes on the roll must equal or exceed the Taint roll. This Thom may be purchased only once.

Trick of the Light: 3 points — The Shadow can subtly alter the perceptions of a character to fit its needs. This is a very, very subtle power of the Shadow, but is extremely potent when used correctly. The Shadow spends one Angst point per scene to maintain the perception-shift. Note that this tool only covers one sense per use: multiple senses require multiple expenditures of Angst. The Shadowguide, not the Storyteller, describes what the character senses.

Bad Luck: 3 points — The Shadow can spend Angst points to reduce the number of successes gained by its host character, just as the player can spend Willpower to increase the number of successes.

Doppelganger: 3 points — The Shadow can appear as one completely different person. The person can be known or unknown. This makes it difficult for the character's friends to recognize him if his Shadow takes over.

Shadow Familiar: 5 points — The Shadow has a smaller spirit of Oblivion that acts as its familiar spirit. This familiar can be the Shadow's eyes, ears and voice. It is usually relatively harmless, for it is not meant to be anything more than a spy. The familiar is small, but may be any shape desired by the Shadow.

Freudian Slip: 5 points — By spending an Angst point, the Shadow may cause the character to take an involuntary, sudden, action, or may insert a single, unbidden thought into the character's head. This can be resisted by the character spending a Willpower point and making a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). One success is needed to resist.

Shadow Life: 5 points — The Shadow lives a parallel life. Whenever the character Slumbers, the Shadow takes over and acts without her knowledge. This can lead to some very interesting problems as the character meets people whom the Shadow has wronged or attacked in some way. The character may not even know about this property of his Shadow. For two more points of Thorn, the character suffers a mental block about the fact. This Thorn may be purchased only once.

Devil's Dare: 7 points — By investing a number of Angst points into a single command and writing that command on a note to be passed to a player, the Shadowguide can stipulate









some action that the Psyche must take. The Devil's Dare must be very specifically defined, and must be something that the character can actually do. The Angst points are immediately spent. Each point of Angst so spent represents the severity of the action: if the action is very severe, the player may petition the Storyteller to have it lowered. If, by the end of the session, the dare isn't somehow worked into the character's actions, then the character loses the number of Willpower points equal to the Angst invested in the dare.

# A Final Note on Shadow Creation

Although the Shadow is a very important part of a character, you must make sure that the Shadow's character does not "upstage" the Psyche of that character. Even though the Shadow may eventually triumph over the Psyche, the player's character is more important than the Shadowguide's.

# Guiding the Shadow



The temptations of the Shadow are offered by another player called the Shadowguide. The Shadowguide develops a persona for the Shadow and roleplays it like a secondary character.

If you choose to be a Shadowguide, you have an important job to do. You must rep-

resent this dark urge within the wraith. In order to roleplay the Shadow, you need to know what drives and motivates the Shadow. When acting as a Shadowguide, you must keep track of the Angst on the Shadow's sheet (see Angst, below, to familiarize yourself with how Angst increases and decreases).

When you roleplay another character's Shadow, you should whisper, thus indicating that it is the Shadow and not your primary character who is speaking. Pointing at the Psyche's player while doing this can also make your intentions more evident. If nothing else, you must make it clear that it is not your character speaking, but the Shadow.

# Psychic Torment: The War with the Shadow

Accept the truth. There is no light without shadow ...

- Shiwan Khan, The Shadow

The Shadow within each wraith ultimately seeks one thing: to be united with Oblivion. The character's Psyche is what imprisons it. The Corpus acts as the last vestiges of a mortal cocoon. A transformation awaits...

Many Shadows have unknowable urges or cannot fixate on one specific goal. Most, however, have a definite goal and work toward it. The primary goal is usually the ultimate subjugation of the Psyche. To the Shadow's way of thinking, the Psyche should allow the Shadow free rein.

# Dark Passions

The Shadow cannot understand "finer" emotions. Even emotions like love or hope are at best facades. Still, it has guiding Passions, burning needs that it must fulfill.

Fulfilling Dark Passions can strengthen the Shadow. Each Dark Passion has a purpose. The purposes of the Shadow are often the opposite of what the Psyche is trying to achieve. For instance, if the Psyche seeks to protect a lover, the Shadow may seek to destroy him. Whenever the Shadow fulfills the purpose of a Dark Passion, it can roll its Passion score (difficulty 7). The number of successes on the roll indicates the amount of Angst the Shadow receives. The Storyteller has the option of changing the purposes of Dark Passions from session to session, although the emotions behind them should remain the same.

The Shadow can fulfill the essence of his Dark Passion (as indicated by the attached emotion) by forcing an emotion on or evoking an emotion from someone else. With Dark Passions, witnessing an emotion is not enough. For instance, if a Dark Passion is driven by fear, if the Shadow can evoke fear from someone, it will fulfill that Dark Passion. If the Shadow achieves this goal, then it can roll its Passion score (difficulty 9) and receive an amount of Angst equal to its successes. Some examples of Dark Passions are: lust, fear, anger, hate, despair, frustration, pain or cynicism. It should be noted, however, that some Dark Passions are merely repressed emotions, not necessarily "dark" ones.

More information on developing Dark Passions is detailed in the section on Catharsis, below.

# Catharsis



his is not hell, nor am I out of it.

— Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus Whenever temporary Angst exceeds the Psyche's permanent Willpower, the Shadow can attempt to dominate the wraith. If this happens, the Shadow controls all the wraith's actions. The player, not

the Shadowguide, runs the character, but must conform to the Shadow personality.

The Catharsis Roll: The Shadow makes a control roll by spending one temporary Angst point and rolling a number of dice equal to its temporary Angst. The Psyche may resist with a (permanent) Willpower roll, adding Eidolon dice if appropriate. Both rolls are at a difficulty of 6. The Shadow stays in control for an entire scene, at which time it returns control to the Psyche.

When the Shadow is dominant, it interacts with the world the only way it knows how. It can gain Angst through its Dark Passions. It may utilize any of the Psyche's Arcanos. It may use Thorns, such as Doppelganger, Shadow Relic and Infamy. It may not cause the Psyche to regain Pathos, nor can it refuel the Pathos of the Psyche once it is spent. The Shadow cannot expend Willpower, nor can it reduce the character's Pathos below 1.

The Shadow uses Catharsis as a threat: it is the ultimate attack against the Psyche. During Catharsis, the Shadow can choose to "cut off" a Psyche from his senses, thereby performing things in secret that will later come back to haunt the character. This effect can only be resisted with Eidolon dice.

# Angst



ngst represents the degree of pain and isolation a wraith feels, and indicates the relative strength of the Shadow. Again, if the Shadow has 10 points of temporary Angst while it is dominant, it can trade these for one point of permanent Angst. As permanent Angst grows, the character slips ever

closer to Oblivion.

# Gaining Angst

There are several ways the Shadow can gain Angst:

 Shadow Dice: The Shadow can offer her Psyche extra dice on any roll that the player makes. One point of Angst is gained for each botch that occurs on the Shadow dice. (For each "1" rolled on Shadow Dice, subtract one success, but only from the Shadow Dice.) The Shadow can offer a maximum of five extra dice to any roll.

• The Shadow's Passions: By accomplishing its goals, the Shadow can gain Angst points. Roll the appropriate Dark Passion in situations where the Shadow is fulfilling that Passion (difficulty 7), and add one point of Angst for every success. When the Shadow forces the emotion underlying a Dark Passion on someone else instead of fulfilling the purpose, the difficulty is 9.

 Arcanos: Some Arcanos give the Shadow Angst even when the Psyche is dominant (see Arcanos, Chapter Six).

Important Note: If the Shadow is dominant, it can still use Arcanos, but powers that normally give the user Angst will instead cost the Shadow Angst. Regardless of which "side" is dominant, Arcanos must be fueled by Pathos.

Of course, if the Storyteller feels that it is appropriate, she may decide to give the Shadow a point of Angst based on the roleplaying of a scene. The player should agree to this, but any scene conveying the separation and alienation of a character may result in a point of Angst.

Chapter Seven: Shadow





#### Variations

The trio of Storyteller, player and Shadowguide has proved the most effective method for evoking the Shadow in our games of **Wraith**. Groups that favor experimentation might consider other options:

 In a small group, it may be possible for the Storyteller to run both the story and the characters' Shadows. This keeps the Storyteller very busy, but if the focus of an adventure revolves around confronting the Shadow rather than dealing with the physical world, running the game in this manner can prove to be a challenge.

 Another variation of the game involves using a "First Mate" or assistant Storyteller to take care of recordkeeping and Shadowguiding for the entire group. This approach can be entertaining, especially if the "Shadow" Storyteller sits opposite the Storyteller. The game gains another level of complexity as the Storyteller concentrates wholly on plot, the players concentrate wholly on roleplaying their characters, and the Shadow Storyteller concentrates on corrupting and misleading the group.

Another variation is to have the Shadowguide remain in control even during periods of Catharsis. While this can be an interesting mode of play for advanced troupes, extrême caution must be taken to make sure everyone is comfortable with the game at all times. Advising your friend's character as his Shadow is one thing, but having total control over that aspect of the character can lead to out-of-game tensions. Additionally, choosing this method of play means that you might have to play someone else's Shadow and your own Psyche at the same time.

Not all groups play the same way. As long as everyone consents, feel free to experiment.

#### Losing Angst

There are several ways the Shadow can lose Angst:

 Castigation by another wraith: This Arcanos is specifically designed to reduce the Angst of another wraith. Note, however, that unless a wraith is using the Arcanos: Defiance, he may not Castigate himself.

 Using certain Arcanos while the Shadow is dominant: When the Psyche is dominant, some Arcanos give a wraith Angst if he fails or botches a roll. If the Shadow is dominant, these Arcanos instead reduce Angst. Arcanos that normally cost Willpower actually increase Willpower if the Shadow is dominant.

• Botching any roll when the Shadow is dominant: The Shadow cannot stand to see its own failure. If the Shadow botches any roll while dominant, it loses a point of temporary Angst.

# [he Harrowing



ike you, I am broken and fragile Like you, I am tasting my heart for the first time

Like you, I am feeding on slumber Like you, I've left my eyes far behind me Down for the count and still drowning...

Christian Death, "The Drowning"

Because wraiths do not have to fear death, many of them act with impunity in the Underworld, thinking that they are somehow immortal in their Restless state. This is not true. When a wraith loses all her Corpus, she immediately plunges into the Tempest. Here, she experiences a nightmare staged for her by her Shadow. This process is called the Harrowing.

The Harrowing is like a theatre of torture, a highly ritualistic challenge. It is designed to empower the Shadow and rip apart those things so dear to the wraith: her own Passions and Fetters.

The stage is set in the Labyrinth, a twisted network of tunnels and caverns, chambers and endless stairs that the Spectres use to move about the Tempest. The Labyrinth responds to the Shadow's ministrations, evoking scenery of stark nightmare at a moment's whim. The players are shades and other dread creatures of the Labyrinth. The star is the fallen wraith, bodiless, without a shell to surround her fragile Psyche. The director is the Shadow, who whispers the wraith's darkest secrets to the assembled hordes, and who manipulates them like a maestro.

The result is horror created expressly for the wraith. And the last act, the Shadow hopes, will be the wraith's plunge into Oblivion.

# The Beginning

It is important to establish a sense of normalcy for the beginning of the Harrowing. The character regains a semblance of a body, although this is not his Corpus: it is merely a mental projection. Usually, the Shadow chooses a typical scene from the life of the wraith, thus giving the wraith a sense of *deja vu*, although some Shadows start with the gore right away. In some cases, the Shadow will choose the Quarry of the Harrowing, an aspect of the character that it will attempt to destroy. This is either a particular Passion (in which case the Harrowing is infused with a motif, mood or tone representing that Passion) or a particular Fetter (in which case the Quarry is part of the scenery or one of the players in the dark drama). If the Harrowing began because the character lost all his levels of Corpus or all his Willpower, there is no Quarry. The character is on the verge of Oblivion.

If a Fetter or Passion is targeted, the Shadowguide should choose it with care. The Quarry should be a Passion or Fetter that the character has neglected, or one that has troubled the character. It is easier to destroy a weak Passion or Fetter than it is to destroy a strong one.

The Shadow must spend six temporary Angst points in order to initiate a Harrowing for the purpose of severing a Fetter or extinguishing a Passion. If a Shadow doesn't have six Angst points to spend, it cannot initiate a Harrowing, although it can still try to call Shades to the wraith's location. In this case, the wraith's Psyche simply floats helplessly in the Tempest for a number of scenes equal to his highest Fetter rating, at which point it snaps back to that Fetter in the Shadowlands, and the wraith's Corpus re-forms.

# The Middle

Next, you advance the plot of the nightmare along simple lines and introduce other characters. These characters will be played either by the Shadow (in most cases) or by various Spectres. Build the mood and tone of the story and add some repulsive elements.

System: You may want to let the character involved in the story make Ability rolls. This is also the stage where the character may make Eidolon rolls (difficulty 9) to change aspects of the nightmare. The change must make sense in terms of the story being told, and it can only serve to defend and help the wraith escape the Harrowing. In general, even successful Ability rolls should only prolong the terror, merely giving the character the illusion of control over an inexorable force.

# The End

During the climax of the Harrowing, the wraith is presented with a dilemma. The outcome of the dilemma determines whether or not the wraith loses the target of the Harrowing, which must be included as part of the nightmare.

System: The dilemma shouldn't be a simple roll. You should either make it a decision on the part of the character, which you then judge in terms of a "successful" decision, a "failure" decision or a "botch" decision; or make the dilemma's outcome dependent on roleplaying culminating in a single, modified roll.

Success: Successfully solving a dilemma lets a wraith escape from the Harrowing. He is snapped back to a Fetter, where his Corpus re-forms (the wraith regains a number of Corpus Levels equal to Stamina). No Willpower is lost (any spent during the Harrowing is regained), nor does the wraith lose a Fetter or Passion.

Failure: When a wraith fails to solve a dilemma, he must roll the rating of his Passion or Fetter (difficulty 8). He loses a





number of points from the rating equal to his number of failures or botches. Still, he escapes the Harrowing and can roll for Corpus renewal normally.

Botch: If a wraith botches the dilemma, he loses the Passion or Fetter outright. Additionally, he plays right into the Shadow's clutches and experiences a moment of weakness as it triumphs. The Shadow rolls its Angst versus the wraith's Willpower: if the Shadow wins, the character is dead forever.

If the Harrowing began because the character was reduced to zero Corpus, zero Passion or zero Willpower, no one Fetter or Passion is applicable, so no such roll is made. The character is directly confronted by the possibility of her own death. The end of the Harrowing results in an opposed roll between permanent Willpower and permanent Angst. If the Shadow wins, the character is utterly consumed by Oblivion.

Here are some ideas about how you could run a Harrowing, based on the Shadow's Archetype.

#### Abuser

Beginning: A nice Sunday afternoon - quiet, calm ... except for somewhere, off in the distance, a strange, metallic grating coming from another room. You walk through your old house, looking here and there. Mother? Father? Who's there? You turn the corner, and ...

Middle: ... there stands your father, sharpening a straight razor. He looks down at you and hisses, "Don't move." You freeze. He starts to shave your eyebrows, your hair...he moves the cold steel across your skin and soon you're totally hairless. You shiver. He screams, "DON'T MOVE!" and slaps you...

End: ... you try to scream back at him, to run, and you run through the door of the bathroom, trying to escape. You run outside, through the front door. Your father chases you, screaming obscenities, his eyes blazing red like fire. Looking up in the window, you see your sister, her hair on fire, waving down at you, crying. As the house goes up in flames, you begin to rise. You reach out to grab your sister, and you rise past her, fumbling to reach her hand. Will you save her?

Success: You grab her hand and, for a moment, remember a brief moment of peace long ago. As you rise up, you hear your sister say, "Thank you..."

Failure: Your sister screams as the flames engulf her, and you turn away.

Botch: You scream as your sister transforms into a horrible beast that snaps at you, and a fiery aura burns you all over.

#### Director

Beginning: All around you, you see hallways. Corridors stretch off in all directions. Doorways line the corridors. Each doorway has a small red button next to it. The buttons flash slowly, on and off. You push a button, and...

Middle: ...one of the doors opens. It leads down another hallway, and you follow it. You catch flashes of terrible scenes from your previous life as you pass the tiny windows in the doors. You hear whispers about you. Someone screams out your name, and you run to identify the origin of the sound. Your turn the corner and discover your Shadow seated at a desk. He grins. "Come in. Please — sit down. I won't bite. Not yet anyway." He offers you a seat, and you sit...

End: ...and your Shadow smiles as he clicks a button on a small box in his hand. Two blinds slowly recede, revealing two of your loved ones behind two-way glass. They are both bound and gagged, and are slowly being lowered into pits of acid. "Quick death or slow death?" your Shadow asks you. "Which one? Choose."

Success: You grab your chair and throw it through the glass, shattering it. As light surrounds you and you start to move upward, you grab your loved one and pull her to safety.

Failure: You wrestle with your Shadow and throw a chair through one of the windows, which shatters. You grab your loved one, but, as you rise slowly into the air, you realize that you are holding a dummy made to look like your loved one. Turning, you see your other loved one's feet disappear into the acid tank below him.

Botch: You wrestle with your Shadow, who pushes a button on the box in his hand. Both of your loved ones drop immediately into their pits of acid. Your Shadow laughs as acid spills out into the room you're in, burning your feet and filling the room with a sickly sweet smell.

### Freak

Beginning: You're in public, walking down the street, a nameless individual in the crowd. Faceless people walk past you. All of a sudden, someone whispers to you from an alleyway. A finger crooks in your direction. You turn to look, and...

Middle: ...you see an old friend of yours. He gives you a key and whispers, "behind the warehouse." You hear voices and see men with torches and shotguns stalk down the alley, looking for "creatures" just like you. You run, and they call out your name.

End: ...you run behind the warehouse and down to the door. Opening the door with your key, you see a whole bunch of people just like you, hiding, hunched down, trying not to be seen. This is where you belong. You go and embrace one of your old friends and begin to dance. Suddenly, a gunshot reverberates through the room, and your friend convulses in your arms. You whirl around ...and see the men with torches standing in the stairway, laughing at you, calling you awful things, their guns leveled at you.

Success: You scream in anger at the men with guns, who stand there looking befuddled. They step back. Your anger is like fire. You step forward, rising up, surrounded by light. You tell them to get the hell out and never come back. One by one they leave, and as you rise up, you see others standing up and shouting out their rage.

Failure: You attack the men. One by one, they empty their shotguns into you. As you rise up in a nimbus of crimson light,



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you realize that the ones you left behind are cowering as they laugh at their own fear.

Botch: You attack the mob, but somehow they're on you. They grab you, calling you "Freak," and carry you outside. There's a fire there for you, and they lash you to a stake. They hold a brand to the kindling, and you scream as the flames begin to sear your legs.

#### Leech

Beginning: You're sitting down to a bountiful feast. It's elegant and tasty; everything on the table is something that you love to eat. It's all there for you. Then, you hear someone calling you in the next room ...

Middle: ... you see your Shadow there, lying on the bed, demanding to be fed, complaining, saying that you don't care about him, that you only care about yourself. You bring him food and drink, and try to fluff his pillows, but nothing is enough. Still he complains, whining, demanding, griping ....

End: ...until, finally, he stops and plaintively asks if you really care about him. And how you plan to show him. And then he asks you to feed him some more, and you do, and you begin to feel empty inside. You realize he's sucking your soul from your body.

Success: Finally, indignantly, you throw down the serving tray. You take a piece of bread for yourself, and as the light surrounds you and you begin to rise, you see your Shadow scream in pure jealousy and rage.

Failure: You cram more and more food into the Shadow's hideous mouth. Finally he gets overzealous. You scream as he clamps down on your fingers and bites them off.

Botch: He eats more and more, and you soon run out of food. Finally, the Shadow opens his maw and begins to take bites out of your flesh - but you are cold and dead. You feel no pain and can only watch in horror as he consumes you.

#### Martyr

Beginning: You're on an airplane, thousands of feet in the air. Suddenly, shots ring out, and a masked terrorist storms through the plane ...

Middle: ...standing up, you offer yourself as a hostage, to protect the other innocents on the plane. The gunman drags you up to the flight deck. One of the flight crew screams and breaks free, pushing and kicking at the terrorist. You see him lower his machine gun, and you step in front of the bullets ...

End: ...you feel hot lead rip through you as you fall forward. Blood sprays everywhere. The terrorist steps over you...

Success: ...and you see remorse in his eyes. As you are surrounded in light and begin to rise up, you realize that you did not die in vain. Your death had a lasting effect on him.

Failure: ... and you see that your death was meaningless. He unloads the rest of his clip into the crew member and stalks down the aisle, looking for more victims.

#### ( The second

Botch: ...and you realize that, somehow, you're still alive. So you stand up again, and again you get shot. Again you stand. Again, you get shot. You take the bullets for everyone on the plane. Finally, in an orgy of self-destruction, you make your way to the pressure door and slam it open. You leap out into nothingness.

#### Monster

Beginning: You're comfortably ensconced in your bed, clutching the covers around you. You look at the shadows on the wall, and they slowly begin to move...

Middle: ...all around the bed, tentacles whip and writhe. One of the tentacles lashes out for your teddy bear, grabs it, and yanks it away. You grab at the teddy bear, trying to save it, and more tentacles wrap around you. They begin to drag you off the bed. You scream, but you know no one will hear you...

End: ...you get up, wrench your teddy away, and run toward the light switch. One of the monster's tentacles snares you, and you trip and fall. The tentacles pull you closer; you strain against your slimy bonds. You reach out to flick the switch, and...

Success: ... you flick it on. Light floods the room. The monster vanishes, leaving only a trail of slime, as you rise up into the light.

Failure: ...you flick on the light, and it illuminates the most terrible monster you've ever seen. You scream in horror, dropping your teddy bear. The last thing you see, save for a writhing net of slime-covered tentacles, is your teddy sizzling in the acid of the thing's body.

Botch: ...a tentacle grabs your hand just as you try. Another tentacle, then another, then another, then another... covering your whole body, dragging you across the floor to the gaping, open beak.

#### Parent

Beginning: You're with the most beautiful person you've ever been with, and it's going well. You start to get intimate, and suddenly the door to your room flies open...

Middle: ...your Parent Shadow stands there, a look of disapproval on his face. He screams at your lover to get out, and your lover vanishes. There is no reasoning with him. He carries you upstairs to "wash your mouth out"...

End: He fills a sink with water and wrestles you into place, thrusting your head under the water. The soapy water fills your mouth, and he brings your head up again. "Are you ever going to be with that nasty person again?" he screams.

Success: You spit the water out at your Shadow, covering his face in soap. He screams in rage as you begin to rise up, demanding that you "come right back down here." He is still screaming as you leave.

Failure: You shake your head slowly. "No," you mutter. Your Parent smiles and says, "That's more like my baby." He carries you into a bedroom and straps you to the bed. "Nighty-Night," the Parent says, and shuts out the light. You are utterly alone.



Chapter Seven: Shadow







Botch: You say "Yes!" through a mouthful of soapy water. Your Parent backhands you, sending you reeling into the wall. He begins to recite a litany of every bad, dirty, terrible thing that you've ever done, all the while grabbing your head and thrusting you under the water again... and again... and again. You feel your life drain from you as the water fills your lungs.

#### Perfectionist

Beginning: It's the morning of your big interview. Everything has to be perfect. You go to the mirror and check your suit to see how you look...

Middle: ...and you look perfect — except for one stray thread, which you pull away. So you get into the taxicab and halfway to your interview, you find another thread. You pull it out. Another one. And still more threads, sprouting from your suit like black weeds.

End: You reach your interview after throwing a handful of threads in the trash. Your Shadow is there, seated behind the desk. As you walk in, you realize that an entire wall of the room is a giant mirror, one designed cunningly to show every part of you. You begin the interview and look down at your sleeve. A thread?

Success: You ignore the thread, concentrating on the interview at hand. Your Shadow constantly brings up the thread, but you feel that it's of no concern, and say so. As you rise up into the light, your Shadow begins unraveling his own suit.

Failure: You tug on the thread. It seems to be stuck. You tug again. It starts to come through, and you can feel that this is a pretty important thread. It seems to wind its way through your entire suit. You pull on it again, and it comes entirely free. Then, looking down, you realize that your entire suit has come apart and is pooled around your ankles. You look at the Shadow, who says, "I'm afraid we have no openings for you right now, sir," and leaves.

Botch: You tug on the thread, and it rips completely out. You find another one, and another one, until finally you're obsessed with unraveling your clothes. The interviewer calmly watches you and then begins going over your résumé while you pull out threads. He brings up every small mistake that you've ever made, and you realize, suddenly, that you won't be getting the job at all. In fact, as the Shadow gleefully tells you, you've been blacklisted from your entire industry. Looking up, you realize that everything is flawed, and that the greatest flaw is your continued existence. The end of the thread is attached to your flesh, and you begin to tear it away...

#### Pusher

Beginning: You're at a really nice party, and you feel great. You haven't even thought of alcohol. You sit down on the couch and realize that someone's left an entire bottle of expensive





whiskey right there in front of you. You see a glass with ice cubes sparkling next to it. Your hand starts to shake...

Middle: ...you reach out to take the glass, and then someone offers you a mirror with cocaine on it. You reach for that, too, and someone offers you a remote control, which he sticks in your hand. You're trying to experience everything. Someone is stuffing food in your mouth...

End: ...and you realize that you're the only one doing anything, that you're drinking and snorting and eating and watching the TV alone, while the rest of the party has long since left. Your Shadow stands next to you with a hypodermic needle, saying, "Come on, guy. Let's really burn it up..."

Success: You grab the needle from him and throw it across the room. Standing, you throw of all of the other crap and run for the door. As you run through the open doorway, rising up into the light, you hear your Shadow say, "You'll be back..."

Failure: You grab the needle from him and plunge it into your arm. You feel the white fire dancing through you; you feel invincible. Your Shadow leads you over to a window and whispers one word in your ear: "Fly." You run toward the window, throwing yourself through it. You fall, endlessly falling, into the dark.

Botch: He plunges the needle into your heart, shooting the white fire directly into your blood, and you scream in pain as it burns all over you. He plunges another, and another, and, in the midst of it you realize that this is what you want, to feel the white fire and to burn up in it. You fall over, and the last thing you remember is your Shadow smiling at you.

#### Rationalist

Beginning: You're roaring down a winding road late at night, feeling the exhilaration of speed as the car responds to your slightest touch. Suddenly your headlights illuminate...

Middle: ...a child running along the road. She cuts in front of you, and you run right over her. You hit the brakes and skid to a stop. Getting out, you see the child's crumpled body on the road.

End: Your Shadow, a "friend of yours" seated in the car next to you, says, "Go on, nobody saw you. Let's just leave."

Success: You get in the car, pull out the car phone, and dial the number of the local police. They arrive and put you in handcuffs for the crime. As you ascend into the Shadowlands, your Shadow shakes his head in disbelief.

Failure: You get back in the car, close the door and say, "No one has to know." Your Shadow agrees. You drive off into the darkness.

Botch: You get back in the car and drive off. You're driving fast on a high mountain road. Your Shadow tells you to bear left, and you do so. Your car flies off the side of the mountain, spinning end over end, and crashes in a deep gorge.

Chapter Seven: Shadow





# Chapter Eight: Systems

Understanding does not cure evil, but it is a definite help, inasmuch as one can cope with a comprehensible difficulty far more easily than with an incomprehensible darkness.

- Carl Jung, Preface to Psyche & Symbol



his chapter discusses the different ways a character can change during the course of a chronicle. It describes many different systems for resolving changes to characters, whether the change in question is the accumulation of experience or the accumulation of wounds.

This chapter is divided into three sections, each of which discusses a number of different systems for implementing character changes. Character Development describes how Traits can increase (and decrease). Physical States includes systems for injuries and recovery from injuries. Mental States includes systems for the Fog, the Shroud and additional information on Transcendence.

One of the most exciting things about playing characters is seeing them change over time. Watching a character develop and grow is like watching a child grow up before your eyes. In Wraith, however, development doesn't always mean the character gets better. It often means the character slowly and steadily sinks into the abyss. Such is the nature of this game. Focus on getting better and surviving the rough periods, and try to appreciate the artistic impact of losing your humanity or your mind.

This is a chapter of permutations, not rules. There is nothing contained in the next several pages that you need to know, only things you might want to know.

# Character Development



od," a Hasidic master remarked, "did not say that 'it was good' after creating man; this indicates that while the cattle and everything else were finished after being created, man was not finished."

> Erich Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods This section discusses the ways a char-

acter can increase (or decrease) in power and abilities.

# **Experience** Points

Humans are learning machines, and we learn constantly — almost despite ourselves. By acquiring not only facts and figures, but new ways of being, we can make ourselves into what we want to be. Change occurs in wraiths as well.

During a story, characters learn many things. Much of what they learn is not the type of thing that can be recorded on character sheets, but rather something the players simply keep in mind. They may have learned never to leave a Nihil unwatched or never to walk into a dark alley with a light behind them. Sometimes, however, what characters learn can be recorded.

Chapter Eight: Systems





At the end of each story, the Storyteller awards experience points to each character, normally giving the same amount to each one. The players then simply record how many experience points they gained. Experience points can be used to increase Traits. The cost for raising Traits varies widely; see the chart below for specifics. The cost is almost always based on the present rating times a certain number. Thus, if the character has an Alertness rating of 2, and the player wants to raise it to 3, it costs four experience points to do so. If the character does not have the Trait at all, the cost is listed as a "new" Trait. A Trait can only be raised one dot per story — never more.

# Roleplay İt

As the Storyteller, you should not let a player spend her experience points to raise any Trait she wishes — it's a little more involved than that. The increased Trait must be something the character had a chance to learn or use during the story — either the character achieved great success through use of the Trait, or she made a big mistake from which she can learn. In the case of Willpower, something must have actually occurred to bolster the character's self-confidence.

You should only allow Trait increases if they have been or can be woven into the story. At the very least, changes need to make sense in terms of the story and not simply be changes the player makes because she wants her character to be a certain way. This experience system can be as realistic as you make it. The more you force the players to make sense of their experiences, the more character development as a whole is furthered.

# Awarding Experience Points

The older a man grows, the more mysterious life becomes to him. We sometimes say to a youth that when he grows up he will know more, but that is a half-truth. In general, an increasing experience of life only deepens the sense of its mystery.

- Harry Emerson Fosdick, Riverside Sermons

Assigning experience points requires a careful balance between rewarding the players and maintaining game balance. If you follow the guidelines below, you probably won't get into too much trouble, but feel free to experiment as you see fit.

# End of Each Chapter

Give each character one to five experience points at the end of each chapter (game session). One point is given whether or not the Circle succeeds or fails, as a function of simply participating (remember, sometimes we learn despite ourselves).

 One point — Automatic: Each player gets one point after every game session.

 One point — Learning Curve: The character learned something from his experiences during the chapter. Ask the player to describe what his character learned before you award the point.  One point — Acting: The player roleplayed well not just entertainingly, but appropriately. Award for exceptional roleplaying only; your standards should get increasingly higher. In most cases, award this only to the person who did the best roleplaying in the troupe.

 One point — Concept: The player acted out her character's concept very well.

 One point — Heroism: When a character risks herself for others, such as when she suffers multiple disruptions of her Corpus fighting off spectres while the rest of the Circle escapes, give her an experience point. Don't let characters take advantage of this; there is a fine line between heroism and stupidity.

#### End of Each Story

At the end of each story, you can assign each player one to three *additional* experience points over and above the one to five points earned for completing the chapter.

One point — Success: The Circle succeeded in its immediate mission or goal. Perhaps it was not a complete success, but at least a marginal victory was achieved.

 One point — Danger: The character experienced great danger during the story and survived.

 One point — Wisdom: The player (and thus the character) exhibited great wits or resourcefulness, or came up with an idea that enabled the Circle to succeed.

If you want to award even more points, thus allowing the characters to develop even more quickly, simply invent new categories in which to award experience. These can even vary from story to story, and can be based on the specific circumstances of that story.

# Personality Development

A man is exactly what he has made himself and what he therefore deserves to be.

Franklin Edgerton, The Bhagavad-Gita

A character's personality can change over the course of the chronicle, but for the most part, the changes occur through roleplaying and not simply by changing the character sheet. For instance, character motivations change with the passing of time. Deciding when and how a character's motivations change can add great depth to roleplaying. However, when a character's Demeanor or true Nature changes, the change should be recorded on the character sheet. No aspect of personality can change through the use of experience points.

#### Demeanor

Though the Demeanor listed on the character sheet is simply the way the character most commonly presents herself, it is not an absolute standard of behavior. Changing the Demeanor of a character may help the player focus on the change in personal-



ity. A player may change his character's Demeanor at any point in the game, but should either tell the Storyteller he has done so or, preferably, make it evident through his roleplaying.

Sometimes the Storyteller might suggest the change after watching the way the character is played, simply as a way of alerting the player that she has noticed the change in personality. Keep in mind that Demeanor is only a tool the player uses to focus and direct roleplaying. If a change in Demeanor is called for or seems appropriate, the player should feel free to go ahead and change it.

#### Nature

A player may also change her character's Nature, but rules for this are somewhat more strict than the ones for changing Demeanor. A character's Nature is central to who and what he is — it is the locus of his being. A change in Nature is akin to a change in personality — everything is different after it occurs. It should not be decided on the spur of the moment, but must be thoroughly considered. The Storyteller should require the player to roleplay the change over a number of game sessions; a story might even be created around the tumultuous transformation. Conversely, sometimes it may make sense for the change in personality to occur suddenly, as a reaction to what has happened to or around the character.

# **Increasing and Decreasing Traits**

The costs for permanently raising the Traits listed below are listed on the Experience Chart.

#### **Experience** Chart

Trait	Cost
Attribute -	current rating x 4 :
New Ability	3
Ability	current rating x 2
New Arcanos	7
Arcanos	Level of Arcanos x 3
Willpower	current rating





# **Raising Arcanos**

It is possible for a wraith to learn Arcanos on his own, but it takes longer and requires more effort. If a wraith has the Mentor Background, he may roll this Background; each success reduces the cost of learning an Arcanos. For example, a character with four dots in Mentor can roll four dice (difficulty 6); each success reduces by one the experience point cost to get that Arcanos.

# Willpower

Characters can raise their maximum Willpower with experience points; sometimes the Storyteller may give a player a specific chance to raise his Willpower. The opportunity to gain Willpower is a great motivation for stories, especially the more bizarre ones.

When temporary Willpower reaches zero, the Shadow will attempt a Harrowing.

If a wraith's permanent Willpower drops to zero, the wraith loses all consciousness and becomes a Drone. A Drone is never a player character.

# Passions

It gets dark, it gets lonely On the other side from you. I pine a lot, I find a lot, Cross through without you. —Kate Bush, "Wuthering Heights"

### Losing a Passion

The Storyteller has complete control over whether or not a Passion diminishes. There are two ways that a Passion can diminish:

Neglect: If a wraith neglects a Passion, over time it will diminish. If the Storyteller feels that a wraith has neglected her Passion, he can call for a Passion roll (difficulty 9) to see if the Passion rating is reduced by one. A botch indicates that two points of Passion are lost.

Harrowing: The Harrowing is a soul-scarring experience. Often, a wraith's Passion is the focus, or Quarry, of a Harrowing. If she fails to resist the horror of the Harrowing, her entire Passion Trait may be ripped away.

Numbing: Many Spectres, especially Shades, have the power to numb the spiritual "heart" of a wraith and thus damage a wraith's Passions. Through a successful attack, the spectre can reduce the wraith's Passion by one. (See Spectres, pg. 232)

If a wraith's Passion is reduced to zero, it vanishes and can no longer give him Pathos. That tie to his mortal life has been severed. If a wraith loses all his Passions, he immediately slips into Oblivion and ceases to be a character.

#### Increasing a Passion

There are no hard-and-fast rules for increasing or gaining a new Passion. Passions only increase at the behest of the Storyteller, who must make a decision based on roleplaying and the circumstances of her chronicle. Passions may not be increased by spending experience points.

Although a player can suggest when a Passion of hers should be increased, the Storyteller has final say in the matter. There is no attached roll: the Storyteller simply tells the player to raise the Trait. Experience points need not be spent on the Passion.

The Storyteller should permit a Passion's increase only in extreme circumstances, after a major event in the character's existence. The increase should make sense in terms of the Passion and the character.

#### Gaining a New Passion

A wraith may gain a totally new Passion only by becoming involved with the living world and interacting with the living. The Storyteller decides when a new Passion is gained, although a player may choose not to accept the offer of a new Passion if she does not feel that the Passion is warranted. The new Passion cannot be rated greater than 3, but may be increased from there.

# Fetters

Give me life Give me pain Give me myself again. — Tori Amos, "Little Earthquakes"

### Losing a Fetter

The Storyteller has complete control over whether or not a Fetter diminishes. There are three ways that a wraith may lose a Fetter:

Destruction: If a wraith's Fetter dies or is destroyed, she loses her connection to that Fetter immediately. For this reason, most wraiths seek to protect their Fetters.

The Harrowing: A wraith's Fetter might be the Quarry of a Harrowing. The entire Fetter can be lost if the wraith fails the Harrowing.

Rending: A Spectre, particularly a Shade, can rend a wraith's Fetter, thus reducing its rating by one.

If a wraith's Fetter is reduced to zero, it no longer binds him to this world. If a wraith loses all her Fetters, she can no longer operate in the Shadowlands: she can only stay there for a few minutes at the very most. Wraiths without Fetters should either find a "safe" residence in the Tempest or emigrate to Stygia or some other realm within it.

### Gaining Fetters

Very rarely, a wraith may gain a new Fetter by interacting with the living world and coming to care for and identify with people, places, or things. Although there are no hard-and-fast rules for this process, it should generally be easier for a wraith to gain a person, rather than a place or thing, as a Fetter: the living are much more important to wraiths.

# Backgrounds

Background Traits never change through the use of experience points. Changes to Background Traits happen during the normal course of events in the chronicle. Eventually, the Storyteller will note the changes, and the character's Traits will increase (or decrease) appropriately. A player may wish to ask the Storyteller if one of her character's Background Traits should be changed, but this should not be done too often.

The Storyteller may design a list of things characters must accomplish in order to increase each Background Trait, and the players may or may not be shown the list. To gain a new Contact, for example, a wraith has to find the right subject and befriend him.

For the most part, Background-raising decisions take place over the course of a story. Backgrounds generally increase one dot at a time, but major victories or upsets in a story can lead to the gain or loss of more than one Background dot at a time.

# İnjury

Here's a quick impression for you: Caw! Caw! Caw! BANG! Oh, fuck! I'm dead!

- Top Dollar, The Crow

Wraiths are paradoxical in that they are both fragile and incredibly resilient. Even though there are many different ways that a wraith can be injured, only one Trait deals with injury: Corpus. A wraith's Corpus is the shell of plasm that surrounds and protects her Psyche. A player records injuries by marking off levels of Corpus, signifying damage to that body.

Unlike humans, who lose blood, viscera, and vital organs when they are damaged, wraiths lose substantiality — physical coherence. When a wraith's Psyche is no longer protected by her Corpus, it becomes extremely fragile and susceptible to the pull that Oblivion exerts over all things.

#### **Corpus States**

Material: This state is accessible only through use of the Embody Arcanos. A Material wraith is made of solidified spiritual energy. When injured in this state, the wraith takes normal damage and suffers penalties to Dice Pools (pg. 200), just as though she were a physical being (of course, the soak roll still applies — see *Combat* in Chapter Nine).

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Corporeal: This state is the normal state of the wraith as she exists in the Shadowlands. When damaged in this state "through the Shroud," i.e., by anything from the living world, the wraith loses one Corpus Level and suddenly becomes Incorporeal (see below). A Corporeal wraith injured in the Shadowlands receives normal Corpus damage but does not become Incorporeal.

Incorporeal: When a wraith is Corporeal and is damaged by an object in the living world, he becomes Incorporeal with respect to the living world. This always costs a level of Corpus. His form immediately becomes misty and indistinct. This state lasts for a number of turns equal to his Stamina.

Destruction: When a wraith loses all his Corpus, he is immediately sucked into the Tempest. There is a strong chance that his Shadow will drag him into the Labyrinth and there begin the nightmarish experience called the Harrowing (see *The Harrowing*, pp. 184). It is possible that over the course of the Harrowing, the wraith may discorporate, passing on to Oblivion and ceasing to be a playable character. If a wraith survives the Harrowing, he is drawn back to one of his Fetters, where his Corpus re-forms. When this happens, he begins with a number of Corpus Levels equal to his Stamina rating.

# Healing

Luckily for wraiths, their ghostly shells don't require much maintenance, and they may convert their own Pathos energy into Corpus. By spending a point of Pathos, a wraith can regain one of her lost Corpus Levels (only one point may be thus spent per turn). Using the Arcanos known as Usury can also restore a wraith's Corpus. A wraith may also heal Corpus Levels by Slumbering. The Slumbering character will fade into one of her Fetters for eight hours. The player then rolls the character's Stamina (difficulty 6); the character heals one level of nonaggravated damage for each success.

### Aggravated Damage

Certain creatures and items damage wraiths so severely that they cannot easily repair the damage. These injuries, known as aggravated wounds, are commonly inflicted by magical weapons (both in the living world and the Shadowlands), weapons made of Stygian steel, and the claws and teeth of spectres and other foul creatures. Several Arcanos powers also have the potential to damage wraiths (See *Outrage* and *Usury*, pp. 161 and 170). The Storyteller may declare any particularly severe injury to be aggravated.

When an aggravated wound is inflicted, the player must cross off one Corpus Level per level of aggravated damage. Aggravated damage may be repaired only through Slumbering and the expenditure of three Pathos per day. Healing one aggravated wound requires eight hours of Slumber or meditation (see the Meditation Ability on pg. 127).

If a wraith loses a total of 10 Corpus Levels because of aggravated damage, she immediately tumbles into Oblivion. The character is deemed destroyed, and the player must create a new character.

# Sources of Injury

Despite wraiths' resilience, there are many ways to harm them. Some are shared with and readily understandable by mortals; others are specific to wraiths. These sources of injury are described below.

Characters, human or wraith, can make Stamina rolls (difficulty 6) to "soak" damage. Each success indicates one fewer Corpus Level (or Health Level, in the case of non-wraiths) is lost. Each botch means an additional level is lost.

Physical objects in the world of the living can harm wraiths, provided that the object could have harmed them in life. Therefore, because rain, snow and Nerf Arrowstorm<sup>™</sup> arrows are not harmful to the living, they do not damage wraiths either. On the other hand, unfriendly contact with an oncoming truck, bullet or sword — decidedly harmful things — results in the loss of a Corpus Level and the temporary incorporeality of the wraith.

#### Combat

Combat wounds are dealt with at length in the Melee and Firefight sections of Chapter Nine. Each success on an opponent's damage roll causes the character to lose one Corpus Level. Remember that damage from an attack across the Shroud (from the living world) merely results in the assumption of the Incorporeal state.

Firearms work normally, but fires and other chemical reactions produce no heat in the Shadowlands.

#### Darksteel

Many Stygian weapons are forged from the peculiar alloy called darksteel. Developed by Nhudri, the Grand High Artificer, darksteel is an alloy of Stygian iron and wraith plasm that is reportedly tempered in the stuff of Oblivion. It bites deep into wraiths' Corpus bodies, causing aggravated damage. Wraiths who use darksteel to attack other wraiths often gain Angst points.

#### Falling

Occasionally, characters will fall. Use the chart below to calculate damage. Note that damage from falling is never considered "through the Shroud"; falling wraiths actually impact the material of the Shadowlands. Also note that there is no constant gravity in the Tempest; at any given moment, falling damage may be more or less than in the Shadowlands.

Distance (in feet)	Injury	
5	One Corpus Level	
10	Two Corpus Levels	
20	Three Corpus Levels	
30	Four Corpus Levels	
40	Five Corpus Levels	
50	Six Corpus Levels	
60	Seven Corpus Levels	

... and so on, to a maximum of 10 Corpus Levels.

#### fire

Fire is hazardous to mortals, and can injure wraiths when ignited in the Shadowlands. Fire in the living world can hurt wraiths "through the Shroud," but, like any other sort of physical damage from the living world, it simply causes them to go Incorporeal. Fire in the Shadowlands, also called barrow-flame, always causes aggravated damage to wraiths and therefore can potentially destroy them. Barrow-flame exists solely in the Underworld and as such cannot harm the living. It functions just as fire does in the world of the Quick, save for the fact that it is cold rather than hot. It is said that barrow-flame is fed with the power of Oblivion.

Any size flame can potentially harm a character. The player may roll a number of dice equal to the character's Stamina rating against the difficulties listed below. The player must roll each turn the character is in the flames to see if she can resist the damage. If the roll fails, the character takes from one to three Health Levels of damage (see the second chart below), while if the roll succeeds, the character takes one fewer Health Level of damage per success than she normally would. If the roll is botched, the character is harmed in some special way perhaps she loses her eyesight or her limbs are maimed.

Heat of Fire
Heat of a candle (first-degree burns)
Heat of a torch (second-degree burns)
Heat of a Bunsen burner (third-degree burns)
Heat of a chemical fire
Molten Metal
Size of Fire
Torch; part of body burned
Bonfire; half of body burned
Raging inferno; entire body burned

Chapter Eight: Systems





# The Maelstrom

From time to time, Maelstroms sweep across the Shadowlands and through the Byways. Maelstroms are vortices of pure Oblivion that originate in the heart of the Void. See Maelstroms, pg. 41, for more information. Aside from the fact that Maelstroms carry spectres with them, they also can do great damage to a wraith depending upon the level of the Maelstrom:

Maelstrom Level	Damage
One	four dice
Two	six dice
Three	eight dice
Four	12 dice
Five	14 dice

A wraith may resist this damage by using Castigate or by seeking shelter within a Haunt. Damage is per turn of contact with the Maelstrom.

# Mortals



ecause wraiths frequently deal with humans, it is important to understand what injures them. Humans' state of injury is measured by a Trait called Health Levels. Humans have seven Health Levels, as opposed to a wraith's 10 levels of Corpus. Health can be thought of as a spectrum with "Bruised" at one end

and "Incapacitated" at the other. Each Health Level suffered beyond "Bruised" causes a human to suffer penalties to actions:

## Mortal Health Levels

Bruised	No effect
Hurt	-1
Injured	-1
Wounded	-2
Mauled	-2
Crippled	-5
Incapacitated	1

Mark off one Health Level for each wound that a character takes. Wraiths suffer penalties for wounds when they are

materialized. The first four wound levels have no effect; the last six function just like the six levels for mortals (ranging from Hurt to Incapacitated).

#### Mortal Death

A mortal or animal who reaches Incapacitated is one Health Level away from death. If she is injured one more time, or if it is impossible to stem the flow of blood from her body, she will die.

Of course, mortals heal differently than wraiths do. With proper medical attention, mortals recover based on the following chart. Note that the time given is how long it takes to recover that particular Health Level - other Health Levels must be healed as well. Thus, if the mortal takes three months to recover from being Mauled, he must still take the time to heal Wounded, Injured and so on.

Health Level	Time	
Bruised	One Day	
Hurt	Three Days	
Injured	One Week	
Wounded	One Month	
Mauled	Three Months	
Crippled	Three Months †	

\*Not only do mortals have to heal this Health Level, but they lose one point from one Physical Attribute as well. Mortals who reach Incapacitated heal at the Storyteller's discretion; some enter comas for the rest of their lives.

If a mortal dies while possessed with Puppetry, the wraith possessing her may receive Corpus damage. Note that wraiths can heal mortals using the Usury Arcanos (pg. 170).

#### Oblivion

For wraiths, final death means falling into Oblivion. There are several ways a wraith can reach his final death.

· A wraith who loses all his Corpus Levels to aggravated wounds will attain Oblivion.

· A wraith who reaches a score of zero in Willpower or Corpus (from nonaggravated wounds) will undergo a final Harrowing, (See Harrowing, pg. 184). The Harrowing does not involve a Fetter or Passion roll. At the end of the Harrowing, the player must roll permanent Willpower versus an opposed roll of permanent Angst (both rolls are difficulty 6). If the player fails, the character passes into Oblivion.

 A wraith who is Harrowed by spectres will need to undergo the process of Harrowing. The spectre will usually target a Fetter or Passion to obliterate. The Harrowing ends with a



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Fetter or Passion roll. If the roll botches, the player must roll permanent Willpower against an opposed roll of permanent Angst. If the player fails this second roll, the character descends into Oblivion.

 A wraith who loses all his Passions from Harrowing immediately falls into Oblivion.

#### Poison

Mortals are affected by poisons, but wraiths are not. (Though it is said that certain Stygian lords have access to foul, ghostly poisons distilled from spectres' tears...)

#### Suffocation and Drowning

Mortals can die by drowning. The length of time a mortal can hold his breath is determined by his Stamina rating, per the following chart:

Stamina Holding	Breat	ł
-----------------	-------	---

- 30 seconds
- 2 One minute
- 3 Two minutes
- 4 Four minutes
- 5 Eight minutes

Mortals may expend Willpower to continue to hold their breath; each point expended allows the mortal another 30 seconds if her Stamina is 3 or lower, or a full minute if her Stamina is 4 or higher.

When a mortal can no longer hold her breath, she begins to suffocate or drown as appropriate. A drowning character suffers one Health Level of damage per turn; this is not aggravated, but may not be healed until the mortal is out of the hostile environment. When the mortal reaches Incapacitated, she will die in one minute per point of Stamina.





his section discusses the changes that can overcome a character's psyche or the minds of those around him. Many of these changes involve the Shadow; for further explanation of these, see Chapter Seven.

- Wraith: The Oblivion

# Transcendence

#### Among those who believe that such a thing is possible, Transcendence is the ultimate goal to which a wraith can aspire. It is said that some souls pass directly to a state of inner peace immediately upon their demise, while others slip directly into Oblivion. Whatever the truth is, the different beliefs about Transcendence form some of the primary schisms among the various factions of wraiths.

The Hierarchy firmly believes that Transcendence is merely a myth, a childish fantasy supported by the Heretics for the purpose of obtaining more souls. If there were a Transcendence, what would distinguish it from Oblivion? Scholars are evasive, but many Hierarchs have pointed out that Oblivion and Transcendence are both an end of sorts, a loss of identity and self. They dismiss the notion of Transcendence as either a fairy tale or a fool's paradise, and try to make the best of their present situation. On the other hand, certain Hierarchs whisper that Charon himself was pursuing Transcendence, and may in fact have achieved it...

The Heretics are the firmest proponents of Transcendence, believing that each person must follow the path that best suits him. Of course, each Heretic cult tries to persuade the other denizens of the Underworld that its path is best. Heretics believe that only by forming mutually supportive, like-minded communities can wraiths hope to achieve Transcendence. It is too difficult to stand firm against the Shadow alone, they insist. Nonetheless, even in the various realms formed by Heretics, corruption, abuse, selfishness and the taint of Oblivion are everywhere.

If the Renegades can be said to have a collective opinion on anything, it is that *if* Transcendence does indeed exist, it is something that each individual has to find for himself. Many state that if Transcendence is possible, it is not attainable by *trying* to get it; it either comes about or doesn't, based on the spirituality and ethics of the individual. Renegades believe that each wraith should act in accordance with his own conscience and beliefs. If the result is Transcendence, great; if not, who cares?

Believers in Transcendence say that Transcendence is a state in which Psyche and Shadow are one, in which Eidolon merges with the self to achieve a level of ultimate self-awareness and inner peace. Although there are no hard-and-fast rules for how to pursue Transcendence, most Heretics state that the first step is to resolve any matters still tying one to the living world. This alone is enough to turn many wraiths from the



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path to Transcendence, out of fear that if their Fetters are dissolved, nothing will hold them to the land of the Quick.

The next step, and undoubtedly the most difficult one, is to come to terms with the Shadow. Wraiths tend to think of the Shadow as something outside of themselves, no longer a part of them. By externalizing all that the Shadow stands for, the Psyche is often repulsed by her Shadow, seeing it as a repugnant monster. Yet only by achieving a balance between Psyche and Shadow, say the Heretics, may Transcendence be found. Some state that the Shadow must be defeated; others insist that the Shadow must be absorbed and integrated into the Psyche.

Storytellers should emphasize that Transcendence is not merely a matter of mechanics, but a spiritual journey similar to those in countless myths and legends. The hero's journey through the Underworld is ultimately a quest for enlightenment, and each player is a Persephone, a Dante, an Inanna or an Orpheus. The search for Transcendence is ultimately a search for self, and not every character is prepared to face the labors demanded by such a search.

# The Shroud

The Shroud reflects the relative difficulty to perform Arcanos in a given area of the Shadowlands. A local Shroud is affected by a number of factors, including time of day, how many and what sort of people frequent the place, and so on. The following chart provides guidelines for general Shroud ratings.

The Shroud in an area cannot be reduced below 4, regardless of modifiers.

Busy shopping mall, noon	10
Subway stop, afternoon	9
Old Victorian house in good repair	8
Crowded, dimly lit goth club	7
Shadowy country road on a starless night	6
Deserted cemetery at midnight	5

The Fog

Mortals do not want to face their own mortality, and any acknowledgement of wraiths means that they must also acknowledge that they too will one day die. The Fog is the name wraiths ascribe to mortals' instinctive denial of their existence. Mortals affected by the Fog react to wraiths in a variety of bizarre ways, but inevitably block the encounter from memory.

Those who do not comprehend the terror of death (pets, children, the insane) are not affected by the Fog, and, as a result, can perceive wraiths with a successful Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8).

		og Ratings
Willpower	% of Population	Reaction
1	10%	Catatonic Fear: The mortal is paralyzed with fear, unable to take any action beyond whimpering or perhaps hiding.
2.	20%	Panic: The person bolts in a blind panic, going through anyone and anything to get away from the wraith.
3	18%	Disbelief: The person refuses to believe that she is seeing a ghost, and will rationalize evidence of the wraith as merely "a bit of underdone beef," the wind blowing the door open, or virtually anything other than the actual cause.
4	15%	Berserk: In blind, frenzied fear, the mortal takes some sort of action: anything from throwing things at the wraith to running down the street breaking windows.
5	13%	Terror: The mortal is afraid, but is not in a panic. She will quickly try to put as much distance as possible between herself and the wraith; but she will stop to lock doors, etc.
6	10%	<ul> <li>Conciliatory: The mortal is afraid, but pleads with the wraith to spare him, leave him alone, etc.</li> </ul>
. 7	7%	Controlled Fear: While this person is still aftaid, she is outwardly calm and takes constructive action to flee or fight as appropriate.
8	5%	<ul> <li>Curiosity: Perhaps this person is a casual researcher into things supernatural, or someone</li> <li>who "always thought Uncle Louie was looking after us kids, even after he died"; in any</li> <li>event, this mortal is more fascinated than frightened.</li> </ul>
9	1.5%	Righteous Anger: This individual may be a member of a religious order or simply an indignant homeowner who won't stand for anyone — dead or alive — violating his space. Regardless, he stands his ground, unwilling to yield to a "foul creature of darkness."
10	5%	No Reaction/Blasé: This person either had nerves of steel or a brain of Jell-O. For whatever reason, this person does not react to the wraith in any way. If spoken to, she responds politely and casually. Why?

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Sect





# Chapter Nine: Drama

White. A blank page, or canvas. The challenge? Bring order to the whole through design, composition, tone, balance, symmetry, and harmony.

- Stephen Sondheim, Sunday in the Park with George

There are many actions a player might want her character to take during a turn — jumping a fence, seducing a new acquaintance or researching ghost stories in the library. As the Storyteller, you already know the rules (from reading Chapter Four) and can probably figure out how to adjudicate a player's roll, but there are a few techniques and extrapolations that you might find interesting. That's what this chapter is all about — it provides advice on rules systems for resolving dramatic actions.

This chapter is not meant to be all-inclusive. These systems are only examples of how to resolve the actions taken by characters. Use these as guidelines and invent your own systems for running things. Don't stop the action in the middle of a dramatic scene to look up something in this chapter — just make something up, perhaps based on a rules system you first encountered here.

You should only use one of the systems described in this chapter if a roll is truly needed. If the roll in question is a simple roll, none of these systems are needed. If you're not interested in the drama created by putting the game into the story, use the automatic success rules. Go to the Traits Chapter and, by reading about the Trait in question, determine if the character succeeds or not, without rolling any dice. As a general rule, have the player make a roll only when there is substantial doubt in your mind as to whether or not the character will succeed in her action. If you can reasonably assume she will succeed, then just let her do it.

When you do start making rolls and have the players do the same, make the rolls special and make them different. Don't waste a lot of time on a dice roll that doesn't do anything special for the story or that is uninteresting for you or the players. Each roll of the dice should be a game in miniature, with strategy and tactics to master and luck to inject the unexpected.

# Scenes



scene is a moment in a story when the troupe focuses on the events at hand and roleplays through them as if they were actually occurring. A scene may only require roleplaying and a lot of conversation between the players and the Storyteller, or it may involve a number of different actions,

some requiring dice rolls.

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A scene is like a series of shots taken in a movie, in the same location and at the same moment in the story. It is the essence of roleplaying, when players describe their characters' reactions to events rather than explaining what they intend to do.

You should do everything you can to make the scenes in your story as dramatic, complete and fulfilling as possible. The more you give each scene an exciting beginning, an actionpacked middle and a fulfilling (or strategically frustrating) end, the better your story becomes.

Describe the scene not as a static picture, but as a place or time full of life and action. It should have its own existence apart from the characters. The Renegade leader does not simply sit at a table — while the characters are watching, he calls over one of his henchmen and begins to berate him. Create an open-ended story in your descriptions and invite the players' characters to enter it. Don't force the players to animate your creation — breathe life into it from the very beginning.

Time in the story not spent in a scene is called downtime. This can be when characters travel or conduct extensive research, or can simply be a period during which it isn't necessary to roleplay every moment. Downtime is a break from the intensity of the scene. Though downtime should not be overused (it can be relatively boring), you shouldn't avoid it altogether. Use downtime to organize players, direct the story more precisely, and progress the plot more quickly.

The story can turn into a scene at almost any time. Often it does so quite naturally, without anyone realizing it has happened. For instance, while you and the players discuss how the characters intend to make a journey to Chicago's Necropolis, you may begin to describe what they see along the way. You have gone from downtime to a scene. When you begin roleplaying a Drone who floats up to them and reenacts her strangulation, you have completely immersed them in the scene. By simply roleplaying without warning, you jump-start the players into their roles, instantly beginning a scene.

# Turns



scene is divided into turns in order to organize and structure the arrangement of events. A turn is a variable period of time during which characters can do things. Such a unit helps the Storyteller keep track of what is going on and ensures that each

player gets the same chance to do something. In one turn, each character should be able to do one thing. Additionally, each player should be given about the same amount of time to describe what she wants her character to do. Each turn, go around the table in order of initiative (see below), give each player an opportunity to state an action, and then go to the next person. When you get to yourself, describe the actions of the nonplayer characters.

Even if doing so might not make complete sense, you should use the turn structure pretty loosely. You might, for example, let someone climb a tree while someone else fires a gun, even though in normal circumstances climbing a tree usually takes a minute, while shooting a gun takes only three seconds. Adrenaline makes people do amazing things, after all.

# Multiple Actions

A character can perform multiple actions in a turn (such as dodging and shooting a gun), but he has to divide his dice. To split a Dice Pool among different actions, the character takes the dice from the action at which the character is least skilled (the one with the smallest Dice Pool) and divides that Pool among all the actions he wishes to perform.

A character with multiple actions takes his first action during the normal order of initiative (unless he deliberately delays). He may take no more than one action at this time. After all characters have completed their first (or only) action, characters with more actions may take their second action, again in order of initiative. After everyone has taken a second action, play proceeds with the third and subsequent actions in order of initiative, as above. While a character may delay his action, he must perform it before the rest of the characters move on to their next action, or it is lost. However, a character can always use dice to dodge, as long as he has dice left in his Pool.

# **Action Scenes**



any scenes are so full of actions and dice rolls that they require special rules to ensure everything runs smoothly. These are times when adrenaline is racing and pacing is fast. Action scenes are the fights, races and feats of danger common to adventure stories. Turns during an action

scene are usually very short, lasting only three seconds or so.

Many different types of actions can occur in an action scene, and correlating everything can seem a little tricky. Make sure you carefully describe where everyone is in the scene, as well as what cover is available and how far it is from the characters. Otherwise, you will have to describe the scene again

and hear complaints like, "Wait a minute, you didn't say anyone was over there!" You may also want to describe the environmental conditions and how they might affect the scene. Rain, wind and smoke can affect the difficulties of rolls.

In general, let a character do nearly anything she cares to try, even if you assign a difficulty of 10.

# Organizing an Action Turn

Just as turns organize a scene, there are different stages within each turn. Still, you will probably not need to subdivide turns unless they are action turns. Though you need not go exactly by the following stages, look over this list to get ideas about how you can organize things when the action gets hot. The better you've organized a scene, the more smoothly it will go and the more fun everyone will have.

#### Describing the Scene

At the beginning of each turn, you should describe the scene from the characters' perspective. You may want to suggest what the characters' opponents might be about to do, but do not actually describe what will happen. Sometimes this will be a wrap-up of the last turn, making it clear to all players what occurred. This sort of constant description is essential if you want to avoid confusion.

This is your chance to organize and arrange things so that all goes smoothly when the players begin to interact with the environment you have created. You should make your description as interesting as possible, leaving open all sorts of possibilities for characters' actions.

The players need to roll for initiative (see *Initiative*, below) to determine the order in which their characters will act. In especially complicated situations, you can have the players describe to you what their characters intend to do that turn, starting with the player who rolled the *lowest* initiative (the character with the highest initiative speaks last, after she has heard everyone else's actions, and acts first).

If you wish to be particularly free-spirited, eliminate the initiative roll altogether and have the characters act in whatever order you wish — e.g., "In the distance, you hear Hierarchy gongs and see that the Renegade at the end of the alley seems to have noticed them as well. He wins the initiative and sprints toward the fence. What are you going to do?"

#### Decision Stage

Going in reverse order of initiative (if the players made initiative rolls), have each player explain what her character intends to do and how she intends to go about it. If you did not call for initiative rolls, simply go around the table from left to right, or in order of character Wits, or using whatever consistent method you like.

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You then decide how you want to resolve the action what kind of roll each player must make, the difficulty of the roll, and the number of successes needed. You can make the process as simple or as complicated as you like — e.g., "If you want to catch him before he gets over the fence, you need to make a Dexterity + Athletics roll, difficulty 6. You need to score six successes to catch up with him, but he only needs three more to get over the fence."

#### Resolution Stage

This is when the players roll to see whether their characters succeed or fail. The players roll dice to attempt the actions they described in the preceding stage.

At the end of the turn, you need to summarize everything by describing what happened and translating all dice rolls into description, plot and story. Don't simply say, "You manage to hit the bad guy for three Corpus Levels of damage." Get more graphic and say, "After ducking away to the left, you sweep across with your fist and strike him in the head. Your hand stings, but you've wounded him for three Corpus." Or, "With a great burst of speed and a daring leap over a garbage can, you race down the alley after him. Next turn, you will be able to make a grab at him before he gets away. However, you see a Hierarchy coach pull in around the corner of the alley."

### Initiative

At the beginning of most scenes, you need to figure out who goes first. Rolling for initiative is the best way to decide the order in which players will take their turns for the remainder of the fight. Sometimes it will be obvious who goes first, such as when an ambush was set or when one combatant is clearly caught by surprise. In combat, however, if you intend to let the opponents have a free shot at the characters, you should not simply spring the foes on the players. Let them make Perception rolls (difficult ones) to see if characters notice something just before the bad guys open up. Otherwise, you'll have a pack of whining jackals on your hands. The difficulty depends on how well the ambush was set (usually 8 or so). The number of successes the players score indicates the number of dice they can roll on their first actions (usually dodges).

In a normal situation, each player makes an initiative roll, and you do so for each of the opponents. Everyone involved makes a Wits + Alertness roll (or you can have them roll Wits + Brawl, Melee, Firearms or any appropriate Ability). The difficulty is usually 4 — characters with the most successes act first. Ties act simultaneously. Characters who fail act after those who succeeded last. A botch on an initiative roll means the character does not get to act that turn — his gun jams, or he stumbles and cannot punch or dodge.



#### Current and

# **Taking Actions**

The four basic actions characters can take without making rolls are:

• Yielding: The character allows the person with the next highest initiative to take his action, thereby yielding her turn. She can still take her action at the end of the turn. If everyone, including her opponents, yields as well, no one does anything that turn.

• Healing: The character may use her Pathos to heal wounds to her Corpus at a rate of one per turn. She must not take any other actions that round; if she wishes to move, she must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 8) to heal. Note that aggravated wounds cannot be healed in this manner.

• Moving: The character may move by walking, jogging or running. If she walks, she may move seven yards. If she jogs, she may move 12 yards + Dexterity. If she runs, she may move 20 yards + (3 x Dexterity).

No roll is required to move, but movement is the only action allowed to the character in that turn. In some situations, it can be hazardous to jog or run, and a roll might be required to maintain balance when there is glass on the ground or bullets are raining down. If a character wants to run away from a conflict or encounter, she must dodge unless she is not in the field of fire or otherwise hindered.

# **Dramatic Systems**

escribed below are a variety of different systems to resolve actions, or, to put it simply, a bunch of ways to make rolls. If you prefer to roleplay through dramatic scenes, just use these sys-



tems as suggestions of what sorts of things can happen during the scene. Physical dramatic systems are the most numerous, because these actions are impossible to resolve through roleplaying alone. Social and Mental systems can be simulated by the players.

# Physical

These systems describe physical actions and confrontations — dramatic situations in which Physical Attributes predominate.

# Climbing

When a character attempts to climb any sort of surface (a tree, cliff or building), ask the player to roll the character's Dexterity + Athletics. The difficulty depends on the sheerness of the climbing surface, the type of surface being climbed and, to a lesser extent, the weather conditions. Each success All sorts of other actions require rolls. Some are listed here:

 Attack: A character may decide to fire his weapon or strike someone. The roll made depends on the attack; for instance, a Firearms attack requires a Dexterity + Firearms roll.

 Climb: This action requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll.

• Dodge: Dodging not only allows a character to avoid an attack, but removes him altogether from the line of attack. A character can make a Dodge roll right after someone tries to hit him, thereby (hopefully) avoiding the blow.

 Get to Feet: It takes a turn to get up from the ground without having to make a roll. If a character wants to get to her feet and still take other actions, she can take dice from her announced action and attempt to score at least one success on a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty at least 4).

 Leadership: A character may give commands to followers and have them obeyed by making appropriate Charisma (or Manipulation) + Leadership rolls.

 Reload Gun: This can be done in a single turn so long as the character has a preloaded clip.

 Research: A character may try to look up vital information in a book. Research generally employs the Investigation Ability. Though this would likely take longer than three seconds, you may wish to suspend reality a bit for dramatic purposes.

 Start a Car: This action doesn't require a roll at all, unless a character is hot-wiring the car.

 Sneak up on Enemy: This action usually requires a Dexterity + Stealth roll.

 Unjam Gun: This action can normally be performed in a single turn by making a Wits + Firearms roll.

indicates that the character has climbed five feet. Once he accumulates enough successes to get to where he wants to go, he can stop rolling. For example, Samuel is trying to climb a 25-foot wall, so he needs five successes to get to the top. A failure indicates the character is unable to make any progress during the turn. A botch indicates the character falls and cannot again attempt to climb without expending a Willpower point.

- 2 Easy climb: a tree with many stout branches
- 4 Simple climb: a cliff with many handholds
- 6 Straightforward: a tree with thin branches
- 8 Treacherous: very few handholds
- 10 Extremely difficult: a nearly sheer surface



### Feats of Strength

A character's Strength is often used alone, without an Ability, for actions where brute force is all that matters. This system works on the same basis as automatic successes. If the character's Strength equals or exceeds the difficulty of the task she is attempting, she succeeds automatically. Only if the difficulty is higher than his Dice Pool must she make a roll.

When the character makes the roll, however, it is based on Willpower, not Strength. It is a simple roll, so the character gets only one chance to make it. The difficulty is almost always 9, though it can vary according to the surface conditions, the structure of the object being lifted, and Storyteller whim. Each success increases the character's effective Strength by one step on the chart below (to a maximum of five steps). Thus, if the character has a Strength of 4, but wants to flip over a car, she needs three successes on the Willpower roll to do it.

Dice Pool	Feats	Lift
1	Crush a beer can	40 lbs.
2	Break a chair	100 lbs.
3	Break down a wooden door	250 lbs.
. 4	Break a 2" x 4"	400 lbs.
5	Break open a metal fire door	650 lbs.
6	Throw a motorcycle	800 lbs.
7	Flip over a small car	900 lbs.
8	Break a three-inch lead pipe	1000 lbs.
9	Punch through a cement wall	1200 lbs.
10	Rip open a steel drum	1500 lbs.
11	Punch through 1" sheet metal	2000 lbs.
12	Break a metal lamp post	3000 lbs.
13	Throw a car	4000 lbs.
14	Throw a van	5000 lbs.
15	Throw a truck	6000 lbs.

#### Jumping

Jumping requires a Strength roll, or a Strength + Athletics roll if it is a horizontal jump and the character gets a decent running start. The difficulty for a jump is almost always 3 (unless there are difficult weather conditions or there is a narrow landing space). The Storyteller calculates how many successes are required to make the jump. There are no partial successes in jumping; the character either succeeds in one roll, or she falls.

Type of Jump	Feet per Success
Vertical (up)	2
Horizontal (across)	4

#### Pursuit

This simple system is used when one character attempts to catch another. One opponent starts with a certain number of successes. This number is either determined by the Storyteller (this is the preferred method) or by having the pursued character roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) for each turn of headstart he has. Add up the number of successes achieved. This number of successes must be achieved by the other character before he can catch up. Once he does, he can try to grapple the fleeing person (see the combat rules). The pursuer might only want to catch up halfway, in order to get a better shot at the fleeing character.

#### Repair

Getting something fixed is not always as easy as taking it to the garage; sometimes the task has to be performed oneself. When a character wishes to fix any sort of mechanical implement, he must roll Dexterity + Repair. The difficulty is determined by the complexity of the task (see the chart below). Before the job can be considered complete, a certain number of successes must be collected, usually between two and 20. Each roll means that a certain amount of time is spent — whatever the demands of the story require. A botch indicates that the device is somehow damaged in the attempt.

This system can be fun to use during combat, as one character desperately tries to start the car while the others fend off the Hierarchy's barghests.

Job	Difficulty	# of Successes
Simple mechanical repair	4	3
Soldering job	5	2
Electronic malfunction	5	5
Fitting in new part	6	10
Repair stalled car	6	5
Tough auto repair	7	10
System overhaul	8	20
Technical glitch	9	2

#### Shadowing

Sometimes a character will want to follow someone. In order to be led somewhere interesting, this needs to be done as discreetly as possible. That is what shadowing is all about following someone without the pursued knowing the character is there.

There are two components to shadowing — keeping track of where the subject is and making sure he doesn't see his tail. Shadowing can be conducted on foot or in vehicles. Rolls can even be made if someone else is driving, such as a taxi driver — "I'm sorry, but I can't remember the address — you'll just have to follow my directions. Take a right at the corner. No, wait, a left!"

The character attempting to shadow must make a Perception + Investigation (or possibly Streetwise) roll. The difficulty is normally 6 (though it can vary from 5 to 9 depending on the thickness of crowds, relative speeds of vehicles, and weather conditions). Each success indicates that the target has been followed for a turn. A certain number of successes is required to follow the subject all the way to his destination. A failure indicates that the character has temporarily lost the subject, but can try again next turn. If she fails a second time, she has lost the subject completely, and the chase is off (unless she can think of a new approach). A botch indicates that the character has not only completely lost the subject, but she is so involved in shadowing that she gets into trouble of her own — a gang tries to beat her up, she falls into an open manhole, or she has a car accident.

Though the Perception roll is the most important aspect of shadowing, a Stealth roll must also be made to see if the subject notices he is being followed. Each turn the Perception roll is made, the Stealth roll must also be made. The player must roll Dexterity + Stealth (or Dexterity + Drive if the character is in a vehicle). The base difficulty is the subject's Perception + Alertness, but this can be modified by up to three points in either direction depending on the circumstances (empty streets or thick crowds, for instance). A single success indicates the shadower is not detected, and each additional success also makes it more difficult for the subject to spot the shadower, even if he is actively looking. A failure indicates the subject becomes suspicious and starts to glance surreptitiously over his shoulder (and may make Perception rolls of his own; see below). A botch indicates the character completely reveals herself and the subject now knows he is being followed.

If the subject is alerted somehow (by the shadower's failure on the Dexterity + Stealth roll) or simply looks to see if he is being followed (out of habit, perhaps), roll Perception + Investigation (or Streetwise). The difficulty is the Stealth + 5 of the shadower. Each success on this roll indicates a higher degree of suspicion. Successes can be accumulated from turn to turn; see the chart below to see how alert the subject is to the fact that he is being followed. Failure means that nothing out of the ordinary is seen and the "suspicion value" of the subject decreases to zero. A botch means the subject is convinced he isn't being followed and no longer looks behind him.

- Successes Suspicion
  - Hunch
  - Suspicion
  - 3 Near-certainty
  - Positive knowledge
  - The shadower has been spotted

Buddy System: Two or more characters can share shadowing responsibilities by trading off. However, they must have previously worked/trained together in this technique; otherwise, the difficulties of all rolls for the pair are increased by





one. One player shadows for a turn or more, trading off whenever her partner gives the signal. If the pair switches off, the subject can't accumulate successes for very long, which makes it much harder for the subject to spot shadowers.

#### Sneaking

When a character attempts to hide in shadows or sneak up on a guard, she must roll Dexterity + Stealth (difficulty of the guard's Perception + Alertness). Anyone who is on watch or actively looking for intruders can be considered a guard.

The sneaking character needs to collect a certain number of successes in order to make it to where she wants to go. A Perception + Stealth roll can be made if the player wants to estimate how many successes will be needed; the difficulty of this feat is usually 7.

Failure of any sort on a Stealth roll indicates detection.

#### Stunt Driving

This system is used to determine the outcome of nearly any type of automobile chase or maneuver. Dice rolls in chases are made not only to see how fast a driver goes, but also to see if she stays on the road. Each vehicle is rated for its maximum safe driving speed, as well as its maneuverability. One vehicle is not always as fast or maneuverable as another, so the details of the chase often depend on the make of the vehicle (see the chart below).

A character can make special maneuvers in order to catch or lose another vehicle, such as spinning around a tight corner, doing a 180° turn, or wheeling about to block a road. Essentially, one character makes a special maneuver, and the other character must copy that maneuver by making the same or an approximate roll.

The player must roll Dexterity (or perhaps Perception) + Drive. However, the vehicle's Maneuverability rating dictates the maximum number of dice that can be rolled. The complexity of the maneuver and the speed of the car determine the difficulty. You should give each maneuver a basic difficulty from 2 to 7, and then designate a speed at which it can be completed at that difficulty. This is most often the Safe Speed, but can be much less depending on how complicated or tight the maneuver is. The difficulty increases by one for every 10 mph the vehicle exceeds that speed while performing the maneuver. The driver decides how fast her vehicle performs the maneuver, although she will not always be able to decelerate enough to avoid a crash or collision.

#### Vehicle Safe Speed Max Speed Maneuverability Six-wheel truck 90 3 60 3 60 100 Bus 70 4 18-wheeler 110 5 Sedan 70 120 70 6 Mini-van 120 70 130 6 Compact 7 140 Sporty compact 100 8 150 Sport coupe 110 9 Sports car 130 170 Formula One race car 10 140 240

# Social

These systems involve social interaction between people. They nearly always require a Charisma, Manipulation or Appearance roll. Often these systems are best left unused, with the success or failure of a particular social ploy instead resolved through roleplaying.

# Credibility

This system is used when a character attempts to convince someone she is telling the truth: for example, when she attempts to persuade a Hierarch magistrate she is not lying or tries to convince a police officer of her identity. The player must make a Manipulation + Leadership roll. The difficulty is the other subject's Intelligence + Subterfuge. Lower the difficulty by one to three if the character is telling the truth (it does make a difference). Each success indicates a higher degree of believability. Five successes indicate the subject is completely convinced. A failure indicates disbelief, and a botch indicates the character is caught in a lie (or the subject thinks he has caught her in a lie).

# Fast-Talk

Fast-talk is a means of verbally browbeating and confusing someone into submission. Manipulation + Subterfuge is the most common roll for such a feat; Charisma or Appearance can sometimes be substituted. The difficulty is the target's Wits + Streetwise.

Success indicates that the target becomes confused and is likely to agree with the subject, at least momentarily. Failure indicates that the attempt has faltered, and the target can try to interject something — an attempt to explain himself, or even an attempt to fast-talk back. A botch indicates that the target doesn't get confused, only angry. Fast-talk attempts by the character will never again work on him.

Repeated rolls might be necessary to confuse the target. As Storyteller, you need to run attempts at fast-talk in a manner consistent with the mood of your game. It can be as slaphappy or as deadly serious as you like.

Willpower points can be expended to resist fast-talk.

#### Interrogation

Interrogation can be used in a number of different situations. It is a form of questioning, not torture, though intimidation is certainly employed. Torture can be used, but you will have to develop your own rules for that if you wish to include it in your chronicle.

The player makes a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (difficulty of the victim's Willpower). The number of successes indicates the amount of information obtained (see the chart below). A failure indicates the character learns nothing of value. A botch indicates the subject tells the character nothing and will never tell him anything — or worse, the subject lies. For this reason, the Storyteller should often make the roll for the player.

Successes	Interrogation
1	Only a few mumbled facts
2	Some relevant facts
3	Much interesting information
4	The subject talks on and on
5	Everything of import is discovered

#### Oration

If a player wants her character to give a speech, but doesn't actually want to recite it, you can use this system. The player should at least describe what her character says and maybe recite a memorable phrase — that might even get her started into roleplaying the speech *verbatim*. Oration is often very difficult to roleplay, so never force your players to do so. Just use this system.

The player makes a Charisma + Leadership roll. The difficulty depends on the mood of the crowd, its willingness to hear what the orator says, and its penchant for throwing rotten vegetables (difficulty is usually 7). If the orator has any sort of reputation, you may wish to adjust the difficulty accordingly. The number of successes indicates how impressed the crowd is (see the following chart). It is a simple roll, so the player has only one crack at it. A failure indicates the crowd ignores the character. A botch indicates the character is going to be attacked (or, if that sort of thing isn't common, booing begins).

Successes	Crowd Reaction
1	They listened, but aren't excited
2	The character has convinced them somewhat
3	The crowd is won over
4	The crowd is completely enthralled
5	The crowd is in the palm of the character's hand

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If the speech is vital to the story, the player may make several rolls. If you want to spend some time on it, you can make it an extended action, interspersing each roll with roleplaying. The character can spend as many turns as she would like on the speech; after the third turn, however, the difficulty increases by one each turn. More successes than five might be required to win over the crowd completely.

#### Performances

This system is used whenever a character gives any type of performance, whether it be comedy, music, acting or storytelling. It can be on a stage or in a nightclub, and can be formal or informal.

The player must roll the appropriate Attribute + Performance (or Expression). The difficulty is based on how receptive the audience is. A failure indicates a lackluster, eminently forgettable performance. A botch indicates a miserable performance that cannot even be finished - the instrument breaks or the character is booed off the stage.

The number of successes indicates how moved the audience is (see the chart below). These successes determine the artistic merit or technical verisimilitude of the piece.

#### 2 Average Approval 3 Good Genuine appreciation 4 Superior Vigorous applause 5 Exceptional Ecstatic reaction 6 Superb Immediate sensation 7 Brilliant Miracle, magnum opus

Mediocre

Reaction

Polite applause

Seduction

Successes

1

Seduction is an unnatural means of gaining intimacy with another person, because every step is carefully staged and real feelings are not shared. A seduction takes place in stages, and unless a person succeeds during each consecutive stage, he will not succeed at all. This system is designed to replicate the activities of a dominant person over a more submissive one. If the emotions and motives are true, then you should ignore this system and roleplay it out.

Opening Line: The player rolls Appearance + Subterfuge. The difficulty is the Wits + 3 of the subject (the player gains a bonus of one to three dice if it's a good line, minus one to

three if it's a stupid one). Each success after the first adds an extra die to the roll on the next stage.

Witty Exchange: The player rolls Wits + Subterfuge. The difficulty is the Intelligence + 3 of the subject. Again, give bonuses and penalties for roleplaying. Each success over and above the base adds an extra die to the roll on the next stage.

Conversation: The player rolls Charisma + Empathy. The difficulty is the Perception + 3 of the subject. Again, roleplaying bonuses come into play here.

Intimacies: At this point, the couple may move to a private area and become physically intimate. No roll is required.

# Mental

These dramatic systems deal with the use of the mind and Mental Attributes. They are employed in situations where drama is caused not so much by the action as by psychological tension.

#### Dream Interpretation

Among wraiths, dreams often contain important information. Unfortunately, this knowledge is often shrouded in mysterious symbolism and obscure references. This can make it very difficult for a wraith to decipher his dreams.

The player of a wraith who decides to figure out the deeper meanings of his dreams must roll Perception + Enigmas. The Storyteller decides the difficulty of this roll, based on the obscurity of the dream and its importance to the character. The more important the information contained in a dream, the more thoroughly it will be hidden, and thus the more difficult the roll will be. Not all dreams have information hidden within them, but go ahead and let the players roll anyway, to keep them guessing.

Dreams should be mysterious things, rich with bizarre symbolism and personal myths. Storytellers should spare no effort when designing important dreams. The players will appreciate it.

Sometimes, a Storyteller may decide to have a recurring dream haunt a certain character. If this is desired, Dream Interpretation can become an extended action. The Storyteller decides the difficulty of the task and the number of successes needed to unravel the hidden meaning within a recurring dream.

#### Research

Research is often the only way for a character to proceed to the next stage of a story. A character may have to investigate matters in a library, in a newspaper office or through computer files in order to obtain needed information. Research is a great way to let a character with high Intelligence show off, and takes the focus off fast-paced action. The player rolls Intelligence + Investigation (or sometimes an appropriate Knowledge Ability after a place to conduct research has been found). The difficulty is based upon the obscurity of the information.

#### Difficulty Accessibility of Information

- 2 Generally available
- 4 Widely documented
- 6 Accessible
- 8 Difficult to find
- 10 Incredibly well concealed

The number of successes determines how much the character discovers. One success might mean that only the most obvious facts are found, while five successes might mean that the full (and maybe truthful) story is uncovered. Depending on the precise information sought, 10 or even 20 successes might be required to find all the available data.

The player might want to continue research after gaining a partial success. However, continued research takes longer than the initial search. Basic research usually takes only an hour — that's the first roll. More in-depth research (and a second roll) takes one complete day. If the player wants a third roll, further research takes a week; a fourth roll takes a month, a fifth roll takes a year. After that, use your imagination. It is easy to see how some research projects can take years or even decades to complete.

#### Search

This system enables a character to search for something in a confined area, like a room. Have the player roll Perception + Investigation; the difficulty depends on how well the object is concealed (it is usually between 7 and 10). Each success indicates that more is found. Sometimes a certain number of successes is required to find a cleverly hidden object. If you want, a lower number of successes could warrant a hint or clue from you, thus encouraging roleplaying and a degree of puzzle solving. As much as possible, lead the player through the search step by step. Have her describe to you where she looks. Don't let her succeed if she doesn't specifically search in the right area, and let her succeed automatically if her description is detailed enough.

#### Track

This system is used to track people and things by following the physical trails they leave. The player rolls Perception + Streetwise (or Investigation, if applicable). The difficulty is based on weather conditions, terrain and the age of the tracks, but averages around 8. Each success lowers the difficulty of the next roll by one.

The character needs to succeed for a certain number of turns; the exact number depends on the length of the trail. Each turn is usually about five minutes long. If the character

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misses a roll, she can try again; this time, however, the difficulty is one higher. Once it goes above 10, the character loses the trail.

# Combat



f some asshole starts to think he's Charles Bronson, break his nose with the butt of your gun.

Mr. White, Reservoir Dogs

Combat in Wraith attempts to capture the drama of violent conflict without downplaying the grim reality of what is

going on. We have made every effort to create a system true to the dynamics, limitations and viciousness of real combat while still leaving room for the unique elements wraiths bring to it.

There are three types of combat, all of which use the same basic system yet have some minor differences. They are: firefight, melee and brawl.

 A firefight is any type of armed combat using projectile weapons — things like Uzis and sawed-off shotguns. Opponents normally need to be within sight of each other to engage in a firefight.

 Melee refers to fighting with hand weapons — anything from broken bottles to darksteel axes. Opponents need to be within one or two yards of each other to engage in melee.

 A brawl describes a hand-to-hand battle fought with bare hands — unarmed combat. Opponents need to be within touching distance to engage in a brawl.

The rolls made in combat determine whether or not an attack succeeds, whether the target dodges and how much damage the target suffers. Almost all combat turns are around three seconds long, though they take somewhat longer than that to resolve.

As with all action scenes, combat turns begin with an initiative roll. However, because combat can sometimes get a little sticky, divide the turn into three stages — Initiative, Attack and Resolution — to make it easier to keep track of things.

# Stage One: Initiative

This stage organizes the turn and is where characters declare their actions. Characters can take a number of different actions — anything from leaping behind a wall to shouting a warning. Each player must declare what his character is doing in as much detail as the Storyteller requires. At this point, everyone needs to decide what weapon to use, if any.

Characters make initiative rolls using Wits + Alertness (difficulty 4, though Storytellers can vary this roll if they so desire). The character with the most successes acts first, while characters who rolled fewer successes take their actions in descending order of successes. Some characters will act simultaneously because they rolled the same number of successes (or, if the Storyteller chooses, the one with the highest Dexterity goes first). Those who gain no successes at all on this roll go last, and those who botch do not get to take actions at all.

Remember to have players declare what actions they want their characters to take during the combat turn before going to the Attack Stage. A player splitting his character's Dice Pool must declare how many dice he is allocating to each action.

A character's actions happen when it is her turn to act. The only exception to this is the dodge, which a character can perform at any time as long as she has dice left in her Pool.

# Stage Two: Attack

The attack is the meat of the combat turn. This stage is where the success or failure of an action is determined, as well as something of its potential impact on the target.

The Roll: There are three different types of attack rolls; the type of combat determines which one to use.

For firearms combat, roll Dexterity + Firearms.

 For melee (with weapons) combat, roll Dexterity + Melee.

 For hand-to-hand (without weapons) combat, roll Dexterity + Brawl.

The weapon or attack used by the attacker determines the base difficulty of the roll. The number of dice rolled might be modified by the gun's rate of fire or the use of a scope, but the difficulty is usually modified only by the circumstances of the attack. If no successes are obtained, the character fails his attack and inflicts no damage. If a botch is obtained, then not only does the attack fail, but something nasty happens to the attacker; the Storyteller needs to invent something truly awful.

#### Dodging

Any time someone attacks a character, she has the option of dodging. In fact, a player may announce at any time that her character is using an action (or part of one, by dividing her Dice Pool) to dodge, simply by declaring "Dodge!" before the opponent makes an attack roll. Some situations may prohibit a dodge, such as in confined quarters or when the character has been surprised. The required roll is Dexterity + Dodge; each success subtracts one success from the attacker's roll. A character can even subtract successes from different opponents, though this means dividing successes between (or among) them.

The difficulty to dodge melee or brawling attacks is a base 6, increased by one for each opponent after the first.



In firefights, the difficulty depends on the availability of nearby cover behind which a character can dive to avoid getting hit. Each success removes one of the opponent's successes. After such a dodge attempt, the character usually ends up behind some sort of cover or, at the very least, lying on the ground (if there is no cover to be found).

The difficulty to dodge during firefights is determined by the proximity of cover.

Difficulty	Terrain
2	By moving back half a step, the character is back under full cover.
4	Full cover within diving distance (one yard)
6	Full cover within running distance (three yards)
7	Partial cover within running distance (three yards)
8	Flat and featureless, no cover (the character dives to the ground)

# Stage Three: Resolution

During this stage, characters determine the damage inflicted by their attacks, and the Storyteller describes what occurs in the turn. The Resolution Stage is a mixture of game and story, for though the dice never lie, the Storyteller must interpret what luck has decreed.

Damage: Each weapon or attack allows the wielder to roll a certain number of dice in order to inflict damage (difficulty 6). Each success causes the target to lose one Corpus Level. Additionally, each success scored with a firearm (after any dodge) adds one die to this damage roll. Melee and brawling successes do not add to the damage.

Soak: A target may make a roll to see how much damage she "soaks" because of her natural hardiness. The target rolls Stamina (difficulty 6); each success reduces inflicted damage by one.

Exception: Damage and soak rolls are two rolls in Wraith that cannot be botched.

# Complications

A number of factors determine whether an attack hits. Smart combatants head for cover as soon as bullets start flying. Others find that ganging up on one foe in a brawl never hurts. The following modifiers delineate many of the variables that affect combat.

#### General Complications

 Changing Actions: If a character changes her declared action after the turn has started, the difficulty for the new action increases by one. Generally, the Storyteller should only allow the character to change her declared action if events have made it impossible. "Yes, I know I said my character would

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Embody inside the car, but that Renegade just used Outrage on the gas tank!"

 Immobilization: If a target is immobilized (e.g., held down by someone), but still struggles, the difficulty for the attack roll is decreased by two. However, if the target is completely immobilized (e.g., is tied up or otherwise paralyzed), then no roll is required and the attack succeeds automatically.

Stunning: If, in one turn, a target loses a greater number of Health or Corpus Levels than its Stamina rating, it must spend the entire next turn shaking off the effects of the debilitating attack. The target may not attack, and its Dice Pool for defensive actions (i.e., dodging) is halved (round down).

#### Firefight Complications

 Range: Getting close to one's foe is a good idea if one doesn't mind taking a few shots in return. The range given on the Firearms Chart is the weapon's medium range; the character receives no modifier for shooting at this range. Twice that range is the farthest the weapon can shoot. Shots within this range have their difficulties increased by one. On the other hand, shots made at targets within a yard of the attacker are considered "point-blank"; the difficulty of a point-blank shot is 4.

 Cover: Intelligent characters use cover to protect themselves from enemy fire. Cover increases the difficulty of an attack by a variable amount, depending on how much of the character's body is still out in the open. However, though cover protects, it can also hamper return fire, and in some rare instances can completely prevent any return fire. For instance, ducking out from around a corner to shoot may increase the difficulty by one, while watching a shootout through the cracks in a battered wall probably prevents a character from firing back at all.

Cover	Difficulty
Lying flat	+1
Behind pole	+2
Behind wall	+3
Only head exposed	+4

 Movement: Shooting at a moving target increases the difficulty by one (or even more), as does shooting while moving at any speed faster than a walk (such as firing out the window of a speeding car).

 Aiming: A character may add her Perception rating to her Dexterity + Firearms Dice Pool if she spends time aiming. However, aiming takes one turn per die added, and during this time the character can do nothing but aim — it takes time and patience to aim. Additionally, the target may not be moving at a speed faster than a walk. Shotguns and SMGs cannot be aimed.

If the gun has a scope, the character may add two dice to her Dice Pool in addition to the dice added for Perception. The scope bonus can be added only once — after the initial three dice added

in the first round (two for the scope and one for Perception), the character continues aiming as outlined above.

 Targeting: Aiming for a specific location (gun hand, the heart) increases the difficulty by two.

• Multiple Shots: If a character wants to take more than one shot in a turn, he must divide his Dice Pool into two or more actions. Also, for each additional shot after the first, the difficulty increases by one. Ten is, of course, the maximum number to which the difficulty can be raised. A character can fire a maximum number of shots equal to the rate of the firearm. The recoil penalty is cumulative. Thus, a character adds two on the third shot and three on the fourth. It is not usually wise to snap off shots blindly; the recoil always catches up with the gunman. Using these rules, it is permissible to fire two or more threeround bursts in a single turn, though a character can only fire on full-auto once per turn (and must reload to do it again).

• Full-Auto: The full-auto option is the most damaging attack a firearm can make; the attacker unloads the full contents of a gun's ammunition clip within a very short time span. However, the gun becomes a bucking bronco, difficult to control and even harder to aim.

#### Firearms Chart

		Incar	illo ullui	L			
Гуре	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip	Concealment	Pathos Use
Example							
Revolver, Lt. SW M640 (.38 Special)	6	4	12	3	6	Р	1
Revolver, Hvy. Colt Anaconda (.44 magnum	7	6	35	2	6	J	1
Pistol, Lt. Glock-17 (9mm)	7	4	20	4	17+1	Р	1
Pistol, Hvy. Sig P220 (.45 ACP)	8	5	30	3	7+1	J	1
Rifle Remington M-700 (.30-06)	8	8	200	1	5+1	N	2
SMG, Small† Ingram Mac-10 (9mm)	7	4	25	3	30+1	J	2
SMG, Large† UZI (9mm)	6	4	50	3	32+1	Т	3
Assault Rifle† Steyr-Aug (5.56mm)	7	7	150	3	42+1	N	2
Shotgun Ithaca M-37 (12-gauge)	6	8	20	1	5+1	Т	3
Shotgun, Semi-auto Fianchi Law-12 (12 gauge)	7	8	20	3	8+1	Т	3
Crossbow††	7	5	20	1	1	T	0
Archaic Pistol (17th Century) Flintlock Dueling Pistol	6	5	20	1†††	20	J	1
Archaic Rifle (17th Century) Brown Bess Flintlock Rifle	7	8	50	1†††	75	N	2

Range: This is the practical range of the gun in yards. A character may fire on a target at up to double the listed range; however, this is considered a long-range shot.

Rate: The maximum number of bullets or three-round bursts the gun can fire in a single turn. The rate does not apply to full-auto or spray fire. Clip: The number of bullets that can be held in one clip or in the barrel. The +1 indicates that a bullet can be held in the chamber, making the gun ready to fire.

Concealment: P = can be hidden in a pocket; J = can be hidden inside a jacket; T = can be hidden inside a trenchcoat; N = cannot be hidden on one's person at all.

† Indicates the gun is capable of three-round bursts, full-auto fire and sprays.

†† The crossbow, unlike a firearm, does not add attack successes to the damage Dice Pool. Additionally, a crossbow takes five turns to reload.

††† These archaic weapons must be reloaded meticulously or they will misfire. Roll Dexterity + Firearms (difficulty 6) to reload. If you achieve more than five successes, you may fire two shots in one round. If you botch, the weapon misfires and may damage you.

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# Firefight Complications

Complication	Difficulty	Dice
Changing action	+1	
Immobilization	-2	
Long range	+1	
Point-blank	4	
Lying flat	+1	
Behind pole	+2	_
Behind wall	+3	_
Only head exposed	+4	
Movement	+1	-
Aiming		+ Perception (1/turn)
Scope	_	+2
Specific area of target	+2	_
Multiple shots	+1/extra sho	ot —
Full-auto	+3	+10
Three-round burst	+1	+3
Spray	5 +1/yard	+10

A character gets 10 additional dice to roll on the attack, thus increasing the chance to hit and cause damage. However, the difficulty is raised by three from the recoil.

Full-auto fire is permissible only when a weapon has more than half its clip remaining. Whenever a character uses the full-auto option, he depletes the entire clip of the weapon. Reloading takes one full action and requires the character's full concentration (and Dice Pool).

 Three-Round Burst: The semi-auto option is the middle ground between the full-auto and single-shot options, and has some of the strengths and weaknesses of both. A burst gives the attacker three additional dice on the attack roll. However, the recoil increases the difficulty by one. As implied by the option's name, three bullets are expended per use.

• Spray: When on full-auto, a character can decide to spray across an area instead of focusing on one foe. A spray uses the extra 10 dice given by full-auto fire, but the attack has a base difficulty of 5, increased by one per yard covered by the spray (in addition to other modifiers).

The player divides any successes gained on the attack roll evenly among all targets in the covered area. If only one target is in the sprayed area, only half the successes affect him. The player then assigns any leftover successes as she desires. If the attacker rolls fewer successes than there are targets, the player may only assign one per target until they are used up. This attack also empties the clip.

The difficulty of a dodge roll against a spray is increased by two.

#### Melee Weapons Table

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Conceal
Sap	4	Strength	Р
Club	4	Strength +1	Т
Knife	4	Strength +1	J
Foil	5	Strength +3	Т
Saber	6	Strength +4	Т
Broadsword	6	Strength +5	N

# Melee and Brawl Complications

 Multiple Opponents: If a character is battling multiple opponents in close combat, that character's attack and dodge difficulties are increased by one per opponent (to a maximum of 10).

 Flank and Rear Attacks: The difficulty of a flank attack is lowered by one, while that of a rear attack is lowered by two.

### Melee Complications

• Parry: A character using a melee weapon may elect to parry an attack, using her weapon to block the blow. Like a dodge, a parry can be performed at any time, so long as the character still has dice in her Dice Pool. A character cannot parry with a weapon as small as a knife, but she can use a sword or axe. She rolls Dexterity + Melee (difficulty 6). Each success subtracts one from an opponent's number of attack successes.

A botch on a parry roll usually means that the parrying weapon is knocked from the character's hand.

Roll: Dex + Melee Difficulty: 6 Damage: none Actions: Special

• Disarm: This maneuver is an attempt to knock the weapon from an opponent's hand. The character rolls Dexterity + Melee; add one to the weapon's normal difficulty. If at least three successes are scored, she then rolls the weapon's damage; if she scores more successes than the opponent's Strength rating, the opponent is disarmed. A botch usually means the character drops her own weapon.

Roll: Dex + Melee Difficulty: +1 Damage: Special Actions: 1

#### Brawling Complications

 Block: A character can elect to block instead of dodge.
Like a dodge, a block can be performed at any time, so long as the character still has dice in his Dice Pool. Blocks may be made only against fists, kicks or blunt weapons. A blocking action cannot block a sword, arrow or bullet unless the defender has an Arcanos that provides special protection (such as the Martialry power). Roll Dexterity + Brawl (difficulty 6);



#### 1. <005.94

each success subtracts one from an opponent's number of attack successes.

Roll: Dex + Brawl Difficulty: 6 Damage: none Actions: Special

• Body Slam: A character charges forward, hurling his weight into his opponent. It is possible to damage oneself with this attack; bodies were not meant to be used as battering rams. A character needs three successes to unbalance an opponent. He inflicts one Corpus Level of damage on himself for each success fewer than three.

If the attack succeeds, the opponent is thrown off balance; difficulties for the rest of her actions this turn are increased by two. Also, if the opponent does not succeed in a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty of the attacker's successes + 3), she falls to the ground. The base damage done equals the attacker's Strength; each success scored on the attack roll above the minimum adds one to this base. If the attacker does not score at least three successes, this maneuver fails; he falls to the ground and is treated as though he has no dice left in his Pool.

The character can move his full running distance, but he must run in a straight line; weaving around in circles does not build sufficient momentum. Roll: Dex + Brawl Difficulty: 7 Damage: Special Actions: 1

 Grapple: An attacker can try to grab a foe, hoping to immobilize him and subsequently crush him. If the attacker scores more successes than the opponent's Strength, the attacker can immobilize him. In the next round, she can begin to inflict harm. Any character struck by this attack loses his attacks for the current turn.

If the attacker misses altogether (by failing the Dexterity + Brawl roll), she is knocked down and must spend an action getting to her feet.

Continuing to grapple during each turn after the first requires the combatants to make opposed Strength + Brawl rolls. Whoever accumulates more successes may immobilize the other. If both score the same number of successes, neither gains the upper hand this turn.

Roll: Dex + Brawl Difficulty: 6 Damage: Strength Actions: 1

 Kick: A kick can range from a very simple front kick to aerial spins. Depending on the circumstances, the difficulty and damage modifier may be adjusted (Storyteller's discretion). The damage from a kick is never aggravated.

Roll: Dex + Brawl Difficulty: 7 Damage: Str + 1 Actions: 1

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 Punch: The attacker balls her hand into a tight fist and swings it with all her might. The Storyteller may adjust the difficulty and/or allow extra dice if the attacker decides the type of punch she wishes to deliver: hook, jab, haymaker, etc. The damage from a punch is never aggravated.

Roll: Dex + Brawl Difficulty: 6 Damage: Strength Actions: 1

## Brawling Chart

		5		
Maneuver	Roll	Difficulty	Damage	Actions
Body Slam	Dex + Braw	1 7	Special	1
Grapple	Dex + Braw	16	Strength	1
Kick	Dex + Braw	17	Strength +1	1
Punch	Dex + Braw	1 6	Strength	1

#### Armor

A character with body armor can add dice to her soak rolls. Different types of body armor have different armor ratings, which are the number of extra dice rolled on a soak roll. Certain types of armor restrict body motion and thus penalize the character's Dexterity rolls (all rolls involving this Attribute have their difficulties raised by an amount equal to the penalty).

Armor is mainly used by mortals; there are very few sets of relic armor in the Underworld

#### Armor

Class	Armor Rating	Penalty
Class One (reinforced clothing)	1	0
Class Two (armor T-shirt)	2	0
Class Three (vest)	3	1
Class Four (flak jacket)	4	1
Class Five (full suit)	6	2

# Freeform Combat (Optional)

The Storyteller should be flexible when arbitrating combat situations; no rules can fully reflect the variety of situations encountered on the battlefield. The Storyteller should feel free to let the players devise rules for special situations not covered by any of the existing combat maneuvers. For their part, players should remember that the Storyteller is the ultimate arbiter in such situations, and her word is final.

If bickering or slowed combat results, go back to the standard maneuvers given above. They are broad enough to handle most situations. Freeform combat is meant to add depth to the game, not create conflict between the players and the Storyteller.

#### Dice Rolls

There should only be two dice rolls involved in any combat maneuver: an attack roll and a damage (or effect) roll. All effects from the maneuver should be figured through these two rolls. An exception to this rule is a movement-based maneuver (see below).

A hand-to-hand attack is made with a Dexterity + Brawl roll, while a melee attack is made with a Dexterity + Melee roll. If a character is trying to outsmart or fool an opponent, the roll could instead use Manipulation plus an appropriate Ability (such as Brawl, Intimidation or Subterfuge).

# Difficulty

The difficulty for a maneuver is usually 6, but this can be raised or lowered depending on the maneuver's complexity or precision (for example, a hamstring has a higher difficulty because it aims for a certain area).

If the maneuver is designed to fool an opponent, the difficulty is usually the opponent's Wits (or Perception) with a + 4 constant modifier. Sometimes the difficulty is an opponent's Ability + 4, or, rarely, an opponent's Attribute plus an Ability (such as Wits + Brawl), in which case the constant modifier is not used.

## **Resisted Rolls**

Sometimes a character can resist an attack against him, whether by dodging, performing an evasive action or using another maneuver. The Storyteller should decide whether a combatant should receive a resistance roll. The resistance roll will often require the combatant to split his Dice Pool if he also wants to attack that turn.

The exception to this is resisting Arcanos. Characters can resist Arcanos attacks without splitting a Dice Pool. See the particular Arcanos write-up for details.

#### Successes

Generally, an attack needs only one success to hit; damage is then rolled. In some instances, however, a set number of successes is required, such as when a character tries to grapple an opponent (he would need more successes than his opponent's Strength score).

# Damage (Effect)

Use the Brawling Chart to determine damage and adjust from there for special conditions.

If the effect is to fool or confuse an opponent, the general rule is that each success on the attack roll subtracts one die from the opponent's Dice Pool. In this case, only the attack roll is made; there is no separate damage roll.

# Combat Summary Chart

#### Stage One: Initiative

- Roll Wits + Alerness (difficulty 4). The winner declares her action *last* (after she has heard everyone else's actions) and per forms it *first*.
- Declare Dice Pool division if performing multiple actions.

#### Stage Two: Attack

- For firearms combat, roll Dexterity + Firearms.
- For melee (with weapons) combat, roll Dexterity + Melee.
- For hand-to-hand (without weapons) combat, roll Dexterity + Brawl.
- Dodge: roll Dexterity + Dodge. A character can forfeit some or all of his Dice Pool to dodge at any time; each success subtracts one from the opponent's successes. (However, remember that straying from your declared action will still remove one die from your Dice Pool.)

## Stage Three: Resolution

- Roll damage, determined by weapon or maneuver (difficulty 6).
- Soak damage: roll Stamina (difficulty 6).

### General Complications

- Changing Actions: The difficulty increases by one.
- Immobilization: The difficulty to hit an immobilized target is decreased by two.
- Stunning: When Corpus damage exceeds Stamina rating, the target is stunned and cannot act next turn.







Multiple Actions: As always, a character will have to split his Dice Pool to perform multiple actions in one turn.

Movement: Normally, a character may not move and attack in the same action. The Storyteller can allow movementbased maneuvers to be performed with the following guidelines.

If a character is performing some acrobatic feat, such as leaping, swinging from a chandelier, etc., then a Dexterity + Athletics roll may also be required. The difficulty depends on the complexity of the maneuver. A simple roll to determine leaping distance has a difficulty of only 3 (see *Jumping*, pg. 212), while a leap from a hurtling train onto a running horse may have a difficulty as high as 9. The character must split his Dice Pool between the acrobatic roll and the attack roll. However, the Storyteller should use the Automatic Success rule whenever possible.

There are some exceptions to this rule, in the interest of dramatic license. If a character has seen many swashbuckler movies and practiced the flamboyant moves she has seen, the Storyteller might allow her to swing from a chandelier and attack without having to split her Dice Pool.

# Example of Play



he Requiem was filled with breathers. Wendy danced by herself in the rafters, precariously balanced on the highest beam. She drifted in the sounds of the technoindustrial explosion playing on the stage. [1] She danced, stepping carelessly here and there, totally absorbed in the lights,

the music and her movements.

A quiet voice called to her, a voice that she could hear even through the pounding music. Mouse appeared up in the rafters with her. His straight razor gleamed as he snapped it closed. [2] His voice seemed to grow louder as Wendy's ears adjusted to the Shadowlands. "Hello, Mouse," Wendy said. What's up?"

"Wendy. Sweet Wendy. I was wondering if you'd seen Lucy. Any ideas?"

"Lucy? Why do you want her? She thinks she's a goddess or something. She's crazy."

"Oh! Wendy, that's not a nice thing to say. Crazy isn't bad. We're all crazy. I know for a fact that you are. Look at how you dance. That's not crazy? You're dead."

"Doesn't mean I have to be bored, does it?"

"You know where she is, don't you? She has your car keys, doesn't she?" Mouse smiled a thin, wicked smile. "Can't do much without your keys, can you?" [3]

Wendy shrugged. "So? Yeah, I know where she is. Why do you want to know?"

Mouse cupped her chin lightly, delicately. She almost turned away from him. "I need her. I need...a goddess. Someone to...investigate goings-on in Oakland. A nasty-nasty. Graves upon graves." [4]

Wendy narrowed her eyes. "What...beasties?"

Mouse smiled, clapped. He looked toward the strobes and laughed. "Give the girl a cigar." He swiveled reptilian eyes in her direction. "Beasties. Nasty creatures. Spectres. Things that go bump in the night. Saints preserve us!" he screamed, and laughed maniacally.

"Shut up!" Wendy said. At that moment, the hair on the back of her neck prickled. She felt the movement of Fate shift as she heard Mouse's laugh, and clapped her small hand over his mouth. [5]

Wordlessly, she pointed down. Mouse squinted hard to see in the darkness, and then noticed the shadowy auras surrounding three of the bouncers. She had seen this strategy used in nightclubs before, and she could even see the hilt of a sword this time. Obviously, all three were possessed by Centurions. [6]

#### Notes

1. Note that Requiem is a popular place for wraiths because it is also a Haunt 3.

2. Mouse used his Flicker Arcanos to get there. You've gotta to give him style points.

The player has invested five Background points in an artifact pair of keys. Wendy loaned the keys to Lucy.

 Mouse is talking about the spectres who hang out in Oakland Cemetery (see Necropolis: Atlanta for more information).

5. The Storyteller feels forgiving today and lets Wendy have a Wits + Fatalism roll to avoid the impending danger. Wendy's player rolls the dice and scores one success: not great. Still, the Storyteller lets Wendy catch the first half of the plot against her. Centurions are Skinriding into the Requiem. She doesn't have much time left.

6. The Centurions Skinride the bouncers. Normally this would be hard, but these Centurions have been attuning these mortals to them for some time. They find the attunement useful when they have to raid clubs looking for people.





Mouse nodded silently and opened his straight razor. He slashed it through the air, opening a hole down to the Tempest, and held out his hand to Wendy. [7] She took it, trying to trust him as she listened to a far-off voice.

"He's back, isn't he?" Mouse whispered. "What's he saying?" He grinned as he recognized Wendy's Shadow. Whenever it called to her, it always imbued a reddish tint to her eyes and hair. Wendy shook her head. "He said that he can't wait to play in the Tempest again. I...I don't want to go in there." [8]

Mouse shrugged his shoulders. He looked at Wendy, then at the crack, and then back at Wendy...and past her. He saw one of the Centurions rising slowly to the top of the club, his gladius shimmering cold and sharp, his face a death's head with fires for eyes. Mouse flashed Wendy an apologetic look, then turned and vanished into the Tempest.

Wendy whirled as the Centurion landed on the rafter. "Cease and desist, Heretic. You will follow me to the Citadel. You must be properly registered. Come now...I won't harm you..." The Centurion had a pair of manacles in his other hand, and Wendy doubted his intentions. So what Lucy had said was true. She'd been branded a Heretic after she'd started running with Shoo-Fly and his Circle. [9]

"I don't think so," she said, trembling. "I'm not into whips and chains!" Why was she so nervous? Couldn't she talk her way out of this? She felt a sharp pain in her chest, and her eyes started to go wild. This isn't going to wor, she thought. I'm going to have to...

The darkness within her broke free. "I'm not into your little games. I'm into this ..." she said, as with one fluid motion she drew a shotgun from the empty air and pumped it onehanded. Her Shadow sent cold waves of approval. That's my baby. No one messes with Daddy's girl... [10]

The Centurion froze. He had been taken by surprise, and his backup was too busy Skinriding to notice. He frantically reached out, hoping to wrench the gun from Wendy's hands. He lunged into the shotgun blast, and flaming bits of his plasm streamed out behind him, evaporating in midair. The rest of the body twitched as it fell to the stage below. [11]

Suddenly Wendy was back in control. Was that what I really wanted to do? Blasts of soulfire from the dance floor interrupted her reverie. She turned and ran.

She plunged through the wall. She felt the steel and mortar as she passed through it, and the tingly feeling of the electricity stung her as she moved through the club's wiring. [12]

She jumped into the alleyway on the other side, still incorporeal. As she braced herself for the fall, she fell to the pavement below. [13] Her Doc Martens splashed in a pile of greenish fluid. Battered trash cans lay strewn in front of her. She turned, and saw the Cohort advancing on her.

In chains, shaking in the middle of a Cohort of Centurions, Mouse gave her a pleading look. They had already grabbed him from the Tempest. Wendy screamed as she felt the power of the Centurions hold her fast.

Wraith: The Oblivion

 Mouse uses his straight razor to rip open a crack into the Shadowlands to enter the Tempest. Of course, this is the same Tempest that gives Wendy the jitters. He rolls his Strength + Argos and cuts open the Shadowlands to allow himself access.

 The Shadowguide player is trying to use reverse psychology. He's hoping to get Wendy to die in the club, so he wants to keep her from escaping.

The manacles are made of Stygian metal, so they can't be broken.

10. Wendy's Shadow takes over. This is done through roleplaying or by using the simple rolling system in the book. The Shadow has a Relic Shotgun as a Thorn: it only manifests when the Shadow is in control. Obviously, her Shadow has the Parent Archetype.

11. Wendy (playing her dominant Shadow) rolls Wits + Alertness for initiative against the Centurion and wins. She then rolls her Dexterity + Firearms (difficulty 6) and scores a whopping three successes. Wendy then rolls her damage: eight dice plus three dice for her extra success equals 11 dice! Yikes! She rolls them, scoring six successes against difficulty 6. The Centurion tries desperately to soak this damage, but to no avail. He scores no successes on his soak roll. The Centurion is ripped apart by the scattershot, and Wendy has a chance to get away.

 Wendy expends a Corpus Level to "phase" through the wall. There is no roll necessary.

13. The Storyteller quickly rolls to see if Wendy takes damage for the fall. He's not sure if the roll is correct, but he decides that keeping the pace of the scene is more important. Wendy doesn't take damage, and the Storyteller moves on.



An arrogant Centurion walked slowly toward her, drawing a pair of manacles. He grabbed her arms roughly, twisting them behind her back. As she tried to summon the will to move, he started to place the cuffs around her wrists. Then a shaft of moonlight caught something falling from above.

A pair of car keys, shadowy and indistinct, landed on the ground at the Centurion's feet. [14] Puzzled, the Centurion looked down — and immediately paid the price for his decision. Screaming from the darkness, descending from above like an angel of mercy, Lucy made her entrance.

One long leather boot slammed into the Centurion's neck. As her black cloak swirled in the darkness, Lucy kicked, snarled and slashed. A silver locket gleamed in the darkness, and shredded plasm sprayed on the walls.

A body fell. Lucy stood over the fallen Centurion, beckoning to the rest with a delicately gloved hand. "You wanna fight?" she hissed, shaking with rage. "Fight me..."

Only one of the Centurions stayed in formation with the group. As the other soldiers panicked, he took out his blade and began swinging his sword in an intricate pattern in front of him.

Mouse screamed in outrage, and Wendy grabbed her keys as she rolled behind the trash cans. Manacles fell to the ground, and the sound of a shotgun being pumped echoed down the alleyway. Some Centurions were gonna pay... 14. Lucy arrives!!! Just in time, too. A combat ensues: this time the Storyteller moves through the action without rolling. He only wants to use this scene to set up a fight, so he uses the dramatic moment as an excuse to have a little fun himself. The Storyteller grabs some miniatures, players reach for combat dice, and the story continues...

Chapter Nine: Drama





# Appendix

# Antagonists

# Spectres The Army of Darkness



pectres are wraiths who have succumbed to Oblivion. They serve and worship it even as it consumes them. Many Spectres are weak, even pathetic, but some are virtual gods.

Because of the fact that Oblivion courses through their plasm, all Spectres possess a form of group telepathy — a sort of commu-

nal hive-mind. The more powerful a given Spectre is, the greater its link to Oblivion, and the more information that Spectre receives. Malfeans commonly spy on the Shadowlands simply by sending a few Spectres into an area. Everything that the subordinate Spectres hear, the Malfean hears. It is said that Spectres can also use Nihils to eavesdrop on the Shadowlands.

There are many different species of Spectres: it is a catch-all term for the corrupted entities who dwell in the Tempest and serve Oblivion. Two kinds most commonly interact with wraiths: the near-mindless Shades and the terrifyingly intelligent Doppelgangers.

#### Shades

When souls are lost to Oblivion and choose to embrace its power, they are taken over by their Shadows and become receptacles for the power of Oblivion. Such Spectres are called Shades. Shades are hungry ghosts with little guiding intelligence: they have tremendous cunning, however, and are quite clever in seeking the sustenance they need.

Shades can neither manifest in the living world nor visit the Shadowlands (unless brought there...and even then they can't stay for long) because they do not possess Fetters.

Shades appear in many forms: some of them (the more recently corrupted) appear basically human, while others have been damaged and twisted by the chaos of Oblivion until they resemble monsters. All of them radiate a cold, black phosphorescence: the rays of Oblivion.

#### Character Creation

Attributes 6/4/2, Abilities 11/7/3, Backgrounds 3, Willpower 0, Angst 8, Corpus 7

Suggested Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 0, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 1





(A Shade's Perception is always sharp because of its predatory nature.)

Suggested Abilities: Regardless of who or what they were in life, Shades have succumbed to their bestial nature and usually have at least Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Alertness 3, and Stealth 3.

Powers: Shades have various special powers (see below). Most Shades have only one power, although some of the larger Shades have up to three. This power is most often "Pathos Drain" — Shades are incredibly hungry creatures and require the warmth of emotions to withstand the chill of the Tempest.

All Shades can fly unhindered through the Tempest and have the ability to locate entrances to the Labyrinth. They also have the ability to sense a wraith by its amount of inner Pathos: those with great amounts of Pathos (7+) blaze like fire in the Tempest's darkness.

Relics: Shades usually don't have relics, but some carry knives or clubs of some sort.

#### Shade Powers

 Shark's Teeth — The Shade can do aggravated damage with a bite: Strength +2.

• Ectoplasmic Tentacles — The Shade can attack twice a turn, but usually doesn't wield weapons.

 Pathos Drain — The Shade can drain one point of Pathos per success on an attack roll. Pathos points are converted directly to Angst points for the Shade on a one-for-one basis.

Spectral Scream — The Shade can scream into the Tempest, thereby summoning one to five more Shades. Use of this power costs five Angst points. Shades are generally loathe to do this, however, because they might attract the attention of a ravenous Malfean.

• Bind — The Shade must first successfully grapple his target. (See *Combat Maneuvers*, pg. 223) The round after grappling the target, the Shade covers the target completely and must be destroyed to free the target. The encapsulated wraith is usually carried off into the Tempest to an uncertain doom. Use of this power costs three Angst points. Some Shades use this power to conceal other Shades within them, bursting open at the appropriate moment.

• Numbing the Heart — The Shade can attack a wraith's Passions directly, infecting the wraith's Passions with the cold of Oblivion. First, a successful attack must occur. Then the Shade rolls its Angst in an opposed roll against the wraith's Willpower. If the Shade succeeds, one of the target's Passions is reduced by one. Use of this power costs three Angst points.

• Rend the Lifeweb — The Shade can attack a wraith's Fetters directly. The Shade must first make a successful attack. Then the Shade rolls its Angst in an opposed roll against the wraith's Willpower. If the Shade succeeds, one of the wraith's Fetters is reduced by one. Use of this power costs five Angst points. Cine Miles

#### Malfeans

• Hound the Harrowed — The Shade can attach itself to a wraith's Psyche as it falls through the Tempest into the labyrinth. While in the Labyrinth, the Shade can attempt to capture any Willpower or Pathos spent and convert it to Angst for its own use. The roll to do so is Dexterity + Alertness (difficulty 9).

• Chameleon Parasite — This power allows a Shade to attach itself inconspicuously to a wraith. The roll to do so is Dexterity + Stealth (difficulty of the wraith's Perception + Alertness). A light source held up to the wraith's Corpus might detect the presence of the Shade-parasite: roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 7). Use of the Castigate Arcanos will also detect a Shade-parasite. So long as it remains quiescent, the Shade can follow the wraith wherever it goes, even into the Shadowlands. The Shade may then detach itself, inflicting one Corpus Level of damage on its host in the process, and attack anyone nearby for one to five turns before vanishing into the Tempest. The Shade can also act as "ears" for a Malfean. This power costs five Angst points to use, plus one Angst per day spent out of the Tempest.

#### Doppelgangers

More dangerous to wraiths in the Shadowlands are Doppelgangers: wraiths whose Shadows have consumed them. Doppelgangers still maintain the appearance of normal-looking wraiths. Unlike most Spectres, Doppelgangers have personalities, free will, and knowledge of many wraith Arcanos.

Doppelgangers still have Fetters that tie them to the living world. Oblivion has not yet been completely consumed them, and the Malfeans have considerable use for these most favored agents.

Doppelgangers should be created as normal wraiths, but their Angst is always 10, and they usually have low Willpower. The only way to tell if a wraith is a Doppelganger is to use Castigate on him, and even that is not always accurate. Doppelgangers continue to gather Pathos, although usually through soul-wrenching means. They have a dislike for Pathos tinged with love or any other positive emotion.

Storyteller Notes: Doppelgangers make excellent villains. As their name implies, they enjoy assuming the shape of other wraiths — although not all Doppelgangers automatically possess the level of Moliate or the Thorn that allows them to assume someone else's form.

Because Doppelgangers are not without personality, they can actually have discourse with the characters. A Doppelganger will often try to evoke a wraith's Shadow during these conversations.

A Doppelganger's usefulness as a spy eventually runs out as its will erodes under the force of Oblivion and its appearance degenerates. A Doppelganger so devolved is often called a Nephwrack, and many Nephwracks are servants to the Malfeans. Malfeans are ancient Spectres who have consumed other Spectres and wraiths. In the process, they have grown enormous, bloated, powerful, and utterly inhuman. Some Malfeans may never have been human at all. Malfeans are distinguished from Shades by their vast power, intellect and individual personalities.

Malfeans are incredibly powerful, but generally lethargic. Some wraiths say that entire colonies of Spectres live within them. They are so gigantic that they defy description through normal Traits.

Malfeans are attended by Nephwracks and huge clouds of Shades, who cluster about them in the Tempest.

#### The Others

Many other species of Spectres live throughout the Tempest, in the depths of the Labyrinth, and in the Void: there are as many different kinds of Spectres as there are twisted souls in the Underworld. The Ferrymen are familiar with most kinds of Spectres and can teach wraiths about them, especially how to recognize their common tricks and predatory patterns.

# Barghests

Barghests are wraiths who have been enslaved, disfigured and lobotomized by the Hierarchy. In the process they have been reduced to the level of animalistic servitors, not unlike bloodhounds. Barghests have been "muzzled" with a device of Stygian metal that negates all higher thought processes, reducing the wraith to only slightly more than animal-level intelligence.

Barghests roam the Shadowlands in packs, called "braces," and are usually attended by one or more keepers. Their purpose is to alert their keeper whenever someone's death falls in the purview of one of the Seven Deathlords. In recent years, the Hierarchy has begun using braces of barghests to track its enemies. Barghests can attack savagely when ordered to, but they are normally servile creatures. They will obey any order given by their keeper, even unto death.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Charisma 0, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 5, Intelligence 1, Wits

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 2, Intimidation 3, Tracking 5 Arcanos: Argos 1, Keening 4 (primarily Dirge and Crescendo)

Willpower: 4 Angst: 7/5 Corpus: 6 Equipment: Barghest Muzzle

Appendix





# Mortal Antagonists The Power of Life



ver since the dawn of humanity, humans have fought the shadow of death. Because of this, human willpower has become anathema to death itself: indeed, many people can stay alive through use of their willpower alone.

Because human willpower is directly opposed to death, humans can use their Willpower Trait in certain ways to inhibit and affect wraiths.

# Warding

Funerals; the practice of pressing two coins into the eyes of the dead; the presence of iron fences, a rusty nail over the doorway, salt water, or a glass of Bay rum and water; incense smoke and offerings: humanity uses a plethora of means to fend off the supernatural.

In times when humanity responded more to myth than to science, these remedies proved effective against wraiths. Since the Industrial Revolution these remedies have been ridiculed, refuted, or forgotten. Still, mortals who find themselves haunted or hounded by wraiths would do well to remember their grandmother's remedies against them. The following spells, wards, and superstitions still work for those who are willing to invest their Willpower in them.

Note that a mortal must have the knowledge to enact these rituals (Occult 3 or higher). Furthermore, the mortal must personally believe that the rituals will work; if she is a cynical or hardened person who does not believe in the supernatural, she may not use Forbiddance or Warding.

Any belief or practice that protects humans from wraiths does so in one of two ways: it can actively Forbid them or it can passively Ward them.

# Forbiddance

Forbiddance involves driving a wraith from an area. The mortal enacting the Forbiddance rolls Willpower (difficulty 7). A wraith must spend one Willpower point per success on the Forbiddance roll to stay in the area. A wraith may counter this activity by attempting to frighten or unnerve the mortal using his own Arcanos: in this case, the Forbiddance roll is opposed by the appropriate Arcanos roll. Otherwise, the wraith must leave the area as soon as possible. Once the mortal's attention is focused elsewhere, however, the wraith may return.

#### Warding

Warding is more of a passive defense. All warding has a specific focus based on the ancient lore used to protect the area: it could be a rusty iron nail, a ring of salt, burning incense, or some other means. A mortal can use such foci to protect an area, usually a building or otherwise permanent structure, from intrusion by wraiths. The mortal rolls his permanent Willpower (difficulty 7) and spends at least one tempotary Willpower to enact the warding. The number of successes scored on this roll indicates how long the warding lasts (see the Warding Chart), and the mortal's permanent Willpower score equals the difficulty for using Arcanos to penetrate the area (this roll is made before any roll to penetrate the Shroud).

Warding Chart				
	1 success	1 hour		
	2 successes	1 day		
	3 successes	I week		
	4 successes	1 month		
	5 successes	3 months		

Thus, the Warding must be renewed over time or it dissipates. A Warded area is very solid in the Shadowlands. It is impossible to expend a Corpus Level and phase through a Warded area. Entering the area is nearly impossible, requiring the use of an Arcanos like Moliate (to flow under a door or through a crack) or Argos (using Jump).

Note that if a wraith chooses to attack the focus of the Warding with Arcanos (like Outrage or Embody), the wraith can effectively end the Warding if she can somehow render the focus inoperative or ineffective (causing the nail to vanish, disrupting the salt circle, extinguishing the incense).

# The Fading of Death's Image

Mortals cannot sense anything but the simplest of impulses from a wraith's presence: though they avoid wraiths unconsciously, they cannot feel them or see them except when they are drunk, exhausted, or otherwise weakened — or unless the wraith wishes to be seen.

#### Innocence

True innocence is rare in the World of Darkness; it is nearly impossible to find in any adult. Even children in the Gothic-Punk world lose their innocence quickly. Still, in most cases, a mortal who is young and free of experience is innocent. Essentially, one's innocence lasts until one leaves the things of childhood behind.

Innocent humans can often see wraiths in the Shadowlands. This usually occurs only at night, and only when the innocent one has a quiet moment during which he is not





concentrating on anything else. In general, the Storyteller rolls the Perception of the innocent character (difficulty 6). Most innocent ones will not necessarily react to the wraith with fear: part of the nature of innocence is a belief that one is immortal — death holds no fear for the innocent. Some children, wise beyond their years, may see a wraith for what he is — a monster — but for the most part, wraiths are simply interesting characters in an innocent's daily life. Many wraiths have long conversations with children, and some children even do things based on what their wraith "friends" tell them to do.

Perhaps because of their lack of fear of death, the innocent also hold a strong power over wraiths. They may forbid a wraith to approach or touch them, or may command them to leave a place.

In practice, innocent mortals need not know ancient lore in order to perform Forbiddance and Warding: they do not instinctively know that they can do it, but their general mien and casual words, "Leave me alone!" or "Get out of here!" have the same effect.

A final note about innocence: many of the insane are so far removed from mortal concerns that they revert to a state of innocence. (This does not generally apply to Malkavian vampires.)

# The Sons of Tertullian

Don't believe what you hear Don't believe what you see When you just close your eyes You can feel the enemy. — U2, "Acrobat"

Tertullian was a very early Christian writer who warned that the Devil would hide his evil in seeming goodness, even going so far as to heal some people, but that imitating God was the worst of sins.

The Sons of Tertullian are holy warriors committed to destroying all wraiths and other "devil spawn." The Sons of Tertullian actively search for people supposedly possessed, those who claim to speak with the dead (psychics, Gypsies, and the insane), and sometimes simply those faithful who speak out against "the word of God," and *must* therefore be possessed.

All Tertullians are trained exorcists who employ exorcism as their main tool of attack. Such exorcisms vary somewhat from practitioner to practitioner, but all are physically brutal and demanding on the supposedly possessed victim. The Tertullians take the words of the *Malleus Malleficarum* to heart, and are experts at applying the torture techniques outlined

therein. Their methods are crude, but can be surprisingly effective if a wraith truly is Skinriding an individual. Unfortunately for the objects of their vigorous exorcisms, the Tertullians are unable to tell whether a victim is truly possessed by a wraith or simply psychic, crazy, etc., until the wraith leaves the person's body.

Alas for those not wraith-ridden, the not-so-tender ministrations of the exorcists become ever more violent, and such patients almost never survive the experience. Even those who are wraith-ridden often die in the exorcism's wake. The Tertullians find such deaths somewhat regrettable, but feel justified in their actions as they are providing the individual with achance at salvation. If the newly dead victim becomes a wraith upon death, the Tertullians simply assume she was the "possessing spirit" and attempt to "kill" her for a second time.

The Sons have a variety of methods to ferret out wraiths possessing mortals, most of which involve the use of certain blessed artifacts capable of alerting them to such a possession. These powers are considered divine, and Tertullians capable of such divination are highly respected among those of the order.

The Tertullians have other weapons at their disposal. A small percentage of Tertullians are capable of more advanced forms of exorcism. Through the application of specially prepared holy water, some Tertullians can see, to a limited extent, into the Shadowlands.

#### The Sect of Saint James

Though love repine, and reason chafe,

There came a voice without reply -

"'Tis man's perdition to be safe,

When for the truth he ought to die."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Sacrifice"

The Sect of Saint James is a very small and radical subcult of the Sons of Tertullian. The all-male membership of the sect (which numbers no more than 99 members at any time) follows the teachings of Saint James. Specifically, the sect follows a peculiar version of the dictates set down in the Secret Book of James, one of the recently discovered Gnostic Gospels. Although many scholars debate the authenticity of the scroll, the sect accepts its teachings utterly. The scroll records that God, through his disciples, taught that truly virtuous men would kill themselves so that they might enter boldly into the kingdom of Heaven. The text goes on to say that those men who commit righteous suicide would be saved before all others at the day of Judgment.

The members of the sect believe they have a sacred duty to kill themselves and take the battle against the creatures of darkness into the Devil's realm itself. Only those Tertullians who prove themselves most worthy (and fanatical) are invited to become members of the sect. The sect has developed prescribed rituals to send its members into the Underworld to face the enemy. Before any member is allowed to make such a journey, he must first prove himself worthy of the honor. This is done by facing all manner of dangerous foes and learning all available information regarding wraiths. When the head of the sect believes a brother's mind and soul are sufficiently prepared, he instructs the brother to create a weapon of righteousness with his own hands. These weapons can take many forms (although they are all edged weapons) and are highly individualized. It often takes more than a year to manufacture such a weapon. Once completed, they are among the most powerful weapons created by mortals.

When the weapon is prepared and the brother has proved his worth beyond a shadow of a doubt, the brother is inducted into a group known as a "cross," made up of four to eight brothers. The brothers of a cross are spiritually bound together through a powerful blessing. The members of a cross then commit suicide, using their specially prepared weapons. The ritual transports the newly dead brothers to the Underworld, where they immediately set about destroying as many wraiths as they can before they are themselves destroyed. Upon their destruction, the brothers believe they are transported to Heaven itself, providing they fought honorably.

Even many members of the Inquisition question the methods of the Sect of Saint James, and several times the sect's teachings have nearly been declared heresy by the rest of the order. However, its members argue that Jesus himself committed suicide by allowing his own death and that he even now sits at the right hand of God. They staunchly avow their claim that they are following the words of their Lord and master, and none can sway the brothers from their chosen course.

#### The Arcanum

The Arcanum is a secret society focusing on the accumulation and assimilation of occult information. It was founded in the late 1880s by a combination of mages and human scholars seeking occult lore of all kinds. The Arcanum has many chapter houses set up throughout the world. Three of the largest are located in Boston, Massachusetts; London, England; and Georgetown in Washington D.C.

Scholars of the Arcanum focus on a variety of occult areas, including faerie, werewolf, vampire, and wraith lore. The Arcanum does not reveal itself to the world at large, as its members reason that most people are unable to understand the greater truths the Arcanum is dedicated to unlocking.

The Arcanum has had limited, but still promising, success in its studies of life and death, including the development of elixirs of health and other alchemical devices. However, although such devices have proved useful in delaying the onset of aging, they are by no means a true cure for aging, which is what many of the Arcanum's members ultimately seek.

endix





The scholars of the Arcanum have vast libraries, laboratories, and a great deal of money at their disposal. The scholars have one of the largest bodies of factual lore on the Underworld in all the Skinlands. In addition, their chapter houses contain the largest collection of trapped wraiths in the living lands.

Members of the Arcanum are scholars and seldom attempt much active investigation of their own. The Arcanum usually hires freelancers of one type or another to capture wraiths. The Arcanum also has certain associate members who, although not scholars, are quite adept at tracking and trapping wraiths and other spiritual entities.

Jonathan Kelvin, the youngest of the Arcanum's original founders, is rumored to have developed a containment cell capable of trapping and holding wraiths and other plasmic beings. Kelvin is currently showing the signs of his extreme age, and his time among the living is running short. In recent years Kelvin has devoted all his efforts to unlocking the secrets of death. To this end, Kelvin has been experimenting with both the living and the dead. He has even gone so far as to extract Pathos from trapped wraiths and inject it into derelicts. There is an endless supply of such desperate souls, who have no idea that the hot meal and warm bed they are offered will soon bring them to an untimely, painful and quite terrifying death.

Kelvin has kept these activities quiet from the main body of the Arcanum, but there are a number of Arcanum scholars aware of his experiments who either approve or turn a blind eye to the suffering he causes. He has had some success with introducing the energies of the dead into the bodies of the living, but although these experiments show promise, that promise has thus far remained unfulfilled.

#### The Benandanti

I have gone out, a possessed witch, haunting the black air, braver at night.

Anne Sexton, "Her Kind"

The Benandanti are a human society whose members have the power to see wraiths. Half-forgotten legends state that from sundown to sunup, the Benandanti themselves can travel to the Underworld. If one of the Benandanti is ever caught away from her body at sunrise, however, she becomes trapped in wraith form. The now-soulless body becomes comatose, puzzling physicians, who find no medical cause for such an occurrence. On rare occasions, a Benandanti has found her way back to her body on her own after months or even years in the Shadowlands, but such a return is rare.

The Benandanti both study and fear wraiths. Many Benandanti believe wraiths are evil souls who must be destroyed, while other members believe the souls are merely confused and must be encouraged to move on. Benandanti often begin their wraithly existence in positions of power in the Underworld — often among the Renegades or Heretics. The Lady of Fate also employs a number of Benandanti wraiths. Benandanti wraiths often bring powerful relics and artifacts with them, including their fennel swords, rumored to be very effective at battling spirit creatures.

The Benandanti comprises humans who were born with a still-intact Caul. If a Benandanti is present at the birth of such a mortal and/or can obtain a piece of her birth Caul, the young mortal may become a member of this strange society. Each Benandanti carries a piece of his birth Caul on his person at all times. Without a piece of his birth Caul, a Benandanti cannot use his powers.

# The Orphic Circle

The members of the Orphic Circle are a varied bunch of scholars, visionaries, vampires of the Giovanni clan, and Euthanatos death mages. The Circle is an ancient organization (currently totaling approximately 300 members) that takes care to keep its existence hidden from other beings.

The Circle's manifest purpose is to discover the true nature of death. Many acolytes of the Circle scout the Underworld, performing experiments on the realm itself as well as its inhabitants to determine if there is a way for one's spirit to move beyond the need for both life and death. Members of the Circle are often willing to experiment with anything from drugs to sacrifices (of the living and the dead) in order to gain even a shred of useful information.

Members of the Circle view the legendary Orpheus as a hero who discovered a way to transcend both life and death. Orpheus was the only mortal known to journey into the Underworld and return again into the realm of the living, supposedly carrying the sacred tomes that outlined the great Mysteries themselves. Some members of the Circle even claim that Orpheus journeyed into the Underworld specifically to find knowledge.

Of all Skinlands societies, this group most assuredly has the best grasp on both the physical and political nature of the Underworld. What the Circle plans to do with this information is unclear, but the most persistent rumor involves a plan to rip away the Shroud that now separates the world of the living from the world of the dead. There are also other rumors that some members of the Circle have made pacts with certain Underworld figures, actually participating in "assassinations" of other wraiths. Officially, however, the Circle maintains a stance of strict neutrality in such matters.

The Hierarchy wishes to put an end to the Orphic Circle. It is concerned about the great deal of knowledge the Circle possesses, and believes such knowledge could be used by the Renegades or the living.

# Supernatural Creatures

# Vampires



owerful, sleek, quick, haughty — vampires move as freely through the mortal world as wraiths do through the Underworld. They rule the cities with frighteningly complex schemes that usually require hundreds of years to come to fruition. Because they dwell in many places where wraiths

also dwell, it is important to know where the vampires are in your city, and what they are doing.

Many vampires can see wraiths who are in the Shadowlands by looking in the right place and attempting to perceive the wraiths' auras. Certain "clans" of vampires (they are organized into clans based on the bloodline of their founder) have a little more power over wraiths than others do — the Giovanni clan is specifically quite powerful, for its members study the magic of the dead and have learned how to summon Spectres and wraiths from the Shadowlands. The vampires of the Tremere clan also know the secrets of the occult and of Thaumaturgy — they study paths of magical knowledge and secret rituals that allow them to affect ghosts and wraiths.

Many of the legends about vampires are false, though some are true. Vampires must avoid fire and sunlight, because these substances cause them extreme pain and inflict terrible damage. They are unaffected by crosses or holy items unless the individual who uses them has True Faith. Garlic and running water have no effect on them.

Because a vampire who has recently feasted on blood is usually much stronger and faster than a mortal, you must keep track of the vampire's current Blood Pool (the number of "Blood Points" the vampire has consumed recently). A vampire may spend Blood Points to increase Physical Attributes temporarily. He may also spend a Blood Point to heal one nonaggravated wound.

Below are some statistics for young, old, Giovanni, and Tremere vampires.

Arcanos: The Arcanos ratings in the listings don't accurately represent the full scope of vampire powers. For example, a vampire's "Puppetry" Arcanos represents an ability to control mortals rather than actually possess them. You should use more appropriate vampire Disciplines in your game if you own Vampire: The Masquerade.

Neonates: These are the youngest vampires, who have not yet reached 100 years of unlife. They are the "teenagers" of vampire society. Wraiths are most likely to encounter these vampires, because neonates are prolific in the cities and usually wander into places where wraiths dwell.



Appendix





Character Creation: Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 13/9/5, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 7, Arcanos 4, Blood Pool 10

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of at least 2 in all Attributes.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Etiquette 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Melee 1, Occult 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Suggested Arcanos: Puppetry 2, Keening 2, Argos 1 (Enshroud)

Equipment: Fashionable clothing, switchblade, sunglasses

**Elders:** Elders are the princes of their urban realms and often dominate a city's politics. Elder vampires have survived between 300 and 1000 years, and thus have considerable inherent powers. The Traits below represent a typical American or European elder.

Character Creation: Attributes 10/7/5, Abilities 21/9/5, Backgrounds 12, Willpower 8, Arcanos 7, Blood Pool 20

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

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Etiquette 3, Expression 1, Intimidation 4, Melee 2, Occult 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

Suggested Arcanos: Puppetry 4, Keening 4, Argos 1 (Enshroud)

Equipment: Outdated but expensive clothing, tinted glasses, pocket watch, sword cane

#### Tremere

The Tremere are scholars of magical lore and rituals, and are usually proficient in the vampire Discipline Auspex, which allows them to see wraiths. They are aware of the existence of wraiths and will take steps to protect their abodes from them. In fact, the more powerful Tremere know a ritual called Ward versus Spirits, which protects them against wraiths.

Suggested Abilities: Tremere rarely have Occult ratings of less than 3, and many have specialized Knowledges like Spirit Lore. Other than that, you can use the above listings to represent them.

#### Giovanni

The Giovanni are a clan of fantastically wealthy vampires whose primary interests are business and necromancy. They literally only make vampires from other members of their original mortal family — there are a few Giovanni who are not vampires, but they are protected by their vampiric family. Giovanni have passed down wraith lore throughout the ages and should be considered the single greatest vampiric threat to a wraith's existence. Of course, they may also make potent allies...

Character Creation: Attributes 10/5/3, Abilities 21/9/5, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 7, Arcanos 4, Blood Pool 10 Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of at least 4 in all Mental Attributes and 2 in all Physical and Social Attributes.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Etiquette 3, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Melee 1, Occult 4, Stealth 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Suggested Arcanos: Puppetry 3, Keening 2, Argos 1, Lifeweb 1

Equipment: Immaculate Italian suit, ornate antique dagger, Rolex watch

Special Power: Necromancy. Necromancy is a power that allows a Giovanni to manipulate wraiths. In general, a Giovanni must own one of the wraith's Fetters before she can affect a wraith. It is rated in levels just like an Arcanos.

The first level of Necromancy lets a Giovanni see what a recently deceased mortal last saw. Level Two gives the Giovanni the power to summon ghosts, but this power can be resisted with Willpower. Level Three bestows the power to command wraiths (this is also resistible with Willpower). Level Four bestows the power to force a ghost to remain in a specific area in the Shadowlands and not enter the Tempest; this can be resisted with the Argos Arcanos. Finally, Level Five allows the Giovanni to extract a living person's spirit from her body; this effectively turns her into a temporary wraith (possessing no Arcanos) with her body as a Fetter. All Giovanni know at least one level of Necromancy. For more information on Giovanni special powers, consult the Vampire Players Guide.

#### Ghouls

Many vampires create ghouls. This is accomplished by giving a mortal or vampire some vampire blood without first draining the creature of its own life force. Because ghouls are essentially mortals, no statistics are given; use human or animal Traits with slight additions to Physieal Attributes (particularly Strength).

Special Rules: So long as ghouls imbibe vampire blood regularly, they can live forever. However, once the point of their natural lifespan has passed, ghouls must always have vampire blood in their systems. Otherwise, they will age and die very quickly — within a few days or perhaps even a few hours. Ghouls can use the blood within them in precisely the same manner that vampires do (i.e., to increase Traits and heal). Assume ghouls have one to 10 Blood Points, depending on the generosity of their master.

# Werewolves

The wilderness of the World of Darkness is not a safe place. Just as predators guard their territorial boundaries against competing invaders, so the Garou guard the forests and moors from humankind. And a vicious defense it is.





The Garou are a race of wolfen shapechangers who claim a cultural heritage stretching far into the mists of prehistory. They see themselves as the defenders of Gaia, the Earth Mother, and in this role they mete out a violent justice against any who transgress their Litany. Their legends speak of a monstrous, metaphysical being called the Wyrm, the source of all evil according to the Garou. They can sniff out the taint of this beast on their enemies, and they use this "stench" as justification to destroy any who stand against them.

Culturally, the Garou are divided into different tribes, 13 in number, although there is a 14th "lost tribe," the Black Spiral Dancers, which joined the Wyrm long ago. Each tribe has its own identity, causes and goals. For instance, the Black Furies are a tribe composed only of women, while the Fianna are all of Celtic descent and celebrate their Celtic-based culture. There are also two Native American tribes, embittered over the loss of their lands to the Europeans; and a tribe of technology fetishists called the Glass Walkers.

Powers: All Garou can assume a variety of forms: human; wolf; and a host of intermediary forms, the most dreaded of which is the Crinos form, the legendary half-man/half-wolf form. In all forms, but especially in the Crinos, Garou are expert warriors and shamans. They are incredibly resistant to damage and can almost instantly heal what damage they take — except that delivered by a silver weapon, against which they have no defense. (Werewolves can soak aggravated damage — except silver — but cannot regenerate it quickly.)

The Garou's magical abilities are gifted to them by nature spirits. These abilities range from control over the elements to massive strength and awesome prowess in war.

The Garou have close ties to the spirit world — the Umbra — and can easily enter this world via a process they call "stepping sideways." They have such deep ties to nature spirits that they regularly bind them into objects, creating magical artifacts. However, few Garou have truck with the spirits of the dead. The glaring exceptions to this are the Silent Striders, a tribe of wanderers whose death-lore stretches back to their origins in ancient Egypt. The Striders know many different methods of entering the Underworld and gaining prophetic lore from the dead. In addition, experienced Garou shamans have certain powers that affect wraiths, such as the ability to exorcise wraiths from their Fetters.

Character Creation: Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 15/9/3, Backgrounds 5, Willpower 8

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 2, except in Physical Attributes, where you can assume ratings of 3.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 4, Animal Ken 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Enigmas 1, Intimidation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Stealth 3

Special Rules: Werewolves have three main forms — man, wolf and wolfman (Crinos). The first two are quite mundane. When in wolfman form, however, a werewolf adds three dots to all Physical Attributes, can regenerate one Health Level per turn (except for damage caused by silver, fire, magick or the teeth and claws of a supernatural entity), and is immune to dice penalties for being wounded.

In addition, werewolves provoke reactions of uncontrollable fear in mundane humans who witness them in wolfman form.

#### Mages

Magic is seldom spectacular because it seldom needs to be.

- Donald Tyson, Ritual Magic

Mages are enlightened humans who can bend reality to their whim. While many are limited in their power, some few achieve near-godlike levels of power. Whether these workers of magick are friends or enemies of the Restless depends largely on each individual mage.

There are a variety of mage factions, and they wage a war over reality itself, fighting for something they call "Ascension." Some mages, called "Dreamspeakers," respect the spirit world and wish, for the most part, to commune with the Restless and then depart. Others, such as the Technocratic Void Engineers, seek to stamp out anything that does not fit into their ideal vision of reality. The enigmatic Euthanatos have the closest dealings with the dead; they themselves can pass into the Shadowlands for short periods of time and work potent death magicks. The corrupt Nephandi also attempt to tap the energies of the Underworld, but their purposes disturb even the most ruthless wraiths.

Mages generally prefer to work their art with as little fanfare as possible. Some mystic Restless claim that mages fear a force called "Paradox," which cancels their magick or destroys mages utterly. While some mages do not seem to care about this so-called "Paradox," most use subtle tactics and quiet magicks.

**Powers:** Mages have a broad range of powers to call upon; using Arcanos to represent mage magick is problematic at best. The Storyteller would be within her rights simply to allow a Storyteller character mage to accomplish a range of given effects within one or two areas of expertise. These effects would have difficulties of 5 to 8; the effectiveness of the magick would depend on how many successes the mage rolled — very little with one, noticeable effects with two, a fair amount with three, great success with four and exceptional success with five or more.

Most magick does not inflict aggravated damage, but fire, electricity, or a powerful attack of pure magickal force inflicts aggravated damage if it scores three or more successes (two levels per success over the second). Give the mage two to six dice to roll for this, depending on the power of the mage. If you have **Mage: The Ascension**, use the Spheres and Arete from that book instead.



The two mid-level mages below represent a Tradition adept of the Euthanatos and a Void Engineer ghost-hunter. Both have a degree of mortal and magickal skill and may have skilled allies or retainers of some sort.

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

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

#### **Euthanatos Mage**

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Etiquette 3, Expression 1, Firearms 2, Linguistics 2, Melee 4, Occult 4, Subterfuge 3, Stealth 2

Suggested Areas of Expertise: Entropy (magicks of breaking things down), Life (magicks of living things), Spirit (to see or interact with the Restless)

Equipment: Dark practical clothing with many pockets, ritual accessories, knives, poison

#### Void Engineer

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Computer 4, Dodge 3, Drive 3, Enigmas 3, Firearms 3, Investigation 3, Repair 4, Science 4

Suggested Areas of Expertise: Forces (elements), Spirit, Prime (the keystone energy of creation)

Equipment: Disruptor Cannon (Level 4 Device): fires blasts of Prime energy linked to Spirit magicks, which disrupt wraiths. The cannon inflicts one Corpus Level of aggravated damage per success the mage rolls on a Dexterity + Firearms roll. Good for 10 shots.

Spirit Goggles (Level 1 Device): allows the hunter to see into the Shadowlands with a successful Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 4).

Loose clothing, trenchcoat, scientific paraphernalia

# Changelings (Faeries)

On the day of the dead, when the year too dies, Must the youngest open the oldest hills.

- Susan Cooper, "Silver on the Tree"

Faeries are beings composed of magic and spirit. Although wraiths do not usually enter faeries' schemes or stories, many faeries have alliances with spirits of the dead through ancient pacts and agreements. Because the Dream Realms border on Arcadia (the faeries' homeland) as well as the Underworld, there are several dark fey (particularly a group called the Knights of the Poisoned Rose) who travel back and forth between the Sunless Lands and the Summerlands as a matter of course. Also, a number of wraiths (primarily those of Celtic heritage) are rumored to travel through the Dream Realms to



Arcadia. There, they serve some faerie nobility as banshees, Keening and using Phantasm for their pleasure.

During the Inquisition, most faeries fled Earth for Arcadia. Many faeries, however, stayed behind for reasons of their own, taking refuge in ancient halls and fortresses under hills and in the deepest oceans. When the Shroud laid its suffocating power across the world, the remaining faeries grew insular, static, and conservative.

Ghosts and faeries share many characteristics: both are creatures born of spirit and composed of magic. Both feel the weight of reality as it tries to erode their very existence. Both must congregate in forgotten places. Both are affected by the mortal world in various ways.

It is rumored that some faeries have become so tainted with human blood that they have forgotten their faerie heritage — these faeries are called changelings by true faeries, after the ancient practice of exchanging a faerie child with a human baby. Changelings can and do die, and, if they are somehow cut off from the fundamental power of the fey, can also become wraiths.

Faeries are generally feared: because they are creatures of spirit, they can easily make attacks across the Shroud.

Attributes: 7/5/3, Abilities: 13/9/5, Pathos 8, Willpower 7, Corpus 7, Angst 6/6

**Powers:** To translate the abilities of faeries into Arcanos, assume noble faeries (not changelings) generally have Argos 4, Keening 5, Lifeweb 3, Moliate 4, and Phantasm 5. Of course, all faerie powers must be united under a specific affiliation or potentiality. For example, a faerie allied with Winter would have powers of cold, snow and ice. Changelings generally specialize in one area (usually Phantasm, Pandemonium, Keening, or Moliate) and are generally not as powerful as true faeries.

Changelings usually appear as young, adolescent, or elderly humans. They are noble, powerful, and unearthly. True fey appear in thousands of shapes, forms, colors, and textures.

#### Others

There are many other possible antagonists and allies for wraiths: Black Spiral Dancers, certain Silent Striders and other werewolves, Pentex agents using wraiths for "juice" in some of their vile manufacturing plants, unaffiliated psychics, manipulative mediums, etc. For further information on how to integrate other supernatural beings into your Wraith campaign, see the Wraith Storyteller's Screen.

# Artifacts



he toys in the attic come out to play, They hate it when you lock them away... — Marionettes, "Ave Dementia"

Within the Shadowlands there are powerful "magical" devices, commonly known as artifacts. Artifacts are one-of-akind items, and each has its own powers

and limitations. All artifacts are empowered by the energies of the soul.

Artifacts are rare and ancient items. While new artifacts may be fashioned by those rare few skilled in the arts, the process is never easy. In fact, owning an artifact means owning a piece of Underworld mythology. Artifacts vary in form from a magic sword that curses opponents, to a headman's axe that always aims for the head, to a love potion capable of overwhelming any wraith with emotion, to wax-and-feather wings that allow a wraith to fly. The possibilities are endless.

Master Artificers, it is said, invest part of their essence into artifacts created in the Underworld. Masks of office, potent weapons and special tools are built to specifications and sold for very high prices. To receive such an item, a wraith must perform some great service or defeat some powerful ghost. Such artifacts are neither common nor easy to conceal; many can be traced by the essence within them.

#### Maintaining Artifacts

Each use of an artifact's power requires the expenditure of one point of the Pathos stored in the item. The wraith can use a point of her own Pathos in place of the artifact's. When all the Pathos inside an artifact is expended, the wraith can no longer use the artifact's powers, though the artifact is still considered "enchanted" and may be recharged by channeling more Pathos into the item. Artifacts can only contain a certain amount of Pathos, which is determined when the artifact is created.

Funneling Pathos into an artifact is simply a matter of transferring Pathos from the wraith's own Corpus into the artifact. It only requires concentration and a few seconds to do so.

## Common

# Seal of Citizenship (Level 1)

In the ancient days of the Stygian Empire, citizens were given these seals as symbols of their citizenship. They were used to sign documents, approve agreements, open special locks, and identify oneself and one's position in the Hierarchy.

This careful system of seals and identification has since broken down in the Shadowlands because of the general anarchy there. Now, only the Anacreons possess these seals from Stygia, but many Freewraiths have begun using discarded and stolen seals as means of marking what is theirs.

Occasionally, a wraith will use a seal to "prove" that he is of the Hierarchy.

# Flask of Liquid Hate (Level 1)

Emotion, properly distilled, can take a tangible form. It is rumored that long ago, Renegades pursuing forgotten forms of magic found a way to remove the hatred they kept inside themselves and distill it into a potable form. Whether they're still capable of this is doubtful, but flasks filled with Liquid Hate are still secretly bought and sold in Hierarchy bazaars.

A flask of Liquid Hate usually contains from one to three points of Hate Pathos. However, after a wraith has consumed that hate, he will slowly bleed it through his every action and gesture. As soon as the Pathos is spent to fuel an Arcanos, that action will also be tainted with hatred.

A flask can be refueled by burying it under the ground in an area tainted by sufficient intolerance, bigotry, oppression or suffering. The type of hate that refills the flask will resemble the hate that is stored there.

## Skeleton's Key (Level 2)

This lockpick is not used to open doors. It allows the user to violate the tomb of an enemy. By inserting it in the soil above a buried body, it will open the earth and uncover the enemy's corpse. If the enemy is another wraith, he will feel a brief, yet excruciating pain as his Fetter is violated. Possessing a Skeleton's Key is a serious crime in the eyes of the Hierarchy.

# Bedside Candle (Level 2)

Wayfaring through the Underworld can often result in a Circle of wraiths getting hopelessly lost. The Bedside Candle is one possible solution to this. After it has "fueled" for one day — that is, been allowed to soak up the resonant Passion stored within a Haunt — it can be used to lead a Circle of wraiths back to their Haunt. The candle, when lit, will burn for one day. The smoke from the flame will waft in the direction of the Haunt. Refueling the candle at the Haunt will restore it.

# Book of Lies (Level 2)

When betraying the Renegades or the Hierarchy, an ethically challenged wraith may need a bit of advice on what to

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do. A wraith who has offered himself to the Heretics made be graced with a Book of Lies if he is particularly promising.

The wraith can open the book at any time (preferably in private) to gain a bit of advice on what to do next. The Book of Lies will eradicate some of the initiate's Pathos (two points) in exchange for a brief passage suggesting a possible course of action. In-game, the character gains an extra three dice on a Subterfuge roll. Out-of-game, the Storyteller advises the player (hopefully in private) on a possible course of action.

#### Nietzschean Tightrope (Level 3)

It is rumored that a young suicide wanted to learn the art of Argos almost immediately after his death. He stumbled upon a most unusual ritual: by taking the rope with which he hanged himself and throwing it into the Tempest, he could walk across it to his destination. Many tried to emulate this ritual, but few succeeded. He later revealed that alone in the Tempest, he could truly explore the depths of his Shadow and, by confronting it, better understand it.

This philosophical journey has been studied in some cults of the Heretics, and some of the ropes used by Masters of Argos have become holy objects. The user of a Nietzschean Tightrope must enact a ritual, walk alone into the Tempest, and overcome his Shadow. The Shadow player will detail all the recent doubts, fears and failures of the wayfarer. The experience is similar to a Harrowing, but the difficulties of all rolls to fight off the Shadow are reduced by two. If the wayfarer wins, the ritual reduces the Angst of the Shadow by five and allows the wayfarer to cross the Tempest and reach his destination.

#### Soulfire (Level: Variable, see below)

The Hierarchy reaps tremendous amounts of Pathos energy from the souls it collects. This Pathos is channeled through strange ebony crystalline rods and collected in massive black prisms. As the prisms fill up, they begin to glow from within and cast shadows much like fire: because of this radiance, the Hierarchy calls the collected energy "soulfire." Soulfire is a resource among the Hierarchy, who uses it to fuel its Arcanos, weaponry, and machines.

Soulfire is dispensed into smaller, spherical black crystals that glow from within when full and gradually dim as they lose power. These crystals are reusable: many wraiths can pick up a few oboli from the Hierarchy just by returning soulfire crystals, no questions asked. There are a limited number of them: they are mined out of the Venous Stair near Stygia.

There are several sizes and shapes of these crystals, each holding a different amount of Pathos:

Size and Shape	Pathos	Artifact Level
Shard (pocket-sized)	10	1
Prism (portable)	20	2
Cone (luggable)	30	3
Sphere (vehicle-mounted)	40	4
Great Sphere (stationary)	50	5

#### Nhudri's Embrace (Level: variable, see below)

These chains, forged of jet-black steel, are used to bind wraiths. They resist destruction by Arcanos and inhibit a wraith's powers. The locks on these chains range from mechanical (in which case they can be picked) to magical (in which case one must know the proper password or thought to unlock them).

A wraith in Nhudri's Embrace who attempts to use Arcanos must overcome the virtue of resistance in the chains:

Level	Resistance
1	3 dice
2	5 dice
3	7 dice
4	8 dice
5	10 dice

The Storyteller rolls the resistance of the chains as an opposed roll versus the character's Arcanos when she attempts to use an art. The chains get a bonus of two dice for resistance if the Arcanos is specifically focused on them.

#### Luxury

# Narcissus' Mask (Level I)

This artifact makes the wearer appear absolutely, stunningly beautiful: during the time he wears it, he gains an effective Appearance score of 5, or 6 if his Appearance is already 5. Over time, however, use of this mask causes a wraith's face to become gradually more featureless until his eyes and mouth are just slits and his face is polished to a mirror sheen.

A wraith may wear a Narcissus' Mask for up to a day at a time without any ill effects. After that, however, he will begin to lose Appearance points at the rate of one per four hours the mask is worn. Only judicious use of Moliate can fix damage done in this fashion, and even then the wraith can never be fully restored to his previous beauty.

# Lucky Pennies (Level 1)

Numerous small objects get lost each day. Many mortals find the idea of finding or losing a penny or two to be a rather insignificant event. A few wraiths have been known to collect "Lucky Pennies" as a result of this.



A Lucky Penny is capable of passing from the Underworld to the Skinlands without much difficulty. A wraith can toss a Lucky Penny into the real world, where it will land with a small "ping." A nearby mortal will be distracted for a brief moment by the sound, and the degree to which he ignores the sound depends on a roll of Intelligence. (With four successes, the mortal will completely ignore it; on a botch, the mortal will feel a brief shiver of terror and investigate.)

If the penny comes up heads, it will fade into the Underworld after one scene and can be retrieved by the wraith. If the penny comes up tails, it will disappear and later be found by a mortal. Despite this, if a mortal flips the coin later and it comes up tails, it will eventually drift into the Underworld again, where it may be found by another wraith.

Lucky Pennies are fairly rare, but they can be spent wisely by ingenious wraiths.

# Silken Lust (Level 2)

Silks are a popular commodity in Hierarchy merchant stalls, but sometimes a dealer can find something that's a little more precious. Silken Lust is a type of fabric woven from a plasm of unknown origin. A wraith who drapes the silk across her Corpus will slowly gain both Pathos and Angst. Evoking the effect usually takes a full day, but after that, the wraith will gain three points in both categories. Some Renegades have been known to weave entire garments from Silken Lust. These poor souls revel in the continuous effects of this illicit substance.

#### Mirror of Lucretia (Level 3)

Lucretia Borgia, after death, was rumored to have long conversations with her dark side. Her Shadow would whisper to her...and she would talk back. She was able to confront and Castigate her Shadow by summoning a shard of it into a reflective surface. Heretic Craftsman are rumored to have discovered the secret of crafting mirrors that can emulate her talent.

By spending a point of Angst and three points of Pathos, a wraith can empower the device with a shard of her own Shadow. She can then reason with it and even bargain with it.

This is represented in the game by having the player directly confront and argue with her Shadowguide to make bargains with her Shadow. The Shadow, however, is under no obligation to listen.

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# Masque of Tragedy (Level 3)

The Masque of Tragedy is a type of disguise used to hide a wraith's true emotions. Bernhart, the master of emotional disguise, is rumored to have gone mad by using one of these masks.

A wraith wearing this device appears to have a Pathos of 10 and may falsify his true purpose. Other wraiths will assume that the wearer is driven by grief, pain or need.

# Cloak of Night (Level 3)

This dark cloak is woven from coiling strands of Nihils. It can be used to shelter most of a wraith's body. The Cloak of Night adds three dice to the user's Stealth Dice Pool and acts as two levels of armor (two dice added to soak) against the damaging effects of Nihils and Maelstroms.

# Borgia Dollhouse (Level 4)

Lucretia Borgia carried her love of intrigue with her beyond the grave. She commissioned a talented defector from the Hierarchy to fashion a dollhouse made from the wood of spectral trees. She then had a Heretic craftsman fashion a collection of animate voodoo dolls. Although Lucretia's personal dollhouse is unique, imitations are known to exist.

Once the appropriate ritual is performed, the dolls will wander the hallways of the dollhouse emulating the activities of the wraiths to whom they are attuned. A Heretic ceremony is used to empower the dolls. By watching the farce enacted in the dollhouse, one can gain insight into the activities of one's enemies.

# Wings of Ecstasy (Level 4)

To craft Wings of Ecstasy, the feathers of dead birds are gathered and affixed to a framework of Stygian metal shaped like the skeletal structure of a bird's wing. The creator of this relic must shape his own plasm (or the plasm of another wraith) to form the musculature. The only element missing is the Passion that fuels it. By raising her Pathos above 8, the wraith wearing the Wings of Ecstasy gains the power of flight. She must be careful, however; if her Pathos drops below 8 while she is in the air, she will plummet to the ground, losing one Corpus Level. Unless she scores at least three successes on a Dexterity + Athletics roll, she will also break her legs and be unable to walk for one day.

# Weapons

# Eternal Timepiece (Level 3)

This device appears as a watch without hands. A wraith who wears it never loses track of the passage of time in the

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mortal world, has three dice of countermagick against any use of a mage's Time Sphere, may nullify a vampire's Celerity (three dice, difficulty 7; each success removes one level of vampiric Celerity), and cannot be attacked more than once in a turn by a werewolf using Rage.

# Velvet Glove (Level 4)

The appearance of this relic is deceptive. Although it is fragile and embellished with lace, the touch of a relic Velvet Glove brings unspeakable anguish. A wraith striking with the glove (a mere slap will do) gains an extra four dice of damage in combat.

## Broadsword of Damocles (Level 4)

Many times, the Angst of a wraith can be consumed by a need to avenge himself on enemies. Some relic weapons channel dark energies into combat prowess. However, if these energies are not mastered, they can damn a wraith. The Broadsword of Damocles is an example of this principle.

When the sword is drawn from its scabbard, the wielder's Shadow will offer to aid the sword's wielder in battle (giving the wielder five extra dice in Melee). The weapon inflicts Strength + 5 damage and, if the wielder desires, adds one point of damage for each point of Pathos expended. However, if the Shadow of the wielder becomes dominant, it will take over in battle. The wielder will then suffer one point of Corpus for each two points he inflicts. The Psyche can still choose to spend Pathos to heal.

#### Souled Weapons (Level: variable)

The Hierarchy has developed a technique for affixing soulfire crystals to weapons so that they do not require Pathos from their wielders. Such a weapon is called a "souled" weapon. A souled weapon is considered permanently charged with Pathos until it is used, at which point the Pathos drains from the soulfire crystal and into the weapon.

Explosives can also be "souled" to provide the energy to fuel the explosion.

Possession of souled weapons is forbidden to all except Hierarchy soldiers and other special officials.

Pistol	Level 1
Rifle	Level 2
Machine Gun	Level 3
Grenade	Level 4

# Calendar



urning, turning, turning through the years, Minutes into hours and the hours into years Nothing changes; nothing ever could Round and round and back where you began... — Victor Hugo, Les Misérables As living peoples throughout the ages

have kept a calendar marking solstices, equinoxes, and other special days, so too do the dead. The calendar of the dead varies somewhat from group to group. Certain days are noted only by followers of the Hierarchy, while Renegades and Heretics hold celebrations and vigils of their own at other times. There are, however, certain days that are observed by all wraiths. Some of the most important of these days are detailed below.

Many of the holidays celebrate dates on which the walls between the worlds of the living and the dead are at their thinnest. The inhabitants of the Underworld are unsure as to why this ebb and flow takes place, although it seems to be somehow connected to the phases of the moon and the position of the Earth in the heavens.

# All Hallows Eve

All Hallows Eve, Samhain, or Halloween as it is often called, is one of the most important times in the year for wraiths. Of all days, Samhain is the time when the veil beneath the worlds of the dead and the living is at its thinnest. On All Hallows Eve, wraiths are free to interfere in the realm of the living.

From dawn of October 31st to dawn of November 1st wraiths may do as they please. This freedom and the appearance of strange "cracks" in the Shroud between the worlds cause many of the mortal myths regarding this night. Such cracks can suck unwary wraiths into the world of the living, trapping them there until dawn of November 1st.

# The Day of the Dead

Although the living have many feasts and celebrations for the dead, the dead themselves most commonly hold a ceremony on the first new moon in autumn. At this time, wraiths often make pilgrimages of one sort or another, for it is said to be easiest to collect Pathos and artifacts at this time of the year. Common destinations for such pilgrimages include Haunts in the Skinlands, the Sea of Souls in Stygia, and the Far Shores.

Various Circles of wraiths also observe other feasts for the dead celebrated by different Skinlands cultures. In general, however, wraiths view such festivals merely as opportunities to harvest great amounts of Pathos from willing living vessels.

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# Eclipses

Wraiths claim that during total eclipses of the sun the powers of the Shadow grow, and that there is a great danger of losing oneself forever during such events. To prevent such an occurrence, many wraiths observe a temporary Pax, or time of peace, where all wraiths may freely meet and no combat or Pathos-thefts are to occur. During such eclipses, wraiths may pass freely through territories and domains in which they would normally fear to tread. However, there are small groups of wraiths who espouse the philosophy that one must give oneself over to the Shadow during such eclipses, lest the pent-up Shadow grow too strong and unleash itself at some unforeseen time.

During total eclipses of the moon, wraiths believe they can purify themselves and come closer to Transcendence by diving into the Tempest and facing their personal nightmares. Such journeys are very dangerous, but wraiths who successfully confront their own failings often do seem to purge themselves of at least some taint.

# Little Five Points: A Setting for Wraith



his section includes a sample setting for Wraith: the Oblivion. Below you'll find basic information for a beginning chronicle as well as ideas for adventures. Here you'll meet the Restless of Little Five Points, a section of Atlanta. Information on other parts of the city can be found in

#### Necropolis: Atlanta.

In our world, Little Five Points is considered to be the "bohemian" section of Atlanta. It's a place to get "essentials" you can't get anywhere else...if you're considered a "freak," that is. In other parts of the city, stores might have trouble selling drug paraphernalia, underground comic books, New Age and pagan books, gay and lesbian fiction or alternative fashion. In Little Five, however, everyone is welcome...except the intolerant.

The area is filled with the living by day and almost empty at night. There's an effort to exude a facade of liveliness and creativity. You'll find apathy and poverty as well, but on a Saturday afternoon, the acoustic guitars, tattoos and attitude try to drive it away.

In the World of Darkness, Little Five Points is more grim. The bright paint covers the decay of the buildings, and the pretense of "life" cannot hide the presence of death. Wher-

ever the living congregate, the Restless also gather, drawn by the passions of the living. Runaways, burnouts, drug addicts, fringe members of society, the homeless — they're all here, and they're all waiting to be used.

# Geography

The Little Five Points area, near Inman Park and Reynoldstown, is accessible by the city's MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority) train system. Many of Atlanta's wraiths are grateful for mass transit; the trains run at regular times, and the automated doors make getting on and off the train much easier than trying to board a bus. New wraiths tend to make the mistake of confusing Little Five Points with Five Points Station, the nexus point of the train lines. With a little practice, covering a lot of ground by train is quite easy.

The walk from the train station to Little Five leads through a rather sedate neighborhood. Older wraiths feel right at home — most of the two-story houses have a definite 19th-century feel to them. Suburbia can be a difficult place to find Pathos, but creaking floors and old buildings make the task a little easier.

Several fields of weeds and kudzu can also be found along the way. Tall trees grow everywhere. In the Underworld, however, draping strands of Spanish moss do their part in obliterating the bright energy of the trees.

Euclid Avenue is the easiest way for new wraiths to approach Little Five. If a wraith can get access to a car (by Skinriding a driver, Inhabiting a car itself or just getting into one), the area is also accessible by Moreland Avenue. On our tour of the dead side of Little Five, however, we'll approach it from the west.

#### Landmarks

Euclid Avenue runs through the center of L5. Traffic is usually rather light. Most of the living have no compulsions against jaywalking frequently here, so the dead shouldn't either. Wraiths should use caution, however; drivers don't slow down for invisible pedestrians. A few key stores and locations act as excellent landmarks to the area. The influence of the dead has slightly changed the ambience of the stores. Aside from the atmospheric changes, the encouragement and discouragement of various places of business, and increasing number of goths in Little Five, the liberal attitude of this area has reduced the Shroud to 8 by day or 7 by night.

#### Western Area

Bass High School — This is one of the largest buildings you'll see while approaching L5. Most mortals tend to ignore it. The buildings have fallen into an extreme state of disrepair; indeed, the school has been shut down for some time. Many of

the locals refer to it as undergoing "renovation," but, oddly enough, not much progress seems to be taking place.

The school has slipped far enough into a state of decay that it now functions as a Haunt for the local Restless. Some residents believe that spiritual energy is building in the gymnasium; others find that notion ludicrous. Most of the wraiths here spurn ties to either the Hierarchy or the Heretics, although they won't turn away the occasional Renegade pack (so long as they're discreet). Between 15 and 20 wraiths can be found in the three-story building at any given time.

The Haunt tends to attract many disenchanted Restless, including a number of Enfants. To help them out, and to ensure that their little piece of Atlanta isn't threatened by any foolishly destructive Enfants, three of the residents act as "teachers" and even hold classes in the classrooms. The teachers are able to give advice to the newly deceased - from a slightly biased viewpoint, of course.

One of the wraiths has attuned himself to a piece of chalk, which he uses to draw diagrams on the chalkboards. Unfortunately, a recent journey to the Far Shores has resulted in him forgetting how to write in English, so strange symbols appear on the chalkboards in the middle of the night.

The building is also used by some of the teenage runaways who come to Atlanta. The police rarely go inside (oddly enough). The residents of Bass High tend to turn a blind eye to any runaway who winds up with a Skinrider.

Theaters - Across the street from the high school, a small coffeehouse is flanked by two independent theaters, the "Seventh Stage" and the "Euclid Playhouse." Low-budget productions are always in progress, and most of the shows are over by about nine o'clock.

Around 10 o'clock, a daily ritual takes place. Some of the wraiths gather together for a competition. Each competitor walks onto the stage and does his rendition of the most amusing or emotional scene he saw the day before. This way, many of the dead of Little Five keep up with the local scene.

Four Humours - Next door is a health food store. Sov milk, vegetarian foods, untreated vegetables and other foods can be found here. The store's worth a good laugh - the people who frequent it tend to die despite their nutritional neuroses. One section of the store has the best selection of black candles in the area.

Urban Primitive - African-American culture meets '90s rave in this cutting-edge clothing store. The owners sell more than just clothes. Two rooms in the back allow private sessions with anyone desiring body piercings or tattoos. Masquers often hang out in the back room to pick up a few pointers.

# Colquitt and Euclid

The intersection of Colquitt and Euclid is just to the north of Urban Primitive. A few notable stores are worth mentioning.



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Gargoyle's — This used to be a somewhat wild clothing store until it got a little "encouragement." Now it has one of the largest collections of goth fashion in the city. The owner, Gene, is a rather slender, pale fellow. He does actually come out during the day. In fact, he's rarely seen at night. Gene holds rituals in the gymnasium of Bass High after the sun goes down. He doesn't realize that he's being watched while he's performing them...

Crossroads — This popular hangout recently changed its focus from bookshop to coffeehouse. The only part of this store that currently sells books is a small room in the back; most of the books deal with fantasy, New Age or occult subjects (as well as a modest selection of Black Dog games). The rest of the store is now a coffeeshop. During the day, the employees try to open a few minds as they widen a few eyes with industrial-strength coffee. At sunset, the store is locked up, the curtains are drawn, and the night shift comes in. Only the dead are allowed inside.

On the left side of the back wall is a large mirror in a window frame. The window used to provide a clear view into a video store behind the bookstore. Now that the owners of both stores have been bought out, the window has been replaced to provide a greater degree of privacy for both stores.

Among the regulars at the Crossroads, wraiths may encounter a Silent Strider werewolf who reportedly brings tales from the spirit world, and a Malkavian vampire calling himself Devon Null who "feeds" on an unusual section of the Internet.

Ray Gunn Video — Behind the Crossroads is a small video store. The old owner was bought out, although he did take his selection of obscure and psychedelic films with him. The new owner is even more unusual. Raymond Gunn has a very active interest in the occult, so along with the foreign films, psychotropia, '50s propaganda, anime and science fiction he usually rents, Ray deals under the counter in some more esoteric items. He fervently believes that both his store and the Crossroads are haunted, and he holds a seance ever Friday night in his store for a few of his friends. During the seance on Friday, or for Ray at any time, the Shroud in the video store is a 6.

#### The Zone

Near the corner of Euclid and Moreland is a triangular, parklike area with plenty of shade trees and park benches. During the day, a few dozen people can be found hanging out, trying to out-cool one another. In the Zone, visitors see jugglers, activists handing out flyers, shirtless bongo-drum players, vendors of everything from hair wraps to cheap patchouli and perfumes, and people whom the news media have dubbed "slackers." The activists deal with a variety of issues, ranging from environmentalism and gay rights to marijuana legalization and Native American issues. A few wraiths hang out near the bongo players and have a sort of spectral jam session. One wraith who regularly does this is Red Feather, a Castigator who uses his drums as a focus for his art. This partly explains the calming influence of the Zone. Red Feather isn't a Native American. He's just a 40year-old white guy who does a rather weak job of trying to act like one.

Thrift Stores — Three thrift stores, a T-shirt place and a store that sells Deadhead paraphernalia, Frisbees and kites are adjacent to the Zone. The thrift stores close around 6 P.M. The owner of one of them refuses to believe in the concept of "inventory," so wraiths who get the permission of the local Restless often Inhabit and create some rather unusual relics.

Magenta — A lavender sign with painted crystals advertises this purveyor of New Age and pagan materials. Wind chimes, crystals and dreamcatchers hang in the window. Inside, New Age music plays continually, and the store does its best to keep up with the needs of the local pagan community. The store gets its name from its magenta decor.

The owner of the store is always referred to rather cryptically, mainly because she's rarely ever there. Some current rumors in the mortal world say that she's either going on "visionquests" in the distant east, living a life of ribaldry in California, or raising money to buy out the abandoned club nearby. All three rumors are correct.

Pawn Shop — Across the street is a rather unusual pawn shop that keeps its supply of pistols and Uzis a short distance away from the Serial Killer trading cards and underground comics. Paranoid mortals can buy guns here (if they can wait a week before picking them up), but walking around Little Five heavily armed is a little too extreme even for the locals.

In addition, there are usually one or two police officers near the Zone. They're rather relaxed about dealing with most weird people, but would-be hunters waving firearms and threatening to kill invisible tourists will wind up in jail very quickly.

The cops are also used by Jameson as part of his Hierarchy duties (see below).

## Gregory L. Davis Plaza

One the other side of the thrift stores is an area with a small plaza. There's a coffee shop, a pizza place, benches, patio seats for people eating ice cream and pizza, street musicians, a notice board advertising local bands and political gatherings, and an art gallery. The gallery, after a little bit of influence, is currently showing a collection of renderings of "death-imagery." Some of the local goths find it fascinating. Some of the local ghosts find it hilarious.

One of the wraiths who hangs out here quite a bit is Neon (listed below), a dead art student who usually keeps tabs on the local art scene and the local drug culture.

Between the Zone and the plaza is a large building that has been used as a restaurant by three different owners in the last two years. The coffeehouse currently there is slowly going



out of business. There are rumors that the property is available at a low price, although there are also rumors that the mysterious owner of Magenta is interested in it.

Across the street from the restaurant/coffeehouse is another row of buildings, including a feminist bookstore, a shoe store specializing in Doc Martens, a Native American bookstore, and an Ethiopian restaurant.

#### Around the Corner

Past Greg Davis Plaza, a number of restaurants and stores are open during the day. A variety of food is available, including vegetarian, Ethiopian, Mexican and Jamaican food.

Madame Junkman — One major spot for tourists is Madame Junkman, a huge alternative clothing store. Skinriding is a favorite activity here, as locals and tourists try on the latest fashions while wraiths try on locals and tourists.

Freedom of Thought — A few doors down, a comic shop and record store feeds the voracious appetites of die-hard fans. The store isn't afraid to be a little more hard-core than most of the shops in other parts of Atlanta. The store almost moved away at one point to seek a better location, but the owner has been discouraged from doing so by some of his "nocturnal" customers. The store's owner is an insomniac, and he often walks the three blocks from his nearby loft to the store late at night. By candlelight, he halfheartedly reads through 10 to 20 comic books a night. Of course, he often has someone reading over his shoulder. The local Restless often get into arguments about which title they should make him read on any particular night.

## Factions

As stated earlier, most of the wraiths in Little Five Points hold allegiance to no one. About 15 to 20 of them are present in the high school at any time.

Only a few members of the various factions are present at any given time.

#### Renegades

There's usually one pack of Renegades hiding in the school at any given time. They try not to flaunt their activities, mainly because they don't want to be considered "criminals" by the Hierarchy. They also know that the Restless of Little Five won't turn them away.

The Hierarchy knows it could sweep in and take out the Renegades, but there wouldn't be much point. The wraiths of

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Bass High would put up resistance just for having their independence challenged.

There's only one permanent Renegade in the Haunt. One of the teachers is secretly recruiting (and corrupting) souls for his faction.

#### Hierarchy

The only permanent Hierarchy representative is Jameson (listed below). Rather than strictly enforcing the Hierarchy's laws, he prefers merely to report extreme activities. There's a sort of ongoing truce between the Hierarchy "cop" and the local dead. Jameson knows if he brought in the big guns, there'd be war, which could threaten the secrecy of wraiths' influence in the city. The local dead know that if they took out Jameson, the Hierarchy would send someone worse in his place.

Jameson does have back-up available if he ever really needs it. He can summon four Enforcers in about 10 minutes. The Enforcers are misty, vaguely humanoid figures cloaked in darkness, and each wears a relic blindfold to assist in carrying out duties.



#### Enforcer

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Firearms 1, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Investigation 3, Law 2

Arcanos: Argos 1, Castigate 2, Moliate 3

Passions: Serve the Hierarchy (Pride) 5, Punish criminals (Anger) 4 (plus one point of personal Passion). Pathos: 6 Willpower: 5 Angst: 3/3 Artifact: Blindfold of Justice (2)

Use of this artifact is a sign of Hierarchy shock troops. The device doesn't block out all sight, just activities that are "extraneous" to the performance of an Enforcer's duties. Of course, the Hierarchy Artificer investing power in the relic defines what is "extraneous." The Perception of an Enforcer wearing one of these is increased to 5. Three dice are added to Investigation, but only if the Enforcer's activities are part of an active investigation.

If the leader of a squad of Enforcers needs his grunts to be oblivious to misconduct or wishes to engage in illegal activities as he performs his job, a series of mystic gestures will prevent the Enforcers from witnessing the event.

#### Heretics

Only two cultists are present in Little Five. One of them is a sleeper agent for the Heretics who has been slowly infiltrating local wraith society. The other has found a host to assist him in his duties.

Recently, a mortal preacher has been seen wandering through Little Five for an hour each day. This is rather unusual for the neighborhood, but because he doesn't yell at or harass anyone, he's pretty much tolerated in the mortal world. The Preacher Man quietly walks up to anyone he thinks needs guidance, and he quietly hands out religious tracts. He'll also leave a few pamphlets lying about at "sinful" places.

## Personalities

When you're characters first come to Little Five, they'll no doubt want to meet a few of the locals, several of whom are listed below.

#### The Living

Suki Lost Runaway Demeanor: Survivor Nature: Child

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma

3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4, Perception 2, Intelligence

3, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2, Stealth 3

Backgrounds: Allies 1 Willpower: 3



Image: Suki is 17. Her clothes are always a little torn, and her slight desperation is always noticeable. She's half-Japanese, half-American, and completely cast out from the world.

Roleplaying Hints: You've got to survive on intuition. You're not sure what you're doing, but you've been getting by long enough on your own that it doesn't really matter if what you do is "right" or "wrong."

History: Suki grew up in an abusive family. She was the result of an affair her mother had in the '70s, and although her father didn't leave Suki's mother, he took out his anger on Suki. She ran away at the age of 16 and never looked back.

Getting by on the streets was hard, but Suki's managed to avoid the worst pitfalls. She's never used drugs, she's never committed a felony, and she's never sold herself, although she almost did once.

She's never really been close to anyone, but she does believe that she has a sort of "guardian angel" who looks after her. Now she's passing though Atlanta, and she'll do anything to find a steady group of friends. She's hoping that she can find at least one person who really cares. That's the one hope that keeps her going.

Ouote: "Hey, you got any change? Hey, you got any change? You got a cigarette, man?"

**Raymond Gunn** 

Wannabe Psychic

Nature: Bon Vivant

Demeanor: Conformist

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 4. Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Performance 1, Computer 2, Linguistics 1 (poor French), Occult 1 Backgrounds: Contacts 4

Willpower: 4

Image: Ray is about 5' 2" and over 250 pounds. His clothing is usually a shameful mockery of whatever is currently in fashion. Then again, although he often tries to follow other's ideas, by getting them wrong, he usually expresses his true self.

Roleplaying Hints: You must follow the current fashions. Even if you don't understand, follow. You desperately want to fit in with the "cool" people. Humility shouldn't get in the way. At that same time, when you misinterpret the ideas of others, you often wind up giving those ideas a piece of your own "distinctive" individuality.

History: Raymond Gunn is a flake, but a harmless one. He's tried to be on the crest of every fashionable wave since about 1972. He's camped out in communes, passed out at rock concerts, salivated over movie stars and thrown away his fortune on the dreams of others. He doesn't care.

His latest interest is the occult. After seeing a trendy movie about the living dead (about 13 times in the first week), he has been fascinated with the idea of ghosts and spirits. He's even convinced himself that the store next to his is haunted. Well, actually, it is. Raymond's considering working as a "spiritual advisor" and believes that he is uncovering his ability to channel souls.

Quote: "One must follow what interests one, yes? Life is an exploration of the mind, an exploration of reality. Care for some brie?"







Preacher Man Servant of the Lord Demeanor: Caregiver Nature: Martyr

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms (Shotgun) 4, Security 2, Investigation 2, Occult (Fringe Religion) 2

Backgrounds: Allies 1

Willpower: 2

Image: Nice cheap suit for going to church. Cheap shoes with holes to show how far he's walked. Don't have time to wash his clothes. Don't have time to wash his blond, stringy hair. Don't have time to wash his sunburned skin. Too busy loving Jesus.

Roleplaying Tips: Obey. Obey. Serve God. Serve God. lesus loves you. Jesus loves you.

History: Preacher Man almost died two years ago. After he was hit by a car, he had visions of God calling to him through a tunnel of light. He gave up his life on the farm, put down his shotgun and his whiskey, and started travelin' from city to city, talkin' about the word of the Lord.

Preacher Man is a "meat puppet" of a desperate Heretic cultist who uses Puppetry to manipulate him. The cultist works alone and is terrified of being discovered, but as long as he can hide in Preacher Man, Preacher Man's gonna stay safe.

Quote: "God loves you, son. Have a funny book! That's right, it's a funny book, 'cause once you've got God, you can't help but laugh. I laugh the laugh of Moses, and dance the dance of the Israelites..."

#### The Dead

Sarah Renegade Survivor

Cause of Death: Suicide

Year of Death: 1991

Demeanor: Loner

Nature: Deviant

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

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Etiquette 2, Stealth 3, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 1 (Latin), Science 2

Arcanos: Argos 3, Puppetry 3

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Status (Renegades) 1 Pathos: 7

Willpower: 6

Image: Sarah rarely allows herself to be seen. She has long blond hair and blue eyes, and still wears her bloodstained sorority sweatshirt. She'll always look like the sweetheart of Sigma Chi.

Roleplaying Hints: You've bought into the "system" your whole life, and it got you nowhere. You were at the top of your class in high school, you were the darling of your sorority, and people still treated you like your success was a way to prove their "system" was right. No more. You get by on your own...with the help of someone who works for you now.



History: Sarah was always Mom and Dad's little angel. As long as her grades were fine and she didn't get into trouble, everyone loved Sarah. She did her best to live up to everyone's expectations, but when she blew her chance at an Ivy League school, lost the opportunity to get into the "cool" sorority, and was humiliated by her thoughtless boyfriend, Sarah wanted out - the fast way. Her half-hearted suicide attempt got a little out of control, and now Sarah has a few incompletes on her transcript.

Now Sarah's got someone she can use. Her victim's name is Suki, and they've been surviving together for the past year. Suki's gullible enough to do just about anything that Sarah says. Sarah just wants to make sure her meal ticket doesn't starve, though. Sarah sees nothing wrong with the relationship. Suki can't live without Sarah, and Sarah gets all the "support" she needs from Suki.

Passions: Find another boyfriend (Lust) 2, Stay on the streets (Desperation) 3, Make sure Suki's always alone (Envy) 4, Prevent Suki's suicide (Regret) 1

Quote: "Delta Delta Delta my ass, honey."

Angst: 4/4

Shadow: Pusher

Thorns: Trick of the Light

Agenda: Sarah has no remorse over using Suki, so her Shadow feels perfectly justified in leading Sarah to her destruction. Perhaps she can take Suki's soul down with her. She's earned it, hasn't she?

Iameson

Hierarchy Officer

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Nature: Judge

Cause of Death: Killed by anarchists in Northern Ireland Year of Death: 1892

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

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms 2, Leadership 2, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Bureaucracy 2, Investigation 4, Law 3, Occult 2, Politics 2

Arcanos: Argos 1, Castigate 2, Keening 2, Lifeweb 2, Moliate 3

Pathos: 8

Willpower: 7

Backgrounds: Allies (Enforcers) 4, Contacts 1 (Police), Status (Hierarchy) 2

Image: Jameson is the model of a Victorian gentleman. His clothes are in the style of the 1890s, complete with a top hat and darkened spectacles. He's tall and lanky and has a peculiar mannerism of twisting the whiskers of his mutton-chop sideburns when he's worried.



Roleplaying Hints: Propriety is your foremost concern. Others may be less respectful of the etiquette of social discourse, but you must remain aloof from their ignorance. Despite the rigid demands of the Hierarchy, one must not lose sight of such things as honor and nobility.

History: lameson has worked for the Hierarchy for over a century. When he first began his career, he was fanatic about enforcing all laws precisely to the letter. When he saw the effect this had on those who didn't fully fit in with the law, he began to understand the spirit of laws instead.

Jameson is very proper, but he admits his faults. His efficiency has not earned him promotions; in fact, his insistence on "gentlemanly" behavior has prevented him from rising in the Hierarchy. As long as the situation in his district doesn't get out of control, he'll treat the citizens of Little Five as people, if that's what it takes to keep the peace.

Occasionally, though, he must put on a display of power to appease his superiors. He genuinely doesn't want to see Charon's Code broken, but he often finds himself running interference between his superiors and the citizens of Little Five. Only his skillful handling of situations allows him to play off one side against the other, although both the Hierarchy and the Little Five wraiths wonder if he'll ever fully commit to one side or the other.

Passions: Uphold the Law (Pride) 4, Serve Stygia (Honor) 3, Investigate the Unknown (Curiosity) 3

Quote: "Renegades, I presume? (sigh) Far be it from me to ruin your evening, but those dratted Hierarchs had the temerity to enact an edict forbidding the spontaneous combustion of mortals' undergarments, and as Charon's duly appointed representative... Angst: 5/4

Shadow: Perfectionist

Thorns: Shadow Call, Spectre Prestige

Agenda: Spectres would like to "recruit" Jameson away from the Hierarchy. He's got connections, skill and style. He'd do a damn fine job in the service of Oblivion. The Hierarchy makes so many mistakes, after all. Perhaps Jameson's Perfectionist Shadow is a bit resentful of that...

Magenta

Flighty Mystic/Movie Junkie

Cause of Death: Drug overdose at a party in Los Angeles Year of Death: 1975

Demeanor: Visionary

Nature: Bon Vivant

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

Abilities: Alertness 2, Expression 3, Subterfuge 3, Etiquette 2, Leadership 2, Performance 2, Occult 3

Arcanos: Argos 2, Embody 4, Fatalism 3, Keening 2, Moliate 2, Phantasm 1

Backgrounds: Haunt 3

Pathos: 9

Willpower: 5

Image: Magenta is usually dressed in the height of goth fashion, although she likes to change her appearance and clothing. Her early years living in a movie theater have affected her taste in fashion, although she does have a favorite form: Magenta has seen The Rocky Horror Picture Show over 300 times.

Roleplaying Hints: Magenta is the ultimate escapist. Take any movie (preferably a horror one). Add a little goth to it.



Wraith: The Oblivion

Think of Gloria Swanson walking up to you and saying, "Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up..." She is a fiend for attention, but once she gets it, she shies away and acts really mysterious.

History: Magenta can't remember her real name anymore. She can't remember the self-destructive life she followed out in California, either, although she does vaguely remember wanting to be a movie star. She also remembers the Hollywood party where she ended her life.

When she first began her afterlife, she spent a lot of time in movie theaters, watching the same films over and over. Life was never really as good as the movies, and death never was either.

To get away from the "real world," Magenta has gone on many epic journeys into the Tempest. She knows a lot about the worlds beyond the Tempest, but because she wants to preserve her "spooky mystic" facade, she'll only hint at what's out there.

She can't remember who she really was, so any ideas she can rip off from the cinema will have to provide her personality for a while.

Passions: Escape from Reality (Fear) 3, Explore the Unknown (Curiosity) 2, Perform (Vanity) 4, Find Lost Brother (Love) 1

Quote: "It's so dreamy... So, fantasy, free me! So you can't see me. No, not at all."

Angst: 3/3

Shadow: Director

Thorns: Shadow Life

Agenda: Magenta's "visionquests" are a little more extensive than she realizes. Waking from slumber in the middle of an unfamiliar realm is a bit disorienting, but it does make learning about those realms a bit easier. Magenta has many methods for finding hidden knowledge, including some her Psyche doesn't know she has.

Daniel DuBois

**Renegade** Recruiter

Cause of Death: Killed in protest riots in France

Year of Death: 1968

Demeanor: Conformist

Nature: Rebel

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

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Subterfuge 3, Firearms 1, Leadership 3, Melee 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics 2, Politics 2

Arcanos: Puppetry 3, Usury 3 Backgrounds: Status (Renegades) 3 Pathos: 7 Willpower: 5



Image: Buzz cut, blue eyes, slouched shoulders, fuzzy sweater, ironed slacks and dress shoes. Small round glasses.

Roleplaying Tips: Teaching at the school is just a job. You've got to teach to get by, but you make up for it by giving time to the really important causes. In life, your cause was opposing the state. Now, in death, you seek to end the Hierarchy's oppression. You've got to be really subtle, but you are in a position to find the most promising wraiths for your cell.

History: When Daniel began as a teacher, he passionately believed in instilling his ideas in the youth of his country. After the third time he was fired, he learned to be a bit more cautious. Teaching became a front. He was extremely good at it, but his most impassioned activities were as a protester. Someone had to instruct the members of his organization in philosophy, kitchen chemistry and freestyle anarchy. Daniel was marked for recruitment from the first day of his death.

Passions: Tear down the state (Vengeance) 3, Teach the tools of anarchy (Hatred) 3

Ouote: "That's an intriguing idea. Not everyone questions the authority of the Hierarchy like that. You know, I've heard a rather interesting rumor about a group hiding out nearby ... "

Angst: 2/2

Shadow: Rationalist

Thorns: Tainted Touch

Agenda: The entire system of oppression established by the Hierarchy is wrong. The Hierarchy is forcing others to suffer in this afterlife. Clearly the Masses must be liberated. Those who cannot fit into our utopia must be destroyed.

Neon Surrealist Artist

Cause of Death: Leapt from the top of Georgia State University while under the influence of LSD

Year of Death: 1985

Demeanor: Jester

Nature: Deviant

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence

3. Wits 2 Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Expression 4, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 2, Crafts 4, Melee 2, Performance

3, Stealth 2, Occult 2

Arcanos: Pandemonium 4, Moliate 4, Keening 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Artifacts 1, Haunt 1 (art gallery), Status (Heretics) 1

Pathos: 7

Willpower: 6

Image: Reality is an option. Neon loves using Pandemonium and Moliate to alter himself and his environment. He usually appears to be a 19-year-old kid with glowing neon hair, swim trunks and sandals. He also seems to have access to an unlimited supply of Salvador Dali T-shirts.

Roleplaving Hints: You are inspired. Anything you say is brilliant, especially if it contradicts what other people normally believe. Create! Destroy! Live!

History: Neon was just too cool to live ... or hold a job ... or have a steady girlfriend...or conform in any way. The world is his canvas, and he wants to take up sculpting.



Appendio

There was only one option for a kid like Neon. With his abysmal grades and the assistance of his doting parents, Neon wound up in art school. There he discovered the work of his "personal lord and savior," Salvador Dali. Neon has been a die-hard surrealist ever since, in every sense of the word.

Passions: Create Art (Joy) 5, Defy Reality (Impish Glee) 3, Serve Heretics (Devotion) 2

Quote: "The true artist must be open to anything! Expand your mind, man; stretch it like a big red balloon! You think that's crazy? Look at all the unhappy people, look at all the conformity, and I'll tell you what's really crazy. Whee! Ants!"

Angst: 4/4

Shadow: Freak

Thorns: Shadow Familiar (a small, ratlike creature who loves to come out to "play"), Shadow Arcanos (Moliate: the creature can distort itself into many different surreal monstrosities.)

Agenda: Neon doesn't belong; reality itself does not accept his surreal visions. Why hold back? Why shouldn't he reshape the world into something that will accept him? He's been shut out long enough.

Lucille

The Fallen "Angel"

Demeanor: Caregiver

Nature: Martyr

Cause of Death: Shot outside her home in Stone Mountain, GA

Year of Death: 1962

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Streetwise 2, Meditation 2, Stealth 1, Investigation 4

Arcanos: Argos 2, Castigate 4, Keening 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2

Pathos: 9

Willpower: 6

Image: Lucille usually wears a black robe and sandals. Her head has been shaved. She also openly wears a pair of wings made out of crow feathers (see "Wings of Ecstasy" under *Relics*, pg. 248).

Roleplaying Hints: Your life was violently taken away from you. Your true love no longer wants you. The world no longer cares for you. The only solace you'll ever find is in the performance of your mission.

History: Lucille fell in love completely and totally when she was 22. She dropped out of college, ran to her lover's side, and gave him her body and soul. There were only three complications: Lucille was black, her lover was white, and the year was 1962. Lucille was shot outside her home in Georgia.



At first she was content to "watch over" her love, but when he slowly turned from an idealistic young man to a broken, subservient thrall of a large corporation, Lucille couldn't stand to see him fall apart. She began to feel like there was no place for love in the world.

Then she began her mission. Lucille feels like she'll be alone for eternity, but she still watches over people. The one thing that keeps her going is helping others find what she lost.

Passions: Protect young lovers (Envy) 5, Watch over her lost love (Pain) 2, Sacrifice for others (Despair) 3

Quote: "I'm no angel. If you get on my bad side, you'll find that out real fast."

Angst: 5/3

Shadow: Parent

Thorns: Bad Luck

Agenda: Obviously, Lucille should learn a little about reality. True love does not conquer all. How foolish she is to believe in "young love." Stories like that always end in tears. Her romance certainly did. Seeing young lovers mocks Lucille's Shadow, because it reminds her of her own pain — the pain her Psyche and her need for blissful passion gave her.

# Adventure Ideas

#### Salvation

The characters meet Suki and may even discover her "guardian angel," Sarah. If they have any compassion or mercy, they'll probably want to help her. Salvation does eventually come to Suki: she falls in love with a student at a nearby high school. Sarah, however, doesn't want to relinquish her control of her. The characters have a chance to intercede.

## It's Showtime!

At the Seventh Stage, a locally written play is being produced. The show, however, is undergoing a few "rewrites"... courtesy of a Renegade gang. Jameson, the local Hierarchy representative, is getting ready to call in his Enforcers, but he offers the characters a chance to "keep the peace" by making sure the show goes on...

#### Preacher Man

The Heretic's plan is going a little too well. He's got access to a loft near Little Five, and it looks like he's recruiting a little cult of mortal. The Hierarchy would pay well for a Circle of adventurous wraiths who could deal with the situation.

## The Witching Hour

Gene's ceremonies in the Bass High gymnasium are getting a little out of hand. A few extreme supernatural manifestations have taken place in the building. Many of the wraiths are clueless about how to resolve the situation, which means that the characters could gain quite a bit of clout by resolving it.

## İmaginary Friends

A six-year-old boy and his family have moved into the nearby neighborhood. The kid really likes the neighborhood...and he's really surprised to see the characters! He doesn't notice any of the other wraiths, but he does seem to have some sort of gift for seeing the unseen. So what happens when the local Restless demand that the characters do something to preserve their secrecy?

## Club-Hopping

Magenta is investing in the abandoned nightclub, but she appears to have some opposition. She's too busy making plans

to eliminate the competition personally, so a little haunting is in order... Care to earn a few favors?

#### Room 666

One of the classrooms at Bass High has a new group of inhabitants. A local gang has taken over and is using the building as a base of operations. This is a chance to do a little vigilante work for the neighborhood.

### **Inspection** Tour

Jameson has gotten a tip: a Stygian representative is going to be examining the neighborhood to make sure the traditions of the Empire are being upheld. It's time to cover some supernatural activity, and fast.

## L'Enfant Terrible

A very inexperienced wraith has breezed into Little Five, and he has no respect for the rules. The characters have to teach him to toe the line... the easy way, or the hard way.

### Channeler Surfing

Raymond Gunn has discovered an unusual way of channeling the dead. He's found a way to summon them through the television set in his video store. Perhaps a powerful entity is using him, or perhaps a Byway has been established to his video store. He's not quite sure what's going on, or even what he's doing, and he's summoned up something he can't put down...

## Fire Walk With Me

A new wraith in the neighborhood has the power of Phantasm, and he's discovered that many of the people in the neighborhood are having the same fatalistic dream: that the neighborhood is going to burn down. Is he a chance for the characters to solve the problem, or could he be the cause of it?

## The Haunting of Bass High

Someone has bought out the high school. A private school is making a big show out of rehabilitating the building. The characters have one goal on this one: make the invaders' lives a living hell.

Appendix





This thing is a man. Look at what you are, and what awaits you. Gaze on this image and learn what your own end will be.

## - grave epitaph in Greece

They found the dog in several pieces in the trashcan, occult symbols carved into its fur and something horrible in its mouth. They found the old man hanging from the ceiling in his study, the plastic on the floor was arranged so that none of the blood stained the lily white carpet. They discovered the child hunched down in a closet covered in her own waste, the tears dried away, the hollow eyes looking out at nothing.

They say not to go into the Fifth Street alley at night it's just not safe. The say that the library is haunted— that sometimes you can feel the crinkle of plastic under your feet. But you don't care what they say, 'cause you know she's in your closet — when you close your eyes to sleep you can still hear her muffled screams and the little hands beating at the door...

## **Chant of the Guilds** elegy of the hierarchy

Raven's cry Tempest's roar Harbinger: What word do you bring?

> Crying, laughing raging, sighing Chanteur: What do you sing?

iron collars Black whips Pardoner: Who do you cleanse?

Sand shining Tattered dreaming Sandman: What lies do you tell?

> Cards and crystals Coins and stars Oracle: What do you see?

Silent stillness Faded glimpses Proctor: Who do you serve? Smile and frown;

Puppeteer: Who do you own?

Walk and dance

Lights flashing Floor creaking Poltergeist: Who do you fear?

Steadfast, watching Patient, waiting Monitor: Who do you watch?

Crash and burn Smash and crack Spook: What do you break?

Hammer and tongs Ringing in song Artificer: What do you make?

Flesh and soul Parts of a whole Usurer: What do you charge?

Clip and cut Nip and tuck Masquer: Who do you hide?

Appendix



"Learn the true topography; the monstrous and wonderful archetypes are not inside you, not inside your consciousness; you are inside them, trapped and howling to get out."

- R.A. Lafferty, The Devil is Dead

ST WORDS

Wraith is cursed. There's no other way to say it. Mind you, I don't believe in curses, but you can't argue with the facts— something's going on. Getting this far has been a real miracle. Even as I write these last words, I keep looking behind my back, half expecting something to spring.

It's been such a long hard struggle, it's hard to believe it's nearly over. Everything that could go wrong did go wrong. I've never seen anything like it. Contracts got screwed up, schedules got mangled, writers and artists disagreed and everyone involved argued and fought endlessly. There was no end of emergencies. Nothing ever seemed to work out. Everything good about this project came about only with agonizing effort. All in all, it sucked.

The curse began years ago, back in the early days of White Wolf before the idea of Vampire was even a glimmer in my mind. At the time I was working on a brand new concept, a game I called Inferno, something I was very excited by.

The idea was that you played someone trapped in Hell, and your the goal, basically, was to either become a powerful demon or to escape. (You can probably see the similarities to Wraith already.) Needless to say, it was a grim and loathsome setting, and I did everything I could to make it as dark as possible. I suppose that's really when my predilection for dark horror began.

Naturally, no one was very excited about playing a character who would be tortured and branded and tricked on a regular basis — but as a favor to me, four of my friends came over for a playtest.

We got together at the company offices (just a house) in the early evening and quickly created characters. I had prepared what I considered to be a rather "fitting" welcome to Hell, and was all set to make them pee their pants. I started out by killing off their characters one by one in the most gruesome and macabre ways I could invent. Once they'd bit the bullet, I pulled them down into hell. They came flying out of the sphincter of some enormous creature and flew into a pool of molten lava. Each time they tried to crawl out, I had foul minion demons armed with pitchforks push them back. I described their prolonged agony in excruciating detail, and reveled in my expository skills. They only climbed out after I was good and ready.

(Let me tell you, I was on a storytelling high. I had the players completely under my thumb. If only they were as thrilled as I was...)

It didn't stop there. After they mounted a nearby precipice, a black batwinged demon suddenly appeared before them. I stood over my hapless victims (all sitting on the couch) and began to chuckle my trademarked manic laugh. Leaning over them, I yelled with impassioned venom about their impending doom— when suddenly there was a huge crash and all the lights went out in the house.

For a few seconds, no one spoke. No one moved. To tell the truth, I think we were scared shitless — no one knew what to think, least of all me. Finally, I figured I'd go outside and see what the hell had happened.

Sitting at the bottom of our next-door neighbor's driveway was a pizza delivery car that had crashed into a electrical transformer box. The idiot hadn't put his brakes on while dashing inside to deliver his pizza (30 minutes or free!) and never realized he was parked on a damn hill.

To make matters worse, by the time I got there, the assmunch was inside his car trying to turn on the ignition. Un-

demeath the real axle I could see the flicker of flames.... For a second I thought I was hallucinating. It was like my imagination come to life.

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After I chilled out from my panic, I ran halfway down the hill and yelled at him to get the hell out of the car. The moron didn't listen, so I tried again. Finally, I went down to the car and practically dragged him from the burning wreckage.

A few minutes later, the car exploded into flames. A half minute after that, the gas tank blew up with a dull thump. I tried calling 911, but halfway through my call, an electrical spike took out every phone in the house (and the fax machine as well, damn it all).

Well, the whole neighborhood was without power now, so everyone came over to watch the bonfire and roast marshmallows. The big news was that the pizza driver didn't have insurance, which didn't please me any. The firetrucks eventually arrived. It was hours before it was all done and the excitement had died down.

Needless to say, the game was over for the night (well, for eternity, actually). The lights weren't working, the phones weren't working, and no one much wanted to face Mr. Demon again, so everyone went home. I was left in an empty house, without power, with a car hulk in my front yard. I had some strange dreams that night.

The next day I resolved that Mama Fate had given me a warning, and I packed away all my notes and called it quits with Demons and Doom. Enough strange things had happened that I figured it just wasn't wise to go on. After they towed away the car, all that was left was a swatch of burned grass and a sharp, twisted lump of metal with bits of glass imbedded in it. I kept it as a momento and used it on my desk as a paperweight. A few months later, I came up with the idea for Vampire and the World of Darkness. Over time, I forgot all about Inferno. If only it had forgotten me.

When it came time to work on Wraith (or Ghost, as it was then known), Mr. Demon arose from the dead. Josh

Timbrook had the temerity to suggest that I use some of the stuff from my old game. I had the lack of sense to agree, having forgotten about the curse. Thus was the curse reborn...

> From that moment on, nothing went right. I've never had so much trouble, pandemonium and bad blood getting a project to the finish line. Now, here I am, the last night before we have to ship every-

thing off to the printers, and I'm trying to come up with clever words. It's four in the morning, and this is my third try on this essay. (You should see the gibbering I've been writing so far.) Even if these words suck, I'm not starting over again. Take it or leave it, I'm just glad it's over.

Throughout the design of Wraith, I had this strange feeling a powerful one, that I was going to die. The weird thing is, got so weird that I began to make preparations just in case... Stewart even made jokes about how he'd put my ashes in the ink when the book was printed. Was someone planning to kill me? Damn, who needs enemies?

Strangely enough, this makes me all the more proud of what we've accomplished. I think this game is something special, and some of the blood spilled in its creation has strengthened it and made it more powerful. I find our creation to be beautiful, in spite of the pain (and perhaps because of it), and I hope you do as well. I hope you get something out of it, something real and true.

Remember, I don't believe in curses, but if bad things start happening in your life... you have been warned.

P.S. It just won't stop! Suzanne, my girlfriend, just woke up in a cold sweat, muttering about her car. Now I'm afraid to go to sleep...

P.P.S. As I slowly emerge from adolescence, I am becoming increasingly aware of how much I depend on others, not only for my bread and shelter, but for the mana of life, the ideas and thoughts that make existence worthwhile. The people here at White Wolf provide just such a refuge. A special thanks to all who are members of this fine and strange fellowship. My affection for you knows no bounds.

Filmography: Flatliners, The Haunting, The Shining, The Haunting of Hill House, The Omen, The Nesting, The Entity, Dark Forces, The Lady in White, Ghost Story, The Green Man, Exorcist, Poltergeist, The Shining, I Married A Witch, Topper, Heaven Can Wait, Tetsuo, Hellraiser, Candyman, Our Town, Human Comedy, It's a Wonderful Life, Wings of Desire, Jacob's Ladder, Ghost, All of Me, The Fog, Alien, Ghostbusters, Love and Death, Comics: Sandman, Spectre, Spawn, Mage, Swamp Thing, Hellblazer, Deadman, Authors: Dante, William Blake, Algernon Blackwood, Lewis Theobald III, Joyce Carol Oates, E.A.Poe, Mary Shelly.



When multiple entries are listed, *definitions* are in italics and **primary entries** are in boldface.

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If we shadows have offended, Think but this, and all is mended: That you have but slumbered here, While these visions did appear; And this weak and idle theme, No more yielding than a dream.

SANGEL.

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With each passing day Oblivion encroaches further With every soul that surrenders to Shadow The end draws ever nearer

The world is not as we knew it Decay's sweet stench now clings To all we once held dear Itis called the Shadowlands

In Death there is no where to hide Nowhere to run From the Hate and fear, the pain and bitterness The Shadow within

> Hope is fragile And few have the courage The Passion To face Death, and say T do not go gentle Into that good night"

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