

GUARDIANS OF THE CERNTM



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The Giving of a Klaive

Verse One

The bonfire burned low within the stone circle, yet it still offered welcome warmth in the cooling evening. Occasional flurries of sparks swirled into the night, to mingle with the uncountable stars. A dozen figures formed a half-circle around the fire. Some appeared human, sitting on stumps and low boulders; others lounged on four legs in lupine fashion. Preferring the former shape, Johnny McLaren leaned against a stone, absently scratching the fresh raking scar above his right knee. A week ago he'd encountered a feral vampire in the woods to the south; he and the Leech went at it for half an hour, but Johnny came out on top. His limp was almost gone, but he hoped the gouges wouldn't fade away completely; a few scars would make for great stories. Like the others around the fire, Johnny was Fianna, and fiercely proud of it. While his wolfpack did its share of fighting the Wyrms in its many manifestations (as his scars could attest), the Sept of Bridget's Blessing was a haven for lorekeepers and craftsmen. He himself was a smith, hammering sharp swords and delicate jewelry with ease. Johnny held his skills with claw and hammer with equal pride.

A lean woman with a thigh-length honey-blond braid stepped forward. Caoilte McLaurin lifted her

head to lead the Opening Howl. One by one, the voice of each individual found its own harmony within the howl, strengthening and magnifying the sound as it echoed across the valley. In this heartbreakingly-beautiful mingling of voices the unity of the sept was reaffirmed. Johnny never felt more a part of the pack than at this moment, as he added his sharp howl to the mix. Following the howl, Caoilte led her fellows in an homage of song and heart to Gaia, mother of the Garou and of all things, to Stag, the guide of the tribe, and to the sept's patron, Dana, legendary mother of the Fianna.

As the last strains of the song died away, Johnny shifted into a more comfortable position and looked around. A murmur arose as Garou began talking quietly among themselves. All sensed the tension in the air, as if something important but unexpected was coming. Abruptly, everyone's attention focused on Ian Corrigan, elder and sept leader, as he stood up. A tall lad with a shaggy auburn mane, he was a Moonsinger of great renown despite the fact he had barely reached his thirtieth year. Like Johnny and most of the other two-legs, he was scantily dressed, the better to show off the scars and tattoos which ran across his body like map of the war against the Wyrms. Johnny noticed

something different about his leader, however: he wasn't wearing the grand klaive he had won in an unlooked-for duel three moons ago. Instead, he carried the bowie-sized silver knife, Caelbad's klaive, he'd been honored with many years before.

Standing behind the fire, the elder drew forth Caelbad's klaive, the wickedly-dagged silver blade reflecting the red flicker of the low fire. He regarded the knife for some moments before sweeping the assembly with his gaze. Then he began to speak, in the measured tones of a master storyteller.

"This klaive has a long history behind it. It was forged for Caelbad mac Fiachu, given in recognition of his victory over a Wyrmbest of great power. As *Righ* Caelbad, this blade honored him, and he it. Many winters later, Caelbad, with his last strength, placed it in the hand of his son and successor, Adamnan. Mac Caelbad used this blade to the exclusion of all others, forsaking spear and sword in battle. When he fell to the claws of a Black Spiral Dancer, his sister, Aoife, took up the blade, and wielded it for a score of years before giving it to a packmate, Padrig mac Comhail. Padrig Mor, as he's now called, accounted for a full fifty Black Spiral Dancers in his time. When he fell in defense of his caern, his blade was recovered by...."

Johnny's excitement grew with the list of former owners. Ian had never done anything like this before; truly something big was about to happen. The *Righ* was going to bequeath the blade, he just knew it. And who else for the honor but him? After all, Johnny thought, who else has fought so hard to drive the Wyrms from caern and county? But Ian was nearly done with his tale, and Johnny gave him his attention.

"Though born of No Moon, Andrea had the skill of a warrior, the patience of a judge and the wordcraft of a Moondancer. She taught me what it was to be Garou and helped keep my head firmly attached to my body." He paused a moment in reflection. "She met her end bravely, alone and surrounded by the corrupted minions of powerful Leeches. Her klaive was found by an honorable Glass Walker. I traveled to him and brought the treasured blade back to my sept. I have worn it ever since. The silver blade has cleansed the blight of Wyrms-taint from many foes in many lands."

Ian held the blade before him, letting it catch the fire's glare across its surface. "Throughout its history, no stain of dishonor has tarnished this blade. Now, it is time for a new hand to wield it. A hand that, though young, is proven. The bladebearer is among us tonight."

Johnny leaned forward slightly. *Here it comes!*

"Erin Kelly, stand before me." Johnny felt the blood drain from his face. Astonished, he looked at the young Galliard as she likewise paled before standing uncertainly. She seemed just as surprised as the shocked Ahroun.

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Erin was taken completely by surprise. She stared at her mentor for a moment before forcing herself up on her trembling legs. With the sept behind her, she faced Ian across the fire, her eyes stung by the smoke and heat. He still gripped the klaive firmly in his hand, where it rested as if it were an extension of his arm. The light shone on the polished silver, outlining the mystic glyphs, which ran along the blade. Erin tore her eyes from it, but couldn't quite meet her mentor's gaze.

"Hold out your hand," the elder said. She did so with hardly a hesitation, and immediately felt the fire's heat rising across her arm as Ian continued.

"Though you are young, you have acted with honor and courage. You have fought for your people and for Gaia. You have learned the history and the ways of the Fianna. In listening to Gaia and to your own heart, you show wisdom. In unselfishly aiding the Gurahl, rarest of Gaia's children, you bring honor to your sept and your tribe."

The heat grew more painful, almost unbearable; she thought she could feel the blisters rising on her arm. But she refused to pull back, or even flinch. Not in front of Gleam-in-his-Eye.

"Take this blade, then, Erin Kelly, *Fostern* of the Sept of Bridget's Blessing. Take it and add to its honor." Though she wanted to scream with pain, she closed her blistered hand around the grip. It stayed there a moment, and then she felt the leather-wrapped haft nestle deeper into her grasp. The spirit of the klaive had accepted her.

As she withdrew her hand, howls of celebration went up from the sept. Her heart swelled with joy and pride. Ian stepped around the fire to crush her in a fierce embrace.

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The night was waning, and the revelers were dispersing or, more frequently, simply curling up by the fire in their lupine forms. But not Johnny McLaren. He stood atop a stone some distance from the fire pit. Ostensibly he was on guard duty, but with his mind in such turmoil a Nexus Crawler could have gotten past him.

He looked back to the fire ring. Two or three Fianna listened to Ian regale them with the tale of the life of Padrig Mor. The brown-noser was among them. He felt the seething rage rise, and turned away, lest he

lose control and add to his own humiliation. For the frivolous little girl to be given a klaive — a warrior's weapon! — and gain rank without even a challenge or quest, made him burn with rage. It was favoritism, pure and simple; she was the leader's pet, with her head so far up his backside she didn't know if it was day or night. He sure as hell wouldn't forget this slight.

He gripped hard the haft of his spear. The head was perfectly forged, with spirals and swirls running almost to the razor edge. Johnny had transformed a bar of iron into this gleaming steel weapon, with the strength in his arms, the sweat on his brow, and his knowledge of crafting. Where was the recognition for his skill? The upstart pup tells a couple stories, and all the Moondancers go nuts.

No, he wouldn't forget this for a very long time.

Verse Two

"Where do you think you're going, young Moondancer?"

Erin's heart sank when the Warder spoke. She was slipping out of the farmhouse, set for a rousing night at the Widdershins concert that she'd looked forward to for weeks. But Brian McCormac seldom spoke to her unless he had something for her to do. She turned to see the man, huge even in his human form, approach her.

"Ian and Caoilte left this afternoon on pressing business, and most everyone else is occupied elsewhere. It's time you pulled your weight at guard duty, klaive-bearer." The meaning was plain — with added prestige comes added responsibility. But for that, she couldn't read approval or disapproval of the honor in his tone. She nodded, keeping her disappointment hidden deep within; the honor she'd been given was worth a hundred nights at watch.

Then she saw Johnny saunter out from his workshop in the barn. The Ahroun smiled at her. "A moment, Warder," he said, voice placid like a shoal-concealing river. "Seems Erin wants to go pretty badly. I'm willing to give her a chance. How 'bout a little contest?" Erin's heart rose again; she had a chance! Looking hopefully towards Brian, she saw the Warder frown slightly, then shrug. In a moment Red Ruff, the Master of the Challenge, arrived to listen and rule. Erin looked expectantly at Johnny. Would they match words? A boasting contest, or to see who could make the dour Brian laugh first?

Johnny answered her unspoken question. "Just happens I've finished a fine pair of staves. May as well break them in." Seeing the grizzled wolf nod and sweep his tail, he retrieved them from his shop. "First to fall

gets to stay home." More glances at Red Ruff, who again dipped his snout in acceptance.

When she caught the heavy quarterstaff he had tossed her, he added, "I'll even let you fight in Glabro, just to be fair." Was that a sneer on his face? Never mind, she felt her muscles shifting and enlarging. It wouldn't do to miss the advantage the Ahroun was offering.

The fight was over almost before it began. Ever-cocky Erin grinned as she threw a tentative strike, then another. Johnny blocked the first, dodged the second, and then struck with a flurry of fast bone-cracking blows that sent the Galliard reeling. Before she could retaliate, he shifted his grip to one end of the staff and brought the entire length down to shatter her collarbone, felling the youth instantly.

She teetered on the verge on consciousness for a moment, before her head cleared. The pain that washed over her didn't subside so quickly, although she could feel her bones knitting together, the ruptured lip closing. Looking up, she saw his back as he took the staves back to the shop. "Not bad for a pup," she heard him say lightly over his shoulder. "If you spent a little more time with a weapon and less with a book, you might even be worthy of that klaive one day." The heat of the insult rose within her, but even as the growl pushed past her bloody lips, the dark reddish form of Red Ruff stepped warningly before her, tail high. She sank back to the earth until her breath came easily again.

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The night was hours old when she made her fourth circuit around the bawn. No untoward scents, no noise, only the night and the trail of her ever-curious packmate Neverwise padding silently somewhere ahead in the darkness. Though properly vigilant, she couldn't get the dust-up with Johnny out of her mind. She'd thought the challenge was all in good fun until the blows rained down. *What was wrong with Johnny?* Then she remembered his parting words: *you might be worthy of that klaive one day.* Maybe it's the klaive! Maybe he's jealous! An angry pride began to grow within her. Why didn't she deserve it? Had she not rescued the cub of the werebears? Had she not recited tales before the Ard Righ himself in the great hall at Tara? She was young, and of low status, but if Gleam-in-his-Eye was her mentor, surely that said something. Then she stopped short. *Do the others feel the same way?* The question gnawed at her, for though she took pains to hide the fact, the acceptance of her peers was terribly important to her. Boldness being in her nature, she resolved to find someone to put the matter to rest one way or another.

Since accepting the mantle of Caern Warder, Brian McCormac had not set foot outside the bawn. Erin found him, knife in hand, sitting by his stone hut, patiently transforming a gnarled branch into a walking stick of exceptional beauty. Without preamble, she posed the question.

"Brian, does the sept resent me for getting a klaive?"

The huge man considered a long moment. "You're thinking about the challenge today, aren't you? If anyone resents you it's liable to be Johnny. Just from watching and listening — a pair of skills you'd do well to master — I'd say he thinks he deserves more recognition. Which is one reason he doesn't get it." He paused again as his small blade drew an improbably-long tailing from the stick. "You *are* young to hold a klaive, but so was Ian when he inherited it. I probably shouldn't say anything, but your mentor sees a destiny in you. The fire of Bridget is in your heart, and he wants to fan it. That's why he pushes you with your lessons. That's why he has introduced you around the court at Tara." Brian leaned forward, eyes growing stern. "But watch yourself, lassie. The greatest Singers suffer more than their share. It's a hard life you'll live. And don't you get too proud of yourself, or you'll deserve everything Johnny and his ilk can dish out." He lay the knife

down and began to slowly sand down the staff, watching Erin from under bushy eyebrows. She said nothing for some minutes.

Finally she looked up. "How can I make peace with him?" she asked. Brian's slight smile was approving.

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Erin walked slowly up the worn path running in a counterclockwise spiral up the sharply-rising hill, squinting in the light of the setting sun. She stepped deliberately, her thoughts following the cadence of her footfalls. She wore a simple tunic, cut sparingly to show off the tribal glyphs on her shoulders and the woaded spirals that snaked down her arms and legs. Within the circle of tall stones above her, the Moondancer felt the vibrancy of magic, of spirit energy in the air. She reached the summit, the caern's center; it was like a coming up for air, pressure easing, sight clearing. It was the rare joy of the spiritual and physical made one. Erin took a place between two rough megaliths. Resting comfortably on her knees, she began to sing a song of Power. Invisible energy rose and crackled around her. Then, as if a door had shut, it stopped. Before her stood a woman, with long reddish-blond hair and a red dress which shimmered with fire in the dying light. It was Bridget, goddess of fire and poetry, come to answer her call.



"Why have you called me, wolfsinger?" Her voice was sweet as young mead, and warm as mulled wine.

"I ask for your help. I offer my tale and ask your guidance in ending it well."

"Tell on, then," the spirit replied.

The stars slowly turned above as the Erin spun her story, of the unexpected honor and the rift it had caused. When she finished, Bridget nodded thoughtfully before speaking. "Jealousy. Thus is planted the seed which always bears a bitter fruit. Such tragedies have fired the minds of poets and talespinners since the world began. But the praise of heroes is also the bard's place, and with less bloodshed." The spirit straightened. "Very well, I shall help you. Think well on the triumphs of this warrior, and let the flame of inspiration flare within."

"How may I repay you?" It was discourteous to accept a spirit's aid, even if freely given, without offering something in return.

Bridget smiled. "Tell your tale thrice and well: once before your foe, to heal the wound before o'erlong it festers; once before your king, who in his hall of legends needs fresh tales of glory; and once before your cousin fae, for such tales of valor are their meat and drink. Kindle hearts and kindle minds, and you will have thanked me, young poetess."

Verse Three

The gibbous moon was arcing upward when Johnny joined the sept at the stone circle. Armed with a bottle of smoky magic straight from Scotland, he settled in for a night of songs and storytelling, for the Sept of Bridget's Blessing always honored the Singer's Moon thus. Long nights of song and drink, laughter and cheers—Johnny knew it was good to be Fianna. When all had gathered, Ian led an invocation to Dana and Bridget, with equal parts Gaelic and Garou. After the

last echoes had died away, and no sound remained but the crackle of the fire, the septleader asked, "Whom shall we hear from first? Who has a tale to tell?"

Erin was on her feet before anyone else could say a word. "I have a tale, a tale of valor and glory."

"Tell on, then," growled the elder as he leaned comfortably against a stone. All eyes turned to the young Galliard, including Johnny's. Erin's voice was strong, and had fallen into the cadence of a practiced wordsmith. *Well, she's a conniving, spoiled little bitch,* thought Johnny, *but I'll grant she has a way with words.* He still wanted the klaive, but he couldn't defy Ian. Now, if the pup showed herself unworthy of the blade....

"Whose tale do you have for us?" asked Ambergold, the young brewer on Johnny's left.

"Caelbad mac Fiachu and the Drellock?" "Gavin Mac Fionn at the Stone Wall?" voices asked from the circle of firelight.

Erin lifted her chin. "We needn't look so long ago or so far away for tales of glory. Tonight, I speak of the triumph of Forged-in-Fire."

Johnny nearly fell over in astonishment at hearing his tribal name. Had he any warning, he would have expected to be the object of a scathing satire in retaliation for the drubbing he'd given her. But as she spoke, he realized it was anything but. With the deftness of a practiced talespinner, she described (and in some cases elaborated on) his battle with the feral Leech. She spoke as if she'd been there to see, and the way she told it, one would think he'd ripped the gullet out of the Wyrn itself! Around him, his packmembers looked upon him, eyes bright with admiration. When the story ended, the Singers howled to the descending moon, and the Ahrouns took turns slapping Johnny on the back. Between buffets, he looked across the fire at Erin, and saw pride and joy in her eyes. He flashed her a grin.

Maybe she wasn't so bad after all.



GUARDIANS CAERNSTM

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Contents

<i>Legends of the Garou</i>	2
<i>"The Giving of a Klaive"</i>	
<i>Introduction: Opening the Caern</i>	10
<i>Chapter One: Of Caerns, Sorrows and Joys</i>	16
<i>The logistics of caern design</i>	
<i>Chapter Two: Tribal Lines</i>	38
<i>Tribal and Changing Breed traditions of caern defense</i>	
<i>Chapter Three: Digging In</i>	66
<i>Player involvement in caern defense and improvement</i>	
<i>Chapter Four: Not of Garou and Kin Born</i>	82
<i>The metis lot</i>	

Introduction: Opening the Caern

I would bleed until rivers poured from me; I would burn until I am ash. I would die ten thousand deaths rather than let the children of the Horned Serpent wipe their feet in Gaia's heart.

— Stone Belly, Warder

Caerns are the heart and soul of the Garou. They are places for communion with the great Mother, sources of solace and much-needed power, and the last lines of defense. They are the center of almost every **Werewolf** chronicle, because they are everything the Garou fight for. They are the lifeblood of Gaia herself.

And yet for all that, the caern is something that isn't necessarily accessible to our way of thinking. We don't personally grow up in the deepest recesses of the wild or the spiritual centers of the cities; we might have visited places like that, but even then we get only a fraction of the picture. And then there's the question of what such a place would be like if a band of werewolves had set up shop in the area!

It can be particularly hard to roleplay a metis character when you don't really know just what growing up in the heart of a caern is like. We're all familiar with human society, and we know roughly what a wolf cub's life is like, but there's no real reference for what day-to-day life in the closely guarded heart of Garou society is like.

Until now.

Guardians of the Caerns is a sourcebook on caerns and sept life, from the most general information on keeping caerns active to specific notes on tribal sept traditions. If you've ever wondered just what the elders at the caern *do* all day, or where it is that the sept eats and sleeps, you should find the answers you're looking for inside.

The Last Few

It's an established fact that the Garou hold fewer caerns than they should; in the End Times, caerns fall to invaders more frequently than new caerns are built. As humanity spreads out across the globe, it becomes harder and harder to keep the sacred places inviolate. Hallowed trees fall to chainsaws; blessed springs are dammed or polluted. The few caerns that remain are guarded viciously by the werewolves who know they can't afford to lose even one more.

But the question of numbers remains: Exactly how many caerns are there in all in the World of Darkness?

The answer...varies.

Although this answer may be frustrating, it's the simple truth that there just aren't any good rules of thumb for determining the number of caerns that should exist in a given area. There are just too many variables. Human population, past history, terrain, native cultures — even the local flora and fauna can have an effect on whether or not a sacred place might have been discovered and consecrated. Just as there's no good way of determining how many Garou should exist over a given number of square miles (unlike vampires, werewolves certainly don't flourish in densely populated areas), there's also no good way to determine how many caerns should exist in that same area.

Furthermore, not all Storytellers maintain the same ratio of darkness to hope in their chronicles. This is particularly true of live-action games, where there are often far more werewolves in a caern than you'd otherwise expect. One Storyteller might decide that about three hundred surviving caerns in all of North America sounds right; but a second might say that five hundred is more like it, and a third might say that there should be *fifteen* at most. Since it's the Storyteller's job to keep the players entertained — and not all players enjoy the same amount of nihilism in their stories — this discrepancy is not only unavoidable, it's probably for the best.

Which brings us around to a very important point: Caerns should never, *ever* be defined by adhering to an "approved" set of ratios or figures. Each caern should be unique, boasting exactly the right number of Garou for the *story's* purpose — which, of course, should be somewhat less than the ideal number to support the caern.

This point can't be stressed enough. No two caerns are alike; each and every one is a one-of-a-kind blend of spiritual purpose, tribal character, geographical location and history. It's all too easy to assume that all

Fianna caerns are stone circles on misty moortops, or that all Glass Walker caerns sit atop shining skyscrapers. What about the Fianna caern of Rage built on an old battlefield, where the sept carefully stores the skulls of all their fallen heroes? What about the Glass Walker caern of Enigmas set on a fog-shrouded island in the city harbor? This book deals in stereotypes, true — but the chronicle's caerns should only possess enough stereotypical features so that the players find them plausible. Everything else should be distinctive.

Caern Purpose

The most distinctive thing about a caern is the purpose it serves. If your chronicle is built around a caern of Enigmas, it's going to be a radically different game than it'd be if you'd chosen a caern of Strength instead. That's why a caern's purpose is important — not because it offers a specific dice bonus, but because it will influence the character of the sept. Obviously, when choosing a caern type, the Storyteller should choose carefully.

The **Werewolf Players Guide** goes into great detail about the most common caerns; those caern types are mentioned here briefly, and are fairly self-explanatory. There are also many other types of caerns, although these are much less common; there might be such a thing as a caern of Humility, but it might be the only one in existence. This section introduces a few more ideas for caerns of the rarer sort; the Storyteller should feel free to expand on these ideas, or use them as springboards to even more singular caerns.

Glory

Obviously, caerns of Glory might arise from old battlefields or places of great victories, but more often caerns of Glory spring from locales that are rich in life and all it has to offer. These caerns most commonly serve the purpose of Fertility, Plenty, Rage, Strength or Wyld.

- Caerns of **Courage** arise in the damndest places; they can be deep in the wilderness, in rural surroundings or even in a city's heart with equal odds. Strangely, they draw much of their power from the texture of fear — after all, courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to be strong despite being utterly afraid. When opened, these caerns can reduce the chances of frenzy or even add dice to Intimidation pools.

- Caerns of **Love** may sound silly and ridiculously romantic at first, even hopelessly out of place in the World of Darkness. But these caerns have nothing to do with romance at all — they have everything to do with the emotional ties that give people strength even



as they weaken them. Such a caern is dedicated to emotional bonds of all sorts: Platonic, filial, paternal or maternal, brotherly or sisterly, romantic, even the love a person might have for Gaia and all her creatures. The defenders of such a caern fight as fiercely as anything, refusing to fail their beloved lands and relatives. When opened, a caern of Love might provide dice of Empathy, or refresh spent Willpower by a few points.

Honor

Caerns of Honor are places of accord and renewal; the Garou know them as sources of spiritual strength and a sense of purpose. They include caerns of Gnosis, Healing, Kingship, Stamina and Willpower.

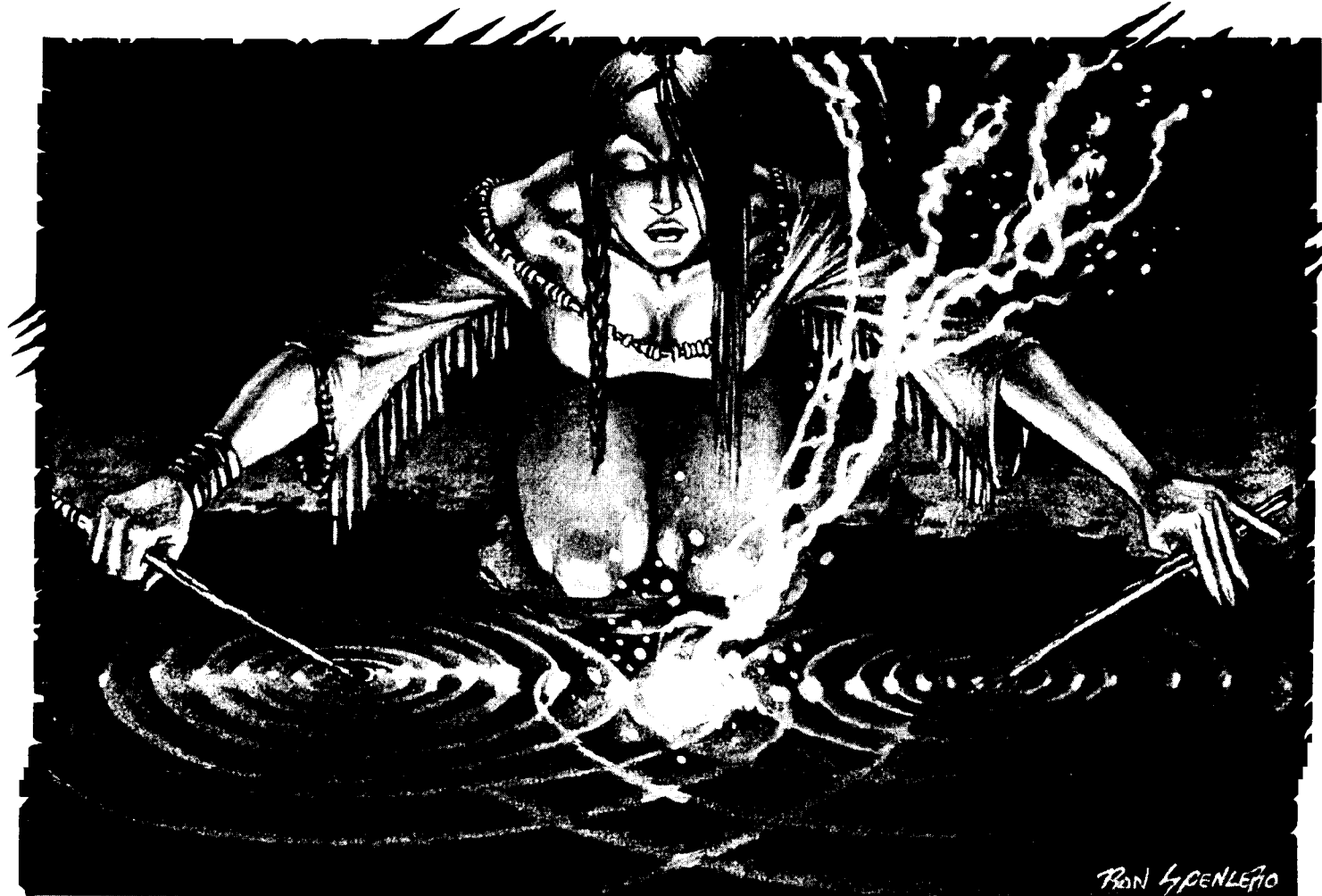
- Caerns of **Justice** are rare *in extremis*, because they are easily fouled by unjust actions taken within the bawn. Although human courthouses would seem an obvious place for these energies to pool, the humans hold so many trials that almost invariably poor rulings will taint the caern or excessive legalism stifle its energy. They are governed by the wisest of Philodox, and their power is used to settle disputes between Garou in the fairest way possible. When opened, such a caern might add dice to Perception or Law; Philodox Gifts might also enjoy a reduced difficulty when used within the opened caern's heart.

- Caerns of **Sacrifice** sometimes arise in areas where Garou or humans stood, fought and died in order to save those near and dear to them. They are particularly demanding to maintain, as a sept must constantly make small but meaningful sacrifices of their own to replenish the caern's energy. When opened, such a caern might allow its defenders to share health levels with one another, the healthy taking the injuries of the critically wounded upon themselves.

- Caerns of **Unity** are almost unheard of. The Changing Breeds are almost without exception a divisive, squabbling lot; even pack-mentality groups like the Garou are heavily factionalized. Yet if a caern of Unity were to have somehow survived, the sept guarding it would be able to draw on its power to increase their teamwork to record levels. If opened, such a caern would likely add dice to Wits pools for the purposes of keeping coordinated, or even bestow an effect roughly equal to the Galliard Gift: Mindspeak.

Wisdom

It's very hard to stereotype caerns of Wisdom, because wisdom can be found anywhere. Some flourish in the heart of human urbanity; others draw strength from their extreme seclusion. Some are



devoted to raw, natural intuition; others promote logic and clear thought. To the Garou, a caern of Wisdom is any caern that will offer powers of insight, no matter what form it takes. They include caerns of Calm, Enigmas, Humor, Primal-Urge, Streetwise and Visions, among others.

- Caerns of **Craftsmanship** have a slight tendency to attract Weaver-energies, but they are still more Gaian than anything else. These places focus the energy of industry, skill, and pride in a job well done, rather than the powers of progress and technology. In ancient times, the Silver Fangs often claimed these caerns; in order to set up *kl'ave-rorges* that could draw on the caern's strength. Even today, they would make ideal places for fetish-makers to craft items worthy of housing spirits. Such caerns add dice to Crafts or Repair dice pools when opened.

- Caerns of **Memory** are very rare; Gaia created the Mokol  to be her memory, and so these caerns weren't vitally necessary. However, in the modern age, such a caern would be a real prize — it could channel the knowledge of countless shapeshifters, enabling Garou to learn more about their once allies and their enemies. When opened, the caern might grant extra temporary dots of Past Life (even to tribes normally forbidden from taking that Background), temporarily

grant picture-perfect recall of any of the ritemaster's personal memories, or even grant visions of past events.

- Caerns of **Stealth** are rarely heard of, and with good reason. These caerns can be literally anywhere; the less obvious a place, the better. It's remarkably difficult to discern their energies; the only way to discover a latent caern of Stealth, even a powerful one, is to stumble across it through chance. Opening such a caern can shroud the entire bawn in misdirection, confusing and misleading enemies, add extra dice to Stealth or Subterfuge pools, or it might even grant the gift of invisibility to the ritemaster. These caerns are disdained by Garou who believe in fair rules of combat, but prized by Shadow Lords, Silent Striders and a few others.

Using this Book

Guardians of the Caerns is a story resource for Storytellers (and to a lesser extent, players); there's not that much by way of rules in this book, but lots of advice on fleshing out the caern and its inhabitants. Although this book is designed with the relatively inexperienced **Werewolf** player and Storyteller in mind, there should also be plenty of interest to veteran groups.

Chapter One: Lines of Defense — This chapter covers the basics of caern logistics, from ecological information on supporting a pack of wolf Kin, to keeping food and water resources at full strength, to defensive measures for keeping the caern safe.

Chapter Two: Tribal Lines — The culture of a sept greatly reflects a caern's nature, and the culture of a sept is largely derived from the culture of the tribes in residence. This chapter covers the most common tribal traditions with regards to holding and sanctifying caerns, the sort of structures you can usually expect to find within a given tribe's bawn, and the more common tricks a tribe might use to defend their territory.

Chapter Three: Digging In — This chapter focuses on specific ways for the Storyteller to get the players personally involved in the sept. In particular, the focus is on having players fill the roles of various sept offices, and when it is or isn't a good idea. Furthermore, this chapter includes guidelines on running the

ultimate story — enacting the Rite of Caern Building from start to finish, from finding the right spot to attracting the right spirit to beating off all the Wyrmbests that'll try to ruin the deal.

Chapter Four: Not of Garou and Kin Born — Finally, this chapter showcases the only Garou to be born, age, and eventually die all within the caern's boundaries — the metis. It details what it's like to grow up as a metis in the sept; there's also information on metis conception, gestation, birth, adolescence and finally death. Included is a comprehensive list of metis deformities, a few more metis Gifts and metis-specific Merits and Flaws — in effect, everything you need to know to breathe some more life into Gaia's wretched.

So — slip out of your shoes and walk barefoot, and lightly, in the heart of the Mother. Take up arms to defend the world's last few urgent, vital, powerful places. And above all else, keep your eyes open to see the wonders that these places have to offer.

Because they make everything worth it.

Chapter One: Of Caerns, Sorrows and Joys

Young cub! You would have us "pick and choose" our battles? Leave our lands when threatened if the foe is too many, so that we may fight when they are fewer? Young cub! Our enemies will always be too many! And without our homes we will be weaker still. No, we must fight with all our strength. We fight for Grandmother Earth, to protect her from the Wyrmbearers and the Horned Serpent's children. A battle may be lost, but no retreat can ever be won!

—Blade-Taker, War Chief of the Watching Falls Sept

Lines of Defense

Where do you find caerns? The images that come readily to mind are stone and earth mounds, sheltered groves, or mountaintops — places far from the touch of human hands. But despite the growling of many lupus, humanity's works are not necessarily distanced from the spiritual. The deep spiritual connection of a caern can be found in bars, monuments, office complexes or even casinos.

Most caerns — certainly almost all of the oldest — are in wilderness or rural places. This is fitting, considering most werewolves hearken to the ancient force of

creation. The champions of the Wyld prize the primal places of the world, where the corruption of the Wyrms or the deadening embrace of the Weaver have not touched. Many Garou claim that caerns require a certain sort of spiritual harmony, and any outside influence — whether the touch of an enemy, a stranger or even an unwitting ally — sets up tiny ripples that can eventually injure the caern itself. For that reason, werewolves are doubly vigilant against outsiders who might "taint" a caern's heart.

A minority of caerns can be found in urban areas as well, and are usually of two varieties. The touch of humans over time may "flavor" a location and predispose it to becoming a caern, as in an institution or national monument. Such a location gathers this potential only when the humans' feelings regarding the place are consistent. For example, if a given bar has always been a light-hearted place, it might attract a resonance of Humor, but if a hospital where countless lives have been saved has also seen numerous deaths within its walls, it cannot attract a strong association with Healing. The other breed of urban caern is usually quite young, having been created in the last couple of decades; typically more Weaver than Wyld, these sacred spots are located in skyscrapers and computer centers where order and patterns reign supreme. While Wyld caerns are fighting for survival every day, new Weaver caerns are actually prospering.

Suburban caerns are for all intents and purposes nonexistent. Wilderness caerns don't survive development, and few suburbs have any sort of long-term associations necessary for the connection with the spirit world to grow. People flee to the suburbs to escape city life, and then leave again as soon as the suburb grows too cramped for their taste. Wetlands are drained to kill mosquitoes, and wind up killing countless other animals that depended on the water and the mosquitoes to survive. Despite what television has to say on the subject, suburbia is just not the place where the human spirit flourishes. Unfortunately, all these factors (and more besides) mean that Wyrms caerns are able to survive and even flourish in the 'burbs. A wilderness caern is laughably easy to corrupt when a landfill or housing project is built upon it. And subdivisions can easily harbor as much angst, sorrow, lust and hate as any urban sprawl — made all the worse because they're so commonly and tightly pent up. After all, you don't want the neighbors to talk.

Different Caerns for Different Bairns

If you've seen one caern, you've seen one caern.

—Bent-Bow, Uktena Theurge

It's been said before, but it bears repeating: while most caerns have many of the elements listed in this chapter, each is unique. The makeup and "flavor" of a particular caern is closely tied to the totem spirit residing there (naturally), the tribe or tribes claiming it and the individual sept that calls it home. Keep this in mind when designing a caern.

Areas

Bawn

As you love the brugh, let none cross the bawn!

— Conn mac Aoghan, sept Guardian, Walking Hill Sept

A Strider is never lost, thought Molly Joy-of-Het-Heru, but she occasionally gets powerfully confused. After stirring up that nest of Banes, she was happy to dive out of the Umbra at her first opportunity. She found herself in a rural area, the kind where there were no road signs because the locals already knew where they were. Six miles later, the sun was dropping and Molly Joy had yet to find so much as a paved road. Half a mile ahead, she saw a barn. Maybe I can charm my way into crash space and a bit to eat.

Then she felt it — like heat from a sun-warmed wall, or a sound just beyond hearing. Slowly she turned, until she faced a woodlot from which the aura seemed to come. Ignoring the NO TRESPASSING sign, she jumped the fence, wincing as she strained muscles still knitting together from Bane wounds. Yes, the feeling was stronger here, and it danced across her skin like a cool breeze, making every hair stand on end. She had crossed a bawn. Quickly, before she was taken for a trespasser, she raised her head and sent a Howl of Greeting to the sky. Before the echoes faded, a welcoming howl answered. Molly Joy smiled, for tonight she had found a home.

The outer perimeter of a caern, known as the bawn, is ordinarily where the outer defenses of the sept are stationed. The bawn is not necessarily circular or square, or even regularly shaped. It may conform to the shape of a mountain range or valley, or follow a pattern of only Gaia knows what. The former extent of the bawn may have been truncated in lands scarred by development or waste — for example, the bawn of a Primal-Urge caern in Tennessee is circular except along one side, where agriculture was practiced until the fields were abandoned only decades ago.

The bawn of a caern is not necessarily an obvious boundary; however, any Garou, as well as certain spiritually-aware non-Garou (some mages, psychics, etc.) can sense when they've stepped across the bawn. The particularly perceptive can often discern what sort of caern they're entering.

Whatever its shape, the bawn is usually fixed in space, changing size only when a caern changes in power. As with anything else, of course there are occasional exceptions — one wouldn't expect the Wyld to conform to every convention. For instance, the Bluewater Caern, consisting of an isle of an atoll, has a bawn that stops at the water's edge, growing and shrinking with the tides.

The boundary of a caern is not necessarily the limit of its physical influence. The Garou very frequently settled their Kinfolk just outside the bawn, close enough to come when needed, yet able to watch for, and if necessarily stall or fight, would-be trespassers before they ever reach sacred ground.

Graves of the Hallowed Heroes

Death is a natural part of life; for the defenders of Gaia it is all too common a visitor. Werewolves accept death, but like other living things, don't necessarily welcome it. When possible, most caerns include a place to honor their fallen, where Garou can remember their packmates. Ironically, this place of reflection may also hearten Gaia's warriors by good example. To have one's name and deeds of glory so honored by the sept teaches a young Garou that if she's brave, she too will be forever remembered.

This graveyard is usually a place of quiet reflection, set well away from assembly and living areas (although some militant septs place the memorials beside or even within the assembly area, as a constant reminder of the glory of a brave death). Often, the grave markers are subtle enough that only a Garou would notice — a glyph on a tree trunk, or small stones set in a peculiar pattern. These are usually memorial marks, not markers of physical graves — every long-standing sept has seen more werewolves fall in battle than there is room to bury in a caern graveyard. There's generally room for only the greatest and most valorous — all others lie in the Graves of the Hallowed Heroes symbolically, but not physically. Many homid Garou are buried in human cemeteries amongst their Kin, and many lupus are left in the woods where they were born; in this way the Garou return, at least in part, to the worlds they left behind long ago.

Every caern has its own way of putting its septmates to rest. Since its inception over a thousand years ago, the Ten Claw Sept has lain its dead to rest in well-equipped earthen mounds, sized roughly according to the warrior's deeds (though because of space considerations, mounds have been built smaller with time). The Sept of the Acrophon lays urns of the ashes of the fallen in marble mausoleums, while the Steaming Dawn Sept puts their dead to rest in forgotten pyramids deep in the jungle. The Gaia's Bounty sept tends an arboretum whose trees are scored with the names of the fallen; the ashes of the dead are scattered across the glen to fertilize the flowers that bloom in riotous profusion.

On the other hand, lupus-dominated caerns often lack a memorial ground entirely. When the spirit flies, the bodies of the fallen are considered inconse-



How Does It Feel?

Aware beings have a difficult time describing the mystical energies that mark a caern. If the power could be heard, then the low background frequency would rise in pitch when the bawn is crossed. If the energies could be smelled, a faint odor would waft about. For strong caerns, the energy may be felt like a mild electrical current, with a tingle across the skin.

Because a caern's mystical forces are "flavored," it may be possible for a traveler to sense what type of caern he has encountered at the bawn. This is usually possible only in small caerns, but the sense of a caern's texture becomes more apparent as one moves closer to the center. Again, words are inadequate, but in the strongest caerns even normal humans can pick up the dominant emotion inspired by the caern. A visitor to a Caern of Calm may find the place soothing and relaxing, while a human near a Primal-Urge Caern may be inspired to cast off the trappings of civilization and live a more primitive life. For a werewolf, this influence may be more pronounced, growing even stronger with proximity to the caern's center; it would certainly be obvious in its source. The center of a Caern of Rage would be an unwise place to hang out on a full moon, even without a Rite of Opening being performed.

Besides its type, a caern may also be flavored by the aspect of the Triat most closely aligned with it. It should go without saying that the Wyld dominates most Gaian caerns with a secondary Triat strength, and the caern's atmosphere reflects this in numerous ways. Life flourishes at the heart, if only in little ways; plants and mushrooms spring up quickly and die out as quickly, living out their lives at an accelerated pace. Garou feel an undercurrent of, for lack of a better term, potential — to many, this seems a

promise that tomorrow may be brighter than today. This brings a sort of euphoria to the werewolves who live here, a much-needed boost in a bleak world of perpetual and seemingly futile struggle against corruption and despair.

In a city caern (almost certainly controlled by Glass Walkers) with ties to the Weaver, things are "as they reasonably should be." Wyld energies are quickly channeled into their logical paths. There are few surprises, since Weaver totems actively discourage chaos and entropy. This can manifest in unusual ways: a flipped coin consistently landing on heads, Kinfolk unconsciously keeping ever more precise and punctual schedules, and so on. Most Glass Walkers are relatively conscientious about keeping the Weaver-influence from getting too out of hand at their caerns; they recognize that a little randomness is a good thing.

Unfortunately, we can't forget that the Wyrms has unholy places of its own. Corruption, darkness and evil are given an almost physical form in these wretched places. The hives of the Black Spirals carry a taint that infects all who venture within, but the particular manifestation varies. Within the Hive of the Broken Manse, for example, the air is putrescence incarnate, and a nauseating weakness saps the vitality of any Gaia-pledged werewolves from the moment they enter. The Pit of the Withered Soul is far more subtle, and Garou have spent hours within its dank tunnels without feeling any worse than they would in a pristine cave system. Within a few years these same Garou fall inevitably into a Harano that only death can end, for their souls are irrevocably poisoned by the mystic emanations of the Wyrms.

quential to these septs, and are taken to an out of the way place to mortify. It is the Songkeeper's job to keep the memories alive.

Unless an urban caern includes a cemetery, it is next to impossible to actually bury dead pack members on site. In such situations, a shrine of some sort is common. The defenders of the Gallows' Pole Caern (housed in a large pub) hang pictures of their fallen along one wall, while the Sept of the Sacred Logo devotes half a floor in their high-rise office building to a museum celebrating the memories of heroes by displaying prized personal items and an interactive kiosk listing each member's moments of glory.

Living Area

"But it's not fair!" growled young Derrick Twoclaw. "I've been here longer than him. How can he take my room?"

Brenda Newshine, Derrick's mentor and member of the Council of Elders, shrugged. "He outranks you, and he challenged for the space. It's traditional precedence."

"Which part of tradition? Rank gets the goods, or mules make good whipping boys?"

Brenda sighed. Before the raid and subsequent fire, this would never have been an issue. Now, space was at a premium; the youngest sept members had to live outside the

If You've Gotta Have a System...

To sense that unusual "tingle" that comes with crossing a bawn requires a Gnosis roll (difficulty of 8 minus the caern's level). The Storyteller may modify the difficulty based on the distance from the caern's center, local mystical "background" energies and any magical concealment or detection in use. Three successes give the Garou an idea of the general strength of the caern, while five lets her discern the general nature of the caern.

Example: A Rank Four caern has a difficulty of 4 to detect. A Rank Four caern spanning half a city block (relatively small) in a soulless corner of Detroit might only require a 2 or 3, while a Rank Four caern covering 2,000 acres (large) in a rural corner of Ireland (high "mystical background count") would probably be at a difficulty of 6 or above for detection.

If a visitor has no Gnosis, then crossing the bawn isn't going to be all that noticeable unless said visitor is using some sort of supernatural power to gauge the background energies. Humans, mages and the like usually have to get fairly close to a caern's heart before they can casually sense the power around them — and let's face it, very few get anywhere near that close.

bawn. But the boy was right; as a metis, he faced constant discrimination and hazing. That was one reason she'd taken the youngster under her wing. Loyalty to her old friend, his late mother, was another. She wouldn't deny his life was harder than it should be, but she knew the council, and they would have little sympathy for the young Fostern.

"We follow traditions; don't forget that," she said, a little sharper than she'd planned. The youngster needed to learn some discipline and respect if he ever wanted to get anywhere in the sept. Softening her expression, she continued. "I know it's hard, but I wouldn't make an issue of it right now. Just accept it for the moment. I've been pushing for the old building to be rebuilt so the entire sept can stay here. They'll agree to it sooner than later, and then you'll have a brand-new room. How's that?"

Head down, Derrick nodded with the resignation he'd shown a thousand times before. But this time was once too often. Too often the wants of untutored cubs were placed before his needs, and to his bruised and smarting ego this small thing was just one more blow. At that moment, deep in his heart, a bitter-bred darkness was born.

Many of the larger caerns have living space for the sept within the bawn. This may take the form of a farmhouse, meadhall, trailer, treehouse, cave or even

something as transitory as a tipi or lean-to. In cities this can also take the form of converted office space, barracks or a duplex. Living space is more than just places to sleep, eat and wash. Libraries of collected history and lore, forges and workshops, places for study or meditation, recreation or workout facilities are common when space is available.

Very small caerns may not have the luxury of quarters for the sept. In such cases, sept members try to have their homes as close to the bawn as possible. Communication and security become problems for these caerns — leaders must develop ways to get messages to septmates quickly, be it a phonetree, runners (human, spirit or otherwise), howl, signal fire, or something even more inventive. At least some Garou must find a way to be on site at all times, for no sept would leave its caern completely unguarded.

As can be expected, ranking packmembers get more living space than the rest. This is true even when space is not limited. Few Garou would consider challenging this setup without a pressing need, since the hierarchy of status is so fundamental to their society. This gets out of hand only rarely. Only the most tyrannical alphas would leave the sept out in the rain simply because a dry house "is his due;" moreover, few septs would let such unequal treatment go unchallenged for very long.

When it's all said and done, a werewolf's idea of "personal space" might be very different from a human's. Privacy isn't necessarily guaranteed in a caern's living area, particularly if the caern has been influenced by generations of lupus elders. Many Garou require little more than a place to stretch out, a place to keep some dry clothes, and a place to eliminate waste — after all, they reason, a werewolf's true home is his body. Regrettably, this attitude can alienate homids fairly effectively, and has caused more than a few morale problems with newly-Changed youngsters.

Shrines

Ranulf knelt in the small room in the northeastern tower. Before him hung an icon in the image of a swooping bird of prey, its gold- and gem-encrusted form sparkling in the light of the high window that looked out over the fields and forests of the king's domain. The walls about him held shelves neatly piled with knives, jewelry, scraps of colored cloth, and locks of hair. Ranulf bowed his head solemnly. Though proud of his skill with a klaive, the king's champion took no joy in the duties he carried out with the sacred weapon.

"Lord Falcon, I ask forgiveness, for in doing my duty I have lessened your children's number. I pray that my holy blade strengthened our tribe even as it killed." He

Shrine Benefits

Depending on the size and appropriateness (that is, **number of material correspondences and other items of chiminage**), a shrine can decrease the difficulty to summon and bargain with the shrine's spirit by -1 to -3 at the Storyteller's discretion.

held up a heavy gold ring. "His name was Henri de Calais, Lord Falcon. Except for his late madness and treachery, he was valiant, a worthy friend and implacable Wyrmling. Speed him to the arms of Mother Gaia, my Lord." With that, the Ahroun placed the ring on a shelf, bowed again to the icon, and backed out of the shrine. He couldn't be sure, but he felt Falcon understood and approved, and his own soul was at peace.

Another feature common to caerns is one or more shrines. As the name implies, a shrine is a place to meditate or pray. It is a place to do homage to a spirit, to dedicate victories to a totem, or to ask for aid. Packs often have shrines dedicated to their totem, although Garou with a close personal tie to a particular spirit (such as an Ancestor-spirit) may keep a personal shrine as well.

Shrines take many forms, but they typically contain objects or materials corresponding to the spirit. The shrine of a war totem may be decorated with the heads and weapons of foes, while that of an enigmatic spirit might be papered with Escher posters and filled with incense. (Other ideas for spirit-pleasing items and rituals can be found in **Axis Mundi: The Book of Spirits**.) A shrine may be found in a small box on a table, a stone hut on a mountainside, or a chamber in a cave, depending both on available space and the spirit's (and pack's) inclination.

Because each pack may have a shrine (though not all do), a caern could easily contain several shrines scattered within its bawn. Garou might even keep a shrine's location or even existence secret from the rest of the sept, as they are both sacred and very personal. Desecration of a pack's shrine is a mortal insult both to the pack and the totem; even casual disrespect can set a pack hunting down the Master of the Challenge to oversee a duel.

Assembly Area

Otto looked about at those assembled in the clearing, Fenrir and Kinfolk alike. No summons had been given, but the sense that something was about to happen had spread quickly through the small community. Now all looked expectantly to him as the Philodox stepped forward.

"I have an announcement!" cried Otto. He pointed to his son, who stood with the comely young Adela, the orphan the proud young warrior had rescued three winters since. "My son, Hendric, has told me his intention to take Adela to his hearth three moons hence. As her guardian and his father, I have given both approval and blessing. So let it be known!" A cheer rose as Otto turned towards the beaming couple, but he turned back when the sound faltered and died.

At the other end of the meadow a pale-faced Kinfolk stepped forward. Otto knew of him — he was Volke, a brash man of eighteen summers and no great means.

"Hear me," shouted Volke, "for I challenge you for the right! She is to be mine!"

Otto raised a warning hand to his son, then said, "You are not Fenrir. You cannot challenge for her! Go home, boy."

Volke looked ready to tear both Garou to pieces. "The blood of the Fenrir is in me the same as in you! It is my right to challenge who I will! I'll die before I see her with him!"

The boy was lovestruck, an affliction that made men insufferably stupid. It was also an illness incurable. He looked to Hendric, whose smoldering eyes made plain his answer to the challenge. "So be it." Otto said solemnly. "In this place at sundown, the challenge will be decided."

The assembly area is the social heart of the sept. It is the place where most moots are held, where challenges are met, and where counsels are kept. The layout of such a place varies considerably, but it must be large enough to accommodate all sept members. The assembly area ideally has room for visiting Garou as well, although in truly cramped caerns, some septs get around the space problem by conducting their moots in the Umbra. At least one Glass Walker sept claims to hold assemblies in virtual reality, although this is surely offensive to most visitors.

As with the rest of the caern, this section reflects the caern type, totem and sept. A sept with an air-aspected totem such as Eagle or Wind is usually very open to the elements, while one dedicated to Owl or a spirit of the deep forest may be surrounded by high trees that block the sky. Many gathering areas have special places set aside for the sept leader or the elders; this may be a throne, a boulder, or even a raised platform of earth. Especially egalitarian septs (which are rare, even in Child of Gaia septs) may lack this feature, refusing to raise any one elder above the rest. A central focal point, such as a tree or fire ring, is common (and appeals to werewolves' sense of drama). Memorials of battles or heroes are fairly common here as well, where the living may often look upon the reminders of past deeds. In the Caern of the Rent Sky, the path to the council circle is lined with megaliths

engraved with the tales of the many great battles fought in the valley below. Nine boulders circle the meeting place of the Sept of the Nine Crowns; six of the stones are fashioned into the likenesses of the prophesied great leaders who have won many glorious victories for the sept, and the master stonemasons wait anxiously to carve the next one in line.

It's considered traditional and appropriate to conduct challenges in the assembly area, where all can witness the contest. Most duelists insist on the privilege anyway; any grudge that requires a challenge is important enough that the entire sept should witness justice being done. The assembly area is also a good rallying point in times of crisis, and packs often congregate in or near it to hear news and announcements.

Assembly areas are usually easily identifiable as such, simply by the physical necessity of a largish area with good line-of-sight to the center. Ancient stone circles, groves, open fields or craters are common meeting places. The Gallows' Pole Sept meets in a main bar room, while the Neon Ice Sept convenes in an abandoned roller skating rink. As might be expected, the Sept of the Sacred Logo convenes in a large boardroom.

Caern's Heart

The heart of the caern is a step back in time, before the schism, before the Gauntlet. It shows us what has been lost. To visit the heart is to learn the true meaning of bittersweet.

— Marcus Cloudwatcher, Shadow Lord Philodox

The most sacred part of a caern is its center. If the assembly area is the social heart of the sept, this is the spiritual heart — the caern's more literal heart. Of course, the center is not always at the caern's geometrical center; there isn't even necessarily always only one heart, as the triple-centered Brugh Na Boinne caern in Ireland clearly shows.

The caern's heart is where the Gauntlet is nonexistent, and hence the place where the most powerful rituals are conducted. Even an average mortal can sense the power of such a place, although how she interprets the sensation varies; a ecologist in harmony with Gaia might enter the sacred grove with hushed whispers of reverence, while a wage-slave accountant might feel bouts of vertigo in the surreal environment ("Swamp gas?" she might wonder). Those bearing Wyrmtaint in their souls may shudder at the danger and unease they feel in this place.

Here the caern's spiritual nature is strongest — a Rage caern seethes with palpable anger, while a Fertility caern is as lush and warming as a mother's embrace. The heart of a caern is also the only place in these latter days where the spirit world and the

Straddling the Threshold

It's true that Garou need make no roll to step sideways at the caern's heart; nor do they need a reflective surface to do so. In fact, any shapeshifter within the heart of a caern — even those who cannot normally step sideways — may walk into and out of the Umbra at will. Spirits that are able to Materialize may do so in the caern's heart at a cost reduction of ten Power.

However, beings that weren't born or created partly spirit in nature — like humans or even fomori — are in potential trouble in such a place. Although the Penumbra and physical world are juxtaposed in the heart, there's no guarantee that a human leaving the heart will do so in the physical world. It's all too easy to wander off into the Umbra and never be heard from again — particularly as humans, vampires, and even mages without Spirit magic are largely incapable of affecting spirits or spiritstuff. Just another reason that a caern is an inhospitable place to the uninvited....

physical world are truly united. A Garou standing here gets a surreal view of the caern and its inhabitants; structures or formations may look very different, particularly if they have dual natures. Spirits and mortals may be standing together yet remain completely unaware of each other, but the Garou in the caern's heart sees them with equal clarity.

Umbra

Ordinarily, only material things with a spiritual investment and/or great age are present in the Penumbra. A brand new laboratory might not appear at all in the spirit world while a cathedral, giant oak or even an old farmhouse can be quite distinct. The key concept is relevance — things that have proved important and focal to their surroundings, either by seniority or genuine human emotion, are most likely to have Penumbral reflections.

At a caern, the thinning of the Gauntlet results in much more detail coming through. Most features in the physical realm can be seen and even felt (well, by shapeshifters and other things able to touch spirit matter) in the spirit realm. In fact, during high holy nights in the most powerful caerns it is possible for even shapeshifters to slip across the Gauntlet accidentally!

Of course, Penumbral structures or objects may not appear as they do in the sunlit lands. A com-

puter terminal commonly looks like gossamer filaments of webbing on the other side of the Gauntlet, while a well-tended and healthy hedgerow might seem wild and lush to spirit eyes. Again, spiritual resonance and even symbolism are more important than realistic detail.

While most spirits slumber in typical Penumbral locales, the reverse is commonly true at a caern. Even buildings are liable to have a fledgling spiritual awareness. Theurges have an especially difficult time carrying on a conversation with so many Umbral beings clamoring for attention. This can prove very involving and interesting for a Theurge's player, though; Storytellers are welcomed to devise plenty of opportunity for a crescent-moon to get to know the local spirits. This helps keep a Theurge involved, and can work well to play up the distance between a seer and the rest of his pack. ("Of course this is necessary. You don't listen to the stones like I do. It's no wonder you don't get it.")

Local spirits have a close, often individual relationship with the Garou of their caern. They are quicker to aid the sept, teach Gifts, or pass on lore. In return, wise Garou show deference to and readily perform services for the spirits. Many Theurges insist that sept members spend a good deal of time in the Umbra to keep their spiritual ties strong. They also try to maintain harmony among the spirits of the caern, for any disagreements or fights in the Umbra will have repercussions in the physical realm.

Supporting the Caern

"Okay, what now?"

The four unkempt teenagers stood in a circle around the fire ring, looking at a fifth. Pete licked his lips and closed his eyes like his late mentor, the Caller of the Wyld, used to do. It helped him stall for time. He and his pack had finished their Rite of Passage only a month before the big attack. All the elders, the other packs — all dead, except these five. Rides-the-Mist had told him the importance of the moot, how it kept the totem happy and the caern alive. Unfortunately, he hadn't taught Pete how to do it. Neither had he introduced them to any other werewolves — Garou, he corrected himself.

Around him, the air thrummed with the caern's power. Think! What did he do next? "Okay, we howl," he said, as certainly as he could manage.

"We just did that," Suzanne said, a little exasperated.

"Yes, but now we howl for... the totem," Pete said quickly. "We... pray for his blessings." The pack lifted their heads and began to howl, a little dissonantly, the young Theurge thought. "Oh, great Lion, we call to you, and ask for your blessings, uh, we who are your children, for we are

Garou, ah, and we need your guidance to strengthen us and protect our caern and...."

"I don't feel anything." At Suzanne's interruption, the howls wavered and died. "When Rides-the-Wind did it, the air was full of electricity. And I know I heard Lion roar."

"It's Rides-the-Mist, and do you want to try it?" Pete exploded in frustration. He felt his skin grow tight, his hands cramping, on the verge of the Change. "He hadn't gotten around to teaching me anything useful yet, just a bunch of vague mystical crap. But he was crystal on how important moots are. So we've got to figure it out!" I've got to figure it out, he added silently. I failed my old family; I can't fail my new one.

The Garou must do more than protect their caern from outside threats — they must tend and nurture it in much the same way a gardener cares for a fragile hothouse flower. The specifics, as with most everything in this chapter, vary by sept and tribe. A nearly universal part of keeping a caern vital is the moot (detailed in depth in the **Werewolf Players Guide**). Monthly moots recharge the mystical energies that make the caern a holy place; this energy is gained from the Garou themselves, as they stoke their passion in the sacred Revel that ends a moot.

The Mechanics

Generally speaking, an active caern needs its Garou to feed it each lunar month, to the tune of five points of Gnosis per caern level. The lion's share of this donation typically comes from the Revel, but a werewolf may make a donation of Gnosis at any point. Such donations can take the physical form of meditation, wild dancing or whatever else seems appropriate — but a Garou has to do something to connect his innermost reserves to his home. It's not like dropping off a check into an ATM — and let's face it, dramatically speaking, it shouldn't be.

Storytellers may decide that a caern's Gnosis needs can also be fed by scrupulous attention to the caern; for instance, if the Keeper of the Land does an exemplary job of making sure that the caern's energies flow unimpeded from place to place, the caern might gain an effective point or two of Gnosis each month from this care.

If a caern isn't "fed" regularly, it lapses into inactive status — it loses its tether to its totem (who retreats into the Umbra), the Gauntlet rises in its heart, and the Rite of Opening can no longer draw on its powers. To reactivate the caern, the sept must perform the Rite of Caern Building — which is no small feat.

Good Neighbors, Part One

Whether bound by tribal affiliations, personal friendship, moon bridges or simply a common imminent threat, most septs have ties to other septs. The days of inviolate territory are, quite simply, long gone. When the **unthinkable** happens and a sept is crippled beyond the means to hold and care for a caern, these septs pull together to provide guardians and Theurges to keep the caern viable. If this isn't an option, septs may throw membership open to any untainted Garou. They often recruit ambitious young Garou hungering for positions and status. This is how many mixed septs are formed.

There are other ways to keep a caern healthy. The Garou who holds the office of Keeper of the Land makes sure the caern is kept up; whether it's adjusting building layout to promote a "positive feng shui," or getting the cubs to clean up trash and fallen limbs before moots, the effort shows respect for the caern spirits and for Gaia. This doesn't work well for all caerns, though; caerns of Primal-Urge and Wyld in particular draw no real benefit from orderly grooming.

Naturally, each sept performs the old rituals with varying degrees of vigor, depending on the sept's overall personality. Some septs, such as the Sept of Bridget's Blessing, rigorously uphold all the traditions and rituals, making every day at the caern one of holy observance. The Silver Fangs of the Sept of the Bright Talon likewise follow their traditions, although unfortunately more to the letter rather than the spirit. Even so, almost all septs are scrupulous enough to follow the basic rituals with appropriate reverence, but it's all too common skimp on the lesser-known and seemingly less relevant rites.

Unfortunately in these latter days, caerns aren't always treated with care. Too many septs, particularly those that have lost the guidance of their elders, are sloppy with the moot rituals. Younger septs have a bad habit of keeping moots irregularly or otherwise neglecting the responsibilities of caern keeping. Often, attrition in the war against the Wyrms leaves septs with too few to perform the proper rituals, or with members too young and inexperienced to know what to do. Even old, established septs may have simply forgotten important rites.

And, unfortunately, some septs simply ignore the traditions. Some feel the antiquated ways have no relevance to modern Garou life. To others, dancing circles and drumthumping lose importance when the

Wyrms threatens the very existence of Gaia and the Garou. These youngsters often learn of their folly the hard way — the *very* hard way.

Regardless of the reason for neglecting a caern, the price for doing so is steep. The power of neglected caerns begins to ebb away, and before long they become dormant, their spiritual connection broken. A tragic few caerns go bad — their magic goes sour and they become especially susceptible to Wyrms-taint. Black Spiral Dancers are always on the lookout for such a place, particularly as it's usually quite easy to take the territory from the incompetents in control.

Supporting the Sept

Ulfred clenched his teeth in frustration. Quickfoot's lupus mentality made it nearly impossible to explain human politics. It didn't help that his stomach was knotting with hunger. Even with the sept's crescent-moons asking the spirits for help, the crops were very poor. They'd managed to keep most of their Kinfolk alive, while the surrounding manors were losing roughly one peasant in four to disease and starvation. But the king was a foolish man, and he would not be satisfied with mere subsistence. He wanted taxes. And now the tax collector was nearing the village.

"Quickfoot, my friend, you don't understand! If we kill the sheriff's men, we'll have the High Sheriff himself coming for the taxes, and he'll bring a score of his best. Even if we killed them all, the crown would think he's been invaded and send every knight in the surrounding shires to take us down."

The lupus snarled. "But this is our territory! Our Kin are here, our blood is here. Why should this man make demands on us for what is ours?" She dug deep furrows in the packed earth with her claws.

"Because the king thinks he owns all the lands, including this forest."

With a toothy grin, Quickfoot replied, "Well, have the king come on then. I'll teach him a little something about ownership."

Ulfred sighed and rolled his eyes. Gaia grant that more half-moons be born while common sense could still save them....

Garou can't survive on Rage and will alone. They need to eat, and they need shelter. Except for ascetics and some lupus septs, they also require at least a few modern conveniences, such as tools, electricity, vehicles, weapons and telephones. To acquire these things, one usually needs cash. Because of the Rage that burns within them, not to mention their duties defending caern and Gaia, werewolves have a hard time holding down paying jobs. With enough land, a wilderness sept can subsist, but that's about it — no electric company

will take payment in exchange for a deer haunch and some otter pelts. A more commune-type setup can support itself and trade for other basics, but anything more extravagant is all too often beyond their means. And this says nothing about ownership of the property — if the sept doesn't legally own the caern, or can't pay the taxes, it becomes very vulnerable to acquisition by real estate developers or other less savory interests. Unless the sept leader is independently wealthy (such as stereotypical old-money Silver Fangs or new-money Glass Walkers), self-employed (with flexible hours!) or has a grant from sympathetic outsiders, the sept will need to find some way to support itself. Some, particularly among the Bone Gnawers, have no qualms about grabbing some cash or fencible goods from their victims during a raid, but this is risky — the money of a Wyrmtainted executive may itself carry taint.

Some may find it ironic, others proper, that the Garou frequently must look to their Kinfolk for support.

Human Kinfolk

"How did they take her?" asked Ironskin, his Rage momentarily dampened by the icy grip clutching his innards. Sweet Gaia, his sister, Adalay, was in the clutches of the Black Spirals of the Carrion Pit! The rest of the pack stood heavily around him, too stunned to utter a growl.

"I don't know," replied Clear Measure in the nonchalant tone he affected whenever he was deeply shaken. "They never crossed the bawn. Perhaps your sister went to the river. Their spokesman was very clear about terms. The Spiral said he would release her, untouched, if Daniel Ironskin will go to the Hive in her place. They asked for you by name."

The Ahroun thought a moment. No, he planned a moment; thinking was the last thing he needed to do, for if he thought too much he would lose his nerve in grief and fear.

"Are they still at the bawn's edge?" he asked, drawing on his inner strength to push the cold fear away.

"Yes, my chief. Five at least, well armed. They have her with them." Clear Measure paused. "Save for a bruise on her cheek, she looked unharmed, only fearful." Thinking to comfort his leader what little he could, he added quickly, "But she wore a brave face."

Pointing to a brace of warriors, Ironskin said, "I want you two behind me. Nightrage's pack, I want you to slip around and charge in from the flank. The Theurge, to the Umbra to gather spirits for an ambush should they slip sideways — go now, but be cautious that none of them are already there. Farshot, if three arrows haven't found their marks before my blade does, you've shamed yourself. Should any escape, I want you, Moonshadow, to track



them back to their lair. On my signal, we strike. We strike as one, and we send the bastards screaming into Malfestas!" At his stabbing hand gesture, all ran to take up their appointed positions, leave only the elders at the ring. All looked at their leader, who stared into empty air. "And Farshot," he added, in a voice as weak as a dying man's, "If you get a clear shot...."

"I understand, my chief." Though he felt his friend's pain, he knew that if the Carrion Pit Spirals had the girl in their filthy talons, she was already tainted in body, and her soul would soon follow. He was proud of his chief, who could do the right thing, the merciful thing, for the Kin he held so dear.

In many septs, Kinfolk living near or within the bawn are expected to support the Garou, or at the very least to provide for themselves. This could be as simple as paying rent for crash space, or as complex as managing investments for the sept. Kinfolk may be farmers or crafters, feeding and supplying their Kin. Others serve in other ways, by taking jobs as forest rangers or local beat cops to better guard the caern and its inhabitants.

The Kinfolk aligned with the Sept of Bridget's Blessing include musicians, carpenters and farmers who, together with the gigs and crafts the talented sept members produce, bring in enough to keep the taxes paid and food on the table. The Bone Gnawer Kinfolk of the Mudpuppy Sept pool their money from odd jobs, overtime and panhandling. At the Temple of Evening's Peace, the Kinfolk are expected to contribute of money or food in return for the healing prayers to the caern's spirits.

How the Kinfolk Feel

How do the Kinfolk feel about supporting their Garou relatives? There's no simple answer. Some take to it with a religious fervor, donating most or all of their salaries to the "cause." Others deeply resent this "forced tribute," and may be looking for a way to get out of their service to (and get back at) the werewolves who bully them. But between these two extremes lie the majority of Kinfolk, who are glad to help and willing to give their share, but also have their limits. Ideally werewolves should be mindful of their helpmates' feelings, neither asking too much nor taking for granted what is given. Resentment, distrust and anger are calls that draw the Wyrms; caerns fall as often from within as from without.

And just to sneak in a blatant plug, **Kinfolk: Unsung Heroes** covers the issue of Garou/Kin relations in extensive detail. It's valuable reading, good and good for you.

In the older septs among the Silver Fangs and Shadow Lords, the Garou-Kinfolk relationship approaches that of a feudal lord and his tenants. The Glass Walker's reputation for paralleling the structure of La Cosa Nostra, while somewhat deserved, is overstated in most cases.

Kinfolk are not always a boon. One potential problem area is that Kinfolk, being thinking beings, may get more inquisitive than a pack of werewolves would like. They wander places where the Garou might wish to remain private. What if some Kin were to slip into the heart of the caern and into the Penumbra? Or perhaps the "interesting piece of wood" he picks up is actually a fetish with a very touchy spirit? Interruptions can botch a ritual, and don't forget the ever-present danger of getting too close to Garou when Rage burns high and hot. Most Kinfolk know to stay indoors during a Revel, but tragic accidents have been known to happen.

Worse, Kinfolk can be a vulnerable point for the Garou, as human shields or hostages. Torture or intimidation can make them divulge valuable information about the caern and its defenses; blackmail or mind control may even make them betray their Changing cousins. Many Garou recognize this weak point, and may treat their Kinfolk with less trust or respect for it.

Generally speaking, though, Kinfolk can count on the protection of their werewolf relatives — even the Garou who see Kin as little more than a resource must concede that they're a *valuable* resource. This protectiveness can blossom into overprotectiveness, and the obligation to protect a Kin line might even get a Garou killed (particularly if there's real feeling between the werewolf and his mate or family — and there often is). Human Kinfolk are potential trouble, but to every tribe but one, they're worth the trouble. If they weren't, there wouldn't be any human Kin — or Garou — left at all.

Wolves

"No, really, they're huskies. I raise them. Really."

— Leo Brenner, Glass Walker Philodox, being caught in a lie

Even more problematic is the logistics of maintaining wolves at caerns. To state the obvious, wolves are not people. They think differently than humans; their communication and social behavior may be downright alien to most humans. Even though Garou can understand their full-blooded beast cousins, the animals may not be able to understand everything the Garou expect of them.

Wolves, even unusually intelligent Kinfolk, are still wolves. They are much more instinct-driven than humans are. What a human might consider a temptation, a wolf sees as an imperative. A wolf will respond to any potential challenge or threat not with false manners and veiled threats, but with plain, decisive action. At the same time, being more intelligent than most people give them credit for, wolves are curious and mischievous. The combination of intelligence, curiosity and instinct is apt to get wolves in a world of trouble.

Then there is the question of supporting wolves — not as simple as one might think. Simply to maintain itself, a healthy active adult wolf requires an average of close to four pounds of meat per day; to thrive, it needs closer to ten pounds per day. This can be supplemented with high-quality dry food as need be, but most Garou frown on manmade foods as a surefire way to bleed the primal side right out of a wolf.

The territory necessary to naturally support a pack depends of the size of the pack as well as the abundance of food. For example, a wolf pair in the north woods may survive with a range of 50 square miles, while a pack of ten may roam across literally thousands of square miles. Of course, Garou tend to be more successful at bringing down large prey than wolves alone; however, such efficiency may eventually crash the local deer herd.

In rural areas, there are other hazards. Sheep and cattle are difficult for a hungry wolf to resist, and local farmers will find wolf sign quick enough. In the World of Darkness, wolves don't have nearly as many advocates as they do in our own world. A rumor of wolf activity near a populated area will invariably bring gunmen looking for bounties, thrills, or the protection of children and livestock. Even if the sept feeds its wolves livestock away from prying eyes, wolves still have an inclination to roam and a hunting instinct.

If feeding is difficult in farm country, it's damn near impossible in urban areas. Because hunting is out of the question, septs typically resort to buying beef by the truckload, picking up roadkill and supplementing it all with dog chow. This can also lead to an unhealthy wolf population unless the sept is particularly careful; there are scads of potential health risks in the meat industry, particularly in the World of Darkness. There's no guarantee at all that the side of beef that "falls off the truck" isn't going to make a wolf sick — possibly even deathly ill.

Why would a sept go to all this trouble? Few werewolves would even ask the question. Loved and cherished, wolf Kinfolk strengthen the lupine blood of the Garou, a precious link which lamentably



Ethics and Wolf Kinfolk

"A caged wolf too easily becomes a dog."

— Richard Eyeshine, Wendigo Ragabash

Wolves are creatures of the wild, whether on open plains, windswept tundra or silent forests. Such a life is hard, and merely surviving is often the best that can be hoped for, but it is what made the wolf what it is today: hardy, watchful, and cunning.

Assuming a sept can protect and feed their lupine Kinfolk, they must face the fact that survival skills grow rusty with disuse, and a wolf denied the freedom of the wilderness loses its ability to survive in that wilderness. An occasional Glass Walker sept tries to maintain the skills and fitness of their wolfpack through obstacle courses and training grounds, but many werewolves (even Glass Walkers) find such extremes laughable at best and offensive at worst. Garou who insist on keeping wolves in confined spaces, such as small yards or zoo habitats, will likely incur a poor reputation, not to mention the wrath of Red Talons. It would be much the same as confining human Kinfolk to a house (or perhaps a room) — no honorable Garou would see their breeding stock, their family, deserving of that sort of degradation.

Unfortunately, not all Garou are honorable — but that's another story.

grows weaker by the year. Wolves also make excellent caern guardians, easily noticing anything unnatural or suspicious.

Protecting the Caern

As the alarm began to buzz, Flatline-the-Banes mused to himself that there was definitely one good thing about having a spiritually awakened house: the security system worked in the Umbra. On the monitor, he saw the Black Spiral pack look about in surprise.

"Five BSDs, north side," he called into his headset.

After a moment, the response came — Wired-For-Rage, from the voice. "Two packs converging on the location. Is it an assault team?"

"Negative, they're too lightly armed. I think it's that scouting party the spirit warned us about."

"All right. Flatline, intensify active scanners on the rest of the perimeter, they may be a decoy."

"Roger." He tapped a few buttons, then scowled. "Wired, I have movement on the east side. Two BSDs,

Capturing Caerns

We're from the Shadow Lords. We're here to help.

— Damian Lastlaugh, Shadow Lord Ragabash, about to score a caern.

Neglected caerns are ripe targets, and not just for Wurmish invasion. Certain tribes have expanded their holdings in recent years by taking control of the weak, neglected caerns. The Get of Fenris and Silver Fangs are historically notorious for this, usually arriving in strength and claiming ownership of a caern (and sometimes a sept) through intimidation, challenge or outright battle.

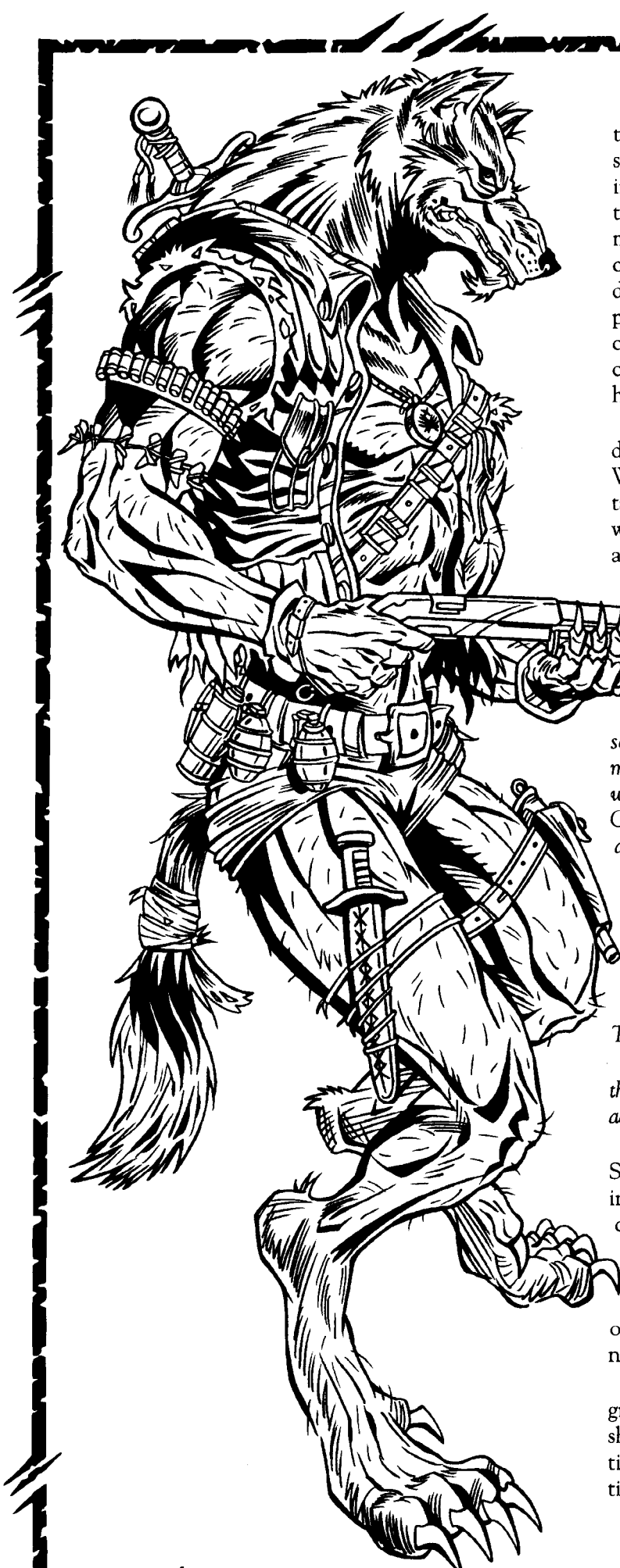
Shadow Lords are also adept at acquiring new holdings, although through much subtler means. A Lord makes his presence known, shows grace and confidence in her knowledge and a willingness to assist the overwhelmed young Garou. Then, more often than not, they will end up owing a debt of gratitude to the Lord who just took over the caern!

This isn't to say other tribes never take charge of faltering septs or abandoned caerns, sometimes forcefully. The Uktena and Wendigo still have a few choice curses for the Fianna who stole as many caerns as the Get did during the days of the American frontier; Bone Gnawers nurse a few tales of being muscled out of an area by Glass Walkers who claimed right by virtue of superior resources. Even the Children of Gaia are said to have captured a Red Talon caern or three in the name of "peace with the local humans." But when the need is genuine, no worthy Garou fails to do all he can to protect a caern, including giving aid to an underpowered sept.

with some sort of rocket grapnel. I think they're going to scale the complex."

"Copy that. Banefrager's headed up top to stir up some spirit help. Do a quick physical sweep — this could be a three-pronged attack." Flatline sighed as he switched monitor #2 to physical mode and cycled through the security cameras around the building. Well, it beats a day job.

No Garou treats a caern simply as a hangout and convenient supply of Gnosis. It is a combination of home and temple, dearly held. Countless Garou have given their lives defending their caern, and thought it a good trade. Even a rootless Strider would sacrifice herself to save one of these holy places from desecration. Any Moondancer much past cubhood knows a few tales of desperate, glorious acts of heroism to protect the spiritual wellspring of a sept.



And the days of such heroics are certainly not a thing of the past, for enemies assail the Garou from all sides. Threats come from minions of the Wyrms looking for their own power sources, Weaver-spirits on their own crazed "pave the Earth" mission, even from mages who drain the precious energies from a fragile caern as if it were an oil well. Furthermore, even in this day and age rival Garou may covet the power a caern provides — although they're usually politic enough to couch such an invasion in terms of "liberating the caern from those who, if pressed, would not be able to hold it against the Wyrms."

Even so, the point of defending the caern is not to die gloriously; if everyone strove for such a goal the Wyrms would just stroll across the heaped bodies and take control at its leisure. The wise caern Warder wouldn't think to leave his charge's fate in the claws of a few Ahroun, no matter how capable they may be; instead, he uses every trick and ally at his disposal to protect the home of his sept.

Concealment

The two boys stood uncertainly on the dirt road, studying the sign nailed to a tall pine which also served as a post for the rusty strands of barbed wire that marked the boundary to Crazy Man Sullivan's. The sign was marked in hand-painted letters which said, "KEEP OUT GUNS TILED" The red paint ran down the sign, and the S was backwards.

"What's a tiled gun?" the black-haired boy asked.

"I ha'n't the faintest," replied his blonde companion. After a pause, he added, "Don't sound good, though." Minutes passed as each boy thought, balancing curiosity and mischief with this unknown factor. Guns were bad enough, but what kind would a Tiled Gun do to young flesh?

"Don't reckon I need to know all that bad." And with that, the first boy led the way down the road, looking for adventures of a more predictable kind.

Perhaps the best protection is to not be noticed. Small, weak caerns are seldom discovered if the Garou in charge are lucky, clever and careful. The larger the caern, the more powerful the spiritual emanations; the Wyrms will take notice of a Level 5 caern if it isn't warded with powerful rites, Gifts or other magics. The Rite of the Shrouded Glen is a common method of hiding a caern from spiritual observers, but it does nothing for mundane trespassers.

For generations, faerie glamours have hidden the greatest caerns of the Fianna from prying eyes. The shamans of the Pure Lands, through age-old association, have likewise used their powers to divert attention from these holy places. From the Burning Times

At the Roof of the World

In Denali Caern, which has one of the largest bawns in the world, a bawn patrol would last well over a week. To save time, numerous patrols usually cover smaller sections of the bawn, with more patrols **near the eastern side where the tourists are.** Spirits and even a pair of Corax are also **enlisted** to keep watch. Several Kinfolk work as rangers and concessionaires in the National Park, keeping an eye out for suspicious visitors.

Usually a small pack will watch over backcountry hikers to make sure they don't cause any trouble. No fomor or tainted hiker ever returns from the backcountry.

to the present day there have even been rare alliances between the occasional earth mage and sept, although such arrangements are usually on the order of compromise rather than fealty. Spells may make a bawn appear a tangled and unwholesome wood, enchant any passerby to be take no notice of the path leading to the caern, or even subconsciously encourage visitors to steer completely clear of the bawn.

For the majority of septs without access to trustworthy supernatural allies with such powers, there are more mundane ways to hide. In town, a run-down building with a CONDEMNED sign, or "BEWARE OF DOG, BE AFRAID OF OWNER" tacked on to a barbed-wire fence will go a long way towards deterring the casual onlooker, although too many such precautions may cause one to wonder what's there is that's so worth protecting. Creative NO TRESPASSING signs can have much the same effect in more rural setting ("Trespasser's next of kin will be notified." "Give up hope if you cross this fence, because if the heat, scorpions, rattlesnakes and cactus don't get you, I WILL.")

Rumors are also plenty useful for keeping trespassers out. The block everybody knows is the turf of a vicious gang won't get much tourist traffic; police attention might be a problem, but the World of Darkness has more than its fair share of urban wasteland where even the cops won't go. Land "everybody knows" was the site of a radioactive sludge dump won't attract developers. And nobody is going to go camping or necking in the hollow where the pot-growing, shine-brewing, banjo-picking locals make Copperhead Road look like Sesame Street.

Sept members or Kinfolk can also do their part to divert attention away from their holy sites. The Sept of the Western Eye, which lives in the tourist-infested Muir Forest, disguises Kinfolk and Garou as tourists or

park rangers, surreptitiously steering other tourists back to the more-traveled parts of the forest.

Detection

To see what isn't

Tell me, cub, is this worse than

To not see what is?

— Shizu Sees-Within, Stargazer Theurge

The next step in caern protection is to observe potential troublemakers before they arrive. The wilderness caern held by the Burnt Grass Sept has the advantage of a hill dominating open shortgrass prairie — anyone larger than a rabbit can be spotted from miles away, and upwind intruders will be scented long before they're seen.

Friendly Kinfolk around a caern's bawn provide an excellent security network, especially when the caern is somewhere few strangers frequent: for instance, bad parts of town, backwater villages, gated communities or high-rise offices. (This is also a popular method of defense among Black Spiral Dancers, whose Kin are an effective information network and a reason for locals to avoid the place.) Conversely, places strangers are welcome and common — bars, tourist locations or parks — guarding the caern becomes very difficult indeed.

Perhaps more useful still are the (super)naturally occurring allies of the sept — the local spirits. Wise septs will take pains to stay on good terms with the local anima. Besides watching the Umbra, many spirits can sense goings-on in the physical world. A content spirit will alert the Garou more quickly, and when the caern is threatened, every moment counts.

And of course, there are the Garou themselves. Ideally (if not precisely typically), a caern has one or more watchers stationed at obvious entry routes, such as an alley, dock or pass. Roving sentinels wander the bawn, checking out anything suspicious. If there's a werewolf to spare, a similar rover (usually a Theurge)

Electronic Surveillance

In urban caerns (and occasionally in rural ones), electronics such as cameras, motions sensors, pressure pads and laser eyes are in fairly common use. Augmented by awakening their spirits, these defenses become more effective in the physical world and also work in the Penumbra. Such devices are rare outside Glass Walker caerns, though not unknown, for they smack too much of the Weaver — a definite handicap to Renown, if nothing else.

circles the caern in the Penumbra. Any of these Guardians keep in touch with their fellows by dispatching spirits, howls, or other signals as need be. Should an alarm be sounded, it falls to the Garou in charge of defense (the Warder or one of the other elders) to decide how to respond. If the threat appears small, the practice is to send only a limited number of Ahroun to deal with the threat, for the possibility's all too real that the attack is only a diversion. For that reason, sentinels stationed elsewhere are usually told to remain at their posts to watch for other threats, unless an "all call" is sounded. This howl or other signal is a dire warning that the perimeter has been breached and the caern is in jeopardy. So, between Garou, Kinfolk and spirits, there is no excuse for an intruder catching the sept unawares without the use of potent magic and cunning.

Barriers

"Yessir, whatcha got here is perfect. The boggy ground will funnel any attack force along the road, which is open to fire starting about 150 yards from the bawn. The ditches are spiked, so there's no cover there. If you want, some bunkers could be set up at key points. I think even the Eagles would earn their pay assaulting this side, assuming your people are awake and can shoot straight. Are you expecting aerial attack? That'll be tricky, but we'll come up with something just in case."

"Yep, the west side's fine. Now, east side, we've got some problems...."

— Hauptmann Klaus Braun, Get of Fenris Kinfolk, Black Eagle team leader

Nature often plays a role in a caern's defense. Mountains, bogs and other rough terrain can be effective against intrusion, particularly intrusion by vehicle. Bayou Endormi is surrounded by river on three sides, and patchy swamp and bottomland forest for miles on all sides; the Winter Pass Caern is perched on a high rocky cliff.

Thick stands of trees, bramble thickets and thorny hedges can deter all but the hardest intruder. An added benefit is that, if awakened (and the sept would have to be pretty foolish not to do so) the thickets will be just as effective in the Umbra.

The sept usually improves on local defenses, building walls, berms, fences or moats. Some septs go so far as to actively boobytrap their territory, using pungi sticks, snares or pitfalls. The Keeper of the Land may also carefully maintain a set of false trails meant to lead casual intruders well away from the bawn.



City caerns can be fortified just as easily, although discretion proves much more necessary. Heavy walls and gun emplacements around a neighborhood block have a way of attracting attention. In run-down neighborhoods or old factories, heavy equipment or rubble can be strategically placed; doors and windows can be barricaded, and broken glass and boards with nails sticking up can slow down or even cripple attackers. Well-to-do septs with Weaverish affinities have other options; the compound of the Sept of the Sacred Logo has all the latest "anti-terrorist" devices designed to foil car bombs or assault teams trying to get on the grounds.

The downside to having barriers is that they can also restrict movement of the Garou. Scouts or perimeter guards rushing into the caern, or defenders hurrying to bolster the bawn, risk getting hampered by the defenses. This can be alleviated by the maintenance of concealed paths. Anyone not familiar with the maze-like trails through the thick forest of the Caern of the True Walker will almost certainly miss the cleverly camouflaged Center Path among the many more obvious ones leading to dead ends or away from the caern.

Defenders shouldn't assume any barrier will stop all comers. Fomori and Black Spiral Dancers can be as inventive at overcoming obstacles as Gaia's Chosen. But fixed defenses will hopefully buy time for the sept to rally its own forces.

Guards

A barricade is all well and good, but without defenders the Guard will have it down in half the time it took to put it up. Can you hold what you've built?

— Renault the Rabble-rouser, Bone Gnawer Galliard, revolutionary

Of course, no amount of fortification will stop a determined attacker, and in the end, an assault almost always comes down to claws, blades and bullets. And let's face it, young hotbloods will be quick to tell you there's nothing particularly glorious in watching fomori beat themselves to death against stone walls, quicksand and wire. Of course, many elders who know the price of a lost caern feel that clean claws and dull watch periods are a small price to pay for security. Still, as much as the sept wants to keep the Wyrms out, the minions of the Wyrms want in that much more — and where there's a will there's a way. And so the final defense of the caern is up to its werewolf defenders.

Generally, the more powerful a caern, the more defenders it has; the greatest caerns attract defenders from hundreds or even thousands of miles away. The Ahroun usually take the forefront in any conflict, but in a pinch every Garou does her share. Local Kinfolk are sometimes enlisted in caern defense; while appreciated and some-

How Many Guardians?

As a rule of thumb, a caern will typically have Guardians equal to five times the caern's level. Large, prestigious caerns may claim a higher number, but most septs just don't have that kind of manpower — although Kinfolk and spirits can sometimes make up most of the difference.

Having plenty of defenders may not seem that hard until you realize that no one can effectively pull guard duty all day, everyday, and **only** the truly obsessed **attempt such a feat**. Apart from factors like **sleeping** and **eating**, most Garou have some sort of life away from the caern. A glory-hunting young Ahroun knows that while guard duty is honorable, one seldom becomes a renowned fighter of the Wyrms sitting at home. Likewise, there are mates and families, friends and sometimes even jobs to consider. The upshot is that a fair-sized caern may only have a third of its dedicated Guardians "on call" at a given time. Of course, when a threat looms (word leaks of a Pentex attack, or Black Spiral Dancers recently probed the caern's defenses), every Guardian will be on hand — or the Warder will know why.

times even expected, Garou know too well that against the biggest threats to the caern mortal Kin can do little.

Spirit protectors

White Eye staggered to the lightning-blasted redwood that marked the caern's center. The silver shot burned within, but he had fared better than his pack. The Pentex strike team had breached the outer defenses far too easily with their explosives and rapid-fire shotguns loaded with the moon metal. His pack had been shredded in moments, and from the roars and shrieks behind him, it sounded like the rest of the sept was going down fighting.

"Griffin!" he howled. "We have failed! The sick apes have stolen your home! But know your sept gave their lives to defend you." He turned to lope back, to take his place with the dying Garou, when a shrill, angry raptor's cry rent the air. Crouched before the redwood was Griffin in all his glory, flanked by four magnificent lions that roared as one. The fury in the totem's eyes filled White Eye's failing heart with fresh vitality. Howling a song of courage, he charged back to the fray, the mighty spirits of retribution at his heels.

A healthy caern is never completely defenseless; the totem that calls the *brugh* home will do what it can to help its Garou protectors. The aid of the caern totem depends on its strength and nature. Warrior totems are apt to be the most direct in defense of their territory. Invaders of Wendigo's caern may find themselves

Good Neighbors, Part Two

In times of crisis, close ties with nearby caerns are invaluable. A quickly opened moon bridge from a neighboring sept can double a caern's defenders moments after an attack begins. Of course, this works both ways — a sept may find itself losing warriors in the defense of another caern. Furthermore, no caern Warder would allow all his caern's defenders to run to the aid of another caern — no sense in risking the loss of two caerns when not even one can be spared. Finally, calling upon one's neighbors too often or frivolously may cost the sept dearly when a real threat looms. (So remember, kids, never cry... well... you know.)

crippled by a bone-cracking cold, while Fenris may send a band of ancestor Fenrir berserks to crush the foe. Less combative totems must be more creative. Dana, for instance, may sing or spin a tale that could entrance or shame any fomori with the slightest touch of humanity left in them. A caern controlled by Fox may become foggy, its trails labyrinthine to any stranger, allowing the Garou guardians to regroup and attack their disoriented foes. *In extremis*, the totem may even materialize at the heart of the caern to do battle with the invaders. Such an effort taxes the spirit, and time or an infusion of Gnosis is necessary to return the totem to its former strength.

Pack totems likewise aid their charges by lending them gifts and charms. If a pack has devoted their energies to honoring their totem, the spirit may have grown strong enough to wield other powers. Minions of the Wyrms may run from a powerful totem that openly fights beside its pack.

As mentioned before, caerns are alive with spirits, many of which can play a part in its defense by clouding an enemy's senses, stealing weapons, or making the land impassable. And of course, many spirits are willing to do actual battle with Wyrms-creatures — in fact, many would be denying their purpose if they refused.

Caern Spirits

Spirits abound at a healthy caern, but one spirit has far more influence, prestige and outright power. This spirit is bound to the caern, dependent on the sept for protection but able to tap the caern's energies. It surrenders freedom of movement for an intimate knowledge of the area within a bawn. The sept venerates its caern totem, devoting time at moots to keeping its favor.

Bonding a Caern Spirit

All established caerns already have totems, of course, but for the rare and miraculous awakening of a new caern, or for a newly rededicated caern, a totem spirit must bond with the land. Generally, a spirit appears at the end of the caern awakening ceremony, although in some cases it may not arrive for hours or more afterwards (for instance, if the caern was awakened shortly before dawn, the spirit of Dusk may not appear until evening.). It goes without saying that no totem is attached to a caern it isn't naturally attuned to. Even if a sept of Glass Walkers *could* secure a Primal-Urge caern, there is no way they could convince Cockroach to inhabit it. Similarly, no Wind-spirit will make its home in dense forest or cave caerns.

On the other hand, the totem that presents itself at the caern may not be what the sept might have expected. Gaia herself makes the final choice. A sept expecting Unicorn to bless their newly awakened caern of Healing may be surprised when an avatar of Brook answers their call.

Though uncommon, it is not unheard of for more than one totem to share the caern. Again, both totems must make sense in the scheme of things; for example, as a holy place of both the Fianna and the fae, the Brugh na Boinne caern holds Stag and Dana as co-totems. Antagonistic spirits may not share totemic responsibilities. Caring for a caern with more than one totem is much more demanding than usual, but the rewards are correspondingly greater.

It's worth noting that the more powerful the caern, the more likely that a powerful and important spirit will answer the call. Level Five caerns almost always boast avatars of tribal totems or other, similarly important Incarna as their patrons. This isn't necessarily indicative of a pecking order among the spirit hierarchy; it just tends to prove that powerful reso-

Totem Avatars

One of the things Theurges must explain frequently to young packmates is the concept of "many-in-one." Lion, for example, has many avatars that serve as both pack totems and caern totems. They are all distinct spirits, yet all part of Lion. Each avatar can wax or wane in strength depending on the fortunes of its Garou associates, which in turn changes the power of Lion by small increments. And the Incarna knows what its avatars know, so if you tick off an avatar of Lion, all of Lion's avatars, from caern spirit to pack totem, will know about it.

nances draw similarly powerful forces to them. A place for everything, and everything in its place.

The Pact

Before a spirit officially settles into its place as caern totem, it seals a pact between itself and the sept, wherein the obligations of both parties are determined. Typically, the totem asks what is offered in return for its service, and the Garou offer to protect and honor the spirit. How this is handled varies by individual spirit. Bull may thunder out of the Umbra and demand what he will, with no room for compromise. On the other hand, the sept's head Theurge may spend several hours (or nights!) negotiating terms with his City Mother totem before a deal is struck. And Uktena may ask nothing directly but expect much down the road. If the sept (or its members) are highly renowned, have a reputation for generous dealings with spirits and treat the totem with the utmost respect, the spirit may take its place at the caern without asking for anything save protection and proper treatment, knowing that the Garou will "do right" by the spirit.

Generally speaking, though, a spirit will not haggle too hard. A caern is a source of power and security, and in general spirits prefer caern connections to freedom of movement. Whatever they ask is due them out of respect rather than greed, and any discussion is more form than substance. Inexperienced Garou have no way of knowing this, of course.

Benefits

The obvious benefit of the caern totem is to allow direct access to the mystical energies of the caern, including access to moon bridges. And like any other spirit, the caern totem can teach gifts. But the spirit of a caern has more to offer. Just because a Theurge must perform a ritual to access the caern's power doesn't mean the totem can't access them by itself; if the caern spirit feels the need is real, it may offer the power of the caern even without the proper rites. This most often happens in times of war when no ritemasters are available; after all, the totem must sacrifice some of its power to offer such a gift.

Another benefit is enhanced access to spirits aligned with the totem. A sept of one of Fenris' caerns will find it easier to summon one of Fenris' brood such as the Norns or the Hrafn, and find them better-disposed to requests than would septs with other totems. Similarly, a caern dedicated to Uktena might offer some leeway with allied spirits, such as the spirits of Wendigo's brood, or other water or serpent spirits.

But a caern totem's influence will also be felt in ways no game mechanic can quantify. In a sense it is

Can Garou Become Caern Totems?

Though not wholly inconceivable, it's pretty much unheard of for an Ancestor-spirit to become a caern totem. Usually, the ancestor must have been powerful and of high rank. She must have shown exceptional dedication to a particular cause or sept, making her spirit in effect a "patron saint." Usually, an Incarna or Celestine intervenes to elevate the Garou's spirit to minor totem status. This is a *much bigger deal* than simply binding a Garou spirit to a fetish, and the Theurge who tries to elevate a packmate to totem status *risks much more than certain failure* — she may incur the wrath of an Incarna.

One known example is the Dawnstar sept's caern. Brighteye, a venerable Theurge of great wisdom *was the ritemaster at the opening of a new caern. Dawn was brightening the sky and the rite was about to end in failure. Knowing he wouldn't have the strength for another attempt, he spent his life force to open the mystic portal.* It succeeded, and Gaia honored his sacrifice by making him the caern totem. The Dawnstar caern is only Level One, though, and it's entirely conceivable that no Ancestor-spirit could serve as caern totem to any caern of higher level — they just don't have the seniority needed to gather sufficient power.

the living essence of a caern, the active personality if you will. It can be felt as a palpable presence around the caern. It is the eerie feeling someone is watching, but for the Garou the sensation is comforting rather than malign. Of course, to an unwelcome intruder, the spirit will not be so welcoming.

If it is honored and protected, a totem's bond with the caern becomes deeper, stronger and more pervasive with time. There often comes a point when a well-tended caern could be expanded. A sept may have built bridges between the Garou and the other Changing Breeds, or it may have crippled some aspect of the Wyrms. When the sept has accomplished a monumental task for Gaia, the totem may intercede on the sept's behalf to expand the caern. After all, it benefits the totem as well as the Garou to increase the power and prestige of the caern.

Demands

In return for the power granted by the caern totem, septs offer protection of the caern as a matter of course. Garou also promise to tell stories and sing songs about

...Like a Totem Scorned

A sept can suggest what sort of spirit bonds with the new caern, but ultimately Gaia decides. If they welcome the spirit respectfully, all is well. If sept members reject the spirit ("We didn't ask for Raccoon, we wanted Fox!"), the new spirit will go off in a huff, possibly throwing a curse or some other mischief. The sept should soon realize the severity of their mistake when the caern begins to fade at the rate of one level per lunar month. Furthermore, no self-respecting spirit will inhabit the caern after the chosen totem was insulted so; the werewolves there have obviously proven that they aren't willing to treat a totem with the respect it deserves. To stem the caern's deterioration, the Garou will have to undertake a major act of contrition (usually involving a major quest) to appease both the spurned spirit and Gaia — if all goes well, then the totem will agree to return and the caern will return to full strength. If not, then it's the Rite of Caern Building all over again....

the caern spirit. In addition, the spirit may ask for other things, depending on its nature.

Wolverine may demand that the sept slay a Wyrn creature every week (or less), while Eagle requests that the bawn be patrolled at all times so nothing escapes the sept's notice. Pelican may ask that the sept devote itself to rehabilitating injured wildlife, particularly those harmed by Endron and other Wyrn tainted companies, while Unicorn may simply ask that the entire sept gather once a week for fellowship and thanksgiving.

Naturally, it falls to the Story-teller to determine the specific demands of a caern totem. Generally, the totem's requests follow the rough pattern of a pack totem's Ban, but can be adjusted depending on the amount of effort the sept is devoting to the caern, the size of the caern, the number of Garou involved (a smaller number might catch a break, since they're already working overtime), and so on.

Limitations

The principal limitation should be obvious: the spirit is rooted to one spot. It can't leave the caern without Herculean efforts. It certainly can't move the caern around under any circumstances. Equally lim-



ited are the spirit's senses: if the caern totem is nearly omnipresent inside the bawn, it can tell next to nothing about what transpires in the outside world, whether physical or spiritual. It may send members of its brood to ferry messages or investigate happenings, but more often it asks the Garou to run errands of more than trivial importance.

Caern and Spirit — Sacred Connection

The entire sept gathered, bleary-eyed, at the council ring. Evil, confusing dreams dogged their heels all night, chasing away restful sleep. The elders agreed that something was terribly wrong, that they and the caern were under some great threat.

Sings-to-the-Black-Rock stepped to the center of the circle, her bare feet crunching softly on the black sand. She stopped before a slim obsidian blade topping a large chunk of roped basalt. She closed her eyes and raised her hand above her head.

"Our Lady of the Mountain, as you give your burning blood to sustain us, so we give our own to protect you. Speak to us now!" She slammed her open hand down hard against the stone. There was surprisingly little pain at first, and she opened her eyes to regard the shiny black blade that now protruded from the back of her hand. As her blood soaked into the hardened lava, warmth spread up her arm and to the rest of her body. The warmth became a red heat, then an agony like a flame was dancing on every nerve. She fought back a scream, and then was beyond screaming as the totem spirit subsumed her shell.

The rest of the sept saw her surrounded in a nimbus of flame. Sings — no, it was Pele now — convulsed in the

flame, then relaxed. Her eyes opened, jet black against the yellow-red of her molten-rock skin. She spoke in a voice deep yet with the high pitch of a hissing steam vent in the background. "War is at hand," she began....

The ancient saying, "the king is the land and the land is the king" applies even more so to caern totems. The caern becomes an extension of the spirit. The totem is aware of every tree and rock like a wolf is aware of its toes and tail. Little happens here that escapes the totem's notice. This can be a great advantage when looking for game or intruders; there is a downside as well. Should something harm the caern, the totem suffers. Clearcutting a forest or dumping pollutants within the bawn strikes the totem as deeply as if a Garou were klaivestruken. Many among the sept, and certainly most Theurges, will be quick to pick up on the totem's distress and quickly seek out the source.

Likewise, if the caern spirit weakens from neglect or evil influence, the caern suffers — trees wither, clear streams become murky, and the caern's energies become tainted. Garou become especially alarmed when such symptoms appear, for allowing the caern totem to sicken is the first step towards losing a caern.

Again, this connection works both ways. A contented, healthy totem will be reflected in the state of the caern, resulting in forests rich in game, bountiful gardens and general well-being (appropriate to caern-type, of course — well-being in the traditional sense may be counterproductive in a caern devoted to anger and Rage). A well-treated caern totem may assist in expanding a caern.

Chapter Two: Tribal Lines

*When we stood against you Wyrncomers, we fell.
When you stood in our homes against the wicked spirits that
you'd brought with you, you fell. Now we stand together,
and if our totems are willing, we will not fall. Our cunning
and your savagery, our wisdom and your speed — it makes
my heart burn to say that we need one another, but there
is no other option. Come. Let us shed blood together.*

— Weeping Stone, Uktena Philodox

It's been stressed before that no two caerns are alike. Each caern has a character all its own, a character that stems from a blend of factors — the caern's location, its physical form, the local spirit broods, its type, and so on. Equally distinctive, however, is the influence that a sept has on its caern. For instance, a Rage caern discovered and maintained by Red Talons would surely turn out very different from what it would be if it had been claimed by Black Furies, Wendigo or even Bastet.

Just as a tribe's practices can change the land they call their own, their traditions can influence the Umbrascape of a caern. The spirit broods of their tribal totems bring additional elements to the caern's texture, as do the beliefs and actions of their Kin. It's true everywhere that the residents' actions can shape the Penumbra of a place — but in a caern, the changes are even more pronounced, and might bleed back from the Penumbra to change the physical world even further.

The Garou

It's solid fact that of the few Gaian caerns left in the world, werewolves control the great majority of them. Gaia's warriors have proven the most effective at capturing and holding caerns, and although their grasp is slipping, they're still doing better than most of the other Changing Breeds.

Although most Garou caerns follow a general pattern, and have much the same areas within them, there's still a great diversity of caerns and sept traditions among the Nation. Some tribes hold certain traditions as sacred writ, while others ignore the same traditions entirely. The character of a caern or sept is thus greatly influenced by the tribe that protects it — and as the tribe influences the caern, and the caern influences the sept, some truly unique caerns are born.

Tribal Caerns

Since the Garou first split into tribes following the Impergium, it has been their tradition to draw up their boundaries along tribal lines. The unspoken assumption was that since each tribe had its own vision and its own strengths, the tribes were better off pursuing their goals separately. This led to greater unity within septs, although sometimes at the expense of outside relations.

Over the centuries, each tribe gradually evolved its own specific traditions for the proper maintenance of their caerns. Although each Get of Fenris caern had its own structure and landmarks, the tribe's fighting spirit and emphasis on strength ensured that each Get sept would have a spacious area for tests of strength and physical challenges, as well as a rock-solid bawn defense. It's for this reason that caern stereotypes are actually fairly useful — two caerns held by the same tribe may look completely different, but a tribe member will probably find enough common elements in each one to feel at home.

Mixed Blessings

In these desperate days, of course, there are very few caerns left held entirely by one tribe; even the urban septs of the Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers usually have a few representatives from other tribes among them. Multitribal septs suffer from increased rivalries and infighting, and have a less focused purpose, but they can also draw strength from their diversity. A sept composed of Red Talons, Bone Gnawers, Black Furies and Uktena may not have very many points in common, but it can also marshal an impressive mix of ferocity, cunning, willpower and wisdom in times of need.

A caern held by a multitribal sept enjoys a mix of landmarks and features, just as it enjoys a mix of defenders. Each area might be a compromise in some way or another, speaking volumes about the tribes who live there. For instance, in the Graves of the Hallowed Heroes of a Get of Fenris/Silver Fangs caern, each marker might house a bone from the warrior it honors, and be hung with weapons appropriate to the fallen. If the Get sufficiently outnumber the Fangs, then they might refuse the Fangs permission to honor fallen Garou who weren't proven in battle. Storytellers are encouraged to develop similar fusions of tribal culture to showcase the caerns in their own chronicles.

Please note that the following descriptions represent trends in caern-building — they shouldn't be followed to the letter. The Storyteller should make certain that every caern is different from the stereotype in at least three respects; this is important to reinforce the locale's singular identity. The phrase "Black Fury caern," for instance, should always inspire a wide range of ideas, instead of one fixed image. The players should know something of what to expect from a given tribe's caern, but they shouldn't be allowed to rely on that knowledge.

Black Furies

The joyous cries and howls were echoing all the way up to Artemis, and all the way down to where Pan-Foot stood watch. He thumbed the edge of his labrys, and mournfully wished for the thousandth time that he might have been born female. He felt that he'd even gladly suffer the pain of growing up metis all over again, even take the burden of the damned hooves again, if only he were able to partake in the rites to Moon and the Mother. It was a warm night, yes — but it felt awfully cold to him.

He'd never been allowed out of the bawn. Yes, of course part of the reason was shame — but how would he explain away the split hooves that were his birthright? The caern had visitors now and again, all female — and they all looked at him with pity or disgust. One Strider metis had even tried to stir his anger against his mother and his sisters, claiming that he was entitled to more than they'd given him. She'd been furious when he had no answer for her. Well, truth be told, he did have an answer for her — but she obviously didn't want to hear it. How could she understand how much his mother and the sept had given him simply by allowing him to stay in the first place?

Suddenly there was a stink on the wind, so sharp that Pan-Foot's thumb reflexively twitched onto the blade. He snapped fully erect, surging upward into his true form, his birth form. He could feel the furnaces within him ignite, already drowning out the pain in his thumb.

Forgive me for disturbing the rite, sisters and aunts, *he thought*. Forgive me, Luna, but I must.

And he howled, long and plaintive, even as the spidery shapes leapt from cover across the clearing at him....

The Furies have appointed themselves guardians of the Wyld, but they are rarely inclined to seek out the Wyld in cities. They prefer caerns in the deepest wilderness, in places where nobody would expect to find human habitation. Unfortunately, such places are much rarer in the modern age; a Fury caern is often surrounded in local rumor and mysticism, simply to keep the humans from getting any closer than they already are.

The Furies are great proponents of defending a caern through secrecy and stealth, using rites such as the Badger's Burrow in conjunction with more mundane forms of stealth. Many Furies deliberately guide the vegetation around their bawn to grow as thick and wild as possible, with only a few hidden trails through the thickets. A few septs have crafted fetish horns that, when sounded, release fog like that generated by the Gift: Curse of Aeolus. The mystical fog blankets the entire bawn, and restricts the vision of anyone other than a Black Fury. (Needless to say, the Furies have never contributed such an item to a multiracial sept, and it wouldn't be that useful there, anyway.)

At the heart of a Fury caern, the Wyld flourishes. Many objects and spirits there are of a transitory nature, whether they change along certain patterns (such as Lunes and other Moon-spirits) or randomly (like Wyldlings). Fury mysticism surrounds the caern's heart, and each sept has certain taboos and traditions governing behavior there. A Fury moot is often more ritualistic than the moots of other tribes, as the Furies pay chiminage to their ancestors, the Wyld, the moon, the caern totem and other spirits all at once.

Many Fury caerns build amphitheaters to serve as their assembly areas; the design was effective in the time of their ancestors, and it's still effective today. Others prefer a more natural environment, and modify natural glades only as much as necessary to make assemblies feasible.

The living area of a Fury caern can take almost any shape or form. There might be a few small cabins that homids would find comfortable, or there might be a complete lack of structures. The tribe doesn't usually worry much about privacy — they certainly do their mating well outside the caern boundaries — but some younger Furies demand a little more space to themselves. (Whether they get it or not is a different story.)

In recent years, many Fury septs have made certain that there's a private area suitable for childbirth — more specifically, for the Crinos-form birth of metis

cubs. Although the tribe would rather such an area was never used, the cold reality is something different.

Pegasus and her brood are often appeased by offerings of art and poetry, and this preference can be seen in the shrines of a Fury caern. The Furies offer gifts made by their own hands, whether weaving, painted pottery, or even sculpture. Of course, some of the more vicious camps and septs also offer the blood of their enemies — and some of the more aggressive spirits demand such sacrifices, even from more compassionate Fury septs.

The Furies are right around the Garou norm when it comes to honoring their dead. Some septs pay exacting reverence to their Ancestor-spirits; others spend almost all of their time focusing on the living. The majority simply tends their memorial areas regularly and offers prayers to their forebears as appropriate. Fury septs sometimes name their memorial areas Gaia's Repose, or more rarely the Nekropolis. It's very rare for their male metis children to be remembered in such a place, but it has been known to happen before; in fact, it's almost certain that when the blind old Teiresias passes on, he'll be remembered in the Nekropolis of the Sept of Bygone Visions itself. Even after millennia, though, this is still a controversial issue.

The Penumbra around a Fury caern is often relatively still; the Furies don't attract quite as many Gafflings to themselves as other tribes might. The atmosphere is more than a little foreboding, thick with the slumbering rage of the tribe. Luna's light shines down sharp and crisp, strengthened by the many rites in her honor. The spirit vegetation, if any, grows thick and lush; there are sometimes even dryadlike awakened Plant-spirits hiding amongst the foliage. If the caern is particularly strong in Wyld, the Penumbra might constantly shift its geography across the entire bawn, making it exceptionally difficult for anyone not in tune with the Wyld to find her way from place to place.

Bone Gnawers

"For Gaia's sake!" Roland Metalsinger finally exploded. "You think this is a social visit?" He jabbed angrily in the geezer's direction with the battered cue. "I told you I was here carrying a formal message from uptown — a message you could've gotten sooner if you'd do us all a favor and install those secure lines already — and all we've done is drink cheap beer — cheap, warm beer — and shoot nineball with seven balls and warped cues on a table that I'd swear somebody's given birth on!" He slammed his cue down for good measure. "Now are you going to guide me to your caern, or should I just go home now and leave you to the sweepers?"

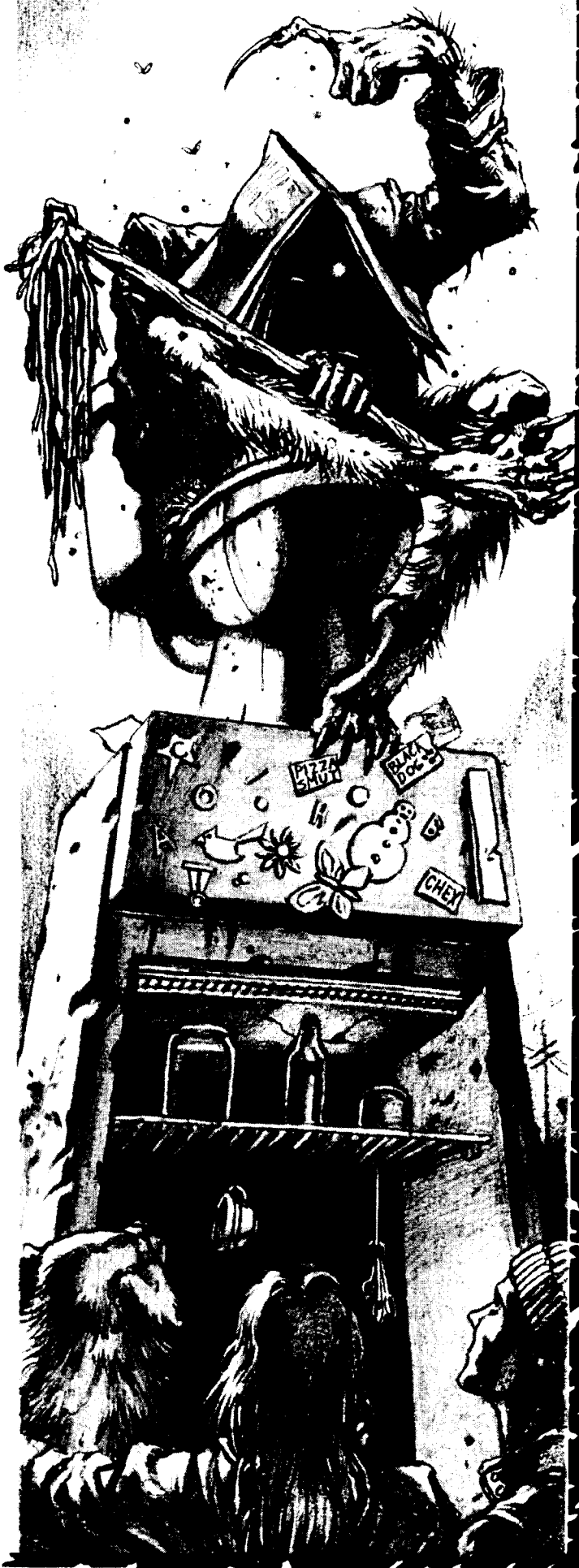
"You're already in the bawn, ya little snot. You just didn't notice, what with that thick head and all." The old man pointedly picked at a chunk of food between his teeth then jerked his head in the direction of the closed door at the far end of the room. "I'll take you deeper when you're good and ready. But for now, wouldja do me a favor and take your damn shot!!"

One might think that the Bone Gnawers don't have very many caerns to their name at all — after all, caerns aren't something that the lowest tribe would receive as hand-me-downs. However, that assumption is pretty far from the truth. The Bone Gnawers are practiced at finding what other werewolves might overlook or ignore, and that includes caerns. While a Black Fury or Wendigo might turn up their nose at an abandoned nursery school, the Gnawers might have the perception to discover that the grounds have absorbed a lot of Humor energy over the years, and might make a good caern.

Most Bone Gnawer caerns are urban; the other tribes often believe that Gaia has abandoned the scabs, and even the Glass Walkers aren't likely to look in the poorer sections of town. And since most caerns that are "going to waste" are in the cities, that's where the Bone Gnawers build them. However, there are still a number of rural Gnawer caerns, particularly among the Hillfolk portion of the tribe. These caerns are usually nestled off Appalachian dirt roads, on the mountaintops and in the valleys in which the Wyrms is only recently making its presence felt.

The effective protectorate of a Bone Gnawer caern can stretch up to about a city block or so; any more is difficult to run without the humans noticing, and too much less is not enough caern. Sometimes this area is counted as the bawn; sometimes the bawn is restricted to a simple building. In all cases, the Gnawers rely on a network of Kinfolk, paid-off street kids, urban Gafflings and other sentries as their first line of defense. Packs of wild dogs are also a possibility, although lupine Kin are even better. (All of these things can also help by establishing that section of town as someplace that smart people *just don't go*.) Jury-rigged electronic security is sometimes a possibility, particularly if the mechanic of the sept is also a Theurge. And as perhaps the most populous tribe of Gaian werewolves, there's a good chance that the sept always has a few sentries to spare.

The heart of the caern is something else entirely, a chaotic mix of Weaver and Wyld, of physical and spirit, of rundown and vibrant. A few Rat-spirits are almost always at hand to serve as eyes of the tribal totem. The purpose of the caern melds with Bone Gnawer stubbornness and zest for life to create an



atmosphere that's hard to replicate in the spirit world or in the physical realm.

The Bone Gnawers don't always hold their meetings inside caern boundaries, strange as that may seem. If a caern is particularly cramped for space, then the Gnawers might hold their war councils and general meetings outside the bawn, perhaps in an abandoned building or warehouse. The Grandmothers and Grandfathers recognize that this is a security risk, but sometimes there's no other option. If there is an assembly area in a Gnawer caern, it's basically the largest space available that isn't necessary for something else. The Gnawers just don't customize their caern structures to the degree that a special assembly area would require; it's kind of hard to conceal large-scale reconstruction in the neighborhoods the tribe claims as territory.

When it comes to living space, the Gnawers don't bother with a lot of frills. Shared crashspace is the norm, whether it's in a dilapidated barn or a giant culvert. The Rite of the Cardboard Box isn't considered particularly shameful housing, even in the heart of a powerful caern. It's tribal custom to be content with what you've got. The only notable exception is that septs with a little extra room give sept members a little extra space to keep the Stuff they accumulate; this is pretty good for morale.

Another good use for Stuff, of course, is to pacify the caern's spirits. Bone Gnawer shrines can look like prodigious junkpiles; the shrine to the totem of a major caern might look like an explosion in an antiques shop. Elaborate graffiti murals are another popular way to pay tribute to a beloved patron spirit, as are scrap metal sculptures. The Gnawers aren't going to be attracting any love from Falcon or any other such high-minded spirits, but Rat and her brood seem to be quite happy with the Gnawers' eclectic homages.

The Bone Gnawers, alas, aren't paragons when it comes to revering their fallen; the tribe's focus on the here and now makes them disinclined to spend too much time dwelling on the past. Their memorial areas (which they often call Boneyards) are often adjuncts to the assembly areas, places where they can enjoy a good wake and then stumble off to bed. A bar's back room might be a place where the Gnawers remember their heroes, as might a wall covered with graffiti. In all cases, their Boneyards are meant for the living as well as the dead. After all, the Gnawers figure, if their dead are still hanging around, they'd want to see that their living buddies are still doing okay for themselves.

The Penumbra of a Bone Gnawer caern is a messy melange of a place. The Weaver's webs are usually present to some degree (except in the rural caerns), but the Wyld is also commonly strong near Gnawer caerns. Rat-spirits scurry back and forth in numbers

that are almost unheard of (except when compared to the infestation that is a Ratkin caern). Gafflings of other urban concepts and creatures are also commonplace, and are constantly getting underfoot — the Gnawers don't demand fealty from visiting spirits, which makes their caerns rather popular. The downside to all this is that an enemy who knew what he was doing could get awfully close to the caern by blending in with the hubbub; but then again, an enemy who doesn't know what he's doing would probably get discovered all the sooner.

Children of Gaia

Eliza Hummingbird sighed and sank back on her haunches. As much as she hated to admit it, the smell of fresh blood was somewhat appetizing.

Right, keep thinking that, *she chided herself. It may smell good, but Gaia only knows what's in it.*

With a small shake of her head, she rose to her feet and shouldered the body once more. Then she noted one of the youngest — David, in Glabro — looking warily at her. She snorted, then turned to him. "Yes?" she growled.

"Ah...nothing. I mean...Hummingbird-rhya, shouldn't I get that for you?" He absently flexed his arms, which were thick as telephone poles. "You've already done so much in the fight, and I'm still not tired..."

"No," she rumbled, fighting her Crinos throat for the words. "I killed him. He is my burden." She shook her head. "Even when you must kill. A burden."

It may seem odd that the Children of Gaia control a relatively small number of caerns. After all, the Children work together very well — although not precisely of one heart and one mind, they certainly suffer from much less infighting than most other tribes. They're also Umbrally sagacious, and ready to fight for what they believe in. However, the Children of Gaia just don't have quite the same aggressive, expansionist mentality that the other tribes boast — well, for the most part, they don't. They've conquered very few caerns from other Garou, they have rather less in the way of ancestral territory, and like any other tribe, they don't have the numbers to enact the Rite of Caern Building left and right — even if there were potential caerns lying around ripe for the taking, which there aren't. As a result, the Children hold proportionately fewer caerns than do most other tribes. They aren't as poorly off as the Silent Striders, Stargazers or Red Talons, but they're certainly not doing as well as the Fangs or Fianna.

However, the caerns that the Children *do* hold are treated with the utmost care and respect. The tribe's elders are usually steadfast about running a sept ac-

cording to the caern's traditions, rather than the tribe's. A Children of Gaia sept protecting a caern of Rage would be martial and aggressive, much more so than the tribal norm. Such a sept would likely evolve its own fierce traditions, traditions only vaguely recognizable as Children of Gaia.

The Children guard their bawns as fiercely as any other werewolves would, if not quite as ruthlessly. Any traps are usually meant to disable, capture or kill quickly; the Children don't care for weapons meant to cripple their opponents with pain. Unless the caern is of martial nature, any spirit allies tend to act as sentries and messengers rather than engaging in combat. The bulk of the caern's defense rests with the Garou in residence. Knowing this, many Children of Gaia septs are rigorous about pursuing martial training, in order to maximize their members' combat ability. Although these warriors often lack the blood-thirsty spirit that makes the Fenrir, Fianna and Red Talons so effective, they have impressive skills nonetheless, and are easily underestimated.

The heart of a Children caern is rather difficult to pinpoint, largely because the tribe tries to avoid putting their mark on this portion of the caern. If Unicorn or one of her brood is the caern totem, then yes, the caern's heart will be a place of healing and calm — but if the caern is devoted to power and endurance, then the Children will do their best to nurture the primal side of the caern's heart. If anything can be said about the heart of a Children caern, it's that all the expected energies are expressed there, only moreso.

The one tribal tradition regarding the Children's assembly areas is that the hierarchy of rank is lightly stressed. The Children are still werewolves, and are still quite status-conscious — but they prefer not to encourage any of their cubs to think of themselves as "omega wolves." In practical terms, this means there are no "cheap seats" in a Children assembly area; the acoustics are designed to be excellent from every angle, so that no matter who speaks and from where, their voices will carry to every listener.

The Children's living areas are even more diverse and eclectic; there's no tribal tradition governing the living quarters at all. A caern might have a common bunkhouse, a collection of tents for privacy, or even a smattering of cabins for the Garou's use. The living quarters are usually spacious enough to allow Kin partners to stay in the caern with their mates, but this rule is waived in places where space is at a premium.

The Children of Gaia are quite meticulous about maintaining both shrines and memorial areas. Both sections vary widely in form; the shrines of one caern might be elegantly simplistic, while at another caern

the shrines might be heaped with garlands of flowers, herbs and other sacred plants. The tribe's values do tend to find expression in the memorial area, where ancestors who died quietly in their sleep are given no less esteem as those heroes who fell in battle. This approach sometimes nauseates visitors from more martial tribes, but the Children aren't changing this practice any time soon.

With the influence of Unicorn's brood, the Penumbra of a Children caern is often more still and calm than might otherwise be the case. Although the tribe does tend to avoid stressing their more pacifistic hopes at the caern's heart, the rest of the caern is optimally a place of rest and rejuvenation. This calm can be relaxing and almost hypnotic, or — in the case of caerns with a long, bloody history — it can project a feeling of fatigue and weariness, like a warrior resting after a long, grueling campaign.

Fianna

"What's with that rock, anyway?" Dragonfly flounced down on a fallen tree, kicking the dead leaves up in a great geyser. "Ma keeps saying that it's Cherokee stuff, but how come you're so interested in it if that's the case? I thought you didn't like Cherokee."

Josiah growled. "Don't have nothin' to do with whether I like Cherokee or not." He ran a finger down the ancient carvings. "This rock talks about somethin' else. Spirits of the mountains — an' not the kind you're used to. Little Folk. You know."

"Fae folk? Really? Like Shelly keeps talkin' about?" The cub's eyes shone. "What kind? The sidhe? Kelpies? Nuckelavee? Asrai?"

"None of that, fool," Josiah sighed. "Those are all English fae you're talking about. The Good Folk were in this land long before people like us showed up. These here are the oldest mountains in the world, and it stands to figure there'd be some fae to come and listen to the old stones' dreams; I figure they were the ones who originally lived in the brugh." He shook his head. "And I surely wish I'd had the opportunity to meet 'em."

The Fianna take caern custodianship very seriously; although they'd be loath to admit it, many of them possess a very Getlike instinct to take over when they see a caern that isn't "being run up to the standard." The Keeper of the Land is an important office among their septs, and he enjoys a healthy amount of influence — in peacetime, he can even demand that the Council of Elders do their share to help keep the bawn clean and healthy.

Most Fianna caerns are located in the wilderness or in rural areas, but the tribe doesn't turn up their nose at suitable urban caerns. They defend their bawns in

most of the usual ways, with the most notable difference an increased Kinfolk presence. Any metis in the sept are given virtually permanent Guardian status; in the Fianna mind, they're the most expendable, it keeps them too busy to aspire to anything else, and you don't have to look at their deformities as much while you're inside the borders.

The heart of a Fianna caern is an energetic place, nearly bursting with passion and warmth. The tribe will sometimes enact marriages there, even consummating the match within the caern's heart as a symbolic gesture of fertility. And despite stereotype, they don't consider it seemly to get outrageously drunk in the caern's heart (unless the totem is one that would approve, such as Grain). It's best to show a healthy mind in a healthy body when at the heart of the brugh — a belief that often results in a ban on metis entering the caern's heart save in times of great need. Again, anything less than the ideal might offend the totems.

Naturally, the Fianna are a gregarious tribe, fond of spending time with one another in peacetime and in war. A Fianna caern must by necessity contain a fine, spacious assembly area suitable for dancing and singing as well as more serious war councils. The stereotype is that a goodly supply of alcohol must also be present, but like most stereotypes, that's only accurate some of the time. Similarly, the only common thread among their living quarters is that there must be some room to entertain visitors. Fianna are particularly interested in having room to romp with their Kin after a particularly festive moot or gathering. This isn't always expected to be private, however; some septs are insistent in having all the post-festivity mating more or less within their neighbors' line of sight, to make sure that nobody's violating the Litany in such a way that'd produce a metis.

Fianna shrines aren't exceptionally elaborate; the Fianna are fond of more "natural" decorations, and are more likely to bedeck a shrine with shed antlers than with dyed cords and beads. Libations are a fairly common offering; the shrine of a favored spirit may perpetually smell of spilt wine and beer.

The Fianna remember their dead in an area that's properly called the Heroes' Cairn. It gains this name because the Fianna are damned fond of building cairns proper for their fallen, even though there's far from enough room to bury even a few great heroes within. Perhaps the most typical structure begins as a pile of stones built over the bodies of the first hero or heroes to fall in the caern's defense (or even during the Rite of Caern Building). Whenever another hero of the caern falls, the Fianna take a large stone, mark it with glyphs denoting that hero's deeds, and add it to the

pile. It's said that the few caerns remaining in Ireland boast Heroes' Cairns of inspirational size. However, other Fianna septs maintain different traditions, and mark their Heroes' Cairns with inscribed standing stones, mounds with chalk figures cut into their sides, or even simple glades with ribbons tied to the branches overhead. It's common practice for a Fianna wake to spill over from the assembly area to the Heroes' Caern, so the memorial area sees more traffic than one might otherwise expect.

It's a point of pride for the tribe that the Penumbra of their brughs resemble the physical world as closely as possible — hence the high estimation of the Keeper of the Land's office. The Fianna do their damndest to make sure that their land is kept healthy and pure, so that its spiritual reflection is all but a perfect match. Exact perfection isn't possible, of course — not all buildings can have reflections, and animal spirits are more common in the Penumbra than their physical counterparts are in the bawn — but it's an ideal worth striving for.

Get of Fenris

The cheering had become deafening. Four shields lay broken on the ground; now each combatant was on their last one. They circled each other in Crinos, two massive gray hulks with heavy axes dangling from their paws. The male had crouched low, almost on all fours; the female stood tall in a display of confidence. Then, almost faster than the eye could follow, they leapt forward at one another. The sound of splintering wood was bone chilling. Howls of disappointment and elation mixed together as the male fell, clearly favoring the deep axe wound in his left arm.

"Great Mother Gaia," breathed Luc from his position on the sidelines. "You call this chiminage?"

"What did you expect?" Ranulf clapped a hand on the young Fianna's shoulder, then guffawed to feel the youngster flinch. "Ha! Be glad we didn't demand that our guest get out there and join in the rites to appease Great Fenris!" The Fenrir elder's fingers tightened just a bit, and suddenly Luc was very aware of all the Get looking at him. He looked sadly over at another post where three shields and a well-notched axe rested, then sighed in resignation and began to walk forward.

Nobody takes the responsibility of guarding a caern more seriously than a Get of Fenris. The tribe's very notorious for moving in to claim caerns that they claim are poorly defended, whether the original occupants agree or not. Conversely, the Fenrir often leave the caerns of their worst rivals be, so long as the rivals



are obviously fit enough to guard the caerns from the Wyrn. It's a very businesslike relationship.

As many Garou and Kin as can be spared rigorously defend the bawn of a Fenrir caern. The Get are fond of claiming caerns set on mountains or hilltops, or wherever a forest is deepest; it pleases their sense of aesthetics as well as providing natural defenses. They're also known to claim island or coastal caerns, particularly in northern waters. Of course, these days nobody can afford to be too choosy, and caerns without natural defenses are still prime territory.

The Get aren't restricted to caerns of battle and glory — most caern types suit their purposes just fine (except maybe caerns of Calm). But no matter the caern type, it will inevitably soak up a portion of the Fenrir's fighting spirit. The heart virtually pulsates with this vigor; even tiny, weak Get caerns have a distinct aura of strength in the heart. The Get have been known to sanctify a caern's heart with offerings of blood (theirs or others), although never if that would offend the caern totem. A few septs set great Wolfspirits to guard the caern's heart, and it would be hard to find more ferocious and stubborn guards — excepting the Fenrir themselves, of course.

Given that the assembly area is also commonly the site where challenges are carried out, it's unsurprising that the Fenrir make certain that this section of the caern is amply equipped for werewolf-against-werewolf battles. Many septs set up posts hung with swords and shields for such an occasion; there are usually many more shields than swords, as the Get have a habit of splintering shields even in non-lethal combat. There may also be axes and targets for axe-hurling competitions, or barrels of potent alcohol for drinking contests. The net effect can make outsiders invited to a gathering distinctly uncomfortable, even paranoid that a fight might break out at any moment. The sentiment isn't far from the truth.

By compare, the living area in a Get caern is almost peaceable. The Fenrir hold home and hearth in high regard, and prefer to do their fighting elsewhere; after all, they're willing to die to protect their homes and Kin, so why destroy such things casually? Any insult delivered in the living quarters is considered twice as offensive, a foible that's undone many a visitor. A Get won't back down from a challenge offered in the living space — that's a sign of weakness she just won't show — but she'll be less likely to offer any challenges of her own.

The Get's allied spirits are usually spirits of glory and battle, and their shrines match their temperament. Fenrir commonly appease their totems with offerings of blood, battle-songs and the weapons of

the fallen; a caern's shrine to Fenris might be piled with ancient, rusty swords and broken AK-47s alike. The Get are just as dramatic in their prayers — mock battles fought with bladed (but mundane weapons), howls of ancient battle sagas and even violent tests of endurance are all considered appropriate paeans to their patron spirits.

The Graves of the Hallowed Heroes are an important part of any Fenrir caern, and woe to the outsider who disrespects the area or the cub who neglects to pay their respects there. The Get commonly place small standing stones, carved with runes and glyphs of glory and conquest, to mark this area. The tribe commonly refers to their memorial area as the place of the slain (usually as some variant such as the Hall of the Slain or the Vale of the Slain). The Fenrir sometimes build actual cairns or barrows for their most revered heroes; funeral pyres heaped with the bodies of the departed's enemies are also common. A few septs refuse to set markers for any deceased Fenrir who didn't fall in battle — those who died of old age or other shameful causes are refused a place among the honored dead. When the Get visit their memorial areas, they are often unusually quiet and reserved — unless they're getting drunk as part of their celebration of their ancestors.

In the Umbra, a Get caern is often a vibrant, primal place. The strength of the Fenrir's passion fuels the local Penumbra, instilling it with vigor — if not outright aggression. The Penumbra is calm in only a few places (such as the place of the slain); throughout most of the caern, it brims with energy. Fierce Umbral winds often blow through the area, and the rumble of distant storms can be heard throughout the bawn. War-spirits and Raven-spirits flit about, anxiously working off reserves of nervous energy (or the spiritual equivalent). Tension fills the air; all in all, it's much like standing on the edge of a battlefield just before the fighting breaks out.

Glass Walkers

The elevator's soft hum was all too relaxing, particularly as it mingled with the faint strains of Handel drifting in the corners. Maria's eyes slowly drifted toward the "just resting" position, and she shifted rhythmically from foot to foot. And it's like this in the public elevators, too, she dreamily mused to herself. How do the employees get any work done?

The light for the 12th floor winked out. There was a brief pause "between floors" — and then the familiar shudder came over Maria, subtle as a cobweb's touch. The light for the 14th floor blinked on, and her eyes snapped open in perfect synchronization with the floor shift.

The relaxation had left her bones; now her frame quivered with the almost electrical sensation of home. It was good to be back. And there was a lot to be done, and not much time to do it.

Although there are Glass Walker representatives in several rural caerns, all of the Walkers' tribal caerns are urban. The cities are the tribe's battleground, and they are dead set against abandoning any of Gaia's sacred places just because the humans have been building in the area. Obviously, not all caern types are available in the city — you won't be finding any Primal-Urge caerns downtown — but there's a surprising variety nonetheless scattered across the cities of the world. And the Glass Walkers are willing to defend them all.

Unlike their Gnawer cousins, the Glass Walkers are meticulous about maintaining a caern's bawn. The Keeper of the Land is a respected position in a Glass Walker sept, even if his duties have more to do with architecture and civil engineering than gardening. The bawn's edge will usually bristle with cutting-edge security equipment, yes, but it will also be as clean and inviting as the finest office building's lobby. Urban septs also find it easier to place Kinfolk in useful positions as sentries, caretakers and security guards — and the Walkers are first in line to take advantage of this edge.

The heart of a Glass Walker caern is very disquieting to more Wyld-aspected shapechangers. The electric hum of Technology and Progress is palpable even on the heart's periphery, and once inside the heart, the pulse of Weaver energy is unmistakable. Many visiting Garou who stand in the heart of a Walker caern are taken with an almost paranoid dread — from that point, it just seems that it'd be so easy for the Weaver to pull her strands and take the caern for her own.

The "executive boardroom" is the stereotypical assembly area for a Glass Walker caern, but it's by no means the only example. Glass Walker septs also gather in small theaters, spacious studios, refitted turn-of-the-century hotels, even art galleries. The security system usually has a few monitors hooked up somewhere in the assembly area; although the Walkers can leave a trusted Kinfolk on monitor duty, they prefer to have a tribe member with easy access to the system at all times.

Glass Walker caerns can boast the most spacious and luxurious living quarters of any tribal caern — by human standards, that is. Lupus are distinctly uncomfortable in the lofts, penthouses, apartments or studios that make up the caern's living areas, but most homids and humans have little to complain about.



The technospirits that attend a Glass Walker caern don't require the same sort of shrines that other spirits might. More than a few Walker shrines exist entirely in cyberspace; some well-disguised shrines are even accessible through WebPages, making every hit an electronic prayer to the spirit in question. Of course, the Walkers are doubly careful to make sure that the servers for these shrines don't collapse, causing a major diplomatic incident with the totem. Of course, many Glass Walker caerns still boast physical shrines to their spirit allies — the Hong Kong Glass Walkers are adamant on this point. These shrines are clean and well maintained, but easily project the air of "urban primitive"; incense, offerings of captured technology and sleek logos are commonplace decorations.

The Glass Walkers don't remember their fallen with a Graves of the Hallowed Heroes *per se*; instead, their caerns often feature a small room, usually with tasteful track lighting, decorated with mementos of the fallen. This can take any form from a mahogany meeting table with inset plaques indicating the honorary "seats" of their fallen, to a more Eastern shrine decorated with personal objects of their heroes. In almost every case, this section of the caern (which they tend to call the memorial hall) is somewhat richly appointed, with fine and expensive materials. Call it

materialism, but the Glass Walkers fully intend to show their fallen respect.

The Penumbra of a Glass Walker caern tends to startle visitors from other tribes. Despite the lowered Gauntlet, the strands of the Weaver's great Web are still present to a fair degree. However, the Glass Walkers' careful maintenance of the caern keeps the Webs in relative order; a few visitors have commented that a Walker caern's Penumbra isn't unlike a carefully trimmed topiary labyrinth, only with electronic webbing instead of shrubbery. A few Web-spiders and other Weaver-spirits scurry past, but they're kept mostly under control by the caern's totem. The caern nature and totem can even further influence the Penumbral landscape; a Walker caern of Enigmas might be bedecked with cryptic glyphs and sigils in flickering Penumbral neon, whereas a caern of Strength might take on the texture of riveted iron in the spirit world. It's certainly far from what one might expect.

Red Talons

Burning Branch paced back and forth, almost as if he were caged. You're certain, he growled.

I am. Fishcatcher's response was deferential, but questioning. Bear was very precise, and the other spirits agree. There is danger.

Burning Branch bared his teeth and continued to pace. Finally, he paused and made direct eye contact with Fishcatcher. Bring her into the caern. She can birth her pups here.

Fishcatcher whined and scratched at the ground. You're certain, alpha?

Of course I'm certain! Burning Branch snapped angrily at open air, and Fishcatcher flattened herself against the ground. It is my decision, Theurge! But the pups must be moved back outside the bawn as soon as it is safe. They cannot grow up here.

Fishcatcher's eyes shone like cold moonlight. I understand, alpha. Hamstringer might be hesitant, but I will... make certain he understands, too.

Unsurprisingly, the Red Talons build the least complicated and elaborate caerns of all. Even so, the Talons are still Garou first and wolves second, and they use their Gaia-given hands and claws to good effect. But whatever structures or marks the Red Talons may use to define their caerns, a Talon caern still ranks among the most pristine and wild of all the Garou's holy places. The Talons hold a few caerns in the Americas, in Europe, in Russia and even one in India — but the number of these caerns is fading fast.

The Red Talons don't usually leave any physical markers at the edges of their bawns — at least, not visual cues. They mark their boundaries with scent

more than anything else; a Garou in Lupus form will be readily aware of the territorial bounds, but a human would easily miss the cues. When they do use more physical, visual markers, the Talons are more likely to use bones, overturned stones or rough claw marks than they are to leave glyphs and the like. Any human who ignores these markings and wanders into the bawn proper is certain to die. (It's something of a joke among certain young homid Garou that *The Blair Witch Project* might not have been a work of fiction after all — but instead based on actual footage of a college film crew wandering into Red Talon territory.)

The bawn of a Talon caern would almost be relaxing, if not for the hints of primal urgency and passion that settle in a visitor's heart. The only trails are no bigger than those wolves would leave, and the water sources are clear and refreshing. That doesn't mean that the bawn is safe, though. The Red Talons may not whole-heartedly endorse technology, but they do set traps and ambushes, and nasty ones at that. Invaders expecting the Talons to think like wolves learn otherwise, sometimes at the bottom of a stake-lined pit or at the ends of poisoned arrows. Regrettably, Talon tactics lack a certain punch when thrown against the modern armies of the Wyrn, and the Talons have lost a distressing number of caerns over the last couple of centuries alone.



The sense of pure wilderness found in a Talon bawn carries over into the caern's heart, where the only sign of Garou habitation is an uncommon number of pawprints on the ground. Red Talons traditionally approach the caern's heart only in Lupus or Hispo form; it's a dire insult to take human form in the heart, particularly if Griffin or one of his brood is the caern totem.

In a Red Talon caern, the assembly area and the living area are often one and the same. Since the Talons disdain human living conveniences like beds and electricity, their living spaces are usually spacious enough to shelter the whole sept. Only in the larger septs, where the Talons can expect to regularly entertain visitors, is the assembly area significantly larger than what the sept would need to sleep. Talon living areas are commonly caves or even Talon-dug tunnels, possibly with access to a larger glade for the occasional romp or discussion. The area is set up so that if need be, a Talon or Kinfolk could raise a litter of pups in the safety of the caern — but the Talons don't want their Kinfolk to become too reliant on their help, so cubs are usually raised "naturally" outside the caern's main areas.

Despite their primal nature, the Talons are still Garou; they keep shrines to the spirits and memorials to their fallen, like any other tribe. These shrines are rather primitive in form, though; the only manmade articles in a Talon shrine are likely offerings taken from fallen foes or victims.

The Umbral reflection of a Talon caern is a wild, lush place. As one might expect, most of the spirits to be found there are the spirits of various animals and natural features. However, the Talons recognize the great variety of Gaian spirits, and often have surprising allies such as elementals lingering around their caerns. Similarly, Griffin has taken the spirits of extinct animals under his wing, and thus under the Talons' protection; it's entirely possible to notice an Aurochs-spirit or a Sabretooth-spirit near a Talon caern. There isn't a Weaver-spirit to be found within the perimeter of the caern; even if a visitor brings in as much as an awakened cellular phone, the local spirits set upon the Weaverish intruder and send it violently into Slumber.

Shadow Lords

A heavy bass growl of thunder set the hilltop vibrating, and was answered by a chorus of low, approving growls from the assembled werewolves. The caern was very nearly pitch-black; the storm clouds blotted out the moon, and the

light from the lanterns at the bottom of the hill fell well short of the caern's council area.

The two "guests" had been given the place of honor at the center of the clearing. One, very much out of place in his tailored suit, stood stock still, resisting the urge to fidget or, even worse, to look sideways at his companion. The other didn't slouch even a little bit — not that he had any choice in the matter. The post was quite unyielding, and the nails the werewolves had used had bitten into the wood like harpoons.

The shadow moot was about to begin in earnest.

Like the Get of Fenris, the Shadow Lords earnestly believe that caerns should go to those strong enough to take and hold them. Thanks to that principle, a Shadow Lord caern is the height of defensibility — it's carefully concealed from onlookers, guarded with layers of mortal and spirit cannon fodder, set with traps and finally defended by some of the most ruthless werewolves in the world. Don't be mistaken: Many Shadow Lord caerns have fallen to the enemy. However, they never fall easily or cleanly.

The Shadow Lords do not mess around with their bawn defenses. Vicious spirits browbeaten into obeying the sept members (but attacking anyone else) patrol the bawn's boundaries. There are ample traps set, and the Lords aren't above playing dirty — smearing stakes with feces and rotten meat to up the chances of infection is only fair, in their opinion. The Lords are careful not to harm the bawn's environment with their traps (for instance, they don't use grenades unless absolutely necessary), but they see no reason to be "humane" to intruders. Some septs are fond of using ravens or crows to act as sentries; one quick caw can bring all hell breaking loose. And, of course, the Lords are happy to use humans and other pawns as the first line of defense; a few Lords have even managed to trick local coteries of vampires into defending their caerns under some pretense or another.

It's even more intimidating at the caern's heart. Although there are no traps in the heart — that would be far too inconvenient during moots — the Lords largely bind caern totems of forbidding aspect. (Some septs prefer somewhat weaker totems that they can force into complete submission, but it must be noted that these septs don't tend to last as long.) The influence of the caern totem and of Grandfather Thunder combine to produce an unmistakable atmosphere of dominating strength. Of course, interlopers at the heart of a Shadow Lord caern have much more to worry about than atmosphere....

The Lords favor strict seating arrangements in their assembly areas, and may even violently remind

their cubs not to take seats above their station. The tribal obsession with a clear hierarchy is very apparent in their gathering places. The elders get "seats" where their voices carry and the view is good; less-favored Lords have to make do with places with poorer acoustics and stony ground.

Similarly, if the Lords can manage it, their living spaces are usually pretty ample — at least, for the higher-ranking Lords. The higher up in rank, the better a Shadow Lord has it at home. This is partly just another way of reinforcing who's dominant and who's submissive in the sept, but it also can serve as a neat way of reminding cubs just why they need to be fearless and committed to the cause. Once there was enough to go around, the tribal elders growl, but now times are different. But if you are a good Lord, and devote your strength to Grandfather Thunder and to us, then perhaps we will be strong enough to take back what is rightfully ours — from the Wyrms and from the Fangs alike.

With all this attention to hierarchy and status, it's only natural that the Shadow Lords are equally precise about establishing rank among their spirit allies. Each spirit and totem allied to a Shadow Lord caern gets exactly the shrine that it's earned for itself — the Lords don't believe in erring on the side of generosity. A spirit's climb from Gaffling to Jagglings takes rather longer in Shadow Lord territory, because there's rather less veneration to go around.

The Lords pay their fallen respect, but perhaps not quite as much reverence as would be appropriate. The only fallen Lords to receive a generous ration of homage are those known to be assisting their descendants as Ancestor-spirits. The tribe expects everyone to pull their weight, and although the dead don't take up valuable resources, they aren't worth extra amounts of effort unless they're somehow pitching in for the tribal good. The memorial area in a Shadow Lord caern is well maintained and generally somewhat austere. Of course, there are some exceptions — most notably among the Hakken of the East — who revere all those who fell with valor and dignity. Despite the slander of outsiders, the Shadow Lords are not strangers to honor.

The Penumbral of a Shadow Lord caern is an imposing place. The Lords are very interested in shows of strength and dominance, and as mentioned before, they generally prefer to court caern totems of intimidating aspect. Faint flashes of heat lightning sometimes light the Penumbral of a Lord caern and echoes of distant thunder rumble through the area every now and again. Crow-spirits are a common sight, and the occasional Pain-spirit emerges from a hiding place to harass uninvited guests.

Silent Striders

The house was gray from long years of hard weather, and its peaks and awnings cast strange, jagged shadows in the afternoon sun. It sprawled on the hill like some aging American gothic gargoyle spread out for a nap, but to Mephi Faster-than-Death, it was beautiful.

He shook his head as he shut the gate behind him. The woman who'd met him there, a long-boned woman who wore her faded cotton dress like an empress' robe, smiled as Mephi continued to drink in the sight. "I thought this place was just a rumor — just wishful thinking," Mephi murmured.

"I know," the lean woman said quietly, gesturing up the hill. "But it's real, and now you're here. Welcome home," — her smile was sad, but her eyes hadn't lost their sparkle — "for such as it is, and for as long as it lasts."

The sad fact of the matter is that the Silent Striders don't hold very many tribal caerns at all — if they have all of five to their name, they're doing better than they can expect. Those few that they hold are often small and weak by compare: places that other Garou have overlooked, but that the far-ranging Striders managed to stumble across and recognize. A Strider caern is usually Level Two at the most, and might be in any lonely, inobvious, out-of-the-way locale; a long-forgotten burial mound is just as likely as a creaking, abandoned New England country house. The most striking exception is the powerful Wheel of Ptah caern in Casablanca, but the Striders don't even claim that caern as exclusively theirs. Rather, they consider themselves the caretakers for a caern that was meant for travelers of all tribes.

When the Striders do take a caern for their own, the result is usually quite eclectic. The Striders borrow some of their ideas and traditions on caerns from other tribes; other traditions are based on their lore of what their ancient caerns were like before their exile.

The Silent Striders obviously don't have the manpower, Kin or Garou, to defend their bawns fully. Instead, they rely on spirit allies to fill in the weak spots. This works moderately well, as the quiet, watchful children of Owl's brood are hard for an enemy, Penumbral or physical, to detect at all. Penetrating a Strider bawn can be like fighting your way into a haunted house where the ghosts are very real, very clever and very vindictive. The only drawback is that Owl has few true warrior-spirits under her wing; unless the Striders have made contact with a warlike caern totem such as Crocodile, they may find that their spirit defenders aren't enough to hold back a concerted invasion. The Striders supplement these defenses with

traps and alarms as need be, but sad to say, the tribe just doesn't have the resources to make their caerns impregnable. All they have left is subtlety and cleverness — and sometimes that works, and sometimes it doesn't.

The heart of a Strider caern sometimes develops the unusual side effect of attracting wandering ghosts. This has become an even more pronounced tendency in recent times, when some great upheaval in the Underworld cast ghosts like so much flotsam across the length and breadth of the spirit world. The Striders do their best to free any ghosts who become stuck in the Middle Umbra and Penumbra near their caerns, but it seems that the tribal curse has been heightened in power.

The assembly area of a Strider caern obviously needn't be all that large, and if they craft the area themselves it usually isn't. Such an area might even be largely neglected; the Striders don't like to hear their voices echo in an empty room or glade. They already have plenty of reminders that their tribe isn't what it used to be.

The Striders also don't require much by way of a living area; most are so used to crashing wherever they can that amenities are rarely an issue. There isn't much by way of physical privacy in their caerns' living spaces — instead, each individual Strider carries his own privacy with him. Six Striders can sleep side-by-side in a small room, and still have miles of distance between them.

The Striders don't have very much in way of shrines to their guardian spirits; instead, the tribe tends to pacify their spirit allies with deeds and favors. The few shrines that do exist in a Strider caern are designed to be easily broken down and carried if need be; call it pessimism, but the tribe is all too aware how tenuous their hold over their caerns is. Again, it wasn't always like this — in ancient Egypt, the Striders built more elaborate shrines to their totems, complete with glyph prayers and invocations — but necessity is now the tribe's guiding principle.

The Striders are very attentive to their Graves of the Hallowed Heroes, which is often the most elaborate portion of the caern next to the heart itself. If the area's enclosed, its walls are often painted with designs celebrating the lives of Strider heroes, or else carved with glyphs to much the same effect. The Striders are also fond of crafting pottery vessels painted with weapons, trees, running water and other "good things" they wish for their forebears, and leaving these grave goods in the memorial area. (In fact, any caern with more than one Strider sept member might have a few of these vessels set neatly among the other mementos of the fallen.) In ancient times, these areas

were even more lavish and involved, much like the tombs of their human Kin, but cold practicality took over when the Striders fell into their nomadic lifestyle. Even so, the tribe treats this area with great reverence — their severing from their ancestral spirits has made them all the more dedicated to keep their ancestors' memories alive. The tribe members rarely refer to this area by name. They connect it with the streams of time and to their lost homeland, but don't want to develop an unhealthy obsession with the past — thus they don't directly speak of the memorial area. If a Strider intends to go into the memorial area and meditate, he'll tell his septmates that he intends "to lie in the river for a while."

In the past, the Striders were fervent proponents of a paradisiacal spirit world; the Penumbra of their caerns often reflected their hopes and dreams. Such a place was lush and vivid, the green of the Penumbra vegetation shining like jade in Luna's pale light. Umbral streams often ran through the bawns, smaller reflections of the great river that nursed the Striders' human kin. Now, however, the Penumbra of a Strider caern is often a shadowed, quiet place, where Luna's light filters dimly through the tangled branches overhead. Soft winds smelling of earth blow through the Penumbra, and it's said that Owl sends some of these to show a Strider to the place he needs to be next. Several Striders have stopped off at such a caern with hopes of staying, only to smell something on the Penumbra wind and sadly make their good-byes.

Silver Fangs

The grizzled old warrior had been kneeling in front of the gravestone for half an hour, and all that time, the white-robed priestess had stood silently by and watched him. There was no birdsong in the grove, no insect noises — the grave area was still as the heroes buried there. Finally, the warrior spoke in a soft rasp.

"He's dying."

The priestess didn't speak.

The warrior shook his head. "His body is hale; his mind is dying. If any others see it, they dare not speak their fears, not even secretly to one another. They fear him — they fear me. I am sworn before Lord Falcon to obey my king's commands, and I cannot disobey. If he were to order me to slaughter Kin..." His voice caught on the words. "I fear I will soon be damned, one way or another."

A long pause — and then the priestess quietly replied, "Do you want me to seek counsel — or even aid?"

It was a long time before he could form an answer.

Silver Fang septs are structured as much like royal courts as anything else; there are kings, shamans,

stewards, squires and seneschals, often given their offices by virtue of auspice as well as deed. This structure carries over into the physical layout of their caerns proper. A Fang caern isn't quite up to snuff if it doesn't boast an impressive throne for its king, lodgehouses for both Sun and Moon Lodges, an entryway where visitors can be formally announced to the court, and banners aplenty proclaiming the glory of the caern and sept. That said, the tribe actually has very few exclusively Silver Fang caerns to their name; they consider it their duty to govern the entire Garou Nation, and have no qualms about sharing a sept with any and all other tribes. As long as the other tribes know their place, that is.

The Silver Fangs keep almost no urban caerns whatsoever. Even though the aristocracies with whom they've been known to breed do the bulk of their governing in human civilization, it is tradition for Garou to rule over the wilderness. What's more, the caerns "suitable" for Silver Fang patronage are situated in the wilds; even if a caern of Kingship were to arise in the heart of New York City, there are Fangs who'd rather choke than hold court there. Most of their caern defenses are natural, although there are plenty of Gafflings of Falcon's brood ready to spy out intruders and cry warning.

The heart of a Silver Fang caern can be quite uncomfortable for members of other tribes. Although the heart pulses with Gnosis, there is a discomfiting twinge in the air, as if faint traces of silver were borne on the wind. If Falcon blesses the caern, unworthy or tainted intruders might find themselves burned as with silver brands just for standing in the caern's heart.

The Silver Fangs' strong emphasis on rank is similarly evident in the caern's assembly area. The sept's king is always given some sort of honorific seat, where he can address the sept or sit in judgement as needed. There are also traditional areas for both Sun and Moon lodges to stand or sit, depending on the assembly area's construction. The closer one sits to the king, the more seriously her opinion is taken during meetings; rank does have its privileges.

One would probably expect the living spaces at a Fang caern to be similarly structured, but that's not always the case. Yes, the Silver Fangs demand the respect they're due; however, a few have no qualms about keeping everyone's living quarters of equal size and quality. This can cause some dissent with more status-conscious sept members, but overall it's well received as a show of solidarity with the entire sept. Unfortunately, not all Fangs are nearly so generous, and many insist on keeping the best for themselves in every area of sept life.

The Fangs aren't greatly inclined to construct any shrines to spirits other than Falcon's brood; to many elders' way of thinking, there are no spirits greater than Falcon and his kin, and no others (save the Celestines, of course) who can call the Fangs equals. The tribe members who behave this way aren't particularly beloved of the local spirits, but the spirits are still bound to offer the Fangs obedience. The shrines to Falcon and his brood, on the other hand, are often resplendent affairs decorated with the finest goods the tribe can produce. In the most powerful caerns, precious metals and gemstones adorn Falcon's shrine. Although the Fangs don't always value such things highly, they are notable signs of wealth and prestige in the human world, and therefore quite suitable for their noble patron.

The Silver Fangs are the ones who originated the term "Graves of the Hallowed Heroes"; their memorial areas are highly important to the tribe. Such places serve a dual role — they are places to pay homage to one's ancestors, and they're visible records of one's pedigree. If there are any Ivory Priests in the sept, they're expected to do the majority of maintenance to the Graves. Like other tribes, the Silver Fangs just don't have room to bury all their fallen in this area — but some septs have a tradition of keeping some of the fallen's bones as relics. There are allegedly a catacombs below a Russian caern where the skulls of Silver Fang kings sit in honor — but the Fangs themselves haven't been the ones to tell that particular tale.

The Fangs like to claim that their tribe's honor is reflected in the spirit world of their caerns — that the Umbra in Fang territory shines like gold and silver. Although that was largely true at one time, the tarnish of the tribe's madness has tainted some of their caerns. Traditionally, if a caern's Lodges are particularly powerful, their influence can be felt in the Penumbra; the pale Umbral reflection of Helios' light shines on the sections held by the Sun Lodge, while the Moon Lodge's territory bathes in Luna's moonbeams. This effect tarnishes badly in places held by a mad king, though, or in septs where the Fangs are largely ill. The North Country Protectorate suffered from a creeping tarnish as Jacob Morningkill slid further and further into senility, but Albrecht's ascension to power has slowed the tarnish for a time. It remains to be seen whether or not Renewalist kings like Albrecht can reverse the deterioration.

Stargazers

Soun leaned on his shovel and mopped his brow. It had taken all morning just to replant the hedges alongside the path, and there were still gaps here and there where the

plants hadn't survived. The stone garden was a mess, the windows needed to be replaced, and the stream would probably run muddy for a week. The Penumbra was even more out of sorts, and although the Wind-spirits meant well, their boisterous energy had been more obstacle than help until the master had sent them away.

And all of this because one mirror had slipped from its moorings, and the flow of energy had gone sour, and the Banes had ridden into the bawn as easily as if they were sliding down a chute.

So some humans think that geomancy is a charlatan's art, eh? he grumpily thought. Well, then, may dharma deliver them exactly what they deserve.

Although the Silent Striders may have the fewest caerns of any tribe, the Stargazers run a close second. The Stargazers have fallen on hard times, and although they're not quite teetering on the brink of extinction yet, they're only a few steps away. For this reason, it's particularly hard to stereotype a Stargazer caern; with so few examples left, the patterns wind up being too inaccurate.

The bawn of a Stargazer caern can take any form, from a small Shinto shrine to a Zen garden atop a skyscraper, from an untouched glade in the woods to a sprawling Himalayan monastery. The Stargazers typically guard their bawns with misdirection rather than force or physical walls; thankfully, Chimera's domination over enigmas and secrets gives the Stargazers a much-needed edge in this department. Kinfolk are too rare and precious to risk on the front lines, and are rarely, if ever, called to act as sentries; instead, the Stargazers rely on spirit allies for that task.

The heart of the caern is truly sacred ground; cubs are rarely allowed there except as part of a deliberate lesson. Elders spend much of their time meditating in the caern's heart, feeling the energies of the invisible world wash over them like tides. Wind-spirits often dawdle in this area, buffeting playfully at any Garou they find.

The typical Stargazer caern doesn't devote much space to assembly or living areas; like the Silent Striders, they just don't have enough members to justify it. In particular, their living quarters are usually kept deliberately bare, in order to focus the cubs' attention within, away from the Weaver's trappings.

The Stargazers also maintain small and understated memorial areas; they honor their Ancestor-spirits with great reverence, but prefer to use simplicity as their guide when adorning a memorial garden. They believe that an ancestor is most honored by markers that are eloquently simple; a stone with one glyph carved on either side is a sufficient memento for an honored forebear. Even Klaital himself is honored in

most shrines by nothing more elaborate than the Stargazers' tribal glyph carved into a tree or stone.

Conversely, a Stargazer caern often boasts elaborate and generous shrines to the sept's totems. Although the tribe doesn't place overmuch value on material goods, they see a distinct connection between a spirit and its lucky or auspicious materials. Of particular note are the statues and paintings of Chimera in such shrines; even the most well-traveled Strider would have to admit that no two depictions of the Stargazer totem are alike. She is always depicted as an amalgam of many human or beast traits, usually holding or surrounded by mysterious objects that hint at some greater symbolic meaning.

The Umbrascape of these caerns often reflects the misdirection that guards the bawn; strange spirit paths might lead in circles, odd mists might obscure portions of the caern, and peculiar noises might distract and mislead wanderers. The Stargazers encourage Wind-spirits to visit them in their caerns, and so the caern's Penumbra might be constantly buffeted with Umbral winds coming and going from all directions. All in all, it's difficult going for a novice, but the Stargazer elders seem to be able to navigate the area just fine.

Uktena

"I don't know," drawled the young Galliard. "It just doesn't seem feasible to me."

"Feasible?" Upside-Down Walker huffed. She sat up straighter, blinking away her sleepiness.

"Yeah, 'feasible.' I mean, come on. A giant hairy evil spirit the size of a house—that I can believe. But to say that it was bound in an umbilical cord—" the young girl's face contorted in disgust—"and buried in the earth, instead of being destroyed...that's just some kind of symbolism, is all. Gotta be. It's too crazy to be true."

"You think it's so improbable?" The old woman smiled and tapped the end of her walking stick against the packed earth of the council house. "Well, then, why don't you start digging here and see for yourself?" She chuckled at the look on the cub's face. "What, did you think I was just telling an old story? Did you think the Red Moon Forest was someplace on the other side of the world? Did you think the white man's name for this forest was its first name?"

She shook her head. "I was honoring the memory of my great-great-grandmother, young one. So if you want to doubt her deeds, I suggest you have a good long look in Hairy One's eye before you do so." She tapped the floor again. "Ready when you are."

Once the Uktena held caerns only in the Americas, but the coming of the Wyrncomers changed all that. With the Old World invading the new, the

Uktena thought it only fair to repay the favor. Displaced Uktena septs and packs spread out across the globe, settling in with aboriginal populations to continue their line. As a result, the Uktena hold caerns in places that other tribes would never expect. Today there are Uktena caerns in Northern Japan, Polynesia, Australia — and, of course, in the Americas.

Several New World Uktena caerns are built on sites where the Banetenders imprisoned mighty Banes long ago. This rarely affects the character of the caern itself; in fact, in many cases, the caern's energies help keep the Bane buried under blankets of purified energy. This practice has led to tragedy more than once, when invaders captured an Uktena caern without learning of the giant Bane imprisoned beneath. Without anyone maintaining the spells that kept the Banes dormant, the Banes burst loose and destroyed many Garou and Kin alike before being brought down — or escaping.

Most Uktena caerns have some sort of natural body of water within the bawn; the tribe does its best to pacify its water-spirit totem with the natural correspondence of water. This isn't a rule by any means — the Uktena maintain the powerful Sept of the Waking Dream in the heart of the sun-blistered Australian Outback — but it's something that makes the tribe more comfortable.

Needless to say, the Uktena are inclined to defend their boundaries with spirit allies and mystical wards. They're particularly adept at using their Gifts and rites to set nasty deadfalls or false trails; a single Uktena metis with the Gift: Burrow can do wonders for defending the bawn. The tribe also crafts a large number of talens for use in a caern's defense; a caern where almost every defender carries at least one Bane Arrow will have a strong reputation in the spirit world. All these mystical defenses also do wonders for enforcing an air of superstition among the local human population, who usually don't need much convincing to stay out of werewolf territory.

The heart of an Uktena caern is strangely quiet and very busy at the same time. Spirits constantly come and go on errands, but never boisterously. The environment shifts from time to time, but never while being directly watched. Like the tribe itself and its totem, an Uktena caern has many layers and great depths hidden under the stillness of the surface.

The tribe typically gathers in small council areas, often by the shrines to the totems and other spirit allies. Some septs believe it's a good idea to have the spirits looking down on their meetings, both for extra luck and for the extra bit of chiminage to their spirits. The Uktena do believe that a totem is as much a part

of the tribe as any werewolf, so they go the extra distance to make certain their spirit companions are welcome at council. By compare, the living space at an Uktena caern is remarkably variable, owing to the tribe's diverse groups of Kinfolk. An Uktena sept might live in cabins, adobes, hogans, caves, huts, even under the open sky.

The Uktena are scrupulous about maintaining shrines to their spirit allies, and even their Ahroun are expected to pay reverence at the shrines on a regular basis. The shrine area sometimes outstrips the memorials to the fallen, depending on the sept's history. Sometimes the shrines to the spirits and memorial area are even one and the same, listing the great heroes and visionaries of the tribe alongside the patron totems. The actual form these areas take largely depends on the local Kin culture; an Australian Uktena sept such as the Waking Dream might immortalize their forefathers and totems with rock paintings, while a sept in Cherokee Oklahoma might keep ledgers of written records.

Uktena septs are also prone to set aside an area for the mystical items and written lore they accumulate, whether warlocks' grimoires, Bane-fetishes or vampire-penned scrolls. This area can take the form of a library or laboratory, but is more often set up as a medicine lodge. The medicine lodge, usually with facilities for research as well as storage, is almost as heavily guarded as the caern's heart itself. It is always a building of some sort, usually covered with glyphs, magical symbols and other wardings. Guardian spirits buzz around the lodge protectively, but not one is permitted within — their presence might upset the balance of mystic power inside the lodge.

The Umbrascape of an Uktena caern is often riddled with paths leading off into the Near Umbra, as well as alive with spirits running errands for the tribe. Any long-term bindings laid on the caern grounds may blaze with life here, appearing as vivid sigils carved into rock or shining from the ground. But if the sept has made one too many "devil's deals," a smoky mist might obscure certain details of the Umbrascape. This mist doesn't obscure vision, but is mainly visible to strangers and innocents — the Uktena whose deeds have invoked the mist are unable to perceive the harbinger of ill luck.

Wendigo

The shamans danced ever quicker, slicing themselves with flint knives as they sang. The young cub with them rushed to constantly fill his bowl with cold water, and then to throw it over the dancing angalkut again and again. All the while, their chants rose to the gray sky.

"Negakfok, Tomanik, O'ha'a! Manitous of Winter, hear your children's cries! Negakfok, plunge their vehicles into the depths of winter cold! Tomanik, bring your six winds to blow them from the slopes of our mountain! O'ha'a, freeze them into icicles! Visit your cold breath on the invaders who have come to slay your children! Freeze them solid, so that Great Wendigo may fill his hungry belly with their flesh, and sharpen his teeth of ice on their bones!"

A great wind howled down from the clouds and rushed through the caern's heart, snapping strings and carrying painted hides away. It blasted past the gathered angalkut, leaving a thousand tiny icicles ringing in their coats. It hurtled through the bawn, snapping branches and snuffing fires. And then the wind, filled with ice, wailed down to the winding road below and the trucks slowly creeping up the mountainside there.

Almost all of the Wendigo's tribal caerns are in North America, for obvious reasons. Each and every one is also located in the wilderness; even when the three brothers were dividing up the land amongst themselves, the Wendigo chose the most severe and challenging surroundings. As a result, the elements themselves make a fine first line of defense against

intruders; people bundled up to face the cold or kitted out to scale the steep mountainsides are at a definite disadvantage when confronted with werewolves who need no such crutches. If the sept's Theurges learn of an impending threat, they can also heighten this defense by calling up storms to blanket the caern.

The heart of a Wendigo caern can be bitterly cold, but it can also provide a sept with its one true source of warmth. Wind-spirits and other spirits of storm or winter are commonplace; these spirits "play roughly" with werewolves who enter the caern for any reason other than a rite. Meditating in the caern's heart is therefore a tricky business for anyone unused to the Wendigo's traditions of stoic endurance.

When the Wendigo gather for council, they usually do so outside; most assembly areas in their caerns are outdoor affairs, and natural ones at that. It's rare that the tribe will go to the trouble to build a council lodge or an amphitheater; it's often more respectful, in their eyes, to gather openly under the watchful sky. There isn't any particular seating arrangement during such a gathering — the "good seats," as it were, go to those who are willing to take them. If somebody wants



to sit near the Warder, for instance, he has to convince (sometimes physically) anyone else who wants the seat that he's the one most deserving.

The stereotypical Wendigo living area is a lodgehouse; in much of Wendigo territory, it's suicide to sleep outdoors in Homid form. The tribe virtually always sets up a shelter of some sort to benefit homids and lupus alike. Sweat lodges are a fairly common adjunct to the lodge area, built to aid in the purification of body and soul. However, the living area is never luxurious by any standard — Wendigo are meant to be able to endure hardship, not avoid it entirely.

The tribe doesn't offer particularly lavish accommodations for their spirit allies, either. Physical shrines are sometimes seen as a means of "coddling" spirits, and the spirit that requires that sort of treatment is not the sort of spirit a Wendigo wants at his back. Wendigo appease their spirits with dance and song, not trinkets. The exception is that some Pacific Northwest Wendigo are inclined to raise totem poles depicting the tribal totem, the caern totem and any pack totems; these poles are often the center of lesser rites.

The Wendigo's memorial areas are sacred ground — not even Kin are allowed to tread there without explicit permission. Wendigo share an abiding respect for the bones of the dead, and often try to bury their dead in as intact a condition as possible. Necessity often demands that the Wendigo maintain a separate burial area for their heroes outside caern boundaries. They do this gladly; the extra work and trouble is more than worth their honor.

The Umbral reflection of a Wendigo caern is often distinctly colder than the physical world. Although this cold can't damage Garou in the spirit world, it can range from uncomfortable to distinctly unpleasant. The more closely attuned to Great Wendigo or Winter-spirits the caern totem is, the more pronounced this effect is.

The Others

Although every shapeshifter can reap the benefits of a caern, not all of them are suited to guarding and maintaining them. In some cases, this is simply because the Breed in question is solitary or nomadic by nature, and admits that their kind would make poor custodians. Other shapeshifters tried their hand at guarding caerns — and ultimately failed.

When the War of Rage broke out, the Garou used it as an excuse to commandeer as many caerns as possible. Their pretext was that the other Changing Breeds just weren't up to the challenge of defending

caerns from the Wyrms — after all, they couldn't defend those caerns from the Garou.

As a result, even though every shapeshifter would gladly use a caern, few indeed have caerns of their own. Instead, they've learned and passed on a different way of maintaining their ties with the spirit world. The caernless shapeshifters commonly have their own rites for staking out a piece of territory, and making travel across the Gauntlet possible there. These "den-realms," as they're sometimes called, don't rely on latent mystical power in the environment — but they don't offer near as much benefit as a true caern might. The shapeshifters of the modern age are thus stuck with a dilemma — should they remain content with what they have, or should they take a few risks in the hopes of gaining the extra power they need?

Ananasi

Six people, half of them thin as bundles of sticks, sat around the fountain and chatted quietly with one another, their white teeth shining in the manmade light.

"The Hive has fallen," said Aspeth, the palest of hair and face. "The winners took several losses in the effort, but their plan was strong, and their information was accurate."

"Of course it was," replied Etienne matter-of-factly.

"Will we be moving in to claim the area for ourselves now?" inquired Nora, the smallest. She was still young, not long past her Metamorphosis. "There's no better time, as weak as the Garou are."

"No, of course not," Etienne chided coolly. "It's not as though we have any use for it... and as long as they hold it, we know where they are. That operation is over. Now we discuss new business."

The werespiders are typical of the caernless shapeshifters; they claim no permanent territories of their own, instead building their own personal connections to the Umbra. The den-realms they create are web-havens, spun of spirit and Ananasi silk, that they call their Sylie. A werespider's Sylie isn't particularly huge; it can fill a small apartment, or it can fit into a closet. Oddly enough, though, Sylie tend to flourish in the heart of the city, or wherever else the Weaver is strong. Apparently, the spirit-strands of the web lock into the Weaver's Web itself, creating a passageway for the werespider to exploit. They use these havens in the usual way — as meditative places to replenish their Gnosis and commune with spirit allies, and as a means of entering the Umbra.

As one would expect, it's a bad idea to invade a werespider's web. Ananasi are notorious for leaving weblines traps to guard their Sylie — anything from

tripwire-triggered traps to strands of razor-sharp, nearly invisible silk. The Gauntlet is sometimes notably thicker and more resistant near a werespider's Sylie as well. The werespiders' den-realms may be transient in nature, but that doesn't mean that the Ananasi don't value the privacy of their parlors.

Bastet

"This is a dire insult, cousins." Enbata shaped each word perfectly and clipped it off directly at the end, a sure mark of his displeasure. "Each one of the Folk should be welcome in the other's territory, provided he shows proper respect. I have shown you and your king proper respect. I have told you that I must speak with him. Why, then, do you not respect me?" Enbata nearly bit his tongue to prevent himself from lapsing into a snarl. "I am Bagheera; I am Bhon Bhat. I am due more than what you give me."

The two tall warriors didn't flinch or back away as much as a step, much to Enbata's ever-growing displeasure. "That is as may be, Bhon Bhat," the one on the left said, tapping the shaft of his assegai with one thumbnail. "But Black Tooth is the Bhon Bhat here. These plains are his plains; these rivers are his rivers; these herds are his herds. You may walk through his gateposts, sit near his throne and feast at his table and at his spirit-spring only if he grants it. And, Bhon Bhat—" there was almost a sneer in his voice as he said it—"he has neglected to inform us that our job is to keep away all intruders save for his good friend Enbata, 'Lord of Thorny Skies.' Perhaps it is an oversight, but we cannot second-guess our master." He grinned, showing filed teeth. "I will ask, just to be sure, when next I see my king. You may wait here until then, if you like."

Although the Bastet have managed to hold on to a tiny handful of caerns, mostly in Africa, the vast majority of the Breed relies on their den-realms as their Umbral connection. The few caerns held by Bastet have little structure; they're rarely anything more than a caern heart and a working agreement between the werecats in residence. It wasn't necessarily always this way — but time and territoriality have forced the Bastet to settle for what they can get.

The Bagheera almost never maintained caerns of any sort; they are among the most individualistic of the Bastet, and have difficulty cooperating in groups for more than a few weeks at a time. It's been implied that the Bagheera were the ones to pioneer the mastery of den-realms in the first place, perhaps so that they wouldn't have to tolerate a whole sept full of other Bastet.

On the other hand, Balam have been known to occupy and maintain caerns, largely because they didn't meet with much competition. The Balam home-

land is rather devoid of wolves, and therefore it fell to the werejaguars to defend the sacred places. For centuries, they sufficed — one "jaguar god" could defend a small caern from the local humans and occasional Banes or Wyrms-beasts until the time came to pass the duty on to a descendant. The arrival of organized threats changed all that — no matter how much the locals feared a jaguar god's domain, the ruling Balam couldn't resist a determined pack of werewolves, an organized squad of fomori, or worse. The Balam lost their sacred places one by one, and are in a desperate struggle even now to save the few they have left.

The Bubasti were unusually gregarious for a Bastet tribe, and sometimes congregated in small groups to lead small temples of Kinfolk "worshippers." A single Bubasti would always dominate such temples, but once a pecking order was established the "septs" were moderately effective. The longago war with Set and his minions changed all this, though, and it would be surprising if the Bubasti have so much as one caern of their own left.

The Ceilican, on the other hand, never bothered to take caerns of their own in the first place. Their ties with the fae folk made them welcome guests at faerie caerns — or if not welcome guests, then at least they knew enough about the place to slip in on their own. When they were betrayed, the tribe became much more reliant on their den-realms, and these days very few Ceilican know much of anything about caerns of any sort.

The Khan are tied to caerns more tightly than any other Bastet breed except one — at least within hengeyokai territory. The Khan of the Far East are not quite as committed to the Bastet ideal of solitude, and commonly take positions of honor in hengeyokai courts. Even after the War of Rage, the weretigers once had a few caerns of their own — but infighting has ensured that all of them were lost to invaders and the Wyrms long ago. The Khan are deeply ashamed of their failure, but don't have the numbers to unite and take back so much as one.

Like the Bagheera, the Pumonca are dedicated individualists, almost to the point of isolationism. However, unlike the Balam, they also shared territory with Garou, so they had no need to watch over unclaimed caerns. Sometimes they bargained with Uktena or Croatan for the use of a caern; mostly, they were content with their den-realms. The arrangement soured when the Second War of Rage broke out; few Pumonca alive today even think about trying to reestablish their old contacts. It's possible that a few Pumonca maintain some small caerns in the Andes, out of Garou reach, but they aren't telling if they are.

The Qualmi are in much the same situation as the Pumonca — they also had connections with the werewolves (largely Uktena), and they too broke off those relations when the Second War of Rage broke out. If anything, the werelynxes have even more right to be bitter, because their European branch was wiped out by werewolves long ago in the original War of Rage. However, the northern cats do their best to keep their tempers ice-cold and their wits about them; they realize that seeking revenge would probably wipe out the last of them.

It's the Simba who truly break the mold. Like werewolves, they operate with a pack mentality; like werewolves, they consider themselves the chosen warriors of their homeland. In many ways, the Simba behave much as if they were feline Garou, and they even hold a few caerns to this day. There they erect shrines to their pride leaders, make offerings to their various Jamak, and draw on the Umbra's power as needed. It's said that Black Tooth oversees two caerns himself — the one he inherited from his ancestors, and the one he took from the Ajaba in his genocidal purge. The werelions are particularly protective of their caerns, because the caern's heart is a way for them to enter the Umbra without mastering a powerful Gift. The pack planning to assault a Simba caern should prepare themselves as if they were planning to assault any Garou caern — and then some.

If the Swara ever held any caerns of their own, the Simba have probably taken them by now. The cheetah folk are barely hanging on to their own already; if not for their Umbral affinity, there's no telling whether they'd still be around today or not.

Finally, the Ajaba, long held as the bastard half-breeds of the Bastet, are in equally bad shape. The werehyenas are as pack-oriented as the Simba or Garou, and were socially inclined to maintain caerns of their own. An Ajaba "sept" was more of a sprawling clan where everybody could claim some distant relation to everybody else. However, the Simba forced them from their ancestral caerns; the only caerns they maintain now are urban caerns, places of Rage and endurance in the face of hardship. The Black Spiral Dancers have also been on a recruitment drive among the Ajaba, and the promise of caerns (well, Hives) all their own has been a major selling point. The majority of the tribe has resisted the temptation to say, "fuck it all" and throw in their lot with the Fallen Ones — but it might be only a matter of time.

Corax

It looked like the situation was well under control at this point. The first wave of fomori had splintered into bits when

they'd hit the Gnawers' ambush, and the rest of the troops had faltered when they'd realized that the werewolves were on to them. Then the spirits had gone to work with a fusillade of glass and fire, softening the invaders just enough to be scattered when the Gnawers' main charge slammed into them. Now the werewolves were hastily dragging the bodies of the fallen away and getting the fires under control, just in case the police actually decided to show up.

And up in the sky, Iosef Backtracker banked lazily around an errant plume of smoke and started beating his wings, flying north to his next stop.

You guys got it easy, he thought to himself. You only have to watch out for one caern at a time. Us, we gotta look out for all of them.

The Corax don't keep caerns, and they don't feel the need to. They don't even establish den-realms of any sort for their own personal use. In ancient times, the Corax were welcome at all caerns. A wereraven's arrival meant the arrival of news, something that was well worth the purchase price of a little spare Gnosis. This changed when the War of Rage broke out, but some Corax have kept a few contacts among certain Garou tribes (notably Get of Fenris, Shadow Lords, Red Talons and Fianna). If need be, these wereravens have been able to slip in while their buddies "look the other way" — but as one of the Changing Breeds blessed with an affinity for Umbral travel, most Corax prefer to recharge their Gnosis in the Umbra directly, in a safe spot picked out for just such an occasion.

Gurahl

The humans' scent was drawing nearer. They were almost to the heart of the sacred place. Their flint spears had stopped stinging Growling Rock's hide a long time ago, but the ache in his heart hadn't faded, not even a little.

He didn't want to fight them, so he'd run away. But they were clever trackers — Growling Rock didn't know how they were able to do it so easily, with such tiny, useless noses. Now they were close, and their jabber spoke of death-bears, of evil places and great strength to be gained from eating the bear's flesh. Their hearts seemed to have rotted completely out of their bodies, leaving them hollow — or so it seemed to Growling Rock, who'd never heard of humans acting this way, and had no idea how to make the manlings better.

Growling Rock didn't want to fight. But it didn't seem that there was any option left to him. So he stood up on his hind legs, and with a mountain-rattling growl, he paced forward to meet them.

The Gurahl no longer make a practice of keeping caerns. At one time, they were happy to serve as protectors of Gaia's sacred places, but they were

driven from their lands for their trouble and either slain or forced into hibernation. There are no (well, *maybe* one, but that's the Storyteller's call) active caerns still in Gurahl hands today. The werebears of today rely on the trick of using den-realms (which they call Umbral Glades) to maintain their Umbral connections. Even so, the information here might prove useful for historical chronicles, or for adding history to existing caerns that might once have been under the werebears' protection.

Naturally, the Gurahl preferred to open caerns of Healing; they saw it as their duty and responsibility as Gaia's healers to oversee such caerns' powers. The werebears were also attracted to caerns of Fertility, Gnosis, Plenty, Strength and Stamina, although they admitted that they had no greater claim to such caerns than did any other shapeshifter. They weren't opposed to tending for caerns of Rage, Primal-Urge and other such types, but in almost all cases they considered themselves only caretakers until a worthy sept could be found to take command of the caern.

In many ways, the Gurahl who served as caretakers for caerns were no different from their Garou cousins. They carefully kept the bawn clean, with all the natural elements in harmony; they propitiated the caern's totem with offerings and songs; they used misdirection and intimidation to keep the humans far away. The largest difference was that the werebears weren't very gregarious over the long term, and sometimes a caern would have only one Gurahl guardian to its name.

The werebears always tried to make the caern ready for visitors. The Gurahl usually set aside a fairly open area for their gathers; even in more recent days, with only a few Gurahl at best available to hold a caern, the werebears always wanted to be ready in case they got the opportunity to host a revel. Their assembly areas weren't elaborate affairs; the main features were massive rocks or immense fallen trees, dragged and shaped by giant paws to mark the boundaries of the assembly area, or to give people someplace comfortable to sit. Such places were usually decorated with garlands of flowers, splashes of paint and heaped with abundant foodstuffs during a revel, in keeping with the Gurahl idea of festivities and hospitality — but for more businesslike meetings, the assembly area remained fairly simple. The tales say that when some Garou violated that hospitality and slew their hosts, it was such a shock to the caerns that the caerns died forever — damning the werewolves with the greatest sin known to any shapeshanger.

Mokolé

They were prepared going in. They knew to expect some light resistance at the border of the reputed "lizard-beasts" territory. They figured that a quick strike with medium-sized ordnance would take down any initial guards. They'd expected the defenders to get more and more desperate as the team penetrated closer to the heart of their territory, and they'd packed plenty of heavy ordnance for just such a fight.

They were not prepared for the twenty-foot long mosasaur that came surging out of the shallow water not twenty feet past the "NO TRESPASSING SIGN" and tore off Conroy's top half before he could scream.

There was quite a lot of screaming and random gunfire at that point; it was no wonder they couldn't think straight. Even if they'd had time to puzzle it out, they likely wouldn't have understood why the monster's attack was so ferocious, so far from the heart of their lair. They probably wouldn't have deduced that they'd chosen a line of attack that took them right over the top of Churning River's egg mound. And there was really no battle plan in the world that could prepare you for facing an angry Mokolé mother.

Mokolé caerns, or "wallows," aren't very elaborate at all. If not for the odd spiritual "tingle" that a shapechanger can receive, it'd be hard for a non-Mokolé to realize when he's standing in the middle of a Dragon Breed wallow. The Mokolé are fairly singular among Changing Breeds; they congregate around caerns as do the Garou, but they have a tendency to be less concerned with a caern's welfare than with the welfare of the shapeshifters and spirits within.

Most Mokolé wallows are located in swampland, or along rivers; the majority of the Dragon Breed is quite comfortable in water, in human form or otherwise. Depending on the amount of local suchid Kin, a Mokolé wallow might be located in a desert — but for the most part, it's nice, comfortable swampland. The bawn is naturally protected by the terrain, as most normal people are deathly afraid of quicksand and poisonous snakes — and it's a simple enough matter for an Archid-form Mokolé to overturn any boat small enough to navigate the marsh.

The Mokolé don't ask too much in terms of living areas, or at least the suchids among them don't. A simple cabin with a good stretch of clean water is just fine. However, a vitally important area of any Mokolé caern is a safe spot to lay eggs and hatch out a clutch. The Dragon Breed will guard such a clutching spot as fiercely as they guard the heart of their wallow; their parental instinct easily rivals the strength of their love for Gaia.



The Dragon Breed does maintain shrines to their spirit allies, although this isn't a fixed rule. A Mokolé's promise of remembering a spirit and its deeds is just as valuable as a Garou's promise to dedicate kills and war trophies to a totem. Conversely, the Mokolé do not have an equivalent for the Graves of the Hallowed Heroes; their deep and abiding connection to the Memory means that wherever they go, they're connected to those who have gone before.

The Umbrascap of a Mokolé caern is nothing particularly unusual — save to those with exceptional spiritual awareness. To these gifted few, they can half-see shadows; impressions left behind by the Memory. Prehistoric shadow-fronds wave in long-extinct winds; giant footprints sink into the muck, but always just out of the corner of your eye. Regrettably, it's impossible for anyone not gifted with Mnesis to see these visions as anything more than fleeting glimpses — which can be quite maddening to anyone who sees them in the first place, and can't help but want to see more.

Nagah

"I think that the Fallen Ones suspect something," Kakeiya mused, plaiting a honeysuckle vine into her hair. "I've noticed divers down by the harbor; they bear no insignia, but I'm certain they have something to do with the Hallahan offices down there. They have a... smell to them."

Silver Sariyena leaned back against the curtained wall. "That may be true," he replied in his sing-song voice, "but it's little enough business of ours. Let the humans dredge the river bottom. They won't find us in here," he smiled, stroking the velvet folds.

"We should make it our business," Tokuda said flatly. "We cannot rush our plans concerning the Glass Walker, and we would be fools to ignore this threat." He folded the knife he was sharpening and slid it into a pocket. "We should prepare our bodies to receive the Ananta, and we should move it tomorrow night. Then we should deal with these would-be river hunters. It will make fine practice."

Kakeiya smiled her perfect smile in agreement. Silver Sariyena also smiled and nodded, but a little wistfully.

The Nagah are another of the shapeshifting races who have few caerns, but have learned to make do. They maintain their own den-realms, as do Bastet — yet they know the secret of absorbing these den-realms (called Ananta) into themselves when it's time to travel. Nagah invariably place their Ananta underwater, possibly because the rite doesn't work on dry land and possibly just out of preference. One wereserpent is enough to create, maintain, absorb and regurgitate an Ananta, but the Nagah prefer to

maintain these den-realms as small “nests” of two or three. In effect, they keep Ananta in much the same way as Garou keep pack totems, even if the function is completely different.

The wereserpents also maintain a tiny few ancestral caerns, all of which are situated under the waters of various rivers. In one of these caerns, the Sesha — the wereserpents’ governing body — holds court. These places are, naturally, little enough to look at in the physical world — but in the spirit world they are majestic caverns, resplendent with veins of shining metal. The Sesha’s caern has a series of shifting spirit-tunnels that connect with every Ananta in existence; thus the snake-breed manages to keep tightly connected.

Nagah caerns are caerns of Enigmas, Gnosis and even Secrecy — a rare caern type that is obviously not well known to any shapeshifter. They are not guarded by any Gaian spirits or caern totems, but maintain some links to the Wani, the Dragon-spirit patrons of the wereserpents. They are exceptionally well hidden even from the Penumbra; it is technically possible to stumble directly into a Nagah caern, but survival is probably much less of a possibility.

Nuwisha

The moot was growing wilder by the minute. Talesinger Mishanter had been forced to begin his tales a little earlier than he’d planned, so that the audience wouldn’t be too drunk or rowdy to appreciate them by the time he’d finished. He was coming to another climax in his stories, and his audience was in fine spirits indeed.

“Though we mourn the passing of our Changing brethren so long ago, we honor them by honoring the caern that was once theirs, and by defending it with our lives!” He raised a horn of frothy liquid that almost seemed to sparkle in the firelight. “To those who came before us, and to the Fianna heroes amongst us who follow in their tracks!”

“Here’s to ‘em!” Curious Moon echoed along with the rest of the sept, raising her mug as they did. And here’s to the look on your faces if you ever figure out that we never really, truly completely left, she added silently as she drank a long swig. Not that I’m going to be the one to tell you.

The Nuwisha used to keep caerns (or “kibas,” as they called them), but when the European Garou came trampling down the landscape, the werecoyotes simply retreated. They’d discovered that the Europeans did indeed serve Gaia, even if they were awfully clumsy and shortsighted about it — so they figured the kibas would be in more or less good hands. At the very least, it wasn’t worth dying to protect the kibas —

Coyote needs his children, after all. So they quietly packed up, moved away, and left the keys where the Garou could find them, as it were.

Well, they left copies of the keys behind. The Nuwisha kept the originals.

To this day, the Nuwisha have almost no kibas to their name; they’re happy to let the Garou do all the work of defending and maintaining caerns, while they just slip in through the back door and use the caern whenever they choose. This isn’t something that the youngsters try; an enterprising werecoyote must be at least Rank Two and possess the Gift of Sheep’s Clothing to stand any real chance of success. It becomes easier to try this prank in kibas that used to be in Nuwisha hands, as the caern totem isn’t likely to blow the werecoyote’s cover if it recognizes her for what she is.

The Nuwisha know a very abbreviated version of the Rite of the Opened Caern, one that allows them to draw on their **former kibas’** power with utmost stealth and expediency. Again, this rite works only in kibas that used to be under Nuwisha control; there’s not a Nuwisha in the world that could saunter into the Black Forest caern and persuade or trick the Wild Boar into doling out a portion of its power on the sly. The rite can be enacted in only five minutes, and it involves no loud howls or cries; most Nuwisha pull it off while the greater portion of the local sept is deep asleep.

Ratkin

“Look at it,” Izzy said admiringly, gesturing out at the swath of blackened concrete and tattered yellow tapes. “Man! Just gets me right there, y’know?”

“Can’t say as I do,” Martha replied carefully, resting her hands on her hips.

“And you guys call yourselves kids of Mama Rat,” Izzy sniffed. “What your problem is, is you’re too fond of them humans. You can’t appreciate stuff like this. When that building stood there, it was just this big ol’ steaming pile that the Weaver crapped out. But a lil’ gasoline later, and blam! The Webs are all cut, and all crashing down. Pure Wyld, right in the heart of the city.” He sniffed the air approvingly. “You can still smell the chaos, y’know. That’s why we took over under the place; it’s good stuff down there. And we’ve kept on stymieing the damn human’s efforts to rebuild. Pays to have friends in City Hall,” he added meaningfully.

“I guess it does,” Martha admitted. And the two of them stood quietly, watching a rat clamber out from between a couple of chunks of rubble and scamper across the side street.

The Ratkin have plenty of caerns (or “nests”) of their own, and they manage to keep hold of them pretty well. The high-and-mighty Silver Fangs or Fianna might think about taking over a Wendigo caern if it's near a clean river with a pretty view, but they're not so enthusiastic about clearing out a subterranean infestation so they can take over the rats' tunnels. These places can teem with dozens of wererats at a time, and are about the farthest thing from “safe” that the city has to offer short of a Black Spiral Hive.

Ratkin nests don't have to take up all that much space, and they usually don't. It's customary among the wererats to spend much of their time at the nest in Rodens form; Homid and Crinos aren't particularly useful in the cramped tunnels they call home. A single closet can offer crashspace to multiple rat packs, as long as they're not trying to drag all their gear with them. As a result, a nest's actual bawn might not extend all that far — but with all the eyes the Ratkin have on their side, they're able to pick up intruders long before the trespassers cross the bawn's boundaries.

However, not all Ratkin nests are urban (although the vast majority are). Ratkin keep the occasional rural kingdom, in abandoned grain silos, bayous, oases or ghost towns. These nests don't boast near the wererat population of an average urban nest, although it's still plenty of Ratkin to give an unwary trespasser a nasty surprise. There are usually lots of Kinfolk — and usually rodent Kin at that — in the area of a nest; Ratkin are notorious for breeding rather prodigiously, and like having a lot of warm bodies around.

The heart of a Ratkin caern is rather... loose around the edges of reality. Even though the caern's heart might be buried deep under an overgrown city block, the wererats have gnawed at the Webs so thoroughly that the Gauntlet is suprisingly low for any urban caern. And the Penumbra of a nest, now, is where things get really wild — or, more accurately, really Wyld. Ratkin are creatures of chaos, and tend to set up shop in places where the Weaver is weak and the Wyld is strong. Thanks to their own practiced brand of anarchy, the Ratkin are able to feed the Wyld even in the hearts of the cities — more accurately, in the urban areas that humans are afraid to enter. Reality gets a few more hairline fractures in wererat territory, and Weaver-spirits who stray too close to the nest's heart get eaten. Rat-spirits are in plentiful supply, even gathering in teeming hordes during major rites. The Web here has been gnawed to almost threadlike thinness in some parts, chewed completely away in others. It's a hostile place for any visitor who isn't allied with Rat or her children, and even Bone Gnawers might have some quick explaining to do to excuse their presence.

Rokea

Eyes-of-the-Wound could smell the whale's blood pouring into the ocean even across the half-mile between them. Forcing himself to think cold thoughts instead of the warm feeding instinct, he sent another question pulsing into the inky waters.

Did they use man-tools?

The Rorqual's answer boomed in his head, and he almost felt a twinge of the great whale's pain. Not to breathe. They used man-weapons to hurt me, and they smelled of more man-death, but the gills they wore were their own.

Very well, *Eyes-of-the-Wound* curtly responded. Swim far from here. I am gathering, and your blood would distract us.

Yes.

His form swelled with new muscle, lengthening and thickening into the Death-shape, the Fighting Jaws, the shape of the Ancestor Shark. Row after row of inches-long teeth ground against each other. The familiar heat of anger pumped in his heart and his mind blazed with a furious call.

Brethren. The sick sons and daughters of Qyrl gather near the Grotto of Six Heated Gashes. Another electrical pulse and the location shot out to the others. Swim to me. There must be a feeding.

The Rokea aren't greatly territorial beasts, and don't have much of a concept of “owning” portions of the sea. The concept of claiming a caern as “theirs” is a little alien to them — if you can't pick it up and carry it with you, how can it be considered yours? They do recognize caerns — or Grottoes, as they call them — as places where the Gauntlet is weak and the weresharks can easily enter the Umbra or draw on some more of Gaia's blessings. They just don't consider a Grotto something that anyone can own.

However, the Rokea's memories are very long — for there are few distractions in the dark seas — and each wereshark knows the locations of virtually every Grotto for hundreds of miles. Although they might allow certain other individuals to set up shop in a Grotto (the merfolk fae, for instance, are able to live in Grottoes without incurring the Rokea's wrath), they are more than willing to decide who's authorized and who isn't.

Finally, the Rokea have a somewhat symbiotic relationship with the Rorqual, great (and quite rare) Kami bound into the bodies of cetaceans. The Rorqual take it upon themselves to draw Gnosis from the Grottoes proper, and distribute it to any of Gaia's own that require it. Since a single Rorqual can hold vast amounts of Gnosis, and is expert at locating Rokea to

give them such a gift, this makes it much less necessary for the Rokea to stay within an easy swim of a Grotto. The weresharks leave it up to the Rorqual to pay homage and tend the sacred places — they'll do the fighting to defend the Grottoes as necessary.

The Beast Courts

The flutist sat cross-legged by the small pool, piping a tune to the carp passing in and out of the lotus stems. The music lingered in the willow branches, sliding between the leaves — then died out abruptly as the short, tattered man hopped the stream and drew near to the flutist. She rested the flute in her lap, but didn't look up.

"Your pardon," the visitor hissed. "I did not wish to interrupt your reverie."

"Your voice makes a liar of you," she replied tonelessly. "But I understand your pleasure in keeping me busy. You dislike the thought of... one of my kind having an idle hour to think on whatever it is we think about."

The man ground his mismatched teeth together, and his lip spasmed as if he were twitching imaginary whiskers. "The Japanese hunters are coming," he spat. "They have very new guns and very many bullets. They stink of metal webs. They must be dealt with, but the Fire Moon sentai is still in Hakodate. General Ten Suns says that you must be enough."

"I see." She rose to her feet in a sinuous motion, as much like a serpent uncoiling as anything else. "Then if I must be enough, I will be." For the first time, she looked directly at her visitor, who flinched under her gemlike stare. She held out her flute — and although he didn't know why, he opened his hand and took it.

"I promised our patron, mighty Mountain, that I would play for him this evening. If I am... delayed, then I believe you should keep my appointment for me."

The lands of the Beast Courts of the Emerald Mother have just as many sacred places as do the Sunset Lands, and the hengeyokai have had to defend their caerns from as many besiegers. In fact, the hengeyokai have even more to worry about — for in their lands, even the living dead seek to drink all the Mother's energy out of a "dragon nest."

The main difference between hengeyokai and Western caerns is that a hengeyokai court (their term for sept) is often composed of multiple Changing Breeds. Although this doesn't change the nature of the caern and its powers, it does have an effect on the way the caern's grounds are structured. The court is expected to maintain their caern in such a fashion that Tengu, Hakken, Zhong Lung and Nezumi alike can all look upon the sacred area, hold their rites there, and pronounce it good. As a result, hengeyokai caerns are

wildly varied from one another, depending on the actual makeup of the court — but there are a few values that all caerns have in common.

The hengeyokai believe very strongly in proper maintenance of the caern's bawn; there is almost invariably at least one office in each court devoted to that very purpose. Should the court be too small to support such an office, the duties of bawn care are generally assigned to the court's general, regent or seer. Although the thought of a mighty Khan general carefully overseeing the planting of cherry trees might seem a bit comical to outsiders, it's no joke to the hengeyokai.

The Beast Courts also collectively hold very few Umbral caerns; a caern in the heart of Hong Kong or Tokyo might be all well and good for a band of Nezumi, Glass Walkers or Kumo, but most other hengeyokai vastly prefer the countryside. Legends of the Age of Testing reaffirm the common belief that the cities are where evil is born, and although some courts are willing to claim territory in the enemy's camp, the majority are not.

Reverence for one's ancestors and spirit allies is a powerful force in hengeyokai society. Not one hengeyokai caern exists that doesn't have a well-maintained shrine area for paying homage to the spirits and the caern's fallen heroes alike. Not one. These shrines can be remarkably diverse in form and adornments — even close cousins like Hakken and Kitsune can choose to venerate their totems in remarkably different ways, so imagine what decorations a court with Kitsune, Nezumi, Tengu, Hakken and Nagah members would provide.

The court's regent sometimes resides fully within the caern's heart; it is considered appropriate for a court's high official to show devotion to the spirits by residing with them. If possible, the caern's heart will also feature a small area suitable for the court's seer to commune with the spirits. The ten suns of the Mirror Lands are only sometimes visible from a caern's heart; they aren't considered good luck, and some courts prefer to build structures to shelter the heart from their light. The heart pulses with spirit activity; Ancestor-spirits, elementals, Animal-spirits, spirits of mountains and trees and streams and stones — all are drawn to the dragon nests, particularly if the geomancy of the area has been well maintained. It can all make matters very difficult for an exhausted regent who's trying to take a brief nap — but the spirits are more respectful to those of high rank and widely renowned wisdom, so the truly enlightened have little to worry about.

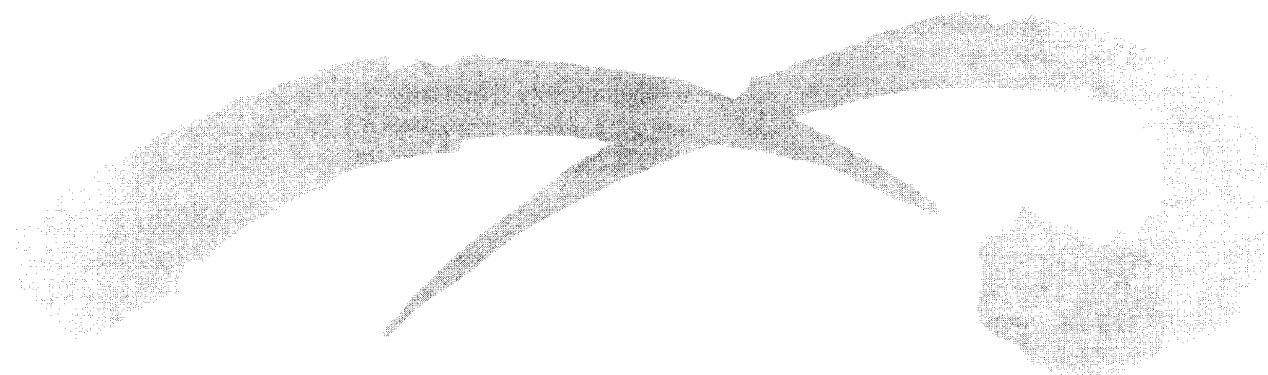
The Eastern shapechangers are as a whole very status-conscious; therefore their assembly areas are

designed to proclaim the caern's glory and honor the court's members at the same time. Such a place is usually hung with many decorations, whether splendidly dyed silks, bright tassels, war-banners, prayer strips, antlers and bones, well-crafted weapons or anything else. The Mirror Lands reflection of a court's assembly area is sometimes more splendid than the physical version, and many courts take to holding their gatherings in the Mirror Lands for that very reason.

Out of necessity, the living areas in a hengeyokai court must be fairly elaborate and diverse. It's important to have quarters suitable for all court members from Nezumi to Zhong Lung — to say nothing of the need to accommodate distinguished guests! Although the living quarters can still be humble in form, it is important that each major faction has privacy, as well as visitors; it would not do to offend visiting *hsien*, for example, by forcing them to sleep in a common room with a dozen other people. Hot springs are an ideal addition to the living quarters, but if none are to be

had, the court will certainly set up a bath area so that courtiers and visitors may purify themselves. Regrettably, since space is at a premium, hengeyokai Kinfolk are always required to dwell outside the caern; even newly married couples are rarely allowed to honeymoon within the bawn.

In the Mirror Lands, a hengeyokai caern can be a vision out of fantasy. The hengeyokai have learned the secret of erecting splendid Penumbral structures that benefit their earthly locations. A small stream might flow a little purer if an ornamental bridge is built and consecrated across its Penumbral counterpart; a caern might enjoy better luck if its Mirror Lands boast a fine set of bright *torii* (Japanese shrine gates). Regrettably, the Fifth Age has been rather hard on the hengeyokai's sacred places, and all too often a caern's Penumbra is scarred with the marks of recent battles. Battles with Banes can get particularly nasty, for if the decorations and structures in the Mirror Lands are destroyed, the physical locale they bless may take ill and wither.



Chapter Three: Digging In

Give me five Garou, and a week to train them. After that, you can open up the gates to any hell you like and the six of us will keep them from the caern's heart.

—Skottri Thousandslayer, Warder of the Burning Stone Caern

A pack's character is interwoven with that of its sept, and a sept's character is interwoven with that of the caern it guards. The actual structure and details of your players' sept should be a very important portion of their self-image. But how exactly do you stress the importance of the players' caern and sept, in ways that don't seem too preachy?

This is one of the reasons that careful sept design and handling are so important. Both are very necessary to meeting the chronicle's needs. If the players don't feel involved, and don't feel that there's anything present that serves their interests, they aren't going to enjoy the game.

There are a number of basic tactics you can keep in mind. First of all, no two caerns are alike — so you should select something wholly unique for yours. Stone circles are a fairly common idea, but what if the stones bleed when Garou blood is shed within a hundred yards? What if the Fury caern boasts a strange blue flame at its center that hasn't gone out for two thousand years? What if the cliff overlooking the caern is shaped somewhat like a wounded bear, with a story to match? What if that urban caern is sacred to Falcon or Fenris? A strong visual identity is very useful for catching the players' interest; more importantly, it should capture *your* interest, and make you want to craft stories around the caern.

You should also make sure that there's at least a little something for each player in the sept; if there's no wolf population around your caern, it'll be hard to convince the Red Talon's player that the caern's worth fighting for. These points of interest don't have to be tribal in nature, either; why not try to hook the Get's player with a romantic interest rather than a sacred battlefield? Even if the players' characters aren't the most important werewolves in the caern, they *are* the most important characters in the game — they're the protagonists, after all. Each one should have ample chance to shine.

Naturally, if the pack continually goes to the effort of bettering their caern and sept, without prompting from their elder, then they're probably due a modest Honor award. Be sure to roleplay out the praise they receive from their elders, possibly at a moot.

But if you *really* want to go the extra distance, there are two highly dramatic options open to you — you can promote some or all of the pack to actual sept offices, or you can even have the players develop some real ties to a caern by getting them to create their own. There are a lot of variables to consider

Double Duty

One possible option open to experienced Storytellers and players is that when the pack members have reached sufficient rank and prestige to earn prominent sept positions, they can accept — and the players play both their experienced sept officials *and* a newly generated pack of fresh-faced cubs. Not at the same time, mind — basically, the players roleplay the elders in sept matters and times of true crisis, but switch over to the new pack when the elders **need to send a pack on a mission but can't leave the caern themselves**. This allows the players to enjoy all the high-powered tension of sept politics, while still giving them ample time to explore the outside world with their newcomers.

This is, however, recommended mainly for experienced groups; it's all too easy for players to start abusing their power by having their elder characters show a bit too much favoritism toward their younger characters. Problems can also arise in times when the caern's under attack, and players naturally want to play both their characters at once. Still, a system like this has a lot of potential. And just imagine the emotional stakes if the elders are taken out of commission temporarily, and the youngsters have to save the day....

with either option, of course; but the interest these tactics can generate is undeniable.

Faithful Service

One of the most direct and fulfilling ways to get your players involved in their caern is to assign their characters specific sept duties — in particular, granting them offices in the sept hierarchy. However, a brief look at the various offices is discouraging to many Storytellers; in order to fulfill these duties well, a pack would have to spend most, if not all, of their time within the bawn. That tends to cut down on stories with interesting backdrops, and anyone can tell you that it's boring to set an entire chronicle in one specific locale, even if that locale's as large as a city or even a state. What's more, if one character has an important sept role and the others don't, there can be long stretches in which that character is the only one doing anything — pure poison for a game.

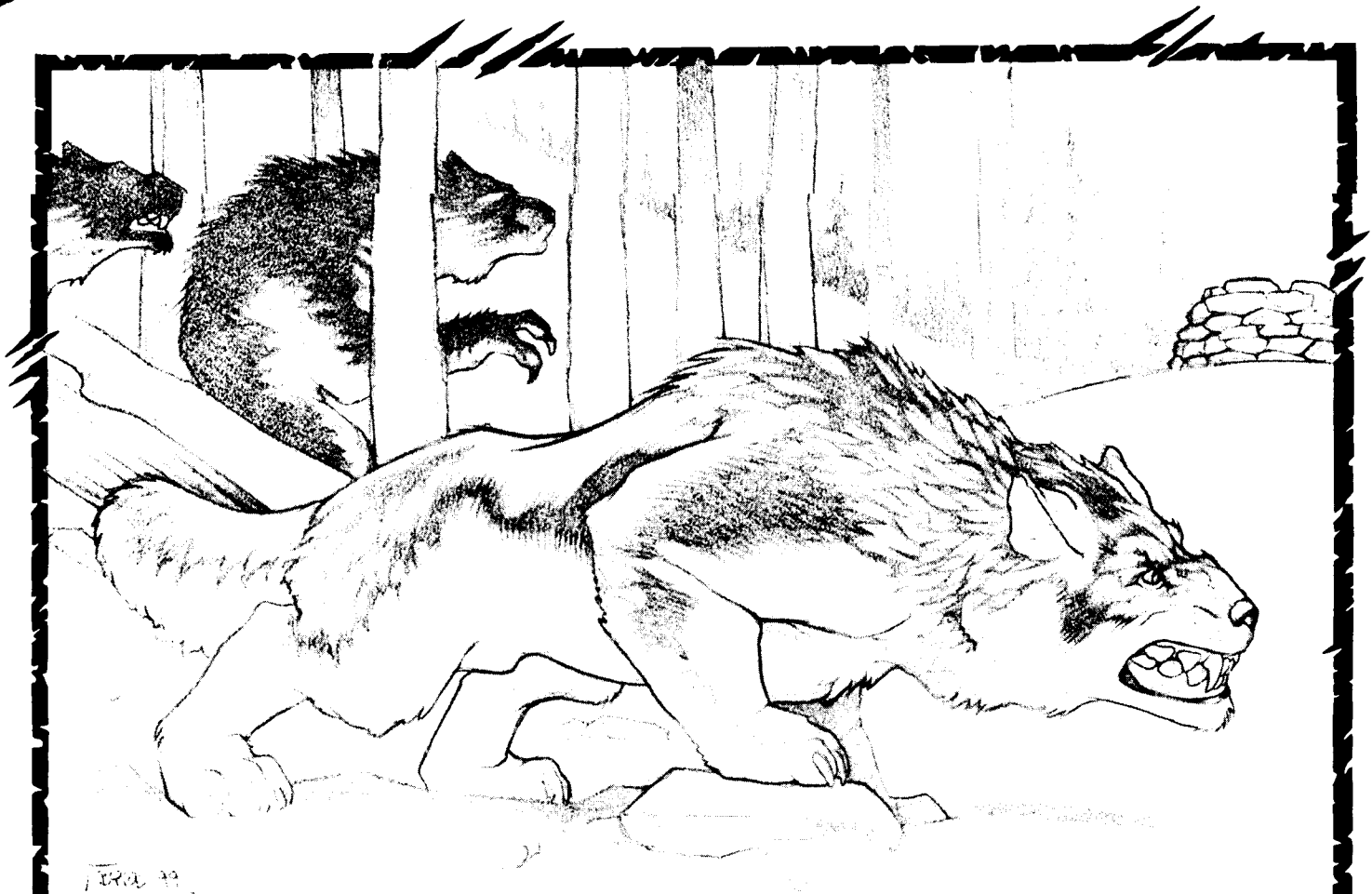
However, there are ways to get the best of both worlds — it is possible to make your players feel like an integral and vital part of the sept, while still allowing them the freedom to go on Umbral quests, diplomatic errands into unfamiliar territory, raids on Black Spiral Hives and the like. Serving in a sept office needn't be equated with retirement; it's a great way to retire a character, of course, but that's not the only thing sept service is good for.

Much of a sept office's duties come into play at moots. Therefore, it's worth repeating here that a sept will hold moots at least once a month (and many measure this by the moon's phases — holding a moot on every full moon, for instance). Keep in mind the schedule of regular moots and your plans for more singular moots; with a little attention to timing, you can orchestrate the events surrounding a sept official's duty for maximum dramatic effect.

Guardians

The most obvious choice for placing your players' pack is as a group of caern Guardians, the sentinels charged with keeping the borders intact. However, the obvious choice isn't always the best. Although service as a Guardian is an excellent way of gaining Honor, it's not a quick route to Glory. More than that, it's not really an expedient way to excitement unless the caern is constantly under attack — and that sort of chronicle grows old very quickly.

On the bonus side, though, Guardians do get a better selection of fetishes, owing to their importance. The fights they do get in are tense, bloody affairs — it's one thing to fight the Wyrms' minions on neutral



ground and quite another to be standing in your own home, trying to keep the forces of corruption and violation from crossing the threshold. It's also a good way of distinguishing yourself to your elders; more than one caern Warder has been drawn from the ranks of the Guardians when his predecessor stepped down or (more likely) was slain in the line of duty.

Service in the ranks of the Guardians is probably limited to a couple of story arcs' worth; it's all too easy for players to see this office as glorified rent-a-cop status, and thus become disenchanted with the prospect all too soon. You can get multiple stories out of this arc, though, without being redundant. First of all, the pack has to distinguish themselves as trustworthy and battle-hardened; that requires a story or two for the players to prove themselves honorable and valorous. Battles against the Wurm or Weaver's forces, as well as some good moral dilemmas, are perfect.

Once they're inducted, you move on to stories where the characters serve as Guardians proper; you can get one or two nights of faithful, mostly uneventful service out of this. Even if Pentex doesn't attack the caern, there's still plenty of opportunity for interesting stories. What if the players catch a Kinfolk or Garou ally sneaking off for a tryst with someone he or she shouldn't be seeing? What if they catch someone

spying on the caern, someone who's not immediately obvious as a friend or enemy (like a mage or hunter)?

And these stories can build up to a climax, a story where the characters' mettle as Guardians is sorely tested. This can mean a full-out assault, but it's also good to have the enemy undertaking clever, covert operations that the players will have to think to counter. Smarter enemies make for higher stakes and more dramatic battles.

Once you've done all you care to (or all your players care to) with the Guardians story arc, there are a number of options for releasing the pack from their duty. One option is promotion; one or more pack members are moved to other sept offices in return for their service, and the rest of the pack is largely released from Guardian duty so as not to break up the unit. Another possibility is that the sept elders become convinced that the pack is better suited for missions on the outside, carrying out first strikes against the enemy. If the pack hasn't done so well, and has been generally neglecting their posts, then they might get sent back to the outside as a punishment. (And yeah, the players could become disgusted with it all and go Ronin, but hopefully their stint as Guardians will have reminded them just what it is they're fighting for.)

Arming the Guardians

It's been mentioned before that Guardians receive a better selection of fetishes than your average pack of cubs; their duties as the front line of defense are just that important. However, what sorts of fetishes are kept in reserve for Guardians, instead of offered to any cub charged with an important mission outside the bawn?

For one, fetish weapons are fairly common "badges of office." Bane Arrows and other talens are particularly appropriate; they're sufficiently expendable so that if a Guardian falls, the loss isn't made all the worse, but they're also potent enough to make a real difference. Guardians' weapons are often bows, spears, axes or other weapons with fairly good reach; the farther away the enemy falls from the caern's heart, the better. Fang daggers and other short-range stabbing weapons are less likely to end up in a Guardian's hands; smaller fetish weapons like those are usually designed so they can be concealed and carried in human society. The exception is typically an urban caern, where it's harder to explain away a tasseled, painted pike.

Klaives are definitely not appropriate; a klaive is far too rare and valuable to give to a Guardian. The silver fetish blades are reserved for Garou who actively take the battle to the heart of the enemy time and again.

Other talens and fetishes offered to Guardians tend to focus more on detection and protection. Stealth is a possibility, but usually reserved for Ragabash and other scouts; Nightshade is a good choice, although it's used sparingly. Sanctuary Chimes are also good, as long as the bearer remembers to invite the caern's spirit protectors to materialize if they so choose. Harmony Flutes and Spirit Whistles aren't popular choices at all; they have a way of hampering the Guardians as much as they do enemies.

The Werewolf Players Guide offers a few more good choices, namely Bones of Shielding, Elk Tooth Necklace, Lagomorph's Boon, Gaia's Poultry and Sands of Sleep. In addition, Storytellers might find the following fetishes and talens handy for rounding out the Guardians' arsenals.

Sentry's Voice

Level One, Gnosis 4

This fetish horn is fairly common among Get of Fenris, Black Fury, Shadow Lord, Fianna and Silver Fang caerns. Anyone can use it in mundane fashion, producing a call that can be modulated to sound like the Howl of Warning. But when activated and blown, its warning blast is audible only to the Garou of the sept (as defined by their link to the caern totem) and their spirit allies. The call resounds through the physical world and Penumbra alike, and is equally loud throughout the bawn. To fashion a Sentry's Voice, the ritemaster must bind a suitable animal spirit into the horn (such as Rooster, Wolf, Coyote, or even Howler Monkey).

Watchespear

Level Two, Gnosis 5

This fetish spear seems to be a fairly primitive weapon, usually flint-tipped with a small hole through the spearhead. Like other fetish weapons, it inflicts aggravated damage (Strength + 2, difficulty 6). However, its true power is to warn its wielder of Umbral danger; when Banes or other Wyrms-beasts in the Penumbra draw within two hundred yards, the spear gives off a low whistle, as if a strong wind were blowing through the hole in the spearhead. This warning comes only if the spear's owner is holding the spear in her hand, and cannot warn of Wyrms-creatures approaching in the physical world; the spear's senses are attuned to the Penumbra alone. To create this weapon, the crafter must bind one of the following spirits into it: Wind, Prairie Dog or Blue Jay.

Arrow-Killer

Gnosis 6

This talen, which takes the form of a small pouch of ashes, is an effective charm against mundane projectiles. The user must spread the ashes in a line before him while activating the talen; the line cannot be longer than ten feet, or it becomes ineffective. While the talen is in effect (for half an hour), no mundane missile weapon, thrown or fired, may cross the line of ashes. Hurling rocks, arrows and bullets all bounce off as if hitting a stone wall. However, fetish weapons and Gift effects (such as Bane Arrows and Call the Breeze) can cross the line as normal; this makes the talen excellent protection for a suitably armed sniper. The ashes are abnormally heavy while the effect lasts, and cannot be easily scuffed or blown away; it takes an entire turn to make a break in the line and therefore spoil the talen's effects. To create this talen, a Garou must bind an Earth-spirit into the pouch of ashes.

Trapdoor Boon

Gnosis 5

This talen takes the form of a small bead of amber or clay. A Garou must swallow it in order to activate it; when he does so, he and all his dedicated equipment meld with a portion of the earth around him — he may sink into the earth, be absorbed by a rock outcropping, or even blend into a brick wall. He may remain in this state, aware of his surroundings, for up to a scene; otherwise, he can emerge into the physical world whenever he likes. If the section of earth he inhabits is damaged, the Garou takes unaggravated wounds to match the severity of the damage; this is usually enough to bring a werewolf out fighting. This talen requires that the spirit of a trapdoor spider be bound within.

Lesser Offices

Most of the lesser offices are fairly suitable for player characters; since they're not strictly necessary for a sept to perform at full strength, the officeholders can be allowed away from the caern now and again as the occasion demands. In many septs, a werewolf might hold two or three of the minor offices, or one of the minor offices in conjunction with one of the greater offices. The elders are usually willing to entrust relatively young Garou with one of these positions, as it lessens another Garou's burden while reinforcing the young one's sense of responsibility.

Caller of the Wyld

Like many of the lesser offices, the Caller of the Wyld is largely a moot office. The Caller of the Wyld is charged with invocation of the sept's totems (the tribal totems of any tribes in the sept, as well as the caern totem itself) during a moot. If there aren't enough Garou to go around, this office's role typically gets tacked onto the Master of the Rite's already long list of duties.

This is a good intermediate-level position for a player's character; it's important enough that the character plays a vital role in any moot, and yet it allows for plenty of "free time" between moots. It's usually reserved for Theurges, although other auspices can do well in this role if they're sufficiently well-acquainted with the totems. If two totems with rivalries share a sept (say, Rat and Griffin), then optimally the Caller of the Wyld shouldn't be of either totem's tribe; that would imply preferential treatment. This office can also offer plenty of Umbral quest story hooks, as the totems might easily make demands of their representative.

If your sept is sufficiently large, you might allow the players to take the roles of the Shining Ones — werewolves charged with dancing, singing or otherwise playing the part of each totem during the Caller's rites. For instance, a large mixed sept of Shadow Lords, Silent Striders and Glass Walkers might merit four Shining Ones, to play the respective parts of Grandfather Thunder, Owl, Cockroach and the caern totem. Like the role of Guardian, this is a good introduction to filling a sept office and a chance for more expressive players to cut loose; the chance to "roleplay" a tribal totem doesn't come around often. Add in the fact that a Shining One had better do a good job of representing her "persona," or an entire tribe at the sept might take offense, and the possibilities become larger than they'd seem at first.

Master of the Howl

The Master of the Howl is another office wherein the officeholder's duties bind him to caern grounds only during a moot. The main duty of this office is to lead the assembled werewolves in the howls, songs and chants that begin the moot, in such a way that the howls convey the right mood and set the right tone. It's an important role, as it's vital to seeing that moots run as smoothly and unobtrusively as possible; even so, the Master of the Howl isn't often needed between moots.

Although the Galliard is the obvious auspice for this position, any character with sufficient charisma and talent can fill this role. Knowing the Moot Rite is also required.

There aren't many plot hooks specific to the Master of the Howl office. This can be a good thing, though. If an appropriate candidate exists in your pack, but one who has extensive goals outside the caern, this can work as a way of getting him more directly involved with the caern without making him feel crushed by his duties. And if he starts to enjoy the role, all the better.

Talesinger

The position of Talesinger might be one that your players will fight over, particularly the more expressive ones. Not only is the Talesinger a prestigious post, but it's also one of the offices that comes into play mainly at moots. Who wouldn't want to be out fighting the Wyrms all day, only to come back to the moot and regale one's elders with the heroic song of your triumph — and gain Honor for the job to boot?

Thanks to the fact that this office is highly coveted, you can get plenty of mileage out of it without even letting a player take the position. If word gets around the sept that a new Talesinger is about to be chosen, the rivalries will start almost instantly. Even if none of your players are looking to fill the post, other Garou might see them as potential rivals, and start subtly trying to discredit them. If you play it right, the pack's Galliard might make a bid for the position just to spite his newfound rivals. (This is a poor motive for becoming Talesinger, but it's typically Garou; and at any rate, you'll have ample opportunity to get the ambitious pup to reexamine his motives.)

Naturally, Galliards stand the best chance at becoming Talesinger, although particularly expressive Garou of other auspices can hold the position. There are no prerequisite rites to learn — only a good sense of storytelling.

The beauty of the Talesinger position is that almost anything becomes a potential story seed at that point — whatever quest or errand the pack is given, the Talesinger has an additional investment in making sure the story comes out right. It's not unlike having a war journalist along, only more poetic — and, of course, the "journalist" has to pitch in and fight like the rest of the pack.

Truthcatcher

The Truthcatcher is meant to mediate disputes and judge crimes both during moots and on less formal occasions. It's a demanding role, and one that might not be best suited for a player's character. The office carries a lot of weight, both in terms of power and of responsibility. It has less freedom than the other minor offices, particularly in multitribal septs where disputes are more common. If four or more tribes share a caern, then there's going to be sufficient conflict to require the Truthcatcher's wisdom on an almost daily basis.

The Truthcatcher is almost without exception Philodox, and an elder to boot. Younger werewolves just aren't considered sufficiently well-versed in Garou laws and the reasons behind said laws. Some of you may have players whose characters fit the bill, but for the most part, players just don't tend to play werewolves who'd be appropriate for this office.

However, if the sept's large enough, the Truthcatcher might have one or more assistants, likely Philodox themselves. This is even more likely in particularly legal-minded septs (those with a high concentration of Shadow Lords or Silver Fangs are good examples). Such assistants might act as bailiffs, investigators who gather evidence, advocates for the accused, or whatever else seems appropriate. These roles can be ideal for players; not only are they tailor-made for the moot equivalent of a courtroom drama, but they're often highly active roles as well. And the sparks can really fly when the Truthcatcher and his assistants see differently on the truth of an affair....

Wyrms Foe

Of all the minor offices, it's hard to find a better one for a player's character than the Wyrms Foe. The Wyrms Foe's primary responsibility is to lead the Revel at the end of each moot; thus, generally speaking, the only time the Wyrms Foe is absolutely required to be present at the caern is during a moot — when the rest of the pack is expected to be in attendance anyway. The rest of the time, the Wyrms Foe is expected to coordinate the caern's packs and plan strikes against the caern's enemies. This position works very well for any active Ahroun — presuming, of course, that said

Ahroun has enough charisma to lead the moot in a Revel and enough intelligence to plan the strikes of multiple packs. Mindless brawlers don't even come close to qualifying, no matter how much Glory the brute might have accumulated.

The only limiting factor is that the Wyrms Foe is required to be an admirable warrior in his own right, which generally limits this post to Ahroun. However, other auspices may qualify, depending on how inspirational and militant they are; for instance, Mari Cabrah may be a Theurge, but she'd qualify easily for the Wyrms Foe position. Evan Heals-the-Past and Antonine Tear-drop, on the other hand, would not.

Remember that in smaller septs, the Master of the Challenge might assume the duty of Wyrms Foe for himself, if no other suitable prospects are at hand. And in most septs, the honor of being Wyrms Foe is passed from one Garou warrior to the next, depending on who has acquitted himself most impressively of late. This can lead to a few friendly (or not-so-friendly) rivalries for the office — further fun with sept roleplaying, eh?

Needless to say, it's easy as pie to create stories that involve the Wyrms Foe. In most cases, you won't have to change that much at all from your regular stories. The main thing to keep in mind is what the other packs at the sept, if any, are up to. Having packs cross wires is a good way to add some tension; was it the Wyrms Foe's carelessness that set them at odds, or was it someone else trying to discredit the Wyrms Foe? And again, rivalries get started this way — and werewolves get very interesting when they have rivalries.

Also, remember that the Wyrms Foe must give way to the caern Warder or Grand Elder if there's a conflict of interest. Although the Wyrms Foe is encouraged to help manage the packs and assign them duties, that responsibility ultimately lies with the warder and the Council of Elders. Used properly, this rule of seniority, can set up further political subplots, or simply add some extra tension to a session.

Gatekeeper

The Gatekeeper is the official in charge of maintaining and opening moon bridges as necessary. She is charged with guarding and maintaining the caern's Pathstone, as well as ensuring that the caern renews its moon bridges every year. The office isn't held by any auspice in particular, but the Gatekeeper must know the Rite of the Opened Caern and the Rite of the Opened Bridge.

The Gatekeeper office is probably best reserved for Storyteller characters, as it tends to involve little combat, no exploration, and negotiation with rival

septs mainly by proxy. However, giving a player's character the role of the Gatekeeper's emissary opens up a multitude of story hooks. Such a character will find himself running to potentially hostile septs in the interest of forming allegiances — and it's no small feat to try and talk a sept of Get and Talons into an alliance, particularly if you're a Fury, Gnawer or Glass Walker. Of course, this sort of mission will typically involve the whole pack, particularly if the other septs require a show of goodwill (such as helping them out with a rescue mission or other task). The Gatekeeper's aide might also be sent (along with his pack) to clear out various Umbral infestations that make moon bridge travel more dangerous than usual.

Keeper of the Land

To many Storytellers, it's hard to associate the Keeper of the Land with a player's character. The conventional stereotype is the stern but kindly old gardener, seemingly gruff but with good advice to any young werewolf patient enough to sit and listen. After all, the Keeper's job is to maintain the caern's general appearance — not a very aggressive post at all, it seems. Small wonder that some tribes don't bother with a Keeper of the Land at all.

There's more to this office than simple yardwork, though. The Keeper has to keep the spirits in mind as

he goes about his business of maintaining caern grounds; that implies negotiation with the caern totem and other spirits. The Keeper of the Land often spends a good deal of time in the Penumbra, analyzing the caern's grounds from that angle and devising ways to bring greater harmony to the area.

There is no particular auspice traditionally associated with this office, although Theurges and Philodox are somewhat more common. A certain amount of Primal-Urge can't hurt, but ultimately there's no one set of skills that makes a good Keeper of the Land.

Ultimately, the Keeper of the Land does work best as a supporting cast member; however, this is also a good "low-maintenance" role for a pack member. After all, you don't usually have to spend more than a couple of minutes hashing out just what improvements the Keeper's going to make to the bawn; then you can move on to the story at hand. Of course, the Keeper can't stray too far from the caern, but that's true of many sept offices.

Master of the Challenge

Although some might say that this office doesn't really merit as high a position as it possesses, that's a shortsighted view. The Master of the Challenge is quite necessary to making sure that the sept's members can cooperate smoothly. By overseeing all challenges,



whether grudge matches or tests for the Rite of Accomplishment, the Master of the Challenge reinforces the sept's hierarchy; she's responsible for ensuring that all Garou feel that they're being treated fairly.

The Master of the Challenge should ideally be eminently fair, but in practice she tends to reflect the attitudes and values of the sept. The Master of the Challenge of a Fenrir sept is going to be harsher and less forgiving than her counterpart in a Stargazer sept; she'll probably make sure that each challenge makes both participants stronger no matter what they want. Most Garou who fill this post are Philodox, but that's a general tendency and not a prejudice. A comprehensive knowledge of gamecraft is a definite requirement; plenty of combat experience is also necessary. The Master of the Challenge need not be unbeatable in all forms of challenges (and who *could* be?), but she must be good enough at all of them to be well versed in picking the appropriate challenge for a situation.

This position can offer a lot of fun, although it's best given to a character whose player shows a certain amount of creativity and sense of justice. A good Master of the Challenge ensures that not all challenges are physical, and that the challenge always serves the cause of sept law. This is one of the posts that can earn its holder some amount of animosity from other sept members, if they feel slighted or cheated by the character's decisions. The downside is that the Master of the Challenge can leave the caern only when there are few Garou in attendance; she can't take the chance that a pair of sept members will get into a duel to the death in her absence.

Master of the Rite

As one of the most important offices in the caern, this isn't one to hand out idly. In fact, it's one of the highest roles a Theurge can aspire to in Garou society. Admittedly, the Master of the Rite doesn't oversee each and every rite performed within the caern's bawn, but he is responsible for overseeing all the rites performed at the caern's heart, which certainly covers all the rites for each moot and other significant occasions.

Of course, the built-in job requirements weed out any applicants who are as yet too inexperienced. The Master of the Rite must know a *lot* of rites, and should possess Rituals 5 as well (or else there'll be no Level Five rites performed in the caern). Comprehensive knowledge of spirits and how to deal with them is also vital. The Master of the Rite is responsible for keeping cordial relations with the local spirits; he should also be prepared for any demands a spirit might have in return for empowering a fetish. The sept doesn't strictly require that the Master of the Rite be a Crescent

Moon, but any non-Theurge has a longer road to tread in order to prove his ability.

Because of the involved demands of the position, this is one of the offices that usually indicates a character's retirement from active play. The most probable exception is for very small septs, wherein the Master of the Rite may have to go on missions with his pack because there's just nobody else who stands a chance of success. Otherwise, although this position offers a multitude of roleplaying opportunities (particularly in the spirit world), it's just not suitable for group play.

Warder

This is not a small job. The caern Warder is responsible for coordinating the defenses of the entire bawn, in peacetime and in war. He decides who is allowed into the bawn and the caern's heart, and he personally chooses the caern's Guardians. To top it all off, if the sept is small, the Warder might find himself carrying the duties of the Keeper of the Land, the Wurm Foe, and possibly even Master of the Challenge or Truthcatcher. The Warder is one of the most important figures in any caern, and sometimes outranks even the Grand Elder in the eyes of the sept. If a caern falls, the fault, if any, is on the Warder's head. He cannot afford to lose.

Unsurprisingly, a caern's Warder is usually the wisest and most experienced Ahroun in the sept; although other auspices perform well in the role, the sept is more inclined to rally behind an Ahroun's word in times of war. The job requirements are really too numerous to list; a Warder has to be *damn* good at all aspects of his job, and that can take decades to learn properly.

Although the Warder is bound to remain in the caern at all times, it's still a position with some potential for a player character. Naturally, the character must have earned the position, and such an accomplishment can take all of a chronicle to achieve — but then again, what if the sept is small, and the Garou have no better candidate? What if a better candidate is temporarily indisposed or captured and the player's Garou must fill his shoes until he can be reinstated?

To truly challenge a caern Warder, there should also be a running war with a very aggressive enemy; otherwise, the player has less to do than his fellows. Although the office of Warder might not be a good long-term choice, it's a good choice for retiring a great hero from active duty (at least as a player character), and a very exciting short-term position for a very harrowing story.

Council of Elders

It doesn't get any higher than the Council of Elders (except for the Warder on matters of caern defense). This is the ultimate aspiration for any politically-minded Garou; only becoming a leader of the entire tribe is higher. There's no particular prerequisite for this office — everyone in the sept will know when a werewolf's deeds are so impressive and his character so impeccable that he's earned a seat on the Council. Once there, he and his fellow elders are charged with the welfare of the entire caern; no small matter.

Becoming an elder of the sept should probably be the final accomplishment of a character; except for a noble death in a desperate battle, there's not much else you can achieve over and above this. If the Storyteller wants to continue on with players running a Council of Elders, the game will certainly change in scope; after all, you can't have the Council running around trying to get killed every week. At this point, the chronicle will probably take a definite political shift — at least for a while. After all, even Beowulf managed to get off the throne one last time for one last fight. If your players have earned their places on the Council, they deserve no less.

The Rite of Caern Building

I swear by all that's holy, I wish I'd never have to go through that again — and I hope to dear sweet Gaia Herself that I'll get the opportunity to do so and succeed a second, even a third time. Worse than childbirth, but twice as rewarding.

— Ashen Voice, the morning after performing the Rite of Caern Building

So, you've finally decided to commit yourself to running a story of the highest magnitude. Establishing a new caern is more than just a task of phenomenal difficulty — it's also one of the most positive things Garou can accomplish. Killing Wyrms-beasts, no matter how big, is peanuts next to this kind of story; the Wyrms can always spawn more monsters, but Gaia can't make more caerns on her own. If your players are successful, the session is likely to end on as high a note as you can get in **Werewolf**, even if Garou had to give up their lives for the result. This is *big*.

This isn't a story that can be wrapped up in one night, of course. It requires a fair amount of planning on the Storyteller and players' part to give the werewolves any chance of success. There are tons of considerations to keep in mind. And now you ask, eyes

narrowed, what sort of considerations are there that aren't mentioned in the main rules?

Glad you asked.

From choosing a site to selecting a supporting cast of rite participants, from running the rite and orchestrating the battle with the inevitable attackers, this is an involved storyline. It'll take a good amount of work to properly roleplay the Rite of Caern Building from start to finish. However, the following section should sum up most of the things you should keep in mind.

Preparations

First things first. It's always a good idea to make sure that you have a general idea of the story's general progression of events, so that you can prepare for each one in turn. If you're going to have a nearby Hive of Black Spirals attack the rite in progress, then you should make sure that the players have some sort of hint that there are Black Spirals in the area. If you've got a caern type picked out, the description of the area should fit well with that theme.

Who's in charge of this little effort, anyway? Is it your players' pack? If so, they'd better be ready to put their money where their mouths are, because this rite isn't kid stuff. Is it an elder of their acquaintance — someone's Mentor, perhaps, or maybe a blood relative?

What about the location? If your chronicle takes place in your own hometown, then selecting a local landmark to serve as the new caern's heart is a good way to get the players' interest going. You might choose the location first and let the location decide the nature of the caern; alternately, you might decide the type of caern you want and then select an appropriate stretch of land.

Foreshadowing

It's far from necessary, but you might want to think about adding some foreshadowing to the earlier steps of the preparations. If you already have a few besiegers picked out for the night of the rite, hint at their recent activities and restlessness. If you know what the caern totem is going to be, plant some hints as to its nature in the dreams or visions of the ritemaster-to-be or the pack Theurge. For maximum effect, plant a few seeds even before the actual plans and preparations begin; start using subtle foreshadowing in the story arc before the caern-building story. Don't make it too obvious, though; too much foreshadowing and you give away the meat of your story. You want to use these hints of what's to come slowly and subtly, to influence your players' mood without dragging them around by the nose. Again, this is by

no means a requirement — but with a story of this magnitude, why not pull out all the stops?

Finding the Site

Obviously, you've got a caern location in mind; the question is, do the Garou? If the players' pack is the major motivating force behind the rite, then they've probably already got a location in mind. If not, it's up to you to decide just how the local (or out-of-town) werewolves have discovered that this particular area has the makings of a good caern.

First of all, there are always visions and dreams; the Garou are a mystical race, and it doesn't take much rationalizing to decide that an Incarna or the like has sent a vision to a given seer. These can be as clear or vague as you like. For maximum player involvement, you might want to make the visions sufficiently vague that the pack is sent (or goes of its own accord) to investigate, and winds up discovering the location's potential over the course of an evening session.

Then there's serendipity. The pack is embroiled in a mission, and over the course of the story they wind up in a place that feels somehow... different. Eventually, they determine that the place they've visited has connections to some mystical force or concept; maybe the old museum they visited has ties to Wisdom, or the rock formation seems to bleed off an aura of Strength.

Although the pack may think at first that it's mere luck they found this place, circumstances can reveal otherwise in the future (if you happen to like that sort of predestination or prophecy thing). This is a good (and subtle) way to convince the players' pack to become the driving force behind the rite without waiting for your players to come up with the idea on their own.

And, of course, there's research. A Silent Strider may have uncovered stories of an old, long-ago battle, and thinks that the battlefield might be a potential caern of Glory. An extended Garou family might have spent years trying to track down possible locations for a latent caern of Fertility. If your players are the ones planning to open the caern, then this is probably the route they'll take to find a location.

In any of these cases, there's the possibility for obstacles and conflict even before the site is found, if you want; maybe the books your players need are in a vampire's occult library, or perhaps the pack follows a dangerous visionquest. It just depends on how you want to pace things.

Clearing the Locale

Once the Garou have decided where the caern's heart will be, the issue of claiming the area arises. This is much trickier in the 20th century, for obvious reasons; there aren't many places in the Western



world where a new sept can just move in unnoticed and unhindered.

How involved do you want this stage to be? If you like, you can let the local Glass Walkers pull a few strings and acquire the territory for their sept (or new neighbors), as easy as that. (Some vampire might very well notice this subtle power play and get involved later, but that's another story.) If you want to get more bloody, perhaps the caern-to-be is smothering under a Weaver-nest or is occupied by Wyrnish troops looking to establish a Pit of their own making. Most of the time, though, it's going to be a lot harder than handing some Black Spirals their eviction notice or raising the funds for a property purchase.

Human involvement is a very real issue. The various conditions that make a place ideal for channeling Gaia's energy also make it pretty ideal for human purposes. Unless the proposed caern is somewhere in deepest, coldest, bleakest Alaska or somewhere similarly removed, there's almost certain to be at least one land developer intent on buying up the area and doing *something* with it. This isn't the sort of problem that can be easily solved with a couple of claw slashes, a klaive thrust and a few well-placed Gifts, either; this is more a job for the homids of the group, and even more likely a job for local Kinfolk. You can take this in a number of directions, depending on how much of a threat you want the local human involvement to be. It might work well to have the entire pack devote their efforts to making sure no other humans are going to be staking a claim; more likely, this might make a good side plot thread alongside other stories.

Urban caerns have their own cans of worms as well. An urban caern's bawn is typically at least partially open to the public, in the hopes that if humans are regularly exposed to the spiritual centers of the city, then they might become a little more in tune with their surroundings, a little more aware of the city as an organism. But at the same time, the sept can't allow just *anybody* to go sauntering through the caern's heart; that's a good way for the Wyrn's infiltrators to slip in and start causing some damage.

Some defensive preparations are in order as well. A ranking Ahroun is typically in charge of learning the lay of the land and choosing the best place to station the sentries. (This is also often the first step to becoming chosen as Warder for the new caern.) Ragabash and Theurges are also generally encouraged to contribute ideas for defensive tactics, generally in the form of traps, intimidating warnings and spirit defenses. However, these defensive preparations shouldn't interfere with the spiritual harmony of the area; setting up a

couple of duck blinds is probably fine, but trying to get a pillbox set up is right out.

Gathering the Garou

Not only do you need sentries to keep invaders from storming the caern and spoiling the rite, you need at least 13 Garou for the rite proper. And finding participants is easier said than done (well, maybe not in a large LARP, but just about anywhere else).

In modern days, a new sept is all too often composed of stragglers who've lost their own caerns, those who've left their septs for political reasons, and similarly displaced Garou; as the werewolves continue to die out, they're just not healthy enough to keep up a good rate of expansion. This is why multitribal caerns are so much more common in the present day — the Garou are, quite frankly, past any point where they can afford to be choosy.

Since the caern will need warm bodies to defend it after the rite, a recruitment drive for participants usually also serves the purpose of locating Garou who'll serve as the new sept. This can get particularly sticky if the only available werewolves to be found are of rival tribes; such an arrangement *can* work, but a mixed Black Fury/Get of Fenris caern wouldn't be possible in any other era but the End Times. (And it might not be possible even now, but that's up to the Storyteller.)

Obviously, this section of the story can involve the players in diplomatic missions aplenty. There can also be rescue missions and extractions as you see fit; if Pentex has murdered the families of its captives, where else would they have to go? The players might call in favors to get some extra warm bodies for the rite's defense, and they might strike new alliances in order to "borrow" enough Garou from another sept.

Finally, it's even possible (although unlikely) that if there aren't enough Garou to complete the rite and guard the locale at the same time, they may have to call in some outside help. This is unlikely largely because most werewolves would rather have their teeth pulled with silver tongs than invite potential enemies into the heart of their territory, show them all the caern's defenses so they can pitch in, and then owe the outsiders a favor on top of that. When Garou do get outsiders to help, it's almost always along Kin lines — they may be suspicious of that second cousin Kinfolk mage, but better him than a mage with no ties at all to the Garou. This is a particularly tricky business when some of the rite's participants are werewolves who've already lost one caern; these Garou hate the thought of losing another caern, and often they'd rather die and have the rite fail than

succeed and let the new caern fall into enemy hands. This can lead to some exceptionally tricky bargaining sessions, but it heightens the sense of tension — after all, you know it's a serious affair if werewolves are voluntarily cooperating with Gangrel vampires or mages. (And if some of the new sept members decide to "wrap up any loose ends" once the rite is over, the players may find themselves in the unenviable position of defending potential enemies from their own allies. Or not — there's no predicting players.)

Courting the Totem

It's not necessary to beseech a totem's cooperation before the opening of the caern; after all, that's largely what the rite itself is for. But it certainly can't hurt.

Most often, the Garou have absolutely no control over what sort of spirit will manifest in a freshly-created caern. They simply plead with Gaia to send them a patron, and trust in her wisdom. However, it is possible to go on a quest to a particular Incarna to try asking for its particular favor. For instance, a group of Red Talons might send a delegation to Griffin, asking their totem to bless their new venture. If Griffin is pleased, that doesn't automatically mean that Griffin himself becomes the caern totem — but it might increase the odds of attracting a caern totem related to Griffin's brood, or sharing his interest in glory and primal strength.

Needless to say, this is an ideal job to assign to your players' pack. It's interesting, involved, and can contribute a lot of personality to the caern before the rite even begins. One of the more interesting aspects of Werewolf is the tradition of offering chiminage — deeds and objects meant to placate spirits. This gets very interesting when you're talking about Incarna. Perhaps Chimera demands something impossible, such

as "a fistful of midnight and a bottle of fishes' tears," before she agrees to act as a patron. Maybe Fenris demands that twenty-one Black Spiral Dancer skulls be heaped at the caern's heart before he responds. This is your chance to really test the pack's resolve in surreal and creative ways; have fun.

The Rite Proper

On the night of the rite, tensions should be running high; if all's been going well, your players should show up for the game very excited. Each and every Garou involved is going to be a bundle of nervous energy; the gravity of the situation is almost palpable.

If the players are going to be part of the 13 Garou enacting the rite, you should work out a rough outline of how the rite proceeds, so that you can roleplay that with them. Roleplay through the Rites of Cleansing to build the sense of anticipation. If one of the players' characters is taking the role of ritemaster, you might want to provide her with a written outline of the rite, so that she can improvise some of her preparations and a few of the passages involved.

Remember that the rite itself is not fixed in stone, or at least portions of it aren't. The actual verses used to summon the caern totem can vary greatly; a group of Black Furies might chant to Pegasus, asking for a member of Pegasus' brood to serve as their patron, while a mixed group of different tribes might make their appeals to Gaia to show them their new spirit guide. Introducing an interesting variation or quirk to

Setting Terms

When werewolves do break down and hire outside help, it's traditional that they set terms up front. Caern access is *never* offered to non-Garou as part of the deal, and it's included in the bargain only if the potential ally is also a shapeshifter, and is willing to join the sept proper. Too many caerns have been drained dry by mages' thirsts to let the warlocks anywhere near the caern, and mortals and dead things have no use for spirit energy, and therefore don't need access no matter how much they wheedle. This isn't just a bargaining tactic — this is the final and most inviolate portion of the Litany in action.

Overkill

We've said a lot about how you should make this rite particularly memorable, and that you shouldn't be afraid to mangle a few stereotypes to prove the point that this is a singular occasion. That's all true except for one point — too much variety is just as bad, if not worse, than not enough.

Remember, the name of the game is **Werewolf**, and the Rite of Caern Building is a Garou rite. You don't want the unique elements to overshadow the Garou's effort, because that undercuts just how important they are and how big a thing it is that they're accomplishing. If the rite is being led by a Gurahl, and there's a Mokolé and a Bastet participating, while three mages, a wraith and a mummy stand side by side with a few Ratkin and the players' characters to hold off the Abomination warlord and his troop of Black Spiral Dancers, Tzimisce war-ghouls, Kumo and Iteration X cyborgs...well, you get the point.

the rite helps build the players' feeling that the caern is *theirs*, that it's been personalized for their benefit.

Any building tension or rivalries between the participants should be addressed here, preferably just before the Rite of Cleansing. This can introduce a shred of doubt into the players' heads, heightening the drama.

Finally, don't forget the battle between the rite's defenders and the besieging enemy. Characters who are partaking in the rite should hear the sounds of battle as it draws nearer, reminding them what's waiting should they fail. They may be tempted to run to the aid of their friends — but they should also be aware that if they do so, the rite fails. This is a tough choice, but it's marvelous emotional fare.

Holding the Fort

Well, this is really the easy part — easy for you, at any rate. After all, you pretty much know what to expect from the Wyrms-beasts attacking the rite, and so do your players.

Which is, of course, why you want to shake this up a little bit.

If your players are going to be involved even peripherally in defending the rite, then you want to make the conflict against the Wyrms' (or even Weaver's) forces distinctive. In fact, you want it to be one of the fights your players will remember, and be talking about for years. It's really that big a deal. So how do you up the emotional stakes sufficiently?

First of all, the enemy has to find out about the rite. They almost always do — but how? Well, one of the reasons is that the rite's power sends ripples through the Penumbra and even into the Middle Umbra; for miles, spirits of all sorts can feel the gathering power. Most spirits keep well clear of the rite's vicinity, going about their business as usual or avoiding the potentially dangerous influx of power. However, Banes are all too often under orders to report this sort of thing to superiors. Soon a hastily-gathered army of the Wyrms' puppets is mobilized, as they have to strike before sunrise.

However, the enemy can also manage to find out beforehand — and you might want to let them, in order to provide a more tense battle. Even better, this should probably depend on the actions of the players' pack and their allies. If the players are sloppy, then they give an edge to the enemy. If they're careful about covering their operations, then the enemy has less to work with — and it's always a good thing to reward players for cleverness.

In either case, the enemy definitely needs a battle plan. Sure, wave after wave of mindless attackers has worked for the Wyrms before, but that doesn't offer much mental stimulation for your players. In order to get them truly sweating, you'll need enemies that do more than walk steadily forward, pincers snapping. Will they send double agents into the caern-to-be to weaken the defenses at a critical juncture? Will they mount a double-pronged Umbral and physical attack?

Botching the Roll

So, after it's all said and done, after all the planning, as the battles with the Wyrms' minions are reaching their peak, and dawn is less than an hour away, the climax is at hand. You take the dice in your hand, and you roll them out for the ritemaster's final attempt at creating a new refuge for Gaia's warriors — and it's a botch.

Crap.

You have two choices at this point: you can accept the roll as it stands, or you can ignore it and declare the attempt a marginal success. (Well, you won't have the latter option if you didn't roll the dice behind your Storyteller screen, or if a player was the ritemaster and made the actual botch himself.) To be honest, either option is perfectly viable. It could be argued that a botch is all too typical of your odds in the World of Darkness, and that it reinforces the very desperate, almost hopeless theme of *Werewolf*. On the other hand, if the roll's botched, it might be extremely hard to convince your players to try creating a caern again — even if they say yes, their hearts might not really be in it.

Sad to say, we can't really tell you what to do in this instance. It really depends on your players — if they're the sorts who appreciate a less than happy ending, then maybe having the grand effort be in vain is the way to go. If they really wanted to see the rite succeed, maybe you should go easy on them. Either way, though, don't go to extremes. If the rite fails, you should probably offer some small light of hope for the future, in order to keep interest levels high. If you relent, treat it like a raincheck on their bad luck — and have their misfortune show up later, in a different form. Always make sure there's plenty of bad with the good — that's the nature of the World of Darkness.



This is also the place where you can unabashedly break with stereotype and expectations. Feel free to break out the big guns: the one-of-a-kind enemies who've had it in for your players' pack for a while, and the unique new Banes you've been saving for a rainy day. Sure, historically the attackers of each Rite of Caern Building have been largely fomori, Banes and Black Spiral packs — but roleplaying this rite is pretty much a one-of-a-kind scenario, so go ahead and make this battle one of the exceptions.

Numbers are also good. You don't want to hit the players with more than they can possibly expect to handle, but you should most assuredly hit them with more than they *think* they can handle. If they think they've barely got a snowball's chance in Hell, that's good — because that's the plight of the entire Garou race neatly summed up.

A strong visual motif would very likely also be in order. The last thing you want is an army of "generic" fomori, each one warty or slimy and waving tentacles or prehensile tongues. One possibility is to choose your footsoldiers' motifs based on their commanders. If you plan to have a powerful vampire heading an assault, maybe his Renfield-esque henchmen all share a common dress sense, tattoo, or other peculiarity. If it's a bloated, toadlike but very cunning fomor in charge, maybe his followers have shaven heads and glisten with an unhealthy sheen. This unity can be very unnerving to players, as it implies good organization and loyalty, possibly even rivaling the pack's own.

Finally, don't forget that if the enemy's going to break and run, they should do so at an appropriately dramatic moment. This is much harder to plan, of course. Keep an eye on the foes' numbers; once they've been sufficiently reduced that they no longer stand a chance of winning, then you should look for your opportunity. This can come when a player disembowels one of the champions in awe-inspiring fashion, when reinforcements arrive, or even when the rite is completed.

You *can* have the enemy fight to the death, of course. But you might want to save some of them for repeat appearances later on in the chronicle. If you handle it right, your players will be happy just to see the looks of terror and despair on their enemies' faces just before the Wyrnish cowards flee for all they're worth.

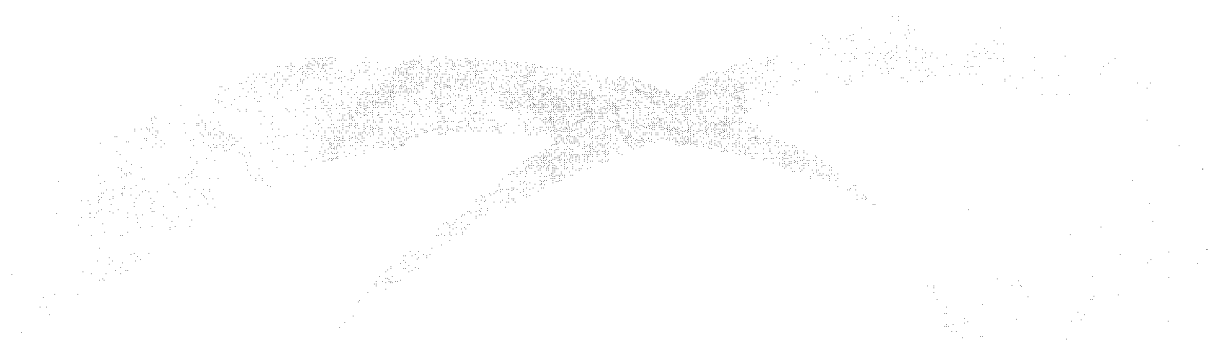
Wrap-up

So presuming that the rite was a success, and any surviving attackers are limping back into the shadows, that would seem to be it. Either you've just provided a climactic finish to a long-running chronicle, or you've

made a transitory stage from one arc of the chronicle to the next. Either way, it would seem that this part of the transition is finished.

Heh. Only if you want it to be. If you aren't ending your chronicle on this note, then the party's just getting started. Now the Garou involved have to start assigning sept offices, deciding who'll be the new caern's Warder, who'll be the Master of the Rite, and so on. Everyone who survived the evening will no

doubt have some ideas as to just what sort of position they've earned for their efforts. Your players, unless they're the humble sort, will probably want to make sure that they get their own fair share of recognition, too. They might even start lobbying for a sept office or two themselves. If they do, then you know you've succeeded — because they're obviously interested in the new caern's welfare, and want to be a part of its future. Good work.



Chapter Four: Not of Garou and Kin Born

*I have lived in the monster and I know its insides; and
my sling is the sling of David.*

— José Martí, *Letter to Manuel Mercado*

The Power of the Name

Told by Merryk Winterchase, Athro Child of Gaia Moondancer, to the Cliath of the Clover Falls Sept:

Names. Damn funny things. They say there's power in names, that knowing a creature's rightful, true name can grant you strength over it. Well, I can tell you all about names. Catchcolt, byblow, bastard — those are the nice ones. Actually, few people among the Garou honestly give a damn if you bear a werewolf child outside of wedlock or honorable mating, Silver Fangs excluded, of course. Getting a kid who grows up to go through First Change, from wolf to human, human to wolf, well, that's usually okay no matter how it comes about. Most people'd forgive that kind of "mistake" without too much trouble. They may huff and puff a little if they're into pure breeding and bloodline stock, but show me a healthy lupus or homid werewolf pup, and I'll show you some happy parents.

But there're other names, like mule, monster, freak or obscenity. They have a lot more power when kids hear them, over and over, every day, from blood

relatives and strangers alike. What's a metis child to think when his own pack shuns him, when his mother, if she's still living, locks him away, hidden from everyone until he's eight or nine years old? That may be earlier than some come to their First Change, but believe me, eight or nine years of living in Crinos is a season in hell. Do I have to tell you that a lot of metis grow up totally screwed in the head? Ever heard stories of feral children? They mature without any contact with other humans. I don't think a single one has ever been reintegrated into so-called normal society. So what does that say about the metis?

Okay, well, it's a bleak picture. What the hell did you expect? I guess I'm telling about the worst so nothing that follows will come as a complete shock. It'd be damnably easy for me to give you this pack of lies about how young, horny werewolves should cut off their own genitals before they succumb to what some say is a perfectly natural desire. That's too simple. It leaves out a lot of interesting, complicated shit like love, compassion and need. Now don't get

me wrong; I'm not necessarily saying any of you two-legs and four-legs should take a roll in the hay with each other! I mean it from the depths of my heart when I tell you to avoid it if you can; it's the first law in our Litany, after all. But there may be a time when you can't avoid it. For good reasons or ill, laws do get broken. And yeah, I *am* talking about all you goody two-shoes out there who stick your noses in the air when you see one of us. Let me tell you a golden truth, my friends: none of us are immune to desire, and the world would be a sorrier place without love and compassion. We are imperfect beings, and if you can't accept that, you might as well shuffle off the waking world here and now. Good riddance.

So to all of you who think you're so perfect, what I'm really saying is this: take us metis for who we are, not what we appear to be. You don't know how it was that we came into the world. In fact, you don't know anything about us. That's one reason I'm talking, to give you a view from another Garou's eyes and nose. Yeah, you heard me. GAROU. That's who we are. It's about damn time we said something about it, too.

Beginnings

If you ask five Galliards how the first metis came into being, you'd get 10 different answers. Oh, so this isn't the version you heard when you were a pup? Somebody gave a different account? Well, excuse the hell out of me; this is the tale I got from my tribe, and if it's not good enough for you, make up your own damn story. I happen to be fond of this one, and I'm sticking to it. Hush now; I've got to get in the proper mood for this. No story should be told lightly, especially not this tale.

Once upon a time, the hours of the Garou turned dark with blood and gore. No, it is not the days of the Apocalypse which fall on us now, but the nights after the War of Rage. Many had fallen beneath our claws: Gurahl and Mokolé, Bastet and Corax, and perhaps others whose names have been forgotten. In the later years, some of these Changing brothers and sisters forgave us; many still harbor hatred for our kind, not without reason, I must say. But in those elder days, those who could flee from us in order to preserve their tribes, did so with malice and thirst for revenge burning in their souls. We were invincible then. Or so we thought.

As has long been so, the Children of Gaia, in a foreshadowing of their role in ending the Impergium that would come later, tried to bring peace before it was too late. A Philodox called Eye of Ebon Moon, for she had one eye that was dark in color and one that was light, journeyed from her home caern to meet with a

Gurahl Truthspeaker. She, like many of our tribe, did not believe the stories spread by Shadow Lords and others, that Great Bear's children bargained with the Wyrms. Eye of Ebon Moon knew that she had one last chance to prove this beyond the shadow of a doubt.

The journey in winter took many days, and hunting was sparse. Later, it's said, the Philodox blamed herself for not being stronger and making her run more quickly. But she finally arrived at the appointed meeting place. Back in those days, when there were more of the Gurahl, they sometimes gathered in groups, similar to our moots. It was at such a gathering where Eye of Ebon Moon was to meet Long Claw, one of the Gurahl lorespeakers and peacemakers. The Garou howled her greeting and waited. Silence bit deep into her heart and cautiously, respectfully, she approached their territory. No growls greeted her. Closer and closer she came to the Gurahl's bawn and then the smell of blood caught her nostrils.

The bodies of a dozen of Great Bear's children lay in a crooked circle, slashed by claws, ripped by fangs. No one should *ever* believe a werebear incapable of defense, but these creatures had come on a peaceful mission. They were not expecting war when a truce seemed to be within reach. Looking closer, Eye of Ebon Moon saw something that transformed her blood to ice. While no remains of wolves lay on the reddened snow, she did find bits of fur and flesh, some of it tipped with long silver hairs smelling of her own brethren. Eye of Ebon Moon's hopes blew away in the cold wind, and although not of the gibbous moon, she howled for the departed spirits as if possessed by the souls of all her Galliard ancestors. The Moondancers among my people often say that Gaia herself wept at the sound of the Philodox's mourning.

As Eye of Ebon Moon prepared to do honor to the Gurahl's remains, she heard a sound coming from the nearby trees. If it had been one of Great Bear's children, I believe she would have gladly let herself serve as the target for their revenge. But as fate willed it, the approaching feet were those of a wolf, a strange, thin wolf with tall ears. The Philodox stood at ready, but the wolf came to her slowly and without fangs bared. He lifted his long, lean head then and repeated her earlier howls of despair and sorrow. Whether by miracle or just the strange setting of the mountains and trees, their cries mingled together, hers and his, one echo after another, long after the two had fallen silent. They sat and listened, then held each other in a need for mutual solace.

His name, so our stories say, was Smenkhare, a Theurge of the Silent Striders. He had come to the Gurahl for much the same reason as she. When he

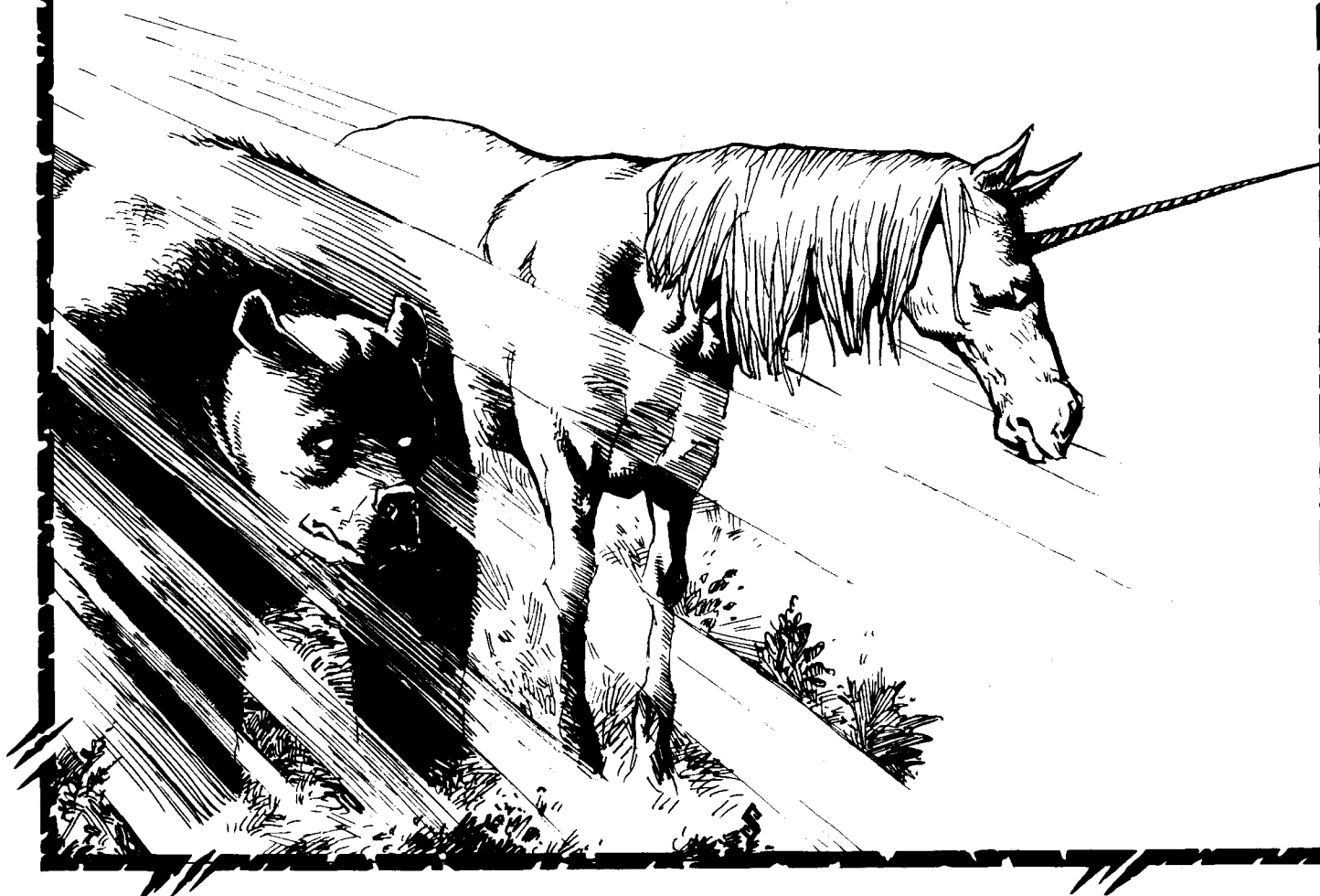
heard her tale and saw the proof, Smenkhare was overcome with fury at the stupidity of the other tribes. Again, the two mourned over what might have been, and then they buried the dead. And later, as the moon began to set and dawn approached, they mated. Whether this was a desire to give peace, a means of forgetting their sorrow or an attempt to soothe the other, I cannot say. For a brief moment in time, I like to think they found some happiness. But that we shall never know. With the dawn came a new understanding and a new terror. They fled from each other, never to meet again. Both realized they had broken Gaia's laws, though neither knew what the result of their actions would be. For until then, there had been no metis at all. No Garou had ever mated with Garou, never had they broken the Litany, never questioned those sacred laws.

Not too many days went by before Eye of Ebon Moon knew she carried a child within her womb. She had no Kinfolk lover and wondered at what the mating of two werewolves might mean. Around the time normal for human birth, as Eye of Ebon Moon was a two-leg, she went to a private glade and there had her answer. Under a full moon, as her body contorted into her human-wolf shape, from her womb crawled a strange creature, a hairless pup that was half wolf, half human. It mewled and screamed its anger at being forced from her body, striking at her with tiny claws. It

looked exactly like a tiny Crinos, the form its mother now wore, and indeed, that was exactly what it was. The Philodox became violently ill at bearing such a hideous creature; shame and horror washed over her, even blotting out her pain and shock from the birth. Sobbing, she lifted a stone to kill the poor thing, to put it out of its misery, for how could such a creature live among two-legs or four-legs? She raised the rock in her fist to do the deed quickly.

Before her arm could fall, a golden light filled the glade. Before the Philodox stood two figures, a dark grizzly bear and a silver unicorn. Perhaps it was a dream, but I think her vision was real; Great Bear and Unicorn had come directly to Eye of Ebon Moon. She dropped her stone in surprise and gave full attention as they spoke together.

"Bittersown was the coming of this child, and so his name shall be. In years to come, he will carry many weapons and fight enemies from within his own kind and without. He is the first of many to come, for though your laws forbid it, and rightly so, Garou *will* mate with Garou. For your part in this breaking of the Litany, Eye of Ebon Moon, you and your tribe will forever bear this message to others: that the Garou should love one another but not mate; this is still the first among the laws. Yet whenever they do mate, for such things are inevitable, the Children of Gaia will be the protectors of the offspring of these matings, the



metis. It is the duty of your tribe hereafter to give shelter to these creatures and their unfortunate parents. This in part may help atone for your own failings and that of the Garou in continuing the harvest of slaughter against Great Bear's children and all the other changing breeds. For the true sin of Gaia's warriors is their pride, as seen in their attacks against the Gurahl and others. Until the two-legs and four-legs understand the metis and put aside their arrogance against those like yet unlike themselves, they will never have peace, whether with the other Changing Ones or within their own tribes."

The spirits vanished then, leaving Eye of Ebon Moon alone with her child. Duly, she called him Bittersown, and she carried the message back to her sept and tribe. From that time on, we Children of Gaia have done as Unicorn and Great Bear ordered to the best of our ability. Their prophecy, by the way, was true. Bittersown was a great warrior who proved his worth time and time again. Eventually, he was slain in battle, not by a Wyrmling, but by his own kind. That, however, is another story.

The Striders do not confirm nor deny their part in this tale. But among all the tribes, they are perhaps second only to Gaia's Children in showing mercy and understanding to the metis and those who produce them. And that says more than a hundred confessions.

Unspeakable Acts

Okay, back to the more cut and dry facts. You're pretty thoroughly disgusted by the whole idea, right? Two Garou mating, bringing blasphemy upon one of the more beautiful acts Gaia has given us? Well, then, just how do you explain that gleam in your eye? 'Fess up, you're just as curious as the next cub about what happens when two werewolves join together. It's definitely a case of the beast with two backs, let me assure you.

But as far as firsthand experience, I can't tell you much. Why? Well, I've had my share of pleasant tumbles with Kinfolk; some of them find my rosy eyes and white hair quite rakish and maybe a bit elfin. Who knows? The thing I've never done, though, is defy the first law of the Litany. You seem shocked! Listen, just because I was born of two werewolves who made a mistake doesn't mean I run around defying the law too. We Children of Gaia *do* protect the metis and their parents, because we know that these things happen, but we sure as hell *don't* call for everyone to get in on the act! Far from it. In fact, while we encourage loving bonds between packmates and tribes when possible, we adamantly oppose Garou matings. And no, it doesn't matter that I'm sterile and that

nothing can come of screwing another werewolf, so to speak. It's the deed that matters, the defiance behind it — the first tenet of the Litany is a prohibition we all should honor. I see that look. You'd believe anything your elders say about us, wouldn't you? Listen, there's a big difference between having a healthy respect for someone and being a mindless pawn, you know. Shit, I'm getting off topic here.

Okay, back to our main topic, Garou does Garou. I can think of a thousand times a thousand reasons why such things happen. Contrary to stereotypes, the Fianna don't have the market on passion cornered. We're all part of the Wyld, and as such, we can be pretty capricious and take the let-hell-break-loose approach on occasion. Maybe it's a case of true love, or it could be taking one moment's solace in a time of fear and violence. These *are* dark times, you know. Anyway, two werewolves fall into each other's arms, and the act that follows is pretty natural. I don't say that with a sick sense of irony, either. You got two werewolves, both in Homid or both in Lupus form, male and female, they can figure out what comes next. I'm not going to belittle my parents or anyone else's by offering commentary on Lupus doing Homid or vice versa. Draw your own twisted conclusions, if that's what truly entertains you.

A strange thing happens when two werewolves mate, no puns intended. More often than not, a scrump session between two Garou results in conception, no matter what the breeds of the parents. Our Theurges and Philodox have had a quite a time debating this issue, and a few of our Kinfolk doctors and veterinarians have chimed in with their own opinions. Let's talk for a moment about human and wolf reproductive biology. I know, I know; we're not precisely *just* wolves or *just* humans in the scientific sense, but bear with me here.

Wolves generally only mate at certain times of year and then only if the alpha female is in her estrus cycle. That's about once a year, maybe twice. In simple terms, she's fertile and gives the alpha male a signal: okay, I'm ready, it's time to mate. If the wolves are healthy, conception is almost a given. Neat, huh?

Humans are different, of course. They can mate almost anytime, but the thing is, most females have lost the ability to pinpoint the most fertile time of their cycle. Sure, they can keep careful records and check temperatures and stuff like that, but a less calculating female's drive is not nearly as precise as the she-wolf's instinct. Consequently, human conception is a little more haphazard. Fortunately for the species, the mated pair usually do it often enough that they catch the female at the right time and boom, there's a baby.

All right, that's the basic biology lecture. What happens when you get two Garou, who in many ways share the physiological cycles of both humans and wolves? Let me start by repeating what my sept's Theurge has constantly told us; with werewolves, there is an element of spirit, of Gaia's power, that no science can predict absolutely. It's similar to how matings between two normal humans may result in the birth of Garou or Kinfolk out of the blue. That said, I've also got to say that for whatever reason, when werewolf mates with werewolf, conception rates are awfully high. Why is this?

Some philosopher types among us suggest it's an indication of Gaia's anger; conceiving such a creature as the metis is a sign of Her punishment and displeasure. Others take the opposite tact and say that, flaws aside, Gaia rewards the parents with a child who reflects the power and might of the Garou; hence the Crinos form at birth. The more scientific bozos postulate that it's just the power of nature driving werewolves' perfectly normal affections for one another into full-blown lust. These are the folks who explain that werewolves tend to mate with one another only when the female's cycle is at its peak. Yeah, you can see how *that* could build a case to blame the women; I bet the Black Furies would shoot that one down real quick!

Look, I don't have any real answers for why these things happen. All I can say is that I know myself. I'm not tainted, I'm not Wyrmspawn and I love Gaia and my pack with all my heart, despite the kicks I've gotten from other tribes. And while I have come across some screwed up metis in my time, I haven't yet met one who wanted anything more than to be a part of her tribe, to chime in with the howls and the rites just like any other werewolf. Dammit, who cares why my parents did what they did? That's old history! I just want to get on with living my life and doing the best I can. Why is that so damn hard to understand?

Birth and Childhood

Okay, kids, I'm getting off the soapbox now. Let's continue the nitty gritty talk and discuss what happens on that dreaded day when mom finds she's expecting a metis pup.

There are plenty of females who would cast out the metis from their bodies. Some might seek, ahem, medical help from Kinfolk or trusted packmates who wouldn't betray their secret. Others may well attempt to rip open their own guts, trying not to die in the process. My tribe doesn't really condone that kind of thing, but we leave the decision up to the mother. I don't use the term parents because most werewolves who break the Litany split up real quick. Only in rare

Pecking Order

Werewolves live by a strict system of rank, just like a wolf pack. The alphas, strongest among the wolves, get the best food and the healthiest mates. The omegas get only scraps and aren't allowed to mate at all. Garou follow the same system; ranking elders generally get the best of everything. A few complicating factors figure into this pecking order too, such as the pureness of the werewolf's breed, her fame among the tribe and her record in battle. So where does this leave metis? If a metis **earns** high rank, is she treated like any other elder? **Are** metis treated better or worse than healthy, breeding Kinfolk?

A simple answer is that metis are **still** Garou. As such, they should always be a notch higher on the pecking order than an ordinary human or wolf Kin. Of course, there's a chance that a particularly famous Kin might occasionally have an edge on a young, untried metis, depending on circumstance and the tribe in question.


As far as metis elders, the assumption is that they've worked extraordinarily hard for such recognition and probably deserve it. Some extremists who hate metis may show deference grudgingly, and others may do so insincerely, but no sane werewolf of low rank would openly insult an elder, even a metis, unless he wanted to challenge. It goes against the laws of the pack.

Storytellers, as always, should feel absolutely free to take these suggestions and change them to suit the personalities of players and tribes they've developed in their own chronicles.

cases does the father hang around to see what happens. Guess you can't blame them for running away, even though it's kinda cowardly in my book. That's one reason most metis adopt the tribe of their mothers, not their fathers, if they're allowed to claim a tribe at all.

So, from the first, a metis child is in isolation, from at least one of his parents and probably even from the tribe. If she decides to carry the child to term, the mother is usually in a frantic state of worry through the entire pregnancy. It's no wonder we — my kind — are born with such righteous fury and indignation!

When metis come into the world, it's no easy task, no matter the breed of the mother. Neither wolf nor human anatomy is well suited to birthing a half-man, half-wolf child. For one thing, even the baby metis has tiny claws, and just like human babies learn to suck their thumbs in the womb, so do the metis learn about



their own sharp digits. So the birth process is even more painful and messy than normal. There's blood, mucus, feces, all kinds of horrible stuff, plus a lot of internal bleeding and injury to the mother. Granted, we're stout and strong creatures; we heal quickly and can take a lot of physical punishment. But this is a bad thing even for a werewolf to go through.

Now, some of the females among you may have already gotten a lecture from your elders — specifically, that you'll have to spend lots of time in breed form if you get pregnant. That pretty much means no shapeshifting after the first trimester or so, because the baby or cubs inside your belly won't be able to change with you, and once they get too big, you run a real risk of miscarriage. You males better listen up, too; these women are your packmates, so you'd better be prepared to help them when it comes time for them to bring the next generation of Garou and Kin into the world.

It isn't any different for our mothers. Thing is, they have to spend the last trimester — yes, it's about a nine-month gestation — in Crinos, which is rightfully hard on them. Metis cubs are tough, even in the womb, but they still can't survive shapeshifting in that last trimester. So the mother's stuck in Crinos for the actual birth; but thankfully, that does make things easier on her and the child. And yes, some mothers die in the process anyway, usually those who don't get help from someone. This is why my tribe tries to intervene before the birth occurs.

Well, let's move on from that unpleasant subject. So here's this metis baby, and oh, my, isn't he a pissy little fellow.

Imagine the normal tantrums any human child goes through... and how tired mom and dad get dealing with a fussy kid. Now imagine that child with the sharp claws and teeth of a wolf pup, *constantly* on the verge of a howling, screaming fit every waking moment. Is it any wonder the luckless parents are at their wit's end? So in addition to dealing with all the negative

stigma of bearing a metis, a lot of these parents go half nuts dealing with the child's bloated Rage. Having tribe members help is a plus, but for reasons I've mentioned before, it doesn't happen very often. Actually, I suspect that it's having to deal with the metis in those loooong years before First Change that often prompts a tribe to kill the pup or exile him. In any case, it's usually mom who has to cope with the kid on her own. One way she can do this is to take the metis away and raise it alone until the time of its First Change. While safer for everyone, including the kid, this really does raise some socialization issues. Humans and wolves, neatly enough, learn so much from interactions with other young kids and pups, that when you raise a metis by himself, you're cutting away a huge chunk of his practical education. After he learns to change form, he then must tackle all the things missed as a youngster, like learning about pecking order, hunting with the pack and the silly little unspoken rules that govern human society.

If possible, it's best to raise the metis in the company of others, such as in the sept. We're pack creatures, and a social atmosphere is the one that the youngster should come to know and understand. Easier said than done, of course, because what tribe is going to welcome a young metis? No, it's hard enough to raise pups or human children without this little monster running around wreaking havoc every minute he's awake! One option is for the sept as a whole to keep the kid confined and hidden, but that's mre difficult than it sounds. Something the Children of Gaia have done is to let several of the metis we care for spend time together; at least they get some sense of being with others of their own kind! Whenever possible, we also try to socialize them with young lupus and homid werewolves who've already undergone their First Change, under close supervision of course. The last thing anyone wants is an upset metis kid gutting another werewolf before the poor little mite has learned how to defend himself.

I guess if there is a silver lining to the cloud hanging over a metis, it's that from the first, they know the facts, if not the realities, of Garou society. Nobody has to wait until they mature before telling metis the ins and outs of werewolf life; they live it from their birth. I've heard that some lupus pups and homid kids have one helluva time as they approach their First Change. They get driven out of the pack or have to defend themselves from bullies. Then, they have to hear that they're not *really* just humans or wolves anymore. That's got to be a lot to digest on short notice! At least we metis have a clue from the get-go.

First Change

Finally, it's here, the day everyone is waiting for! The First Change is a huge relief for most metis because *finally* they can enjoy some semblance of a normal life. By Gaia's blessing, it often happens at a younger age than with homids, usually when a metis is eight or nine years old, a rough equivalent to puberty. As with all of us, no one knows quite what shape she'll try first — will she take on her wolf form or her human form? It's a fifty-fifty chance either way, often depending on her environment. If she's around more lupus, it's probably the wolf form she'll adopt first, and the case is similar if she's around more homids.

Have you ever seen kids with a new, fancy toy? They generally play with it to the exclusion of everything else, then get tired of it. That's a good analogy to apply to a metis just after First Change. The metis will drive you nuts trying on all his new forms before finally settling into what he finds most suitable. I guess I don't have to tell you that most metis, even young ones, *don't* walk around in Crinos most of the time, after they get the option to wear other forms. I guess we all long to go back to our comfortable, true form — but our Rage is close to the skin then, and so we become a little more adaptable in Homid or Lupus. Small blessings and all that.

But the First Change also raises another pressing issue — the Rite of Passage. No Garou can become a full-fledged member of the tribe without this important event. So the big question is, will the metis be granted this privilege? Well, that certainly depends on the tribe, and more specifically, on the sept and pack. I can generalize and tell you that most tribes allow the metis an attempt to prove his own worth; if he can survive the harshness of the Rite of Passage, and a lot of young werewolves don't, then he's gone a long way in showing he can bear his weight in a crunch. Some tribes, though, quietly encourage ritemasters and others to stack the deck against the metis, to set up impossible odds so that the youngster will fail no matter how skilled he is. Sucks, doesn't it? Well, I'm happy to report that more often than not, metis progress through the Rite of Passage with flying colors. Whether this is because of our inner fires or, like that strange folk song I heard at a Fianna moot, the one about a boy named Sue, meaning we grow up tough, I can't really say.

One Day at a Time

Okay, now our metis kid is, in theory anyway, a full-fledged member of a pack. She's made it through

her Rite of Passage and is ready to kick ass with the best of them. So what next?

Again, a lot of what happens depends on the tribe and the individual septs and packs within it. Some tribes take the view that any metis that completes the Rite of Passage can and should undertake the normal duties and such of any other pack member; things may be a little tougher on the metis, but a warm body is a warm body. Gaia needs all her warriors, in other words. Other septs give metis all the scutwork and hope they'll go away, one way or another. As far as serving positions within the sept, well, metis are often out of luck. The Fianna, for example, won't let anyone with obvious disfigurements and deformities hold a high-ranking position, while the Glass Walkers couldn't care less. It's not impossible, but it's extremely uncommon for metis to serve on the Council of Elders or in the positions of ~~Warder, Master of the Rite, Gatekeeper or Master~~ of the Challenge. I once heard that it was more likely for a common human to serve in one of those offices than a metis! What you might see, though, is the occasional ranking metis holding a position as a Guardian of the Caern or a Keeper of the Land; that last position is quite an important one in my own tribe. Also, for someone like a grizzled metis Ahroun, taking on a lesser office like Wyrms Foe is an especially great honor. As far as standing in the tribe or carrying tokens of respect and glory such as a klaive, such things come slow to metis. That's not to say we don't get recognized for our work, but it's sometimes a more grudging process than for our lupus and homid brothers and sisters.

As far as honorable mating goes, well, the metis can tumble in the hay all they like — well, that's if we're let near the Kin, and I suppose not all tribes are as permissive as the Children on that count. I suppose it's a pragmatism thing — most tribes want their Kin to form bonds with actual fertile werewolves, not to get unnecessarily tied up with mates who'll never give them babies.

That's right, nothing tangible will ever come of it. So, you ask, do metis have normal sperm counts? Do the females ovulate? From the few tales I've heard from Kin or the rare Garou who study such things, it seems that both male and female metis can have viable, working parts in that regard. Perhaps we should take a closer look at what they've found out. But I'm no scientist; I can't tell you about all the genetics, and if my opinion counts for anything, I'm not so sure science has much to do with it anyhow. I think it's much more of a spiritual reason why metis can't reproduce. Yeah, yeah, I know that makes great fodder for those who say

metis are cursed; this is just one more sign, right? I don't pretend to know Gaia's mind. I can't say why metis are sterile, but I don't think it's necessarily a sign of Her displeasure. Maybe it's just that She feels we have enough on our minds without worrying about pups, or maybe it is something genetic, and we have withered sperm or dead eggs, and I just don't know what the hell I'm really talking about. Anyway, what I want to throw in here is that just because we're sterile doesn't mean we can't take mates and enjoy normal pleasures like other beings. True, the tribes don't usually recognize such unions as honorable, and some think these joinings are despicable, but sometimes they turn a blind eye to such things, particularly if the mate is also incapable of bearing young. But only a few tribes consider a metis/metis pairing acceptable — which gets back into keeping the laws of the Litany sacred. Never mind that nothing can come of it. Other times, both the metis and his partner, especially if she's a Kinfolk in her breeding years, are completely ostracized, if not severely punished. That's taking breeding privileges away from someone more deserving, after all, and has been grounds for killing metis outright.

Vicious Cycles

That a disproportionate number of metis fall into Harano should come as no surprise. Many of these warriors have proven their worth over and over again only to still face prejudice and disdain from their tribes. Neither will a metis suffering Harano receive quite the same level of concern and attention as one of her homid or lupus brethren, at least not from most tribes. Some Garou think this kind of deep depression is just part of the metis psyche and let the illness run its course, which is a sorry state of affairs for the one suffering as well as those close to her.

A more vicious cycle, though, is that of believing all metis are pawns of the Wyrms. A number of Garou think the metis are inherently Wyrmspawn and should be driven out if not murdered. A lot of metis who otherwise might have been faithful servants of Gaia turn to the Black Spirals, or worse, simply because they have nowhere else to go. In this way, the werewolves clearly shoot themselves in the foot with silver shot; not only have they turned potential warriors into enemies, they've created extremely vengeful foes to boot. Not a few metis have been part of this nasty, self-fulfilling prophecy, returning to their former tribe to wreak serious havoc. Nice, huh?

I guess the times when I've felt most accepted are those hours when howls of warning sound throughout my sept. It could be a Wyrmb-beast or perhaps a pack of crazed Black Spirals. Whatever the threat, in those few moments, I think most of us forget whether we are metis, homid or lupus. Despite all our own hang-ups and imperfections, we still become united as warriors of Gaia, here for a purpose. When my claws slash an enemy, each stroke is a victory for Her and a sign of my solidarity with the pack. Never mind that if I am fighting beside those outside my pack, when the battle is done, my wounds get tended last, my 20 kills are less acknowledged than the lupus Ragabash's five and my tales are sounded only after my packmates call for my words. Makes you wonder how I got to this place in Garou society, huh? But truthfully, those battles are the times, believe it or not, when I can put aside my anger and feel that I'm not here merely by accident of birth.

Endings

All of us know from birth that we end our cycle in death. Few of us fear it, for death to Garou is really just stepping onward towards the needs of Gaia in other

guises, other places. Metis aren't much different than anyone else in this regard. Myself, I like to hope I'll go out in a blaze of blood, song and fire, taking out as many of the enemy as possible. I guess we all hope that, huh?

Of course, there's a *little* problem when a metis dies. See, you can bury a human or leave a wolf under some rotting leaves to turn into dust and not worry overmuch about legal problems. I hear cremation is pretty cheap these days and some folks are even buying burial plots in national forests and getting themselves put six feet under with a cheap shroud and no frills so they can decompose in an all-natural way. But what do you do with a nine-foot tall half-human, half-wolf monstrosity? You sure as hell can't carry it down to Dave and Joe's Cremation Parlor, can you? Ever tried to buy a coffin for someone in Crinos? Forget it!

So, even in death, we're still a big security risk. Whoever's left behind absolutely, positively has to make sure that we get disposed of properly; this is almost always the responsibility of the pack and sept. Usually, the easiest way is cremation, provided you've got a private bonfire to do the burning. Contrary to the movies, kids, there's a fair bit of stuff left behind after a body's burned, such as the large bones of the



legs and the skull. So even after the body has been roasted, somebody's got to pulverize the bones into smaller pieces and then make sure they're well scattered. That shouldn't be too hard for any werewolf. Of course, if you *can* get the body to a real crematorium, the heat there is usually sufficient for reducing everything to a thickish powder. Good luck stuffing the body in the oven, though.

Another option is leaving the body or the burned remains in the Umbra. Some folks, usually the ones who consider metis tainted in the first place, say this is sacrilege. But it's always a nice, quick option if you're on the run. Another practice, which makes me sick, is a little known ritual wherein the parents of the metis, or whoever has taken responsibility for him, must devour his flesh lest it be discovered. This is no less than cannibalism. We are forbidden to eat the bodies of men and wolves; are not metis flesh of both these

Metis, the Litany and the Council of Elders

If punishment is to be doled out for breaking the first law of the Litany, it is always swift but almost never arbitrary. A Garou who is accused of mating with another Garou is brought before the Council with her metis offspring; for obvious reasons, it's usually the female half of the partnership who's discovered first. Depending on her relationship with the metis' father, she may be willing to die before revealing his name, thus excluding him from her shame, or freely tell all, in which case the father's punishment is equal to her own. Consequently, a male werewolf who has great affection for the female may also try to take on all the blame himself, saying he forced her against her will. Shaming or shunning are the usual punishments for the parents, though among some tribes, death is not unknown. Black Furies, Fianna, Get of Fenris, Red Talons, Silver Fangs, Uktena and Wendigo have the most frequent Council meetings on these matters. Shadow Lords and Stargazers may or may not hold these courts, depending on the situation and at least for the Shadow Lords, who's involved. Such meetings are infrequent for the Children of Gaia, Glass Walkers, Silent Striders and Bone Gnawers. However, in all cases, there is the usual Renown penalty for breaking the Litany. The circumstances may have been unusual, but there's no avoiding the fact that the participants obviously cannot be trusted to uphold Gaia's laws no matter what.

beings? I want to believe this ritual is only practiced among certain packs of Fianna, to tell you the truth; they're usually the ones who particularly hate metis.

The bottom line is that you should make damn sure no one can, ahem, piece together that there are nine-foot wolfman creatures running around. It would be disastrous if any Weaver scientists or others of similar ilk found out about us. I needn't say that the same is true of the government, right? That's all we need, a bunch of feds on our tails.

Tribal Perspectives

Up 'til now, I've been giving you an overview of what it's like to be a metis, both the bitter and the sour; I won't sugarcoat anything here, my friends. Despite the fact that we Garou are supposed to be united in our battle against the Wyrms and its minions, the werewolves are essentially 13 nations, with 13 different takes on how to treat the metis. That said, most tribes' views fall into one of three different areas, or somewhere in between. Let's take a look at each.

Perspective number one states that the little metis freaks are evil and Wyrms-tainted manifestations of the sickness of Gaia, so they must be killed as soon as possible. Oh yeah, and beat their parents' asses too, those inbreeding sickos. Those Garou taking this outlook have little tolerance for metis; most who are born die quickly, unless their parents can spirit them away to a more caring and compassionate pack.

Perspective number two is that the poor metis aren't much to look at, but they're somewhat useful cannon fodder, so they should be tolerated. The less said to them or their stupid parents, the better, but it's okay to throw them some scraps once the carcass is well picked over. And don't forget to put them at the front of the battle lines. Er, the metis, that is. A lot of werewolves take this attitude; it's pretty pragmatic, after all, and we're not a people to waste things, whether it be food or warriors. I'll tell you something else; more and more Garou are switching their tunes to this outlook every day. I think they're finally realizing that there are so few of us left, we should be glad of any warrior pledging him or herself to Gaia's cause.

Perspective number three acknowledges that metis *are* Garou and should be treated like anybody else in the tribe. That is to say, they should meet the same expectations, duties and obligations (save one) of any other werewolf pack member. As far as the parents, well, mistakes happen, right? Live and let live. I don't need to tell you that pitifully few werewolves possess this open frame of mind. Nowadays, more packs are willing to give us the time of day, if we do a lion's share

of the work, but I won't be so blind as to say they welcome us with open paws.

I supposed most folks can easily guess which tribes hold which points of view, but for the record, let's do a walk through, of both the stated canon and the nastier reality. In addition to the things the "insiders" say, I've added my own notes on the tribes and their treatment of metis, just to give an outsider's opinion.

Black Furies

Harks at Still Water, homid Ragabash, speaks:

Alas, we hear the cries of Gaia mourning the twisted children! How many more signs do you need that the Apocalypse nears? Every year we pull more and more misshapen bodies from the wombs of our warriors; they've committed a foul sin by laying with other Garou. It is a sacrilege, a crime against nature Herself for us to have carnal desires for others of our own kind. The evidence is there for all to see when a metis comes into this world. Open your eyes! Do whatever you must to avoid this sin. If it were not for the dwindling numbers of all Garou, we would gladly slay the parents and the unfortunate progeny of these unnatural unions. As it stands now, we often let the offenders live and give the malformed pup to others for rearing, much as we do our male pups. Yet if we cannot keep ourselves pure, I ask you, how shall we do so for our Mother?

The answer of Mavis Thornberry, metis Ahroun:

We have an obligation to protect and nurture any creature of Gaia, even if the pup is a product of sin. Would you deny succor to the child born of man's rape upon woman? No! So then how can you say that it is right to destroy or disavow the metis pups? Is this the way of a mother with her young? Should we not love and care for all the Mother's creations, no matter what marks on their bodies? Who is to say that this is not the task Pegasus has quietly set before us Furies as the Apocalypse nears? Will we flee from it because we fear what is different? If so, we have no right to call ourselves protectors and defenders. Besides, what my sister the Ragabash *doesn't* tell you is this: while it's true we let other tribes raise our lupus and homid male children, we quite often keep the male metis and raise them ourselves. The reasons are complex and varied; perhaps you can't understand, not being a woman. But every Fury understands that the male metis pup carries such a stigma that he is no threat to any of us. It's as if the deformity he bears overshadows the power of his masculinity, neutralizes it into something neither alien nor threatening. I don't mean to make light of his identity as a gendered being, nor of whatever pain he must endure for being metis, but bearing a mark of

Gaia's own suffering brings him more into communion with us. Ah well, I see you're shaking your head in confusion, just as I knew you would.

Merryk's comments:

Don't tell them I said this, or there'd be hell to pay, but the Furies for all their claptrap about how "the mother protects her young" and that "treating women a certain way based on their looks sucks" are a little biased against metis, how they look and what they represent. They grudgingly allow them participation in Rites of Passage and in holding sept leadership positions, now, but it's rarely accepted by the whole sept. And as for the whole male metis thing, sounds like some sort of retroactive bullshit. I think the Furies just may have some pity in their dark hearts and don't want the rest of us to think it's genuine, as opposed to being a bunch of rhetoric. They'd much rather us think it was just part of their feminist social agenda. Gaia alone knows why.

Bone Gnawers

Shabazz Strunk, homid Theurge speaks:

Them that say metis are the harbingers of the Apocalypse, they're fools. If anything, they're the very heart of Gaia. If metis are so wrong, well, why are they allowed to exist in the first place? Perhaps they're especially marked in some way, like those who are mad or blind. Wasn't it these kinda people who were the prophets and the seers through the ages? No one ever listens to us Gnawers, of course, but I say the metis are actually the voice of Gaia given physical form. She is in pain from the choking of the Wyrms; the metis share a bond with Gaia and mirror her suffering through their deformities. But that in no way lessens their importance in my eyes; rather, I think we've got a lot to learn from them.

The answer of Pinto One-Ear, metis Philodox:

Shoot, all us Gnawers carry a blemish since we like cities and deal more with humans than any of the other tribes. So what's a little deformity on top of that? I'm well-respected among the Mothers and Fathers, Grandmothers and Grandfathers. They listen to my advice, they count my howl in the moot just like anybody else and they expect me to pull my weight, no matter that this here leg can hardly bear up when there's a fight going on. They take me for who I am. Can your tribe say the same?

Merryk's comments:

The Gnawers feel much the same way about metis as my own tribe, though they take it to streets quite literally. Generally, they don't care how ugly or deformed the metis are; in fact, the Bone Gnawers

respect the metis' differences and their spunk. They only see the metis as Garou, plain and simple. As refreshing as this outlook is, though, I still am a little troubled by members of this tribe being so open about mating with each other. To make a mistake is one thing; to flagrantly disobey the law over and over is another. Not that I'm judging, of course.

Children of Gaia

Raine Hildebrandt, homid Philodox, speaks:

I can't begin to tell you all the pathetic stories I've heard from other Garou, parents of metis, the ones who've made a mistake and then have to leave their septs or face an awful consequence. Granted, breaking the Litany is wrong, and it doesn't come without a pricetag. But should that price be the life of an unborn werewolf child and possibly its parents? Every warrior we have is precious! Nor should the child have to suffer for its parents' sins. The way some tribes treat metis is beyond barbaric. There's another way, and it's the duty of our tribe to show everyone else the right path.

The answer of Calvin Maffey, metis Ahroun:

Yes, even among the Children of Gaia, you'll find some people who fear the metis. I've encountered some reluctance on a few occasions, though never hatred or loathing. My tribe has by far the most enlightened viewpoint of any I've encountered. It's sick that a lot of the others, such as the Red Talons, rend a metis pup to pieces before it can ever have a chance to show its worth. Who's to say that pup wouldn't have fulfilled some great prophecy or sacrificed himself to protect a caern? The other tribes better think before they continue their patterns of cruelty to the metis.

Merryk's comments:

We're pretty logical about the whole metis affair, if I do say so myself. We don't deny passion and love that may exist between our kind, but we take care not to breed metis if at all possible. That's one reason we helped bring about birth control. What, you thought it was just to control the spread of humans? What's that old Fianna saying about fire in the heart and the head? Like I've told you, no one is immune to passion. So, when the chips fall, we do what we can. No metis will ever be turned away from our doorstep, nor will they be denied a chance to serve in a role equal to that of the other breeds.

Fianna

Blaze of Blackwater, lupus Philodox, speaks

Once I mated with one of my own kind, a four-leg. I bore a pup, a metis, and shame has followed me. It was

wrong. As Garou, we know better than to breed creatures that are malformed; the body represents the spirit. But I let the child live. Now she serves as a warrior of my sept and has defended our bawn against Wyrms and Weaver. But I rankle at her impurity; even yet she may turn against us and reveal the flaw in her soul. Was I wrong not to have slain her at birth?

The answer of Bridget Empty Hand, metis Ahroun:

My mother took a lot of heat when she first brought me to the sept. The others regularly roughed her up, and they pretended like I wasn't even there. Yet whatever scraps she got, the biggest share came to me. She never told me how it happened, but now I watch her at moots and see that she is the sternest and most controlled of any Fianna present. I can guess that something got a little out of hand at some revel, and... well, you know. I've never found out about my father, either. I think that telling who he was would bring even more shame to my tribe. Nowadays, some of the sept tolerates me, more or less, and the rest are kind enough to wait until my back's turned to insult me. Black Spirals hit us pretty badly a few months back, and now, not too many of us Ahroun are left. Kind of funny how it took the deaths of a lot of good warriors to raise my standing even a little bit.

Merryk's comments:

It's not without a certain sense of irony that the Fianna, self-avowed masters and mistresses of passion and abandon among the werewolves, despise the metis. They believe that physical deformity shows a malevolence in the spirit as well. But at the same time, they're really into having wild, raucous parties, orgies if you ask my opinion. The Fianna dismiss any potential risk in this kind of activity; their answer to slowing those driving passions is "find a Kinfolk to slake your lust." How practical. Don't kid yourself; there are many metis running around with red hair and green eyes, both in their tribe and outside it.

Get of Fenris

Torgeir Olafsson, homid Ragabash, speaks:

One only has to look at the pitiful form of a metis to know that bringing such a creature into this world is a crime. It shows disrespect to Gaia and to the tribe. I hear a number of werewolves say that this is not the fault of the metis pup, that blame should be placed on the parents. This is perhaps true, but times are hard. Our packs can't support the burden of one who is unable to carry his own weight. I don't mean to be cruel when I say that the kindest thing is to put a crippled metis pup down immediately. Then choose

a suitable punishment for the parents and move on. There are too many duties Gaia calls us for to dwell on the issue of the metis.

The answer of Oddvar Havelock, metis Galliard:

Why was I given the chances I got? Perhaps the Jarl had pity since his son was the one who fathered me. Perhaps our Theurge received a message from a spirit, or Fenris sent a sign that there was something special about me. Whatever the reason, I passed from childhood through my Rite of Passage and stand before you a member of the Sept of Brightskull's Eye. Not that I get any pleasures from life, save blood and the thrum of muscles. Each time our pack does battle, I pray to Fenris that I might hear the wings of the Valkyries as I slay a score of foes before dying to save the pack. I want nothing more than to have the others sing a saga of my deeds.

Merryk's comments:

Not unlike the Red Talons, the Get aren't always above killing their metis children outright, and sometimes the guilty parents are forced to wield the knife. But from what I understand, if the cub's deformity doesn't make it too weak to fight, it stands a pretty good chance of survival. If a hardy one survives to adulthood, she's put to use alongside other warriors; strength is strength, no matter the frame. Maybe she'll never get the same respect, no matter what her deeds, but I haven't exactly spent a lot of time in a Get sept. Most lupus and homid Get will hope she dies a glorious death and has better luck next time. Perhaps that's the kindest thing for any of their kind.

Glass Walkers

Blake Rubenstein, homid Theurge, speaks:

Look, let me give it to you straight. The other tribes are completely ignoring a tremendous resource! The metis are usually willing and able to do whatever is required of them, perhaps with a helping hand, but more often than not, completely on their own. I know a lot of unwanted metis from other tribes flock to the Children of Gaia or the Bone Gnawers. Well, while I can't speak for all Walkers, I know that my pack would be glad to have more metis on our side. They make terrific fighters and have some keen insights; most of them have forgotten more about Garou society than I've ever learned! It's a pity the other tribes can't see past their ancient prejudices.

The answer of Com Beta Io, metis Theurge:

I was born in another tribe; I don't know which one, and it doesn't really matter. The Glass Walkers took me in and made me one of their own. Did the other tribe disown me because I had no eyes? The Walkers showed



me a new way to see. Thanks to their teachings, I now have vision through many eyes in many places. I've discovered back doors that have saved my packmates a number of times. Yet, I could never explain the 'net to a Red Talon, not because of the words, but because of who I am. Who ends up damned when the Pentex team strikes at their forests, and only I can stop their comlinks? It's not the metis outcast, I can assure you.

Merryk's comments:

While I don't understand a lot of Glass Walker technogibberish, I find their outlooks on metis remarkably enlightened. Like us Children of Gaia, the Glass Walkers are often willing to take in metis cubs from tribes that disown them. The Walkers don't necessarily believe that the deformed body hints at corruption of the soul, and probably because of this, they've actually developed cyberware for metis that circumvents certain physical deformities. It's kinda weird and maybe a little too Weaver for me, but it's remarkable nonetheless. A few homid Walkers tend to give metis a cold shoulder now and then, but rarely would they turn down an offer of help from one of my kind. It's just old prejudice coming through, and if more metis join up with the Glass Walkers, even that kind of intolerance will grow less and less, I bet.

Red Talons

Wanders Under Hill, lupus Ahroun, speaks:

Only the strong, the fit, survive. The malformed are to be returned to Gaia, so as not to waste food and energy on them. The two-legs often let the abominations live and call it mercy. How is it mercy when it weakens the tribe? When they let the things live, usually another tribe takes it in. A few Talon packs also let the sick ones live and grow to run with the rest. The sickly ones circle the edge of the pack, scrounging for scraps like a crow, dropping their tails when even cubs come near. They freeze in the Whitecold Moons; they wheeze and cough when they run; their claws and teeth are dull. They add nothing to the pack. These metis usually die quickly, and that is the real mercy.

The answer of Sparsefur, metis Philodox:

I saw one pack rip apart a bitch and her metis cub. I was lucky; my mother's pack let us live. My mother made a mistake, and I accept it. I keep my place, and they allow me to clean the bones. I am grateful and fight hard to help my brothers and sisters when they let me. Once I warned them of an ambush. The next kill, I got to eat my fill! But I must not push the others or ask too much. I must earn the right to follow the pack, for without my pack, what am I?

Merryk's comments:

Well, not much I can add to that, eh? The Red Talons consider metis to be lower than the omega wolf of the pack, an abomination. If they find a metis pup, these lupus werewolves usually don't hesitate to kill it and sometimes its parents as well. From what I've heard, they're also a lot more disciplined about avoiding metis conception in the first place, so it's no wonder that the Talon metis are damned few and far between. Even so, I understand there are a few rare Red Talon metis that have actually achieved some fame. Crookpaw's one, and word is that he's the fiercest and least merciful of any in the whole damn tribe. On the other hand, folks say he gives everyone cause to think after he's made one of his infamous visits. Then there's this Talon metis called Luna Moth who hangs with the Fianna Sept of Bridget's Blessing. That must seem like a contradiction in itself, but word is that she saved the lives of the sept leader's two kids, at least one of whom was prophesied to be a powerful Ahroun. So I guess we all should be more careful about thinking in absolutes when it comes to the Red Talons.

Shadow Lords

Ivar Elek, homid Theurge, speaks:

The metis clearly have some problems; a mere glance at their bodies will tell you this. They either lack the physical strength and vigor or the mental stability to function as stable pillars of Garou society. But this doesn't mean they are worthless! As supporters, they are an excellent addition to any sept. Granted, it is difficult for them to achieve the honors to which the homids and lupus aspire, but they should be encouraged to do their best, always. Never ignore the teeth of the wolf, particularly if its bite can serve you well.

The answer of Sunniva Kardon, metis Theurge:

I have no cause for complaint. Never have I gone hungry or been denied shelter. When the pack rejoices, my howl is welcomed. Or rather would be, if I could howl. I know a few of the sept laugh at my croaking voice, but they give me full attention when the spirits choose to tell me their secrets. While I could never aspire to be Master of the Rite, she has on occasion welcomed my help in preparing for our most sacred rituals. I have seen how the other tribes treat metis, and I am content.

Merryk's comments:

Are they useful to the tribe or sept? Do they have some value? Wonderful! Put them to work. If not, find a way to make them part of the tribe so that they will

be useful. Yep, that's the Shadow Lords at their finest. Of course, then there are the stories of the Children of Lazarus, some sort of civil-rights movement within the tribe. I have to wonder just what kind of activism a metis Lord would condone — I'd hate to think just how bitter their hearts must be.

Silent Striders

Atoberhan Assifa, homid Galliard, speaks:

Clearly, the Litany says **we aren't to mate with other Garou**. What it doesn't say is **how intense the natural yearnings toward others of our kind are**. At least with our **tribe, we meet** seldom, and sometimes when we do, those draws and desires can get out of hand. In ancient Khem, what most call Egypt, brothers and sisters of the royal line mated frequently with each other, to preserve their blood. I can draw some of the same analogies with werewolf mating with werewolf. It's true that the metis blemishes can pose difficulties, but the truth is, I've never met a Strider metis that wasn't among the best of us for battling Gaia's enemies.

The answer of Semere, metis Ragabash:

Some say the Feather of Maat is heavy for us metis, that it tips the scales when weighed against our hearts. My mother, Molly Potter, told me plainly that she felt a movement in her heart when she met my father, a Ragabash from another tribe. She followed her instinct and this is how I came into the world. She believes that one of the Ancient Ones, perhaps Hathor or even Isis, merged her path with that of my father. So tell me, what's so wrong about following the road of fate? Wouldn't it have been more wrong not to take that path? After all, I am one more barrier between Gaia and Her foes, aren't I?

Merryk's comments:

It may seem strange, but metis are fairly common among the Striders, moreso than in most other tribes. And the pups aren't really shunned; after all, Striders have to make hay when the sun shines, so to **speak**. Once in a while, the Litany plays second fiddle to a lonely Strider in the company of another **werewolf**. Members of the tribe have been known to take in metis pups here and there from others, such as the Red Talons, and take them on their travels. I could **think** of worse ways to be raised. Of course, when I say that metis pups go along with their parents, you should instantly start to wonder about, ah, the arrangements. How do they travel with a kid trapped in a Crinos body? I've thought a lot about that, and I wonder if tinker's wagons or circus caravans used to be a good place to hide metis before their First Change? They're all over Europe, you know, and I'm not just talking about Gypsies here. I mean, Strider caerns are few and

far between. I'd find it hard to believe that a Strider would settle down in any one place for more than a year or two at most. So my guess is that they've found ways of taking along the metis pups and still keeping them out of sight. Maybe they've also got some sort of network where young metis are passed around willing Striders, to let the kids really get some firsthand experience among both humans and wolves. Whatever they do, the Striders have had pretty good luck keeping the metis hidden so far.

Silver Fangs

Vassilissa Klimetnovna, homid Ragabash, speaks:

It never happens, or at least that's what I've always been told. But I also know that *never* is usually a falsehood. Perhaps I'm just repeating old wives' yarns or stories our Galliards sing to put fear into our young ones, but there are some tales of how Silver Fang families have secret wings built onto their mansions. Late in the night, you can hear eerie howls and screams coming from those sections of the house. At moots, sometimes I've seen members of my tribe who stand just outside our circles, strange shapes in the shadows, watchful but silent, never letting the firelight and moonbeams show on their forms. Maybe there are metis among us after all?

The answer of Feliks Hides-in-Shadow, metis Galliard:

Did you hear that? What's that noise? Is it *them* again? What did you ask? Oh, metis. Yes, I'm a metis, but don't tell anyone. I wouldn't want *them* to find out, others of the tribe, I mean. The most recent decree from above is that Silver Fangs don't ever, ever, ever mate with other werewolves. So we have to stay out of sight. Many of the young pups don't believe we exist, but here **we are**, heehee, **like** bad pennies just popping out of the **woodwork**. **Damn, look out! There's one right behind you! Just kidding. Have I told you the tale of Ivan Two-Tongue? He was a metis, too! Hey, where are you going? Stay and listen! Please don't go! Don't leave me aloooooooooone!**

Merryk's comments:

Don't you just *love* that denial tactic? I may get in **big trouble for saying this, but what the hell**. There *are* **metis Silver Fangs**, obviously. And it's sad, but many of them are exceptionally deformed, with twisted limbs and bodies that just don't seem to be wired quite right. And that's not the half of it. Their inbred blood, a bit tainted to begin with, boils into a nasty soup when two members of this tribe mate. The resulting pup is often completely nuts in addition to any physical deformity she may possess. The Silver Fang metis are quite shunned, both by their own

tribe, who are supposed to serve as an example of the best among us, and by others.

Stargazers

Chung Guotin, homid Philodox, speaks:

Physical love is a poor substitute for the passion of the heart. There is nothing wrong with two Garou sharing one mind, one soul. However, as you can see, Gaia becomes angered when we allow our bodies to overrule our thoughts. This is the true meaning of the first law of the Litany, to balance the inner and outer selves, high mind and low. Succumbing to those base instincts is where our failure lies. Yet we are fallible beings, that much is clear, so do not be cruel to the metis, who cannot help their sickness. Give them what aid you can, but teach them the ways of their parents were not the best path to finding Gaia.

The answer of Madhur Rani, metis Theurge:

Thought doesn't always equate with deed, especially when we're talking about the creation of metis. Who knows what reflections pass through the minds of werewolves who mate? I can't judge my parents; I can only judge myself. I have many gifts, but they've been bought at a high price, a mark on my soul. Only by clearing this taint can I move onward in the cycle. It's a double burden, being a metis, but I won't question how I came to be here. What I would like to say, though, is that we metis represent an interesting problem for the Garou. Many see us as the objects of unpardonable sin, but in fact, I think that we're merely reminders of sin rather than its personification. I'm not speaking of werewolf mating with werewolf, but of the sin of pride. Think back to your tale about Bittersown and the War of Rage. Was it not the Garou themselves who created us? Until all within Gaia's ranks of warriors can accept us, can accept their own sins, redemption will elude them. We metis are the seeds of that redemption, yet they still overlook us in their gardens.

Merryk's comments:

Yeah, right, just think your way out of it. It doesn't work for high school kids, and it sure as hell don't work for werewolves. But for all that, the Stargazers are kind to metis, seldom shunning them, and then only because our tempers are such a danger. If you need a place to shelter in the storm, know that the Stargazers won't turn you away. As far as seeds of redemption, maybe there's something to that pride idea after all. Not that any Silver Fang or Shadow Lord would listen!

Uktena

Gomda of the Blue Sky, lupus Theurge, speaks:

Do not lie with other Garou, whether two-legs or four-legs. There is no more to the law than this. Why

do you question it? This is no riddle. I see metis in my own tribe and wonder why the pups live. And yet when the time comes for the proving, strong are their hearts in sharing the pack's burden. What more do we need to ask? This is all I need to know.

The answer of Taima, metis Ahroun:

To be a metis in my tribe, you have to practice what I call moving in the shallows of the eye. We lurk just beneath the sight of everyone. Our hands tend the bawn, our fangs rend the enemy, our howls form harmony with the pack. But we are invisible when we ask for meat, silent when we chew, always standing behind the Galliards when the songs of glory are sung. We are always and never with the pack, and this is how we survive.

Merryk's comments:

Damn, ever tried to get a straight answer from an Uktena? They're reluctant enough to speak to any outside their tribe, but even when they do speak, chances are you'd have a better chance of understanding a Stargazer! Well, what I take from these guys is that metis are rare among the Uktena, but they are given an opportunity to prove themselves. Nothing more, nothing less... I guess.

Wendigo

Weayaya Beardancer, homid Galliard, speaks:

What do you know of our people and their ways, Wyrncomer? Perhaps your tribe tried to stop the slaughters, but they failed. And I've heard that legend, the one about how the Child of Gaia brought the first transgression against the law. This is just one more terrible thing you did to us. Now, look at our people! They couple with one another even though they know it is wrong. The females bear young that are deformed and sick. The end times are truly upon us.

The answer of Yancy Yodkolo, metis Ragabash:

Bastards, all of them. I had to leave the res and everything after my mother and father tried to present me to the tribe. I'd gone through First Change; would it have cost so much for them to give me a Rite of Passage? If I'd failed it, no loss to them! If I'd succeeded, who knows what might've come of it? So now, I'm stuck with the Wimpchildren of Gaia...uh, sorry, no harm intended. Look, I'm just upset. Both my parents were of the People, a long line going back many moons, and I wanted to stay with the tribe. Yeah, what they did was stupid, but why blame me for it? Now I'll never get to see the wonderful places they told me about, and that pisses me off. And what gets me even madder is that some metis do get to stay. Why I got singled out is beyond me. I mean, haven't you heard all those rumors about Wendigo's taint show-

ing up among the metis kids of our tribe? Sure, they try to keep it quiet, but I can assure you, there's usually some hint of fact in every tall tale you'll hear.

Merryk's comments:

Hey, all you Wendigo, let me give you a piece of advice. Your tribe takes breaking the Litany *very seriously*, and I'd recommend taking a number of cold showers to avoid any complications. If you do get into trouble, though, don't bother going home.

Other Changing Breeds

I've heard that the Children of Gaia know more than any other tribe about our Changing brothers and sisters, and truth to tell, we know damn little. Why do we know anything at all? It's because, unlike the other tribes, we generally kept the peace through the War of Rage. That trust was hard won, and we don't want it destroyed. So know that I'm telling this tale of the others so just maybe you can understand something about what they're really like. Knowledge is power, and all that, you know. And I guess I don't have to tell you to keep your big maw shut, right? Just keep this all in mind and chew on it if you meet one of the Changing Breeds. Because if you go telling this to everybody, I'd have to hurt you. And you wouldn't like that at all.

Ananasi

Merryk's comments:

It cost me dear to learn anything about the werespiders. Yes, there are Ananasi metis, and what's more, they're the damn *leaders* of this crowd, at least in San Francisco's Chinatown. I've heard that they follow a spider queen, Aunt Nancy, Aunt Nasty, Ananasa, or something like that. Most spiders like solitude, so I wonder how it is that two of them get together to reproduce. What's more, I heard that there's some kind of war going on between their tribes, and that three factions seem to be causing the whole stink. I wonder if, like us, they have three different breeds and many different tribes? There are lots of different kinds of spiders, to be sure.

Bastet

Merryk's comments:

The Bastet have no love for us, thanks to the War of Rage, but maybe there's been some healing in recent years. I've met just one of their metis, there can't be too many of them, and believe it or not, they face no particular shame among their kind. They all told me that among their people, all are judged by

their abilities and actions, not their appearances. Yeah, right. That sounds too good to be true, and I've heard Bastet don't hold truth as high as we do anyway. None have really told me if they have a Litany or anything similar, but I didn't get the impression that two werecat parents get in trouble much, either, though that's probably as big an exaggeration as the other stuff I heard about the werecats.

Corax

Merryk's comments:

The Ravens are actually somewhat chummy with werewolves; a few seem to like hanging around with the Fianna and the Get, though I myself don't understand the attraction for any parties involved. But as many times as I've seen these blacked-winged folk, I've never seen a metis. I can't imagine the Corax having strict laws that everyone follows. I mean, they're sort of outlaw types for the most part. Maybe they're just physically incapable of producing metis? I would say it's because they're birds and not mammals, but the Ananasi metis shoot that theory straight down. I guess until one of the birds feels like squawking about it, we'll never know.

Gurahl

Merryk's comments:

Like the Corax, the Gurahl seem to have no metis. In their case, though, I bet they get some kind of guidance or wisdom from Gaia or the Great Bear when it comes down to matters of, ahem, physical romance. Another thought of mine is that because they are such incredible healers, and perhaps more pure in spirit as a people, maybe some part of their inner selves either prevents them with mating with any but Kinfolk or at least from conceiving if they do mate with each other. If only they could bottle it and sell it... but that would mean a lot of good people would never be born.

Mokolé

Merryk's comments:

The Mokolé generally hate us all, and I wouldn't have known anything about them, except for the goodwill of some Silent Strider buds of mine. One said that while metis don't exist among the lizards, their ghosts do; she called them the Hungry Dead and said they're horrible and dangerous. They like to corrupt others with their malice. Now, does that make one iota of sense? All I can figure out is that the Mokolé must kill their metis, all of them, in some systematic fashion. They must have breeding taboos even more strict and harsh than our Litany.

Nuwisha

Merryk's comments:

As far as I can tell, there's never been a metis werecoyote seen. I'd have a hard time believing that they kill these pups, though; how can the damn Nuwisha stop laughing long enough? The werecoyote I spoke with joked with that they don't like being with each other so much, that no two of them could get along long enough to do the deed. They'd much rather pester humans, coyotes or other shapechangers. That I definitely believe. I won't tell you how much wine he drank and how empty my wallet was after he left.

Ratkin

Merryk's comments:

I just don't get the wererats. I mean, they've gotta breed like rabbits, right? You can find Ratkin in nearly every city in this country without too much trouble. And yet, I've seen few if any metis. Hell, it's kinda hard to tell! They're all pretty damn ugly. Anyway, I don't know if their low numbers of metis are due to their terrible deformities or something else. Based on the few wererats who'd speak with me, I did find out their metis are sterile. Still, you'd think there would be more of them considering how much these creatures breed.

Rokea

Merryk's comments:

There are such things as weresharks, but they're hard to see. No, I've never had the pleasure myself. I hear the best place to look for them is among the peoples of the coasts and islands, particularly in the warm waters of the Pacific. Too little is known about them to say if they have metis. I've seen some odd-looking sharks pulled ashore, but I've never been convinced they were anything other than mutants of some kind, probably from all the pollution.

Rules

By now, Storytellers and players should have a pretty good grasp of where metis stand in the Garou order — low to the ground, yet an undeniable part of the society. They have a place, even if it's not always a particularly desirable one. All this previous information covers much of what the troupe needs to know for roleplaying. The following sections are intended to look at some rules for metis characters, including deformities, Merits and Flaws, Gifts and of course some ideas for the Storyteller.

Metis Deformities

Several of the following metis deformities are reprinted from the main rulebook and the **Werewolf Players Guide** in order to give Storytellers and players a comprehensive list. A number of them are new. Players are encouraged to make up new metis deformities in consultation with their Storytellers. Here are a few provisos for designing these on your own:

- Remember, unless it has a negative impact on the character, it isn't really a deformity! Make sure that your metis suffers somehow from the condition, either physically, socially or mentally. In some cases, the character may receive some small advantage from the deformity, which is fine. Just make sure that the bad far outweighs the good.

- Many persons with varied disabilities in the real world lead productive and rich lives, and laws are finally changing to protect their interests and rights to access and equality. But remember that the characters live in a darker world. Most werewolves despise the metis, thinking they're a sign of Gaia's sickness. A lot of Garou aren't going to go out of their way to be considerate to metis or make sure they have any special equipment they need to survive. Thus, if you design a metis deformity, it should be playable within the given context. For example, if you create a metis Red Talon who has no limbs, the Storyteller is going to be hard pressed to come up with a chronicle involving that character. On the other hand, a Glass Walker chronicle focusing on cyberspace and adventures in the Digital Web might be a perfect venue for a quadriplegic character. In simple terms, make the deformity fit the character and the story.

- If choosing a deformity from the provided list, players should feel free to customize it to suit their character. Be descriptive! If the metis has hooves, what do they look like? Are they cloven like a goat's or more solid like a horse's? Do they make the character less stealthy or agile? Is the character able to use them in combat? If so, how? Of course, always check with the Storyteller about your ideas and customizations.

Albino

You were born without any melanin in your body, no matter what form you take. As a result, your skin is faintly pink and burns easily. Likewise, your hair is stark white and your eyes are ruby red. To say your fur stands out among the browns, golds and blacks of the other werewolves is an understatement. Every part of your body is sensitive to sun-

light, which means you wear long sleeves, a hat and sunglasses all year round; in your wolf form, you have to stay out of the sun or get burned. Take a +2 difficulty on all Perception rolls if you're trying to operate in bright light without your shades.

Cleft Lip

The split in your lip detracts from your appearance, but perhaps worse for a Garou, you have a speech impediment thanks to your hard palate. A minor annoyance to some, for Galliards this is a serious disability. All metis with this deformity are at +2 difficulty to Social rolls that involve major speeches, performance or seduction.

Conjoined Twin Syndrome

When your parents mated, the fertilized egg split, albeit imperfectly. Instead of having two identical metis twins, your mother bore you with a remnant of your twin still embedded in part of your body. It's pretty clear to any onlookers that you have part of a metis fetus stuck onto your flesh. While this causes you no physical difficulty, it's a real problem in social situations. Add +2 difficulty on all Social rolls that involve Appearance and Charisma.

Fits of Madness

One or more types of mental illness plague you on a periodic basis; these may include manic depression, schizophrenia or extreme paranoia. Whatever your malaise, you tend to fall to pieces when you're under stress. Make a Willpower roll at difficulty 8 whenever the going gets tough; less than three successes means you go quietly nuts for a while.

Foul Scent

Whether you reek of an overripe skunk, week-old sweat or perhaps Black Spiral #5, your scent disgusts other werewolves. Some believe you to be dangerous and won't come close; others want to pick fights with you. Increase the difficulty of Social rolls among humans by one and by two around animals, including wolves and Garou.

Fragile Claws/No Claws

Your claws are brittle and may tear or break when you attempt to use them as weapons. Each time you attack, if you botch, your claws snap off. It's extremely painful; take one health level of damage for every level you would have inflicted, plus one aggravated health level. On the other hand, you might have no claws at



all. In this case, you can't inflict aggravated damage with a claw attack (obviously). This puts you at a serious disadvantage in a fight.

Hairless

You have no hair or fur in any of your forms, making you a strange sight indeed while in Crinos. Take a +1 difficulty to all Social rolls while in any form except Homid. Also, the character may have no dots in Pure Breed.

Hard of Hearing/Deaf

Because of your metis birth, you can't hear as well as other werewolves. If hard of hearing, you have +2 difficulty to all Perception rolls involving sound. If you are deaf, you have no aural perception at all. The closest sensation to hearing that you possess is feeling the vibrations of loud sounds. Total deafness may also mean you have a speech impediment.

Hemophilia

Your blood has a limited ability to clot. In combat, you cannot regenerate health levels as do other Garou. In fact, a Gift like Mother's Touch is necessary for you to heal at all. Being so limited in a fight may well brand you a coward among other werewolves.

Hooves

Like an herbivore, you have hooved feet, which are apparent in all your forms; these are your back legs in Crinos, Hispo or Lupus. These hooves may look like a cow's, a goat's or a deer's, but they're definitely the accouterments of a grass eater. Take +1 difficulty to all Social rolls and see that you eat plenty of meat, especially around other werewolves.

Horns

Much like hooves, horns are a mark of prey rather than predator. As with hooves, you receive a +1 penalty to all Social rolls due to your appearance. However, if your horns look more like antlers, some Fianna may give you respect because you seem marked by their totem, Stag. The same is true for a metis with a single horn on their forehead; Children of Gaia may believe Unicorn blesses you.

Human Face

As horrifying as it may seem, you keep a human visage no matter what your form. The appearance of a human-faced wolf is particularly ghastly, and some werewolves might mistake you for a fomor or a Black Spiral. You incur +1 difficulty on all Social rolls.

Hunchback

You were born with a front-to-back or side-to-side curve of your spine that has gotten progressively more severe as you've aged. Not only does it give you a negative social stigma (+1 difficulty to Social rolls), it

also impedes your movement. Add +1 difficulty to all Dexterity-based rolls.

Hyperactive Senses

This deformity is a mixed blessing. While you have a bonus to pick up minute clues that someone else might miss, such as the scent of a Leech after a rainstorm, there's also a terrible downside. Whatever sense group you choose to be hyperactive gets all too easily overwhelmed by normal stimuli. The firing of a gun, the flashlight in your eyes, the stench of crude oil — these might be enough to make you deaf, blind or choked for several minutes. Storytellers should be sure to use the penalties of this deformity more often than its benefits.

Hyperallergic

You were born overly sensitive to the flood of manufactured products currently sweeping the world. Contact with anything that is plastic-based or otherwise manmade, such as polyester or linoleum, causes you to break out in debilitating hives or suffer a bout of respiratory distress. Either way, you're useless until you get away from the offending material. Natural materials and fibers, such as wood, stone or wool, don't bother you at all.

Monstrous

It's not one thing; it's everything. Your form is, simply put, hideous. Pups run howling from you, and adults tend to look at your feet. Your Appearance is 0 and can never be higher; depending on the situation, you may also incur a +1 difficulty to Social rolls (Storyteller discretion).

Mute

Whether howls of warning or the Queen's English, oral communication is important to werewolves. You're out of the loop on this because you can't make a sound above a weak croak. To communicate with wolves, you have to rely totally on body language, such as the lifting of your tail and ears to indicate submission or dominance. Among humans, it's a little easier, as long as you have a pencil and paper.

No Ears

All canids rely heavily on their ears to signal emotions. Raised ears indicate alertness; gently lowered ears mean submission, while ears flat against the head may signal anger and aggression. None of this means much to you, though, because you were born without external ears. Not only is it more difficult to catch certain sounds (+1 difficulty to Perception rolls involving hearing, all forms), you also are lacking in social abilities among wolves. Add a +1 difficulty to all Social rolls when in Lupus form.

No Sense of Smell

You have no olfactory nerves, or else what's there doesn't work right. Your sense of smell is severely impaired if it functions at all. This is an unfortunate thing for a creature that relies so much on her nose. Take a +2 penalty to all Perception rolls involving smell.

No Tail/Deformed Tail

Whether you have a hairless, bony protrusion or look like the werewolf version of a Manx cat, not having a tail means serious communication problems with others of your kind. You have +1 difficulty in all Social situations while in Lupus, Hispo or Crinos forms. Likewise, your sense of balance suffers; add +1 difficulty to Dexterity rolls as well while wearing those forms. A variation on this deformity would be having a thin, snakelike tail or some similar disfigurement.

One Eye

Whether you simply have no eye in either your right or left socket, or you have one cyclopean eye in the middle of your face, depth perception is not your strong suit. Take a +2 penalty on all Perception rolls involving sight. If you have a cyclopean eye, your Social rolls are at +1 difficulty as well.

Oversized Limbs

One or more of your limbs doesn't fit right; it's far too large for the rest of your body mass, offsetting your balance and giving you a twisted appearance. You incur +1 difficulty to both Dexterity and Social rolls because of the limb.

Palsy

Palsy is an uncontrollable shaking that comes and goes depending on your circumstances and environment. When in a stressful situation, make a Willpower roll at difficulty 8. If you score less than three successes, you start shaking until the situation passes and have a +1 difficulty on all Dexterity rolls.

Poor Sight/Blind

You have two eyes in the right place, but they don't work so well. No glasses or contacts can correct this problem, either. Take a +2 difficulty on all visual Perception rolls. If you are blind, you automatically fail any rolls involving vision.

Physical Deformity

This category is a general catch-all for physical disabilities not otherwise detailed, such as missing limbs, paraplegia and so on. With Storyteller approval, take a +2 difficulty to all Dexterity rolls. You may wish to define this a bit further depending on your character. For example, a werewolf may be paralyzed from the waist down, unable to run, but he still may be able to shoot well (i.e., with no penalty).

Restricted Forms

Choose any form other than your breed form of Crinos; because of your deformity, you are never able to assume this form of your choice. When trying to change forms under stress, you simply skip over this shape and transform into the next closest thing. For example, if you are in Crinos and have chosen Glabro as your restricted form, with two successes on a dice roll, you change to Homid. It's as if the Glabro form simply didn't exist for you.

Seizures

You don't go mad, but when you are under the gun, you lose all control of your body. When you botch an important roll, make a Willpower check at difficult 8. Less than three successes means that you writhe uncontrollably until the Storyteller tells you to make another roll. You can take no actions while experiencing a seizure.

Silver Hypersensitivity

Silver is extremely potent for you. When struck by silver, you take an extra health level of damage; this happens even if you are in Homid form. Your Gnosis is reduced by 2 instead of 1 for every silver item you carry. Even prolonged exposure to silver makes you sick and causes your skin to blister. Still, you have one slight advantage in that you can sense presence of silver easily by making a Perception + Medicine roll.

Third Eye

Stargazers are intrigued by the third eye in your forehead, believing it allows you to see things in other worlds, such as the Umbra. Whether you really can see such things is up to the Storyteller. However, if Tremere vampires ever spot you, they'll attack you on sight, and you won't have a clue why.... Add +1 difficulty to all Social rolls; despite the Stargazers' interests, other werewolves find your deformity offensive.

Tough Hide

Your hide is like tough old leather; it's wrinkled and dry with only spotty patches of hair. Your Appearance can never be greater than 1 and you're plagued by hot spots and unbearable itching. On the plus side, you get +1 on soak rolls, but it's only a small advantage in the face of your smelly, scratchy hide.

Wasting Disease

Maybe it's not a particular illness, but you have a weak constitution. You cough and wheeze a lot and can't keep up when the other werewolves trot along for hours on end. Take a +2 difficulty on all Stamina rolls, including rolls to shapeshift (but not soak rolls).

Weak Immune System

Unlike other Garou, you catch almost every germ that comes along. Constantly sniffing and often suf-

fering from flulike symptoms, you don't have quite the same ability to resist disease that others have. Because of your condition, you have no Bruised Health Level; when marking damage, begin at the Hurt level.

Weak Musculature

You may be graceful and have a good constitution, but as far as how much weight you can lift, you're a wimp. Your Strength in Crinos can never be greater than 5; adjust accordingly for your other forms. Other werewolves laugh at your puny muscles.

Withered Limb/Lame

You have four limbs, but one is withered or paralyzed, possibly with atrophied muscles. Depending on your form, you can't walk well, and your running is slower than that of other werewolves. You incur a +2 Dexterity penalty when trying to use this limb.

New Merits and Flaws

The **Werewolf Player's Guide** has a number of interesting Merits and Flaws to flesh out any character. In particular, many of the physical and supernatural Merits and Flaws are appropriate; a hunchbacked metis might also be supremely strong, or a mad metis might exude the taint of corruption. This section includes a few more that may be particularly appropriate to metis. Remember that metis *can* get freebie points for Flaws taken, if these are above and beyond their chosen metis deformity.

Awareness

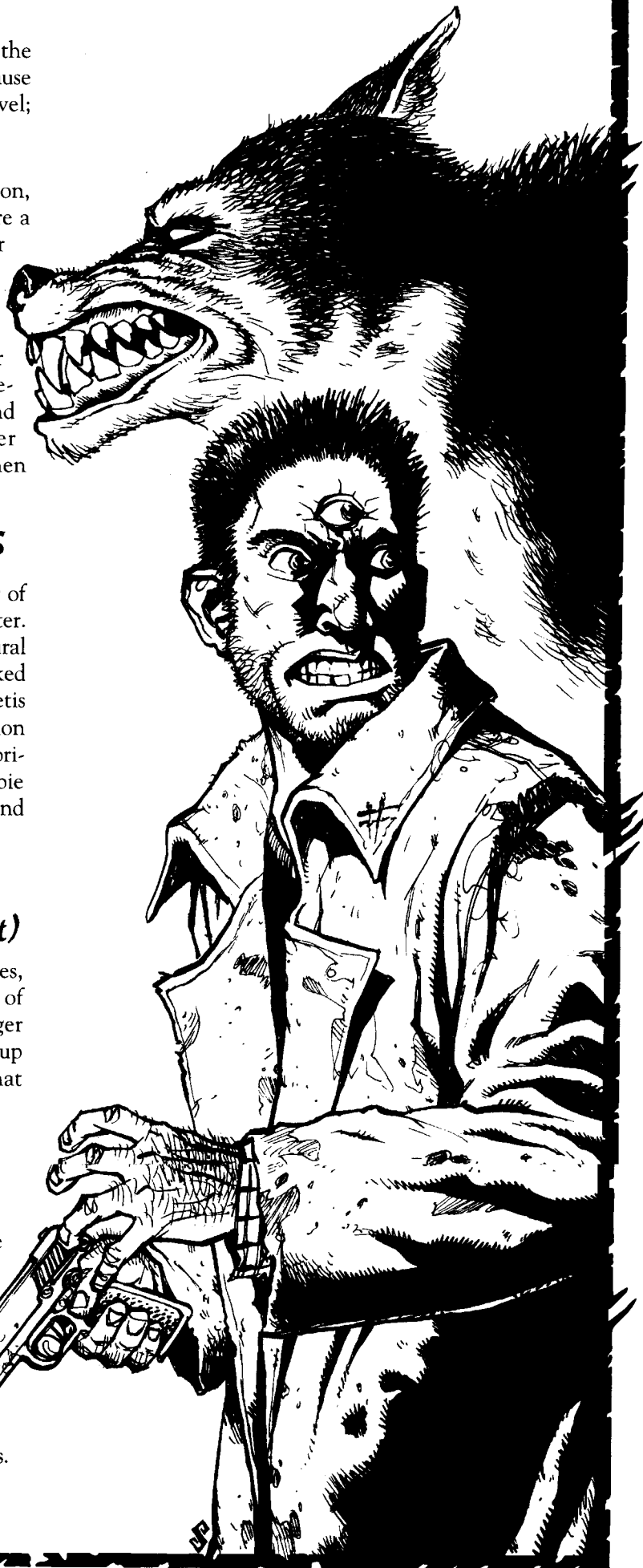
Compensatory Senses: (3 point Merit)

If your metis deformity involves weakened senses, such as being hard of hearing or lacking a sense of smell, another sense group has gotten a bit stronger in order to compensate. Choose another sense group and lower the difficulty by 2 for any rolls that involve those senses.

Garou Ties

Phantom Mask: (2 point Merit)

Your metis deformity is concealable with some work. For example, you may be able to hide your third eye under a scarf, or perhaps you have a charm from a fae or wizard that hides your deformity. This serves you just fine, unless the other werewolves find out. They'll hate you for being a coward in addition to whatever prejudices they have against metis, and you'll be the object of particular scorn by other metis.



Fertile Does Not a Metis Merit Make

Despite the events and characters detailed in *Rage Across the Heavens*, which are an exceptional case, metis can't reproduce. Yet, you say, why can't I create a Merit that would allow my metis to have children? Well, the answer to that is another question. Why play a metis if all you want to do is circumvent part of what makes the character so interesting? Because the Garou as a people are shrinking in numbers, reproduction is a major thing. And not being able to help end the problem of extinction is a part of why the metis are often hated. Anything that tries to get around that quintessential part of the metis identity smacks of twinkism. 'Nuff said.

Human Society

Unnoticed: (2 point Merit)

Maybe they're just being polite, or else your deformity doesn't matter to them. Whatever the reason, humans, including Kinfolk, tend to ignore your metis deformity. Some may even find it enticing or exotic. Werewolves, on the other hand, tend to look at you askance—this seems rather suspicious to them. Wolves are even less forgiving.

Physical

Prosthesis: (3 point Merit)

If your character has a physical deformity or missing limbs, you've somehow obtained prosthetics to compensate. This does not mean your deformity is cured; when you can't wear the prosthetics, and many homid and lupus dislike them, you've still got the deformity and its limitations. However, these prosthetics may help offset some of your penalties when worn (Storyteller discretion). This is a common Merit among Glass Walker metis.

Double Jeopardy: (5 point Flaw)

You were born not with one, but two metis deformities. These are incurable and cannot be eliminated through experience points or events in the chronicle. Gaia has either marked you for something special or cursed you for some unknown reason.

Metamorph (6 point Merit)

Yes, this is the same Merit from the *Players Guide* (pg. 21). However, there's one aspect of this

Merit that makes it particularly useful to metis: Metis with this Merit are born able to shift their forms from one to the other. Metis such as this are the ones you hear about who turn from human infants to wolf cubs while still in the crib. (Fengy, from the Central Park setting, is one example.) Even when a metis with this Merit is knocked unconscious, the difficulty to assume whatever form she chooses is reduced to 7. Nobody knows their body and its limitations better than a Metamorph-blessed metis.

Metis Gifts

Metis usually find opportunities to learn Gifts few and far between. They've had to make some strange partnerships and bargains to gain access to powerful caerns or non-metis elders willing to help them.

- **Wriggle (Level Two)** — Metis sometimes have to hide in all the wrong places at the wrong times. With this Gift, they can take best advantage of their surroundings to get away and take a breather. The spirit of a Cockroach teaches this Gift.

System: Spend a Gnosis point, and the Gift takes effect immediately. For the rest of the scene, no matter what her form, the metis can squeeze into a space no less than half the size of her body. Storytellers should make judgments on space limitations.

- **Frozen Form (Level Three)** — Homids and lupus have no idea what it's like to grow up as a metis, never changing from Crinos form for years upon years. This Gift, taught by any aerial spirit, lets a metis give others a taste of what spending extended time in Crinos is really like.

System: Spend a Willpower point and roll Stamina + Primal Urge, difficulty 6. For each success, the target must spend one full day in Crinos, consecutively if more than one success is rolled. This Gift works only on other Garou, including Black Spiral Dancers.

- **Badger's Heart (Level Four)** — Metis often possess angry hearts, and in their own way, they have a keen understanding of Rage, no matter what their auspice. This Gift allows them to affect the Rage of other werewolves, causing their enemies to expend more of it than necessary. A Badger-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: Spend a Gnosis point and roll Willpower, difficulty 7. Three successes are necessary, but if the roll is made, the target expends twice as many Rage points as he normally would. For example, if Merryk Winterchase successfully uses this Gift on Mari Cabrah while they're in combat, each time she spent one Rage point, she would actually use two, without gaining the benefits of the second Rage point. This Gift's effects last for a day.

• **Twist of Fate (Level Five)** — Some Stargazer metis have used this Gift to deliver a fatal blow to unsuspecting enemies, even knowing that the cost will be their own lives. After a Garou has been dealt her own deathblow, if she invokes this Gift, she may strike her enemy once more ere she dies. It's bittersweet but often leads to an enemy falling dead alongside the metis warrior. This Gift is taught by a Cobra-spirit.

System: The player need only spend one Rage point to get that final shot; no wound penalties apply. The attack doesn't automatically land, although the metis may spend Willpower to add to the attack roll's successes (even though she's already spent Rage in the turn). The metis' damage pool is increased by ten dice — a metis' parting shot channels a lifetime of Rage, and is almost always lethal.

Using Metis in a Chronicle

Because they're different and have such potential for being screwed over — that is, *character development* — metis can be a ton of fun to have in a chronicle, as player and Storyteller characters alike.

Tying in Rage Across the Heavens

In *Rage Across the Heavens*, a major story arc involves the player characters finding a "perfect" metis cub. He's even the child of two metis, an impossible event in itself. So doesn't this go against everything you've read here? Not at all. The idea behind the birth of this cub is that something *big* is about to happen. This is the wildest news the Garou have had in centuries; it's a climatic phenomenon of major proportions, tied to many other equally significant signs and portents. Or not — the material in *Rage Across the Heavens* is set up to allow a Storyteller great flexibility in telling the tale of the "perfect metis;" after all, it's even possible that the cub will prove to be mad or somehow deformed in a way that wasn't obvious from birth. If you're interested in running a nifty chronicle set around this kind of exciting event, go get the sourcebook. If not, don't; it's that simple. The sourcebook police won't give a citation to your gaming library. We promise. Really.

The Lone Metis

Storytellers with the time and player interest may enjoy running a solo chronicle for a metis character. Perhaps the metis has been kicked out of his sept for a real or imagined offense. One theme of the chronicle could be for him to prove the accusations wrong and regain any standing he had with his packmates. Alternatively, the character could be sort of a lone wolf for

justice, traveling around and righting various wrongs, both on earth and in the Umbra. This gives the Storyteller a lot of options for adventures, from the mundane to the truly bizarre.

Metis as Enemy

Like anybody who's had a tough time of it, metis can turn bad. Instead of always using Wyrms or Weaver minions, why not have a potent metis be an important villain in the chronicle? Perhaps she's acquired a few powerful fetishes that give her the upper hand. Maybe she has allies that hound the characters, so that she doesn't reveal her hand too soon. The scariest thing about this metis, aside from her obvious disregard for Gaia and the werewolf way of life, is that she no longer really *thinks* like a Garou. She doesn't have a pack mentality, nor does she have respect for things like rank and honor. Make sure you play up this part of her personality; it should be at least as horrifying as whatever metis deformity she might have.

An All-Metis Pack

If the players are amenable, why not run a chronicle with an all-metis pack? They've banded together out of sheer need for companionship, but maybe they decide to take the battle straight to the Wyrms. Perhaps they've gained a little notoriety, not that it helps them much in dealing with other packs. This kind of chronicle probably involves a lot of combat with the occasional angst thrown in for good measure.

Metis of Note

The following are present-day and historical metis who've somehow made a mark on Garou society. Feel free to incorporate them into your own chronicles as friends, adversaries or werewolves of legend discussed around the moot fires.

Bittersown

Many legends from all tribes describe the coming of the first metis. The Children of Gaia spin a tale that names the first metis as one of their own. Bittersown was the child of a Silent Strider Theurge and a Child of Gaia Philodox. Born hairless and pale under a full moon at the end of the War of Rage, he became one of the Garou's greatest warriors. After years of slaying Wyrms, he at last received accord and status among the werewolves. Yet in his rise to fame was his downfall. Marijika Foebreaker, a homid Fenrir Galliard, had once borne a metis pup and saw him killed before her eyes. After years of shunning, she made a valiant

return by saving the life of an entire Silver Pack. As reward, she demanded the right to single combat with Bittersown, who was a living symbol of her hatred and loss. In a battle that raged for hours, only by sacrificing her own life was she able to defeat the metis warrior. The Get of Fenris sing a slightly more heroic version of her tale, of course, but the truth is that they both died needlessly. Bittersown remains one of the greatest heroes of the Children of Gaia and a paragon for metis of any tribe.

The First Ronin

On the other hand, other tales have it that the first metis was not nearly so heroic. Many legends tell of the First Ronin, and name him not only as the first Garou to be cast out from his tribe but also as the first metis ever born. According to these songs, the First Ronin was feared and accursed from the moment of his birth. His parents allegedly took pity on him and refused to slay him after he was born, but eventually the tribal elders decreed that he was a living embodiment of crimes against the Litany, and that he had to be banished from the tribes. Not even his parents spoke in his defense, and he was cast from the warmth of the caern. Full of spite and bitterness, he turned to the Wyrms, and became first of the Garou to fall. For his betrayal, he was rewarded with immortality — and the freedom to kill the Garou who exiled him.

It's said that even today the First Ronin hunts and kills, violating and slaying any Garou he catches alone. His story is used as a cautionary tale, a warning to all listeners against breaking the Litany. Although the stories don't always agree on the identity of the tribe that cast it out, many waning-moon Galliards of other tribes have claimed that only the Children of Gaia would have spared the first metis at birth — and thus been responsible for giving the Wyrms the idea to corrupt Garou in the first place. Needless to say, when two Galliards duel with tales of Bittersown and the First Ronin, there's likely to be a fight somewhere in the caern before the night's through.

Zhiyuan

During the height of Mongol power in the plains of the east, a metis child was born to a wandering Silver Fang lupus. The pup's father was a Stargazer homid of unknown nomadic blood, and he took the responsibility for raising the metis, a child born with a withered foreleg and only one eye. After watching the young Philodox take on great burdens and holding his own

with other pups, the father named him Zhiyuan, which means ambitious. As he grew older, Zhiyuan gained some grudging respect as a mediator among the werewolves of the Asian steppes; his lack of an eye in no way impaired his inner vision and foresight. He brought peace where none had been before. Perhaps if Zhiyuan had stayed on this path, he would have led a better life. But fate intervened in the form of Kublai Khan, who upon hearing of the young man's wisdom, asked his attendance and advice at court. There, Zhiyuan's foresight took a bloodthirsty turn. He became embroiled in plots within plots and even used his Gifts to help propel Kublai Khan to the pinnacle of power. Zhiyuan's aged father and his pack turned against him for having too many dealings with humans, and the once peace-loving Philodox ended his days on a battlefield empty of Garou, with no honor left. Stargazers sometimes share lessons about Zhiyuan to show how werewolves must find balance between their wolf and human selves.

Meryet-Aamose Sheshi

Born in the dark of the moon with weak arms and legs, Meryet probably wouldn't have survived to First Change in any tribe other than the Children of Gaia or the Silent Striders. Fortunately, her Theurge mother was of the latter, and she eagerly took her young child with her on her many wanderings in the waking world and the Umbral realms. Meryet did encounter prejudice and loathing but far less than that of some other metis pups. As a result, she grew up a bit more content with her lot. The Ragabash traveled with her mother until the Theurge fell in battle with a powerful Wyrmbest, a creature Meryet later destroyed herself. After that, Meryet pondered her next step in life. Did she want to keep roving around aimlessly, or did she want a purpose in life? Meryet then struck on the idea of helping other metis pups. She'd had it fairly good, thanks to her mother's wisdom and influence. What about pups from other tribes? Surely they didn't fare so well. Meryet made up her mind to be a surrogate mother to unwanted metis. Now, she still travels, but mostly to collect metis pups in order to find them sanctuary with any tribes who will take them in. The Ragabash has contacts all over the world, particularly with the Children of Gaia, Glass Walkers and Stargazers. Her new goal in life is to rescue as many Red Talon metis as possible, a task that's proving more difficult than she imagined, thanks to her own standing in werewolf society.

Annie Licks-the-Wound Linden

Not all Black Furies think the metis are signs of the Apocalypse. The Galliard Annie Licks-the-Wound Linden is an outspoken proponent among her tribe and indeed all werewolves for showing more mercy to metis. Her own deformity, an unfortunate propensity to fall into a seizure during battles, severely limited her usefulness to the Black Furies, and her pack might well have cast her out. However, they also discovered her aptitude for healing, particularly the dire wounds from claws or silver. Now Annie tags along when a big fight is a sure thing. She heals the fighters so they can keep on battling the tribe's enemies, and she can do it faster

and easier than anyone else. Annie is now much sought after, by the Furies and others. Lately, though, she's been taking her message about metis and their place in Garou society to moots and councils. Annie believes that all children, particularly those of werewolf blood, are precious and should never be outcast. Rather, they are members of the tribe and should be given the opportunity to make the contributions they can; Annie swears that if metis are granted such a chance, they'll outperform even the highest expectations every time. Her sharp tongue is actually winning over support in some circles, but at the same time, she's gaining a lot of enemies. Much of how metis will fare in the future may depend on this Galliard's continued efforts.

