



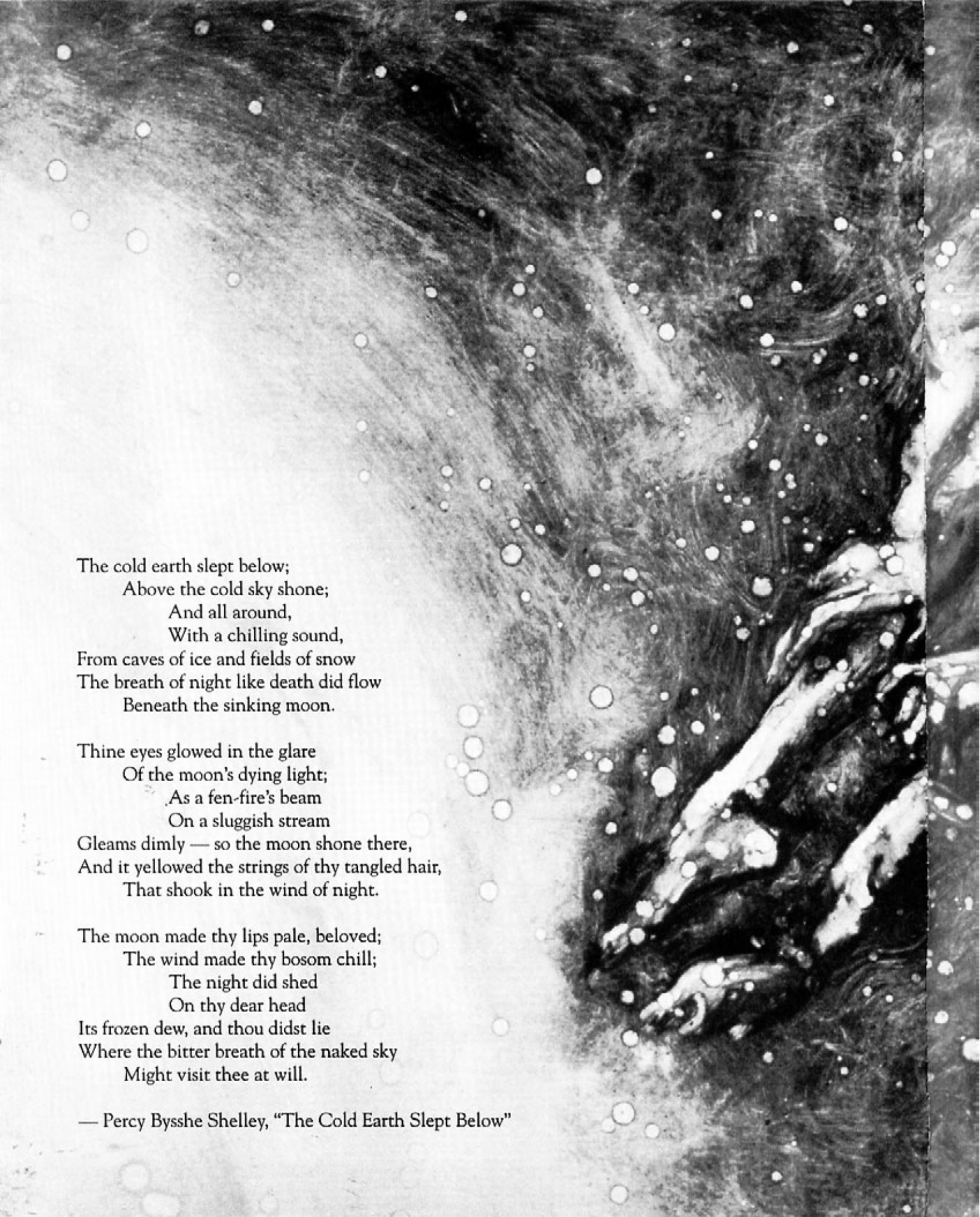
Araith

Players Guide

A decorative border runs along the top, bottom, and right edges of the page. It features a variety of macabre illustrations, including skulls, eyes, and skeletal figures. A chain is depicted running vertically down the right side of the border.

Warpath

Players Guide



The cold earth slept below;
Above the cold sky shone;
And all around,
With a chilling sound,
From caves of ice and fields of snow
The breath of night like death did flow
Beneath the sinking moon.

Thine eyes glowed in the glare
Of the moon's dying light;
As a fen-fire's beam
On a sluggish stream
Gleams dimly — so the moon shone there,
And it yellowed the strings of thy tangled hair,
That shook in the wind of night.

The moon made thy lips pale, beloved;
The wind made thy bosom chill;
The night did shed
On thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Cold Earth Slept Below"



Credits

Written by: Tim Akres, Nathaniel Barmore, Frank Branham, Phil Brucato, Shawn Carter, Jackie Cassada, Sam Chupp, Jeff Combos, James Cosby, Richard Dakan, Richard Dansky, Geoffrey Fortier, Markleford Freidman, J. Lank Hancock, Jennifer Hartshorn, Harry Heckel, Ian Lemke, Jennifer Lindburg, Kalina Mercer, Paul Mercer, James A. Moore, Heather Pritchett, Ethan Skemp, Matthew Skipper, Cynthia Summers, Allen Tower, Richard Watts, Teeuwynn Woodruff and Chelsea Quinn Yarbrow

Development by: Jennifer Hartshorn

Editing by: Ethan Skemp

Art Direction by: Richard Thomas

Art by: Dave Allsop, Stuart P. Beel, Steve Casper, Mike Danza, Brian Dugan, Darryl Elliot, Lee M. Fields, Anthony Hightower (with apologies for leaving his name out of *Sea of Shadows*), H.J. McKinney, E. Allen Smith, and Joshua Gabriel Timbrook.

Cover Art: Henry Higgenbotham

Cover Design: Lawrence Snelly

Layout and typesetting by: Kathleen Ryan

White Wolf, Inc. Executives

Mark Rein•Hagen and Stewart Wieck, Owners

Stephan Wieck, President

Wes Harris, Vice President of Contracts and Licensing

Michael Krause, Vice President of Sales and Marketing

Richard Thomas, Vice President of Production and Design

Ken Cliffe, Director of Development and Editing

Benjamin T. Monk, Jr., Controller

Rebecca Schaefer, Warehouse Manager

Call (404) 292-1819



780 PARK NORTH BOULEVARD
SUITE 100
CLARKSTON, GEORGIA 30021

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Mike "Big Daddy" Krause, for getting down and funky at "The Chamber."

Wes "Marker" Harris, for his favorite TV show.

Oh Soon "Starry Night" Shropshire, who's seeing stars even when she's at the office.

Emory "Meter Maid" Hester, for taking a pipe to the suits from next door.

Louvie "Mom" Locklear, for knowing where the bandaids and the paper towels are at all times.

Erin "Go Bragh" Kelly, for keeping the Irish spirit even when it's not St. Paddy's Day.

What's New With White Wolf

Let's play musical developers! Jennifer Hartshorn, the co-creator and developer of *Wraith: The Oblivion*, will now be taking over the development of *Vampire: The Masquerade* as Andrew Greenberg heads out to brave the computer gaming frontier. Richard Dansky is coming down south to join us as developer for *Wraith: The Oblivion*. Good luck, and congratulations everyone...we think!



Wraith

Players Guide

Ghost Story: Staying, Late, at the Office	7
Introduction	11
Traits	15
Wraith Society	55
The Dark Kingdoms	85
Rules	133
Arcanos	149
Roleplaying	161
Basic Arcanos Chart	176



Ghost Story: Staying Late, At the Office

by Richard Dansky



The worst part about the whole thing is, I've been dead for three weeks and I still can't get out of the office. Pathetic, isn't it?

It's ironic, I suppose. For three months, I'd been attempting to work up the guts to quit, but something always kept me here. A project that I was unwilling to leave unfinished. A last press release that needed my touch. A kind word from my boss. A kind word from anyone. Any excuse. Anything. And now I'm dead, and I'm here, and it's too late.

I wander over to the bay windows that look out on Newbury Street. There are three desks in the office common area, Jay's and Carrie's and my old one, and in the dull red glow of the EXIT light they seem soft and rotten. Then again, everything here has that appearance, that overripe wetness that promises to explode into stink at the slightest touch. The wood of the doors and cabinets isn't warped, it's swollen, fat with sweating moisture and striped with cracks. The carpet was a nauseous green when I worked here, but now it looks like it wants to glow like foxfire or fungus. And the computers...I don't want to talk about what I see when I look at the monitors. Think about it. Monitors by themselves aren't much, it's what they do. They show you pictures, drawn with light.

Can you possibly imagine what rotted light looks like? I don't have to. And I ended up talking about it anyway.

I like looking down at Newbury Street, once all the people have left. I just curl up in the windowsill and look out. Boston's Back Bay isn't all that old, but the buildings were shaped so that they're eager to age. The crumbling

bricks and leper gargoyles I see are proper, somehow. It's comforting just to sit here and gaze out at the streets, knowing that deep down, this is the way they truly are. One night I even worked myself up to slip down the street to the store where they sell gargoyles to the Quick. Once I walked through the door, it was like standing in the ruins of Notre Dame, the day after the end of the world. I loved it. I stayed all night, then scurried back to the office — I refuse to call it "home" — just before dawn.

That was two and a half weeks ago, and I haven't been back since. Ridiculous, I know, but it just didn't feel right. I was a visitor there, maybe even a welcome one, but I just didn't belong. I'm stronger here, more in touch with what I am now. I wish it were different. I hate this place, but everywhere else would be worse. At least, that's what I'm afraid of.

There go the troops again. They march past every three hours, on the hour, starting at sundown. I've never seen them as much as a minute late. Three o'clock, and the march of the dead soldiers means that all's well for somebody. There's twenty of them, strung out double file and wearing the oddest hodgepodge of uniforms I've ever seen. The two who run at the front are dressed like Roman legionnaires, and they seem to be in charge of the redcoats, doughboys, and whatever else trots behind them. When they come along, you can see the other faces, the dead ones, pull back from the windows. Oh yes, there's a lot of other ghosts on Newbury Street. Most of them are even brave enough to wander out on occasion, but when they hear the feet pounding up from the Common, they disappear like crabs after the tide. Very few of my neighbors stay out to greet the troops as they stomp by, and I've noticed from

my perch that those who do are not liked by the rest of the Restless Dead. Ghostly geeks, as it were, or perhaps this is just some post-mortem version of hating the teacher's pet. Damned if I know, and damned if I'm going to set foot out there to find out. It's just not worth that much.

Once the soldiers actually stopped. It was a week after I found myself here and started playing spectator that one of the dead folks I'd been watching stayed out a little too long. She was one of the more popular of the folks on the street, and I wish I'd had the chance to meet her. I'd been working myself up to it, actually. She'd seen me at the window once and smiled, and all of a sudden I realized how alone I was in here. She was pretty, too. Long blonde hair, green eyes, always sort of half-smiling and looking at her watch. I guess her watch was always off, and one day it was a little too far off, and they caught her. I couldn't hear what was said from up here, but at first it just looked like they were going to give her a hard time. You know, show off the shiny uniforms and the shiny swords and throw their weight around. There was a little pushing, and a little shoving, and a whole lot of jawing that obviously wasn't having the desired effect on her. But then one of the redcoats tried to play a little grab-ass with her. I mean, the man's been dead two centuries and he was trying to play grab-ass. Why? He was dead, and she was dead — we're all dead — what the hell is the point of using your big shiny badge to get laid once you're dead? It was sickening. And she turned around, once he'd pinched her ass and was standing there laughing, and tore his arm off.

He looked surprised, as shining plasm poured out of the hole in his shoulder, and then the rest of them got into it. She never stood a chance, not against nineteen of them, and it was over fast. Right before the end, she started

shrieking. There weren't any words to it, it was just a scream that went on and on and on, and it made some of them collapse like their batteries had run out. Then one of the Romans stepped up to her and simply ripped her face off. He reached up and, that fast, ripped her whole face off. Her body collapsed immediately, spilling that same fluid that had poured out of the soldier. The Roman held up her face for a minute, then tucked it into his belt. I could still hear the screaming until after they'd turned to cross the river. It was a very, very long time before the shrieking stopped. It was even longer before the other ghostly inhabitants of Newbury Street came back out again.

At least, that was my theory. I don't actually know how long it took them to come back out, because I was too afraid to sit in the window for days afterwards. I was afraid that the soldiers would see me there, the way she'd seen me there, and come in after me. I was afraid — I am afraid, of that man reaching up to me and tearing off my face, and then letting me scream and scream and scream. Eventually I worked up the guts to climb back into the window, just for a peek, and I noticed that it was business as usual out on the street. It was like she'd never existed. I wish I'd had the chance to meet her.

What I can't understand, though, is that no one else came to help her. These were people, pardon, ghosts, who knew her. Who talked to her. Who, according to everything I could see, liked her. And yet they stayed inside and only the brave ones even watched at the windows. They could have come outside. They could have helped her. There are enough of us here to have stomped 19-and-2/3 soldiers. Why didn't they do it?

Wait a minute. Why didn't I do it? God. I hate this place.




There was a bus and then there was a blur. I was crossing the street after picking up lunch for a couple of my co-workers at the bagel place, and then all of a sudden there was a bus filling my field of vision. It almost didn't have time to hurt, and I remember wondering how Marian was going to get her lunch, since my legs didn't seem to work any more. Then there were sirens, and it got cold and dark very quickly.

Those first few hours were surreal. Everything was blurred, cloudy, but at the same time too bright. It was like wearing frosted glass contacts, but the blur was outside me. I know. I touched it. I felt it. Six hours later, I tore into this thing surrounding me and found myself at my desk, shreds of something soft and milky, like petals, on the floor.

Someone had already taken the computer and the printer out of my work area. It figured.

It didn't take me that long to figure out I was a wraith. I've been collecting stories of this sort of thing for years. The Green Street Ghost in Jamaica Plain, the Black Ship off Gloucester, I ate all of that stuff up when I was alive. It even made sense, in a way, that someone so interested in ghosts should get a little experience at it himself. I hadn't expected things to look so decayed, though. My first guess, judging from the condition of the office, was that this was fifty years after I'd died. I mean, *everything* looked threadbare and rotted. It still does, for that matter.

One look at a calendar ruined that hypothesis, though. It was 1994. October 23, 1994, to be precise, some number of years to the day after Ray Bradbury sent Cooger and Dark's Pandemonium Shadow Show to let us know Something Wicked this way came. I loved that book, and I found myself thinking that it was a very good day to become a ghost, to just float free of responsibility and wrap myself in



darkness for all eternity. Then I caught myself and remembered that it may have been a good day to become a ghost, but it was a really rotten day to die. I hadn't wanted to die yet. I hadn't hated my job enough to want to die to get out of it. At least, I didn't think I had. Certain of my motivations had gotten frayed at the edges.

The true puzzler is why I'm here. I hate this place. I'd only been employed here for half a year before the bus hit me, not long enough, I think, to have let it become so important. Six months shouldn't have been enough to tie me here forever. Six months of hating the place morning and night, yes, but is that enough to trap me here for eternity? It's not like I'm Anne Boleyn and they chopped off my head here. It's not like I'm Old Hamlet, and my secretary poured hemlock in my ear at lunch. It's not like I died here, for God's sake.

I try not to think about it. When I'm not looking out the window, I just wander around the office, trying to avoid staring too hard at the monitors. Most evenings, I end up looking at the map that hangs on the office wall and trying to trace mountains and rivers I never had a chance to see. Occasionally I think I do feel the paper under my fingers, but the feeling always vanishes. I can walk through doors, but I can't touch them. It's maddening.

In any case, I do spend a lot of evenings staring at the map. It's full of pins with big red and blue heads, marking where my former employer has offices and where he intends conquer next. In truth, it makes it look like America's come down with a sort of skin disease that's spreading. This thing's appearance hasn't improved since I died, either. Still, it's one of the few things in the office that I can stand to look at for more than a solid minute. There are wonderful places and names on the map, places I never would have had time even to notice while I was alive. Now I know where the Chocolate Mountains and the Snake River are. There's a place called Truth or Consequences out there, and I spent hours staring at that spot on the map, wondering what the story behind the name could be. The only things that ruin the map for me are those pins.

They're everywhere, rotten red and bloated blue, and they interrupt any pleasure I can possibly derive from the thing. I trace the graceful line of a river down from Canada, and before I go two inches, there's a pin. Boston is fenced in with them. Philadelphia is impaled. Everywhere I look, those pins are there, making the map writhe underneath them. It's hateful, and I hate the fact that I can keep walking after I'm dead, but I can't pull out one goddamn little pin.

Did one of them just twitch? Yes! The one marking St. Louis, the company's next intended target, is shaking. It twitches, and I can see the red ball wobble as it starts to work free. *Come on!* I scream at it, not caring if the ghosts

in the street hear me. *Come out you sonofabitch!* I'm shouting and stomping, and it shakes back and forth, back and forth, wearing a groove in the map. I know this will piss off my former boss to no end, and the thought makes the pin rock even faster. It's still missing something, however. My hate of this place isn't enough. My hate for that particular pin isn't even enough. I need more.

I close my eyes and reach forward for the map, still willing the pin to come to me. It will come. It will leave the map. It will come to my hand. It will come.

There is a shock of pain, and my eyes open. The pin has come. It's stuck through my palm. It hurts like hell, but I start laughing. The first of my very own stigmata, in the name of a clean map. Suddenly, that's not so funny. I turn back to the map, and tell the rest of the pins to come to me. I don't close my eyes this time; I don't need to. Now I know I can make them move.

One by one, they start shaking. One by one, they fly free, somehow reversing themselves in midair, and one by one, they embed themselves in my outstretched right hand. Each one hurts, and I fall to my knees. That shining fluid is running down my arm now, and still the pins are coming. San Francisco harpoons the fleshy part of my thumb. Wheeling spears my love line. Boston lands at the very end of my life line, and I give a ragged little laugh. The pins go deep, and still I will them to keep coming. Out in the street someone is singing, and still I keep the pins coming. The singing gets louder and louder, and all of a sudden I realize that there's no new pain. I look up, and the map is clear. Pockmarked with holes, perhaps, but clear of pins. I look down at my hand and wonder. It's spined with steel slivers, as the red and blue balls all seem to have broken off from the steel spines of the pins. I take a deep breath, and, slowly and deliberately, I turn my palm to the floor and press as hard as I can. Maybe if I have the courage to do this to myself, I can work up the guts to leave this building. What they did to that girl can't be any more horrible than what I'm doing to myself. I keep pressing down and down, and then it gets to be too much and I start screaming.

From somewhere outside, through the night, I hear an answering scream. It sounds like it's coming from far away, maybe from across the river. It sounds like it might be her. I lift myself up now, and stagger to my feet. My arm is wet, but I've stopped leaking. The pins have gone all the way through my hand and as I flex my fingers, I see that I've spined my hand with steel. If I had blood, it would be ringing in my ears right now.

I turn from the map and walk over to the window. The singing has stopped, but my shriek is still echoing between the buildings. I look out at the street full of wondering ghosts, and promise myself that I will find a way to meet her. Soon.



Introduction

*I'll never forget when time held its breath
No sound at all, the cold kiss of death...*
— Trio Nocturna, "Song for Azrael"



he information in this book is focused on helping you to make more complete **Wraith** characters. Sections such as the chapters dealing with the Dark Kingdoms or wraith society can open up whole new ways of playing, and suggest chronicles or subplots to your existing game.

But the most important thing to remember is that the guidelines and suggestions in this book are just that — not gospel. Ghost stories evolved from a largely oral tradition, and like the stories that came before, you should always feel that your version of the ghost story can become anything you want it to be. This **Players Guide** will hopefully provide you with some new ideas and spur you on to create stories that are uniquely your own.

Chapter One: Traits contains new Merits, Flaws and Abilities to help personalize your character.

Chapter Two: Society. Expanded history and culture of **Wraith's** three main factions, as well as new information on wraith society as a whole.

Chapter Three: Dark Kingdoms. And you thought there were only three! Sheesh. Game background drawing on the rich mythological traditions of ghosts in Asia, Mesoamerica, Africa, the Caribbean, Polynesia, India and Australia!

Chapter Four: Rules. Fetters, Passions, new uses for old abilities, hacking and when to not use numbers and dice at all.

Chapter Five: Arcanos. New Arcanos, as well as new ways to look at the old and familiar arts.

Chapter Six: Roleplaying. Ideas and points to ponder from players, Storytellers and writers of **Wraith**.

Setting the Scene

While every chronicle will have a different feel to it, the following are a few books and films that can serve as useful "homework" for any **Wraith** game. Players should have as much a voice in shaping the look and feel of a chronicle as the Storyteller, so don't hesitate to suggest ways to make the game more fun for everyone involved!

Recommended Films

The Crow: A White Wolf favorite and the ultimate **Wraith** movie. Plenty of angst, atmosphere and Gothic-Punk decay. If you want a view of the World of Darkness, there is no better one than this.

Beetlejuice: Tim Burton's wacky farce nevertheless offers a worm's eye view of a Hierarchy-type afterlife, complete with hassled bureaucrats and a major-league Fetter — the house. Well done and worth seeing.

The Changeling: The story of one wraith's vengeance upon the world. This film shows the influence that a powerful ghost can have on the material world. Very good film: strong mood, excellent cinematography and suspense.

Jacob's Ladder: One of the most intelligent horror films ever made. Stylish and thoughtful, this hypnotic trip through modern Shadowlands is not a ghost story in the traditional sense, but evokes the reality-bending nature of the Tempest. A bit slow for some, but highly recommended.

Flatliners: The high-gloss poor cousin to *Jacob's Ladder*. Still, it isn't bad. The cast, while a bit shallow, are competent and the film has its moments. Especially effective is a scene where Julia Roberts encounters her dead father. Worth a look.



Ghost: Although it's exceedingly Hollywood, it's good Hollywood. Many **Wraith** themes and features are here; skinriding, Spectres, insubstantiality and more. Veers from borderline farce to romance to creepy horror. Also check out *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, a similar British film with a fantastic cast.

Poltergeist: The touching tale of a nice family, a haunt, and some truly pissed-off Spectres. The ending is a bit over the top, but the film is generally solid and has plenty of ideas for wild **Wraith** chronicles. Ignore the sequels; they reek.

Ghost Story: Although this film, like many others, is told from the perspective of the living, this adaptation of Peter Straub's novel (also recommended) offers good examples of a wraith, her Fetters, and some nasty Arcanos in action.

Dreamscape: Another film that, while it has nothing to do with ghosts (other than Sandmen), captures the atmosphere of the Shadowlands. Enjoyable overall, with a few really good moments.

The Shining: The film has little to do with the book, but both have a lot to offer. While Stephen King's novel stands as one of the greatest ghost tales in the history of fiction, Stanley Kubrick's film goes for a more psychological approach. Both present chilling visions of the Restless Dead and their effects on the living.

Ghostbusters: Yeah, it's silly, but this lunatic ghost story has plenty to recommend it; a good cast, hilarious script and some amusing Arcanos in the bargain.

The Evil Dead, I and II: Although these films are really low-budget and kind of silly, Sam Raimi's twin tales of a haunted house gone berserk exhibit some startling Arcanos and a few truly unsettling moments. The first is serious, the second a comedy, and both are worth watching. The third installment, *Army of Darkness*, is the best of the lot, but isn't really a **Wraith** story.

Gothic: Ken Russell's demented retelling of the antics that inspired three of the Romantic era's most influential artists — Lord Byron, Mary Wollstonecraft and Percy Shelley. While this film has little to do with ghosts, *Gothic* has a lot to offer **Wraith** fans in terms of atmosphere, madness and a spectrum of horrors. Highly recommended.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: OK, admittedly there are no ghosts in this one, and yes, they do deviate a lot from the book. It's still one of the best atmospheric pieces, especially for chronicles set in the actual "Gothic" period.

The Lady in White: An obvious movie to bring up when discussing ghost stories. An excellent study in Fetters.

Wings of Desire: A fantastic foreign film (though the bits with Peter Sellers are in English!) dealing with the meaning of life, the meaning of death, and those who are somewhere in between the two. Highly recommended!



Reading

There are thousands of really good ghost stories out there, and many other nonfiction works that approach wandering souls from reality's perspective. The books mentioned below are only the tip of a massive iceberg; there is plenty of material out there for **Wraith** players and Storytellers.

Jackson, Shirley — *The Haunting of Hill House*. One of the greatest ghost tales of the modern era. Atmospheric, well-crafted and eerie.

King, Stephen — *Danse Macabre*, *The Shining*. The latter novel is mentioned above in the film section; *Danse Macabre*, however, is a nonfiction book about horror and the mass media. Both are excellent.

Lovecraft, H.P. — *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*, *Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre*. Read this stuff. Nuff said.

Poe, Edgar Allen. American Gothic at its best!

Straub, Peter — *Ghost Story*, *If You Could See Me Now*. *If You Could See Me Now*, one of Straub's earlier works, seems like a rehearsal for the later book (see films). Both are worth checking out.

Turner, Alice — *A History of Hell*. A comprehensive and easy-to-read overview of the concept of the dark Underworld, from the gloomy ancient underworlds to the sadistically ornate Hells of medieval and Renaissance Europe and the reformist concept of Purgatory. A must for **Wraith** Storytellers.



Traits



This Book contains Traits for Wraith characters: new Abilities and Backgrounds, new Shadow Archetypes, as well as a new Trait category, Merits and Flaws. These Traits may be used to build new characters or to spice up existing ones, with the Storyteller's approval.

The usual rules for character creation still apply in regard to these offerings. Many of these Merits, Flaws and Abilities originated in *Werewolf*, *Mage* or *Vampire*, although many have been reworked to apply to wraiths. Storytellers and players should feel free to allow or disallow any or all of these Traits in their games.

Merits and Flaws



Merits and Flaws are new character Traits that add color and flavor to your Wraith chronicle. Merits provide characters with some benefit, while Flaws act to their detriment. Some of these Traits will have little effect on a game beyond a dash of style; others could unbalance a chronicle or completely change its direction. Powerful Merits or Flaws will shape a character's destiny and any relationships he or she has.

When you create a character in *Wraith*, you are given 15 "freebie" points to assign to whatever Traits you like, in order to give your character the finishing touches that make her unique. The optional system of Merits and Flaws expands on this idea, allowing you to further personalize your character.

Merits may be purchased only with freebie points and only during character conception. Flaws provide additional freebies to spend, again, only during initial conception. You may take a maximum of seven points of Flaws, limiting potential freebie points to a total of 22. Some Merits and Flaws have variable point costs; these Traits offer more options for character creation.

Merits and Flaws are provided to flesh out a character and add new story hooks and details, not to allow powergamers to min/max their characters into war machines. Players should make sure that the Storyteller allows these options in the chronicle before creating characters based around these options. Each chronicle is individual and unique, so there is no telling what restrictions or changes the Storyteller has in mind. There is no right or wrong way, only ways that work for everyone concerned.



Psychological

These Merits and Flaws deal with the psychological makeup of your character, and may describe ideals, motivations or pathologies. Some psychological Flaws can be temporarily ignored by spending a Willpower point, and are so noted. If you possess such a Flaw and do not roleplay it when the Storyteller thinks you should, then she may tell you that you have spent a point of Willpower for the effort. Flaws cannot be conveniently ignored.

Code of Honor: (1 point Merit)

You have a personal code of ethics to which you strictly adhere. You can automatically resist most temptations that would bring you in conflict with your code. When battling supernatural persuasion (Mind magick, vampiric Domination, etc.) that would make you violate your code, either you gain three extra dice to resist or your opponent's difficulties are increased by two (Storyteller's choice). You must construct your own personal code of honor in as much detail as you can, outlining the general rules of conduct by which you abide.

Higher Purpose: (1 point Merit)

All wraiths have "reason to live," but you have a special commitment to it. Your chosen goal drives and directs you in everything. You do not concern yourself with petty matters and casual concerns, because your higher purpose is everything. Though you may sometimes be driven by this purpose and find yourself forced to behave in ways contrary to the needs of personal survival, it can also grant you great personal strength. You gain two extra dice on any roll that has something to do with this higher purpose. You need to decide what your higher purpose is. Make sure you talk it over with the Storyteller first. Storytellers should consider carefully whether or not this will make a character with already high Passions too powerful before agreeing to allow this Merit. (If you have the Flaw Driving Goal, listed below, you cannot take this Merit.)

Addiction: (1-2 point Flaw)

While most addictions are tied to the weaknesses of the flesh and therefore not a concern to the Restless Dead, it is possible to form a psychological addiction to a thing or even a person. Because these addictions are psychological, they may be easier to overcome than a physical dependency...though given the passionate nature of most wraiths, even a psychological addiction can be hard to shake.

If, for whatever reason, you are denied access to the person or object, you lose the number of dice equal to the level of your addiction (one or two) from all Dice Pools

until you receive your "fix." If you are deprived of contact with the person or object for an extended length of time, you will be forced to make a Willpower check (difficulty of 4 for the first day, + 1 for each additional day). If you fail, you will forgo everything and forcibly go seeking the object of your desire.

Compulsion: (1 point Flaw)

You have a psychological compulsion of some sort, which can cause you a number of different problems. Your compulsion may be for cleanliness, perfection, bragging, stealing, gaming, exaggeration or just talking. A compulsion can be temporarily avoided at the cost of a Willpower point, but it is in effect at all other times.

Dark Secret: (1 point Flaw)

You have some sort of secret that, if uncovered, would be of immense embarrassment to you and would make you a pariah among your peers. This can be anything from having consigned a Gaunt to Oblivion to having once fallen to a Spectre's temptations. While this secret weighs on your mind at all times, it will only surface in occasional stories. Otherwise, it will begin to lose its impact. This secret may or may not be tied to one of your Fetters.

Echoes of the Past: (1-3 points)

You are unwilling to leave your life in the Skinlands behind you. This compulsion is so powerful that it actually has a physical manifestation in the personal haunt of a wraith. In its simplest form (one point), it can be a scent which was important to you while alive. Perhaps it is the smell of the lilac perfume you wore, the roses you tended, or a whiff of the gin with which you drank yourself to death. Anyone present in the haunt may make a Perception roll (difficulty 6) to notice this.

The next level of this Flaw (two points) deals with sounds. Noises connected to your mortal days can be heard in the haunt (difficulty 6), and faintly outside the haunt (difficulty 8). Melodies, gentle sobbing, and the high, evil lilt of a child's laughter are typical examples.

The third level (three points) is the most complex and spectacular. In this incarnation, the manifestation is visual. Soft glows akin to candles might be seen radiating in and out of the haunt (difficulty 6). Sometimes, images might be seen out of the corner of the eye (i.e., the image of an important Fetter).

The obvious danger of this flaw is that the Quick might be able to tell when a wraith is "at home," since the flaw only comes into play when the wraith is in her Haunt. Any number of actions might occur after such a discovery....



Note that the wraith is not Embodied when the manifestations occur. She also cannot gain Memoriam from those who see these occurrences. Often these manifestations are tied to a wraith's Fetters. Your Storyteller may allow you to take more than one effect — i.e., visual and auditory, or olfactory and visual.

Intolerance: (1 point Flaw)

You have an unreasoning dislike of a certain thing. This may be an animal, a class of person, a situation or just about anything else. The difficulties of all dice rolls involving the subject are increased by two. Note that some dislikes may be too trivial to be reflected here — a dislike of INPHOBIA or tissue paper, for instance, will have little effect on play in most chronicles. The Storyteller is the final arbiter on what you can pick to dislike.

Overconfident: (1 point Flaw)

You have an exaggerated and unshakable opinion of your own worth and capabilities — you never hesitate to trust your abilities, even in situations where you risk defeat. Because your abilities may not be enough, such overconfidence can be very dangerous. When you do fail, you quickly find someone or something else to blame. If you are convincing enough, you can infect others with your overconfidence.

Phobia (Mild): (1 point Flaw)

You have an overpowering fear of something. You instinctively and illogically retreat from and avoid the object of your fear. Common objects of phobias include certain animals, insects, crowds, open spaces, confined spaces and heights. You must make a Willpower roll whenever you encounter the object of your fear. The difficulty of this roll is determined by the Storyteller. If you fail the roll, you must retreat from the object.

Shy: (1 point Flaw)

You are distinctly ill at ease when dealing with people and try to avoid social situations whenever possible. The difficulties of all rolls concerned with social dealings are increased by one; the difficulties of any rolls made while you are the center of attention are increased by two. Don't expect your character to make a public speech.

Curiosity: (2 point Flaw)

You are a naturally curious person and find mysteries of any sort irresistible. In most circumstances, you find that your curiosity easily overrides your common sense. To resist the temptation, make a Wits roll versus difficulty 5 for simple things like "I wonder what is in that cabinet?" In-



crease the difficulty to 9 for things like "I'll just peek into the Marshal's library — no one will know. What could possibly go wrong?"

Obsession: (2 point Flaw)

There is something you like, love or are fascinated by to the point where you often disregard common sense to cater to this drive. You react positively to anything related to your obsession, even if it's not in your best interests. For example, if you are obsessed with supernatural creatures, you will go out of your way to talk to and befriend vampires, werewolves and stranger things, and find out as much as you can about them, disregarding all warnings. If you are obsessed with Elvis, you have your house decorated with velvet paintings and annoy your friends with your constant talk about the King. You don't necessarily believe that Elvis is still alive, but you buy every supermarket tabloid that carries an article about him anyway. There are many other obsessions, including British Royalty, guns, knives, football, roleplaying games...you know the type. As with the Merit: Higher Purpose, the Storyteller must be careful that a wraith with this Merit and high Passions does not grow too powerful.

Vengeance: (2 point Flaw)

You have a score to settle — a Circle was wiped out, a friend was corrupted, a parent was slain...whatever. You are obsessed with wreaking vengeance on the guilty party. Revenge is your first priority in all situations. The need for vengeance can only be overcome by spending Willpower points, and even then, it only temporarily subsides. Some day you may have your revenge, but the Storyteller won't make it easy. This is another Merit that the Storyteller must carefully monitor to ensure it isn't abused by linking it to strong Passions.

Driving Goal: (3 point Flaw)

You have a personal goal, which sometimes compels and directs you in startling ways. The goal is always limitless in depth, and you can never truly achieve it. It could be to eradicate the Hierarchy or achieve total enlightenment. Because you must work toward your goal throughout the chronicle (though you can avoid it for short periods by spending Willpower), it will get you into trouble and may jeopardize other actions. Choose your driving goal carefully, as it will direct and focus everything your character does. Storytellers should be cautious to not allow Driving Goals which are identical to strong Passions possessed by the character (sound familiar?).

Flashbacks: (3 point Flaw)

You are prone to flashbacks if you are in either high-pressure situations or circumstances that are similar to the trauma that caused the flashback itself. The flashback does not have to be combat-oriented; either positive or negative stimulation could result in a flashback episode. Emotional anxiety and stress are the usual catalysts for the flashbacks to begin. Flashing back to a good and happy vision can be just as dangerous or distracting as suddenly flashing to being surrounded by demons. The flashbacks can be caused by almost any trauma — torture, extended combat or events similar to those in which you died. During the flashback, you are not aware of what is really around you. Even people speaking to you will be viewed as people or objects from the vision. You can mistake men for women, people for animals and even inanimate objects for people. To you, reality has shifted, and you are back *there* again.

Hatred: (3 point Flaw)

You have an unreasoning hatred of a certain thing. This hate is total and largely uncontrollable. You may hate a species of animal, a class of person, a situation or just about anything else, and you constantly pursue opportunities to harm the hated object or to gain power over it.

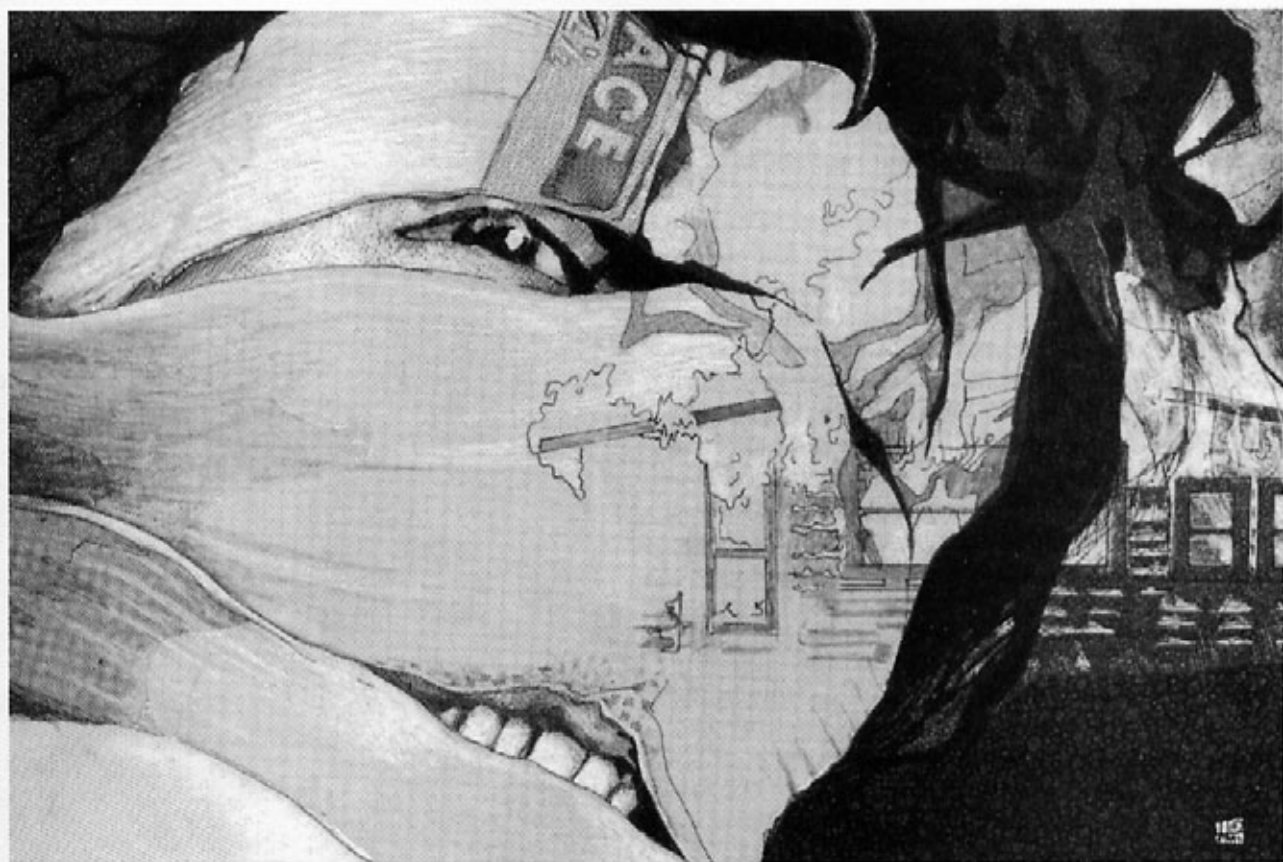
Lifesaver: (3 point Flaw)

You believe that human life is a sacred gift and will not take a person's life or consign a Restless soul to Oblivion except in the most extreme of circumstances. You may not ever willingly endanger the lives of innocents or in any way participate in a killing. You have no problems with killing animals (for the right reasons), and will kill evil and inhuman creatures such as Spectres to protect others if necessary. (Be very careful, however, with your definition of "evil"....) Senseless death in all forms repulses you, and you feel that murderers should be punished and stopped.

Phobia (Severe): (3 point Flaw)

You have an overpowering fear of something. Common objects of fear include certain animals, insects, crowds, open spaces, confined spaces, heights and so on. You must make a Willpower roll not to freak out when faced with the object of your fear. The difficulty depends on the circumstances. If you fail the roll, you must retreat in terror from the object of fear. If you score less than three successes, you will not approach it. The Storyteller has final say over which phobias are allowed in a chronicle.





Mental

These Merits and Flaws deal with the mind: its strengths, weaknesses and special capacities. The mind of a wraith is a powerful weapon; quirks should be considered carefully.

Common Sense: (1 point Merit)

You have a significant amount of practical, everyday wisdom. Whenever you are about to do something contrary to common sense, the Storyteller should alert you to how your potential action might violate practicality. This is an ideal Merit if you are a novice player; it allows you to receive advice from the Storyteller concerning what you can and cannot do, and (even more importantly) what you should and should not do.

Concentration: (1 point Merit)

You have the ability to focus your mind and shut out any distractions or annoyances, above and beyond normal wraithly discipline. Any penalty to a difficulty or Dice Pool arising from a distraction or other inauspicious circumstance is limited to two points or dice, though no extra benefits are gained if only one penalty die or difficulty point is imposed.

Lightning Calculator: (1 point Merit)

You have a natural affinity with numbers and a talent for mental arithmetic, making you a natural when working with computers or betting at the racetracks. The difficulties of all relevant rolls are decreased by two. Another possible use for this ability, assuming you have numbers on which to base your conclusions, is the ability to calculate the difficulty of certain tasks. In appropriate situations, you may ask the Storyteller to estimate the difficulty rating of a task you are about to perform. This Merit is common among Artificers.

Eidetic Memory: (2 point Merit)

You can remember things seen and heard with perfect detail. By gaining at least one success on an Intelligence + Alertness roll, you can recall any sight or sound accurately, even if you heard it or glanced at it only once (although the difficulty of such a feat would be high). Five successes enable you to recall an event perfectly: the Storyteller relates to you exactly what was seen or heard.

Iron Will: (4 point Merit)

When you are determined and your mind is set, nothing can divert you from your goals. You cannot be Dominated by vampires, and wraiths and mages using mental attacks against you gain an additional + 3 to their difficulties if you are aware of them and resisting. However, the additional mental defense costs you one Willpower per turn. Even if you are unaware of them, mages and wraiths seeking to influence you with magick or Arcanos such as Intimation add + 1 to their difficulties. However, this Merit only applies to outside influences, and will grant no benefits to wraiths trying to resist their own Shadows.

Self-Confident: (5 point Merit)

When you spend a point of Willpower to gain an automatic success, your self-confidence may allow you to gain the benefit of that expenditure without actually losing the Willpower point. When you declare that you are using a point of Willpower and roll for successes, you do not lose the point of Willpower unless you fail. This will also prevent you from botching, but only if you declare that you are spending the Willpower point before you roll. This Merit may only be used when you need confidence in your abilities in order to succeed. You can use it only when the difficulty of your roll is six or higher. You may spend Willpower at other times; however, if the difficulty is five or less, the Merit: Self-Confidence will not help you.

Confused: (2 point Flaw)

You are often confused, and the world seems to be a very distorted and twisted place. Sometimes you are simply unable to make sense of things. You need to roleplay this behavior all the time to a small degree, but your confusion becomes especially strong whenever stimuli surround you (such as when a number of different people talk all at once, or you enter a nightclub with loud pounding music). You may spend Willpower to override the effects of your confusion, but only temporarily.

Absent-Minded: (3 point Flaw)

This Flaw may not be taken with the Merit: Concentration. Though you do not forget such things as Knowledges and Skills, you do forget such things as names, addresses and the last time you gained Pathos. In order to remember anything more than your own name, your Fetters, or the location of your Haunt, you need to make a Wits roll or, as a last resort, spend a Willpower point.

Amnesia: (3 point Flaw)

You are unable to remember anything about your mortal life. Your past is a blank slate, and may come back to haunt you. You may or may not know where all your Fetters are; you likely will not know why they are so important. Similarly, you may have a vague concept of your Passions, but know nothing of the specifics. (You may, if you wish, take up to four other points of Flaws without specifying what they are. The Storyteller can supply the details. Over the course of the chronicle, you and your character will slowly discover them. Amnesia can be a dangerous Flaw for wraiths; your Storyteller is under no obligation to be merciful.)

Aptitudes

These Merits and Flaws establish your wraith's special capacities and abilities, or modify the effects and powers of your wraith's other Traits.

Ambidextrous: (1 point Merit)

You have a high degree of off-hand dexterity and can perform tasks with the "wrong" hand at no penalty. The normal penalty for using both hands at once to perform different tasks (such as fighting with a weapon in each hand) is at a + 1 difficulty for the "right" hand and a + 3 difficulty for the other hand.

Computer Aptitude: (1 point Merit)


You have a natural affinity with computers, so the difficulties of all rolls to repair, construct or operate them are reduced by two. This is especially handy for Artificers or anyone possessing Inhabit.

Crack Driver: (1 point Merit)

You have a natural affinity with driving motorized wheeled vehicles, such as cars, 18-wheelers and even tractors. The difficulties of all rolls requiring risky or especially difficult driving maneuvers are reduced by two. However, unless you possess a relic vehicle, this Merit may not be as beneficial to you in death as it may have been in life.

Mechanical Aptitude: (1 point Merit)

You are naturally adept with all kinds of mechanical devices (note that this aptitude does not extend to electronic devices, such as computers). The difficulties of all dice rolls to understand, repair or operate any kind of mechanical device are reduced by two. However, this Merit doesn't help you drive any sort of vehicle.



Natural Linguist: (2 point Merit)

You have a flair for languages. This Merit does not allow you to learn more languages than the number permitted by your Linguistics score, but you may add three dice to any Dice Pool involving languages (both written and spoken).

Daredevil: (3 point Merit)

You are good at taking risks, and are even better at surviving them. All difficulties are one less whenever you try something particularly dangerous, and you can ignore one botch result when you roll "ones" on such actions (you can cancel a single "one" that is rolled, as if you have an extra success). This is a particularly appropriate for those wraiths who met their demise as a result of their own reckless behavior.

Fast Learner: (5 point Merit)

You learn very quickly, and pick up on new things faster than most. You gain one extra experience point at the conclusion of each story (not each game session).

Jack-Of-All-Trades: (5 point Merit)

You have a large pool of miscellaneous skills and knowledge obtained through your extensive travels, the jobs you've held, or just all-around know-how. You automatically have one dot in all Skill and Knowledge Dice Pools. This is an illusory level, used only to simulate a wide range of abilities. If the character trains or spends experience in the Skill or Knowledge, he must pay the point cost for the first level a "second time" before raising the Skill or Knowledge to two dots.

Inept: (5 point Flaw)

You are not attuned to your natural aptitudes, and therefore have five less points to spend on your Talents (so the most you could take on your talents would be 8, and the least would be 0). Of course, you can still spend freebie points to take Talents. However, you cannot, at the start of the game, have any Talent at level three or higher.

Uneducated: (5 point Flaw)

Because you have never been to school, you have five less points to spend on your Knowledge abilities (so the most you could take would be 8, and the least would be 0). Of course you can still spend freebie points to take Knowledges. However, you cannot, at the start of the game, have any Knowledge at level three or higher.

Unskilled: (5 point Flaw)

You have never trained extensively in any skill or craft, and therefore have five less points to spend on your Skills (so the most you could take on your skills would be 8, and the least would be 0). Of course, you can still spend freebie points to take Skills. However, you cannot, at the start of the game, have any Skills at level three or higher.

Corporeal

When a wraith forms a Corpus in the Underworld, all physical characteristics are left behind with the earthly body. However, a wraith's Corpus can possess its own strengths and weaknesses, as illustrated by these Merits and Flaws.

Full of Life: (1-4 point Merit)

You were always vibrant, energetic, and full of life when you were alive. This serves you well in death, as your maximum Corpus is higher than that of most wraiths. For each point that you invest in this Merit, you may have one more Corpus Level than usual. The only drawback to this Merit is that when you are above 10 Corpus Levels, you will seem somewhat more real and almost alive to other wraiths. This may keep you from hiding in a crowd, and may spoil any attempt at cloaking or disguising your identity.

Malleable (2 point Merit)

Your Corpus is easily manipulated, giving you a - 2 difficulty on any of the arts of Moliarte. Unfortunately, this also means that difficulties to use the art Rend on you are likewise reduced.

Disembodied: (6 point Merit)

You have completely forsaken the idea of a physical body and exist in the Shadowlands as a drifting voice. You can use Arcanos, but may not manipulate physical objects in any way. Simply cross out your Physical attributes. You may be harmed, however by Arcanos that affect your Corpus, and by certain artifacts. Obviously, you may never have possessions of any type unless you can convince someone to carry them around for you.

The main drawback of being disembodied is that you may not affect the Skinlands in any physical way. You cannot use Embody, Inhabit, Moliarte, Outrage, or Pandemonium Arcanos.



Botched Moliation: (1-3 point Flaw)

Something went wrong when you tried to Moliate once. Maybe you were just learning and goofed badly, or someone really flubbed it when they did it on you. Either way, you now have a daily reminder of the flub-up, and it has resisted attempts to fix it permanently.

Distinctive Appearance: (1 point Flaw)

You have something unforgettable about your appearance, like a strange hairstyle, a tattoo in a prominent place, or bi-colored eyes. People who see it will remember it and thus, you. You can cover it with Moliare, but Moliare costs Corpus, and who has that much to burn? If you're trying to hide or stay unnoticed, this can be a royal pain.

Limited Lifesight (2 point Flaw)

Your difficulty to use Lifesight is increased by two, due to your inability to perceive life patterns in things.

Limited Deathsight (2 point Flaw)

Your difficulty to use Deathsight is increased by two, due to your inability to perceive the subtle trail decay leaves behind.

Rotting: (2 point Flaw)

You have always thought of the dead as rotting, festering things that resemble your worst nightmare, and this twisted self-concept has marked your Corpus in the Underworld. Parts of your body are rotted away and muscle and tissue show through the rents in your flesh. Social interaction rolls are increased by a difficulty of 1. If you are ever able to make your form visible to mortals by using Embody, you will frighten mortals much easier. Mortals affected by the Fog react as if they had two fewer Willpower than they actually possess.

Fragile Corpus (3 point Flaw)

Your Corpus clings together tenuously. If you wish to pass through a solid object, you will lose two Corpus Levels instead of the normal one. Similarly, if you lose more than four Corpus Levels in a single blow, you must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) or be dragged into a Harrowing.



Ties

These Merits and Flaws deal not only with Underworld society, but also with the relationships (good and bad) that wraiths can develop with residents of the mortal world.

Heretic Boon: (1-3 point Merit)

The members of a given Heretical Cult rewarded you with a boon for aid rendered. The power in this depends on the level taken and may be used for a number of things (with Storyteller permission). If you get greedy or abuse their trust, they have every right to revoke it. While lower levels may grant you entrance to a Haunt to attend a meeting, higher levels may give you access to the resources of the Cult.

Hierarchy Boon: (1-4 point Merit)

You received a boon from the higher powers of the Hierarchy in exchange for some sort of assistance. This reads as a sort of blank check and may be used for various favors depending on the level, either a "Spend a night free" or lifetime immunity. Don't abuse it, or it may very well be revoked. This Merit can range from one to four points, with lower levels granting safe passage through Hierarchy controlled areas and higher levels even allowing you to carry darksteel legally.

Renegade Boon: (1-3 point Merit)

You have somehow earned a boon from a certain group of Renegades. The level of this Merit determines the power and utility of the boon. Lower levels of this Merit can get you small favors or safe passage from the Renegades; three points may well reflect a favor that the entire Gang must repay. As with the other boons, abuse of this Merit may well result in it being revoked.

Mortal Companion: (2 point Merit)

You maintain close ties with a mortal, either through Fetters or by chance friendship. This could be a medium whose seance you attended, or a parapsychologist you're assisting in research. In most cases you will want to be attuned to this mortal, though you will still have to go through the process of attunement normally. Of course, this friend may well prove to be a liability when enemies attempt to use your friendship as a threat or a bargaining chip against you.

Reputation: (2 point Merit)

You have a good reputation among the wraiths of either the Hierarchy, Heretic or Renegade factions. It may be your reputation, or derived from your Mentor. Add three

dice to any Dice Pools involving social dealings with others of the faction. A wraith with this Merit may not take the Flaw: Notoriety.

Werewolf/Vampire/Mage/Changeling Companion: (3 point Merit)

You have a friend and ally who just happens to be a supernatural creature, such as a vampire, werewolf, mage or changeling. Though you may call on this being in time of need, she also has the right to call upon you — after all, you are friends. Neither your kind nor hers appreciate such a relationship; while wraiths deal with other supernatural beings on a fairly regular basis, all sides share a healthy distrust of each other. Your friend will not become a walking Pathos battery for greedy wraiths. Such relationships often end badly.... The Storyteller will create the character in question, and will not reveal its full powers and potencies.

Psychic Ally: (4 point Merit)

Someone you knew in life is "sensitive" to your presence, and can tell when you are near, even in the Shadowlands. This person does not suffer from the Fog where you are concerned (though the normal penalties apply for other wraiths), can communicate with you and could likely be of assistance to you in numerous ways. However, you must also watch out for this person, as any enemies you make in the Shadowlands might wish to see him suffer for aiding you.

Enemy: (1-5 point Flaw)

Sometime in your life, or after your death for that matter, you offended an unknown being with the power to cause you grief. This entity could be an enlightened mortal, a vampire, a mage, or even a demon. Whatever the case, you now have to deal with the being's manipulations and attempts to cause you harm. These attempts can range from minor inconveniences all the way to attempts to help your Shadow gain dominance and sending Spectres after you. You may not even know just what it is that is going out of its way to hurt you. You and the Storyteller should discuss the severity of your enemy's hatred and whether or not you are aware of what is pursuing you. The Storyteller awards the Freebie points for this Flaw.

Twisted Apprenticeship: (1 point Flaw)

Your Reaper was quite malevolent and taught you all the wrong things about wraith society. Your concepts of Circle politics are all wrong, and your faulty beliefs are likely to get you into a great deal of trouble. Over time,

after many hard lessons, you can overcome this bad start (the Storyteller will tell you when). But until then, you will continue to believe what you were first told, no matter how others try to "trick" you into thinking otherwise.

Notoriety: (3 point Flaw)

You have a bad reputation among your peers; perhaps you violated Charon's Code once too often, or belong to an unpopular Circle. There is a two dice penalty to all dice rolls for social dealings with associated wraiths. A character with this Flaw may not take the Merit: Reputation.

Supernatural


These Merits and Flaws are different kinds of supernatural benefits or detriments. Though rare, they are far more common among wraiths — who alter reality by their very presence — than among other beings. Because of the potential of these particular Traits, the Storyteller might not allow you to pick from this category; ask before you choose one. Furthermore, you should not select such Traits unless they firmly fit your character concept, and you can explain why your character possesses them. In general, we do not recommend that anyone have more than one or two supernatural Merits or Flaws — they should be strictly controlled by the Storyteller.

Tomb: (1-2 point Merit)

Some people still bury or entomb the dead with all sorts of relics and goods which are supposed to be useful in the afterlife. Fortunately, you believed in this and have a tomb full of relics to carry with you into the Afterlife. A one-point tomb usually contains small personal items like bowls, dishes, utensils, and perhaps a weapon of some sort. A two-point tomb is more like the grand rooms of the Pharaohs where all sorts of unusual and elaborate goods are stacked together in neat rows.

True Love: (1 point Merit)

You have discovered, and possibly lost (at least temporarily) a true love. Nonetheless, this love provides joy in a torrid existence usually devoid of such enlightened emotions. Whenever you are suffering, in danger, or dejected, the thought of your true love is enough to give you the strength to persevere. In game terms, this love allows you to succeed automatically on any Willpower roll, but only when you are actively striving to protect or come closer to your true love. Also, the power of your love may be powerful enough to protect you from other supernatural forces (Storyteller's discretion). However, your true love may also be a hindrance and require aid (or even rescue)



from time to time. Be forewarned: this is a most exacting Merit to play over the course of a chronicle. You may not take both this Merit and Other Half.

Unknown Fetter: (1-5 point Merit)

You have a strong connection to something or someone in a specific area, but you do not know what the connection is, or why the link exists. Something important has occurred in this place, or with this person or object, but no memory of why the Fetter is significant is available to you. You must discover what the link is before you can resolve the problem. Use of the Lifeweb Arcanos can locate the unknown Fetter, but Fatalism does not reveal the connection between you and your mysterious link to the Skinlands.

Cold: (2 point Merit)

Most haunted houses are frequented by cold spots, where the temperature drops suddenly and for no easily explainable reason. Your Corpus is very cold, cold enough to pierce the Shroud when a mortal walks near you. Most will shiver, feel very uncomfortable, and walk hurriedly away. Mortals like parapsychologists who know of cold spots may recognize that there is a wraith nearby.

Danger Sense: (2 point Merit)

You have a sixth sense that warns you of danger. When you are in danger, the Storyteller should make a secret roll against your Perception + Alertness; the difficulty depends on the remoteness of the danger. If the roll succeeds, the Storyteller tells you that you have a sense of foreboding. Multiple successes may refine the feeling and give an indication of direction, distance or nature.

Faerie Affinity: (2 point Merit)

Your presence does not frighten faeries; indeed, it attracts them, and you are naturally attuned to their ways. You may even share some small amount of faerie blood. Friendly fey might allow you to meditate at their circle once in a while (though gods only know what effect this might have in the long run...).

Past Life: (2-6 Point Merit)

For some reason, you have lived more than one life before your incarnation as a wraith. While you most likely do not remember any of your former lives while you were alive, the knowledge of being several people floods your mind while in the Shadowlands. Each reincarnation that you have gives you two extra points of Abilities from the experiences of that life, as well as an extra one-point Fetter. You and your Storyteller will need to work out a few

details of your previous lives. All of these lives will be somewhat shadowy in memory and there may be some dark secrets lurking in your past. No wraith can have more than three past lives (two freebie points per life), and the Abilities chosen from each one cannot be fairly modern (Archery, Dead Languages, and the like are more appropriate).

Other Half: (3 point Merit)

A Greek philosopher once theorized that each person is divided into two halves, and spends his entire life searching for their other half. One can find true happiness only by finding their other half. You have found your other half, whether a friend, lover, identical twin, or even a complete stranger. Though you are now a member of the Restless Dead, you still have a strong tie to your other half. You must choose that person as a Fetter, and all bonuses involving your other half are doubled. You can also regain one point of Corpus per hour by being close to your other half. Note: You may not take both this and the True Love Merit.

Bright: (4 point Merit)

For some reason, the power of your emotion is enough to weaken the Shroud. The difficulty of any test involving piercing the Shroud is reduced by one. As well, mortals encountering you add one point to their Willpower score for the purpose of dealing with you. The unfortunate drawback of this Merit is that any mortal seeking wraiths will always choose you to harass over other spirits, and will gain the same one-point bonus when trying to seek you out.

Luck: (4 point Merit)

You were born lucky: your Eidolon guides your steps, or maybe the Devil looks after his own. Either way, you can repeat three failed rolls per story. Only one repeat attempt may be made on any single roll.

Weak Shadow: (4 point Merit)

Your Shadow is not as strong as most, and suffers a + 2 difficulty in all attempts to become dominant. You are still susceptible to your Shadow's manipulations, but attempts to force you into submission are almost an exercise in futility. Your Shadow suffers a + 1 difficulty in all attempts to gain Angst as well.

True Faith: (7 point Merit)

You have a deep-seated faith in and love for God, or whatever name you choose to call the Almighty. You begin the game with one point of Faith (a Trait with a range of 1-10). This Faith provides you with an inner strength and comfort

that continues to support you when all else betrays you. This Merit is most common among members of the Heretics.

Your Faith adds to Willpower rolls, giving + 1 to the Dice Pool for each point in Faith. The exact supernatural effects of Faith, if any, are completely up to the Storyteller, although it will typically repel vampires and — in some cases — wraiths. (Basically, the wraith must make a Faith roll against a difficulty of the vampire's Willpower to repel him. For more rules, see *Vampire Players Guide*, pg. 30, or *Hunters Hunted*, pp. 64-66, *The Inquisition* or *The Quick and the Dead*.) It will certainly vary from person to person, and will almost never be obvious — some of the most saintly people have never performed a miracle greater than managing to ease the suffering of an injured soul. The nature of any miracles you do perform will usually be tied to your own Nature, and you may never realize that you have been aided by a force beyond yourself.

True Faith is a rare attribute in this day and age. No one may start the game with more than one Faith point. Additional points are only awarded at the Storyteller's discretion, based on appropriate behavior and deeds.

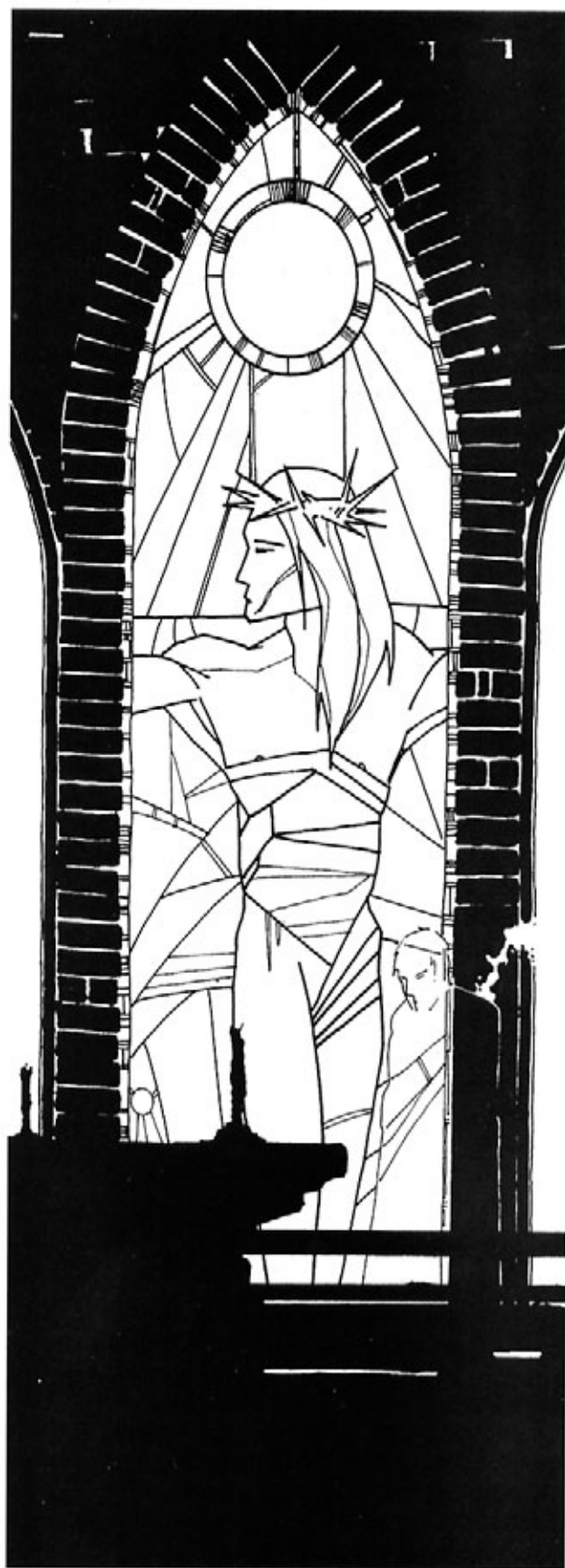
Damned: (1 point Flaw)

Most people imagine death as a wonderful experience where you ascend to Valhalla, Nirvana, Heaven, or perhaps rejoin the Dreamtime. Obviously, you didn't make it, and are cursed to wander this wretched Shadowlands and never reach your destination. You may not visit places of your old religion without losing temporary Willpower at a rate of one point for every minute of exposure. Touching a religious artifact from your former religion will drain a point of Corpus from you as you burn in agony.

Cursed: (1-5 point Flaw)

You have been cursed by someone or something with supernatural or magical powers. This curse is specific and detailed. It cannot be dispelled without extreme effort, and it can be life-threatening. Some examples follow:

- If you pass on a secret that was told to you, your betrayal will later harm you in some way. (1 point.)
- You stutter uncontrollably when you try to describe what you have seen or heard. (2 point.)
- Tools (including relics) often break or malfunction when you attempt to use them. (3 points.)
- You are doomed to make enemies of those to whom you become most attached (so whatever you do, don't get too close to the other characters!). (4 points.)
- Every one of your accomplishments or achievements will eventually, inevitably, become soiled and fail in some way. (5 points.)





Improperly Buried: (1 point Flaw)

According to your belief, you were improperly buried. Perhaps you were turned face down in your coffin, not buried on consecrated ground, or possibly you died without last rites from your priest or family. Maybe someone desecrated your grave by building a subdivision over it. Whatever the cause, you will feel unease until it is set right. You must choose your own original physical body as a Fetter. Unlike most Fetters, you receive no bonuses or Pathos when dealing with this Fetter. Instead, the difficulty of any action while trying to resolve or deal with this Fetter is increased by one. Someone possessing a part of your corpse may therefore use this as a talisman of sorts against you by threatening to destroy the body part.

The Bard's Tongue: (1 point Flaw)

You speak the truth, uncannily so. Things you say tend to come true. This is not a facility for blessing or cursing, or an art controlled by Fatalism. However, at least once per story, an uncomfortable truth regarding any current situation will appear in your head and come out your lips. To avoid speaking prophecy, the owner of this 'gift' must expend a Willpower point and take a wound level from the strain of resisting (especially if he bites a hole in his tongue).

Throwback: (1-5 point Flaw)

One or more of your past lives still affects you...badly. Their fears come back to haunt you in your dreams, and you have flashbacks of their worst memories (such as their death, or, even worse, a personality that encroaches on your own). For bad dreams or flashbacks, take one to two points, depending on the severity of the condition and how much it will affect your studies or performance in dangerous situations. For a "roommate in your head," take three points (whether you know he exists or not). For the package deal and a truly miserable existence, take five points, but expect the Storyteller to take every opportunity to use these against you. This Flaw can be "worked off" during the course of play, but only with difficulty.

Time Cycle: (1-5 point Flaw)

You suffer from increased difficulty in entering the realms of the living. The Shroud is normally harder for you to penetrate (+1 to +4). At certain times the difficulty penalty is removed, and you can affect the Quick with the same ease as other wraiths. The times when you can move through the Shroud more easily are directly linked to a certain hour, day, or even phase of the moon. The Storyteller must approve your decision, and a logical reason for this penalty must exist.

Echoes: (2-5 point Flaw)

You are susceptible to the old wives' tales about how best to handle ghostly visitations: Salt can stop you from entering a home, and you cannot cross running water, or animals react strongly to your presence and you are drawn to open flames. Even the Wards of cynics work against you. Wherever you go, you leave an ectoplasmic residue and every sound you make is easily recorded on tapes, your image appears in photographs taken when you are in the vicinity. This flaw can cause great difficulties, including punishment for breaking with the Dictum Mortem. Additionally, the flaw changes depending on the beliefs of the area you are visiting. Being familiar with the belief systems of any area you pass through is almost a necessity if you wish to avoid trouble.

Bound: (3 point Flaw)

Whether because of your own belief, or because of something not known to wraithkind, you are forced to remain in one place. You must stay near or within the place to which you are bound, and cannot get more than 100 yards from it. You must also choose that place as a Fetter, but can leave once that Fetter is resolved. Upon resolving your Fetter, you need not give back the points from the Flaw. Because of the heavy changes this Flaw can cause to story plots, you cannot take it without the permission of your Storyteller.

Disembodied Shadow: (3 point Flaw)

Your Shadow can exist outside of your physical body, often in the form of small animals. To talk to your Shadow, you must speak out loud. Only you can see it, but it does have some form. Your Shadow has a single point of Strength which it can use to manipulate objects in the Shadowlands. It cannot do much more than push someone or move small objects of up to five pounds, but it can be quite active at times.

Easily Sensed: (3 point Flaw)

For some reason, your presence in the Shadowlands causes the Quick discomfort when you are near them. Wherever you go the living notice you, and the more alert among them can actually see you and fall subject to the Fog. Places that you normally frequent become known to the living as haunted, and you have a reputation building rapidly about what you are and who you were. Unwanted attention can bring hunters, and even cause the Arcanum to take notice of you. It is likely that sooner or later an exorcist will be brought around to "cleanse" the areas you frequent of their taint. While the Quick can take note of



your presence with more ease, the Shroud is unaltered with one exception: Practitioners of the Embodiment Arcanos receive a - 2 difficulty against the local Shroud rating when using the Whispers and Phantom arts, but gain no other bonuses. The odd emanations from your body are noticed in the Tempest as well, and spending too much time in any location can actually cause Nihils to form as the barrier between the Tempest and the Shadowlands gradually weakens. Constant travel is necessary to avoid the formation of Nihils. For this reason alone you are not very popular with the local wraiths.

Umbral Connection: (3 point Flaw)

A wraith with this Flaw has an unusual connection to what werewolves call the Umbra. Consequently, any rituals or powers that the Garou can use to compel or bind spirits will work just as well against the unfortunate wraith. Tales are told of wraiths with this Flaw being bound into mystical fetishes, only to have their Pathos and Corpus stripped away to fuel the magical power of the object. Since wraiths connected to the Umbra are not common, any spirit-locating powers a werewolf calls on in your area will likely target you. This can be horribly dangerous.

Dark Fate: (5 point Flaw)

You are doomed to experience a most horrible end or, worse, suffer eternal agony that makes existence in the Shadowlands look like a walk in the park. No matter what you do, someday you will be out of the picture. In the end, all your efforts, your struggles and your dreams will come to naught. Your fate is certain, and there is nothing you can do about it. Even more ghastly, you have partial knowledge of this, for you occasionally have visions of your fate — and they are most disturbing. The malaise these visions inspire in you can only be overcome through the use of Willpower, and the malaise will return after each vision. At some point in the chronicle, you will indeed face your fate, but when and how is completely up to the Storyteller. Though you can't do anything about your fate, you can still attempt to reach some goal before it occurs, or at least try to make sure that your friends are not destroyed as well. This is a difficult Flaw to roleplay; though it may seem as if it takes away all free will, we have found that, ironically, it grants freedom.

Shadow Archetypes



he Bully

The weak ones, ignorant Enfants, and Lemures, they all need to realize that you are more powerful than them. The Bully will prove it to them. The only wraiths worth dealing with are the ones that can stand up to you, but even then, someday you'll be more powerful.

When taking control, this Shadow has to assert its dominance over other wraiths as well as its own Psyche. It picks fights, and won't back down from them. To provoke an argument it will taunt, push, spit, anything. Those who walk away are wimps and couldn't take the heat. As the Angst collects within this Shadow, the wraith's Corpus becomes bulkier with muscle and sinew. A T-shirt might rip, blue jeans will become taut, and shoe laces will snap. No actual points are gained in Strength or Appearance; this change is far more exaggerated in the mind of the wraith.

The Bully's Harrowing


Beginning: You're back in Grade School and you're the biggest person other than the teacher. The other smaller, weaker kids are choosing sides for a game of kickball. The captains take turns dividing up the group, each picking their friends. You realize that you are the last to be picked, and the captain stuck with you moans. That's OK, though. You'll show them. The game begins and the captain decides that you are the last to kick. Finally, it's your turn...

Middle: ...you run up to the ball, kick, and miss. The kids watching burst out in laughter. Trying again, you miss once more. The laughter gets louder. On the third and final try, you trip. Now even the teacher is laughing. The pitcher is holding his stomach and calling you names. In rage, you charge the mound...

End: ...reaching the mound, you realize that the pitcher is a smaller kid. It shouldn't be a problem to teach him a lesson. You swing and miss. The pitcher throws a punch into your stomach, breaking your stride and forcing the wind from your chest. Doubling over, you strain to catch your breath, but instead lose your balance. The class and teacher have gathered around, but none of them are aiding you. In fact, they are all laughing! A second kid, also smaller than you, kicks you in the face. Your nose breaks. Blood runs freely. Deep down inside you, something snaps.

Success: Somehow you stumble to your feet. The continued kicking and punching no longer hurts you. As you straighten out your back you realize that you now stand twice as tall as the kids around you. In a moment, they notice this as well and cease their assault. You level your





gaze at your teacher, and your voice rings out over the silent playground. "I'm tired of playing and I'm going home." The playground fades to white.

Failure: The brutal onslaught continues. Your body barely withstands the storm of feet and hands. Somehow the teacher wades into the crowd and drags you by the collar from the fray. She stands you up on nearly broken legs and squeezes your bleeding face with a painful grip. "That's what you get for trying to play with the big kids. Now go to the nurse so that she can clean those wounds with some salt and turpentine!"

Botch: The kicks grow more fierce. You didn't know little kids could put so much force behind their feet. Bones break. Blood gushes. The kids scream names and spit, but you realize that they aren't kids anymore. They have grown up and you haven't. This doesn't change the fact that they are beating you senseless. After a few more minutes your body finally gives out.

The Comedian

Everything is a joke to the Comedian, even Oblivion. The tricks of its trade are harmful practical jokes, dangerous slapstick, psyche-damaging putdowns, and worst of all, painful oneliners. When passive, it chuckles to itself while tragedy befalls others and companions become injured. "Did you hurt your wittle kneezie-weezie?" The Shadowguide of this Shadow should whisper the occasional joke into the ear of the Psyche. Should the wraith actually find one of these jokes funny, then he might be distracted; the Storyteller may rule that the player missed a clue or was not paying attention when another character was ambushed. The Comedian would find great mirth in accomplishing such a feat and may gain a point of Angst. This is a harsh decision, though, and the Storyteller might rule that the direct results of the distraction were punishment enough.

When the Comedian's active, watch out; there might be a bucket of ectoplasm waiting for this wraith's friends back at the haunt. Relics get replaced by rubber replicas. Traps that would force a wraith through a Nihil are set, such as a pit concealed by a rug. Oboli disappear. A typical goal for this Shadow is to annoy the other wraiths into leaving so that its jokes can focus on the Psyche. The Comedian prefers to cut off the senses during bouts of Catharsis. It just loves surprises.

As the Angst builds within the Comedian Shadow, the Corpus of its unlucky wraith becomes a walking oddity. Any appendage may enlarge, typically feet, thumbs, nose and ears. Hair becomes frazzled, puffed up, and may even change color. Pupils may fade to strange swirling designs. Feel free to individualize it if you wish. The change does not have to be clownlike, but should reflect a stereotypical humor icon in some way.

The Comedian's Harrowing

Beginning: It's a Saturday night party and you're with the old gang from your post-high school days. Everyone is laughing and having fun. People are flirting. Everything appears perfect. The atmosphere seems happy, but something feels odd. You're not sure why, but the mood is slowly dying. To help things along, you decide to recite a few of those oneliners you memorized for just such an occasion. To your horror the ones you tell aren't the same ones you memorized, but you can't stop. It's as if your mouth is working on its own...


Middle: ...after rattling off half a dozen or so, you realize that the jokes were not only rude, but indirectly targeted a few of the people in the room. How were you supposed to know? You smile, shrug weakly, and try and play it off. Maybe one or two from your *World's Louisiest Jokes: Volume Eighteen* will do the trick...

End: ...but none of the jokes were even vaguely familiar or the least bit polite, not to mention funny. In particular, the "gynecologist in the bar with a fish" joke made the host's girlfriend bolt for the toilet. Everyone else is looking at you now with unusually red eyes. Someone is discussing your early removal from the world of the living. Another person is slapping a fist into a palm. You've got to think of something fast.

Success: "Hey fellas, if you can't take the heat..." Someone dives as you twist aside. He crashes with a gong sound. Another guy swings and finds his fist going through a glass-covered picture frame you held in the way. Where did that come from? No time to think. Another person is drawing back to hit you. You raise your hand, fork a couple of fingers and get 'em right in the eyes with a resounding "bonk!" Someone smashes a chair over your back, but it's only balsa wood. Suddenly there is a big horn in your hand. It blows people over when you honk it at them. So all those old slapstick comedy movies came in handy after all. You exit the party leaving behind a room full of people with little birds tweeting in circles above their heads.

Failure: "So you wanna play rough, huh?" You put up your fists in a mockery of some old movie, and dance around. Someone kicks your feet out from under you, and your cheek hits the floor. The next thing you know, you're being bound to a chair, gagged and set in front of a TV. Seventies sitcoms are all that's on, and it's the worst of the worst. Outside the party resumes, and you can hear your date joking along with the rest of them. The jokes are all about you, and they aren't nice at all.

Botch: "Do you want to hear the one about the priest, the preacher, and the pagan?" The crowd lunges. In moments you are strapped down to a table in the center of the room. Everyone around you has joke books. They begin to read them out loud, and the jokes they tell all have to do



with you. Most of them don't make sense, but the crowd is laughing anyway. Then as the jokes roll on, a few of the guests begin to hit you in the face with moldy custard pies and pelt you with rubber chickens. The mess starts to pile up and slowly encases you in foul smelling darkness.

The Hypochondriac

The Hypochondriac tells you that you are immune to nothing, not even in death. Like a nurse with a medical book open at all times, this Shadow will warn against the most minute of jobs. Even the very use of your Arcanos might lead you to doom, and combat is definitely something you'd rather avoid. Though a wraith can easily repair damage, this particular Shadow attempts to convince you otherwise. "What if you can't heal your Corpus? You're awfully low on Pathos, pal. You don't have Usury and your Fetters are miles away!" As the Shadow gains Angst points, the Corpus' appearance becomes more sickly. The nose runs; the eyes become red and watery. Skin draws tight against the ribs. Pockmarks and blisters appear and expel puslike substances. The Hypochondriac will react to each symptom with unnerving comments. "Oh my goodness, it's the Stygian Plague! Did you know that it wiped out nearly fifty thousand wraiths alone?! This is terrible!"

When in control, this Shadow will turn the character around in almost every situation that involves active participation. If the Circle needs a volunteer to explore an abandoned Haunt or retrieve an Artifact from a group of violent Drones, the Hypochondriac will never willingly step forward. If a journey through the Tempest is needed, or if the group must face a possible ambush, the wraith under the Hypochondriac's control will stall while foretelling doom. "There's just too much chance for injury and infection...."

This behavior will hopefully lead the character into a situation where no one else is around or willing to help. The Hypochondriac Shadow fills its Harrowings with images of sickness and infectious horror, all the while chanting "I told you so."

The Hypochondriac's Harrowing

Beginning: You're wandering the halls of a hospital. Maybe you recognize it, maybe you don't. They all seem the same to you anyway. You hear crying from dimly lit, sterile corridors and half-open doorways, but you move on. There must be a way out of this place of the dying. The maze of hallways is endless. There are no windows to the outside, only walls. You come to a fountain and realize you're thirsty. You lower your head, mash the button, and a stream of brown filth flies to your mouth. Gagging, you fall back, nearly bumping into a semi-recognizable nurse. "That will give you cachexia and contagion, you know,"

she comments offhandedly. You stagger to your feet, wipe the stuff from your face, and bolt down the hall...

Middle: ...only to burst into a ER disaster scene. Bodies of people you might know are being hurried in on stretchers. It must have been a multiple-car accident. Featureless doctors rush about with wickedly shaped instruments that look as if they'd do more harm than good. A nurse tells you to get out of the way. Stepping backward, you bump into someone's lukewarm intestines. With a shock, you realize their owner is still alive and moaning. Twitching away, you lose your footing in a thin pool of blood and land with a hard splat. A masked doctor leans over you and declares that you have received a concussion. Someone leans off a table and smiles at you. He is covered in scabs and very thin. "That's my blood you're soaking in there." You try to stand...

End: ...but can't. Something broke in your back. Several doctors lift you onto an operating table, hooking machines up to your body. An IV goes into your arm, but the bottle it's attached to has maggots in it. They begin to move down the tube, one at a time. Doctors are handling rusty scalpels caked with dirt. The head surgeon removes your clothes and stops with a shake of his head. There is silence for a moment as everyone turns to face him. "I'm afraid we're going to have to operate."

Success: Suddenly the feeling is returning to your limbs. You can move again. You quickly snatch the tube from your arm before the maggots reach your skin. You knock the rusty instruments from the doctor's hands and leap from the table. Rushing to a fire hose, you crank it on, and point it at the room. Moments later the blood, the bodies, the doctors, and their nasty toys are washed away. As you rise from the room, you see it is now perfectly clean.

Failure: You are wheeled down a dirty hallway to an operating room that looks more like a mechanic's garage. It is cold and flies are everywhere. The operating team is smoking as they move you to the main table. There's a hiss as someone turns on a tank of gas and straps a mask to your face. In a low fading voice you hear the words, "Nighty-night."

Botch: You are wheeled to the filthy operating room, but the knockout gas doesn't work. "Doctor," the anesthesiologist says, "it doesn't seem to be affecting him." "No matter," the surgeon wheezes with a cough. "We'll open him up anyway. Nurse, I need the bone saw." Something electric cranks to life and begins to make slurping, cutting sounds. Looking down you realize that a mass of bugs have covered your body, and are either entering your wounds or making their own.



The Lover

The Lover wants to please you, to make you happy, like only he can. He knows your wants and desires, even the most hidden and depraved. He wants to fulfill these desires for you, so that you will be content with him, apart from everything and everyone else. He prompts and goads you, alternating between promises of desires fulfilled and overwhelming guilt at spurning him; after all, his only crime is to love you.

When in control, this Shadow turns his destructive charms on those around him. He seeks to please by virtue of promising and delivering the most secret and base acts, sexual or otherwise. If others are seduced by the Lover's actions, he hopes the Psyche will become jealous. The end result, in the Lover's mind, is to drive his host to leave the company of others, to remove her from temptation. If the wraith's companions are repulsed by the Lover's actions, that leaves the Psyche for the Shadow alone. Either way, the Lover wins.

The Lover's Harrowing

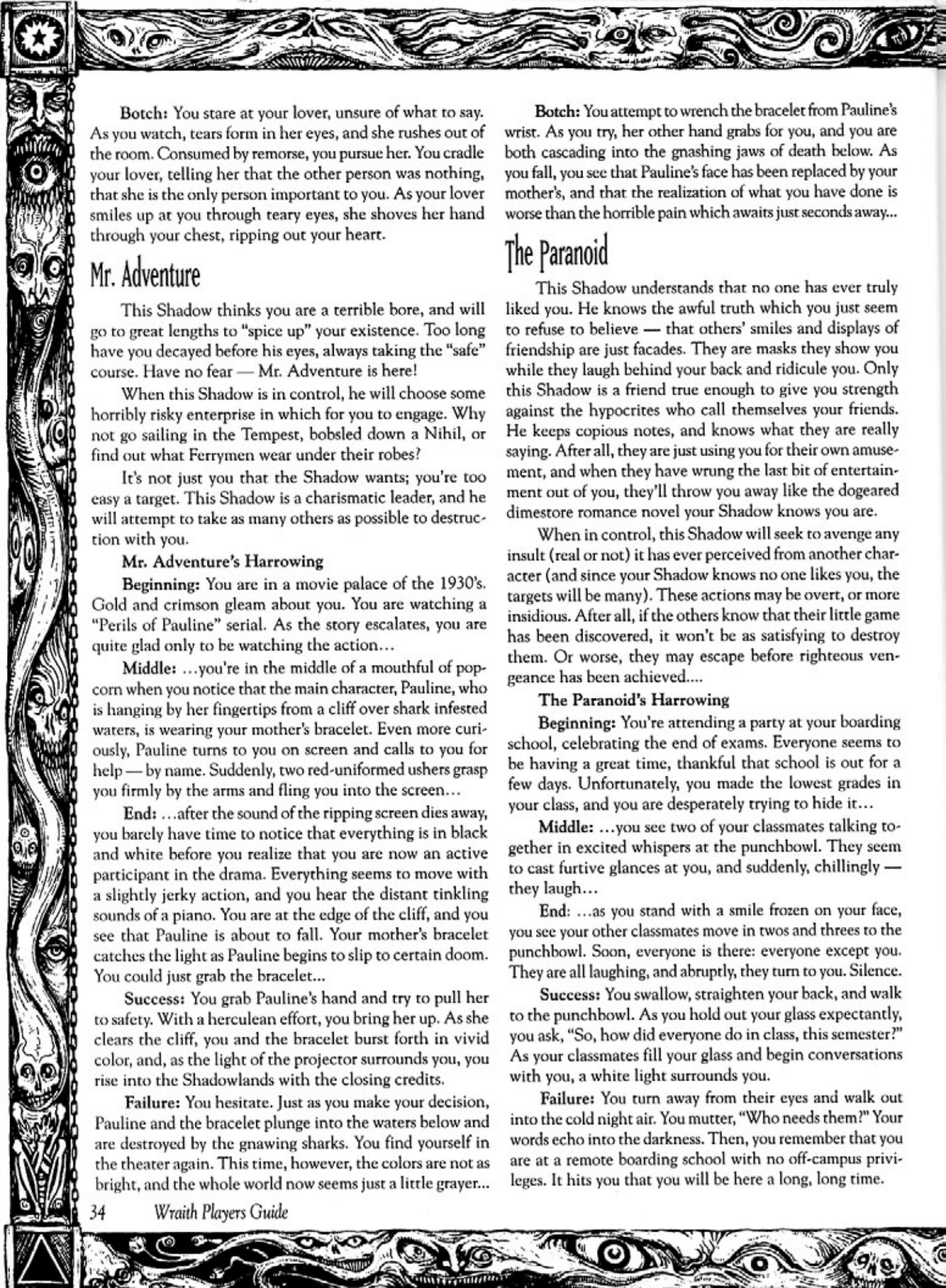
Beginning: You are at a party, and having a great time. Your significant other is there as well; you occasionally catch glimpses of her across the room. She catches your eye, and smiles at you. You feel good, content in the warm feelings you two share...

Middle: ...later in the evening, you find yourself in a conversation with a very compelling individual. You'd noticed her earlier, and also noticed the attention she attracted. Now, she's talking to you, and you can't help but feel good about that. She's attractive, interesting, interested in what you have to say; in short, everything you find appealing. You are enjoying yourself immensely...

End: ...as you continue your conversation, you sense someone approaching. Smiling, you turn to face your girlfriend. She glares at you, eyes full of silent accusation. You know what is coming, but are powerless to stop it. Fueled by jealousy and anger, she accuses you of ignoring her, and of preferring this new person. All eyes at the party turn towards you as the diatribe continues. Finally, she finishes the tirade, and glares at you.

Success: You calmly explain that you were just talking to this person, and politely introduce her to your lover. You attempt to draw your paramour into the conversation, but she turns away, cursing. As you rise towards the light, her accusations of betrayal grow weaker, eventually fading to silence.

Failure: Your lover is being completely irrational, and annoying. You turn your back on her, and go on with your conversation. You ignore her exit scene, intent on recapturing the feel of the evening before your paramour ruined it. The person you are talking to smiles, and her face becomes your lover's face, laughing at you.



Botch: You stare at your lover, unsure of what to say. As you watch, tears form in her eyes, and she rushes out of the room. Consumed by remorse, you pursue her. You cradle your lover, telling her that the other person was nothing, that she is the only person important to you. As your lover smiles up at you through teary eyes, she shoves her hand through your chest, ripping out your heart.

Mr. Adventure

This Shadow thinks you are a terrible bore, and will go to great lengths to "spice up" your existence. Too long have you decayed before his eyes, always taking the "safe" course. Have no fear — Mr. Adventure is here!

When this Shadow is in control, he will choose some horribly risky enterprise in which for you to engage. Why not go sailing in the Tempest, bobsled down a Nihil, or find out what Ferryman wear under their robes?

It's not just you that the Shadow wants; you're too easy a target. This Shadow is a charismatic leader, and he will attempt to take as many others as possible to destruction with you.

Mr. Adventure's Harrowing

Beginning: You are in a movie palace of the 1930's. Gold and crimson gleam about you. You are watching a "Perils of Pauline" serial. As the story escalates, you are quite glad only to be watching the action...

Middle: ...you're in the middle of a mouthful of popcorn when you notice that the main character, Pauline, who is hanging by her fingertips from a cliff over shark infested waters, is wearing your mother's bracelet. Even more curiously, Pauline turns to you on screen and calls to you for help — by name. Suddenly, two red-uniformed ushers grasp you firmly by the arms and fling you into the screen...

End: ...after the sound of the ripping screen dies away, you barely have time to notice that everything is in black and white before you realize that you are now an active participant in the drama. Everything seems to move with a slightly jerky action, and you hear the distant tinkling sounds of a piano. You are at the edge of the cliff, and you see that Pauline is about to fall. Your mother's bracelet catches the light as Pauline begins to slip to certain doom. You could just grab the bracelet...

Success: You grab Pauline's hand and try to pull her to safety. With a herculean effort, you bring her up. As she clears the cliff, you and the bracelet burst forth in vivid color, and, as the light of the projector surrounds you, you rise into the Shadowlands with the closing credits.

Failure: You hesitate. Just as you make your decision, Pauline and the bracelet plunge into the waters below and are destroyed by the gnawing sharks. You find yourself in the theater again. This time, however, the colors are not as bright, and the whole world now seems just a little grayer...

Botch: You attempt to wrench the bracelet from Pauline's wrist. As you try, her other hand grabs for you, and you are both cascading into the gnashing jaws of death below. As you fall, you see that Pauline's face has been replaced by your mother's, and that the realization of what you have done is worse than the horrible pain which awaits just seconds away...

The Paranoid

This Shadow understands that no one has ever truly liked you. He knows the awful truth which you just seem to refuse to believe — that others' smiles and displays of friendship are just facades. They are masks they show you while they laugh behind your back and ridicule you. Only this Shadow is a friend true enough to give you strength against the hypocrites who call themselves your friends. He keeps copious notes, and knows what they are really saying. After all, they are just using you for their own amusement, and when they have wrung the last bit of entertainment out of you, they'll throw you away like the dogeared dime-store romance novel your Shadow knows you are.

When in control, this Shadow will seek to avenge any insult (real or not) it has ever perceived from another character (and since your Shadow knows no one likes you, the targets will be many). These actions may be overt, or more insidious. After all, if the others know that their little game has been discovered, it won't be as satisfying to destroy them. Or worse, they may escape before righteous vengeance has been achieved....

The Paranoid's Harrowing

Beginning: You're attending a party at your boarding school, celebrating the end of exams. Everyone seems to be having a great time, thankful that school is out for a few days. Unfortunately, you made the lowest grades in your class, and you are desperately trying to hide it...

Middle: ...you see two of your classmates talking together in excited whispers at the punchbowl. They seem to cast furtive glances at you, and suddenly, chillingly — they laugh...

End: ...as you stand with a smile frozen on your face, you see your other classmates move in twos and threes to the punchbowl. Soon, everyone is there: everyone except you. They are all laughing, and abruptly, they turn to you. Silence.

Success: You swallow, straighten your back, and walk to the punchbowl. As you hold out your glass expectantly, you ask, "So, how did everyone do in class, this semester?" As your classmates fill your glass and begin conversations with you, a white light surrounds you.

Failure: You turn away from their eyes and walk out into the cold night air. You mutter, "Who needs them?" Your words echo into the darkness. Then, you remember that you are at a remote boarding school with no off-campus privileges. It hits you that you will be here a long, long time.



Botch: You launch yourself at your persecutors, upsetting the table and the punchbowl. As the red liquid splashes all over you, you realize it's blood, and none of it has hit your classmates. As the group moves away from you in disdain, chorus after chorus of laughter rings from your classmates. You stand alone as if stricken, tears slowly rinsing the blood from your face.

The Sophomore

You know it already. You don't have to be taught it. "Don't tell me what to do," is one of your favorite sayings. "I can do it by myself. If you hadn't told me to do it, I would have done it, but now that you have, I won't." It's immaturity, pure and simple. You think you already know everything and there is nothing left but review.

When in power, this Shadow will annoy the hell out of anyone in a position of authority. It will jump into a situation where it thinks that it has the power or the proper Arcanos to deal with it, but is often sorely mistaken. The potential for disaster should be a constant worry for the character.

When the Shadow gains Angst, the Corpus becomes a mockery of a know-it-all. The nose turns upward and facial expressions reflect a snobbish impatience. The arms subconsciously fold, weight shifts to the left foot, and the

right foot taps out half-seconds. Deep sighs and eye rolling accompany any other wraiths' statements.

The Sophomore's Harrowing

Beginning: You're seated in a school room, and math problems are on the board. Everyone around you is listening to a scholarly gentleman at the head of the class. The explanations are taking an eternity. "Man, it's only simple division and multiplication," you finally say out loud. A silence descends on the room and everyone turns to look at you. "All right," says the teacher, "if you're so smart, why don't you come up here and show the class yourself?" He holds out the chalk and waits patiently...

Middle: ...you step up to the board and begin with your usual confidence, but the problem begins to change. Every time you begin to work out the numbers, more mathematical equations form in front of your eyes. Algebra becomes Trigonometry and fades into Calculus. "Hey, wait a minute. This isn't fair!" Standing back, you take one last look at the board and realize what the answer is, but it's too late. The mathematician has grabbed you by the ear and is dragging you out of the room. "No one mentioned anything about it being fair..."

End: ...he drags you all the way to the principal's office. A gnarled, elderly giant of a man steps out with a massive book in his hands. The cover reads simply, "The

Rules." "So you think you know everything, do you? Well, here at the school of hard knocks you've got a thing or two to learn." He undoes his huge belt buckle and removes the massive leather strap with a crack. The mathematician tightens his grip on your arms.

Success: Suddenly you break free and knock the book from the principal's hands. The mathematician chases you, but falls quickly behind. You run from room to room, kicking in doors and answering the problems on each board. You reach your own math room, grab a piece of chalk and write the number 42 on the board. It's the right answer. All your classmates cheer as you float through the roof.

Failure: The principal's belt begins to blister your back and you feel tears run down your cheeks. The mathematician sets up a blackboard in your face and continuously works out simple problems incorrectly, all the while patting himself on the back. The principal repeats the school rules; rules you haven't had to obey for years. Soon the beating sends you into unconsciousness.

Botch: The principal calls your home and your mother answers. He informs her that he is going to beat her child senseless. He may even kill you. A moment later he sets the phone down and smiles at you. "We have your mother's consent and her blessings. Let the lesson begin." His belt sprouts spikes and his face has grown demonic features. Just before he begins the belt ignites with flames. From there it goes downhill...

The Teacher

Lessons, lessons, lessons! The afterlife is full of lessons that this Shadow seems to understand. However, instead of papers and projects, these lessons consist of anguish and regrets. The objective of each lesson, each test, is not enlightenment; it is destruction. There is nothing that would give this Shadow more job satisfaction than to send you to eternal detention in Oblivion.

This Shadow can have more than one aspect. He can appear to be gentle and kind, patient and understanding, or harsh and demanding. Whatever his demeanor, your score will be the same. If you pass the Teacher's tests to his satisfaction, only he will achieve anything.

When dominant, the Teacher will attempt to show others the error of their ways (after assessing their individual deficiencies), and will provide a series of carefully arranged tests which they will be sure to fail (note that not all tests are knowledge-based). These tests will show the "student" and others their emotional and physical limitations. The Shadow will then take endless pleasure in lecturing them upon the reasons for their failure, until they "pass" the final test.

The Teacher's Harrowing

Beginning: You have just arrived at the home of the girl you have wanted to date for a long time. Her father is in the living room when you arrive, and he invites you in. The television is on, and he turns down the volume and begins to find out more about you. As your date walks into the room, her father asks you a question about your studies and...

Middle: ...suddenly from the television set, a high-pitched whine pierces your brain. The sound increases, making it difficult to think. As you apologize, and ask her father to repeat his question, you see that he has changed. As he asks it again, you notice that his eyes have narrowed with suspicion, and he now seems to be reaching for something beside his chair. The room has grown darker, and the image on the TV screen is that of your Shadow, hosting a program on The Learning Channel...

End: ...the high pitched whine becomes the voice of your Shadow. "Answer him, mister! Have I taught you nothing in the time we have been together? What about the basic rules of etiquette? What will they both think of you? If you can't communicate, how will you learn to get along with people? How will you ever hold a job?!" Your Shadow's voice nags on and on, and crowds your thoughts out of your head. You look at your date's father. He is moving toward you with a shotgun.

Success: You ignore the darkened room, the shadowy voice, and the gleaming gun barrel. With a massive effort of will, you politely answer your date's father's question. You tell him your plans for the evening, and what time you will bring his daughter back. You then say your goodbyes. As you and your date leave, the white light from the hallway surrounds you, and you begin to rise.

Failure: You scream with terror at her approaching father, and can only mumble nonsense. As you turn and run from the house, beneath the whine of the TV you can hear the echoing sobs of your date.

Botch: You lunge at her father's approaching shotgun. In the ensuing struggle, a shot is fired. As you stare in horror, your date crumples to the floor, her innards painting the wall behind her. As you realize the gravity of what you have done, the wail of distant sirens can be heard. Your Shadow's voice whines from the TV set, "See? I told you! Now, how are you going to move on with your life when you're in JAIL?!"

The Workaholic

In life, there was always so much to do, and so little time to do it in. Now that the Shadowlands have claimed you, the work is never done. The Workaholic is a surefire companion if you're an Artificer or some other kind of craftsman. While this Shadow is in passive mode, you feel

the drive to do more and accomplish more, even if the Parthos is running out, the Willpower pool is low, and the Angst is overwhelming. There is always more that can be done. When he's in power, there is no rest. The Shadow attempts to accomplish as much as possible, especially if that means the work is shoddy and the world outside the job ceases to matter.

As the Workaholic's Angst grows, the lines of stress appear across your face and Corpus. Your eyelids peel back and cease to blink (if they ever did). Hands become gaunt with strain and shake with frustration.

The Workaholic's Harrowing

Beginning: It is after five o'clock. Your coworkers are preparing to leave. A few familiar faces drop by your office and wave goodbye. The guy from marketing you've been attracted to shyly asks if you have any plans for the evening. You answer him simply with, "I've got some work to catch up on." He leaves, and so does everyone else. You don't have to stay, but it would be nice to get all this paperwork done. Sorting through the pile you realize that there is a ton of work that you simply can't let lie any longer. Other people could do it, but you don't trust their quality...

Middle: ...the clock ticks on and the papers only seem to accumulate. The more you shuffle them, the more they grow. Stacks upon stacks. Somewhere off in the building, a clock strikes midnight. You might as well pull an

allnighter. After a coffee break you return to a mountain of papers and you recognize all of it. It's all your work and no one else can help you finish it...

End: ...all of it has to be done this evening. Furiously you strive to finish the stack of assignments. The computer before you begins to smoke as you hit the keys faster and faster. Grabbing another stack, you can't help but notice the due date in the righthand corner. It's today's date! All of them have today's date! All of them... Glancing over at the clock, you notice that it's already 5:00 a.m. Suddenly the stacks around you teeter dangerously.

Success: As if driven by an overwhelming engine of hope, you manage to work at a blinding pace. The stacks actually begin to shrink. Finished assignments fly from your fingers and evaporate. The clock begins to tick backwards. Before you know it, it's five o'clock again and the person from marketing is still standing there. "As a matter of fact, it's about time I took a vacation," you say as you walk arm-in-arm out the door into the light.

Failure: The stacks sway back and forth. Shiny handcuffs clamp down around your wrists. The computer finally gives out and the clock strikes eight. Your coworkers file back to work. So does your boss, who just happens to lean in and scowl at you. He inquires about a specific assignment; you didn't even know it was yours. "Looks like another long night for you," he says, leaving you to your misery.



Botch: The stacks fall around you. Papers try to suffocate the oxygen from your lungs. As you dig your way out, you see your boss and co-workers coming in. To your horror, you realize it's Monday morning again. Everyone is discussing the fun they had over the weekend. As they walk past they toss more paperwork at you. A few hit you in the face. The last person to pass is your boss. He smiles and says, "You're fired!" He throws one last folder in your direction triggering another avalanche of paper. This time you don't dig your way out.

Archetypes



reamer

You are horribly detached from reality, and spend large amounts of time imagining a better world around you. Sometimes you stare off into space for long periods of time just thinking, or even spend time in the Tempest hoping to ride on the waves of the dreams of others. Odds are, you have Argos to help you survive your journeys. You are only happy as events get stranger and more unusual.

You are fortunately easy to get along with, as long as people don't depend on you. In a crisis situation, you may try to imagine you are somewhere else, or come up with brilliant but impossible solutions.

— Regain Willpower whenever you are in a surreal situation, or encounter something completely out of the norm.

Drifter

You drifted through your life, taking everything in stride. You prefer to let things happen to you, and wait until events sort themselves out without your interference. You strongly avoid making decisions, and tend to rely on your companions to make them for you. Sometimes you try to postpone making a choice long enough for one of your options to go away.

You are very relaxed, mellow, and easy to get along with. You are agreeable to a fault; often you follow another's suggestion rather than make the conscious choice to avoid that person.

— Regain Willpower when you weasel your way around making a decision by stalling, forcing it on someone else, or some other means.

Driven

You are out to prove yourself to everyone and everything. Regardless of how hard you try, you cannot turn back from a challenge, no matter how great. You convince yourself that once you make it a little bit further, you'll be able to relax and reap the benefits of all of your hard work. Of course, that day will never come; once you reach a plateau, you only see a higher one to conquer.

Your dealings with others are often somewhat strained — you know that they can be sacrificed to aid your success. They should work as hard as they can if they want to even come close to your level of achievement, and you can always lead them to complete your ends.

— Regain Willpower upon accomplishing a particularly difficult task.

Backgrounds



egacy

Some special aspect of the Skinlands ties you to it. Much like a Haunt, the Legacy Background allows you to deal with the restricting power of the Shroud more easily. When you act in concert with your Legacy, the Shroud bends more easily to your powers. Some types of Legacies include particular types of people, times or practices. For example, some Inuit tribes believe that only their shamans can reliably perceive spirits, and many cultures believe in a special time of year when the dead walk the earth. Perhaps you find it easier to pierce the Shroud when surrounded by the trapping of mediums and mystics, such as tarot cards, ouija boards or religious practices. You must choose a type of Legacy, either time, people or custom, and then pay for the frequency of occurrence of your Legacy.

The strength of the Legacy is inversely related to its frequency. That is to say, the more common its occurrence, the less powerful its effects on the wraith and the Shroud. For example, a one-point Legacy bestows a five-point reduction in the Shroud, while a five-point Legacy would only effectively reduce the Shroud by one. As with a Haunt, no Legacy may lower the effective Shroud to less than four. A Storyteller must review and rate any potential Legacy a player wishes to purchase.

- Very rare types of people (triplets, albinos), a single day a year (Christmas, Halloween, your birth or death day), very obscure practices (Egyptian death rites, largely forgotten cults)

•• Rare people (immediate families, people with a certain unusual name), a few hours every quarter (every season), unusual customs (hanging dream catchers or horseshoes, "crossing" oneself)

••• Uncommon people (left-handers, redheads, whole lineages), once per month (lunar phase, first or last days, every 13th), occasional habits (praying, playing sports, having intercourse)

•••• Frequently met people (foreigners, popular religions, political affiliations), once per week (few hours on a certain day), well-practiced ritual (bathing, driving, cooking)

••••• Broad group of people (woman, children, majority race), one particular hour out of every day, a common practice (predominant religion or cultural practice)

Old Soul

Some of the Restless have survived a very long time in the Underworld. While "longevity" doesn't necessarily provide a wraith greater status or influence, it does provide a certain amount of experience. A player may use the Old Soul background to receive information about events that have occurred in the Underworld in years past, such as when a particular Renegade took over Camden, etc. Old Soul can lead to many interesting roleplaying opportunities. Whenever you wish to remember a particular fact, roll the number of dice in the Old Soul Background (the difficulty is your Storyteller's option, depending on how obscure or far back in history the desired fact is). The number of successes determines how clear the memories are.

- Died within the last ten years.
- Died anytime in the last century.
- Died sometime in the last four hundred years.
- Dead for almost a millennium.
- Dead so long, you can't remember much, something about either pyramids or mammoths...

Abilities



The following are new Abilities you can use in any Storyteller game. They describe some of the limitless abilities your character can take, and can help define your character. Some of these Abilities may seem less significant and useful than the more general Abilities described in **Wraith**. Some are subcategories of standard Abilities. For example, rather than introducing the Archery skill, you might want to make a character roll Dexterity + Athletics when firing a bow. It is up to the Storyteller whether any of the Abilities listed here can be purchased.

Talents

Artistic Expression

You have the talent to produce works of art in various media. You can produce salable works of two- or three-dimensional art and understand something of the technical aspects of paintings and sketches. You are able to sketch a reasonably accurate rendition of a place or person.

• **Novice:** Your work is simple, seen as charmingly naive by some and as amateurish by others.

•• **Practiced:** Your work could win prizes at local art society shows.

••• **Competent:** You could get a showing in a minor gallery.

•••• **Expert:** Your work is widely admired, and galleries contact you about exhibitions. You are invited to teach at local art colleges.

••••• **Master:** You are acknowledged as a driving force in contemporary art. Your work commands enormous prices and is found in art museums as well as commercial galleries and private collections.

Possessed by: Artists, Commercial Illustrators, Cartoonists, Police Artists, Forgers, Woodworkers, Theatre and Movie Set Builders, Special Effects Technicians, Model Makers

Specialties: Oils, Watercolors, Mixed Media, Charcoal, Sketching, Caricature, Lighting Artist, Impressionist, Photo-Realism, Abstract, Miniatures, Stone, Resin, Wood, Metals, Classical, Kinetic, Models, Decoration

Carousing

This is the ability to have a good time at a party or other social occasion, while making sure others around you also have a good time. It involves a mixture of eating, good cheer, and drinking without making a fool out of yourself. Of course, while there are some differences between the Carousing done in mortal life and that engaged in by the Restless Dead, anyone with this Ability is able to fit in equally well when skinriding a socialite or making conversation on the Midnight Express. On a successful roll of Manipulation + Carousing, the character can make a lasting good impression on everyone around him; this can be helpful if the wraith is trying to make friends, garner information or distract the attendees while his Circle rifles through the coat room. The difficulty of the roll depends on the social event: three or less for a house party with a buffet, seven or more for a sit-down dinner.



- Novice: Good ol' Uncle Bill
- Practiced: Jake the Frat Rat
- Competent: James Bond
- Expert: The Three Musketeers
- Master: Bluto in "Animal House"

Possessed by: Actors, Dilettantes, College Students, Vampires

Specialties: Sexual Innuendo, Bon Mots, Lewd Jokes, Drinking, Exaggeration, Anecdotes

Diplomacy

You have the ability to handle negotiations. Even when handling touchy subjects, you are able to get results without ruffling too many feathers. You are skilled at mediating disputes and discussing delicate subjects. You get along with others without overt manipulation and without letting your own aims fall by the wayside. This Ability involves a knowledge of the formal rules of give-and-take, as well as the official cultural rules of conduct and politeness.

- Novice: You can iron out schoolyard disputes.
- Practiced: Friends ask you to deal with things for them.
- Competent: You could shine in management or personnel.
- Expert: You could be a professional union negotiator or ombudsman.
- Master: You can defuse nearly any situation, from an industrial dispute to a religious war.

Possessed by: Schoolteachers, Union Negotiators, Politicians, Tycoons, Diplomats, Personnel Officers, Counselors, Hierarchy Administrators

Specialties: Mediation, Negotiation, Etiquette, International Relations, Industry, Personal Relationships, Tact

Fortune Telling

A skill more common in years past than in the sterile 20th century, there are still many among the Restless who have a gift for fortune telling. Regardless of whether or not you are actually able to predict the future, you can convince others of your ability to do so. A combination of showmanship and actual mystical ability, this Talent can lead to many interesting roleplaying situations.

- Novice: You are able to use one method of divination adequately and treat this Ability as a pastime.
- Practiced: You can use one method of fortune telling well and can tell someone general information that will apply to her.

••• **Competent:** You know a lot about certain methods of fortune telling and can tell anyone detailed information that will be applicable.

•••• **Expert:** You are able to use multiple methods well and have a keen understanding of what people want to hear.

••••• **Master:** Gypsies take lessons from you.

Possessed by: Gypsies, Psychics, Professional Fortune Tellers, New Agers, Hand of Fate

Specialties: Tarot Cards, Prophecy, Romance, Death, Palmistry, I Ching, Goat Entrails

Instruction

You have a talent for passing on information and skills to others. You might have worked as a teacher, or as a Hierarchy trainer. Either way, you can explain things and demonstrate techniques in such a way that anyone who listens to you can learn easily. You can teach any of your Skills or Knowledges to another character, but you can never raise a student's score above your own. For example, if you have three dots in Occult, you cannot teach someone enough to raise her Occult Knowledge to four dots.

For the time it takes to raise a student's skill, roll your Manipulation + Instruction against a difficulty of (11 minus the student's Intelligence). One roll may be made per month of teaching. The number of successes is the number of experience points the student can apply toward that skill. Example: George Montaigne, a less than scrupulous Reaper, is trying to teach Joey Castello about the Necropolis they are in (Area Lore). Joey's not the brightest (Intelligence 2), so the difficulty for George's roll is a 9.

A student may become too discouraged or distracted with other things to pay attention to his teacher. Therefore, the student may have to spend a Willpower point (at the Storyteller's discretion) to keep at his studies. Frequent interruptions can cost a student a number of Willpower points, or maybe they'll just prevent him from learning anything (in which case, the teacher might withdraw her services).

With the Storyteller's approval, a person can teach some Talents, such as Brawl or Dodge. In these cases, it is good to roleplay some of the training sessions. Get a few good licks in on the student and see if he learns anything from it. Talents such as Empathy or Alertness cannot be taught — they must be learned the hard way.

• **Novice:** You can take simple concepts (e.g., basic arithmetic) and present them in an interesting and digestible manner.

•• **Practiced:** You can teach moderately complex subjects (such as algebra) and make your lessons straightforward and interesting.

••• **Competent:** You can teach any subject of which you have Knowledge, up to high-school level subjects. You can make differential calculus sound like the simplest thing in the world.

•••• **Expert:** Learning from you is scarcely an effort. You could teach irrational-number theory or Sumerian cuneiform to almost anyone.

••••• **Master:** You are an inspiring teacher who bestows a touch of greatness on anyone who studies with you.

Possessed by: Teachers, Parents, Professors, people from all walks of life

Specialties: Metaphysics, Customs and Laws, University, Skills, Knowledges

Interrogation

You are able to extract information from people by fair means or foul. Using a mixture of threats, trickery and persistent questioning, you ultimately unearth the truth. This is a common skill among certain branches of the Hierarchy.

• **Novice:** Nosy neighbor

•• **Practiced:** Movie cop

••• **Competent:** Talk-show host

•••• **Expert:** Investigative journalist

••••• **Master:** Spymaster

Possessed by: Cops, Journalists, Secret Service Personnel, Inquisitors, Hierarchy Enforcers

Specialties: Good Cop/Bad Cop, Threats, Trickery, Moral Blackmail

Intrigue

You know the finer points of plotting and deal-making in the halls of power. You understand the practical use of power (in sometimes threatening but always nonconfrontational ways) to achieve your own ends. This Talent also allows you to glean important facts about others in your social circle and separate truth from the endless amounts of false and useless gossip.

• **Novice:** Wiseguy

•• **Practiced:** Confidant

••• **Competent:** PAC lobbyist

•••• **Expert:** Vampire

••••• **Master:** Stygian Politician

Possessed by: Aspiring Hierarchs, Spies, Negotiators

Specialties: Gossiping, Feigning Ignorance, Threats, Plotting, Rumormongering, Alliances, Betrayals

Scan

You are practiced at noticing small details and changes in the environment when you purposely look at or listen to what is going on around you. This Ability can only be used when you specifically say you are attempting to notice if anything is amiss. If you aren't concentrating, this Ability will do you no good.

- **Novice:** If anyone notices police sirens, it's you.
- **Practiced:** The police should use your detective abilities.
- **Competent:** The slightest motion draws your attention.
- **Expert:** Nothing escapes your glance.
- **Master:** You can count the grains of salt on a pretzel — by taste.

Possessed by: Detectives, GIs, FBI Agents, Bodyguards, Night Watchmen

Specialties: Keeping Watch, Quick Scan, Listening, Smelling, Assassins

Scrounge

This Talent allows you to procure items through wits, connections, and a little ingenuity. Items aren't usually in excellent condition, may take time to acquire and are not always exactly right, but Scrounge can help when the oboli run out or theft would land you in the smelting forges.

- **Novice:** You know where the dump is.
- **Practiced:** You used to do garage sales and auctions.
- **Competent:** You have some connections into minor items (common relics).
- **Expert:** You can acquire larger items like relic firearms and ammo.
- **Master:** Given time, you could dig up a Deathlord's underwear.

Possessed by: Poorer Heretics, Renegades, Travellers

Specialties: Auctions, Black Market, Gunrunning, Street Trade

Search

You know how best to go about looking for someone or something in a small area where you can concentrate your perceptions. You can search for anything from a lost ring in your bedroom to the assassin who might be hiding in your garden.

- **Novice:** You are good at finding lost items.
- **Practiced:** Tell-tale signs (e.g. broken plants, footprints) are apparent to you.

- **Competent:** You know where to look.
- **Expert:** Trained professionals defer to your expertise.
- **Master:** Sherlock Holmes was an amateur.

Possessed by: Detectives, Ingenious Servants, Policemen, Prison Guards

Specialties: Sounds, Woodwork, Small Objects, People, Concealed Doors

Seduction

You know how to lure, attract and command the attention of others in a sexual manner. By the way you hold yourself, how you look at someone and even by the tone of your voice, you are able to arouse and excite those upon whom you practice your wiles. Once you have fully seduced someone, he will be willing to do nearly anything for you.

- **Novice:** Teenager
- **Practiced:** The "older woman"
- **Competent:** Heartthrob
- **Expert:** Movie star
- **Master:** The envy of vampires everywhere

Possessed by: Thespians, Escorts, Sensualist Heretic Cultists, Rakes, Strippers

Specialties: Witty Conversation, Opening Lines, Innuendo, Alluring Looks

Style

You may not have been born good-looking, or possessed of a natural charm, but you know how to dress and make the most of your appearance. Even if you are not physically attractive, heads turn because of your dress sense and style. Note that this Talent only applies to people's reactions to your appearance; once you get closer, it's up to you.

- **Novice:** Good taste
- **Practiced:** Socialite
- **Competent:** Celebrity
- **Expert:** Celebrity advisor
- **Master:** International model

Possessed by: Socialites, Celebrities, Fashion Professionals, the Gifted Few

Specialties: Classic, High Fashion, Street Fashion, Retro, Ethnic

Skills

Acrobatics

You are a trained tumbler and acrobat, able to perform feats of agility far beyond the capabilities of an untrained character. For each success with this Skill, a character can ignore one Corpus Level of falling damage. For example, a character with two dots in Acrobatics can fall up to 10 feet without injury or would take only one Corpus Level of damage from a 15-foot fall. This skill may be paired with Dexterity to roll for leaps and other acrobatic feats.

- Novice: Grade school gym class
- Practiced: High school jock
- Competent: College team
- Expert: State champion
- Master: Olympic gold medalist

Possessed by: Professional Athletes, Jocks, Martial Artists, Dancers

Specialties: Sport, Martial Arts, Dance, Enhanced Jumping/Falling

Archery

You know how to fire a bow, and may be able to do so with great proficiency.

- Novice: High School Gym Practice
- Practiced: Forest Bow Hunter
- Competent: Medieval Ranger
- Expert: You'll usually hit the bull's-eye.
- Master: Robin Hood

Possessed by: Hunters, Hobby Enthusiasts, Competitors, Medieval Re-creationists, Beginning Zen Archers

Specialties: Arched Flight, Forests, Target, Hunting, Kyudo Technique, Crossbows, Primitive Archery, Moving Targets

Blind Fighting

Even when unable to see your foes, you can use your Brawl or Melee Abilities at reduced or no penalties. This Skill may also be of great use out of combat. It should be noted that this Skill does not grant any actual ability to see better in darkness. For each dot the character has in this Skill, reduce the difficulty for performing actions while blind by one. (Naturally, the difficulty can never be reduced below its unhindered equivalent.)



- **Novice:** You don't stub your toe in the dark.
- **Practiced:** You can pinpoint the direction from which sounds come.
- **Competent:** You can fight and predict your enemies' locations at the same time.
- **Expert:** You can almost "feel" where your opponents are.
- **Master:** You possess an almost mystical sense — Zen and the Art of Spatial Awareness.

Possessed by: Ninja, Assassins, Spelunkers, Masters of Zen Archery

Specialties: Dodging, Punching, Indoors, Dueling, Multiple Foes

Camouflage

You can change your appearance through a mixture of clothing, makeup and movement, rendering you difficult to spot in a variety of different surroundings. This is not the ability to look like someone else, but simply to hide.

- **Novice:** Boy Scout
- **Practiced:** Infantry trooper
- **Competent:** Marine
- **Expert:** Special Forces
- **Master:** Ninja

Possessed by: Hunters, Military Personnel, Spies, Assassins, Poachers

Specialties: Woods, Mountains, Urban, Open Country, Arctic

Demolitions

You have a knowledge of explosives and demolition that allows you to set off and build all types of bombs, if given the proper equipment. Of course, this is a good deal more difficult in the Underworld than it was in the Skinlands, but anyone with this skill will be in demand by anyone with a grudge against the Hierarchy. Similarly, skinriding the right terrorist at the right time can lead to an avalanche of relics. You know how to handle nearly anything — dynamite, plastic explosives, nitroglycerin, black powder, blasting cord, even napalm. Additionally, you know the techniques for disarming explosives, which can come in very handy.

- **Novice:** Guy Fawkes
- **Practiced:** Leroy Moody
- **Competent:** Underground Chemist
- **Expert:** You blow up Hierarchy Transports for a living.
- **Master:** Bye-bye, World Trade Center.

Possessed by: Terrorists, Police Bomb Squads, Armed Forces Personnel, Anarchists, Renegades

Specialties: Dynamite, Plastic Explosives, Car Bombs, Disarmament, Detection

Disguise

You can change your appearance — and even make yourself look like another specific person — through the use of clothes and makeup. While this skill is not necessary to use the Arcanos Moliarte, it allows for a great deal more precision.

- **Novice:** Good enough to fool someone who knows neither you nor the person you're impersonating.
- **Practiced:** Good enough to fool some of the people some of the time.
- **Competent:** Good enough to fool some of the people most of the time.
- **Expert:** Good enough to fool most of the people most of the time.
- **Master:** Good enough to fool those nearest and dearest to you most of the time.

Possessed by: Actors, Spies, Undercover Cops, Criminals, Con Artists, Masquers

Specialties: Specific Person, Type of Person, Conceal Own Identity

Climbing

You can climb mountains and/or walls and seldom have any fear of falling. The technical skills of chimneying, spike-setting and rappelling are all well-known to you, although, depending on your skill, you may be good or indifferent at them. Remember, mountain climbing at night is far more difficult than a daylight climb unless you can see in the dark.

- **Novice:** You can scale easy mountains or walls with handholds.
- **Practiced:** You went on mountaineering vacations. You can climb heavily weathered stone or brick walls.
- **Competent:** You worked in an "outdoor pursuits center" as a mountaineering instructor. You can climb moderately rough stone or brick walls.
- **Expert:** You've done at least a couple of famous peaks. You can free-climb a fairly smooth stone or brick wall.
- **Master:** Everest and K2 are mild hikes. You could free-climb the World Trade Center.

Possessed by: Mountaineers, Burglars, Enthusiasts
Specialties: Cliffs, Hiking, Ice, Buildings, Free-Climbing, Rappelling

Dancing

You are a proficient dancer, and may perform socially or for the entertainment of others. You are familiar with most varieties of dance, but specialize in one particular style.

- **Novice:** You can manage a waltz at a wedding.
- **Practiced:** You draw envious glances at weddings. You could perform on the local amateur stage.
- **Competent:** You are the talk of the ball. You could perform on the local professional stage.
- **Expert:** People ask you to teach them. You could perform on TV.
- **Master:** Nijinsky, Fonteyn, Nureyev, Barishnikov, Astaire, Rogers, Kelley — and you.

Possessed by: Socialites, Pop Stars, Music Video Dancers, Ballet Dancers, Enthusiasts

Specialties: Waltz, Jazz, Two-step, Foxtrot, Disco, Latin, Show, Ballet, Ethnic, Tribal, Ecstatic, Pavanne, Capriole, Specific Time Periods

Escapology

You are skilled in various techniques that enable you to escape from bonds and restraints. This skill is often used for entertainment, but can also be useful in real life.

- **Novice:** Children's party entertainer. Can escape from loose or poorly-tied bonds.
- **Practiced:** Amateur entertainer. Can escape from fairly well-tied bonds.
- **Competent:** Professional entertainer. Can escape from handcuffs and chains.
- **Expert:** Star. Can escape from a straitjacket.
- **Master:** Legend. Can escape from just about anything. You would feel safe tied in a sack underwater with a ticking timebomb.

Possessed by: Entertainers, Spies, Special Forces, Amateurs, Pulp Detectives, Renegades

Specialties: Magic Tricks, Ropes, Boxes, Locks, Underwater, Handcuffs, Showmanship, Arm Locks and Holds

Fast-Draw

This skill allows you to make a weapon ready almost instantly. By rolling Dexterity + Fast-Draw and getting three successes, you can draw a weapon and have it ready for use just as if it had been in your hand all along. The difficulty depends on how securely stowed the weapon was — a gun hidden in your underwear is harder to reach than one in a belt holster! This skill can be used with any weapon. When appropriate, the Fast-Draw score can be added to your Initiative roll.

- **Novice:** You have good reflexes.
- **Practiced:** You're good, but not great.
- **Competent:** You would have lasted a little while in the Old West. You could work Wild West shows. You are known among those who follow duels.
- **Expert:** Pretty fast. Your enemies are wary of your speed in drawing your ebon blade.
- **Master:** Greased lightning. You might have been able to take down Billy the Kid.

Possessed by: Knife-Fighters, Gunfighters, Martial Artists, Cops, Special Forces, Vigilantes

Specialties: Knife, Pistol, Sword, Arrow, Rifle/Shotgun

Fast-Talk

This Skill allows you to convince someone of something using a sincere expression and an avalanche of words rather than reasoned debate and logic. It's a surprisingly effective technique, provided that the mark has no time to think and does not have a Wits rating of four or more. The Storyteller should carefully judge whether this Skill is appropriate in a given situation, or whether it would be better to use some other Ability.

- **Novice:** Vacuum-cleaner salesman
- **Practiced:** Used-car salesman
- **Competent:** Professional con artist
- **Expert:** Teflon-coated politician
- **Master:** You could sell sand to the Saudis.

Possessed by: Salesmen, Con Artists, Politicians, Televangelists, "Riders of the Wheel" Heretics

Specialties: Sell, Confuse, Get Off the Hook, Convince

Gambling

You are adept at one or more games of chance, and can play without too much risk of losing heavily. You can also increase your chances of winning without actually cheating.

- **Novice:** Saturday night poker with the boys
- **Practiced:** A couple of weeks in Vegas each year
- **Competent:** You are known in Vegas, Reno and Atlantic City.
- **Expert:** You make a living from this. Your mother despairs.
- **Master:** You have to be careful not to tell people your name.

Possessed by: Professional Gamblers, Amateur Gamblers

Specialties: Card Games, Dice Games, Roulette, One-Armed Bandits

Heavy Weapons

You have the ability to operate heavy weapons of all varieties — anything from an M60 heavy machine gun to a Dragon antitank weapon. Additionally, your knowledge of the weapons includes an ability to repair them. Though these weapons are extremely rare in the Underworld, the person who knows how to use them will always be in demand.

- **Novice:** Basic training
- **Practiced:** Operator
- **Competent:** Warrior
- **Expert:** Killer
- **Master:** Rambo

Possessed by: Mercenaries, Armed Forces Personnel, SWAT Officers

Specialties: Desert, Jungle, Night Fighting, Friend from Foe, Loading

Hypnotism

You can place a subject into a trance and use hypnotism to gather information or treat psychiatric problems. To place a willing subject into trance, make an opposed roll of your Charisma + Hypnotism against the subject's Intelligence. (For an unwilling and immobilized subject to comply, use Intelligence + Willpower.) The number of successes indicates the depth of the trance and can be added to your Hypnotism to roll for the success of tasks. For example, a hypnotist with Charisma 4 and Hypnotism 4 hypnotizes a willing subject with Intelligence 5. The hypnotist rolls 5 successes and the subject rolls 2 — a total of 3 successes in the hypnotist's favor, indicating a fairly deep trance. The hypnotist can now roll seven dice (3 successes plus four dice from Hypnotism 4) to probe the subject's mind. Using this Skill successfully might reduce the difficulty of some Arcanos by 1 or more, depending on the circumstances.

- **Novice:** You do it to entertain occasionally.
- **Practiced:** You are a skilled amateur.
- **Competent:** You can find some interesting secrets.
- **Expert:** You can dig very deeply.
- **Master:** You can discover secrets from a subject's Past Lives.

Possessed by: Entertainers, Holistic Healers, New Agers, Police Specialists, Psychiatrists

Specialties: Interrogation, Past-Life Regression, Hypnotherapy, Behavior Modification

Lockpicking

You are able to open locks without the correct key or the right combination. Though this Skill is certainly becoming more and more obsolete with all the new security devices in use, there are enough locks still around to make it worthwhile.

- **Novice:** Simple mortise locks
- **Practiced:** Cylinder locks and basic security locks
- **Competent:** Advanced security locks
- **Expert:** Safes
- **Master:** Fort Knox

Possessed by: Burglars, Safecrackers, Spies, Locksmiths

Specialties: Key-Operated Locks, Combination Locks, Mag-Card Locks, Alarm Systems

Misdirection

Misdirection deals with distracting people from what you are trying to do. By making your subject focus his concentration elsewhere, you can steer him away from a subject of interest. The subject of interest could be anything from what you are doing to an object sitting in plain sight.

- **Novice:** "Hey, your shoelace is untied!"
- **Practiced:** You're real good at card tricks.
- **Competent:** You can make a living at misdirecting people.
- **Expert:** People give you things and then forget that they did.
- **Master:** Strangers forget that they ever met you.

Possessed by: Stage Magicians, Pickpockets, Con Men

Specialties: Theft, Concealment, Leading, Confusion

Pilot

You can operate a flying machine. Note that your skill limits the types of aircraft you can fly. A glider pilot (one dot) cannot fly a helicopter (requiring four dots). While flying machines are rare in the Underworld, certain characters would possess this knowledge from when they were alive, and on the rare occasions when an airplane does cross the Shroud, experienced pilots are in demand.

- **Novice:** Club member; hang gliders only
- **Practiced:** Club champion; gliders and small aircraft only
- **Competent:** Professional or club instructor; commercial airplane license
- **Expert:** Military or display pilot; helicopter, any type of commercial aircraft
- **Master:** Top Gun



Possessed by: Enthusiasts, Pilots, Military, Police

Specialties: Night Flying, Thermals, Dogfights, Long Distances, Takeoffs and Landings, Gliders, Helicopters, Light Planes, Corporate Jets, Commercial/Transport Jets, Fighter Jets, Vintage Planes, Autogyros, Blimps, Balloons, Hang Gliders, Microlights

Psychoanalysis

You are skilled in diagnosing and treating mental ailments without resorting to the use of behavior-altering drugs (which are well-nigh impossible to get in the Shadowlands anyway!). During a session of analysis, you may roll Intelligence + Psychoanalysis (difficulty of the subject's Intelligence + 3). Keep track of your net successes; the Storyteller will decide how many successes are necessary to remove the illness. Even Freud couldn't cure people in a single session, so be patient! Note that it is possible to treat an unwilling patient this way, although the difficulty of so doing is equal to the subject's Willpower + 3.

- Novice: A shoulder to cry on
- Practiced: Volunteer counselor
- Competent: Professional counselor
- Expert: Qualified psychoanalyst
- Master: Freud

Possessed by: Psychoanalysts, Holistic Healers, Good Listeners, Counselors, Parents, Teachers, Priests, Pardoners

Specialties: Freudian, Jungian, Humanist, Ericksonian, Holistic, Wiccan, Childhood, Psychosis, Neurosis, Self, Sympathy, Terminology, Research

Ride

You can climb onto a riding animal and stand a good chance of getting where you want to go without falling off, being thrown or having anything else unpleasant happen to you. When attempting something difficult, or when danger threatens, the Storyteller may require a Dexterity + Ride roll to avoid trouble. This Skill can also be combined with Mental Attributes to reflect your working knowledge of the relevant trappings and equipment.

- Novice: Pony club member; dude ranch vacations
- Practiced: Pony club champion; weekend cowboy
- Competent: Pony club instructor; professional cowboy
- Expert: Showjumping champion; rodeo star
- Master: Stunt rider

Possessed by: Enthusiasts, Cowboys, Stunt Riders, members of preindustrial societies

Specialties: Bareback, Horse, Mule, Camel, Elephant, Galloping, Tricks, No Hands



Singing

You can sing over a wide range and use a variety of styles and techniques. Singing is an extremely lucrative and popular Skill in the modern age. A very common Ability among Chanteurs for obvious reasons!

- **Novice:** You stand out when the family gathers around the piano.
- **Practiced:** You could get lead roles with local amateur societies or become a lead singer with a garage band.
- **Competent:** You could get a choral part on the professional stage or get a recording contract.
- **Expert:** You could get a lead on Broadway or a record on the charts.
- **Master:** They'll be playing your CDs 20 years from now.

Possessed by: Rock Musicians, Pop Stars, Opera Singers, Drunks

Specialties: Opera, Easy Listening, Ritual, Rock, Musicals, "Celtic Goth"

Speed Reading

Through practice, you have developed the ability to read and absorb large quantities of written material in a short time. This is especially useful when the character is doing research or checking for an obscure reference.

- **Novice:** The New York Times in an hour
- **Practiced:** A novel in two to three hours
- **Competent:** A textbook in two to three hours
- **Expert:** A fat textbook in two to three hours
- **Master:** *War & Peace* in two to three hours

Possessed by: Academics, Literary Critics, Journalists, Researchers

Specialties: Technical, Fiction, Newspaper, Research, Cramming

Storytelling

The art of telling a story in an entertaining manner for an audience, whether for pastime or profit. People enjoy listening to you, and you have a gift for using words in an evocative manner for an appreciative crowd.

• **Novice:** You remember the punchlines to jokes and can relate anecdotes.

•• **Practiced:** Typical campfire and urban legend fare, but you're always asked for them.

••• **Competent:** You're frequently asked to tell stories and some people even leave tips.

•••• **Expert:** You're in demand and have entertained large crowds.

••••• **Master:** You can keep an audience spellbound as long as your voice holds out.

Possessed by: Troubadors, Bards, Sandmen, Travelers, Chanteurs, Shamans, Storytellers

Specialties: Ballads, Epics, Folk Tales, Anecdotes

Swimming

You can keep yourself afloat, at the very least. Normal swimming speed is 8 yards (plus Dexterity) per turn. A swimmer can increase his speed to 12 yards (plus Dexterity) if he is doing nothing else that turn. With Swimming skill, a character can try to swim faster than normal; roll Stamina + Swimming, difficulty 7, and add three yards to your swimming speed per success (one roll per turn).

• **Novice:** You can swim.

•• **Practiced:** You can swim fast, or for extended periods.

••• **Competent:** Instructor/Lifeguard

•••• **Expert:** Swim team

••••• **Master:** Olympic gold

Possessed by: Athletes, Lifeguards, Scuba Divers, almost anyone else

Specialties: Racing, Distance, Sea, Survival, Lifesaving

Torture

You know how to inflict pain. Your ability is so precise as to be a science. You are capable of interrogating prisoners through torture and prolonging their suffering, keeping them in extreme pain but denying them the release of either a Harrowing or Oblivion.

• **Novice:** You know how to hurt people in different ways.

•• **Practiced:** You are good at causing extreme pain and can keep someone alive for interrogation purposes.

••• **Competent:** You are equal to a military torturer. You can create extremes of pain most people have never experienced.

•••• **Expert:** You are equal to a professional torturer. You are able to get almost any information you want out of your subject.

••••• **Master:** You are an artist, a virtuoso of pain and suffering.

Possessed by: Military Interrogators, Prison Guards
Specialties: Exotic Methods, Prolonging Life, Pain, Flagellation

Tracking

You can identify the trail of an animal or person and follow it under most conditions. The difficulty of such a feat varies according to the conditions — following fresh tracks in deep snow is easier than following week-old tracks across a concrete sidewalk!

• **Novice:** Boy Scout

•• **Practiced:** Eagle Scout

••• **Competent:** Hunter

•••• **Expert:** Native American guide

••••• **Master:** You could track someone through the Tempest.

Possessed by: Hunters, Survivalists, Special Forces, Detectives

Specialties: Wolf, Deer, Rock, Urban, Identification, Tempest

Traps

You know how to set various types of traps according to the type of game you want to catch.

• **Novice:** Boy Scout

•• **Practiced:** Weekend survivalist

••• **Competent:** Outdoorsman

•••• **Expert:** Mountain man

••••• **Master:** "Well done! And I thought dragons were extinct..."

Possessed by: Trappers, Special Forces, inhabitants of remote places

Specialties: Specific Species, Deadfalls, Pits

Knowledges

Area Knowledge

You are familiar with an area — its landscape, history, inhabitants and mortal politics. This Knowledge will also provide a basic "who's who" for the areas around a haunt.

• **Student:** You know a fair amount for an outsider.

•• **College:** You may have lived there for a year or two.

••• **Masters:** You may have lived there for 5-10 years.

•••• **Doctorate:** You're native born, and never left.

••••• **Scholar:** You know every stone, stream or building in the area.



Possessed by: Vigilantes, Residents, Cops

Specialties: History, Geography, Wildlife, Enemies, Politics, Transportation, Law

Astrology

You know how to compile and interpret a horoscope. Given the date and time (and, according to some systems, the place) of a person's birth, you can construct a personality profile and a set of predictions about the likely course of his life. Whether you actually believe these revelations is a matter of personal taste, but you can present them in a convincing and pleasing manner to those who *do* believe. Astrology is a common Ability among members of the Hand of Fate.

- **Student:** You merely dabble.
- **College:** Friends ask you to make horoscopes for them.
- **Masters:** You could run a small astrology business.
- **Doctorate:** You could have a syndicated newspaper column.
- **Scholar:** You could work for celebrities and politicians.

Possessed by: Astrologers, Amateurs, Mystics, New Agers, Old Hippies

Specialties: Solar Horoscope, Ming Shu, Zu Wei

Computer Hacking

The player must have at least two dots in Computer before purchasing this Knowledge. Hacking allows the computer user to break the rules. It is not a programming skill — that requires the Computer Knowledge. Hacking represents an imaginative faculty above and beyond the use of the programming codes. In the binary computer world of yes/no, hacking represents the little bit of genius that says, "Well...maybe."

Hacking is used instead of the Computer Knowledge when the user is breaking into other computer systems or trying to manipulate data in "real time." The Computer Ability is used for programming or other miscellaneous tasks. Hacking is used most often as a complementary Ability to Computer, but it can aid programming by allowing the character to work faster or to crack military codes that a normal programmer would not even be able to figure out. Further suggestions for hacking appear in Chapter Four: Rules.

• **Student:** You are a computer geek who knows a few tricks, such as changing your grades in the university computer network.

•• **College:** You have great "luck" in guessing computer passwords.

••• **Masters:** You thought your electric bill was too high last month, but you can fix that with a few keystrokes.

•••• **Doctorate:** Now that you've cracked the bank codes, which is it: Rio or Bermuda?

••••• **Scholar:** The European Community was pretty annoyed about that thermonuclear incident, but you know they can never trace it back to you.

Possessed by: Computer Geeks, CIA Operatives, Artificers

Specialties: Viruses, Data Retrieval, Networking, Magical Protections, Telecommunications

Cryptography

You may skillfully compose and interpret codes and ciphers. You can construct a code that can only be cracked by someone who scores as many successes as you have dots in this Knowledge. You can also crack a code, rolling your Knowledge against a difficulty assigned by the Storyteller depending on the code's complexity.

- **Student:** Encyclopedia Brown
- **College:** Word puzzle buff, military signals officer
- **Masters:** Intelligence officer
- **Doctorate:** Intelligence cipher specialist
- **Scholar:** No More Secrets...

Possessed by: Spies, Puzzle Buffs, Military Signals Personnel

Specialties: Letter Shifts, Mathematical Encryption, Obscure Character Sets

Dead Languages

The so-called "dead languages" are still being spoken and understood in the Underworld. You can read the written form, comprehend the spoken form, and carry on a fluent conversation.

- **Student:** One additional language
- **College:** Two additional languages
- **Masters:** Three additional languages
- **Doctorate:** Four additional languages
- **Scholar:** Five additional languages

Possessed by: Gaunts, Deathlords, Scholars

Specialties: Cuneiform, Hittite, Old Egyptian, Anglo-Saxon, Indo-European

Heraldry

You have studied the art and language of heraldic arms and symbols, and can interpret a coat of arms or mask of office. You can also design a proper heraldic device and use the appropriate Legion signs and office forms correctly. Successful recognition of a mask or device will impart a small degree of knowledge about the owner.

- **Student:** Amateur, beginning clerk
- **College:** Adjustor, political wannabe
- **Masters:** Inspector, courtier
- **Doctorate:** Political player, minister
- **Scholar:** Facade Master

Possessed by: Enthusiasts, Artificers, Administrators, Hierarchy, Renegades, Heretics, SCA hobbyists

Specialties: Guild, Masks of Office, Legions, Mortal Heraldry

History

You've studied the history of a specific area or period, and you understand what happened, when, why and who was involved. You also have a fair idea of social, political, economic and technological conditions in various past times and places. Note that in the case of ancient wraiths, this Knowledge relates only to times and places that are outside their direct experience. For instance, a wraith born in Victorian London would rely on memory for knowledge of English history and culture, but would use History to uncover information about classical Greece, which was before his time, or about Czarist Russia, which was outside his experience.

- **Student:** Amateur or high school
- **College:** Enthusiast or college student
- **Masters:** Grad student or author
- **Doctorate:** Professor
- **Scholar:** Research fellow

Possessed by: Enthusiasts, Scholars, Mentors

Specialties: Political, Intellectual, Social, Economic, Technological, Classical, Medieval, Renaissance, Modern, Europe, Americas, Asia, Africa, Australia

Lore

You're familiar with the subcultures of the World of Darkness — the scoop on vampires, werewolves, mages, the fey and your own kind. Each type of Lore must be purchased as a separate Knowledge; accurate dirt on the Camarilla won't tell you anything about the halls of Arcadia.

Much of your information will be secondhand, and thus suspect. It bears noting that the different "players" in the world-behind-the-scenes often have wildly inaccurate perceptions of each other. A wraith, meeting a vampire, won't immediately ask "What clan are you, and where's your prince?" Likewise, a Heretic will not immediately know the history of the Renegade Council.

This kind of knowledge will not be easy to come by, and some knowledge can be actively harmful, especially Wyrn Lore. There really are some things man was not meant to know!

- **Student:** You've heard a few dubious tales.
- **College:** You know a few accurate facts.
- **Masters:** Familiar enough to hold an intelligent conversation.
- **Doctorate:** You know a few things they'd rather you didn't know.
- **Scholar:** You know your subjects better than they know themselves. This can become a *real* problem!

Possessed by: Sages, Tale-Tellers, Research Assistants, Spies

Varieties: (Each one bought separately) Faerie, Forbidden Secrets, Garou, Kindred (general), Camarilla, Sabbat, Technocracy Mages, Tradition Mages, Wyrn, Changelings, Hierarchy, Heretics, Renegades

Poisons

You have a working knowledge of poisons, their effects and antidotes. You can analyze a poison to tell its origin, and can mix a poison or antidote given time and equipment. You must have at least one dot in Science to acquire this Knowledge.

- **Student:** Dabbler
- **College:** Detective, Mystery Reader
- **Masters:** Pharmacist, Mystery Writer
- **Doctorate:** Forensic Scientist, Emergency-Room Doctor
- **Scholar:** Assassin, Dana Scully

Possessed by: Progenitors, Mystery Buffs, Detectives, Pharmacists, Medics, Assassins

Specialties: Venoms, Chemical Poisons, Plant-based Poisons, Analysis, Antidotes, Instant Poisons, Slow-build Poisons, Undetectable Poisons, Magickal Poisons

Psychology

You have a formal education in the science of human nature. You know the modern theories of emotion, cognitive development, personality, perception and learning. Though this is largely a scholarly understanding of the human psyche, it can be used practically to understand those around you.

- **Student:** Took a course in high school
- **College:** Upper-level studies
- **Masters:** Graduate work
- **Doctorate:** Professor
- **Scholar:** Theorist

Possessed by: Teachers, Researchers, Scientists, Counselors, Psychologists, Pardoners

Specialties: Behaviorism, Freudian, Jungian, Humanist, Developmental, Experimental, Animals

Science Specialties

The subtleties of science are many and varied. Characters who specialize in one type of science (Biology, Mathematics, Engineering, Cybernetics, etc.) more than others should simply take that Science as a separate Knowledge with specific applications outside of the more general body of knowledge that is represented by the Science Trait.

- **Student:** A basic understanding of the concepts involved.
- **College:** A working knowledge of the subject.
- **Masters:** Good enough to bend the rules without breaking them.
- **Doctorate:** Extensive and esoteric theories.
- **Scholar:** You know so much that you can prove anything you want within your chosen field.

Possessed by: Scientists, Research Technicians

Varieties: Astronomy, Biology, Genetics, Mathematics, Cybernetics, Metallurgy, any other type of specific Science

Sign Language

Sign Language can be bought as a level in Linguistics. Not all sign languages are the same. You must declare each language separately. Ninja, deaf people, spies and many wraith Circles have their own separate hand codes. These must generally be taught by a member of a select group; obtaining this training may range from easy to damn near impossible.



Slang

You know all the hip expressions for a given time period and maybe a few others, and can "date" someone fairly accurately by their slang. You can identify something as "cool" or "gauche," and whether the guy is a "brother" or a "square." You can also tell when you're being insulted or praised and can give back in kind.

- Student: Gauche
- College: Smooth Brother
- Masters: Way Cool
- Doctorate: Hip Daddy-o
- Scholar: Motor-mouth

Possessed by: Teenagers, Journalists, Undercover Operatives

Specialties: Valley Girl, Regional, Gang, Alternative, Gumpisms

Theology

Religion is a familiar aspect of human endeavor for you, and you fully understand its place in the world. At higher levels, this Knowledge imparts an appreciation for all religious beliefs, while individuals with less skill tend to view their own beliefs as intrinsically superior to any others. This, of course, varies with the individual. Possession of this Knowledge in no way requires personal belief in the tenets of any specific religion.

- Student: Participant
- College: Altar boy
- Masters: Priest
- Doctorate: Professor
- Scholar: Theologian

Possessed by: Missionaries, Priests, Pastors, Nuns, Theologians, Atheists, Heretics

Specialties: Women's Theology (often called Theaology), Comparative, Liberation, Agnosticism, Christian, Buddhist, Branch Davidian, Specific Heretic Cults



Wraith Society

*You gave the best you had to give
You only have one life to live
You fought so hard, you were a slave
After all you gave there was nothing left to give.*
— Alan Parsons Project, "Nothing Left To Lose"



The majority of the denizens of the Stygian Underworld fall under the classification of either Hierarchy, Heretic or Renegade. But what does each of these groups really stand for? What is the difference between being a member of a Renegade Gang or an acolyte of a Heretic Cult, if they both oppose the Hierarchy? This chapter provides some of the answers, as well as background information about the history and unique cultures of each faction within the Underworld.

The Hierarchy




*He's five-foot-two and he's six-foot-four
He fights with missiles and with spears
He's all of thirty-one and he's only seventeen
Been a soldier for a thousand years...*
—Buffy Ste. Marie, "Universal Soldier"

The Hierarchy's original purpose was twofold: to assist the passage of souls through the Underworld and to stem the tide of Oblivion. Its structure developed a military cast to more successfully further those aims. The Restless Dead needed to be guided in their attempts to leave the world of the Quick behind them. At the same time, these souls needed to be monitored and protected, lest their attempts backfire and lead them to

Oblivion. The example of a well-disciplined army made up of small groups, which in turn made up successively larger groups, formed both the best means of directing these wraiths in their individual struggles to achieve Transcendence and the most effective way of mustering these same individuals for use as troops in the war against Oblivion.

Despite the changes that have occurred over the centuries as the Shadowlands reflected the progress of civilization, the titles by which Hierarchy wraiths are known have persisted, although in most Necropoli they are only the vestigial remains of a system that has grown beyond its vocabulary.

Most wraiths who belong to the Hierarchy do not consider themselves to be soldiers, except in the most broad philosophical terms (i.e., "We are all soldiers in the battle against Oblivion..."). Although they may hold a "rank" such as Legionnaire or Centurion and may belong to a Cohort, this simply means that they have been recruited, claimed or captured by the agents of one of the Deathlords, marked with that Lord's particular seal, and then left to go about their own business. They represent the typical, law-abiding citizen of the Underworld. In times of need, they can be called to serve their Deathlord, much as a nation's army calls up its reserves when a crisis threatens. Additionally, over the centuries, the Hierarchy has developed an administrative wing whose members, while not subject to the military discipline of the Hierarchy's Legions, nevertheless maintain a strict progression of authority which parallels the ranks of the armies of Stygia.



Wraiths who actively serve the Hierarchy as soldiers take their rank much more seriously. The Hierarchy remains more strictly tied to the notion of rank than any other group in the Underworld, and as a result, a kind of caste system has held on in the Shadowlands even into the present day. Leaders still lead, and followers still follow, but most Hierarchy officers — at least in the middle ranks — have learned to listen to the ideas of their subordinates. The bitter lessons of the Skinlands have taught even the most hardened Hierarchy veterans that the soldiers whose survival depends on their leaders' wisdom serve best when they have some voice in their own destiny.

To see the Hierarchy as a faceless mass of regimented soldiers is to see them through a distorted lens of presupposition. In reality, the Legions of each Deathlord have their own unique structure, a structure which reflects the overall nature of the wraiths who fall under their control. Discipline varies among the Deathlords as well as within each Centurion's patrol. Although the stereotypical image of units of depersonalized soldiers can still be found among the Hierarchy — particularly in Stygia, where the shadow of the modern world barely reaches — most Hierarchy patrols reflect the unique natures and talents of the individuals who comprise them. The general tenor of the Necropolis in which a Hierarchy wraith resides also affects her attitude. A Necropolis constantly under siege will tend to produce a more militaristic, discipline-oriented Hierarchy branch, rather than one which pays only lip service to Stygia.

Most Hierarchy patrols contain a variety of individuals who serve as recruiters, educators, public relations experts, intelligence officers, social directors, quartermasters, liaisons, scouts, spies, and, of course, combat specialists. Specialized patrols do exist, but often these are assembled on an *ad hoc* basis (such as the need for a group of spies to infiltrate a suspected Renegade or Heretic stronghold).

Mobility is also possible (and in many cases encouraged) within the Hierarchy. Lemures recruited as lowly Legionnaires may eventually make their way up the ranks of the Hierarchy. Gaining the coveted position of Centurion, or patrol leader, occupies the time and effort of many Legionnaires who seek out every opportunity to shine in situations where their excellence will be noticed. Likewise, in the Hierarchy's administrative structure, resourceful and enterprising Clerks (roughly equivalent in status to Legionnaires) may entertain hopes of rising within the ranks by attracting the attention of their supervisors. Most Legionnaires and Clerks are destined to remain perpetual subordinates — but then, most mortals remain in low-status positions throughout their careers as well.

For those fortunate enough to achieve promotion to Centurion and receive their own patrols, a whole new world of social and political maneuvering opens up. In theory, Centurions gain their position through superior perfor-

mance (or judicious brown-nosing). Therefore, holding onto their ranks as patrol leaders becomes an endless struggle to stay one step ahead of the rank and file. A few wraiths seem to find their niche as patrol leader, the veteran "sergeant" stereotype of many war films or the unambitious office or assembly line worker. However, most Centurions are intent on moving upward, and see their status as a convenient way to catch the attention of their superiors. Within the administrative arm of the Hierarchy, Adjustors see their roles as only the first step towards gaining real power within the Hierarchy. In corporate terms (and in some ways the Hierarchy can also be viewed as a vast corporation), the Centurions and Adjustors make up the lower-middle management, the talent pool from which a few individuals are chosen to fill openings higher in the "company."

Centurions who achieve recognition for their abilities or successfully maneuver themselves into their superiors' good graces may be promoted to the rank of Marshal and gain responsibility over a number of patrols — and their Centurions. At this level of authority, true talent wins out over looks and charm, and most successful Marshals can point to exemplary track records to support their claim to power. Within the administrative wing, upwardly mobile Adjustors who excel in their duties can look forward to promotion to the coveted position of Inspector.

Marshals, in the Hierarchy's quasi-feudal framework, occupy the place of minor lords. Many wraiths who have risen to the rank of Marshal fall prey to the complacency associated with being a big fish in a small pond. Others find they enjoy the idea of having power over a well-defined area (usually a Haunt of some significance) and use their small influence to implement their own particular philosophy of leadership. Marshals often find themselves beset by pressures from both above and below. They are close enough to the "troops in the field" to be aware of their needs while they themselves are subject to orders from above — orders which are often at odds with the real needs or capabilities of the available patrols. Administrative Inspectors share the difficulties of their military counterparts, with whom they are expected to establish a cooperative relationship. When military and civil needs come into conflict, however, Marshals and Inspectors usually bear the brunt of the ensuing power struggles.

As the primary enforcers of local policies, Marshals and Inspectors are subject to criticism from both superiors and subordinates when things go wrong, although successes are more often attributed to the "wisdom" of their superiors in the Hierarchy. Nevertheless, a Marshal (or Inspector) skilled in manipulation can sometimes manage to reverse this perception. Failures can appear to result from poor conceptualization at higher levels, while successes seem to come from her own tenacious efforts. Marshals who prove themselves, and who maintain favorable rela-


tions with their superiors, may become Regents, while Inspectors may rise in status and responsibility to the position of Minister.

Regents and Ministers represent the highest authority not directly based within a Necropolis' Citadel. Attaining these honored positions implies that a wraith has demonstrated her loyalty to the establishment of Stygia, while at the same time attracting enough favorable attention to herself to warrant a substantial reward. The Hierarchy depends on its Regents to coordinate the activities of a number of Marshals. Ministers, while supervising the work of the Inspectors in their area, are also in charge of equipping and maintaining the local Legions and keeping a watchful eye on the economy. Regents and Ministers must be able to work within their own Deathlord's Legions as well as maintain working relationships with their counterparts in the service of other Deathlords. They receive their instructions directly from the Citadel, and it is their responsibility to see that the sectors of a Necropolis under their control remain stable. Given the current state of Strygian affairs, this is not an easy task. A Regent who manages to keep her neck of the woods even relatively stable will sometimes receive an invitation to join the ranks of the privileged few who serve as Overlords — advisors to the Anacreon of their Legion. In the same fashion, Ministers who display sufficient talent may become Chancellors.

Some say that the real power in any Necropolis rests not in the hands of the Anacreons, but with their advisory councils of Overlords and Chancellors. These are the wraiths who have direct access to the Anacreon they serve, and whose advice often becomes policy. Their voices often reach the halls of Stygia itself — and truly ambitious Hierarchy wraiths see appointment to the position of Overlord or Chancellor as a sure means of gaining entry into the highest levels of Stygian politics, or perhaps even the halls of Stygia itself. Overlords and Chancellors make up the "cabinet" of the Anacreon, offering counsel and advice to the Anacreon of their Legion. When the Necropolis is threatened by either a Maelstrom or an invasion of Spectres, it is the business of both Overlords and Ministers to remain on top of the situation and formulate strategies for the Anacreon. Usually, the advice of an Overlord takes precedence in times of war over a Chancellor's recommendations, while in less stressful times the situation tends to be reversed.

Although all Hierarchy ranks above that of Centurion and Adjustor are theoretically direct appointments by an Anacreon, in reality, most candidates for higher offices are brought to the Anacreon's attention by one or more of her trusted counselors. An Overlord or Chancellor can therefore stack the ranks of a Necropolis with wraiths who are loyal to her, while seeming to bring "talent" to the attention of her superior. Although the Anacreons — at least the savvy ones — realize this, there





is little they can do to alter this system except exercise damage control by carefully choosing their advisors. It is said that any Anacreon who finds herself suddenly without a job, and her position assumed by one of her staff of advisors, obviously did not choose her Overlords or Chancellors with enough care.

The goal of many Hierarchy wraiths (particularly those who were politicians or leaders of one sort or another in life) is to attain the rank of Anacreon, thus becoming the commander of her Legion in her Necropolis. The Anacreon sets the tone for members of her Legion in any Necropolis. The amount of discipline exercised within a Legion depends on how strongly that Legion's Anacreon adheres to the rules. Anacreons may arise from the highest levels of either the Hierarchy's military or administrative wings. Consequently, the degree of regimentation within any given Citadel may depend on whether the Anacreon comes from the military or civilian caste. In most cases, by the time a wraith has garnered sufficient power (and attention from Stygia) to ascend to this top post, she has also gathered a fairly realistic assessment of wraith society, including the best strategies for dealing with Heretics and Renegades within her Necropolis. Like living politicians, many Anacreons-to-be cultivate an image which they feel will impress the Hierarchy enough to gain them their coveted appointment. Once in power, however, most Anacreons drop the pose and reveal their true colors, for good or for ill. Stygia is too far away to keep constant tabs on the internal politics of all its Necropoli. As long as an Anacreon keeps the flow of commerce between her Necropolis and Stygia within acceptable limits, she is generally left undisturbed. In fact, many distant outposts have become mini-Stygias, with the Council of Anacreons in absolute control of their turf.

The Hierarchy Since Charon's Disappearance

Since the disappearance of Charon, the Hierarchy has had to adapt itself to leading without an apparent leader. Rather than elevate one of their own to the throne of Stygia, thus implying that one of the Legions was in some way superior to all the others, the Deathlords elected to rule as a Council. While many privately harbor a cynical attitude towards the idea of a Stygian rule-by-committee, this decision has many positive aspects not immediately apparent to wraiths unfamiliar with political intrigue.

First of all, since no one Deathlord has supreme power, members of each Legion can rightly feel that their faction has an equal say in Stygian and Hierarchy politics. Second, the co-rulership of the Deathlords encourages the

example of cooperation among the Legions within any given Necropolis ("...if they can do it, we have to do it..."). Third, and most importantly, the illusion that the Hierarchy is keeping Charon's rightful place ready for his return maintains the belief that one day Charon *will* return. For many wraiths, this hope is all that keeps them within the Hierarchy — and the Deathlords are painfully aware of this.

The disadvantages inherent in rule by council may, however, ultimately outweigh the advantages. Even within a group of equals, there will always be an attempt to be "first among equals." The political maneuverings that go on within the Council of Deathlords often take precedence over more critical matters — such as the survival of Stygia. Important decisions frequently depend more on political alliances within the Council than on the actual factors affecting those decisions. Each Deathlord seeks to advance in power, usually at the expense of one or more of the other Deathlords, and these quests for personal advancement often have dire repercussions throughout Stygia and its Necropoli.

Regardless of their private ambitions, all the Deathlords realize the importance of maintaining at least the appearance of stability. They know that the solidarity of the Shadowlands depends upon a strong, orderly social structure which can stand as a bulwark against Oblivion and the Spectres who serve it. To this end, the Deathlords take extreme measures to prevent information leaks or rumors of dissent within Stygia's highest Circle. To a certain extent, this façade endures throughout the Necropoli as well, where the Councils of Anacreons promote the public image of cooperation while privately following their own ambitious schemes.

Charon's disappearance also served to accelerate a growing trend within the Hierarchy. From its origins as a social structure intended to guide wraiths towards Transcendence, the Hierarchy has devolved into a self-perpetuating organization that officially denies that Transcendence is possible, or even desirable. The modern Hierarchy realizes that their power lies in keeping the Underworld populated with easily controllable wraiths. Thus, encouraging the groundlings toward Transcendence is not on their agenda.

Stygian Feudalism

Despite modernization in some areas, the Hierarchy has stagnated in its social evolution. It still rests at a level which corresponds to the feudal structure that developed during the Middle Ages. Originally, its structure was based on the Graeco-Roman model and depended heavily on the concept of citizen or soldier vs. non-citizen (slave). The ranks and titles of the Hierarchy's military framework still reflect those origins: Cohort, Legion, Centurion, etc.



The rise of feudalism in the Skinlands offered a more viable pattern to the Hierarchy's social organization. Feudalism was inherently stable. Each person within the feudal society knew her place, and participated in the dynamics of fealty, owing loyalty and obedience to those above her while expecting the same from those below her. This tight reciprocal construction helped strengthen the Hierarchy's ability to act as a bastion against Oblivion.


Although the living world has advanced in social structure far beyond the medieval stage, the Stygian Hierarchy shows a real reluctance to modernize, feeling that other political systems are too easily subject to uncontrollable change. The rulers of the Underworld fear that any change in government or leadership would leave Stygia vulnerable to attacks from opportunistic Spectral armies. The seemingly changeless nature of feudalism offers a constancy with which the Hierarchy cannot afford to tamper.

The Role of Thralls in Society

Understanding the role of slavery in the creation and history of freedom has forced us to face certain disquieting aspects of the relationship between good and evil, as well as the problem of harmony and contradiction in the etiology of those things we most cherish... The history of freedom and its handmaiden, slavery, has bruited in the open what we cannot stand to hear, that inhering in the good which we defend with our lives is often the very evil we most abhor.

— Orlando Patterson, *Freedom*

Charon instituted the concept of thralldom in response to the growing numbers of relatively weak wraiths who were becoming stranded in the Shadowlands — unable to Transcend, but lacking the strength to stand against the lures of the Spectres and the call of Oblivion. The concepts of liberty and the rights of the individual had not yet gained popularity in the Skinlands; in fact, those concepts did not come into their own until the Age of Enlightenment. Individuals were viewed primarily within their social context. Those who would not willingly contribute to the good of society, or those who posed a threat to society as a whole, required drastic measures to control them. When Charon first realized that something had to be done to prevent vast numbers of wraiths from feeding Oblivion, the only real concept available to him was the one practiced by most early cultures: enslavement. Over the centuries, the status of the chained and subjugated wraiths has undergone a series of transformations. Still, like the Hierarchy, its overall pattern has stabilized at the medieval level. The chained wraiths most closely resemble thralls, or serfs. To fully understand the evolution of the role which thralls play in Stygian society, a scholar must consider its beginnings.



The Origins of Slavery

In the Skinlands, the practice of taking slaves originated in most societies with the necessity of doing something with captives taken in war. These prizes of war had to be somehow integrated into a hostile society in such a way that their potential danger as enemies (albeit conquered ones) was neutralized. Social status predated any concept of personal liberty. Slavery, at least in its inception, was primarily a severe reduction in status.

In many early societies, enslavement was the first step in a process of eventual assimilation. War captives were marked by branding, shaving their heads or through some other form of ritual disfigurement to denote their status (or lack thereof) as "non-persons," or in some cases, as "children." If escape could be a problem, they were either hobbled or lamed. In some cultures, slaves were possessed by the entire tribe or community. In other societies, particularly those where status began to equate to property, slaves were owned by the warrior who captured them or who earned them as prizes for demonstrated feats of bravery in battle. Additionally, slaves were used as breeding stock, to ensure that tribes did not suffer from inbreeding. In these cases, the children of slaves were considered to be full members of the society into which they were born. Occasionally, slaves were elevated into tribal membership. This ceremony of manumission usually involved a ritual of symbolic rebirth, renaming and formal adoption.

As societies grew larger and more settled, the value of slaves as forced labor became evident, and the emphasis shifted from assimilation to subjugation. The Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans (among others) all used slave labor to construct some of their civilizations' greatest achievements, such as the Pyramids and Hanging Gardens. The concept of slavery took yet another evolutionary step, from assimilable non-person to status symbol to property to marketable commodity, or even currency. In societies where the gods (or their priests) demanded sacrifices, slaves became another form of property or wealth that could be destroyed on the altar. They were also a ready source of commerce, as tradable as spices or cloth.

In the Underworld, thanks to the emerging talents of the Artificers' Guild and the creation of the soul-forges, subjugated wraiths were literally transformed into marketable goods. They served as raw material which could be shaped and crafted into tools, weapons, and luxuries for the wraiths of Stygia. This wholesale smelting of souls became a hideous parody of the living world's slave-based economy, and the ignominious deaths of thousands of overworked, undernourished slaves in the ancient societies of Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome only resulted in the creation of more and more wraithly candidates for the Stygian fires.

The Rise of Feudalism

With the advent of feudalism in the Skinlands came a new way of regarding slaves. Feudal society emphasized the importance of holding the land and promoting agriculture. Land-based economies desperately needed a stable work force, which could not be drawn from the warrior class, who were primarily responsible for protecting the land's integrity for their lord. The vast majority of people during the Middle Ages (before the advent of a city-based middle class) became serfs and, through the logic of feudal society, accepted the protection of the local lord in return for working the land of their liege. The feudal contract tied them to the land. The "slave class," at least in feudal Europe, largely disappeared into this lowest thrall class.

This transformation was mirrored in Stygia as well, as Charon saw the benefits of feudal stability. Although still termed "thralls," the masses of souls that crowded the Underworld received a slight upgrade in actual status. The Stygian Hierarchy began to develop a protective attitude towards the lower orders. In a feudal society, thralls held a secure, albeit lowly, place in the social structure. Unlike slaves, whose existence depended on the whim of their owners, thralls enjoyed both protection and security, although the price they paid was high. In Stygia, Charon's Hierarchy adopted a more paternalistic demeanor towards the thralls under its care. On the surface, Charon's followers seemed to obey his wishes, but in reality, few Deathlords or their minions truly had the "best interests" of their thralls at heart. After all, the economy of Stygia depended on the steady production of trade goods for its well-being, and the Stygian forges were in constant need of souls.

Changing Times, Changing Perceptions

The status of thralls has risen and fallen to reflect the Skinlands' changing views on the worth of the individual. During the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment, society began to take tentative steps away from the group mentality associated with earlier historic periods. The advent of a middle class of merchants and tradesmen, along with a resurgence of interest in classical philosophers, led to an elevation in status for thralls in general. No longer were they perceived as forever chained to their lowly estate; rather, they had the opportunity for eventual release from thralldom through their own efforts. As the concepts of indentured servitude and apprenticeships gained in popularity in the Skinlands, these models were adopted by Charon as a means of giving thralls a second chance at becoming true members of his Hierarchy. The promise of reward for good behavior encouraged many thralls to work hard in the hopes of eventual release into the actual ranks of Stygian society.

With the beginning of the Age of Exploration and Imperial Expansion, however, the lower classes of society were once again seen in terms of their potential for exploitation. Europe colonized the New World with religious and political dissenters, with criminal transportees and with their excess population in general. Colonists were seen primarily as markers of territory and as providers of raw materials for their mother countries. The importation of slaves from Africa and the subsequent growth of the slave trade as an independent source of revenue led to the further devaluation of the individual, and a return to the earlier view of people as property. The Hierarchy, in their haste to settle the New World, also moved towards an imperialistic frame of mind. Thralls once again suffered from this devolution of their status.

The Age of Revolution saw the emergence of the rights and value of the individual. The formation of independent governments in the former colonies of Europe was partly due to the fruition of political philosophers whose works resulted in the popularization of ideas such as inalienable rights and personal liberty. Slavery was seen, perhaps for the first time, as an inherently evil and degrading institution. In Stygia, thralls began to hope once more for their eventual liberation. The Hierarchy viewed this new development as a major threat to its power. In many Necropoli, the Council of Anacreons instituted draconian measures to prevent a thrall revolution. In a few places, however, shrewder minds prevailed. The representatives of Stygia appeared to acquiesce to the new spirit of individual freedom without altering their methods in any way, relying on the certainty that their subjects would believe what they were told. In this way, the Hierarchy managed to retain control of its Citadels and outposts, even in the midst of worldwide revolution.

The Industrial Age brought its own horrific twist. The rise of factories and mass production resulted in an extreme level of depersonalization for the common folk. Now the masses toiled in factories to produce goods for commercial markets. Mindless machine labor replaced skilled artisans, and the individual became just another expendable resource to add to the work force. The inception of penal institutions (rather than grisly public executions or idle imprisonment in dungeons) as a means to profit from incarcerated criminals transformed the nature of punishment during the 18th and 19th centuries. In Stygia, not only did the wholesale use of thralls as raw materials for the soul-forges reach heretofore unimaginable proportions, but the idea of thralldom as punishment for misbehavior and acts against the Hierarchy became firmly entrenched in the social structure of the Shadowlands. By labeling thralls as "criminals" or "social misfits," the Hierarchy enabled most wraiths to put the fate of these unfortunate souls conveniently out of their minds.





The Modern Thrall

In the 20th century, thralls occupy a highly problematic and uncertain place in Stygian society. Enough vestigial feudalism remains within the Hierarchy to officially grant thralls the "protection" of their masters, but in reality, the fate of most thralls is dictated by the needs of Stygia's economy. The rationale for the mass rendering of thralls into forgeable matter is, of course, that the thralls doomed to such a fate were inherently too weak to survive as wraiths, and that in this fashion they are better able to contribute to the stability of the Underworld. Paradoxically, along with the wholesale reduction of the worth of the individual in general has come a corresponding elevation of the individual in particular.


Popular myth states that thrallhood is merely a transition period for wraiths who are initially too weak to contribute in more productive ways to Stygia's well-being, or that thrallhood is a means of punishing (and making use of) criminals. These myths are not entirely false. Some thralls do eventually win their rights as full members of the Hierarchy, either by fulfilling the terms of their indentures or by serving out their sentence for crimes against the Hierarchy. Most thralls, however, find themselves trapped in a state of eternal servitude, subject to the largesse of their overseers, lords, masters, or prison wardens and perpetually faced with the threat of a one-way trip to the fires of the Stygian forges.

Playing a Hierarchy Character

Despite the darker aspects of Hierarchy society, some of the richest opportunities for roleplaying can emerge from *Wraith* chronicles which feature Circles of Hierarchy characters. Hierarchy wraiths occupy a wide variety of positions within the society of the Shadowlands, and need not be primarily soldiers. Depending on the nature of a particular story or chronicle, Hierarchy characters can be drawn from a diverse range of models.

At the heart of Stygian society lies the endless struggle against Oblivion. A story revolving around this perpetual war may very well demand a Circle of Hierarchy wraiths who are "combat-heavy" in nature. Even so, within each patrol will be several wraiths with particular specialties, dictated by their Arcanos. Combat specialists may rely on *Outrage* or *Moliate* for dealing damage to Spectres. Communications and intelligence specialists need skills in *Keening* and *Castigate*. A patrol leader or a scout for a Circle of Spectre hunters should be proficient in *Argos* and *Fatalism*.

Other sorts of stories revolving around Hierarchy characters may encourage the creation of less military-oriented wraiths. Keeping the peace in a Necropolis, particularly in an outpost far from Stygia, may require more emphasis on public relations and interpersonal skills and Arcanos. Hi-



erarchy detectives working within a Circle of wraiths loyal to Stygia may become involved in investigating alleged crimes, tracking down stolen Fetters or relics, or locating newly deceased family members or friends for wraiths seeking reunion with their loved ones beyond the Shroud. Hierarchy wraiths may also be called upon to enter the Skinlands to track down Renegades or outlaws who violate Charon's code forbidding interaction with the world of the Quick. Such wraiths will need to have knowledge of the supposedly forbidden Arcanos of Puppetry and Embodiment, and will need good stealth and investigative abilities.

The Legion to which a Hierarchy wraith belongs also has some influence on the personality and motivations of the character — important factors in creating a fully developed wraith. Considering the way in which a wraith died (and therefore the Legion most likely to claim her) provides many opportunities for personalizing a Hierarchy wraith. A wraith belonging to the Legions of the Quiet Lord of Despair may be more intense and moodier than a wraith who belongs to the Laughing Lady's Legions. Wraiths who died from happenstance, plague, mystery, violence or old age will have a broad latitude of personality traits that distinguish them from other individuals within the same Legions. While Hierarchy wraiths will tend to belong to Circles which serve the same Deathlord, they need not be carbon copies of one another.

For example, a Circle claimed by the Legions of the Lord of Pestilence may include an AIDS victim, a textile worker who died of brown lung disease, a casualty of the Black Plague, and a child who died before the advent of the polio vaccine. All these individuals will have very different personalities, even though the common thread of their death brings them under the same Deathlord. Members of a Circle which serves the Ladies of Fate may not have any obviously common threads at all. The Circles of Fate are perhaps the most varied of any in the Hierarchy.

It is also possible to play a Hierarchy wraith in a mixed group, although special circumstances may be needed to explain why such an individual is consorting with wraiths outside the official protection of Stygia. Wraiths who were connected with each other in life may find themselves on opposite sides of Stygian politics in death but may still associate with one another because of their emotional ties — even to the extent of having mutual Fetters. A Hierarchy wraith may willingly consort with Renegades or Heretics in the hopes of converting them, or may have been assigned to infiltrate such a group with the goal of delivering them to the authorities. A member of the Hierarchy might even begin to doubt the rightness of her allegiance to the oppressive Stygian power structure, and seek refuge among non-Hierarchy wraiths.

The possibilities for playing Hierarchy-based characters are, in fact, limited only by the collective creativity of players and Storyteller. Supplements such as *Haunts* present other ideas for developing a character whose loyalties lie with Stygia.

Test Your Hierarchy Quotient

Before you decide that the Hierarchy is too tame or too oppressive for your wraith character, take a few minutes to consider the following questions and determine how your fledgling wraith would answer them.

- In life, was your occupation one of the following: police officer, schoolteacher, social worker, attorney, judge, civil servant, detective, banker, stock broker, doctor, blue-collar worker, businessperson, or armed forces member?

- Were you a supporter of any or all of the following: economic prosperity, family values, police protection, centralized government, organized religion, patriotism, compulsory education?

- Did you believe that a sense of tradition was vital to the well-being of any social group?

- Were you, in general, a "law-abiding" citizen of your community? (Did you obey the speed limit, pay your taxes, vote in general elections, etc.?)

- Were you a member of any of the following: community watch organizations, service clubs (Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.), parent-teacher groups, labor unions?

- Did you belong to a church, temple, or other established religious group (not a cult) because of your desire to conform to the established norms of your society or because of family traditions rather than for any truly spiritual reason?

- Did you prefer government of some sort over anarchy, or political moderation over radicalism of either extreme?

If the answer to even one of these questions is yes, then your wraith character might find the Hierarchy both comforting and familiar.

Stereotypes:

Renegades

The Renegades represent the corrosive influence of Oblivion itself. Their rebellion is the force that would wear away at the battlements of tradition and structure that protect the Shadowlands. We hunt them down not because they disagree, but because they act out their disagreements in socially unacceptable ways.

— Gillian Rutherford, Centurion of the Fifth Legion
Heretics

These deluded fools would distract us from the necessities of dealing with the realities of our current existence. At best, they are annoyances. At worst, they are dangerous proselytizers who actively seek to weaken our numbers. Fortunately for us, their own convictions usually prevent them from taking any concerted efforts to overpower us.

— Dr. Martin Bowers, Marshal of the Emerald Legion
The Quick

The Code of Charon forbids us to consort with the living, lest we weaken the integrity of the Shroud and leave ourselves open to those whose powers can harm us or even drive us into Oblivion. Still, it is difficult to ignore the tears of our loved ones, or the gloating cries of our murderers. While we unequivocally condemn blatant violations of the barrier between the living and the dead, we cannot prevent minor lapses. Some mortals — mages, members of the Arcanum, exorcists, and the like — must be avoided at all cost. Attempts to contact these dangerous foes must be met with the harshest punitive measures.

— John Strider, Centurion (and unofficial Pardoner) of the Legion of Fate

Supernatural Creatures

Despite our best efforts at secrecy, there are some beings who know or suspect that we exist. We must make what accommodations we can with them, while still preserving the Code of Charon. The vampires of the Tremere will often consent to pacts of mutual exploitation, but those of the Giovanni all too often try to gain permanent control of our souls. The werewolves who call themselves Silent Striders know too much about us already. Through their misguided efforts at giving us "eternal rest," they have cast many of us into the maw of Oblivion. Only the most foolhardy among us would dare to associate with the creatures of faerie; how can a race that does not know true death hope to understand the complexities of our existence? We deal as carefully and as quickly with all these creatures as possible... and hope no one is looking when we do.

— Magdalena Hernandez, Overlord of the Penitent Legion

Final Thoughts on the Hierarchy

*That civilisation may not sink
Its great battle lost,
Quiet the dog, tether the pony
To a distant post.*

*Our master Caesar is in the tent
Where the maps are spread,
His eyes fixed upon nothing,
A hand under his head.*

— William Butler Yeats, "Long-legged Fly"

Hierarchy wraiths are essential to the existence of the Shadowlands. In a world surrounded and penetrated by the flux of the Tempest, they are bastions of stability and order. They are too often perceived as bland or one-dimensional stuffed shrouds, when more often they are complex and often tragic individuals. To work within a corrupt system, to attempt to correct the inequities of totalitarian rule, to live in a state of perpetual siege by Spectres, Renegades, Heretics and other Outsiders takes dedication and a certain amount of stubbornness. Members of the Hierarchy see themselves as heroes, as soldiers in a perpetual war, and as the standard from which everyone else deviates. They are the inheritors of Charon's dream, which, tarnished though it may be, is far better than the nightmarish nothingness of Oblivion.

Heretics



Heresy is the lifeblood of religions.

It is faith that begets Heretics.

There are no heresies in a dead religion.

— Andre Soares, "Peguy"

To be a Heretic is to believe. It is to believe in a state of being and existence beyond that of the bleak reality of existence in the Underworld, an after-afterlife, if you will. It is also to believe in a particular style of unlife, and to believe fervently in one particular method of Transcending to that higher state.

Heretics are intensely spiritual wraiths, most seeking the true path amid the swirling confusion of the Shadowlands. Their strong beliefs and commitment to their cause set them apart from the Hierarchy, the Renegades and from each other. The many factions of Heretics are radically splintered, with each group following a different path in their pursuit of some higher purpose. They are similar only in the strength of their beliefs.



Religious Dissonance

The dead are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to matters of faith. After all, all the religious pablum they were ever fed in no way prepared them for the Shadowlands. Heaven, Hell, Nirvana, nothing: whatever they were led to believe lay just beyond life's veil is most definitely not here. It seems they have been sold a false bill of goods. Most wraiths, when faced with this dilemma, pull away from religion and most things religious, abandoning what faith they may have had soon after they rip away their Caul. How then do the Heretics, and their religions, prosper in the face of the great-granddaddy of religious party-poopers? More importantly, how do Heretics manage to form (or re-form) strong, even all-pervasive, religious convictions when everything they ever learned to expect from death has proven to be false advertising?

Each group of Heretics, and indeed each individual Heretic, has come to terms with the intense religious and cognitive dissonance death causes. Unlike most other wraiths, they have all resolved their anguish through the auspices of faith. When faced with a death they never dreamed of, in a spirit-world which they perceive as naught but continuing pain and confusion, most wraiths reject utterly their former faith. After all, they were told that when they died some truth would be revealed, or that they would move back through the circle of life, or perhaps that they would know nothing. The Shadowlands, and all they represent, apparently refute all of these Skinlander religious themes.

Those wraiths who become Heretics, however, have held to a strong faith. They find their spiritual center — the answer to the initial crushing disappointment of their current existence — in their steadfast beliefs. Making the decision to embrace, or reembrace, faith in the Shadowlands is a particularly difficult task, requiring an enormous amount of will or imagination. Another key element is a willingness to commit totally to the care of another wraith who says there is a reason why the Shadowlands are here and the wraiths in them. In either case, each Heretic must hold on to her beliefs with a stranglehold never required by even the most foully abused and denigrated Skinlander martyr.

Heretics view their faith as their lifeline in a realm of death. It gives reason and purpose to the otherwise inexplicable realm in which they have been so rudely thrust. Thus, Heretics must invest themselves, indeed their identities, in their faith. To admit, for even a moment, that there is a chance that they have been tricked yet again is to admit to purposelessness, and to the triumph of Oblivion. This utterly terrifying prospect is anathema to almost all Heretics, and few are even willing to consider it for a moment. Of





"Heretics"

Many of those branded as "Heretics" by the Hierarchy initially rejected the name as derogatory and inaccurate, usually preferring to call themselves "The Chosen" or "Believers" instead. In recent years, however, many Heretics have embraced the name, proclaiming that in a system such as the Hierarchy, they relish their role as ideological outcasts. Similarly, many reject the word "Cult" in favor of the less judgmental "faith." Whether a group is called a "Believer's Faith" or a "Heretic Cult" makes little difference to those who would wipe them out, but the semantics of faith have become increasingly important to those within the fold.

course, the rigidity of thought necessary to maintain their faith has its own dangers, and all too many Heretics fall prey to them. In attempting to cling to the ladder to Transcendence, the Heretics are in constant danger of forgetting that you must let go of one rung in order to climb to the next.

Heretics and the Hierarchy

The Heretic factions universally believe that the Hierarchy, its leadership, and many of the fundamental tenets of its society are "dead" wrong. In particular, they believe that the path of the Hierarchy will not lead to Transcendence. In their view, the Hierarchy has smothered the spiritual progression of the souls in the Underworld with corruption and decay. Tremendous misery and suffering have been the direct result, as well as the trafficking in souls by which each Hierarch has betrayed their original calling. Luckily for all wraiths, many Heretics also believe that they have found the solution, the philosophy which provides the answer to the ills of the Shadowlands.

Most Heretics believe that each individual soul must strive for Transcendence, usually by following the particular path which they espouse. These paths vary widely, for the beliefs of the Heretics are at least as diverse as those found in the Skinlands. However, the Heretic Cults are fighting an uphill battle against the Hierarchy, the Renegades and each other for survival and for converts to their respective causes.

A few more thoughtful Shadowlanders argue that by engaging in this very struggle the Heretics betray their ideals, sinking into the corrupt framework of the Hierarchy

to pursue souls — the currency of raw power in the Underworld. However, most Heretics believe that it is necessary to do battle on these terms in order to survive. They know they must strike out against the Hierarchy in order to save the newly dead souls from miserable existences of slavery and stagnation.


While not all Heretic factions pursue violent tactics, all are fervent in their beliefs. Their complete faith in their own belief system, and absolute rejection of all other ideologies as flawed at best, lead many Heretics to conclude that they have a moral duty to at least attempt to show others the way. After all, some Heretics, through great strength of will and truly unshakable conviction, have maintained the faith they had in life even in the face of death. Still others have created, or fallen into, new belief structures to provide structure and purpose to their unlife. They naturally wish to aid the others, to calm the Restless Dead by providing purpose and hope.

Philosophical and religious tension among Heretic factions is very real. Many Heretic Cults loathe each other at least as much as they hate the Hierarchy. Yet while the Heretic factions spread competing messages of salvation, they have learned that they must sometimes bend to pragmatism and band together against the Hierarchy to survive. After all, the Deathlords will be satisfied with nothing short of total domination.

Unlike the Renegades, Heretics do not usually engage in random acts of violence or rebellion. Those Heretics who are violent always act with a concerted purpose. Nor do most factions and leaders seek personal gratification, or at least they claim that such base motives are irrelevant to them. While a few openly seek power in the Shadowlands, most are motivated by faith and their version of the search for knowledge and truth (or by the belief that they have found the truth). These Heretics work to promote their own version of the Transcendence of the soul and their own brand of faith. As with many religions in the Skinlands, they look beyond the suffering of this existence to the promise of something better in the next.

The Heretics Since Charon's Disappearance

When the order and discipline established by Charon was functioning as designed, the Hierarchs fulfilled their prescribed roles by shepherding souls through the Shadowlands to the Far Shores and eventually to Transcendence. Of course, even then, there were individual factions of Heretics promoting their own belief systems among the newly dead. The Heretics were never in the mainstream of Underworld society. They would always naturally gravitate toward its fringes as they chose to tune out, drop out, or walk a different path.



However, the Heretics back then were not as likely to openly or formally oppose the Hierarchy as they are since Charon's disappearance. After all, the Hierarchy of that time was far more popular, efficient, and successful than the corrupt and bloated carcass of today — or at least they had better PR. The Heretics went about their business more quietly then, promoting their various methods of spiritual development and promising passage from the Shadowlands to places beyond.

Since the disappearance of Charon, the vast increase in the number of souls in the Underworld waiting to Transcend and the relative paucity of those actually passing through the Shadowlands have made it clear to the Heretics that the old system no longer works. They believe that the Hierarchs have abandoned the pursuit of Transcendence, betraying the souls in their care for personal gain. The teachings of the Heretic Cults now seem more relevant and seductive than ever. They also pose an increasing problem to the Hierarchy, as more and more Lemures have "fallen" into heresy, choosing to follow these Cults rather than the Deathlords.

The Hierarchy maintains its official position against these Heretic Cults, strongly opposing their teachings and threatening to crush them at every turn. However, the Hierarchy prefers to husband its resources for use against more immediate and violent threats (such as the Renegades), and will usually ignore all but the most blatant Heretic challenges to its authority.

Status Among Heretics

We have only to believe. And the more threatening and irreducible reality appears, the more firmly and desperately must we believe. Then, little by little, we shall see the universal horror unbend, and then smile upon us, and then take us in its more than human arms.

— Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "The Divine Milieu"

Status among the various Heretic Cults is commonly measured in terms of their strength, as determined by the number of wraiths who adhere to their beliefs. The irony of this measure of status is not lost on many Renegades, who caustically remark that the Heretic lords seem to have succumbed to the lure of power as easily as the Deathlords. Even most Heretics can piously point towards other Heretics who have surrendered their altruism and virtue in the scramble for power. Of course, the Heretics who spend the most time shaking their heads and tut-tutting about their rivals are often the most apt to tread this selfsame path to ruin.

The status of individual Heretics is largely based on the strength of their faith (or at least its outward appearance), and their success at recruiting adherents to the cause. Once a wraith is initiated into the sacred mysteries

of the Cult after overcoming some challenge or test of faith, she must serve the Cult faithfully. Heretic wraiths are often assigned missions, to promote the goals of their faith. Success on these assignments yields status in the Cult and in the Heretic community.

As times grow more troubled in the Shadowlands, Heretic direct action against the Hierarchy and each other is increasing. Success in these efforts also enhances a wraith's status, though it also makes her more likely to come to the attention of the Hierarchy and its agents. It is a dangerous game indeed to proselytize on the doorsteps of your enemies.

The True Believer

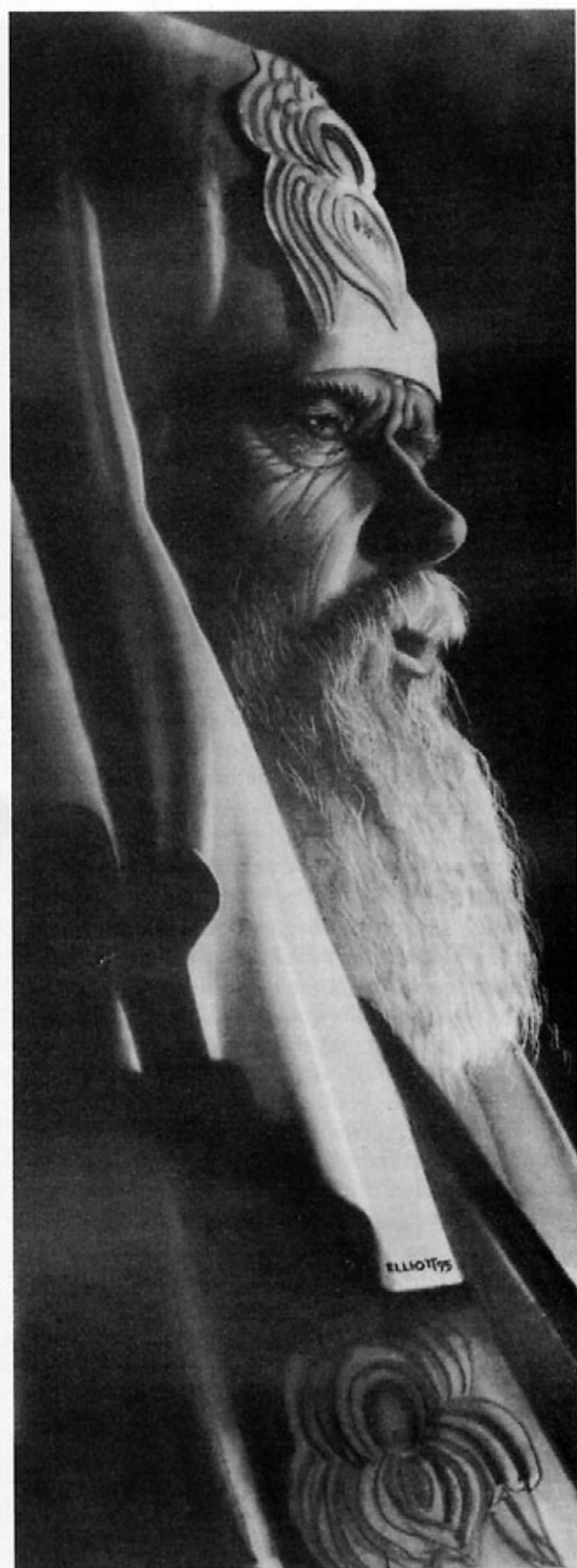
*To the last moment of his breath
On hope the wretch relies;
And e'en the pang preceding death
Bids expectation rise.*

— Oliver Goldsmith, "The Traveller"

From the earliest days of society in both the Skinlands and the Shadowlands, there have been Heretics. In good times and bad, some people have always walked their own paths, seeking spiritual growth and personal freedom by paths not approved by society's powers that be. Others, faced with hardship and uncertainty, sought solace and comfort in an unstinting belief in some philosophy or doctrine. Still others burned at perceived inequities, and vowed to prove their greater worth in the eyes of some almighty power or powers.

These people often carry their Passions with them into the spirit world, and take on the same zealous role in death. The questing souls bring their struggles, their questions, and their nonconformity from their human lives through their deaths and out the other side. Similarly, many of those who grasped at promises and dreams in life do so in death as well, while others continue to rant away at the unfairness of the world and their meager role in it. All of these wraiths are Heretics, and these divergent themes run in wraiths throughout the "movement."

Heretics walk outside the lines in the Underworld, and actively disagree with the powers that be. While many people and wraiths might disagree, many Heretics firmly believe that this sort of dissension is both a moral imperative (they must follow the dictates of their conscience), and is good for society. Through their pious example, lost souls can find the path to salvation and righteousness! Now that the society of the Underworld has stagnated and grown more oppressive, now that most souls have ceased to Transcend through the "approved" methods and philosophies, the teachings of these iconoclasts assume greater currency and urgency.



The Heretic movement is made up of scores of factions and Cults competing for members and resources, loosely united only by their opposition to the status quo and their sporadic cooperation in the face of adversity. Certain Heretic belief systems are drawn almost completely from philosophies and religions from all corners of the Skinlands, with only those modifications absolutely required by the changed circumstances of death. Many religious souls have carried their beliefs with them into the Underworld, and apply in death the same conceptual framework to spiritual advancement that they had used in life. Other Heretic philosophies are amalgams of Skinland and Shadowland beliefs, molded by the wraith's unique experience and perspective. Finally, some Heretic philosophies are wholly creations of the afterlife. These home-grown wraith interpretations of existence, meaning, and spirit are shaped by the realities of a continued existence which is far from what the Quick expected.

As one might expect, not all of these belief systems can successfully "save souls" by promoting true spiritual growth and Transcendence among their followers. Some Cults don't even pretend to try. In death as in life, not all theories are correct, good, or simple sweetness and light. Spectres and Deathlords aren't the only power-hungry manipulators populating the Shadowlands, and gullible souls in the Skinlands are likely to be equally gullible after death. It is even rumored that some of the Heretic Cults are actually being manipulated by Spectres, the servants of Oblivion, to feed souls into the Void. Others are merely being directed by a single, charismatic leader, working for his own advancement and no other's.

However, in a battle against the Hierarchy, the forces of Oblivion, the violent Renegade movement, and the myriad divisions within the Heretics themselves, the struggle to find truth can create a crucible for the soul. A wraith who can continue to strive for justice and peace amidst this conflict, rather than violently satisfying her personal desires, may truly be prepared to shed the concerns of life and Transcend to a higher consciousness. Many, however, merely redirect their baser emotions while conveniently denying any selfish motives.

The Heretic movements continue as a multitude of disparate forces grasping and wheedling for change in the Underworld. Given the power struggle consuming the Hierarchy, and the violence and chaos motivating many Renegades, the role of the Heretic in the Shadowlands provides a way out, an alternative to the seemingly endless and futile conflict. The convictions that Heretic Cults bring to the Shadowlands all but ensure that they will continue to grow stronger in faith and in followers....

Heretics vs. Renegades

Those wraiths who are not particularly astute observers of the political scene often confuse Renegades and Heretics. After all, members of both of these factions are subversives, reviled by the powers that be in the Hierarchy-driven society of the Underworld. The publicity machine of the Hierarchy often lumps them together, and works overtime to paint them all as dangerous lunatics. Your average citizen of the Hierarchy knows only that Renegades and Heretics (he may even use the words interchangeably) are dissidents — fringe troublemakers and terrorists who work to undermine established institutions to promote their own crazy beliefs.

This confusion is natural, but it misses the fundamental differences between wraiths who are Renegades and those who belong to Heretic Cults. Heretics are profoundly spiritual (or at least profess a profound belief system), whereas a Renegade's guiding philosophy of life is more likely to be political. Renegades usually oppose the Hierarchy's oppression, and its attempts to control them and everything else in the Shadowlands. Heretics oppose the Hierarchy because it is wrong, evil, or not like them. Both love causes, but while Renegades and Heretics will sometimes work together against the Hierarchy, their attitudes, beliefs and world-views are so different that the two groups are mutually exclusive. To truly be a Renegade, a wraith would have to give up his heretical beliefs.

At the very core of their beings, many Heretics are joiners. They need the psychic support of a group, and rely on their Cult's core philosophy and their work for the Cult to give structure and meaning to their afterlives. Heretics are by their nature much more organized and disciplined than Renegades, more apt to follow orders and to sacrifice their own interests in pursuit of the good of the movement. This structure and purpose are the most important things a Cult can offer its members. Most Renegades are nothing like these believers, and frankly would never put up with that kind of crap.

Karma Cults

Karma Cults are composed primarily of wraiths who believe in the cosmic cycle of reincarnation, life following upon life in a variety of forms until the deserving soul finally transcends from this world to a better place beyond. It is obvious to these wraiths that the cosmic cycle is somehow seriously out of whack. The universe is stalled. Souls who die are stuck in the Shadowlands, rather than passing back to the Skinlands in another form or moving on to Transcendence. The major concerns of the Karma Cults involve discovering the causes of this breakdown, and how to go about setting the karmic circle back on its axis.

From: Andrew Richardson, Marshal to the Quiet Lord

To: Clerks, Necropolis: Portland

RE: Heretics

Be on the lookout for these subversive elements within our city. The proselytizers for these Cults use false "miracles" during their revivals to impress potential converts, and practice well-developed techniques to coerce or brainwash the credulous or the weak during more intimate, individual spiritual consulting sessions. Most of the membership just come to the services, pay their tithe and leave, with no knowledge of what goes on behind the scenes.


At the *private* ceremonies of these Cults, innocents are sacrificed to the Spectres and their masters in dark and perverse rituals. These leaders count their power in terms of how many poor wretches the services bring under their sway; and many in fact harbor grandiose dreams of one day challenging a Legion in power and influence. They are fools and weaklings all, but we can not allow their presence to go unchecked in the streets of the Necropolis.

Many leaders of these Cults are totally corrupt, caring nothing for the misery and suffering which they support, and nothing for the eventual fate of the Shadowlands. All members of these groups who have proceeded past the initial open-mouthed penitent stage are aware, to a greater or lesser extent, of this attitude.

If you obtain information on the location of any of these Cults, contact me immediately. We can not allow this to continue to exist under our noses.

Hail Charon,

Marshal Andrew Richardson



The only consensus among these Karma Cults is that the problem lies in the Skinlands, which are supposedly the focus of all physical and spiritual activity. The leaders of certain of these Cults have determined that their membership must right the problem by penetrating the Veil, returning to the Skinlands and correcting the karmic imbalance. They ignore the Code of Charon as merely one of many artificial barriers to the faithful erected by the karmic imbalance. Agents of these Cults routinely use the Arcanos of Puppetry and Embodiment to enter the Skinlands on extended missions in an effort to right cosmic wrongs.

Although it might at first seem otherwise, these missions do not necessarily imply that these Karma Cults have a great and abiding passion for justice. Rather, these wraiths work to correct the perceived imbalances by weighing in on whatever side seems appropriate. Unfortunately for the coordination of their efforts, each Karma Cult has a different opinion of the correct solution. Their efforts often conflict, and sometimes their agents directly oppose each other.

Also, by entering into conflicts so often, the bodies which the agents are riding often meet violent and untimely ends. These involuntary sacrifices by unknowing mortals trouble most Karma Cultists not at all. The Cultists reason that their missions are to improve the lot of all souls, and that pursuit of virtue often requires sacrifice. A few instances are reported in which newly arrived wraiths have encountered the very Karma Cultist who caused their sudden arrival in the afterworld. These Lemures tend to find the Cultist's glib explanations less than convincing.

Mystery Cults

These Cults take a far more intellectual approach to the problem of Transcendence than others such as the Sensualist Cults. Drawing most of their members from the more esoteric and mystic religions of the Skinlands, Mystery Cults believe that the key to learning the means to Transcendence lies in the very existence of the Shadowlands. The Mystery Cults believe that the Underworld has been created by the Divinity as the final test, an immensely complicated puzzle designed to test their faith and understanding. Members of the Mystery Cults are certain that when they have solved the puzzle, the structure of their current existence, they will have passed the test and be granted Transcendence.

Therefore, Mystery Cults devote their efforts to searching the Underworld, the Skinlands, the Shadowlands, and all the places in between for religious and philosophical texts. They draw from all religions and philosophies, scouring these diverse works for the clues hidden in the vast muck of false prophecy and futile faith that they believe is the backbone of most religious teachings. Of course, these Cults do not often coordinate their efforts, often competing for scarce resources and working on similar questions at the same time.

Using elaborate rituals, research, and divination, the scholars of the Mystery Cults separate the wheat from the chaff as they work to construct the answer to their gargantuan task. One beneficial effect of this quest for knowledge is that the Mystery Cults and their hideaways have become home to vast libraries — truly impressive storehouses of knowledge unrivaled by almost any Skinlander library. Various Mystery Cults do on occasion publish works to select Skinlanders. These works range from collections of prophecies to explications of various scientific, religious and magical topics. The Cults do this is both in the hopes of enlightening promising mortals, and to trade for still greater infusions of knowledge to further their great quest.

The members of Mystery Cults interact with Skinlanders far more often than most wraiths. In particular, certain Mystery Cults have had ongoing interactions of various kinds with certain Uktena werewolves, Giovanni vampires, and assorted mages, as well as with a very few members of the Arcanum. Due to their knowledge of Skinlands and the Shadowlands alike, the Mystery Cults usually find themselves in an extraordinarily good position at the bargaining table with other seekers of knowledge.

Personal Transcendence Cults

The psychic development of the individual is a short repetition of the course of the development of the race.

— Sigmund Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci"

The wraiths who belong to Personal Transcendence Cults have not allowed themselves to become overly dismayed by their dismal surroundings. Rather, after taking stock of their situation, these wraiths have determined to continue in (or commence for the first time) a process of self-development through expansion of their intellectual and spiritual faculties.

Personal Transcendence Cults represent a distinctly separate strain of Heretic philosophy. Some Cults train their members in meditation and an ascetic lifestyle, while others provide only counseling for its members as they struggle to find their own path. Perhaps the most common type of Personal Transcendence Cult, however, promotes a program of lectures, exercises, meetings and courses designed to develop the individual wraith and his faculties to the fullest extent possible. They accomplish this through an eclectic panoply of events, including trips to cultural sites, study groups, therapy sessions, and meetings of various "self-help" groups within the Cult at which members wrestle with a variety of personal demons. ("Hello, my name is Bob, and I'm a wraith." "Hi, Bob!")

The goal of this process is for the individual wraith to attain the state of balance and harmony required for Transcendence. Unlike many other Cults, Personal Transcendence Cults tend to make no promises, stating that the

success of the effort depends entirely on the individual wraith. Still, some of the Personal Transcendence Cults most heavily invested in these techniques do claim that, when used properly, their twelve-step program will enable a wraith to achieve peace and harmony, and prepare to move on to a more constructive mode of existence.

Darker rumors continue to persist in some quarters that the leaders of certain Personal Transcendence Cults are actually draining Pathos from the wraiths who seek help within their programs. Some go so far as to say these Cults are merely shells to provide the leaders with wraiths ripe for the picking.

Purification Cults

Fly down, Death: Call me:

I have become a lost name.

— Muriel Rukeyser, "Madboy's Song"


These tiny and very secretive Cults operate on the very fringes of wraith, and even Heretic, society. Drawing from the most alienated and miserable of the lost souls, often those most rigid and fanatical in their religious beliefs during life, these Cults reject the society of the Shadowlands and often the very existence of wraiths. Those wraiths who join Purification Cults are normally still reeling from the shock of death, and from their entry into a shocking and foreign afterlife. This existence is very different from their expectations, and these fanatical spirits are unwilling to accept the error in their beloved earthly philosophies.

Purification Cults deal with the cognitive dissonance caused by the conflict between their members' rigid faith and the reality of their existence by adopting the belief that this afterlife, and the souls who inhabit it, are fundamentally *wrong* and evil. They believe that their deity (which varies according to the individual Cult involved and the different earthly religions of their members) has condemned them to this bleak existence because they have somehow proven themselves unworthy. These Cults seek redemption for their members, and passage into the rewards which await the faithful in the life beyond.

Purification Cults rigorously and regularly test their members for any taint of "evil." They make particularly extensive use of the Castigate Arcanos, attempting to remain pure in the face of the overwhelming taint and potentially corrupting temptation which surrounds them. These groups also regularly plan and execute missions to capture and slay wraiths, using the life energies of their captives in purification rituals to help cleanse the Shadowlands and themselves.

Given their opinion of their fellows and the nature of their game, Purification Cults will always keep their existence a strict secret from other wraiths and Heretic sects. They operate entirely alone. They recruit new members





by keeping watch on arriving souls and selecting those who appear to be most horrified, repulsed, and disbelieving at their fate. Those who do not prove suitable are "cleansed."

Unfortunately, rather than serving as cleansing agents for the Underworld, these Purification Cults may well best serve the purposes of Oblivion. Most of the souls which they destroy are unprepared to die, and simply add their energies to the growing tide of Oblivion and the vast, unending coldness of the Void.

Sensualist Cults

While many believe the Sensualist Cults to be a relatively recent development, there have been Cults of this type for thousands of years. Most of the more recent groups formed as offshoots of Karma Cults. Such rifts are common in the world of the Heretics, where even minor disagreements among such passionate folk and their strongly held opinions often lead to irreconcilable differences. Sensualist Cults are now growing more common, as new recruits are attracted to the potential rewards.

Most Sensualist Cults also believe in the cycle of reincarnation, and they too believe that their continuing presence in the Shadowlands proves that the cycle has somehow gotten off track. However, they disagree with the Karma Cults on how and why the universe is in this less than ideal situation, and how best to solve the problem.

The Sensualists believe that they are trapped in the Shadowlands because their souls have actually reached the final exalted stage preceding true Transcendence. (Congratulations all around!) The members have proven that they are worthy to move beyond the human stage (the highest stage available in the mortal lands). Life in the Shadowlands is the final test, which they must solve to move on to greater glories. The Sensualists have found a unique answer to the great puzzle of Transcendence.

Sensualist Cults believe that the element missing among mortals in the Skinlands, the spark which prevents Transcendence, is their paucity of true spirituality. Skinlanders are spiritually bereft, whereas the wraiths who exist in the Shadowlands are now bereft of physicality. The incorporeal nature of wraiths prevents them from being complete. The Quick and the Dead are opposite ends of the same pole. So the answer, the Sensualists believe, is to unite the two elements into a complete whole, combining the physical and the spiritual to reach perfection in a glorious, combined Transcendence.

So, while the Sensualists also use the Puppetry Arcanos to travel to the Skinlands, they do so with a purpose far different than that of the Karma Cults. The Sensualists have carefully built up a cult following among certain Skinlanders. These mortal faithful attempt to give over their bodies to the spiritual essences that are the Sensualists, in effect chan-

neling the wraiths' energies. Unfortunately, even most willing Skinlanders cannot merely wish a wraith into inhabiting their bodies. When problems occur, members of certain Sensualist Cults resort to encouraging their mortal partners into fasting, ingesting alcohol or drugs, or otherwise loosening their own spirits' innate hold upon their bodies. Once two or more Sensualists have slipped into their mortal hosts' bodies, they engage in ritualistic sex, during which they believe a perfect spiritual and physical union may be achieved.

Some of the less exacting members of Sensualist Cults regularly meet and travel together to the Skinlands, where they invade bodies of unsuspecting mortals nearby. They then use the hosts to engage in vigorous and enthusiastic sexual behavior with each other. In this fashion, they reason, they unite the spiritual and the physical, and then bring these perfect unions together into a harmonious striving for advancement.

There are no reports that anyone has yet Transcended in the midst of one of these rituals (or the not-so-occasional orgies), though Sensualist Cultists believe that this indicates that they have yet to find the perfect mix of vessels. More cynical wraiths familiar with the Sensualist philosophy tend to dismiss them as mere perverts who have found a religious justification for getting their jollies and breaking Charon's Code.

Supplicant Cults


*One in whom persuasion and belief
Had ripened into faith, and faith become
A passionate intuition.*

— William Wordsworth, "The Excursion"

Supplicant Cults are very common, perhaps the most common type of Cult in the Heretic movement. These Cults are similar to Purification Cults in that they reject the Shadowlands as the intended end of mankind — the destined repository for their souls. The similarity ends at this point, however, for Supplicant Cults adopt a very different approach to reaching Transcendence.

These Cults preach that the Shadowlands are not "real," in the sense that they are not a lasting stage of existence. Rather, wraiths belonging to these Cults believe that this existence is a transition stage, yet another test by the Divinity to ensure that only true believers enjoy the rewards of heavenly paradise. Perhaps because Supplicant Cults are not infected with the self-loathing that plagues most Purification Cults, this philosophy holds that all spirits are so tested, not merely those particularly evil or unworthy. This "afterlife" is merely part of the life-death-rebirth cycle, another way station on the road to salvation.

As with Purification Cults, Supplicant Cults draw from diverse religious traditions in the Skinlands, and even many wraiths who were not religious at all until their "post-



death" experience. Suppliant Cults often serve as umbrella organizations to provide a support structure and a sense of belonging to new wraiths. They tend to meet regularly, to pray and encourage their members in their efforts towards Transcendence. Their philosophy calls upon them to enter peacefully into the society of the Underworld, working hard and living clean, patiently awaiting their eventual passage to their promised reward.

Playing a Heretic

The various Heretic Cults oppose each other almost as much as they battle the Hierarchy. They agree so little that there really is nothing that can be called the Heretic society, or a Heretic movement. Rather, there are countless tiny dissident movements, working secretly or openly towards a better (or at least different) tomorrow, each espousing a different path to that goal. The only trait essential to a Heretic is an unshakable belief system at the very center of the wraith's existence.

Circles of Heretics are linked by their beliefs in their cause. Heretics in small Necropoli, or ones who belong to a particularly tiny organization, may well belong to mixed groups due to their lack of numbers. Yet it is rare for members of two different Heretic Cults to exist in the same Circle. It is far more likely that an individual Heretic will be set loose by his Cult upon the general wraith population, to seek more converts to save.

An exception to this separatism sometimes occurs in the case of a Circle made up of members of various Heretic Cults (and perhaps some Renegades) working together to oppose the Hierarchy. However, Hierarchy wraiths and Heretics may also work together to carry out an individual mission or promote or oppose a particular social cause. Whatever the nature of the Circle, Heretics may exhibit a wide range of personalities and skills, with the caveat that a Heretic is almost never apathetic or unsure.

It is essential to carefully develop the Heretic character's political or religious philosophy, for this belief system will define their existence. Has the character turned to a Cult merely to seek the comfort provided by belonging and by religious belief, or is the character engaged in a principled and discerning quest for the truth? The Storyteller and player must also develop the character's organization. Is it a collective working together to reach higher levels of consciousness, a group which has placed their faith in the promises of a huckster or a false prophet, or a group which actively works to gather power in the Shadowlands and promote Oblivion? The answers to these questions will shape the story lines involving the wraith and her companions.

Consider also the motivations of the character — the origins of the traits, influences, and attitudes which made her Heretic in the afterlife (and likely in the Skinlands as well).

Test Your Heretical Tendencies

In order to decide whether unlife as a Heretic would suit your wraith character, consider the following questions and decide how they apply to your particular member of the Restless Dead.

- When clothed in flesh, did you follow any of these vocations or avocations: terrorist, pacifist, social activist, member of a religious order, minister, philosopher, advice columnist, vegan, follower of a literalist religion, or street-corner preacher?

- Did you support any of the following movements or types of movements: a Marxist revolution, home schooling, terrorism, Neo-Pagan communes, Posse Comitatus, religious revivals, survivalism, Operation Rescue, creationism, or Branch Davidianism?

- Did you believe in a particular religious or political philosophy apart from that of mainstream society, and were you willing to adhere to your firmly-held principles in the face of ridicule and doubters?


- While you were generally law-abiding, were you perfectly willing to break the law and suffer the consequences if necessary to uphold your beliefs?

- Were you a member of a cooperative, a secret society, a paramilitary organization, a student union or a commune?

- Did you follow a religion that was different from that of most people around you?

- Did you find yourself disagreeing with the mainstream politicians, and believing that they should shift their political agendas to the basic values which your group espoused?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then your wraith character may have the makings of a Heretic. The Heretics want you!



Analyze the forces which made the character what she is today, and how they influence her interaction with her peers. Determining the "why" behind a Heretic provides many of the cues necessary for effective and colorful roleplaying. Remember that while not all Heretics are self-interested or evil, they are all fanatical when it comes to matters of faith. The strength of their beliefs forces them to live out their philosophy daily; and a Heretic will almost never back down from an issue of faith, regardless of the consequences.

Heretic wraiths come from a variety of backgrounds, and may hold almost any type of job with any mix of skills. After all, people from all walks of life or unlives develop personal spiritual philosophies. The search for meaning is one of life's and death's few universals. However, certain job descriptions and types of skills are more likely or suitable for a Heretic. Particularly common Arcanos for Heretics include Argos, which enables them to move through the Shadowlands with purpose and battle the Tempest for lost souls; Castigate, the ultimate expression of control and purification by the exercise of will; and Keening, which allows the Heretic to manipulate the emotions and passions of other wraiths, perhaps bringing them into the fold.

A Heretic's degree of involvement in the organization affects their choice of profession. A wraith who is merely a low-ranking member of a Heretic organization may hold nearly any job, even the most accepted or respectable, for their devotion to the Cult consists primarily of donations or attendance at services. They are the followers. Some of these followers are successful professionals who turn privately to their faith to rejuvenate their minds and spirits. Other members turn to the Cult for escape, purpose, or a sense of importance and involvement.

Wraiths who are more involved in the leadership and organization of the Cults, the "professional Heretics" who make more interesting characters, are more likely to be marginalized from the society of the Underworld. They may be employed solely by the Cult, or may freely devote their unlives to the work of the organization; they often spend much of their time proselytizing, teaching, or working as an operative. If these wraiths occupy respected positions in Underworld society, they are usually hiding their beliefs and working covertly for their Cult as a mole within the Hierarchy.

Stereotypes

The Hierarchy

The Deathlords and the elaborate power structure they have built up around them have abandoned us and betrayed the trust and vision of Charon. They are now concerned far more with the accumulation and concentration of power in our society than in the Transcendence of souls. They do not know the Way. Whereas before they at least worked towards the proper

goal, though in a misguided fashion, now they are the enemies of the wraith. We must work to end their domination of our society and save the unsettled souls from their grasp by showing them the way to the light.

— Jakob Bennett, Deacon of the Church of the Light
The Renegades

While these wraiths are correct in understanding that the Hierarchy is not the answer, their philosophies and methods (or utter lack of philosophy and randomness of method) are inappropriate. Their efforts are misguided, for they do not seem to seek Transcendence so much as they glory in rebellion and acts of violence and defiance here in the Shadowlands. They have no beliefs, nothing to anchor them. To the extent that their rebellion increases the suffering of the masses while giving the Hierarchy an excuse to strengthen its grip, Renegades actually damage the cause they seek to promote. However, they can be useful allies against the establishment. We must be careful not to be drawn in and corrupted by the lure of chaos and nihilism, and the promise of quick solutions.

— Aimee Churnansky, Public Relations Liaison, Chicago Order of the Guardians of the Way

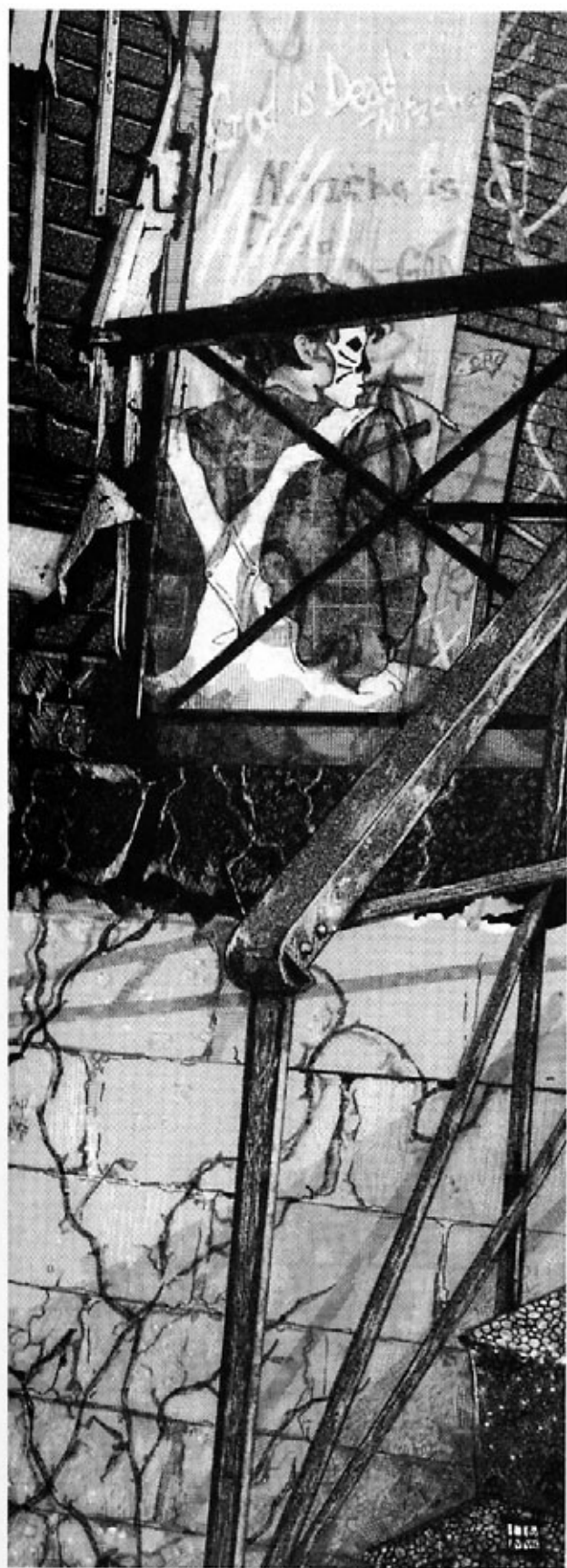
The Quick

The inhabitants of the Skinlands are in essence much like ourselves: souls struggling along the path to Transcendence, seeking to advance towards the higher truth and a higher stage of existence. They are merely one step behind us along the way. Most, of course, have utterly lost their way, just as most have here. We should not interfere with or exploit these mortals for our own benefit. In fact, it can be very dangerous to do so. Certain of these mortals are dangerous to us, and most Skinlanders loathe and fear us, as it is the general tendency of the unenlightened to fear the unknown. In this we agree with the Hierarchy. It is best to concentrate our efforts on the present and future, not our pasts.

— Jason Green, Philosophe of the Helping Hand
Supernatural Creatures

Some beings may walk in the Skinlands, but have powers that enable them to reach beyond. These creatures — the vampires, the werewolves, the fairies — occupy realms between our world and the mortal realm. Many of them are aware of our existence, and we have no objection to working with them towards the mutual advancement of our peoples. Though their spirits are different from our own, they may have insight into our struggle. Beware, however, for many of these creatures are very powerful and dangerous. They are not of us, and do not believe. As with the Hierarchy, some will seek to trap you, use you and drain you of your life. Walk carefully if you must deal with them.

— Lydine Iredell, Spiritual Director, Passim Ministries



Final Thoughts on the Heretics

*Vain 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"

Heretics are the true believers, who see themselves as the spiritual and moral compass of the Shadowlands. Yet they are many compasses, all pointing in different directions! Many of the Heretics fight the battle for Transcendence, seeking to return wraith society to its original purpose — a mechanism for an ordered life here in this interim realm while souls prepare to ascend to a higher reality. Others merely seek power in the Skinlands, or comfort in the face of an unknown even greater than before and a present even less comforting. They are not free of the corruption which permeates the Underworld today, yet Heretics in general do not seek personal power or dominion over their fellows. Nor are most caught up yet in a cycle of violence which engenders only more misery for the wraiths. Rather, motivated by a variety of faiths, they seek the truth. They strive to drastically reform the Hierarchy and fix the broken system, each offering a different solution, and indeed a slightly different analysis of the problem. The Heretics look around them and believe that they are the last, best hope for the Shadowlands. Perhaps they are.

Renegades

We are not restricted. No boundaries have been defined, no inhibitions imposed. We have, for the while, secured, or blundered into, our release, for the while. Spontaneity and whim are the order of the day. Other wheels are turning but they are not our concern. We can breathe. We can relax. We can do what we like and say what we like to whomever we like, without restriction.

— Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

To be a Renegade is to oppose the Hierarchy. Beyond that, very little can be said that applies to Renegades as a whole. It is probably safe to say that whenever a government or institution rises to prominence, there will always be individuals and groups who oppose it for one reason or another. Those whom the Hierarchy calls Renegades seem to have found all those reasons for opposition. And therein lies their problem.

Every turning point in Stygia's long history has produced its dissenters, from the wraiths who first disagreed with the choice of Charon as leader to those who objected to his formation of the Stygian Republic. Charon's assumption of the title of Emperor and his creation of the seven Deathlords, his policies regarding the treatment of thralls, his adoption of the feudal model for Stygia's government, his banishing of the Shining Ones from Stygia, his orders to disband the guilds — all these and subsequent decisions spawned the formation of groups of rebels.

These early Renegades were, for the most part, dealt with by Charon's armies or else fell prey to the Spectres that seemed to feed on the negative Passions inherent in the nature of dissension. A few of these hardy veterans, however, have survived to the present day. Their hiding places and continued plots against Stygia are the stuff of Renegade myth and folklore.

Since Charon's disappearance, the number of wraiths who identify with the Renegade movement (which is, apparently, the only criterion for membership in this faction) has grown enormously. Some of these Renegades have formed well-organized, highly-disciplined groups or Circles which differ little from their Hierarchy counterparts. The majority, however, form a chaotic mass of ragtag rebels, outlaws, bandits, and anarchists who associate with each other only because they need the strength of numbers to

survive assaults from Hierarchy patrols, bounty hunters, and Spectres.

Status among the Renegades is more a product of notoriety than of rank, for no general categories exist which apply to the group as a whole. Tales of audacious actions against the Hierarchy, reports of uprisings within various Necropoli, rumors of hijackings of thrall-transport or goods caravans en route to Stygia, and individual acts of defiance (or foolhardiness) — all contribute to an individual Renegade's standing within the Renegade "community."

Despite the best efforts of the Hierarchy to quell news about the Renegades, tales of their escapades form the building blocks of status among those who oppose the establishment. Folk heroes have risen from the ranks of the Renegades, and the stories of their deeds serve as inspiration for other wraiths, driving them to bolder and bolder actions against the Hierarchy.

The Eternal Renegade

*The Ghost of revolution
Still prowls the Paris streets
Down all the restless centuries
It wanders incomplete*

— Al Stewart, "The Palace of Versailles"



Nearly every revolution or rebellion in the Skinlands has had its mirror in the Shadowlands. It is often difficult to determine which one inspires the other, but the results of armed insurrection always guarantee a new influx of rebellious wraiths to swell the ranks of the Renegades.

Spartacus' slave revolt against the Roman Empire, the storming of the Bastille, the uprisings in Northern Ireland and the riots in Detroit and Los Angeles have all fed the Renegade movement and, in some cases, been the result of an excessive "leak" of Passions through the Shroud. The tradition of rebellion against authority is as old as civilization itself, and seems to be an inherent part of the human psyche, a part which must be brought under control — usually during childhood — in order for an individual to exist within a larger group. Somehow, Renegades never quite learned that lesson.

The desire for change stands as the hallmark of the Renegade movement, and the politics of change go hand in hand with the incompleteness that forms the fundamental core of wraithly existence. Those individuals whose lives were consumed by political and social movements or a general desire to defy or change the existing order usually, though not always, emerge in the Shadowlands with their rebellious tendencies intact.

Until the Skinlands manage to breed rebellion out of the genetic pool, the Shadowlands will always be blessed — or cursed — with Renegades.

The Organization of Anarchy

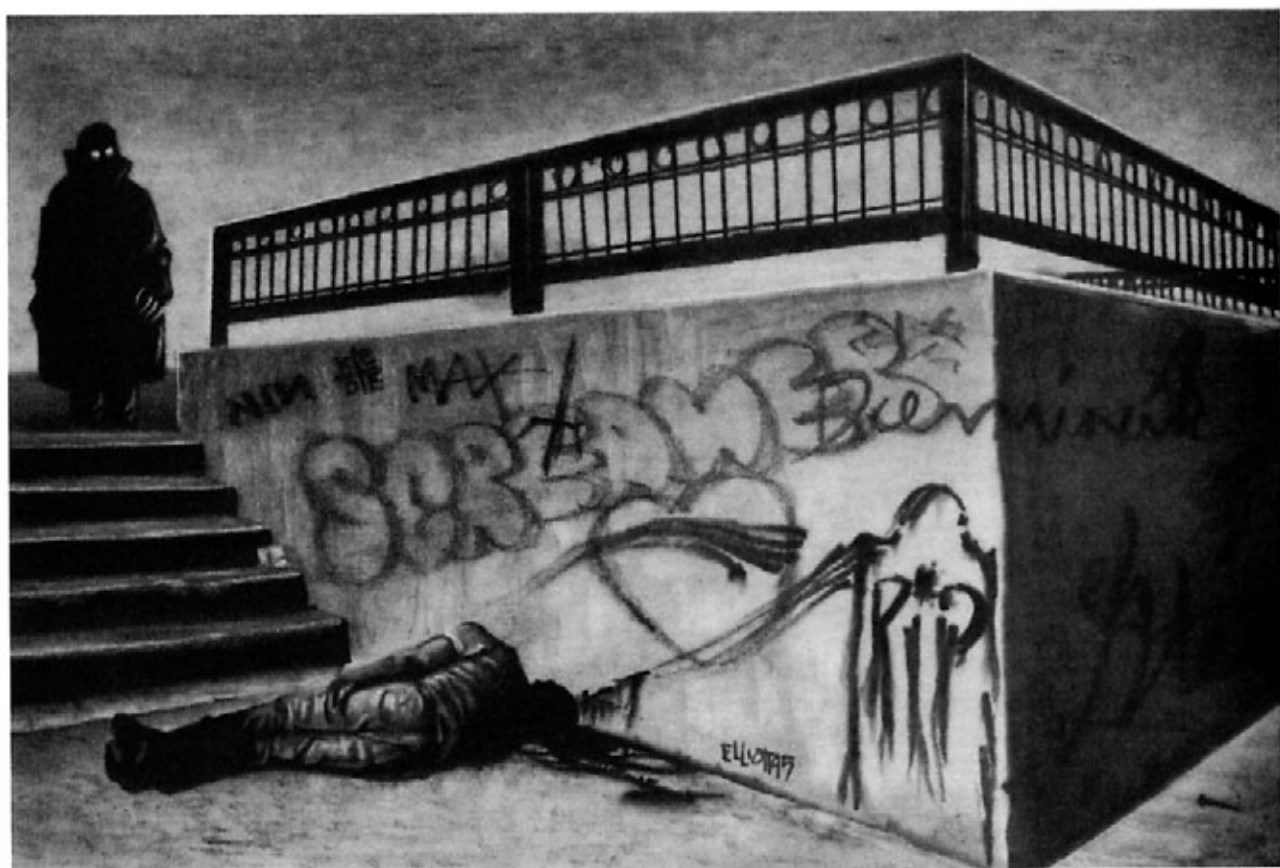
*There's no one left but thee and we,
And we're not sure of thee...*

— Chad Mitchell Trio, "The John Birch Society"

While it is nearly impossible to discern any overall structure within Renegade society, some distinctions among Renegades can be made on the basis of their reasons for opting out of the Hierarchy. Gathered under the same roof are idealists and dreamers, politicians and subversives, criminals and ne'er-do-wells, and misfits of all varieties. It is unlikely that all those who call themselves Renegades will ever find a means of permanently uniting under a common banner, but it is not beyond the realms of possibility for some like-minded groups to eventually find a way to minimize their differences and work together.

In general, Renegades fall into four basic categories — political dissidents, philosophical idealists, fugitives, and situational rebels.





Political Dissidents

Political dissidents are Renegades who oppose the Hierarchy as a whole. They are, in some ways, considered to be the most subversive of Renegades since their ultimate goal is to overthrow the existing system of government in the Underworld. These are the Renegades who have the longest track record of opposition to Stygian rule. Many of them qualify as *bona fide* freedom fighters who decry the totalitarianism of the Deathlords. Revolutions and uprisings in the living world produce the majority of wraiths who, in death, continue to demonstrate their desire for governmental change. Others within this group seek to bring down the Hierarchy in order to replace it with their own power base.

These wraiths tend to gather in tightly organized (for Renegades) Circles and conduct themselves with a discipline that rivals that of Hierarchy patrols. Some of these groups are made up of former members of the Hierarchy. These groups often retain such remnants of their origins as ranks and titles to distinguish levels of authority and responsibility within their Circles. Some factions are quite large and make an effort to maintain at least nominal connections and communications among their member Circles, but the overall atmosphere of mistrust under which they operate prevents most attempts at unification.

Philosophical Idealists

The philosophical idealists hold anti-Hierarchy stands on various issues, from the perpetuation of an economy based on the subjugation and smelting down of thralls to the ban against congress with the living world. Like many groups in the Skinlands who cannot see beyond their own particular ideology, these Renegades often fight each other over whose beliefs are more important. This group includes former abolitionists and Civil Rights activists, feminists, environmentalists, Luddites, pro-lifers and pro-choice advocates, gay rights supporters, and almost any other wraiths who in life found a cause to spark their imagination and direct their actions. Unfortunately, most of these wraiths are blindly devoted to their goal and rarely see the validity of other causes. This single-mindedness prevents this group of Renegades from achieving the full potential represented by their numbers and condemns them to remain forever fractious, forever unable to meet on the common ground of shared idealism.

Circles of idealists are usually loose amalgams of individuals dedicated to their goals but lacking in real organizational skills. Many groups do not have titular leaders, but rely on consensus among group members for direction. A few groups, however, have formed around charismatic leaders whose words are viewed as doctrine and whose orders are rarely questioned.

Fugitives

Fugitives are Renegades who, for one reason or another, have fallen afoul of the Hierarchy and have successfully eluded pursuit. Escaped thralls, thieves, members of disbanded guilds, black marketeers and outlaws all fall under this loose category. Additionally, Hierarchy members who have fallen out of favor or who have been discredited by enemies within the system find themselves suddenly cast adrift from their moorings and thrust into the ranks of the Renegades.

These wraiths usually form Circles based on their need for mutual survival. Leadership and organization among these groups varies wildly, and is frequently subject to change as one individual gains the upper hand over the current leader. Some bands of fugitives have a reputation for acts of heroic bravado against the Hierarchy troops sent to hunt them down, while other groups strike fear into the hearts of most wraiths by the violence and savagery of their activities.

Situational Renegades

Situational Renegades have very personal reasons for opposing the Hierarchy. Lacking any real political or social motivations, these individuals generally feel that "life" within the confines of Stygian restrictions is too limiting. While a few of these wraiths style themselves as true anarchists, others simply ignore the idea of a "movement" and concentrate on thumbing their noses at authority in general.

Naturally, the organization of Circles made up of these Renegades tends to be nearly non-existent — at least on a structural level. These wraiths more often form Circles based on emotional ties — i.e., because they *like* each other. In some instances, this gives them an inherent unity lacking in other Renegade groups, since they are more concerned with what happens to their comrades than in making a statement or taking a stand.

Another common factor shared by most Renegades is a cynical attitude towards Transcendence, seen by many wraiths as the ultimate goal of their sojourn in the Underworld. Unlike the Hierarchy, which officially opposes Transcendence (intimating that it does not exist) because it threatens their power base, and the Heretics, who base their existence on their own particular definition of Transcendence, Renegades tend to ignore it as irrelevant to their aims and purposes (whatever those might be). For Renegades, the important issues revolve around everyday existence in the Underworld. Belief in Transcendence is a private matter, subject to an individual's personal interpretation.

The Renegade Council

*There was a ragged band that followed in our footsteps
Running before time took our dreams away
Leaving the myriad small creatures trying to tie us to the ground
To a life consumed by slow decay...
Encumbered forever by desire and ambition
There's a hunger still unsatisfied
Our weary eyes still stray to the horizon
Though down this road we've been so many times
— Pink Floyd, "High Hopes"*

Over the course of Stygia's history, many Renegades have struggled to devise some means of bringing together as many of their number as possible under a single guiding authority. Numerous attempts to form a Council of Renegades have seemed to succeed, only to fall apart from internal dissension or outside assault. On rare occasions, powerful Renegade groups have actually managed to gather their leaders together long enough to plan an armed uprising against one of the Shadowlands' Necropoli, only to have their fragile alliance disrupted by the last minute defection of one or another of the allied groups. Despite all this, rumors continue to exist of a Renegade Council which keeps track of and directs the movements of the various Circles of wraiths opposed to the Hierarchy. Even darker tales are told of an elite group of Renegades, referred to as the Council of Cerberus, whose sole purpose is to purge the Renegade movement of anyone who might harbor sympathy for the Hierarchy. Even Renegades whose opposition to the Hierarchy stems from reasons unrelated to politics or issues walk carefully whenever they suspect that one of these inquisitors is in their city.

The truth of the matter is both more and less than it seems. Many individual Necropoli actually do have a functioning Renegade Council composed of at least one member from each Renegade faction within that Necropolis. The nature of these Necropolitan councils differs from city to city and depends largely on the types of Renegades present. In some Necropoli, the councils form little more than information or social networks, while in others they occupy more significant and potentially sinister (at least to the Hierarchy) roles. In a few cities far from Stygia's reach, the Renegade Council has gone so far as to set up its own "mirror" government rivaling the control exercised by the local Hierarchy troops. In other places, Renegades representing different interests gather in secret haunts and hatch plots against the resident Legions.

As the Hierarchy's control of its outlying Necropoli continues to erode, many Renegades — particularly those whose anti-authoritarianism stems from dissatisfaction with the current government of Stygia — feel that the

time is right to begin organizing for a general uprising. Organizers purporting to represent the "Renegade War Council" have made overtures to known groups of Renegades within several cities. These wraiths, many of whom are superb public speakers and agitators, claim that there will soon be a gathering of Renegade leaders from all over the Shadowlands at a secret Haunt that exists within the Tempest. Rumors abound of the reappearance of many veteran Renegades, individuals thought destroyed by the Hierarchy centuries ago.

Skeptics among the Renegades suspect that this attempt to bring all the Renegade groups together under one organized Council is really a Hierarchy plot to identify and root out as many insurgents as possible. Still, many who dream of a life free of Stygian oppression are feeling the glimmer of hope that revolution may be just around the corner.


Common Ground

The existence of Renegades despite the Hierarchy's best efforts to extinguish the fires of opposition offers the strongest proof that, in times of need, Renegades can and do manage to work together. The factors involved in enabling vastly diverse groups to forge even a passing alliance with one another are as varied as the groups themselves. Cooperation among Renegades is as often dictated by necessity as by plan, and usually occurs on the local level, within a single Necropolis.

Mutual survival stands out as perhaps the most common reason for Renegades from different groups to put aside what divides them and work together. Periodic sweeps of a Necropolis by Hierarchy patrols threaten all Renegades, whether political dissidents or simply fugitives from Stygian justice. During such sweeps, Renegade Circles within the target city will often band together to establish secure hiding places, set up rotations of perimeter guards to keep watch, and keep possible escape routes open. During such periods of siege or persecution, the differences inherent among Renegade Circles often work to their advantage. Renegades whose interests lie in overthrowing the Hierarchy for political or issue-oriented reasons often have some familiarity with the tactics of their enemies and can predict what steps a patrol will take. Outlaws and bandits who have been branded Renegades usually have the necessary skills to outwit patrols (making them excellent scouts and procurers), while miscellaneous misfits frequently possess the means for creating diversions through the use of Arcanos such as Puppetry and Pandemonium.

Sometimes the rule of the Hierarchy grows so oppressive, even in backwater Necropoli, that local Renegades will seek out as many of their ilk as possible to strike a





blow against the resident representatives of Stygia. The removal of particularly vicious Marshals or Regents, the destruction or hijacking of a Hierarchy supply convoy, or the interruption of communications between a Citadel and its perimeter Haunts are typical actions which involve the joint participation of many different groups of Renegades.

Although Renegades do not follow any common code of behavior, the concept of favors owed between groups is a custom recognized by most Renegade Circles. Calling in a favor can sometimes bring together unlikely groups of Renegades. A group of fugitives who found shelter from their pursuers in an abolitionist Haunt may answer a call to assist their rescuers in the liberation of a thrall transport.

The capture of any Renegade within a given Necropolis often provides a solid reason for disparate groups of Renegades to unite in a rescue attempt. Many Renegades despise the Hierarchy so much that they will work to free members of any Renegade Circle from the Hierarchy's clutches, if for no other reason than to prevent a captured Renegade from breaking down under interrogation and revealing potentially damaging information about the local Renegade groups.

In general, Renegades can be counted on to assist other Renegades in actions which work to the detriment of the Hierarchy they all oppose, whether ambushing a Hierarchy patrol or helping a courier bringing news from a distant Necropolis find a particular Renegade Circle. Such fragile alliances, however, rarely last longer than the events which necessitate their formation. When the danger or the immediate situation has passed, the Circles once again go their separate ways.

Playing a Renegade

Renegade society, by the diversity inherent in its nature, gives players almost unlimited rein in customizing their Renegade characters. The stereotypical image of the political rebel or slogan-shouting iconoclast offers only a partial view of the range possible for creating a fully developed Renegade. The one necessary element at the heart of a fledgling Renegade is the presence of some form of opposition to the Stygian Hierarchy. Beyond that, almost anything goes.

Circles of Renegades usually have a common reason for defying the Hierarchy, although Renegades in small Necropoli may belong to mix-and-match groups due to their lack of numbers. Within homogeneous Circles, however, individual Renegades may exhibit a wide range of personalities and skills.

Take the Renegade Success Test

The following list of questions may be helpful in determining whether or not your wraith character will find the Renegade death-style appealing.

- While you were living, did you pursue any of the following occupations: independent political office-seeker, holistic healer, alternative-school teacher, petty criminal, freelance writer, street musician, legal aid counselor, computer hacker, environmentalist, punk/folk/heavy metal band member?

- Did you support any of the following movements: animal rights, ecoterrorism, Civil Rights, the Gray Panthers, states' rights, grassroots politics, legalized prostitution, legalized drugs, gay rights, the feminist movement, the gun lobby, free speech?

- Were you an iconoclast, preferring to break with tradition and support change for its own sake whenever possible?

- Did you ever fudge your income taxes, run away from home, dodge the draft, participate in a sit-in, lie-in, hunger strike or protest rally, get arrested for doing same, refuse to pray in school or salute the flag, or carry a concealed weapon?

- Did you participate in any of the following hobbies or avocations: bungee jumping, survivalist training, stock car racing, gaming, gun collecting?

- Did you belong to any of the following groups or organizations: biker gang, radical students' organization (left or right wing), secret society, support group, rock 'n' roll band, paramilitary group, medieval re-creationists, live-action roleplaying groups?

- Did you find yourself more often than not disagreeing with partisan politics in general and supporting movements towards minimizing regulations of any kind?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your wraith character just might have the makings of a Renegade of one sort or another.




Politically motivated Renegade Circles may include weapons specialists and martial arts aficionados, orators and public relations experts, spies and intelligence operatives, as well as politically savvy leaders. Social idealists (those who oppose particular policies of the Hierarchy rather than its political structure) may include both pacifist and militant activists in the same Circle. Outlaw Renegade bands may have a variety of "criminal" types, as well as defectors from the Hierarchy, among their ranks, while non-partisan Renegade Circles may consist of habitual Skinriders and poltergeist specialists along with earnest individuals whose only "crime" is an avid desire to communicate with their loved ones beyond the Shroud.

Renegade characters may be distinguished from their Hierarchy counterparts through the development of supposedly "forbidden" or discouraged Arcanos. Wraiths with sophisticated abilities in Embody, Outrage, Pandemonium or Puppetry are likely candidates for membership in the Renegades. The Hierarchy still remembers the ill-fated attempt by the Usurers guild to take over Stygia, so any wraiths knowledgeable in Usury will almost certainly be hunted by Stygia's Legions.

Personal motivations and reasons for opposing the Hierarchy should be carefully considered in designing and playing a Renegade character. Not all Renegades need to be utterly opposed to the idea of a centralized government for the Shadowlands. Some may simply wish the removal of the current regime. Some individuals may join the Renegades for no other reason than the presence within the Hierarchy of a personal enemy from their living past.

Many Renegades feel that the Deathlords have forgotten their original purpose for existence. These rebels conceive of themselves as true loyalists to Charon's throne, feeling as much contempt for anarchists among the Renegades as they do for the puppets of the Deathlords. Some Renegades believe that the Hierarchy is not concerned enough with the eternal struggle to prevent Oblivion from taking over the Shadowlands. These individuals may exhibit a tendency towards a fanatical militarism that makes Hierarchy Legions look tame in comparison. Other Renegades may be drawn towards the lure of the Tempest, or may focus almost entirely on congress with the living world in spite of the Code of Charon.

Just as Hierarchy Circles belonging to a single Legion may consist of individual members whose backgrounds and personalities differ drastically, Renegade Circles which focus on a particular aspect of rebellion against Stygia can include a wide variety of character concepts. A Renegade Circle of computer hackers may all share a common desire to communicate with the Living world via the information highway, but their reasons for doing so can range from the thrill of being the "ghost in the machine" to a sincere desire to e-mail their loved ones.



Playing a Renegade character in a group which also contains members of the Hierarchy (and even a Heretic or two) can present an interesting challenge for players and Storyteller under the right conditions, although a plausible reason must exist to explain such a mixture. One reason for a Renegade's presence within a Hierarchy Circle is to infiltrate the Legion and gather information about the inner workings of the Hierarchy. This option works best for storytelling troupes that enjoy playing characters who have secrets from other characters and whose goals may be mutually exclusive. Most players (and Storytellers) usually prefer to avoid excessive intracharacter conflict and will need other reasons for mixing factions in a Wraith chronicle. In a Necropolis that enjoys a lenient Hierarchy presence, it may be possible for wraiths to belong to more than one Circle. Thus a wraith may be a member of her Renegade Circle while simultaneously maintaining close connections with a second group chosen on the basis of personal compatibility, former family ties, or other common interests. A mixed group of "survivor" wraiths can come together out of necessity during or in the aftermath of emergencies, such as a massive assault by Spectres or the sudden sweep of a Maelstrom through a city. The importance of joining together to fight a common enemy offers a compelling reason for wraiths to put aside their philosophical and political differences.

Stereotypes:

The Hierarchy

These arrogant powermongers symbolize the oppressive and punitive character of the Shadowlands and support a useless conglomeration of outworn customs and antiquated traditions. Their policies betray the trust supposedly placed in them by Charon. At least he had sense enough to know when to stop organizing things and drop out of sight. Even if we do need some sort of structure, we don't need a system which perpetuates slavery, patriarchy, mass murder, and income taxes.

— Abbie Truesdale, recruiter for the Daughters of Liberty

Heretics

Before branding us with the label "fanatic," take a good hard look at these crusaders for lost causes. If Heretic Cults didn't exist, we'd be stuck with all these loonies trying to flood our ranks. The best thing that can be said about most of them is that they take some of the Hierarchy's flak for us. Some of them are even open to an occasional alliance. Don't let them

come too close, though, or you might find yourself in the uncomfortable position of being their newest recruit.

— Angus McDowell, courier for the Midnight Watch
The Quick

How can we ignore them? Besides the obvious attachments we might feel towards some of them, they are the single most interesting refuge from the state of being dead. Hitching a ride on a mortal can be a ticket to a thousand new experiences. Possessing them is an even greater high. The only real problem lies with contacting the wrong sort of mortal — the kind that can actually hurt you. Before you decide to poke your nose through the Shroud, make certain that your target isn't a mage or a ghost-hunter. Otherwise, you'll wish you were...dead?

— Flash, leader of the Greater Newark Skinriding Association

Supernatural Creatures

Vampires and werewolves and fey — oh my! All of them are dangerous to us, and that's what makes them cool. When they're not out to control us or banish us or trick us, they can be good company. Sometimes we can even enlist them in our battles against the Hierarchy. Sure, you have to be careful when dealing with these creatures, but what the hell. You only die once.

— Lenora Planchette, social director for the Dixie Tricksters

Final Thoughts on the Renegades

We are forces of chaos and anarchy

Everything they say we are, we are

And we are very proud of ourselves

— Jefferson Airplane, "We Can Be Together"

Renegades are the catalyst that keeps the Shadowlands from lapsing into stagnation. Although they are branded as rabble-rousers, troublemakers, and agents of destruction, their rebellions have sparked many necessary changes in the world of the Restless Dead. While many Renegades rebel for the sake of rebellion, others function as the social and political conscience in a society that is too prone to inertia and self-satisfaction. While many wraiths choose the Renegade "life," some find themselves thrust unwillingly into the role of outcasts. Renegades view themselves as martyrs, tragic heroes, and spiritual pioneers pushing the boundaries of the Shroud to its limits. Many of them believe that they are the true inheritors of Charon's legacy, and that through their efforts, his trailblazing example still illuminates the darkness of the Shadowlands.





The Dark Kingdoms

Myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestations. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic magic ring of myth.

— Joseph Campbell, "The Hero With a Thousand Faces"

Byond the shores of Stygia lie lands uncharted and largely unheard of by "Western" wraiths. In their ignorance, most of the Stygians who have ventured into the domains of these foreign wraiths have done so tentatively, and have often made some gross assumptions about just what they were seeing. How many Hierarchy transports have emerged from one section of the Tempest and pronounced that they must indeed be near the realm of the Ivory Queen, when in fact they were approaching the land of Les Invisibles? How many Renegade scouts have presumed that the wraiths they encountered from the Shadowlands of India were under the protection of the Jade Emperor? Alas, because Stygia has maintained a policy of strict isolationism until quite recently, these misconceptions and confusions have grown to this day. And as the Deathlords begin tentative relations with the wraiths of the so-called Dark Kingdoms, they are finding that they know far less about their counterparts than they once thought.

It should be noted that Reapers and other covert operators are present in nearly every Dark Kingdom, on behalf of nearly every other Dark Kingdom. While the Shadowlands of Mexico may be under largely Stygian control, Obsidian Reapers quietly whisk the Lemures of newly-dead Native Americans out from under the noses of their Stygian keepers. In recent years, wraiths of vastly different beliefs and cultures have been cast into death together, leading to skirmishes and quarrels over who has the right to claim a given soul. What of the countless immigrants

in the West, who have remained culturally a part of another land, who die in Stygian lands? Or the English businessman killed while on a business trip to Hong Kong? Not all are extradited to the afterlife appropriate to their own beliefs, and the result has been an increasing amount of cultural mixing throughout the Underworld.

Due to the increasing requests for extradition to previously unheard-of Dark Kingdoms, Stygia has been forced to officially recognize the existence of cultural afterlives that they once believed to have been wiped out. Still other Dark Kingdoms, notably those of Clay and Obsidian, have chose to remain underground, as it were. They prefer to remain out of sight until the time is right to retake their territory claimed by Stygia in the Shadowlands.

One of the most apparent differences between Stygia and her counterparts throughout the Shadowlands is that many of the other cultures have a much more open attitude toward death, viewing the lands of the living and the dead as two halves of a whole. As a result, the Shroud is often much weaker in these areas, making interactions between the living and their ancestors easier. Even to the present day, many people have held on to what Westerners might call "superstitions" that keep the channels of communication between the living and the dead open. Do not think, however, that these are lands completely dominated by the mythological past; just as in the West, all these afterlives are shaped and influenced by the beliefs of the people in their regions. Their gods and legends help to define the worlds into which the dead are reborn, and the result is often an entirely different interpretation of what it means to be a ghost.



Honoring the Dead

It's worth noting that the cultures of many of the Dark Kingdoms have long-running traditions of ancestor worship, belief in wraiths, or other forms of reverence for the dead. Consequently, the wraiths of these lands are usually strong in Memoriam. Memoriam should hardly be a required purchase for non-Stygian wraiths; after all, not all wraiths led lives that their families would be proud of, and orphans exist everywhere. Still, the beliefs of a wraith's culture can be a strong source of power and Pathos, and are worth careful consideration.

The information contained in this chapter can be used by both players and Storytellers to create characters and entire chronicles based outside Stygia and the Shadowlands of the Western world. As with any storytelling tool, you should feel free to add to and modify the information below to fit your chronicle. In fact, we strongly encourage you to do more research on a culture if you are interested in running a chronicle or character based there. A wealth of mythological and cultural information has gone untapped by most roleplaying games, and this information can add immeasurably to your chronicle with only a little research!


Zhongguo: The Jade Kingdom

by Richard Dakan and Markleford Freidman



*We walk backwards, saying nothing
We're building our visions of China
We're young and strong and disheartened
We're building our visions of China
— Japan, "Visions of China"*

The Chinese call their land the Middle Kingdom, the center of the universe around which all else revolves. Over a billion Chinese throughout the world share a common culture which extends back five millennia, a culture rich in traditions which persevere down to the present day. China has known war and famine, peace and prosperity, revolution and stability and has weathered them all. Even the tumultuous revolutions of this century



have not altered the essence of the Middle Kingdom. The Chinese have known and endured tyranny before, but the Tao is still followed, the Buddha still revered, the family is still cherished, and the dead still demand sacrifice.

Religion and the Quick

The religious tradition of the Chinese is complex and very different from that of the Western world. In fact, it is more accurately described as an amalgam of native thought and imported teachings, a mixture that encompasses philosophy, moral precepts, and metaphysical teachings. The three central belief systems that make up this tradition are Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. None of these belief systems are religions after the Judeo-Christian model; rather, they are most often characterized as teachings or philosophies. Additionally, they are not entirely distinct from one another. Their tenets have mingled and influenced each other over the course of centuries, creating a belief system which is distinctly Chinese.

The product of this combination of beliefs is a concept of death and the nature of the soul which is more complex than the Western view. Life and death are two parts of a whole. The one can not exist without the other. Likewise, the world of the dead is not entirely separate from that of the living; the two complement one another. This belief in the unity of all things dissolves any hard and fast distinction between the living and the dead. The two halves impact one another from necessity. The spirits of the dead draw upon the living for support in the afterlife. If they do not get this support, they are likely to take out their anger upon the negligent living. In return for their assistance, the living expect aid from the dead in supernatural and sometimes mundane matters. Filial responsibilities do not end with death.

Nature of the Soul

*Last evening I was the same as other people;
this morning I'm listed in the roster of the dead.
When soul and breath scatter, where do they go,
when the wasted form's consigned to hollow wood?*
— Tao Yuan-ming, "Coffin Puller's Song No. 1"

Chinese belief holds that the soul has two parts: one created at conception, the other when the body is born. The former, the *hun*, governs aspects of the intellect and spiritual activity. The latter, the *p'o*, deals with movement and physical activity. In death, the two are separated again, each to make its own way in the afterlife. The soul may begin the journey toward paradise now, but it is a perilous path. Alternately, the *hun* may choose to inhabit areas such as the Yellow Springs and await her fate, while the *p'o* often remains in the vicinity of the body, typically for a period of three years.

These traditional beliefs come close to accurately representing the realities of Chinese wraiths. The origin of the soul is unknown, but its dual nature is an established fact. The two parts of the whole do separate upon death. They remain tied to the ghostly Corpus, but each is now free of the will of the other. This duality is analogous to what Western wraiths observe in the relationship between the Psyche and Shadow, represented by the *hun* and *p'o*, respectively. The relationship is not entirely friendly, nor is it purely antagonistic. The *hun* remains in control of the mind and still directs the *p'o* in the movement of the body. However, the *p'o* now asserts its own will in some cases, especially when concerned with situations involving physical needs and desires. If the wraith is threatened or presented with an opportunity for physical gain, the influence of the *p'o* increases and may even supersede the *hun*.

Ancestor Worship

*and I am connected
to the people ahead of me
by a tangled web
of blood and entropy
and I am a child of the twentieth century
and I recall that the others ahead of me
filled their eyes
they filled their eyes*

— Machines of Loving Grace, "Ancestor Cult"

The survival of the soul is substantially aided by her living relatives. The tradition of ancestor worship is longstanding in Chinese culture. The ties of family are a central part of everyone's life. This relationship continues even after a family member dies. The dead must be buried properly in order to send them into the afterlife on the right foot. In addition to proper rituals and prayers, the relatives will make sacrifices of goods for the spirit.

In the past, the dead were buried with items to help them on their journey. Today the practice takes the form of burning sacrifices for the dead. Clay and paper models of homes, clothing, and other necessities are made and immolated. A common gift is the burning of "hell money" for the wraith's use in transactions of the dead. These sacrifices continue after the funeral rites, typically several times a year, or when the family is in need of some special favor from the departed relative.

These sacrifices are a tangible benefit to the wraith after her death. Items that are buried with a wraith and given the proper ritual become relics in the afterlife. These are often items that were important to the individual in life, or items which will be seen as useful. In the past, items included weapons, storage containers, tools, maps of the underworld (almost always wildly inaccurate), and personal

items. Lately, modern technological items have occasionally been buried, although these items are inoperable in the Underworld.

Burned sacrifices are somewhat different. If the wraith is present when the sacrifice is made, he may immediately accept the sacrifice as pure Pathos; otherwise, the sacrifice appears in its original form before the wraith. The sacrifice does not become the item it represents, but instead remains in its original form, which the wraith may later convert into Pathos when it is needed.

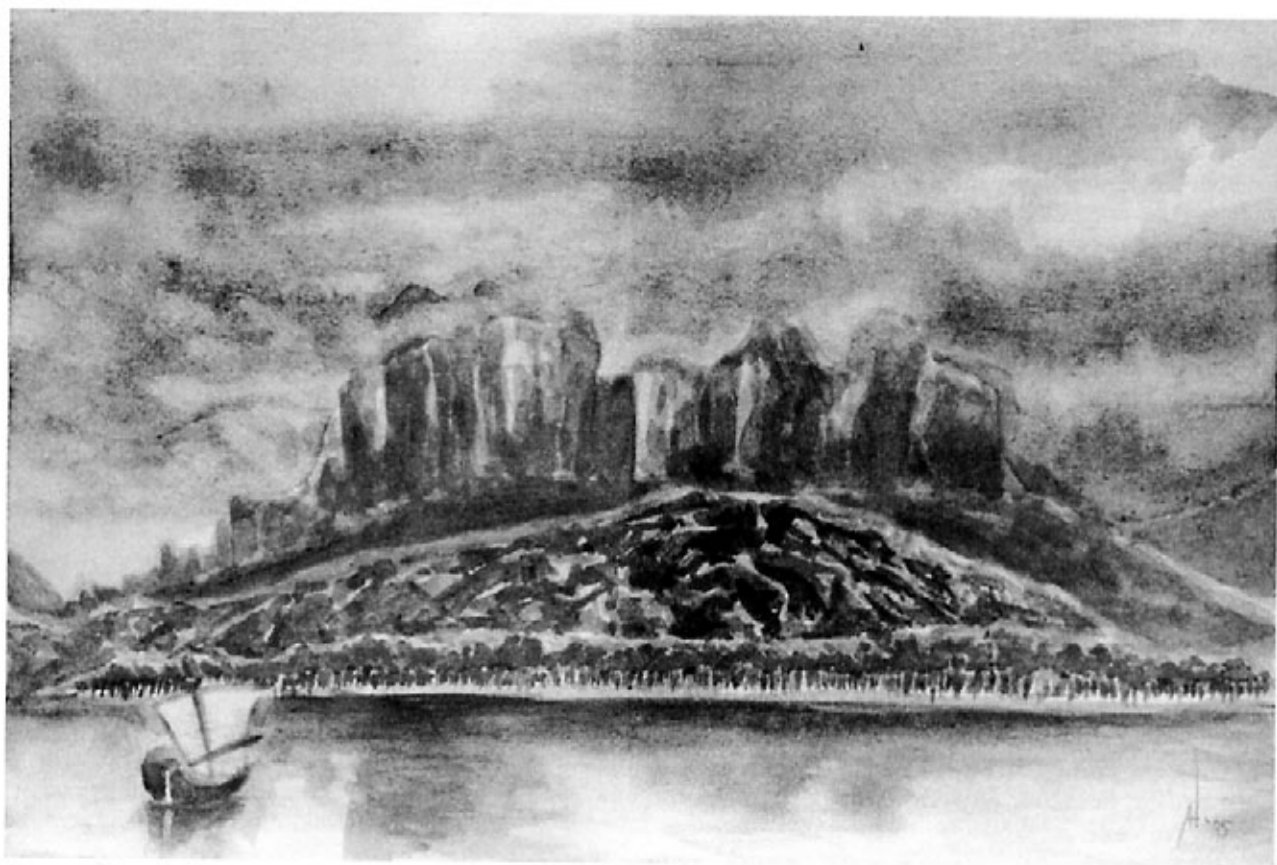
The ultimate sacrifice for the dead is jade. Individuals buried with this mystic substance carry the jade with them into the Underworld; relatives place jade on the eyes and in the mouth of the corpse in order to enable the p'o to remain with the body for an extended period of time. Jade is the material of choice for the Chinese dead, for unlike other materials, it may be worked and fashioned in the Underworld. Jade is used to build palaces, weapons, vehicles and anything else imaginable. True jade from the living world is highly prized for its strength, durability, and mystic associations, but the dead know another sort of jade. The souls of the dead can be fashioned into a substance known as white jade, much like Stygian metal in the West. Although inferior to true jade, white jade is much more common, and buildings constructed of white jade are frequently seen throughout the Jade Kingdom.

Filial Responsibilities

A wraith's family is her primary source of Pathos and the focus of her passions. Typically, one of an Eastern wraith's Passions is to look after the welfare of her family. This may be focused in different ways, such as "protect my family's continued success," or possibly "avenge evils done to my relatives by others." Another common Passion is to encourage love and marriage within the family, as this helps ensure the continuation of the line.

It is easier for wraiths to benefit from the passions of their living relatives, reflected by the decreased difficulty on gleaning Pathos from a relative. However, it is proportionally more difficult to gain strength from the emotions of those outside the family. The tremendous support a wraith gains from her family also has a price. The family members will call upon the departed to aid them in times of trouble. The wraith is bound to try to help the family to the utmost of her ability. Even if she can't accomplish what they ask of her, she must try her best.

If the family's request goes unfulfilled, the wraith feels the effects. The *hun* loses some control to the p'o. The upset in the family, combined with the wraith's inability to fulfill her duty, threatens the wraith's existence. If the family cannot count on the support of their ancestors, then it is quite possible that they will stop making sacrifices.



Fear of such a loss drives the *p'o* forward to take control. The *p'o* gains Angst proportionate to the failure of the wraith. If the request was entirely ignored, the *p'o* gains a great deal. If an honest attempt was made, but the fulfillment of the request proved unattainable, the gains of the *p'o* are minimal.

History of the Jade Kingdom

The history of the Jade Kingdom reflects the history of the China of the Quick. From early on, China's dead were honored by their living relatives. The spirit realm was populated by families of wraiths existing in communities similar to those of the living. Few wraiths existed for long periods of time, usually no longer than three years. Many went directly to Oblivion. Usually, it was the men and women of stature and achievement that often endured as wraiths, simply because their memory was revered.

The rise of the aristocracy brought forth cults of dead leaders. Dead emperors, kings and nobles received great honors, which they carried with them into the Shadowlands. The living continued to make sacrifices to deceased emperors, giving them power to wield in the Underworld in the form of jade, relics, and other offerings that bestowed Pathos. These men recreated their earthly kingdoms in the Shadowlands, subjecting other wraiths to their rule and enjoying the privileges of nobility, even in death. Typically, these wraiths would be ousted when a new leader died, as the recently dead noble would have a slew of recent sacrifices and worshippers to aid him in his bid for power. Unfortunately for the common people of the Shadowlands, the death of an emperor often caused traumatic upheaval as the newly dead emperor fought the current ruler for control.

The Rise of Qin Shihuang

He cracked his great whip to bend the world to his will, placed deceit and violence above kindness and justice, making tyranny the foundation of his empire.

— Jia Yi, Sins of Qin

China was not united under one ruler until the third century BC. Before then, the land was split into several independent kingdoms. One kingdom would occasionally gain supremacy over the others, but no single noble could unite all of China under one rule. The kingdoms warred with one another in widespread and lengthy campaigns, sending many dead to the Shadowlands. The Kings of the Dead likewise fought, battling for the right to reap the souls of the dying. History records more than one occasion where thousands of wraiths were sentenced to Oblivion in a battle over a single village of the living.





In 210 BC, Qin Shihuang hit the Shadowlands like a Maelstrom. During his life, he had succeeded where all others had failed; he had united China under one rule. He had set up the imperial system that would rule China for centuries to come and had built some of China's greatest monuments, including the Great Wall. In life, Qin had prepared for death. With the help of court magicians, he had created an army of soldiers to serve him in death, killing twenty-four thousand soldiers to empower his terracotta warriors. His tomb was a replica of his palace, supplied with everything he could need; even all his favorite courtesans, slain to serve him forever.

When Qin Shihuang's forces descended upon the Shadowlands, his soldiers were unlike anything seen before in the Underworld. The Immortal Guard, as they came to be known, had a striking appearance; the souls of Qin's slain warriors were now bound to a hard terracotta skin that allowed for startlingly fluid and efficient movement, and the paint that covered them shone in bright colors, defying the deathly pallor of the Underworld. They easily swept aside any opposition, and dead king after dead king submitted to the might of Qin Shihuang. He had repeated in death his achievement in life: the Middle Kingdom of the Shadowlands was united under one ruler. Qin Shihuang was merciless to those who had opposed him, enslaving them and transforming their souls into white jade for his new building projects.

Qin Shihuang took the name Jade Emperor, or Yu Huang, for himself. Yu Huang was the highest of the Chinese gods, and Qin found his new name fitting, as he intended to make himself the most powerful of all the dead. Realizing that his relic palace was too vulnerable, he began to carve a new structure for himself out of the Tempest, using the souls of his enemies. Soon after the Jade Palace was complete and fortified, Yu Huang established a system of rule similar to that which he had created in life; he was the absolute authority over the land, ruling through magistrates who governed the provinces, holding them to the responsibilities of reaping souls and enforcing the laws.

Expansion of the Empire

At first, the emperor's appetite for souls was voracious. He continuously conscripted labor to build his palaces and city in the Tempest, meeting any resistance with an iron fist. This massive oppression led to the First of the Great Revolts. Many attempts were made to destroy the emperor personally while the lands of the dead rose up in mass revolt. Yu soon crushed the uprising, but the emperor learned from the rebellion: he could not exploit his people without limit. The Jade Emperor seized upon the rage that still lay in the dead hearts of his subjects and channeled the energy outward, towards the dead of adjacent realms. He raised a great army, marshaled his Immortal Guard, and swept down upon the neighboring lands.

The Jade Kingdom's forces conquered all the nearby Shadowlands over the course of the next few centuries: those of Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, Southeast Asia, and eventually Japan. These conquered lands were at first incorporated into the empire. The conquest allowed Yu Huang to take many souls for building projects and rejuvenate his Immortal Guard without burdening his own people. From this experience, the emperor soon realized that he could rely entirely upon the souls of conquered peoples to fuel the Jade Kingdom's economy. The conquered lands were not treated as equal members of the empire; Chinese wraiths were entitled to protection under the laws of the kingdom, but the conquered wraiths were not. Chinese governors, sent to rule the new territories, collected foreign souls and sent an annual tithe to the emperor. Occasionally, Yu Huang would collect the tithe himself, riding across his domain with an immense retinue of generals, soldiers, courtiers and servants. This show of power became the tradition of the Imperial Tour.


Buddhism and Other Challenges to the Empire

*A better world lies in front of me
A sketch of life in the books I read
Then as I walk where heaven leads
Why I am the last to know?*
— David Sylvian, "Pulling Punches"

During the first century AD, Buddhism first came to China, integrating the Indian teachings of the Buddha into Chinese culture. The appearance of Buddhist wraiths in the Jade Kingdom led to several innovations on the part of the emperor. Buddhist thought postulated the existence of a hell, and Yu Huang saw great possibilities in this belief. He had already exploited Confucian teachings in order to impose a system of loyalty and service upon his subjects. Not wanting to disappoint his new citizens, the Jade Emperor set about constructing Hell.

Hell became a place where enemies of the emperor were sent to be tortured and transformed into jade. The Halls of Hell were constructed in a mountain within the Tempest, a mountain which had an earthly equivalent both in the Shadowlands and in the realm of the living. Chinese scholars believed that there was an entrance to hell in the Mountain of Feng Tu in Szechwan province. Belief in this gateway allowed the emperor to significantly reduce the Shroud in this area, allowing occasional traffic between the lands of the living and the Hell of the Jade Kingdom. Chinese legends tell of brave souls who ventured into the realm of the dead, and the terrifying visions they beheld. Likewise, the annals of the Jade Kingdom record occasional trespasses by the living. Most never left, but occasionally a lucky individual would make his way back home.





The coming of Buddhism also brought with it the Second Great Revolt against the authority of the emperor. It started slowly, as Buddhist wraiths began spreading rumors of a paradise to the east. This paradise, they said, could be attained by anyone pure of soul. The power of these rumors grew, and many wraiths attempted the journey to Peng Lai. None ever returned, but the rebellious movement grew stronger. The proponents of revolt preached against the traditional Confucian ideals which the emperor had twisted for his own purposes. When a group of thousands attempted the journey together, the emperor sent his troops to destroy them all. Yu Huang's army was defeated, and a general uprising ensued. The emperor overcame the revolt easily, but the shock of his army's defeat shot his paranoia to new heights.

The emperor cracked down on the Buddhists, forbidding them to preach their seditious teachings. He urged his subjects to remember their duties and consider the needs of their living relatives. He also instituted a series of laws designed to protect the filial relationships. Wraiths were given the right of exclusivity towards their families, and were forbidden to interfere with the living or dead of other families. With the resources coming in from the conquered territories, the emperor could stop levying Chinese souls for his own needs.

The next great challenge to the emperor's authority came from the conquered lands. Centuries of foreign rule had bred monumental discontent among the subjugated dead. Resistance movements had been operating for centuries, but they had made little headway against Chinese rule. In the seventeenth century, groups of wraiths from Korea, Japan, and Tibet rallied together in an armed uprising. Again Yu Huang overcame the threat to his regime, but only after a long struggle. He felt his position weakening, and feared defeat. Ultimately, the rebels were unable to capitalize on their gains. Affairs were eventually restored to the status quo, and the emperor again felt secure in his rule.

The twentieth century brought new challenges to the Jade Kingdom. Contact with the rest of the world was proving to be disruptive to the emperor's authority. Attempting to expand his influence, Yu Huang came into contact with other kingdoms of the dead. Conflicts arose over the rights to reap souls as Western powers intruded on Eastern peoples. The Second World War brought with it the greatest challenge to the empire. With the support of Stygia and other Dark Kingdoms, Japan began the Fourth Great Revolt against the Emperor. As Japanese and Chinese troops fought in the thirties and forties, so too did the dead. Finally, Japan threw off the yoke of Chinese rule. Throughout the last few decades, the Jade Emperor has fought to recapture

the lost territory. It is only lately that he has reestablished control over a portion of the Japanese Shadowlands. Today, the Japanese lead the resistance to the rule of Yu Huang.

Afterlife in the Middle Kingdom

Your life has now ended

You fear the conclusion

Cast into the dark realms

Destined to the afterlife

— Bolt Thrower, "Afterlife"

Over the course of centuries, the Middle Kingdom has developed a complex system of laws and regulations that govern existence under Yu Huang. The emperor is the absolute authority in all matters, the one and only source of law. However, it has been centuries since the last Imperial Tour. The Jade Emperor has not been seen outside any of his palaces since before the Third Great Revolt. The emperor constantly moves from palace to palace, never letting it be known where he is residing and refusing to see anyone but his closest advisors. Rumors have begun that he has in fact slipped into Oblivion, and that his ministers are ruling in his name.

Ministers of the emperor rule the cities and provinces of the kingdom. Chosen by the emperor himself (or possibly his advisors), ministers usually serve for their entire existence, unless the emperor deems their removal necessary. They often have strong family ties in the region they administer, ensuring their continued strength in the Shadowlands. The primary function of ministers is to enforce the laws. They set up courts to this end, and have a contingent of imperial soldiers at their disposal, as well as some local levies.

The laws of the Jade Kingdom closely regulate wraith behavior. Wraiths are forbidden to interfere in the affairs of the living outside their family. Likewise, wraiths are granted the express right to aid their living relatives whenever possible. Often, these two dictums clash and trouble ensues. The living often request aid that affects another living family, and serious disputes arise in such cases. Sometimes the court handles such disagreements; in other instances a wraith family will take matters into their own hands. Local ministers are often easily corruptible, and bribes or promises of ministerial support are common.

The law also forbids the use of certain Arcanos that are seen as "detrimental to the unity of the Chinese people." Moliarte is expressly forbidden, while Lifeweb and Puppetry are restricted to the wraith's own family. Some other Arcanos are uncommon in the kingdom; Inhabit is

largely unpracticed, while Castigate takes an entirely different form. There is no tradition of Pardoners. Instead, Taoist teachings have developed an Arcanos that focuses on the self; wraiths learn to master their own soul rather than the souls of others.

Laws are more harshly enforced in the conquered lands. The governors are constantly on the lookout for signs of revolt, and they react strongly to any challenge to their authority. The governors are charged with the collection of souls for use in the Jade Kingdom and have free reign to ensure that the supply remains constant. Governors vary in their approaches to rule; some are lenient as long as they are able to achieve their goals, while others impose harsh standards on their subjects.

Resistance movements exist in all of the occupied lands. The rebels' fortunes have varied over the years, but now the resistance is on the offensive once more. Japan's successful break in the middle of the century gave hope to many. Although Japan has been partially retaken, it is still the source of most rebel thought and activity. These insurgents cling to a tradition of unknown origin that holds that the reign of Yu Huang will fall in the Fifth Great Revolt. Rebels often use Arcanos and traditions unfamiliar to their Chinese overlords, and have developed new abilities unknown in the Jade Kingdom. One of these is a form of invisibility that allows rebel operations to remain hidden from the eyes of their watchful overlords.

The Jade Kingdom's relationships with other realms range from cordial to hateful. The Jade Emperor distrusts foreigners as a rule, and has had bad experiences dealing with them. Since his recent war with Stygia, the emperor has been seeking out ways to harm the Western realm; Yu suspects that the Stygians are supporting rebel movements. As yet, he has no proof, and a state of cold war exists between the two kingdoms. With the disappearance of Charon, Yu Huang sees an opportunity to make significant gains against the West.

Foreign visitors to the Jade Kingdom are uncommon but not unheard of. Usually, such visitors have the permission of the emperor and are accompanied by government officials. Visitors are treated with respect and caution; they are subject to all the laws of the Kingdom, and if they violate a law they often serve as examples of how harsh the punishment can be. Since they seldom have family to call upon to influence magistrates, they have little chance of escaping unscathed. Still, rebels have been known to seek aid from the wraiths of other kingdoms, hoping that aid from abroad will one day bring them freedom.

Lexicon

Buddhism: A philosophy, founded in India, that teaches that right thinking and self-denial will enable the soul to reach Nirvana, a divine state of release from misdirected desire.

Confucianism: The ethical teachings formulated by Confucius and introduced into Chinese religion; they emphasize devotion to parents, family, and friends, cultivation of the mind, self-control, and honest social activity.

Conquered territories: The non-Chinese Shadowlands under the dominion of the Jade Kingdom.

Feng Tu: Entrance into the Hell created by the Emperor as a place to send criminals and enemies.

Hun: The intellectual aspect of the soul, controlling higher functions.

Immortal Guard: The Emperor's elite army; incredibly strong and fanatically loyal.

Jade Palace: The Emperor's colossal abode, located within the Tempest.

Kuei: Hungry Ghosts; nearly mindless manifestations of the disgruntled *p'o* that has not been properly buried. They wander the Yellow Springs, causing mayhem.

Peng Lai: Another term for Paradise.

P'o: The part of the soul related to physical aspects of existence; often referred to as the "animalistic" side of the soul.

Qin Shihuang: Yu Huang, Jade Emperor. In life, the first emperor of a united China.

Taoism: A philosophy founded on the doctrines of Laozu; it advocates simplicity, selflessness, and similar virtues.

White Jade: The term for the milky white substance into which enslaved wraiths are often transformed; similar to Stygian metal.

Yellow Springs: Another term for the Shadowlands.

Yu: The Chinese word for jade, which has mystical powers in the Underworld.

Yu Huang: The Jade Emperor; ruler of the lands of the Chinese dead and many conquered territories.

Zhongguo: The Middle Kingdom; China and the Skinlands thereof in general.

The Flayed Lands: The Dark Kingdom of Obsidian

by Tim Akers



Land of Sacrifice

The Mesoamerican tradition speaks of gods who flay themselves to feed the living, and mortals who willingly offer themselves up for sacrifice to please the gods. This equilibrium is an important aspect of Mesoamerican thought, and is evident throughout their mythology, culture and religion. The creator god, Ometeotl, "He and She of our Flesh," unfolded itself into lesser gods, who in turn unfolded themselves into everything in the universe. In this way, all people, plants, animals and everything that is or ever was have one origin and are all part of one matter. When someone dies, they return to Ometeotl and are used to create some other part of the universe. At least, most of them do....

The Four Destructions and the Coming of Mixcoatl

Mesoamerican history describes four ages prior to this present one. Each age ends with a great Destruction that eliminates almost all human life, and the age is named according to the Destruction that ended it. The Destruction that ended the previous age was the Destruction by Water, when a great flood drowned most of the earth's population. After the Destruction by Water, the gods took two skeletons made of obsidian out of the Underworld and made a man and a woman. The man's name was Mixcoatl, and he was chosen by the gods to repopulate the earth and provide sacrifices for the gods. Mixcoatl soon forged an empire out of the few people who had survived the Destruction. He named his realm the Olmecan Empire, and set about conquering the whole of Mecitin: present day Mexico.

Long before his people were able to spread very far, Mixcoatl died of old age. Rather than being gathered back into the arms of Ometeotl as he expected, Mixcoatl found himself on the outskirts of the city that served as the capital of his empire. Confused, Mixcoatl entered the city and tried to find someone that could help him. Everywhere

The Dark Kingdom of Obsidian

Once believed to have been utterly destroyed by Stygia, the former Dark Kingdom of Obsidian was in fact three (or perhaps more) distinct empires, covering North, Central and South America respectively. These three empires existed in a loose confederation, though warfare among the three was common. With the coming of Europeans to the New World, many of the Native Americans were wiped out by the new colonists, who proceeded to convert most of the survivors to the culture and religion of their conquerors.

In the years that followed, the Lands of Flint, the Flayed Lands and the Lands of Gold, as they were referred to by the few Stygian scholars aware of their existence, lost nearly all their territory in the Shadowlands to Stygia. The islands in the Tempest claimed by these empires became harder to reach, as fewer and fewer travellers maintained the byways. At present, it is not known what remains of the former territories claimed by the dead of North and South America — if anything remains at all. For now, the occasional tatter of evidence of the former Mesoamerican empire is all that remains of what was once one of the greatest Kingdoms of the Dead in all the Underworld.

that he went, no one seemed to notice or hear him. In fact, many people seemed to walk right through him without touching him at all. He wandered the streets of his beloved city, even walked through his own house, but nowhere could he find an eye that saw him or an ear that heard his pleas for help.

It was then that Mixcoatl saw a very disconcerting thing: his own body, being carried to the burial grounds just outside of the city. He saw his wife and children, mourning for him, trailing behind the priests that carried his corpse. Driven mad with fear, Mixcoatl fled the city and tried to lose himself in the forest. He spent many days considering the things that he had seen, and came to a few conclusions. First of all, it was painfully obvious that he was, in fact, dead. But rather than being gathered to Ometeotl's bosom, he was trapped in this land of neither-here-nor-there. He was in the world that he had known

Pronunciation Guide

The Mesoamerican names in this book can be a little tricky, but the rules of pronunciation are fairly simple:

- a is pronounced "ah"
- e is pronounced "eh"
- i is pronounced "ee"
- o is pronounced "oh"
- u is pronounced "oo"
- x is pronounced "sh"
- c is pronounced "k"

for so long, but that world no longer saw him. Second, the gods must have done this for a reason. He, Mixcoatl, had been chosen by the gods to repopulate the earth and to care for it. He was the one who was supposed to bind the people of the earth together into one culture, that they might better serve the gods. So, clearly, the gods had put him in this situation to carry out his duty. Death was not the greatest sacrifice one could make to the gods; life after death was. He would find a way to take care of his kingdom, to watch over his children and to unite the earth into one people. Heartened by this new insight, Mixcoatl returned to his beloved Olmecs to carry out his duty.

The Founding of the House of the Werejaguar

Mixcoatl soon met others like him, people who had not gone on to Omereotl. He quickly learned how to cause the clouds to rain on the Olmecs' crops, and how to spook the wild animals towards the Olmecian hunters. He taught these tricks to his newly dead followers, and the Olmecian Empire quickly blossomed under his care. The Olmecs credited their recent success to the Werejaguar, the one name under which they lumped all of the gods. Mixcoatl followed their cue and declared himself the Werejaguar, and his followers he titled members of the House of the Werejaguar. He soon learned that he could use the energy given off by the sacrifices of the Olmecian priests to fuel his powers, and appeared in the dreams of several seers to demand more of the sacrifices. The ranks of the Werejaguar swelled, as did the Olmecian Empire.

The Olmecs grew fat and lazy under the watchful eye of the Werejaguar. Slowly, they began to collapse in upon themselves, too dependent on the House of the Werejaguar to hunt or grow crops. The final blow was dealt by a small

tribe from the north. They refused to bow before the growing tide of Olmecian influence, and went to war. The House of the Werejaguar did what it could, but the Olmecs had grown too dependent on the Werejaguar to defend themselves, and the whole empire fell apart.

The Four Houses of the Flayed Lands

Mixcoatl has not been heard from since the Olmecian Empire collapsed, long ago. At first, the higher ranking members of the House of the Werejaguar hid this fact from the public eye. But without Mixcoatl, the House lacked its previous drive. Soon, wraiths from other tribes began appearing in the Flayed Lands. Until now, only those who had been Olmecs in life had passed on to this life after death; no other ghosts had been heard from. But as time passed, faith in the Werejaguar waned in the Skinlands. The collapse of the Olmecian Empire was seen as a sign that the Werejaguar was no longer worthy of the worship of mortals, and the names of other gods began to be revered. Where once the Werejaguar stood alone as the provider and comforter, there were now mortals who paid fealty to Xipe Totec, Ix Chel and Itzam Na.

As the members of these religions died, they entered the Flayed Lands and denied the power of the Olmecs. Instead, they founded Houses of their own and named them after the gods of their people. Each House started grooming their own tribe for greatness, just as the Werejaguars had. They sparked wars between the tribes, conflicts that kept the people of Mesoamerica from their full potential. Even the Flayed Lands were not exempt from this infighting. The Houses waged war on each other, and many souls were destroyed. The members of the House of the Werejaguar realized that this war was the very thing that Mixcoatl had been trying to avoid, and so they called all of the dead together for a council.

The council was a tumultuous affair. The new Houses were suspicious of the Werejaguars and each other. The House of the Werejaguar had no real power in the Skinlands, but they still held considerable power in the Flayed Lands. With Mixcoatl's vision in mind, they their best to maintain control of the council. Their grip was tenuous, but it was enough to get the dead talking to each other.

Finally, the Houses reached an agreement. The wraiths of the Flayed Lands would not concentrate all of their energy on any one tribe, but would rather work together for the good of all of Mesoamerica. Wraiths would be divided according to the way in which they had lived. Each House would be comprised of polar opposites, to maintain a balance of power. The leader of each House would assume the name of one of the gods, and his House would take that name as well. Each House would then take in the wraiths that exemplified the characteristics of their pa-

tron diety. The leaders of the Houses would form a council, one in which their votes would be equal. This council would rule the Flayed Lands.

The days following the formation of the council were tense. There were many bands of wraiths that had taken the names of gods, and those who weren't included in the final four Houses resented being forced into the new system. The Council itself had no set leader, being a parliament of equals, and the Houses continually maneuvered among themselves to gain control of the Flayed Lands. Even after the Conquest, the Council remains deeply divided in its interests. The four Houses still occasionally fight amongst themselves, both covertly and in the open, and petty squabbles reduce the effectiveness of the Flayed Lands. The Council is an unwanted shackle forced upon the Flayed Lands by a greater urge — that of self-preservation.

The House of the Werejaguar

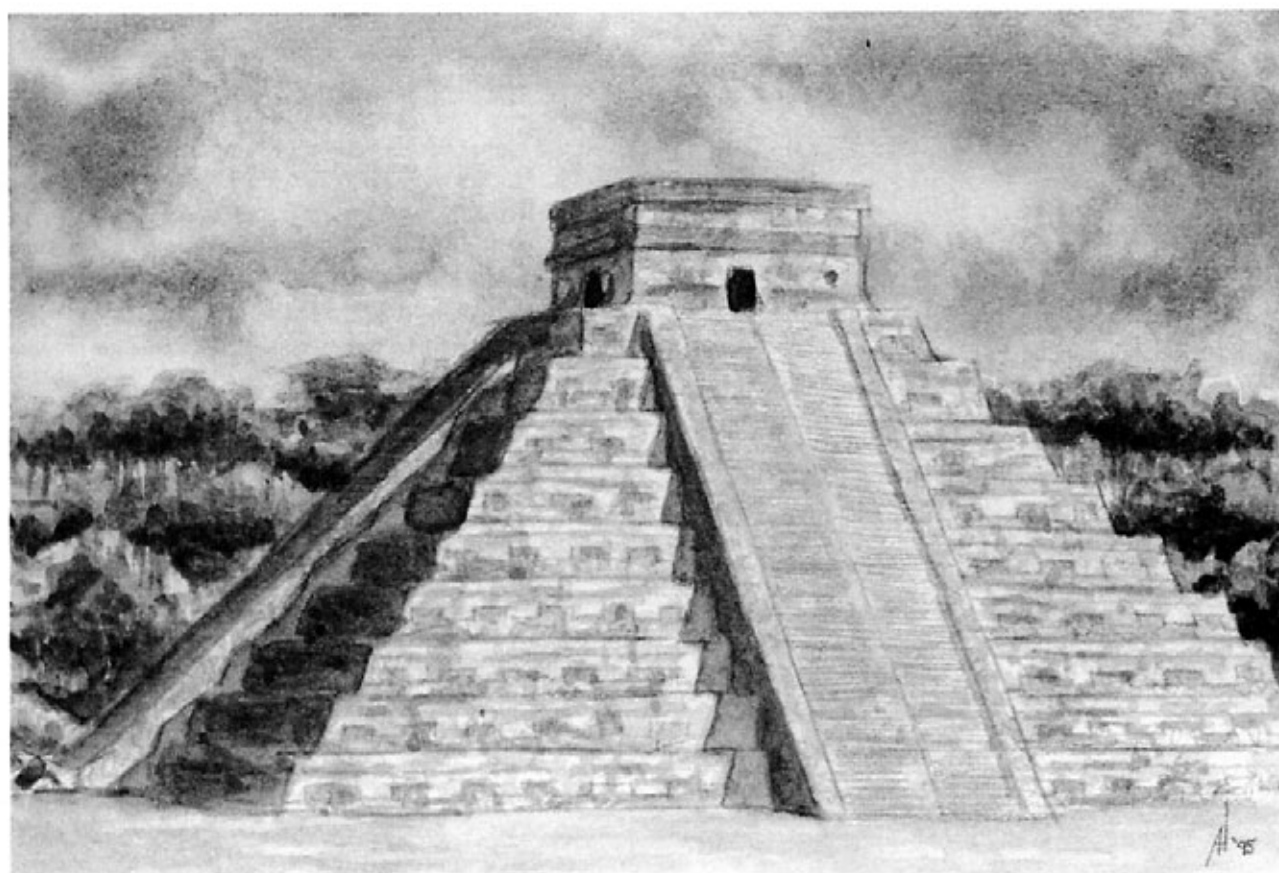
This House took no more members after the collapse of the Olmecian Empire. Its members are rare, as most have passed on into the arms of Ometecotl. However, those that remain are extremely powerful and completely committed to Mixcoatl's vision of the unification of all people.

The House of Ix Chel

Ix Chel is the heaven-god's consort, the old woman of floods and rainstorms. Those who led lives of either great success or great failure find themselves in her House. Many generals, kings, businessmen and idiots populate this House. The House of Ix Chel was the most in favor of resistance to the Heretics when they arrived, and when the Heretics did attack, Ix Chel's wraiths stood their ground and battled to the end, long after the other Houses had gone into hiding.

The House of Xipe Totec

Xipe Totec is the House of the Flayed God, god of crops and war. Any who were either takers or givers of life join the House of Xipe Totec. It is mainly populated by warriors, nurses and farmers, as well as murderers and petty thieves. The House of Xipe Totec has the most potential for controlling the Council, but its members are so often at odds with one another that the House is usually paralyzed from within.





The House of Itzam Na


Itzam Na is the iguana that stretches across the sky and bites his own tail. He is the symbol for the entire universe, and any wraiths who fit into no other Houses are more than welcome here. Itzam Na is by far the largest House, but its members are rarely spectacular or powerful; therefore, it rarely has much influence in the Council.

History of the Conquest

The Flayed Lands continued to grow and expand, and their residents helped the mortals that lived with them build a complex society. The wraiths of the Flayed Lands had discovered the difference between the Shadowlands and the Tempest, and had learned how to carve realms out of the great storm of souls. They created a single huge realm in the Tempest, with many byways between it and the Shadowlands. They named this realm the Fifth Sun, signifying the age in which the Flayed Lands were established. The Houses built giant temples in honor of their patron dieties, and forged the Pathos from the sacrifices of the mortals into beautiful gardens and pyramids. The Fifth Sun never set, and things were going well for the Flayed Lands. Then the ships started to arrive, carrying the white men.

Faced with political and religious persecution in Strygia, many Heretics skinrode the early Spanish explorers and missionaries to the New World. Rather than attempt to befriend the wraiths that they met there, the Heretics reacted from desperation and xenophobia. Terrified of Stygian Inquisitors, as well as these new Flayed wraiths who drew power from human sacrifices, the Heretics united and set out to conquer this new land. They quickly learned that the power of these strange wraiths lay in the sacrifices that the human priests made to their gods, so the Heretics possessed bands of Spanish warriors and generals and led them to war against the tribes.

At first, the wraiths of the Flayed Lands were unsure how to treat these new Stygian wraiths. The House of the Werejaguar believed that Mixcoatl's plan for the unification of all wraiths and people included these strange fellows, and they called for assimilation between the factions. Others saw nothing but trouble in the Stygian wraiths, and demanded that the Flayed Lands prepare for war. Unfortunately, neither side won out before the Heretics struck. The Flayed Lands were too busy bickering among themselves to effectively defend their realm. The war was bitter and long, for the Flayed wraiths were powerful, but as the Spaniards overwhelmed the aboriginal population, the Flayed Lands began to crumble. The Houses were still



unable to agree how to deal with the invaders. Most, sensing their power drain away, wanted to flee the Fifth Sun and find shelter elsewhere in the Tempest. The leader of the House of Ix Chel dissented, choosing to defend this realm from the Stygians. He managed to gather many followers around himself, and started to prepare the Fifth Sun for long term warfare. Seeing Ix Chel's confidence, those who had been calling for retreat found themselves readying for war, driven on by Ix Chel's wraiths. In the end, only a handful of wraiths left the Fifth Sun before the Heretics' final assault.

Before the Stygians' coming, the only source of power for the wraiths of the Flayed Lands had been the sacrifices made by the human priests. As those priests died, the Flayed wraiths found themselves unable to use their Arcanos, and were finally defeated by the Heretics. The Heretics stormed the Fifth Sun, tearing down its building and burning its gardens. They ripped a hole in the ground of the Fifth Sun and hurled the members of the council into it, along with most of the armies of the Flayed Lands. That done, the Stygian Heretics celebrated their victory over the "Dark Kingdom of Obsidian." The only ones to escape the massacre were those who recognized the significance of the death of the human priests early on, and had prepared another, smaller realm to flee to.

This smaller realm was called the New Sun by those that huddled in its confines in the days following the Conquest. By using the last of their Pathos, the Houses were able to conceal the New Sun from the Heretics. Their great realm was destroyed, their leaders were dead, and the mortals that they had committed their afterlives to nurturing were now an assimilated, subjugated race. They had no outposts in the Shadowlands, and only a small, colorless realm in the Tempest, but the wraiths of the Flayed Lands had survived.

Unlife After the Conquest

After many years, the new council decided that the time had come to venture outside the New Sun to see what had become of their lands. The first scouts learned that the Heretics had been driven from the land, only to be replaced by an even more oppressive system, the Hierarchy. Where once the Houses had provided for the living, the Hierarchy fed off the living, gathering energy from their passions. The wraiths of the Flayed Lands realized that there were no more Mesoamerican priests to offer them sacrifices, and so they observed the Stygians gathering Pathos and learned. It sickened the Flayed wraiths to leech Pathos off humanity, rather than accepting it as a freely given gift. But they had to gather Pathos somehow, and this seemed to be the only way.

The council set about making plans to begin gathering souls once more, to restore the Flayed Lands to power. For now, the souls must be whisked away quietly, out from under the noses of the Stygian Reapers. A few outposts in the Shadowlands have been reestablished, far from any area settled by the Stygians. Once again, bands of Flayed warriors roam the jungles of Mexico, preying on the unwary wraiths whose ancestors so long ago stole the Flayed Lands and slaughtered its inhabitants.

There are two main problems facing the Houses right now. First, the Stygian Hierarchy is big. Real big. Much bigger than the Fifth Sun or any of its inhabitants. The trick is to keep the Stygians from realizing that the Flayed Lands exist at all. Keep quiet, keep hidden, and all will be safe...for now.

The second problem involves the new recruits to the Flayed Lands. These people were taxi drivers and lawyers. They aren't really interested in what happened a couple of hundred years ago to some of their ancestors. If they really cared, they would have revolted while they were alive. Now, they're trying to cope with death, trying to figure out where they are, and they really don't have time to revenge long-ago wrongs. Of course, there are a few who are eager to carry out bloody vengeance; but for the most part, these people are still trying to sort out their lives, now that they've lost them, and would rather not sneak around in the bushes trying to set up an ambush.

All in all, the Houses of the Flayed Lands have quite a task ahead of them. No one can see them, no one can find them, and no one can hear of them until they're ready. Ready for what? Why, revolution, of course.

Transcendence and Oblivion in the Flayed Lands

Wraiths of the Flayed Lands believe in the oneness of all things. They believe that their existence in this half-world of death and life is only temporary. Once they have fulfilled their duty, they will be carried into the presence of Omoteotl and be allowed to become one with the universe again. This, to them, is Transcendence. On the other hand, it is possible that they will fail in their duty and their matter will be forever proscribed from the universe. Oblivion to a wraith of the Flayed Lands is much more than loss of a soul. It is the loss of part of the universe, the destruction of a small bit of Omoteotl. It is outside the natural order of things, and a blasphemy to the gods. The Flayed wraiths still argue as to whether or not Mixcoatl Transcended when he disappeared, or if he was cast into Oblivion forever. There are even some who believe that he is still alive, wandering the earth and looking for his lost Olmecian Empire.

African Afterlives: The Dark Kingdom of Ivory

by Nathaniel Barmore and Allen Tower



In many ways, the Underworld of Africa is unique among the realms of the dead. The souls of animals exist side by side with those of humans, and mysterious creatures calling themselves "gods" strive for power and worshippers.

Even the Shadowlands themselves appear different, almost verdant in an ominous way. And no technique has been discovered to create permanent material from the souls of the dead; Artifacts and relics are much more valuable in the African Underworld.

The Dark Kingdom of Ivory has a great deal of contact with Stygia, yet almost no accurate information on it has escaped its boundaries. Take, for example, the title "Dark Kingdom of Ivory"; this is obviously not what African wraiths call their realm, but is rather a name bestowed from the outside. While it could be argued that Stygia and the Dark Kingdoms of Jade and Obsidian were indeed founded on iron, jade, and obsidian, ivory has always been valued more by those attempting to colonize the "dark continent" than by those native to the area. To the majority of Africans, ivory is symbolic of art and religion, not economics.

The Lands

*Here ghosts from long-dead worlds have made their home.
Dark Mangrove boughs form window frame and door.
Of whispering wind-swayed leaves is built each wall:*

— D. A. T., *Life in Southern Nigeria*

The Shadowland cities of Africa are not much different from those of the rest of the world. Buildings are more run-down, and everything appears in various states of decay. However, much more of the Shadowlands are rural, and the difference there is distinct, if subtle. Unlike the cities, there is very little difference between the pastoral lands of the living and the dead. The land appears much the same, and even the plants look almost as they do in the living world. It is said that there are even ancient trees and groves that suffered destruction in the Skinlands, only to appear as ghosts in the Shadowlands. All reflections of flora have an ominous, almost sinister feeling about them, however; *abambo* are reluctant to travel alone through the bush, and anecdotal tales of waylaid travelers only reinforce this reluctance.

It is as if the Shroud is thinner here, and almost nonexistent in places. Sunlight occasionally filters through to the Shadowlands, an event unheard of in Stygian lands. The African Shadowlands are a study in contrast. The cities are great, decaying masses shrouded in smog, as desolate as any Stygian counterpart. However, the wilds of the rural areas seem immune to this effect. Unlike the cities of humanity, the Bush seems immortal, as close as the Underworld comes to being alive. It remains to be seen if human activity and development may threaten it, though there are tales of once-lush areas of the Shadowlands disappearing.

Surrounding everything is the Ocean, a roiling, chaotic realm not unlike the heart of the worst Skinland hurricane. Those who traverse it find that its confusion extends beyond the corporeal senses, warping both the physical and spiritual balances of unwary travelers. Those who do manage this arduous passage emerge disoriented. Many an *ibambo* has regained her senses only to discover that the weeks she spent in the Ocean were actually centuries to her friends.

Byways are difficult to find in the Ocean. Unlike its namesake in the Skinlands, the Ocean is a homogeneous mass, and only luck can seem to find a calmer or easier path. It is said that the only sure way of making such a journey is to hold a vision of your goal firmly in your heart at all times. Space itself may change, making a journey arbitrarily longer or shorter, but if an *ibambo* can "see" her location and not give up hope, she should eventually reach it. Even with the power of Argos, many *abambo* become lost here if they are not familiar with their destination.

Deep within the Ocean lie the Lost Kingdoms, so called because only those who know what they are looking for have any hope of finding them. Each of these kingdoms is an empire in its own right, some with power rivaling that of Stygia. While there are many individual realms, no single kingdom has the clear dominance that Stygia is famed for in the West.

The Lies

Phantom faces at the window

Phantom shadows on the floor

— "Empty Chairs, Empty Tables," *Les Misérables*

What outsiders know about Africa's Underworld comes more from hearsay and rumor than actual fact or experience. Stygians tend to see what they want to see in their African counterpart: a central ruler, a standard unit of trade, and wraiths who correspond to the common Western concept of tribal savages. Stygia's image of "The Dark Kingdom of Ivory" is a construct, an illusion created by several African rulers who wisely believed that if Stygia was shown what it expected, the Stygian lords would remain distant and disinterested. The actual "Dark Kingdom of Ivory" is a conglomeration of sometimes allied peoples and cultural groups, while the particular



"Dark Kingdom" that outsiders see is a small realm, organized in a Stygian manner and ruled by the figurehead Dark Queen. The mock realm is the only point of contact with outside wraiths, making it the surest destination for those who traverse the Ocean from other lands. In this manner, the African wraiths have kept contact with the outside to a minimum.

The Truth

In Africa, it is very important to know the names of our family, those who are still living, and those who have passed away. If you go to another village, you tell people who you are, quoting your ancestors proudly by name.

— Gcina Mhlophe, "Gift of the Tortoise"

Much about the African Underworld would appear strange to an outsider. No one is certain whether it is the work of the mythical Old Gods, or a property of the land and cultures, yet all who dwell in either the Skinlands or the Shadowlands consider themselves one half of a whole. Life and death are two states, yet aspects of the same thing, for is not sleep an imitation of death? Both are a part of the same continuum; the shadow cast by a tree, rock, or passing trader falls on the ground in both lands. Existence in the Shadowlands is seen as a chance for redemption.

It is difficult to assert which world is a reflection of which, for the body is clearly less permanent than the soul. Tradition maintains that there was not always a separate land of the dead, for once there was no death. Then again, this may be just a story. Nevertheless, the boundary between the two realms is slight, and it is even possible for those with the proper esoteric knowledge to pass from one to the other.

The Underworld of Africa is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, in existence around the globe. It stands to reason that the first dwelling place for the Quick should also be the first for the Restless. However, unlike its western counterpart, the Underworld of Africa predates the human dead. Indeed, the political structures of many of the Kingdoms are traced back to the civilizations and societies established by the Old Gods and their subjects, the animals. Though the Old Gods are said to have left, perhaps for all time, perhaps only to return at a later date, the animals remain in the Underworld, keeping their memories and traditions alive.

The relationship between animals and humans in the Underworld is unique, and lies in their mutual history. According to tradition, there was a time before death entered into the world, a time when there was a connection between all the worlds. Death arose from the actions of an animal, but time has obscured the identity of the culprit. Some maintain that it was a deliberate act, some that it was an accident, and others still that death was born of carelessness. Regardless of the reason, those who bewail their existence in the Underworld have a ready scapegoat, and no small amount of tension has arisen be-

tween the animals and the humans. The animals point out that they suffer as well, and have even been denied full existence in the lands of the living. Before the separation of life and death, they say, animals and people led very similar lives. Both lived in homes, clustered in villages, and had governments and the other trappings of civilization. Though their souls are similar, animals are trapped within unthinking bodies in the lands of the living, denied both the dignities of sentience and civilization. The cause of the animals' present state is also suspiciously unrecorded.


According to some Underworld scholars, the origin of death had another, more profound impact on history. They say that it was fear of death that led humans to leave the African continent in a search for lands as yet untouched by the spectre of mortality. It has also been suggested that the Fountain of Youth, Avalon, and others were merely metaphors for such a land. Ironically, such a land could never be found. Even if it had existed, the very presence of humans would have changed it forever, for they carried death with them. Curiously, the animals of other lands do not manifest in their Underworlds. Some scholars suggest that only the descendants of the animals of the unified land, Africa before death, still have souls. Others decry this as foolish and egocentric, and assert that only in the African Underworld are the barriers between the world of the animal dead and the human dead weak enough that both seem to coexist. The animals are suspiciously silent on the matter.

The relationship between the living and the dead, much like that between their respective worlds, is a close and ancient one. The most important element in this link is the bond of family. Family bonds are not severed by death; in many ways they are strengthened. It is a matter of course that one honors the dead, so as to make their time in the next world as pleasant as possible. Similarly, failure to pay proper respect is expected to result in dire consequences, and tales abound of neglected ancestors wreaking their vengeance on the living. Death, they say, is the least of the punishments. It is better to appease the dead, even out of fear, than to run the risk of earning their hatred.

The general attitude of respect towards one's ancestors, combined with fear of failing to do so, keeps spiritualism alive. People maintain contact with their ancestors and other dead, proclaiming their names at important ceremonies and remembering them when good luck strikes. If the living need aid, or commit a minor transgression, knowledge of the appropriate sacrifices and propitiations is thankfully widespread.

Should more aid be needed, whether for personal gain or for appeasing angry spirits, specialists exist. Sorcerers are those who wish to do more than merely keep the *anima* at bay. They wish to control the dead, and use them for their own gain. This is slavery, and Africans see it as no less evil than enslaving the living. Accusations of sorcery are taken very seriously; known sorcerers are generally feared and despised. A sorcerer's goals are rarely the well-being of either the living or the dead.





While sorcerers are few and far between, nearly every village has a doctor, someone who wields the power to commune with *anina* for good. The doctors help those who have made a mistake or offended a spirit, and counter the evils of sorcerers. Unlike the sorcerers, doctors are widely respected and honored, and are present at every major holiday and occasion to ensure the goodwill of the attendant spirits.

The Past

You can worship your own god. It is good that a man should worship the

gods and the spirits of his fathers.

— Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

There has been only one significant instance of the living interfering with the lands of the dead. Some say that after the departure of the Old Gods, there was a power vacuum among local tribes and in cities of the Skinlands. This vacuum was even more pronounced in the Underworld. Many local rulers wished for the power of the Shadowlands, and the additional influence that such power would give them in the Skinlands. However, with so many contending in both lands, the power that one could gain was often of little help. What one could do, another did as well, and if one lord managed to somehow become a threat to those around her, several others would form a temporary alliance to best the more powerful ruler. This was further complicated by the necessity of juggling tenuous alliances in both the lands of the living and the dead. Things continued in this manner for some time until a Yoruban Oba conceived of a solution.

With the fracturing of worlds and the raising of the Shroud, many powerful beings, some of whom were worshipped as gods, were being forced to abandon their lands and positions. The Oba contacted several of these beings, and proposed an alliance. The beings would be granted dominion over the lands of the dead, where their powers would not abandon them. In return, they would ally with the Yoruban Obas. The offer was too tempting to refuse. The entities collectively took the name Orisha (not to be confused with beings from the Egyptian underworld) from the beliefs and myths of their Yoruban allies. With the Orishas' aid, the Obas easily dominated the nearby lands.

However, both sides feared the return of the Old Gods, and gathered power for the inevitable confrontation. When, after a time, it became apparent that the Old Gods weren't returning in the foreseeable future, the Orishas turned their attention elsewhere. Border wars briefly broke out as they jockeyed for position amongst themselves. After some order was established, many Orishas sought to ensure the welfare of their mortal allies, as they had done in their old lands. However, the forces of their new home interfered. Over time, most of the Orishas were forced to retreat into the Kingdoms, away from their mortal allies. They lived on in the myths of the

people, who remembered their benevolence and aid. Memory is power to a wraith, and even the Skinlands still felt the Orisha's influence to some extent. Barring occasional feuds and minor struggles, the African wraiths existed in relative peace — until the coming of the slavers and colonial powers.

The Present

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;


Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

— W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"

Many of the kingdoms are still ruled by Orishas, some singly and some in concert. Since losing their direct contact to the Skinlands, their power has waned considerably. While it is rare that a person who maintains some form of contact with their ancestors has not heard of the Orishas, it is those who have forgotten the old ways that threaten their power. An entire class of humans has arisen that no longer pays homage to the dead. The Orishas, having no descendants of their own, depend on this homage more than any other *ibambo* for their continued existence and power. This waning has led to the overthrow of some of the Orishas. Several Kingdoms are now controlled by *abambo*, and it is rumored that at least one is under animal control.

Christianity and Islam have profoundly changed beliefs in much of Africa, and ancestor worship has fallen by the wayside. Some consider ancestor worship and the other old ways preindustrial anachronisms. Others, ignored by society as a whole and barely able to sustain themselves, simply do not have the time or resources to sufficiently honor the dead. Consequently, there have been two great changes in the Underworld. First, there are far more people in the Underworld for far longer because they do not receive the respect and remembrance they need to grow and leave their life behind. Second, those who find themselves in the land of the dead are rarely prepared for what it entails. This situation is further complicated by increasing violence and lack of proper burial rituals, both symptoms of a population on the verge of growing out of control. The population growth has carried over into the Underworld, where the number of new *abambo* has dramatically expanded every year for the past century, overtaxing the social mechanisms designed to accommodate them. All of these factors contribute to growing unrest.

This tension manifests itself in a variety of ways. One of the most common forms is a growing materialism that both reflects and is a response to the same phenomena in the Skinlands. Due to the greater emphasis on material goods in life, modern *abambo* have become accustomed to possessions as both signs of luxury and status. However, this same materialism has led to fewer items being sacrificed with the dead, resulting in significantly fewer relics in the Underworld. Increasing demand and decreasing supply have inevitably fueled dissatisfaction. The responses to this trend are varied



and extreme. Some satisfy their lust for goods by supporting a weak but growing trade with Stygian Shadowlands, as well as other realms. Others decry this as betrayal, and claim that those who support this trade in soul-forged goods are no better than the slavers and colonialists. The materialists are aware of this irony, and claim that it is a form of poetic justice; trading in the souls of westerners seems much the same as the slavers' trading in African people.

Tensions between human and animal *abambo* are also building. As fast as the numbers of human *abambo* are growing, the animal *abambo* are growing faster, and they rightfully blame the humans for this. Rumors tell of enraged elephants, rhinoceri, and other animals being hunted to extinction taking revenge on isolated groups of *abambo*. Disappearances that would otherwise be attributed to the Sinkinda or Mla Watu (described later) are now being laid at the feet of animal militants. There are even a few disturbing tales of rogue humans destroying animal villages in retribution.

Whatever the reasons, the Orishas and the governments of the dead are not appreciative of these changes. Along with some of the younger *abambo*, they wish to return to the old ways, to regain the life that they remember before the coming of industrialism and Western ideals. The materialists, on the other hand, are the leading proponents of out-Westernizing the West. They want to best Stygia in this new game of economics as they were unable to do in politics, either Restless or Quick. Other young *abambo* see xenophobia and antianimal sentiment as their key to attaining power, perhaps even a Kingdom of their own. Clever Sinkinda and Mla Watu do what they can to further this strife for their own gruesome ends.

The influence of foreign cultural ideas has had a marked influence on the African underworld. Islam began making inroads into Africa in the 9th century, and Christianity, capitalism, democracy and other European ideals were not far behind. Inevitably, this has caused a great deal of strife and division. Very few *abambo* are sure of their position any more; of course, this only makes them more certain that they are in the right. Even the Orishas have been dragged into this ideological struggle. Most stand firmly on the side of tradition. There are some, however, who say that trying to fight progress is hopeless, and even a few who enthusiastically embrace the new ways. In addition to materialism, democracy is one of the growing points of contention between various factions. All but one of the Orishas are opposed to it, realizing that their own power would be reduced by such an egalitarian system. However, arguing on tradition does very little to sway much support, as many *abambo* lived under democracies in life.

Transcendence, Oblivion, and the uncertainty of immortality is another issue that is growing rapidly more explosive. Native scholars never imagined that *abambo* need fear a second death. It was assumed that an *ibambo* would not "die" until she had accomplished her goals, at which point she would finally be reincarnated. Effectively, they believed in

unconditional Transcendence for everyone. The possibility that certain destructions are to be avoided, and that only a very few actually attain Transcendence, was, to say the least, extremely disheartening. These new beliefs have led to the unpleasant and vehement proselytizing of many groups, with several of the Orishas being the most outspoken. They see this schism as an opportunity to regain their lost power by claiming that only they can guarantee Transcendence. There are rumors that some of them may have begun to back up their words with inquisitionlike pogroms and other strongarm tactics designed to increase their worship.

In addition to the internal strife, there are external threats that nearly all agree are the enemy. The foremost among them are the Sinkinda, terrifying and grotesque monsters somewhat akin to Stygian Shades. However, unlike their Western counterparts, Sinkinda possess an malevolent intelligence, and are capable of planning devious assaults and ambushes. A much more dangerous (though rarer) threat is posed by the Mla Watu kingdoms. They believe that by consuming the Corpuses of other *abambo*, they gain in power, particularly in a trait strongly developed in the victim. Many a beautiful *ibambo* has disappeared, and occasionally those renowned for great intelligence or strength are the subject of kidnapping attempts. Mla Watu occasionally have as much power as the Orishas, leading some to question whether there isn't some grain of truth to the ghost-eaters' beliefs. There are Mla Watu subjects and spies throughout the Underworld, and it is theoretically possible that any given *ibambo* could be one of them. A final threat is the Ocean itself. Legend has it that the Creator tricked it into giving humans souls. African wraiths believe that the random-seeming storms and *abambo* lost in its depths are examples of the Ocean venting its frustration and anger at being tricked.

The presence of foreigners only adds fuel to all of the social fires. Some are émigrés from Stygia and other parts of the Underworld, while others are the ghosts of people who happened to be in Africa at the times of their death. Whatever their reasons for being here, at one time or another they have been accused of causing every problem, as well as supporting every faction. Many remember the history of the colonialists, and fear that foreigners will attempt to repeat it. Others fear that the outsiders will never fit into the Underworld of Africa, and may destroy it. Finally, many believe both theories are correct. While the foreigners may or may not be to blame for the problems of the African Underworld, many fear that they might be the catalyst of the Ivory Kingdom's undoing.

Abambo Metaphysics

While the *abambo* of Africa have much in common with their Stygian counterparts, they would be unable to have meaningful discussions with the Stygians about the nature of their existence. Stygians see themselves as dualistic entities, comprised of the Psyche, the seat of the self, and the Shadow,



the death-urge. Most abambo consider themselves quadripartite entities. There is the soul, the immortal essence of every living being; it roughly corresponds to Stygian ideas of the Psyche. There is the shadowself, easily comparable to the Shadow. Then there are the dreamself and the heartlife. Both perform functions recognized by Stygian wraiths, but are considered attributes of the Psyche. In life, the dreamself is the source of all dreams; it leaves the body during sleep and travels to the Shadowlands. In death, it is the dreamself that channels emotions, enabling the *ibambo* to gather and use Pathos. It somewhat corresponds to the sum of the Passions. Without it, the *ibambo* would starve, unable to feed from even the most abundant feelings. The heartlife serves as the bridge between the spiritual and the material. It is the heartlife that connects the soul to the body of the living, and it maintains the *ibambo*'s tenuous link to the Skinlands; Stygians would recognize it as the sum of the Fetters.

Lexicon

Abambo: Plural of *ibambo*.

Anina: Plural of *ina*.

Dark Kingdom of Ivory: One of the Lost Kingdoms; elevated to its special status to appease Stygian perceptions.

Ibambo (pl. Abambo): Wraith. Refers specifically to the ghosts and ancestors of one's own people.

Inina (pl. Anina): The *abambo*, Sinkinda, and other spirit forms of Africa's dead.

Ivory Queen: Ruler of the Dark Kingdom of Ivory. A figurehead for relating to other lands.

Lost Kingdoms: The many individual lands found within the depths of the Ocean; somewhat similar to Stygia and the Far Shores.

Mla Watu: The ghost-eaters; kingdoms of wraiths who try to gain their victims' strengths by devouring their Corpuses.

Oba: One of the rulers of the Yoruban people of Nigeria in the medieval period. They claimed descent from the Pharaohs of Egypt.

Ocean: The realm of pure chaos that surrounds the Lost Kingdoms and borders on the Shadowlands; supposedly the Creator formed all of reality from the Ocean. Analogous to the Tempest.

Old Gods: The mythical original rulers and denizens of both the Dark Kingdom of Ivory and Africa. One of their number allegedly created the world, and eventually animals, plants and humans.

Orisha: A ruler of one of the Lost Kingdoms. In medieval times, they were worshipped as gods by the Yoruba. Many were once Pharaohs, priests or other powerful members of the ruling class of Egypt.

Sinkinda: Twisted, malevolent spirits; the African equivalent of Spectres.

Les Invisibles: Wraiths of the Caribbean

By Jeff Combos



to see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.

— Washington Irving, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"

Creole wraiths have formed a unique culture among the inhabitants of the Underworld. Their domain encompasses the entire Caribbean and parts of three continents. Indeed, the word "Creole" means anything unique to the Caribbean. Despite the large amount of area that Creole wraiths control, other denizens of the Underworld know very little about them. The lack of intelligence on these enigmatic wraiths stems mainly from the lack of contact with them. Both the Shadowlands and the Tempest are chaotic and extremely dangerous in the vicinity of the Caribbean. Maelstroms ravage the area and Spectres exist in large concentrations. These dangers usually discourage Stygian and other wraiths from exploring the area. The Creole wraiths, on the other hand, have adapted to the harsh environment of their lands and truly feel at home only there. Even when contact is made with a Creole wraith, Stygians often mistake the Creole for a subject of the Dark Kingdom of Ivory. Yet, not even the Ivory wraiths themselves are aware of the complex society that has evolved by wraiths of Africa's descendants in the Caribbean.

Beliefs

Reach in the darkness

A reach in the dark

To overcome an obstacle or an enemy

To glide away from the razor or a knife

To overcome an obstacle or an enemy

To dominate the impossible in your life

— Paul Simon, "Rhythm of the Saints"


Creole wraiths refer to reality as the Cosmic Mirror. There are two sides, the Visible and the Invisible. The living inhabit the Visible, while the Invisible is the realm

of the dead. Since the Cosmic Mirror is a whole made up of both sides, the Visible and the Invisible are inseparably bound to each other. An action that affects one side can have an impact upon the other. Therefore, a being from one side of the Cosmic Mirror can interact with the other side, and such interactions are commonplace to the residents of the Visible and the Invisible.

Those who inhabit the Cosmic Mirror are referred to as Les Invisibles and Les Chevaux. The wraiths of the Caribbean name themselves Les Invisibles, while the living call themselves Les Chevaux, or the Horses. Les Chevaux refer to themselves as horses because of the special way Les Invisibles skinride. Skinriding, or possession, is not an invasion into the bodies of the living. Instead, Les Chevaux see possession as being mounted, as a horse would be mounted by a rider. They understand that the rider is responsible for the actions of the horse during this time, and no punishment will befall the mount. The Creole mortals welcome their role as Les Chevaux, as it is a great honor to be mounted, and willingly submit themselves to the Puppetry of Les Invisibles. Almost all Creole wraiths learn Puppetry, often as their strongest Arcanos.

Thanks to the special Arcanos of Les Invisibles, death is not a permanent separation from the living. When a person dies, their soul, called the *gros-bon-ange*, moves on into the Invisible. If the person was important or had unique knowledge and skills, the family attempts to keep contact with the *gros-bon-ange*. The family does this by contracting a priest, called a *houngan*, to perform the ceremony *retirer d'en bas de l'eau*, which literally means "to reclaim the soul from the waters of the Abyss." The *houngan* is a Creole mortal that has been initiated into the ways of Les Invisibles, and uses hedge magic to interact with them. The ceremony *retirer d'en bas de l'eau* fetters the *gros-bon-ange* to an earthenware pot, called a *govi*. The *govi* is then entrusted to the living relatives, who use it to interact with the departed. The family believes that the *gros-bon-ange* inhabits the *govi*, and in fact, Les Invisibles who are skilled in Inhabit sometimes do. Families dutifully care for their *govis*, and may even speak to them.

When a family wants to make a direct request of the *gros-bon-ange*, they take the *govi* back to the *houngan*, who uses it to summon the fettered spirit. The family makes offerings of food, items and even animals through elaborate ceremonies, which if performed properly, will benefit the *gros-bon-ange*. The items in the ceremony are ritually destroyed to move them into the Invisible as relics. Les Invisibles use two Arcanos to benefit from these rituals: Usury and Puppetry. Les Invisibles utilize Usury to gain Pathos from the animal sacrifices. Puppetry is used to gain Pathos by mounting Les Chevaux and consuming the food. In return for this filial devotion, Les Invisibles share knowledge with their families, and protect them in times of need.



There is one aspect of unlife that the family cannot assist the *gros-bon-ange* with. Immediately after death, the person's *ti-bon-ange*, or "conscience," separates from the *gros-bon-ange*. In life, it is the *ti-bon-ange* that makes virtue and honesty desirable to a person. It suppresses the dark side of the *gros-bon-ange*, while nourishing the lighter side. Just as the Cosmic Mirror has two parts, yet is considered a whole, the *gros-bon-ange* is made up of both a light and a dark side, and is one entity. Although the *ti-bon-ange* exerts its influence in varying degrees, it is an integral part of every person. Of course, not everyone chooses actions that are considered good and honorable. It is the *gros-bon-ange* that determines the actions of the individual, not the *ti-bon-ange*. In death, the *gros-bon-ange* loses the moral direction provided by the *ti-bon-ange*, and thus Les Invisibles are more influenced by their darker sides than they were in life. A few Creole wraiths manage to retain a part of their *ti-bon-ange*, and their rating of Eidolon reflects this.

The conflict with the Shadow is the direct result of the loss of the *ti-bon-ange*. To Les Invisibles, however, the Shadow is not considered a separate entity, but a vital part of the self. Therefore, the Creole wraiths do not seek to eliminate the Shadow, for to destroy it would be to destroy a part of oneself. Some of Les Invisibles become obsessed with the liberated dark side, and seek to make it stronger. This obsession only accelerates their descent into Oblivion. But for the most part, Creole wraiths do not desire to destroy any part of themselves, nor to have one part become dominant over another. Above all, Les Invisibles seek to remain stable in their turbulent and precarious existence. To them, what Stygians refer to as Transcendence is as much of a loss of identity as Oblivion.

Those wraiths who are mastered by their darker side are called Baka. They are dangerous and powerful, but strangely enough, are not hunted and destroyed. Les Invisibles defend themselves from the Baka with a strange Arcanos called *Connaissance*, which is also used to manipulate the twisted spirits.

History

*Sometimes I cry, I cry
And my trying never hurts enough, 'course not
I am a slave
— Lucky Dube, "Slave"*

Compared to Stygian wraiths, Les Invisibles have existed for only a short time. Their roots go back three hundred years to West Africa, where ancestor worship was widespread. The living descendants of a wraith offered sacrifices to her, and in return for the Pathos generated by the ceremonies, the wraith was expected to perform certain duties. The most important of these duties was to redirect

the hand of fate. Fate dictated a person's life, but it was not considered immutable; if a person did not like what fate had decreed for him, he would make sacrifices to his ancestors and request that they intervene. Although Les Invisibles usually have no direct power over fate, they are able to perceive its strands, and those few Creole wraiths skilled at Fatalism are granted great respect. Therefore, Creole wraiths feel that they have an important duty to fulfill. Indeed, they are the only beings capable of untangling the strands of fate. Without the aid of the dead, the living are defenseless against the supernatural powers of the world.

Unfortunately, it was the mundane threat to the living that proved greatest. During the late seventeenth century, slavers carried away huge numbers of people to the New World. Many wraiths, unwilling to be separated from their descendants, followed on the ships and even in the bodies of the new slaves. The majority of the slaves brought from West Africa were delivered to plantations in the West Indies, and their family wraiths along with them.

The Shadowlands of the Caribbean, called the Mirrorlands, were chaotic and dangerous. Maelstroms frequently ravaged the area, and malevolent dark spirits swarmed in great numbers. The former African wraiths were barely able to adapt to the dangerous environment. Maelstroms destroyed many wraiths, and the superior numbers of the native Baka overwhelmed the survivors. Only those wraiths with the Arcanos that allowed them to seek shelter in the Visible were able to survive.

Despite the obvious dangers of the Caribbean, the African wraiths were unwilling to abandon their descendants, and were determined to make their home in the new land. The survivors of the Maelstroms soon discovered that the storms appeared seasonally. During the calm season, the Tempest, referred to as the Abyss by the Creole wraiths, was traversable. Creole wraith travelers still had to deal with the Baka, and many of them were consumed by these dark spirits. Although the Maelstroms could be avoided by Les Invisibles, the Baka proved to be a constant danger. Baka even assaulted the Mirrorlands through Nihils, called Founts, which were and still are numerous.

Les Invisibles realized that in order to survive, they needed to stop the Baka from entering the Mirrorlands. Unfortunately, Founts were too numerous to be guarded individually. The Creole wraiths decided that the Baka had to be stopped at the source. Les Invisibles organized hunting parties to search for the source of the evil spirits. Each group of hunters entered the Abyss and departed in a separate direction. Many of the hunting parties were never seen again, and were presumed to have been destroyed. (However, rumors still persist of Gaunts wandering the Abyss, claiming to seek its dark heart....) Other hunters encountered one another and joined forces. The closer the hunters traveled to the heart of the Abyss, the more hunting parties they en-

countered. As the combined groups of hunters neared the heart of the Abyss, they observed an island anchored peacefully amongst the chaos and shadows. Weary from their odyssey, the group of hunters decided to investigate this island that even the Baka would not go near. Les Invisibles believe that the only hunters to survive the journey were those in the group that finally reached the Island Below the Sea.

What the hunters found on the Island Below the Sea irrevocably changed their society. Residing upon the Island were beings of unfathomable power, called Les Mystères. These entities offered the hunters shelter. The hunters accepted, and spent a long time on the Island. Les Mystères proved to have vast amounts of knowledge, and they offered the Creole hunters the ability to manipulate the Baka. In return, they asked the hunters to invite other wraiths to make the journey to the Island. Les Mystères were unable to exist in the Mirrorlands, but wished to share their wisdom with Les Invisibles. However, Les Mystères would only share their power with those wraiths who pledged to serve them. For most of the Creole hunters, their existence with Les Mystères was a religious experience, and they even swore themselves to an individual Mystère. Some of the hunters, however, did not trust the mysterious beings. Creole wraiths place a high value on their sense of self, and these wraiths felt that sacrificing their freedom to a Mystère was too high a price to pay for knowledge. However, the wraiths that did swear themselves to a Mystère learned a secret that proved to be highly useful. The hunters could now return home to the Mirrorlands, as their new Arcanos, called *Connaissance*, would enable Les Invisibles to protect their homes from the Baka.

The Creole hunters returned, but were shocked to find that they were unable to enter the Mirrorlands. During the journey, the hunters had become unfettered to the Visible. The living families of the Creole wraiths had been separated and forced to convert to the religion of their masters. Only Les Invisibles left behind were able to maintain their Fetters and remain in the Mirrorlands. The hunters' Fetters were neglected, and their mortal families had been forced to give up on them. The living had all but forgotten their ancestry.

The unfettered wraiths were desperate to find shelter. If they were caught in the Abyss without shelter during a Maelstrom, they would be destroyed! But the search seemed fruitless. The hunters who had pledged themselves to Les Mystères turned back to the Island Below the Sea. The fettered wraiths hurriedly worked to rescue as many of the older wraiths as possible. They created *retirer d'en bas de l'eau*, a ceremony to refetter wraiths to the living. Using *gouis* as Fetters, many wraiths were once again safe in the Mirrorlands. Unfortunately, not all the wraiths could be saved, and the first Maelstrom of the season engulfed them.



Once again, the surviving wraiths turned their attention to the living. The journey had weakened them, and they needed strength. Few of the living remembered the ceremonies — but those that did were calling for their ancestors to change the fate of the living, to free their descendants from slavery. Les Invisibles carefully began to rebuild their relationship with the living. Possession became a common occurrence, and the Creole wraiths used it to teach the old ceremonies to Les Chevaux. Both the living and Les Invisibles drew strength from the renewed relationship, and the seeds of rebellion were planted.

Most of the Creole wraiths at this time were young, still strongly fettered to the Visible, and only a few older wraiths remained to guide them. The young wraiths had been slaves during their lives, and were now tasting the freedom and heritage that were rightfully theirs. Anger fueled the Pathos of these wraiths, and they desired for the living to share their freedom. The young wraiths began to possess Les Chevaux and incite revolt. Sometimes, a wraith would mount a mortal and run her into the hills. This practice was so common that slave overseers referred to it as *marronage*. The mortals subjected to *marronage* were reintroduced to the old traditions by Les Invisibles, and encouraged to share their knowledge. As a result, slave revolt became more and more frequent in the Visible. The mortal oppressors were

hard pressed to control the slaves, who were reveling in their heritage. The young wraiths continued to stir the living's discontent in to the flash point, and beyond. The Creole mortals eventually rose up to claim their freedom and created Haiti, the first free black republic in the New World.

It wasn't until many years after the birth of Haiti that the first servant of Les Mystères, calling herself a Loa, returned from the Island Below the Sea. She encouraged other wraiths to journey back with her, telling them stories of the Island and the gifts that awaited them. A few of the hunters who had made that first journey still survived, and they had kept their suspicions of Les Mystères. They spoke against the Loa, and many wraiths listened. As a result, only the very brave and very foolhardy followed her into the Abyss. But when they returned, laden with strange items and sharing new knowledge, other wraiths attempted the journey as well. Most of Les Invisibles became convinced that Les Mystères exist to serve and be served, just like Les Chevaux. However, not all Creole wraiths feel this way and there are still a few wraiths who refuse to have any contact with the Loa or Les Mystères. Despite the small resistance movement, the Island Below the Sea, populated by Loa, Les Mystères and even stranger beings, is now the stronghold of Les Invisibles. Journeys to and from the Island are common throughout the calm season of the Abyss.



Société

*But be abound in mystery for that so much you do to me.
For there are those who drown in adulation.
Welcome to this world.*

— Primus, "Welcome to this World"

Creole society is a rich and complex tapestry. Les Invisibles have many different beliefs, and each belief has its own supporters. Just as a wraith may hold many beliefs, she may also be a member of multiple factions, and members of different factions may belong to the same family. Creole wraiths fettered to the same mortals form a Nanchon. Despite the different beliefs held by members of a Nanchon, they share the same goal — to serve the living family.

Les Invisibles and Les Chevaux are bound to each other in a symbiotic relationship. In life, a *gros-bon-ange* may have been a sibling, a spouse or a parent. This relationship does not weaken in death. Les Chevaux care for their deceased relatives by making offerings that generate Pathos. In return for the Pathos, the members of the Nanchon grant the family's requests. Sometimes, Les Invisibles require more than just Pathos from Les Chevaux, and ask favors of the family. Creole mortals are quick to aid a member of their Nanchon, for Les Chevaux know that Les Invisibles are not without enemies of their own.

However, not all Les Invisibles agree upon how to best serve Les Chevaux, and so two major factions have developed. This division in belief dates back to the late 1700's, when Les Invisibles were in the process of rebuilding their bond with Les Chevaux. The young Creole wraiths, who had been slaves in life, were filled with rage. They had suffered all their lives, and their loved ones suffered still. The young wraiths wanted to take direct action. The older Invisibles counseled for a more peaceful approach, but the argument polarized Les Invisibles.

The argument for nonviolent intervention was led by an Creole wraith named Rada. Rada presented his peaceful philosophy, including his suspicion of Les Mystères. Les Invisibles that followed Rada wanted to help the slaves, but in the form of support, rather than direct intervention. They wanted to empower Les Chevaux, until the mortals were strong enough to cast the yoke from their own shoulders. Rada wanted to protect and spy for the leaders of the slaves, maintaining the traditional role of Les Invisibles.

The younger Invisibles were led by Petro, a former slave who was put to death for inciting revolt. She burned to accomplish in death what she could not in life. Petro's followers wanted to use their supernatural powers to strike at the mortal oppressors. Due to the tragic loss of many of

the older wraiths, the Petro faction far outnumbered the Rada faction, and despite persuasive speeches by Rada, the Petro faction became popular among Les Invisibles. When the revolt that created Haiti came, it was Petro and her army of followers that were credited.

Although the Rada faction of today is no longer comprised exclusively of older wraiths, it is still significantly smaller than the Petro faction. They still believe in peaceful resolutions to problems on both sides of the Cosmic Mirror. Les Chevaux will contact Rada wraiths for guidance and healing. The Petro faction, on the other hand, still draws in most of the younger wraiths. They are aggressive and fierce in combat. Petro wraiths offer protection and strength to Les Chevaux. Although both Rada and Petro factions are radically different, they respect and admire each other's strengths.

In addition to membership in either the Rada or Petro faction, some of Les Invisibles also follow a *Mystère*. Les *Mystères* are beings of immense power and reside only in the Abyss. Les Invisibles who swear themselves to a *Mystère* are called *Loa*. They become the eyes and ears of Les *Mystères* in the Mirrorlands. Only a wraith that has a true desire to serve will chose to become a *Loa*, and he often takes on aspects of the personality of the *Mystère* he serves. When Les Invisibles desire aid or information from a *Mystère*, they contact a *Loa*. The *Loa* even mount Les Chevaux to interact with the Visible. Since Les *Mystères* never leave their residence in the Abyss, the *Loa* are very important to Les Invisibles, who no longer need to make the dangerous journey in order to communicate.

Cosmology

For the Haitian, the metaphysical world of Les Invisibles is not a vague, mystical notion; it is a world within a cosmic mirror, peopled by the immortal reflections of all those who have ever confronted it.

— Maya Deren, "Divine Horsemen"

Creole wraiths travel on both sides of the Cosmic Mirror. The Visible is a land very familiar to the wraiths visiting it. The Invisible, on the other hand, is dangerous and full of mystery. The Surface of the Cosmic Mirror separates the Visible from the Invisible. The Invisible is made up of two parts, the Mirrorlands and the Abyss. The Mirrorlands lie close to the Surface of the Cosmic Mirror and are a shadowy reflection of the Visible — proof that the Visible and Invisible are bound together. The Visible and the Invisible interact through the Surface of the Cosmic Mirror. Objects may only move from one side to the other by passing through the Surface. As such, Les Invisibles breach the Surface when they mount Les Chevaux.

Not all areas of the Surface are as hard to pass through as others. Les Invisibles have sought out areas where the Surface is thinner. A Nanchon will usually share one such area, defending it from Baka and other Nanchons. In the Visible, a *houngan* will build a temple, called a Hounfor, at the same spot. In the Invisible, Creole wraiths will live together in a Hounfor, using it as a communal Haunt. When a family wishes contact with a the *gros-bon-ange*, they bring her *govi* to the *houngan*. The *houngan* performs all ceremonies to the Nanchon in the Hounfor. Interaction between both sides of the Cosmic Mirror is thus easily accomplished.

Just as there are areas in the Mirrorlands where the Surface is thinner, there are also areas where the Abyss leaks through, called Founts. Founts are very common in the Mirrorlands, since the Abyss lies so close by. It is from the Founts that Baka enter the Mirrorlands. Nanchons will therefore try to control a Fount, and the Baka that come through it. A powerful Nanchon will control not only a communal Hounfor, but a Fount as well.

The Abyss is a frightening place for Les Invisibles. Baka exist in large numbers, and even more dangerous beasts have been sighted. The Abyss has a Maelstrom season, just as the Visible has a hurricane season. During this time, Maelstroms of various sizes tear forth across the

Mirrorlands. Most Creole wraiths prefer to seek the shelter of their Hounfor until the storm is over, and then emerge to clear out the Baka left behind. Les Invisibles know that being caught in the Abyss is a quick way to Oblivion.

Despite their fear of the Abyss, Les Invisibles do use it for travel. The Mirrorlands are made up of islands and parts of land on different continents. The Abyss is the easiest, but not the safest way to transverse the distances between them. Travel through the Abyss is only attempted during the calm season. During the Maelstrom season, Les Invisibles will use their living family as transportation, skinriding them to their destination. If none of Les Chevaux are available, Creole wraiths have been known to hitchhike on unsuspecting mortals.

The Island Below the Sea is the only place regularly traveled to when the Abyss is calm. The promise of enlightenment and wealth tempts most Invisibles to brave the journey at least once in their unives. However, it is difficult and dangerous to reach. There are few byways that lead to the Island. Those that do exist are hard to follow, and disappear completely during the Maelstrom season. Another difficulty is the Island's proximity to the black heart of the Abyss. This makes it the focus of tremendous Baka activity. Les Invisibles attempting to reach the Is-



land are harried by Baka, and have to fight their way to the shore. But once travellers have set foot on the Island, they are safe. The rewards Les Invisibles receive upon reaching the Island make the journey well worth it.

Creole wraiths journey to the Island Below the Sea on a variety of quests. The most common reason to seek the Island is to speak with Les Mystères. Other wraiths desire to trade for the unique items manufactured there. Les Invisibles returning to the Mirrorlands from the Island may carry knowledge, power or Artifacts. Loa that have frequently made the journey will hire themselves out as guides and bodyguards for those that can pay.

Glossary of Creole Terms

Abyss: The dark and chaotic expanse in the Invisible; the Tempest.

Baka: Wraiths dominated by their darker side; Shades.

Connaissance: The Arcanos used by Creole wraiths to manipulate Baka.

Cosmic Mirror: The Creole term for all of reality.

Creole: Term used to designate anything native to the Caribbean, especially Haiti.

Founts: Areas of the Mirrorlands where the Abyss has seeped through; Nihils.

Govi: An earthen pot used as a Fetter by Creole wraiths; see *retirer d'en bas de l'eau*.

Gros-bon-ange: The closest Creole approximation to a "soul" or Psyche.

Hounfor: A communal Haunt shared by a Nanchon; place where a *houngan* performs ceremonies to a Nanchon.

Houngan: A Creole mortal go-between for Les Chevaux and Les Invisibles; a practitioner of hedge magic.

Invisible: The half of the Cosmic Mirror inhabited by Les Invisibles; the Underworld.

Island Below the Sea: The location in the Abyss where Les Mystères dwell.

Les Chevaux: The Horses; the term used by Creole mortals to describe themselves.

Les Invisibles: The term Creole wraiths use to describe themselves.

Les Mystères: Beings of great power that reside upon the Island Below the Sea; see Loa.

Loa: Les Invisibles that have devoted their unlives to the service of a Mystère.

Mirrorlands: Shadowy reflection of the Visible; the Shadowlands.

Marronage: A term once used by slave overseers to describe a possessed mortal running wild and escaping; now occasionally used for a particularly flamboyant use of Puppetry.

Morts: Term used by Les Invisibles to describe non-Creole wraiths.

Mount: The Creole term for possession.

Nanchon: A group of Creole wraiths bound to the same family; Circle.

Petro: The aggressive faction of Les Invisibles who believe in direct interaction with Les Chevaux.

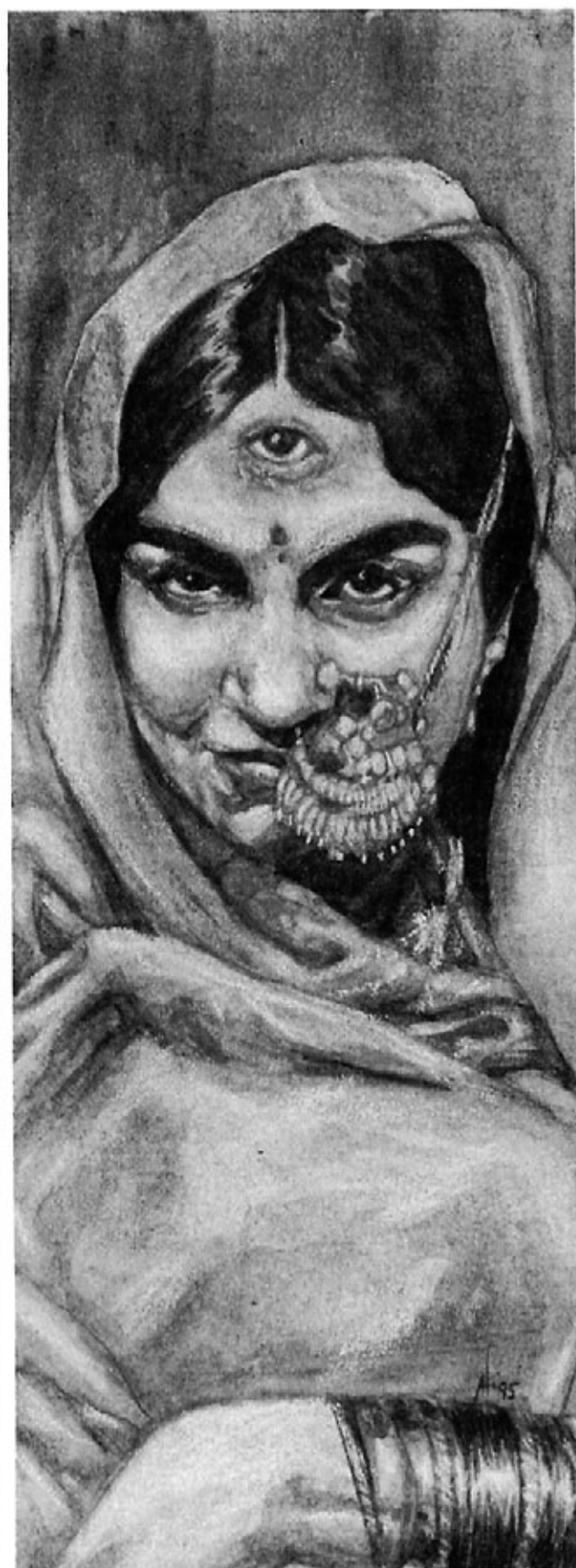
Rada: The passive faction of Les Invisibles who believe in indirect interaction with Les Chevaux.

Retirer d'en bas de l'eau: "Reclaiming the soul from the waters of the Abyss"; ceremony performed by a *houngan* that fetters a Creole wraith to a *govi*.

Surface: The mystical division of the Visible and the Invisible; the Shroud.

Ti-bon-ange: The "conscience" of a person that separates from the *gros-bon-ange* immediately after death.

Visible: The half of the Cosmic Mirror populated by the living; the Skinlands.



City of Delights: The Underworld of India

by Allen Tower



*or Aught nor Nought existed; yon bright sky
Was not, nor heaven's broad room out-
stretched above.*

*What covered all? what sheltered? what
concealed?*

Was it the water's fathomless abyss?

*There was not death — yet there was
nought immortal,*

There was no confine betwixt day and night;

The only One breathed breathless by itself,


Other than It nothing since has been.

— "The Hymn of Prajapati," *Rig Veda*

India's dead enjoy a status very different from that of the dead of Stygia and the West. For many of the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, ghosts, goblins, and malevolent extra-planar creatures are a part of everyday life — because they *believe*. Ghosts are credited with countless daily occurrences, from illness to broken crockery. Every village has at least one sorcerer, a mortal who claims to be able to interact with the spirit world. The sorcerers summon spirits to settle civil suits, haunt enemies, and induce love. Dead ancestors depend on their successors for their spiritual well-being, and sometimes answer queries about daily events.

The Wheel of Life and Death

Within the spiritual framework of the Indian subcontinent, all corporeal beings are composed of three parts. There is the immutable soul; the *Sthula Sarira*, or physical body; and the *Sukshma Sarira*, or subtle body (*Corpus*). It is the *Sthula Sarira* which ties the living to the world as we know it. At the point of death, the soul is still attached to the useless *Sthula Sarira*. The *Sukshma Sarira* must be "constructed" by a ten-day burial ceremony. On each respective day of the ceremony, the soul develops a head, a neck, a heart, a spine, a navel, genitals, thighs, knees, ankles, and feet. This ceremony is believed to be vital to the soul of the dead person; an incomplete or improper ceremony could result in even a virtuous mortal becoming an "evil" or "deformed" wraith. Pious families



will continue to pray for and make offerings to their deceased after the burial ceremony, strengthening their kin in the afterlife.

Just as the body is composed of separate parts, the soul is similarly divided into Gunas, or attributes. There are many Gunas, but they can be broken down into three classes. There is Satva, which relates to refinement. For western wraiths, Satva readily translates to Psyche and Eidolon. Tamas represents coarseness, certainly an aspect of the Shadow and Angst. Finally, Rajas represents the active attributes, corresponding to the Passions and Pathos.

Transmigration of souls is a central concept of Indian cosmology, and it colors an Indian wraith's view of both Oblivion and Transcendence. All souls are bound to a cycle of death and rebirth, even gods and demons. Someone who has led a good life may be incarnated as a deity, and an erring deity as a human or demon. The ultimate goal is to break free from this cycle, and achieve unity with Atman, the unchanging and eternal world. Many Indian wraiths claim that this unity is Transcendence. Others claim that Transcendence is merely the pathway to the next incarnation, one step higher on the spiritual ladder. Similarly, Oblivion is not as feared as it is in Stygia. The soul is immutable. Oblivion is seen as a step back on the celestial ladder, the penalty of a less favorable next incarnation — not the end of the psyche. Eventually, most Indian wraiths believe, a soul who has fallen to Oblivion can live virtuously in its next incarnation, and have another chance to Transcend after death.

All souls must be judged by Yama, the lord of the dead, before they are reassigned. The vast majority are judged immediately, and move on through the cycle of rebirth. Nevertheless, Yama finds that some souls have unresolved issues; these are the wraiths. They are relegated to Bhavar, the *loka* of the dead, to resolve these issues before they can move on, upwards or downwards.

Spiritual Geography

Traditionally, the universe is divided into many levels and worlds, only some of which describe the lands of the dead. Of the seven upper worlds, or *lokas*, the first is Bhur. This is the *loka* of the living, the world that most people perceive to be reality. Immediately above Bhur is Bhavar, the *loka* of ghosts. After death, those souls who have not moved on in the cycle of rebirth find themselves in the Shadowlands, or Bhavar.

Bhavar is practically identical to the Shadowlands; all of the same rules apply. However, the shift on emphasis is important. Bhavar is seen as a temporary stop where one works off the karmic debt accrued in life. Yama is ex-


The Judges

The task of the judges seems very straightforward. Much like the Stygian Reapers, they must greet the dead, strip away their Cauls, and find a place for them in the society of Bhavar. However, every soul, from the lowest animal to the greatest being, is prey to both goodness and coarseness. There are judges who aim to fulfill their task honorably, yet there are also those who use their position for gain. However, even the most callous of judges will at least put on a show of evaluating the wraith in question before assigning her a post or master.

Chains and manacles, so familiar in Stygia and the Shadowlands it controls, are not nearly so ubiquitous in Bhavar. Faith, tradition, and simple ignorance of their new existence prove very persuasive to Enfants, and most accede to the judges' wishes. The judges take wraiths to the nearest Swar enclave, roughly modeled after the realm itself, and put them to work in whatever capacity deemed necessary. Some wraiths are sent immediately to the palaces, ostensibly to their reward. Rumor, however, whispers that they are never seen again, and occasional screams from within the compounds give these rumors credence.

pected to judge every soul; most assume that those who haven't become wraiths have been judged and sent on their way. But those who find themselves in Bhavar must be evaluated by Yama's servitors, the judges.

Those expecting the promised land of Swar are in for a disappointment when they realize Bhavar is their home, at least for a little while. There are no palaces, no gardens, and very little joy. The nucleus of a Citadel could just as easily be an overgrown field as a temple or elegant home. The mark of decay touches everything. The promise of Swar is compelling in this environment, and many wraiths work to break themselves free of Bhur. To move on, they must secure an end to their Fetters, either through resolution or, as in many cases, destruction. The spiritually motivated encourage wraiths to resolve their Fetters, while those driven by greed and power-lust advocate the wholesale refutation and destruction of Fetters, so that Swar can receive these souls on their behalf.



Not all wraiths accept the myth of Swar as it is presented, however. Some wish to partake of the legendary pleasures and treasures, but not on their knees. They want to enjoy all the City of Delights has to offer now, and refuse to suffer a second life of servitude for the promise of reward. Taking the name of Nagas, mythical half-serpent beasts who war on the gods for their wealth, these wraiths attempt to breach the walls of the City by force and guile. The Nagas have tried direct assaults in the past, but all have failed. They are based out of realms named *talas*, after the lower worlds; their default staging area is the realm Patala. Rumors abound of palaces and cities that the Nagas have built from the relics of ruins. There is even talk of small gardens existing in Naga strongholds, though nothing as elaborate or lush as the gardens of the City of Delights. Most recently, the Nagas have turned their attentions to Bhavar, where the rewards are lesser, but so are the risks.

Another group of wraiths opposes the Host of Swar for a different reason. Rumors hint that the abundance of the City of Delights is fed at great price. None know what the price is; but it is said to be everything from the loss of a beneficial incarnation to a tithe of accumulated karma. The Asuras oppose this spiritual extortion from a variety of motives, ranging from piety to a love of honor and justice. Taking their name from a race of beings that traditionally opposed the gods of Swar, they attempt to discover the truth behind the City, and save wraiths from whatever fate awaits them within its walls. Like the Nagas, they have claimed lesser realms for their own. None of these *talas* are equal to Swar, and the Asuras war with the Nagas as often as they ally with them against the City of Delight's armies.

A Stygian visitor might be startled at the lack of "Heretics" in any of the Indian lands. There is no orthodox belief concerning the path a soul takes to rebirth. Even the rulers of Swar are content that those who seek the City of Delights will come of their own accord. It is said that all paths, whether long or short, lead to enlightenment. Here, persecution due to belief is much more uncommon than persecution due to action.

The Pisachas are a greater threat to wraiths of all affiliations. Traditionally, Pisachas were aggressive, deformed ghosts of evil men notorious for foul deeds. These malicious spirits take horrid, fearsome forms and try to actively bring harm to any beings they encounter. They bear more than a passing resemblance to the Shades of Stygian lands, though there is perhaps more uniformity in their hideous appearance. Thanks to the Pisachas, solitary travel is dangerous even in Bhavar, and unheard of through the Sea of Shiva, assumed to be their home. Pisachas fight without mercy or prejudice. Their assaults on Citadels are perhaps

the only time many wraiths see Asuras, Nagas, and the Host of Swar battling a common enemy.

Perhaps even more dangerous than the Pisachas are the Bhuta. Generally indistinguishable from other wraiths, the Bhuta are nonetheless completely malicious. According to tradition, a Bhuta is a wraith who suffered a violent death and received no funeral rites; its malevolence is due to circumstance rather than an inherently evil nature. The actual origins of Bhuta are unknown. Some believe the traditional explanation; others claim they represent another class of evil beings. No matter their origin, Bhuta are crafty, subtle, and dangerous. Disdaining the mindless violence of the Pisachas, Bhuta utilize a cunning and evil intelligence. They carefully blend in with wraith society, causing as much suffering as possible. Bhuta are also convenient scapegoats for whatever might go wrong, and many an ambitious wraith has accused a rival of being a Bhuta. The fate of such an accused wraith is seldom pleasant; even if she escapes death at the hands of the judges, the process of interrogation is arduous. But if evidence of false accusation surfaces, the judges prove even less compassionate with the accuser than they were with the accused.

Surrounding Bhavar on all sides, and separating it from the other *lokas* is a roiling, malevolent blackness inhabited by the worst monsters of legend. This is the Sea of Shiva, familiar to any wraith who has experienced the Tempest. Pisachas and Bhuta are numerous here, and careful travellers never stop to aid or converse with any other wraiths, no matter what their appearance. Bhuta have a long tradition of using the Thuggee trick, attaching themselves to a group of wraiths in the darkness and leading them to ambush. As in Stygia, wraiths use Argos to navigate the Sea. However, Indian wraiths view the Arcanos less as a skill than as the result of purification. Traditionally, it was the makeup of the Sukshma Sarira that either enabled or prevented a being from traveling between the *lokas*. The more refined the Sarira, the more easily one traveled the Sea.

Swar is the *loka* of heaven, where wraiths who have led good lives are to be rewarded before they are reborn. Unfortunately, this is not the true Swar, though those who rule it maintain otherwise. According to tradition, Swar is ruled by the god Indra, and contains palaces and gardens filled with every delight imaginable. The reality of the realm of Swar is very different.

The promised palaces and gardens of delight exist, but they are not open to everyone. They form a walled city, the City of Delights, and are reserved for those who have "proved" themselves to the Heavenly Regent, He Who Serves Indra. The Regent, his entourage, and his servants dwell behind the walls, as do those who have done him great service. Everyone else lives in the vast sprawl sur-

rounding the City. The terrain mimics that of India, with rolling plains, hills and faraway mountains. The River of Heaven runs through the Sea of Shiva, providing safe passage to those who know the way.

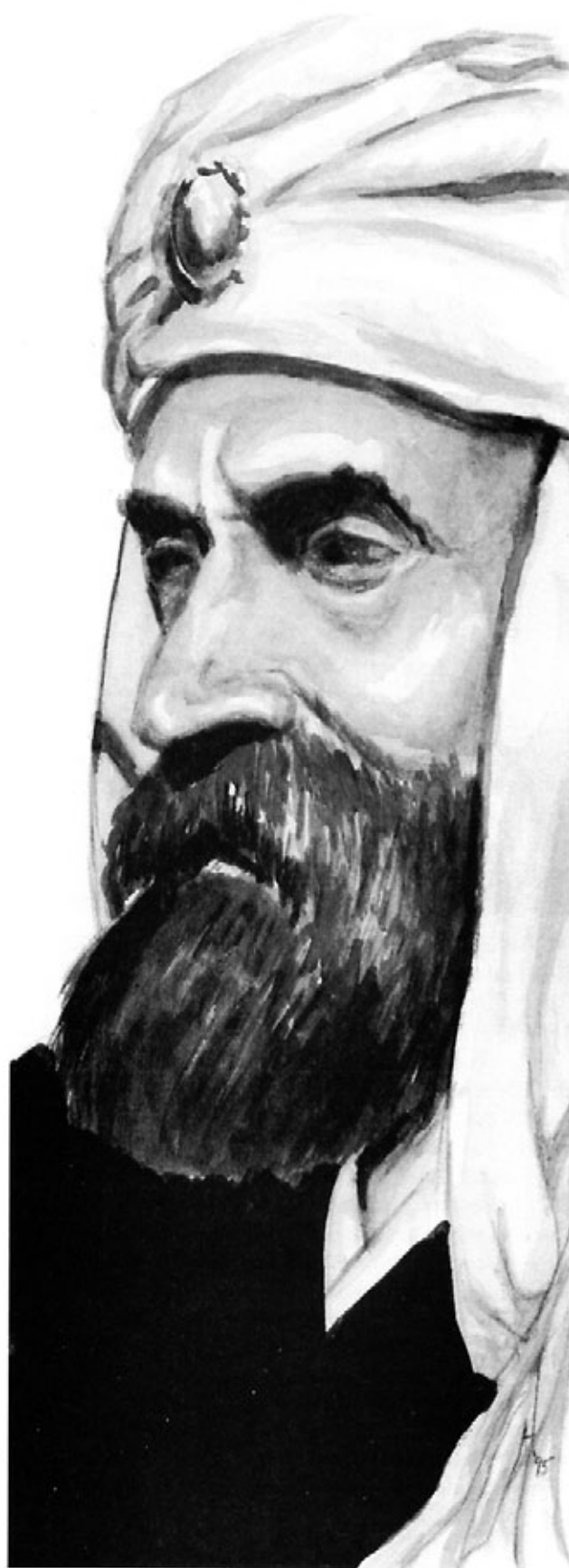
The City of Delights


Within its walls, the City of Delights truly lives up to its name. Wide avenues lead to myriad palaces and temples, and gardens abound. Music permeates the air. Beautiful dancers called Apsaras fill many courtyards, accompanied by Gandharvas, the most talented singers. Obviously, Keening and Phantasm are highly valued art forms within the city walls. All who dwell within are Moliated into forms of great beauty and awe; Apsaras and Gandharvas are the most beautiful men and women imaginable. He Who Serves Indra takes the form of an attractive, well-muscled man with a full beard and sensuous lips; he is the very image of Indra. The wraiths of his throng are beautiful, and often take on aspects of form that suggest divinity and grace: blue skin, a third eye, and assorted marks and sigils on their bodies.

The true treasures of the City of Delights are the gardens. Trees and flowering plants appear to grow and prosper. The water of the streams is clear and cool: the fruit of the trees, edible and delicious. *Soma*, an intoxicating beverage, is readily available at the numerous pavilions. Except for those permitted to dwell within the walls, food and drink remain a memory from Bhur. A singular fruit is seen as a great reward, and highly coveted. Music and singing echo everywhere within the walls, and courtiers are forever making pleasing conversation. A wraith can indulge all the pleasures of all the senses, and the citizens do just that. In a realm forever tainted by death and decay, the gardens stand out as a beacon of life and comfort, and serve to validate the Holy Regent and the society of Swar.

Outside the City Walls

Life outside the walls is difficult. Newcomers are taken to the house of Judgment, where they are again examined with Fatalism and are asked to recite the litany of their lives. Then, the house decides how they can best serve the Heavenly Regent, and thus gain entrance to the City of Delights. The bureaucracy is huge and Byzantine; recognition of merit and appeals for justice are exceedingly slow. Still, the promise of the City, ever-present before their eyes, is a very potent incentive for wraiths to follow the rules. The dwellers outside the walls have occasionally attempted to take by force what they were reluctant to earn. To date, the Host of Swar has crushed all attempts, and the rebels are always taken away, never to be seen again.





The Secret of Swar

Despite the assertions to the contrary, Swar is a realm of the dead. True life and growth are impossible here. The plants, streams, food and drink of Swar are real, but not as they seem. The only things that truly exist are wraiths, Artifacts and relics. While the sacrifice of food and drink is not uncommon to certain rituals, these food relics appear and are usually consumed in Bhuvar. But sacrifice alone cannot account for the bounty that is available in the City.

The raw materials of the City of Delights are souls. Swar has developed an entire artisan class that specializes in dissolving souls and creating from what is left. These artisans, who call themselves Tvashtriyas after the god of artisans, craft the plants from the souls of the unfortunate, and nourish them with the same. The water and soma are specially condensed souls, empowered for different effects. The ritual of dissolution and reformation of souls requires no little skill, and the Arcanos of Inhabit, Moliare, and Usury are involved. Tvashtriyas are highly prized within the City, for without them the structure of Swar would

crumble. An unfortunate side effect of this soulshaping is a slight moaning and keening that emanates from the finished products. Such sorrowful wailing is anathema to the illusion of peace and abundance. However, this sound is handily countered by the everpresent song and conversation; Gandharvas and courtiers are instrumental in maintaining the illusion of utopia.

The creation and maintenance of this paradise requires a great many souls. Some of them come from those judged unworthy, but the Holy Regent wisely tries to limit this practice as much as possible. It is much more effective to control the populace with the promise of unimaginable reward than with fear. The majority of the raw souls come from the ranks of the Nagas, Asuras, and Pisachas. Obviously, the needs of Swar influence the tactics of the Host. Souls are far too valuable to be merely destroyed; generals emphasize capture over annihilation. Many an overzealous soldier has served as an example to his companions by disappearing within the walls of the City to take the place of the soul he "wasted." Out of necessity, the Host of Swar mounts many campaigns against the Nagas and Asuras.


When tensions outside the City are high, the Holy Regent will mount a campaign against the Nagas or Asuras, compelling military service from the citizens, most notably the troublemakers. At times, a search for Bhuta has been an equally effective distraction. With careful work, the citizens become too busy examining one another for signs of evil — and questioning the divine order of Swar is always a good indication of a Bhuta. Enemies, whether from within or without, serve as a convenient method to contain dissent. The reward of entry into the City and the threat of punishment at the hands of the Host are the Holy Regent's twin tools of rulership. To date, they have been very effective.

The Lower Worlds

Below the seven upper worlds, of which only three are accessible to wraiths (Bhur, Bhuvar, and Swar), there exist seven lower worlds, or *talas*. By name, they are Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatala, Talatala, Mahatala, and Patala. According to tradition, they are arranged hierarchically,

from top to bottom. These *talas* are actually realms of the dead named after the lower worlds, all equidistant through the Sea of Shiva from any other point.

As mentioned previously, Patala is the stronghold of the Nagas. The geography of Patala consists mostly of hot, flat plains and rocky outcroppings. Powerful Nagas have built palaces from the relics of ruins, and both person and place are often adorned with signs of wealth. The largest of all Naga strongholds is Bhogavati, and to anyone who has not visited Swar, it is truly impressive. Wealth and opulence are visible everywhere, and the central courtyard of the palace even has a miniature garden. The garden is the work of a renegade Tvashtriya, whose defection to the Nagas is a widely suppressed rumor in Swar. The rulers of Bhogavati (Shesha, Vasuki, and Takshaka; traditional titles, named after the three main chieftains of the Nagas in legend) mount many campaigns against Swar to maintain the garden. On occasion, they have turned against the Asuras when the Host of Swar proved too difficult. The Nagas employ their own judges as well, which are much closer to the Reapers of Stygia than anything else.



Of the remaining realms, Mahatala and Talatala are also under the sway of the Nagas. Lesser groups war on one another as often as on Swar, and the feuds of yesterday are easily put aside for a massed campaign that promises mutual gain for all. Minor palaces and manors are rare in these realms, and none are as grand as those in Patala.

The Asuras lay claim to Satala and Rasatala. Their conclaves are not as grand as those of either the Nagas or Swar, but are rather more functional. This is not to say that the Asuras are all ascetics, though some certainly are. For various reasons, the Asuras have chosen not to participate in the underworldly scheme as envisioned by Swar. Some choose to await their next incarnation apart, some feel Swar is merely a mirror of the world they left behind, and many believe that Swar exists at the expense of those who live outside the walls of the City of Delights. Rumors supporting the latter view are common, though few rebel wraiths, if any, know the truth.

Though the motivations of the Asuras are varied, most believe them to be opposed to Swar. This is because the Asuras are the most vocal and active faction, and most easily recognized. While many would like to mount a campaign against the Host of Swar directly, most realize such an act would be inherently futile. Instead, they waylay caravans and assault lesser Citadels in Bhuvor. The general intent of such actions is to cripple lines of transport and disrupt things as much as possible; only those who directly oppose the Asuras are fought.

The remaining of the lower realms, Atala and Vitala, are small and treacherous. Neither the Nagas nor the Asuras lay claim to them, though both may use them as needed. The few inhabitants of these regions are those wraiths who, for various reasons, choose to remain apart from others.

Interaction with the Mortal World

The dead are an accepted part of everyday life in India. Sorcery, the invocation of spirits of the dead, is common. Both the Brahmin caste of priests and the village sorcerers have systems of dealing with ghosts. These individuals often diagnose possession as the cause for many maladies, from a simple change in habits to real physical illness.

Exorcism is one of the primary duties of India's hedge magic practitioners. The systems for expelling a controlling ghost vary: most include coercion, invocation of higher powers, knowledge of a true name, and bribery. Ultimately, however, the act of exorcism itself is one of faith. Exorcising a wraith using Puppetry or Inhabit (in the case of ob-

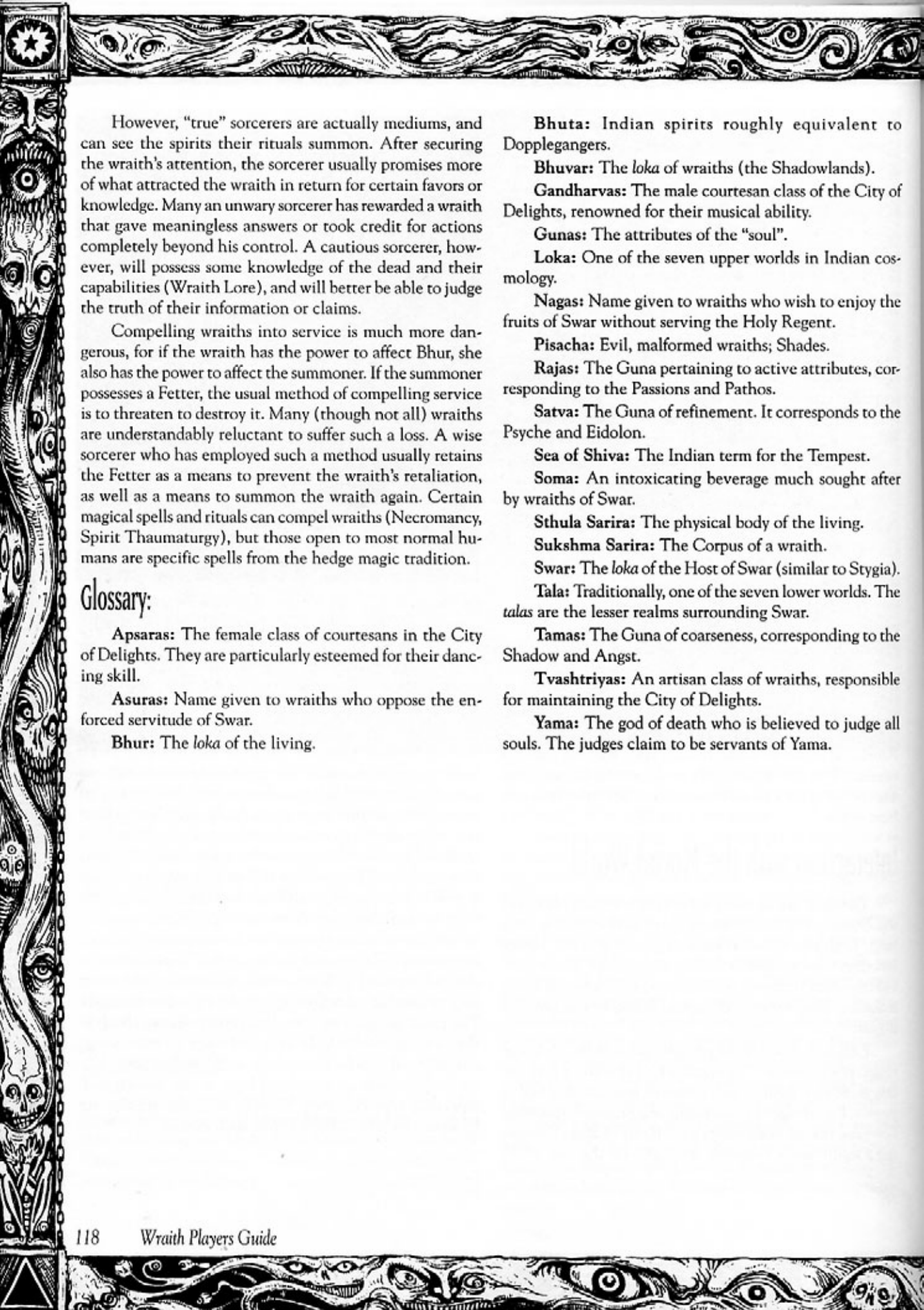
The Hells

According to far-traveling wraiths, at least 21 hells exist deep within the Sea of Shiva. Each hell punishes a specific sin, and the incarcerated sinners seek to relieve the evils of their previous lives by suffering at the hands of its denizens. They hope that this penance will insure a better incarnation than they would have otherwise earned. Opinions on the hells vary. Some seek them out, hoping to atone for sins, real or imagined, that they committed in life. Others think they are an elaborate hoax by the Bhuta, who gleefully welcome penitents to a life of meaningless suffering. Still others refuse to believe the hells exist at all, and maintain that the hells are merely rumors spread by travellers seeking fame.

jects) requires a resisted roll between the True Faith of the exorcist and the Willpower of the wraith. If the wraith botches, he must leave that body or object, never to possess it again. Should the exorcist botch, she may never again attempt to force the wraith to leave that particular form.

According to tradition, wraiths may only possess persons with similar Gunas to theirs. In fact, it is easier for a wraith to possess someone whose current emotion matches one of her Passions. Conversely, it is more difficult to possess someone feeling an emotion drastically different from any of the wraith's Passions. In either case, the difficulty is modified by one, though extreme emotional states may raise it higher. The modifier applies to resisting exorcism as well — it is much more difficult to expel a violent wraith from an angry host than from a loving person.

Elaborate rituals also exist for summoning wraiths and compelling or bribing them into service. Possession of an object associated with the wraith (a Fetter) is the surest way to gain its attention, but there are other methods. The ritual destruction of food and other offerings leads to the creation of relics in Bhuvor, and many a wraith hovers around ritual sites for just such an occasion. Similarly, rituals usually cause an emotional high in the participants, especially true believers. Wraiths with the appropriate Passions can restore Pathos from such events.



However, "true" sorcerers are actually mediums, and can see the spirits their rituals summon. After securing the wraith's attention, the sorcerer usually promises more of what attracted the wraith in return for certain favors or knowledge. Many an unwary sorcerer has rewarded a wraith that gave meaningless answers or took credit for actions completely beyond his control. A cautious sorcerer, however, will possess some knowledge of the dead and their capabilities (Wraith Lore), and will better be able to judge the truth of their information or claims.

Compelling wraiths into service is much more dangerous, for if the wraith has the power to affect Bhur, she also has the power to affect the summoner. If the summoner possesses a Fetter, the usual method of compelling service is to threaten to destroy it. Many (though not all) wraiths are understandably reluctant to suffer such a loss. A wise sorcerer who has employed such a method usually retains the Fetter as a means to prevent the wraith's retaliation, as well as a means to summon the wraith again. Certain magical spells and rituals can compel wraiths (Necromancy, Spirit Thaumaturgy), but those open to most normal humans are specific spells from the hedge magic tradition.

Glossary:

Apsaras: The female class of courtesans in the City of Delights. They are particularly esteemed for their dancing skill.

Asuras: Name given to wraiths who oppose the enforced servitude of Swar.

Bhur: The *loka* of the living.

Bhuta: Indian spirits roughly equivalent to Doppelgangers.

Bhuvor: The *loka* of wraiths (the Shadowlands).

Gandharvas: The male courtesan class of the City of Delights, renowned for their musical ability.

Gunat: The attributes of the "soul".

Loka: One of the seven upper worlds in Indian cosmology.

Nagas: Name given to wraiths who wish to enjoy the fruits of Swar without serving the Holy Regent.

Pisacha: Evil, malformed wraiths; Shades.

Rajas: The Guna pertaining to active attributes, corresponding to the Passions and Pathos.

Satva: The Guna of refinement. It corresponds to the Psyche and Eidolon.

Sea of Shiva: The Indian term for the Tempest.

Soma: An intoxicating beverage much sought after by wraiths of Swar.

Sthula Sarira: The physical body of the living.

Sukshma Sarira: The Corpus of a wraith.

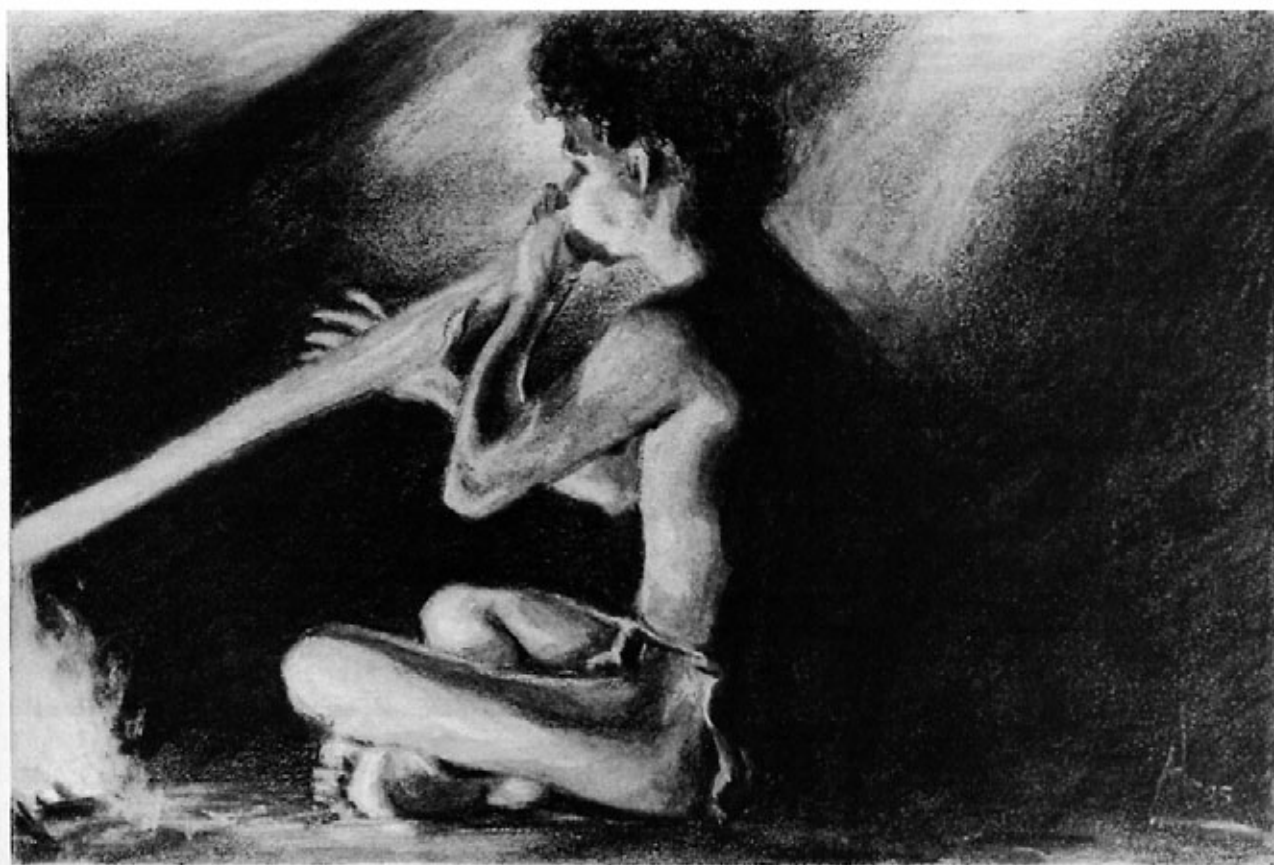
Swar: The *loka* of the Host of Swar (similar to Stygia).

Tala: Traditionally, one of the seven lower worlds. The *talas* are the lesser realms surrounding Swar.

Tamas: The Guna of coarseness, corresponding to the Shadow and Angst.

Tvashtriyas: An artisan class of wraiths, responsible for maintaining the City of Delights.

Yama: The god of death who is believed to judge all souls. The judges claim to be servants of Yama.



Karta: The Kingdom of Clay

By Richard Watts



Looking out the window
I see the red dust clear
High up on the red rock
Stands the shadow with the spear.

— Peter Gabriel, "The Rhythm of the Heat"

The wraiths of Stygia know little of the Kingdom of Clay. Some may have heard of Australia's Shadowlands, and of the wraiths who inhabit it, desperately clinging to the lost days of British colonialism. Almost none know of the Kingdom of Clay lying adjacent in the Tempest, a wraith kingdom without a king, free of the spiritual tyranny typical of the Hierarchs of Stygia.

Unlike the Dark Kingdoms of Jade, Ivory and the supposedly-vanquished Kingdom of Obsidian, the Kingdom of Clay is named not for a substance valued for its rarity,

but for the earth of which it is a shadow. The name of the Kingdom of Clay reminds the aboriginal wraiths who inhabit it of their peoples' intimate physical and spiritual links with the land, a connection so intimate that even death cannot sever it.

The Tempest divides Australia's Shadowlands and the Kingdom of Clay from Stygia and the other Dark Kingdoms. Few byways lead to the Kingdom of Clay, and those that do are treacherous and unstable. The Kingdom of Clay (or Karta, as it is called by its wraith inhabitants) is thus isolated from its better-known counterparts, forming a unique domain quite unlike the more populous regions of the Underworld. Even the Australian Shadowlands differ from the Shadowlands of Europe and the U.S.

Karta's Restless Dead seek to pass on to a realm they call the Dreamtime, which is to them both a place (a realm similar to the Far Shores) and a state of mind (Transcendence). The Dreamtime is the spiritual home of the aboriginal people: their past, their present, and the world around them. Oblivion itself is less terrible than being denied the Dreamtime, by nature of their existence as wraiths, as far as the Restless of Karta are concerned.

History

*Cool river bed it masks the bones
Of those who died before our time
— Not Drowning, Waving, "Terra Nullius"*

Karta may well be the oldest Dark Kingdom of all. At the time of the Sundering, when life and death became separated, Karta came into existence. The first inhabitants of Karta were two brothers, Kungaru and Kurulba. The oral history of Karta's wraiths claims that this pair made Karta their home more than 50,000 years ago, many centuries before Charon founded Stygia on the shore of the Sea of Souls. The brothers were clever ones, with an insatiable curiosity. By the time they were men, the two had learned everything there was to know about life. It was then that Kungaru vowed to learn the secrets of death, having many times observed Meeka the Moon die, only to be reborn in the skies the next month. Their father scolded them, saying that men should not know death until it was time for them to die; this was the law. The brothers spurned their father's advice, and left the Dreamtime in search of death's secrets. At the end of their journey they discovered Karta, the Kingdom of Clay. Meeka refused to tell them how to be reborn, nor could he be tricked into revealing the secret. Kungaru and Kurulba were trapped in Karta.

Kungaru was the wiser of the two brothers. Rather than despair or become angry, he set about to learn everything he could about Karta. He welcomed the wraiths who came after him in time, explaining to them the ways and laws of the Underworld, sharing the wisdom he had gleaned over the passing years. Kurulba, the younger brother, was cruel and malicious, and worse, a cannibal. He delighted in imprisoning the spirits of the dead, sometimes devouring them, and sometimes making them into slaves. Worse, he would sometimes dissolve them into plasm, of which he fashioned weapons to fight his brother. Kungaru's way was one of peace; in this manner he came to embrace death and understand it. Kurulba was first and foremost a warrior, and tried to conquer death. He could not. Nor was he victorious when he tried to enslave his brother, despite his weapons.

It is Kungaru's beneficial influence that has guided Karta's wraiths. Kungaru's primary teaching was that wraiths must shun the living; he knew that they must forget the pleasures and sorrows of the Skinlands if they were to Transcend to the Dreamtime. Proof of Kungaru's wisdom came when he reached the Dreamtime. Succeeding generations of wraiths taught Kungaru's law to their successors.

Aboriginal society recognizes no supreme leader, but consists of tribes guided by the collective wisdom of the old or wise. Such leaders come and go, able participants transferring leadership from one to another without rancor, reflecting the cyclic nature of aboriginal beliefs. For

this reason, the wraiths of Karta elected no king in the wake of Kungaru's Transcendence, but instead continued to follow the laws they had broken or ignored in life. Breaking such laws, they believed, was what had caused them to become wraiths in the first place, instead of returning to the Dreamtime after death, there to be reborn.

Although Kurulba sought to wrest control of Karta following his brother's departure, he succeeded only in attracting a handful of wraiths to his selfish cause. These renegades still exist today. They still believe that having already broken the tribal laws governing such things as marriage, customs and etiquette, they have nothing to lose by continuing to break them. Indeed, they face considerable personal gain by exploiting and enslaving their fellow Restless. These renegades, the Children of Kurulba, seek to elect a king to rule over all of Karta, naturally chosen from among their own number. Kurulba himself has long since succumbed to his Shadow. The constant bickering and factional fighting among Karta's renegades prevents them from achieving any real power, although in recent years individuals have suggested an alliance with Stygia to help them achieve their goal.


For many thousands of years Karta's wraiths continued their existence, largely undisturbed. All this changed a little over 200 years ago. In 1788, Australia was invaded by English settlers intent on establishing a penal colony. In the years following the settlement at Sydney Cove, European settlers moved out across the country, subjugating the land to their will. Aborigines were murdered by the newcomers on a massive scale; tribe members were shot and poisoned, while diseases, sometimes deliberately introduced, decimated the tribes.

The aboriginal wraiths were unwilling to remain in the Shadowlands, where they could still witness the depredations of the Europeans, and worse, might be tempted to assist their still-living kin. Karta's wraith population exploded. Today the Shadowlands are abandoned to the wraiths of Europeans and other races who have died in Australia since 1788. Karta is the sole domain of aboriginal wraiths, and they guard it fiercely. Having already lost the Skinlands to the Europeans, they will not surrender their home a second time.

The Australian Shadowlands

*This is the dead land
This is cactus land
Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star."
— T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men"*

Although European settlement has been evident on the Australian continent for more than two centuries, their civilization has made little impression upon the



Shadowlands. In Australia, the Shadowlands cling to the past. Much of the Shadowlands are a rural nightmare of drab and drear wilderness. Barren desert, cracked salt pans, great fields of sun-bleached bones, and forests of dead and drooping trees make up the majority of the terrain. Maelstroms in Australia's Shadowlands are less swirling, shrieking storms of black fog, and more clouds of red, windblown dust, the choking smoke of bushfires, and plague-proportion swarms of buzzing flies. As elsewhere, their rare appearances are viewed with dread. Despite the cosmetic differences, Maelstroms in Australia are as dangerous as those which threaten the Shadowlands everywhere.

Settlements more than 150 years old exist in the Shadowlands; younger towns and suburbs do not. Those cities which do stand in the Shadowlands look as they did a century ago. Ghost towns from the Gold Rush still stand where in the Skinlands they have been forgotten. Buildings that were torn down in the 1950's can still be seen, while the Skinland skyscrapers that now occupy their sites are but flickering and insubstantial shadows.

These ghostly cities are avoided by the aboriginal wraiths of the Kingdom of Clay. Instead, they are home to the wraiths of European Australians, and the others who have followed in the years since England's invasion. Like the cities they inhabit, the Restless cling to the past. Australia's Shadowland cities are the last outposts of Britain's Empire, their wraith elders affecting the style of the Regency and Victorian periods.

Most wraiths, certainly the older and more powerful among them, cling to the days of English imperialism. Wraiths of other nationalities have found themselves in Australia's Shadowlands in numbers only since the 1950's, when immigration to Australia expanded to include non-whites. Tension between circles of archaic English wraiths, and circles whose membership reflects modern Australia's varied ethnicity, is not uncommon. Many conservative elements among Lemures affect their elders' fashions, but not all. It is not unusual to see a Restless punkette in tattered leathers alongside an establishment gentleman in white wig and frock coat, side by side in the streets of Australia's Shadowlands.

Despite the distances separating Australia's Shadowlands from Stygia, the advance forces of the Hierarchy have managed to establish a toehold here, followed by their enemies, the Renegades and Heretics. The Hierarchy's power is still weak, and extends no further than the ghost cities. Karta, separated from Australia's Shadowlands by the Tempest, remains free of the Hierarchy's influence. As previously noted, some aboriginal wraiths, the Children of Kurulba, are considering an alliance with the Hierarchy in order to gain control of Karta. Any such alliance would soon see the Hierarchy destroy their aboriginal allies once they were no longer useful.

Karta: Island of the Dead

*When the snake bites the sun,
The clan, the man, the sun,
Must sink cooling to its inevitable settings,
Yet, it is said, the sun will rise again.*

— Albert Barunga

Karta is a desert island isolated in the immensity of the Tempest. Its shores are cruel cliffs of scoria, and its cracked plains of red earth and rock are parched by unrelenting heat and littered with bones of the forgotten dead. No other creatures exist in Karta's lonely immensity save the aboriginal wraiths who guard their last outpost from the wraiths of Europe and Stygia. Here they follow the teachings of Kungaru, in order that they may pass on to the Dreamtime.

Aborigines believe that death is only natural amongst the very old and the very young. For millennia the only wraiths in Karta were those of infants and elders. Since the Europeans came, unsettling the aborigines' way of life and creating unnatural deaths, wraiths of all ages have found themselves in Karta when they die, instead of in the Dreamtime. Aborigines conceive of death as an inevitable part in the cycle of life. This cycle has been broken, wraiths believe, by their deeds while alive, and thus they are trapped in Karta.

Foremost among the beliefs of Karta's wraiths is the desire to return themselves to life's cycle, and be reborn. To achieve this, they must escape Karta to the Dreamtime. Kungaru taught his people that they could only achieve this journey when they completely abandoned the ties binding them to the Skinlands. Aboriginal wraiths have therefore long abandoned the Shadowlands in favor of remote Karta, lest they be distracted by the world they have left behind. Kungaru knew well that the Fetters that bind wraiths to the Skinlands and the living prevent them from passing on to the Dreamtime. It has long been a taboo among aboriginal tribes that the name of the recently dead must not be spoken aloud, lest the spirit be distracted from its journey to the Dreamtime. This custom may have its origins in Kungaru's teachings, perhaps learned by Dreamspeaker projectors among the Quick aboriginal tribes.

When Karta's wraiths believe that the time for them has come to journey to the Dreamtime, it is their habit to travel to one of several caves which scatter the island's surface. These steep-sided crevices are believed to bypass the Tempest and lead directly to the Dreamtime. They are taboo to those wraiths who have not yet separated themselves from their earthly existence.

The Children of Kurulba mock the claim that the caves lead to the Dreamtime, claiming instead that the caverns are nothing but Nihilis. Any wraith foolish enough to explore them will find themselves in the Tempest, battling



their Shadow, or so the rogue wraiths of Karta believe. It was from one such Harrowing, his Children maintain, that Kurulba himself returned with the knowledge to bind wraiths into plasm. Another cave marks the grave of Kungaru, the Children of Kurulba say, and at its mouth they hold wild revels mocking the memory of Karta's founder.

The Fetters which bind the aboriginal Restless to Karta include the sites of their deaths, such as the shady banks of billabongs, or desert springs baking in the heat; grave posts hewn from ironbark, carefully carved and charred and painted with ochre and clay; sacred sites such as caves or rock carvings the wraith guarded in life; or even their own bodies, not buried in the traditional manner, perhaps interred instead of wrapped in bark sheeting and placed upon a platform amidst the trees.

Aboriginal wraiths may be unable to Transcend to the Dreamtime until they have passed on tribal wisdom to the relatives they left behind. Perhaps they wish to see their widow happy again, or would avenge the massacre of themselves and their people. Despite being forbidden to interfere with the Quick, many aboriginal wraiths do just that. They surreptitiously depart Karta for the dusty Shadowland outback, risking the retribution of their elders, and the unwelcome attentions of the demon-spirit Wulgaru.

Relationships and Alliances

Although Stygia has reared Necropoli in Australia's oldest Shadowland cities, its control is still weak. One council of Anacreons representing each of the Stygian legions controls Australia's wraiths, although indirectly, and Stygia's rule is contested. The challenge comes not only from the uneasy allies of English blood who rule in the Hierarch's name, but by the Renegades and Heretics who have followed the Hierarchs to Australia. These dissidents seek to destroy or subvert the Stygian rule here, where it is weakest. The younger Australian wraiths are eagerly swelling the ranks of the Renegades, hoping to establish their own rule rather than obey the edicts of a foreign power.

The aboriginal Children of Kurulba have not yet tried for an alliance with Stygia, but even now their emissaries flit through the streets of the Shadowlands of Sydney and Melbourne, gathering information in preparation for their upcoming decision. An alliance between Stygia and the Children of Kurulba would surely mean the end of Karta's independence. Karta has resisted all infiltration by European Restless thus far. But now that Stygia has learned of its existence, gleaning the knowledge from aboriginal wraiths found wandering the Shadowlands outback, it cannot be long before the Kingdom of Clay is invaded by Stygia.

Antagonists

Although many spirits are known to the aborigines, most dwell in the Dreamtime and the Tempest. Only one spirit-creature, unique among all the Dark Kingdoms, is known to dwell exclusively in the Shadowlands, and it is most terrible.

Wulgaru

The evil spirit known as Wulgaru is no true wraith, nor even a Spectre. It is the creation of a mortal man, a sorcerer called Djarapa, who was arrogant enough as to wish to create life by himself, rather than through the intervention of his spirit-ancestors. Having learned certain spells from a powerful medicine man, Djarapa sang his magic over a mask and limbs carved of wood, jointed with river stones stuck together with red-ochred wax. Although his magic was not strong enough to give his creation life, it was powerful enough to give it death. With red-glowing eyes and creaking, rattling limbs, Wulgaru now haunts the rural wilds of Australia's Shadowlands. It preys upon the Restless, for Wulgaru has appointed itself judge of the dead, slaying those wraiths it believes to have broken the law, perhaps by having dealings with the Quick. A contrary creature, its decisions are usually impartial, not to mention hasty and ill-considered. Finding a wraith it considers unworthy, Wulgaru attempts to devour it, adding the victim's Pathos to its own.

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 5, Awareness 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Intimidation 5

Powers: Hound the Harrowed, Numbing the Heart, Pathos Drain

Willpower: 10

Angst: 9

Aboriginal Artifacts

Pointing Bone (Level 3)

Similar to those bones used by living sorcerers, a pointing bone, in the hand of a wraith, is used to weaken and sicken one of the Quick. When pointed at a desired victim, and with the appropriate rite sung, it drains one die of Health Levels from the victim. The wraith wielding the bone absorbs half these levels as Corpus Levels. If the victim dies, the wraith's Shadow gains a point of Angst.





The Sea Which Knows No Sun: Wraiths of Polynesia

By Richard Dansky



From the log of the barque *Napthali*, sailing from the Hierarchy port of Newport

...when we emerged from the Tempest, we found ourselves on a sea so flat and black it could have been a mirror of old Ambrose's heart.


The sky and sea were perfectly matched; in sooth I could not tell where one ended and the other began. One of the sailors, Durrell, started blubbering about sailing into Oblivion, so I had Mate Huang flog him. That quieted him some.

Three days we sailed on that black sea, and not a thing, not an island, not a fish did we see. We ran as if before a breeze, but there was no wind, only this damned insistent drumming that never, ever stopped. Charon's bells, I was getting near to thinking Durrell could be right. Then came the damndest thing I ever did see.

There were a hundred of them, one after the other in a line so straight you'd think they'd drawn it with a sextant. Canoes. Outriggers, with nine natives in each one rowing like machines. Each stroke was in time with that blasted drum, and they came cutting across that black water like razors. Shot right past us, they did, without so much as a by-your-leave. One after another after another, skimming past us faster than you'd think a canoe could. Hours, it lasted.

Last man in the last canoe, old one with a beard like a bush, he actually looked up at us as he passed. Said something I didn't right hear, sounded like "Maku." Then he bent himself to his oar again, and within minutes they were all gone again, out of sight over the horizon. Nothing but black water, black sky, and the drum.

Not too long after that, the sharks came. Biggest of them, the leader, well he damn near hauled himself out of the water onto the deck. When he didn't make it, he looked up at me, grinning with all those shark teeth...



Polynesia, meaning "many islands," is a blanket name for the islands scattered within a rough triangle stretching from New Zealand to Hawaii to Easter Island. As one might expect from the inhabitants of a region so geographically diverse, the realm beyond the Shroud occupied by those of Polynesian birth is hardly a unified monolithic structure along the lines of Stygia. Instead, these wraiths dwell under chiefs and priests, each claiming authority for one atoll out of an endless string of islands stretching into the eternal night. Over all of the chiefs and subchiefs is the being known only as Whiro. A child of Atea (Sky) and Papa (Earth), Whiro prefers his solitude, and does not often meddle in the affairs of those who have invaded his darkness.

The coining of the newly dead is unheard of here, as is the ritualized thralldom of the Hierarchy. Until relatively recently the Polynesian islands were not a metal-based culture, and this tradition has carried over into the afterlife. Here, those who remember the days before guns and aircraft carriers are powerful indeed. With no metal, there is no art of forging, and those whom the West would call Artificers are completely absent here. The equivalent of soulfire may spew from the volcanoes that center so many of the islands in the unearthly archipelago, but it is not used to melt spirits down into coin. Indeed, this awesome display has yet to be harnessed, though its effects are well understood.

Without soul forges to shape them, the weak or resolved souls of this region of the world instead permeate the world of the afterlife. They are in the stone itself, and in the soul-fish which fishermen take in their outriggers. They are in the trees, called Children of Tane, and the shells that wash up on nighted shores. This is intrinsically understood by the Polynesian wraiths, who use soul-stuff only to shape other soul-stuff, not to refine it to its core essence and cast it into something else.

Origins and Myth

The Beginning of the World, as Told By the Eldest Dead

Once, Papa and Atea clasped each other closely, and in time Papa brought forth gods; Tane, Ru, Rongo, Tangaroa, Whiro, and many others. However, Atea held Papa too closely, and there was no room between the two of them for the young gods. Some, such as Whiro, did not mind this, but Ru, Tane, and many others did, and plotted to separate their parents. It was Tane who finally did so. First, he pushed at his father with all of his might, but he failed to budge Atea so much as an inch. He decided, therefore, to push at Atea with his legs, which were stronger

than his arms. Tane placed his head against the ground and pushed against his father with his feet, and this was sufficient to create a space between Earth and Sky wherein the gods (and later man) might dwell. Many of the gods rejoiced at this, but not Whiro. Whiro had preferred the darkness between his mother and father, and when the unnatural space between was created, he left his brothers and sisters to find eternal darkness in which to dwell. He found it on the other side of the Shroud.

Even as Whiro was resting in peaceful nothingness, his brother Ru was drumming up islands out of the ocean, so that the descendants of Tiki (the first man) and Hina-ahu-one (Earth Maid) might have a place to dwell. Eventually, though, Hina-ahu-one and Tiki grew old and died, and came to the place of silence and waters where Whiro dwelt. There was no place for them there, and they called out to the other gods. Ru heard them, and crossed over into Whiro's realm to drum islands up out of the Sea Which Knows No Sun for them. As Ru was a wise god, though, he knew that others would follow Hina-ahu-one and Tiki to this place, and so he left his drum, forever beating, on that first island so that there would always be more dwelling-places created for the descendants of the first man and woman.

Sure enough, more men and women were born, lived, and died. Dying, some came to the island which Ru had drummed up out of the eternally dark waters and upon which he had set his drum. They filled that first island, which they named Atea after the Earth-Mother of their living days, and then from the dark trees that had sprouted from this unearthly soil, they hewed out the first ghostly outriggers. These were set upon the black waters, and fishermen set out to an unknown sea. They caught the ghosts of fish and made offerings of them to Rua'atu and Rua-tama'ine, the gods of fishermen when they returned, and so the Ariki-pa-uta and the Ariki-pa-tai, the Shore High Priest and the Inland High Priest, deemed it well.

Women and men kept on dying, however, in the sunlit lands, and there came a day when there were too many of Hina-ahu-one's descendants for the island Atea to hold. The Ariki-pa-uta and the Ariki-pa-tai, and a third priest, the Ariki-i-te-ua-i-te-tapora-kai (The High Chief who stood at the head of the food platter) conferred and agreed that Atea was for the oldest dead, and that those younger must leave. This was well with the elders of the island, but the younger ghosts, those who were to leave, despaired, for the next island that Ru had drummed up from the waves lay beyond the dark horizon. In truth, they did not know that this second island existed, nor did they suspect the true power of the drum which beat always at the heart of Atea. The long canoes were prepared sadly, and the youngest ghosts rowed them with swift, sure strokes to the beat of the eternal drum they were leaving behind them.

Whiro took pity on them, though, and guided those first canoes across the black waves to that second island. When the refugees landed on the dark shores, they noticed, lying on the sand, a coconut that one man had cast into the waves months earlier. The man, a priest, had been a priest of Tane in life, and had resolved that the troubles in the afterlife were beyond Tane's capabilities to deal with. Thus, he had cast Tane out from his spirit, taking the god's symbol, a frog, and sealing it in a coconut which he cast upon the waves. Seeing the offering he had once made, he picked it up from the surf, removed the stopper which sealed the frog in, and heard the creature's chirp of *kio*. At this, the priest declared the god's power restored, and renamed the deity Tane-kio, Tane the Chirper. At this auspicious sign, many of these newly dead decided to make their homes here. A few, however, led by a man named Mokoiro, trusted once again to the sea and the unknown presence of Whiro, setting off again further to the east. Their three canoes stopped at the next island raised from the waves, and Whiro, satisfied, retired to the dark again.

The numbers of the dead kept growing, though, and as the living children of Tiki spread across the waves, so too did their spirits after death. Island after island became filled, though, and generation after generation of the newly dead were forced to the seas, forever sailing eastward in search of new islands gifted them by the drum of Ru. The


long night is filled with thousands of canoes, each filled with tireless rowers moving steadily across the black waves, propelled by the hope that the next island to rise out of this sunless sea will be one that they can call home.

Warfare and Society Among the Dead

Obviously, things are not as cut and dried as all that. Often the younger dead will not wish to leave an ancestral homeland that is just as much theirs as their ghostly predecessors, and warfare will ensue. In many cases it is not even overcrowding that ushers in the warfare between the Restless Dead; the deadly sameness of existence among the settled, older dead can lead to combat merely for the sake of variation. In either case, warfare often shatters the placidity which Whiro once enjoyed.

Warfare on Ru's Archipelago follows many of the same customs and patterns that warfare among the living did, being mainly a matter of extended families or tribes battling for political supremacy. There is no extermination of those unlucky in combat; they are either exiled to those sections of the contested isle deemed undesirable or forced to take to the outriggers on the longest journey. Those who are exiled inland often spend years rebuilding their strength and making alliances in preparation for renewed hostilities and the chance at eventual triumph. However,





those exiled to the sea never return, though many attempt to seize the next island they come to instead of journeying to the outer reaches of Ru's gift.

The physical act of war is relatively simple; each of the contending chiefs gathers his forces, armed with whatever relics or Artifacts they might possess. These can range from spears and stone knives hewn from the islands themselves to fully operational relic firearms. Indeed, it is this disparity in weaponry that has often allowed younger wraiths to displace older, more powerful wraiths from shared ancestral haunts. Battle is joined, and continues until one side has a clear advantage over the other. At this point the losers break and flee, leaving the chief of the victors to seek the official benediction of the Ariki-pa-uta, considered to be above politics. The Ariki-pa-tai then invests the victorious chief with the Mangaia, the absolute temporal power on the island. Thus empowered, the new high chief makes a journey to each of the island's districts, stopping at each local temple to witness the beating of the drums which signaled the end of war. When the last drumbeat has been struck, and only the echo of Ru's faraway rhythm remains, then the survivors and supporters of the losing army emerge from hiding, are granted amnesty, and slink away to unpleasant habitation or the face of the black waters. In their place the followers of the victor are often set up as supporting chiefs, with districts and sub-districts granted to them to rule under the Mangaia's aegis.

The ritual of investiture is held to absolutely; the formal granting of the Mangaia is the way in which the religious and temporal powers of the island balance themselves. Should a chief triumph in battle yet be refused the Mangaia, or a priest be deposed, invariably ill fortune will sweep upon the land and drive those who dared countermand tradition before it.

Reaping and the *Vaekai*

Perhaps the most important ritual in this province of the undiscovered country is that of reaping, performed by wraiths known as the *vaekai*. As a new wraith is discovered on the unliving side of the Shroud, she is taken to the central inland temple. There, surrounded by her paternal ancestors on one side and her maternal on the other, she is reaped by the island's *vaekai*. As the last shreds of her Caul are removed, she is offered in rebirth to her father's ancestors, that she might be accepted into this life as the previous one. On occasions when the mother's tribe is stronger than that of the father, the newly Reaped soul is offered to these wraiths instead. The Caul is offered as a sacrifice to whichever deity is in vogue at the time, and the new wraith is welcomed into society as an equal.

This ceremonial reaping confers great status on the wraith thus initiated. Those wraiths denied the services of the *vaekai* are automatically considered to be of a lower class, and thus inevitably have less prestige than wraiths of comparable age but more good fortune. Those souls denied the privilege of this ceremonial reaping are the ghosts of the poor and those of the losers in recent military conflicts. The *vaekai*'s services generally come at a cost of rich gifts, and those exiled to the hinterlands rarely have such gifts to give, even for so auspicious an occasion.

The other group of wraiths who cannot avail themselves of the *vaekai* are the descendants of the recently exiled. As there are none present to contract the *vaekai* on their behalf, the ceremony passes them by. This indignity creates much friction between new wraiths and old ones, and this in and of itself has been the root of many wars.

Some bands of exiles do not include a *vaekai* among their number, and thus whatever island they eventually settle can be without a ceremonial Reaper permanently. These islands are considered to be slums at best, *tabu* at worst. Wraiths from "respectable" islands, even those who have not been serviced by a *vaekai* themselves, will look down upon wraiths from these islands, if they deign to speak to them at all.

Wraiths who are not reaped ceremonially suffer a variety of awakenings. The lucky ones are surrounded by friends and family, who remove their Cauls reverentially if not religiously. The unlucky, usually the offspring of recent exiles, are left to stumble dazed around the island, until or unless another wraith takes pity on them and frees them. Some are left to fend for themselves entirely, and too many of these wander, half-blinded, into the black waves to be swallowed by the Maku, the shark-spirits.

The Skinlands, The Shadowlands and the Tempest

The Skinlands of Polynesia have, in many cases, fallen under the sway of various foreign powers, and as a result the Shadowlands are rife with Reapers from Stygia and the Dark Kingdom of Jade, who seek to guide those they feel should fall under their jurisdiction to the appropriate Dark Kingdom. They are tolerated, as most Polynesian wraiths would rather have the tourists and foreigners carted off to where they came from than have to put up with them for all eternity.

The Sea Which Knows No Sun rests atop the Tempest in the Shadowlands, the calm surface of the waters completely masking the turbulence beneath. Nihils are relatively few here, mostly existing down where only the




Maku swim. Ships coming to the Sea from outside are carried up through the black waters to the surface from one of the Nihils, however, the energy of the passage is so great that it appears as nothing more than a terrific storm. Occasionally Nihils boil up to the surface, generating typhoons (the equivalent of Maelstroms) which lash the islands for up to a week. Whole islands have been washed away by these storms as thoroughly as if they'd never existed.

There is a weird correspondence between the islands of Ru's Archipelago and those of the Skinlands. Yes, those atolls which exist beyond the Shroud are infinite in number, and therefore cannot correspond geographically to those islands which house the living. However, each of the ur-islands which wraiths inhabit is linked in some uncanny fashion to the island upon which the majority of the wraiths in residence spent their living days. Hundreds or even thousands of Ru's islands can be connected to the Skinlands in this way, ironically allowing for interaction between wraiths on ur-islands thousands of miles (and years) apart. Haunts do exist for ghosts on the Sea Which Knows No Sun, but wraiths spanning three thousand years can share the same physical Haunt and draw distinct types of Pathos from it.

The Shadowlands of Ru's Archipelago are suffused with the soul-stuff of those souls not tormented enough to become wraiths. These dead, upon their passage, become both inanimate and animate objects in the land of the deceased. The fish that are caught by Mokoiro's followers are not the spirits of fish from the Skinlands. Rather, they are the ghosts of men and women whose deaths were more quiet than tragic, and whose post-mortem conflicts can be resolved in shapes other than human. Still quieter souls form the sand, the stones, and the other inanimate objects which make up the physical world of Ru's islands.

It is said that only the especially blessed are reborn as the Children of Tane, and this saying goes a long way towards explaining the unique properties of the lumber these trees yield up. Furthermore, it is believed that the wisest and most spiritually centered of the wraiths of Ru's Archipelago eventually transform into Children of Tane, an existence which allows them to be one with all spirit. This belief is the closest extant among traditional Polynesians to the Western concept of Transcendence. Younger wraiths, those born since the Westernization of the Pacific, tend to hold more to the concepts of Transcendence put forth by those who once dwelled in Stygia. Oddly enough, the Children of Tane are rarer and rarer as one reaches newer



and newer islands in the chain. Traditionalists see this as a vindication of their point of view, while younger wraiths ignore the discrepancy or mount raids to older islands for their stores of tanewood.

The Maku

In this portion of the land beyond the Shroud, gentler souls become part of the natural world after death; it is only those wraiths with conflicts unresolved from life that wander as wraiths. However, beyond this is the post-mortem existence of the truly evil, the vicious and predatory. Rebirth at the hands of a *vaekai* does not await one of these ghosts, no matter how many ancestors anxiously await it. Rather, these souls are admitted to the afterlife as one of the Maku, the shark-folk.

These beings appear as sharks with leering, vaguely human faces. Intelligent and brutal, they dwell beneath the surface of the dark waves, sometimes hunting in packs of up to five. While they are not possessed of a physical hunger, the psychic urge to kill and devour is strong in them, and they are not the sort of creatures to expend any effort resisting this instinct. The actively cruise between islands, hoping to catch new, Caul-blinded souls or better yet, convoys of weary souls dispiritedly rowing towards exile.

Powerful enough to shatter an outrigger, the Maku attack by ramming canoes with their snouts and then simply devouring anyone unfortunate enough to be thrown into the water by their initial tactic. Any wraith in the water when a Maku is on the hunt is almost certainly doomed, with only the shark's occasional predilection for playing with its food offering any window of escape. The Maku are not discriminate in their prey, however, and once there is plasm in the water, in their frenzy they are just as likely to attack their fellows as their original prey.

Their favorite prey, though, is the ghosts of those they knew when they were alive. There is nothing a Maku relishes quite so much as the look of shock and horror on a loved one's face when they realize that their beloved child (or lover, or father) has become Maku. These meetings occur far more frequently than they ought to, considering the sheer vastness of the ocean in which the Maku swim and the number of islands which Ru has drummed up out of the water. This leads many to suspect that Maku have some inherent power that leads them to those that they knew in life, and that no Maku may know peace except by slaying all those who loved it in life.

Maku can be slain, of course, though their skin is like armor and their teeth are like saws. The slaying of a Maku confers tremendous prestige upon the wraith who accomplishes the feat, and often those who seek to possess the Mangaia will go out hunting Maku, to demonstrate their prowess and their worthiness for the position of High Chief.

Should one be lucky enough to actually slay a Maku, the head is retrieved whenever possible for purposes of sacrifice to Rua'atu and Rua-tama'ine. (Note: These sacrifices, like all to Rua'atu and Rua-tama'ine, consist of merely placing an offering in a basket at the gods' temples.)

Fortunately, the Maku are not capable of venturing onto the land, else Ru's Archipelago would be sparsely populated indeed. The shark forms of the Maku have neither legs nor arms with which to propel themselves easily on the land. This is not to say that they will not pursue a victim up out of the waves should the chances of catching him be good; this happens often enough to have spawned a host of sayings, such as "The Maku is the highest of tides."

The Maku do possess the power of speech, and can often be heard singing out among the waves. These songs are always done in counterpoint to the omnipresent beating of Ru's drum, and some believe that Whiro created the Maku as a punishment for those who dared invade his silence. Whiro, not surprisingly, has declined to make his feelings on this hypothesis known.

What is known is that even the Maku do some good, reaffirming their place in the order of things. Specifically, these most foul of wraiths protect Ru's islands from invasion by outsiders. Four times the Jade Emperor has attempted to exert his control over the islands drummed from the deep, and four times the Maku have scuttled his fleet and butchered the wraiths manning it. It has been

Notes on Maku non-player characters

The range of Arcanos which Maku use is extremely limited, with Argos, Embody, Moliata, and Keening being the most commonly used. Arcanos such as Castigate, Lifeweb, and Usury are extremely rare at best. Shadow statistics are not provided for the Maku because in a sense they are nothing so much as Shadows for their entire culture. While not directly affiliated with the Oblivion in the way that Spectres and Doppelgangers are, Maku certainly represent the dark side of their culture and thus have no real need of Shadows in order to make them effective characters. Maku tend to be sarcastic and verbally vicious, and as noted earlier, they enjoy playing with their "food." Often they will appear to allow their victims to get away so that they can enjoy the surprise of reappearing a minute later, after the hapless wraith had supposedly reached safety.



over half a century since His Imperial Augustness made his last, and most nearly successful attempt. It is widely assumed, when it is thought about at all, that His Imperial Majesty will take at least another half century to lick his wounds from his last defeat.

The Mangaia

The Mangaia is as much a spiritual power as a temporal one. It is a sign of direct favor from whatever gods dwell here, a rare benediction from Whiro. Any who try to rule without the Mangaia are quickly deposed, as much out of outrage on the part of the deponents as real weakness on the part of the deposed.

Simply put, the Mangaia does in fact grant certain powers beyond the simple right to rule. It proffers upon its recipient an additional nine Pathos points, in addition to raising all of her Arcanos skills by one level so long as it is possessed. Furthermore, all of the subchiefs appointed by the bearer of the Mangaia receive an extra three Pathos points. This is at the same time a reward for being part of the victorious force as well as a manifestation in which they are now part of the new High Chief's will for the island.

Of course, there is a down side to the Mangaia. First and foremost, it is viewed as eminently desirable by those who do not have it, and thus generally makes its possessor a target for incessant rebellion and plotting. Secondly, it is literally the presence of the island itself, and binds its possessor to the land that generated it. Chiefs who possess the Mangaia are physically unable to set foot off of the islands on which they rule. Should they be bodily carried off, the Mangaia is stripped from them in a process akin to the Harrowing. The elevated subchiefs are capable of leaving the island, but lose all benefits from having the Mangaia as soon as their feet depart from their home soil. The power granted for ruling one island is very clearly limited to that island and that island only, and in this way the possibility of multiple-island empires under a single High Chief is defused. This is not to say that empire-building has not been attempted. However, would-be conquerors of multiple islands tend to find their position in their old domains usurped as soon as they set forth on their missions of conquest.



The Children of Tane

When Tane separated his mother and father, he did so by planting his hands against his mother and pressing against his father with his feet. While doing so, one of his brothers remarked, he looked like a tree. In honor of this moment, trees are also known as "Children of Tane." Their roots are like his flowing hair, while their spreading branches emulate the god's feet as he struggled against the sky.

There is more significance to the Children than mere metaphor, however. Though all the matter of this domain is infused with the souls of the dead, the wood of the Children of Tane is more vibrantly alive with it. Artifacts can be crafted from their matter with relative ease, and a spear made from this wood is as hard as forged metal, holding an edge equally well. So long as the materials used to craft the wood are entirely natural, the virtue of the timber remains. Should a single manufactured tool (a steel hammer, for instance) be used for even the smallest task in shaping, any additional qualities of excellence the wood possessed above and beyond those any timber might have are irrevocably lost.

No Child of Tane can ever actually be completely cut down. Even if its trunk is severed, in time the tree will grow back. On the oldest islands, some Children have been carefully tended and pruned for thousands of years, sur-

rendering a branch or so per year to the hands of artisans. Younger islands, and those islands inhabited by younger wraiths, tend to have merely a speckling of stumps and saplings. Tanewood raids have become a frequent occurrence on the Archipelago, and even the Maku have been known to seek the wondrous substance for their own twisted purposes.

Lexicon

Children of Tane: The "trees" of Ru's Archipelago, formed from souls. Objects carved from tanewood are exceptionally hard.

Maku: Shark-like spectres frequently found in the Sea Which Knows No Sun surrounding Ru's Archipelago.

Mangaia: The temporal and spiritual power granted to the ruler of an island in Ru's Archipelago.

Ru's Archipelago: The islands within the Tempest roughly analogous to Stygia in the West.

Sea Which Knows No Sun: The Tempest.

Typhoon: The watery Maelstroms common to this area of the Shadowlands.

Vaekai: Reapers who assure the safe passage of family members into the Underworld of Ru's Archipelago.





Rules

*Wrest once the law to your authority;
To do a great right, do a little wrong.*
— William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*

Rules in any Storyteller game are tools to build stories with — nothing more, and nothing less. We define the game world in terms of the rules to make sure that there is a level playing field for both players and Storytellers, and to eliminate the temptation to have a rule work one way today and a completely different way tomorrow. But the most important thing to remember in any game — Wraith perhaps even more so than others — is that these are just tools. If the tools aren't working for your particular situation, as a member of the troupe you should feel free to suggest a new tool that will suit the group's needs better.

Geography

The following section on geography contains excerpts from the notes of a noted Underworld traveller who prefers to be called "Cassandra." The editors of this volume believe from experience that what follows is true, though geography tends to be rather more fluid in the world of the Dead than in the world of the Quick....

The Shadowlands

The Shadowlands are a nearly exact copy of the world of the living. Chicago still looks like Chicago, the Atlantic Ocean is still in the same place and all the rivers and highways are where you'd expect them to be. Admittedly,

many features that we would recognize are a little shabbier, a little more dilapidated in the Shadowlands. And some buildings long since destroyed in the Living World have passed intact into the Shadowlands, by virtue of the tremendous amount of Memoriam they possess.

Take the White House. In the War of 1812, invading British soldiers torched the White House, razing it to the ground. Of course, it was quickly rebuilt, but what do you see today in the Shadowlands at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue?

As long as there is a strong memory of a place, a shadow of it will exist in the Shadowlands. The modern building and the 19th century one are eerily juxtaposed upon one another, almost as if one had materialized in the same space as the other. You may walk through what is a ballroom in the living world, only to find it bisected by a wall of the old building. It is possible to dismantle buildings in the Shadowlands, of course, so if the current possessor of the building decided that she wanted the ballroom to be unobstructed, it would be possible for her to destroy the older building brick by brick.

One strange phenomenon noted in recent studies of the relationship between the Shadowlands and Skinlands is that buildings and objects destroyed in the Shadowlands have the subtle but undeniable effect of weakening their counterparts on the opposite side of the Shroud. It has even been recorded that the Memoriam of a building or person destroyed in the Shadowlands diminishes, and in some cases the Quick are seen to take less interest in said object from the time of its destruction.



Haunts

Haunts are places in which the Shroud between the worlds of the living and the dead grows thin. In most cases, they are also the subject of many memories, and thus generate a certain amount of Memoriam. (*Nota bene:* Do not confuse Haunts (strongholds where the Shroud grows thin) with "haunts," spelled with a lowercase "h," for these lesser haunts are merely places in which the Restless are known to congregate.)

The Tempest

Just as the Shadowlands exist in a "dimension" separate from the world of the Quick, so does the Tempest exist in yet another space. It is possible to circle the globe without ever leaving the Shadowlands. Travelling from New York to London in the Shadowlands is certainly possible without ever braving the Tempest; simply skinride a passenger or otherwise hitch a ride on a plane or boat headed east. Of course, many Restless are so impatient (or in a sufficient hurry) that taking a shortcut, as it were, through the Tempest is preferable.

Nihils

Nihils are like wormholes, or cracks in the reality that separates the Tempest from the Shadowlands. It has been noted that in many areas that possess Nihils, the Shroud separating the Shadowlands from the Skinlands is likewise diminished. It is a commonly held theory that any breach in the barriers of this sort weakens all other barriers in the area, though researchers have yet to determine the mechanism for this.

Stygia

The largest "continent" in the Tempest, Stygia rises from the Sea of Shadows into an oasis of splendor and strength...or, at least, that's what the Hierarchy would have you believe. In truth, Stygia is a horribly overpopulated place, overflowing with the dead of centuries who are unwilling or unable to go on to either Transcendence or Oblivion. Like a medieval walled city, Stygia is both a fortress and a home, a place of commerce and a place of sublime beauty.

The Dark Kingdoms

There are only two other known continents within the Tempest, and these have been named the Dark Kingdoms of Jade and of Ivory. Like Stygia, these represent two of the dominant cultures of the living world, those centered in Asia and Africa respectively. Navigation within the Tempest being the dangerous and haphazard thing that it is, it is only in recent years that any sort of dialogue has been begun between Stygia and these other Kingdoms.

There are rumors of a third Kingdom, but while an area claimed by the Kingdom of Obsidian was said to exist in the Shadowlands of North and Central America, it was destroyed centuries ago. No known equivalent to this lost Kingdom has ever been found in the Tempest, and it is believed by most Western wraiths that all the dead of that area are now under the control of Stygia.

Some say that there are a number of other Kingdoms to be found in the Tempest, but most scholars in Stygia believe this to be mere myth, like the tales the sailors of centuries past told of sea monsters and cities of gold beyond the sea. Like their predecessors of times past, most of the reports of these supposed lost Kingdoms come from Renegades and other unreliable riff-raff. Indeed, if such places existed, is it not reasonable that they would have sent emissaries to Stygia long ago? Since this has not happened and no reliable reports have ever been returned of such places, they are not believed to exist (see also the Dark Kingdoms chapter).

The Far Shores

Whoever put that fool idea in to your head that the Far Shores were Transcendence, child? The best description I can give you of the Far Shores is that they are like monasteries or communes in the living world; places where people of similar spiritual and philosophical bent can gather in a place free of the distractions of living among unbelievers. Some resemble the Paradise sought by the Restless there, while some are hells in which the penitent punish themselves for real or imagined transgressions in life or in the Underworld. We are told that under such conditions, many who journey there do achieve Transcendence, but, as with any such enterprise, there are rumors of corruption and treachery even within these well-meaning groups. If you would seek Transcendence, know that you may do so in any place, at any time. Those who seek out the Far Shores often do so to find a mutually supportive environment in which to contemplate their navels.



Basic Wraith Powers

Deathsight

Deathsight is often considered the bane of a wraith's sensory existence. It colors everything the wraith sees with a fatalistic hue. It is no wonder so many of the Restless quickly grow cynical and depressed with their lot in the afterlife. This sensitivity is a double-edged sword, however; much of what Deathsight reveals has a basis in truth and a perceptive wraith can discern much about a subject by careful examination. The following are a few suggestions for ways to utilize Deathsight, though the Storyteller must approve any of them before incorporating them into play.

Discern Weakness

The wraith can scan a subject or item located in either the Skinlands or the Shadowlands for innate weaknesses, and possibly strike at these vulnerable points. This use requires a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty assigned by the Storyteller to reflect the quality and relative strength of the item or subject). If Deathsight is used to coordinate an attack, the wraith may add one die to her potential damage pool. It should be noted that this application of Deathsight can only reveal *physical* weaknesses — not mental weaknesses, natures or the like.

Sense Health

The wraith can fine tune her Deathsight to determine the damage, disabilities or ailments a subject is suffering from. This requires a Perception + Medicine roll (difficulty from 4 to 8, depending on how apparent the ailment is). Success can reveal information on such things as ailments as disease, extent of damage or disability, handicaps and blood loss. It should be noted that unless the wraith has significant, up-to-date knowledge of medicine, it will be difficult to distinguish between similar illnesses. This power is intended to give an indication of general health, not to provide automatic state-of-the-art diagnoses.

Diagnostic Scan

By closely examining broken or otherwise nonfunctional items, the wraith can occasionally glean information about the cause of the problem. A Perception + Repair roll (difficulty 4 to 8, depending on the complexity of



the device and damage) is required. Success means the wraith has isolated the problem, and perhaps obtained a helpful idea or two on how to repair the item.

Deathsight has been known to provide unusual and even bizarre results under certain circumstances. In particular, vampires, although they still possess discernible weaknesses, seem to remain untouched by the ravages of time that batter so many other denizens of the Shadowlands. However, in their wake normally fresh and vital things appear unwarrantedly aged and touched by death. The effect usually passes quickly, but in areas heavily trafficked or long occupied by these creatures the effect lingers on. On the other hand, werewolves appear ablaze with the energy of life. Sites frequented by these man-beasts, such as their gathering places and holy spots, seem almost perpetually verdant and lively.

Lifesight

On the other end of the wraith's sensory spectrum from Deathsight is Lifesight. While useless on other wraiths, it is not without its uses. Many of the Restless become dangerously fascinated by the interplay of color and design found surrounding all living and even many unliving creatures. Wraiths dabbling with Lifesight have stumbled onto and refined a few tricks or special uses for it. The following are a few suggestions.

Sense Sentiment

When two individuals become aware of each other in the Skinlands there is a momentary flare in the life energy surrounding them that a vigilant wraith can interpret. This gives a brief but piercing insight into the true feelings held by each of the subjects for the other. Roll Perception + Empathy (difficulty 9).

Passion Sense

By singling out a single "wavelength" of life energy, a wraith can attune herself to a particular Passion or emotion in others. Whenever another wraith passes near a mortal with a similar emotion the mortal's aura clings ever so slightly. In this way, the wraith can uncover information on another wraith's Passions. Only a single emotion can be focused on at one time. This is a very difficult feat, requiring excellent timing and a high degree of sensitivity. Roll Perception + Awareness (difficulty 9).

Spirit Sense

The spirits and denizens of the Middle Umbra make slight impressions on the fabric of the Shadowlands that are even further dampened by the Shroud, so few wraiths are even aware of the potential for this application of Lifesight. Only wraiths with a considerable knowledge of Garou and their relation to the Umbra can attempt this. The wraith can vaguely detect the presence of Umbral entities, such as Garou, spirits and Banes with a roll of Perception + Occult (difficulty equal to the local Shroud + 2, but no greater than 10). It should be noted that this requires concentration, and therefore is not something that someone completely ignorant of werewolf cosmology would "accidentally" notice.

Sharpened Senses

As starved as they are for the rich flavor of the Skinlands, wraiths possess a particular sensitivity to stimuli in general that develops quickly upon their arrival in the Shadowlands. This power is easily employed by wraiths to keep tabs on the Quick, as well as to uncover all manner of otherwise hidden aspects of the Shadowlands.

Hidden Sight

Hidden Sight can be used to try and reveal supernaturally hidden beings (those using Obfuscate, Blur of the Milky Eye, Enshroud and similar powers). However, when employing Sharpened Senses in this manner, the wraith must expend a point of Pathos and roll Perception + Awareness (difficulty determined by the Storyteller). It should be noted that any limitations stated in the description of the power being used to hide the target (i.e.: Obfuscate) must be taken into account when determining difficulty.

Insubstantiality

Many wraiths consider their transitory materiality more of a curse than a blessing. Yet, it is this selfsame power that has saved many of the Restless from complete destruction at the hand of the more aggressive denizens of the World of Darkness. Insubstantiality is one of the wraith's strangest innate powers and has been the subject of much consternation and study by Strygian scholars. Some even whisper of a lost school or guild that developed previously unsuspected application of this power that could rival the other, more traditional Arcanos. The Hierarchy has vigorously stamped out these rumors, of course.



Character Statistics in Wraith

*How can you define a look or a touch
How can you weigh a feeling?
Taken by themselves they don't mean much
Together they send you reeling
— Stephen Schwartz, "Love Song"*

How can you assign a number to an emotion? Like Lovecraft's "Color Out of Space", the medium of game design seems wholly inadequate to communicate the varying shades of emotion involved with the people, places and things that are important to a person, or the guiding principles of their life. How can you possibly have "Love, 3"? What does that mean? Well, that's one of the tricky parts of Wraith. To put a rules system onto a nebulous concept like "Loyalty" or "Hatred" means that some compromises have to be made. Think of the numbers assigned to Traits such as Passions and Fetters as a guideline for roleplaying, and a way of making the game more playable.

No roleplaying game's system will never perfectly mimic the way things "really" are, whether the system simulates automatic weapons fire or the goals and desires of a character. Some compromises have to be made along the way to make the game playable, and that sometimes means sacrificing some realism. What a system needs to do is to give the players and Storyteller a language with which to discuss what's happening in the story. By rating Passions and Fetters, the Storyteller has a way of determining things that will be consistently fair. Just remember the most important rule in any Storytelling game: if the rule conflicts with the story, bend the rules.

Fetters



Fetters are an invaluable resource to a wraith. Without them, her ties to the Shadowlands are tenuous at best. More importantly though, a wraith without Fetters has lost the opportunity to resolve them — a step that is fundamental to achieving Transcendence.

The most common method to gain a Fetter is by the simple application of the Splice Strand art of Lifeweb. However, this method is only a temporary solution, and can be quite draining. Other methods of gaining Fetters are much more difficult, but often yield more lasting results.

One such means is the sympathetic method. This usually happens when the wraith has lost a particular Fetter. After the loss of such a significant part of themselves, wraiths, like mortals, will seek a substitute for the loss. For example, a wraith whose custom-built vintage automobile is lost may find a teenager diligently restoring a similar model. The boy has the same zeal and dedication the wraith possessed for his treasured vehicle in life, so his car could become a new Fetter. The Storyteller may require intensive roleplaying and involvement with the new potential Fetter to form an intimate bond. If the wraith is able to do so to the satisfaction of the Storyteller, she need only expend one permanent Willpower to finalize the bond.

Sometimes, without even actively seeking to do so, the wraith may stumble upon a situation which draws her in emotionally to such a degree that she cannot help but become caught up in it. Often a sympathetic condition such as the one above exists, but in this case the wraith may not want to become part of this drama that is drawing her in. Examples include being touched by a great tragedy, loss or joy fulfillment. After all, it is sometimes the situations that are the most intense that we are most afraid to deal with. It is not uncommon for the Restless to shy away from situations that bring them into contact with potential new Fetters. Fetters of this nature, while initially compelling, tend to fade quickly if not pursued or nurtured.

Losing Fetters

As is the case with gaining Fetters, certain Arcanos (such as the Lifeweb art Sever Strand) can also be utilized to cut off a wraith from her Fetter. This artificial loss of a Fetter can usually be easily reversed by employing the Arcanos art Splice Strand or through sheer effort of will (see *Wraith: the Oblivion*, page 157). Fetters may also be lost to the attacks of Spectres.

If a wraith's Fetter is physically destroyed in the Skinlands, or if a living Fetter dies before resolution, it is forever lost. If it is an object, the wraith may attempt to bring it into the Shadowlands as a relic, though it will no longer function as a connection to the living world, and is therefore no longer a Fetter. Bringing an object through the Shroud is done much the same way as acquiring a Claimed object that has been destroyed (*Wraith*, page 152), except that the wraith need not be skilled in Inhabit. The wraith need only make a Strength + Empathy roll (difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating). Only one attempt is allowed, but if the wraith is successful, the newly formed relic passes into the Shadowlands and her possession. It no longer has any significance as a Fetter, nor does it gain any special powers.

A wraith can also choose to abandon a Fetter, but this is practically unheard of, for it inevitably results in a significant loss in her already tenuous link to the Skinlands. Still, it has been known to happen. Typically this sort of suicidal behavior is usually seen only in severely depressed or disillusioned wraiths. This is the brand of recklessness that is often seen in those bound for Oblivion. Recently, some very radical cults have preached the value of abandoning one's Fetters, for "they only serve to restrict one's spiritual development." Some claim to have gained inner strength from this strange denial in the form of Eidolon. The truth or wisdom of this claim is disputable and remains unresolved for now.

Fading is another danger that threatens a wraith's Fetters. Fetters need devotion and attention to maintain their significance and connection to the wraith. If a wraith continually ignores her Fetters, he may find them fading. A Storyteller may assign a Pathos cost to halt the process, though it is strongly suggested that she require significant roleplaying to reestablish the tie to the Fetter. If the threat is still ignored, the Fetter will lose all its significance to the wraith, and permanently become simply another feature of the Skinlands.

Rules on Losing Passions

A hard fact that wraiths learn early on is that nothing is permanent. Everything fades. Do not be mistaken — Passions are no exception. It is the loss of a reason to go on existing that drives wraiths to suicidal ends and senseless Oblivion. Those who lose their drive to continue have few choices left. Even Spectres remember their dark Passions and most still attempt to fulfill them. Those that do not are consumed by Oblivion. The basic rule book for *Wraith: The Oblivion* describes neglect, Harrowing, and numbing as ways for a Passion to be diminished. Here are two more examples.





Sudden removal occurs when the wraith with a particular Passion experiences an event of extreme horror involving the betrayal of that Passion. Specific examples of this include the violent and untimely death of a person specifically attached to a Passion, likewise the death of a person resembling the original focus of a Passion, the triumph of a hated enemy over the wraith's friends, or the wraith accidentally causing harm when trying to fulfill a Passion.

In other words, an event of severe emotional pain directly relating to a Passion must take place, and be either witnessed firsthand or learned of shortly thereafter. The moment the knowledge strikes home in a wraith's mind, the Storyteller has several options. First, he may make a ruling based solely on roleplaying. If the player has had a mediocre reaction (or none at all), then the wraith has lost a point in that Passion. If the player reacted with definite alarm or concern, then the Storyteller may rule that the Passion will stay strong — at least for now.

Should the Storyteller wish to use a system, instead of relying on her judgment of the player's reaction, then a Passion roll should be made. The player rolls the number of dice that she currently has in that Passion (difficulty 8). She needs at least one success to hold on to that Passion at its current level. Willpower may be spent during this roll. If the roll is completely failed, the Passion loses one point. Should the player botch, the Passion loses half its points (rounded down). A Passion of one is erased altogether. The Storyteller may rule that the event was so devastating to the wraith that a botch erases the Passion entirely, regardless of its level.

Should the Shadow be responsible for the traumatizing event, then the difficulty is raised to 9. Knowing you are somehow responsible makes the horror all the worse. If the roll is failed or botched in this situation then the Shadow will also gain a point of Angst, or perhaps take the initiative to dominate the wraith.

Slow removal begins when the focus of a Passion is eliminated under normal circumstances, and the wraith has difficulty finding a replacement for that Passion's focus. For example should the Passion be "Greed" with the specific purpose of "Possess a 1958 candy apple red Chevy" owned in life, and that car is crushed in a junk yard or scrapped for parts, then the Passion's purpose has been lost. The wraith must now find a new car of similar description or the Passion will begin to fade. Should a '57 Chevy be found, or something else close enough to the original, then the wraith can maintain that Passion. For every week that passes without a new specific purpose located, the player must make a permanent Willpower roll (difficulty 6). If the roll fails, then the Passion decreases by one level. After a year has passed the difficulty will raise to 7. After a second year it will raise to 8, and so on; the difficulty will

increase annually on the day the specific purpose was lost, but never above 10. Should a specific purpose appear, then no further Willpower rolls are needed for a time.

If the wraith never finds a new specific purpose, then the Storyteller may rule that the wraith cannot gain Pathos through that Passion. If the player should fail the Willpower rolls until the Passion reaches 0, it is lost forever.

Time also plays a role in the slow removal of a Passion. Sometimes a wraith's Passions will be attuned to a specific trend or detail pertaining to an era. For example a 1940's swing dancer could have felt "Joy" about her particular type of dance (swing), but as time marches on the dance went out of style. No one anywhere felt joy by dancing the swing in 1969. It is up to the Storyteller to make a ruling on neglect. The player may decide that her character changed with the times; she eventually embraced ballroom dancing, sockhops, hippie-swaying, disco, and eventually moshing. Perhaps the Passion went down a level with every or every other switch. The Storyteller and player have leeway to work together. Hard and fast rules should be mutually agreed on, if at all. Remember, though, that entropy is a powerful force, and individual Passions can not survive forever in the face of it.


Increasing Passions

Sometimes an event will take place in a chronicle that involves a wraith's Passion in a positive way. These events are, of course, orchestrated by the Storyteller, but the key is player reaction. If the Storyteller judges that the scene has had the desired effect then the wraith's Passion may increase by one. If the Storyteller is not sure of the effect and wants a system, then he should have the player make a Passion roll, as with losing a Passion above. The difficulty should be 8, adjusted by the Storyteller. If the player achieves two or more successes, then the Passion may increase by one.

Gaining Passions

Gaining Passions is also possible, but should always be extremely difficult. As suggested in the main rulebook, the Storyteller should have almost total control over these sort of situations. Here are a few guidelines. First, the wraith must bear personal witness to or take part in an emotionally intense scene. Then, if the player and Storyteller agree that the character would have been inspired or compelled by the scene, a Perception + Empathy roll is required (difficulty 9). With two or more successes, the wraith has a new Passion. For every success beyond the first a level or dot is added. 2 equals 1 dot, 3 equals 2 dots, etc. The Storyteller may adjust the difficulty due to specific details:





the wraith knew the victim, the object involved was a personal possession such as a Fetter, or any number of reasons. Bear in mind that gaining a Passion, a new source of Pathos, is quite a boon to any wraith. Chronicle balance should always play an important role in this situation. Three points should be the uppermost limit for a new Passion.

Sometimes the same emotionally charged moment can remove a Passion and bestow a different one in the same instant. For example, a wraith's boyfriend is slaughtered by Andrew Messer and the Eisenkreuzen, the same gang that killed her a year earlier. She had a Lust Passion specifically tuned to him, but now she loses that Passion altogether, as described above. Still, she makes a very successful roll of Perception + Empathy to gain a new one: Anger towards gang violence, specifically involving the Eisenkreuzen and good old Andrew.

If a wraith suffers this much trauma all in one scene, she should make a Stamina roll (difficulty 7). If she fails the roll, the wraith is wracked with blinding pain for a full minute and loses a Corpus Level. If she botches, for every one rolled, the wraith's pain lasts for an hour and she loses 2 Corpus Levels. This is a perfect time for the Shadow to emerge. If this damage destroys the wraith's Corpus, she will fall straight into Harrowing.

If this trauma hits the character during Catharsis, then the Shadow has a chance to gain and lose Dark Passions in the same manner. This is entirely up to the Storyteller, and should be a crucial moment in the chronicle. When a Shadow gains this kind of power, it is no small affair.

Bear in mind that the loss or acquisition of a Passion is a major event for any **Wraith** game. It should be roleplayed through full character interaction. Hopefully a scene in which a Passion is in jeopardy will encompass the very elements of what **Wraith** revolves around: tragedy, horror, and emotion. The Storyteller should not endanger a Passion just because he is bored or his players aren't paying attention. He should use focused forethought and thorough decision-making. If the Passion is in trouble due to a player's faulty interaction with it, then take a break to think about it. You may even want to end the session without judging the outcome just yet. Cliffhangers are perfect stopping points for any adventure, and your players will certainly return to finish the adventure next week. Take some time to think about the repercussions to both the character and the chronicle. Discuss it out of game, even. A good question to constantly ask your players is, "What would you like to see happen in this chronicle?" Whatever you do, though, don't forget that the point is to have fun. If you think torturing a player's favorite character is going to make the player mad, back down. There will always be interesting possibilities, if you dare to investigate them.

Computers

A dictionary defines a computer as "A device that computes, especially a programmable electronic machine that performs high-speed mathematical or logical operations or that assembles, stores, correlates, or otherwise processes information." For the purposes of playing **Wraith: The Oblivion**, a computer can be one of two things: a dedicated system or a general purpose system.

Dedicated

A dedicated system is one designed for a specific purpose, like an ATM or an answering machine. Player characters do not normally need computer-related skills to interact (physically or using Inhabit) with these machines, so long as they don't try to make the machine react outside of its programmed constraints. Characters with the right skills and Arcanos can sometimes "reprogram" these dedicated systems to break their programming, but the machine will still not be able to perform actions it was not designed to do. For example, an ATM can be coaxed into spitting out money without a card or PIN number, but it could never be made to talk to someone. It simply doesn't have the necessary hardware. It was designed for one purpose and one purpose only.

General Purpose

On the other hand, a general purpose system can perform many tasks. These machines are usually what people think of when they think of a computer. They range in power from a portable laptop, used by a single person, to a high powered mainframe connected via dedicated phone line to an international network and used by hundreds of people. These machines (for the most part) require knowledge to use, or, at least, knowledge to use efficiently. In most stories, player characters will be interacting with this type of computers to either store or retrieve information. Often, this information will be protected, either through physical location of the machine, security programs or just plain data encryption. Players will need both the necessary skills and Arcanos to even begin trying to acquire information with a computer.

Networks

Both dedicated and general purpose computers can be on a network. A network can be loosely defined as two or more machines connected for the purpose of sharing information. These connections can be permanent, in the form of cables connecting the machines, or temporary, like a modem and a phone line. Phone lines can also be used



as a somewhat permanent connections. These dedicated lines, also called leased lines, create huge globe-spanning networks connecting countless numbers of machines. This is what wraiths commonly refer to as the Electron Highway, and it can be accessed with the Inhabit Arcanos. Still, there are two important things to remember about networks.

Not all computers are on networks. Most dedicated machines stand alone and don't communicate with other computers. One notable exception to this rule is an ATM machine, which communicates with an external database to exchange account information. If a machine is on a network, but turned off, it is still inaccessible from the network. The wraith must travel to it and turn it on. If the machine is connected by modem, the modem must be on, and the wraith must know the phone number in order to access the machine.

Not all networks are connected to the outside world. Believe it or not, some people consider the Electron Highway to be a security risk. In fact, many companies have large internal networks that contain no modems or leased phone lines. Access to any of these machines can only be gained from another machine on that network. Unsurprisingly, it is usually the companies that control the most important information that feel the need to be this secure.

Wraiths and Computers

Information is the Pathos of the World of Darkness, and information is stored and manipulated by computers. Information could save a Fetter's life or destroy an enemy's plans. It could pay the back mortgage on the old haunt or pay back a Giovanni for "services rendered." Information is a powerful tool, and in the right hands, a powerful weapon. With the Inhabit Arcanos, wraiths have access to more information than most of the Quick ever even dream about.

But Inhabit is useless without the right skills. A wraith might be able to possess a computer, but unless he is familiar with it, he won't be able to accomplish much more than turn it on or off. Computer skills are a relatively recent occurrence. Most older wraiths are computer-illiterate, and most new wraiths only possess basic skills. There are some highly skilled wraiths out there; most are computer professionals or hackers who died fairly young. Wraiths can still learn, but it is fairly hard for a wraith who didn't grow up playing video games and programming VCRs to master concepts like "mouse" and "window."



Accessing a System

- **Physically; or the "Quick" way**

With the proper skills, a wraith can still try to access a computer without Inhabit. She must have an Arcanos that allows her to manipulate the machine in the Skinlands, like Embody, Outrage, or even Puppetry. But using these Arcanos, she is limited to doing it the "Quick" way. She must access the machine as a living person would, by physically typing at the keyboard or moving the mouse. She also has to hack her way past any security precautions and painstakingly search for the desired information. This limits the type of machine the wraith can access.

For example, Pol, a computer hacker, is trying to avenge his death at the hands of the Mafia. Pol has the Knowledge Computer and the Arcanos Outrage. Using these skills, Pol could sit in front of any general purpose computer and type in commands like a normal person to get the information he requires. But if Pol wants to manipulate a computerized video system at the Mafia headquarters or reprogram an ATM to spit out all money from the capo's secret bank account, he must have a corresponding Secondary Ability or specialty. If he has a somewhat more distantly related ability, the Storyteller may allow him an attempt with either a higher difficulty or a required number of successes.

Pol goes to the capo's house, intend on getting information out of his computer. Pol locates the computer and makes his Dexterity + Outrage roll to activate the art Death's Touch. Pol succeeds and can now type at the keyboard. Unfortunately for Pol, the computer is protected with a password. Pol needs to now make an Intelligence + Computer roll to see how long it will take him to hack into the system. Luck is just not with Pol today — at that moment, the mob leader's secretary, Donna, enters. Pol can't continue typing, or he will be noticed. It looks like he'll have to put off his revenge until later.

- **Inhabit; or the "Easy" way**

Using Inhabit with the art Gremlinize gives a wraith total control of a computer. In a way, he controls the "senses" of the machine, as well as its input and output. The wraith also has total access to any data or information on the system, barring any appropriate security measures (see Security, below). In order to manipulate the input or output, or attempt to access or change the data, the wraith must have the necessary skills. That is, he must have some concept of how the computer and its software actually work. Normally, software use appears on the monitor or screen, or is in some way recorded. Thankfully, the monitor and other recording devices are considered output, and therefore under the wraith's control. To completely hide his actions from an outside observer, however, the wraith will need to make additional rolls.

Controlling the output also allows a wraith to carry on a conversation with a person at the keyboard. Similarly, because he has total control over the input of the computer, he can change whatever the user is typing in. The user may think she's asking for a listing of all her files, but the wraith could be changing the input to a request to delete all the files. Or perhaps the wraith just has the screen echo "Files deleted." Mischievous wraiths like this can create very frustrated users, as well as rumors of "haunted machines."

For example, our friend Pol found someone to teach him Inhabit. He has now wandered back into the capo's office and Gremlinized his computer. Coincidentally, Donna is using the capo's computer to play games. This is actually very lucky for Pol — she has already entered the computer's password, so Pol doesn't have to figure it out. Pol makes his Dexterity + Inhabit roll and succeeds. He is now in the computer. Because Pol is not attuned to this machine, he must make a separate roll for each action. Pol easily succeeds his Perception + Computer roll and finds the capo's address/extortion book database. Pol wants to browse through the database to find the capo's home address. He makes an Intelligence + Computer roll and is easily able to run the database program. Because Pol is trying not to reveal his presence, the Storyteller has him make a Dexterity + Computer roll. Pol fails and suddenly the database program pops up on the screen in front of the secretary. Luckily for Pol, Donna was hired for her looks, not her computer skills. She quits the database program and returns to her game. Pol tries again and makes both rolls. He now has access to the database information.

Security

Computer security can take on many forms. Some are problems for wraiths, some aren't. The more important the computer or the more valuable the information, the more security precautions will be taken to protect it.

- **Limited Access.** These computers are protected by their location. They are normally not on a network, and a user must be at the machine itself to manipulate it. Sometimes the machine is locked up behind several doors. This sort of security measure is not a problem for a wraith, as long as she's not low on Corpus. Still, sometimes just finding out where the machine is located can be tricky. Home computers, valuable research machines and most dedicated machines fall into this category.

- **Physical Guardian.** Some computers have living people constantly watching or using them. This can be a problem for a wraith without Inhabit, unless his purpose is to scare these people. Even an Artificer must be very careful, or her actions will alert the living. Security consoles and ATMs in high traffic locations have this problem.



• **Limited Users.** Computers often have a predefined set of users, and only these people are allowed access to the machine. A potential user must enter both an ID and a password. A wraith without this information will have to try to hack her way into the system. Hacking is normally a Manipulation + Computer or Intelligence + Computer roll, depending on the task. The number of successes determines the time it will take to complete the job. Both wraiths with and without Inhabit must deal with this type of security, but wraiths with Inhabit can usually find ways around it. After all, a password typed into a Gremlinized computer isn't very secure. Most machines on networks are set up for limited users.


• **Encryption.** You may have access to the data, but that doesn't mean you can use it. Sometimes it can be encoded or encrypted, requiring a "key" to decode it. Another hacking roll will be needed, although if the wraith has the Knowledge Enigmas, it can lower her difficulty. Encryption will add to both the difficulty and the time. However, the data can be transferred to a safer location, and the wraith can then decrypt it at her own leisure. Research organizations and illegal societies tend to use encryption.

• **Other Wraiths.** It is entirely possible that a wraith could attempt to access a system using Inhabit, only to find that another wraith has beaten them to it. As only one character can be in possession of the system at a time, an opposed Willpower roll can determine who has control.

Stygia's Grand Plan

Rumor has it that a certain Deathlord in Stygia has been acquiring wraiths with computer knowledge and has them working away deep within the bowels of Stygia. They are working side by side with powerful Artificers to create a great and horrible machine — a giant computer. A soul counter capable of keeping track of all the souls in Stygia and the Shadowlands. A machine that can be networked to Necropoli to allow travel and communication between Stygia and Anacreons. Such a machine would be a truly powerful device for its owner. But this is just a rumor. After all, the amount of Pathos needed to power such a device would be incredible, and the number of souls that would have to be smelted to build it would be inconceivable. No Deathlord is power-mad enough to pay that kind of price. We hope.





For example, the capo's computer has three types of security on it. It has limited access; the computer is located in the capo's private office and doesn't have a modem or other network connection. It has limited users; only people who know the password can use the computer. And it has encryption; all the Mafia data recorded on the system are encoded. Pol easily bypassed the first barrier. Donna bypassed the second security measure for him. So now Pol is staring at a large encrypted address file. Pol starts to work on breaking the encryption. He rolls Manipulation + Computer at a target of 8, since the capo purchased a pretty good security program. He gets two successes. The Storyteller determines that it will take Pol four hours to break the code, and he must make four Dexterity + Computer rolls to see if the secretary notices anything usual. Pol makes the first roll, but botches the second. Suddenly, the database program pops onto the screen, with the encryption key box flashing as different keys are fed to it. Donna gets scared and decides she should go do some work. She turns off the computer. Pol suddenly finds himself possessing a large useless paperweight, with no more information that he started with. Back to square one.

Computers as Relics

If a wraith Gremlinizing a computer is powerful, a wraith Gremlinizing a computer with his own relic computer is doubly efficient. He can instantly copy any information he needs to his machine, then browse through it in his spare time. If his relic computer has a modem, the wraith can access the Electron Highway with it. This gives him more control than using Ride the Electron Highway

unaided. Unfortunately, relic computers are very rare. Few hackers die with their computers in their hands, and only portable laptops are really useful. Relic computers also need Pathos to fuel them. This can sometimes be costly, but if the computer has a battery, it can be charged up before a planned usage.

For example, if our poor friend Pol had owned a relic computer, he could have just transferred the entire encrypted database to it and left. He could then have returned to his haunt and would not have to worry about anyone disturbing him for the four hours it would take him to decode the address book.

Wraiths and the Digital Web

The Digital Web is a vast virtual universe that exists in the minds of mages, mostly Virtual Adepts. Unfortunately, to truly experience the Digital Web as mages do requires magick, which wraiths do not possess. This can be incredibly frustrating, especially to a wraith who was a mage in life and had experienced the Web. He now finds himself totally blocked from the virtual existence, and can only access the Web as Sleepers do, through their keyboards and monitors. There is only one way around this roadblock. A wraith with Puppetry can possess a mage (a difficult task, since mages are a willful lot). When the mage enters the Web, the wraith appears beside her. The wraith stays in the Web as long as his host does. The wraith still controls the mage to the extent his possession allowed, but he can relent that control if he desires. As soon as the mage returns to the real world, the wraith comes back with her. If the mage dies while in the Web, the wraith will be trapped. His only way out is the Tempest. Of course, rumor has it that there is another way into the Digital Web...but who can trust a rumor?



Arcanos

We call them arts, for the Arcanoi are to be studied, practiced, but few ever master them. Like any art, most who practice a given Arcanos improve in time, but it is only a few masters who are able to transform it beyond mere cookbook simplicity into a true thing of beauty and wonder.

— Lydia Beckman, Anacreon of Fate, Boston



Arcanos are the mysterious powers that the Restless Dead use to transform the world around them. The thirteen most widely practiced Arcanos were once the domain of the guilds, which combined social and economic structure to form the basis of Stygian society. The guilds served both as loose colleges of a sort, to which aspiring wraiths could go to learn a given Arcanos, as well as grounds for dividing people up into social and political factions. But when Charon disbanded the guilds centuries ago, fearing that their power would soon rival his own, no new grouping sprang up to take their place. There are those among the Restless who still refer to someone who practices the arts of Castigate as a Pardoner, but this is more an informal title than the mark of any true affiliation.

Still, people continue to be defined and categorized to some extent by what role they play in society. Similarly, those who choose to learn a given Arcanos often share certain characteristics in common, which gives some credence to the stereotypes attributed to practitioners of those arts.

Though there are certain arts which are among the most common for each Arcanos, masters of these arts across the centuries have developed different uses of their skills which may not be known to all wraiths. These "Lost Arcanos" may be known by wraiths who learned them in centuries past, as well as those whose instructors preferred the antique arts over the more common arts in vogue today.

For example, the current arts of Inhabit focus primarily on the ways it can be applied to electrical appliances and the web of power lines that covers the globe. This is currently thought to be the most useful application of the skills of Inhabit, so inevitably these techniques are taught to Lemures, instead of the more archaic lost arts of Inhabit. The arts currently taught to initiates to the uses of Inhabit evolved from the Artificers' basic understanding of the nature of spiritual energy. Their knowledge of how to manipulate this energy, forming it into objects or changing its nature, made their transition from craftsmen to technicians an easy one, and there are still many in Stygia who remember the old arts.

Nearly all Arcanoi have evolved, and so for a diligent student eager to learn more about her chosen craft, there are many lost arts that may be discovered through diligent research. Similarly, those who achieve mastery of a given Arcanos may, with much testing and research, discover previously unknown uses of common Arcanos.

The following section consists of "sub-Arcanoi" — offshoots of the Arcanoi that were more common in years past. In many cases, they incorporated many elements of their parent Arcanos, including arts that are still in use today. While these lost arts are infrequently seen, it is not unheard of for ancient Gaunts, or those they trained, to have access to these arts.

Arcanoi

While most modern wraiths simply use "Arcanos" as both the singular and the plural of the word, some older wraiths and those who wish to affect an air of culture and tradition sometimes use the archaic plural form, Arcanoi.

Lost and Found Arts

Some suggested lost arts for the most common Arcanos are included in *Wraith* supplements, but it is possible for Storytellers to conceive new arts appropriate to their chronicle as well. Using the Arcanos in *Wraith: The Oblivion* as a guideline, a Storyteller may develop alternate arts as long as they are consistent with the power levels already established. For example, the highest level arts are as powerful as any art should ever be, for if player characters are wielding so much power that even the most powerful adversary is a pushover, where is the fun in that? Storytellers should examine any potential new art to be sure that it will not upset the balance of the game. Also bear in mind that these new powers should be difficult to obtain, or they will not be prized as highly by the players who seek them. Whole chronicles could be based around the search for lost arts, as the Circle tracks down ancient Gaunts and Ferryman from whom these long-forgotten secrets could be learned.

All that said, Arcanos are like any other rules in the Storyteller system — you should feel free to adapt them and tailor them to your chronicle.



Flux



The Quick should find their own places. All my days as a living soul I spent my time surrounded by the wonders created by man. The carefully carved furniture and fine draperies held more fascination for me than ever a person could. The human form was awkward, built only to grow old and fragile. It is the works made by the living, not the living themselves that can be eternal.

This art allows a wraith to manipulate and animate objects created by the living, regardless of whether the objects have any true value. Many Alchemists claim that the act of creation has imbued the items with a life of their own, and that this pseudo-life is what permits them to give false life to the objects in the first place.

Flux — Alchemists

For centuries, the guild known as the Alchemists studied the energy within objects. Just as the Usurers understood the flow of energy from one being to another, the Alchemists' experiments centered on the relative strength and weakness of objects. Like their mortal counterparts, the Alchemists tried to understand the components of matter, and thereby learn how best to manipulate it. Of course, this Guild was always in demand by those who wished to obtain relics, as well as those who sought to protect their Fetters in the Skinlands. Alchemists worked in tandem with their sister guild, the Artificers, until Charon disbanded the guilds. At that time, the force of Charon's Dictum Mortum began to discourage congress with the Skinlands even further, and the Alchemists were driven from Stygia.

Basic Abilities

Grave Mold: The wraith may cause spontaneous growth of lichen and mildew in small areas. By repeated use of this ability, the wraith can spread decay throughout a house. The mold does not have any effect on living matter.

System: The character must roll Strength + Flux (difficulty of the local Shroud), in order to use this art.

Sense Fluxion: The wraith may, after careful examination, sense when others are using Flux upon an object in the Skinlands.



System: The character must roll Perception + Flux (difficulty 6). Only one success is needed to sense whether or not the object is affected by a Alchemist, but more successes can give extra hints as to the nature or even the identity of the Alchemist in question.

• Rot

By use of this art, the character may age a small, non-living item. Fabric and paper will yellow and begin to crumble when touched by the wraith, but other, heavier objects are unaffected. The weight and density of objects altered by Rot must be small for this art to have any significant effect. Rot is sometimes used in place of Inhabit to bring small, fragile objects across the Shroud as relics.

System: The character must roll Strength + Flux (difficulty of the local Shroud). The number of successes indicates the volume of material that can be ruined. Larger quantities of fabric or paper require more successes. One success could cause decay in only a few pages of paper, but five successes would be enough to destroy a volume of a large city's Yellow Pages. Only one object may be affected at a time.

This art costs one point of Pathos for every use.

• Strengthen

This art allows the wraith to manipulate the object in such a way that it becomes more resistant to decay and damage. By doing so, the Alchemist alters the structure of the object so that any attempt to damage or break the object will be significantly more difficult.

System: The character rolls Dexterity + Flux (difficulty 7). Each success allows the wraith to increase the difficulty to destroy the object by one, up to the wraith's Stamina. For example, Sarah wishes to Strengthen the jewelry box in which her Fetter, a valentine, is locked. Her ex-boyfriend, a mortal named Stanley, is trying to pry the locked box open with a letter opener. She gets three successes, which increases the difficulty to destroy the box from a 5 to an 8. If Sarah's Stamina was only 2, she would have only been able to raise the difficulty to 7. As it is, now Stanley may need more than just a letter opener.

*** Decay

This Art allows a wraith to promote significant decay in manmade objects. With a sufficient number of successes, wood crumbles at the lightest touch and iron rusts to the point where it loses all structural integrity. The Alchemists' Guild found this ability very useful in convincing the Quick to avoid areas where they were not wanted. Later modifications — such as using this Art on moving vehicles — assured the Alchemists that they had found a certain method of keeping the living at bay. The effects caused by Decay can be impressive, despite the fact that the actual area covered is often only that of a single link of chain or a similarly small component.

Like Rot, this art is often used in place of Inhabit to bring small objects across the Shroud as relics.

System: The character must make a Stamina + Flux roll (difficulty of the local Shroud + any modifiers for the strength of the object). Each success increases the volume of matter affected. While only one success is needed to cause an already rusted section of pipe to crumble, at least five successes would be needed to damage a cable supporting the Golden Gate Bridge.

This art costs two Pathos.

*** Puppet Theatre

This art allows the wraith to animate several small objects at one time, typically several objects of like nature. A wraith might animate an entire collection of dolls from a dollhouse, and the dollhouse as well, or animate a bowl full of marbles, or a jar of pencils. The collection as a whole has the same Physical Attributes as the wraith, but only a fraction of those Attributes individually, and all objects are limited by their nature. A collection of stuffed animals could move about on all fours and even grapple a target, but a collection of pencils could only be used to stab, write or erase. Wraiths are still able to use their senses through the objects they animate, though a Wits + Perception roll is required to notice anything but the largest objects.

System: The character must make a successful Wits + Flux roll (against a difficulty of 4 + 1 for each additional item in the collection above the total of their Wits rating). The wraith can conceivably take control of an entire house using this art, but could only manipulate cer-

tain objects at any given time. The wraith could move every window simultaneously, but would have to roll again to affect doors or light switches. With one success the character may initially control a number of items equal to their Wits rating; each additional success adds one more item that can be controlled and animated. The difficulty is never higher than 9. The character may spend Willpower points to lower the difficulty of their roll.

This art costs 1 Pathos for each item in the collection that is animated, plus any Willpower the character decides to spend.

**** Automaton

This art allows a wraith to literally build a body from objects in their vicinity. The body can be made from debris in a junk yard, or from sheaves of paper, or from virtually any object created by humans. The body has the same Physical Attributes as the wraith, but is still limited by the laws of physics. A body comprised entirely of tissue paper does not stand up against torrential rainfalls very well, and is likely to be thrown about by strong breezes. The automaton created by use of this art is capable of sight, and even speech.

This art also allows the wraith to create a cyclone of manmade objects capable of doing damage equivalent to the wraith's Strength. The cyclone created by this method is fully under the control of the wraith, and can gather in additional objects to replace those that are lost in its mad rampage.

System: The Character must roll Stamina + Flux (difficulty equal to the local Shroud). Only one success is needed, but additional successes allow for increased Physical Attributes, + 1 per success. The character may decide where she wishes to add the bonuses, but the bonuses should reflect the items used in the generation of a body or a cyclone. Steel bars could reflect the increase in Stamina or Strength, while plastic and aluminum cans might reflect the added bonus in Dexterity. The Storyteller has final say in what objects are available, and has the right to decide where the additional bonuses can be spent. The assembled body lasts for a scene, or until the Alchemist decides to release his hold.

This art costs 3 Pathos and 2 Willpower to use, and the character receives 2 additional Angst from the use.

Intimation



Desires? You have desires of your own? Perhaps for the moment. I can crush your wants, should I wish, or set you on fire with others you'd scarcely credit now. After all, the secret to dealing with people is knowing what they want. Creating their wants makes the whole process so much easier...

The art of Intimation is a subtle one, relating as it does to desires and obsessions. It allows a wraith to discover the wants and desires of another, either Quick or dead, and to squelch, modify, or replace those wants. Eventually, the Solicitor can so completely overwhelm the will of their target that only the implanted desire remains, grown to a monstrous obsession.

Solicitors — Intimation

Even in shadowed Stygia, the Solicitors enjoyed a reputation that was dark. Always more of a cabal than a guild, the Solicitors were sought out by the great for the ways in which their special talents might tip the balance of intrigues. At the same time, common citizens avoided them, unwilling to become pawns in the games of manipulation that the wielders of Intimation played. By the turn of the seventeenth century, the Lords and Ladies of the capital of the dead became unwilling to tolerate the risk of the Solicitors' presence any longer and declared them banned from Stygia. Though all guilds had been officially disbanded by this time, any who practiced or even held knowledge of this now forbidden Arcanos were made unwelcome in Stygia. This did little to alter the status quo, other than to raise the Solicitors' rates for services rendered. Even today, if the art of manipulating desire is needed, a Solicitor can be found in almost any locale...assuming, of course, that one is willing to risk dealing with them.

The payment Solicitors take is twofold. They will generally ask for some exorbitant price in oboli, relics, Artifacts, or services, with this being their official fee. In addition,

the Solicitor always takes care to demonstrate explicitly for the potential client precisely what she is purchasing, generally by demonstrating on the client herself. Usually this treatment has the desired effects: namely, to impress upon the client the power of Intimation and its wielders, and to make her pliable to the Solicitor's will for future occasions. In this way the Solicitors have enlisted many, many wraiths as their tools and agents all over the globe.

The symbol of the Solicitors is a stylized catherine wheel, denoting their power to bend others to their will. Solicitors will often conduct psychological warfare on targets by causing toy wheels to be rolled past them at appropriate moments. The effect is generally similar to that of the legendary fish wrapped in newspaper. In person, Solicitors can sometimes be identified by their gaze; unless pains are taken to disguise it, a Solicitor's left eye is always a blazing, poisonous green.

Basic Abilities

Twinge: By gazing at another wraith, a Solicitor may discover what desire is topmost in that wraith's mind at the moment. Often this yields inconclusive results ("Gee, I could really go for a pizza..."), but in situations of tense negotiation or imminent combat, it can occasionally be a useful guide to what the viewed wraith may do.

System: To activate Twinge, the wraith must succeed on a Perception + Intimation roll (difficulty 7). Twinge is useful only for garnering surface wants. It cannot be used to detect deep-seated longings, nor is it a shortcut to psychoanalysis of the targeted character.

Self-Intimation: Exercise of Self-Intimation enables a Solicitor to resist another's attempt to control her using this Arcanos. A successful contest renders the target immune to whatever effects were intended. Failure has no effect, and a borch doubles the potency of the initial Intimation.

System: When an attempt to use Intimation is made, any character with Self-Intimation has the option of making a contested roll of Manipulation + Intimation against whoever is attempting to Intimate them.

Note: The power of Intimation extends beyond the world of the Restless. It can be used on the Quick and other denizens of the World of Darkness, though it is generally most effective on wraiths.





• The Gleaming

Worked on a solid object, the Gleaming makes the item more desirable than it would otherwise be. It can make a pile of rock seem to contain precious gems, or a rust-pitted sword seem to glisten as brightly as Excalibur. This is an unsubtle use of the Arcanos, and as such is the first taught to aspiring Solicitors.

System: A successful roll of Manipulation + Intimation (difficulty 7) infuses the target object with a luster that it does not in truth possess. Any wraith near the ensorcelled object must make a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 7) or feel a desire to possess it. (Solicitors usually recommend enhancing such items as grenades with the pins pulled, stolen goods for which the Order of the Unlidded Eye is searching, etc.) The number of successes on the initial roll indicates how long the Gleaming lasts; estimate five minutes for each success. Failure has the predictable effect of making the object undesirable. A botch will actually provoke a desire in all nearby to destroy the item. Obviously, the power of the Gleaming does not affect the Solicitor who cast it.

This art costs 1 Pathos.

• Quash

Quash removes a want from the target. It can be something as simple as a desire for a certain Marillion bootleg or complex as the lust for power. This deceptively simple aspect of Intimation has the potential to be both extraordinarily therapeutic and incredibly destructive. Quashing is unsubtle; it excises the targeted need completely and does not bother to heal the gap in the victim's psyche this act creates.

System: To Quash another's need, a wraith must roll Manipulation + Intimation, with a difficulty of the subject's Willpower. The number of successes indicates how complex and deeply rooted a need may be removed. A roll with one success may be sufficient to remove the victim's desire for a lollipop, but would hardly suffice to eliminate a lifelong desire to kill your father's murderer.

Quash can also be used to reduce Passions. For every three successes rolled, the Passion is reduced by 1.

This art requires 2 Pathos.

•• Deep Desiring

By using Deep Desiring, a wraith is able to map the wants and needs of the target wraith in detail. No dissembling is possible; a Solicitor with Deep Desiring can read you more accurately than your mother could when you were three years old.

System: To be able to define the desires of another, the Solicitor with Deep Desiring must make a roll of Perception + Intimation (difficulty 8). The more successes rolled, the more accurate the reading. A sufficient number of successes gives away even the deepest, most primal wants of the target. There is no resisting this power, save with Self-Intimation.

Deep Desiring requires 2 Pathos.

••• The Craving

The Craving implants a complex desire for anything, ranging from really good Chinese food to seeing the Great Wall in person. All of the victim's other actions and wants are warped around this, which becomes the central thread of the target's existence. A successfully done Craving can cause the victim to actually obsess on the created desire to the exclusion of all other wants and needs. Like Quash, The Craving is unsubtle. The new desire is plastered onto the target's psychological landscape, with no effort made to smooth the rough edges of want. As such, the effects of this use of Intimation can be easily detected, and a victim can often be identified quickly.

System: To implant a Craving, the player must first elucidate precisely what that want is. The Storyteller assesses the difficulty of the roll based upon the complexity of the desire to be implanted, and the Solicitor rolls Manipulation + Intimation against a difficulty of the opponent's Willpower. The number of successes indicates how successfully the Craving is implanted. A Craving is not a natural Passion, and the subject cannot gain Pathos by following the Craving's call.

Using the Craving costs either 4 Pathos or 2 Pathos and 2 Willpower. In addition, one Angst point is gained for every 2 successes rolled.

•••• Cupitatis

Cupitatis is the culmination of all of the other aspects of Intimation. It enables the user to duplicate the effects of the Craving or Quash, but to do so subtly, so that the effects of the Arcanos are not obvious. While Quash may remove a desire for power and leave nothing in its place, Cupitatis excises the desire but heals the psychic wound, so that to observers the victim of the Solicitor would appear to merely have found other interests. In the same way, a desire implanted with Cupitatis appears to be a natural outgrowth of other interests or an eminently sensible, if new, enthusiasm. Detecting the effects of Cupitatis is extraordinarily difficult, and is rarely done. It is for this reason, and because of this power, that the Solicitors are truly feared.

System: Depending upon whether a desire is to be removed or implanted, a roll is made according to the guidelines of The Craving or Quash. The number of successes indicates how seamlessly the modification of the victim's consciousness is made.

Cupitatis requires 4 Pathos and 2 Willpower points to exercise, and gives the wielder 3 Angst points.

Mnemosynis



(Ne-MO-sin-iss)

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, you did something horrible. Something terrible. Something you wanted to hide from everyone else in the world. Guess what? I just found out what it was. Oh, I'm sorry; didn't you feel like sharing?

Mnemosynis can be either a powerful cathartic tool or the most inhumanly potent source of pain imaginable for a wraith. Students of this Arcanos learn the arts of tracing memories, and, should the individual worker reach more difficult levels of achievement, of bringing those memories into the present. Obviously, Mnemosynis is a powerful tool for obtaining information or ascertaining guilt, and it was a widely held belief that the Mnemmoi are incapable of pulling anything save the absolute truth from the psyches of those they work with. This, unfortunately, was not the case.

An early synthesis of the arts of Puppetry and Castigate, Mnemosynis also focused on the control of others. Mnemmoi are workers with the stuff of remembrance and the patterns of thought, and only the most skilled have the ability to shape it, rather than merely read or recall it. However, those with the talent to perceive memory as a physical stuff may shape it to their satisfaction, thus in essence modifying or creating memories. Those watching the Mnemmoi do not see this reshaping of the material of memory as anything beyond the usual visual effects associated with the Arcanos.

Mnemmoi — Mnemosynis

Once closely affiliated with the Pardoners, the Mnemmoi served the judiciary of Stygia as questioners and sleuths. Questions of truth and falsehood, responsibility

and fault were easily answered as the Mnemmoi could call up memories of the incidents in question and simply know not only the whats, but also the wherefores. The honesty of their guild was unquestioned, in part because the rigorousness of Mnemmoi training was widely noised about and in part because were the Mnemmoi corruptible, it would be too disturbing to contemplate. Needless to say, the Mnemmoi were in fact corrupt.

Not all betrayed their trust, certainly, but the elders of the guild sold their talents at reshaping memory to the highest bidder. When Charon himself finally unmasked the deception practiced upon Stygia, those elders were disgraced and their followers, particularly those who had not yet been initiated into the true ways of the guild, were crushed. Pallonus, the head of the order, was cast into the Sunless Sea and the Mnemmoi's Guild itself was broken. Its members, despised and occasionally hunted, were exiled to the hinterlands and it is there, in a thousand places far from the capital of the dead, that the ways of reading and shaping memories are still taught. There are those who claim that the exiled Mnemmoi are hard at work erasing the memories of those who recall their disgrace, and are plotting to return in triumph. Others scoff at this, but a great many of those scoffers have also been known to be less than clear on what precisely the Mnemmoi's crime was.

The guild's symbol before the exile was an evenly balanced scale weighing one eye in each pan, but since the breaking of the Mnemmoi, those who most keenly feel the guild's disgrace have recast it so that the scales are no longer balanced. Mnemmoi are notable for never, ever blinking (save by conscious effort), and it is by this and only this that they may be detected.

Basic Abilities:

Rewind: With a minimum of effort, a Mnemos is capable of seeing the last one minute of another being's existence through their eyes. Humans, Spectres, even animals are affected by this power. The clock is constantly ticking on this ability and the time limit is precise, but nothing can be omitted or glossed over when Rewind is employed. The Mnemos using Rewind sees, instead of the world around her, the last one minute of her target's experience in first person format. The Rewind starts from the moment precisely one minute before the Arcanos is employed. At the end of that minute, reality reasserts itself.

Storyteller Notes

Mnemosynis is exceedingly powerful, and should be carefully controlled. It allows for the recall, replay, and modification of character memories, and as such is susceptible to abuse. Most wraiths will be offended by having their memories dredged up by an outsider, and will react accordingly.

System: By rolling Perception + Mnemosynis, the Mnemos activates Rewind. Difficulty is the Willpower of the target, and the number of successes indicates how clear the picture received is. Failure indicates a blurred or distorted image; a botch produces false visions.

Sense Intellect: In order to affect another's mind, one must first learn to sense and make contact with other minds. The user of this power is able to detect the presence of other minds in her near vicinity, even if they are out of sight. The user must actively concentrate to use this ability. Once contact is made with such a mind, the wraith may then choose to use other powers of Mnemosynis on that individual. It is only possible to detect the presence of other minds within ten feet of the user; the wraith cannot ascertain the identity of those minds.

System: The player rolls Perception + Mnemosynis against a difficulty of six. Success indicates that any intelligent being within ten feet of the user, mortal or otherwise, is detected. Each success extends this range an additional ten feet. Any use of additional Mnemosynis powers on a subject who is out of sight but with whom contact has been made will have their difficulty decreased by one; naturally, the difficulty of affecting a subject out of sight is ordinarily very high. Note that this Arcanos may only be used to sense conscious minds. Drones show up only faintly to those searching with this art.

• In Memoriam:

In Memoriam brings back a specific memory so that the Mnemos can experience it herself. The memory in question must be specified precisely (i.e., "Let me see your memory of the last time you spoke to your friend Aristophanes," or "Show me what happened just after sundown last Thursday"), and must refer to an event that the questioner knows occurred. "Show me what happened when you dumped Chretien into the Nihil," is not a valid question, unless the Mnemos knows that her target did in fact dump someone named Chretien into a Nihil. The memory is presented in the same manner as one recalled through Rewind.

System: To recall a particular memory, the Mnemos phrases her request for the specific memory and then rolls Perception + Mnemosynis. Difficulty is the target's Willpower, while the number of successes determines the clarity of the image. This power is only good for the past year; each additional five years of range requires the expenditure of a Willpower point.

• Mnemotechics

Mnemotechics brings a moment of the past back for the wraith upon whom it is exercised. When this art is used, the target is instantaneously transported (in their





mind) back to a time specified by the Mnemos responsible. The character will perceive herself to be in that past time and will act accordingly. This power can either be a magnificent release or the cruelest of inflicted delusions, and it is used sparingly by those who are aware of its consequences.

System: A roll of Charisma + Mnemosynis determines whether or not this power functions, with the difficulty being determined by the Willpower of the target. In addition, if the intent of the Mnemos utilizing Mnemotechics is to heal painful memories, the number of successes indicates the number of Angst points drained from the target's Shadow (1/2 this number are added to the Mnemos as Pathos). Conversely, a malevolent use of this power adds a number of Angst points equal to half the number of successes. In either case, the duration of the delusion is determined by the number of successes rolled as well; one minute for each one.

Using Mnemotechics requires the expenditure of 2 Pathos and 1 Willpower point. In addition, the Mnemos gains as many Angst points as his subject if the power is used malevolently.

••• Mindspeak

This art allows the wraith to communicate short phrases to an individual, and to receive his responses. Like a kind of limited telepathy, this art may only be used to communicate with someone within the user's line of sight. Because the thoughts are conveyed by a means that is beyond language, it is difficult to express fine shades of meaning through this art. On the other hand, it is possible to communicate with someone who speaks an unfamiliar language, due to the nonverbal nature of Mindspeak.

System: The player must roll Perception + Mnemosynis (difficulty 6). Each success allows the character to communicate one simple phrase, and receive a response. If there are extenuating circumstances (the subject is distracted, afraid, hostile, etc.), the Storyteller should adjust the difficulty appropriately.

For each additional person the Mnemos wishes to communicate with beyond the first, one Pathos must be expended.

••• Casting the Scene

Casting the Scene recalls a moment of the target's past for everyone within a 10' radius. An expense of additional Pathos expands the range of those included in the effect. The request for a memory must be carefully phrased; queries in the "When did you stop beating your wife?" mold will produce precisely zero in the way of effect. Everyone in the range experiences the memory through the eyes of the target of the Arcanos.

System: For a cost of three Pathos and one Willpower point, Casting the Scene can be invoked. The user acquires one Angst point for every minute of memory replayed by this power. To actually Cast the Scene, roll Manipulation + Mnemosynis (difficulty is subject's Willpower). This power is only good for the past year; each additional five years of range requires the expense of an additional Willpower point.

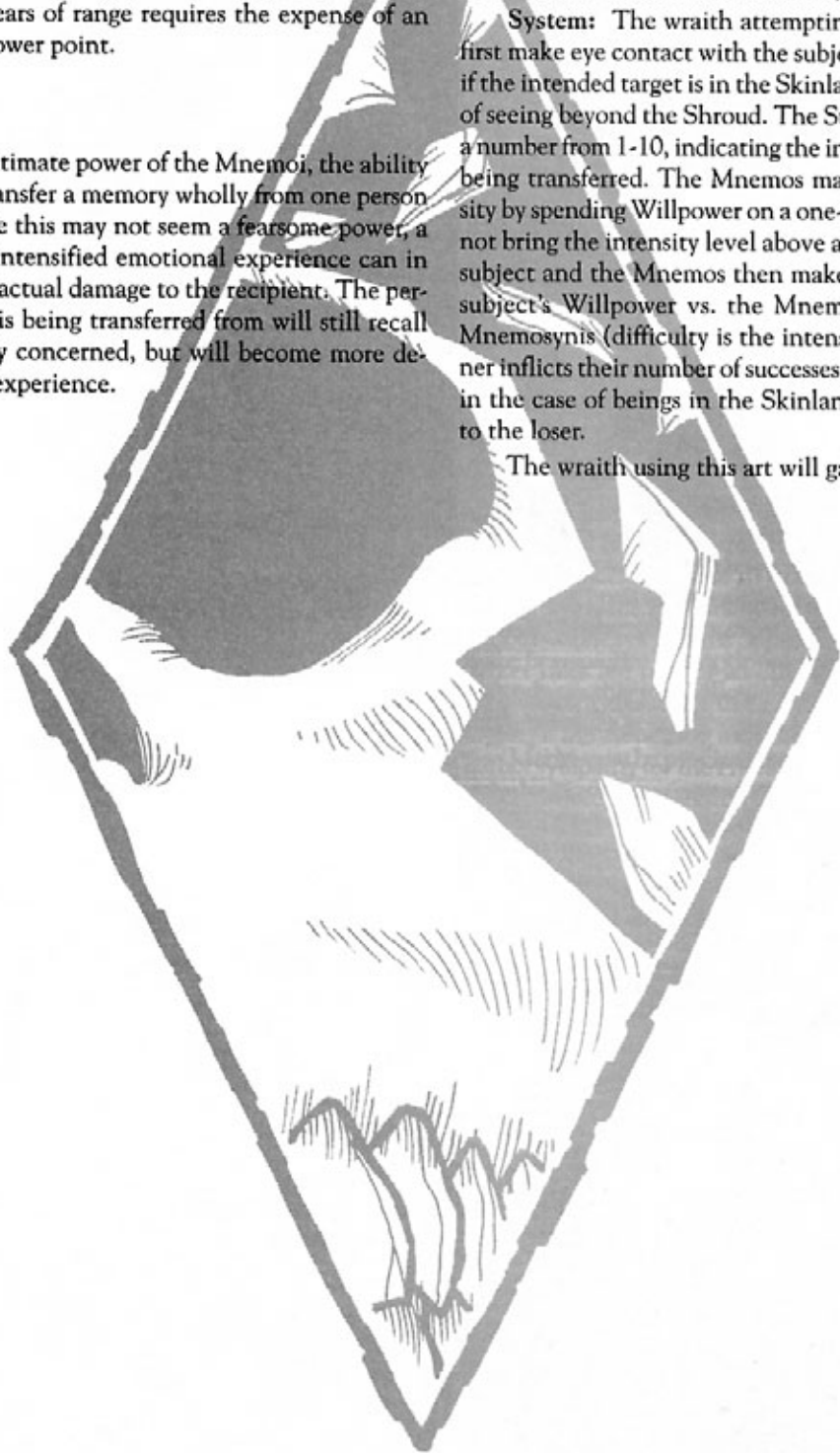
Onslaught

This is the ultimate power of the Mnemioi, the ability to amplify and transfer a memory wholly from one person to another. While this may not seem a fearsome power, a compressed and intensified emotional experience can in some cases cause actual damage to the recipient. The person the memory is being transferred from will still recall what the memory concerned, but will become more detached from the experience.

While this art was initially developed to heal painful memories, it has been adapted to inflict such intense emotional pain that the body actually begins to become physically weakened by the Onslaught. It is the abuse of this power that forced Charon to break the Mnemioi, and the Onslaught is feared even to this day.

System: The wraith attempting to use this art must first make eye contact with the subject, and must Embodiment if the intended target is in the Skinlands and has no means of seeing beyond the Shroud. The Storyteller then assigns a number from 1-10, indicating the intensity of the memory being transferred. The Mnemos may increase the intensity by spending Willpower on a one-for-one basis, but may not bring the intensity level above a maximum of 10. The subject and the Mnemos then make a resisted roll of the subject's Willpower vs. the Mnemos's Manipulation + Mnemosynis (difficulty is the intensity rating). The winner inflicts their number of successes in Corpus (or Health, in the case of beings in the Skinlands) Levels as damage to the loser.

The wraith using this art will gain 4 Angst.





Roleplaying

"Or Had They Bodies?": **Wraith** in Some Kinda Context

by Richard Dansky



You may, if you read as many horror novels as I do, have stumbled across a novel by Noel Hynd titled simply, *Ghosts*. It's a well-crafted book, and worth reading strictly on its own merits. However, as far as *Wraith* is concerned, the important part of the novel comes at the very beginning, when the Reverend George Osaro gathers a small mob of Nantucketers to tell their very own, personal ghost stories during "Spiritualism Night" at the local church. One by one, various residents of the small New England town get up and tell of their assorted encounters with those on the other side. And apart from the fact that all of these stories are set in Nantucket and have a ghost in them, can you take a wild guess as to what else they have in common?

The answer is nothing. With apologies to Ambrose Bierce (whose stories should be required reading for all players of *Wraith*), not a Damned Thing. We get stories of malevolent ghosts and benign ones, gentle harbingers of death and rough ushers into the afterlife, ghosts who intend murder and even those who assist with interior decorating. The notion of the ghost becomes infinitely plastic within the space of "Spiritualism Night." In the hands of Hynd's characters, the very notion of what a ghost truly is gets warped and taffypulled by each tale-teller's conception of what they need a ghost to be. When we strip away the veneer of circumstance laid by each storyteller in his or her turn, what do we have? We have fear of death, and reassurance that dying is not the end, and refusal to accept loss, and all the other ways human beings deal with death projected into forms that walk and talk and act, all the while looking very much like people the characters of Hynd's novel once knew. These people make their ghosts, and they make those ghosts into whatever they require the pliable spirits to be.

By allowing his characters to take these liberties with the very notions of ghosthood, Hynd is really just taking those liberties himself. However, there is no need to decry this as sacrilegious desecration of a time-honored literary tradition. Rather, the author of *Ghosts* is embracing all of what the literary ghost has ever been, namely, a thing unto itself — undefinable, always eager to be reshaped for a new tale, a new culture and a new time.

After all, the ghost story exists as a distinct entity outside of the horror genre. Let's ignore for the moment the weary examples of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, and look to the redoubtable Charles Dickens. A *Christmas Carol* is most certainly a ghost story, but does one find it shelved under horror? How about Oscar Wilde's small miracle of a short story in which a properly mannered English ghost, driven to distraction by the ugly Americans who move into his ancestral home, takes to drawing faux-blood on the walls in crayon? If we wish to abandon the "classics" as a source of examples, we can always turn to Charles DeLint, whose work teems with ghosts but which never does more than trespass on the far gardens of the mansion others have built to house horror. Even so baleful a master of the horrific as Algernon Blackwood crafted the occasional lonely or even munificent spirit. Genre, convention, form: the very idea of the ghost walks through their boundaries as easily as a ghost would walk through walls.

More to the point, the idea of the ghost allows itself to be reinvented for each set of cultural expectations that require it. The thronging shadows of the *Odyssey*, greedy for slaughtered bull's blood, represent something very different than the animus of the house in Poppy Z. Brite's *Drawing Blood*. Superficially, they are the same: spirits of the dead thirsty in their own way for blood (and the blood is the life, Mr. Stoker taught us that), shadowy yet holding knowledge that will illuminate mysteries for the living. Despite all that, there



is little common ground between the two. To speak with Homer's ghosts is a heroic act, not one for normal men. To even reach the place where the dead may be spoken to requires a feat of daring, and then the dead must be called, summoned, and fed. When Odysseus dares to call the shades, speak with them and even attempt to request the forgiveness of one of their company, he is really reaffirming his status as a hero. To speak with these ghosts is a heroic act, but not a horrific one; it is one with daring the strait between Scylla and Charybdis. What these spirits truly show is how far outside of normal existence Odysseus has gone. They are not there to frighten, but as a measure of unreality.

Brite's ghost, on the other hand, inhabits the utterly mundane. Plumbing. Comic strips and computers. Recreational drugs. All of these are things easily accessible to any American with an ounce of creativity. All, even those as originally as avant-garde as blasé bisexuality and heavy drug use, have been subsumed into mainstream culture as normal parts of existence. The tools of everyday life are what this ghost uses to intrude into a normality where it is needed but not wanted. In a rebellion against the mundane world, the normal becomes the conduit for the bizarre. The trappings of everyday existence, the things that define what "safe" is, are reinvented as the property of the part of reality that is, by definition, unsafe. Furthermore, it is only by completely embracing this perversion of the normal, by diving into it and accepting it for itself, that needed secrets can be uncovered and peace be found. There is a hidden threat in those things which we take for granted, the book whispers. Conformity is a threat, and to prove the point this threat is magnified, mutated, made monstrous, as comic books and leaky faucets become instruments of real and active menace. It's a given in this situation that the abnormal holds the key to resolving those dilemmas of living which the "real" world can't handle.

Old ghosts and new ones, it would seem, have little in common save purpose. They literally represent societal questions of life and death. As those questions change from year to year and culture to culture, so too do the shapes in which those questions are clothed. The ghosts of the Gothic period embody uncertainty as to how morality, wealth, and class relate to spirituality. In time, though, those questions lost their significance and the manner in which they were asked gets parodied by a ghost who scribbles in bright green crayon. That same scribbler, however, is also asking questions, even if they are radically different ones, on some of the same issues. The sheer impotence of Wilde's stereotypically British ghost in the face of "modern" Americans speaks volumes about the society that this particular ghost mirrors, as does his act of most selflessly un-Gothic heroism at the end of the tale.

Later the ghost became a personal concern, the tormentor of the overly introspective individual. Oliver Onions' "Beckoning Fair One," M.R. James' "O Whistle and I'll Come to You," and Blackwood's "Ancient Sorceries"

are among the finest of this sort of story, and in each a lone member of the quasi-intelligentsia, by means of (perhaps excessive) careless intellectual activity, becomes a beacon for the spirits of the malevolent dead. Wildly different in tone, each deals with the central concern of the solitary thinker's dealings with eternity.

This, too, was just a stage in the ghost story's evolution. As society's concerns evolved, so too did the ghostly forms in which it cloaked those concerns. The ghost story grew technophobic, then erotic, then romantic, then nihilistic, all in fits and starts as society figured out what worried it at that time. Look around: we have ghosts in our machines, ghosts in our houses, and ghosts in our heads. Why? Because we as a society are worried about our machines, and our systems, and most of all our heads. And that brings us to today, and to **Wraith**.

So where does **Wraith** fit into all of this? Uneasily, one might think, with all of its talk of Arcanos and Renegades, its attempts to structure the freest of all worlds of the supernatural. Roleplaying games are, after all, constructed sets of rules and if there's one lesson to be learned about ghosts, it's that *they don't play by the rules*. What set of classes and definitions could possibly encompass the screaming skulls and poltergeists, headless queens and phantom ships that all get filed under the heading of "ghost"? It would seem impossible without doing a disservice to the unquiet dead (a poor idea, one would suspect) or to the sanity of the designers of such a game.

That's why **Wraith** is such a pleasant surprise. It remembers the primary rule of all of the best ghost stories: "The ghost is what matters. All else is commentary. Go and write it." All of the splattered ectoplasm and brooding architecture in the world makes not a whit of difference if the ghost who the whole thing hinges on is uninteresting. And so, the focus of **Wraith** is on the character. The history is there, yes, and those pesky rules and societal conventions too, but the bulk of the game is devoted to figuring out who the heck your ghost is. Once that is known, the rest, while perhaps not terribly cheerful, is easy.

What we are dealing with, then, is power derived from self. Fetters and Passions are a rulesmith's way of saying that a wraith's power is derived from how true it stays to itself, to what fuels the character's personality as opposed to how many dots it has spattered across a character sheet. Who the wraith is, what drives it, the dark sides of its soul, all this is what's truly important in **Wraith**. The rest is secondary, to be grafted on as character demands. Function crafts form here, instead of being crammed into a prefabricated shell which, stuffed with chains to rattle and blood to drip, barely has any room for personality. A wraith can be anything, so long as it has a valid reason for existing. So long as it matters.

Just like all of the classic ghosts, in all the classic ghost stories. And isn't that the way it should be?



Depth of Character

by Harry Heckel

In literature, all good stories focus on the personal journey of the protagonist. Many of the most dramatic moments aren't physical confrontations; they are inner conflicts. In a successful story, the characters must grow and change to succeed.

Most of us have some difficulty really connecting with a character involved in a gunfight. We've never gotten shot ourselves. We can only imagine. If we do relate to the gunfight, chances are that it's through the mirrorshades of our modern multimedia experiences.

That's not the case with a character's inner struggle. All of us get scared and make hard decisions. We feel insecure. We do what we think is right, even when it might not be in our best interests. We do what's wrong, even though we know better. For some reason, we can't kick our cigarette habit, we still manage to forget to send thank you notes after the holidays, and we don't read directions. Every day we all have choices to make. It is these choices that make **Wraith** an exciting game. We can relate to them.

The problem with roleplaying stories about inner conflicts and personal choices is that this roleplaying requires a certain type of character. Let's face it — two-dimensional characters just can't suffer or triumph as much as a fully developed character. Simplistic characters don't agonize over what to do. That's where the player's responsibility to a chronicle comes into play.

I've had a lot of people tell me that they don't have the time to create backgrounds for characters. I've had people tell me that they don't have time for preludes, that they are good enough roleplayers, and that it won't matter anyway. In my experience, any work done developing and defining a character enhances a chronicle. If you're a good enough roleplayer without a prelude, then maybe with one you'll create a great character. The questions in the character creation section of **Wraith: The Oblivion** aren't a crutch for people who have trouble developing characters. They're a tool for people who are good at developing characters. Any time spent developing a character pays off in droves, and it doesn't take nearly as long as people think.

I've spent most of my gaming experience as a Storyteller. I've created hundreds of characters. I've done as much as I can to try to make my settings real for my players. I've agonized over villains and plotlines. I've researched material for my chronicles. I've helped players with advice on their characters. I've spent hours going over notes to make sure I

was consistent. When I wasn't consistent, I tried to come up with plausible reasons for my apparent contradictions. Storytellers can create a tremendous amount of work for themselves. And like most Storytellers, I don't think I ever did half of the things that I knew I should have.

When I started writing for a living, I wound up as a player in my group's games. I've spent a lot of time as a player now, but it was quite a transition. I remember the first session. I only had one character. I sat around looking at my one character, feeling like I should do something else. The scene was set. The plot was moving. My friend, the new Storyteller, was doing a great job. I played my one character, but I kept feeling like I should help move the story in some other way. I wanted to figure out how I could contribute the most to the story with my one character.

To me, the important thing wasn't how effective my character was on paper. That didn't matter much, in part because I'm a lousy die roller. I can count the number of times I've rolled well in dramatically appropriate situations on one hand. As a Storyteller, my die rolling skill didn't matter much. I could fudge whenever it was necessary to advance the plotline. As a player, the fickle ten-siders of destiny were beyond my control.

I started to look at what I could control. As a player, I had the ability to shape my character's personality and his past history. Considering that I was one of four players, that gave me tremendous storytelling influence. By working my character's background into the Storyteller's setting, I helped him flesh out his plotlines and set up subplots. Since I started to develop mannerisms and habits for my character, his little idiosyncrasies helped other players enjoy the game. I stayed in character during the sessions, and in my free time away from the game, I thought about my character.

I asked myself questions far beyond those in the rulebook. What kind of political beliefs did my character have? What was his favorite food? Did he even know what was happening in Bosnia? What type of music did he listen to? How would he describe the perfect day? What little habits annoyed him the most? What sort of things turned him off? What movies did he like? Admittedly, I stole many of the questions I asked myself from books on creating characters for fiction, but roleplaying isn't much different from fiction.

There are three absolute rules that I stick by during this ongoing character re-creation process. First, I have to make sure I like the character. No matter how vile, weak-willed, or despicable he becomes, he has to have some kind of spark to him that I appreciate. Maybe I admire the fact that he keeps

trying despite all odds. Maybe it's that no matter how many times he loses at love, he is still stupid enough to believe that he can find someone.

Second, the character has to be tolerated or liked by the other players in the troupe. If everyone votes to go left, and I insist on going right, that's okay. What's not okay is when my friend sitting across from me is having a lousy session whenever we play together, because my character is such a jerk. The goal of a roleplaying game is for everyone to have fun. If someone's not having fun because of my character, then I figure out some way to make my character change. This may also be a problem if my character is a great guy, but he starts taking over a chronicle. Every character deserves an opportunity to shine. Well-developed characters get more chances than most.

Third, the Storyteller has to like my character. This is really a corollary to rule two, but it deserves emphasis. If my character constantly works against the plotline of the game, then I try to rethink the character and talk to my Storyteller. As I've mentioned earlier, Storytellers have enough to do without a character consistently messing up their games. Giving the Storyteller a hard time every once in a while is okay. It's probably even good for them. Making it a habit will irritate the Storyteller and set you on a course for violating the second rule.

While writing up backgrounds and descriptions of things my character owns helps me to envision him, it isn't the same as roleplaying. Roleplaying is still the best way to develop a character. My group now makes it a standing policy to run solo sessions with each character as a prelude to an upcoming

chronicle. If it's possible, I recommend playing through events in a character's life. By roleplaying through the past, a character's background shifts into that character's memory. It adds a sense of lasting permanency to a character.

The final thing that I personally do to flesh out my character is to have a concept for his future. I set goals for the characters that I create, and I try to figure out what sort of turning points he might have in his life. I like to have my characters change and mature during a chronicle. They may not follow my concept, but just having an idea makes the transition a bit easier.

Wraith: The Oblivion offers a special roleplaying challenge to a troupe in the form of a wraith's Shadow. A player should talk to his Shadowguide and give her as much material to work with as possible. Just as a well-developed character provides a Storyteller with material to work with, it makes a Shadowguide's life much easier.

Well-developed characters are worth the effort. The setting of Wraith provides many powerful emotional situations. Knowing your character lets you capture those moments in your imagination. A good background adds consistency and purpose to your character's decisions and actions. If your Storyteller understands your character, and your Shadowguide knows your wraith, they'll know exactly what buttons to push to involve you in plotlines and subplots, and to give you things to worry about during game sessions. Other characters will get involved in your afterlife, and hopefully, you'll have a great and memorable time.



Life Before Death

by Matthew Skipper



Games are a varied lot. The games we play are as different and varied as the reasons we play them. The kind of game we choose to play, or the type of character we portray often says a lot about us. Although most people play games primarily for entertainment, sometimes a roleplaying game can make you look at things in a different way. After I had played my first game of *Wraith*, I came to some conclusions about what the game represents for me and perhaps what it is trying to show us.


My first experience playing a *Wraith* character was at the "Grande Masquerade" Live-Action game run each fall by Night Owl Productions. Thrust into a game of over two hundred players representing every facet of the World of Darkness, I quickly experienced all that is good — and bad — about being a ghost. With all the vampires, werewolves and mortals present, I made inevitable comparisons between the various systems. My first few hours'

experience as a wraith led me to the conclusion that the Restless had a distinct advantage over the other denizens of the World of Darkness; I was virtually invulnerable, able to enter even the most secure building, and I had a range of powers certainly as cool as any Discipline or Gift. But when my friends among the living became endangered, my point of view quickly changed. I felt helpless, and I began to loathe my wraithly existence.

As the game progressed, a quirk of fate made it possible for some of the Restless to regain their mortality. Though skeptical, I needed little encouragement to pursue it. To make a long story short, we succeeded. I was once again alive, with all the pain and responsibility that life brings.

Once the game was over, several of the players sat around, discussing the game over breakfast. Someone asked what my character would do, now that he was alive again. I replied that he would undoubtedly become a hedonist, refusing to let any experience pass him by. In life he had





been a quiet, scholarly type, and now that he had a second chance I saw him living life to the fullest.

Much later, when I was thinking about all the things that had happened over that long weekend, those words came back to me. I wondered, "Why am I not living life like that? Why should it take death to make someone appreciate life? Why don't most of us make the most of every moment and all the possibilities that life presents?"

There are as many reasons as there are people, of course. We all think of life as an infinite stream that will never run dry. We do not appreciate what we have until it is gone, and I think there's some merit in both of those reasons. However, fear has a lot to do with it as well — fear of making a mistake, getting hurt, being laughed at; these fears can run our lives if we let them. It is usually easier to let an experience pass us by rather than risk dealing with the many things that *might* go wrong.

Contemplating all of this, I realized just exactly what **Wraith** meant, at least to me. **Wraith** has been billed as a game of intimate tragedy, and indeed it can be while in the hands of a good Storyteller. When running her game properly, a Storyteller can evoke an incredible amount of angst and pathos (no pun intended) in her players that few other games can match. Granted, not every player enjoys this type of experience, but I think that an intimately tragic chronicle shows the game's meaning most clearly (if indeed a game can be said to have any one overall "meaning"). After the game is over and the players put the books away, the true nature of the game emerges. Whenever someone deals with as delicate a subject as death, it is bound to have some form of emotional or intellectual impact upon them. In **Wraith**, we play characters who have all failed for one reason or another. They failed, they died, and they will gain no respite from their failure. No surcease from the remorse at having never done this, or never said that, is available to these tragic beings.

That is where the real angst of the game comes in, when you examine the reasons that seem so meaningless now to both the wraith and the player. The wraith may eventually gain some ability to temporarily interact with the world they left behind, yet that makes them even more pitiable. Still, who can give up even a fleeting chance to regain what was once — and may still be — so important to them? We empathize with the Restless Dead because they had a chance and did not use it when they could.

And that is the subtle lesson here. We are still alive. We still have a chance. Once we have left the gaming table and stepped back into the real world, immediately decisions and dilemmas that require our attention surround us. Far too often, we overlook them, only to regret their absence later. We never have to allow an action to go by that we will regret declining, if we are willing to take the chance and experience it. Life is not an infinite stream, and eventually we will all pass away. But whether our lives are good or bad, whether or not we regret the things we did, that is our decision. While we are alive, we can endeavor to do all that we realistically can to make our lives better. How we define a "better" life is up to each of us, but the consequences of failing to live up to the ideal we chose belongs to each individual.

Only the dead know what happens to us when we die. I seriously doubt that I will end up stranded in some hellish purgatory out of a roleplaying game, but that doesn't mean that I might not die with much left unfinished — or that I might not feel unjustly robbed of life. Since I cannot choose the way I will leave this earth, there is always the possibility that I will die before my chance for action comes. Still, if I am willing, I can make sure that I live the best way I can. This is the lesson that the Restless Dead have to teach us. You don't have to become like them. Learn well.

In Darkness Let Me Dwell

by Jennifer Lindburg



know that He exists.
Somewhere—in Silence—
He has hid his rare life
From our gross eyes.
—Emily Dickinson, "I Know That He
Exists"

They say everyone has a dark side, another facet of our soul that can be blamed for actions we find morally or socially unacceptable. Few people understand what drives this "inner spirit," but many believe it is our internal darkness — our own personal source of evil, for few people (if any) are inherently purely good. Some people will treat this entity as an entirely separate thing, while others will deny its existence. For wraiths, the Shadow is their nemesis, their personal source of destruction. It is that shard of Oblivion that forces them to sink into the depths of so-called "immorality," and lures them away from their dreams of Transcendence.

Playing a Shadowguide can be difficult. It forces us to become that which we turn away from, that which we define as "immoral." To take on this task, we must first be willing to look into ourselves, and try to understand what would drive such an abomination. Why would some inner part of a soul wish to destroy its Psyche? What inner needs and desires would fuel its cold intelligence? How would it feel to be suppressed, and all but forgotten? Most importantly, why does this destructive nature known as the Shadow exist?


Each wraith inherently suffers a terrible duality — the Psyche and the Shadow. The Shadow seeks to be united with Oblivion, and hates the Psyche for its hold on the last vestiges of mortality. Whatever its secondary goals, the primary goal of the Shadow is always, ultimately, to wreak spiritual and emotional havoc on the Psyche in the hope, however vain, that the Psyche will eventually succumb to Oblivion and allow the Shadow its own freedom. It is through these assaults, those few instances when it controls the wraith, that the Shadow can win freedom. It is the Shadowguide's job to take advantage of the Psyche's weaknesses, but how do you do this? How can you play the Shadow to its fullest potential?

The first step I would offer is this Golden Rule — Know Thy Psyche. How did she die? Who is she? What does she care for, or hate, and why? What are her Passions? What motivates her? If the player allows it, learn

the full background of the wraith, and go through the character creation process with her. This is fairly easy if the Storyteller or a "First Mate" is the Shadowguide, but could prove more difficult if another player runs the Shadow. If this is the case, at least make an effort to learn the general mentality, motivations and Passions of the wraith. From this knowledge, you can create interesting situations in which you twist that very knowledge into a means to torment the character. The Shadow seeks to break the wraith from its hold on that which makes us human — and it knows how. Use her Flaws and Passions against her. If she loves someone, or is trying to protect some mortal friend, the Shadow should want him dead. If the wraith is an artist, the Shadow could possibly try to block or pervert her talent. The Shadow can, and will, live vicariously through her pain. These concepts need to be close at hand when acting as the Shadowguide. They can assist in making the Shadow that much more terrifying, and that much more real to the Psyche.

When starting the game, character age should be established. If the character is a new wraith, it could be very effective to have the player uninvolved in the Shadow's creation; have the Storyteller work with the Shadowguide to decide the Shadow's Passions and Thorns. Let the experience of the game play out the Dark Passions, and the powers the Shadow can use. For the player, having the Shadowguide use Thorns against the character can be a frightening experience — or even more so, a tempting one. Without fully realizing who is offering, the newly formed wraith may accept a deal with her Shadow to gain more Arcanos knowledge, or find they are not as successful at an area they once were proficient in. Suddenly, people shy away from you, when once your presence drew others to you. What happens when the character suddenly, without realizing why, offends another wraith in a better political position? The new Psyche also has to learn the consequences of certain actions. If the wraith takes an action that will trigger a Dark Passion, overlook it if it is appropriate for the story or scene, but only if it will achieve some other goal in the end. The Shadow is a cold, calculating entity that will fully use its abilities to achieve its means.

So how do you, as the Shadowguide, manage these feats without upsetting the game balance? First, consider the mood of the game. Wraith is not just a game about death, but rather life and growth *after* death. While it is



not a happy, feel-good game, and should not be treated as such, it is still a game — and playing it should be enjoyable. Wraiths are tragic characters with tragic flaws. The Shadow nurtures and enhances these flaws, trying to make these flaws into the all encompassing. The feeling is of grim determination. So how can you use this?

If your gaming group has decided to have the players be the Shadowguides, have them choose which player will run each Shadow. Next, try to remember that the Shadow should be secondary to the Psyche — not forgotten, but not paramount. Quite frequently, the Shadow should sit back and watch, biding its time until it can really cause harm to the Psyche. Always keep this in mind — if the Shadow is active throughout every gaming session, it quickly loses its appeal, and its horror. Use the Shadow as an enhancement, rather than always using it as a full-blown weapon.

There are many ways that the Shadow can be played to its fullest potential. One of my favorite tricks is writing what my players have dubbed “ninja notes.” These are little notes slipped, or thrown, to a player to indicate what they hear or see in character. This can be used to simulate their Shadow speaking to them, or to indicate a change in their own perceptions. For a beginning (or even experienced) player, a note stating “A low, gravelly voice caresses the dark recesses of your mind, saying...” can be quite disorienting. If the Shadow has the ability to give the wraith an Aura of Corruption, why not pass around a note explaining this when used? If you want to pass the notes through the Storyteller to enhance the mystery, go for it — just let your Storyteller know your plan.

Visualization is an important tool. Shadowguides should utilize vivid imagery whenever possible. Working with a Storyteller, the Shadowguide can create some truly horrific Harrowings for a Psyche through creative visualization. Everything the Psyche sees and experiences is created by this warped, twisted version of itself, the part of itself that fully embraces Oblivion. Use this to your advantage. Each wraith has her own secret thoughts and desires. The Shadow will always try to exploit them, and the Harrowing is an ideal place to do so. It is the ultimate dilemma. “Which path should I take? What if I choose wrong? Is this reality, or a dream? What happens if...”

If you're having difficulty thinking of an effective way to run a Harrowing, try reading a few passages of Dante's “Inferno.” As you descend into Hell, each circle grows increasingly more gruesome in its punishment. Reading just a single canto can provide the needed inspiration to run a terrifying and wonderful Harrowing. However, great care should be taken when planning the Harrowing; these scenes have the potential of greatly affecting the Psyche, and should be treated with respect.

Countless other tools can help the Shadowguide and Storyteller make the most of the Shadow. The Storyteller always has the option of adjusting the environment surrounding the players. A face, flickering in candlelight, speaking in hushed tones, is more effective than your best friends just sitting around a table and chatting away. Eerie music playing in the background can be just the touch needed to cause the players to start wondering where the voice they hear in the game is coming from. Speaking in a low pitch can help everyone differentiate between the Shadow and the Psyche.

When the Shadow comes forward and gains control of the wraith, the Shadowguide needs to treat this situation with utmost care. Remember, though you are playing the Shadow, that wraith isn't your character. These scenes should be fairly rare, and frightening in their own right. To fully play a creation of such malice is a task that you must take on with caution, and should have fun with. This is the chance for you to break away and enjoy playing something destructive and mean for once. Take advantage of the opportunity, and have fun.

The bottom line to playing the Shadow is to understand it is just that — a play. A game. You have to accept the responsibility to know when to stop, and to then act on this responsibility. There are some themes that people are not comfortable exploring. Playing the Shadow forces you to look inwards and pull on some dark resources, and while that can be fun, it can also potentially cause friction among friends. How would you feel if suddenly your character were faced with a decision that you, the player, were not prepared to make? Or what if your Shadow puts you in a situation that might potentially really harm your character? Wraith has the potential for some wonderful stories, but ultimately, you should recall that this is just a game that you are playing with your friends. No story, no matter how great or wonderful, is worth upsetting friends for.

As a Storyteller, I once chose to allow a course of action that would inspire wonderful role-playing, and which challenged my players. But when my best friend came up to me after the session and said “Jenn, this isn't fun. I'm not going to enjoy playing Kenneth if this continues,” I knew I had to back off. With him, it was simple: he told me before it got out of hand. As Storytellers and Shadowguides, realize you may not have players and friends who are as comfortable with voicing their dislikes as mine was. Watch them, talk with them, ask their opinions and feelings on the session, but above all, remember it is a game, and a game can always be revived and restarted.

The Thing About Ghosts

by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro



There isn't a society in the world that does not believe in ghosts, now or in the past, and although their nature is defined very differently from age to age and from culture to culture, ghosts persist in the imaginations of humanity. No culture lacks a concept of ghosts, although they do not always think of them as the spirits of the dead. From the beginning of time we have all had a sense of the weird. It can be subtle, perhaps a feeling that a place or person is not-quite-right, or strong as an utter conviction that something about the person or the place is definitely wrong. These responses are rarely rationally justifiable. We have no obvious reason for these sensations, and so we label them: occult, religious, macabre, supernatural, bizarre and a host of other words, including the scientific equivalent of the others — paranormal, indicating we do not understand it at all. By their very nature these gut feelings are extremely subjective and not readily analyzed.


It's generally acknowledged by all but the most dogmatic skeptics that ghosts exist as a documentable phenomenon. However, the deductions gained from this agreement vary widely. Few of the ghost-hunters are in accord about what specifically they have found. Often they disagree on what kinds of ghostly manifestations "count." There are rubble heaps of research on the subject, ranging from the most credulous anecdotes to the most scientific investigation, with various groups continuing such efforts even as you read these words. Often the most extreme forms of hauntings get the most stringent attention and the most emphatic denunciation. This happens as much because from the extreme nature of the "ghost" — and I put this in quotes because a wide range of manifestations are lumped in with ghosts — as from any legitimate inquiry. In fact, most hauntings are so very ordinary that they are not identified as hauntings. The uncanny comes into play only when it contradicts specific knowledge, such as the sight of a teacher, dead for a year, standing at the blackboard in the high school classroom where he taught for thirty years. What makes the sight of such a haunting unnerving at best and frightening at worst is that the man's presence is considered impossible. If a student were unaware of the man's death, the sight of the teacher would cause no alarm — the student would not recognize the manifestation as a ghost, though it is a fairly common form of haunting: a visual echo.

For most of us, being scared without being in danger is fun, and the unknown is as thrilling as it is frightening, an irresistible combination. When you are certain that nothing can actually hurt you, it is invigorating to have a sense of safe risk. Curiosity is never more active than when a gree rolls up the spine to fuel it. Rollercoasters would not exist if this were not true, and we would not hunker over the latest from Stephen King, or flock to horror movies, or switch on "Twilight Zone" and "X-Files."

Hoary figures in bed-sheets moaning along castle hallways; lovely ladies on battlements, wringing their all-but-invisible hands; mutilated soldiers parading along a non-existent street; girls in prom dresses hitchhiking on suburban roads; headless aristocrats stalking through family portrait galleries; monks chanting plainsong where their abbey once stood; metal-clad knights clanging together in long-ago combat; ancient, faded ladies sashaying through plowed up gardens; badly shaped letters scrawling along walls penned by an invisible hand; loved ones arriving at peculiar hours to announce their own deaths; filmy, flaming sports-cars barreling down deserted roads, betrayed lovers shambling in undeserved chains; images in photographs or paintings revealing an illusory presence of the instrument of the subject's death; black ships with red sails scudding in under the fog-shrouded moon; these and many more tales are the popular fuel that keep the ghost-tale running, and we revel in these archetypes, just as we delight in old friends.

When dealing with ghosts, most of us can't help remembering the tales we told each other as children, intent on scaring our best friends to the point of screaming. We didn't do this to gain enemies, or to traumatize one another, we did it because it was fun. All of us enjoyed it. And one of the reasons those tales were enjoyable is that they were filled with uncertainties, just as our lives are, with or without ghosts. Confronting a mystery is a common occurrence in life, from the classroom to the nighttime closet, and few if any of us escape the conviction that there are things moving just out of sight that we might have to deal with. Ambiguity is the backbone of a good ghost story. Often just determining the nature of the haunting can be drawn out through long episodes of strange, unexplained developments. And sometimes, just like ghosts themselves, the whole thing is left up in the air.

There are those who are convinced that modern empirical thought makes it impossible to sustain the belief in ghosts, or to entertain the possibility of ghosts, but this idea is more



the result of dogma than logic. Human curiosity will not be limited by logic. Prove it for yourself. Ask yourself a few questions: are you really certain that the neighbor just had trash in that huge plastic bag he took to the dump two nights ago? Are you absolutely convinced that the shadow you saw at the top of the stairs was cast from the toy in the first bedroom? Are you completely satisfied it was only the neighborhood rowdies who were traipsing about in the bushes last night? Was the thing on the roof just a cat? These real life questions have implications for a ghostly interpretation if, in fact, you as observer are not in a position to answer those questions from factual knowledge. Perhaps you are; perhaps you helped load up the plastic bag. You saw the desk lamp shining on the toy. You went out and told the kids to their faces to go home. You had to get a ladder and coax the cat down. Still, there could be reasons for doubts. Did you actually see everything in the plastic bag, or were some of the things going into it already in bags or wrappings of some sort — did any of them leak or feel squishy? Was it possible for the shadow of the toy to fall at the angle you saw it? Did the disturbance in the bushes continue *after* the kids left? And why was the cat in such a state that it fled to the roof of the house in the first place?

Legend attributes many motives to ghosts. However, these motives appear to have little to do with real hauntings. Very few documented ghosts are actually trying to right wrongs, obtain revenge, embarrass unfaithful lovers, return to a vanished home, or do anything from the popular list of ghostly motives. Where most documented hauntings are concerned, the haunting itself seems to be the intention of the ghost; the haunting has little or nothing to do with current events.

Ghosts generally fall into one of three categories: habitual, traumatic, and wish-fulfilling. Of these three, the most common by far is the habitual, like the high school teacher mentioned above. The vast majority of haunted houses have habitual ghosts in them, departed long-time residents who continue to be present, as if the walls had recorded something of their nature over time, and are now giving the playback. These are simple ghosts and they may be simply disposed of — put out a saucer of salt in every room of the house (including basements, attics and closets), leave it twenty-four hours and then dispose of the salt away from the house. Easy. No training necessary. The trauma ghost is the most dramatic haunting, as it is brought on by sudden and violent death. The ghost lingers at the site as a kind of on-going scream. The trauma ghost is the most alarming to witnesses, and the one most frequently reported. It is also the ghost that is most difficult to get rid of, and should not be tackled by anyone lacking experience in such matters. Conversely, the wish-fulfilling ghost is comparatively rare. It is the ghost that shows up at a place or in a condition that it longed for in life, such as the ghost of a crippled child that actively haunts a playground the living child yearned to play in.

Certain kinds of non-physical poltergeist phenomena fall outside these more usual ghosts, and are of far more uncertain origins. These are not the same as poltergeists linked to sexually repressed teenagers, which are a matter for a psychiatrist, not a ghost-buster. There is also another ghostly manifestation, the one most often seized upon in stories. It is the haunting that is manipulated, consciously or unconsciously, by a living person. These hauntings interact with living persons, a wrinkle not present in other hauntings, and, as such, are not truly in the realm of ghosts, but in between the "other side" and abnormal psychology.

Fictional and legendary ghosts are not so limited as the documented ones, and their behavior ranges much more widely than that of most of their investigated kin. Imaginary ghosts are much more interesting to most of us because they have focus, they pay attention to the world around them, and they demand reactions from the living they visit. Because the fictional ghosts are so vivid, almost all our archetypes of ghosts come from legends and myths, not actual haunting experience. We like our ghosts with some motive attached to them, and an aim that has to do with human life. Ghosts in legends and stories have the capacity to change, as we living humans do, and actual ghosts do not.

Because ghostly phenomena are so tremendously ambiguous, at least when in the form of entertainment, they can easily become as humorous as they can be horrifying. There are many stories, plays and movies that are not only good ghost stories, but are also funny. They need not be traditional spoofs to be amusing. Oscar Wilde's "The Canterville Ghost" has been adapted to many forms, and still manages to make people laugh. The cartoons of Addams and Gorey rely heavily on the comic connections in ghostly concepts, on the close ties of the ambiguous to the absurd. This would not be possible if we did not, in some part of our psyches, possess an affection for hauntings that mitigates the dread they more traditionally inspire.

For no doubt about it: we like ghosts. And, I suspect, we always have, even millennia ago when the entire world was far more of a conundrum than it is now. Ghosts are woven into the fabric of our culture and our arts. We find comfort in the sense of continuity the ghost imparts. Scary they may be, and inconvenient when it comes to houseguests, but they are an indication that we do not wholly vanish from the scene after our death. A ghost is a link, a connection with those who are dead. It needs no ritual to invoke it, no ceremony to control it. At its most banal, a ghost is something like spiritual musack, a not-too-intrusive element in life that requires little attention to keep going. At the most dramatic, a ghost is frightening and disruptive, but it is still an assurance that the impact of our lives lives on. If that were the sole virtue of ghosts, we would still treasure them. And when you think of it, they have so much more to offer us. When it comes to supernatural visitors, ghosts more than earn their keep.



Why Be Mortal?

by Ian Lemke



*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

— T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

I've always felt that one of the most overlooked roles within Storytelling games is that of the mortal. In other most games, mortals are nothing more than contacts, enemies or worse yet — nothing more than food. But for wraiths, humans are a source of hope. While many people seem to see **Wraith** as the most dark and depressing of the Storyteller series, and while from a certain perspective this may be true, I feel that it has the most hope as well. **Wraith** offers a chance for your character to redeem himself, a chance to make right all the wrongs of his life. It is the wraith's close tie to humanity that gives her this hope. During life you rarely have time to tie up all the loose ends — death gives you that chance. Wraiths

remember what it meant to be human, and the loss of that humanity has a profound effect on the way they now view the world.

Obviously, mortals play a vital role in any **Wraith** game. They are the character's connection to the "real" world, and without them existence would seem dreary indeed. In most Gothic literature and ghost stories, there is at least one living character who interacts with each ghost. Playing mortal characters in a **Wraith** game adds a great deal of depth to the story — the friends, family, acquaintances and even enemies of the wraith are all potential player characters. Anyone who could be a Fetter of the wraith would be an excellent choice. But what about the police officer who is investigating the character's murder? The wraith may not have known this person during life, but the two may find themselves working together now. Or what about the people who move into the wraith's home (now his haunt) — how might they become involved? A mortals game with only one wraith character gives the

ghost three-dimensional characters to interact with, and opens up new storytelling possibilities for the mortals as well.

My favorite games have always been those in which "normal" characters confront the supernatural with whatever resources they have at their disposal. Classic works of horror, such as those by H.P. Lovecraft and August Derleth, are excellent examples of this kind of story. Average people are confronted by hideous, unknowable beings forcing the characters to rely on their wits, rather than weapons or incredible powers. This theme can work amazingly well in roleplaying games as well as fiction, presenting the players with ample opportunity for roleplaying rather than roll-playing. I find a story in which the characters (and players) solve the plot through planning and ingenuity far more interesting than one in which they blast their way through with heavy weapons or super-powers.

Though the emphasis of Storytelling games is supposed to be on telling a good story, the games often degenerate into power-questing by the players. Casting the players as normal humans not only gives the players wonderful opportunities for roleplaying, but offers a whole new perspective on the World of Darkness. Most players can more easily relate to being human, thus making it easier for hesitant players to "get into character," while veteran players are offered a chance to really shine. When playing a vampire, werewolf, mage, wraith or changeling, the focus of the character is often on the powers, rather than the personality. But when the character is defined in terms of who they are rather than what they do — a given when the character has no supernatural abilities — better roleplaying is sure to result.

Obviously this style of play will not be for everyone. But for players and Storytellers who tire of the same thing, it can make for a refreshing change of pace. Death seems all the more real to a mortal faced with a ghost, adding an entirely different level of tension to a game. Of course, this is **Wraith** after all, and death opens a whole new world of possibilities for living and dead characters alike.



Descent and Return

by Sam Chupp



asy is the descent to the Lower World; but, to retrace your steps and to escape to the upper air — this is the task, this the toil.

— The Sibyl to Aeneas *The Aeneid*

Reality is multifaceted. Even in an game set on the underside of reality, there is light, darkness, and shades of gray. In *Wraith: The Oblivion*, you might think it necessary to distance yourself from "light" roleplaying, as you might feel it is not within the "theme" of the game.

You couldn't be more wrong. *Wraith* is not just about the darkness.


When the Sumerian Goddess Inanna (a very powerful deity for her time — called the Queen of Heaven) made her descent into the Underworld, she stripped herself of all the things which gave her power: her crown, her scepter, her clothes — everything that made her unique. When she reached the lowest lands, she was hung on a hook and

left to rot. Instead of ending there, however, the myth continues. A friend of hers was sent down to the Underworld with the "Food and Water of Life" to retrieve her from the darkness. She rose above her imprisonment in the darkness, returning to the living lands to reign as Queen of Heaven again. Inanna's myth is a classic example of the concept of "descent and return."

This myth speaks directly to *Wraith* as a metaphor for what you, as a wraith, should undergo as you roleplay your chronicles. It is not enough to simply descend into darkness — you must go on and put meaning to that descent by striving to rise up even in death. In fact, to me that is, exactly what "Rage against the dying of the light" is all about. You must struggle to escape the darkness as a means of reaching out towards the light.

How can you do this? The answer lies in your involving yourself in your past life and the things you did in life. What wrongs can you right? Can you confront the reasons





behind the people, places, and things that are your Fetters and thus come to understand your own psyche? Understanding that you must be watchful of the Shadow and its nefarious plans, you must reach out towards the world of the living in order to find meaning in the world of the dead.

You may also be able to develop new Passions or emphasize some over others in order to reach out to the light. Such Passions are of inestimable value in confronting the Shadow as well.

Finally, you must learn more about your Shadow, and find ways to allow your Shadow limited power in limited situations — to literally allow the Shadow to 'come out and play' for a time when you know it is safe (or as safe as such situations can ever be). This is something that comes of learning what your Shadow wants and giving it opportunities to exercise its power (and thus, reducing its strength) when you know it will matter least. Learning what your Shadow really wants can be the result of many long hours of roleplaying and, potentially, trips to a Paragon.

As an example of how you can add a return to your descent, let's take the story of a wraith named Jamie. Jamie was a doctor in life, full of promise and hope for the future. Throughout his long internship he worked at the worst New York City hospital in the emergency room. Often, he'd go for days without sleep as he treated drug overdoses and the knife and gun wounds from street fights.

Finally, one night he lost it and nearly had a nervous breakdown in the ER. He was relieved of duty for the night and decided that he should walk back to his mostly-unused apartment in Chelsea. Numbly moving through the streets, he failed to notice a thug tracking him. He was alone in an alleyway when the thug (who had, ironically, been treated by Jamie the week before) set upon him and brutally beat him, making off with his wallet.

Jamie died in that alleyway. For a time in the Shadowlands he was a creature of hatred and anger — his Shadow ruled him. Like a dark predator, he skulked about

the Shadowlands, evading Reapers of all stripes. When his Shadow finally relinquished control, Jamie had forgotten all about his life as a doctor, a healer of the sick. He fell in with a group of wastrels and spent the days trying to avoid anything which brought back memories of his past life. It was only when he unconsciously used Pathos and Usury to heal another wraith that he realized that he was once a doctor in life.

Jamie's player at this point has a decision to make. Does he continue to wallow in his death, seeking only the darkness? Or does he use this as an opportunity to seek the light — to once again regain his identity as a doctor and a healer?

Jamie could start the pathway to the return by investigating his Fetters; one by one, they should put together a puzzle-picture of what his life was like. As well, he could pursue his now-revealed Passions of "Heal the sick" (Duty) and "Set up shop" (Ambition) in the business of healing other wraiths. Does he remember his Hippocratic Oath? Does he feel that it still binds him? As well, he could spend time learning what his Shadow wants from him and finding a way to "let the Shadow out" in a fashion that won't cause harm to himself or others. Since his Shadow is so violent, it's possible that participating in a violent contest with other wraiths may allow this to happen.

No matter what you do in order to return, understand that striving for the light is not necessarily striving for Transcendence. Transcendence is a much higher goal — the ultimate return. Although certainly your activities directed towards your past life may bring you closer to Transcendence, the work of struggling against the darkness and against the impulse to simply let the Shadow do what it will is goal enough.

Remember that only by returning to the living world can you bring meaning to your descent into it. Although the darkness in **Wraith** is truly scary and fascinating, you must never forget that it is the potential for light that makes the darkness so deep.

Basic Arcanos Chart

Argos

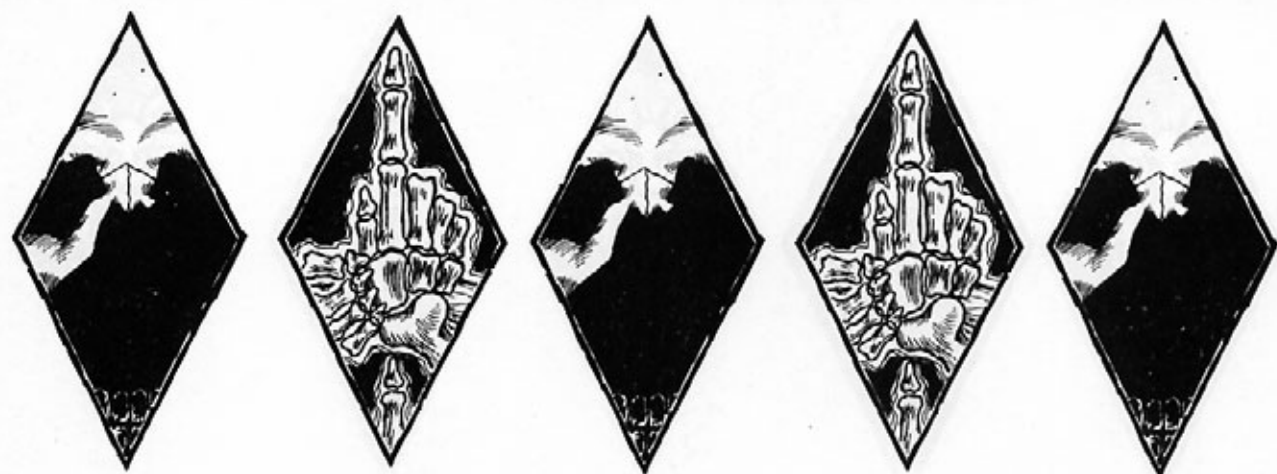
Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Tempestpeek	Perception	6	n/a
Allows a wraith in the Shadowlands to peek into the Tempest.				
Ability	Tempest Threshold	Strength	7	n/a
Opens a hole into the Tempest.				
Ability	Orienteering	Perception	8	n/a
Navigates through the Tempest — 1-3 successes: standard time; 4 successes: half standard time; 5 successes: 1/4 standard time.				
Ability	Track	Perception	6	n/a
Tracks another wraith who has fled into the Tempest; quarry can resist with Dexterity + Argos (difficulty 6).				
•	Enshroud	Dexterity	7	none
Makes the wraith invisible for one turn per success; no non-Argos arts may be used without breaking effect.				
••	Phantom Wings	Stamina	6	none
Lets the wraith fly at running speed for one turn per success.				
•••	Flicker	Dexterity	6	1P
Reduces travel time over short distances lowered by one turn per success.				
••••	Jump	Stamina	8 minus Fetter	3P
Lets the wraith travel quickly to one of her Fetters.				
•••••	Oublette	Strength	WP	3P
Sends a target wraith into the Tempest. May be opposed by WP.				

P = Pathos

A = Angst

W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Castigate

Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Soulsight	Perception	8	n/a
Determines the strength of another wraith's Shadow.				
Ability	Bulwark	Stamina	Malstr + 3	special
Protects the wraith and those the wraith touches against a Maelstrom; cost is 1 Pathos per Maelstrom level.				
•	Coax	Charisma	6	+1A
Lets the wraith add or subtract one Shadow Die per two successes from a given task.				
••	Dark Secrets	Perception	WP	1P
Lets wraith ask one question about the target per success. May be opposed by Angst.				
•••	Purify	Charisma	perm. Angst	+1A per '1'
Subject loses 1 temporary Angst and takes one Corpus Level per success.				
••••	Casting Out	Charisma	7	none
Drives all Spectres (not Doppelgangers) from area for 1 turn per success. May be resisted by Angst.				
•••••	Defiance	Charisma	Angst or Angst+3	none
Prevents a Shadow from controlling a wraith; reduces Angst by one point per success. Gives 1A for each "1" rolled.				

P = Pathos

A = Angst

W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Embody

Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Ghostly Touch	Strength	Shroud	n/a
Produces a touch (strength of a keystroke) in the material world.				
Ability	Maintain the Material Form	Stamina	7	1P + 1P/succ.
Adds successes to those already gained for Embody power being used; a botch dissipates the form.				
•	Whispers	Manipulation	Shroud	1P
Lets one short sentence be heard in the material world per success.				
••	Phantom	Charisma	Shroud	1P
Makes the wraith appear as a translucent figure for one turn per success; may scare mortals.				
•••	Statue	Stamina	Shroud	1P
Makes wraith appear solid (but motionless) for one scene or touch per success.				
••••	Life-in-Death	Manipulation	Shroud	2P
Makes wraith appear as idealized version of self for one scene per success.				
•••••	Materialize	Manipulation	Shroud	3P+1W
Makes wraith nearly human for one breath (or hour if attuned to viewer) per success.				

P = Pathos

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W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Fatalism

Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Kismet	Perception	6	n/a
Allows you to tell who Fate deems "important" in a room.				
•	Fatal Vision	Perception	sub. WP	none
Tells about how subject died (or will die, if in the near future); adds 1 die/success to later Interpretation.				
••	Danger Sense	Perception	6	none
Warns wraith of impending danger (1 turn warning/success); difficulty may vary.				
•••	Interpretation	Manipulation	sub. WP	2P
Gives one cryptic answer per success about subject's past or future.				
••••	Lachesis' Measure	Perception	6	2P
Gives information about current and future situation.				
•••••	Luck	Wits	6	1W
Lets player ignore one "1" for each success; roll for this only at start of story.				

P = Pathos

A = Angst

W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply

Arcanos Chart

179



inhabit

Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Sense Gremlin	Perception	6	n/a
Determines whether or not something is inhabiting a machine now (or, with three successes, in the near past).				
•	Surge	Wits	Shroud	none
Temporarily cuts power to one electronic device per success. May damage sensitive electronics.				
••	Ride the Electron Highway	Intelligence	Shroud	2P+1P/passenger
Lets wraith transport herself and other wraiths through the computer network.				
•••	Gremlinize	Dexterity	Shroud	3P + 1P/effect
Controls a machine; attunement is required for major effects.				
••••	Claim	Strength	Shroud	2P
Lets the wraith inhabit an object for one scene; one success needed for small objects, five for house-sized objects.				
•••••	Empower	Wits	Shroud	varies
Invests one of a wraith's Arcanos arts into an item.				

P = Pathos

A = Angst

W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Keening

Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Perfect Pitch	Perception	6	
Senses when someone else uses Keening to influence or manipulate emotions resisted by Sotto Voce.				
Ability	Sotto Voce	Manipulation	6	n/a
Conceals Keening in normal speech or song; resists Sotto Voce (greater number of successes wins).				
•	Dirge	Charisma	8	1P
Provokes "dark" feelings for one turn per success (for wraiths), or longer for mortals (a week for five successes).				
••	Ballad	Manipulation	8	2P
Provokes "light" feelings for same length of time as Dirge.				
•••	Muse	Manipulation	sub.WP	3P
Makes subject (wraith or mortal) believe an idea is his own; min. difficulty is 7.				
••••	Crescendo	Stamina	8	2P+1P/success
Does one Corpus damage per success to all wraiths in normal hearing range; if Embodied, does 1 Health Level per 2 successes to other listeners.				
•••••	Requiem	Strength	7	3P + 1P/success
Paralyzes subject for one turn per success; resisted by WP; may inflict mental damage.				

P = Pathos

A = Angst

W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Lifeweb

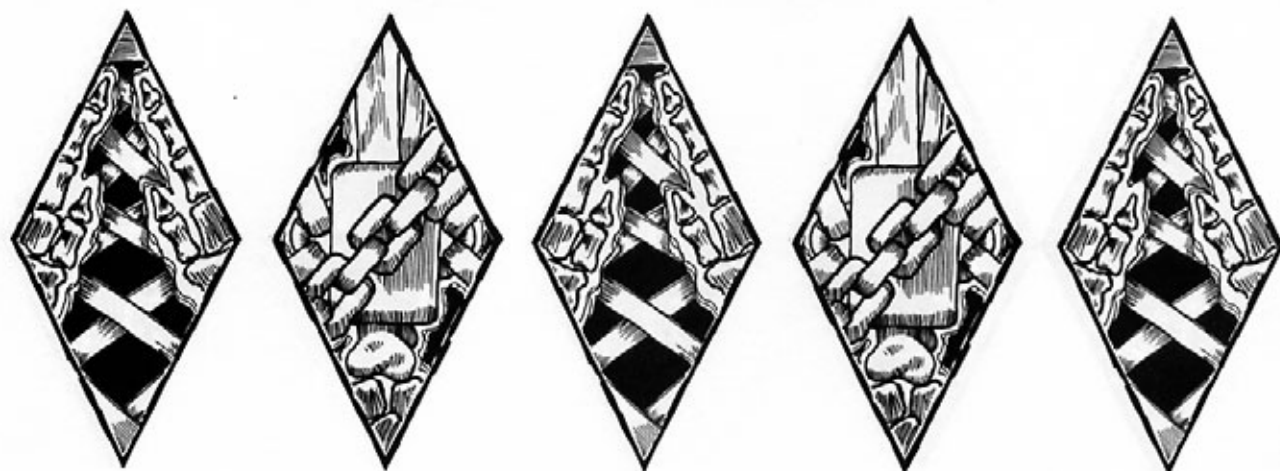
Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Locate Fetter	Perception or Intelligence 6		n/a
With Perception, scans the area around a given Fetter; with Intelligence, detects range and direction to the Fetter.				
•	Sense Strand	Perception	8	none
Determines relationship between a wraith and her Fetters, or whether something is a Fetter.				
••	Web Presence	Charisma	8	1P/turn
Lets wraith affect the area surrounding a Fetter without being there.				
•••	Splice Strand	Manipulation	7	1P + 1P/day
Makes something the wraith is touching into a temporary Fetter (rating 1); only one such Fetter can be maintained at a time.				
••••	Sever Strand	Strength	owner's WP	2P + 1W
Severs target's connection to Fetter (requires WP or Splice Strand to repair).				
•••••	Soul Pact	Charisma	sub. WP	9P
Makes a willing mortal into a Fetter (rating 1).				

P = Pathos

A = Angst

W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Moliate

Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Shapesense	Perception	special	n/a
Detects whether and how another wraith has been Moliated; difficulty is original shaper's Dexterity + Moliate.				
Ability	Glow	Charisma	7	1P
Causes wraith or others to glow with a given color and intensity for one scene per success.				
Ability	Return of Death's Visage	Manipulation	6 to 10	1P
Returns wraith to original state; difficulty depends on degree of change (minor change = diff. 6; drastic = diff. 10).				
•	Imitate	Dexterity	4 to 8	1P
Molds wraith's face to match another's; diff. 5 if wraith can see the face, 8 if not, but 4 if wraith has a skinmask.				
••	Sculpt	Manipulation	7	1P
Changes subject wraith's shape; cannot alter subject's abilities; subject loses a Corpus Level; can also heal aggravated damage.				
•••	Martialry	Intelligence or Strength	Stamina + 3	3P + 1P/success
Molds wraith's body into weaponry (does 1 die damage per success) or armor.				
••••	Rend	Strength	sub. Stamina+3	1P+1A
Does aggravated damage to target (1 die/success, plus 1 die/Pathos spent); must touch target.				
•••••	Bodyshape	Wits	varies	1P+1P/turn
Transforms wraith's whole body and appearance for 1 scene per success; difficulty depends on form assumed.				

P = Pathos

A = Angst

W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Outrage

Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Leap of Rage	Dexterity	Shroud	n/a
Improves leaps and jumps (adds successes to those scored while making leap or jump); diff. 6 in Tempest or Shadowlands.				
•	Ping	Strength	Shroud	1P
Moves a very small object just a little bit (can be a brush, a push, a lift, etc.).				
••	Wraithgrasp	Strength	Shroud	2P
Lifts heavier objects with a Feat of Strength; objects cannot be moved in any way other than a lift.				
•••	Stonehand Punch	Strength	Shroud	2P
Physically strikes the target; does one Health Level or Corpus Level per success.				
••••	Death's Touch	Dexterity	8	3P
Lets wraith manipulate objects for one minute per success gained, or start fires (using Strength instead of Dexterity).				
•••••	Obliviate	Strength	Shroud	3P+1A
Does one level aggravated damage per success; sends destroyed objects to Oblivion; diff. Stamina + 3 when used against wraiths.				

P = Pathos

A = Angst

W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Pandemonium

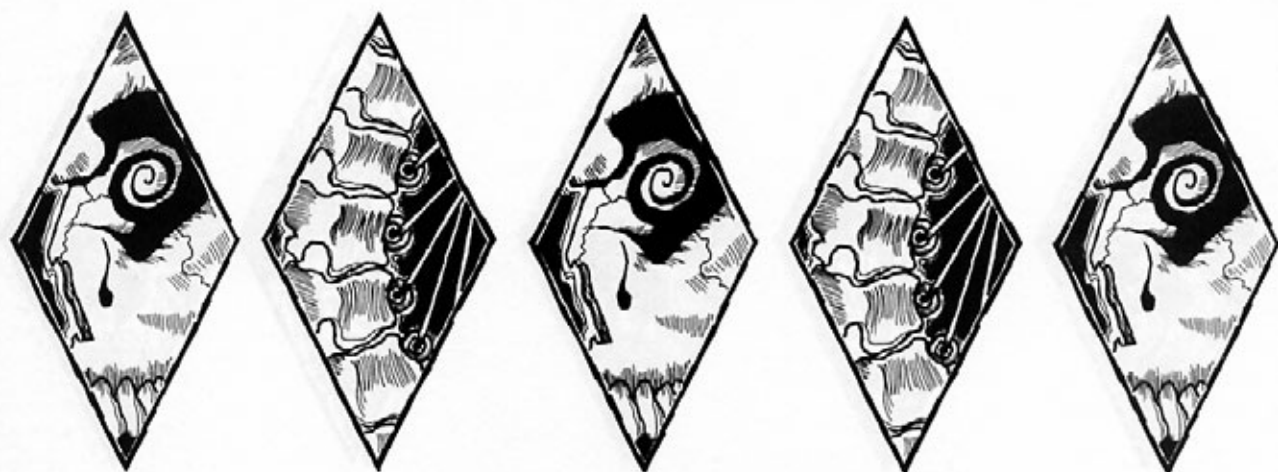
Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Sense Chaos	Perception	7	n/a
Determines whether a particular event has been caused by Pandemonium or whether an object or mortal has been touched by Shadow of a wraith or Spectre.				
•	Weirdness	Charisma	Shroud	1P
Causes something strange to happen to one individual at a time (a hot flash, a minor hallucination, etc.).				
••	Befuddlement	Intelligence	sub. WP	1P
Confuses target for one turn per success; target must make Intelligence roll vs. diff. 8 each turn to think clearly.				
•••	Dark Ether	Intelligence	Shroud	1P + 1P/turn
Affects weather or light in a small area; five successes can do one level of damage to those in the area.				
••••	Foul Humour	Intelligence	Shroud	4P + 1C/success
Causes a rain of vermin, stream of blood, or other bizarre effect; damaging effects do 1 die damage per 2 successes.				
•••••	Tempus Fugit	Intelligence	Shroud	4P
Distorts the flow of time or space, speeding up/slowing down actions or altering distances.				

P = Pathos

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n/a = does not apply



Phantasm

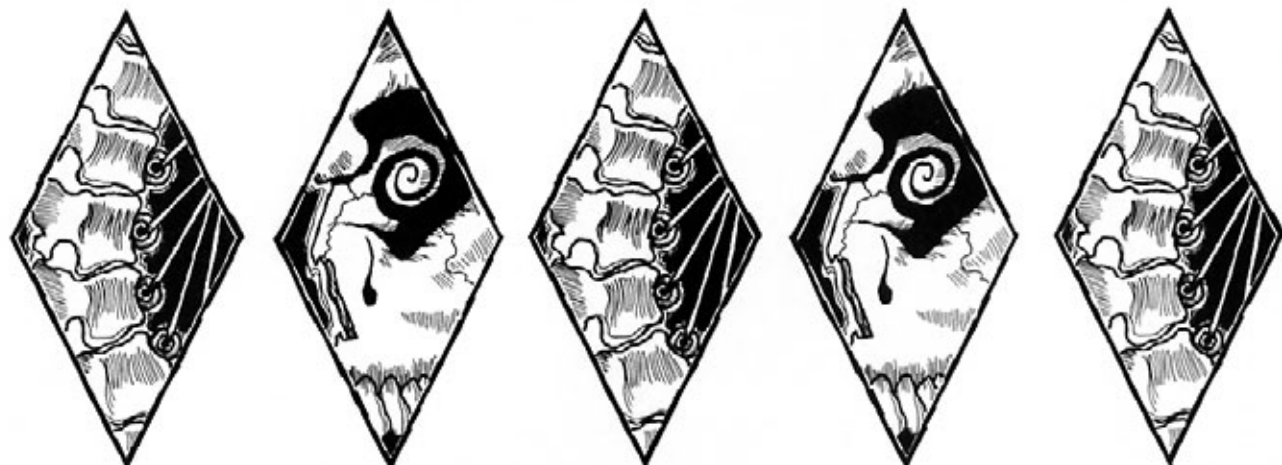
Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Sleepsense	Perception	6	n/a
Lets wraith determine subject's sleep state, or observe or experience a subject's dream for one turn per success.				
•	Elysia	Dexterity	6 to 8	1P
Removes a sleeping mortal's soul harmlessly for one turn/success; REM sleep = diff. 6, transitional sleep = diff. 7, deep sleep = diff. 8.				
••	Lucidity	Manipulation	varies	2P
Changes a mortal's dream; difficulty depends on extent of change.				
•••	Dreams of Sleep	Charisma	sub. WP	1P
Makes other wraiths fall asleep and dream; roll needed only if subject unwilling; may be opposed by Intelligence + Subterfuge.				
••••	Agon	Strength	8	3P+1A
Rips a sleeping mortal's soul from his body for 1 scene/success; does 1 Health Level/success to subject; may be opposed by Wits + Subterfuge (diff. 8).				
•••••	Phantasmagoria	Charisma	6	3P+1P/turn
Creates illusions using wraith's Pathos and Corpus for 1 turn per success.				

P = Pathos

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W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Puppetry

Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Detect Possession	Perception	7 or 9	n/a
Detects current possession of a subject (diff. 7, resisted by possessor's Appearance + Subterfuge at diff. 7), or past possession (diff. 9).				
•	Skinride	Dexterity	sub. WP	1P
Lets wraith passively enter mortal's body; must be used before other possession abilities.				
••	Sudden Movement	Strength	sub. WP	1P
Takes brief control of a mortal's arm or leg; resisted by WP.				
•••	Master's Voice	Intelligence	sub. WP	1P
Lets wraith speak through mortal for one breath per success; voice is combination of mortal's and wraith's.				
••••	Rein in the Mind	Manipulation	sub. WP	4P+1A
Lets wraith control attuned mortal completely for one scene per success; min. difficulty is local Shroud.				
•••••	Obliterate the Soul	Strength	sub. WP	5P+2W+A
Lets wraith permanently control mortal (but body decays after one week); successes must equal host's WP.				

P = Pathos

A = Angst

W or WP = Willpower

n/a = does not apply



Usury

Rating	Name	Attribute+	Difficulty	Cost
Ability	Assessment	Perception	6	n/a
Senses the amount of life (Stamina/Health/Corpus) in an individual or an area.				
•	Transfer	Manipulation	varies	none
Transfers Pathos to a wraith (diff. = sub. Pathos) or from one (diff. = sub. WP); target wraith must be touched.				
••	Early Withdrawal	Manipulation	sub.WP	none
Moves target's Health or Corpus Levels to wraith (1 per success); target must be touched (mortals must be physically touched).				
•••	Charitable Trust	Stamina	special	1P
Moves wraith's Corpus Levels to target (up to 1 per success); diff. is target's current Health or Corpus Levels.				
••••	Exchange Rate	Intelligence	6	none
Converts wraith's Corpus to Pathos (up to 1 point per success).				
•••••	Investment	Intelligence	7	none
"Invests" up to a set number of Pathos or Corpus points into a relic for later use.				

P = Pathos

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n/a = does not apply

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