20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Wraith™

THE OBLIVION

THE FACE OF DEATH

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Rage, rage, against the dying of the light
Do not go gentle into that good night.

-Dylan Thomas

The living are as shallow
as they are witless.
They ask the questions
but don't want the answers.

THANA

Death:
What is it?

What masks
does it wear?

What shall
we say of it?
What can be said
for certain?

Why does
death hold such
lasting
fascination?

There are
so many
questions, and so
few answers.

For what
could be more
mysterious? What
subject more
incomprehensible?

How to
speak of that which
cannot be shared?

TOSIS

They are as bound by
lies as they are by truth.
But soon this will one will
no longer be bound by either.

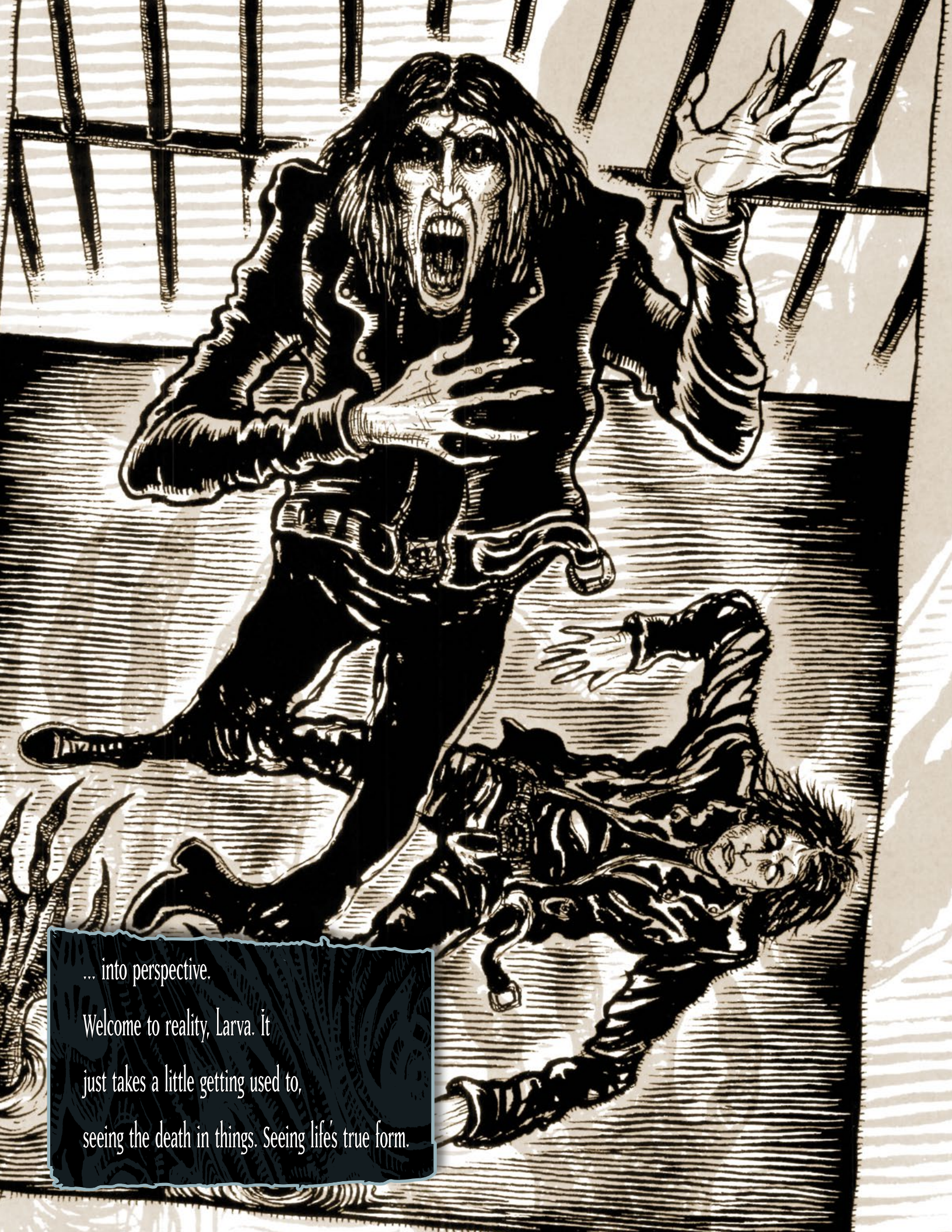
Motivated by nothing they can name, these killers have done their will. But the demons have fled, and now the puppets stand confused.

How easy the birth into death, as compared to the birth into life. First there is pain, then there is nothing. Agony, torture, relief. It is over. Praise Charon that I am here in time.

Always am I struck by how they fumble like newborn babes – by the look in their faces as they first behold the shell in which they so long resided.

Well, you thirsted for the knowledge, and now you have the truth of it.

It's really not that bewildering; you've just got to bring things...


... into perspective.
Welcome to reality, Larva. It
just takes a little getting used to,
seeing the death in things. Seeing life's true form.

Don't let your terror rule you.

There's naught I can dif you let your shadow rule you. If you slip through the cracks, I cannot hoist you back up.

Black Taint

Death surrounds us, constantly threatening and eventually overwhelming us. It cannot be ignored or forgotten.

The stench of death taints everything we say and do. The suffering of the human condition is described by the despair of purpose and the angst of spiritual malaise. Life is so often devoid of meaning or significance.

Life does not last long; it is but a spark in the dead, black night. Welcoming us at the terminus of life, Death awaits us ever patient.

Death is a rebirth. It is a stepping over, a passage through the Shroud. It is not an ending, but a beginning. It is a rite of passage, the end of one journey and the beginning of another.

The fear, the loathing, the terror, the peace, the salvation, the ecstasy, the pain, and the oblivion. That is death. Death is all, and it is nothing.

Alas, much weighs upon you, dark child, and Oblivion cannot be delayed. The nightmares pull you down...

Into the Tempest.

This is the whirlpool

at the rim of reality,

a roiling sea of curses,

and hatred.

This is the void ,

and nothing

is real here.

Know that here

imagination creates

its own form.

Where are you now, boy?
Will you find your way?

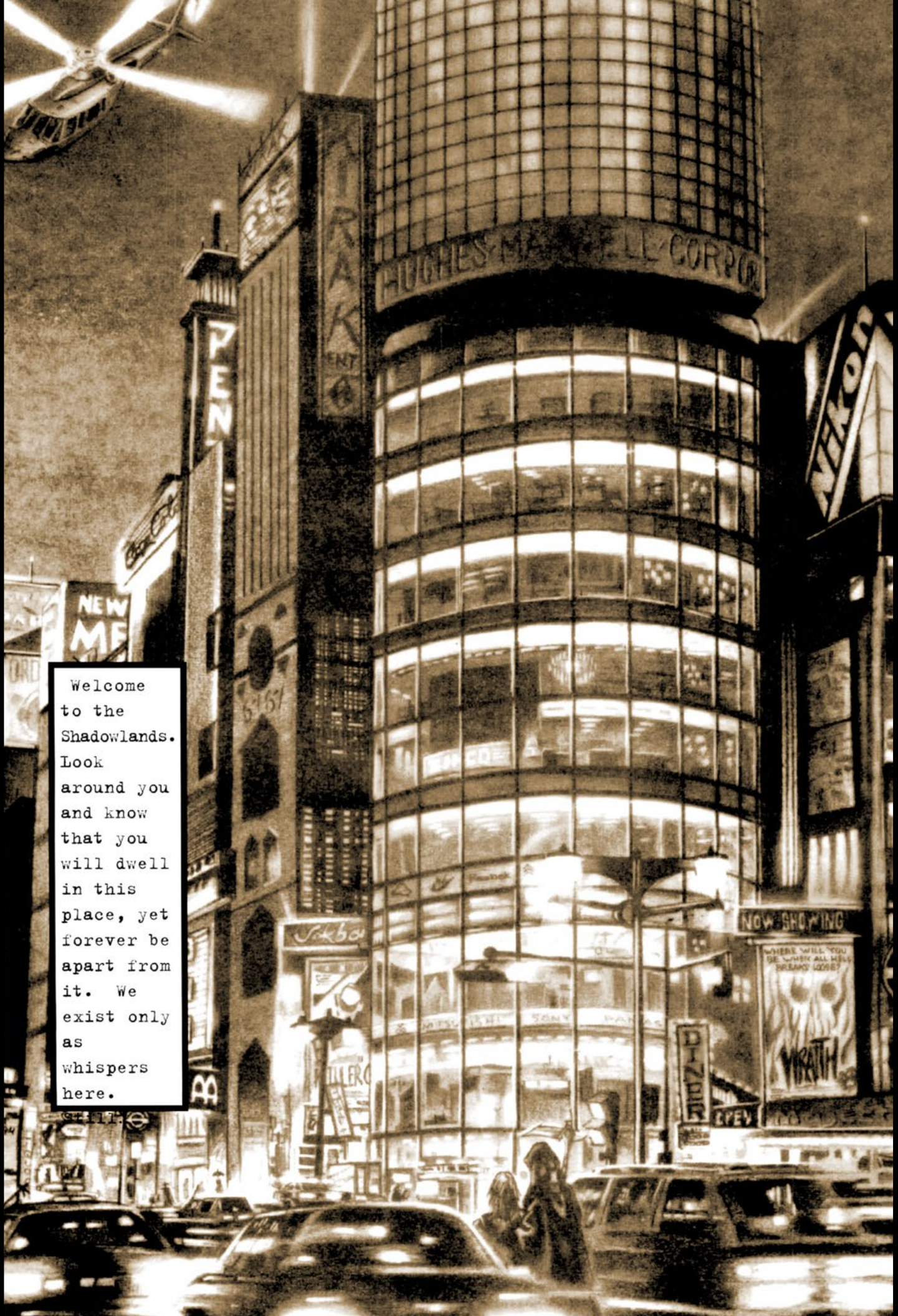
Will the path be barred?
You know of transcendence, but you are not ready for it.
The guardian blocks the way.
Its crimson torch has warned others.

Spectres. Blighted creatures.
They carry with them the stench of Oblivion.
They are the bottom crawlers and feed upon the hopeless.

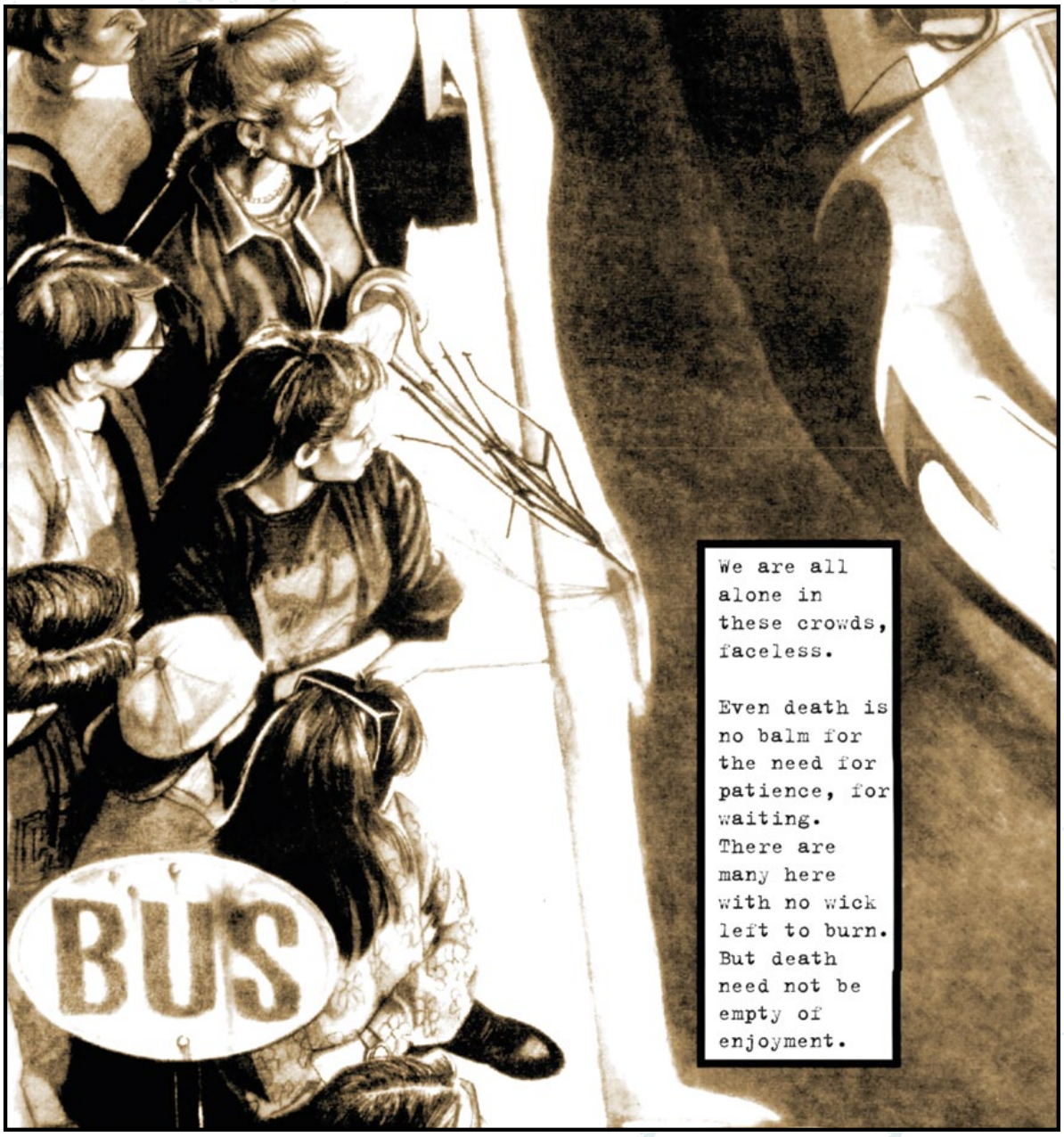
They're getting to know you. They embrace your nightmares and fill them up.
They awaken the Shadow asleep within you.
They seek to conquer and consume you.

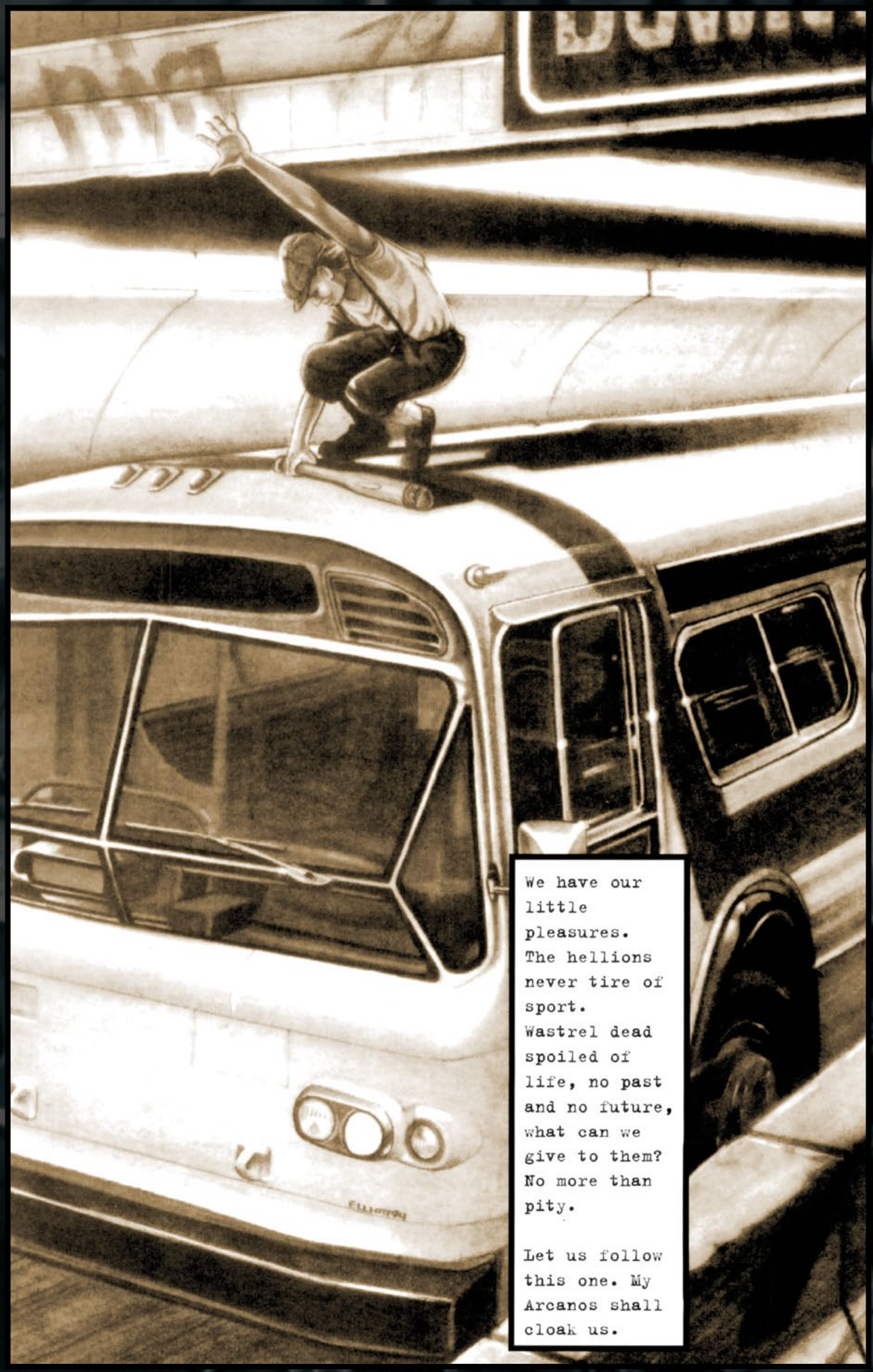
But I will not allow it,
I have need of you. And, if I must, I will pay the price.

The hangman's fee.
This Doomshade can be bought; it owes me that.
Stand back, demon spawn, for I claim this soul as mine. Now come with me.


Welcome to the Shadowlands. Look around you and know that you will dwell in this place, yet forever be apart from it. We exist only as whispers here.
NEW
PEN
NIKON
NOW SHOWING
WRAITH
DINER

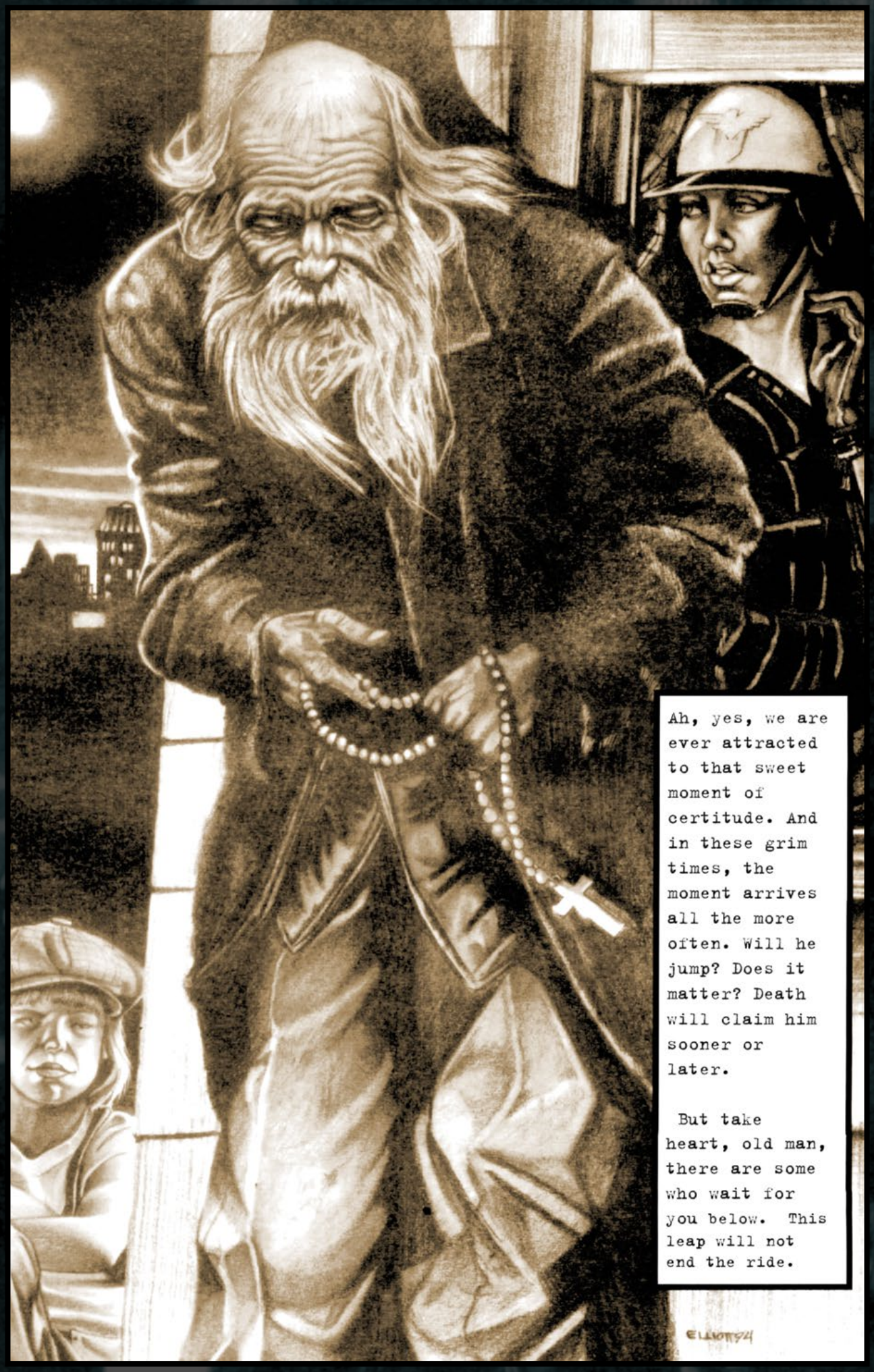
XI
...you must watch your step. They do not see you, and you are too naive and weak to stand such discorporation. Stand where they will not run over you...

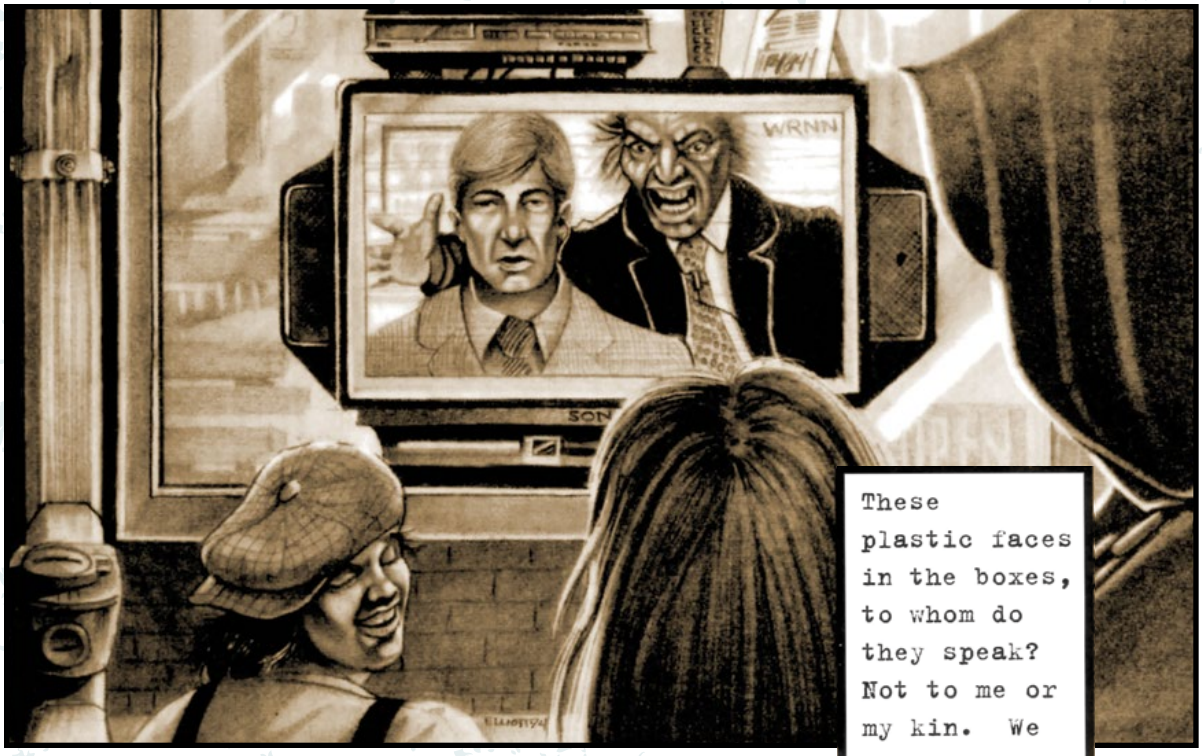

BUS
We are all alone in these crowds, faceless.
Even death is no balm for the need for patience, for waiting. There are many here with no wick left to burn. But death need not be empty of enjoyment.


We have our little pleasures. The hellions never tire of sport. Wastrel dead spoiled of life, no past and no future, what can we give to them? No more than pity.
Let us follow this one. My Arcanos shall cloak us.

Dance, writhe, shout into the blackened night. It won't save them, but it will bring solace, or so they think.

See the little wretch stealing from the hapless skin. The living possess such vigor, such soothing power. Performance is one thing, puppetry is another — use and abuse alike. The Code of Charon means little to this hellion renegade.


Ah, yes, we are ever attracted to that sweet moment of certitude. And in these grim times, the moment arrives all the more often. Will he jump? Does it matter? Death will claim him sooner or later.
But take heart, old man, there are some who wait for you below. This leap will not end the ride.
ELLIOTT94

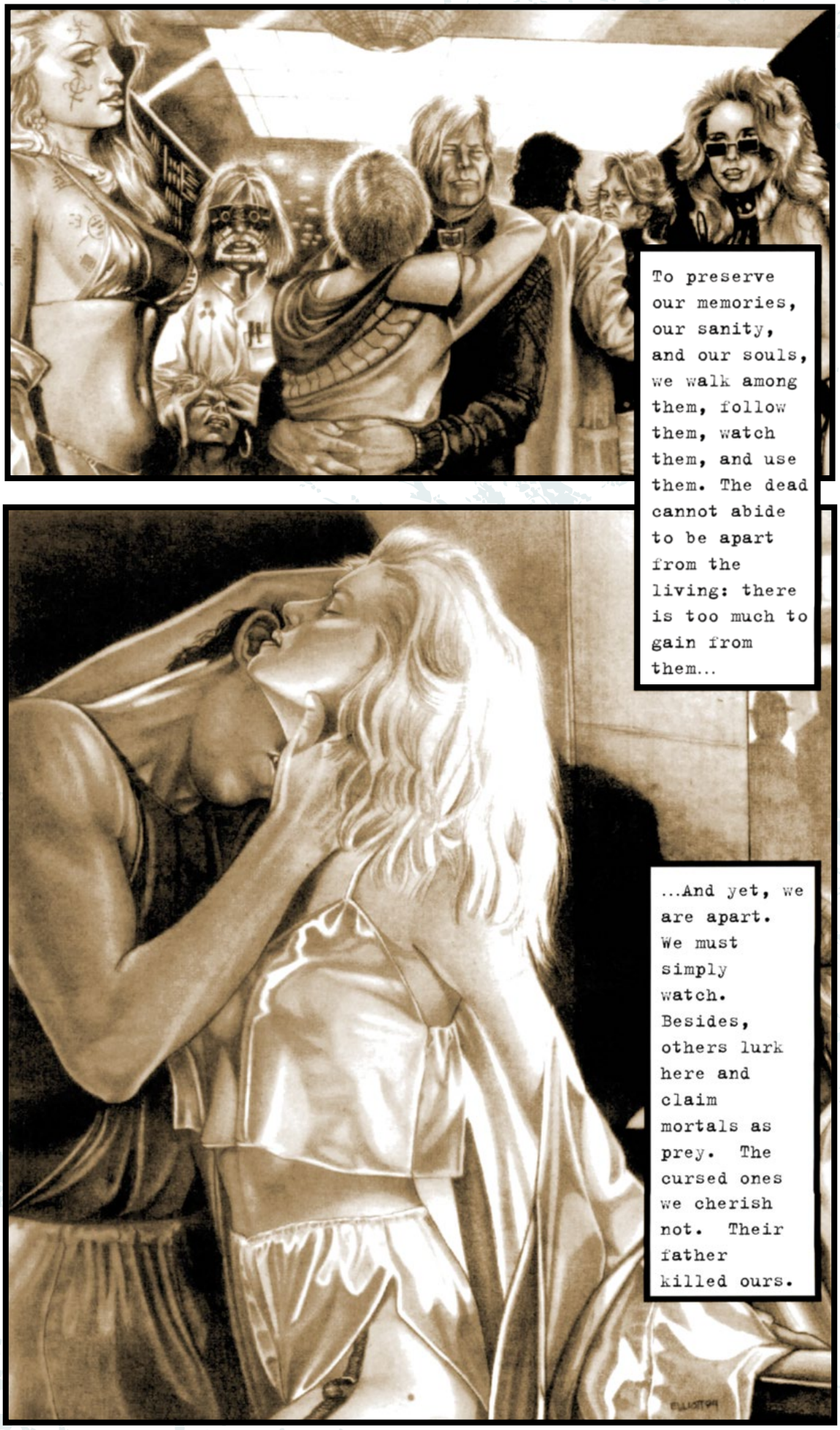


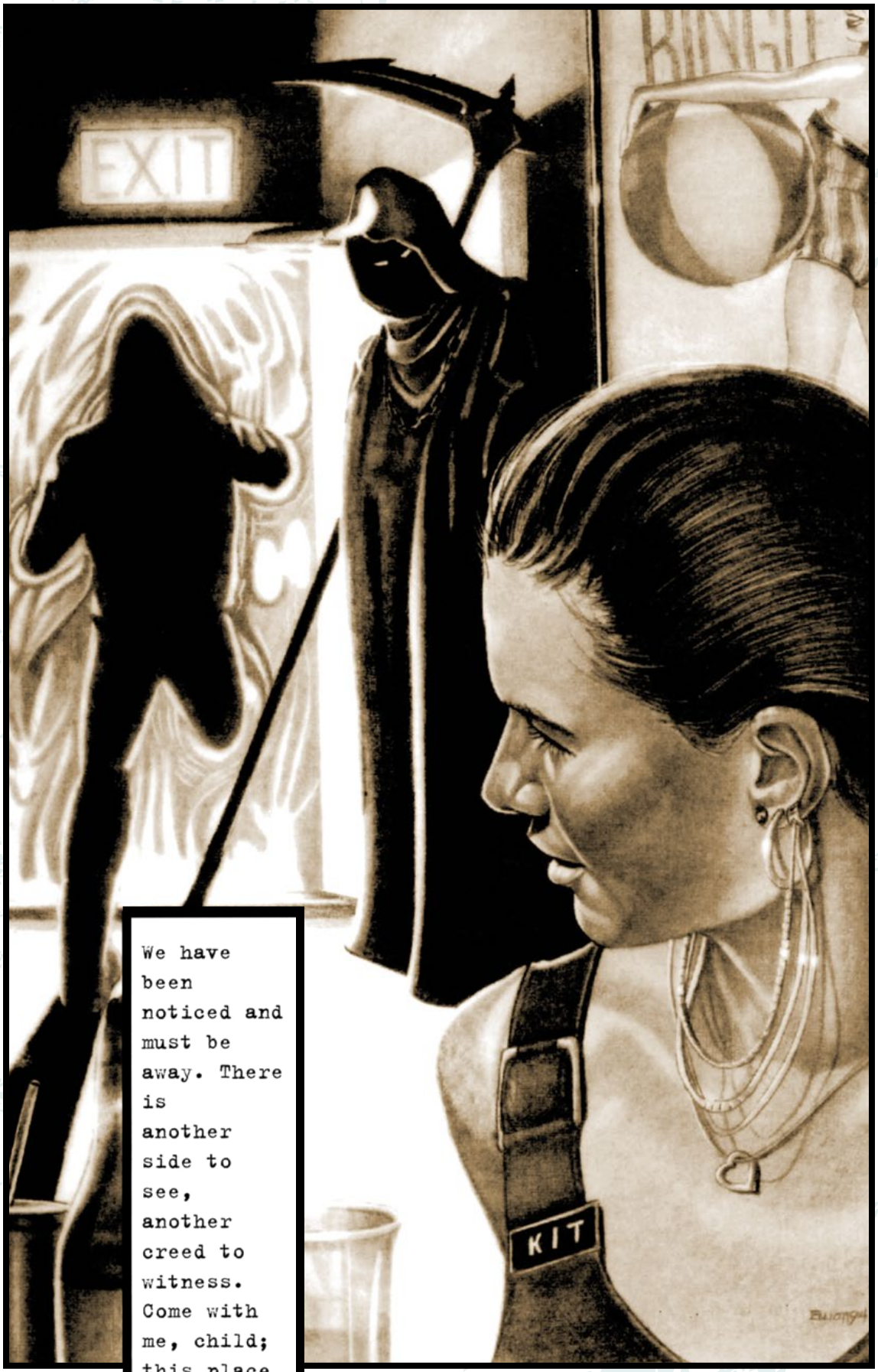
These plastic faces in the boxes, to whom do they speak? Not to me or my kin. We have our own demagogues, our own proselytizers —we just share channels.

...Indeed, we use the living with impunity, to get where we need to go...

...and to receive the vibrancy we require. We are trapped between our veil of death and the need for life. There are those who make love to the dying only to rid them of their wealth and sell them unto perdition.

There are many places which we christen, but some haunts throb more than others. Some bless the night storm with their raging might. They are homes to us.


To preserve our memories, our sanity, and our souls, we walk among them, follow them, watch them, and use them. The dead cannot abide to be apart from the living: there is too much to gain from them...
...And yet, we are apart. We must simply watch. Besides, others lurk here and claim mortals as prey. The cursed ones we cherish not. Their father killed ours.


EXIT
KIT
We have been noticed and must be away. There is another side to see, another creed to witness. Come with me, child; this place has grown cold. Let us depart.

And they initiate their own

with these rituals...

...their own games, their own entertainments. They fight each other in death because they cannot leave behind the pain of life.

...rituals of hazing and punishment. Some buy drones to savage, to relieve themselves of misery by inflicting it upon others. Be glad that you are not one of them...

RIGID EMBRACE

When it comes to death, we all possess a ramshackle of hope, faith, fear, desire, and denial. Our minds conjure up a unique vision, images drawn from dusty folklore, kinetic pop culture, and the annals of personal experience. The mask of Death is whatever we make it to be.

Like beauty, death rests in the eye of the beholder.

But call it what you will, the truth of it cannot be denied, just as it cannot be thwarted.

For some, death is as horrible as it is undeniable – a scourge and a devil. For others it is less terrifying and more palatable – annoying but irrelevant. To a few it is a benevolent god – an entity to be understood and respected. For many, death has become anthropomorphized, no more than concept or tool. Some of us pretend it doesn't matter, but in the end it's the only relationship we possess that doesn't die.

Death is always with us.

These wretches will take what they can frm you. They'll steall all the relics you've brought with you and the last Lucan in your purse. They have their own cruel code here...

They war down here – legion and host, gang and cohort, cult and clique.

Grim battles fought by both maneuver and bluff. Machines stolen from

junk heaps, cobbled together with twine and prayer. Fearful nevertheless.

They fight over haunts and relics, insults and honor. And most especially over the newly dead. Larvae such as you are the heart of this grim commerce.

Masks that protect. Masks that conceal. Masks that hide.

I wonder... who is being duped more?

Bute enough illusions. How about a dose of truth?

... for even their leaders are hardly what they seem.

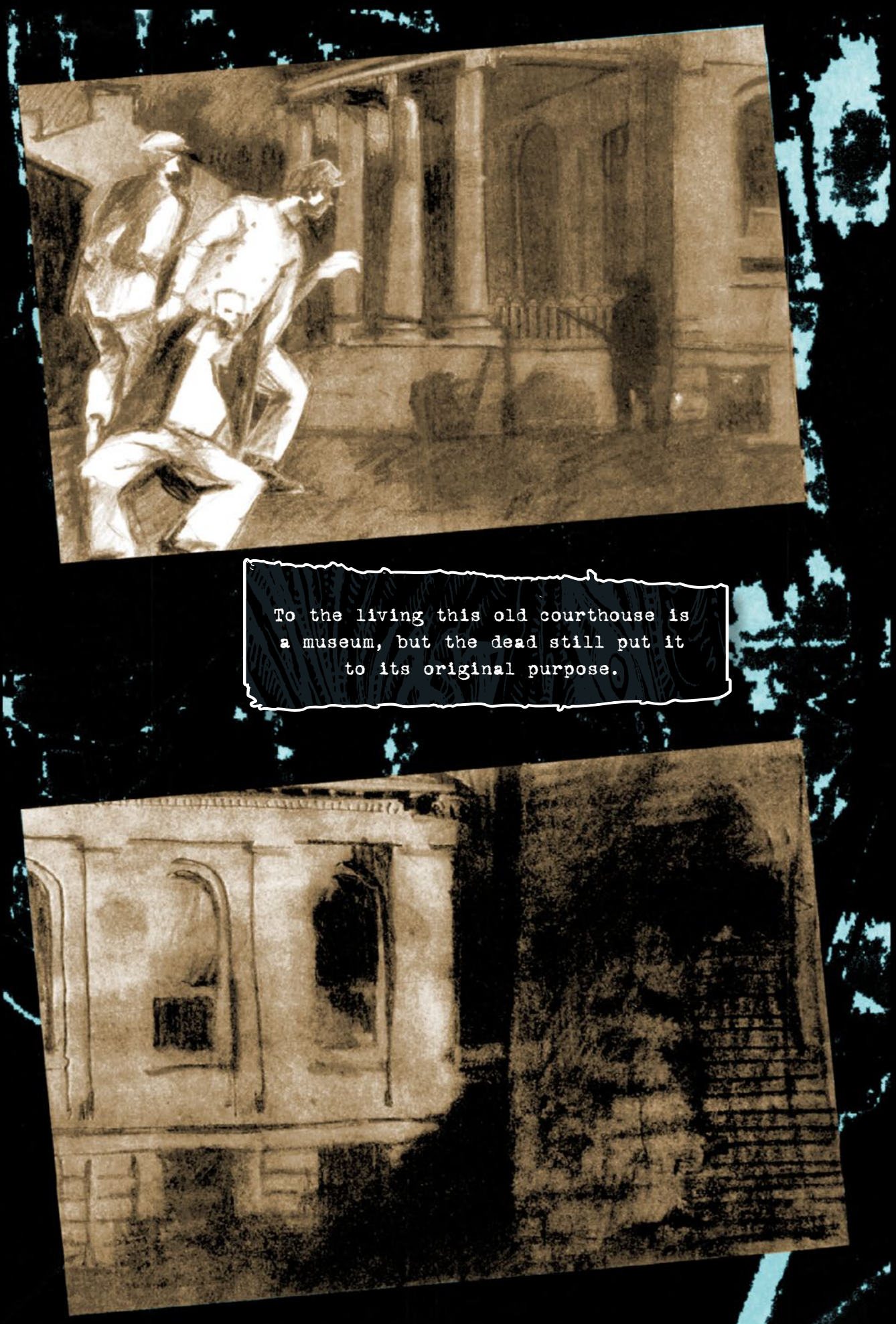
They, too, wear masks...

This is the heart of the
Hierarchy's nest, the place
where the condemned must stand

Unload them roughly or gently; it does not matter. Most shall be hauled off to the pits of Stygia.

Their warriors are the dead of many wars. They fear nothing.

Struggle they might, but these thralls cannot insist. They will be judged this day.


To the living this old courthouse is a museum, but the dead still put it to its original purpose.

Some of already judged - the failed refuse, the beggar thralls
See that man up there? Does he not look familiar? Think back to those old grainy photographs in your family album. That's your father's father, four times back. He's your blood; he's behind all this. If only he knew who you were.

You can see his
tender mercies

Denial of Death

The thousands of things undone, the millions of roads less traveled, the longing and regrets: they do not die with the body. Instead they linger on and take on lives of their own. They become ghosts. Sometimes the longings are so profound that their essence remains trapped between this world and the next, held back by misery and pain.

This is the denial of death.

The only thing holding us back is fear – fear that we aren't ready, that we won't survive the trip, fear of the unknown.

We all pray that the anguish of life does not exist beyond death, but at the same time we fear the unknown Oblivion. Our fear of death can turn life into a nightmare. We fail to enjoy life because of our fear of death.

We watch our dreams slip away from us, and our cowardice haunts us to the end of our days and beyond. The icy touch of fear sits on our shoulders, but seldom do we realize what it is we fear. For death hides itself well.

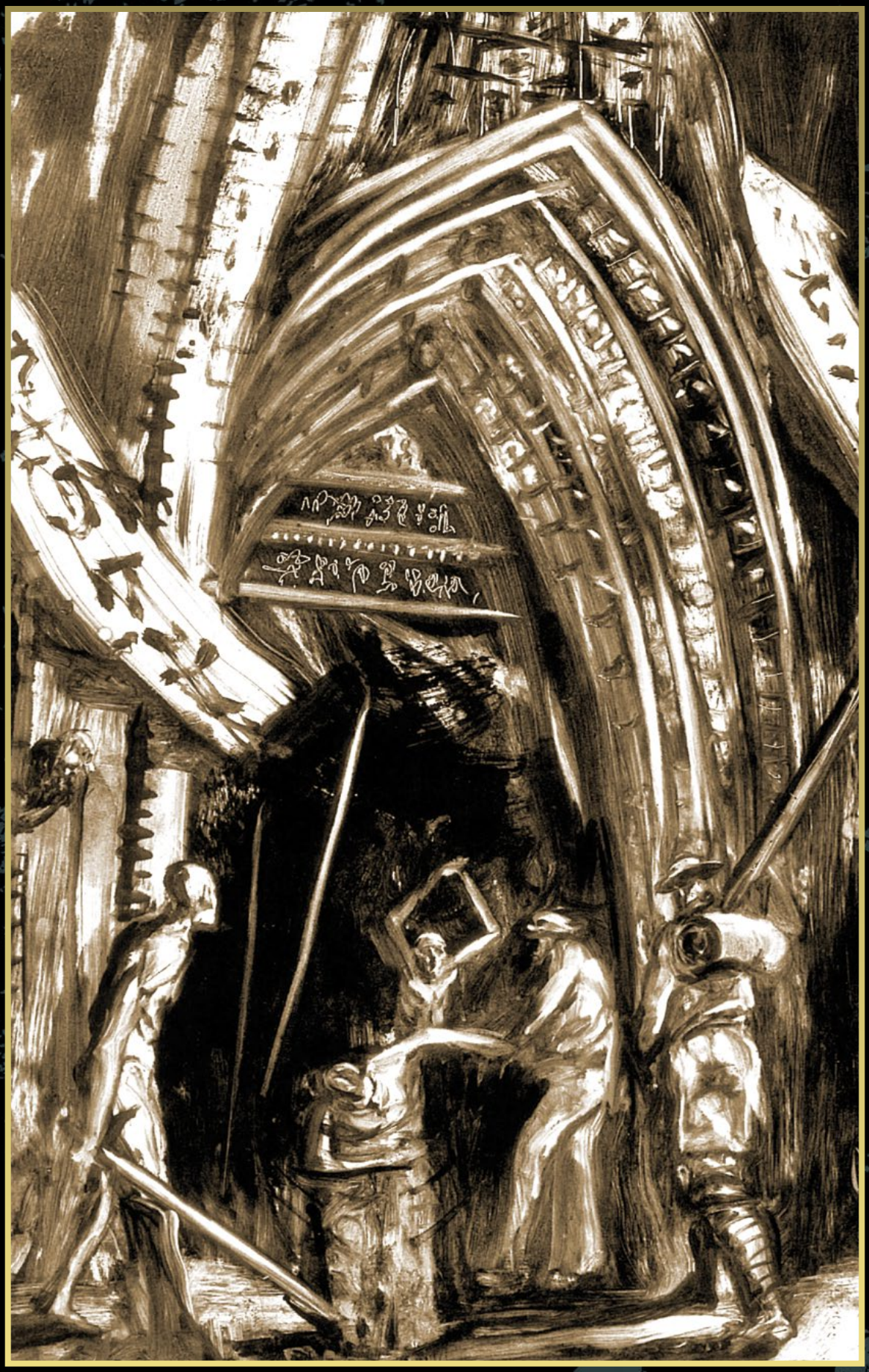
The cycle of fear isn't over when we die; it just begins all over again. The pain doesn't stop, and no answers are given. Mortal anguish is replaced by the immortal. The wheels turn ever on.

The meat of the body is gone, worm meal in an empty grave, but the essence remains. The spirit clings to its past, never quite trusting and strong enough to let go. It's the path to Transcendence. Once unfinished tasks are completed and fetters to reality are loosened, it can pass on.

The irony is that death, even in death, can't be escaped. And neither can the fear.

So deal with it.

This is the great escape.

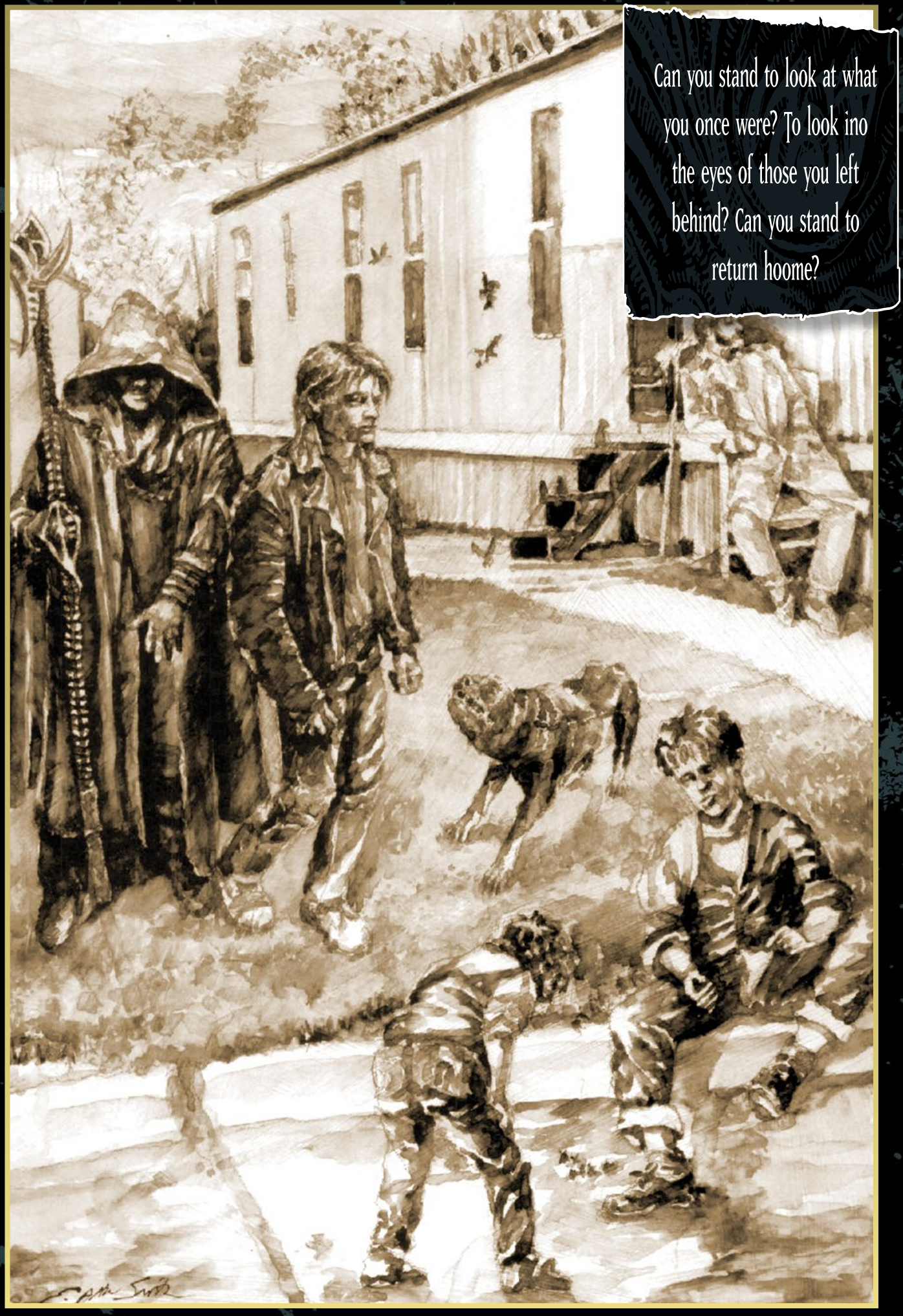


Where is the Wailing Wall? They wail toward an unfeeling heaven. But the sky offers no reward here.

They are the Born Again – Do you recognize him? From TV?

These Heretics are in ecstacy. They believe his promises.

Repent, ye sinners – A Necropolis of the dead, still afraid of dying


Can you stand to look at what you once were? To look ino the eyes of those you left behind? Can you stand to return hoome?

The Restless

Wraiths are the screamers, trapped by their own pasts, by their own memories, by their very consciousness. They are, therefore they feel.

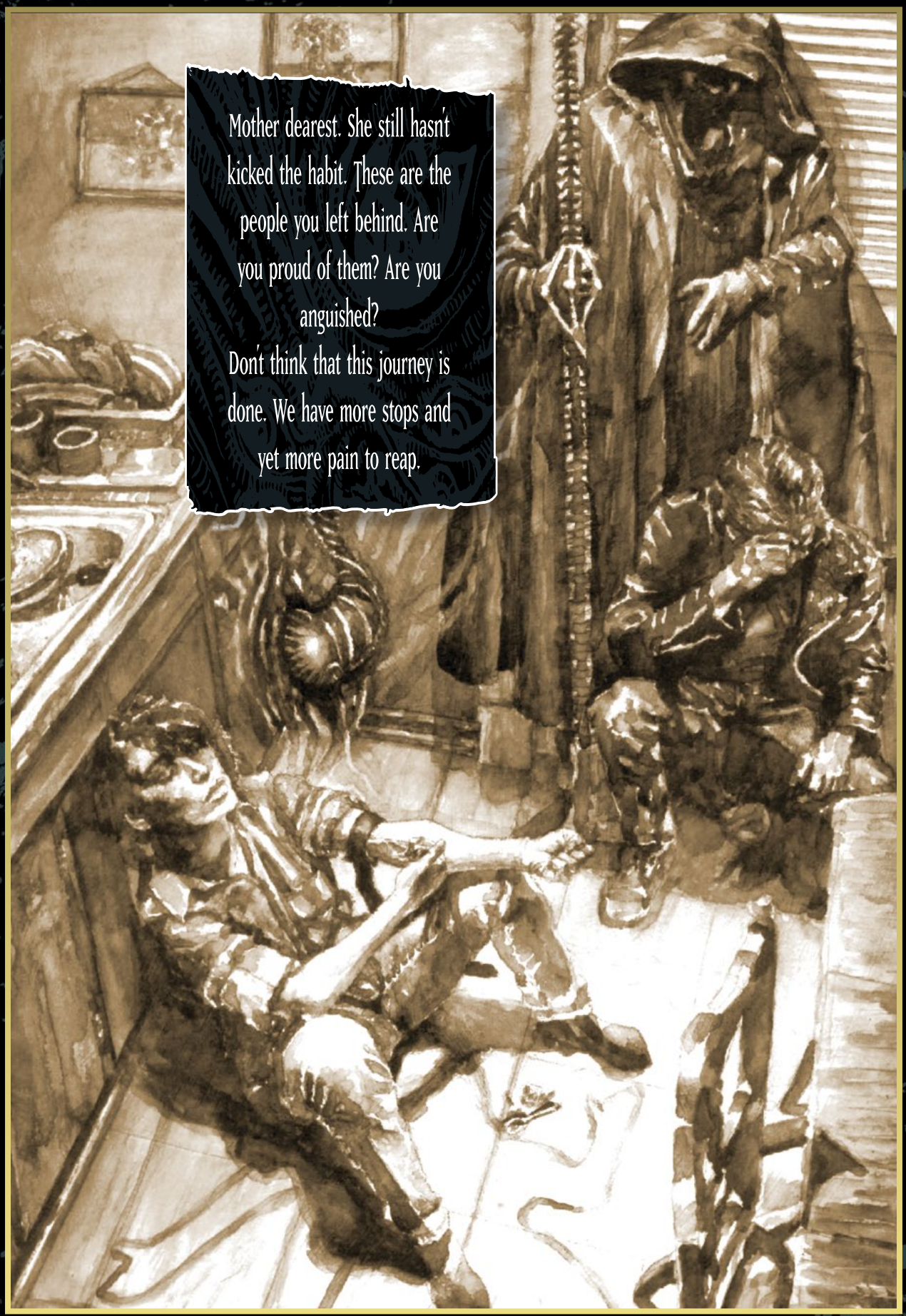
They remain because they must, because they cannot let go. They have some grating seed of meaning left to perform, express, excise. They still have something to say. There are as many reasons for why they remain as there are places for them to go. All existence is expression, and the dead are all poets, starving for enough meaning to survive.

They are bound by a tragic sense of a life unfulfilled, by unsaid words breaking in their hearts - by a life cut short by Fate. Some are driven by bitterness and rage; others, by ideals they champion beyond the grave. Some still long for meaning and fulfillment ever denied them in life.

Many are the products of violent, cruel and sudden deaths. The end comes by surprise, leaving no chance to resolve a lifetime of half-told stories. They are bound to their lost lives, and are likely to remain in the shadows for long.

They shall not rest.

She is experienced at what she does, enough to attract an audience. In her line of work she is never short ofcash.


Mother dearest. She still hasn't kicked the habit. These are the people you left behind. Are you proud of them? Are you anguished?
Don't think that this journey is done. We have more stops and yet more pain to reap.

...for the City of the Dead. The penitent has made the leap and received his prayer.
Only he's gotten more than he asked. The scavengers always find the dead; that is their purpose.

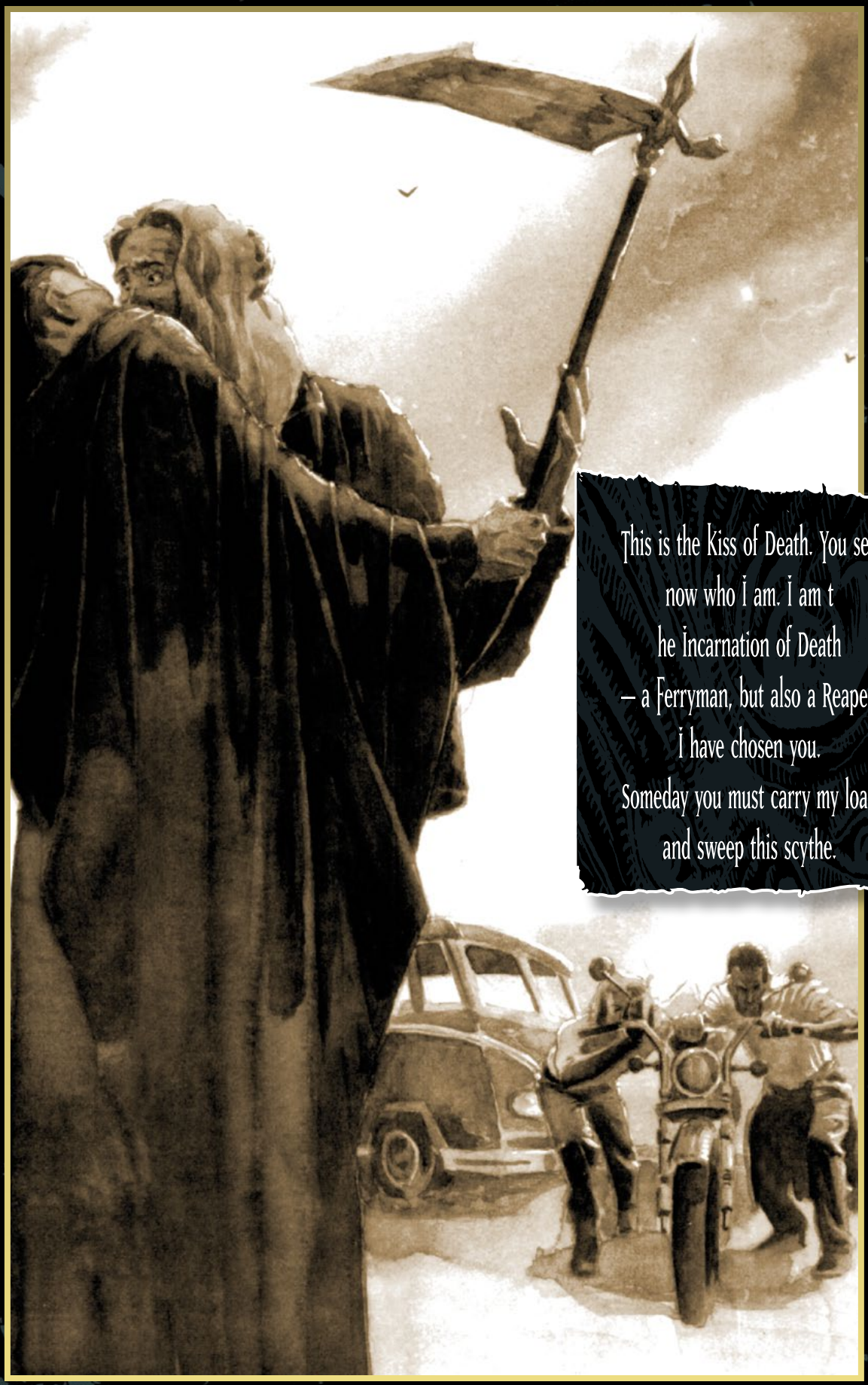
This shall be your cohort, and this place your haunt.
We are more at home in such forgotten places; here we do not bump into them.

Do you not see how death makes a mockery of our bodies?
We become as twisted without as we are within. And yet we cling to these shadows

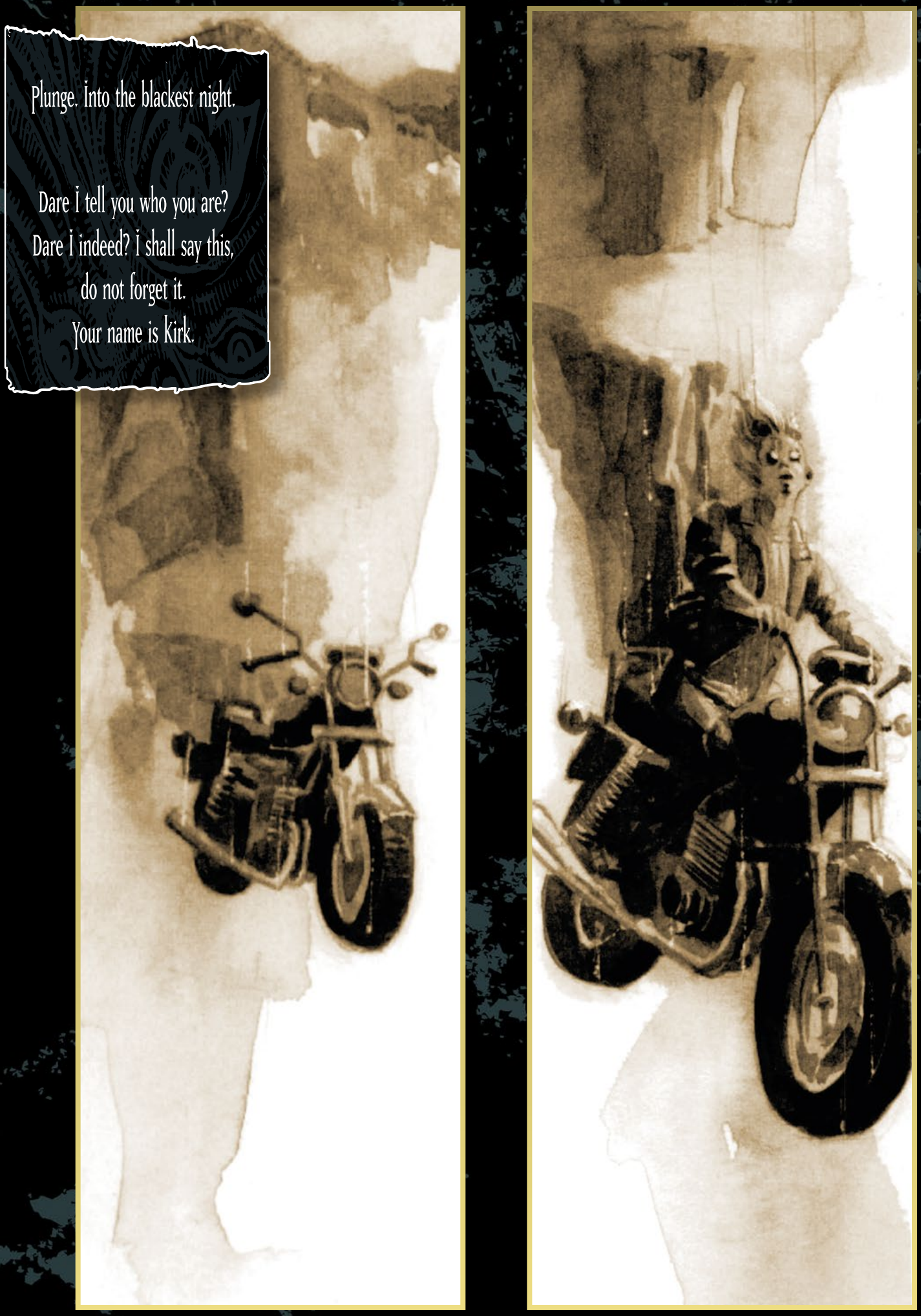
wherein it is easier for us to draw our unliving breath.
We deny Oblivion her need, yet we fail to live with what is left to us.

You must learn to be one of them; embrace their ways.
Look past their faces, for their faces are only masks

Some masks are more grotesque than others. Judge not the Restless by appearances.
They are circumstantial. These are not privileged, but they will protect your and provide you with a home.
Now come... let me show you a lower breed...


This is the Kiss of Death. You see now who I am. I am t he Incarnation of Death – a Ferryman, but also a Reaper. I have chosen you. Someday you must carry my load and sweep this scythe.

It is time to say farewell.
Your friends are here
to send you off,
with a Viking funeral no less.
Better to be buried with your
ship than without it.


Plunge. Into the blackest night.
Dare I tell you who you are?
Dare I indeed? I shall say this,
do not forget it.
Your name is Kirk.

TRANSCENDENCE

Where are the Answers?

Does existence hold purpose and meaning? Or is eternal Oblivion the only truth?

At one time we thought we had all the answers. The truth was clear, the explanations complete. The priests spoke their words, shouting down from on high, and the gathered host listened. Not all, but most. Enough. But that was before...

But God is dead, His altars overturned. Death has no name in this gilded age. Rationality provides no answers, just explanations, and cannot speak of such things.

What lies beyond this place, none can say. Transcendence? Who dares hope?

But to confront death we must find within ourselves the seed of Thanatos, the wish for death. You must confront the scourge, face it nose forward. Some do not seek Transcendence; indeed, they dread it. Out of terror they cling to the trappings of life and remain bound to this world while existing in the next. This is the coward's way.

Transcendence of any sort requires passage through the Void, the soul of Oblivion. The journey is most perilous, and few survive it intact. The inner Void of the Shadow must be challenged, defeated and embraced. Nihilism must be denied, fear spurned, passion wrought, and life at last truly lived. Those who have not faced their Shadows, who have not fought, overcome, and exalted, are in the end consumed. Oblivion awaits those who refuse to live.

Those who deny Oblivion for too long are eventually eaten by it. The Shadow thrives on angst and pain and fear.

To forget is to die...to die truly and finally.

Face Old Man Death, look him in the eyes, and say – i do not go gently.

杏桃園
TOW-AWAY
NO STOPPING
ANY
TIME
Caffe' Spirt
SEAL
FOOD

Farewell, my lover, my child. You've much to see. Your journey into death has just begun.

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THE OBLIVION

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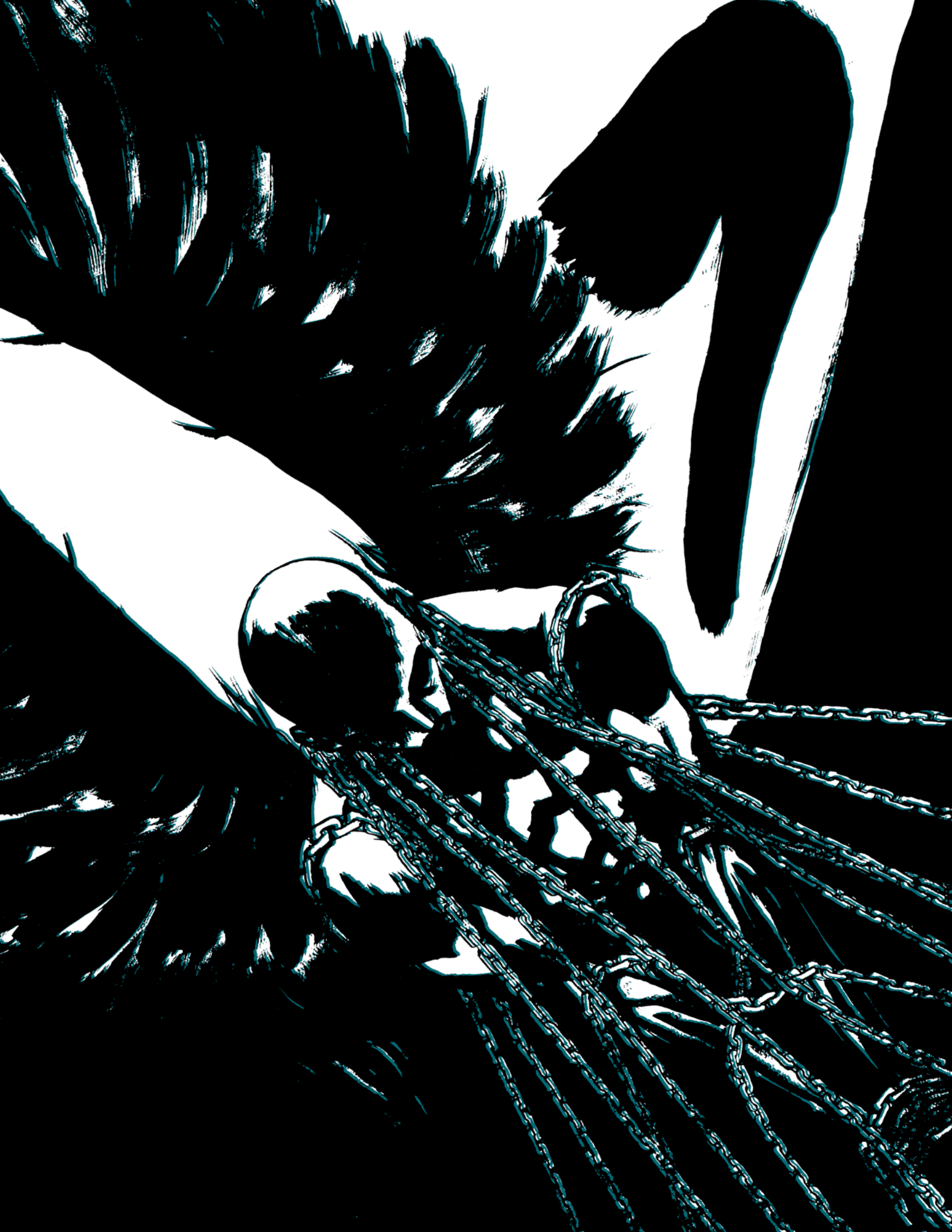

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Humans have always told ghost stories. From the first stirrings of civilization as our ancestors huddled around campfires, to the mannered spectres of English Christmastime tradition, to the found-footage ghost hunting "documentaries" of today, we've always been fascinated with death and the possibility that there might be something that comes after. We've found a million ways to tell those stories, from the reassuring to the terrifying to the humorous, but in all of them, we've looked to the other side of the veil in hopes of finding someone there.

Wraith: The Oblivion is another way for us to tell ghost stories, only these aren't told around that paleolithic campfire or by a single teller. The stories of **Wraith** are simultaneously written and told collectively by groups of players and their Storytellers. Sit down to play **Wraith** and you're helping to write the next chapter in a tale that belongs to you and your friends, a ghost story that no one's heard before.

Because in **Wraith**, you play the ghosts.

This book is the how-to guide for telling those stories. It has all the settings, rules, and tools a Storyteller and players need to tell their tale within the framework of the game. Here is everything a player needs to become a wraith, a ghost with unfinished business, whose passions tie them to the land of the living. Here's the world they explore, the means to map out all their defeats and victories and adventures.

And that's the key to **Wraith**: not "winning" or "losing," because in a game like **Wraith** those concepts don't apply. If you've played roleplaying games before, you already know this; if you haven't, get yourself ready for a new type of game experience, where the journey, not the arbitrary destination, is what matters. It may sound a little strange, but it's nothing you haven't done before. It's just that this time, rather than playing cops and robbers, you'll be someone else, someone who's crossed over and isn't ready to let go.

You'll be the star of your own ghost story.

So, let's get started. It's time to dive into the Underworld and see what's waiting there. Time to learn about the ancient empire of the dead, and the tragic legacy of the mighty ghost known as Charon. Time to take up arms against the ravening servants of Oblivion, or to walk the mean streets of your hometown and haunt those who wronged you in life. Time to see what this book has to offer, and make it your own.

A Little History

Twenty years ago, the first edition of **Wraith** put the tools for telling those stories in people's hands. It offered rules for playing one of the Restless Dead, and outlined the vast, terrifying world they inhabited postmortem. Since that initial edition, **Wraith** has seen a lot of changes. The

setting was explored and expanded. Rules were added and revised. Games were played, stories were told, and ultimately, the world — or at least the version familiar to players of **Wraith** in its classic form — ended.

But the whole point of ghost stories is that the end isn't always the end. Sometimes it's just the beginning. And so, two decades on, **Wraith** was reborn in this new, expanded, and updated edition. If this is your introduction to the world of **Wraith**, everything you need to play is right here. There's no need to worry about content from older editions or catching up. If you played **Wraith** in one of its earlier incarnations, you will probably notice certain changes — new rules designed to streamline or correct older ones, adjustments to the setting to make it more cohesive, and others — but at its heart, **Wraith** remains **Wraith**.

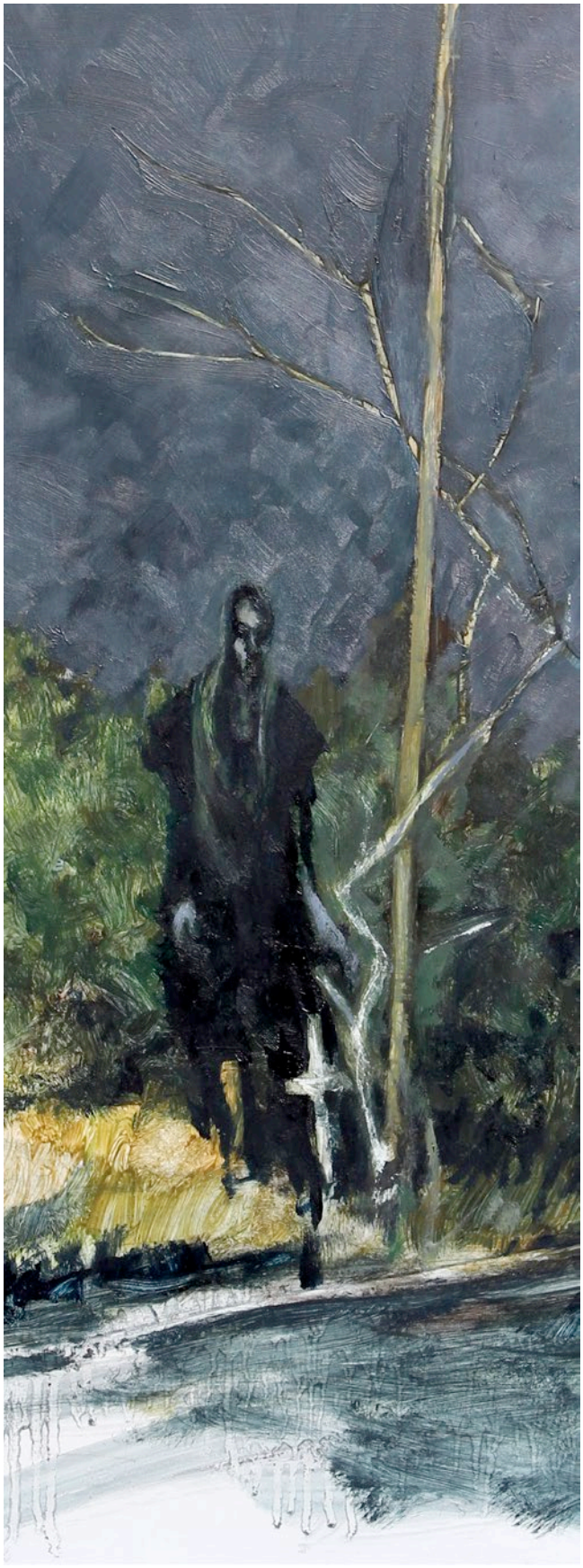
Storytelling and Roleplaying

Humans are storytelling creatures. We see a flash of lightning, and we create the story of angry Zeus on Olympus tossing thunderbolts in his rage. Telling stories, whether it's in the thousand pages of an epic novel or 140 characters at a time, is part of who we are and what we instinctively do.

And in telling stories, we take on the roles of the characters in those stories. We put on masks and assume voices not our own. We become the heroes and villains, the noble allies and the innocent bystanders. We become part of the stories we tell.

Wraith is part of that storytelling tradition, albeit not in the traditional method of tale-teller and audience. A game of **Wraith** does have a Storyteller, someone who sets the stage and guides the action, but the story doesn't belong to them alone. Each player also contributes by taking up a role, or as we call it, playing a character. What that character says and does also helps shape the story, making sure it's told — and heard — by everyone playing.

The flipside of the storytelling experience is the roleplaying one. Wraith is a roleplaying game in the classic sense, less about leveling up than it is about the opportunity to play someone else and experience what it's like being in their skin (or, in this case, ectoplasm). On that level, it's no different from the games we played as kids, pretending to be superheroes or giant monsters or whatever we wanted to be. The only difference is rules: The roles we played on the swingset or jungle gym were bounded only by our imaginations and the recess bell. **Wraith**, on the other hand, has specific rules to help shape the action and move it along. The rules set up the boundaries of the story and the world, letting you know what you can and can't do, and how to do what your character wants to try. They provide a means for resolving conflicts and describing challenges. As kids, we argued "Got you!" "Did not!" "Did too!" when we hit a moment of conflict in the stories we were telling. In **Wraith**, we check the rules and roll the appropriate dice, if needed, to accomplish the same thing.



All of the rules you'll need to play **Wraith** are located in Chapter Three. Those are the basics. The others that you'll find elsewhere within — whether we're talking about the ghostly powers called Arcanoi or how to do a shootout with spectral bullets — are the specifics that give the story, for lack of a better word, life.

Wraith, in its basic form, is played by everyone sitting down at a table, real or virtual, and going through a chapter of the ongoing campaign together. While there's no official upper limit for the number of players you can have in a game, more than a half dozen tends to get unwieldy. Throw in the fact that you can't always get everyone in the group together for every session, meaning Storytellers will have to cover for characters whose players aren't there, and it's best to keep things simpler, and smaller.

How to Use This Book:

his book is divided into 13 chapters and an appendix, each of which defines and describes one particular aspect of the game. It's important to remember that what's contained in these chapters is a starting point, not the be all and end all. It's your game, and you should always feel free to adapt the elements of **Wraith** that work best for you and your game. In addition, in several places you'll find alternate ways of handling things like Shadowguiding and Harrowings, to allow for a variety of play styles. There's no "right" answer, just a variety of tools you can use to make your game what you want it to be.

Chapter One: An Introduction — The basics of **Wraith** and a first step into the world of the Restless Dead

Chapter Two: The Underworld — A look at the world of **Wraith**, from the lands of the living to the deepest heart of Oblivion and the society of the dead

Chapter Three: Rules — A walk through the rules that define **Wraith** and all its systems

Chapter Four: Character Creation — How to create a character for **Wraith**, from first concept to finishing touches

Chapter Five: Traits and Guilds — Detailed writeups of the various character traits and powers that go into a wraith character, as well as an introduction to the Guilds who practice the various ghostly Arcanoi

Chapter Six: The Shadow — A guide to the dark side of every wraith's personality, both the concept and how to build one. Also included are rules and techniques for Harrowings

Chapter Seven: Storytelling — Advice and techniques for running **Wraith** games, from gothic horror to undead adventure to horror comedy

Chapter Eight: Systems — The nuts and bolts of gameplay, from traveling between levels of the Underworld to experience points and everything in between

Chapter Nine: Drama — A reference for the common structures and actions of a **Wraith** game, from scene composition to rules for combat

Chapter Ten: Antagonists — A guide to Spectres (wraiths who have succumbed to Oblivion) and other, more dangerous denizens of the Underworld

Chapter 11: The Risen — Rules and concepts for playing and storytelling Risen, wraiths who've climbed back into their bodies and been set loose in the Skinlands

Chapter 12: The World of Darkness — Mediums, vampires, ghost hunters, werewolves and more, how they interact with the Restless Dead, and how to integrate them into a chronicle

Chapter 13: The Dark Kingdoms — Stygia isn't the only place the dead go when they cross over.

Appendix: Orpheus — A guide to integrating the world of **Orpheus** — living mortals who infiltrate the Underworld — into **Wraith**.

Roles

The Storyteller

very story needs a storyteller, and the ones you create collectively playing **Wraith** are no exception. The Storyteller is equal parts director, deity, and casting agent for the game. It's their responsibility to craft the outline of the game narrative, to prepare the material the players are going to encounter, and to take the parts of everyone else in the world — living and dead — that the players' characters will encounter. They have to be ready to improvise to meet the challenge of what the players might do, and to play a dozen parts in a dozen minutes if necessary in order to populate the slice of the afterlife in which their campaign takes place.

But most importantly, a Storyteller's role is to make sure that everyone is having fun. That doesn't mean catering to everyone's whims and giving each character exactly what they want. Nor does it mean bowing to every player request to make sure that everyone goes home happy. Rather, it means telling a story that each of the players feels like they're an integral part of. It means making sure that everyone is involved — if not at every single moment — and comfortable. And it means understanding that the story being told belongs to everyone — Storyteller and players alike — so that players don't run amuck and storytellers don't railroad players down a plot track they have no interest in following.

In more practical terms, the Storyteller is also the arbiter of the rules of the game. It's the Storyteller who decides what rolls are made when, and when it's good to fudge the results a little in order to make for better drama. It's also the Storyteller's role to enforce the rules of the world, to ensure that the playing field is level for everyone. As such, it's important for aspiring Storytellers to be at least reasonably familiar with the contents of this book, especially the basics of the world and the core systems

for things like dice rolls, health, Shadows, Harrowings, and suchlike. That doesn't mean needing to memorize every word — the book is, after all, designed as a reference for play — but it does mean knowing how to keep the game running smoothly, and being willing to double-check on things you don't know.

Storytelling **Wraith** can be challenging. It can also be incredibly rewarding. Bringing the world of the dead to life for you and your players can make for play sessions that are enjoyable, moving, and emotionally powerful. And at the end of each session, you'll have a story that belongs to you and your players alone.

For more on the Storyteller's role, see Chapter Seven.

The Player

No Storyteller can function without players, the actors in the drama they create together. Players each take one major (and one minor — more on that later) part in the world, creating a player character to serve as their avatar in the Underworld. This character is a wraith, one of the Restless Dead, and it's how they choose to interact with the story: a collection of traits, skills, powers, and narrative elements that make for a unique personality. When play starts, the player puts on the guise of their character, reacting as they would in a sort of improvisational theater supplemented with rules to describe actions and interactions. It's the player who decides what their character does and doesn't do, and who interacts with the other players as part of the group. Every word the wraith says and every action they take comes from the player.

But there's a twist. Each wraith also has a dark side, called The Shadow. And each player, in addition to playing their wraith, also takes a turn playing another character's Shadow. There'll be more on this later in the book, but this style of play, called Shadowguiding, provides a unique play experience, and the chance to take on multiple roles during a single campaign.

Ultimately, it's the player's responsibility to play — to interact with the Storyteller and the other players. That doesn't mean being in the spotlight at every single moment, but it does mean being involved, active, and aware of the rules and the ongoing story. Got that, and you're good to go.

Because really, what's better than telling a story with your friends?

Character

As noted above, playing **Wraith** means making a character. **Wraith** characters are ghosts, members of the Restless Dead who have unfinished business on Earth or in the hereafter. It is the player's job to figure out, with some help from the Storyteller and maybe the other players, who their unique character is. That means both coming up with a name and a backstory (for example: "Bob was a firefighter who was killed while rescuing a small child from a fiery death"), and following the rules of character creation to build your character's capabilities according to the rules. That allows you to know what your wraith can and can't do, while also helping you figure out who they are, how'd they react to things, and what they hope to achieve.

The more fully fleshed out a **Wraith** character is, the easier it is to play them. Beyond the dots on the character sheet that say how strong they are, it's useful to know what really makes them tick. Where are they from? What did they do for a living? Did they leave family or loved ones behind when they passed on? The more questions like that you can answer, the more real your character becomes, and the easier it is to play them through the ever-changing scenario of a **Wraith** campaign.

Winners and Losers

Nobody wins a game of **Wraith**. Nobody loses, either, at least not in the traditional sense. Characters may triumph or fall, but the story goes on to the next chapter. The cast may change along the way as players decide a particular character's story has come to an end, but that doesn't mean the player's role ends as well. Even if a character is destroyed, that's just an opportunity to take on a new role and try new adventures.

Which is another way of saying that playing **Wraith** means setting aside old ideas of what you're getting out of a game. It's the experience that matters, whether that's helping fend off a wave of Spectres or coming to grips with one of the things that's keeping your character from moving on. You can win fights or lose them; you can also "win" without rolling dice or facing a single enemy, simply by playing a scene in a way that's rewarding to you and the people you're playing with. Success is in telling a satisfying story. Everything else is just details.

Playing Aids

There are very few physical requirements for playing **Wraith**. You'll need enough ten-sided dice for the group, as well as pencils and printed character sheets if you're going hardcopy. Beyond that, it's all set dressing. Use whatever works to make your game more enjoyable and get you and your fellow players in the mood, though you should draw the line at props that make other players uncomfortable. Spooky music, lit candles, clanking chains, letters and old newspaper clippings and more, all of these can enhance a game and make the experience more immersive. Just remember that the props should always be there in the service of the story, and not the other way around.

Terms

In this chapter and the ones that follow, there will be a great many specific (and sometimes capitalized) terms used to describe elements of **Wraith**. A complete glossary of these terms is at the end of this chapter.

Live-Action

Live-action roleplaying, or LARP, takes players away from the table and lets them act out their characters in real time. Instead of describing what your wraith is saying

and doing, you get to say and do it yourself, removing a layer between you and your character.

LARPing **Wraith** can be a little tricky — no one has figured out a way to walk through walls, for example — which means adapting rules or using rules sets like the ones in **Mind's Eye Theatre.** At the same time, live-action play can offer an enjoyable variation on the Wraith experience, with the possibility of larger games, more emergent gameplay, and character cosplay. The specific rules you use matter less than making sure everyone has a good time.

The Basics

What Is a Wraith?

Everybody dies with unfinished business. For most people, it's not enough to keep them from moving on to whatever's next, be it Heaven, Hell, another incarnation, or the eternal void that is Oblivion. But for a few, the pull of things left undone is enough to keep them tied, however tenuously, to this existence. These are the Restless Dead.

These are wraiths.

Simply put, wraiths are the spirits of the dead who, for whatever reason, have not moved on from the trappings of their lives. Some cling to the things, places, and people that they love. These things, called Fetters, bind them to the lands of the living and anchor them against the insatiable pull of Oblivion. Others have come to terms with their ghostly existence and have continued to dwell in the Underworld long after all the countries they once dwelt in have crumbled to dust.

Suspended between life and death, wraiths must deal with the challenges of their new existence. They may choose to stay close to the lands of the living, interacting with the so-called Skinlands and haunting those who yet draw breath. Others move into the deeper Underworld, taking a part in — or taking up arms against — Stygia, the ancient empire of the dead.

In **Wraith: The Oblivion**, you play the part of a wraith, one of these restless spirits who still has work to do. Caught between the relentless gravity of Oblivion, the perilous existence of a wraith in the empire of the dead, and the ever-more-distant lands of the living, you must find a way to carry on.

The Underworld

A breath away but vast beyond human comprehension, the lands of the dead are collectively called The Underworld. Stygia, the Tempest, and the Shadowlands are where most wraiths spend the bulk of their existences, but the Far Shores, the Labyrinth, and the Void are also part of the so-called Deadlands.

Sitting across the Underworld from Stygia, the Far Shores are an endless archipelago of islands in the Sunless Sea. Some wraiths believe paradise can be found here, or Hell; explorers who've ventured that far say they've found both, lorded over by would-be gods and devils. In truth, no one knows what the Far Shores hold, but the empire has forbidden journeying there.

Howling beneath the placid surface of the waters is the Tempest, the eternal storm where Spectres roam free and Ferrymen silently pole their rafts to unknown purpose. Rare islands of stability exist within the endless winds; Stygia is built on one, and other Dark Kingdoms are known to stand against the storm as well. There are also safe paths, called Byways, through the storm. Their locations are known to only a few, and they are jealously guarded.

At the heart of the storm is a monstrous, constantly shifting Labyrinth. This is where Spectres dwell and the monstrous Neverborn slumber, dreaming of destruction. Every horrific landscape imaginable can be found here, along with some that defy imagination. And at the very center of the Labyrinth is the mouth of the Void, the sucking maw of Oblivion made manifest and deadly.

The Core Rules of Play

Certain boundaries should not be crossed, whether you're sitting at the game table or LARPing in full costumed splendor. **Wraith** games are for everyone playing them, which means:

No Touching — Always respect other players' boundaries. Getting physical crosses a line, even if you're just trying to demonstrate the move your character is trying to make. Tabletop or LARP, respect other players' space.

Know When to Stop — Emotional boundaries are just as important as physical ones, and **Wraith** can touch on some dark material. Be willing to stop play and step back a bit, or abandon a plotline if it's causing someone distress.

No Weapons — Weapons can make for glorious pieces of costuming, but they can also cause accidents or get misunderstood by bystanders (if, say, you're LARPing in a public space). Props are fine, but the real thing potentially presents too many disruptions.

Respect the People Who Aren't Playing — If you're in a public space, whether it's a table in a game store or a LARP in a coffeehouse, try to be aware and respectful of the people around you. They may not know what you're doing, so overenthusiastic declarations of intent to cause in-game mayhem may accidentally produce out-of-game consequences. And be willing to explain what you're doing to curious passersby. Who knows, you might get yourself another player that way.

Not every Byway leads down. Some instead take the traveler to the Shadowlands, a layer of reality that sits atop the Skinlands of the living like a translucent blanket. Full of memories and echoes given form — destroyed buildings and ancient roads — it is where many ghosts with strong Fetters still dwell. The Shroud, a membrane of fear and disbelief, separates the Shadowlands from the Skinlands. Where it grows thin, wraiths can affect the living more easily and places acquire reputations for being haunted.

Of course, this doesn't match any faith's view of the afterlife. Stygia is neither Heaven nor Hell, though many of its denizens joke that it just might be Purgatory. Most humans who die never appear in the Underworld. What happens to them, the Restless Dead do not know.

But despite its horrors and excesses, most wraiths readily concede it's better that the visible alternative. And so the streets of Stygia are full of the Restless Dead, born of every age from ancient Athens to the modern day, all holding the line against Oblivion in their own way, and for as long as it takes.

Wraith Characteristics

Being one of the Restless Dead isn't all bad. You may be on the wrong side of the Shroud, but every wraith does possess certain abilities as a byproduct of their ghostly nature:

Insubstantiality — The basic element of the ghostly condition, being insubstantial is both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, it allows wraiths to walk through walls, let bullets, fists, and speeding cars pass right through them, and otherwise laugh off the perils of the physical world. On the other hand, being unable to touch anything makes it that much more difficult for wraiths to affect the lands of the living.

Deathsight — Being dead literally affects one's outlook. Being dead, wraiths see the world as broken down and dying. Plants look withered, humans have a corpse-like pallor, and buildings look like they're about to crumble. It's a result of wraiths being able to instinctively sense how much something has been tainted by the touch of Oblivion. The more ramshackle it — or they — appear, the more heavily it's been affected. On the more practical side, this also allows wraiths to see an object's weak points, and to assess the general health of a living being.

Lifesight — Just as they can see death, wraiths can also see life. Every wraith is capable of seeing the auras around living beings, the swirling shells of color that change from moment to moment according to their health, mood, and state of mind. With a little practice, wraiths can use this ability to get a reading on what one of the Quick is likely to do next, and if they're lying.

Sharpened Senses — The Restless have incredibly sharp senses. They can pick up the faintest scents, hear whispered conversations, and pick out the tiniest details when they set

their minds to it. On the other hand, loud noises, bright lights, and other forms of sensory overload can temporarily overwhelm or even harm them.

The Shadow

The devil on the shoulder, the imp of the perverse, the little voice in the back of your head telling you to do the thing you really shouldn't — for wraiths, that voice is all too real. It's called the Shadow, and it has a will of its own. Every wraith's worst enemy lives inside their mind, constantly urging them down the path to Oblivion. The Shadow is a part of a wraith — the part bent on self-destruction — and it maintains an independent, malign existence inside the wraith's head.

Selfish, sadistic, and seductive, the Shadow will bribe, cajole, threaten and occasionally take control, all in the interest of edging the wraith one step closer to the eternal precipice. They can offer power and assistance, using their unique gifts, called Thorns. But that assistance always comes at a price, and that price is always too high.

There is no conflict a wraith faces as deadly, as vicious, and as relentless as the one they fight alone against their Shadow. The Shadow is an enemy who can never be vanquished, and who knows the wraith's darkest secrets and hidden weaknesses intimately. Psyche and Shadow are locked in combat for all eternity, and the greatest triumphs and most crushing defeats a wraith can face take place on the battlefield of their own soul.

More information about the Shadow can be found in Chapter Six.

Oblivion

The ultimate enemy for all of the Restless Dead is, simply put, Oblivion. It is the ultimate force of negation, the destruction of all things. It taints everything it touches. It fuels the Shadow and marshals legions of Spectres — wraiths who have given in to its blandishments — as the soldiers in its neverending war on all of reality. Most wraiths believe that Oblivion is the inevitable end of the road, which is why they cling so tightly to the Fetters that anchor them against Oblivion's pull. But even those Fetters can fade or break, and untold millions of wraiths have been swallowed by the Void over the centuries.

Transcendence

There are those among the Restless, however, who hold that there is another way. Transcendence, an ascent to a higher state of being, is their hope and their watchword, and they struggle endlessly toward it. Of course, just as among the living, there are disagreements among the Restless as to how to achieve this state. A thousand and one paths to Transcendence have been described, but how many actually lead there, no one knows.

Regardless, Transcendence is a beacon of hope in the Underworld, a counterweight to the omnipresent darkness of Oblivion. And it is the stories of Transcendence, as much as the walls of the citadels and the tug of earthly Fetters, that encourage wraiths to keep resisting Oblivion.

The Passion and the Horror

Those two words define **Wraith** more than any other. Every wraith is driven by Passion. It is what allows them to carry on in the face of Oblivion. Without the powerful drive to do something — protect a loved one, fight injustice, wreak vengeance on enemies — a wraith is just a shell. Passion is what drives a wraith to act, and in acting, stay the hand of Oblivion.

But **Wraith** is a game of dualities. The flip side to Passion's coin is horror. Wraiths are dead, and they dwell in an Underworld capable of eternal torment and cruelty. Monsters older than the universe lurk in the corridors of the Labyrinth, and every one of the Restless has to deal with the demon living in their own head. The faint light of the possibility of Transcendence merely allows the horrors of the Underworld to cast longer, deeper shadows.

Passion and horror, hope and fear, action and destruction — these dichotomies collide in **Wraith**. Passion without horror to overcome is wasted, while horror that does not inspire passion is weak. Where the two intersect and are intertwined forever, that is where you will find the Restless Dead.

Lexicon

new existence calls for new terms with which to describe it. Below are some of the terms used to define Underworld existence.

Angst: The negative mental energy that the Shadow (and Spectres) feed upon and use.

Arcanos: One of the supernatural abilities that wraiths possess, allowing them to affect the living and the dead. Plural is Arcanoi.

Arisen: Wraiths who have Transcended.

Artifact: An object in the Underworld that has unusual powers of some sort.

Body Snatcher: A wraith who possesses the living.

Byway: A safe path through the Tempest.

Caste: The term for the various types of Spectres, ranging from Striplings and Doppelgangers all the way up to the godlike Neverborn.

Caul, The: The amniotic sac of a wraith's birth into the Shadowlands. The translucent covering made from ectoplasm into which all wraiths are reborn.

Charon: The founder of Stygia and, for centuries, its emperor. He vanished in 1945, fighting the monstrous Spectre Gorool in the Fifth Great Maelstrom.

Circle: A group of wraiths. They usually share a common goal or interest.

Citadel: The central building and stronghold of a Necropolis. It serves as local Hierarchy HQ and the last line of defense against Maelstroms.

Consort: A member of the Quick attuned to being used as a Host by a wraith.

Corpus: The physical "body" of a wraith.

Dark Kingdom: General term for one of the many lands of the dead. Stygia is far from the only one.

Deathlord: The leader of a Legion and member of the council currently ruling Stygia.

Dictum Mortuum: Charon's decree forbidding interfering with mortals. It is honored largely in the breach.

Doomsday: The end of the world. Most wraiths think it means the day Oblivion swallows everything, but any number of Heretic cults would beg to differ.

Doomshade: A term for Spectre, generally used by older wraiths and mocked by younger ones.

Doomslayer: A wraith who specializes in hunting Spectres.

Drone: The shell of a wraith, doomed to endlessly repeat one task over and over again. They are responsible for the majority of ghost sightings by the Quick.

Enfant: A wraith just reborn into the Underworld. Enfants are usually encased in Cauls.

Far Shores, The: The endless series of islands across the Tempest from Stygia. Some wraiths think they host Paradise.

Ferryman: One of a mysterious group of ancient, powerful wraiths who guide travelers through the Tempest.

Fetters: Those things that remain in the lands of the living that tie a wraith to her old life.

Fronds: Powers the Psyche can use to affect the world around it.

Freewraith: A citizen of Stygia who is not actively serving as a soldier. When a Maelstrom hits, however, everyone is considered part of the reserve.

Great Maelstrom: A massive Maelstrom, capable of reshaping the Underworld. There have been five so far in the history of Stygia.

Guild: One of the supposedly banned organizations dedicated to the study of the Arcanoi. Each Arcanos has a Guild associated with it. There are 13 Greater and three Lesser Guilds.

Harrowing: The nightmare trip through the dark side of a wraith's subconscious that occurs when they are gravely wounded or otherwise facing destruction. Many wraiths never emerge from their Harrowings.

Harvesting: The act of cutting Enfants free from their Cauls and initiating them into the Underworld. Not all Harvesting is done altruistically.

Haunt: A place where the Restless make themselves at home and the Shroud is thin.

Helldiver: A wraith who voluntarily ventures into the Labyrinth, either to hunt Spectres or to retrieve materials and Artifacts. Most wraiths regard Helldivers as suicidal.

Hierarchy, The: Officially, the bureaucratic apparatus of Stygia. At this point, the two entities are interchangeable in most wraiths' minds.

Heretics: Religious fanatics among the dead. Most Heretic groups are tolerated by the Hierarchy, though a few are outlawed and actively persecuted. Most Heretic beliefs revolve around Transcendence.

Host: One of the Quick, possessed by means of the Puppetry Arcanos.

Isle of Sorrows, The: The island in the center of the Tempest upon which Stygia stands.

Juice: A slang term for Pathos.

Legacy: A very potent Fetter. Largely used by older wraiths.

Legions: The divisions of the populace of Stygia, defined by how their members died. Each Legion is ruled by a Deathlord. The term "Legions" is also used specifically to describe the armies and bureaucracy of the empire.

Lemure: A young wraith, generally one who has come to grips with their new existence but hasn't been around more than a decade or two.

Maelstrom: Monstrous storms that roar out of the mouth of the Void to hammer Stygia and the Shadowlands. They carry Spectres and other, less identifiable things on their winds, and are generally triggered by horrific events in the Skinlands.

Mitty: A wraith whose main regret is not having done anything with their life. The Hierarchy is full of them.

Necropolis: A citadel of the dead, usually manned by the Legions. Often found in the oldest parts of a city or the ones most thickly populated by wraiths. Plural is Necropoli.

Neverborn: The members of the oldest and most powerful caste of Spectre, who slumber in the Labyrinth. Even other Spectres are careful not to wake them up.

Nhudri: The mysterious smith Charon retrieved from the Labyrinth, whose discoveries set the stage for much of Stygia's development.

Nihils: Tears in the fabric of reality, temporary or permanent. Many exert their own gravitational pull, sucking down any wraith nearby when they open. Some, but not all, lead directly to the Labyrinth.

Oblivion: The corrupting hunger of Entropy to devour all things. It manifests in the Underworld as the Void, which is located at the heart of the Labyrinth. Also known as *The Great Unmaking*, as well as several less flattering things.

Obolus: The base unit of Stygian currency, forged out of one soul.

Onyx Tower: The palace of the lost Emperor Charon, abandoned since his battle with Gorool.

Pathos: The energy of pure emotion, which wraiths feed upon and use to fuel their existences.

Plasm: The physical matter of the Underworld. Wraiths, Artifacts, plasmics and pretty much everything else in the Underworld is made of one form of plasm or another.

Plasmic: One of the strange, monstrous beasts that dwells in the Tempest.

Psyche: The brighter side of a wraith's personality, capable of looking beyond self-destruction. In Spectres, it serves the same role as the Shadow.

Quick, The: One of the living.

Reaper: A wraith who removes an Enfant's Caul.

Relic: The ghost of an object, made out of plasm.

Renegades: A catch-all term for wraiths who oppose Stygia. Most exist outside the Hierarchy's effective zone of control. They range from armed resistance groups to members of independent communities to roving ruffians.

Restless, The: Another name for wraiths (not Spectres) in general.

Risen: A wraith who has struck a deal with her Shadow allowing her to reanimate her corpse. Exceedingly rare, they are regarded as urban legends by most wraiths.

Shadow, The: The self-absorbed, self-destructive, sentient side of a wraith's personality bent on eventually dragging him down to Oblivion.

Shadowlands, The: The ghostly realm just across the Shroud from the lands of the living.

Skinlands, The: The level of reality where the Quick live. It is difficult, but not always impossible, for wraiths to affect.

Slumber: A deep sleep that wraiths can use to heal.

Soulfire: Crystals of concentrated Pathos, used for soulforging.

Soulsteel: The substance made from the transfigured substance of wraiths. Very durable and very expensive, but not always comfortable to be around.

Spectre: A wraith who has given into Oblivion. Their Shadow is now dominant, and they work to serve Oblivion's goals. Also known as Shadow-Eaten.

Stormrunning: Taking a shortcut directly through the Tempest. It is considered extremely risky.

Stygia: The colloquial name for the Dark Kingdom of Iron, the largest group of wraiths in the Western world. Stygia is also the name of the capital city, called "The Eternal City," which is scavenged from the destroyed monuments of history and sits in the middle of the Tempest

Tempest, The: The endless storm that rages through the Underworld. It separates the Shadowlands from the Far Shores and Stygia. Only the bravest wraiths dare sail it regularly.

Thorns: Powers the Shadow can use to affect the world.

Thrall: The term for a wraith bound in service to another.

Tithe: The amount of Pathos a wraith draws from a Fetter or Haunt.

Transcendence: The moment when a wraith moves on to a higher plane of existence. Considered legendary by many, it is thought by others to be the moment when a wraith reconciles their Shadow and Psyche, creating a unified whole.

Underworld, The: A catch-all term for the lands of the dead, from the Shadowlands to the Far Shores and encompassing Stygia and the other Dark Kingdoms, the Labyrinth, the Tempest, and the Void.

Veinous Stair: The winding stairwell that runs from the heart of Stygia to the depths of the Labyrinth. Its exact location is a secret.

Void, The: The abyss at the center of the Labyrinth.

Wraith: Also known as the Restless, a ghost with such strong attachments to the land of the living that she is bound to this level of existence.

Source Material

host stories provide a particularly rich vein of inspiration for **Wraith**. From the classics — think *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, not to mention Dickens, and Saul's biblical visit to the Witch of Endor to summon up the shade of the prophet Samuel — to more recent hauntings like *The Blair Witch Project* and *Ghost Hunters*, there's plenty of ghostly material to choose from. Here are some that may be particularly useful.

Recommended readings include:

A Manhattan Ghost Story — T. M. Wright
Drawing Blood — Poppy Z. Brite
Ghost Story — Peter Straub
Ghost Stories of An Antiquary — M.R. James
The Haunting of Hill House — Shirley Jackson
Heart-Shaped Box — Joe Hill
Our Town — Thornton Wilder
The Shining — Stephen King
The Turn of the Screw — Henry James

Recommended viewing includes:

American Horror Story: Murder House
Bedlam
Beetlejuice
The Changeling
The Conjuring
The Devil's Backbone
The Fades
The Frighteners
Insidious
Mama
Poltergeist
Ringu
Session 9
The Shining
The Sixth Sense

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The world of **Wraith** is not our world, though to the casual observer they may look remarkably similar. But a closer look shows the subtle differences, the deeper shadows and lurking darkness that defines the place where the Restless Dead walk. There's still beauty in this world, still love and faith and hope that can inspire a soul even beyond the grave. But at the same time, it is a world of pain and fear and terror, a version of our world as we are afraid it might be. The light of the human spirit still burns brightly, but the shadows it casts are darker and longer, and highlight decay rather than hiding it.

Perhaps this is due to the metaphysical nearness of the so-called Shadowlands, the part of the Underworld that drapes over the lands of the living like a spectral cloak. Surely the proximity of the lands of the dead to the realm of the living must have some chilling effect. Then again, the world as seen through the eyes of a wraith has never been a pretty place. It is truly a World of Darkness, one in which the flares of passion and defiance rise up, shine brightly, and then all too often are snuffed out.

This chapter describes, in detail, the world of **Wraith**. It covers everything from the basic metaphysics of ghostly existence to the history of Stygia, empire of the dead, to the peculiar geography of the Underworld. Anything a well-educated wraith needs to know is here.

Geography and Metaphysics

The Skinlands

In ghostly parlance, the lands of the living are known as the Skinlands. You or I would find ourselves largely at home there; the geography is the same, as is the (official) history, the content of the pop charts and the name of a given street sign. But because this is the World of Darkness, there's an edge to it that is sometimes absent here. Winds blow colder and dirtier. Skyscrapers are both more ornate and more impenetrable to those who don't belong inside. Cities are more crowded and closer to the brink; streets are more mazelike, with fewer lights and more dead ends. Even more than in our world, the citadels of the rich are clean and elegant and somehow removed from the workaday reality others must deal with. And there is a subtle dread that permeates everything, an unspoken expectation that something is always about to go wrong.

The world of **Wraith** tilts heavily toward the gothic side of the gothic punk equation. Cathedrals boast more gargoyles scowling along their rooflines and architecture

suggests the 19th century as much as the 21st. Bureaucracies are larger, more inefficient, and more impersonal. The sounds of excess rise from the gardens of the lucky few, while outside the shadows grow longer and colder every day.

But that's not to dismiss the punk aspect as well. Counterculture is vibrant and sometimes violent, throwing bricks through the roseate windows of cathedrals that tower over old neighborhoods. The streets are unsafe and anarchy reigns everywhere it isn't forcibly clubbed back into the underground. While many who dwell in the Skinlands choose lives of quiet desperation, there are always those who are determined to burn bright and fast, reveling in every sensation the world has to offer.

It is a haunted world, and a dangerous one, both for the living and the dead. Wraiths can cross over into the Skinlands from the Underworld by use of powers called Arcanoi, but by and large they can only do so briefly. Even to attempt to do so is dangerous, for the laws of Stygia forbid contact with the world of the living, and other dangers lurk as well. Some places in the Skinlands are more easily breached by the dead than others. They often acquire reputations as haunted, and are usually abandoned by all but the desperate and the foolhardy.

Meanwhile, the living go about their business unaware of the world that moves alongside their own. And on those rare occasions when they are made aware of its existence, they do their best to forget what they've seen.

The Shroud and the Fog

The realms of the dead are collectively known as the Underworld, and they are separated from the Skinlands by a thin membrane of reality known as the Shroud. Invisible, and yet largely impenetrable, it allows the Restless to see the world of the living but prevents them from interacting with it. Stygian metaphysicists argue over what exactly comprises the Shroud, whether it be fear or disbelief or something far stranger, but what is known is that the Shroud was not always there. Before it existed, the living and the dead walked freely with one another, but as time passed and societies grew more fearful, the Shroud arose.

The Shroud is not always of a uniform thickness. In some places, particularly those where wraiths have violated Charon's law and repeatedly crossed the Shroud, it is worn thin. Places where the Shroud is worn down in this way are often claimed as Haunts by enterprising wraiths, who take advantage of the ease of Skinlands interaction as best they can.

The Fog, on the other hand, exists solely in the minds of the living. It's the term wraiths use for the defense mechanism that prevents humans from recognizing and remembering evidence of ghostly activity. Born from the innate fear of death, the Fog is the little voice telling you that it must have been the wind pushing that door open, that the ghostly reflection you saw in a mirror was just a trick of the light, and that there's no possible way you could have seen blood dripping from the walls.

Not everyone is susceptible to the Fog. Children and animals in particular are immune to its effects, perhaps because they don't comprehend or fear death. Cats in particular are known for watching wraiths through the Shroud, and for reacting in unexpected ways to their presence in the Skinlands.

The Underworld

The Underworld is the collective term for all of the realms of the dead, from the Shadowlands that border on the lands of the living to the hellish depths of the Labyrinth, indescribably far away. The Underworld doesn't exist as a singular place. Rather, it's best thought of as a sort of onion-like metaphysical structure, with layers within layers that somehow keep getting bigger the further in you go. Scratch the surface of the Shadowlands and underneath you'll find the roiling eternal storm of the Tempest. Go deep into the Tempest and you'll find islands of stability — Stygia and the other kingdoms of the dead and eventually, the legendary Far Shores. Dive into the heart of the Tempest and you'll find the monstrous, ever-changing maze called the Labyrinth that serves as a home to the uncounted armies of Spectres. And at the center of the Labyrinth is the maw of Oblivion itself. All these are considered part of the Underworld, though each offers unique attributes and dangers.

Gaze Upon My Works

The scenery in the Underworld can rarely be described as "beautiful." It is the resting place for all of history's ghosts; the torn-down buildings and shattered monuments all come to rest here, to be scavenged by the Restless Dead. Nothing grows here save the rare, stunted trees that line the banks of the Great River, and scenes of overwhelming horror can erupt at any moment. And yet it is also a world that wraiths cling to with unparalleled ferocity, one that can be fired by the strength of eternal love or defiant hope. Even in the desolation of the Shadowlands or the whirling chaos of the Tempest, there can be beauty.

Oblivion

At its most basic level, Oblivion is the force of passive destruction in the universe. It is the gaping maw of entropy, waiting patiently to devour everything in due time. Those who pass into the Void are gone forever, absorbed into the long dark and removed from this plane of existence.

But a little Oblivion goes a long way, and in the Underworld, it's a far more vital force than one might expect. Not content to simply wait for time to bring it sustenance, it reaches out through its agents to hasten the inevitable decline of creation. It is Oblivion's touch that turns wraiths into shadow-eaten Spectres, and that gives voice and power to the Shadow inside every wraith's mind. It's Oblivion that fuels the nightmare

monstrosities of the Labyrinth and that sucks the material of its twisted walls out of the Tempest. And it is Oblivion that belches forth Maelstroms, the savage storms that scour the Underworld and devour the weak and unlucky. Sooner or later, all things must fall to Oblivion, but it would prefer sooner.

Physically, Oblivion manifests as the Void, the ultimate emptiness. The so-called Mouth of the Void, the gateway to this ever-expanding nothingness, rests at the heart of the Labyrinth. If there can be said to be an "up" and a "down" in the Underworld, the Mouth of the Void rests at its very lowest point. Nothing that enters its impenetrable darkness ever returns.

Surrounding the Mouth of the Void like a particularly warped seashell around a particularly unpleasant mollusk is the Labyrinth, the unending maze of passages stocked with horrors and home to countless Spectres. It's impossible to say how large the Labyrinth is, as it is constantly shifting in size and even the few stable landmarks are subject to sudden dislocation. The flotsam of reality drifts down here, broken relics and abandoned Artifacts and Shadow-Eaten souls who have no more use for the light. Ancient Spectres, the so-called Neverborn, slumber uneasily in vast temples carved out by their spectral servants, while the laws of physics reverse themselves on a whim from corridor to corridor. Few wraiths venture here voluntarily, and fewer still return.

History of the Dark Kingdom of Iron

To those who existed and struggled through the birth and continued existence of the western world's lands of the dead, a few great moments of that journey are painted in vivid detail. They are the highlights of a long, and often brutal, battle to prolong existence beyond death and reach the acceptance of themselves that allows wraiths to move on to a hoped-for higher realm of being. As with any history or great piece of artwork, not every detail is portrayed or examined to the nth degree. Some mysteries (and even some outright exaggerations or hidden truths) remain, for to know a thing so well that it loses all wonder is to destroy whatever value it once had. This, then, is the usually agreed-upon basic history of this shadowed realm.

A Time Before Time

There was a time before time began, a time before dark and light were divided, when living and dead existed separated only by a gossamer veil. The living could pass into the shadows and speak with the dead — to hear their wisdom or to bear messages from the dead to those they left behind. In like manner the dead could find their way back into the world of the living to visit loved ones or enemies without any hindrance to their return. Though not alive, they could interact with the living world in small ways. Stories are told of living heroes who made that crossing and returned to tell of their journeys.

In that long and shadowed time, the lands of the dead remained ill-defined at best. The souls in the lands of the dead wandered through a hazy landscape composed of misremembered dreams and hopes, of foggy, dim memories and terrifying fears. Many sought some way to return to the world of the living or to move on and find peace and contentment in some recognizable afterlife.

The Sundering

None know how long it was, or what might have caused such a thing to happen, but a great convulsion shook the earth, tearing a rift between the world of the living and that of the dead. This catastrophe forced the two realms apart, erecting a barrier called the Shroud between them. This barrier permanently separated the realms of the living and the dead, allowing only the souls of the newly dead to cross. The lands of the living, or as the Restless Dead called them, the Quick, became known as the Skinlands. The vast and uncharted world on the other side of the Shroud, the realm of the dead, was the Underworld.

Oblivion

At one time, Oblivion was not a ravenous corrupter. Rather, it was the manifestation of passive destruction, the void into which all things eventually fell when their time came. It did not seek out prey, as it did not need to. In time, all things came to it, dying in order to make room for the new. It was, in this pure incarnation, an essential part of the cycle of life and death.

And with the shock that separated the living from the dead, all of that suddenly changed.

Once, wraiths had roamed a world made up of memories and dreams, occasionally drifting away when they no longer had a sufficient sense of self to continue. But with the rising of the Shroud, Oblivion awoke, and it was hungry. Reaching out, it stirred a sleeping part of every wraith's mind, the vicious, selfish, despairing heart of darkness in every soul, and gave it voice. The Shadow now tore at wraiths from within their souls, urging them down the endless slope to Oblivion and tormenting them if they resisted.

The Labyrinth

Oblivion also birthed gruesome and loathsome children — twisted and filled with hatred — and loosed these monsters on the Underworld. These monstrous beings were known as Malfeans, and they gnawed endless, twisted tunnels in the very fabric of reality that underpinned the afterlife, carving it into a mind-blasting Labyrinth. This maze became their prison, an ever-shifting nest that became home to all the foulness and Shadow-Eaten of the Underworld. And at its heart was the maw of Oblivion, always ravenous.

The Lady of Fate

Amid the chaos and upheaval that shook the Underworld, a great hope emerged for the Restless Dead. The Lady of Fate stood before the fearful, trembling masses of souls and prophesied that a great leader would rise up in the Underworld. He would journey down the River of Death and guide souls who had made it through the rift to the safety of the Far Shores, where they might find eternal shelter from Oblivion. Hearing her, many wraiths took heart and felt a renewed will to resist the whispers of their Shadows and the pull of the void.

While this was her first act in defining the shape of the Underworld, it would hardly be the Lady of Fate's last. She is perhaps the single most influential wraith in all of creation, the wise advisor who foretold Charon's coming and counseled him even when his hubris led him astray. While others have faded with the centuries, she endures and, in her own way, watches over what she helped create.

Charon

Finally, from the dead of Mycenae, the one of whom the Lady of Fate had spoken arose. Traveler and guide, he was welcomed into the Underworld by the Lady herself. She gave him a boat woven of the reeds that lined the River of Death, encouraging him to sail its course and learn its mysteries — the secret inlets and tiny coves, wide bays and narrow passages, how it flowed and eddied and where it led. And when he knew it such that he and the river were almost as one, he could then return to guide other souls in their journey toward the promised Far Shores. There, they might find peace and safety from Oblivion and its servants.

Charon fulfilled his charge, spending many years alone exploring the great river. He traced its paths and tributaries through strange and otherworldly places, until he finally came to a wide delta where the river opened upon the great expanse of the Sunless Sea. There he found the river choked with spirits more numerous than grains of sand, stranded and abandoned as they waited for passage across the unknown depths of the vast, dark ocean.

At the river's mouth the delta spread out into reedy marshes and a great, craggy island rose from the sea. That dangerous and forbidding promontory was named the Isle of Sorrows, its coast far too forbidding for any craft to land upon it.

A Word on the Far Shores and Transcendence

Until the Lady of Fate spoke of these concepts, many of the dead had never heard of them. All knew that some who died never came to the Underworld at all, but went on to a reward or punishment elsewhere or were then reborn. Now, however, those destinations had a name — the Far Shores. These were places to where the Restless Dead could journey in order to find their final reward. There, wraiths could find Transcendence, a way for those diverted to the Underworld to let go of whatever tied them to their Restless existence and travel onward — just like the perfected souls that never arrived in the land of the dead at all.

Payment For the Dead

In the beginning, as they had nothing else with which to pay the tithe, the dead might bargain with their services for a time. Fearing that the longer they waited to make the crossing, however, the greater the chance they might fall to despair, some managed to contact those in the Skinlands and ask them to send payment onward as grave goods to render the tithe instead.

Eventually, the idea of the payment for Charon (and later, the Ferrymen) prompted those left behind to put a coin over each eye of the person who died in order to pay for their crossing.

The Lady's Tasks and Charon's Payment

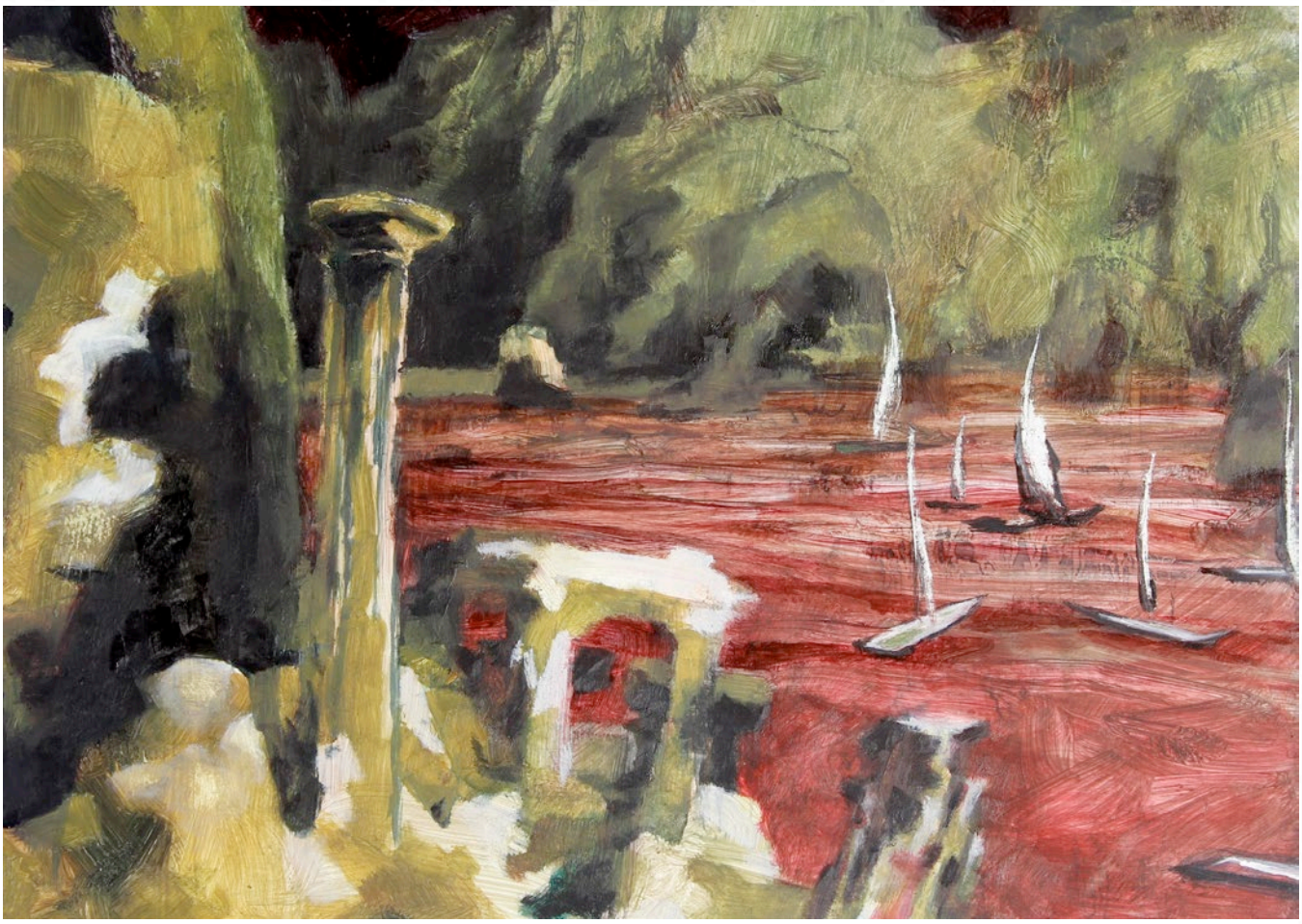
Once again, the Lady of Fate intervened on Charon's behalf, appearing to him and guiding him safely to a hidden landing on the isle. There she spoke to him of things to come. She told him that he would provide guidance and light to the great masses of the wandering dead. In return for his efforts, he would receive a tithe from the dead he assisted, payment for his aid in the crossing over the sunless waters.

Charon went to the wandering dead and told them of the Lady's vision. Inspired by his words, they made him their leader by acclamation. In return, he taught them how to make their own boats like his, woven from the reeds that carpeted the river delta. Many built their crafts and sailed across the Sunless Sea, seeking eternal rest on the Far Shores. But not all could make those journeys for themselves.

The Ferrymen

The Lady spoke of those among the wanderers who still had fetters that bound them to the world of the living. These, she called the Restless. She foretold that they would come to Charon and learn from him the ways of the Underworld, so that they might endure and resist Oblivion until they might find peace. Some among the Restless who learned those arts chose not to follow Charon, but those who did became known as Ferrymen. The Ferrymen pledged themselves to help Charon carry souls down the river and across the Sunless Sea.

Upon the rocky tor of the Isle of Sorrows, the Ferrymen met to exchange ideas and information. They swore a further oath to Charon and their brethren to protect the travelers in



their charge and to defend the Quick from the depredations of the Restless who refused Charon's teachings.

Soon after the Ferrymen formalized their group, many grotesque Spectres rushed forth from the Labyrinth. screaming their defiance and hatred. The Ferrymen met the assault and sheltered their passengers from these horrors, ensuring that the souls in their care would reach the Sunless Sea.

In response to the eruption, several Ferrymen crossed the sea to establish the safest route for carrying souls to the tranquility they sought. As their travels illuminated the way for others to follow, they became known as the Shining Ones. Though saddened by their departure, Charon knew their efforts would hasten the passage to eternal rest for those who came after.

The First Descent

Once again, the Lady of Fate appeared to Charon, convincing him to descend into the Labyrinth to confront Oblivion directly. Heeding her words, he traveled to the Veinous Stair, so named for the bloody, veined marble steps that pulsed with Oblivion's wrath. Armed with a lantern and scythe, Charon entered the great maze, bearing the only light in the utter darkness. No Ferryman followed, but all heard the sounds of great battle emanating from the maw of the Labyrinth and wondered about the fate of their leader.

Nhudri

Emerging from the Labyrinth at last, Charon brought with him a smith wraith named Nhudri, who had been a prisoner of Oblivion. Long experienced in forgecraft, Nhudri knew how to create items using the souls of the dead as his materials. Seeing the value in this, both to create needed items and to keep weak souls from falling to Oblivion by using them thus, Charon gave Nhudri the responsibility for and the power to use his shaping abilities in the Shadowlands.

The Shining Ones Return

When Charon returned from the Labyrinth, he sailed down the River of Death to the Isle of Sorrows. There he used a great horn to summon the Ferrymen to him, telling them of his journey and his confrontation within the darkness. He emphasized that Oblivion was growing and described a terrible pit where the souls of those who were weak or unprotected and of the Restless who refused the call to become Ferrymen were trapped and then thrown down into the Void below.

Charon expressed disappointment with the Ferrymen that they had not been vigilant enough to prevent this, and they responded by redoubling their efforts. Many spread across the Underworld, seeking a way to better fight Oblivion and safeguard

Soulforging

When Nhudri followed Charon from the Labyrinth, he brought with him a hellish forge called Kyklos. Upon this forge Nhudri created items and objects made from the souls of other wraiths. Most common among these were the coins called oboli, which fueled the trade of Stygia. Though Charon felt reservations concerning the enslavement of souls, he realized that Nhudri's talent might save them all from falling to Oblivion.

To create his works, Nhudri took wraiths and plunged portions of their Corpus into the blazing hellflames of Kyklos until they became malleable. Despite the agonized shrieks and frenzied writhing of the victims as they were twisted and deformed, the master (who would become known as the Lord High Artificer) took up his great hammer, beating and shaping them into the items he wished to make. With fire-hardened hands, whispered incantations, and his indomitable will he bound their souls into these objects and trapped them there in permanent shapes, known as Soulsteel. Thus began the art of Soulforging.

the souls in their keeping. Soon after the Ferrymen departed on their mission, the Shining Ones returned to tell of their finding the Far Shores. There, they said, wondrous Halls of the Dead existed. These housed fallen warriors, great thinkers, and virtuous souls of all sorts who feasted together and found the peace they had struggled to achieve in life.

Taking the charts they provided to him, Charon set sail across the Sunless Sea to the Far Shores to see for himself what lay there. He was gone for many years, and the Ferrymen maintained their watch and guarded against Oblivion in his absence.

The Founding of the Empire and Building of Stygia

Charon's return from the Far Shores coincided with the rise of the Roman Republic in the Skinlands. He bore with him seven signs, gifted to him by the Shining Ones who stayed across the Sunless Sea, taking the realms there under their protection. By these signs, Charon was acknowledged to have power over the dead. It was given to him and him alone to be their sole magistrate, to mete out judgment and to decide the fate of all souls in (and yet to come to) the Shadowlands.

He took the seven signs and placed them into a huge iron tablet, which he set up in the Shadowlands. By their authority he created the cornerstone for a new city to be the center of civilization in the Underworld. He took the ghosts of the strongest stones from great cities that had gone before — from Memphis and Babylon, Jericho, Sparta and Athens — to construct a fortress on the Isle of Sorrows. In the center of his new city, atop the highest point of its seven peaks, he raised a towering lighthouse. It shone forth as a beacon of hope and safety for all souls, and as a monument to Charon for the great deeds he had accomplished. This grand, new city, founded upon seven hills on the Isle of Sorrows, was called Stygia.

The Republic of Stygia

As the acknowledged leader of the Restless and bearer of the Shining Ones' mandate to be their judge, Charon instituted the first government of the Restless Dead. Formed using the model of the Roman Republic, so eagerly described by the newly dead, the Republic of Stygia had a Senate that held seven seats, which Charon filled with his most trusted lieutenants. Each senator was granted control over a different part of the land of the dead, with Charon taking the humble title of Consul.

As their first act, the Senate granted lands to Shining Ones near the docks of the Shining Sea. There, they might build temples to act as refuges for the dead waiting to journey to the Far Shores.

They also received emissaries from other, faraway kingdoms that ruled over their dead as Stygia ruled over the European ones. These were known as Dark Kingdoms — that of Asia, which the Stygians called the Dark Kingdom of Jade, and that of Africa, which they dubbed the Dark Kingdom of Ivory. In turn, these ambassadors dubbed Stygia the Dark Kingdom of Iron. Charon and the Senate met frequently with the Ivory Queen, ruler of the African Underworld, and with ministers of the Jade Emperor, discussing common needs, problems, and negotiations among them.

The Golden Age

In the Skinlands, Rome became a great empire under the Caesars. In like fashion, Stygia grew into a Republic with Charon at the helm. From its beginnings as a tiny outpost to its incarnation as a massive citadel built to defy Oblivion, Stygia matured into a just, strong republic over the next few centuries. Those times became known as Stygia's Golden Age.

As decreed by the Lady of Fate, Charon took a tithe from all of the dead who entered the Shadowlands. He gave the tithes to Nhudri for the smith to create the first weapons and armor forged in Stygia, gear that would be given to those who would defend the city. Nhudri then created three very special and important projects with the tithe-ore he smelted: Siklos — Charon's blade which he used as his rod of office, Lumen — Charon's lantern used to illumine the central beacon at the heart of the city, and the Masks of the Senators. When he created the masks, he took from each a small piece to create Charon's mask. The last was a symbolic gesture, to show the Senators and all the dead that Charon was a part of them and they, in turn, a part of him.

Charon enlisted Nhudri's help in a further grand project, the building of a network of roads that cut through the Tempest

and led to the Sunless Sea. As Oblivion grew and fractured the Shadowlands with its Spectres, Charon fought it by creating the roadways webbing the realm to provide secure passage from all corners of the Underworld. As Rome's legions spread in the Skinlands, Charon directed Nhudri to follow them — to Britain, Gaul, Thrace, Jerusalem, Damascus, Iberia and Egypt — to all the lands Rome conquered and made parts of their empire. Roman foot soldiers who died in the battles to conquer these far-off places became soldiers in the Stygian ranks.

Lux Veritatis

The Lady of Fate impressed upon Charon the idea that Oblivion must be fought on every front, not just on the field of battle, but also with the mind and heart. With that as his goal, Charon made his second pronouncement as Consul: Lux Veritatis, or the Light of Truth. By it, Stygia undertook the collection and preservation of humanity's greatest works. All were bidden to collect the finest art and sculpture, the greatest works and thoughts and philosophies of mankind, and beautiful treasures wherever they might be found. These were brought to the imperial city, archived and stored deep beneath the Senate in vaults made especially for the purpose. By this doctrine, Charon hoped to preserve the beauty and wisdom of the ages so that they might be an inspiration to all within the Republic. They might be lost to the living, but the dead would never feel their lack

The Decline

The Republic and its great city of Stygia were the Underworld's mirror to the grandeur that was Rome. It served as the waypoint and guarantor for all those seeking Transcendence and protection against Oblivion. Yet as Rome declined, its attackers and malcontents fell and arrived in Stygia. There, they refused to accept defeat or to bow to Charon's rule, instead spreading out along the Byways and attacking Ferrymen and their charges.

This left many innocent souls to fend for themselves against the Spectres, who found them easy prey. These malcontent scavengers became known as the Renegades. In response, Charon instituted a band of cavalry called Equitaes. These death knights were empowered to escort the Ferrymen's caravans of souls and to patrol the thoroughfares, clearing them of both Spectres and wolfs-heads.

Despite these efforts, discontent was growing among the dead. When Rome fell into decrepitude, that great empire also faced a new challenge in the form of the followers of Christ. Stygia followed the pattern, finding itself stretched thin governing and protecting the countless souls in their care.

The followers of Christ among the Restless, calling themselves Fishers, came to the edge of the Sunless Sea and made their own vessels from flotsam they collected there. They turned down the Ferrymen's offer of guidance and set off for a place they called "Paradise." This Far Shore was not known to Charon or any of the Ferrymen, though the Fishers seemed certain they would find it.

The Steeds of the Shadowlands

Though animal souls do not normally come to the Shadowlands, Charon found and bent to his will the great black stallions found along the fens of the River of Death. Tamed in antiquity by Charon, they have served for hundreds of years as mounts for the Deathlords and the Equitaes. They do not eat or sleep, and nobody knows how they sustain themselves. What is known is that they are swift beyond telling, fierce in combat, and utterly loyal to their chosen rider.

At least one wraith scholar claims that the horses sprang from earthly horses of noted fame — horses like Alexander the Great's Bucephalus, an enormous, black stallion noted for his bravery and fierceness, and Caligula's horse Incitatus that the emperor threatened to make a Roman consul. Whether this hypothesis holds truth is still a matter of some debate, but what is known is this: There are still wild horses running free along the river's banks, and with Charon gone, woe betide any who tries to tame them.

The Fall of the Republic

In the Skinlands, Rome teetered on the brink, buffeted by increasing social pressures, mad rulers, and invading barbarians. In like manner the unrest in the Shadowlands took the form of increasing numbers of Spectres fanning out across every corner of the Underworld, leaving destruction, hatred and the siren call to Oblivion in their wake. They crossed over into the world of the living and turned to Skinriding the barbarian tribes as they attacked Rome and its holdings. Upon their deaths, the barbarians arrived in the Shadowlands and continued their assaults against what they saw as another Rome — Stygia.

They swarmed against the city as they had once invaded Rome. Roaring behind them came armies of Spectres, ferociously attacking all they encountered. In response, Equitaes were summoned to defend Stygia and the Ferrymen took up arms against the marauders. Charon took up Siklos, taking the field of battle with his Legionnaires, cutting wide swaths through the enemy ranks. Though they turned aside the invaders, many Legionnaires were lost and the Spectres settled into a siege of Stygia.

At just such a point of conflict, in the year 476 AD, Rome finally fell. Great temples, government buildings, and places of learning were razed or burned, the people killed, beaten down or enslaved. These buildings and the Restless who filled them suddenly appeared in the Shadowlands, creating even more chaos and stressing the abilities of the Ferrymen to ferry all the

new souls to safety and the Far Shores. There were simply too many new arrivals, and too many soldiers and Ferrymen had been lost in the struggle to protect Stygia.

The First Great Maelstrom

Madness ruled the Underworld as the battles raged. At the height of the pressure a great bellowing sound roared forth from deep within the Labyrinth. At Charon's command, his sentries rang huge warning gongs to alert the dead to coming disaster. Vainly, Stygia tried to prepare as the First Great Maelstrom broke upon them like a fiery hurricane. Howling, scouring winds accompanied wave upon wave of fiery tsunami. The isle itself cracked and boiled, tearing great rents into the very stone and shaking structures to their core.

The storm, the first to earn the name "Great Maelstrom," left Stygia in shambles. On the coattails of the great storm, Spectres attacked the Isle of Sorrows and none were able to prevent them from breaching the walls. What was not already broken, burnt, or smashed into rubble the Spectres burned and pillaged. Razing monuments, temples, and mansions alike, they ran amok as the city fell around them. They even ransacked Charon's palace, the Onyx Tower.

Charon was not there to confront them, as he had taken the field with his Ferrymen to drive back the hellish forces of Oblivion. By the sheerest margin, Stygia's defenders triumphed. Yet their victory rang hollow.

The cruel destruction wrought by the storm left massive pyres in the broken husk of the once-glorious city. The River of Death lay choked and dammed, its polluted waters overflowing its banks. The roads that had once webbed all points of the Shadowlands to departure points on the Sunless Sea lay cracked and broken, their lengths smeared with acrid refuse vomited up by the storm. The Ferrymen were all but destroyed, the Senate crushed, and the Restless Dead left huddling like frightened children awaiting further attacks. The Republic was gone.

Resurrection

Surrounded by the remains of the great dream of Stygia, Charon once again took up the task of rebuilding. He swore he would renew the city, creating a stronger, more brilliant Stygia than the first. He would take the dead bones of his Republic and construct a mightier citadel where the Restless would find safety and peace. Rising above the despair, he and his lieutenants took up the broken and battered stones of the old Stygia. They created a new citadel of hope patterned after new empires from the living world. But they built upon the foundations of the old Republic, in keeping with the words of the Lady of Fate.

From the Caesars, Charon took the idea of calling himself emperor. His seven remaining senators were now called Deathlords. Each Deathlord was made the steward of a different group of souls. Souls were sent to each Deathlord according to the manner of their deaths, and that master was given authority over them. Thus, different Deathlords oversaw the elderly, the sick, the victims of violence, those slain by nature, and those caught up in war. These became the Legions — each made up of the souls sharing a particular kind of death. Seven of the Legions were led by the Deathlord to whom they were given. The Lady of Fate led the eighth. Each Deathlord wore a mask to symbolize their new role; instead of an individual wraith, each was now the guardian of many, the walking symbol of how they had entered the afterlife.

In time, "Deathlord" became the title of the job rather than a specific individual. Some Deathlords are centuries old; others have changed with new wraiths taking over from a previous one. To most wraiths, however, it is the office — and the Legion that serves it — that matters.

The Ferrymen Rebel

Not all were enthralled with Charon's new title. The Ferrymen were outraged that he would put on such airs as to call himself an emperor and refused to serve him any longer. Many, angry at the loss of their brethren on the battlefield and feeling that Charon had truly overstepped his authority as first among many resigned their commissions. They refused outright to ferry souls to the new Deathlords.

The City of Dis

This city is the home and headquarters of the Ferrymen. Found within the Tempest, Dis' origins are hidden even from the Boatmen's Society. The Ferrymen took the city and fortified it against Maelstroms. Digging deeper into the Labyrinth where it rested, the Ferrymen and their servants created hidden tunnels and rooms, then created thick Stygian steel doors to bar the way into the Labyrinth. Three times those doors have been breached by enemies from below, but the city has not fallen to them.

As the Boatmen reclaim relics and arcane Artifacts, many of the hidden rooms act as storage for these treasures. Others serve as private chambers for the Boatmen in residence. Some rooms are used to initiate new Ferrymen into their duties and responsibilities. And more serve as forges where robes, lanterns, weapons, and reed boats are created from Moliated Spectres for the Ferrymen's use.

It is almost impossible to enter the hidden pathways into and through Dis without the consent of the Boatmen's Society. Innumerable traps and diversions dissuade the curious and the hostile from easily gaining entrance. This ancient city is the sole outpost between the chaotic Tempest and the area claimed by Oblivion's servants.

Furious at what he saw as a repudiation of the Ferrymen's oaths, Charon retaliated by banishing them from the Isle of Sorrows and stripping them of their claims and awards. He decreed that their names be stricken from all records. He felt that if they would not perform their duties, then they would be thrown out to fend for themselves alone. Some joined the Renegades, who had always refused Charon's leadership, some left for the Far Shores; many, sadly having lost their purpose, surrendered to Oblivion. Seeking to stave off further losses, the great and wise among the Ferrymen banded together to claim a new city, making it a place of refuge where those who bore the lantern and scythe might find new purpose. They called this place "Dis."

Rebuilding

Over the decades, Stygia was slowly rebuilt. The task was interrupted time and again by wild, destructive storms — remnants of the Great Maelstrom that refused to die, and periodically sought out Stygia as if guided there. Renegades built their own hamlets along the river and continually tore up the roads or spread discontent. Malicious wraiths pierced the Shroud in numerous places and appeared to mortals in the guises of demons and devils, demanding tribute and sacrifices. Nonetheless, Stygia battled on.

After centuries of strife, the last of the Spectres vomited up by the first Great Maelstrom were destroyed or forced back into the Labyrinth. With the surcease of conflict for the moment, Charon stood forth to honor those brave Restless who had performed their duties and remained firm against the Shadow-Eaten and the collapse of the Republic. Praising all, including those Ferrymen and Equitaes who did not desert Stygia when its walls were breached, Charon instituted the Imperial Order of the Sickle. Many souls joined the ranks of the militia, hoping to one day become members of the prestigious new Order. Even today, some members of each Legion may be granted a place in the Order for conspicuous bravery, great leadership, or great work done to increase their Legion's success and standing. Aside from a coveted place in the *Chronicles of the History of the Dark Kingdom of Iron*, the award confers a few small rewards and minor treasures on its holders.

With the brief peace, the dead set about repairing the roads and buildings destroyed by the Maelstrom. They rebuilt the Onyx Tower. As newly dead souls provided a greater workforce (not to mention more raw materials for the forge), Nhudri and his apprentices created new structures, including a sea wall around the Isle of Sorrows that would stand against any storm.

The Fishers Return and the Treaty of Paradise

While Stygia was still rebuilding, the Fishers returned. Their golden ship, used to transport wraiths to the Far Shore they called Paradise, was seen just off the Isle of Sorrows. They

took on hopeful passengers, then built a magnificent temple on one of the hills of the isle itself. Finally, they approached Charon, demanding that he tithe to their temple. Though he heard them out, Charon refused. Arguing that he served the Lady of Fate and the whole land of the dead and not any particular Far Shore, he made a counterproposal.

His proposal was accepted and became known as the Treaty of Paradise. It called for the Fishers to tithe the relics they collected, and in return Charon promised to give all incoming wraiths who sought Paradise into the Fishers' care. The treaty ushered in a new era of cooperation and order in Stygia, as the number of Fishers was ever-growing.

The Hierarchy

In the lands of the Quick, the Crusades caused many thousands of wraiths — both Christian and Muslim — to enter the Shadowlands from the battlefields and besieged towns as well as from the sickness and starvation that accompany war. Though many attempted to continue the wars of their living days, they were quickly taught the nature of their new state. Most elected to join Nhudri and his followers in repairing roads, or signed on with the Stygian militia, finding common ground with former foes in battling against Spectres or Renegades.

As life in the Skinlands changed, Charon remade Stygia to reflect the Kingdoms of Europe. He founded the Hierarchy, with Charon and his Deathlords at the top. The Legions and the Eqitaes, now called Knights, were just below that level, along with the Ferrymen who remained loyal to Charon. The lowest place was reserved for the equivalent of serfs — wraiths called thralls, who were bound with Stygian steel chains and used as slaves or as payment among the higher classes.

The Founding of the Guilds

At this time, many of the ancient organizations of like-minded wraiths coalesced into Guilds, societies modeled on the trade guilds of the living. These Guilds sought to protect and grow the knowledge of their particular powers, called Arcanoi, and to find ways those powers could be marketed to the populace of the city. Hand in hand with that went the responsibility to prevent abuses of said powers. Each Guild developed its rites and rituals, and many wraiths with any demonstrable power signed on, even if the inner circles remained restricted to the chosen few. Charon later claimed credit for organizing the Guilds, a grievance that was remembered when the Guilds later revolted. Regardless, the Guilds took a place just below that of the Knights and Legions in Wraith society.

During this time, however, discontent continued among some of the wraiths who resented Charon, his Hierarchy and the Guilds seeking to curtail their free use of their talents. These penetrated the Shroud time and again, appearing to mortals as demons or devils and demanding tribute or sacrifices. To provide legal recourse to stop such practices, Charon instituted the *Dictum Mortuum*.

The Second Great Maelstrom

In the year 1347, the lands of Europe were laid to waste by the Black Death, a plague so foul and deadly that entire villages and towns were wiped out. Souls began to cross the Shroud in such great numbers that the Shadowlands could scarcely hold them. These miserable wraiths massed together, the weeping lesions that were the sign of the plague scarring king and commoner alike. Such devastation heralded the arrival of the Second Great Maelstrom.

Unlike during the first great storm, Stygia held on. Charon and the Hierarchy appeared to the new wraiths, giving them assurances that they would fulfill their accustomed roles in the Shadowlands as they had while living. Adrift and terrified, the huddled masses acquiesced, and Stygia's numbers were bolstered in time for the city's hour of need.

The true mettle of Nhudri's work was made clear when the great seawall held against the Great Maelstrom's fury. The roads did not crack or burn and the Knights, the Legions, and the Fishers' Crusader-Knights cut down the Spectres that were unleashed both quickly and decisively.

So many new wraiths had entered the Land of the Dead, though, that Charon began a census of all his subjects. He then took tithes from all to help fund the demands placed on Stygia by the unprecedented influx.

The Fishers Revolt

The leader of the Fishers, known as the Archbishop, was gravely angered by the tithe. He met with Charon and demanded that the emperor reduce the tithe he asked from the Fishers,

The *Dictum Mortuum*: The Code of the Dead

In the wake of the wraithly abuses during the so-called Dark Ages, Charon created a code formalizing the separation between living and dead. These laws dictated that no wraith was to penetrate the Shroud under any circumstances. There was to be no contact with the living, no attempt to impart what the future might hold for them or to harass or threaten those still living in any way. Finally, wraiths were forbidden to suggest or compel the Quick to take a life, whether their own or any other to facilitate passing over into the land of the dead.

As one might expect, the *Dictum Mortuum* was immediately honored more in the breach than in the observance. To this day, the Legions spend an inordinate amount of wraithpower policing *Dictum Mortuum* violations, pursuing everyone from heartbroken wraiths seeking to reach out to their loved ones to hardened poltergeists-for-hire.

since they now represented the largest single group of wraiths in Stygia. They had become so powerful that they not only commanded their own temple in the outskirts of Stygia, but their own Crusader-Knights and Death-Bishops.

Charon knew they represented a threat to himself and his hierarchy and that they had not been entirely truthful when recruiting wraiths to their ranks. Rather than reducing the demand, Charon ordered that the Crusader-Knights be disbanded and doubled the tithe on the Fishers.

For months the Fishers' temple stood dark, with bands of Crusader-Knights patrolling its grounds and defying Charon's order to disband. Then, as if by some unseen signal, as one they formed up and mounted a lightning raid on the Onyx Tower itself. The palace guard was warned of their coming by one of the Crusaders, who saw his own companions' actions as arrogant and treasonous. The fully prepared palace knights had fortified the tower and overthrew the Fisher troops, stripping them of their mounts and placing those they routed in chains. The rebels were taken to the great lighthouse, where their chains were set alight. The prisoners' bodies burned there for all to see for seven days.

Victorius, Charon and his forces entered the great temple. There they found untold stores of treasures that the Fishers had promised to tithe unto Charon but had instead hoarded for themselves. The direct violation of the Treaty of Paradise greatly angered Charon, and he sent his most trusted Knights to the Far Shores to speak with the Shining Ones who dwelled there.

The Great Evacuation

Charon issued an order that all Shining Ones who resided on the Isle of Sorrows were to depart for the Far Shores with the next tide. They were no longer welcome in Stygia. At the sounding of the great gong signaling the changing of the tide, all the Shining Ones set forth in any skiff, raft, or ship they could commandeer, taking with them as much as they could carry. Silhouetted by the flames that devoured their temples, Charon watched the rag-tag fleet until it vanished out of sight.

Heretics

The Knights that Charon sent across the sea returned, bringing the most horrible news Charon could imagine. The Far Shores as Charon remembered them were tranquil realms where wraiths who crossed the Sunless Sea could find Transcendence. Now the Knights reported that the Shining Ones had abandoned their duties and the words of Charon and the Lady of Fate and were forcing continual obedience from those who were under them. Many souls were bound in torment or herded into pens and ignored. For centuries, the wraiths trapped there had been denied Transcendence by the ones Charon trusted to help them. Many of the Shining Ones were some of the first Ferrymen who betrayed him and the souls they were supposed to protect for their own greed and power. Depressed and bitter, Charon retired to his chambers and was not seen for weeks. Many feared he had fallen to Oblivion from the blow.

The Proclamation of Reason

After weeks of deliberation, Charon appeared on his balcony. He spoke not to the Deathlords, but to the citizenry of Stygia, delivering the Proclamation of Reason. It declared that the Shining Ones had broken their compact to shepherd souls to Transcendence, abusing and tormenting those in their care and no longer standing against Oblivion. Further, they had lied to, deceived, and enticed souls to join their ranks to foster their own power and as such, they and their ilk were henceforth damned for all eternity. He named them as Heretics, who led souls away from the true light, and proclaimed Stygia would no longer give them audience, safe passage, or any assistance. From that day forward he pledged that Stygia would seek to bring about their eradication.

The Council of Inquisitors

To enforce his decree, Charon formed the Magisterium Veritatus, or Council of Inquisitors. Taking as their model the Catholic church's Inquisition in Europe, its members and agents were sent out to root out and destroy any pockets of Heretics and their influences. The militant branch of the Council took the name the Order of the Unlidded Eye to remind all of their eternal and unsleeping vigilance in their duties. To the populace, however, they became known as the Grim Riders as they patrolled the roads and the River of Death searching for incautious Heretics.

Charon did not forbid individual souls from trying to find their own way to the Far Shores, nor were these seekers held as Heretics for doing so. But without maps or guides, they had little chance of making it across the Sunless Sea.

Stygia Besieged

Surrounded on all sides by unrest and enemies, Stygia took on the atmosphere of a city under siege. Renegades lived beyond the city walls and harassed the few Ferrymen still performing their duties. Heretics whispered their doctrines in the ears of wraiths already distrustful of Charon's new policies. Fearing the Inquisition's ever-watchful eye, neighbors turned in friends, kin, and anyone else whom they thought suspicious, branding them Heretics and throwing them to the Grim Riders to keep themselves above suspicion.

Only those who were foolhardy or crazed ventured from the city. Soul-trade slowed to a crawl and no ships left port for the Far Shores. Soul upon soul crowded into the dubious safety of Stygia's walls, packing in so tightly as to line the walls with cowering wraiths. From this pressure-cooker atmosphere arose events known as the Three Abominations. One began from outside the city, the next was internal, and the last was far away, yet so horrid it scarred the souls not only of those who took part, but also of those who merely heard of it.

The First Abomination: The Looting of the Artifacts

Early in the 16th century, Renegades massed along the river delta and stormed Stygia's walls. Charon and his Knights met the assault, but the panic that overtook the city allowed the attackers to breach the Onyx Tower and raid its Artifacts, among them the Spear of Longinus, the lance reputedly used to pierce Christ's side at his death. Many great treasures, stored in the tower under the practice of Lux Veritatis and considered to be the property of all the souls of Stygia, were looted and carried away. Their value as great works of art and truth, and their ability to inspire and impassion those who looked upon them, lay trampled under the greed to own treasures with no thought to their purpose of enlightening the populace. All would have been lost if the Knights had not made the ultimate effort; many of their best and most trusted sacrificed themselves to thwart the Renegades, and pushed them out of the tower and beyond the city's walls.

The Second Abomination: The Breaking of the Guilds

The second abomination came from within Stygia's walls. Reading the unrest and fear of the populace in the wake of the assault, certain Guildmasters revolted and attempted to wrest control of Stygia from Charon and his Deathlords. In the year 1598, the Guilds struck. Despite uniting themselves in the attempt, the always quarrelsome and jealous Guilds ultimately failed to coordinate and fell to Charon's forces. Scores of Guildwraiths were destroyed. Included among the fallen were Nhudri's original three apprentices, wraiths who had helped to build the roads of the empire. It is said that Nhudri no longer plied the forges quite so willingly after that loss, but only Nhudri and Charon knew the truth of it.

The Third Abomination: The Flaying of Obsidian

In the Land of the Quick, Europeans began an age of exploration. Mariners sailed across the Atlantic to the new world, finding new lands and discovering new races. They returned to their homelands with rich and exotic gifts, which whetted the appetites of Europe's monarchs and peoples for more.

Charon and his Deathlords heard the stories of these explorations and sent emissaries across the Tempest, where they found a whole new kingdom, a Dark Kingdom of Obsidian as Stygia was a Dark Kingdom of Iron. Ruling the wraiths in the new world was a leader named Ix Chel.

The official story holds that Heretics and Renegades fleeing the Inquisition came to those foreign lands skinriding crews from Iberian ports. It is doubtful that no Stygian wraiths joined them, as pressures in the Dark Kingdom of Iron continued to build. The crews housing the skinriders fell into hate and fear of these strange new people and the wraiths within descended upon the Obsidian lands.

Their Shadows grew uncontrollable as they made war upon the Obsidian wraiths. But it was the wraiths themselves, and not their Shadows, that commanded the devastation and murder. There followed decades of savage violence, piling slaughter and desecration atop larceny and pillaging. Reports of the savagery unleashed on the Obsidian wraiths finally reached Charon and the Deathlords. But before they could gather a force to cross the Tempest, the violence stopped. All was silence. Ix Chel and his people had been massacred, hurled into Oblivion by the invaders. Their kingdom was totally destroyed in this third abomination, which became known as the Flaying.

Emissaries returned with horrified stories of the utter annihilation of an entire kingdom from the Shadowlands. The Heretics had committed their most heinous crime, obliterating an entire world.

The Third Great Maelstrom

The Three Abominations built one upon another until the Shadowlands could take no more. The earth itself screamed as it cracked and shook. Lightning blazed across the skies, striking where it willed. Storms of fire and whirlwinds of ice raged across the land, all borne on a wind that howled of despair. The Third Great Maelstrom had been born, and its righteous wrath made those that came before it seem like the lightest of summer rains.

From the maw of Oblivion, great stinking clouds of grave dust billowed forth, covering Stygia, choking the Great River, and plunging the city into darkness. The maddened Tempest overflowed everywhere, separating Stygia from the rest of the Shadowlands.

The empire was torn and all but swallowed up when a brilliant nephwrack general named Coldheart led divisions of Spectres up from the Labyrinth. They feasted on the hatred and fear fostered by Renegade, Heretic, and Hierarch alike and swarmed the River of Death, leaving behind a fear-choked, impassable river that even the bravest Ferrymen dared not travel alone. Though the surviving paths were cracked and stained with the atrocities, greed, and cruelty the wraiths of the kingdom had wrought, Ferrymen chose to sojourn down the roads that were left, called by their duty. The landscape they traveled in was dark and stinking, oily with the effluvia and slime of the Tempest.

In the wake of the Maelstrom, the Shroud thickened and grew. Wraiths seeking to cross it were rebuffed, and the *Dictum Mortuum* suddenly became more than just a joke.

Renewal and Industry

Once again taking his cue from the advances in the Land of the Living, Charon emerged from the Onyx Tower and moved among the wraiths of Stygia, bolstering optimism and expressing the desire to recover and rise to greatness once again. To gain advantages over Stygia's enemies, Charon ordered that every freewraith — those bound to Charon since the demands he made after the second abomination — be allowed to carry swords made of soulsteel. They were symbols of these wraiths' allegiance and also weapons to fight Oblivion wherever it was found.

In addition, he personally scoured the streets of Stygia searching for and taking into custody layabouts, wastrels, and those without strong Passions. As they were undistinguished in life, so he would make them in death.

Industry swept Europe and as it did, Charon bound these wraiths and made Thralls of them, slaves to labor in mining the death ore of the Veinous Stair. These materials were sent to Kyklos to be forged into machinery for the empire. When those Thralls were too worn out to continue serving, he kept them from Oblivion's grasp by having them forged into necessary items.

Many felt that Charon's cavalier actions in enslaving the weak was a heinous and callous act. And so it was. His reasoning for doing so was to keep them from being taken by Spectres or dragged to Oblivion where their souls would strengthen the enemy's darkness rather than serve Stygia, but many were not convinced by this logic. Still, fed by the forges, the Stygian economy roared to life and prosperity.

The First Necropolis

The Third Great Maelstrom changed the lands around Stygia forever. The River of Death, once a swift-flowing stream, now ran sluggishly, choked and impassable. The grand bridges that had linked Stygia with the far parts of the Shadowlands lay twisted and broken. Charon saw the need for cities to be founded outside of Stygia. Here the influx of new souls could be gathered to shield them from the horrors lurking within the Tempest. Further, another city would give Stygia some relief from its unmanageable numbers engorging and pushing against its distended walls.

Charon approached the Legions to build a City of the Dead on the borders of the lands of the living, a Necropolis which would be a protected place for newly arriving Restless. They responded by constructing the first Necropolis, located in the burgeoning city of London. Heretics and Renegades attempted to destroy the fledgling city, but their forays against the Legions proved useless. The powerful Legions fiercely routed all attacks, swatting away those fools who sought to harm the Necropolis. The Citadel soon became the bastion of the empire and other cities grew and took shape: Rome, Paris, then spreading across the whole of the Shadowlands.

The Fifth Legion was tasked with creating a Necropolis in the New World. Their efforts yielded New Amsterdam where they again fought off Heretic, Renegade and whatever foul trash was left from the Third Maelstrom. Other Legionnaires came to cleanse the Shadowlands nearby and founded Necropoli at

Philadelphia and Boston. Others soon followed. As they grew, the Necropoli became clearing houses for souls.

The Age of Industry

The souls collected in the Necropoli were herded onto great transports and sent to the Deathlords, who divided and claimed them according to the manner in which they died. As science and industry informed life in the Quicklands, the Shadowlands profited when great thinkers, scientists, and industrialists died and brought their talents to Stygia. The City's façade changed again as it opened to engines and wheeled transports, to "boom sticks" and other discoveries.

Great iron ships, used to carry cargos of souls from the Necropoli to Stygia, were built at new ports on the Isle of Sorrows. What were once the temples of the Shining Ones became industrial foundries, turning out the behemoth vessels at a phenomenal rate.

As industry became the new way of life in the lands of the Quick, the people changed. Many forsook the faiths of their fathers and the craftsmanship and artistry of creation for new deities and doctrines: science, reason, mass production, and the mightiest — money. These people died without strong Passions. Their shades passed through the Shroud and flitted aimlessly through the Shadowlands, easy targets for Oblivion's minions.

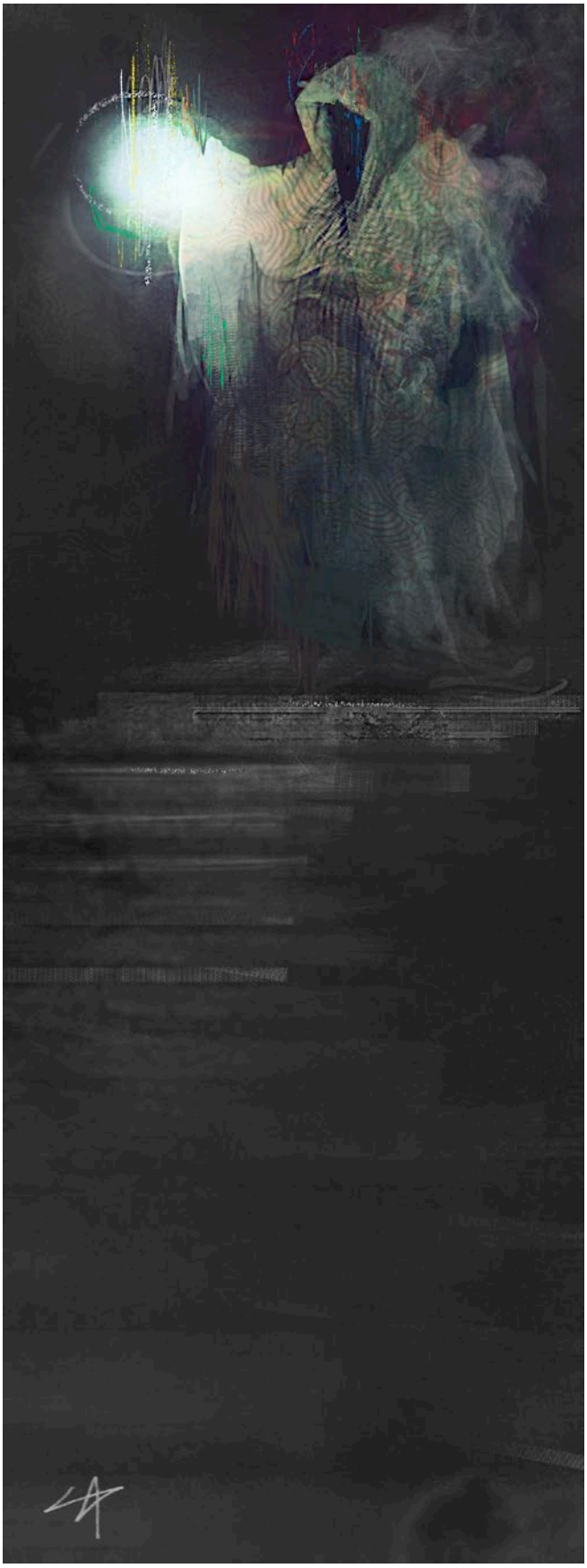
Soon the Veinous Stair swarmed with these newly taken Thralls laboring to mine the death ore there. From dull, meaningless existences, the Thralls were condemned to dull, meaningless annihilation. And when their usefulness was done, the forges glowed as their drained Corpora were smelted.

Each advancement of Stygia was also costly as the Shroud thickened and thickened again, becoming largely impenetrable. Wraiths now existed as virtual prisoners, unable to visit the Skinlands. Charon visited the few portals to the Land of the Quick where he caught new wraiths, whose strong ties to the world above gave them the ability to break the Shroud. These he immediately made into members of the Hierarchy in Necropoli where their ties would be protected.

The Fading

Charon decided to travel the Shadowlands to see for himself how things fared. But as he reached the realm separated from Stygia by the Tempest he began to fade. The great Charon was discorporating. Realizing the danger, he quickly returned to Stygia. He told no one of this except a very few loyal Inquisitors. Those, he charged with finding out the cause. While they searched, other highly placed Hierarchs found themselves similarly confined. Deathlords, Legionnaires, and even Ferrymen began fading as they neared the Shadowlands.

True to their mission, the Inquisitors found the cause: Charon's Fetters had been destroyed, as had those of the other highly placed officials. Mighty though he was, Charon could not even visit the Shadowlands or watch over those he was sworn to protect.



The Deathlords immediately began squabbling among themselves. Each accused another of conspiracy, of deliberately destroying the other's Fetters to weaken him. Every Deathlord feared the others, bickering and desperately hoarding whatever each had, fighting to become more powerful. The Legionnaires, frustrated at it all, blamed the Heretics and Renegades and began brutal pogroms to annihilate them.

The Second Descent

In what became known as the Second Descent, Charon, mighty Emperor of Stygia, locked himself away from his subjects, retiring into the solitude of the Onyx Tower. He issued no statements or commands, nor did he respond to the citizens who gathered outside his home night and day to implore him to return. In his absence, the Deathlords became the rulers of the empire. They cooperated enough to claim right of rule over the Necropoli, which continued to supply souls to Stygia, but for most purposes became self-autonomous cities.

Without Charon's direct leadership, the Deathlords acted as petty tyrants. They seemed unwilling or unable to form an effective government. They squabbled and wasted opportunities. They changed their minds to reflect whatever whim took their fancy. Worse, they became hucksters, bargaining and promising Transcendence just to gain more souls on their side, though there was already a system to divide the souls fairly. Stygia began to rot from the inside as wraiths lost their sense of meaning and continuity.

The Great Influx

August 1, 1914. The countries of Europe started a great war that would become known as World War I. The Citadels of the Shadowlands received whole divisions of soldiers and victims whose bodies were scarred and torn by bayonets, choked by mustard gas, or riddled with machine gun fire. They spoke of deathfields called Galipoli or Ypres or the Somme.

Herded onto "railed carriages," the new Restless journeyed from the Necropoli of France and the Low Countries to Stygia. The Hierarchy processed this constant flow as best they could, though the walls of Stygia could hold no more. Great bridges were constructed, long structures of Stygian iron that rose above the city's walls to reach the Iron Hills. There enormous towers were erected to house the new Restless. They became massive barracks of the dead.

The Fourth Great Maelstrom

The shock of those newly dead along with the hellish influx of so many Restless caused another titanic Maelstrom, the fourth. The hell winds of Oblivion whipped across the Shadowlands. During the storm, the Deathlords fled to their Citadels, huddling and hiding from its fury.

Great hailstones and torrents of effluvia-filled rain lashed Stygia, the Necropoli, and the new towers and bridges. Screams of Spectres who rode the demon winds froze hearts and drove some insane. But the city held. When all was over, those emerging from whatever shelter they had found discovered that the fury of the winds lashed the towers and structures of Stygia, polishing them to a mirror-like brilliance.

The Doomslayers

Aside from hunting down Spectres, the Doomslayers took up other duties as well, from mapping out the Labyrinth to watching for signs of a higher-up member of the Hierarchy falling to his Shadow or being replaced by a doppelganger. Some even say that they are searching for ways to reverse or redeem Spectres from Oblivion's venom.

Though they have suffered downturns, they have also known great triumphs in their challenges as explorers of the Labyrinth and Spectre hunters. Such an existence is very demanding both physically and mentally, as their constant readiness and closeness to Oblivion's creatures forces them to contend with their own potent Shadows on a daily basis. They are always aware that if they are unlucky or careless, they might even become the very creatures they hunt. There are currently five divisions of Doomslayers, each with its own special missions.

Necropoli Invaded and the Great Depression

Stygia survived the Maelstrom, but the Necropoli did not fare as well. Spectres following in the wake of the winds located the new roads to the various Citadels in the Shadowlands. They managed to infiltrate them, moving among the populace. Once inside, they smashed through the Shroud to Skinride mortals in many cities of the Quick. Spectres infested New York, Chicago, and other large cities where they gleefully encouraged crime and murder.

Whole sections of mortal cities played host to the battles among Spectres as they sought to kill off their rivals or gain more influence. Massacres of whole families occurred. Some even battled in their human "skins," killing one another and being killed so they could experience the death and misery they caused.

Further causing chaos in the Skinlands was the collapse of the merchant houses of Europe and America as bank after bank went under in the years following World War I. The lands were thrown down into the Great Depression, which forced bankruptcy on the rich, destitution on the working class and destruction on the truly needy. People lost their cars and houses, whole families were broken apart as desperate people sought any work they could get. Misery and hunger stalked the land and, as if in mockery of the Great Maelstrom, great dust storms

stripped the land of its vitality. Spectres cackled and capered at the sorrows they had wrought.

Charon Emerges

At last, Charon emerged from his self-imposed exile. He studied the state of the empire and noted the chaos and destruction wrought by the Maelstrom. He was especially troubled by the Spectres, who still ran amok in the Necropoli and in the mortal world. Calling together a group of independent wraiths who had helped defend Stygia from the Maelstrom and any other that would agree to hunt down and destroy Spectres, he formed them into a group called the Doomslayers. Their mission gave them the recognition of the Hierarchy, though they were not an official part of it. Charon proposed that they become bounty hunters, hunting down and killing Spectres wherever they were found and bringing back proof of their demise.

World War II and The War of the Dead

Though the Doomslayers and others were doing their best to curtail the spectral hordes, those evil beings still wormed their way into the politics and lives of the Quick. Spectres tinkered with their invisible influences and whispered lies, spewing hatred and violence into the ears of malcontents across the earth. The fragile peace enforced by the victors of the Great War tottered on the precipice.

In the lands of the living, one called Hitler rose to prominence by playing upon his peoples' insecurities, wounded pride and distrust, even hatred, of outsiders and those whose practices they abhorred. For too long the rest of Europe looked on and none stood forth to stop his aggression. Finally, Hitler plunged Germany into another all-consuming war as the Spectres danced and clapped at the new slaughter to come.

Again the battlefields filled with thousands upon thousands of dead, their souls as newly minted wraiths swallowed up by the Necropoli and sent on their way to Stygia. Again, the wounds upon them, whether from bullet or grenade, showed the manner of their deaths. Those who did not fight also arrived — torn, blown apart, raped, starved, or smashed almost into pulp by the bombs dropped on their cities.

As bad as the civilian dead seemed, sent to their doom by the exigencies of war, even that was not the worst. First as a trickle and then a torrent, the wraiths of the people of Abraham inundated the Shadowlands. People arrived naked, their death marks proclaiming them as victims of poisoning or asphyxiation. Along with them came those Hitler also deemed unfit: Romani, homosexuals, intellectuals, the mentally ill, physically disabled, and clergy, as well as many Soviet prisoners of war. Not only men, but women, children, grandparents, newborn babes — all arrived with shaved heads, and while those who were processed at the Nazi death camps and immediately killed were mostly able, others arrived with bellies distended on stick-like figures from long starvation, their bodies marked with numbered tattoos and worked to exhaustion. All bore a stench that could not be mistaken for anything else, the sickly sweet stink of burnt meat.

War blazed across the Pacific as well as Europe. Attacks were made upon certain Necropoli and in retaliation Charon launched enormous warships made of Stygian iron that sailed the Tempest and clashed with the jade ships of the Dark Kingdom of Jade. The Tempest became choked with the bodies of these ships in a contest to lay claim to the Stygian souls who died thousands of miles from their homelands. Such reclaimed victims were delivered to the great City and Charon's care. Ships clashed and burned, and shells screamed through the skies of the Tempest as each side sought to conquer the other.

The Fifth Great Maelstrom

The Second World War raged for many years across Europe, Africa, and Asia. It ended finally when the United States created a new weapon that wrought destruction on the building blocks of matter itself. Though the people in charge claimed that the new weapon would be used to save their soldiers' lives, many believed that having created such a horror, those responsible were too fascinated by its possibilities not to see what it could do.

Accordingly, the new atomic bombs were used on two Japanese cities: Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When they exploded, the concussion, roar, and shock penetrated even through the Shroud and into the Shadowlands. Flames like those caused by a million suns burst over the underworld for the briefest moment, blinding all who saw them.

The Labyrinth itself screamed like a wounded beast and split open. In doing so, it vomited forth the Fifth Great Maelstrom, far greater than any that had come before. The storm thundered across the skies, releasing blistering heat and pressure so intense that any caught in the blast were blown straight to Oblivion.

Thousands of smaller Maelstroms were loosed in its wake. These spread across the Shadowlands, sucking souls into the darkness below and making travel impossible, whether by ship or rail or road. The Necropoli became outposts cut off from one another and from Stygia as swarms of Spectres attacked the Citadels. They became islands, harboring any wraiths they could find and desperately fighting for survival. Many fell; none were unscathed.

Gorool and the Third Descent

As the Fifth Great Maelstrom responded to the perversion of life by shaking loose the Labyrinth itself, it released a horrid and deadly creature from its bowels. An ancient Malfean known as Gorool arose from the depths of the Tempest. Its beastly fangs and claws, great strength, and lashing tail smashed Charon's warships to splinters, breaking them like children's toys as it devoured entire crews.

Charon called upon the Deathlords and Necropoli for help in bringing the giant down before it could destroy the whole of Stygia, but not one came. None would leave his seat of power and risk it being taken over by another. In the end, and in his

Whence Gorool?

There are those in Stygia who have grown obsessed with the mystery of Gorool's appearance. Currently popular among them is the theory that Gorool was actually Charon's Shadow, excised from him by the Pardoners and given a new and independent existence in the Labyrinth. Others hold that the beast was the Shadow of the entire Dark Kingdom of Iron, the many sins of its long existence coming home to roost. And there are those with even wilder theories. If there is an answer to this conundrum, it lies deep within the Labyrinth, and no Helldiver has yet discovered it.

last act as Emperor of the Dark Kingdom of Iron, Charon stood alone, as he had always from the first moment he had been chosen by the Lady of Fate.

Putting aside his mask, he took up his great blade, Siklos. He stepped into his reed boat, as he had done so many centuries before, to face the beast alone. He sailed into the Weeping Bay, challenged the Malfean and attacked. Back and forth the battle raged, until Charon drew the baleful form of the beast away from Stygia and its people. In deeper water, they fought to a standstill, neither able to best the other. Then Charon, fearing that he would weaken before his enemy did, opened a great whirlpool. He flung his tiny boat and himself down into it with the horrid beast following after him. This became known as Charon's Third Descent.

The whirlpool closed over the two of them. Neither Charon nor Gorool emerged from that place in the Sunless Sea where they had gone down into the depths.

Aftermath

In the wake of the loss of Charon, Stygia mourned. And while Stygia mourned, the Deathlords moved to consolidate their power. Speaking as one, they told the populace that they would uphold the virtues Charon espoused while seeking to avoid the mistakes he made. They praised his valor and love for Stygia, while making it clear they remembered his missteps as well. And they ended their declaration, their words echoing from behind their masks, with a statement of purpose: that Stygia would continue.

Then, they immediately went back to scheming against one another.

And as wars and revolutions, plagues and mass murders rocked the decades after the second World War, the Deathlords took in the souls they regarded as theirs, built up their Legions, and kept watchful eyes on their neighbors. For the average wraith, it was a time of relative peace and prosperity. But every so often the Maelstrom winds blow, or a Necropolis falls, and they are reminded that Oblivion does not give up its prey so easily.

Souls and Memories: The Economics of the Underworld

retty much everything in the Underworld is made of one of two things: souls or memories. The bulk of the raw materials are memories, relics of destroyed items from the Skinlands that made their way across the Shroud and were scavenged to feed Stygia's insatiable appetite. Chunks of buildings, cars (wrecked and usable), torn-up rail lines, and the asphalt from abandoned highways, all of these find their way to the Underworld and, in capable hands, are put to use. There's a reason wraithly architecture looks like it's made from bits and bobs haphazardly welded together; that's because it is. Look at the walls of a Citadel and you might see brick from a beloved schoolhouse cheek-by-jowl with concrete buttresses from an imploded stadium and steel girders from an old shipyard left to rust.

But while they may be common materials, they're not necessarily the strongest, which is why the economy of Stygia really runs on something else: souls. Through a process discovered by Nhudri, the Great Smith, souls can be transformed by the application of hammer and soulfire into inert objects, the raw materials of everything from construction to cash. The currency of Stygia, the obolus, is a heavy, slate-gray coin made from a single soul, melted down and reforged. Souls are not only the population of Stygia, they are also its dearest resource, and as long as wraiths hunger for the items that can be made from them, the forges are always clamoring for more.

To meet this need, different wraiths take different approaches. Some try to bring in Spectres, reasoning that it's better to impress these tainted souls into the fight against Oblivion than to allow them to succumb to it. Others hunt Drones, the mindless remains of wraiths who stayed too long in their Cauls, and turn those in for bounties. Plasmics are always fair game, though those who go fishing in the Tempest are as likely to end up devoured as they are to come home in triumph. The courts of Stygia add to the pile; traitors and criminals are often sentenced to the forge, and if later evidence exculpates a since-forged wraith, it's too late to do anything about it.

But the bulk of souls that are fed to the forges come from aggressive and amoral reapers called Harvesters, who hunt down newborn wraiths for the express purposes of transforming them into material wealth one way or another. Slavery is a booming business in the Underworld, based not on color or creed, but on the simple proposition that the strong enslave the weak simply because they can. Wraiths unlucky enough to be caught by a Reaper of this sort are marched off to the Thrall markets or the soulforges, depending on where the best profit can be made.

It is a brutal, inhumane system, and yet it persists because no one chooses to do anything about it. There are a myriad of rationales: better those souls support the fight against Oblivion than eventually succumb to it, the practice is needed to defend against Oblivion's ravages, soulforging literally crushes the Shadow out of a wraith — the list goes on. But regardless, the truth is that the system has been in place too long; too many wraiths are too heavily invested in it and there's no easy substitute available. And so the forges will keep burning bright as they turn out the arms, armor, and other materiel Stygia needs to sustain itself.

The Smithy

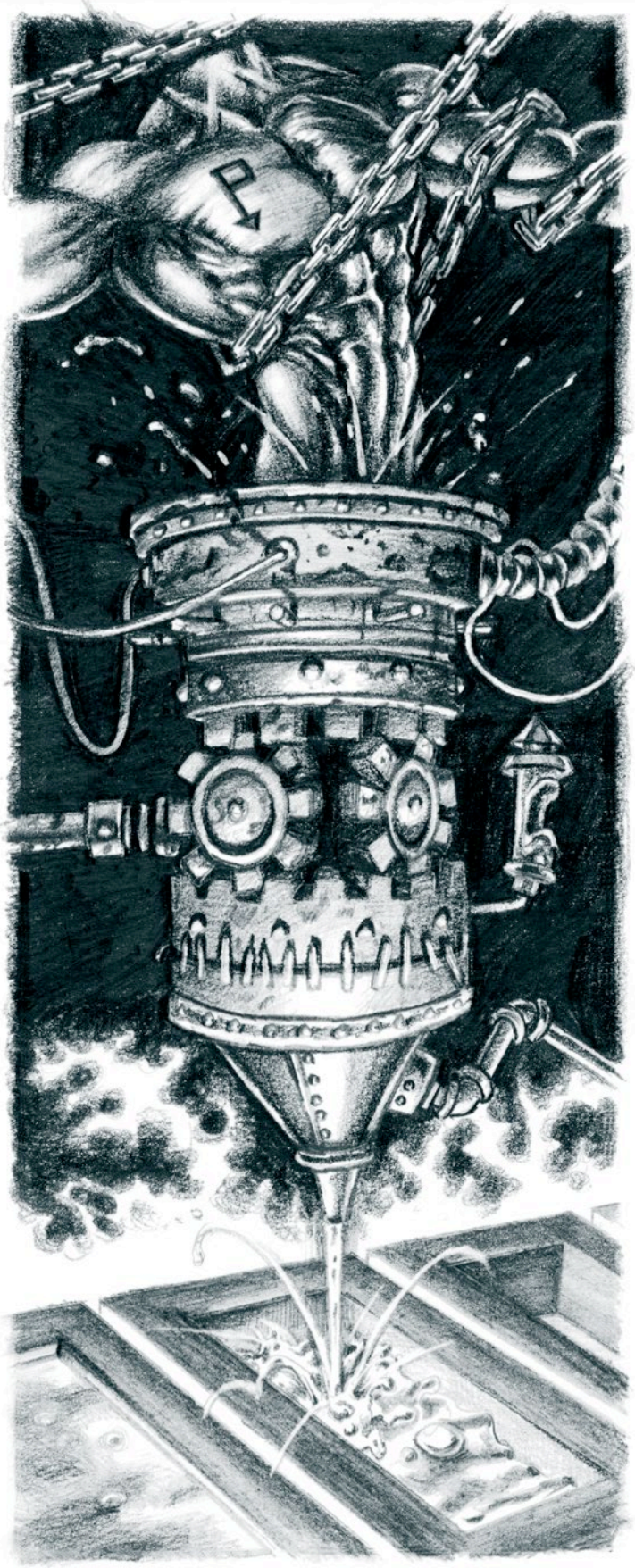
The art of soulforging was brought to Stygia by the great smith Nhudri, long ago. His apprentices in turn taught the art to others, eventually forming the Guild known as the Artificers. By and large, they have a monopoly on soulforging techniques, though here and there it's possible to find someone who's picked up the knack either through illicit instruction or other means. Officially, the Artificers, like all of the Guilds, are outlawed in Stygia, but the key role they play in the Stygian economy has granted them plenty of leeway for hiding in plain sight.

Soulforging

The process by which material is soulforged is painfully simple. The Corpus of the subject is heated over soulfire crystals — crystal shards invested with Pathos by a master Usurer — until it softens and begins to melt, at which point the smith takes a hammer to it and begins to forge it into the desired shape. The process is repeated until the results are satisfactory to the forger. The end result is called soulsteel, and it is durable, tough, and holds an edge exceptionally well.

Some smiths use only the hammer and tongs; others prefer to cast molten plasm into molds. But regardless, the rule of the Underworld is that a single soul can only be turned into a single item, except under certain extenuating circumstances. Artificers know the trick to pledging only a part of themselves to the forge; this is part of their initiation into the Guild, but the plasm they sacrifice can never grow back, and it is only the specialized knowledge of the Guild that allows them to do this at all. In the early days of Stygia, other wraiths were commanded to make the Tithe of the Dead, a sacrifice of part of their plasm to earn entry into the Underworld, but both this practice and the art by which these wraiths were only partially forged have both long since been lost.

There remains a lively running debate about whether souls remain self-aware after they've been soulforged. It has been taken as an article of faith for centuries by the bulk of the Stygian population that they do not, and that the process eliminates any and all sentience. And yet, there are those who swear that this isn't true. What is known is that soulforged items have an uncomfortable tendency to moan softly to themselves, often at the worst possible time.



NHUDRI

Who or what Nhudri is remains a mystery, but modern Stygia would not exist without him. Every wraith in the Hierarchy knows the story of how Charon descended the Veinous Stair and brought forth Nhudri the Smith, who then taught the secrets of soulforging and Stygian steel to his apprentices. However, beyond that the story gets fuzzy. While the official version has Charon releasing Nhudri from imprisonment, it's never stated precisely who imprisoned him or how he got into the Labyrinth in the first place. Naturally, this led to an explosion of theorizing, conspiracy theories, and embellishments, and so-called "Nhudri ballads" (extended songs telling fanciful versions of the rescue) are popular pieces of any older Chanteur's set

Those who have met or served under Nhudri always describe him the same way: a huge, bald man with a shaggy beard and skin burned carbon black by soulfire. He wears simple garments and always carries with him his great hammer, which is so heavy that it requires multiple wraiths to lift it. Nhudri claims no nation as his own, and while he is friendly and forthcoming when it comes to his work, he never discusses the time before Charon led him out of the Labyrinth. Apprentices know better than to ask, or they quickly become ex-apprentices.Nhudri himself remains staunchly apolitical, and he has not ventured outside his forge since Charon's fall. He continues to take apprentices, and the great forges continue to churn out the armor, weapons, and other items that hold Stygia together. Business is transacted in chambers far from the forge itself by polite but unsmiling apprentices, many of them unapologetically members of the Artificers Guild. Those who attempt to gain deeper access to the forges, perhaps in search of Nhudri himself, are caught and removed from the premises with vigor. Those who make it all the way in become new apprentices.

What the forges produce is an endless variety of hard goods (softer items, like cushions, tend to be either relics or wraiths shapeshifted into item form through use of the Arcanos Moliate). Swords, shields, girders, oboli, objets d'art, and more all come from the forges, as do the bones of many of the empire's massive building projects. There's not a strict one-to-one correlation between the size of the Corpus forged and the size of the end product; the Law of Conservation of Mass holds no

sway in the Underworld. So a hulking plasmic could go into the forges and emerge as a delicately crafting ring, while a single Drone could be hammered into a massive girder. The limit in many cases is merely the smith's imagination.

Relics and Artifacts

The two main classes of items in the Underworld are relics and Artifacts. relics come from the Skinlands. They're the ghosts of things that have been destroyed or have been abandoned or rotted away, and they materialize throughout the Shadowlands at the moment of their final destruction in the lands of the living. But mere destruction isn't enough; they also need to have been invested with emotional significance — positive or negative — by someone. It's that emotional fuel that provides the kick that turns a broken toy into an intact relic. This produces some odd disparities in the Underworld — there may be a billion broken cheap ballpoint pens in the world, but it's the fancy models that were given as birthday presents and anniversary gifts that tend to pop up as relics.

Artifacts are things created in the Underworld. They can include relics — indeed, many are based on them — but their function is a product of the afterlife. Anything that comes out of the forges is a considered an Artifact, for example, as is a relic that's been adapted to Underworld functional specs. The ghost of a pistol that only fired relic bullets would be considered itself a relic. That same pistol, retrofitted to fire infinite rounds while fueled by soulfire crytals, would be considered an Artifact.

Unless reinvested with emotional energy, relics eventually crumble and fade. Sometimes it's a question of years, sometimes of centuries, but they're simply not made to last in the Underworld. Artifacts, on the other hand, tend to endure the ages exceptionally well, and thus are generally more desirable.

What Wraiths Want

What wraiths actually buy and sell is very different from what the living purchase. Wraiths don't need food, their need for clothing is limited, and the real estate market among the dead is a very different thing once you no longer need bathrooms or kitchens. That being said, there are still items that wraiths want and will pay for. Instead of necessities, wraiths seek things that will either help preserve their existences or engage them as the long years roll past. Works of art and working firearms are both desirable to wraiths in a way that so much else can no longer be.

The most common exchanges among wraiths are swaps of service. They may seek one-time deals, measured in terms of the task that they want done or the length of time they want spent on a task — a bit of Moliation, some special Castigation attention in the wake of an unexpected upwelling of Spectres, or a suite of happy dreams. Or they may want an ongoing arrangement — a year of Lifeweb help for servants or bodyguards at risk of losing fragile Fetters, a campaign of Pandemonium or Outrage-fueled attacks on enemies in the Skinlands. They all share the same general structure.

Beyond that, there are plenty of items that wraiths seek to possess. relics and Artifacts are always sought after, sometimes for their usefulness and sometimes merely for aesthetic value or rarity. The cost of a functioning relic automobile, for example, is astronomical, while the relics of abandoned stuffed animals abound, making them as cheap as they are sought after. Weapons and armor are always useful, and those rare bits of high technology that make it through the Shroud are nearly priceless.

Because of the haphazard nature of relic creation, the market value of items in Stygia can fluctuate wildly. What's rarer than plasmics' teeth one day can be part of a flood on the market the next if, say, a museum burns down. It's all a matter of timing.

Oboli

Oboli are the only universally accepted coinage throughout Stygia. Different Necropoli may take different relic legal tender, and the trade in the ghosts of ancient currencies is ongoing, but for the day-to-day business of Stygia, oboli are preferred. The coins themselves are heavy for their size. One side bears the great seal of Stygia, the other an image of Charon's Deathmask. Beyond that, they often bear the mark of the Necropolis and the forge where they were made, and in some cases the particular signature of the smith who forged them. They, more than other soulforged items, have a tendency to emit unnerving moans, and more than one wraith has sworn they felt the contents of their purse or moneybag move of their own accord.

To possess an obolus is to make a statement. The fact that a wraith is able to devote a soul's worth of material to coinage, rather than something more materially useful, says a great deal about that wraith's wealth and power.

Unlike other soulforged items, It is possible to cut an obolus into fragments and pay for an item in that way. Interestingly enough, if left alone fragments of an obolus will inevitably flow together to create a new, complete coin. With Stygian prices as low as 1/32nd of an obolus, and some oboli having been in circulation for untold centuries, it's impossible to guess how many souls have blended into new combinations over the years. And no one seems eager to find out.

Relic Hunting

Hunting relics is a common occupation in the Shadowlands. Wraiths stake out Skinlands locations that tend to produce frequent bounties — dangerous curves, incinerators and the like — in order to pounce on freshly translated relics. The strongest and most experienced relic hunters, often working in teams, tend to lay claim to the best spots, while younger and less experienced wraiths find themselves picking over less likely neighborhoods in the Necropolis — or outside its walls — in hopes of a lucky find.

It is possible to reforge an obolus, whole or in pieces, into something else, but it's inefficient. Most Artificers will lose at least half the soul mass to sublimation straight into the surrounding dark ether, and even experts will lose at least a quarter. Given the choice, any Artificer would rather make something else.

Not all wraiths wish to handle oboli, and the desire to avoid depending on the soulforges for anything that isn't truly necessary is common enough that few would-be buyers or sellers make a fuss about it. Forcing an unwilling trading partner to accept oboli is a naked exercise of power, with all the advantages and complications that gratuitous bullying generally brings.

Barter

With oboli, there is cash available to Stygian wraiths, but not much of it, compared to how many wraiths there are. So they have to make do as many living people do, with a system of credits and accounts that looks like barter but isn't. Buyers and sellers keep track of what sellers would pay in oboli if they had them, and buyers know what many kinds of goods and services would be worth in oboli if they had them. Relics with frequently desired emotional resonances cost more than ones without. Skilled labor — whether it's based on knowledge brought from the Skinlands or on the use of handy Arcanoi — is worth more than the mere ability to move a load around. Wherever wraiths gather, some know what goods and services have cost in the past, there and elsewhere. They share information with each other to shape expectations of what prices should be now.

Wraiths who regularly engage in trade of any kind keep their ledgers in written form if they're lucky enough to have access to relic paper and pen, or with a wide variety of mnemonic devices if not. Some even arrange with skilled Masquers to turn some of their own Corpus into a variety of recording devices, their markers and debits on display for all to see.

In practice, therefore, everything that might be for sale has a price, even if that price will seldom, if ever, be paid in hard currency.

The Art of the Deal

One of the basic rules for safe commerce in the Underworld is "have a witness." In the words of another old saying among wraiths, "every deal between two is between four." If two wraiths strike a bargain, their Shadows are both watching as well. Further, one of the participants might actually be Shadow-ridden at the moment the deal is struck. Wraiths who can do so like to seek out a witness, either one with some means of recording key information or trained in the arts of accurate recall practiced in writing-poor societies. The witness is vulnerable to the same troubles other wraiths are, but it's unlikely for three unrelated wraiths to hit them all at once.

Making a deal in private is, for most wraiths, an exercise in power. One of the participants is telling the other, "I'm in charge here, and you acknowledge that you are submitting to my terms. You don't get the relief of any outsider interfering." Where one wraith does have that power over another and wants to exercise it, buying and selling can happen anywhere at all.

When neither participant can or wants to be so obviously the other's boss, they make their deal someplace trustworthy witnesses gather. Many Necropoli have a city hall or some equivalent building, and most have some kind of officially recognized marketplace or agora where wraiths can gather outdoors. Would-be witnesses come there, demonstrate their skills, and hope for the fees and prestige that come from plying their trade.

Stygian Steel

There's one additional kind of durable material available to wraiths, valuable both when worked into goods and in its raw form. Stygian steel is an amalgam of exotic ingredients, very strong but very difficult to work with. It requires plasm harvested from dense clouds in the Tempest, where the gale winds render some plasm into a peculiar translucent gel, and rainbow-veined ore mined from the walls of the Veinous Stair or the Labyrinth's endless tunnels. The metal that emerges when these elements are combined just right is a flat gunmetal gray when looked at directly, but shines with a silver light when seen at the edges of one's field of view.

Stygian steel is both more ductile and more malleable than soulsteel. Once forged, it's also easier to repair — the metal itself seems to sense efforts at restoring its shape and integrity and to cooperate with them. All of this makes it highly desirable for anything intended to last, from armor to weapons to the massive gates of the proudest Necropoli.

Since they last indefinitely, Stygian steel goods keep circulating through Stygian society. A wraith who's made an unexpected windfall of tradable assets might get herself a particularly durable weapon or shield. A wraith with a special aptitude for rare Arcanos arts might cut a deal trading ongoing access to his specialty for an especially secure lockbox. It won't happen in the normal course of events, but just as people in the Skinlands win lotteries and otherwise stumble into temporary (or even lasting) wealth, so it is in the Underworld.

Their gains may be at risk depending on the attitude of powerful wraiths in their vicinity. Some Anacreons think it's just wrong for anyone but designated officials of the Hierarchy to hold anything so valuable. Independent, powerful wraiths may feel that commoners just don't deserve such things, and that only the rich can properly appreciate or use them. A lucky, otherwise-average wraith might well find himself enmeshed in conspiracies, chases, and unsolicited high adventure to keep possession of the valuable thing he thought he bought fair and square.

Metaphysics

If everyone died at peace with themselves and the world, feeling they'd done a good enough job wrapping up their life's business, there'd be no wraiths. Wraiths exist because many of us die without that sort of resolution. They are, after all, the Restless Dead. And because they have that sort of unfinished business, they're able to endure, granting themselves the haunted existence of a ghost beyond the Shroud. Relatively few mortals become wraiths. It is the rare soul that combines the drive and the rationale for resurrecting herself in this way. But while the numbers may not be great, they are steady, and the Underworld teems with the newly Restless. And properly fueled by Passions and anchored by Fetters, a wraith can seemingly endure eternally.

The Caul

A newly fledged wraith begins her existence in the Underworld wrapped in an ectoplasmic sheath known as a Caul. Within the Caul, everything's fuzzy, perception is limited, and movement is restricted. Wracked by the overwhelming emotions of her new Passions, tormented by the voice of her nascent Shadow, and tugged on by both her Fetters and the fearsome gravity of Oblivion, she is experiencing the best and the worst of wraithly existence simultaneously as her soul is reshaped into one of the Restless Dead.

The Corpus

A wraith's body in the Underworld is called the Corpus. Rather than having complex biological systems, it's made of a material called plasm that is, by and large, the raw stuff of the afterlife. In the right hands (such as those belonging to Masquers), plasm is endlessly mutable, allowing wraiths to be reshaped, armored, or otherwise remade. Without a wraith's guiding intelligence to hold it together, a Corpus can dissolve into a gooey puddle of clear, glistening plasm — or be soulforged into something more permanent and terrible. Wounded wraiths "bleed" plasm, but the Corpus is astonishingly resilient and

The Beginning

All wraiths' Cauls appear in the Shadowlands, the part of the Underworld closest to the lands of the living. Unless driven by extenuating circumstances — a Harrowing, the intervention of a Ferryman or Deathlord, setting foot on the Midnight Express — an Enfant is bound to the Shadowlands for a number of days equal to the rating of their strongest Fetter. The more potent the attachment, the longer it takes the wraith to be able to explore the deeper Underworld.

heals easily from most wounds. And as an added bonus, when a wraith's Corpus is destroyed, there's still a chance of escape and return through the process of Harrowings.

The original appearance a wraith presents in the Underworld is dependent largely on his deeply held conception of himself. As a result, most wraiths emerge from their Cauls looking like younger, idealized versions of themselves, or as more energetic versions of themselves as they died. This is not to say that every wraith comes out of the Caul looking like a champion bodybuilder, but rather that the wraith's perception of himself, abetted and hindered by the Shadow, determines (within the rough boundaries of basic human anatomy) how the wraith appears to the rest of the Restless. What matters most is how the wraith *feels* they should appear — not a conscious choice, but a true one.

Reaping

The good news for the new wraith is that older wraiths want to help them, for certain values of "help." The arrival of a new wraith leaves traces that careful observers can spot several different ways, including various Arcanoi. Wraiths already brought into the fold call the hunt for new wraiths Reaping, and there's a healthy trade in bringing new souls into the Shadowlands. Reapers find a wraith still in her Caul and cut it apart, letting her emerge into the full reality of the Shadowlands. Once freed, she can sense, think, and feel fully, though it often takes some time to get over her disorientation.

The bad news is that many Reapers see the new arrivals as resources. Some of them only want Thralls, laborers bound as slaves or prisoners. Others want new souls as raw material for the soulforges. An Enfant who falls into the hands of one of these Reapers is in trouble from the get go, and unless she escapes, she may find her time in the Shadowlands to be nasty, brutish and short.

Other wraiths get more mentoring from their Reapers, and the Legions of the dead are constantly sending out parties of Reapers in hopes of bringing in fresh recruits. These new wraiths are treated relatively well — as long as they behave themselves.

Thralls

The official Stygian line is that thralls are souls who are too weak to resist Oblivion on their own and thus they were pressed into service at Charon's behest. Even this feeble rationalization has long since been abandoned. The trade in souls is too lucrative, and the need for raw materials is too great. Now, gangs of Reapers roam the Shadowlands, looking for new wraiths they can immediately clap into irons and then sell as thralls. More enterprising Reapers will ambush travelers or raid Renegade encampments in order to keep their coffles full and their pockets fuller.

Anyone can be made into a thrall. The Reapers do not discriminate by gender, race, age, Guild, Legion or anything else — it's merely a question of opportunity and bad luck. Once the coffle is full, it's off to the markets and the forges. "Lucky" thralls are picked for hard labor, while others are earmarked for transmutation into soulsteel.

Most thralls are worked until they're worn down. Unable to tend Passions and Fetters, they are ground down to near drones, at which point they're fed to the forges. This in turn generates a need for new thralls, and the cycle continues.

There have been periodic movements to ban thralldom in Stygia. Thus far, they have always failed. The practice is too profitable, and too many powerful wraiths benefit from it.

In a few instances. coffles of thralls have worked together to strike down those who'd chained them, and escape. There are also gangs of Renegades who have no love for the chattel slavery thralldom represents, and who strike at Reapers to free their cargos whenever they can.

Reaper's Chains

The obvious escape from thralldom would seem to be to dive into a Harrowing, but even this route is denied them. One of Nhudri's most ingenious — and diabolical — inventions, the Reaper's Chains bind a wraith to the here and now so that they cannot use their Arcanoi and they cannot force themselves into a Harrowing. Any wraith attempting such a thing will wind up weakened, battered, and weary, but still firmly in the grip of their chains. Originally created to hold only the most dangerous enemies of the empire, the chains weree long since repurposed and the secret of their manufacture was spread far and wide.

Masks

Not every Hierarchy wraith wears a mask, but every wraith who wants to be someone within the Hierarchy does. Masks are many things to the Restless Dead: symbols of office, expressions of self, and in some cases, items of power. Charon's mask was not merely ceremonial, nor are the Deathlords' masks merely tokens of office.

The richest and most powerful among the dead have masks made from Stygian steel, often inset with soulfire gems or tiny, precious Relics. Poorer or less powerful wraiths must settle for soulsteel, or even Relics.

Initially, wraiths adopted masks with Charon's encouragement. He felt that the anonymity of masks would allow wraiths to speak freely in council, without fear of reprisal. Needless to say, this did not work out as planned.

Every Necropolis has a maskmaker in residence, either a Masquer, an Artificer, or a particularly clever craftsman. There are also bands of traveling maskmakers who move from Necropolis to Necropolis, hawking their wares and taking commissions.

Drones

Some wraiths never make it out of their Cauls. They linger on, losing mental clarity and emotional intensity. If they aren't devoured by passing Spectres or creatures who hunt in the Shadowlands, they become the mindless entities wraiths call Drones. These are the obsessed haunting figures of so many ghost stories, whose last shreds of willpower all focus on some single person, place, or thing that was important to them. They no longer remember why they're drawn to it, only that they want it for themselves. If it's destroyed, the Drone makes the long drop into Oblivion, never to return.

When ordering a mask, a wraith must be cautious. Commission a design too close to that of one's superiors, and be accused of toadying flattery; ask for one too original and attract suspicion. In addition, many masks are attached to the offices they represent. Most Anacreons' masks are handed down from one holder of the title to the next, symbolizing the continuity of the Hierarchy. Individual wraiths may fall, but the whole endures.

Renegades and Heretics also have been known to wear masks, though for different reasons. Ritual masks are common among Heretic cults, while Renegades take great care to hide their identities. Their masks tend to be plain and functional, as opposed to the ever-more-ornate models worn by those in service to the isle.

Deathmarks

Every wraith's Corpus is marked with indicators of her death and life. These Deathmarks are present on all wraiths, though the vain and the subversive do their best to Moliate them away. Caused by trauma and the use of certain Arcanoi, Deathmarks offer a roadmap of a wraith's death and afterlife to any who know how to read them.

Deathmarks are also good indicators of what Legion and Guild a wraith might belong to, which is why many wraiths strive to keep theirs hidden. Sometimes, the afterlife is easier if your whole story isn't literally written on your face.

Psyche and Shadow

To be a wraith is to be divided. This is nothing entirely new: Every living person sometimes feels torn between rival goals, or impulsively does something he wouldn't have chosen after a moment's thought. Will, desire, hope, fear and everything else that influences choices of action add up to a messy churning stew of the soul. It gets more complicated and dangerous across the Shroud, because Oblivion's all-consuming power can — and does — echo inside each ghostly soul without living flesh to temper it.

As a result, each wraith comprises two parts: Psyche and Shadow. Psychic siblings locked in eternal conflict within the same shell, one struggles to endure while the other seeks the path down to the Void.

The Psyche is the essence of a wraith: his memory, personality, and the drives that keep him connected to the Skinlands. It's the Psyche who feels the Passions that keep him active and who's drawn to the Fetters that sustain him when he's in need. (See below for more about both of these.)

The Shadow is also the essence of a wraith: his self-condemnation, and everything in him that yearns to destroy his own accomplishments and lash out at the world. It would be very convenient, morally, if this were all forced on the wraith by Oblivion and had nothing to do with who he is, but it doesn't work that way.

Oblivion calls to the urge toward destruction in everyone and everything, on both sides of the Shroud. When a soul crosses the Shroud and hears that call so much more strongly, it's Oblivion that empowers part of the wraith, giving it the strength to develop an identity of its own. But Oblivion invents nothing. It gives power to what's already there. Every person has some baser impulses, some drives anchored in fear, envy, and the like rather than in nobler feelings like hope and joy. The wraith was no sinless angel in life, and his whole self crosses into the afterlife, for good or for ill.

The Shadow is as self-aware as the Psyche, and it has its own reserve of spiritual power, called Angst. It can sense what the Psyche senses. It can talk directly to the Psyche, and make bargains with the Psyche, offering some of its power when the Psyche needs help. It can even attack the Psyche with its own powers, called Thorns, and use them to thwart and sabotage the Psyche's plans.

Throughout a wraith's time in the Underworld, these two halves of their legacy and self compete for control. What distinguishes wraiths from Spectres is which half is winning overall. Wraiths experience moments where the Shadow takes control, but these stand out as not being the norm; most of the time, the Psyche is making the decisions. Spectres have lost the battle — sometimes in the very moment they cross the Shroud, sometimes later — and the Shadow is permanently in charge. They're now part of Oblivion's story, not their own.

Passions and Fetters

Together, Passions and Fetters sum up a wraith's unfinished business with life, the things that allowed her soul to stick around postmortem. Emotions and attachments strong enough to defy death, more than anything else, are what matters in a wraith's existence. In a real sense they help define her, and lay the groundwork for much of what she may do as one of the Restless.

Passions are as they are named, the potent emotions and purposes that a wraith feels most strongly and that power her Restless existence. Acting in accordance with a wraith's Passions generates the energy called Pathos that she calls upon to

use many of her wraithly abilities. They are her, the reasons she feels compelled to continue to defy death. And while a Passion may be focused on an action — protecting a loved one or a beloved neighborhood, finding a killer, or seeing a long-standing injustice corrected — at the heart of each one is a singular emotion. The more the wraith acts on that emotion, the more Pathos she generates, granting her greater capability and flexibility of action.

Wraiths thrive on intense feelings, and not necessarily just nice ones. If felt strongly enough, grief and rage play their part in keeping Oblivion at bay as much as love and joy do. A wraith who fails to express her Passions does so at their own risk, leaving her vulnerable to Oblivion and at risk of having those Passions atrophy into nothingness.

Fetters, on the other hand, are the people, places, and things in the living world that a wraith remains attached to, the anchors that hold her steady against Oblivion's endless pull. Where her Passions are the things she feels most strongly, her Fetters are the things she feels most strongly about. They may be things she loved in life: living relatives and loved ones, places where treasured events happened, such as the tools she used in satisfying work. They may be hated reminders of old losses and failures that sustain her anger: the rival who took her place with a loved one who didn't return her love, a monument to an enemy, the prison cell where she suffered. Some Fetters are big, obvious things in the living world, like human beings and cities. Others are small, like a beloved pen or piece of jewelry. The soul doesn't care about physical scale, only about personal importance.

A wraith who's been badly damaged returns to one of her Fetters for healing sleep. Being close to it renews her Corpus. Sensitive mortals may feel her presence; it's the source of many experiences of being haunted without the fear ghosts usually bring.

People change over time, and the Restless Dead are no exception. The intensity of their Passions and the degree of their commitment to their Fetters rise and fall in response to the events of their afterlives, because nothing is static in the Underworld.

Wraiths' Passions and Fetters can change in two basic ways:

- **Resolution:** The wraith reaches a point where she can let go peacefully of one of her old attachments, and does. This is risky, but she can succeed despite the hardships, and then is no longer defined in part by that feeling or thing. In game terms, she simply no longer has that Fetter. She is that much closer to Transcendence, if she wishes to pursue it.
- **Destruction:** Outside forces can attack a wraith's Passions and Fetters, too. In times of severe overall injury or targeted attack by Spectres, she may be pulled into a Harrowing specifically intended to grind down a feeling. Her Fetters can be attacked deliberately by knowing forces reaching up from the Underworld, and also by all the happenstance of existing in the Skinlands. A skyscraper may seem like an indestructible Fetter, but if an earthquake sends it tumbling down, it's gone and the wraith feels the effects. A wraith pulled involuntarily away from a Passion or Fetter is left diminished and hurting, and vulnerable thereafter for lack of one of her crucial resources. Occasionally, a wraith forms a brand-new Passion based on her experiences in the Underworld. Love for other wraiths, the desire to fix an injustice in wraithly society, hatred for Oblivion's minions — strongly felt emotions of all sorts can become part of a wraith's very reason for continued existence. See p. 305 for information on developing new Passions.

Catharsis and Harrowings

Inevitably, sometimes the Psyche weakens and the Shadow gains temporary control of the wraith's Corpus. Wraiths call that time of domination by the Shadow "Catharsis." It may last for just a few seconds, and seldom lasts more than a few hours, but there's plenty of potential for mischief in even the briefest of takeovers. While it's in charge, the Shadow is free to pursue its own driving Passions, and can use the Psyche's powers along with its own. The wraith's Corpus looks the same as always to other wraiths (though some Arcanoi can reveal the truth), making it hard to detect that somebody new is temporarily in charge. Of course, when a wraith comes out of Catharsis, he has to deal with whatever deeds his Shadow committed in the interim. Sometimes the damage is apparent immediately; sometimes it takes days or even years for a Shadow scheme to pay off in disaster.

Far worse than a bout of Catharsis is a Harrowing. When a wraith suffers grievous damage to her Corpus, loses a Fetter or Passion, or runs out of Willpower, then she is instantly pulled down through a Nihil to the very depths of the Labyrinth. There, she's confronted with a nightmare psychodrama concocted by her Shadow in conjunction with troupes of Spectres. Drawing on the wraith's hidden fears and insecurities, the Harrowing presents her with a seemingly inescapable scenario. If, by dint of intelligence, persistence and determination, she unravels the puzzle of the Harrowing, she's released back to the higher Underworld little the worse for wear. If she doesn't, then a terrible price must be paid. And, in a few rare instances called Destruction Harrowings, the price of failure is dissolution as the wraith falls into the mouth of the Void.

Stygia

Wraiths spend a lot of their existence in empty places. The world is big, and there just aren't as many wraiths relative to living people. Every Necropolis has its busy spots and around them whole neighborhoods where a wraith may be all alone, with only glimpses across the Shroud and her own Shadow. The depths of the Underworld are much bigger than the world, and have even more empty spaces, and there are

Common, That Is, Disrespectful Usage

Wraiths are no more likely than the living to spend all their time being solemn and pedantic. They have to fill their waking hours, and with many options available to the living taken away from them. Many of Stygia's residents indulge in the age-old pastime of mocking the terminology and titles of authorities over them. To wraiths not very enthusiastic about defense, Stygia doesn't resemble a sickle but a banana. Whatever insulting labels occur to the members of a troupe for the oh-so-serious business of Stygia are likely to have occurred to the wraiths there as well, and to work their way into conversation outside official circumstances.

countless places where there may be lots of exotic creatures or Spectres but very few wraiths.

Then there's Stygia.

Stygia is the city of wraiths, at least in the Dark Kingdom of Iron. Ancient beyond comprehension and constantly inhabited by millions upon millions of wraiths, it sprawls for miles across its original island, shallows of the Sunless Sea, and nearby islands. It is simultaneously altogether unlike any living city and deeply familiar in its parts, since it includes the memories of famous buildings, monuments, roads, and features from across the western world.

It is the capital of Charon's venerable empire and it is the place to see and be seen among the dead. It's home to wraiths in a way no other place can ever be. Sooner or later, the ambitious, the powerful, and the lost all find their way here.

Stygia rests on and around the Isle of Sorrows, a stable point within the Sea of Shadows. It's at the mouth of the River of Death, which flows through much of the Dark Kingdom of Iron, and stands just a few miles from the top of the Veinous Stair, which runs all the way down into the Labyrinth.

These are not things that could all be true of any place in the Skinlands. Rivers don't flow through seas, for instance, except in the form of currents in special conditions. In the Underworld, geography is more accommodating. The River of Death partly flows from island to island like a current in a physical ocean, but it also descends through rapids, falls, and twists through multiple dimensions. Likewise, the sea around the Veinous Stair is sometimes like water, sometimes like a howling wind, and sometimes turbulent in complex ways all its own. The Underworld keeps reminding its inhabitants that it's not like where they came from.

Approaching the City

Almost all modern wraiths approach Stygia either by rail or by river. It's certainly possible to fly in when there's no storm blowing, but not encouraged. The city's defenders always worry about what might come in airborne, and space for landing strips is in short supply. For decades, there was a regular zeppelin service along the river, but a series of four-bell Maelstroms in the late 1970s took care of that.

By River

Tributaries of the River of Death flow through the Shadowlands in whatever direction they need to, and not always consistently at that — river sections that reverse their flow are commonplace. They take on more consistent directions as they converge. The main channel of the river traces a continental-scale arc like the shape of a sickle head — much like that of Stygia itself — starting at a northwest point, curving east and south, and finally flowing west as it empties out into the sea.

For the last several hundred miles of its length, the river is always at least a mile wide, with countless islands large and small dotting the expanse. The river flows deep, too. It has shoals that may rest just a few feet below the surface, but the main channel is always hundreds of feet deep, often thousands, and in many places it is apparently bottomless. The largest relic vessels ever known can safely sail it, along with soulsteel constructs larger than anything the Skinlands could ever support. Famous relic ships work the channel regularly, along with strange agglomerations of a half-dozen relic vessels bolted together in ungainly fashion. The rafts of the Ferrymen also patrol the river's course, and even the largest vessels will turn aside at the sight of the hood and lantern.

The river is also home to some of the only living things in the Underworld, using the term loosely. Stands of withered and gnarled trees line the riverbank in clumps here and there, their long branches drooping down to almost touch the water. This is the only vegetation the river possesses, and few wraiths are brave enough to take saw or axe to them. Doing so is said to be bad luck, and more importantly, will incur the Ferrymen's wrath.

Also seen along the banks of the river and up into the great chasm that is Horse-Noose Canyon are the last few of the wild horses Charon tamed and gave to his Equitaes. Fierce and wild-eyed, they run in herds of up to 20 at a time. Approaching them is foolish, as their hooves are as hard as Stygian steel and they don't take kindly to strangers. On rare occasions they can be seen swimming from one side of the river to the other, daring whatever plasmic predators lurk in the deeps to try their luck. Few, if any, ever do.

Docks surround the Isle of Sorrows, and also many of the smaller islands it's now connected with. The docks are busy, but travelers have long waits for customs and inspections only in rare moments of crisis.

By Rail

The Midnight Express is the most famous railway in the Underworld, but not the only one. Many groups of wraiths build and maintain rail lines for all sorts of reasons, from simple ambition to a desire to continue doing what one did in life. Some are small-gauge routes intended only to carry a few people at a time, others are more rugged tracks intended to carry the heaviest cargos that wraiths prefer not to send by other means.

Most of the time, these lines and the trains on them have little to do with each other. There's plenty of room and more, due to simple space-twisting tricks that let crossing routes never directly intersect. The one area they come together is in the last few miles outside Stygia. Tracks of all styles and gauges rise, fall, and bend as necessary to line up in parallel on trestles built from ancient ruins and storm debris. They skim across the sea, 100 feet above sea level, to arrive at the largest depot in the Dark Kingdom of Iron. Built largely from long-replaced pieces of Grand Central, Union Station, Gare de Lyon, and many more, it has an immense Victorian grandeur that both welcomes wraiths to the island and warns them that theyshould be on their best behavior.

The Lay of the Land (and Sea)

The Isle of Sorrows is shaped like the head of a giant sickle half-sunken in the Sea. (In fact, the isle has much the same shape as the main channel of the River of Death. Debates about whether that's fate, coincidence, or someone's plan keep idle wraiths busy.) The tip of the sickle lies to the northwest, and the blade curves east, then south, with a fragment of handle running off to the southwest. It's eight miles in a straight line from the tip to the handle, and 15 miles along the curve; the arc of the island is generally three to five miles wide.

The River of Death flows in from the east to meet the broad curve of the isle. The isle here rises gently from the waterfront up to the crest. The enclosed bay has much steeper slopes, with many outright cliffs and heavy switchbacking required for all the routes coming up from the bay's interior. To the southwest, marshy lowlands and haphazard channels cut through the sea to the Emerald Keep a few miles away. The Emerald Keep is the official last bulwark before the Veinous Stair; beyond it flow the tainted waters that swirl around the Stair.

Nearly every inch of the isle is covered in some sort of construction, driven by the pressure of wraith population. Storms still happen as they always did, and plasm continues to accumulate in little valleys and depressions before tumbling down well-worn channels to the sea. But now almost all the channels are paved and monitored, and there are only walled groves for the few remaining trees. Erosion is a fact of the Underworld just like in the Skinlands, and over the centuries it's cut dangerous paths through older layers of construction. Newly arrived and newly built structures require ever more elaborate bridges, buttresses, and support columns, driven ever deeper down into the isle's foundations. And so the city presents as a layer cake of architectural style, skyscrapers pressing down on Art Deco façades built on top of castles and chateaus, which in turn squat on Roman ruins and Athenian temples. Students of history will constantly find marvels here, that is, if they're not run over by foot traffic while they gawk.

Tradition says the isle has seven hills, with seven of the eight Deathlords choosing to build their Citadels there. (The Lady of Fate chose to put hers on the Isle of Eurydice, 20 miles offshore, and has kept it there ever since.) This isn't exactly wrong. The center ridge of the island does rise and fall, and there clearly are distinct hills. But in truth, there are at least nine of them, or there were before two of them were devoured by construction. Nonetheless, the popular lore is well fixed by now, so seven hills it is.

Major Features

These are landmarks that the wraiths of Stygia use to orient themselves. "Go here and make a left," "it's halfway up the hill on this side of there"…these are the heres and theres of Stygia.

The Onyx Tower is the oldest surviving structure on the isle. Charon built a lighthouse when he made the isle his home, on the very highest point of land at the very tip of the scythe's curve. It grew and grew over the centuries, with many other wraiths' labor adding to Charon's own work. The Onyx Tower itself has remained locked since Charon closed it up on his way to fight Gorool, but the lighthouse it's part of remains active, and the many supporting buildings around its base are as busy as ever.

It is the Onyx Tower that most wraiths think of when they think of Stygia, and that's with good reason. Gleaming black and silver, it towers over even the Deathlords' Citadels. Its beacon can be seen to the very edges of the Sea of Shadows, and it has withstood countless Maelstroms with nary a scratch. Legend has it that the base of the Tower was built upon the relic pieces of the Lighthouse of Alexandria, and that every so often its light somehow pierces the Shroud to be seen by lost mariners in the Skinlands.

The Road of Lords runs at or near the crest of the isle's center ridge, from the Onyx Tower all the way to the causeway that leads to the Emerald Keep. In early days, this was a very sharply sloping path, but it's been progressively leveled with the help of tunnels and bridges. In addition, because of its prominent exposure to the forces of Underworld weather, it's almost entirely enclosed beneath cantilevered ceilings, with windows that can be shuttered tightly during the worst storms. The road has junctions with short roads to each of the Citadels and a few other prominent features.

For much of its length, the official Road of Lords is accompanied by less official, less maintained roads that make their way across the terrain as best they can. The armed troops of the Legions have priority access to the Road of Lords, and there are always travelers who'd prefer not to have to yield to the armies on the march. In some places, the less formal and

direct roads keep to older, rougher ways; in others, they tunnel over or even pass along the top of the official route.

The Citadels occupy the best high ground, each one separated from the next by at least a mile. From north (closest to the Onyx Tower) to south (farthest away), they are: the Seat of Shadows, home of the Iron Legion; the Seat of Dust, home of the Skeletal Legion; the Seat of Burning Waters, home of the Grim Legion; the Seat of Succor, home of the Penitent Legion; the Seat of Silence, home of the Silent Legion; the Seat of Golden Tears, home of the Legion of Paupers; and the Seat of Thorns, home of the Emerald Legion.

The Road of Steel runs around the whole island, resting on a retaining wall that keeps it five feet above sea level. Boat landing strips, dry docks, drainage ditches, and the like pass through the wall, and the Road of Steel rises over them on short bridges. As the name suggests, it's made of soulsteel, though of a unique, silver-white kind seen nowhere else. Popular legend has that it's the leftovers from a truly massive secret project Nhudri undertook for Charon shortly after arriving on the isle.

The Road of Steel is the widest route on the island, wide enough for infantry regiments to march in standard formation and for whole buildings to travel on their special platforms when it's time to relocate. Warehouses and maritime businesses fill its landward edge as it circles the western bay, while its eastern curve hosts residential mansions, more warehouses, museums, temples, and a bit of everything else. Over time, ancient wraiths say, everything in Stygia sinks down or rises up far enough to butt into the Road of Steel.

The Road of Souls cuts across the Isle of Sorrows in an east-west line, rising from the bay up through the deepest pass in the center ridge, meeting the Road of Lords at that road's lowest point, and descending to the eastern shore. It's almost as wide as the Road of Steel, and graded as gently as possible to let heavy, awkward, and slow traffic make the trip in something like safety. The Seat of Burning Waters overlooks the Road of Souls from the north, and the Seat of Silence from the south.

The Road of Souls has two tiers for its whole length. The lower level is reserved for pedestrian traffic and small vehicles like pedicabs. The massive main level is open to the skies, and has patrols enforcing minimum size and weight requirements so that lesser traffic doesn't get in the way.

The Sea of Souls is the official name of the bay, though almost all Stygians simply call it "the bay." It's filled with a kind of soulforged liquid as distinctive as the Road of Steel's material. The bay's liquid is more viscous than the water-like plasm beyond, and slightly denser. Ships that sail on it can't move very rapidly, but the viscosity helps hold them upright and steady for unloading in all conditions and provides extra protection against capsizing during storms. The popular story says the bay is what remains of the first epic project undertaken by Nhudri's first apprentices, and has something to do with anchoring the whole island. Stygian naval vessels patrol the bay endlessly, keeping a watchful eye for Spectres and other monstrosities in the waters below. Notable among them is the Jameson, a refurbished WWI battleship whose booming guns, augmented by Nhudri himself, can be heard above even the loudest Maelstrom winds.

The Seawall is a 100-foot-tall wall of pure black soulsteel surrounding the isle, with just a handful of gateways to allow ships to pass. In some places it's within 100 feet of the shore; in others it's up to half a mile away. It's one continuous construction — the gates don't run all the way to the seafloor, so when they're closed the whole wall presents a unified defense and can be acted upon by Arcanoi that deal with single, though large, objects.

The Iron Hills is a cluster of eight islands not far beyond the Seawall, off the eastern and northern shores of the Isle of Sorrows. They used to be given over to luxury estates and preserves, but thanks to constant population pressure, Charon chose to incorporate them into Stygia proper early in the 20th century. Networks of bridges and causeways now tie them together with Stygia, though they're still on their own when the Seawall closes.

The Ever-Drowning City

Stygian architecture extends far out to sea and far below surface level. The original Isle of Sorrows is now almost completely buried under the weight of many layers of construction. The Relic buildings that make up most of the city don't actually fade out of existence, but they do weaken. They may crumble,

An Isle of Legacies

Nearly every building on Stygia is a relic or Artifact. When Charon founded Stygia and wraiths first gathered there in large numbers, the ghosts of famous landmarks would drift through the Underworld by themselves as if drawn magnetically. As the population grew, and the Hierarchy developed with it, deliberate city planning followed. The Deathlords and other prominent officials make their interest in this building or that known, and their underlings engage in whatever diplomacy it takes to make that happen.

For Storytellers and players alike, this is a chance to customize the setting for your chronicle. If you have favorite old architecture that's been lost to the living world, it can have a place in Stygia. Storytellers, when your players ask about this landmark or that, say "yes" and decide where it is rather than saying "no" unless you have some particularly good reason. Stygia is a city where the continued memorial interest in the living matters intensely, and if your players are showing interest, then it's a safe bet that living people in the World of Darkness would be, too.

and they're prone to subsiding. There's a constant flow of new construction and new relic delivery because there must be — not every landmark can remain useful or even safe century after century. Damaged old buildings slide or get pushed across the Road of Steel to sink down into the bay or sea, with new work taking their place. When Maelstroms blow, landslides and earthquakes can knock buildings and even whole districts down, leaving more empty scars to fill with new arrivals once things settle down again.

In addition to the shed remains of the city's older buildings, the surrounding seafloor is covered by buildings and miscellaneous debris that never quite made it to Stygia. There are buildings that tore apart while being transported and couldn't be reassembled, which were then dumped into the sea. There are remains, sometimes very large ones, washed down the length of the River of Death until they bump into the shallows around Stygia. There are also ruins, which seem to push up from below without anyone in Stygia being responsible. Some of these can't be identified, while others can and prove to have arrived from all over the Dark Kingdom of Iron's wildest corners.

The Districts

Much of Stygia is policed and managed by one of the Legions, usually whichever has the closest Citadel. This doesn't mean that the inhabitants all share a deathmark. There are too many wraiths on Stygia with too many concerns to make sorting like that viable. Wraiths go to whichever distract they can find work, entertainment, and a congenial place to slumber. Close to a Citadel, three-quarters or more of the wraiths passing by are likely to belong to that Legion. Downhill, around the shores, in the crowded valleys along the way, half or fewer of the wraiths in sight share their overseers' deathmark.

Each district has its own civil patrol, whose officers function as police, customs officers, and whatever responsibility the Deathlord in charge chooses to assign them. Depending on the Deathlord, anywhere from one to three quarters of the patrolling officers belong to the same Legion as the Deathlord, with the others recruited from the ranks of all the wraiths who prefer to dwell in the district. Patrollers provide most of their own equipment, with the exception of insignia. These insignia combine Legion symbols with a stylized rendering of the district's map silhouette or some favorite landmark. The self-arming practice changes in times of Maelstrom and other general crisis, when all the Deathlords, no matter what their other concerns, make sure their forces are properly armed and armored.

Lower Bay

The commercial heart of Stygia, Lower Bay runs the entire north-south length of the bay. It's entirely given over to business. Some wraiths may make havens for themselves, but they do so secretly; as far as the police patrols are concerned, everybody goes somewhere else to slumber.

Lower Bay is evenly divided between relics from harbors throughout the Dark Kingdom of Iron and original construction out of local materials. The piers and warehouses here reach back to ancient Crete, and include some destroyed as recently as World War II. The soulforged buildings tend to look very much alike, and very little like the relics, since many of the harbormasters over the centuries have favored uniform construction as part of uniform policy about taxation and administration. The actual diversity of Lower Bay reflects the ongoing struggle for decision-making authority between the current harbormaster, the Legions' representatives in the district, and other prominent wraiths.

Upper Bay

Upper Bay also runs the entire length of the bay, starting where the slopes become too steep for most warehouses and heading up to the heights around the Road of Lords where there's level enough ground to support more buildings. Most of this is sheer cliff face and slopes far too rugged to be worth anyone's while to build on, but no place in Stygia can go altogether empty.

There are extensive caves at half a dozen points, and smaller ones at many more. The largest of all is the Hermitage, supervised jointly by the Penitent and Silent Legions for those who wish to retreat from Underworld society safely. Expert Pardoners patrol the caves for signs of Shadow trouble and have the right to intervene when they deem it necessary, while otherwise leaving the hermits alone.

Upper Bay is home to one of the largest relic wrecks in Stygia. Half a mile of Roman buildings destroyed in the fire during Nero's reign used to rest on the west side of the Road of Lords. When the First Great Maelstrom broke, the entire stretch of hilltop came loose and toppled over. It skidded to a stop halfway down and has stayed there ever since, tilted 70 degrees from horizontal. Fallen Rome, as it's known, is a favorite gathering place for wraiths with a talent for Argos, and for non-Argos-using climbers and daredevils.

Also found here is a massive statue known as Dominus Ex Anima. No one can recall who made it or when it first appeared; as far as anyone can remember, it's always been there. The Dominus, as impertinent wraiths call it, is made from relic marble and bronze, clabbered together to make a massive figure who appears to be watching out over the bay itself. Some say the figure is Charon; others claim it is a prophecy of the one who will someday succeed Charon. In any case, even the cheekiest of wraiths show the sculpture a great deal of respect, as standing in the presence of its power and majesty can be a sobering experience.

Riverside

Unlike most of the districts, Riverside isn't a single continuous area. It's the name given to all the parts of the western shore where Legion claims and interests don't run all the way to the waterline. Some of these are small, rocky outcroppings that have been exploited since whatever tremor pushed them up, and most encompass just a few blocks of neglected, crumbling relics. Most of Riverside comprises places for wraiths to go when

they lack connections and haven't had the personal luck or success to buy their way into any of the available social networks.

The biggest exception to that generalization is the Library, just north of the east end of the Road of Souls. This area became neutral ground not because nobody wanted it, but because everybody did, and the struggle for control was doing significant damage to the thing everyone was fighting for. At the heart of the Library is the Library of Alexandria, now buried deep beneath the Road of Steel by later arrivals. Today, the Library includes legacies as small as single-room libraries from Pompeii and as large as the great library of Constantinople. The Library extends almost half a mile inland, many stories underground, and includes piers far out into the sea and two spires just over half a mile tall, combining relics, solidified dreams taken from modernist architects, and more of Nhudri's unique handiwork. Cadres of librarians work the stacks, as they have steadily for centuries, inducting newcomers into their ways and protecting the valuable contents of the shelves and vaults. Every lost and loved book comes to the Library eventually, and espionage is constant as Deathlords, thieves, and even agents of rival kingdoms of the dead seek to "liberate" particularly valuable items for their own uses.

Also found in Riverside is the Fountain of Caroline, a prime spot for wraiths with grievances, manifestos, or prophecies to stand up and share their thoughts with Stygia. What might be considered treasonous talk elsewhere in the city is tolerated at Caroline's by long tradition. And so ranters, poets, prophets, and revolutionaries all get their say so long as they stand at the foot of the fountain.

Onyx Point

This, as the few residents seldom tire of saying, is where it all began. This is where Charon built his first permanent shelter, and where he set up his lighthouse. When Charon was in residence, this was one of the busiest places in Stygia, the Road of Lords carrying a constant traffic of officials, petitioners, and simple tourists. Now it's much quieter, a simple park with a few benches scattered around it, alternately placed so wraiths may gaze up at the tower or out over the sea. The tower where Charon resided is still there, meticulously maintained by volunteers from each Legion in rotation, and the lighthouse operates as always, needing only a handful of Artificers to tend its soulcrystal glow.

A popular legend says that slumbering here makes Deathsight-fueled prophetic dreams more likely. It's likely not true, but that doesn't stop curious wraiths from trying it. The groundskeepers try to keep slumberers off the main routes and otherwise let them be.

Ironville

The Seat of Shadows, home of the Iron Legion and its Ashen Lady, rests on the northernmost of the "seven hills" along the Road of Lords, and it sets the tone for the whole district. Each morning it appears in the dawn light as a beautiful, darkly

gleaming grove of soulsteel and Veinous Stair stone spires, rising almost as high as Charon's own Onyx Tower. As the day passes, it seems to age and crumble, and at night it's a tangle of ruins punctuated by only a few usable halls and chambers. Then dawn comes and it renews again. Many buildings in Ironville do the same, out of a shared emotional resonance.

Ironville has an earned reputation as one of the most conservative districts in Stygia. The Iron Legion, whose members died of old age and the march of time, is very deeply invested in conserving and protecting what already exists in the Shadowlands. Its engineers are among the Underworld's best when it comes to restoring damaged relics and Artifacts; they often advise in the transportation of relic buildings bound for other districts, but prefer that their own landscape changes as little possible.

Things get discarded more slowly in Ironville than elsewhere. Buildings that have sunk into the sea or been buried by landslides are more likely to remain in use here. Elaborate connecting tunnels and canopies let wraiths keep going about their affairs, with whatever adaptations the fading buildings may need. This suits many wraiths of other Legions who share a desire to not hastily lose any of the past they still have, and keeps Ironville well supplied with skilled crafters, scholars, and entertainers in styles gone by.

Tucked into Ironville is the House of Julio and Livia, which, behind an unassuming façade, is one of the largest and most reputable dealers in relics in all of Stygia. Keen-eyed hunters bring their wares here, and the vast subterranean storeroom contains numerous treasures from across the ages, for those sharp enough to spot them.

Also found in the district is the winding lane colloquially known as Angela Agony Avenue, named for a local Pardoner who was known for the extreme strictness with which she ministered to the locals' Shadows. The screaming from her workplace could be heard up and down the street, giving her and the thoroughfare their respective nicknames.

The Spine

Next in line is the Seat of Dust, home of the Skeletal Legion and its Skeletal Lord. The Seat of Dust sits on one of the lowest of the seven hills and looms over its district much less than most Citadels. It still sets the tone, with its unique decoration. All its walls are covered with a fine white filigree, which evokes individual bones and elaborately posed skeletons. The Legion's Artificers don't care to share the secret of its making, but it's widely understood that relic bones ground to powder played an important part. What is known for sure is that the Legion's relic buyers offer the best prices for relic bones in any condition.

One way the Skeletal Lord distinguishes his Citadel from the others is his lack of accommodation for personal concerns. There are some Pardoners in residence, like everywhere else wraiths gather in large numbers. But the Seat of Dust is not a place for wraiths to go to get help dealing with their Passions and Fetters, or anything else concerning their individual existences. It's all about business in the here and now. Partly, this is because of the nature of the Legion: Dying of disease or illness is likely to leave a wraith feeling less than sentimental about the old home up above. Partly it's the temperament of the Skeletal Lord in particular.

The same general attitude prevails throughout the district. The Spine has more soulforged construction and fewer prominent relics than the rest of Stygia. Its entertainers present fewer works of comedy and drama taken from the Skinlands, opting for more original works dealing with themes of Underworld history and philosophy. There's inevitably trade in relics and Artifacts because wraiths share needs and wants regardless of ideology, but Spine merchants are most interested in discoveries from explorers willing to go out into the vast Tempest — and below — despite the Legions' interest in discouraging amateur helldiving. The Spine provides many of Stygia's best practitioners of Argos, their affinity for their here-and-now giving them an edge in sensing the constantly changing weather.

In public, the Skeletal Lord professes loyalty to Charon's dictates, including the one suppressing dangerous cultic beliefs, and he means them…but in his own way. It's an open secret that he believes himself to be, literally, Pestilence the horseman of the apocalypse from the Book of Revelations. The Spine is relatively welcoming to wraiths with heterodox views. Its patrols will interfere with too-public displays of banned belief but prefer to ignore private practice. This attitude contributes to the Spine having a relatively small fraction of Skeletal deathmarked wraiths; unbelievers and dissenters from all the other Legions like to gather here.

The most prominent sign of this unusual attitude toward belief is the now-closed Temple of the Fishers. For 16 centuries, it was the preeminent gathering place for wraiths who retained some form of Christian faith. It was closed along with all the lesser temples when it turned out that the Fisher leaders were running false paradises and slave states out among the Far Shores. Today, the Spine's patrols discourage everything that suggests worship on temple grounds, but they don't interfere with the tourists who come to see relic churches gathered from all across the Dark Kingdom and melded into a single edifice.

Also found in the domain of the Skeletal Lord is one of the more puzzling and notorious spots in Stygia, the house known only as "Mog's." Named after the last wraith to dwell there (and emerge intact), it's a nondescript house in a nondescript neighborhood. However, something lurks beyond its door such that anyone who goes in does not come out. Experts have theorized it's perhaps a Nihil, or that possibly some form of plasmic creature is trapped inside, but no one, including a squad of heavily armed centurions, has returned from the threshold to report on what they found. Instead, the Skeletal Lord had the door boarded up and the site placed under guard, but every so often an intrepid and foolish wraith finds a way in, if not a way out.

Hangtown

The Seat of Burning Waters, home of the Grim Legion and its Smiling Lord, is not a nice place even by Stygian standards. It takes its tone from the Smiling Lord's throne room, where a flaming moat separates his seat from the rest of the chamber. Screams are more common in Stygia than many wraiths would like, but in that room, screams are constant as tormented souls char on their way to Oblivion. Fire and images of punishment loom throughout the Citadel, reminding everyone what's at stake.

The Grim Legion, for the victims of violence, shares a distinctive problem with the Penitent Legion. In both cases, the deathmarks bring in perpetrators and their victims alike. Killers and the murdered both belong in Hangtown, as far as the forces behind the deathmarks are concerned, and the Smiling Lord doesn't challenge fate in this regard. Every marked wraith has a place here. This creates constant friction, since few victims ever get comfortable (or want to try to) with the ones responsible for their deaths. To maintain civic order, the Grim Legion's patrols in Hangtown promote a very elaborate, very careful etiquette, similar to the worried carefulness surrounding medieval knights. Offenses against the unwritten rules give the patrols an excuse to haul offenders away before the underlying tensions explode.

It works, more or less. There are few public outbreaks of violence in Hangtown. Wraiths who just can't stand the charade are at liberty to move to other districts, or to join the Grim Legion's many ventures that offer them chances to go ahead and vent their violent emotions elsewhere. There are always calls for Legionnaires willing to defend the walls of the Necropoli, for example, and a steady flow of Hangtown's finest goes out to the Shadowlands.

The one major outlet within Hangtown is entertainment. If it's formally organized as sport, theater, or other recreation, and if its managers keep the violence contained, then just about anything goes. Revenge tragedies and Grand Guignol plays (including ones organized on "be an actor for a day" lines that provide minimal coaching), gladiatorial bouts, extreme sports that allow contestants to interfere with each other — they all let some of the bloodlust out. Then the entertainment finishes and everyone goes back to their rigid politeness.

A more serious landmark within Hangtown is Michael V. Roberts' Passage. Named for the soldier who singlehandedly held it against spectral hordes during the last Great Maelstrom, it is an otherwise-unassuming passageway that opens up to the open-air market of Malavis Square. Particularly sensitive wraiths claim traces of heroism still cling to the cobblestones of the passageway, and that if you listen carefully, you can hear the echoes of sword on sword and desperate combat.

Hangtown spreads around the Library. The Smiling Lord would love to control it, but learned long ago that he couldn't fend off all challengers. The district patrols take care not to infringe on Library grounds — the Library patrols often choose not to share in Hangtown's unique customs, and resist intruders vigorously.

Sanctuary

The Seat of Succor, home of the Penitent Legion and the Laughing Lady, dominates the district of Sanctuary. The vagaries of erosion and Maelstrom damage carved canyons that let wraiths almost everywhere in the district get a good look at the place, and an informal, but very strong, tradition discourages new construction that would block existing sight lines. It's the least ornate of the Citadels, resembling nothing so much as a very large hospital or asylum. There are now no visible signs of the damage it suffered during the Grim Legion's revolt in the Great War; the Laughing Lady simply oversaw its reconstruction on exactly the same principles as before.

The most unsettling feature of the Seat of Succor, for most visitors, is the voices. Unseen souls, or their echoes, or some other source altogether, fill the Seat with constant laughter, none of it actually happy. There are laughs that turn into screams, laughs that turn into tears, laughs that turn into shouting in unknown languages, and more. Wraiths whose duties require them to spend a lot of time here come away much more centered than they might have dreamed possible.

Like the Grim Legion, the Penitent Legion has the problem of dealing with perpetrators and victims who share a deathmark. The solution favored by the authorities in Sanctuary is exactly the opposite of the one in Hangtown: they encourage confrontation, public and private, with all affected parties given a chance to air their grievances. In Sanctuary, long-time residents explain to newcomers, everything comes with recriminations. The officials in the Seat of Succor say that this tempers the whole Legion, along with anyone else who chooses to exist with this discipline, and keeps small challenges from becoming big crises. And if it has the side effect of keeping things unusually vigorous ("lively," the locals say when they feel ironic), that's just the cost of doing business.

Sanctuary has some impressive relics, including the largest continuous plot of undeveloped land in the city, parcels that used to be a favorite of Dionysian cults in southern Greece. It's also known for having Stygia's biggest circles of helldivers and their collections of stolen Angst stored in caves, basements, and other places the Sanctuary patrols aren't likely to look. The residents include many wraiths unusually willing to talk about their experiences with damaged thinking, dark passions, and the personal fight against Oblivion, whether or not they are Penitent themselves. The district has a well-earned reputation for being the place for wraiths who struggle to survive to come and find both understanding and help.

Newtown

The Seat of Silence, home to the Silent Legion and its Quiet Lord, lives up to its name, on the outside. The Citadel shares the Legion's overall mission, helping those who died because of suicide, despair, martyrdom, and other forms of self-destruction. All around the Citadel, a persistent quiet holds sway, and a dense fog often gathers on the hill no matter what the weather

is like in the rest of Stygia. The Quiet Lord says this gives those considering time there a private realm in which to make their choice. It's much noisier inside, as the sounds of constant grief fill every nook and cranny. Wraiths who come here for help must each mourn in their own way, through whatever stages or phases each one needs, until they've gotten to a point of calm where the Legion's castigators can help them establish a new foundation for life.

Newtown is second only to the Spine when it comes to favoring Underworld-based buildings and activities. The Spine is built around a harsh rejection of sentiment; Newtown rises around the belief that the old life still matters, but that new existence calls for new objects of desire. The district is home to experiments in architecture, Corpus presentation, and the design of all sorts of equipment, all starting with the principle that there's no need to imitate Skinlands precedents anymore. Newtown is the place to go to see genuinely new things.

The long-term population of Newtown is lower than in the other east-side districts. The transient population is huge, however, because Newtown's experiments in design include massive docks and airfields. A traveler to Stygia who hasn't specified some other point of arrival is very likely to disembark in Newtown, and many wraiths with nothing else to do at the moment like to watch the crowds come and go.

Whilestown

The Seat of Thorns, home to the Emerald Legion and its Emerald Lord, would dominate its section of the Road of Lords like no other Citadel, if only it were visible. It's a unique complex, making use of countless thousands of green crystals, gathered from the Labyrinth at great cost, to illuminate all its sides and angles. But the Emerald Lord has chosen to cover all the rest of its hilltop with a maze of briars — carefully bred from the riverside trees — a full mile across; anyone who has business with the Seat of Thorns has to budget the time to maneuver the maze, even if they have an expert guide on hand. The Emerald Lord remembers what civil wars and Great Maelstroms are like and has decided to do everything he can to ensure that he and his Legion can survive whatever may come next.

Whilestown reflects the nature of the Emerald Legion, those who've died by happenstance, even in its name. The archetypal story of how a wraith ended up with Emerald deathmarks begins, "One day, while I was just minding my own business…." Whilestown is the place wraiths gather to do something else with less fear of dying this time around. The Legion is large, but its presence in Stygia is relatively small, with most Legion activity happening elsewhere. The Emerald Lord seems comfortable with the idea of his district being Stygia's "odds and ends" place.

If a wraith needs an Artificer as innovative as the ones in the Spine but more interested in mortal precedents, a scholar as informed as the Library's but less likely to make an acquisitive lunge at rare manuscripts, someone with access to illicit stores of Angst without the tragic histories so common in Sanctuary, Whilestown is the place to come look. It acts as an escape valve for social pressures elsewhere on Stygia, since nobody excels at keeping diverse misfits together like the Emerald Legion.

There's an informal theme of unexpected synthesis in Whilestown relic and local construction. Legion forces work by seeking complements among people who had nothing in common and forging bonds between them, and they apply the same principle to urban design. Buildings fused together, or stacked on top of each other, or inserted one into another like a wedge dropped from above, all help Whilestown maintain the look that many visitors expect all of Stygia to have.

The same principle affects the way Whilestown wraiths do business. Almost every business is a bit of this and a bit of that: a warehouse block and a dating/escort service with an index of wraiths with exotic Passions, a market square for vendors unable to afford their own permanent addresses and an outfitter specializing in Tempest-resilient gear for hermits and explorers, a jitney depot and an office of Pardoners who offer expert advice in religious practices both legal and otherwise. Some reflect a single wraith's interests, while many emerge out of chance partnerships.

South End

The Seat of Golden Tears, home of the Legion of Paupers and the Beggar Lord, occupies the tallest of the seven hills and sets the tone for the whole southern end of Stygia. It's a constantly shifting jumble of semi-independent buildings and fractions of buildings, which rise and fall, rotate, and move in response to unheard commands that follow no discernable routine. Of all the Citadels, it's the one that makes guides most necessary, and even so, there's no shortage of true tales of those who came up to the Citadel on business and were never seen again.

The Legion of Paupers takes in those whose deaths are in some way mysterious: those who have no memory of how they died, those who died in circumstances where they lost control but don't fit the criteria for the Penitent Legion, and those who died in ways that make them eligible for several Legions at once. The Paupers get the wraiths that Deathlords' representatives in reaping grounds would otherwise fight over. The district of South End provides a similar function for the city of Stygia, taking in wraiths, relics, and other odds and ends that nobody else wanted to keep, but that nobody felt motivated enough to destroy.

South End residents and patrols share an attitude about outsiders. It's usually expressed as "If you're just here to look around, goodbye." The wraiths in this district take the opportunity to make something good out of others' leavings seriously, but they're making them for their own kind, not for the benefit of those who may well have done the original throwing away. Travelers who come to South End had better have a clear mission and a local contact if they want to avoid trouble.

There aren't many grand relics on display in South End. Luxury, the residents point out in tones from whining to raging, is for those who don't have to make do with others' leftovers. The South End inheritance is more modest, and includes many

small remains whose purpose was misunderstood by later discoverers: the "temple" that's actually an ancient sewer system, the "cemetery" whose pillars were actually part of an elaborate ball game, the "royal library" that was actually a black-market warehouse that flooded just after receiving a big haul. When it comes to new construction, the district's Arcanos masters love to make use of the rival flows of emotion and desire in objects subject to intense, but incompatible, understandings.

A particularly grim neighborhood landmark is a building with a blank façade that most wraiths go out of their way to avoid. It is a prison, where wraiths of particular interest to the Beggar Lord are held and questioned. There are rarely more than a few wraiths resident within the frowning confines at any given time; a place in what is known as Antonius Giovanni's House is reserved for those few who really catch the Beggar Lord's attention. The fact that the building is named for a vampire only adds to its sinister air; stories as to why this is swirl like dead leaves. Some say the vampire held the Beggar Lord himself captive at one point and the name is a reminder to the Deathlord that even the mightiest can be humbled. Others say Giovanni struck a deal with the Beggar Lord and instructed the questioners who work there in certain persuasive techniques. And there are those who say the vampire has incurred the Beggar Lord's special ire, and that all that is done behind the walls is done in the interest of finding, and dealing with, the vampire.

Iron Hills

For most of Stygia's history, the Iron Hills hosted massive villas and the occasional business or commune that didn't want to deal with district patrols. That formally changed early in the 20th century, when Charon decreed that they were now directly the property of the Onyx Tower and would be developed to provide homes for the ever-swelling population. The existing residents received generous payments and vigorous shoves.

As soon as the Fourth Great Maelstrom settled down, Stygian architects and engineers went to work assembling relic bridges and new construction into massive causeways to cover the mile between the southernmost island and the nearest convenient points on the main island. The north route begins just below the Onyx Tower and makes a gradual curve to face northeast, while the south route starts at Riverside between Ironville and the Spine. Each route makes use of the one of the openings in the seawall. They can be safely closed in a matter of hours, or slammed shut for emergencies in minutes, at the cost of needed rebuilding later.

Half a million wraiths now reside on the Iron Hills, with more arriving all the time. Their residential conditions are almost always bad, using whatever relics others didn't claim and whatever shelter can be cobbled together from the River of Death's endless drift. What does work, to the surprise of many skeptical outsiders, are the social conditions.

Everyone on the Iron Hills realizes that they exist in a very fragile situation. Anything that required closing the seawall would leave them on the wrong side, and there's plenty of trouble that can do great harm without rising to that level. Charon gave them what support he could; the Deathlords don't actively wish the Iron Hills any harm, it's just that other places, starting with their own districts, get more attention. So the Iron Hills wraiths' only reliable resource is each other. They're where the true flotsam and jetsam of Stygia wash up: the disgraced, the destitute, the dreamers who don't have anything to offer that the isle wants. And naturally, this cauldron of seekers and exiles can be a fertile source of plots, unexpected alliances, and agents of outside powers. Spies and self-described freedom fighters are everywhere here, and heretical cults thrive, yet somehow the community always still manages to pull together and protect its own.

One of the most notorious haunts of self-styled revolutionaries is the Brian Quinn Estates, an apartment building that burned to the ground in 1987 and was transported in its entirety to the Iron Hills. For some unknown reason, revolutionaries and Renegades always converge on it, and a half-dozen cabals are active within its walls at any given time. The authorities know this and raid the place on a semi-regular basis, but as soon as the heat is off a new batch settles in.

Also found in the Iron Hills is Nikink's, a dive of a Pathos bar that's got a reputation for accepting one and all, as long as they behave themselves. Guildwraiths rub elbows with high-ranking Hierarchs and Heretics pass the time with would-be Inquisitors. Much of the unofficial business of the empire is conducted in its cramped and crowded rooms, and it's even rumored that one or two of the Deathlords regularly patronize the place.

Less salubrious is a wrecked villa that, even in the cramped Iron Hills, is given a wide berth. Colloquially known as The House Aludian Thex Built, it belonged to a wealthy Artificer named Nicholas Vandemaele-Couchy, who had an arrangement with the ancient vampire whose name adorned his home. The secret to Vandemaele-Couchy's wealth lay in the regular deliveries of Enfants Thex provided across the centuries. The Artificer's agents received the souls of those Thex dispatched at a regular Shadowlands rendezvous. In exchange for this bounty, Vandemaele-Couchy made certain there were no vengeful wraiths waiting for the ancient Lasombra on the other side of the Shroud, nor would there be any interference from those whose hatred of the vampire proved stronger than their fear of breaking the *Dictum Mortuum*.

Necropoli

A Necropolis is the standard term for a Hierarchy outpost in the Shadowlands. usually overlaying some mortal city or other. At the heart of the Necropolis is the Citadel, a fortified central redoubt made from the ghosts of destroyed buildings and hardened against Maelstroms and other spectral attacks. Normally they are found in desolate or decayed areas, but as waves of gentrification swept through cities, many Anacreons moved their operations to historic sites and the like that are less likely to become construction sites overnight.

Generally a Necropolis claims authority over the Shadowlands of an entire city, though there are rare cases of multiple Citadels springing up in particularly crowded areas. Back when Brooklyn was an independent city, it had its own Necropolis, but since it was absorbed into New York as one of the five boroughs, there's been constant bureaucratic warfare between the original New York Citadel and the Brooklyn one as to whether one has authority over the other.

All wraiths who are within a Necropolis' borders are considered to be under the authority of that Necropolis and its ruling wraiths. Depending on the Necropolis' size, some or all of the Legions may have a representative in place. The highest-ranking wraiths in a Necropolis hold the title of Anacreon, and it is the council of Anacreons that directs policy in times of peace and defense in times of war and Maelstrom. Of course, all Anacreons are not created equal, nor are all Necropoli, and the balance of power within a given city can shift based upon the Legion allegiances of its wraithly population or the political skills of the local Anacreons. Each Anacreon holds ultimate responsibility for the wraiths of their Legion within the Necropolis.

Every Necropolis is also garrisoned by armed and armored Legionnaires, ready to defend the Citadel at a moment's notice against any threats. In theory, the territory of every Necropolis is walled, though as cities expand, overburdened Anacreons are often forced to pick and choose which sections of their city to protect.

Notable Necropoli

Edinburgh

Edinburgh is often called, without irony, the model Necropolis. Laid out by noted architect Sir William Bruce, it features a central Citadel with equal quarters for each of the eight Legions, and a strong series of fortifications around the Necropolis perimeter that have withstood numerous spectral assaults.

The council of Anacreons in Edinburgh currently includes representatives from all eight of the Legions, with the Anacreon of Fate having only recently arrived as a replacement for their unfortunately Harrowed predecessor. Debate is often heated, but once a decision is reached on matters of policy, the Council

stands together to back it no matter what an individual's opinion might have been. Likewise, they move in lockstep when it comes to the interpretation of Stygian law, whether it be the persecution of too-obvious Guildwraiths or prescriptions on how newly arrived Enfants are to be treated. Those who violate the laws, regardless of personal status or connection, are sentenced to nights in the so-called "soul cages," soulsteel contraptions that swing in the Niddry vaults below the city. The greater the crime, the longer the stay. And since there's something down in those vaults that's fond of ripping wraiths to shreds on odd occasions, most would prefer to avoid the experience. Repeat offenders don't get a third chance, but instead are packed off straight to the forges.

The reason for this level of cooperation is simple: The city is built on an ancient volcano, and the old crater at Arthur's Seat houses a Nihil that opens into the Labyrinth. Packs of Spectres make constant attempts to breach the city's defenses, and a very few succeed. With such an existential threat on their borders, the Anacreons long ago recognized that they didn't have time for partisan bickering. Each new addition to the Council is briefed on what her real duties are and where here real loyalties must lie — with the city, first and foremost, and devil take the words of a faraway Deathlord with no idea what might be about to bubble up into the street.

The Citadel itself is set onto the lower volcanic hill of Castle Rock, at the end of the Royal Mile. In case of emergency or Maelstrom, there are prominently posted evacuation routes for wraiths posted around the city, and there are even occasional (and not always well attended) practice drills.

Despite its reputation as being haunted (as well as a home of other high strangeness), Rosslyn Chapel has been placed strictly off-limits to the local wraith population. Why, none of the Anacreons will say, but what is known is that wraiths who sneak past the sentries and into the chapel itself rarely emerge the same as when they entered. Some are prone to strange manias, while others immediately flee the Necropolis for points unknown. None will speak of the experience inside the chapel except in the broadest possible terms, and they cannot be coerced into giving up its secrets.

Los Angeles

If you want to see stars — dead ones, anyway — the Los Angeles Necropolis is where you should go. There's no shortage of the famous, the almost famous, and the would-have-been famous working behind Citadel walls. Sharp-eyed visitors will recognize more than one movie star in the Necropolis, such as Fatty Arbuckle working side by side with Frances Farmer, or Howard Hughes negotiating with Bugsy Siegel over the allocation of soulsteel from the city's forges to its Legions. Feasting on the Memoriam generated by their mortal success, the stars have risen to the top of the Necropolis pecking order, and a certain glitzy, glamorous veneer overlays the whole enterprise.

Underneath, of course, is the seedier side. Dealmakers and spin doctors, fixers and crooked agents, they're the real grease that makes the Necropolis run. And then there are the movers and shakers, the land barons and hustlers who drew the maps of the city while they were alive and hunger for similar power now that they're dead. The stars may have the name recognition, but operators like Pen Timbletom and Walt "Cabbie" Karmanik are the ones wraiths in the know respect and fear.

Ironically, the heart of the Los Angeles Necropolis is not actually located in Los Angeles proper. There's simply no room for it there — there's too many people and the real estate is too crowded to allow for it. Rather, the Citadel was built in the nearby community of Vernon, amongst warehouses and factories.

The other interesting fact about the Los Angeles Necropolis is that it's not actually run by the Legions. Instead, L.A. is a Guild town, with the Masquers ascendant. It's an open secret among Guildwraiths that L.A. is where you go if you want to avoid getting hassled by Legionnaires, or if you want to practice your arts openly and without risk of being hauled off to the forges because of it. Diandra Coulson, head of the local chapter of the Masquers' Guild, has worked hard to bend the power structure to his will, largely by co-opting potential rivals into the Guild structure and thus making his enemies into de facto allies. Those he can't subvert he isolates; Althea Prescott, the Anacreon for the Penitent Legion, refused Coulson's entreaties and remains firmly non-Guild, but all four of the Overlords working for her gave in to Coulson's blandishments, effectively neutralizing their boss.

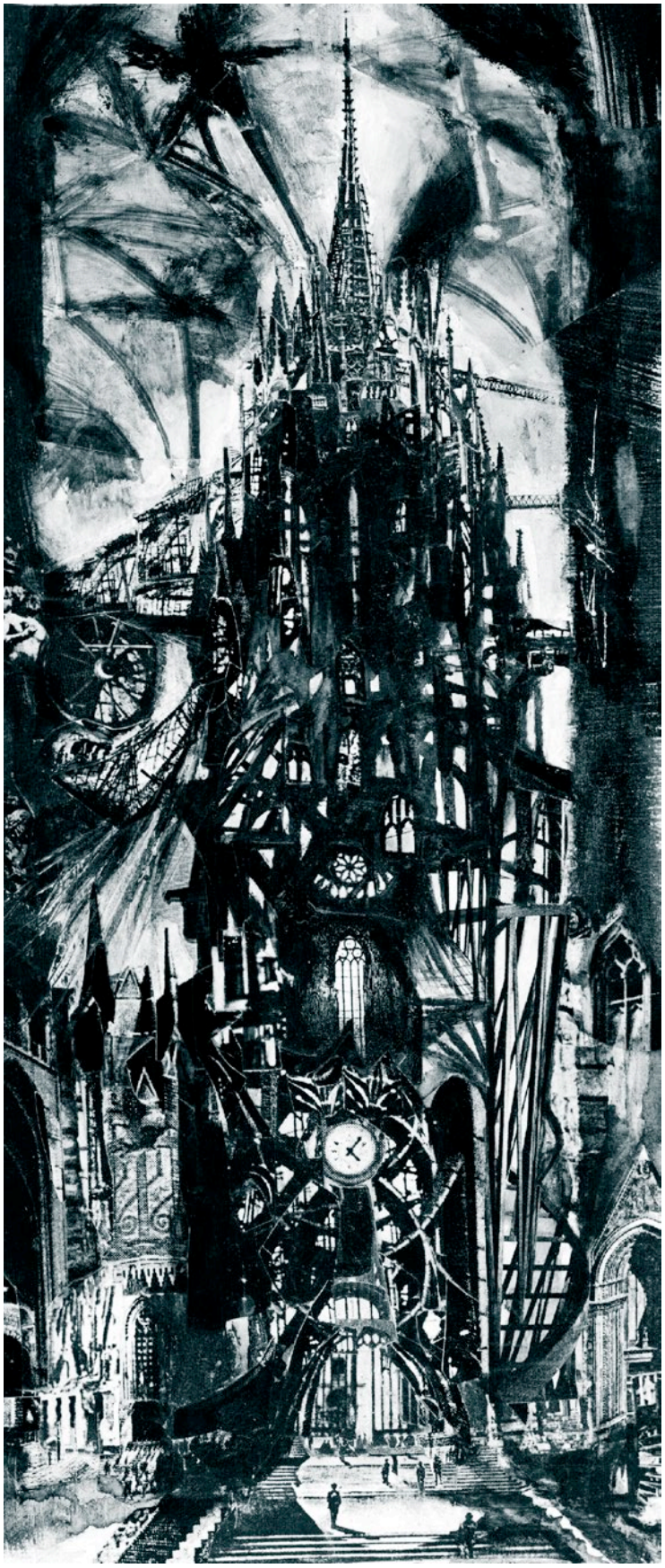
If Coulson does have a rival, it's Harrison Gray Otis, a rising star in the Iron Legion who, in his breathing days, helped build Los Angeles into the metropolis it is today. Ruthless and deeply distrustful of the Guilds, Otis has the tacit backing of the Stygian elite to try to reclaim control of the city. His right-hand wraith, Ezekiel O'Brien, is notoriously cutthroat and ruthless, even by Los Angeles standards, and a visit from O'Brien is as feared as the ringing of the Maelstrom bells.

One unique element of the Los Angeles Necropolis is its trolleys. The ghostly cars serve all areas of the Necropolis, following over 1,000 miles of track laid down in their heyday in the Skinlands. Travel is free to any resident of the Necropolis; outsiders must pay a fee — or have a resident vouch for them.

In the Skinlands, the city is home to innumerable oil wells, with the rigs pumping away day and night. Some even operate downtown, behind building facades designed to hide them from view. And where they have drilled down in the Skinlands, in the Shadowlands many are host to perpetually open Nihils that lead to the Tempest or, in some cases, the Labyrinth itself. Many — including the largest, at the La Brea tar pits — are guarded against the possibility of something untoward coming through, especially in case of a Maelstrom. But more and more are opening, and there aren't enough Legionnaires to stand guard at all of them. Sooner or later, something will slip through.

Paris

Most Necropoli tower above the local Shadowlands, rising up to dominate the Underworld landscape. Not so in Paris, where



the entirety of the Necropolis is located underground. Only a small portion of the famous Paris catacombs are open to the public; the rest are claimed by the dead as their own. Some have compared the Paris Necropolis to an anthill, with its miles of underground tunnels and endless waves of scurrying wraiths going about the city's business. The denizens of Paris take the comparison with a wry smile, well aware that their "anthill" has withstood the worst the Great Maelstroms could throw at it far better than other cities — including Stygia.

The Necropolis is ruled by Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, the legendary Marshal of France and Anacreon of the Grim Legion. While all of the other Legions are represented in the ruling councils of Paris, it is de Vauban who has the final say on all matters of import. His troops, while technically outnumbered by the representatives of other Legions, are elite, and take the forefront in any conflict. This includes any fights against Spectres and any internal strife, which de Vauban puts down ruthlessly and efficiently.

Perhaps his greatest contribution to the once-fractious Necropolis, however, is the modernization of its defenses. At the first hint of an incursion, the tunnels become a deathtrap for any hostile forces, be they wraith, Spectre or something worse. Spikes of plasm-rending Stygian steel emerge from the walls. Impassible barriers slam down, funneling attackers to choke points where they can be captured or destroyed en masse. It is a point of pride among the Parisian dead that no spectral assault has ever breached their Citadel, and they remain confident that none ever will.

Not everyone is happy with the current arrangement. A collective of wraiths, most dating to the days of the Paris Commune having set up an alternative Necropolis on the grounds of the Pere Lachaise cemetery. They've attracted a somewhat sizable following, though it's long on bureaucrats and short on soldiers. For his part, de Vauban is content to let the rabble-rousers congregate there, where he can keep an eye on the lot of them.

While the Necropolis proper is set up in the tunnels, there are outposts elsewhere in the city. Taking advantage of Paris' history — and its booming tourist trade — the Hierarchy has fortified outposts at many of the city's most famous sites. These are set up for the express purpose of collecting Pathos from awestruck visitors. The Louvre, Montmartre, the Eiffel Tower and more are endless sources of powerful emotion, and the Hierarchy prudently harvests as much of it as possible. These outposts are obvious targets for raiders, and each has a heavy complement of Legionnaires attached to it.

If there is one spot in Paris, however, that even de Vauban's shock troops dare not go, it's La Colonne Médici. Originally built as an observatory and apartment for her court astronomer by Catherine de Médici, the tower stands near the booming commercial district (for the living and

the dead) of Les Halles. It has, however, a sinister reputation that dates back the last days of the Valois dynasty, one that is well deserved. Spectres haunt the site, and every attempt to cleanse them from this place has met with disaster. At the heart of the tower sits the ghost of Cosme Ruggieri, once Catherine's chief astrologer and advisor. Now, however, Ruggieri has been transformed into a powerful Shade, and he hungers to control far more of the city than he currently does.

Philadelphia

The City of Brotherly Love is largely known for two things: being the site of the origins of the United States of America, and the one time local sports fans threw snowballs at a guy dressed like Santa Claus. Both of these elements infuse the city's Necropolis, where a jury-rigged series of alliances keeps things simultaneously operational and on the brink of disaster.

The main Citadel, and the home to Anacreons of the Emerald, Penitent, and Silent Legions, is built in the center of Eastern State Penitentiary. Once a functioning prison with an experimental design, it's now a tourist site — and has a reputation for being haunted. The three Legions based there formed an unlikely alliance, and serve as the central axis of power around which the Necropolis turns.

However, there's a secondary, smaller Citadel in Fairmont Park, home to the Skeletal and Iron Legion representatives and their subordinates. Led by the wraith of the indomitable abolitionist (and now Anacreon of the Skeletal Legion) Lucretia Mott, this group seeks to end thralldom within the Philadelphia Necropolis. A fierce pacifist in life, post-mortem Mott has no qualms about doing whatever it takes to achieve what she views as the greater good. As a result, the troops from this secondary Necropolis will occasionally raid Reapers inbound with freshly captured Enfants, freeing and recruiting the new souls to their cause. Generally, they have little trouble getting their point across.

The remaining Legions are slighter in numbers and maintain a strict neutrality when the others squabble. They count among their membership several of the so-called Founding Fathers, and can be found in a series of small fortifications around the central hub of Independence Mall. The strong emotional resonance from the founding of the country keeps these wraiths potent enough to ward off any attempts at coercion by the other factions, and it is through their offices that many of the deals necessary to keep the figurative lights on get struck.

Fragmented as it is, the Philadelphia Necropolis constantly seems to be on the edge of disaster, and yet somehow the varying factions always find a way to come together just in time to avert disaster. Whether it's fending off a spectral incursion, acting to influence mortals to preserve historic buildings that serve as Fetters for many Philadelphia wraiths (only the barest pretense of obeying the *Dictum Mortuum* is shown here. When questioned about it by an Inquisitor of the Unlidded Eye, a local Legionnaire named Morgan Cook said, simply, "Screw that, we got work to do."), or resisting interference from any flavor of Stygian central authority, the local factions can be counted to cooperate when it counts. It's the rest of the time that they bicker, squabble, and occasionally come to blows.

In a city with a fractured Citadel, it's not surprising that the nature of the Necropolis is fractured as well. Some neighborhoods are safe and fortified against Maelstroms, others are no-man's lands where Renegade gangs and occasional Spectres roam. There's also a strong Heretic presence in the city. Pennsylvania's original charter forbade religious discrimination, leading to many marginalized religious groups settling there in the colony's early days. Many of these wraiths, rather than journey to the Far Shores, have remained in Philadelphia, particularly those of the Quaker faith. As for the Renegades, the Benjamin Rush House hosts the largest gang, a collection of victims of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 who've split off from the Skeletal Legion over a refusal to take orders from Mott. Led by firebrand orator James McGregor, they stubbornly cling to their independence and remain a constant thorn in Mott's side.

Rome

Rome might not be the oldest of the European Necropoli, but it's certainly among the largest and most prestigious. Huge chunks of the architecture of Stygia were pulled from the Shadowlands of Rome and its environs, granting the isle a classical majesty that even today informs its architecture and layout.

With its preservation of so many Roman-era treasures, however, Rome also offers wraiths of a certain age something not many places can: secure Fetters going back millennia. In practical terms, this means that the city's politics are dominated by wraiths who were contemporaries of Julius Caesar or Claudius. This in turn means that those in charge in the city wield almost unheard-of power, as few wraiths of their age can endure the Shadowlands for long. Younger wraiths looking to climb the ladder have only two options: Make powerful friends, or wait a very long time.

The flip side of having very old wraiths in charge of a Necropolis is that they have very long memories, and the elder wraiths of Rome remember the sack of the city as if it were yesterday. As such, they remain eternally vigilant against even the slightest threats to the city, and they will act swiftly and decisively to neutralize them. And if they get it wrong and accidentally take out an innocent or three, that's just the cost of doing business.

While all eight Legions are represented in the main Citadel, the real core of power rests with the representatives of the Grim Legion. Made up of a hard core of generals and military personnel going all the way back to Caesar's legions, they are ruthless, disciplined, and in lockstep as to how to handle the city's problems. The Anacreon is the venerable and brilliant Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, who combines a strong sense of civic duty with a superb tactical mind. Leading the opposition is the Anacreon of Fate, the legendary orator Hortensia, backed by the Pauper Anacreon Idrin and, silently, several others. Normally the Ladies of Fate dislike intervening in city-level politics, but

Rome is of such importance to Stygia that orders came down from the isle to take a direct hand in matters, else the Grim Legion would run amok.

The main Citadel is located on the grounds of the Colosseum, but the city is so huge there are smaller citadels scattered throughout. Each of these satellite citadels is run by an Overlord of the Grim Legion, who reports back to the Anacreon as needed but otherwise functions almost autonomously. Indeed, it's almost as if there is no singular Rome Necropolis, but rather a collection of smaller ones under a single rubric.

If there is trouble brewing in Rome, it's not from this loose arrangement of citadels. Rather, it's from the deathgrip that the ancients have on power in the city. As brilliant and civic-minded as Agrippa may be, getting him to understand the nature of modern communications or computing power is incredibly difficult. Decisions are made based on facts and opinions that should have long since crumbled to dust, and the ever-increasing number of younger wraiths have less and less patience with it — and with their own powerlessness. Hortensia, shrewdly, is aware of this, and bends her efforts towards directing the dissatisfaction squarely at the Grim Legion.

Contrary to popular belief, Vatican City is not under the jurisdiction of the Rome Necropolis, and has its own walls and guards. Communication between the Roman Citadel and the Vatican one is rare and strained at best; the dead of the Vatican prefer to keep to themselves, and for their own reasons.

Ranks Within A Necropolis

The civilian ranks within a Necropolis are as follows:

Chancellors: Overseers of all civilian functions in a Necropolis, they report directly to Anacreons and Deathlords as needed.

Ministers: Heads of the various departments within a Necropolis' bureaucracy. Often selected by Legion allegiance rather than special skill in a subject.

Inspectors: The civilian equivalent of Marshals, they handle day-to-day operations within a section of a Necropolis.

Adjusters: Equivalent to Centurions, they organize and oversee Clerks.

Clerks: The ruck and run of the civilian wraith population. They do the grunt work and day-to-day tasks as needed.

Factions

Death does not enforce uniformity of opinion. As in life, the dead have disagreements on how to take care of business. In many cases the divisions are relatively small, or overwhelmed by the enormity of the threat of Oblivion, and everyone agrees to more or less disagree. In others, however, the fractures are too great to be ignored.

Power in the Underworld is not broken down along equitable lines. In the Dark Kingdom of Iron, Stygia reigns supreme. It has the most wraiths, the most power, and the most wealth, by far. But not every wraith is willing to align with it, Those whose disagreements with Stygia are political are loosely grouped under the umbrella of Renegades, while those whose opinion is more religious or spiritual are often referred to as Heretics. Both factions are made up of numerous smaller groups, many of which have as little in common with each other as they do with Stygia. Intra-faction conflict is common, and groups coalesce and dissolve with startling rapidity. That being said, there are still places on the map that Stygia's power can't reach, and in these spots, others call the shots.

Renegades

As long as there has been a Stygia, there have been Renegades. However, since the Third Great Maelstrom — in part incited by the actions of certain Renegade groups — their power has greatly diminished and they were forced to the fringes of Stygian society. Renegade groups vary in size from lone operators to organized, fortified encampments where Hierarchy wraiths

Famous Renegade Gangs

The Brotherhood of the Black Rabbit — Consisting of deceased stage magicians, spiritualists, and mediums, the Brotherhood seeks to protect the living who deal with the dead from the abuses of the Hierarchy. They are led by the notorious Alexis Naucek.

Daughters of the Scythe — An all-female gang, the Daughters reject the entire premise of Stygia's existence and look to bring it down so that something better can be built on its ashes. Once found only in a couple of Necropoli on the American west coast, they've now got chapters all across the empire.

Doyle's Irregulars — An irregular mob of street-fighting toughs surrounding a hardened professional center, Doyle's lads will do anything to anyone for the right price. Based out of the Boston Necropolis, they've been known to travel worldwide to finish a contract, as their word is their absolute bond.

Storm Riders — The pre-eminent biker gang of the Underworld (there are numerous others), the Riders reject Hierarchy authority and spend their time cruising Byways in a Robin Hood-like quest to aid the poor and downtrodden.

The Flying Column — Dedicated to freeing the Dublin Necropolis from Stygian rule, this gang was founded by the veterans — and casualties — of the 1916 Easter Rising. Since then it's added dozens of members, all focused on the same goal.

dare not go. Each gang shares one trait: a refusal to be part of the Stygian machine. Beyond that, everything is up to the individual group. As a result, Renegade politics are constantly shifting, with various bands dissolving, merging, and splintering with alarming frequency. How each Renegade gang is run is also a matter of local control. Some are cults are personality, while others are purely democratic, and still others use trial by combat, feats of strength and anything else imaginable to determine whose word is law. Every political system the living ever thought of is on display among the Renegades, and quite a few more that they haven't, and a wraith's reception in a Renegade gang can vary widely depending upon which sort of crowd she's fallen in with.

By and large, Renegades exist outside of Stygian protection, in the wildlands between Necropoli. Others dwell inside enemy lines, hidden within Stygia itself and waiting for the right moment to forcibly declare their opposition. Not every Renegade gang is locked in mortal combat with Stygia; some just want to be left alone to exist in their own way, while others prefer an independent existence not bound by Stygia's rules. But the popular — and romanticized — image of a Renegade is of a wraith forcibly smashing the forges of an underdefended Necropolis while setting the local thralls free and declaring revolution.

While each Renegade gang will proudly swear they're independent, there are longstanding rumors of a Renegade Council, made up of representatives from the strongest and most influential Renegade bands and led by the so-called Renegade Lord. No one has ever laid eyes on the Renegade Lord, and she — if she exists — has managed to evade capture by Hierarchy forces desperate to bring her in for centuries. Hierarchy strategists pooh-pooh the notion of a Renegade council, but their counterparts closer to the front lines note that certain Renegade actions have an unprecedented level of coordination between groups that would normally be at each other's throats, and keep their counsel to themselves.

In the end, there is no such thing as the average Renegade. Some are Hierarchy wraiths who grew disillusioned over the centuries and struck out on their own. Others are activists who tangle with Reapers over new souls the way environmentalists throw themselves in front of whaling ships in the Skinlands, or who refuse to be part of an empire founded on the practice of soulforging. Still others are bomb-throwers and rabble-rousers, determined to bring the entire Stygian edifice down and to hell with the consequences. And then there are the mercenary gangs, willing to do whatever for the highest bidder so long as they can do it on their own terms. What matters most is that

they offer an alternative to allowing one's self to be absorbed into Stygian society, as perilous as that alternative might be.

Heretics

One would think that an actual, tangible afterlife would end all discussions of religion among the Restless Dead, and in doing so, one would be wrong. Innumerable groups of wraiths have fallen in behind charismatic leaders or theologies that attempt to explain the mystery of wraithly existence, leading to the relentless rise of Heretic groups (known as "cults"). Heretics officially date back to the Proclamation of Reason, when Stygia pivoted away from the pursuit of Transcendence and the Far Shores. Those who had once been Fishers, leading the questing Restless across the Sea of Shadows became outlawed, functionally the first Heretics. And while some core of those ancient Fishers remains, the term has grown to mean any religious or spiritually-based group that stands in opposition to official Stygian policy.

That doesn't mean that the Heretics present a united front. Far from it — the various cults spend far more time bickering with one another than anything else. This is due in large part to the various cults' refusal to recognize the potential validity of any metaphysical viewpoints other than their own. With the price of failure being Oblivion and the prize of success being Transcendence, it's no wonder that Heretics will defend their way to the very doorstep of the Void. Simply put, they cannot afford to be wrong, and they cannot allow those who are wrong to mislead others or all might pay the price.

Notable Heretic Cults

The Riders of the Wheel — Substituting Chance for Fate, these wraiths believe gambling is the purest form of observance.

Children of the Green — These wraiths view the Underworld through an adaptation of neopagan principles. Believing their postmortem existence works as a sort of balance to the living world, they strive to achieve peace, eliminate soulforging, and otherwise provide a moral counterweight to all of the horrible acts committed in the Underworld.

The Host — These wraiths believe themselves reborn as guardian angels for the living, and act as such in deliberate defiance of the *Dictum Mortuum*. One of the most widespread Heretic groups, they have spread across various Necropoli with lightning speed. They are led by a mysterious wraith known only as Michel, whose capture is a Hierarchy priority.

The Cult of Nhudri — Contained within the Artificers' Guild, this cult views the great smith Nhudri as a divine figure worthy of worship. What Nhudri himself thinks of this is not known.

The Enemy of My Enemy

Just because they both stand against Stygia doesn't mean Spectres and Renegades are natural allies. Some Renegade gangs do make the devil's bargain and hook up with the Shadow-Eaten against their mutual foe, but by and large these groups end up betrayed by their erstwhile allies, hauled down into the Labyrinth, sold out to Hierarchs for the feast of panicky Angst this generates, or Shadow-Eaten themselves. Only a rare few can manage the balancing act of taking assistance from the Labyrinth without being devoured by it. It's far more likely for Renegades and Hierarchs or Heretics to stand together against Oblivion's threat, then go back to brutalizing each other once the greater danger has passed.

Today, most Hierarchs view Transcendence as a myth, and Heretics as fools or propagandists for clinging to the notion. Heretics, on the other hand, feel this approach has been inculcated by the Hierarchy to keep them from losing souls to whatever lies beyond. Some Heretic cults attempt to recruit from amongst the poor and disaffected in Stygia; it is these groups that the Legions crack down on harshly.

As with Renegades, Heretic groups come in all shapes and sizes. Many answer to a single charismatic figure who leads the cult, setting the rules and making decisions as needed. Others are more rigidly formal, with rites and customs that have been handed down through the centuries. Still others have more ecstatic approaches, believing that pure emotion is the surest route to Transcendence. In any case, few Heretic cults are openly welcome inside the walls of even the smallest Necropolis. Instead, they build their temples and shrines in the contested badlands shared with Renegades, or in humble and hidden places within Stygian cities.

The Hierarchy

The Hierarchy is not Stygia, but Stygia could not survive without the Hierarchy. Instead, the Hierarchy is the term for the organization that supports the Dark Kingdom of Iron and keeps it functioning from day to day. It's the vast network of clerks, soldiers, pilots, accountants, bureaucrats, and other souls who keep the Underworld from devolving into total chaos, and they take their work very seriously.

Founded by Charon as a way of formalizing and unifying the afterlife, the Hierarchy has grown far beyond his initial conception. The Legions have crossed oceans and claimed new territories, the bureaucracy has expanded beyond all compre-

hension, and still more souls flood in and need a place — a safe, comfortable place — to dwell lest Oblivion claim them.

That is what every loyal Hierarch tells herself is the true goal of the faction: keeping Oblivion at bay. Every effort is theoretically bent towards this end, from manning the walls to providing new Enfants with a welcoming reception in and easy transition to the afterlife, to forging criminals to prevent them from becoming Shadow-Eaten.

The truth, as always, is somewhat more complicated. It's not just criminals who get sent to the forges, and too many wraiths end up as thralls. A culture of corruption and incompetence has grown up in the Stygian bureaucracy, so ancient and entrenched that it's impossible to root out. And with all the time in the world stretching ahead of them, there's little incentive for established members of the Hierarchy to adapt, to change, or to respond quickly to requests or demands from everyday wraiths. Meanwhile, younger wraiths, trapped behind immortal superiors, seethe and stew for decades or more, as their only hope for advancement is the utter destruction of a superior, by Shadow or by soulfire. Murderous intrigues spring up, the devious games of wraiths who have grown impatient over the centuries. All of these horrors are woven into the fabric the Hierarchy, dragging it down from Charon's pure initial conception into something painfully imperfect and monstrous.

And yet, it is the last and best bulwark against Oblivion. It's the Hierarchy that builds the walls high and keeps them manned, and it's the Hierarchy that provides shelter and protection for the vast majority of Enfants reborn in Stygian territory. The Byways are maintained and patrolled under Hierarchy authority, and Citadels are constructed with its resources. And while the higher ranks of the bureaucracy are indubitably corrupt, the local Hierarchs are more often of the community and working to improve it, idealists and hardworking wraiths trying to do the best they can, helping new arrivals or keeping their fellow wraiths safe. Those few altruists who've risen in the bureaucracy see Stygia as a once-great empire that has begun to lose its way, and while it is undoubtedly flawed, its original intention was noble. In these degraded times, the best thing a wraith can do, they argue, is fight to uphold the original ideals on which the Hierarchy was founded, even if the Deathlords themselves have forgotten them.

Ferrymen

The Ferrymen stand outside of Stygia, equal parts legend and mystery. Encounters with them are rare, while answers as to their true nature and history are even rarer.

What is commonly known is this: the Ferrymen travel along the Byways and through the Tempest on their own missions, frequently stopping to help wraiths in danger or in need. They also run the Midnight Express, providing safe transit through the Underworld. Students of Stygian history are aware the Charon himself was once a Ferryman, and that the so-called Oath-Circle of the Oar predates Stygia itself. Eventually, its members grew disillusioned with Charon's increasing self-aggrandizement and focus on building a safe haven in the Underworld, rather than helping wraiths on to Transcendence, and they ultimately split with him after the First Great Maelstrom. Since then, they have been an ominous shadow lurking on the fringes of Stygian society, helping individual wraiths while at the same time maintaining an air of terrifying mystery.

The Ferrymen's great secret is the rite known as the Severance, whereby the Ferryman's Shadow is completely excised from her Corpus and instead exists as an independent, monstrous Spectre called a Pasiphae. Post-Severance, a Ferryman is immune to Catharsis (as well as the doubt that comes from having a Shadow constantly whisper in her ear). She also gains additional Corpus, new powers, and immense reservoirs of Pathos and Angst to draw on as needed. The rite also makes the Ferryman look somehow stretched, and hinders her ability to cross the Shroud. However, accepting Severance — supposedly taught to the Ferrymen by Anubis, though the Ferrymen themselves will neither confirm nor deny this — means becoming a being of immense power, one who is matched by a cunning and equally-powerful adversary bent on undoing everything the Ferryman achieves.

Every Ferryman carries three key pieces of equipment: the lantern, the scythe, and the hooded robe. The robe appears to be made of humble fabric, but it can endure Spectre claws and howling Maelstrom winds without a tear, while the hood always shadows the Ferryman's face. The lantern's light pierces even the darkest Tempest storm clouds, providing a beacon of hope to the lost and lighting the way for the determined. And the scythe is perhaps the deadliest weapon in the Underworld. In the hands of a trained user — and every Ferryman is trained in its use — it can wreak untold havoc or be used to make the most delicate of cuts.

The Ferrymen are headquartered at the city of Dis, a lone island honeycombed with tunnels and crowned with fortresses deep within the Tempest. Surrounded by the hulks of sunken ships and dangerous reefs, Dis is nearly impossible to approach unless one knows the precise route — as all Ferrymen do. Others who try and fail find the waters near Dis to be home to particularly inhospitable and aggressive plasmics, and the Ferrymen have been known to actively turn away unwanted visitors. As for the island itself, it contains the great halls, manufacturing concerns, and spartan dwelling places of the Ferrymen, who return here for councils, and for rest and recuperation. Most Ferrymen, even the ancient First, spend little time at Dis, preferring to prowl the Underworld on their neverending mission.

Ferryman society is largely flat, with each member treated as an equal from the moment he takes up the oar. Those surviving Ferrymen who predate the learning of the rite of Severance are referred to as "First," and they make up many of the office holders of the group. But the choice of new Ferrymen is so selective and the initiation so rigorous that all who become Ferrymen are deemed worthy of as much respect as any other.

In the decades since the Fifth Great Maelstrom and Charon's disappearance, the Ferrymen have been more aggressive about

interfering with Stygian society. It was they who brought Stygia to the table to establish the Covenant of the Millions, and with Charon gone, their interactions with Stygia and those who hold the reins of its power have become more frequent than ever.

The Midnight Express

The surest, safest route from the Shadowlands to the heart of the Underworld and back, the Midnight Express is a spectral train of indeterminate length that stops at dozens of Necropoli before plunging into the deeper Underworld. Chugging along on tracks that are miraculously inviolate even in the swirling heart of the Tempest, it features a mismatched hodgepodge of relic train cars — luxury carriages from the Orient Express, a Pullman car, a car from a circus train, etc. — all strung together in what appears to be random order. The length of the train varies — it is described as being "as long as it needs to be" — and those who truly need passage will always find there's room in the car that's pulled up to the station.

The Express is pulled by the legendary #13 Engine, and its engineer is a wraith named J.W. Stillwell. Stillwell was at the throttle of old #13 when she jumped the tracks in the Skinlands, and he's been with her ever since. Watching over the train as a whole are the Ferrymen, who are often seen on board, and who have been known to defend the Midnight Express as it barreled through four-bell Maelstroms.

The Express is always on time, arriving at each stop at precisely midnight local time. Occasionally, this requires the train to be in multiple locations at once, and yet somehow it always works out. Standard stops include great Necropoli like New York, Atlanta, London, Rome, and more, as well as places that hold particular resonance for railroading folk and locations Ferrymen have deemed significant. It will sometimes stop at locations that previously never saw its visits, usually in response to some vague but looming crisis. "The train knows where she's going," is Stillwell's only comment on such matters.

Travel on the Midnight Express is free, though luxuries can sometimes be purchased. Stillwell and his crew, led by the redoubtable Jonathan Jojanns, maintain a strict peace on board the train, and anyone who disturbs it is liable to be chucked overboard into the Tempest. As a result, the Midnight Express is considered a safe haven for travelers of all stripes, and one can find Hierarchs, Renegades, Ferrymen, and even the occasional self-possessed Spectre among the train's passengers.

Legions

Just as the Roman Legions served as the backbone of both the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, the Legions of the Restless Dead form the necessary framework for Stygia's ruling Hierarchy. Each wraith technically belongs to one of the eight Legions, assigned upon arrival to a particular Legion according to the wraith's manner of death. Sometimes, when the way in which a wraith died is arguable, the Legions who might lay claim to the wraith may dispute which Legion has the better claim, and then the case is adjudicated by lawyers, combat, or whatever other method the opposing Legions see fit to use that day.

Each Legion falls under the control of a Deathlord who holds ultimate responsibility for the actions of her followers and troops. Authority passes down through a series of military ranks, similar to those of the Roman Legions. The Deathlords' ultimate purpose is to guide the Legions in the performance of their duty — the maintenance of the Stygian Empire as the Underworld's chief bastion against the forces of Oblivion. On the surface, this might seem a simple matter for a group of powerful individuals, presumably with many hundreds, if not thousands, of years of experience in the Underworld. In reality, however, the Deathlords have, over time, fallen prey to the weaknesses so often found among similar groups in the Skinlands. As such, it is the title that endures, not necessarily the individual, and each Deathlord's ornate mask of office not only represents power but also hides the changed face behind it.

As powerful as they are, the Deathlords are still driven by recognizable needs: power, recognition, or the desire to ascend the absent Charon's throne. These competing ambitions can lead to conflicts between the Deathlords as surely as differences on policy might, and those rivalries trickle down through the ranks. The clashes can be so bitter that a member of the Emerald Legion, upon finding herself the sole survivor of an attack by Spectres, may think long and hard about seeking refuge or assistance from members of another Legion, even though they may be nearer than her own reinforcements. Even when inter-Legion relations are tolerant (as with the Emerald Legion and most others), the whisper of doubt (as well as the wraith's own Shadow) creeps to the fore, warning the lone Legionnaire that there is always a first time for the betrayal of trust.

Despite these rivalries and lack of true cooperation, the Legions, for the most part, perform their jobs successfully. After all, Stygia still stands. One reason for this success lies in the ability of the Legions to absorb a civilian side as well as its natural military side. Each division has its own duties and does not usually conflict with the other. As hated as another Legion might be, Oblivion is first and always the true enemy.

Civilian Duties

Not every wraith serves as a combat soldier in her Legion. Most wraiths who are recruited into a Legion find themselves in a civilian job instead. The bureaucracy of Stygia is immense, overshadowing that of the most red-taped, bound-in-triplicate corporation in the Skinlands. The citizens of Stygia, its Necropoli, and its outposts spend most of their time sifting through the chaos of being the receptacle of untold numbers of souls every deal. Each soul must undergo processing: reaping, assessment of its value, assignment either to a Legion or to the soulforges, transportation and initiation into the basics of Underworld existence, and that's just the start.

Civilian members of Legions serve as census takers, maintain the stability of the various Necropoli in terms of physical condition, social structure, the training of Enfants, enforcing laws, instilling loyalty to their Legion, and more. The civilian membership of the Legions keeps Stygia running smoothly (concealing the bumps they encounter with long-practiced techniques), and, at its best, provides a safe place for every new wraith to dwell in and come to terms with their afterlife.

Military Duties

The work of the military arm of the Legions — what most wraiths think of when they hear the word "Legionnaire" — consists of patrolling the Byways, keeping order within the Necropoli, hunting down Spectres, chasing Renegades or Heretics whenever they create problems, and other duties associated with a standing army. The Legions, however, perform an even more important duty. By their very existence, the Legions create stability and order in a realm that is endlessly threatened by the hungry maw of Oblivion.

Legion Rank

In order to maintain parity with, and enable integration of, military and civilian roles in times of need, both groups use the same series of ranks to keep the chain of command firmly in place. Originally, each member of a Legion held a rank that corresponded to the equivalent one in the Roman Legions. As the centuries rolled by and Stygia evolved, new roles emerged, and so did new names for them. The ranks are:

Legionnaire — Legionnaires make up the basic rank and file of the Legions. They form the majority of patrols, bear the brunt of front line action, and, in general, perform the actions assigned to them by their superior officers, i.e., anyone other than themselves.

Centurion — As empowered representatives of Stygia, Centurions represent the most basic of officer classes (roughly equivalent to a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army). Individual Centurions may use some leeway in their interpretations of the many laws and rules of Stygian life, whether in or out of combat. Just as a Legionnaire's focus is on following orders, a Centurion's goal is to achieve whatever mission is set before her by her superior officers. Centurions usually aspire to higher ranks with more privileges and responsibilities. In the meantime, they command between four and 20 wraiths, depending on circumstance.

Marshal — Stygian Marshals enjoy some independence and a great deal of responsibility, since they take charge of the small domains outside the larger Citadels. They control several

patrols (and their corresponding centurions) and answer directly to their Legion's Overlord. They can be seen as Captains, by those more familiar with modern military ranks, but also carry some of the nuances of "Sheriff," or Federal Marshal.

Regent — A Stygian Regent is an elevated Marshal, controlling areas further from local Citadels and requiring even more independence of thought and action than a Marshal. In areas not centered on a Necropolis, the Regent is often "the Law." They are roughly equivalent to Majors in a modern military.

Overlord — An Overlord ranks just under an Anacreon, and is often thought of as second-in-command of her Legion in her city. In a large Citadel, an Anacreon may have more than one Overlord. Overlords act as direct assistants to the Anacreon and oversee most of the day-to-day responsibilities pertaining to their Legion, making policy decisions, organizing patrols, and giving orders to lower ranking Legionnaires. An Anacreon's overlords may be considered equal to colonels and, when an Anacreon has more than one overlord, they make up his command staff.

Anacreon — Anacreon lived in Greece during the sixth century B.C.E., and was considered one of the nine most important lyric poets of Greece. Though the truth remains unknown, many consider him to be the first in Stygia to hold the position later named after him. The Anacreon stands as the most powerful member of a Legion within a Citadel. A council made up of the Anacreons of every Legion except the Legion of Fate, which steadfastly remains outside politics, rules each Necropolis. Together this council makes decisions affecting the Necropolis as a whole. Although they claim to strive for cooperation among the Legions, too often the Anacreons become embroiled in inter-Legion politics. Anacreons answer only to the Deathlords in Stygia proper, giving them tremendous authority in their own Citadel and its corresponding Necropolis.

The Emerald Legion

Comprised of wraiths who met their deaths through happenstance, the Emerald Legion contains some of the most positive-minded, forward-thinking elements of Stygian society. Perhaps the fact that members met their deaths, not after long and debilitating illnesses, but rather from sudden and uncontrollable interruptions in their lives has marked these Legionnaires' attitudes, making them more anxious to get on with their unlives rather than bemoan their bad luck. In addition to victims of car crashes, household accidents, fires, floods, and "acts of God," the Emerald Legion counts among their number a significant number of mountain climbers (or fallers, as the case may be), base jumpers, skateboarders, and other extreme sports athletes. Those who court danger in life seldom fear it when they enter the Underworld. They may not have lived themselves, but their spirits live on.

The Emerald Values

Sometime after the disappearance of Charon, so the story goes, the Emerald Lord himself delivered a series of four principles he called The Emerald Values. These values serve as the bedrock of existence in the Emerald Legion.

Value One — Determine Risk

Rather than subscribing to the "cover your ass" practice of most of the other Legions, the Emerald Legion encourages taking reasonable risks in undertaking missions (for the military arm) or taking on projects (for the civilian arm). The emphasis on risk, performance, and trial instead of results creates an air of positivity among Emerald Legionnaires not found elsewhere. The oft-spoken phrase "we learn from our failures more than from our successes" proves inspirational in a realm where successes are few and far between, and in which most wraiths must content themselves with damage control and acceptable losses. These are counted as "near successes" among the Emerald Legion.

The Legion encourages the use of Fatalism to change odds to favor success, usually aiming for an 80/20 ratio as ideal. Legionnaires often consult Oracles and other experts, or bargain with their Shadows, even if the long-term consequences not

The Legions in Brief

The Emerald Legion — Composed of the victims of happenstance, this Legion is ruled by the Emerald Lord, from the Seat of Thorns.

The Legion of Fate — Composed of those wraiths who bear fate's mark, this Legion is ruled by the Ladies of Fate from the Seat of Fate.

The Grim Legion — Composed of those who died through violence, this Legion is ruled by the Smiling Lord from the Seat of Burning Waters.

The Iron Legion — Composed of those who died of old age, this Legion is ruled by the Ashen Lady from the Seat of Shadows.

The Legion of Paupers — Composed of the victims of mystery, this Legion is ruled by the Beggar Lord from the Seat of Golden Tears.

The Penitent Legion — Composed of the victims of madness, this Legion is ruled by the Laughing Lady from the Seat of Succor.

The Silent Legion — Composed of the victims of despair, this Legion is ruled by the Quiet Lord from the Seat of Silence.

The Skeletal Legion — Composed of the victims of pestilence, this Legion (also known as the Gaunt Legion) is ruled by the Skeletal Lord from the Seat of Dust.

always desirable. The corollary to this Value is: Take risks, but stack your deck when you do.

Value Two — Cogs Turn Wheels

The second Value puts a premium on the common wraith. Things get done by the people who do them, not by the ones who command the doing. Few Emerald wraiths get smelted, since each person behind a desk or at the battle lines is accomplishing more than a smelted item decorating a Legionnaire's quarters or filling his pockets. Better to be destroyed in the fight against Oblivion than to grace someone's living or working space. This assurance likewise inspires a sense of security rare among other Legions.

Value Three — Throw It Up and See if It Flies

The third Value encourages acting on one's risk taking. Failure is more acceptable than lack of trying so long as it leads to another attempt, informed by the previous failure. The theory holds that, if one winnows out all the risk factors, eventually something will work. The only sin is in not trying.

Value Four —Talk Emeralds, Not Thorns

The fourth Value enjoins Legionnaires to battle against their Shadows' constant efforts to undermine productive action. Although Legionnaires may find it hard to distinguish the blame game from constructive criticism, this precept encourages them to try. Negative criticisms should always come with a positive solution in the wings.

Abuse of the Values: Assessor States

When an Emerald Anacreon goes bad, an Assessor State is born. Commonly found in the Shadowlands of dictatorships or areas overwhelmed by bureaucracy, the Assessor States are pockets of Emerald Legion control where the Emerald Values are twisted into a cult of productivity, and those who don't measure up are hauled before "Assessor Boards" to determine whether they deserve to be kept from the forges. Curiously, the Emerald Lord and his advisors do nothing about the proliferation of the Assessors, instead preferring to issue bland statements about "internal disagreements." In the meantime, more and more Assessor States dot the map, and more and more Emerald wraiths are faced with the choice of falling in line with the Assessors or facing the fire.

Civilian Life

Non-military members of the Emerald Legion tend to view themselves as all-important "cogs" in the wheel of supply and demand that keeps Stygia going and Oblivion at bay. The Emerald Anacreons employ kindness and positive reinforcement rather than fear and suspicion to make sure that workers

keep their production levels high. Due to this, wraiths of the Emerald Legion are among the most productive and, for lack of a better word, happiest in Stygia.

Military Life

Because the idea of hundreds of independent-acting, forward-thinking soldiers does not necessarily translate well into military structure, the Emerald Values have not transitioned as well to military life. After centuries of struggle between the "Old Guard," who held out for traditional military hierarchy and unquestioning obedience to orders, and younger wraiths who insisted on an "army of equals" facing Spectres and other enemies, each according to her own manner, one wraith stepped forward with a plan to solve the dilemma.

Vietnam veteran Marcus Lowry appeared on the scene in 1972, having proven himself as a strong Legionnaire and, later, as a canny tactician and capable commander. He convinced the Old Guard to allow him to combine the Emerald Values, with their focus on individual action, with tried and true small unit tactics. He organized the Legion into small "Ranks" of around 10 individuals each, with field-promoted "Occasional Centurions" (or OCs) commanding each Rank, while regular Centurions commanded 10 to 12 Ranks, making up Centuries that could work as one large unit or many smaller ones. In addition, he negotiated with other Legions, loaning them Emerald Ranks for special operations. These small groups excelled at such focused operations, winning them kudos among the Legions and gaining Lowry many followers. While many of the Old Guard still hold to traditional tactics, Lowry's Legions continue to gain in number and popularity.

Standard military dress in the Emerald Legions consists of long coats, trousers, knee-high boots and squared-off military caps, except for members of Lowry's Legions. Each Rank adopts its own style of uniform, while remaining within the parameters of military dress.

Other Legions

The Emerald Legion holds a mildly tolerant view of the other Legions, recognizing the need for the different Legions but feeling their superiority over all the other, less enlightened armies of Stygia. Their strongest alliance exists with the Paupers Legion, and Emerald Reapers often concede souls to the Beggar Lord without disagreement when necessary to maintain parity of numbers. They decry what they consider the waste of souls in the Grim and Gaunt Legions, who consign potential recruits to the forges that the Emerald Legion might consider as salvageable. They bear some resentment toward members of the Legion of Fate, however, due to that Legion's failure to share information that might answer some of the many questions that plague victims of happenstance.

The Skeletal Legion

The Skeletal Legion lays claim to anyone killed by sickness or pestilence. Victims of cancer, genetic disorders, or opportunistic secondary infections also find their place in the Skeletal Legion.

In many cases, individuals who succumb to a disease have at least some time to prepare for their deaths, meaning more Skeletal Legionnaires had time to put their affairs in order before they crossed over. This results in less unfinished business on their part, which in turn translates to weaker Passions and Fetters than the average wraith.

This potential weakness — or strength — has not escaped the observation of the Skeletal Lord. Irreverently nicknamed "Mister Bonyhands," he keeps a massive chronicle of his every spoken thought, entitled The Journals of Bone, which is lovingly transcribed by the small army of scribes that follows him around. In addition, he issues frequent proclamations, declaring amendments to existing policies or creating new ones in such a flurry that not even his closest advisors can keep track. While there is debate as to what is actually intended with these actions, one thing is clear: The Skeletal Lord views himself as Charon's right and proper heir, and every move he makes is intended to make the other Deathlords understand this as well.

Civilian Life

Non-military members of the Skeletal Legion, unsurprisingly, exist within a highly compartmentalized society, with many departments covering every aspect of work and "play." The Skeletal Lord enjoys coming up with more and more ways to sort out his subjects, and frequently creates new departments to reflect his latest ideas, some of which are then immediately disbanded or merged with other groups as new inspiration strikes. A few of the more significant divisions, along with their duties, appear below.

The Department of External Affairs consists of the wraiths who represent the Skeletal armies to outside groups. From their lofty spot in the upper reaches of the Tower of Bone, the Legion's ambassadors and their staffs represent the Legion, not only to the other Legions, but, clandestinely, to other groups as well — including Renegades, Heretics, and even other supernatural creatures. Here, attempts to coordinate actions with the other Legions are the focus of daily routine.

The Department of Internal Affairs falls under the command of the Skeletal Legion's Civil Services, though many of its senior officials come from the military. Select Marshals may become Inspector Generals for Internal Affairs. As such, these individuals (and their entourages) visit the various Necropoli to oversee the activities of both civilians and military. They have the onerous and often dangerous duty to seek out corruption in the ranks, whether from cheating in reports, embezzling oboli, hoarding supplies, or siphoning off thralls slated for the soulforges. They provide preliminary investigations of charges of treason or disloyalty, determining whether to resolve matters locally or refer the charges up the line, even as far as Stygia. These Inspector Generals also concern themselves with morale within the ranks, interviewing many of the lower echelons as to their attitudes toward their leaders and to their fellows. On the

more tedious side, Inspector Generals have the responsibility of preparing statistical studies of the collection and distribution of Enfants, to make sure they miss no one with the potential of joining the Skeletal Legion. Their powers make Anacreons nervous — with good reason. A bad word whispered back home and even the mightiest Anacreon might find herself fatally reorganized.

The Department of the Crimson Trefoil, otherwise known as Research and Development, studies and compiles information on mortal diseases. The Skeletal Lord has forbidden reaching across the Shroud to create new diseases, per requests from the Lady of Fate, but that still leaves plenty of work for R&D as they gather up every bit of information on every mortal pathogen and illness they can find. The goal is to develop an exhaustive body of information on diseases to help Legion members understand what killed them, knowledge often instrumental in resolving Fetters or Passions. The Crimson Trefoil supports itself, and makes extra money for the Legion, by charging curious wraiths of other Legions for their information.

Legionnaires who do not hold government jobs fall under the "General Services" classification. This sector of civilian life includes shopkeepers, street cleaners, entertainers, and the myriad other denizens of a city. Here, too, are the unemployed, the petty criminals, the hard-luck wraiths and those who have fallen through the cracks, at least until discovered and put to more "gainful use."

Legion Constables straddle the line between military and civilian affairs. Technically part of the military, they have a mission to police the Legions — civilian and military — with the authority to call in the heavy troops when situations get out of hand. Like police detectives, they investigate criminal activities reported to them. The wraith-on-the-street both respects and fears the Skeletal Constabulary, and Constables work very hard to uphold their image as righteous protectors.

Military Life

While most of the Legions emphasize some form of structure in their military, the Skeletal Legion demonstrates military compartmentalization to the extreme. Some believe this stems from the Skeletal Lord's fondness for rules, policies, and cataloging (leading some wraiths to speculate that the Lord was originally a librarian). Others claim that the nature of the members of the Legion requires more regimentation than other Legions. These were, after all, not natural fighters, for the most part, but instead those who fell victim to conditions they could not resist. The excessive do's and don'ts of military service help these wraiths get a grip on their new existence and, in fact, gain some control over their fates.

In the Skeletal Army, Centurions command squads of 10 Legionnaires, whose duty consists of patrolling a single territory. Within Stygia, each Skeletal squad has the responsibility for one section of the city. Each squad, when not on patrol, shares a bunkhaunt, supervised by a Marshal within a Necropolis or a Regent, in places without a Necropolis nearby. This arrangement creates a bond of solidarity among Legionnaires, making the Skeletal Legions some of the most internally loyal of Stygian troops.

The General Overlord commands the entire Skeletal Legion from his personal headquarters in Stygia (or, in the case of important battles, from his field command post). The General Overlord's identity remains unknown, though much speculation exists as rumors, which change from moment to moment. What is certain is that the General Overlord is a brilliant military tactician with many Skinlands battles to their credit as well as a long list of Underworld military victories to celebrate.

The Skeletal Legion emphasizes the use of the longbow, both as a means of marking their soldiers as unique and also of preserving the devastating attacks a rank of longbowmen represents in battle. Each squad has one or two dedicated bowmen, while each battalion contains one company of trained archers. The Skeletal Legion places great value on relic longbows and pays well for any that come through the Shroud. Reports of museum fires or the destruction of private collections of ancient weapons in the Skinlands draw relic collectors to the site, eager to claim any available relic weapons because they know that the Skeletal Legion will pay top obolus for anything they acquire.

Uniforms of the Skeletal Legions generally consist of a mixture of styles and eras, though the 19th century military uniforms of the U.S. Army enjoy great popularity when available. Helmets for the Skeletal Legions feature crown-like points, and serve as identifiers for the Legion.

Other Legions

The Skeletal Legion maintains generally good relations with the Legion of Paupers and actively cultivates better relations with the Emerald Legion, with standing orders to come to the aid of Emerald Legionnaires whenever possible. A subtle rivalry exists with both the Iron and Silent Legions, since those Legions most frequently argue over the dispositions of souls. The Grim Legion presents the most direct rivalry since The Smiling Lord and the Skeletal Lord control the two largest Legions, and each vies for supremacy against the other. Open warfare has not yet broken out due to the overriding necessity of combating the forces of Oblivion, but in the meantime, mutual espionage and light sabotage make up the primary form of hostilities between the two rivals. The Skeletal Legion tends to keep a distant politeness with the Penitent Legion, while the Legion of Fate evokes a general hands-off policy. They do, however, heed the words of the Lady of Fate whenever necessary.

The Legion of Paupers

Some wraiths awaken in the Shadowlands without having the foggiest notion why or how they died. One moment, they were alive and well, and the next — they were in the Underworld. When a wraith appears in the Underworld with no clear deathmarks, or with too many, or with no idea of what happened to her, that wraith is inevitably claimed by the Legion of Paupers, victims of Mystery.

Ruled by the eccentric, erratic and, some say, bitterly sardonic Beggar Lord, the Legion of Paupers remains one of the smallest Legions in the Stygian Empire. In addition to collecting wraiths whose deaths are shrouded in mystery, the Paupers also pick up many whose Legion membership is in question. Those who bear more than one deathmark or who can legitimately belong to more than one Legion fall into these ranks, particularly when a squabble over their assignment would bring other Legions to blows.

Because of their small size and disparate membership, Paupers often find themselves under the Stygian radar, underrated and unnoticed by most of the other Legions just as the other Deathlords overlook or dismiss the importance of the Beggar Lord. This practical anonymity allows the Legions of the Beggar Lord to do what they do best: collect information unnoticed. The Paupers know what goes on across the entire Dark Kingdom of Iron, and beyond. They know where the figurative bodies are buried, and where the literal ones have crawled back out of the ground as Risen. This knowledge, in the possession of the Beggar Lord, places him in a pivotal position in Stygian politics. Too dangerous to destroy and too knowledgeable to ignore, he wields a subtle power that often has more sway than all the Smiling Lord's bluster.

Civilian Life

Once they enter the Shadowlands, Paupers manage to settle in to the daily grind with less trauma than many other Legions. Those with civilian jobs find a kind of tedious satisfaction working for the Stygian bureaucracy. While shuffling and filing papers for wraiths who have just arrived, many discover a sense of continuity and completeness in the constant flow of backstories, most of which have a logical beginning, middle, and end, before crossing the Shroud. Likewise, many Paupers rise to the position of Reaper, seeing in their job a way to give newly arrived wraiths a place where they "belong."

Other Paupers serve the Legion on the streets of the Underworld. They pursue offbeat occupations — buskers, street sweepers, and sometimes even literal beggars — while going about their true work of gathering information to bring back to their bosses. True talent evinces itself, and the Paupers with the juiciest tidbits of information or the hardest-won secrets rise within the hierarchy of information gatherers and spies. The best of the best graduate to positions in the Beggar Lord's Stygian contingent, and their names become legend.

Military Life

Other Legions tend to look down on the Paupers, seeing them as a motley crowd of ne'er-do-wells who can't even give a reason for being in Stygia. As a result, those serving the Legion in a military capacity often feel they have something to prove. This need bestows exceptional determination, combined with a desire to defy expectations. Pauper Legions take pride in reminding others that some of the best fighters in history died shrouded in mystery. Lost flights, missing missions, whole armies swallowed up by history — these are the inspirations the Pauper Legions look to in order to fuel their pride.

Knowing they're part of an underdog Legion, Pauper Legionnaires fight knowing that the reputation of the entire Legion rests with them in every battle. As such, they exhibit a determination far beyond what could be reasonably expected, and they make a point of never giving ground. When others

Legions within Legions

Within the Legion of Paupers, a few special organizations exist, each one dedicated to a unique purpose that furthers the aims of the Beggar Lord.

The Legion of the Onyx Tear

The members of this sub-Legion constitute the personal guard of the Beggar Lord. Clad in distinctive black armor, they wear onyx masks with mouths carved in a perpetual laugh and tears descending from the eye slots. Limited in number to 25 Legionnaires of officer's rank, these soldiers serve in five units of five, ensuring a constant bodyguard for their eccentric and always suspicious leader. Strict rules govern the routines of these elite Legionnaires. They may not gather in groups of more than six, ostensibly to make certain that a shortage of bodyguards never leaves the Beggar Lord underprotected. Most wraiths who know about this restriction, however, believe it exists to prevent them from sharing what they know of the Beggar Lord's secret plans with each other. Since their duty is to the Beggar Lord, members of this Legion rarely leave the Isle of Sorrows on their own. At their Deathlord's request, they visit the courts of the other Deathlords as the Beggar Lord's agents. On the streets of Stygia, their word carries the weight of the Deathlord himself.

The Legion of Revelations

Officially, this sub-Legion does not exist. No one except the Beggar Lord knows the exact numbers of this clandestine organization, and the members themselves only know the identities of their immediate associates. This Legion bears the responsibility of interpreting the information gathered by the Legion's spy network and furthering the covert operations of their master. Acting as the "hands" of the Onyx Tear, the Legion of Revelations carries out their Lord's wishes anywhere in the Underworld or beyond. Fiercely loyal, they would go to the forges before admitting their allegiance. These wraiths wear no special uniforms, as their anonymity serves as their disguise.

turn and run, it is the Paupers who stand in the breach — and the few survivors are sure to let the other Legions know it.

Other Legions

The Paupers are well aware of their unique place in Stygian society. They serve as the important catchall for all those wraiths who have nowhere else to go, as well as the landing place for other Legions' castaways. This puts them in good, if sometimes problematic, standing with everyone else — everybody needs them but nobody really wants them around. The Beggar Lord doesn't help with this, as he makes certain everyone knows of his close working relationship with the Ladies of Fate. Since the Seat of Fate takes no direct part in Stygian politics, the Paupers serve as the Legion most often called upon as a "tiebreaker" in the event of a stalemate among Deathlords. No Legion wants them as opponents. The Grim Legion comes the closest to being an actual rival; both Legions exhibit the minimum amount of trust in the other to enable inter-Legion cooperation, when necessary.

The Legion of Fate

Only two individuals stand at the heart of Stygia's history: Charon, its founder and (despite his absence) supreme leader, and the Lady of Fate, who called Charon to serve as Stygia's ruler and confirmed him in that role. Chosen to guard, protect and serve the Lady — or Ladies — of Fate, the members of the Legion of Fate enjoy the status of an elite army. The smallest and least homogeneous of the Legions, the Fated boast the strongest and most stable organization of them all.

Those souls who bear the mark of Fate have little in common save one thing: Their deaths somehow mattered. Members of Fate's Legion died for a reason, most often one known to them — and sometimes only by them. In life, many seemed to possess a preternatural knowledge of the time, place, and/or manner of their deaths. The Fated include the commercial pilot who lands his damaged plane so that he saves his passengers at the cost of his own life, the mother who tosses her child out of the way of a speeding vehicle only to find herself in its path, or the nuclear power plant worker who stays behind to seal a damaged core, preventing catastrophe at the cost of their own life.

Martyrs for their faiths, like Joan of Arc, or political martyrs, such as Lincoln, usually find prominent places among the Fated, unless they bypass the Underworld altogether. And a very few may not know why Fate chose them, arriving in the Shadowlands confused and bewildered; their reasons for being among the Fated only become apparent once they have joined the Restless Dead.

Unlike the Deathlords of the other Legions, the Lady of Fate, along with her council of Ladies, do not make their home in Stygia. Instead, they claim residence on the Isle of Eurydice, off the Stygian coast. Granted to the Lady by a grateful Charon in return for her counsel, this mysterious island affords the Legion of Fate a certain independence from Stygian rule and sets them apart from most of the political machinations on the Isle of Sorrows.

Stygian Steeds

Another Stygian mystery revolves around the steeds used by the Equitaes, or cavalry. Once upon a time, so the story goes, wild horses ran free along the banks of the Styx. Like the trees that once graced the river banks, the origin of these powerful horses lies cloaked in the mists of history. Some say they are living creatures endowed somehow with the ability to cross at will between the Shadowlands and the Skinlands. Others say they are the spirits of great horses, brought to the Underworld for some reason. The truth may never be known.

The horses appeared on the banks at irregular intervals until the use of cavalry in the Skinlands stopped meaning mounted units and started meaning armored vehicles. With a few ceremonial exceptions, by the end of the 20th century, mounted cavalry had become a thing of the past, and the horses stopped appearing in the Shadowlands.

The only steeds that now exist do so as mounts for the Equitaes of various Legions. Though originally wild, once tamed, the steeds bond with one rider. They refuse to allow anyone else to ride them until their original rider is destroyed. As trained warhorses, these steeds can trample any would-be interloper, if not bonded to them, into a Harrowing. These horses all have Argos •••••, making them capable of carrying their rider through the Tempest at incredible speeds.

They wear the finest armor, equal to any belonging to elite Legion officers. When a Legionnaire must decide between saving a horse or its rider, standing orders require him to save the horse.

Most Stygian steeds are dark colored, ranging from deep brown, through gray shades, to the blackest blacks. Occasionally, a bone-white horse appears. Usually reserved for Stygia's elite, these pale horses, called "death steeds," bond to only a single rider, ever. If their rider is destroyed, the horse simply fades into Oblivion. Some fear they continue to exist as mounts for Spectres.

Rumor has it the Lady of Fate keeps one of these white steeds, not as a mount, but as a bonded companion. No one knows whether she ever rides it.

For convenience's sake, the Legion of Fate maintains a "townhouse" in Stygia, though usually only minor officers take up brief residence there. Located on one of the few open spaces on the island, this building resembles a classic Roman villa. The estate itself presents an aura of serenity amid the bleak complexity of Stygia. Its landscaped grounds hold trees plucked from among those that grow along the banks of the River Styx. A thick, black stone wall surrounds the estate, and the whole houses the garrison sent as the Legion's contribution to the defense of Stygia. Here also reside the recent arrivals who await transport to the Isle of Eurydice for orientation and training.

Because of their unique physical position as part of Stygia while remaining outside the empire itself, the Lady of Fate and her Legionnaires maintain a sense of their own separateness. They do not fall into simple categories, as do members of other Legions. Their paucity in number also requires that members of the Legion of Fate take on numerous roles, whether they are members of the civilian branch or the military one.

Civilian Life

Because of its small size, the Legion of Fate organizes its civilian branch efficiently. An Anacreon heads each Necropolis government or, in sparsely populated regions, an entire province. Below her stand the two non-military Chancellors of Reaping and of Politics and Administration, as well as the Overlord of Military Affairs. While the upper echelons of power mimic the structure of the other Legions, members of lower civilian ranks fall under a less rigid system. All administrators must know how to perform many tasks to make up for the lack of numbers. Rather than performing the same tasks day after day, members of fate's civic government form ad hoc committees or specific task forces, which disband as soon as they achieve their goals. The regard that Fate's Legions enjoy enables them to maintain a separate but cooperative internal government that takes care of its own rather than making use of the overall government of the Hierarchy.

Ministers and Inspectors form the bulk of "titled" positions. Lower ranks, such as Administrator or Clerk trainees, slowly work their way up to more prestigious titles. Fate's civil servants undergo cross-training in many areas. Variety keeps the working environment fluid and challenging, preventing stagnation as the slow centuries roll by.

Military Life

Greater in number than the civilian members of the Legion of Fate, the military branch has a reputation for excellence. Highly trained in small-unit tactics, the Fated Legions operating off the isle must cover more ground than most units of other Legions. Like the civilian bureaucracy, military Legionnaires are expected to be flexible, able to fill whatever role the situation

demands. Although their military performs actions similar to those of other Legions, the armies of Fate carry with them the assurance that whatever they do is what they are "fated" to do. Their presence inspires surrounding Legions with an extra dose of confidence.

Each Overlord of Military Affairs oversees military operations for his area. Sometimes they are the only units available to answer calls for help from the areas outside the Necropoli, performing duties and achieving a reputation for bravery far beyond their numbers. Four Legionnaires and a Centurion make up a patrol (or section). Heavily armed with both firearms and swords made of Stygian steel, these units band together in groups of four to six to make up a cohort under the leadership of a Marshal. These cohorts, about the size of a platoon, make up the bulk of the Legionnaires used in patrols or deployed against Spectres. A company comprises a half-dozen cohorts, led by a Regent. All are expected to operate independently, and to use their best judgment rather than constantly looking to the isle for orders.

The Legion of Fate maintains three battalions, each made up of five companies, in the Tempest itself. Taking their orders directly from the Lady of Fate, they patrol the Byways and fight Spectres wherever they may emerge. Consisting of armored Equitaes and other crack troops, these heavily armed and armored warriors make up an elite force that has few rivals.

The companies rotate their duties so that no one remains too long in highly stressful postings. Many Legionnaires look forward to their turn among the five companies that make up the garrison on the Isle of Eurydice. Despite its isolated position, the aura of peaceful silence provides weary Legionnaires with badly needed relief from the clamor and demands of duty in the provinces or the Tempest.

Other Legions

The Legion of Fate tends toward indifference toward most of the other Legions, due to their sense of being set apart from the obvious politicking and policing of Stygia. They feel a kinship, however, with members of the Emerald Legion, since the line between Happenstance and Fate is a faint one. Members of the Iron and Grim Legions, however, seem to resent the Legion of Fate, considering them as unjustly favored by their position as the "darlings" of the Ladies of Fate.

The Penitent Legion

Madness makes strange bedfellows, and nowhere more so than in the Penitent Legion. Those who die because of madness, either their own or their killer's, should end up in the Penitent ranks. This is not always as straightforward as it might seem. Reapers from other Legions often claim these wraiths; one who dies as the result of a spree killer's rampage may end up in the Grim Legion while a depressed individual who hangs herself may find herself claimed by the Silent, and so on. Because of this, Penitent Reapers often take any wraith they feel may qualify, no questions asked, no paperwork done.

Members of the Penitent Legion often have little in common. Held together by the dicta of the Lady of Madness from her fortress, the Seat of Succor, members of the Penitent Legion eventually learn to coexist with one another and to function as a Legion that can take its place within the power structure of Stygia.

The Seat of Succor serves as a place of healing, in which wraiths undergo intense therapy to learn to deal with their particular issues as needed. Sometimes this involves coexisting with the individuals who caused their deaths; sometimes contemplation and meditation are called for. In a realm where pharmacology doesn't exist and the soul manifests itself physically, approaches to mental illness swim in deep and uncharted waters.

Civilian Life

Two groups figure most prominently among the civilian members of the Penitent Legion: the Reapers of the Penitent, and the Order of the Keepers. Reapers make up a wraith's first "official" introduction to the realm of the dead, and the Penitent Reapers make every effort to find the Enfants who belong to them before other Legions' Reapers snatch them up and perhaps do them irreparable harm. To prepare for this, Penitent Reapers undergo special training and a grueling selection process to make sure that only the most decisive, quick-thinking, and fast-moving wraiths qualify for this delicate position.

The Order of the Keepers serves as the personal companions, bodyguards, entourage, and aides to the Laughing Lady. Although they display a wide variety of talents and perform many functions, their primary duty consists of maintaining the mental health of the Legion's members. Many Keepers came from the ranks of psychologists, psychiatrists, and others in the fields of mental health, while others show a demonstrated ability to deal with others wisely and with empathy. Clergy, social workers, and others who cared for those on the fringes of society now use their capacity for counseling and offering forgiveness to help their fellow Penitents.

As Keepers, they use the Pardoners' Arcanos Castigate to help scour the souls of their charges. Counseling sessions, both one on one and in groups, as well as incentives to model new behaviors, also serve as ways to help Penitents master their problems. Regardless of their pasts, Keepers serve as the watchful eyes of the Lady as well as her helping (or punishing) hands. Most Keepers have a keen familiarity with the Seat of Succor, since they often convey Penitent wraiths to and from that hall.

Other civilian Penitents occupy places within wraith society similar to their counterparts in other Legions. Though the Penitent Legion keeps fewer records than most other Legions, they do need clerks and "office" workers to process wraiths once they enter the Legion's ranks.

Military Life

The military side of the Penitent Legion consists of several units whose identity and structure complement one another,

ensuring a complex and effective fighting arm in the Shadowlands' continual war.

The Skirmisher Corps, also known as The Storm of Night, claims the status of the oldest unit in the Penitent army. The Storm serves as the first line of battle, making initial contact with and attempting to stop the forward drive of the enemy. Clad in lightweight, jet-black armor and armed with bows and arrows, light swords, and bucklers, the Storm presents a formidable appearance. Excelling in hit-and-run tactics and trained in Argos to provide for quick and timely exits, the Skirmishers disrupt the initial attack formations, attempting to cause the enemy to fragment. When they have accomplished their mission, they pull back to allow the bulk of the Penitent Legion to engage.

The Phalanx Corps, otherwise known as the Wall of Skulls, provides the heft to the Penitent Legion's attack. Forming an impenetrable phalanx, the Wall serves as a second wave, piling shock onto an enemy already discomfited by the lightning attacks of the Storm. They know only one direction in battle: forward. While specialized units move into action, the Wall acts as a relentless, inescapable tide. Clad in heavy armor enhanced by bony ridges and carrying bone shields, they use heavy weaponry, either great swords or more modern weapons as the individual soldier prefers. A band of musicians made up of drummers and trumpet players provides a steady beat, setting the pace for the advance. Colorful banners depicting past victories build morale among the Penitent, and the warriors of the Legion will gladly go down into a Harrowing before they'll let one of their banners be taken.

A wraith named Liamh has served as the commander of the military arm of the Penitent Legion since his arrival in the Shadowlands during the time of Julius Caesar. A leader from Albion who attempted to stand against the Roman invasion, Liamh claimed that the voices of his gods spoke to him every night and helped him plan upcoming battles against the invaders. Warning him of the impending arrival of Caesar's legions and instructing him in strategy and tactics, these inner voices prepared him for his destiny. In actuality, the "gods" Liamh heard instead prepared him for the real battle that would take place after his death, one against the overwhelming forces of Oblivion. After overcoming his resentment at working with a "Roman" institution, Liamh has worked to maintain an effective army, using his insights to create the soldiers of the Flesh, Beast, and Machine Corps to battle Oblivion.

The Beast Corps consists of groups of six: one beastmaster and five specially Moliated barghests, whose skins bristle with razor-sharp blades. The beastmaster's armor encases him in a hard, insect-like carapace, while a helmet resembling a hound's head with bared teeth completes the fearful image. The barghests are trained to display absolute obedience, and wreak utter havoc on an enemy when allowed to slip their leashes.

The Flesh Corps consists of horrific creations composed of many wraiths Moliated into giant Leviathans, sometimes "ridden" by archers, spearmen, or snipers inside specially designed howdahs. The monstrosities tackle weak points in the enemy's lines, causing further disruption and often resulting in a wholesale, frantic retreat. Penitents who repeatedly fail efforts at rehabilitation or conflict resolution, or those who run afoul of the Laughing Lady, frequently end up as components of a Leviathan. Some wraiths attribute the disappearance of dissident wraiths from other Legions as well as captured Heretics and Renegades as fodder for these horrific creations. A few wraiths claim they spotted the discernable face of one of the missing within a Leviathan's Corpus.

The Machine Corps makes use of Soulforging techniques to create hollowed-out war machines, somewhat like early 20th century tanks, filled with soulfire crystals. The machines have one job: to explode, sending a final, spectacular burst of terror into what is left of the enemy. Also composed of failed Penitents, whose screams increase the horror factor, these Juggernauts use only the most skilled, most aggressive drivers to direct them. The drivers undergo frequent rotation and receive intensive sessions with the Legion's Pardoners to avoid any risk of Catharsis before taking the wheel of one of their war machines; it would be unpleasant in the extreme for one to get turned around and used against its makers.

The final special group answers not to Liamh, but to the Laughing Lady herself. Made up exclusively of female soldiers, The Storm Maidens originally come from The Storm of Night. At the behest of the Laughing Lady, these fearless women Helldive into the Tempest on rescue missions and also launch preemptive strikes on hives of Spectres.

On Penitence

The external perception of the Penitent Legion is that they every single Legionnaire is in some way insane. This is not the case. While the Legion may cannily project that image to cause rivals to underestimate the Laughing Lady and her followers, the truth is that relatively few of those in the ranks suffer from severe mental illness. Rather, the vast majority were taken out by a single moment of perversely bad judgement — the sudden, uncontrollable urge to swerve into oncoming traffic, the irresistible need to get a selfie with a bear cub, or the foolish attempt to race heroically across a battlefield towards an enemy trench filled with manned machine-gun emplacements. Many of the Legion's older members were seers, mystics, and religious ecstatics, and "madness" is a term hung on the Legion by disapproving outsiders in the 18th century. By allowing the myth to be perpetuated, the Laughing Lady carefully crafts the narrative that will cause thoughtless others to underestimate her followers. And, when the time comes, they will be ready.

Other Legions

The Penitent Legion has few friends among the other Legions. The Silent, Grim, and Iron Legions, in particular, consider them rivals for their excellence in combat and frequently engage in jockeying for position, at least in the eyes of the Penitent. On the other hand, the Paupers, the Emerald Legion, and the Legion of Fate enjoy friendly and usually cooperative relations with the Penitents. This association seems to come about due to the eccentric nature of all these Legions. The Skeletal Legion holds itself apart, as they usually do, from any conflict.

The Iron Legion

Those who don't die of anything else inevitably die from old age. The Iron Legion lays claim to all those victims of too many years — and a few others besides. Disputes between the Iron Legion and other Legions occur when a person's cause of death directly relates to old age: an octogenarian falls prey to a life-ending accident, an elderly woman starves to death because she is too weak to eat, or pneumonia takes the life of an old man in his nineties. The Ashen Lady also claims the junkies who may have only lived a few decades but whose bodies bear the burdens of those much, much older.

The Ashen Lady is a shrewd bargainer, however, and knows when to pick her battles and when not to press for individuals who do not quite fit her mold. After all, she does not lack for recruits. When the other Legions have claimed their marked ones, the Lady gets everyone who remains behind, and they are, to coin a phrase, legion.

The Ashen Lady rules her Legion from her opulent Seat of Shadows, rebuilt to exemplify the glory of the Renaissance and a leading "tourist" attraction for wraiths visiting Stygia. New wraiths come there with their Reapers for a brief period, during which they learn everything necessary for survival among the ranks of the Iron Legion. Some may stay on, or return later, if they qualify for any of the groups in residence within the Seat. Others depart, the image forever seared in their memories as an idea of what Stygia should be.

The Lady's personal bodyguard, her Council of Ministers and their entourages, and members of the Lady's prestigious "Salon" number among the permanent residents of the Seat of Shadows. A permanent support staff also exists to maintain the art gallery, private library, and cutting-edge research laboratories. Because she rules over wraiths who come to her at the end of long and often busy lives, the Ashen Lady has access to a great reservoir of experience in many fields: Generals, financiers, architects, lawyers, scientists, mob bosses, and dynastic patriarchs and matriarchs all contribute to the affairs of the Iron Legion and its Mistress.

The Legion encourages new recruits to take time off to track down deceased relatives, realizing that people who have lived long lives may have several generations of kin who have predeceased them. Enabling a Legionnaire to reconnect with her loved ones in Stygia or the Shadowlands not only helps build cross-Legion relations but frees the Legionnaire from worrying about her family's fates. Also, so many elderly wraiths have strong ties to their kin in the Skinlands; wraiths whose mortal lives encompassed many generations of sons, daughters, grandchildren and beyond often have living descendants as Fetters. Understanding the particular strength of these ties, the Lady of Shadows allows her Legionnaires to bend the *Dictum Mortuum* just enough to visit their mortal kin, reaffirming their connections and, incidentally, forging potentially valuable links that can prove advantageous to the Legion and its Lady. Ironically, the Iron Legion shows a surprising ruthlessness toward members of other Legions caught Skinriding or otherwise making forbidden contact with the Skinlands.

Civilian Life

Meticulous planning forms the hallmark of both civilian and military existence. Surprises have a zero tolerance rating. "Expect anything" is the Legion's motto. The years of experience represented by Iron Legionnaires ensure the highest degree of excellence in performance.

While many civil Legionnaires end up in the paperwork brigade or the street sweeper squadron, talent and years of mortal experience tend to assert themselves. The most prominent paths for civilians in the Iron Legion lead to the Salon, the MPPU (Maelstrom Prediction and Preparation Unit), the Mediators, or the Advocates.

The Salon: Emulating the prominent cultural salons of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Ashen Lady has collected the most brilliant minds and the greatest talents from within her Legion to form a think tank/social forum within her Seat of Shadows. Afforded the greatest luxuries Stygia can produce, these great artists, writers, musicians, philosophers, scientists, and other renowned persons exist in an eternal meet-and-greet intended to inform and amuse the Lady and any special guests she may have. Not all members of the Salon bear the natural Deathmarks of the Iron Legion; some come to the Salon as the result of inter-Legion bargaining. Once part of the Salon, a wraith tends to remain permanently within the Seat of Shadows. Speculation about the fates of those who fall out of the Lady's favor bears a grim cast, as no one ever hears a word about those who ceased to amuse.

Many cutting-edge ideas come from the Salon, particularly among the scientific contingent, said to be working on cures for cancer and other diseases in order to bring more wraiths into the Grim Legion's purview.

Maelstrom Prediction and Preparation Unit (MPPU): The wraiths in this group (originally part of the Salon) study Maelstrom phenomena: what a Maelstrom is, under what conditions they form, and most importantly, how to stop them. Members of the MPPU design emergency procedures for enduring Maelstroms, creating training programs that every Legionnaire must pass in order to qualify for active service. The MPPU also

designs fortifications against Maelstroms and ways to strengthen buildings in Stygia and the Necropoli to withstand the buffets of these spirit storms.

Mediators: Though the *Dictum Mortuum* strictly forbids contact with the Skinlands, the wraiths who make up the Mediators do just that. They act as liaisons between the worlds of skin and shadow, subject entirely to the orders of the Ashen Lady and her Ministers. The Mediators pass messages across the Shroud at the behest of their supervisors, remaining ignorant of the reasons for these messages. For excellent service, these wraiths often receive permission to undertake personal missions across the Shroud. Sometimes the Lady amuses herself by allowing them to use mediums or charlatans to pass bogus messages to gullible mortals.

Advocates: The Iron Legion uses the lawyers and judges that come to them to form a corps of Advocates. Whenever one of their Legionnaires faces trial, either within the Legion, by another Legion, or by the highest authorities in Stygia, the Legion provides the defendant with an Advocate to ensure fair representation. Often, the Legion lends their Advocates to other Legions, setting a valuable precedent for equitable trials throughout Stygia and the Necropoli. Though other Legions have their own judges and lawyers, the Iron Legion counts more legal personnel among their ranks, possibly because so many members of the legal profession die of old age.

Military Life

For an army made up of "old soldiers," the military forces of the Iron Legion maintain one of the most efficient and forward-thinking militaries of all the Legions. The wealth of expertise available from so many time periods allows for excellence in training of new recruits, honing each member into a soldier capable of independent thought, yet willing to practice the restraint and discipline learned from their veteran instructors.

The army of Iron comprises two distinct units. The Regulars, made up of veteran ground forces, practice tried-and-true military tactics and strategies, taking their examples not only from the armies of ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, but also spanning the history of warfare up to the present day. They form the bulk of the Legion's military and have bases all throughout Stygia. They call themselves the Elder Legions.

The Specials, on the other hand, make up a smaller percentage of the Iron armies, but make their presence known. These crack teams of soldiers, many of them drawn from various armies' Special Forces throughout history, take on the most dangerous assignments the Legion has to offer. In exchange, they receive the latest weapons and devices that come from the research laboratories of the Salon and the MPPU, acting as beta testers in the constant war to stave off Oblivion. While some Specials look on their roles as guinea pigs with some trepidation, they would never admit it to anyone outside the Legion. They pride themselves as being the oldest and the best.

Other Legions

The Iron Legion maintains fairly amicable relations with most of the other Legions. The Ashen Lady and the Beggar Lord, however, enjoy an especially close and cooperative liaison, and their armies sometimes undertake joint ventures. While not overtly hostile to the Skeletal Legion, the Iron Legion often competes directly with them for recruits, since many old people die from diseases.

The Grim Legion

The Grim Legion claims all those who die by violence. Despite the common assumption, soldiers do not make up most of this Legion's membership. Instead, most of the Grim are unwilling participants in the violence that took their lives — victims of mob or gang warfare, assassination, hate crimes, feuds, and suchlike. Since murderers themselves often die violently, both murderer and victim may both end up in the Grim Legion, which means there's the very real possibility of a murder victim serving in ranks with his killer.

Soldiers who die in battle do make up a significant portion of the Grim. Membership in the Legion takes no notice of the sides one took in the Skinlands, so often former enemies find themselves expected to fight together. Sometimes, however, the feuds of the living can't be abandoned, and a situation similar to that of murderer and murder victim arises.

Over the centuries, the Legion developed its own way of dealing with this dilemma. Whenever a murder victim finds her way to the Grim Legion, she receives a promise from the Smiling Lord. If the new recruit's killer is reborn into the Shadowlands, the victim will get a chance to see her murderer brought to trial, or at least to have a face-to-face encounter with that individual.

It's not an empty promise. Hundreds of Legionnaires work tirelessly to bring murderers back to the Smiling Lord's domain, regardless of whether they were just reaped or are well-respected members of another Legion. During the ensuing trial, the truth of what happened inevitably comes out. A guilty verdict usually results in a sentence of soulforging, while lesser convictions range from imprisonment to immobilization through Moliation to being assigned to suicide missions on the Smiling Lord's behalf. Rarely, victim and murderer find a resolution that allows both parties a second chance, usually in separate Legions or in locations distant from one another.

The Legion tends to look the other way when one of their own violates the *Dictum Mortuum* in order to discover the identity or location of their murderer, or uses Arcanoi to harass that person in the Skinlands. The saying "all is fair in love and war" takes on an interesting extension among the ranks of the Grim. "All is fair in love and war — and murder." Members of the Legion stand together on this issue, and their solidarity makes them one of the tightest fighting units in Stygia.

Civilian Life

Wraiths in the civilian arm of the Legion undertake their share of the usual and necessary jobs found throughout the Shadowlands. Some special duties stand out among the Grim, however, and many of the wraiths selected by the Smiling Lord's Reapers seem uniquely suited to these tasks.

Infiltrators: Because the Grim place such an emphasis on finding out the causes and perpetrators of the deaths of its members, certain wraiths become Infiltrators. These individuals (once called Requiters) act like private investigators or undercover policemen. They work to develop leads in the murder investigations of fellow Legionnaires in their casefiles. Once they have a suspect, Infiltrators attempt to gain her trust. They serve as a confidant while they gather information that can either establish guilt, innocence, or, sometimes, exigent circumstances. These highly trained wraiths enjoy a great degree of leeway. They have the skills to maintain their covers, and they also act, in some circumstances, as judge, jury, and executioner.

Infiltrators must have already solved or otherwise resolved their own need for personal vengeance before launching their own careers. In fact, doing so qualifies them for their job. Sometimes, when the stress of living undercover and bearing the responsibility of bringing another wraith to postmortem justice becomes too much, Infiltrators take on secondary careers performing unskilled or mindless labor until ready to return to their primary task. Regular visits to Legion Pardoners make up an even larger part of an Infiltrator's schedule than they do for most wraiths.

Reapers: Grim Reapers, unlike those of other Legions, have the added responsibility of Reaping, if possible, the murderers of those they reap. Occasionally, this leads to problems with other Legions' Reapers, who may have a valid claim on the murderer in question's soul. If actual skirmishes break out that pose a threat to the peace, the local Anacreon of the Legion to which the murderer belongs often solves the problem by delivering the discorporated remains of the murderer to the Grim Legion as an acceptable compromise. Murder has few proponents even in Stygia.

Retrievers: When the Infiltrators fail, the Retrievers get called in. Working either solo or in small strike teams, these master infiltrators will either bring back or take out their target by whatever means are necessary. They also make a point, after the fact, of publishing the facts of their cases. When possible, they use Stygia's laws to accomplish their purpose, employing the full gamut of the Hierarchy's legal system to their advantage. But when those systems fail, they fall back on their special training.

Sardonicai: These wraiths belong to the Smiling Lord's civilian Marshals and form an elite group within that category. They and their entourages act as ambassadors, not only to other Necropoli, but to the various Dark Kingdoms. They have the unenviable task of representing the Smiling Lord outside Stygia, bringing with them valuable or beautiful treasures or Artifacts as gifts to earn the favorable attention of distant realms of the Restless. Sardonicai have usually dwelt in the Shadowlands for many years — or centuries — and have received decorations and honors that testify to their diplomatic skills. Some of them transfer from prestigious positions in the military arm of the Legion to take up this new, even more perilous calling.

Scribes of the Great Ledger: While every member of the Grim Legion must, at some point in his existence, add his story to the pages of the Great Ledger, only a select few become Scribes. The job of a Scribe consists of overseeing the creation of accurate entries in the Great Ledger, whether through overseeing the writing of an individual or transcribing the entrant's story. In addition, Scribes make additional notes to each story in their section, recording the resolution of an individual's murder and the details regarding the justice carried out. They also note discrepancies and make recommendations as to how to pursue resolving them. Many Scribes have skills as Pardoners. Potential

The Great Ledger

Centuries ago, a Grim wraith named Hiram decided to write down his death story for posterity. When the Smiling Lord heard of this, he commissioned Hiram to do the same for him. From these two stories emerged the massive tome that bears the title The Great Ledger.

With the Smiling Lord's approval, Hiram went on to record the death stories of other wraiths, chronicling as much as they knew of their passing. When Hiram indicated that the stories entered in the Great Ledger should also record the names, where possible, of the murderers of those who told their stories, the Smiling Lord made participation mandatory. He appointed Hiram as The Master Scribe. To keep up with the massive number of wraiths needing to record their stories, Hiram required assistants. His helpers became the first Scribes.

The Ledger itself resides permanently in the Great Library. Because it requires continual updating, its pages allow for the insertion of new pages between older ones. Each story has its own pages, so that one wraith's story never shares a page with another's. Once a scribe inserts a story into the Great Ledger, it becomes permanently bound into the book. The tome itself rests upon a pedestal in the central hall of the Great Library. Its cover consists of the crafted soulstuff of some of Stygia's oldest murderers. The pages come from the stock made on the Isle of Eurydice by the papiers of the Legion of Fate.

Scribes serve an internship to determine whether the often reclusive and monastic existence of a Scribe suits them.

Military Life

The plethora of former soldiers who occupy the ranks of the Grim Legion's military arm ensures its excellence in battle. Blending wraiths from many different eras might seem to lead to confusion in the ranks as conflicting battle styles clash. But the Legion has had centuries to work on integrating the latest tactics — and tacticians — and instead the mixture leads to a synthesis of the best tactics from all the different armies. Specialized units who worked together in the Skinlands also have a place in the ranks of the Grim: Roman battalions or LRRP squads from the Vietnam era manage to stay together, particularly in instances where an entire squad dies simultaneously. These make up elite fighting units who go where their type of warfare makes the most sense, using Nihils as their means of instant transport.

Legion soldiers from many different time periods also train together before they separate into their special units so that any combination of soldiers can fight together based on a common knowledge of fighting standards. That means training in everything from Macedonian phalanx warfare to modern MOUT tactics. It's a lot, but the Restless have nothing if not time.

Regardless of their period of origin, Grim soldiers wear heavy gray clothing under armor resembling that of the Roman legions. Their helmets mimic human skulls. Only marks of rank distinguish individuals from one another; adding personal touches to one's kit is strictly forbidden. This uniformity not only instills psychological fear in an opponent faced with an army of skulls, but it also helps unite the troops into a single, focused fighting unit.

Grim armies practice strict discipline on the field, knowing that precisely timed movements in battles that involve appearing and disappearing Nihils, the potential for Maelstroms, or any number of other phenomena unique to the Underworld can make the difference between success and destruction. The propensity of these soldiers for violence also demands soldiers who can control their impulses and channel them in the direction of their enemies.

The Executioners: These wraiths make up the best of the best among the Grim Legion, comprising the Smiling Lord's personal guard. Each has personally sworn an oath to the Smiling Lord, committing her Corpus, soul, Shadow, and existence to his will. On the rare occasions that the Smiling Lord leaves his Seat of Burning Waters, at least 50 Executioners accompany him at all times.

Dressed in identical black armor and capes, wearing helmets depicting a smiling skull as the faceplate, the Executioners maintain an eerie silence at all times when on duty. They only speak to give or acknowledge orders. In combat, their use of Keening often puts an enemy to rout before they even make contact. Some say their silent discipline carries over into their off-duty time, but only the Executioners themselves know — and they're not telling.

Other Legions

The Grim Legion regards members of the Emerald, Skeletal, Iron, and Paupers Legions as worthy allies. They look down, in

general, on the Penitent and Silent Legions, feeling that they have no honor: the Penitents for not recognizing it, and the Silent for throwing their lives away. They respect the Legion of Fate, but prefer to ignore its members as much as possible, Grim Legionnaires believe they make their own fates, and no one can tell them otherwise.

The Silent Legion

"The Silent Legion," proclaims the ancient jest the Quiet long ago appropriated for their own use, "is the empire's only all-volunteer Legion." It is black comedy whose core of truth makes it all the more cutting, for among the victims of despair, death was all too often a conscious choice. Yet the Silent Legion's ranks are a perpetual source of surprise for wraiths who expect a morose collection of suicides whose final living acts failed to end their tormented existences. Here, too, are the terminal cancer patients who chose death with dignity, surrounded by loved ones, the self-effacing nonentities who led lives of quiet desperation until they simply stopped living, the troops encircled or left as sacrificial rear-guard detachments, whose only option was to reenact Thermopylae, the forgotten martyrs whose faith availed them nothing against counter-revolutionary fervor or authority's cold indifference, the school shooters whose revenge-power fantasies crumbled at the first resistance from intended victims, and the silent millions whose final living regret was that they had made no difference in the world. Despair wears many faces. Not all of them are blue-lipped from poison or smeared by a shotgun blast under the jaw.

The first few weeks after death and Reaping are critical for the new Quiet. Whatever measure of peace or freedom they hoped to find postmortem, the Underworld isn't it. Left to her own devices, almost every Silent Enfant attempts suicide again, hoping to finish the job this time. Some do a better job of it than others — for every wraith who frantically scrabbles to slit wrists that don't bleed, another swan dives into a Nihil and never comes out. Fortunately, centuries of practice have made the Silent Legion adept at the combination of counseling, mentoring, discreet Arcanos application, and direct intervention necessary to arrest suicidal recidivism before another one of its new members volunteers again — this time for Oblivion. Most Quiet Reapers operate in loose Circles to ensure a variety of approaches are available to match each recruit's temperament. If a freshly Reaped wraith truly isn't capable of dealing with the Underworld, Quiet Reapers suggest Steel Martyrdom: voluntary soulforging as a last-ditch escape from despair that doesn't feed Oblivion.

As with any other cause of death, not every suicide victim (or victim of despair) becomes a wraith. Only those with strong drives or social connections – usually unvoiced, denied, or even suppressed beneath the level of conscious acknowledgement — cling to life after death. Silent Reapers ruthlessly exploit these Passions and Fetters to demonstrate to their charges that wraithly existence can bring a fresh start.

This approach's perennial danger is that it encourages violations of the *Dictum Mortuum*. The ensuing conflicts drive the Silent Legion's most vicious internal disputes. As an Imperial organ, the Legion is bound to uphold Charon's laws, yet its recruit retention methods stretch the bounds of legality. Those Quiet whose formative interactions paid off are among the most liberal of Hierarchs, while those whose early experiments brought only more regrets become sorrowful but unforgiving enforcers. Legion history records no Quiet Lord taking a side in this eternal debate.

The Suck

Younger Restless who are still coming to terms with wraithly existence often conflate Oblivion, their Shadows, and their personal depressions and sources of despair. In attempting to externalize these forces, wraiths personify them. Names assigned to these darknesses typically attempt to diminish their influence through mockery: the Suck, the Cloud, the Big D, Harvey, Daddy Issues. Shadows are notably unappreciative of such appellations.

Older Quiet with a better understanding of Underworld metaphysics still identify despair as a separate force, much like fate (though making this comparison in earshot of fate's own can draw… interesting… comments). The common interpretation holds that despair is integral to the Psyche, separate from the Shadow's manifestation of Oblivion. The Quiet Lord discourages exploration of the connections between the two forces, as such inquiries frequently lead to heresy or Spectral conversions. Nevertheless, some of the Legion's greatest heroes have been those who claimed to have mastered or transcended despair.

Civilian Life

Recognizing that regimentation and monotony often fostered despair in their charges' living days, Quiet leaders strive to keep their Legion's bureaucracy to a minimum. Some degree of organization is necessary, even in the Hierarchy's second-smallest Legion, but positions in the back office go to wraiths who actually crave sameness in their daily existences. The bulk of Silent Legionnaires find themselves in more active roles, often tasked with just a hair more work than they can comfortably manage. Ostensibly, this is a consequence of the Legion's constant understaffing. Really, it's another deliberate personnel decision, one intended to keep the Quiet too busy to backslide into introspection and regret. The typical Restless figures this out within the first century of unlife, after which their duties coincidentally become less onerous — if she's also becoming less prone to despair.

Every Silver Lining Has a Dark Cloud

The Quiet's biggest collective problem is that their cause of death persists after death. The biochemical processes of depression may go away with the mortal shell but the deeper-seated and more insidious psychological causes remain. Even sanctioned Arcanoi have limited impact. A Pardoner can only do so much if the seed of Oblivion lies within the patient's Psyche, not her Shadow.

Some Quiet characterize their organization as "the Underworld's biggest support group," another common meme from the Legion's self-deprecating gallows humor. In life, many were trapped in vicious cycles of alienation and withdrawal, understood by no one (or so they felt). Quiet Regents and Marshals spend a lot of time on personnel management, identifying their charges' particular strains of despair and assigning tasks that bring them into contact with like-minded fellows. In theory, this fosters empathy and a sense of belonging. When the theory works, it's great.

When accepted methods fail, the Quiet all too frequently turn to unaccepted ones. In particular, two banned Guilds have longstanding associations with despair's victims. Those Restless who seek surcease from their self-destructive impulses turn to the Solicitors to suppress these desires. For those who would rather forget the events that spawned their personal darkness, the Mnemoi have always been there. Guildwraiths of both organizations sought refuge within the Silent Legion after Charon outlawed them and their continued presence is the Quiet's most closely-held secret.

What To Do

A key element of the Quiet Lord's stewardship is a Legion-wide focus on finding a craft or art matching each of his subjects' Passions. Consequently, the Silent Legion dabbles in every legitimate Stygian pursuit without cornering the market on any of them. There's a subtle pressure toward production-oriented or creative pursuits, the better (so the conventional wisdom says) to stave off despair. Quiet who take up soulforging often prefer artistry over practical assembly-line work, especially when

working with Steel Martyrs. In entertainment fields, Quiet tend to enjoy notable successes in one of two modes: channeling their personal demons into wrenching tragedies or meeting them head on with wicked satire.

If the Silent Legion can be said to produce Stygia's best at anything, those would be its counselors. The Quiet cultivate unflinching self-awareness. Restless with a gift for empathy find themselves guided toward advanced training in both mortal psychology and the particular needs of the dead. Their Arcanoi lessons focus on Castigate, with Lifeweb also common. Particularly competent and trusted Quiet may receive offers of tutelage in Intimation or Mnemosynis. Even without these latter arts, the status that the rest of the empire grants the Silent Legion's Pardoners and Monitors gives them access to the secrets of a surprising breadth and depth of Stygian society.

Military Life

Early Quiet Lords recognized that their Legion would never be able to match its larger counterparts in size or wealth, and established policies of quality over quantity that remain in place today. The Silent Legion's military arm is proportionally smaller than those of most other Legions and chronically under-equipped but its officers compensate by sparing no expense for training. In particular, the Silent Legion has always sought out combat veterans who succumbed to despair, attempting to rehabilitate them as cadre for its unseasoned troops.

Another factor compounds the Legion's troop shortage: Its military arm accepts only Quiet who aren't despair-ridden and looking to commit suicide by Spectre. Blazes of glory and heroic last stands are fine for Chanteurs to sing about, but in the real Underworld, the Silent Legion can't afford the waste. Part of every soldier's job is to die for the cause if necessary, but that isn't a virtue here.

As a result of these policies, the Silent Legion fields some of the Underworld's finest light infantry. Scouts, skirmishers, snipers, and raiders, their job isn't to stand in firing lines or phalanxes, but to harass and disrupt enemy operations and return with intelligence. Backing up this capability is a surprisingly robust transportation arm that provides both logistical support and battlefield mobility. Death comes on silent wings — whether that's Argos or parachutes.

The Ten Thousand

This elite battalion of Equitaes is the core of any Silent Legion expeditionary force. Despite its name and historical precedent, it rarely numbers more than a few hundred wraiths. Soldiers who died in foreign lands with no hope of returning home make up the Ten Thousand's ranks. Not all are victims of despair, but enough bear its deathmarks to align the unit decisively with the Quiet. The unit does cause the Quiet Lord occasional headaches, though. If evidence came to light of its independent raids into other Dark Kingdoms to rescue Stygian prisoners of war, the empire could find itself drawn into open conflict without warning.

The Rushes of Lethe

The Rushes of Lethe is a small group of Silent Legion veterans who have transcended despair. Or perhaps they've found a way to use it as a weapon — maybe as a new Arcanos, or somehow forged into their legendary Severance Blades. Whatever the case, they're the Quiet Lord's personal bodyguards and hatchetmen, anonymous behind their featureless, midnight-blue masks. They're certainly dangerous enough but their present duties are largely ceremonial, a comfortable reward for long service in the ranks. Certainly, they've never conducted covert operations on behalf of despair's victims, especially not against other Legions. And it's ridiculous to think that the Quiet Lord's most trusted troops include martially-adept Solicitors or Mnemoi….

Other Legions

The Silent Legion has cordial, yet distant relations with most of the other Legions. It's mainly a question of focus — the Silent are either turned inward toward introspection, or outward towards the boundaries of Stygia, and the in-between politics are rarely of interest. The one exception is the Grim Legion, which too many Silent view as being made up of bullies and abusers, precisely the sorts of people who engendered despair in them back in their breathing days.

The Guilds

The Guilds of Stygia are each one part trade cartel, one part secret cabal. Formed in the earliest days of Stygian society, they coalesced around the development and perfection of specific Arcanoi. Guild members are the undisputed masters of their respective arts and the gatekeepers of advanced study. Though the Hierarchy relies on their knowledge, it has always been wary of the Guilds' ambition. Their suspicion is not unjustified: The Guilds attempted a coup centuries ago, and the threat of a reprise always lurks in the background. But time heals some wounds, and while the Guilds are still officially illegal, they've quietly — in most cases — crept back into Stygia and set up shop. After all, everyone needs what they have to offer.

The *Collegia*

Occult orders and secret societies have always attracted the Restless. Oracular mystery cults older than recorded history thrived among the Mediterranean cultures that fed into early Stygia. Souls crossed the Shroud expecting to find answers to the metaphysical questions they pursued in life. To the dismay of many early wraiths (and the delight of a few), the Underworld was if anything more confounding than the Skinlands. Those for whom arcane study was a concern often redoubled their efforts when confronted with an afterlife rife with mysteries and

dangers. By the time of Rome's ascendancy, cults and cabals in Stygia were common as cobblestones.

One popular form, carried over by early Roman dead, was the collegium. In the Skinlands, *collegia* served a broad array of purposes. Many were nothing more than organized crime syndicates. Some served as social clubs, others as trade cartels. Most were a little of all of the above, in the way a modern country club is a great place to do some insider trading between rounds of golf. And within them, they carried the seeds of what would become the great Guilds of Stygia.

Origins

Every Guild has their own story of how they came to be, and no two agree with one another or the official Stygian history. It is entirely possible that the Stygian records are incorrect, and that the true beginnings of the Guilds are hidden behind a smokescreen of "official Stygian action." It is also entirely possible that the Guilds have self-mythologized to downplay the empire's role in their creation, allowing them to distance themselves from their seemingly mundane roots. In either case, it's best to know all the stories, and who believes which one, before doing business with a Guild.

While *collegia* participation was merely a social outlet for many wraiths, some were serious students of the secrets of the afterlife. They gathered in earnest to try to understand the new possibilities and jealously guarded their discoveries. Out of their studies arose the earliest formal, repeatable manifestations of the powers recognized today as Arcanoi. The Stygian Republic tolerated these early efforts as long as the concern of such cults was what came next: Transcendence. In some cases, such as the burgeoning Nhudri cult, a network of chapters based on shared rites and philosophies seemingly always existed to advance the use and teaching of certain techniques. Likewise, Mnemoi organized and oversaw the judiciary of the Republic of Stygia from its earliest days. Before their banishment they served as judges, with the Usurers acting as early court recorders. Most powers, however, were as yet unexplored or only understood in a rudimentary fashion.

Like Attracts Like

The cabals of Stygia, such as the *collegia*, were at first unrelated or had at best passing contact. As groups began to make discoveries, the more successful Circles drew the interest of Stygia's most dedicated researchers and vice versa. Circles sought the greatest minds of the dead as new recruits to help them in their studies, competing for membership even as wraiths began to show predilections towards manifesting one set of powers or another. They also brushed against one another when in pursuit of the same secrets.

When more than one *collegia* or cult sought the same ends, things often got ugly. Consolidation — whether through peaceful mergers or less genteel means — became common between *collegia* studying similar powers or competing for talent. Monopolies formed around these techniques, with practitioners

setting increasingly outrageous prices for their unique services. Over time, the formalized Arcanoi arose from their ambitious exploitation of new abilities and the wraiths who mastered them.

While this led to a rapid expansion of powers available to the dead, it worried the republic. Stygia did not appreciate authority — especially authority shored up by secrecy and occasional brawls — being wielded by any other than those it controlled. Rumors were common, within and without the *collegia*, that the Legions would be deployed at any moment to shut down the societies and to seize their secrets.

Instead, the authorities played the *collegia* against one another to the Legions' advantage. Consolidation was encouraged to eliminate troublemakers, put down political ambitions, or create distractions. There are Usurers — and Mnemoi — whose records reflect a long pattern of Stygian interference in the development of the Arcanoi. Powers the authorities deemed too worrisome were quietly discouraged or altogether eliminated — as were the wraiths developing them. A collegium dedicated to something patently illegal might be wiped out by "unknown rivals" while another merely suffered the silent disappearance of its brightest minds. The secrecy of these groups regarding their own research and results prevents us from knowing exactly what was lost. It is widely believed within the modern Guilds, however, that techniques far stranger and more powerful than the current Arcanoi were wiped out amidst the Republic's manipulations of the proto-Guilds.

The First Great Maelstrom

The First Great Maelstrom proved to be the ending and the saving of the *collegia* in Stygia. After the vast destruction wrought by the storm and the things that rode into Stygia with it, Arcanoi were sought after. Repairs were needed. Replacement Artifacts had to be forged. Routes between Necropoli had to be restored and the wounded needed healing. Legionnaires, concerned invasion would be the new norm, quietly sought out applications of Moliate to improve their odds in combat. The infant empire simply could not recover without skills exclusive to cults, the secrecy of which they loathed to legitimize. In the end, they had no choice. If Stygia were to be rebuilt in fast fashion, arcane techniques would be required.

The empire already relied on the Nhudri cultists who developed Inhabit, and some other developing orders. Stygia hoped for equally beneficial symbiotic relationships with other groups and a better understanding of these groups' capabilities — if only it could get them under the empire's thumb. The solution was to give the cults something to lose by not submitting to authority. The Hierarchy offered the *collegia* a source of guaranteed income via litterae patentes: a legal monopoly on the powers they developed.

All arts would be recognized, but only one charter would be offered for each power and the power must be explained. The Hierarchy hoped to inject just enough mistrust into the proto-Guilds to weaken their grip on the abilities they controlled. The long period of secrecy and mistrust between rival organizations had taken its toll in grudges between metaphysically minded Restless. Rather than join forces with long-hated competitors, Imperials reasoned, some Arcanists would be absorbed into the Hierarchy. Legions would gain access to their abilities and the empire would be strengthened. Instead, the offer sparked off a war.

The War of the Guilds

The study and use of Arcanoi had become extremely profitable, and profit makes a powerful motive for violence. Now, with a shot at enforceable monopolies, the candidate Guilds turned on one another with previously unseen savagery. Countless wraiths gifted in arcane arts were sent to Oblivion or eaten by their own Shadows as they scrambled for the promised letters of patent from the empire. No one was entirely clean by the end of this shadowy war of assassinations and street battles.

Cults kitted out their best thugs as living weapons and hunted rivals to extinction in the cobblestone alleys behind Stygia's decaying facades. Leaders were ambushed and forcibly disappeared. Safe havens and magical laboratories were ferreted out and obliterated. Other occult enterprises built around powers in violation of the *Dictum Mortuum* — Embody, Puppetry, Outrage, or Pandemonium — moved against one another in the relative obscurity of the Skinlands. There they could find plenty of blood-soaked Pathos and mortals only too ready to be turned to violent ends. Living victims executed heinous acts against one another, from individual assaults to wars between nations, until these proxy conflicts were spent. Even those with powers not particularly suited to violence joined the conflict. Every esoteric order and metaphysical entrepreneur stood to live or die on whether they won Stygian recognition.

By the middle of the 14th century, the proto-Guilds had eliminated so many only a few remained. In 1358, the Artificers and Usurers jointly presented a charter to these survivors, creating the Council of Guilds. Their intention was to regulate trade and punish violence between competitors. Participation was mandatory for recognition, and the creation of Arcanos-based business ventures was otherwise prohibited. (There were grumblings the Ferrymen should be forced to join, but no one seriously considered trying to force the Ferrymen to do anything.)

Gathering support took time but by 1405, the Guilds held legal monopolies on all Arcanoi, including their teaching and practice. Sharing knowledge of them outside a Guild-sanctioned arrangement was strictly forbidden. The formalized were instantly wealthy beyond imagining. Oboli poured in like a river, with its headwaters in the forges of the Artificers and its deltas in the pockets of all the rest. The Oracles warned of a dark future, but no one listened.

Not everyone benefited, however. The empire needed to make sure the Guilds knew to submit when commanded. Acting on rumors the Solicitors were considering a coup, the empire did not hesitate to crush the Guild. The Legions tore Solicitor Guildhalls to the ground and their leaders — those who were caught — were sent screaming into Artificer forges. The message to the Guilds was clear: They were to be entrepreneurs,

not politicians. The Guilds were to know their place in society and to stay in it. A surplus of ambition would be punished by eternal anguish.

The Council persisted for two and a half centuries, during which time the Guilds and their membership amassed vast wealth. The powers manifested in the Arcanoi were vital to the continuation of Stygia's economy. Perhaps less overtly acknowledged, they were also vital to Stygian psychology. Many wraiths have nothing but time. Guilds offered the Restless opportunities for entertainment, for income, and for ways to occupy themselves. The intense scarcity of resources in the Underworld is mirrored by the widespread dearth of purpose many Restless feel. Driven by their Passions, every wraith has cares and fears, all of which are deeply personal. Like the *collegia* and other societies before them, the young Guilds were a way to build something together.

The Coup

The Guilds suffered the same surplus of ambition that brings down many Skinlands enterprises. Many businesses measure success only in growth, and this eventually pushes them to overreach, sometimes with disastrous consequences. With their monopolies locked in and their income maximized, the Guilds looked for new applications of their effort. Stygian society at its heart was — and is — a machine designed to convert political will into oboli and back again. Commerce and power are the two main pastimes available to the dead. With more coin than they could count, the Guilds turned their passion towards building and buying political influence.

Pioneering this aspiration was a small faction of Artificers whose arts were discouraged by the traditional power structure of the Nhudri cult. These wraiths had developed Flux instead of studying the traditional applications of Inhabit. Expecting praise for their achievement, they were instead openly shunned by their more traditional masters. Students of Flux were given the pejorative "Alchemists" in mocking reference to hucksters and grifters of the Quick. Under the noses of their leadership, the Alchemists went into business for themselves. Relegated within their Guild to the arcane equivalent of doing the sweeping up, Alchemists started selling their services out of the back doors of Artificer Guildhalls far and wide. Flux quickly brought the Alchemists wealth of their own. With that coin and the demand for their services, the Alchemists began to curry favor within and without the Guild. Wraiths who wanted fetters strengthened or destroyed and relics manipulated would gladly grease Alchemist palms out of sight of the more conservative Nhudri cultists.

The Mnemoi, playing their own game, were seen to encourage the Guilds' yearning for political power. Hierarchs who accused them of corruption had long thrown them out of the courts the Mnemoi themselves had constructed. Nursing grudges for centuries, they felt the moment for their revenge was long overdue. Whispering in the Alchemists' ears, the Mnemoi painted elaborate pictures of a future in which the Alchemists were an independent Guild. Alchemists could be peers — no, betters — of the Artificers who held them back. They simply needed some grand, ambitious effort they could lead. The Alchemists in turn pulled strings within the Guilds to foment a rebellion.

In 1598, the Alchemists and those they — and the hidden Mnemoi — influenced were ready to make their move. Eager to see an end to the *Dictum Mortuum*, the Freewraiths of the Haunters, the Spooks, the Puppeteers, and the Proctors were quick to support the effort. Widely respected and relied upon, the Artificers' more temporally ambitious members joined the coup. Pardoners contributed to the effort only because they knew Oblivion would claim too many for Stygia to survive if Castigate were not available to whoever came out on top.

Usurers joined only halfheartedly, knowing the coup would mean chaos but fearing resistance would mean being made scapegoats as the Solicitors had been. The Masquers likewise put forth at best a token effort, concerned with the effect success might have on the brisk business they did with the Legions — not to mention their trade with Renegades, Heretics, and anyone else who might shy away from them if the Guild had too much official power. Chanteurs were hesitant to join and in the end hired themselves out to the other Guilds at absurdly high rates. Keening might be used to influence other wraiths or shatter Legion weapons, but at great cost. Sandmen had always been focused on their powers and not politics, not caring whether the coup succeeded or failed. Harbingers took plenty of contracts to transport conspirators, but they also transported the Legions who responded.

Early on, as they made preparations for the rebellion, the Alchemists consulted the Oracles. Their response is not recorded, but they were not invited to participate and did not volunteer. Alchemists have harbored some degree of hatred of the Oracles ever since.

The Guilds moved swiftly and applied the most fearsome powers available to them. The coup looked for a short time like it would succeed. Proctors and Puppeteers were incredibly effective agents. They used the Skinlands for both covert channels of communication and the distribution of materiel. Haunters sowed chaos to cover the others' tracks. Mercenary Chanteurs fanned flames of discontent and shattered Legion fortifications. Existence in Stygia is brutal and terrifying for many, and widespread discontent was readily turned to the Guilds' ends. The empire's grip was not as tight as it might have hoped in all Necropoli and outposts. There were places where the Legionnaires could be intimidated into taking orders from new masters. Others were so far flung they never knew the coup was happening. Some officers could simply be bought, and the Guilds commanded more than enough wealth to do so.

These early successes were short lived. Usurers and Masquers shook the coalition by abandoning it almost as soon as the coup began. When the Alchemists declared themselves a new and independent Guild, the traditionalist elements of the Artificers reasserted themselves: The Nhudri cult's practice of Inhabit was sacred and the practice of Flux was a sacrilege. The Artificers

quickly surrendered to the empire and offered the Alchemists' leadership as the real authors of the rebellion. Only Usurers cared deeply enough about getting the history right to raise objections. Fulfilling the Usurers' worst fears, their conflicting accounts drove the Hierarchy to count them among the most dedicated rebels. The empire's reliance on what the soulforgers offered was so complete the Artificers could successfully execute libel against some of their own members and, in so doing, bring down a Guild that was, at best, hesitant to participate.

With the three most economically important Guilds now out of the coalition, and the Pardoners at best neutral observers trying to keep everyone sane in the chaos, it was over. By the middle of the year, the empire had snapped back into the expected order. Imperial authority was never seriously threatened. The Guilds had achieved only their own destruction. Charon issued a decree called The Breaking, banning the Guilds, revoking their litterae patentes, and ordering the Legions to seize their assets. Too late, the Guilds realized they simply brought to fruition everything they feared. The empire gained vast wealth, the leaders of the Guilds were soulforged into silence, and much knowledge of the ancient arts was forever lost.

In some Legion halls, to this very day, there are reclaimed trophies crafted from the corpora of rebellion leaders. They scream faintly, as if heard from a great distance, whenever a Guild wraith calls out to them. Some Freewraiths honor them, others dismiss them as reminders of someone else's mistakes, but everyone knows the Artificers did the forging.

Life on the Fringe

After the Guilds had their charters revoked, membership became a crime. It was possible to be hunted and soulforged for belonging to any of them. This didn't change the fact that many wraiths had few or no other options when it came to the services that only the Guilds could offer. The empire still required the services of several of them in order to function. The Stygian economy relied thoroughly on the Artificers. The military needed Masquers to improve their soldiers. The judiciary needed Usurers to record decisions and provide evidence in disputes. All wraiths needed the services of Pardoners or they would quickly be overwhelmed by their Shadows. The empire made it clear to the alumni of these former Guilds that they were free to practice their arts as before, but organization of a political nature would not be tolerated. They were half ordered and half begged to return to their forges, their blades, and their books, and to keep their heads down.

Some were simply ignored as long as they remained apolitical. Chanteurs whose voices crumbled Legionnaire fortifications were certainly smelted alongside the Harbinger captains who ferried them free of charge, but everyone needed trade and entertainment. Before long, the "softer" Guilds — Chanteurs, Harbingers, and Sandmen — were left alone so long as they didn't make their Guilds' persistence obvious.

The empire focused instead on the real targets of its fury: the Alchemists and the Guilds so eager to overturn the *Dictum Mortuum*. Those orders were hunted relentlessly, with the Legions enthusiastically destroying nearly everyone they could find who knew the powers of Puppetry, Embody, Pandemonium, or Flux. They

of course kept around a few from whom they could learn those powers for their own use, while others simply slipped through the cracks, each hunted Guildwraith helping the next — when they weren't selling one another out in exchange for safe passage through Legion lines.

The quiet existence of Guilds whose powers were focused on the Shadowlands was considered a necessary evil. Some Hierarchs devotedly hunted after them, with proof of Guild affiliation leading to immediate destruction. More commonly, Guild-affiliated wraiths were tolerated as long as they kept their mouths shut and their heads down. This was especially true in locales with fewer experts on whom to draw. Not every community of Restless could afford to follow the letter of Stygian law. Someone had to mint coins, advance culture, and keep the Shadow at bay. Even so, Guilds were held in wide disregard. An accusation of Guild membership was the easy shortcut to disposing of an enemy, akin to the Skinlands practice of accusing a widow as a witch to drive her away; accusations of Guild membership were used as a blunt club in Stygian politics for centuries. Many wraiths genuinely feared the Guilds' return and many Freewraiths feared being identified with the Guilds to which they swore fealty.

Usurers in particular bore the brunt of distrust out of those whose powers were integral to the function of Stygian society. As the fair-minded scribes of all transactions, they were seen to have violated a significant trust by their halfhearted participation in the conspiracy. Their early desertion did not counter this resentment. They have forever remained suspect in the eyes of the Hierarchy. Once among the best of Stygia, they are now its most distrusted.

After the Breaking, Charon approached the Oracles to question their involvement in the coup. As occurred with the Alchemists, whatever was said between Charon and the Oracles is not recorded, but no Oracles were put to the forge. Their Guildhalls were not raided and their wealth was not seized. Instead, they were quietly hidden behind new facades. Why, none would say.

The Guilds in Modern Stygia

Officially, the Guilds are still outlawed within Stygia. Unofficially, things are a little more complicated. While not every wraith belongs to a Guild, pretty much every wraith knows someone who does, or knows someone who knows someone, or knows where to go to find a Guildwraith if they need. Plenty of Guildwraiths have set up shop hawking their Arcanos specialties in plain sight — every neighborhood has its one shop with a Pardoner's lantern in the window — but the attitude of the Stygian authorities is, by and large, one of neglect rather than persecution.

That's the rule in Stygia. What happens in far-flung Necropoli can be entirely different. Some cities are known to be Guild-friendly, or even entirely under the sway of a particular Guild's influence. Others are controlled by Stygian hardliners who see the Guilds as a threat to their authority, and who crack down on any Guild presence mercilessly. And then there are the communities outside Stygian control, Renegade encampments and Heretic communes that welcome Guild assistance, though not too much of it.

Behind closed doors, the Deathlords are well aware of the Guilds and their power structures: who's in charge, what their policies are, and how willing they are to make deals. Various Guilds have backroom arrangements in place with the Legions, offering support and training in exchange for protection and the occasional blind eye from patrolling Legionnaires when unpleasant Guild business spills out into the streets. As noted above, many of the Legions have also tried to set up parallel structures to the Guilds within their ranks, with very little success. The most powerful Arcanos variants and arts are the sole property of senior Guild members. They're also the Guilds' ace in the hole, something valuable they possess that no one else does, and that would be lost without them.

The end result is a precarious balance, where the Legions permit the Guilds to work in peace so long as the Guilds don't overstep their bounds. Should there be the slightest inkling that the Guilds are looking to reprise their failed rebellion of 1598, the situation would change rapidly, and for the worse.

The once exception to Stygia's laissez-faire approach on Guilds is the case of the so-called Forbidden Guilds. Membership in one of these is automatic grounds for soulforging, as the powers they wield and the uses to which they've put those powers in the past are regarded as an existential danger to Stygia itself. Members of the Forbidden Guilds can be found lurking on the fringes of Stygian society or burrowed deep within it, waiting for the moments when the need for their talents outweighs the fear of getting caught making use of them. The Solicitors and Mnemoi in particular may be regarded as the next thing over from Spectres, but there's still a steady market for their services in the halls of power on the isle.

Parallel Structures

Part and parcel with the Breaking were efforts by the various Deathlords to replicate Guild knowledge and teachings within their respective Legions. Much like Nazi rocket scientists were secured and put to work by the U.S. and Russia following World War II, high-ranking and knowledgeable Guildwraiths were brought into the various Legions in order to kickstart Arcanos research and teaching facilities. The idea was to give the Legions access to what had been Guild-only knowledge. The actual result was that most of these Guild imitators were quickly subverted by the Guildwraiths they'd hoped to take advantage of. Many persist to this day, and many of the wraiths staffing them are loyal Legionnaires who have no idea that things are not quite as they seem.

Organization

Each Guild has its own internal structure, but those who are signatory to the Compact also participate in the Council of the Guilds, a loose governing body featuring one representative from each Guild, usually a senior Guildwraith. The Council makes the decisions on broad policy for the Guilds as a group, and also arbitrates formal disputes between Guilds in order to prevent them from getting out of hand. Once the Council has decided, all the Guilds — even those who don't stand to benefit from a given ruling — are expected to fall in line. Though the War of the Guilds lies centuries in the past, for some Guildwraiths the memories are still fresh, and they have vowed never to let such a thing happen again. Younger, more ambitious Guildwraiths do chafe under the conservative leadership of their elders, and friction between Guilds is a constant — no one has yet entirely forgiven the Artificers for their original arrogance — but thus far, the Council has held and any schisms between Guild factions are rapidly patched up.

Within the Compact, the Guilds break down into three rough groups: The High Guilds, the Working Guilds, and the Criminal Guilds. The former includes the Artificers, Pardoners, Masquers, and Usurers, and their talents are by and large necessary to keep Stygia functioning. As such, they get a much longer leash from the authorities, they have greater wealth and prestige than other Guilds, and they aren't shy about letting other Guildwraiths know it.

The Working Guilds, including the Chanteurs, Harbingers, Oracles, and Sandmen, are by and large tolerated and their gifts appreciated, though they're not viewed as essential to survival. That being said, they can wield enormous influence, and popular Chanteurs and Sandman troupes often find themselves invited into the corridors of powers unasked.

The so-called Criminal Guilds traffic in Arcanoi that defy the *Dictum Mortuum*, and as such they're automatically on the wrong side of the law. Stygian authorities work very hard at justifying not aggressively outlawing these Guilds — Spooks, Haunters, Proctors, Puppeteers, and Monitors — while still keeping an eye out for egregious violations by individual Guild members. The Criminal Guilds keep a lower profile, are hard to find unless you're "in the know" and provide services that everyone needs sooner or later, despite what the laws say. Anacreons and other high-ranking Legionnaires are no different, and they know that cracking down on an abuse of Puppeteering one day means there'll be no help forthcoming if they need that skill down the line.

Guild membership varies by wraith. No one is Reaped already a Guild member, though wraiths now do have predilections for one Arcanos or another from the get go. To be accepted into a Guild requires finding a Guildwraith willing to sponsor the newcomer, and the successful navigation of the various initiation tests and rituals peculiar to that specific Guild. Security among the Guilds is tight, as they guard their secrets jealously and are always on guard against the possibility of another Breaking. Becoming a trusted Guildwraith, however, can open many doors. The Guilds have allies and members in high places all throughout the Underworld, and a Guildwraith in good standing can find unexpected friends when they least expect it.

The Compact of the Guilds

The Compact of the Guilds has been resurrected and reaffirmed by the surviving Guilds, though its language has changed a great deal since the 14th century. Today, 13 of the 16 Guilds are signatory to its revised provisions. These include:

Setting limits as to how much a Guild can meddle in politics

Describing adjudication for resolving squabbles between Guilds

Recognition of the authority of a council of Guild elders to decide broad policy for all Guilds

It's the last point that many Guilds find contentious, but thus far nobody has tried to break away from the Compact.

Outside Looking In

As noted above, most wraiths are not members of a Guild. Finding one in a time of need, however, requires different approaches for different Guilds. Members of the High Guilds practice openly under Stygian auspices, though they don't proclaim themselves as Guildwraiths, per se. Working Guilds may be difficult to track down in a group, but individual members can be found. They just may not be willing to admit that they are Guild members, or be willing to introduce a stranger to the organization. The Criminal Guilds can be found on the wrong side of the tracks, and connections are made through cutouts to ensure that everyone's on the up and up. As for the Forbidden Guilds, seeking them out is a matter of luck and chance, and the wraith who's looking for a meeting with a Solicitor is far more likely to find himself on the short end of a sting operation conducted by the Unlidded Eye.

There are some wraiths who've decided the Guild structure is not for them. Some want to disrupt what they see as a calcified way of doing things, others want the still-considerable prestige (and ability to charge top obolus) that Guild status confers without any of the restrictions or discipline, and so pretend to Guild membership they have no claim on. The actual Guilds — and their de facto allies in the Hierarchy — crack down on faux Guildwraiths hard and mercilessly, but out on the fringes of Stygian territory, nobody's going to look too closely to see if the wraith with the Shadow-stained fingers has their Pardoners' Guild dues paid up. As for the would-be disruptors,

if discovered they're put under observation. It's highly unlikely they'll discover something the Guilds haven't, after all, but just in case they do, the Council wants to be ready.

The Mnemoi

No one is as reviled in Stygia as the Mnemoi. Their ability to manipulate memories is particularly terrifying to wraiths, beings who are by and large constructed entirely of their memories of themselves. And everybody knows that the Mnemoi, once the trusted judges of Stygia, must have done something utterly horrible to have been stripped of their powers, exiled, and hunted. The problem is, no one can quite remember what exactly it is that they did. Rumors and contradictory evidence abound, but as for the truth, it remains elusive. Meanwhile, conspiracy theorists among the Legions and in Renegade camps put forth a thousand crackpot theories: The Mnemoi were framed, the Mnemoi are the Deathlords, all of this is part of a long game the Mnemoi are running so that they eventually return and conquer Stygia, and a thousand more. But the truth remains elusive.

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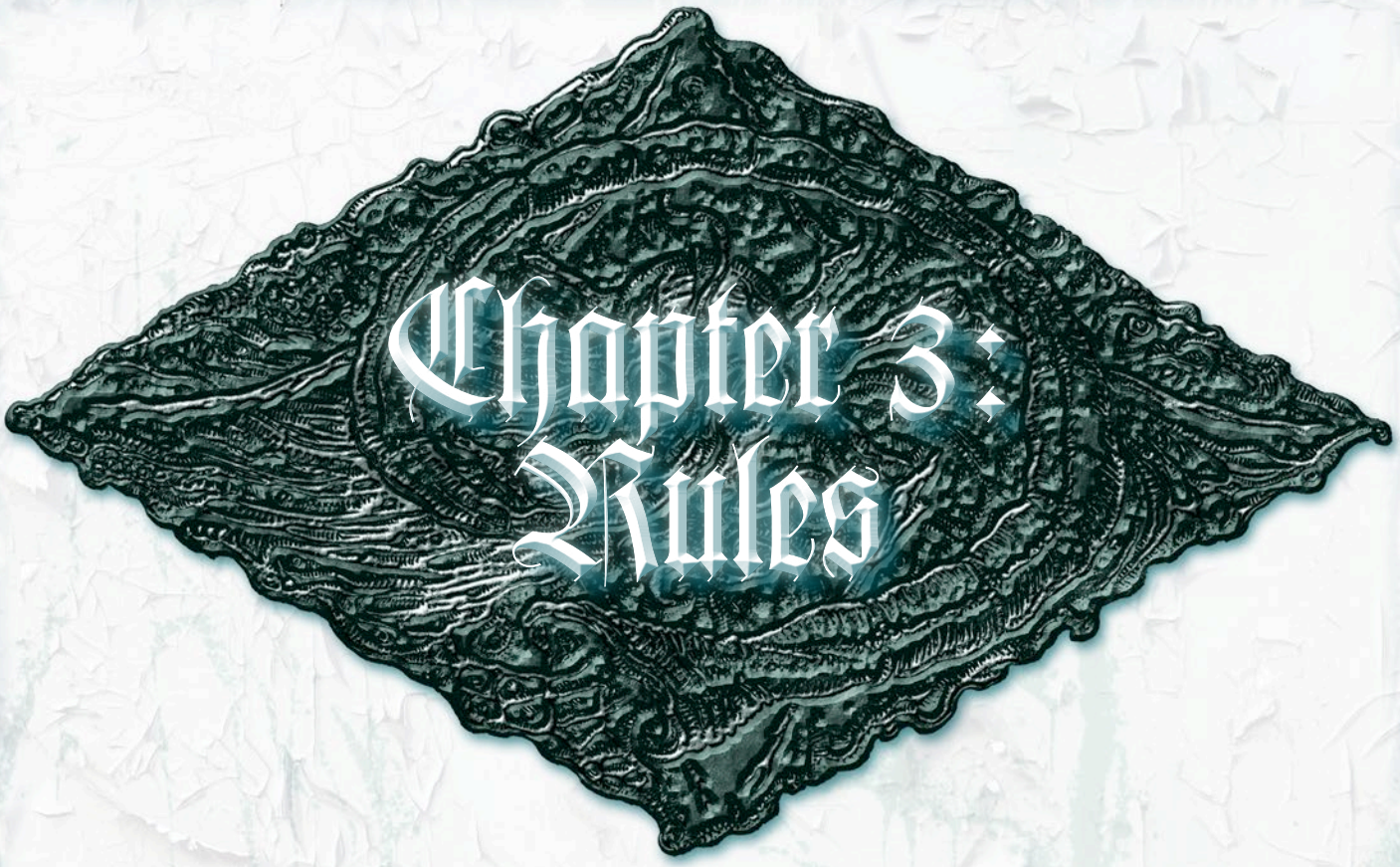


In games like baseball, tic-tac-toe, or poker, rules help players play a game without too much arguing about what happened: is he safe or out, is that move legal, or whose cards win? Like other games, **Wraith**'s rules help players decide what characters can do without too much arguing: Does he push the door open? What if she pushes back to keep the door closed? Who wins?

However, having too many or too detailed rules result in more time spent looking up section 23-b-3 and arguing if that particular rule applies or not than actually playing the game. **Wraith**'s rules define how to determine what happens fairly in a way that is simple and flexible, so players avoid as many arguments as possible and play as much as possible.

Wraith's basic rules are simple and are all you need to resolve most in-game possibilities. Some situations might benefit from more detailed game mechanics, and specific variations and extension rules exist for them elsewhere in this book. You decide what rules work best for your game. This chapter presents both the basic rules as well as several optional rules for some complicated situations.

Rules and Storytelling

In **Wraith**, the story is always the most important aspect of the game and strict interpretations of the rules always come second. **Wraith**'s rules are intentionally abstract; the basic rules cover most situations that characters will encounter, and you can address complicated situations by applying the basic rules to the situation's component parts. While the rules are generally suggestions, the further you go from the basic rules the more open to interpretation and debate your game will become. Chapter Seven presents advice on Storytelling.

The Golden Rule

"If you don't like it, don't use it" is the golden rule of **Wraith**. The most important part of the game is the story; use or don't use specific bits of this book as you see fit. Rules should help streamline and enhance play, not get in the way.

Time

Time in **Wraith** is measured in units of turns, scenes, downtime, chapters, stories, and chronicles.

Turn: The amount of time a character needs to perform one action is a turn. This can be three seconds, three minutes, or any length between those.

Scene: Turns make a scene. A scene happens in a single location. A scene can be any number of turns.

Downtime: Downtime is the time between scenes during which characters are not actively engaged in play. During downtime, characters can rest, recover, learn new skills, or travel between settings.

Chapter: Scenes and downtime together make a chapter. A single game session is often enough player time for a chapter.

Story: Chapters make a story. A story contains as many chapters as are needed, with no upper or lower limit. Some stories are short and need only a few chapters to introduce the situation and build to an ending, while others may stretch out and involve many chapters.

Chronicle: Combined, stories make a chronicle. Sometimes the stories are only connected by the same characters' presence in them, while sometimes a chronicle has a theme or plot that connects the stories together.

Chapter Nine: Drama gives more advice on how to work with these units of time in **Wraith: The Oblivion**.

Rolling Dice

Dice are fair: The chance of a die rolling a given number is the same for everyone regardless of who's rolling. Dice rolling impartially resolves when a character's desire meets conflict or uncertainty. The player may want her wraith to jump the gap between cars of the Midnight Express; the dice tell us if her character actually did it. The system is simple, but might seem a little complicated at first.

How many dice do you need?

Wraith requires 10-sided dice.

The Storyteller needs at least 10 dice.

Players may need fewer dice than the Storyteller, but a second set of 10 dice for the players should be enough.

When do you roll dice?

Roll dice when both the success as well as the failure of an action can be interesting. Stopping the roleplaying to discuss what Traits are involved in an action and what difficulty number the action is, then rolling and reading the result of the dice roll can slow down a game session, especially if the stakes are low and the action is one that should be accomplished easily.

On the other hand, if an outcome matters and there's genuine tension attached to success or failure, use the system and roll the dice. A die roll can help determine how well a character succeeds in an action, or how long an action might take — or that the action fails in a spectacular manner that brings all sorts of new challenges.

For example: David's character Evan and Rachel's character Ed search an unused library in a Hierarchy complex for a secret entrance to a Deathlord's hidden records chamber. Rolling dice and repeatedly failing to find the latch is boring: The story can't move forward until the characters find the entrance so the players are stuck. The Storyteller could decide that no die roll is needed, simply announcing that the characters find the entrance after a few minutes of searching so the story can move forward to the next scene. Alternately, the Storyteller could decide that someone comes out of the hidden door, revealing its location while surprising the characters. Or, a patrol could hear their scrabbling around and decide to come investigate, thus forcing Ed and Evan to deal with more pressing concerns — and thus breaking the chain of failed rolls in a different way.

How does rolling dice work?

To make a dice roll, do this.

When a player declares his character intends to perform an action, the Storyteller assigns a difficulty number between 2 and 10 to that action. The default difficulty is 6. The harder or easier an action is, the higher or lower the difficulty is.

Modifiers may affect the difficulty number, or affect the number of dice to be rolled. A +1 difficulty make the die rolls harder, or having to roll one fewer die makes it harder to roll the required number of successes.

The Storyteller determines how many successes the character will have to roll. A success is a single die roll that is equal to or higher than the difficulty number. The number of successes needed generally defaults to one, but certain actions, or Storyteller discretion, may demand more.

The Storyteller also determines what character Trait or Traits relate to the action: For example, sneaking past a guard would involve the Traits Dexterity and Stealth.

The player adds up the dots in the character's relevant Traits, and rolls that many dice. Together, all the dice being rolled for an action is called a dice pool.

No successes in the dice pool means the character fails. Achieving the target number of successes in the dice pool means the character succeeds. The more successes above the minimum, the more emphatic the success.

This is the entire basic rules system, which boils down to:

What action does the player declare her character intends to do?

What is the difficulty number for the action?

Are there any modifiers to the difficulty number? To the number of dice being rolled?

How many successes are required?

What Traits are involved?

How many dice rolled were equal to or higher than the difficulty number?

For example, Evan and the other characters Claire, Althus, and Briana are searching the Deathlord's office when a guard opens the door. David declares that Evan grabs an ashtray from the desktop and throws it at the guard. The Storyteller decides the difficulty number of this action is the default number of 6. Throwing an object involves the Traits Dexterity and Athletics. This is commonly written as "Make a Dexterity + Athletics roll." Evan has two dots in Dexterity and one dot in Athletics so the dice pool is three. David rolls three dice for the rolls of 4, 6, and 9. Two of the three rolls are equal to or above the difficulty number of 6, so Evan has rolled two successes: enough to hit the guard and stop his attack, but not enough successes to knock out the guard. Everyone runs as the guard shouts to raise the alarm.

Actions

An action is something a character does that might affect the story. To perform an action, the player tells the Storyteller what his character will try to do and how he intends to do it. The Storyteller decides how difficult the action is, and what other game mechanics are involved in the intended action. One action generally takes one turn of game time, though some can take longer.

Only some activities of a character are considered actions. Walking across the street is generally not considered an action because it's so easy that failure is amazingly unlikely and rolling for every trivial action would be impossibly boring. However, avoiding being noticed by the Hierarchy guards while sneaking across that same street, or breaking through a festival crowd to cross that same street before the Reaper you're chasing escapes? Those are actions: You might or might not succeed, and whether you succeed or fail matters. Rolling dice can help resolve if, and how well or how badly, your action succeeds or fails.

Conversation between characters is rarely an action: Simply talking to another character doesn't require game mechanics. However, if for example the characters are fleeing the Deathlord's office while howling barghests pursue them and Claire shouts where they should meet after they split up, dice rolls may be appropriate to determine if the other characters successfully hear Claire over the noise of the pursuit.

A simple action requires only a single success and a single turn. An extended action, such as holding up a gate long enough for a coffle of thralls to escape, can take more than one turn. Alternately, in a split action a character tries to perform more than one action during a turn and divides his dice pool between the multiple actions.

Trait Ratings

A Trait is a character's capability in something: how strong, how good at driving, or how much that character knows about

14th-century French architecture. The number of dots in a Trait show the character's capability in that Trait. Normal human Trait values range from one to three dots, with two being average. Some people can have four, five, or zero dots in a Trait, but these are exceptions. A character with four dots in Gymnastics can work as a circus headline performer; a character with five dots is a world-class gymnast at an Olympics level of skill.

Dots	Rating
x	Abysmal
•	Poor
••	Average
•••	Good
••••	Exceptional
•••••	Superb

Roll one die for each dot your character has in a Trait relevant either by rules or by Storyteller decision to an action. If your character has three dots in Dexterity, roll three dice when attempting to juggle; if your character has one dot in Perception, roll one die when attempting to notice something.

Traits are of three kinds:

Attributes: A character's capacity for performing Physical, Social, or Mental tasks. Attribute examples are Stamina, Charisma, and Intelligence.

Ability: What a character knows, learns, or can do. There are three kinds of abilities: Talent, Skill, and Knowledge. Examples of Abilities are Empathy, Meditation, and Bureaucracy.

Advantages: Traits that are neither Attributes nor Abilities, such as Backgrounds, Arcanoi, Passions, Fetters, Willpower, and Pathos.

Most actions involve an Ability Trait such as Firearms or Medicine, and a relevant Attribute Trait such as Dexterity or Intelligence. The number of dots in a character's Attribute added to the number of dots in the character's Ability is the number of dice that the player will roll: These dice are called a dice pool.

For example, as a Reaper sneaks up behind Evan, the Storyteller asks Evan's player David to make a Perception (an Attribute Trait) + Alertness (an Ability Trait) roll for his character. Evan has one dot in Perception and three dots in Alertness so he has a dice pool of four. The Storyteller decides the Reaper is very stealthy and assigns a difficulty number of 9. David rolls four dice for the result 4, 6, 9, and 10: He's rolled two successes, so Evan notices the Reaper before he gets too close.

Some Traits, such as Willpower, have both permanent ratings and temporary ratings. A Trait's temporary rating can rise and fall during a game, but a Trait's permanent rating doesn't change as often. Use the squares on the character sheet to track changes in a Trait's temporary rating and use the circles to track changes in a Trait's permanent rating. A character's dice pool in these Traits is usually based on that Trait's permanent rating.

Some actions have no relevant Ability Traits so the dice pool is based on the character's Attribute or Advantage Trait alone. For example, a character's dice pool to lift a heavy object equals the number of dots in her Strength.

Only two Traits of any type can be combined in a dice pool. A Trait that has a potential value of 10 such as Corpus or Willpower generally cannot be combined with any other Trait, except under very specific circumstances. It is extremely rare for a character to have more than 10 dice in a given dice pool.

Difficulty, Success, and Failure

An action has a difficulty number that the Storyteller assigns based on how hard the action is to perform. The Traits relevant to the action define how many dice to roll, and the difficulty defines how high a number the player must roll on the dice for a success.

Difficulty Number

The difficulty of an intended action is the number a die must be equal to or above when rolled to count as a success. The Storyteller sets the difficulty number when the player announces their character's intended action, assigning low numbers to easy actions and high numbers to difficult actions. The difficulty number is always between 2 and 10. The default difficulty number is 6.

If a character's dice pool is equal to or higher than the intended action's difficulty number, the Storyteller may decide the character automatically succeeds without the player needing to roll dice at all. See Automatic Successes for more information.

Difficulties	
3	Easy
4	Routine
5	Straightforward
6	Standard
7	Challenging
8	Difficult
9	Extremely Difficult

In exceptional circumstances, the Storyteller can set a difficulty of 2 or of 10. A difficulty of 2 is so easy that some reason must exist to roll dice at all. A difficulty of 10 is so hard that failure is almost certain and a botch or catastrophic failure is likelier than usual. For more on botches, see Botch.

Success

A success happens when at least one die in a dice pool roll equals or is higher than the difficulty number. A die roll of 10 is always a success. You need only one success in a roll to succeed in the action. One success in a roll is considered a marginal success, but rolling five successes in a single dice pool is amazing and grants spectacular results.

Number of Successes	Degree of Success
One Success	Marginal
Two Successes	Moderate
Three Successes	Complete
Four Successes	Exceptional
Five Successes	Phenomenal

For example, Catherine's character Briana enters a badly lit warehouse where a group of Renegades are hiding in ambush. The Storyteller asks Catherine to make a Perception + Alertness roll. The number of successes Catherine rolls in her dice pool affects how well the action succeeds.

One success: Briana hears a small noise emanating from where the wraiths are hiding.

Two successes: Briana hears the noise and also sees some movement.

Three successes: Briana sees the wraiths' hiding place immediately, without having to take an extra turn to investigate the noise.

Players can usually score a single success even with only one or two dice. On a standard difficulty of 6 and a dice pool of two, players have a 65% chance to roll six or above with one die and succeed.

Failure

A failure happens when no die roll in a dice pool roll is equal to or higher than the difficulty number or the number of die rolls of 1 is the same as or more than the number of successes (rolling a 1 cancels a success).

A failure is a simple lack of success of the attempted action, not a disastrous failure. In general, a failure should not result directly in harm to the character unless the circumstances require harm to occur. Failing an action of defusing a ticking time bomb should simply not defuse the bomb, but that failure should not set off the bomb immediately, or cause the timer to start counting down five times as fast as before. For example, Claire tries to hotwire a relic sportscar (Dexterity + Larceny, difficulty 8). She has three dots in Dexterity and two dots in Larceny, so her player Rachel rolls a dice pool of five dice and the result is 2, 4, 5, 6, and 6. No die rolls are equal to or above the difficulty number of 8 so Claire's action fails and she doesn't start the car this turn. This is a problem only because of the rapidly approaching Barghests….

(If the dice pool roll was 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8, then the roll of 1 would cancel the only success roll of 8, and the result is also a failure.)

Automatic Successes

If the dice pool is equal to or greater than the task's difficulty number, the character automatically succeeds with a marginal success without rolling dice. Their player can roll dice to try for a better than marginal result, but by rolling they risk a failure or even a botch.

For example, Catherine's character Briana runs around a corner to discover a tripwire she tries to jump over without triggering (Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 7). Briana has four dots in Dexterity and three dots in Athletics so her dice pool is seven: She can automatically succeed without having to roll dice.

Optional Rules

This section presents rules for specific kinds of actions and results:

Botches: Disastrous failures, which can be very exciting
Multiple Actions and Split Dice Pools: Do two things at once
Extended Actions: Some actions take more than one turn
Resisted Actions: Working directly against another action
Teamwork: Work together to combine successes
Trying It Again: Failing an action can make trying again harder

Some actions can involve more than one of these additional rules at the same time: An action such as two characters working together to push a heavy wardrobe across a room to block a door can be both an extended action *and* teamwork.

Botch

A botch is a catastrophic failure of an action, and happens when no die roll in a dice pool is a success and at least one die roll in the dice pool is a 1.

If any successes are rolled at all the result is only a failure and not a botch, even if that success is canceled out and one or more 1s remain.

For example, Althus stumbles into a crowd of Heretics and tries to blend in unnoticed (Wits + Subterfuge, difficulty 8). Althus has three dots in Wits and two dots in Subterfuge, so his dice pool is five dice. Althus's player Alan rolls a 1 and also rolls no successes, so the result is a botch: while Althus correctly sweeps his left arm outwards to mimic the Heretics' wave of greeting, his bracelet Hierarchy badge breaks its clasp and flies off his wrist, striking the Heretics' leader on the nose. There's a pause, and then…

(If Alan rolls two 1s and one success, the first 1 cancels the success but because a success had been rolled the remaining 1 would not make the result a botch.)

A failure is a simple lack of success of an action, but a botch is both a great and an interesting failure. You break the lockpick inside the lock and jam the mechanism, rendering the door you need to escape through inoperable. Your ball toss not only misses your friend's outstretched hands but also flies through a window in the Iron Legion's regional headquarters, attracting the attention of the humorless centuries-old official inside. Botching an Awareness roll, your character doesn't notice the two guards on the other side of the door before he swings the door open and hits both of them.

Botches are great opportunities for Storytellers to exercise their creativity, as a botch doesn't have to be as simple as simply falling, dropping your weapon, or accidentally hitting your friend. The blade could break, or a stumble because of the missed attack could break an oil lamp and spill oil across the floor. A botched flying roll might not mean that the character completely lost control, but could mean that the bag of oboli the character had slipped off their belt and is gone. In general, the Storyteller should treat a botch as an opportunity to introduce a new dramatic twist to the scene.

Multiple Actions and Split Dice Pools

To perform two or more actions in a single turn, declare the actions, select the smallest of the dice pools for the actions, then split that dice pool between the actions and roll the actions separately. The Storyteller may assign a higher difficulty number if the actions are unlikely to be capable of being done simultaneously, or rule that the two declared actions are impossible to do at the same time.

For example, fleeing from his botch, Althus dives for cover over a fence (Dexterity + Athletics) while firing a gun back at a pursuing Heretic (Dexterity + Firearms). Althus has three dots in Dexterity, three dots in Athletics, and two dots in Firearms, so his player uses the lower of the two dice pools and has five dice to split between the two actions.

Extended Actions

Extended Actions require multiple successes and normally involve multiple turns. If searching a swamp for a lost boat requires eight successes, rolling eight successes in a dice pool would be almost impossible. However, you can roll one or two successes each turn and add those successes together over several turns.

For example, Evan wants to push a heavy chest filled with soulsteel to block a door — he's not lifting the chest, only pushing it a few inches. The Storyteller rules that he will need six successes against a standard difficulty of 6. Evan has Strength 3 for a dice pool of three. For the first turn David rolls 1, 6, and 6; the roll of 1 counters one of his two successes so he has one success. For the second turn David rolls again for a result of 4, 8, and 9, earning two successes this turn and a total success of three. It takes Evan another two turns to roll three more successes and push the chest far enough to block the door.

Not all actions are extended actions: Lifting a heavy object that can't be separated into multiple smaller objects or jumping across a gap that only jumping partway doesn't help are two examples. Reading a book, searching an area, repairing a set of several objects, or writing a story are some examples of extended actions. Some extended actions involve teamwork, where more than one character makes the same roll separately and the successes are added together.

Resisted Actions

In a resisted action, two characters whose actions oppose one another make dice rolls separately. The character with the most successes subtracts her opponent's successes to determine the winning character's total number of successes. For example, Claire wants to intimidate a bouncer in a Stygian nightclub to let her into the back room (Strength + Intimidation). She has two dots in Strength and four dots in Intimidation so her dice pool is six, and the bouncer's dice pool is five. Claire rolls two successes, but the bouncer rolls three successes; three minus two gives the bouncer one success, so he does not give in to Claire's intimidation attempt.

If a resisted action is also an extended action, the Storyteller determines the number of successes necessary to win. Both characters roll each turn as a resisted action, and the first character to earn the required number of successes wins.

For an example of a resisted and extended action, Althus and Briana must play tug of war across a chasm for the amusement of a Deathlord (Strength, difficulty 8). The Storyteller determines the winner must score three successes. Althus and Briana both have Strength 3 so it's possible but very unlikely for the contest to end in only one turn. Althus' player rolls no successes and Briana's player rolls two successes for the first turn. The second turn Althus' player rolls one success and Briana's player rolls two: Briana subtracts Althus' one success from her two for a net success of one during the second turn, so she adds one to her two successes scored in the first turn, tumbling Althus into the depths.

Teamwork

In teamwork actions, each player rolls his character's dice pool separately for the same action based on the individual characters' Trait values, then they add their successes together.

For example, David's character Evan pushes a heavy chest filled with soulsteel to block a door (Strength, six successes) again, but he's not alone this time. The Storyteller rules that the chest is wide enough that three characters can push at the same time. Evan and Briana both have Strength 3, while Claire has Strength 2. David rolls 4, 6, and 8 for two successes, Catherine rolls 6, 6, and 9 for three successes, and Rachel rolls 7 and 8 for two successes; together the characters have seven successes and block the door.

Trying It Again

When a character fails an action then tries that same action again, the Storyteller can increase the difficulty number of that action for that character by one, and increase the difficulty by one for each successive failure until the character either succeeds, chooses to stop, or fails a difficulty 10 roll.

For example, Alan's character Althus survived the fall into the chasm and escaped. Now he plays cards with a Pardoner who knows where the other characters are, and promises that if Althus wins he'll tell him. Althus tries to deal the bottom card of a deck to the Pardoner he's playing with, but fails. When Althus deals again, the memory of his earlier failure distracts him and increases the difficulty of the roll by one.

Trying it again isn't appropriate for all actions: Failing a driving roll and missing a turn should not affect the difficulty of the next driving action. Another character trying the same action uses the original difficulty number; it's his first time trying the action so he isn't frustrated by the other character's failure. Combat and other similar actions don't fit under this heading. A miss on the first swing of a sword shouldn't frustrate the character and make her next attack harder, because not every blow is expected to land.

Complications are Complicating

Remember the golden rule at the beginning of the chapter? These optional rules can add detail to the game system, but use these rules only if their use improves the experience of playing for the group. If these rules interfere with playing **Wraith**, don't use them.

Lexicon

The first list contains general game mechanics terms of how **Wraith** works, and the second list is of terms more specific to **Wraith: The Oblivion**. Terms used to describe the environment of **Wraith** and that might be used by characters in **Wraith** can be found in Chapter 1.

Gaming Terms

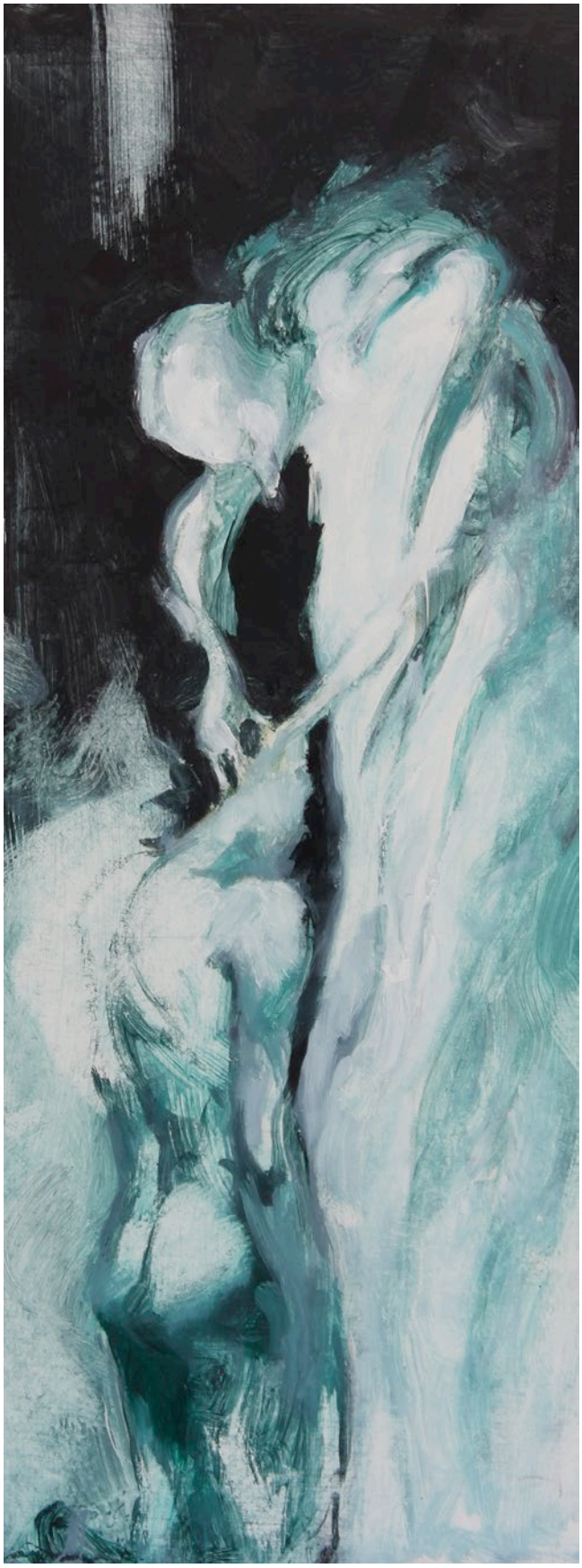
Ability: What a character can do naturally, has trained to do, or has studied to know. There are three kinds of abilities: Talents, Skills, and Knowledges. Examples of Abilities are Empathy, Meditation, and Bureaucracy.

Action: A deed a character performs. Using Arcanoi and firing a gun are actions. A player announces an action by telling the Storyteller what her character is about to do.

Advantages: Traits that are neither Attributes nor Abilities. Advantages are Backgrounds, Arcanoi, Passions, Fetters, Willpower, and Pathos.

Attributes: Traits describing a character's capacity for performing Physical, Social, or Mental tasks. Attribute examples are Stamina, Charisma, and Intelligence.

Backgrounds: Traits describing a wraith's place and experience in society. Background Trait examples are Status, Mentor, and Eidolon.



Botch: A catastrophic failure of an action. A botch occurs if a dice roll has no successes at all and also has at least one die that comes up as a 1.

Chapter: A unit of game time. A chapter is composed of scenes, and is often played in a single game session. Chapters are generally linked by downtime.

Character: The persona that a player chooses to play in **Wraith**. An actor plays a role in the same way that a player plays a character.

Chronicle: A unit of game time. The combined stories of a troupe of **Wraith** players. A chronicle is the largest unit of game time in **Wraith**.

Dice Pool: The total number of dice in a given roll, determined by the number of dots the character has in relevant Traits.

Difficulty: The number that a die roll must equal or exceed to be a success. The default difficulty is 6. Difficulties range from 2 (incredibly easy) to 10 (amazingly hard).

Downtime: A unit of game time. Time that characters are not actively participating in a story.

Extended Action: Actions that require multiple successes and can involve multiple dice rolls. Some extended actions can involve teamwork where more than one character rolls separately and the successes are added together. Others can require more than one turn.

Knowledge: An Ability learned through study, books, and classes. Generally more intellectual than Skills, examples of Knowledges include Medicine and Bureaucracy.

Points: The temporary or current value of a Trait such as Willpower, Pathos, Angst, and Corpus.

Rating: The permanent value, or number of dots, a character has in a Trait.

Resisted Action: The opposite of teamwork, two characters roll and compare successes. The character with the greater number of successes succeeds in his action.

Scene: A unit of game time. A single moment in a story, like a scene in a play or a movie. A scene is composed of turns.

Simple Action: An action that requires only one success in a dice pool roll to succeed. Multiple successes improve the action's result.

Skill: An Ability learned through training, study, and practice, such as cooking or animal riding.

Story: A unit of game time, a story is composed of chapters.

Storyteller: The person who creates and guides a **Wraith** chronicle. The Storyteller describes to the players what their characters see, hear, and so on. The Storyteller also plays the adversaries and allies that the characters meet.

System: The rules that apply to a given situation in a game of **Wraith**. Most often, this means what sort of roll is appropriate for what sort of action.

Talent: An Ability that a character has intuitively and through personal experience, not acquired through regimented training or study.

Thorns: Special abilities of a wraith's Shadow.

Trait: A measure of a character's capability that can be measured in dots. Traits include Abilities, Attributes, and Advantages.

Troupe: A group of people who play **Wraith**, the players and the Storyteller.

Turn: A unit of game time. The amount of time a character needs to perform one action under normal circumstances. This can be three seconds, three minutes, or any length between those. A turn is the smallest unit of game time in **Wraith**.

Wraith Terms

Angst: A Trait defining the negative mental energy that the Shadow (and Spectres) feed upon and use.

Arcanos: One of the supernatural abilities that wraiths possess, allowing them to affect the living and the dead. Plural is Arcanoi.

Catharsis: An attempt by a wraith's Shadow to take control of the wraith's Corpus.

Corpus: A Trait defining the physical "body" of a wraith. Every success on a damage roll removes one point of Corpus from the target of the attack.

Dark Passions: The purposes that drive a wraith's Shadow, based around a core emotion. Shadows gain Angst by following their Dark Passions.

Demeanor: The personality a wraith appears to be. A wraith's Demeanor and Nature may or may not be the same.

Eidolon: A Background Trait that can aid a wraith's resistance to their Shadow's attacks.

Fetters: Those things that remain in the lands of the living that tie a wraith to their old life. A Fetter's importance to a wraith is determined by the dots in that Fetter.

Nature: A wraith's true personality archetype.

Passions: The purposes of a wraith's existence. A Passion is based on a core emotion. A wraith gains Pathos by following his Passions.

Pathos: A Trait defining the energy of pure emotion, which wraiths feed upon and use to fuel their existences.

Psyche: The brighter side of a wraith's personality, capable of looking beyond self-destruction. In Spectres, it serves the same role as the Shadow does to a wraith.

Shadow: The self-absorbed, self-destructive, sentient side of a wraith's personality bent on eventually dragging him down to Oblivion.

Shadowguide: The player who plays a Shadow of another player's wraith character.

Willpower: A Trait defining the self-possession and purpose of a wraith. Willpower is often involved when a character is attacked mentally or emotionally, or needs to draw on reserves of character to achieve a difficult task.

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Chapter 4: Character

In **Wraith**, character creation is fundamental to the experience of roleplaying. Systems and character are near one and the same. Unlike most games, your character is rarely going to be fresh from the academy or about to embark on her first quest. Instead, in **Wraith**, your character has already had a life. It may have been cut short, and it's certainly over, but it holds within it a bank of memories, experience, knowledge, and regret. To play **Wraith**, you'll be creating a character from the ground up, and the character's experiences while alive will have a direct impact on the Traits you select for her now that she's joined the choir invisible.

Numbers and points on a character sheet tell us about the makeup of the character: what he can or cannot do, what his strengths and weaknesses are, and where he might have spent his time in life. The statistics you ascribe to your character aren't limitations. Instead, they assist in adding tone and feel. Possessing a Strength of 3 implies more than just being able to lift a certain weight or having triceps of specific dimensions. A character with a Strength of 3 could be an extreme sports enthusiast, able to lift herself up a rock face with just the tiniest of handholds. Alternately, it could also be a retired boxer, past his golden years but still muscled, compact, and able to land a devastating punch.

In creating your character, the statistics you assign are tools for weaving your character's story. Traits tell the tale of her life: of the time she discovered the most exclusive nightclub in town with her Streetwise 2, or the instant she realized (with her Occult rating of 4) that the crazed babblings of your possessed daughter were in John Dee's Enochian. Absence of Traits rarely means a complete inability to perform a given task; they just indicate a lack of training or specific expertise. Indeed, low Trait ratings can even result in compelling scenes as wraiths struggle with their limitations. The occasion your character completely embarrassed herself at a dinner with the ambassador (and look who has no dots in Etiquette) may still sting her pride. The tragic moment your character lost her father to a medical crisis she (with no dots in Medicine) couldn't identify — and the sense of loss it still engenders — contributes to your character's growth.

Characters can take a long time to gel. Your first concept may not be the one you ultimately want to go with, and it's worthwhile to take the time to think about who and what you want to play. And there are all sorts of motivations you can draw on when developing your character. You want to emulate a figure you admire, for example, or you're keen on exploring a character of a different race, gender, or sexuality. You like the idea of playing the wraith of a journalist whose proximity to the World of Darkness became a little too pronounced and who knew a little too much. You love

the thought of playing a child who wandered off on a camping trip and was never seen again, because the story tugs at your heartstrings and sparks your imagination. When you have an idea, build upon it using the Traits provided. And as your character concept takes shape, his Passions and Fetters will fall into place to solidify the idea.

Getting Started

haracter creation can seem intimidating, especially when building someone who has lived a complete life prior to the beginning of the action. Don't agonize over fear of character complexity or conversely, in-game restrictions. Not every block needs to be in place immediately. The following advice should be among the first considerations of character creation:

• In **Wraith**, you can be anybody. There are no restrictions based on age, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexuality, gender, or political, religious, or philosophical viewpoint. You're encouraged to make the character you want to play — one that's fun to roleplay and interesting to both you and the rest of your group. For the purposes of balance, it's useful to have your wraith at the same experience level as the rest of the group's characters, with experience being a topic worthy of group discussion. If you have a greater knowledge of the setting and rules than the other players, you could create a character to lead a Circle from a position of age and experience, or you could choose to join them on their journey of discovery of the Underworld. But you should always discuss matters like this with the rest of the group before making any character decisions.

• Character creation in **Wraith** is a means of discovering the depths of your character's personality, through their desires, fears, regrets and more — all the things that drive a mortal soul to persist beyond death. What it isn't is a set of randomly assigned statistics on a character sheet, simply there to empower dice rolls. Characters need character to make the most of **Wraith**, and the stats they accrue are there as convenient signifiers of the shape of the framework the character's built on. Assign the statistics to the character, not the character to the statistics.

• Your character Traits are rated numerically, typically ranging from zero to five. As a general rule, a rating of one implies a lackluster ability, two is average, three is the point professionals reach and four is the top of a given field. Five points is a rarity, implying a genuine gift unmatched by anyone the character has ever met. Your character could be focused to the point of obsession or be a jack-of-all-trades. Traits don't define a character. They embellish and tip the story points you may already have in mind, allowing them to translate mechanically. It's one thing to say, "He was a Formula 1 driver;" four dots in Drive is a way to translate that level of skill you want for your character into **Wraith**'s gameplay systems.

• The reason your character returns as a wraith rather than succumbing to the draw of Oblivion is key. By definition, every wraith has a strong reason for clinging to existence, even if their new form is a hollow reflection of hot-blooded mortality. Ask yourself why your character is still here. Question whether it's a reason you're likely to share with other wraiths, a guarded secret, or fragments of an unknown whole. Not everything need be apparent immediately, and your unfinished business could have the capacity to expand or intersect with those of the other wraiths in your Circle.

• Ensure your character will work well with others. This doesn't mean you can't play a former fossil fuels tycoon in a Circle also containing a deceased environmentalist, but it does mean it's worth discussing what will keep your characters together. A shared Fetter, being accused of the same crime, a specific circumstance that brought them together — all are possibilities. And if the group wishes to take on opposed roles, that can work, too, as long as there's collaboration on what keeps the group cohesive. Some find it tricky to think of a reason for disparate dead people to form a Circle, but sometimes common cause, shared benefactors or opponents, familiar memories, or a shared incident resulting in death can be enough. Mere companionship sounds mild, but the Underworld is a scary place. Friends can be hard to find.

For Storytellers...

A Storyteller should be familiar with the system and setting of **Wraith** and have the framework of a plot in mind by the time players create their characters. The Storyteller needs to be able to guide players through character creation in order to keep the process clean and achieve the desired results without generating characters who will wreck the proposed campaign. Ideally, the outcome of character creation is a Circle of wraiths with reasons to work with and depend on one another. These wraiths will have agency within the plot the Storyteller created, and will be relevant protagonists within the upcoming chronicle.

When you take on the Storyteller role, it's your responsibility to provide players with blank character sheets they can fill with playable details. You'll lead the character-creation discussion with each player, explaining the system and laying out some of the plot structure you have in mind to ensure the characters are a good fit for the chronicle. It's worth elaborating on details like geographical area, whether the game is contemporary or set in a specific era, and if there are any special provisions to consider. Also, be mindful of trauma triggers or topics to not be addressed in character backstory or motivation.

As Storyteller, you want all of the player characters to have linked plot hooks, ensuring these characters have a good reason to work together. This reason can be all-encompassing, such as each character having been killed in the same plane crash and therefore sharing one giant Fetter. Conversely, the Circle could consist of wraiths who died in separate ways but

who now come together in the same Stygian waiting room, telling one another their tales. Long term, it's beneficial to create character links, and doing so keeps the group from splintering over a lack of shared direction. If a player proposes a character wildly out of place, as Storyteller it's your role to find a way to fit that character in or advise on changes that can be made to accommodate her within the chronicle. It can take time to make these connections, but they provide fantastic roleplaying opportunities if you invest in them.

When character concepts and sheets are done, you'll be running Preludes. Preludes are character introductions that take place prior to the actual chronicle. The hours immediately preceding a character's demise or a Stygian day in the death of a wraith both act as solid Preludes that allow players to start connecting with their characters, and their characters to start connecting with the world. They are key to helping players hone the all-important Passions and Fetters possessed by each wraith. Preludes also provide players with opportunities to road test the character they've built, discussing with you as the Storyteller potential reallocation of points or switching Archetypes because a Nature of Traditionalist just didn't fit as well as they initially thought. For further information on running Preludes, see p. 120.

Dead or Alive Don't Matter None to Me

Don't feel that because you're playing **Wraith**, all the action must be postmortem. Preludes are a golden opportunity to explore the lives of characters before everything went the way of the Styx. Through exploration of a character's life, Fetters can come into focus, their importance to the wraith highlighted during these scenes. Another possibility to explore is the decision not to define Fetters until after the Prelude. The appropriate objects, people, and locations may become apparent through roleplaying and could then be added to the character sheet post-Prelude.

A Prelude can also exist to define a character's role in wraith society. A wraith's Passions can be refined in such a scene; political motivations, spiritual beliefs, enemies and allies can all be introduced. Preludes run for characters already Restless can provide some much-needed clarification on setting and system.

Mix Prelude types depending on what aspects of the game and their characters the players wish to explore. You're running the game for them, so open with something that'll make them feel right at home with **Wraith**.

Character Creation

Step One: Concept

During character creation, the first step is imagining a basic concept and then putting pencil to paper to flesh it out. You're aiming for the highlights and defining aspects of your character before you move on to the minutiae of their life and death. Character creation is a constant process of development and refinement in **Wraith**, with your character gaining layers as you go.

At this stage, the basics are all that are required. Your options are limited only by imagination and any restrictions the Storyteller has put in place in order for the plot and characters to remain cohesive. While some character concepts may struggle to fit in with others or with the planned game (the wraith of a 6th-century Visigoth killed in battle by Byzantine oppressors will find little common cause with that of a 21st-century law student driven to suicide by unpayable debt, for instance... or perhaps not), any concept should be considered as possible providing discussion has taken place.

At this stage, all you really need do is answer three questions intrinsic to **Wraith**: Who were you, how did you die, and why are you still here?

Who Were You?

When you were alive you were more than the sum of your profession and education, even if society believed otherwise. Your core as a human was characterized by what kept you going and what occasionally slowed you down. Whether you lived a life pursuing an ambition or constantly ran in fear, the most important aspects of your life have stuck with you. Following is a list of potential concepts that could characterize your wraith:

- **Addict** — Whether your fix was drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, sex, or danger, your addiction came to define you. Part of you loved the thrill each time you fulfilled it. The other part was filled with self-loathing and a desperate desire to be free. Life after death offers you the greatest highs — or the possibility you'll be hooked forever.
- **Artist** — Many artists receive recognition only after they expire. Perhaps you want to ensure your reputation beyond the grave? Or maybe somene's intent on stealing your unseen work and claiming it for their own — something you cannot allow.
- **Blank Slate** — You can't recall your life, or at least your real life. You see fragments of a picture but you don't know how many of them are real, or how they fit together. You're intent on discovering the mysteries surrounding your life. Who were you?

- **Cop** — You were a cop who walked his beat around the most dangerous corners of the inner city and took pride in doing your job right every day. But you did your job a little too well, and that got you a bullet to the back of the head. Now, you know that death doesn't have to stop the wheels of justice.
- **Crook** — You were proud of your rep as a crook, commanding fear and respect. Then again, your crime was a permanent stain on your life. Whether repentant or not, you're now presented with a tableau of victims both living and dead. Are you going to extort them further, or try to make amends for your sins?
- **Dabbler** — In life you put your hand to a clutch of activities but mastered few. This left you feeling unfulfilled. You never found your true calling. Amazed by the experiences now available beyond death, you've now got more of existence to explore. Your chance to find something new — something that is you — is out there.
- **Guardian** — People always needed protection, and you were the woman to deliver it. Your volunteer work on a suicide hotline helped assuage your guilt over neglectful actions best forgotten. In death, you can offer the same care and affection to those who need it.
- **Nomad** — You constantly traveled from city to city, and borders were irrelevant. A free spirit, you were never pinned down by family, work, or obligation. Being a wraith offers you even greater liberties, and wider vistas to explore.
- **Official** — You commanded respect and had ultimate authority over the fates of others. Being the head of any group makes you a target, though. Just ask Jimmy Hoffa. You'll soon be able to compare notes.

Setting Limits

Death can be cruel and abrupt. Life isn't a picnic for every human being either, and can take someone down twisted avenues. Sometimes the harsh facts of life can be more disturbing than those of death. Some elements of life, including but not limited to hate crimes, prejudice, assault, and explicit physical or mental trauma can be thought-provoking subjects to explore in **Wraith**. At the same time, they can unsettle players and Storytellers alike, and take a chronicle to an uncomfortable place players or Storytellers don't want to be in this context.

During character creation, feel free set limits if you feel you need them. If there's a subject you don't wish to explore in the course of the chronicle, your group should respect your decision. **Wraith** is a game in which your character's inner darkness is discovered and often displayed, but the players' boundaries should always be respected.

- **Prisoner** — Your living days saw you trapped in a life you never wanted. Your time as a prisoner is one you were never able to escape, even when the state said you were free. As a wraith, you finally have your freedom, and you'll fight tooth and nail to maintain it.
- **Revolutionary** — Your existence was predicated around subversion. You always felt that someone had to raise their voice to bring down the Man, and that someone would be you. The corruption you found in living society appears to have followed you through to the other side. You'll fight the good fight against the corrupt power structure of the dead.
- **Slacker** — You always seemed to take the easy route, but it wasn't that simple. You had your reasons. And even now, conserving your energy for the moment it's truly needed is key. Until then — you'll just chill.
- **True Believer** — You lived for faith. Belief is what saves people, spiritually and physically. You may be dead, but you never question the faith that guides you and makes you whole. And you're still here so you can lead others down the same righteous path.
- **Victim** — You never had a chance. The gears of society ground you up and spat you out. Somehow you survived. Death is just another blow. You've been victimized enough. It's time to overcome a lifetime of defeat and strike back.
- **Workaholic** — Your life could have been one of grinding monotony or an exciting adventure every time you exited your house, but work defined you. Your success in the office was all that mattered, but what was left when you were done? An empty life, filled with regrets. You still can't stop working after dying, but for the first time you're intent on working on something worthwhile.

How Did You Die?

Your cause of death will have a great effect on the way you view the world as a wraith. Someone who was gunned down in his 20s won't appear or act the same as one whose death came in his sleep at a ripe old age. Anguished, drawn out death leaves a very different mark than an unexpected demise. Here are several possibilities:

- **Accident** — Fate is fickle. You were on your sleepy commute to work when the train you were on derailed and crashed, snuffing you out in a welter of tangled metal. It was such a cruel surprise for someone with so much to live for. Bitter, you feel you deserved better. What that is, you'll find out soon.
- **Elements** — You may have considered yourself "green," but nature didn't care. Tornadoes, it turns out, don't play politics. Your death could be philosophized away as the natural order of things, but that didn't offer much solace as you hit the ground at speed. Now that you're dead, you can actually manipulate the world around you. Maybe not much now, but you've got time for your powers to grow.

- **Illness** — Some illnesses are predestined by genetics. Others strike without warning. Your agonizing end put things into perspective, and you'll do everything you can to ensure nobody else goes out that way.
- **Mystery** — Death came as a complete shock to you. You don't know what happened to you, and maybe you weren't alone when it occurred. Whenever you seek an explanation, a small part of you warns that maybe it's not such a good idea to pry. A larger part has to know.
- **Old Age** — As you got older, you realized death was stalking you. You did everything you could to stave off the inevitable, but it wasn't enough. After all, it never is. Now you've moved on, but somehow you remain. It's time to stop living in fear, and time to start living.
- **Overdose** — You were desperate to quit, but only after the next dose. Even now you feel the urge for one more hit. There's a part of you that's forever stuck at that cusp of euphoria. Somewhere in Stygia there has to be someone who can find a way to tip you over the edge one more time.
- **Something Strange…** — Not all deaths follow patterns of logic or sense. Being struck by lightning, ingesting mercury thinking it'll convey immortality, tripping over your beard and breaking your neck, getting caught in the gears of a combine — what becomes social media fodder for the living was the way you met your end. Ashamed of the embarrassing way you went out, you simultaneously need to understand it and find a way to move on.
- **Violence** — Shot by a jealous ex. Taken out by a gangland hit. Shoved onto train tracks by a thrill-seeking sociopath. Someone else was directly responsible for your end, and you're not going to let that happen to you — or anyone you care about — again.

Why Are You Still Here?

There are many reasons a mortal becomes a wraith. Regret, anger, curiosity — all of them can be summed up under the term "unfinished business." Figuring out what your wraith left undone that's so powerful that he can't move on is key to understanding who they are and drives them going forward.

- **Confusion** — You weren't the only one to die in that accident, so why are you the only one here?
- **Failure** — Whatever it was you were trying to do in life, you failed. Now that you're dead, you may have a chance to finally get it right.
- **Guilt** — You did a bad thing. Now, you won't let yourself rest until your burdensome guilt can finally be assuaged.
- **Legacy** — There's little more important to you than what you left behind. Your legacy will flourish, no matter what you have to do to ensure that.

- **Love** — There is love beyond death, from the lifelong devotion of a married couple to a parent watching over his child to a hopeful lover who never got a chance to say "I love you" before she died. The power of love can give a wraith reason like nothing else.
- **Missed Chances** — Regret for all the things you failed to do in life anchors you to the Skinlands. As a wraith, you won't let those chances slip away a second time.
- **Mission Possible** — Your mission doesn't stop with your death. You may be dead, but you're still on the case.
- **Need to Understand** — You need to know why you died in the way you did, and how you brought yourself to that last inevitable point. Until then, you can't rest.
- **Resentment** — The family who moved into your home after you died shouldn't be there. What's yours is yours, even after you're gone, and god help anyone who tries to take it from you.
- **Revenge** — Someone put you in the Underworld. You intend to return the favor.
- **Unfulfilled Destiny** —This is all part of a bigger plan. You have a grand destiny, and death is just one step along the way to fulfilling it.
- **Unrevealed Truth** — You died with secrets untold — the location of the family fortune, or the composition of your secret chemical formula. Now you need to make it right.

Nature and Demeanor

Your public and private approaches to the afterlife may differ. Not every clown is truly happy, after all. Your *Nature* is your true personality, while your *Demeanor* is the face you present to the world. They may or may not match, and the way your character's public and private faces interact opens up all sorts of roleplaying opportunities. Following are a list of common Archetypes, any of which may fit as your character's Nature or Demeanor.

Personality Archetypes

- **Activist:** A cause possesses you and keeps you marching.
- **Architect:** You're going to build something better than anything that's come before.
- **Avant-Garde:** The new — and possibly controversial — never fails to excite you.
- **Bon Vivant:** If death's not the end, the party can go on forever!
- **Bravo:** You make a stepping stone of those weaker than you.
- **Bureaucrat:** Civilization was built on rules — they prevent chaos.
- **Caregiver:** Wraiths feel pain too, and need even more nurturing than the living.
- **Child:** You can't help but behold the Underworld with wide-eyed wonder.
- **Competitor:** Why aim for anything less than the best?
- **Conniver:** You'll take advantage of these other suckers.
- **Critic:** Nothing will improve unless you're there to provide correction.
- **Deviant:** Some call your preferences abhorrent; all you know is conforming isn't for you.
- **Enigma:** You'll change whenever people think they've got you pegged.
- **Explorer:** The Shadowlands are rife with wonders waiting to be discovered!
- **Eye of the Storm:** You shine when everyone around you starts losing their heads.
- **Fanatic:** Your belief is the most important thing of all. It keeps your inner fire burning.
- **Follower:** Powers behind the throne receive the reward without becoming a target.
- **Gambler:** You know the rules, how to play the odds, and you're going to win big.
- **Jester:** Humor helps you — and others — cope. Keep smiling.
- **Leader:** You'll lead your comrades through the night, and into the light of day.
- **Martyr:** You suffer for your values, but make sure all know the meaning of sacrifice.
- **Mediator:** Any crisis can be averted through diplomacy.
- **Optimist:** Always look on the bright side of death.
- **Pedagogue:** You educate them so they stand a better chance at survival.
- **Penitent:** Every action is atonement for your sin.
- **Pragmatist:** Practicality and focus are the name of the game — forget petty morality.
- **Rebel:** Someone has to act against the establishment, and it's often got to be you.
- **Rogue:** You'll never succumb to the whims of others.
- **Scientist:** You want to know how death works, so you can predict and control the results.
- **Survivor:** You will persist and overcome in the face of every adversity.
- **Traditionalist:** The old ways have always protected us. Why change now?
- **Visionary:** Out with the old and in with the new. Change is forward momentum!

You may hide your Nature beneath a Demeanor formed to deflect intrusion, or you may be exactly as you seem. By acting in accordance with your Nature, your inner confidence and resolve (Willpower) grows.

A wraith with a Nature of Optimist and a Demeanor of Gambler may play the odds to make her Circle feel more positive about a situation. A wraith with a Nature of Rebel and a Demeanor of Traditionalist may transform the system from the inside to bring about much-needed change.

Character Creation Chart

Step One: Character Concept

Choose concept, Nature, and Demeanor.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Prioritize the three categories: Physical/Social/Mental into primary (7 points), secondary (5 points), and tertiary (3 points).

Step Three: Select Abilities

Prioritize the three categories: Talents/Skills/Knowledges into primary (13 points), secondary (9 points), and tertiary (5 points).

Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Arcanoi (5 points), Backgrounds (7 points), Passions (10 points), and Fetters (10 points).

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record beginning Pathos (5 + Memoriam) and beginning Willpower (5).

Spend freebies.

Step Six: Shadow Creation

See Chapter 6.

Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Attributes are the natural gifts possessed by all humans. How agile you are, how persuasive you can be, how aesthetically pleasing you look and your ability to think on your feet — all are presented as your Attributes.

After death, you take on a new physical form possessed of Physical, Social, and Mental Attributes. These Attributes must be prioritized, with the most important one designated primary. The next most important is secondary, and the remaining category is tertiary. All characters start with one point in each Attribute, and add from there.

- **Physical** — Your raw strength, ability to withstand trauma, and capacity to move at speed, all contribute to your Physical Attributes. Soldiers, athletes and burglars are likely to prioritize these Traits. Strength is the Attribute governing damage you inflict hand-to-hand and your sheer physical power. Dexterity measures your speed, agility, and precision. Stamina relates to your endurance and your ability to resist damage via soak rolls.
- **Social** — Your attractiveness, charm, and natural skills of coercion all effect your Social Attributes. Diplomats, interrogators and performers are likely to prioritize these Traits. Your Charisma rating dictates how magnetic a personality you are, and how others react to you. Manipulation determines how well you control others, whether through ploys or appeals to their better nature. Appearance is all about looks, how striking your features may be — for good or ill.
- **Mental** — Your reactions and awareness, capacity to research and retain information, and quickness of understanding make up your Mental Attributes. Scholars, detectives, and powers behind the throne are likely to prioritize these Traits. Perception determines how good you are at noticing the obvious and the hidden, allowing you to discern lies or notice you're being followed. Intelligence is a measure of brainpower, and the higher the rating the more likely you'll be able to utilize your encyclopedic mind or research efficiently. Wits is commonly a reactionary Attribute, determining how quickly you respond to changing situations, such as combat, arguments, or dynamic conditions.

Every character starts with one dot in each Attribute. After prioritizing the Physical, Social, and Mental Attribute categories, you then assign further points to each Attribute. Your primary Attributes receive seven additional dots for distribution, your secondary Attributes receive five additional dots and your tertiary receive three. These points can be assigned in whichever order and manner you feel best matches your character concept. If you're a private investigator, Mental fits well for your primary Attributes. You can allocate four dots to Perception, two to Intelligence and one to Wits, creating an eagle-eyed observer with a keen mind for research, but an average capacity for inventive thought. Alternately, you can put three in Wits and two each in Intelligence and Perception, making you well-rounded but not superb at any one thing.

Make the Attributes fit the character you want to play, but don't be afraid of throwing in a curveball if you think it makes the wraith more interesting. The political advisor with an enviously high rating in Manipulation may have a surprisingly high Dexterity due to his time spent as an expert target shooter in his spare time, while the gigantic wrestler may be of massive Strength but spend his spare time reading the classics, and have an impressive Intelligence.

Your Attributes may seem low, but later you'll be given freebie points to spend wherever you choose. These can be used to raise your Attributes if you chose. For now, just aim for the general concept you have in mind.

Note that certain Arcanoi — powers you'll be choosing later — are often based off particular attributes. Feel free to rearrange your Attribute points as needed to match your concept once you've chosen Arcanoi.

Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Abilities are the Traits describing those things you know how to do intuitively or as a result of training. Talents, Skills, and Knowledges form the brackets under which these Abilities are recorded. The rating of an Ability is typically paired with an appropriate Attribute to produce a dice pool you can roll in order to determine success.

As with Attributes, the higher the rating in an Ability, the more proficient you are at that given task. One dot implies a basic level of aptitude, gained through paying a modicum of attention at high school. Three dots suggests professional-level skills. Five dots makes you a world-class expert, regardless of which world you're in.

Having zero dots in an Ability doesn't render you utterly clueless or incapable in that regard. Such a void can be filled through training during the chronicle, or can play an important role in your backstory.

- **Talents** — Abilities gained through experience, repetition, intuition, and natural environmental and societal pressures are likely to fall within Talents. These seemingly natural knacks still require endless practice.
- **Skills** — Through apprenticeships, the tutelage of a mentor, and the need to pick up Abilities for survival, the end results are valuable Skills. Skills are typically practical in application, as they are generally hard to learn without rigorous training.
- **Knowledges** — Intellectual Abilities, learned through arduous study, theory, research, and exposure to new ideas are the Knowledges. They're not limited to dusty academia. Everything from hands-on work with computers to field archaeology to mastering arcane cyphers falls under this rubric.

Just like with Attributes, you prioritize your Abilities. You have 13 points to distribute among your primary Abilities, nine points to distribute among your secondary and five for your tertiary. Your distribution should match your character concept. If you're a doctor it's likely you'll have at least three dots in Medicine. It's less likely you'll possess more in Melee. Tailor your Abilities to your character.

At this point in character creation, no Abilities may exceed a rating of three dots. As with Attributes, Abilities can be increased later using freebie points. Until experience is awarded during the course of the chronicle, freebie points are the only way in which Abilities can be raised to four or five dots.

Killing is my business, and business is good

Any Attributes or Abilities you have with a rating over three dots can be assigned a Specialty. These aren't obligatory, but can help you out in some tough situations. For more information on specialties, see Chapter Five: Traits.

Step Four: Advantages

Unlike the prior Traits, your Advantages aren't prioritized. You receive a set number of points for each Advantage and can increase them further through use of freebie points.

Arcanoi

The dangerous, bizarre, and unique powers wraiths possess are known as Arcanoi, and you have five dots to spread among them. Starting characters cannot have more than three dots in any given Arcanos. Expertise in a particular Arcanos may also imply membership in a particular Guild devoted to that power.

Arcanos powers are split into Common and Initiate varieties. The former can be learned by any wraith, while the latter are largely restricted to members of a particular Guild. Deciding which powers you want to have therefore potentially influences your social circles as well. You can join a Guild by spending points on the Guild background (below).

The Arcanoi are as follows:

Arcanos	Guild	Description
Argos	Harbingers	The Arcanos of travel
Castigation	Pardoners	Allows wraiths to wrestle with others' Shadows
Embody	Proctors	Lets a wraith manifest in the Skinlands
Fatalism	Oracles	Allows a wraith a glimpse at Fate
Flux	Alchemists	The Arcanos of decay and reconstruction
Inhabit	Artificers	Lets wraiths possess machinery and computers
Intimation	Solicitors	The Arcanos of creating and removing desires
Keening	Chanteurs	The songs of the dead
Lifeweb	Monitors	The Arcanos of working with Fetters
Mnemosynis	Mnemoi	The Arcanos of memory
Moliate	Masquers	Allows a wraith to reshape plasm
Outrage	Spooks	Permits a wraith to exert force in the lands of the living
Pandemonium	Haunters	Creates all manner of ghastly effects
Phantasm	Sandmen	Allows a wraith to work with dreams
Puppetry	Puppeteers	The Arcanos of possession
Usury	Usurers	Lets a wraith manipulate vital energies

Backgrounds

It's what you know, who you know, and what Artifacts you possess that help define your role in Restless society. Backgrounds are the measure of a wraith's contacts, alliances, relics, and status, among other factors. Backgrounds can affect the way you're seen by other wraiths and determine your importance in Stygia. If you have four points in Mentor, your patron may be an ancient wraith of great importance, with a lot of political sway. Backgrounds can also paint a nice big target on your back. Your three points in Relic can make you the target of thieves and saboteurs, as many want what you have. You have seven points to distribute among Backgrounds.

Passions

Your Passions are the core of your being, and part of what's kept you hanging on to existence. You never stop searching because of your overpowering love, or the fire of vengeance keeps burning, and won't stop until you deliver justice. Regardless of the details, they force you to persist.

Passions are divided into three parts: A statement of the Passion (i.e., "Finish my masterpiece" or "Discover the identity of my killer"), a core emotion for the Passion (such as Hope or Bitterness), and a rating from one to five.

Your Passions are inextricably linked to who you are and why you became a wraith, so you gain 10 points to divide between them however you choose. You can hold 10 minor Passions, each with one dot, or two major ones with five dots apiece. Passions with higher ratings are more demanding, but you derive more benefit from acting in accordance with them. Smaller Passions demand less, but offer less as well.

For more on Passions, see p. 304.

Sample Passions

Some common Passions include the following:

- Protect my family (Love)
- Find my killer (Revenge)
- Keep people away from my car/home/stash of gold/art collection (Greed)
- Find someplace safe (Fear)
- Kill my rival (Hate)
- Look out for those who need protection (Courage)

Any strong emotion can be the basis for a Passion. All that's needed is an action, the emotion at the core of it, and a numerical rating for its relative strength.

Fetters

Fetters are the important physical objects, parts of your former existence that tie you to the world. They could be people, places, or things. The child to whom you never got to say goodbye, the '63 Stingray you lovingly restored, and the creepy shack in which you were murdered can all be Fetters. Fetters allow you to engage in Slumber, the healing sleep of the Restless. They can also serve as lifelines out of the terrifying events of a Harrowing, and possessing them allows you to move within the Shadowlands until either you come to grips with them or they are destroyed.

If you distance yourself from a Fetter and neglect your attachment to it, the Fetter rating will reduce. Likewise, those who wish to harm you — such as Spectres and exorcists — can rend your Fetters. Once a Fetter loses all value, you will enter a Harrowing as the Fetter is lost.

You have 10 points to allocate to your Fetters, with ratings ranging from one to five. More important Fetters are rated more highly.

Passions and Fetters can easily be linked together. If your Passion were "Protect My Son" (Fear) 4, your Fetter could be My Son: 5.

Giving Yourself over to Fate

Your Fetters can be assigned to the Storyteller to allocate if you want an air of mystery to surround the reason you became a wraith. You'll know what your Fetters are, but you may not understand their importance until it's too late.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

By now you'll have a detailed character sheet and the bones of your character concept have plenty of meat on them.

The final steps are detailing your Pathos and Willpower, and spending your 15 freebie points. Once your Pathos and Willpower are resolved, have a good look at your character sheet before assigning freebie points. These are the elements that will finalize your character, so you'll want to make them count.

Corpus

Each wraith begins play with a rating of 10 Corpus.

Pathos

All wraiths possess a pool of emotional energy with which they power their Arcanoi and heal their ectoplasmic Corpus. Each wraith has a starting Pathos rating of five, plus however many dots you have in the Memoriam Background. Freebie points can contribute to this Trait up to a maximum Pathos rating of 10. Bear in mind that your Pathos rating will shift during the chronicle, as Pathos can be either lost or regained, based on a wraith's actions.

- Most Arcanoi require the expenditure of Pathos for activation (see the individual Arcanoi for cost requirements).

- Pathos can also be used to fuel some Artifacts, making them duplicate function as well as form.
- Once per session a wraith can roll their Memoriam rating (difficulty 8), with each success granting one point of Pathos.
- A wraith can roll one of their Passion ratings at a time that Passion has been explored (difficulty 6 if the wraith is experiencing the Passion and difficulty 8 when observing others experiencing the Passion), with each success granting one point of Pathos.
- One point of Pathos can be spent to change direction in the Tempest.
- By spending one point of Pathos, a wraith regains two Corpus levels lost through normal damage (one point per turn may be spent in this way).
- By Slumbering or meditating for eight hours and spending three points of Pathos, a wraith regains one Corpus level lost through aggravated damage.

Willpower

Willpower is the Trait that determines your mental resistance to aggressive forces intent on wearing you down. It is the resource you draw on when you need to make that last desperate push and you cannot afford to fail. As such, Willpower can be used to automatically succeed on dice rolls. Just as importantly, it is fundamental in the resistance you offer to your Shadow. All wraiths start with a base permanent Willpower rating of five dots, which can be increased with freebie points to a maximum of 10.

Willpower has a permanent rating determined at character creation, and a temporary rating that shows the character's current strength of will. Your temporary Willpower is the force of will you possess right now, while the permanent rating is your maximum. When commencing your chronicle, temporary Willpower matches permanent.

- Some Arcanoi require the expenditure of Willpower for activation (see the individual Arcanoi for cost requirements).
- You can spend one temporary Willpower point per turn to gain an automatic success. This is a standard success, and is not equivalent to rolling a 10. You must announce you're spending this Willpower point before rolling.
- Willpower can be spent to enable a wraith's attunement to Fetters, Artifacts, and Consorts (see p. 149).
- By rolling your permanent Willpower rating (difficulty variable) you can resist or regain control from your Shadow if it has temporarily seized control (see p. 236).
- By acting in accordance with your Nature, you may regain a Willpower point (at Storyteller discretion).
- When a wraith loses (or uses) all of his Willpower he becomes subject to a Harrowing (see p. 240).
- Permanent Willpower is used when attempting to resolve Passions and Fetters (see p. 304).

Freebie Points

You now have 15 freebie points to spend on rounding out your Traits. It is here your underpowered Traits can be pumped up to more respectable levels. Freebie points are available so you can craft the character most interesting to you. If you felt like something was lacking before, now is the time to plug the gaps. Any Trait can be increased using freebie points, although different Traits have different costs.

Another option available is to reduce your Shadow's freebie pool by spending points to do so on a one-for-one basis. You can also earn up to seven additional freebie points by letting your Shadow's freebie pool increase, but if you do this, you will be creating a particularly potent antagonist for yourself. At this point you will want to start considering how your Shadow manifests, what your dark side wants, and all the ways in which your other half can get to you. Shadow creation rules can be found in Chapter 6.

Freebie Points Cost

Attributes	5 points per dot
Arcanoi	5 points per dot
Willpower	2 points per dot
Abilities	2 points per dot
Passions	2 points per dot
Backgrounds	1 point per dot
Fetters	1 point per dot
Pathos	1 point per 2 dots
Corpus	Cannot be increased with freebie points

Spark of Life

At the start of this character creation you were thinking of who you were, why you're here, and how you feel about being one of the Restless Dead. That personalization is what we return to now.

Nothing in this section needs to be noted on the character sheet unless you want it to be. Indeed, the following approaches are unlikely to have any sort of rules impact. Personalization has a greater impact on how you act, and how you interact with others.

Appearance

Your form within the Shadowlands is partly a reflection of you from your living days, but can also reflect an idealized or critical version.

The Prelude, any flashbacks, and premortem scenes are likely to help provide a solid picture of how you appear. Realizing the dots you've allocated on your sheet misalign with your vision at this stage is fine. It's always okay to move a few dots around if that means realizing your vision more closely.

If you can't form a mental picture, consider your various Traits. What does it mean if you have an Appearance 4 and Science 3? Possibly it means you're the guy in the lab everyone doted on. You have no chemical burns, your designer glasses set you apart from the goggle-clad assistants, your hands are manicured and you smell more like cologne than ammonia. On the other hand, if your Appearance is a 1 your lab coat may be stained, you could be sporting a visible injury from an experiment gone awry, and long hours in the lab have left you looking haggard and drawn.

Quirks

Little features can set you apart from the masses of the Restless. Idiosyncrasies, oddities, and twitches can endear or they can alarm. These features aren't the main thrust of your character, but they're part of what you're known for and how other wraiths might refer to you.

Character Creation and Disability

A wraith's initial physical form is largely driven by her self-image. This can lead to some variance from the wraith's "actual" looks at the moment when he died — a little less gut, perhaps, or a little more hair — but by and large the plasm reflects the mind's image of the self. This includes wraiths with disabilities. Simply put, wraiths emerge from their Cauls as their mind understands them to be. The choice is entirely up to the player.

It cannot be stressed enough that these are character choices on the part of the player. There are no bonus points allotted to spend elsewhere because of this, and any impact the player's choice has on dice pools, etc. should be discussed with the Storyteller ahead of time to make sure everyone's on the same page.

What it boils down to, however, is that in the world of **Wraith**, death welcomes all, and all are free to make their way in the Underworld as they choose. To say or rule differently would be hypocritical.

Maybe you possess a distinctive accent, or never wear anything other than black. You have the habit of humming in times of stress, or you can't help but clutch those rosary beads when excited. Quirks establish a character in his community and in the game. Just make sure you're choosing habits that won't become irritating to you or the other players.

Example of Character Creation

achel wants to create a character for an upcoming **Wraith** chronicle. Initially she only has notes and a rough concept in mind, so she follows the creation process step by step to flesh out the character fully.

Step One: Concept

The first thing Rachel does is create a concept. Rachel likes the idea of playing a man in law enforcement. But rather than being an upstanding citizen, this character is party to a string of illegal activities. Rachel decides he's a deputy sheriff in a rural county, operating on a state border. Rachel also doesn't want to play a character who's immediately likeable, so there will be hidden facets beneath his blunt exterior that will only come out with time. She decides he has a teenage daughter he loves very much, but he's been estranged from his wife for the last few years. He has a few close friends outside of work who call him Eddy, but to most people he's just Ed.

Rachel considers Ed's Nature and Demeanor, and decides it's unlikely he'd share his real self with too many people. So, his Nature and Demeanor are likely to be very different. Rachel thinks of Ed as a clear, commanding presence, if somewhat bullheaded when investigations aren't proceeding as fast as he'd like. To add depth, Ed has committed a few crimes of his own, and he needs to atone. He exudes authority, but this is in order to compensate for a desperate guilt. Having taken bribes for years from coyotes smuggling illegal aliens across the border in his county, he finally came to grips with the fact that by doing so he was complicit in all the other crimes the smugglers were committing. But when he tried to come clean, he caught a bullet for his troubles from the very people he'd finally decided to betray.

Rachel opts for Pragmatist as Ed's Demeanor, with Penitent as his Nature. While initially attracted to Bravo for Demeanor, Rachel isn't keen on playing a bully. Ed is forthright but not abusive. He takes what he views as the most sensible course, and has little time for foolish dreamers or compulsive planners. "The hands that help are better than the lips that pray" sums him up, and thus Penitent is a perfect fit for Ed's Nature. Rachel notes this as a recent change for Ed, his Nature altering from Conniver or Gambler in the run up to his death.

Step Two: Attributes

Ed now requires Attributes. Rachel prioritizes his categories as follows:

Mental is Ed's primary category. When he puts his mind to an investigation he can crack it. He knows the law like the back of his hand, and in another life he could have been a lawyer. Behind his rough exterior is someone who's remarkably well read.

Physical is Ed's secondary category. He's a fit and healthy man capable of tackling crooks and pursuing a fleeing perp. He's a drinker on and off hours, and this had started to take a toll on his physique. Fortunately, his untimely death prevented this vice from reaching dangerous levels.

Social is Ed's tertiary category. He has a handsome look that can quickly turn imposing. He turns on the charm when he needs to, although such talents are weakened as guilt and the desire to drink consume him.

Rachel has seven points to allocate among Ed's Mental Attributes. She assigns three to Wits (added to the existing one free point automatically given per Attribute, this raises Ed's Wits to a 4). The remaining four points are then split equally, with two being assigned to Perception (raising it to 3) and two to Intelligence (being raised to 3). Ed is a quick thinker, and is also possessed of the ability to read people. He bolsters this with having had an average education and a good memory of the law's finer points.

Ed's five Physical Attribute points are divided up; two being allotted to Dexterity (raising it to 3) and two to Strength (raising it to 3). Ed is a fast mover, his body lithe and athletic. Only one point is applied to Stamina (raising it to 2) as his waned in the months preceding his death. The guilt he feels made him start to neglect his workout regime in exchange for mind-numbing alcohol.

Ed is a handsome guy with striking looks and a winning smile, when he finds cause to apply it. Two of the Social Attribute points are allocated to Appearance (raising it to 3). When he was younger he was quite the ladies' man, but now he's developed more of a weathered, lived-in appeal. One point is added to Charisma (bringing it to 2). This leaves no points for Manipulation (leaving it at 1). Rachel isn't happy with such a low Manipulation rating for a character who has to interrogate criminals, so she makes a note to apply freebie points to the Attribute later.

The image of Ed is coming together. He's tall, fit, and rarely seen outside his deputy sheriff's uniform. His perpetual five o' clock shadow chisels his face nicely, and is offset by piercing eyes. With that stare, Ed wins some hearts, and breaks the wills of lawbreakers. As a grace note, Rachel imagines Ed as constantly grinding his teeth. It might be in anger, but more likely as an unconscious tic he has when in thought.

Step Three: Abilities

Rachel then reviews the Abilities categories. While Skills seem like the most suitable option as Ed's primary category, she instead leans towards Talents, due to a number of them matching his character to a T. She selects Talents as primary, Skills as secondary and Knowledges as tertiary.

Rachel can already see multiple uses for the 13 points she's spending in Talents. Immediately she puts one in Expression and one in Intimidation to reflect Ed's persuasive abilities. Two more are assigned to Empathy to explain Ed's ability to read people so well, and two are allocated to Alertness, as he's rarely caught off guard. His increasing corruption and concealment of crimes justifies three points placed in Subterfuge. The remaining four are split with three going into Athletics and one into Brawl.

Reviewing the available Skills, two of her nine points go into Drive. Ed's perfectly capable behind the wheel. Even more so with a gun, as Rachel allots three points to Firearms. Four points remain, so Rachel divides them up with one going to Repair, two to Meditation and one to Melee. Ed may have restricted his crimes to looking the other way, but he knows how thieving works. And as a deputy sheriff, he has training in how to use a billy club. Ed's prone to meditative trances when working out or otherwise engaged in manual tasks. When he suffers feelings of guilt for the various crimes he's helped conceal, meditation helps subdue the accusatory voices in his head. As a wraith, his skill at meditation will help him even further when combating his Shadow.

Ed's weakest category is Knowledges. Rachel's happy with this being the case, as she thinks her character is focused on a select few Traits. Two points are allocated to Politics and two go to Investigation. Ed is a case-cracker, or was in the time before corruption started eating away at him. Rachel believes Ed can apply this part of himself again in the Shadowlands, not least in an effort to discover who killed him. He also knew how to work the system, which was how he got away with taking bribes for so long. The final point lands in Academics. Ed has little patience for studying, but received an education.

With his first round of dots in place, Ed takes focus as a competent, sharpshooting law-enforcement officer, or would be if he wasn't so wrapped up in hiding the crimes of others for payoffs. He's a practiced liar, and possesses a true understanding of his field from both sides of the law. Rachel intends for Ed to walk the line between falling back into corruption and becoming a responsible upholder of the law.

Step Four: Advantages

Rachel then contemplates Ed's Background options. As a wraith with connections on both sides of the law (and Shroud) it would make sense for him to have a focus in Contacts, but she's also tempted by some of the wraith-specific Backgrounds.

Three of the seven Background points are allocated to Contacts. She sees Ed as having a smattering of mortal contacts from the sheriff's office, but more contacts within the Shadowlands, represented by victims of the cross-border trade. His death was likewise connected to these dark dealings, so he shares common ground and enmity with his peers. One Background point is allocated to Eidolon, so Ed has a basic spiritual fortitude that may allow him to understand his Shadow. She then chooses to have two points in Haunt, as Ed is firmly linked to the location of his death — a hunting camp on the Rio Grande where

he used to go to drink in solitude. The final point is spent on Memoriam. Ed is missed by his daughter, who now seeks answers to the circumstances behind her father's disappearance. Rachel will be spending freebie points on further Backgrounds.

Rachel's first Arcanos choice is to put three of her five points into Inhabit, as she sees Ed as wanting to screw with his killers and badly disrupt their operation. Inhabit allows Ed to play the gremlin in his killers' communications devices, transportation, and even guns. She's also keen on his eventually being able to create Artifacts with this Arcanos, informing the Storyteller that Ed would be interested in seeking out the Artificers' Guild in the chronicle, should the opportunity present itself. The remaining two points are put in Usury. Usury allows Ed to transfer Pathos between wraiths. Atonement being a large part of Ed's character, assisting the spiritually injured is a form of penance he'd be interested in pursuing. She keeps in mind that at higher levels Usury can be used for stealing Corpus from mortals as well as wraiths. It suits the character that he may succumb to more selfish activities, so this is a fine fit. One issue Rachel notices when reading over the Usury powers is its reliance on the Charisma Attribute. As Ed's Charisma is average, she resolves to roleplay Ed as someone attempting to regain some of the charm he once had. This will justify expenditure of experience points on Charisma, later in the chronicle.

Many of Ed's Traits now assigned, Rachel reviews her character's progress so far. He's a criminal, but she's intent on making him redeemable. There has to be a heart of gold, or at least an uncomfortable weight of culpability on his shoulders to justify his Nature of Penitent. His Attributes, Abilities, and Backgrounds justify his Demeanor, but not his Nature.

There are 10 points to spend on Ed's Passions. Ed's reasons for continued existence are apparent to Rachel, so she goes on to weigh up the importance of each Passion. The most important one to Ed is protecting his daughter as she gets closer to the dangerous truth behind his illegal activities. She contemplates whether this fits as Fear, but decides on Love. Ed adores his daughter and will do anything to protect her from these criminals. She writes, "Protect my daughter (Love) 4."

After going back and forth on Ed's method of death, Rachel decides that while planning a double cross of the traffickers, he was murdered with one bullet to the back of the head. His swift death was at the hands of an unknown assailant, his body was never found, and he was simply listed as "missing." Indeed, the sheriff's office went on to publicly moot the "missing" Ed as involved in illegal activities — the same deplorable ones that drove him to his final, fatal action, rather than the bribes he'd actually been receiving. Ed angrily wishes to prevent these criminals from continuing operations, therefore opting for "Destroy the traffickers (Fury) 3." Rachel's already planning how he would attempt to find other victims in the Shadowlands to help him in his mission. A part of Ed can't move on without discovering the identity of his murderer. The only person he told about heading to the traffickers' boathouse was a fellow deputy, and she's not spoken up since his death. Rachel writes "Identify my killer (Determination) 2." Finally, a little self-deception compels Ed to assert his innocence despite his real crimes. He wants his daughter to know that her father was a good man, so Rachel chooses "Clear my name (Hope) 1."

Ed's Fetters now need to be decided, with 10 points to spread between them. Rachel considers what objects, people or locations might keep him tied to the Skinlands, and comes up with some interesting choices. Tying them to Ed's Passions and Backgrounds, she decides on "My daughter: 4" as an obvious choice, and "Written logs of the traffickers' activities: 3," stored — somewhat dangerously given the events surrounding his death — in his locker at the sheriff's office. "The hunting camp: 2" follows, as the site where Ed first made a deal with the traffickers, regularly received payment, first witnessed their true natures, and eventually met his end. This leaves one more point, so Rachel decides to go for a wild card, and chooses to spend it on a cherished "Bottle of Overholt 1911 Rye Whiskey: 1." Ed was saving it for the day his daughter got married. It remains unopened at his house, a testament to both his love for his child and his affection for high-end alcohol.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Ed's Willpower rating of 5 and his beginning Pathos of 6 (5 plus the one point in Memoriam) are added to the character sheet.

Rachel now considers how the 15 freebie points can be spent. Her first decision is to spend five points increasing Ed's Manipulation by one dot to a rating of 2. She then spends a further two points to increase his Willpower to a rating of 6, to reflect his hardheaded demeanor. Two points are spent on the Relic Background — Ed's deputy sheriff's badge has stayed with him beyond death as a reminder of what he aspired to be. With six points remaining, she allocates two to give him a Craft Skill rating of 1. The remaining four are allocated to the Larceny Skill to give it a rating of 3. Rachel has been considering Ed's hobbies, deciding he was a little more conversant with criminal ways than he'd like to admit.

All the freebie points now spent, Rachel makes a note on her Shadow's character sheet that the Shadow can gain an additional two freebie points. Ed is going to take two in exchange and apply them to his Passion "Identify my killer (Determination)" to give it a rating of 3.

The numbers now finalized, Rachel makes her last few character-creation notes. She provides names of Ed's colleagues, some of the traffickers, and victims also killed as a result of their actions, with the plan of tracking them down if they were reborn as wraiths. Rachel also assigns Specialties to the Traits with ratings of 4 or above, noting that Ed's Wits Specialty is Quick-Witted and his Perception Specialty is Attentive, which he sadly neglected in life. Rachel makes a quick set of notes as to Ed's wiry, yet toned appearance, and crisp deputy's uniform with a small bullet hole cutting through the back and exiting the front of his hat. She also makes a basic family tree noting his parents, wife, and daughter, their names and his relationship with them.

Rachel decides she doesn't want any quirks that would be too distracting, and already having settled on his teeth grinding, doesn't want to go any further. She's good with accents, but will gauge the rest of the group before playing Ed with a Texan drawl.

Rachel now works with the Storyteller and the person playing her Shadowguide on generating Ed's Shadow. For an example of creating the Shadow, see p. 236.

What Now?

Roleplaying the Prelude

he roleplay can now commence. Before the chronicle begins in earnest, it's a good idea to run a Prelude. A Prelude is a short scene that narrates the events of your last living moments, death, and rebirth as a wraith, but they don't need to be restricted to those key events. Preludes can be run with the group, or solo so that each player can preserve her character's dying secrets. The scenes should genuinely be kept short, in order to maximize their emotional impact without eating too much into playtime as a wraith, and while they always end the same (fatal) way, that doesn't mean there can't be surprises along the journey. Cameos from other, premortem characters, foreshadows for the chronicle, clear evidence of ghostly intervention in a character's death — all of these are possibilities.

This is also the final opportunity for you to find amendments you want to make to your character. This is where you find the Arcanoi you picked don't fit your concept after all, or that the fourth dot in Firearms was an indulgence. That's okay — the chronicle hasn't yet begun and such points can still be exchanged. Just inform your Storyteller so she's aware of the desired changes.

Avoid skipping straight to the chronicle if you can help it. Individual Preludes for each member of the Circle can truly make for evocative and emotional roleplaying.

The Before-Death Experience

Knowing who you were before death in **Wraith** is paramount. You can't get the most out of your Passions or Fetters without knowing why they're so important to you. If one of your Passions is "Alleviate the suffering of my partner (Compassion) 3" there's little context or emotional clout unless you explore what your widower is experiencing. In your Prelude, you could have a multipart scene in which you gradually succumb to the cancer ravaging your body, unable to do more than just watch the emotional toll it takes on your spouse. This type of Prelude is moving, enhances your character development, and does a heck more than just saying "I had a loving relationship."

All your Fetters and Passions should be on the table for your Prelude. If they're that important, they deserve to be examined. And if you can't find a good scene for them, maybe it's worth reconsidering whether they carry that much weight. Similarly, if you've chosen the Memoriam or Haunt Backgrounds, it's likely you'll want your scenes to take place in a way involving the people who will miss you and the places you frequented. In the aforementioned example, one of your Fetters may be your partner, the bed in which you died, or the photo of the two of you on your nightstand — the last thing you saw before the light disappeared from your eyes. Having a photo listed on your character sheet means less without the interaction with it in your Prelude. Your Memoriam can be made up of family and friends who visited you during your final days, and the foundation they set up in your honor after you were gone. Your Haunt may be the bedroom in which you passed or the hospital you dreaded visiting for every dose of chemotherapy.

Preludes allow you to determine how you feel about your Fetters. You don't have to like them, but you should feel something strongly towards them. Your character's overstuffed pill box could be a Fetter — a constant reminder of your illness. Similarly, you can review the emotions you associated with your Passions. You don't feel compassion for your partner as a result of the Prelude, and decide that instead your Passion will be "Alleviate the suffering of my partner (Pity) 3." You decide that in your final moments you were consumed by hate. You're sure it was his smoking that resulted in your getting cancer. Through discussion with your Storyteller you change your Passion to "Drive my partner over the edge (Hate) 3." It's a sinister trail to go down, but if it makes your character more interesting and fun, then go for it.

The Death Concept

If you haven't selected your character's cause of death already, then a Prelude is a perfect way to discover the culmination of your mortal existence. You can play out a mortal story and the Storyteller can choose an elegant exit, or you can call the shots and make the decision when you feel the time is right.

Awakening

You know who you were, and you know how you died, so it's time to look at the critical moment when you reawaken as a wraith. The manner of your Reaping will crucially determine how you view the Underworld. The character's initial experiences following the Reaping — whether they include nearly being melted down into coinage, escaping thralldom, rapid recruitment into a Legion, or apprenticeship to a Ferryman — establishes your wraith-specific Backgrounds, your place in Stygian society, and your relationship with your fellow Restless.

This is the time when the reasons for your Notoriety, Mentor, or Status can be established. Don't be afraid to imagine the stories behind the collection of dots. A daring escape from a savage band of Reapers can earn you notoriety; showing promise by doing so can attract the attention of a Mentor, and the other wraiths you free along the way could become your Contacts.

Preludes don't need to be run in a formulaic way. If you're playing in a chronicle where all the characters have been wraiths for centuries, it'll be less important to experience life as a mortal in a single chapter. Instead, dealing with this element as fragmented flashbacks during the course of the chronicle could be the way

to go. If the players are all experienced with **Wraith** and want a high-powered game of Underworld politics and war, the manner of your death is less important than your relationships with other wraiths. Flexibility is recommended, but that doesn't mean that there's no value to a Prelude. These scenes are incredibly important in allowing players to understand their characters, so don't automatically eschew them completely as a result of eagerness to get on with "the good stuff." Preludes drive home the precious value of mortality, and set the mood perfectly for the chronicle to follow.

The End Is The Beginning

Preludes don't need to be strictly regimented as life, death, and Reaping. While this is a typical setup and one that often works, don't deny yourself the possibility of something a little stranger. Some options are:

- Some of the characters are already wraiths, and their actions lead — possibly unintentionally — to the death of the other, mortal characters. This could be an intriguing Prelude to play, involving everyone at the table.
- Flashing back to a moment years before the moment of death, perhaps one that is thematically linked to why the character became a wraith. This sort of Prelude can set up a mystery of the wraith's existence, or demonstrate their Fetters to good effect.
- Some of the other players could take supporting roles in another character's Prelude. It'll be good practice for when they start playing Shadowguides if they're given the temporary roles of friends, colleagues, lovers, and enemies of one of the characters during her time as a mortal.
- All the characters could die in the same horrendous terrorist attack, natural disaster, or similar communal horror. Such a scene allows interaction between the characters, who may know one another already or form attachments in their last few moments among the living.
- Storytellers can always mislead players into writing characters for another World of Darkness game, then having them meet their predestined fate quite unaware that you had a game of **Wraith** planned all along. This could conceivably happen in the first session — which serves as the Prelude — or further along in a chronicle. Just be aware of your group's dynamics if you have this planned, as some may react adversely to such deception.

Q & A

Your Prelude will go a long way towards answering any character questions, but there may be more questions you wish to explore. Elements of your backstory may have been missed in the Prelude, in which case these questions will help you add those finishing touches.

- **How old were you when you died?**

The age you were when you died is going to have an impact on appearance and maturity. Does a youngster deal better with having died than someone in the prime of their life? An elderly war veteran may be taken more seriously in the Underworld than the wraith of a child, who becomes eternally frustrated at the lack of respect given to her.

- **What were your friends and family like when you were alive? What are they like now?**

Sometimes family's the only sure thing in the world, the sanctuary that never dissolves when things go bad. That being said, how did your family cope with your death? Did your independent wife move on to another partner within weeks of your machine being switched off? Your kids always seemed disrespectful, but how are they now that you're gone? Does your huge group of friends even notice you're missing? How do you feel about these people now? How do they feel about you? They might make up your Passions or your Fetters, and not necessarily for good reasons.

- **What life achievement makes you proud?**

Sometimes it can be difficult to choose from the list of a lifetime's labors, while other times it can be hard to find even one. Most people have achieved something, whether it's landing a job despite your lack of experience, or scoring that first kiss despite your nerves. Then again, maybe you struggle to find anything that makes you truly proud. You think your life was wasted, and now you need to go out and do something — anything — to make your mark. If you did achieve something, is it an achievement that now requires protection from beyond the grave? What will happen to you if someone takes it from you, claims it as their own, or destroys it?

- **What are you most ashamed of?**

Shame is a powerful motivator. Being caught cheating on your finals was embarrassing. That time you lost your temper with your children was the worst day of your life — there are a flurry of options for shame. At least one of them must eat away at you in death. You're not proud of it, but it helps to explain why you are how you are. If your Fetters are harmed by the horrible truth being exposed, you need to do everything in your power to protect your secret, or come to peace with it.

- **What places mattered to you when you were alive?**

Places of importance are useful to a Storyteller, both as sources for Haunts and Fetters but also as locations your characters may encounter during the chronicle. The house in which you grew up can have a great, formative effect. The corner of the library where you used to spend your lonely lunches tells

a sad tale of incompleteness. The woods in which you and your friends went looking for (and not finding) Bigfoot as teenagers are intensely memorable. Memorable locations can be as vital as notable people.

- **When did you die?**

If your wraith is particularly old, she's likely to have a very different take on technology and sociological conventions than one who died yesterday. That said, she's unlikely to have been inactive for the last four centuries, and may have picked up some tricks along the way.

- **How did you meet the rest of your Circle?**

It's important to determine your wraith's connection to those of the other players. There are plenty of options — maybe you share the same political ideas and met at an underground meeting, or perhaps you all got bullied by the same Legionnaire during basic training in your first days in the Skeletal Legion. From there, the question expands into where you now meet. Do you have a communal Haunt, or do you prefer neutral ground? Your Circle may meet in a place for safety, nostalgia, or because they enjoy the music. As a Circle, it's worth discussing your options, based on the location in which the chronicle is set.

- **What do you miss most about being alive?**

Did you have hobbies you can't indulge in now that you're dead? Do you miss fine foods and finer wines, or more sensual pleasures? Will missing these lead you to try to violate the *Dictum Mortuum*, just so you can give it one more shot? Or does the knowledge that they're lost to you forever drive you to find something new?

- **What do you do for fun now that you're dead?**

Even the grimmest Legionnaires like to have fun once in a while, and just because you're dead it doesn't mean the party's over. Stygia offers innumerable options, from attending a concert where Mozart performs his posthumous works to the simple pleasures of going out and exercising your Passions on the mean streets of the local necropolis. Figure out how you spend your free time, and if your fellow wraiths share your hobbies — or have very different views as to what constitutes "fun."

- **What do you seek?**

There has to be a goal beyond mere existence. Your driving force as a wraith is part of what stops you from succumbing to the intoxicating allure of Oblivion. It's what keeps you sane, grounded, or attached to the Skinlands. Then again, it may be what drives you to distraction, keeps you moving, and immerses you deeper and deeper into the mysteries of the Underworld. Maybe you're looking for Transcendence, or a way back to the lands of the living. Figure it out and keep your eyes on the prize.

- **What do you believe?**

Your beliefs may have changed since your mortal days. The Underworld is enough to shake any faith, or instill it in someone who had none. Talk of Charon, an ancient Hierarchy, Transcendence, Far Shores, and the forbidding Labyrinth may make one question one's beliefs. Has your faith strengthened, altered, or crumbled?

Knowing the answers to these questions — and any others you or your Storyteller may think up — will lead to you knowing your character even better. And that in turn will better prepare you to know how to play them in the face of any threat or circumstance the Underworld can bring.

Chapter 5: Traits

Traits detail a **Wraith** character's capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses. They allow you to translate your character into the reality of the game by providing a way for your character to interface with the rules systems. They also help you understand and develop your character, showing off strengths and defining weaknesses.

That being said, Traits are a way to keep of track of what a character can do, not who she is. They're the framework that character rests upon — an important framework, but just the start. Your character's traits delineate the general parameters of what she can do. What she actually *does* with those capabilities is up to you, your Storyteller, and your imagination.

In **Wraith**, character Traits are deliberately left broad and open to interpretation, so that you get to spend more time on your character than on your character sheet. Take the Traits you select and use them as the basis for how your character acts and thinks. They're there to be a starting point, a list of capabilities, instead of defining hard and fast limits.

In this chapter is a description of all of the basic Traits you'll need to decide on while creating a **Wraith** character. Not every character will have all of these, but the descriptions provided should allow you to pick the ones that best fit your character concept, and allow that concept to grow going forward.

If you find there's a Trait you really feel your character should have but that doesn't appear in the chapter, talk to your Storyteller about creating it in a way that serves your character without destabilizing the chronicle. If adding a new, previously undefined Skill is what your character needs to be fully fleshed out, then work with your Storyteller to define that Skill.

Specialties

Certain types of Traits (Attributes and Abilities) can have specialties. If a wraith has a rating of 4 or higher in a Trait, he may choose a specialty — an aspect of that Trait in which he has a particular aptitude. A specialty in Dexterity could be described as Speed; a specialty in Drive could be Rush-Hour Traffic or Off Road. A wraith with the Rush-Hour Traffic specialty would thus be a very good driver normally, but especially adept at weaving through the evening traffic snarls. Every time a wraith uses his specialty, he has the opportunity to reroll all 10s on the initial roll in an attempt to gain additional successes.

Archetypes

very wraith has a personality they project and another they conceal. These personalities fall under the heading of Archetypes. The displayed Archetype is the wraith's Demeanor: a wraith's mask used to face the Underworld and all who dwell within it. The hidden Archetype is the wraith's Nature: a true personality, dangerous to reveal. By knowing a wraith's Nature, one closes in on a wraith's Passions. Such knowledge is potent leverage.

Archetypes are rough personality types, not defining but instead providing a framework for the player. They are good guidelines to which to refer when faced with the question, "How would my wraith act in this scenario?"

Willpower points are recovered when a wraith acts in accordance with her Nature. Whenever a player feels she's played her wraith's Nature, she should refer to the Storyteller to check whether it justifies the gain of up to three Willpower points. It's easy to play a Nature straight and gain a single Willpower point, but doing so is risky. It exposes the wraith's innermost motives to any observers of the action. Playing a Nature surreptitiously, by cloaking it in the wraith's Demeanor, can be worthy of two or even three Willpower points.

Contrasting Natures and Demeanors can lead to exciting roleplaying possibilities. A wraith could attempt to maintain a façade of calm Bureaucrat, while underneath the ambitions of a passionate Activist rage. On the other hand, closer Natures and Demeanors encourage more nuanced play. A wraith's Demeanor of Jester could be an over-exaggeration of her Optimist Nature. In order to remain as positive as her Nature dictates, she can't help but make dark comedy in the grimmest situations.

Choose Archetypes to fit the character concept and that interest you as a player. If none of the Archetypes listed below match the character you've got in mind, work with your Storyteller to create a new one. Archetypes for the wraith's Shadow can be found on p. 227.

Activist

The Activist is a wraith who instigates, campaigns for, and participates in change. He recognizes the Underworld's issues and protests them in order to make things improve. The Activist aggressively stands up to the forces that appall him, regardless of whether they originate in a local Necropolis or from one of the Deathlords' thrones. Sloth and apathy drive the Activist to frustration. Obstacles against his taking action force him to anger.

The Activist regains Willpower every time he takes a successful action to further his chosen cause.

Architect

The Architect carefully plans for the future. She's a creator, and knows creation to be the greatest weapon against Oblivion. The uncontrollable must be surveyed, organized, and put towards a better, useful purpose. She doesn't just plan the construction of objects — society itself can be built better and stronger.

The Architect regains Willpower every time a long-term plan she has created comes to fruition.

Avant-Garde

The Avant-Garde is a pioneer of invention. Unafraid to experiment and innovate, the Avant-Garde produces and supports whatever she can that is exciting and new. To her, being dead is no barrier to discovery and growth. The Avant-Garde is unafraid of controversy or what the neighbors might think. She despises bland repetition, and always seeks new experiences.

The Avant-Garde regains Willpower every time she experiences something new and controversial.

Bon Vivant

The Bon Vivant sees death as an opportunity to revel. He faces Oblivion with a cocktail in hand and a lover on his arm. Hedonism isn't escapism for the Bon Vivant — it's the only logical response to Oblivion. Such a view can lead to short-sightedness, but if the choice is between embracing absolute pleasure or succumbing to tedium, then that choice is easy to make.

The Bon Vivant regains Willpower every time he truly indulges and expresses his enjoyment.

Bravo

The Bravo never shows fear. She'll happily put others down if doing so improves her standing, and does it for fun even if it doesn't benefit her directly. She's a bully, more inclined to continue a losing battle than compromise with the victor, even against unstoppable odds. The Bravo is good to have on your side in a conflict, but woe to those who cross her. Defeat leads to wracking self-doubt for the Bravo, or pushes her to dangerous extremes instead.

The Bravo regains Willpower every time she beats someone down, verbally or physically.

Bureaucrat

The Bureaucrat works the system from within. He recognizes the need for regulations, forms, and ordered queuing. Patience and organization are typical strengths of the Bureaucrat, who follows every procedure. The Bureaucrat understands rules and red tape can stifle initiative, but only by working steadily via the correct channels can security be maintained.

The Bureaucrat regains Willpower every time he uses the established rules to deal with a situation.

Caregiver

The Caregiver finds meaning in helping others. If there's another wraith who needs assistance or just someone to listen, she's the first to demonstrate compassion. Though some wraiths take advantage of this kindness, the Caregiver knows it's only through looking out for one another that wraiths can resist the pull of Oblivion.

The Caregiver regains Willpower every time she successfully protects and nurtures another.

Child

The Child sees the Underworld without cynicism or bitterness. Every journey is an undiscovered adventure, one the child can't wait to embark upon. The Child's enthusiasm is infectious, her spark of vitality a beacon of hope in the Underworld. However, her patience is thin, and when she wants something she wants it now. She's endearing, but some wraiths take exception to such naiveté.

The Child regains Willpower every time she gets her own way despite the objections of others.

Competitor

The Competitor is determined to be the best. He's the hardest worker and hones his skills relentlessly until they're superior. The Competitor measures himself against others and will do whatever it takes to beat them head to head. This can result in trouble and unwinnable situations, but also empowers his drive to excellence.

The Competitor regains Willpower every time he succeeds at a competitive challenge.

Conniver

The Conniver knows everyone's out there waiting to be played. She'll dupe them all and come out untouched on the other side. And the best part is, she'll do it with the knowledge someone else will take the fall for whatever she's done. It's the act of getting away with something, far more than the actual deed itself, that excites the Conniver, and suckering someone else in the process is the icing on the cake. Nothing is worse for the Conniver than to be alone without someone to outwit.

The Conniver regains Willpower every time she convinces someone else to do something that benefits only her.

Critic

The Critic is the first to spot another's flaws and point them out — but only in the interest of helping them improve, of course. His goal is to help others perfect themselves through his advice, even if not everyone has enough self-confidence to react well to his honesty. To those he cares about, he gives sage advice without the sarcasm or judgement; those he doesn't get the full force of his critique.

The Critic regains Willpower every time he points out someone else's flaw, and through its exposure provably reduces harm.

Deviant

The Deviant stands out as frankly different. Her preferences don't match those of the surrounding culture, but she won't stop practicing them. She sees no reason to conform when there's more to be gained through independent thought and experience. Others judge the Deviant, but she remains stalwart in her pursuits, daring her critics to comment.

The Deviant regains Willpower every time she blatantly flouts social mores and benefits as a result.

Enigma

To be an Enigma is to walk apart from all the wraiths around him. He erects obfuscations around his actions, enjoying the fact that everyone considers him a puzzle to be solved. Hating predictability, he takes pleasure in being hard to anticipate. His actions have logic, but he's only happy if no one else is privy to it.

The Enigma regains Willpower every time someone is confused by his actions, which later turn out to be worthwhile.

Explorer

The Explorer is possessed by wanderlust and the need for adventure. She views the Underworld as one rich prospect offering endless possibilities for discovery, and this in turn drives her constantly to seek out its limits. From the unknown spaces on the map to the boundaries of what can be done with Arcanoi, she always wants to find out what's around the next corner. What's done is done, and what matters is what comes next. Part of her worries there will one day be no new treasures to find, but those anxieties are brushed aside. There will always be new horizons to discover.

The Explorer regains Willpower every time she discovers something previously unknown.

Fanatic

The Fanatic is consumed by her belief. She does not care how others perceive her, for her cause is righteous and all those who stand in her way do so at their own risk. Advancing along the road toward that goal provides only fleeting triumph, as there's always more to do to in the service of her creed. Impossible to dissuade, she'll tackle any odds in the service of her belief.

The Fanatic regains Willpower every time, when fueled by zeal, she successfully completes a task related to her core belief.

Follower

The Follower recognizes an excellent leader and flourishes by supporting her. He offers advice from behind or beside the throne, his loyalty never in doubt. Freed from the responsibilities of command, he can function to best effect by putting his efforts at someone else's disposal. Always looking for a stronger personality to support, the Follower can be a loyal, capable ally, allowing a strong leader to be even more effective.

The Follower regains Willpower every time he demonstrates absolute loyalty under trying circumstances.

Gambler

The Gambler risks it all just to feel a tiny spark of life again, upping the stakes in order to get the thrill of beating the odds. She's sure she can win when the chips are down, and that any setback's a temporary one. The thrill of existence is the risk of losing it all, and the rush when a bet pays off. She trusts her luck and skill equally, and will lay them on the line against anything Oblivion can come up with.

The Gambler regains Willpower every time she comes up against unwinnable odds and somehow emerges the victor.

Jester

The Jester knows the strongest weapon against Oblivion is humor. To laugh in the face of Oblivion is to deny it any power. Though the Jester's timing may not always be the best — the compulsion to make a joke out of everything can wreak havoc with trying to commune with one's Passions — their unflagging goof humor can be more infuriating to a ravening Spectre than a fully armed Centurion.

The Jester regains Willpower every time he makes a dire situation lighter through comedy.

Leader

The Leader is a wraith who knows she's the only one capable of doing what must be done. Incapable of just sitting by while things are done poorly, she'll step up and take charge when the situation demands it. A natural at giving orders, the Leader cares less about others' feelings than she does about making sure things get done right.

The Leader regains Willpower every time she assumes control of a situation.

Martyr

The Martyr knows the meaning of sacrifice. He puts his own Fetters on the line to achieve the objective at hand. The Martyr suffers to see a cause reach its just end, and loudly proclaims all that's being lost in exchange for the greater goal. He doesn't want a reward, but he does seek recognition for all he's

prepared to surrender. Sometimes misunderstood as suicidal, the Martyr simply knows that to achieve great things, someone has to pay the price.

The Martyr regains Willpower every time he sacrifices a definable resource or suffers demonstrable harm so others may gain.

Mediator

The Mediator knows how important compromise can be, and seeks to avoid conflict. She pursues give and take no matter who the parties are, knowing that unless both sides benefit, clashes can escalate to cataclysmic levels. While there's always the fear her involvement might makes things worse, she knows someone has to be the impassioned voice of reason when the stakes are so high.

The Mediator regains Willpower every time she convinces others to compromise on a high-stakes disagreement.

Optimist

The Optimist knows things could be a lot worse, but with a little effort they're going to get better. He sees the positive side of having survived death, and presses the realization on everyone. The Optimist vigilantly aims to keep spirits high, helping to show others that even in the Underworld, it's not just doom and gloom. This, in his opinion, is the best way to fight Oblivion and its sidekick, despair.

The Optimist regains Willpower every time he discovers and champions the bright side to an otherwise grim event.

Penitent

The Penitent needs to make up for all the terrible things he's done. Every action he takes is done with an eye toward atonement, while every misstep redoubles his determination to make good in the end. Doing so may not always be to his advantage, but such is the price of redemption. From the outside, it may look like the Penitent teeters on the brink of being self-destructive, but he knows his suffering is a badge of honor, and every scar is a sin washed away.

The Penitent regains Willpower every time he makes heartfelt reparation for a previous error.

Pragmatist

The Pragmatist's complete focus is on reaching her goal, no matter what it takes. She has a matter-of-fact approach to the inhabitants of the Underworld, knowing an omelet can't be made without breaking a few eggs. It's all well and good to debate moral niceties, but when there's a Maelstrom pounding on the door, solutions are what matters. Others might think this makes the Pragmatist cold, but they can't argue with the results.

The Pragmatist regains Willpower every time she succeeds by putting the goal first.

Rebel

The Rebel sees authority and needs to tear it down. He despises the establishment, seeing it as a force of oppression. That doesn't mean he has anything in mind to replace it with; it's just that what exists now needs to come crashing down. Occasionally he wonders about the collateral damage he inflicts, but in the end, the system has to be destroyed. Casualties can be mourned and celebrated after the rebellion is done.

The Rebel regains Willpower every time he acts successfully against authority.

Rogue

The pinnacle of both self-interest and self-sufficiency, the Rogue looks out for herself. She uses society for her own benefit but doesn't think its rules apply to her; as far as she's concerned, regulations are for people who can't think on their feet. Others may despair of her focus on herself, but the Rogue's charm and sunny disposition usually win them over in the end.

The Rogue regains Willpower every time her self-centered disposition leads to demonstrable advantages, in the form of material profit or favors to be repaid.

Scientist

The Scientist knows the Underworld is possessed of patterns and logic, and he strives to understand and master both. Every encounter he experiences brings him closer to the truth. It's all just incomplete data, which he endeavors to make complete. He's the one best equipped to solve the greatest mysteries and make sense of this new existence. He is careful and methodical, because the consequences of being slipshod are too terrible to contemplate.

The Scientist regains Willpower every time a logical, systematic approach helps solve a long-term problem.

Survivor

The Survivor never surrenders or backs down, even in the face of Oblivion. She resists every obstacle thrown her way and overcomes each adversity. Her will is indomitable. She knows even as others fall by the wayside, she'll keep going no matter how impossible the odds. Her Shadow may attempt to chip away at her cast-iron self-discipline, but she resists even that malevolent voice with gritted teeth and clenched fists.

The Survivor regains Willpower every time she survives a dangerous situation through grit and determination, or her encouragement causes someone else to do so.

Traditionalist

The Traditionalist finds strength in the accomplishments of the past, and seeks to utilize them in the present. He's not prepared to gamble his existence, or that of his Circle, on un-

tested methods. The Traditionalist is bolstered by the known and familiar, and knows how to employ them to best effect. In his eyes, altering the status quo is an unnecessary risk — just look what happened to Charon. He'll fight tooth and nail to preserve the old ways, believing he's fighting to prevent disaster.

The Traditionalist regains Willpower every time one of his previously espoused positions ends up being the correct course of action.

Visionary

The Visionary knows a better tomorrow awaits, and is unafraid to say so. She sees the path to that shining future clearly, but taking it requires guts and a willingness to throw caution to the wind. The Visionary knows if her vision fails she'll be decried as a fraud, but believes in what she's doing. Her vision gives her strength and lends it to those around her. In turn, her vision's reinforced by others supporting her journey.

The Visionary regains Willpower every time she convinces others to follow her vision, without providing evidence to back up its veracity.

Attributes

Attributes are the basic descriptors of a wraith, and affect all of his interactions with others and the Underworld. Based partially upon a wraith's self-perception, Attributes rate how the wraith's Corpus compares physically (and how his Psyche compares socially and mentally) with those of his peers in the afterlife. A wraith's Corpus and capabilities are based on his longstanding knowledge of what he is capable of, and are no more susceptible to change than the Attributes of the living are.

Physical Attributes

Why any wraith should be stronger, weaker, or faster than another is unknown, but a wraith's Corpus conforms to her preconceptions of it, which mold it and its capabilities to match her mortal body even before the Caul has been removed. Physical Attributes are the easiest of a wraith's Traits to define and comprehend, and are the ones most often used in terms of game system mechanics.

Strength

Strength is the measure of your physical ability to change the world around you, whether by damaging another wraith, lifting something, or trying to displace a resting object. How much physical damage you can do is based upon your Strength score, and this Attribute is also used for jumps, leaps, and other activities that draw on raw physical power. Strength is used to determine the base number of dice used in physical attacks.

Specialties: Buff, Ripped, Mighty, Country Strong, Wiry, Large, Husky, Able-Bodied

- • **Weakling:** No comment necessary.
- •• **Average:** You could bench press your own weight.
- ••• **Good:** You were exceptionally strong.
- •••• **Exceptional:** MMA fighters envied the force of your haymaker.
- ••••• **Outstanding:** Olympic-caliber powerlifter.

Dexterity

Dexterity is a matter of both fine and large motor skills. It rates how fast you run, how well you handle a needle and thread, and everything in between that relates to speed, grace and control. Dexterity is also used to set the base number of dice in order to determine whether or not you hit a target in combat.

Specialties: Fast, Quick, Delicate, Steady, Deft, Catlike, Lithe, Flexible, Sure-Footed

- • **Poor:** You routinely cut yourself while shaving or making salads.
- •• **Average:** You could handle sharp objects without hurting yourself.
- ••• **Good:** You could juggle easily.
- •••• **Exceptional:** You could juggle knives easily.
- ••••• **Outstanding:** You had the grace and litheness of a jungle cat.

Stamina

Stamina is the Attribute that determines your Corpus' coherency. It's a measure of how well your body stays together when outside forces are trying to rip it apart. It also determines just how long your body can maintain physical exertion and how well you resisted disease, torture, and pain while you were alive. In game terms, Stamina is used to determine the base number of dice in order to soak damage.

Specialties: Tough, Tireless, Enduring, Determined, Tenacious, Relentless, Resilient

- • **Poor:** Colds routinely kept you home from work.
- •• **Average:** Insurance companies deemed you an "acceptable risk."
- ••• **Good:** Broken bones barely slowed you down.
- •••• **Exceptional:** Marathons were a hobby, triathlons a calling.
- ••••• **Outstanding:** You survived being given enough poison to kill an elephant, being shot three times, getting stabbed over 10 times, beaten by at least five people, tied up, placed in a sack, and dumped in a freezing river.

Social Attributes

Social Attributes determine how well a wraith is able to deal with others. They help define how the wraith places himself in society and how he relates to other wraiths, regardless of political affiliation or social standing. Social attributes are useful in any sort of interpersonal interaction, from sweet talking records out of a Hierarchy functionary to being the life of a dead man's party.

Charisma

Charisma defines your overt presence with other wraiths. It determines how well you attract others, persuade them, or lead them willingly. Wraiths who are affected by Charisma feel that they are acting of their own free will; Charisma works by appeal, not through trickery.

Specialties: Smooth, Eloquent, Classy, Savoir-Faire, Genial, Well-Mannered, Urbane, Sophisticated, Folksy, Captivating

- • **Poor:** You were shunned on the playground — and for the rest of your life.
- •• **Average:** People could stand to be around you.
- ••• **Good:** Someone was always eager to do you a favor.
- •••• **Exceptional:** People felt guilty about disagreeing with you, even slightly.
- ••••• **Outstanding:** You could have led a nation — or a religion.

Manipulation

Manipulation is the flip side of Charisma, for it is the ability to bring wraiths onto your side without them realizing it, rather than convincing them to do so voluntarily. It is the knack for getting others to perform actions without their initial consent, and as such does carry risks. People do not like to realize that they have been fooled, so a failure on a Manipulation roll can carry consequences.

Specialties: Glib, Persuasive, Cunning, Logical, Remorseless Logic, Bravado, Forked Tongue, Witty, Legalese

- • **Poor:** You couldn't talk Mom into letting you stay up late.
- •• **Average:** Occasionally you got your way.
- ••• **Good:** You *always* got your way.
- •••• **Exceptional:** You could have been a successful politician.
- ••••• **Outstanding:** Lawyers took notes when speaking with you.

Appearance

The Appearance Attribute is not merely your physical looks, but also your ability to create a definite impression. While the other two Social Attributes require time and conversation to function, Appearance allows basic concepts to be communicated instantly and silently through the nuances of body language, facial expression, and other subconscious cues. Despite the widespread use of masks in the Shadowlands, your ability to give and receive impressions is unhampered, for it is not just the face that communicates.

Specialties: Dignified, Stunning, Honest-Looking, Gorgeous, Noble, Sexy, Pleasing, Handsome, Luminous

- • **Poor:** You were the "before" picture in many ads.
- •• **Average:** A face in the crowd.
- ••• **Good:** Reasonably attractive.
- •••• **Exceptional:** You turned heads everywhere you went.
- ••••• **Outstanding:** A face and physique for the ages.

Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes relate to a wraith's mental capacity: memory, perception, thoughts, and base knowledge. They detail how fast he can think, how much he can think about, and whether he knows what he should be thinking about.

Perception

Perception determines how much you notice of the world (or the Underworld) around you. Your Perception rating describes how well you pick up incidental details, how much you actually garner from conversations with others, and how much more beyond the obvious you are generally aware of.

Specialties: Insightful, Attentive, Probing, Patient, Detail-Oriented, Astute, Observant, Clueful

- • **Poor:** You often walked into trees.
- •• **Average:** You were aware of the basics of your surroundings.
- ••• **Good:** You could find subtext in advertising and novels.
- •••• **Exceptional:** The smallest details caught your eye.
- ••••• **Outstanding:** Needles? Haystacks? Child's play.

Intelligence

Intelligence is the sum of both your knowledge and your ability to reach new conclusions. It is your ability to take discrete pieces of information and fit them together into a coherent whole, as well as a measure of how complex the ideas you can comprehend might be. Intelligence is not a measure of how fast you think, but rather how well you think and, to a lesser extent, what you already know.

Specialties: Knowledgeable, Smart, Bookworm, Researcher, Clear Thinker, Astute, Pragmatic, Obsessive Fan

- • **Poor:** Adding numbers higher than 10 was difficult.
- •• **Average:** You could count your change and know if you'd been ripped off.
- ••• **Good:** You could calculate tips in your head.
- •••• **Exceptional:** Quantum physics and macroeconomic theory made sense to you.
- ••••• **Outstanding:** An IQ of 200 — or more.

Wits

Wits is your ability to react to the information that is presented you. Essentially, your Wits Attribute determines how well you think on your feet, how fast you can use the information you process, and how efficient you're likely to be under stress. It also includes, to a degree, humor, and could well be described as the "processor speed of the brain."

Specialties: Clever, Shrewd, Sharp, Quick-Witted, Levelheaded, Creative, Free Association, Savant

- • **Poor:** What was that "tick — rick — tick" sound, anyway?
- •• **Average:** You knew when to hold or fold in poker.
- ••• **Good:** You could guess the punch lines of jokes you heard for the first time.
- •••• **Exceptional:** You could follow Shakespearean dialogue without skipping a beat.
- ••••• **Outstanding:** Your thought processes were supercomputer quick.

Abilities

Talents

Strictly untrained and intuitive, Talents are the things you have a knack for from the day you are born. Most Talents can't be picked up through training (though Brawl and a few others are exceptions), only through direct experience and native-born ability. There's no penalty for trying a roll on a Talent you don't possess, as these Abilities are so natural that everyone has at least a very basic idea of how to perform them.

Alertness

This Ability displays how aware you are of your physical surroundings. It has nothing to do with eerie feelings or the supernatural; it's just a measure of knowing what's physically out there. Alertness extends to sounds, smells, and touches as well as sights. A wraith has the option of hyperattenuating her senses at will, and sometimes this requires a roll of Perception + Alertness to see things in the Skinlands.

- • **Novice:** You know which side to look on when someone taps your shoulder.
- •• **Competent:** You could see how a stage magician did his tricks.

••• **Practiced:** Pickpockets knew to avoid you.

•••• **Expert:** No one's managed to sneak up on you in decades.

••••• **Master:** You can hear a pin drop and know what type of grenade it came from.

Possessed by: Helldivers, Sentries, Paranoiacs, Hunters, Secret Service Agents

Specialties: Vigilance, Traps, Bodyguarding. Ambushes, Crowds, Spectres

Athletics

Athletics is a measure of general physical fitness and skill at using one's body in ways other than combat. This Ability measures how good you are at climbing trees, leaping chasms, walking tightropes and hitting fastballs. Athletics are complex Talents, requiring the combination of Physical Attributes and motor skills. Any roll that requires only an Attribute, such as powerlifting, does not involve Athletics.

• **Novice:** You weren't the last kid chosen on the playground.

•• **Competent:** You were the terror of the company softball league.

••• **Practiced:** You played for the varsity team in college.

•••• **Expert:** You could have made an Olympic team.

••••• **Master:** You signed a $200M contract and the fans didn't think you were overpaid.

Possessed by: Professional Athletes, Fitness Nuts, Aerobics Instructors, Dancers, Triathletes

Specialties: Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Specific Sports, General Fitness, Swimming

Awareness

Awareness is the psychic equivalent of Alertness. With Awareness, you instantly notice when things are not as they should be. This is useful in detecting evidence of Arcanoi or Spectres, seeing if other supernatural beings have been about, and sensing when something contrary to the laws of nature is about to happen.

• **Novice:** You could tell if a photo of Bigfoot looked genuine.

•• **Competent:** Some say you had second sight.

••• **Practiced:** You can cold read strangers accurately.

•••• **Expert:** Little that is odd escapes your eye.

••••• **Master:** You can sniff the breeze and know when the next Maelstrom is coming.

Possessed by: Tarot Readers, Occult Investigators, Parapsychologists, Psychics

Specialties: Animals, Magic, Supernatural Creatures, Haunted Houses

Brawl

Brawl is the gentle art of hitting something and watching it fall down. It serves as a catchall term for any form of unarmed combat, from martial arts to two drunks blindly wrestling on a pool table. This Ability covers everything from haymakers to eye gouging to spinning side kicks, pretty much any combat maneuver that doesn't require a weapon. Brawls are generally less lethal than armed combat, but this Talent can be quite deadly.

• Novice: Little kids on playgrounds feared you.

•• Practiced: You could hit someone and he'd know it.

••• Competent: Professional legbreakers left you alone.

•••• Expert: Muggers would leave a subway car that you entered.

••••• Master: Two sounds — you hitting them, them hitting the floor.

Possessed by: Big Guys Who Ride Harleys, Soldiers, Cops, Martial Artists, Thugs

Specialties: Martial Arts, Boxing, Gratuitous Violence, Wrestling, Bar Fights

Dodge

Dodge is the Talent that some possess for getting out of the way. One can dodge oncoming traffic, bullets, flying fists, or just about anything else, but the principle remains the same. This Ability covers avoiding missile, melee, and brawl attacks.

• **Novice:** You could cross the street without becoming roadkill.

•• **Practiced:** When the bullets flew, you knew where to hide.

••• **Competent:** The playground was your turf during dodgeball.

•••• **Expert:** Why buy a fan when you got the breeze from people swinging at you?

••••• **Master:** No one ever laid a finger on you unless you let them.

Possessed by: Cowards, Martial Artists, Survivalists, Cat Burglars, Military Personnel

Specialties: Acrobatic Leaps, Ducking for Cover, Dive, Sidestep

Empathy

This Talent is related to sensing and understanding what others are feeling. This is not to say that using Empathy automatically makes you sympathetic to what you pick up from others, but you do get an accurate reading of what they are really feeling. Empathy is also useful in allowing you to get a general feel for your surroundings, and whether the vibes in an area are good, bad, or indifferent.

- • **Novice:** You can keep your foot out of your mouth.
- •• **Practiced:** Everyone cries on your shoulder.
- ••• **Competent:** You know why others do what they do.
- •••• **Expert:** It's almost impossible to slip a lie past you.
- ••••• **Master:** Your psychiatrist told *you* about *his* mother.

Possessed by: Parents, Teachers, Psychiatrists, Actors, Salesmen

Specialties: Deep Motivations, Truths, Personalities, Emotions

Expression

Expression allows you to get your point across clearly, concisely, and accurately. It's the measure of how well you can speak or write, regardless of topic. Characters with high Expression ratings can be extremely memorable for what they've said or written, even if there's nothing else remarkable about them.

- • **Novice:** You wrote for your school paper.
- •• **Competent:** You successfully contested parking tickets.
- ••• **Practiced:** You were published professionally.
- •••• **Expert:** You hit the bestseller list.
- ••••• **Master:** You rank with Cicero and Daniel Webster.

Possessed by: Writers, Columnists, Standup Comedians, Talk Show Hosts, Actors, Demagogues

Specialties: Poetry, Off-the-Cuff Remarks, After-Dinner Speaking, Rabble-Rousing, The Dozens

Intimidation

Intimidation allows you to gently — or not so gently — coerce another into doing your will. Uses of Intimidation range from subtle threats to making examples to causing severe physical pain, and each of these techniques has a time and a place. Wraiths with a high level of Intimidation can cow others with a look, and often seem to radiate authority.

- • **Novice:** You could take candy from babies.
- •• **Competent:** You never lacked for other kids' lunch money.
- ••• **Practiced:** "Nice place you got here. Be a real shame if something happened to it…"
- •••• **Expert:** You could terrorize writers into making their deadlines.
- ••••• **Master:** You frightened off IRS auditors, Hierarchy Inquisitors, and Nephwracks.

Possessed by: Mafiosi, Businessmen, IRS Agents, Bouncers, Babysitters, Bounty Hunters

Specialties: Icy Stare, Implied Pain, Veiled Threats, Massive Property Damage

Streetwise

On the streets, everything — from Soulfire crystals to gossip from inside the Deathlords' citadels — can be had for the right price. Streetwise is the art of knowing what you want, who has it, and how you can get it from them safely. With Streetwise

comes an understanding of slang and street customs, as well as an instinctive way of fitting in. Wraiths without Streetwise who attempt to enter the scene are easily identified as being out of their element; wraiths who do have Streetwise are given an automatic sense of belonging. Bear in mind that not every scene is the same, and that a wraith who fits in one place may be a fish out of water in another.

- **Novice:** People see you and don't scream "Hierarchy Narc!"
- •• **Competent:** You can get connected with a few hours' effort.
- ••• **Practiced:** You know where the bodies were buried.
- •••• **Expert:** You know where the bodies were buried, who buried them, and where they rented the equipment.
- ••••• **Master:** You can get anything, at any time, in any place.

Possessed by: Hustlers, Pimps, Runaways, Crime Novelists, Cops, Reporters

Specialties: Finding Info, Panhandling, Trashpicking, Dealing, Fencing, Blackmail

Subterfuge

This Talent allows you to bend, mangle, or break the truth and get away with it. In addition, you also can sense when others are doing the same. At your best, you could have dissected a dissembling witness on the stand; at your worst, you could have made a fortune selling used cars.

- **Novice:** You could cheat on a test in high school and get away with it.
- •• **Competent:** You could have made a living at door-to-door sales.
- ••• **Practiced:** You had your pick of law schools.
- •••• **Expert:** You claimed to be misquoted in your autobiography and people believed it.
- ••••• **Master:** The Smiling Lord? I'm sorry, I didn't recognize you.

Possessed by: FBI Agents, Accountants, Lawyers, Little Kids, Casanovas, Scammers

Specialties: Baldfaced Lying, False Testimony, Financial Scams, Seduction, Little White Lies

Additional Talents

Search, Scrounge, Guile, Intrigue, Instruction

Skills

Skills are Abilities that can be acquired through rigorous training or apprenticeship. Part intuition, part learned information, Skills are equal parts talent and training. If you attempt to make a Skill roll relating to a Skill in which you have a rating of zero, the difficulty for that roll is increased by 1, to reflect the fact that you don't have more than a vague idea of what you're doing.

Crafts

Crafts involves taking raw materials and building something useful from them. It refers to the skills of master artisans — gem cutting, glassblowing, leatherworking, woodworking, smithing, etc. The number of successes on a Crafts roll indicates how well-made the object in question is.

- **Novice:** You could make a birdhouse from popsicle sticks.
- •• **Practiced:** You made something in shop class that you could actually use.
- ••• **Competent:** You were a regular on the local craft fair circuit.
- •••• **Expert:** You taught advanced classes at arts centers.
- ••••• **Master:** Collectors instantly recognize your work.

Possessed by: Artisans, Potters, Artificers, Scout Leaders, Soulforgers

Specialties: Woodworking, Sewing, Candlemaking, Stonemasonry, Blacksmithing

Drive

It is assumed that all modern characters have a base familiarity with the Drive Skill, allowing them to handle an automobile with reasonable ease in normal situations. Instead, Drive allows you to perform tricky maneuvers, drive at high speeds, and engage in car chases. On the other hand, just because you're familiar with one type of land vehicle doesn't mean that you can handle another; there's a world of difference between a subcompact and a troop carrier. The difficulty of a Drive roll can increase or decrease, depending upon how familiar you are with the vehicle you're driving. Older wraiths can be considered to have base familiarity with wagons or horseback riding in the same way modern characters are familiar with cars.

- **Novice:** You could handle long highway trips.
- •• **Practiced:** You could drive stick shift.
- ••• **Competent:** You survived driving in Boston in winter.
- •••• **Expert:** You could have been a professional racecar driver.
- ••••• **Master:** Rush hour traffic in Rome? Not a problem.

Possessed by: Taxi Drivers, Auto Racers, Teenagers, Chauffeurs, Bagmen, Stunt drivers

Specialties: City Traffic, Off-Road, Stunt Driving, Bad Weather, Ice

Etiquette

Etiquette is the measure of your understanding of the nuances and delicate balances of polite society. Such a Skill is useful during diplomatic engagements, gatherings, or encounters with higher society. It's also helpful in figuring out how to interact with centuries-old wraiths on the isle as opposed to fresh Enfants in the streets of the local Necropolis, and even understanding the social mores of the Labyrinth. After all, Etiquette isn't just

knowing how to be polite, it's also sometimes knowing how to avoid getting yourself eaten.

- • **Novice:** You know when to keep your mouth shut.
- •• **Practiced:** You know the difference between formal and black tie.
- ••• **Competent:** You knew which utensil to use for which course.
- •••• **Expert:** You can get along with — or at least not offend — anyone without trying.
- ••••• **Master:** You could navigate family Thanksgiving dinner without offending anyone.

Possessed by: Diplomats, Hereditary Nobles, Mediators, Psychiatrists

Specialties: Formality, Correspondence, Negotiation, Compromising, Soirees, Stygia, Dark Kingdoms, Spectral Society

Firearms

This Skill covers both how well you can shoot and your skill at maintaining and repairing firearms. Artillery pieces, mortars, and so on are not covered by this Skill, nor are archaic weapons such as bows, slings, or atlatls.

- • **Novice:** You can hit the broad side of a barn with a shotgun.
- •• **Practiced:** You didn't embarrass yourself at the rifle range.
- ••• **Competent:** You can hit a moving target.
- •••• **Expert:** You would have aced sniper school.
- ••••• **Master:** You can drop a target at range during a Maelstrom.

Possessed by: Snipers, Mercenaries, Hunters, Petty Criminals, SWAT Team Members

Specialties: Sniping, Shootouts, Pistols, Rifles, Automatic Weapons

Larceny

Larceny is the art of subtly doing things one ought not to, particularly as regards to the disposition of property. It covers all the basics of theft and acquisition, from pickpocketing to safecracking to knowing how to fence stolen goods without bringing the heat down on your head immediately. Sleight of hand and the ability to misdirect are equally important aspects of Larceny, which can be used for anything from filching a wraith's Fetter to looting a shrine in the heart of the Labyrinth. Larceny also lets a wraith recognize cons for what they are, making it equally helpful for those on the right side of the law.

- • **Novice:** You could usually pull off card tricks.
- •• **Practiced:** You ran a successful three-card Monte game.
- ••• **Competent:** People routinely checked their wallets when you left the room.
- •••• **Expert:** You cracked safes like a short order cook cracked eggs.
- ••••• **Master:** You had a type of heist named after you.

Possessed by: Pickpockets, Stage Magicians, Safecrackers, Police Detectives, Scam Artists

Specialties: Sleight of Hand, Pickpocketing, Safecracking, Smash and Grab, Now You See It

Leadership

Leadership is more than barking orders. It measures how well you can get others to implement your decisions, whether they're issued as memos, orders, or polite requests. It also covers how willingly people accede to your wishes, as reluctant followers are worth far less than willing ones. Leadership is most often used in conjunction with Charisma or Manipulation.

- • **Novice:** You decided where your carpool was going for lunch.
- •• **Practiced:** When you yell, people listen.
- ••• **Competent:** People routinely look to you for their marching orders.
- •••• **Expert:** Others will follow you into the jaws of Oblivion without questioning.
- ••••• **Master:** You've got the makings of a future Deathlord.

Possessed by: Military Officers, Gang Leaders, Educators, CEOs, Police Chiefs

Specialties: Field Leadership, Long-Term Planning, Military, Nobility, Commands

Meditation

In an existence in which the voice of your Shadow is a constant threat, Meditation, the ability to focus and center one's thoughts, can be an essential skill. This is a very personal Skill, and one for which you develop your own technique. Meditation can be used to catch up on lost Slumber. To do so, a wraith rolls Stamina + Meditation (difficulty 8). The number of successes determines how many effective hours of Slumber are gained per hour of meditation.

- • **Novice:** You could block out the sound of your neighbor's stereo.
- •• **Practiced:** You can achieve a peaceful repose.
- ••• **Competent:** You can relax in any position.
- •••• **Expert:** Your concentration is almost impossible to break.
- ••••• **Master:** You are glacial in your calm, totally centered and imperturbable.

Possessed by: Zen Masters, Buddhist Monks, Athletes, New Age Gurus

Specialties: Biofeedback, Relaxing, Zen, Centering

Melee

Melee is the broad term for all sorts of combat that involves hand-to-hand weapons. The definition of a hand-to-hand weapon is a loose one, as it includes knives, swords, broken bottles, chains, saps, and just about anything else than can be

used to inflict damage on another wraith. With the Melee Skill comes knowledge of proper care of your chosen weapon as well.

- • **Novice:** You've been in a few fights without getting Harrowed.
- •• **Practiced:** You have basic military training.
- ••• **Competent:** Any object becomes a weapon in your hands.
- •••• **Expert:** Fencing masters in Heidelberg feared you.
- ••••• **Master:** Orange seeds and paper airplanes were deadly in your hands.

Possessed by: Fencers, Muggers, Martial Artists, Medieval Reenactors, Soldiers

Specialties: Fencing, Heavy Weapons, Blunt Objects, Martial Arts Styles, Found Weapons

Performance

Different from Expression in that it involves more than just spoken or written words, Performance covers the entire gamut of live artistic expression. Singing, acting, dancing, playing musical instruments, and similar skills are all covered under this rubric. In addition to actual performing ability, this Skill also measures how well you know the society surrounding your particular art form and how you fit in with it. Advanced levels of Performance usually require some form of specialization.

- • **Novice:** You weren't kicked off stage during company karaoke night.
- •• **Practiced:** You got parts off-off Broadway.
- ••• **Competent:** You could get speaking parts in films.
- •••• **Expert:** Your handprints were on the sidewalk in front of Mann's Chinese Theater.
- ••••• **Master:** You were one of the legendary artists of your time.

Possessed by: Actors, Musicians, Mimes, Singers, Dancers, Choreographers, Chanteurs, Haunters

Specialties: Voice, Instrumental, Acting, Dance

Stealth

Stealth is the Skill that covers both moving silently and hiding unnoticed. Usually Stealth rolls are made against another character's Perception.

- • **Novice:** You were a master at "hide and seek."
- •• **Practiced:** You blend in with shadows — but not Shadows.
- ••• **Competent:** You're not noticed unless you want to be.
- •••• **Expert:** You could move through the woods and not crunch a dry leaf.
- ••••• **Master:** You can walk the halls of Stygia or the corridors of the Labyrinth unseen.

Possessed by: Spies, Saboteurs, Car Burglars, Reapers

Specialties: Lurking, Camouflage, Blending In, Silent Approaches

Other Skills

Soulforging, Survival, Cooking, Boating, Archery, Disguise, Other Weapons (Heavy, Ancient, Medieval)

Knowledges

Knowledges are those Abilities dependent upon rigorous application of the mind. There may be a physical element to their use, but the key component is acquiring, assessing, and using information. Knowledges can be learned inside or outside of a classroom, but study at them is necessary. Learning from someone (like a Mentor or a fellow player character) is the best way to acquire a Knowledge, but there are many self-taught wraiths. Without a Knowledge in a specific field, you may not even attempt to make a roll relating to that Knowledge. The only exceptions are when the roll in question refers to trivial knowledge that any wraith might know, or when special circumstances arise.

Academics

The Academics Knowledge represents the character's education in the humanities: literature, history, art, philosophy, linguistics, and other subjects normally encompassed under the banner of "liberal arts." A high Academics rating indicates a well-rounded knowledge in many of these fields, along with expertise in one in particular. This can be useful to a wraith in multiple ways, whether she's poring through the centuries of Stygian archives or meeting the wraith of the 14th century king she did her thesis on. A player must always choose a specialty in Academics, even when her character has fewer than four dots in the Skill.

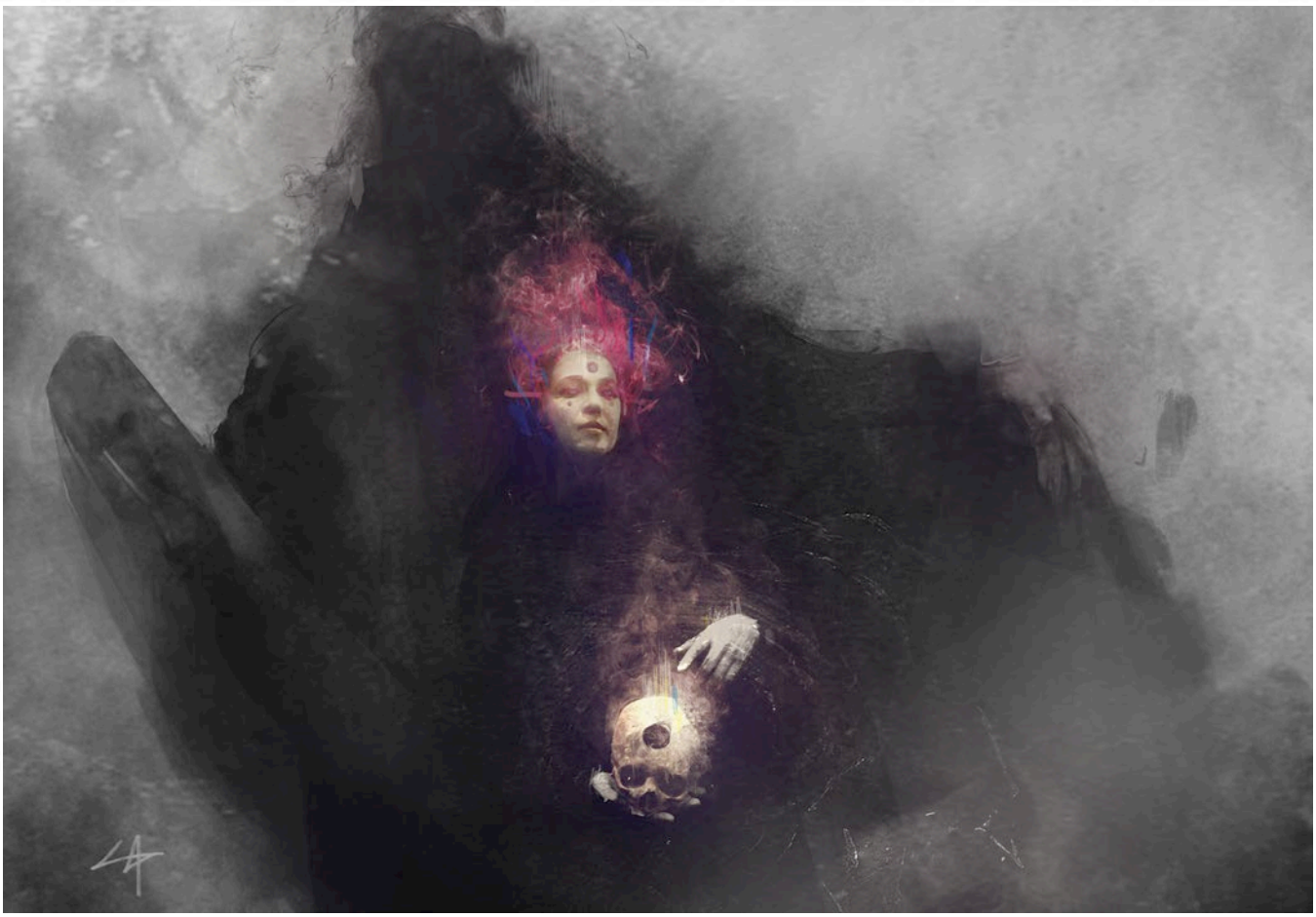
- • **Student:** You know Henry VIII sure liked the ladies.
- •• **College:** You can quote from the classics of literature, identify major cultural movements, and understand the shift of languages over time.
- ••• **Masters:** You could get a paper published on your area of expertise.
- •••• **Doctorate:** When they say you wrote the book on the subject, it isn't a metaphor.
- ••••• **Scholar:** In your field, you were one of the ultimate voices of authority.

Possessed by: Professors, Historians, Literati, Arts Students, Topical Bloggers

Specialties: Color Theory, Linguistics, Poststructuralism, Ethics, Metaphysics, Guilds

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy, a.k.a. the system, is theoretically an organization for getting things done more efficiently. With the proper knowledge of how that system functions and how to utilize it to achieve your ends, you can get permission to do what you want and prevent others from getting theirs. Bureaucracy is also a measure of your organizational skills and knack for achieving



your goals, and of your efficiency at manipulating the system in both the Underworld and the Skinlands. And when one is dealing with the millennia-old government of Stygia, this can come in very handy indeed.

- • **Student:** You could file a tax return.
- •• **College:** You could file a tax return and expect a refund.
- ••• **Masters:** You could stall a debate — or an angry citizen — indefinitely.
- •••• **Doctorate:** You can make whole branches of the Hierarchy operate efficiently.
- ••••• **Scholar:** Stygian bureaucrats rush to do your bidding without even realizing it.

Possessed by: Bureaucrats, Accountants, Personal Assistants, Anacreons

Specialties: Governmental Regulations, Taxes, Requisitions, Accounting

Computer

Computer defines the character's ability to operate and program computers, from traditional desktops and laptops to cellphones and tablets. A character with this Knowledge is also assumed to have a general familiarity with the internet, including the use of search engines and online research resources. At higher levels, you can write software and create convincing fake websites, and even use system vulnerabilities to break into secure networks.

- • **Student:** You can navigate touchscreen and traditional point-and-click GUIs.
- •• **College:** You know your way around various applications and the internet.
- ••• **Masters:** You know what to do with a text command prompt.
- •••• **Doctorate:** You can make a very comfortable living as a consultant.
- ••••• **Scholar:** You have all the SDKs and comprehend data structures for a stunning variety of programming languages.

Possessed by: Hackers, Programming Engineers, Game Developers, Artificers

Specialties: White Hat Hacking, App Development, Exploits, Systems Administration, Coding

Enigmas

The Enigmas Knowledge concerns your ability at solving mysteries and puzzles. In essence, it is a measurement of your problem-solving skills, measuring how well you combine vital details into a coherent solution. Enigmas comes in handy when solving mazes, answering riddles, and the like.

- • **Student:** You could do jigsaw puzzles.
- •• **College:** You could solve puzzle games without resorting to walkthroughs or cheat codes.
- ••• **Masters:** You did crossword puzzles — in pen.
- •••• **Doctorate:** You know what happens if a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it.
- ••••• **Scholar:** Zeno's Paradox was nice for a warmup.

Possessed by: Zen Masters, Stage Magicians, Logicians, Mystics, Gamers

Specialties: Koans, Ancient Riddles, Visual Puzzles, Wordplay, Video Games

Investigation

Investigation allows you to call upon basic knowledge of criminology to locate evidence and perform forensic analysis. At sufficient levels, you can conduct a proper criminal investigation, deduce *modus operandi* and reconstruct a crime scene. Particularly in conjunction with a few Arcanoi, this Knowledge can be invaluable to wraiths seeking to protect or rescue their Fetters.

- • **Student:** You've seen a few police procedurals.
- •• **College:** You understand basic police investigative procedure.
- ••• **Masters:** You could have been an insurance investigator.
- •••• **Doctorate:** A spot in an international espionage agency was yours.
- ••••• **Scholar:** Elementary, my dear Watson.

Possessed by: Private Eyes, Police Detectives, Insurance Claims Investigators, Intelligence Agents, Forensic Doctors, Unlidded Eye Agents

Specialties: Quick Searches, Tailing, Detective Work, Deductive Investigation, Crime Scene Reconstruction

Medicine

This Knowledge details how well you know how the human body works and how to repair it in case of injury. Of course, that implies a knowledge of what is harmful to the human form as well.

While Medicine might seem to be a useless Knowledge to the Restless Dead, there are multiple uses for it, both benign and malicious. Understanding of this field, combined with Deathsight, can help determine what steps need to be taken to protect a living Fetter, while an appreciation of physiology could combine with Outrage to produce some devastating results.

- • **Student:** You passed a Red Cross first aid test.
- •• **College:** You could have been a paramedic.
- ••• **Masters:** You're knowledgeable enough to have been a GP.
- •••• **Doctorate:** Other doctors came to you for consultation.
- ••••• **Scholar:** Artificial hearts and organ transplants were child's play.

Possessed by: Doctors, Registered Nurses, Field Medics

Specialties: Pharmacy, Surgery, General Practice, Emergency, Specialized Field (Pediatrics, Neurology, etc.)

Occult

There are many supernatural secrets in the World of Darkness, and with the Occult Knowledge, some of them are yours. Occult implies a general knowledge of things such as *voudoun*, curses, and fortune-telling, as well as information more specific to the supernatural beings that inhabit the world.

- • **Student:** You can pronounce "tarot" properly.
- •• **College:** You've read Gardner, Cunningham, and Crowley.
- ••• **Masters:** You know about more than just ghosts.
- •••• **Doctorate:** The World of Darkness is an open book to you.
- ••••• **Scholar:** Nostradamus and Albertus Magnus could crib from your notes.

Possessed by: New Agers, Mystics, Occult Shop Owners, Mages

Specialties: Qaballah, Hermetic Magic, Spirits, Channeling, The Underworld, the Labyrinth

Politics

This Knowledge covers the theory and practice of politics. With points in this Trait, you can figure out who's on top on the local system and how they got there. Politics covers both human and Restless political structures, and can be essential in dealing with both living and dead authorities.

- • **Student:** You were senior class president.
- •• **College:** You've worked the campaign trail.
- ••• **Masters:** You've held local office.
- •••• **Doctorate:** A career politician, you were notable enough to appear in political cartoons.
- ••••• **Scholar:** The fate of nations rested in your hands.

Possessed by: Diplomats, Career Politicians, Advisors, Spin Doctors, Lobbyists

Specialties: Realpolitik, Coalition Building, Grassroots, National, International

Science

This Ability measures not only theoretical knowledge but also how well you can put it to practical use. It puts equal weight on knowing the difference between a boson and a quark and being able to whip up a Molotov cocktail from chemicals used for scrubbing bathrooms. Lower levels of Science indicate a general familiarity with modern science; higher ones usually involve some sort of field specialization.

While the science of the living doesn't always apply to the Underworld, knowing how things work in the Skinlands can help a wraith to manipulate them from across the Shroud.

- • **Student:** You watched PBS regularly.
- •• **College:** You could make explosives from common household chemicals.
- ••• **Masters:** You could teach a high school honors course.
- •••• **Doctorate:** Your research got grant money without you breaking a sweat.
- ••••• **Scholar:** Feynman, Einstein, Galileo — and you.

Possessed by: Scientists, Mad Scientists, Graduate Students, Science Popularizers

Specialties: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Practical Applications, Theory

Technology

This is a general measurement of a wraith's aptitude with smartphones, computers, and all related personal technologies. While most modern characters have at least a passing familiarity with personal devices; this background grants more in-depth knowledge.

Wraiths with the Technology knowledge find it an easy way to access the Skinlands. Maneuvering through networks, skipping from device to device, gathering (or deleting) data, getting messages to the living, and manipulating devices for their own purposes through the higher levels of Inhabit are ways in which this Knowledge is useful to Restless.

- • **Student:** You're adept with your own personal devices or ones similar to them.
- •• **College:** You have a knack with any technology you encounter, including computers.
- ••• **Masters:** You can manipulate and extract data in your sleep.
- •••• **Doctorate:** You're a programming genius.
- ••••• **Scholar:** Silicon Valley erupted in a bidding war over your skills.

Possessed by: Engineers, Programmers, Hacktivists, Computer Science Professors, Students

Specialties: Hardware, Software, Wireless, Networking, Security

Additional Knowledges

Law, Psychology, Finance, Art, Philosophy, Theater, History, Linguistics, Military Science, Genealogy, Geography, Theology, Specific area of knowledge/trivia

Backgrounds

Backgrounds are Traits that lie beyond the direct physical and supernatural capabilities of a given wraith. They help define a character's history and context, and you should choose them to enhance and solidify your wraith's personality and history. Backgrounds can also complement each other, and the suite of Backgrounds chosen reveals a great deal about a character. Characters with a lot of Allies but few Contacts are completely different from characters with few Allies but loads of Contacts, though they may know the same number of wraiths. The former has a great many wraiths upon whom she can rely on in a crunch, but few acquaintances; the latter knows wraiths who will converse with him, but who won't back him up in a time of need. Often, a character's Backgrounds, particularly those like Memoriam or Status, help define the limits of what a Storyteller character (or newly met player character) might know about a wraith upon first meeting her. With this in mind, it is vital to pick Backgrounds that work well with your wraith's character concept.

Your Storyteller should have input into your choice of Backgrounds. For example, in a chronicle that begins with your character's death (and subsequent rebirth in the Shadowlands), it might be inappropriate for a character to possess certain Backgrounds — Mentor or Status, for example. Other chronicle concepts, such as a story in which the wraiths are agents of the Hierarchy, might require that the characters possess at least two dots in each of these Backgrounds. Backgrounds are a good way for Storytellers to ensure that the characters devised by the players fit smoothly into the chronicle and work well together. A shared Mentor, for example, gives two wraiths a reason to know each other; a Contact shared across the entire group can bring the characters together if that wraith suddenly goes mysteriously missing.

The Language of the Dead

It has been said, not without some irony, that death is the universal language. Except, of course, it happens to be true. Regardless of a wraith's native tongue, once they cross over to the Shadowlands, she's able to understand and speak with any wraiths she encounters. The same holds for written language; the records of the dead are kept in a script that is understood by all. Some theorize this is due to death's winnowing effect, while others chalk it up to a miracle created by Charon or the Lady of Fate. Regardless, all of the citizens of Stygia can in fact communicate with each other easily and directly.

That doesn't mean that a wraith's language skills evaporate when she crosses the Shroud. Other wraiths may speak the language of the dead, but interactions with mortals still require an understanding of the tongue they're speaking in, and written documents remain in their native languages even when read by the Restless. As a result, more than one Renegade group has taken to communicating through Skinridden mortals penning notes in obscure mortal languages, the better to frustrate the spying eyes of the Legions.

On certain rolls, a Background can be combined with an appropriate Attribute. For example, your Storyteller might call for a Charisma + Allies roll to determine how many of your Allies rally to your current cause, or a Manipulation + Status roll to decide if you can bully a Centurion based on rank alone.

Be aware that Backgrounds are fluid things. You can purchase (or the Storyteller can award at their discretion) additional points in Backgrounds based on the action of the campaign. After all, new Allies and Contacts can be acquired, Artifacts and relics can be purchased or found, and Haunts can be settled. At the same time, a Haunt can be seized or destroyed, Artifacts can be stolen, and Mentors, Allies, and Contacts can be turned, captured, or taken out of commission. A Background is a starting point, not an assured final destination.

Allies

Life among the dead is, of necessity, bleak. It would be bleaker still were it not for the tendency of wraiths to associate with one another and seek company and solace from their Restless colleagues. Creatures of passion, wraiths are prone to making and breaking strong and intense friendships with others in the Shadowlands. Such bonds are represented by the Allies Background. Allies need not be close friends (and should not include members of a wraith's Circle), but may instead represent comrades in arms, likeminded individuals, fellow mourners, or any wraith (or other inhabitant of the wraith's world) who has reason to feel kinship with the character.

Allies often aid a wraith when called upon, although like any friend they can become tired of repeated demands on their time and resources. Allies need to be maintained, and a wraith who takes but does not give is likely to find his Allies deserting him. Spending points on buying an Ally does not ensure the services of an infinitely tolerant, infinitely generous individual, but rather a relationship that must be tended in order to remain beneficial. After all, most Allies have needs of their own, and a wraith may find himself being called upon to help his friend in her time of need.

The Storyteller and player should cooperate in detailing specific Ally characters, and many stories can develop from the relationship between a wraith and his Allies.

None: A character with no Allies is unusual, and you should decide what it is about your character that drives others away.

• A single Ally, probably highly valued for her uniqueness.

•• Two Allies; are they jealous of each other?

••• Three Allies; one may be special in some way.

•••• Four Allies; do your Allies know of each other's existence?

••••• Five or more Allies; why are you so popular?

Artifact

Commonly fueled by Pathos, Artifacts have certain functions or powers that aid the wraiths (most often the servants of the Hierarchy) who carry them. Artifacts are highly valuable, and greedily hoarded by the authorities. Any wraith who chooses the Artifact Background must create (in conjunction with the Storyteller) a story explaining reasonably where she obtained the Artifact, and why she has been allowed to keep it. This is particularly tricky for wraiths who have just been Reaped. If a player wants an Artifact for such a character, it's up to her and the Storyteller to either come up with a very good explanation for how this happened or set up a way for the character to obtain the Artifact at an appropriate moment during gameplay.

Characters who take this Background can purchase it more than once with each purchase representing one Artifact of the appropriate level. Conversely, multiple points spent on Artifacts can instead grant a character a single more valuable and potent item.

None: Like most wraiths, the character has acquired no Artifacts. Maybe it's lack of interest, maybe it's lack of funds, maybe it's lack of opportunity.

• A seemingly insignificant Artifact.

•• A minor Artifact, such as a compass that always points to Stygia.

••• An Artifact of some purpose, like a sword of Stygian steel.

•••• A major and unique Artifact, which the Hierarchy would dearly love to possess (e.g., a gun that doesn't need relic bullets).

••••• The most useful and powerful of objects, the envy of all other wraiths.

Contacts

Distinct from Allies, Contacts are people (or wraiths) whom the character has encountered and who are willing to work with him. They are individuals who are prepared to do the character a favor, or furnish him with information or aid, but in general they have a price. That price may be as simple as a promise of a later favor, as complicated as a political maneuver or as base as a financial debt, but it generally matches the value of the service rendered.

A wraith's Contacts score represents two things: major Contacts and minor ones. Major Contacts are the individuals, detailed by the Storyteller and/or the player, with access to the services and information that the player desires. These can be wraiths in the Shadowlands, Spectres in the Tempest, or living people from the character's time among the Quick, but all will recognize her and should be willing to cut some kind of deal. There are also minor Contacts, who specialize in the same general

field of influence as the major Contacts. These individuals can prove useful to a wraith if a successful roll against her Contacts rating (difficulty 7) is made, but minor Contacts are generally less informed, less helpful, and less friendly than major ones.

None: No useful Contacts. However, perhaps you are a Contact for some other wraith (not a player character).

• One major Contact and few others. You probably have a special arrangement with this Contact.

•• Two major Contacts in different areas and a scattering of associated minor Contacts.

••• Three major Contacts and a fair helping of minor ones.

•••• Four major Contacts, all in different areas, although you could double up and cover one particular field completely.

••••• Five major Contacts and an associated minor Contact on almost every street corner.

Eidolon

Eidolon is a measure of spiritual fortitude. It is an indication of special potential in a particular wraith to resist the temptations, assaults, and insults of the Shadow. While it does not necessarily suggest that a wraith is objectively good or even moral, it does reveal a wholesome knack for metaphysical resistance. Eidolon is tied to a wraith's Psyche, and some Eidolons are *so* strong as to manifest occasionally as a separate entity, much like the Shadow does. Most, however, are firmly integrated into a wraith's Psyche. A wraith with a high Eidolon rating does not necessarily possess special insight into the workings of her Shadow (although she may), but may instead have some special ability to stave off the Shadow's attempts to drag her to Oblivion.

Each point of Eidolon represents one extra die per session that a player can add to any roll which resists some intent, plan, or ploy of his Shadow (including the Shadow's Thorns). A player may use one, some, or all of his Eidolon dice in any roll but not more than his total Eidolon rating each session. Eidolon can also be used during a Harrowing to exercise some control over the course of events.

None: Like most of the Restless, you face your Shadow alone.

• You can sometimes second guess your Shadow.

•• You can mount a successful resistance to one of your Shadow's ploys.

••• Spiritually tough; your Shadow must work hard to influence you.

•••• You see through all your Shadow's stratagems, and occasionally counter them.

••••• Your Shadow must choose its moment carefully or waste all its efforts.

Haunt

It's not an accident that ghost stories refer to the tendency of spirits to inhabit certain buildings, crossroads, or other locations. Wraiths are often tied to a spot in the Shadowlands that corresponds to a place of special import for them in the Skinlands. In these places, the Shroud wears thin and a wraith can establish a Haunt, which serves as home, sanctuary, and refuge. When in her Haunt, a wraith can employ Arcanoi more easily and confront her Shadow in privacy and with confidence. Wraiths can Slumber in their Haunts, and many also fortify them as refuges against Maelstroms and other spectral incursions.

Sometimes Haunts are shared between several wraiths, but these groups are invariably small, as the trust involved in sharing the privacy of a Haunt is seldom found in the Shadowlands. Haunts are usually tied to a single physical place, and the corresponding Skinlands location is often run down and decayed. A Haunt, if belonging to a single wraith, is often connected with a particular Passion or Fetter, and a Haunt which is itself a Fetter is both rare and potent.

The local Shroud rating is lowered by the Haunt's rating inside the Haunt itself, and many Haunts also gather Memoriam, which is available to any wraith who spends time there. At the Storyteller's discretion, players can combine their Background points to purchase a shared Haunt. The details of such a place are left to the Storyteller to determine. Other wraiths may wish to have both communal and private Haunts. In this case, the Background must be purchased twice, once for each type of Haunt.

None: You have no Haunt and probably Slumber on the run. Are you a nomad by choice or circumstance?

• A small domicile, perhaps a closet or phone booth.

•• A Haunt large enough for you to survive in, but hardly luxurious.

••• A fair-sized Haunt, which can accommodate you and several guests comfortably.

•••• An opulent Haunt, with ample accommodation for up to four wraiths. Alternatively a special Haunt, such as a mobile or well-defended Haunt.

••••• A majestic Haunt in good repair, perhaps the haunted mansion on the hill. No doubt this Haunt is the envy of many powerful wraiths not blessed with such a home themselves.

Legacy

It might be the desire of every living person to be remembered, but human memories are the very lifeblood of wraiths. Some individuals are remembered by few, some by many (this is covered by the Background Memoriam), but there are cases where a wraith's works are remembered long after her name has been forgotten. The Legacy Background covers this sort of memory, representing a wraith's creations that have lived on after her death. A Legacy can represent a variety of different things, from hard objects — buildings, statues, 1,000 planted trees — to less tangible things such as an art collection, a political theory, or a word that has become common usage.

Once per story, a wraith can try to gain focus and comfort from her Legacy. To do so, the wraith must travel to the site of

the Legacy (or some important place associated with it in the case of intangible Legacies) and roll a number of dice equal to the level of the Background (difficulty 7). The number of successes represents the number of levels of damage the wraith can heal. Normal damage is regenerated instantly; aggravated damage takes approximately one hour of attendance upon the Legacy per Corpus Level healed. This represents a process of confirmation and affirmation for the wraith, the physical manifestation of which is healed Corpus.

None: No trace remains that you ever lived.

• A painting of yours hangs somewhere on the wall of an obscure gallery.

•• You funded a building on a college campus.

••• You reseeded a devastated forest area through which people pass every day.

•••• You designed the Eiffel Tower or the Statue of Liberty.

••••• An important idea in modern life is attributed to you. Perhaps you founded a religion or a political movement, or created a popular social media app.

Mentor

The relationship between a character and his Mentor is different from that between a character and either an Ally or a Contact. A Mentor is sometimes a patron, sometime a teacher, sometimes a protector, and sometimes all of these things. While a Mentor will not always respond to requests for help from a wraith, she always acts in what she believes are the wraith's best interests (though the wraith might see things differently). A wraith's relationship with her Mentor is complicated and personal, and should be the subject of detailed roleplaying. Such a relationship is not usually an even or casual one, and entails responsibilities on both sides.

Some Mentors teach Arcanoi to wraiths in their charge, but always the Mentor chooses what is taught and what is not. A Mentor may do more than teach Arcanoi — perhaps they serve as an advocate for the character in Stygia, perhaps they teach new Abilities, or perhaps they even physically bail the wraith out of trouble.

None: Perhaps you have a problem with authority, or you seek a master worthy of your attention.

• A Mentor little older than yourself, but with a few connections.

•• A Mentor of some importance, but little power.

••• An old and wise Mentor, with a modicum of clout.

•••• A politically powerful Mentor who can pull strings on your behalf and teach you many secrets.

••••• An almost omniscient Mentor, perhaps a Ferryman or a high-ranking Hierarch.

Memoriam

The essence of the dead is hard to define, but Pathos stems directly from emotion, and the emotion that the living feel for the dead is expressed as memory. After all, memory is the way in which the living interact with the dead. People have a tendency to remember those who are lost in strange ways, or to project thoughts and feeling onto those who are no longer there to represent themselves.

Some wraiths can take comfort from the fact that they are remembered by many people (though not necessarily fondly). Others are recalled by few, one, or even none. There is an argument among the dead as to whether it is better for one person to remember you well than for an entire nation to recall your life with hate, envy, or resentment. However, Memoriam makes no judgments.

Memoriam allows the wraith to access extra Pathos. By invoking the feelings the living have for her, once per session a wraith can roll her Memoriam rating (difficulty 8), with each success granting one point of Pathos. If a botch is rolled, one point of Memoriam is permanently lost, as the inevitable process of forgetfulness and myth obscures memories of the wraith.

None: You lived and died alone. Few, if any, even remember your name. Alternatively, you lived so long ago that all memories of you have faded.

• One person remembers you. Perhaps you have a roadside memorial somewhere.

•• A handful of people remember you on occasion.

••• A stretch of highway is named after you, or perhaps a beloved local park.

•••• A community, organization, or company has you on its roll of honor — or curses your name.

••••• You have legendary status in an entire nation (or more). This level of recognition is far easier to achieve in a negative light than in a positive.

Notoriety

Fame is an important issue for most of the living occupants of the western world. Those who are not actively pursuing or attempting to preserve it are constantly bombarded with images of those who are. Among the dead, mortal fame has little impact, though there are those who die with such a reputation that the Restless await them.

However, it is also possible to cultivate a reputation, good or bad, beyond the grave. Renegades and other dissidents soon earn themselves reputations, and not ones to be envied. Notoriety is a measure of how well a wraith is known, how much he is talked about and what expectations other wraiths have of him. There are some benefits to Notoriety — some wraiths will flock to attach themselves to a notorious figure, while others will flee or do whatever the wraith asks out of fear. At the same time, a wraith with a high rating in Notoriety may find that it can be a curse — other wraiths talk about him a great deal, project hopes and grievances onto him and demand favors and attention simply by virtue of his role as a public figure. Fame in life does not guarantee Notoriety after death, nor does a quiet and low profile life preclude a rise to prominence in the Shadowlands.

None: Like most of the Restless, you are a face in the crowd. Do you deliberately keep a low profile?

• You have made some impressions.

•• Perhaps your Haunt is visited regularly.

••• Your name has traveled farther than you have.

•••• Every wraith in the Shadowlands recognizes your name (but not necessarily your face).

••••• For whatever reason, you cannot escape being recognized everywhere you go.

Relic

Relics are things that once existed in the Skinlands, and that persisted in the Shadowlands after their destruction. The reasons for this psychic durability vary, but all invoked strong enough emotions while they existed to cross the Shroud on the strength of those memories. Some relics were important things in themselves, such as national treasures or badges of office. Others were articles that were acutely important to one person and acquired enough emotional weight from that individual to persist in the Shadowlands — wedding bands, stuffed animals and the like. A relic need not have belonged to the wraith in life or even to have had some great significance to her; property can be acquired by the Restless as well, and there is a huge market in buying, selling, and scavenging relics across the Underworld.

Characters who take this Background can purchase it more than once with each purchase representing one relic of the appropriate level.

None: You have nothing. Are you a recent escapee from Thralldom, or just not attached to material things?

• A seemingly insignificant relic, like the keys to a treasured car.

•• A minor relic, perhaps a small work of art.

••• A relic with some usefulness, such as a telescope or knife.

•••• A major relic with moving parts, often powered by Pathos.

••••• A huge or invaluable relic, a sophisticated device or famous object.

Status

Status is a more concrete recognition of power than Notoriety. It does not, however, measure actual worth or achieve-

ment. Many in the bureaucracies of the Underworld, just as in the Skinlands, have done little, if anything, to deserve the authority they have; they have simply accrued it over the years, and now wield it. Status can also be used to gain favors from authorities, of whatever kind.

Status does not necessarily relate to the Hierarchy, although most Hierarchy members possess at least some Status. It can also represent a ranking in a Renegade band, a Heretic cult, or one of the many Guilds. It is possible, though uncommon, for a wraith to possess Status in several groups. In this case, the Background must be purchased multiple times. With Status comes duty and responsibility, and wraiths with high Status find themselves responsible for decisions which affect the existence of many lesser Restless.

None: No organization recognizes you.

• An initiate of some kind. You are most likely responsible for unpleasant duties, but are at least recognized as part of the group.

•• After demonstrating your devotion to the group, you have been chosen for a position of some responsibility.

••• You are in the murky middle ranks. Not low enough to be pushed around or high enough to do the pushing, this is a dangerous place to be, but has many rewards.

•••• This level of Status represents the level of management and privilege. You can access the resources of the group and are trusted by its leaders

••••• Player characters are unlikely to ever rise higher than this. Having gained significant power and respect, you are a leader.

Special Arrangements

Each Guild has traditional allies. Over the centuries, these relationships have disseminated lesson plans and initiate arts outside the originating guilds. Mechanically speaking, this means Status in a given guild also grants limited access to the guild instruction and initiate arts of two other guilds. The following table illustrates these relationships. When seeking Guild instruction in an allied Guild's Arcanos, a wraith's Status in the allied Guild is considered to be two dots lower than her actual Status in her own Guild. For example, a character with Status (Harbingers' Guild) •••• is considered to have Status (Artificers' Guild) •• and Status (Oracles' Guild) •• *only* for the purpose of Guild instruction in Inhabit and Fatalism.

Primary Guild	Allied Guilds
Alchemists (Flux)	Artificers (Inhabit), Proctors (Embody)
Artificers (Inhabit)	Harbingers (Argos), Alchemists (Flux)
Chanteurs (Keening)	Sandmen (Phantasm), Proctors (Embody)
Harbingers (Argos)	Artificers (Inhabit), Oracles (Fatalism)
Haunters (Pandemonium)	Spooks (Outrage), Mnemoi (Mnemosynis)
Masquers (Moliate)	Usurers (Usury), Sandmen (Phantasm)
Mnemoi (Mnemosynis)	Pardoners (Castigate), Haunters (Pandemonium)
Monitors (Lifeweb)	Puppeteers (Puppetry), Solicitors (Intimation)
Oracles (Fatalism)	Harbingers (Argos), Usurers (Usury)
Pardoners (Castigate)	Solicitors (Intimation), Mnemoi (Mnemosynis)
Proctors (Embody)	Alchemists (Flux), Chanteurs (Keening)
Puppeteers (Puppetry)	Monitors (Lifeweb), Spooks (Outrage)
Sandmen (Phantasm)	Chanteurs (Keening), Masquers (Moliate)
Solicitors (Intimation)	Pardoners (Castigate), Monitors (Lifeweb)
Spooks (Outrage)	Haunters (Pandemonium), Puppeteers (Puppetry)
Usurers (Usury)	Masquers (Moliate), Oracles (Fatalism)

Arcanoi

The Underworld's rules are vastly different from the Skinlands'. The realms of the dead have metaphysics, not physics, and the forms and minds of wraiths are equally alien to the comfortable fixed reality of the Quick. Wraiths who can come to grips with these differences learn the focus and insight necessary to evoke changes in the world around themselves. Initially, such workings were unique, spontaneous efforts of will, usually in Pathos-fueled moments of desperation. Over the millennia, though, dedicated wraithly innovators learned to replicate these manifestations, eventually refining their observations into the powers known as *Arcanoi*.

A wraith can learn Arcanoi from other Restless, rediscover them through study and experimentation, spontaneously manifest them in moments of great emotional upheaval, or even acquire them from her Shadow. Each Arcanos is a method of using the wraith's force of will and spiritual energy to evoke a series of conceptually related effects. An Arcanos is a balance of philosophy and craft, with some leaning toward concrete, codified skills and others more resembling transcendental mysticism. Most wraiths demonstrate aptitude for a handful of Arcanoi shortly after their rebirth and quickly learn or manifest the elementary powers, or *arts*, of those Arcanoi.

Learning Arcanoi

Each Arcanos art has a rating of one to five dots, with higher-rated arts being costlier and more potent. Each Arcanos dot grants an associated *common art*, a widely-recognized manifestation of that Arcanos that is in widespread use throughout the Underworld. For example, upon learning Argos ••, a wraith can use the Weather Eye and Phantom Wings arts. When she acquires Argos •••, she gains access to the Flicker art as well.

Many different narrative paths can lead to a new dot in an Arcanos. The normal experience-point costs for Arcanoi reflect self-taught acquisition or ordinary tutelage from another Arcanos user. Mechanically, the player justifies the purchase to the Storyteller and pays the experience-point cost for the new dot.

On the character sheet, the circles for Arcanoi are bisected, unlike the circles for other traits. When the character learns a common art at a given Arcanos rating, the player fills in the *left* side of the circle. When the character learns an *initiate art* (see following), the player fills in the *right* side of the circle. Either side of the circle counts as a dot in the Arcanos for rules purposes, but having both sides filled in doesn't grant any additional bonus. Nor does learning more than one initiate art at a given rating, if the Storyteller decides to create additional initiate arts.

Optional Rule: Trading Arcanoi

If the Storyteller thinks it makes for a more interesting tale, characters can learn Arcanoi from one another, or from Storyteller characters, on a direct basis. A lesson in an art requires one consecutive day per dot of the art's rating. In addition, the student's player spends 1 Willpower per day and the teacher's player makes a single Charisma + Leadership roll (difficulty 6 for a common art, 8 for an initiate art). With success, the student's experience cost for the art is reduced by the teacher's successes, to a minimum of one experience. This doesn't stack with the rules for Guild instruction.

Yes, this option allows players to swap Arcanoi among their characters, resulting in a stronger Circle of wraiths. That's okay. If the protagonists are powerful, the Storyteller can throw more difficult challenges at them with a reasonable expectation of not Harrowing the entire group.

Also, if you've been paying attention up to this point, you already know that solving a wraith's *real* problems isn't a matter of throwing around another cool special effect. **Wraith** is not a game whose foremost concern is adherence to an artificial power curve.

Spontaneous Manifestation

Wraiths are creatures of passion. Strong emotion can alter their metaphysical being. Sometimes, this results in a character summoning a hitherto-unknown Arcanos art in moments of desperation.

In game terms, a player can spend experience points *during a scene* to buy a new Arcanos dot. With Storyteller approval, the player spends Willpower equal to the art's rating, then pays the full experience cost for the new dot. The wraith immediately gains the associated art — even an initiate art, if it's appropriate to the character and the circumstances. This is best allowed sparingly, during climactic scenes, and at moments when the new art can tip the balance in the group's favor.

Guild Instruction

Mastering an expression of will that warps the Underworld's already-malleable reality is easier with a teacher. The Guilds are Stygia's most prolific and systematic providers of Arcanos instruction. Over the centuries, they've developed training methods to streamline the instruction process while avoiding most of the potentially lethal errors that unskilled users of the arts can commit.

Guild instruction in common arts is available to any wraith with Status in the appropriate Guild. This process is automatic unless the Guild is locally persecuted or otherwise experiencing severe turmoil, in which case the Storyteller may require a Charisma + Streetwise roll (difficulty 8) to locate a teacher. For any common art, Guild instruction takes one consecutive day per dot of the art's rating, and the art's experience point cost is reduced to current rating x2 experience (or a flat 5 experience for a new Arcanos). See p. 301 for the character-development rules.

Initiate arts (see following) are rare and carefully guarded, so the process is a bit more difficult. Locating a teacher *always* requires a Charisma + Streetwise roll (difficulty 8, or 10 if the Guild is under local threat). With success, the same experience-point cost reduction applies. A botch indicates the would-be student's inquiries have brought some sort of trouble down on the Guild in question.

Initiate Arts

The common arts are taught across Stygia. Most students of wraithly powers know their effects and signs, at least in broad terms. However, these aren't the only arts within each Arcanos. Each guild has its own array of secret lore, outgrowths of its signature Arcanos that it holds closely and teaches only to its members and most trusted allies. The collective term for these powers is *initiate arts*.

When a wraith gains a new dot in an Arcanos, she may learn that level's initiate art in place of its common art if she has sufficient guild standing, as represented by her dots in Status (appropriate guild). A wraith may learn initiate arts with a rating up to her corresponding Status rating. For example, a character with Status (Harbingers' Guild) ••• may learn the initiate arts for Argos • through •••. Learning an initiate art doesn't require instruction as described above, though it can reduce an initiate art's experience cost.

An eligible character who already knows a common art for a given Arcanos rating may also learn the initiate art for the same rating or vice versa. This carries the same experience-point cost as the original dot for that level of the Arcanos. For example, a character with Argos ••• who knows Wayfarer's Resolve (the Argos •• initiate art) may learn Phantom Wings (the Argos •• common art) by paying the experience-point cost for the second dot of an Arcanos.

Technically, a character who knows an initiate art can teach it to anyone, regardless of Guild affiliation. Such transgressions have steep political costs for a Guildwraith, including revocation of Guild membership or worse.

Guilds and Arcanoi

Each Guild has a chicken-and-egg relationship with its signature Arcanos. Some Arcanoi were the common elements that brought their corresponding Guilds together, while others arose from the collective workings of like-minded wraiths. In either case, the Guilds were once the sole source of Arcanoi, controlling not only their arts but the unique services those powers enabled.

Though the Guilds remain the unchallenged masters of the Arcanoi, their strict monopolies are long gone. Centuries of leaks, defections, and spontaneous rediscovery have spread the Arcanoi throughout the Underworld. Today, it's a rare wraith who's been active for more than a decade without learning a few common arts of an Arcanos or two. However, initiate arts remain the guilds' jealously guarded purview — and, in some cases, are the secret weapons that made survival possible through centuries of Hierarchy persecution. The Guilds' modern mystique is, in part, an outgrowth of the initiate arts' cachet, and it provides leverage for recruiting and intimidation alike.

Despite the common arts' democratization, the Guild-Arcanos pairings remain entrenched in Imperial culture. A wraith who displays Arcanos proficiency is likely to be stereotyped with its Guild's archetypal traits, even if she's never met a Guildwraith. Moreover, the Stygian vernacular freely interchanges Guild monikers to mean both "member of a Guild" and "wraith who knows that Guild's Arcanos." Thus, all Argos practitioners are termed Harbingers, regardless of membership.

Guildmarks

Practicing each Arcanos causes the wraith's Corpus to manifest *guildmarks*: permanent changes to their appearance or behavior that stem from use of those arts. As with the Arcanoi themselves, guildmarks once were badges of Guild membership. The spread of common arts means many wraiths on a citadel's streets now bear at least superficial guildmarks. The Arcanos itself, not any sort of Guild affiliation or initiation, is what creates these marks.

Typically, a wraith begins to manifest guildmarks when she learns the second dot of an Arcanos, and fully develops them at the third or fourth dot. A wraith with such proficiency in multiple Arcanoi displays all their guildmarks. If two guildmarks conflict, the Arcanos the wraith uses more often tends to dominate, though evidence of the less-favored Arcanos appears as well. For example, a Harbinger with some knowledge of Intimation has the jet-black eyes associated with Argos, though Intimation's green glitter dances in her left eye's inky depths.

Wielding Arcanoi

Using an art involves pairing its rating with an attribute's. For example, an art's dice pool may be Perception + Lifeweb or Strength + Inhabit. Most arts also require the wraith to expend temporary Pathos, and a few exact an additional toll of Corpus or Willpower. Some arts, particularly those that coerce or destroy, also allow the user's Shadow to batten on temporary Angst. Each art's rules give its specific dice pool and costs.

The local environment affects most Arcanoi. The Shroud, the barrier between the local Skinlands and Shadowlands, impedes wraithly power. Even when a manifestation is confined to the Underworld, a strong local Shroud still impedes any attempt to change reality. For many arts, the difficulty of rolls to invoke effects across the Shroud is equal to the local Shroud rating. Unless the specific rules for an Arcanos or art state otherwise, this is the default difficulty to use any art. See p. 284 for typical Shroud ratings in different locales.

No effect may ever reduce an art's difficulty below 4.

Rattling the Chains

As part of a wraith's relationship to the lands of the Quick, a Fetter can ease attempts to affect the living world. If a Fetter is central to an Arcanos use (usually as the target), it can reduce the difficulty. At the Storyteller's discretion, the player may roll the Fetter's rating (difficulty 6), with each success reducing the art's difficulty by 1. Alternately, the Storyteller may reduce the art's difficulty by 1 or 2, depending on the Fetter's importance to the character and the scene.

Attunement and Consorts

Attunement is a long-term process of repeatedly applying Arcanoi to a certain subject, investing effort to harmonize the wraith's energies and the target's being. This most commonly occurs through Embody, Inhabit, and Puppetry, though other Arcanoi may benefit, too. People to whom a wraith is attuned are called *Consorts*.

Each time a wraith successfully manifests to, Skinrides, or inserts herself into a being or object, the player may spend 1 Willpower (not more than once per scene). The closer the wraith was to the subject in life, the easier attunement is. Attuning to a stranger costs 5 Willpower over time, while attuning to a close friend or lover may require only 2 or 3.

Attunement's benefits vary by Arcanos. Some arts are usable only on Consorts, while others' effects are enhanced when dealing with an attuned subject. If an art lists no benefits of attunement, the Storyteller should determine an appropriate benefit. Reduced difficulty is a good default.

A wraith may never be attuned to more objects or beings than her permanent Willpower. However, she is always considered attuned to her Fetters, and they don't count against this limit.

Arcanos Optimization

The dice pool for each art is Attribute + Arcanos. All Arcanoi use only two attributes. In most cases, these are attributes from the same category: either Physical, Social, or Mental.

Three Arcanoi depart from this rule by using attributes drawn from different categories. These are the banned Arcanoi: Flux, Intimation, and Mnemosynis. Each of these still relies on only two attributes, but then again, optimizing for use of a feared and outlawed set of powers should be a little more difficult.

Harbingers

The Underworld's unsettled spaces are vast and hostile. Spectres, plasmics, Maelstroms, and stranger hazards threaten the unwary traveler. Subjective distance and protean terrain render cartography an exercise in futility. The only reliable method of navigation through the Tempest is Argos, the ancient Arcanos of travel. Only the desperate and foolhardy sail the sunless sea without a Harbinger guide, whose expertise can make the difference between a narrow escape and an unexplained disappearance. When unencumbered by companions, a traveler versed in Argos can evade or outrun even the Tempest's greatest dangers.

Guildmarks

As Argos affects the Tempest, so too does a bit of the Tempest soak into each Harbinger. A wraith skilled in these arts gradually develops jet-black eyes, and her clothing flutters in intangible winds that gust with her emotions.

The Guild

Harbingers' Guild folklore holds that the Guild existed long before it became the dominant body of Argos practitioners. Its apocryphal founders were victims of the first shipwrecks who continued their seamanship after death. The tale's accuracy is debatable, but the Harbingers have always been closely associated with mariners, and Guild culture shows heavy influence from maritime (and, later, aeronautical) customs.

Harbingers have always been travelers; their Arcanos' very nature enables and sometimes seems to compel it. Some are messengers, vital in an environment where communication moves at the speed of travel. Others are explorers, plumbing the Tempest's depths or seeking the farthest shores or Dark Kingdoms. Those of a more mercantile bent become traders or guides, moving wraiths and their goods throughout the Underworld. All but the most cynical, however, adopt the sailor's ethos of always aiding vessels in distress, adapting it to the Underworld. Many wraiths owe their continued existence to a Harbinger's timely intervention. Stygian tradition holds that interfering with a Harbinger, particularly with one engaged on a mission of mercy, brings ill luck.

In the Guild's heyday, its members' constant motion forestalled any attempt at rigid organization. Harbinger society was a loose meritocracy ranked by navigational prowess and deeds of exploration or rescue. What structure existed hinged on the Harbormasters, veteran Harbingers who retired from travel to serve as Necropolis trade factors, lighthouse keepers, shipwrights, weather forecasters, and occasional lifeboat captains. The Harbormasters also maintained the Harbingers' relationship with the Hierarchy, working closely with the Stygian government but never becoming part of it.

Focused on the Tempest, the Harbingers had few conflicts with Charon's laws. Any participation in the revolt was individual choice, not Guild mandate, and most Harbormasters counseled early withdrawal. The Breaking had little impact on the Harbingers' comings and goings or their roles in the Underworld. Most Harbormasters remained discreetly in place; the few Necropoli that did eject them quickly became Maelstrom-wracked backwaters.

Factions

Beyond the Harbormasters, the Guild's internal divisions mark out the Harbingers' trades and agendas. Circuit Riders travel between smaller Necropoli, either alone or as part of like-minded Circles, providing skilled services that the Hierarchy can't or won't. The Anemographers study the Tem-

pest and plumb the Underworld's darkest recesses. Privateers enjoy a mixed reputation, capable of moving any sort of goods but also likely to flout Hierarchy law and common decency for the right price. By contrast, Emissaries cultivate an aura of incorruptibility, serving not only as messengers but as trusted mouthpieces for wraiths who can't themselves travel to conduct critical business. The most-respected Harbingers, though, are those for whom patrolling the Tempest and rescuing distressed wraiths is not a duty but a calling — one which yields a complex and not always warm relationship with the Ferrymen.

Argos

Argos Systems

Unless otherwise specified, a wraith using an Argos art may apply it to additional voluntary traveling companions, providing the same benefits that she herself receives. All members of the group must hold hands. Each "passenger" who lacks Argos increases the difficulty of all associated rolls by 1 (maximum 10). Any passenger who loses his connection to the wraith falls into the Tempest.

When the wraith uses any Argos art to travel to one of her Fetters, the difficulty of any associated rolls is reduced by the Fetter's rating (minimum 4).

• Weather Eye (Common)

The wraith is constantly attuned to the Tempest's local fluctuations. In addition to providing awareness of nearby events in the Tempest, this allows swift travel between two Shadowlands locations via momentary shortcuts through the storm.

System: The character is always aware of current "weather" conditions in the Tempest. Looking into the local Tempest requires a Perception + Argos roll (difficulty 6). The number of successes determines the clarity with which the wraith perceives the Tempest.

When the wraith uses Tempest shortcuts to speed Shadowlands travel, the player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Perception + Argos (difficulty 6). Successes reduce travel times.

1 success	Normal for the mode of travel (walking, driving, etc.) but without incident
2 successes	Three-quarters normal travel time
3 successes	One-half normal travel time
4 successes	One-quarter normal travel time
5 successes	As 4 successes, but the wraith arrives at a dramatically appropriate moment, even if her arrival violates causality

• Enshroud (Initiate)

The wraith can manipulate the membrane between the Shadowlands and the Tempest, drawing the sunless sea over herself for concealment or plunging herself into it without entering a Nihil.

System: When the wraith attempts to enter the Tempest, the player rolls Wits + Argos (difficulty 7). One success is enough to open a momentary portal, which irises shut as soon as the wraith slips through it.

To use the Tempest for concealment, the player spends 1 Corpus and rolls Wits + Argos (difficulty 7). Each success adds one die to all Stealth dice pools for the rest of the scene.

•• Phantom Wings (Common)

This art enables the wraith to fly in both the Tempest and the Shadowlands. Unless aided by the Tempest's winds (which carry their own hazards), flight isn't particularly swift, but the added mobility can be convenient. The power's eponymous wings always assume the same appearance for a given wraith, and are translucent and insubstantial.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Wits + Argos (difficulty 6). Each success grants one turn of flight at any speed between a stationary hover and the character's normal jogging speed. Tricky maneuvers or tight quarters may require a Dexterity + Athletics roll at the Storyteller's discretion.

In the Tempest, the wraith's maximum speed doubles, though she is still subject to any inclement weather. In a Maelstrom, this factor increases by the storm's force (e.g., a three-bell Maelstrom multiplies the wraith's maximum flight speed by five), though, again, Phantom Wings provides no protection from the Maelstrom's damaging effects.

•• Wayfarer's Resolve (Initiate)

Many wraiths find travel into the deeper Underworld constrained by the spiritual weight of their Fetters. This art frees its user to move between the Shadowlands and Tempest-bounded destinations without suffering this constraint.

System: The wraith ignores the difficulty penalties that normally apply outside the Shadowlands while she has unresolved Fetters. This art is always active, requires no roll, and can't be shared.

••• Flicker (Common)

This art harnesses the Tempest's natural currents, enabling rapid leaps to nearby destinations. A wraith using Flicker may appear to teleport, or may seem to be sucked into a spontaneously forming Nihil only to be ejected violently from another. While this effect resembles that of Enshroud, use of the lesser art is not necessary for Flicker.

System: The player selects a destination within (Perception x 100) yards, spends 1 Pathos, and rolls Wits + Argos (difficulty 7). Each success reduces travel time by one turn. If the destination is within the wraith's line of sight and within one turn's running movement, she teleports there instantaneously and this use of Flicker does not cost an action.

While traveling via Flicker, the wraith is submerged in the Tempest. Characters in the Shadowlands can't perceive or target her without using Weather Eye or another appropriate power.

••• Turn the Anemoi's Wrath (Initiate)

Stories abound of Harbingers plummeting through the fury of a Maelstrom, untouched by its acidic rain and barrow-flame lightning, to succor travelers in need. Turn the Anemoi's Wrath is the source of many of these stories, an art that makes the wraith nigh-invulnerable to the Underworld's most savage weather.

System: The player spends 1 Corpus and rolls Perception + Argos (difficulty 8). For a number of scenes equal to the successes rolled, the wraith's dots in Argos add to her soak pool against environmental sources and Pandemonium arts. In addition, while this art is active, the wraith can soak aggravated damage from these sources with her full soak dice pool.

•••• Stormreader (Common)

Superficially similar to lesser navigational arts but far stronger, Stormreader gives the wraith an intuitive sense of the Tempest that enables her to navigate safely over vast expanses of the sunless sea. This art is the cornerstone of the Harbingers' ancient mastery of Underworld travel, allowing journeys in relative safety between destinations in the Tempest.

System: When the wraith begins a journey to or from a destination in the Tempest, the player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Perception + Argos (difficulty 8). Successes reduce travel times as per Weather Eye. Additionally, successes also reduce the effective level of any Maelstrom through which the character passes during the journey.

•••• Tempest-Rider's Canceleer (Initiate)

Infrequently taught in recent centuries and always rare outside the Harbingers' Guild, this martial transformation melds aerobatic flight and vicious scything attacks. When a wraith invokes Tempest-Rider's Canceleer, gleaming black metallic wings erupt from her back. Impossible to mistake for Phantom Wings, these are solid, knife-edged, and limned in cold fire.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and 1 Corpus and rolls Wits + Argos (difficulty 7). Each success manifests the wings for one turn. The wraith can fly as per Phantom Wings, except her maximum flight speed is her running speed. In addition, her brawling attacks inflict Strength + 2 damage — bashing if she buffets her target, lethal if she slashes with the wings' edges. Against Spectres and plasmics, slashes do aggravated damage.

Alternately, if the wraith neither flies nor attacks with the wings during her turn, she can mantle over adjacent characters to block incoming attacks. When so interposed, the wings provide the wraith and any beneficiaries with armor whose rating equals the wraith's dots in Argos. While mantling, the character can use her hands normally — for example, to attack with a weapon.

This art cannot be shared.

••••• Oubliette (Common)

Feared by all who've seen it in action, Oubliette is an art of unwilling travel. With a glance, its practitioner can open temporary Nihils directly beneath other wraiths, plunging them into the Tempest. Alternately, she can pin targets in place, preventing them from escaping into other parts of the Underworld.

System: For either application of this art, the player spends 3 Pathos and makes a resisted Wits + Argos roll against the target's Strength + Athletics. The wraith also gains 1 Angst.

If the wraith successfully uses this art to cast her target into the Tempest, a small Nihil opens under his feet, sucks him in, and immediately closes. The victim suffers lethal damage equal to the wraith's net successes. Once pulled into the Tempest, he may use all Arcanoi normally — though if he lacks Argos, getting out of the Tempest may be more of a problem than the damage.

If the wraith successfully pins her target in place, the victim may not move for one turn per net success. Nor may he use any powers that facilitate travel between or within the Tempest, Shadowlands, or Skinlands. The imprisoning wraith must maintain at least minimal concentration (–1 die penalty to all social and mental dice pools) to keep her victim in place, and may release her hold at any time. Other wraiths may target the pinned character with arts that affect or force travel — for instance, hurling him into the Tempest with another use of Oubliette. Success on any such invocation breaks the pin but does lethal damage equal to its net successes as the unfortunate soul is torn between two irresistible forces.

This art cannot be shared.

••••• Maître après Dieu (Initiate)

This art has always been rare, due not to any Harbinger recalcitrance but because of its limited applicability. With Maître après Dieu, a wraith can apply much of her command of Argos to a relic or Artifact vehicle. This, of course, requires the wraith to control and command such a vessel. If she does, even the unlikeliest of conveyances can sail, soar, or speed across the Tempest itself.

System: To use this art, a wraith must be at the helm, wheel, or other steering control of a vehicle. The player spends 4 Pathos and 2 Corpus; no roll is required. As long as the character remains aboard, in command, and in control of the vehicle, she may apply any other travel-related Argos art to the vehicle and all its occupants. All occupants are considered "passengers" of the Argos arts in use, but the Harbinger does not suffer increased difficulties for their presence.

Sharing this art is as impossible as it is unnecessary.

Pardoners

All wraiths struggle against their Shadows, but a select few — the Pardoners — carry the battle further. Masters of the Arcanos Castigate, they study the Shadow to learn what drives and feeds it so they can weaken it. They walk a dangerous path, for as Nietzsche reminds us, those who fight monsters must take care not to become monsters themselves. More than one Pardoner has gone just one step too far and succumbed to his own Shadow, all his powers of no avail.

No one method or practice defines Castigate. Each Pardoner takes his own approach to studying, confronting, and hindering the Shadow: introspective philosophy, violence and intimidation, self-flagellation, meditation, ritual, book learning, music, or ruthless logic. Perhaps the best-known tactic is *the Devil's Dialectic*, a sort of dialogue/negotiation/debate based on the Shadow's Nature. This individualistic approach may affect not only which arts a Pardoner chooses to learn, but how those arts manifest, appear, or function. A Pardoner who Castigates a Shadow with excoriating sermons works differently from one who puts a wraith through shamanic ordeals of endurance or inflicts suffering with harsh interrogation techniques.

Guildmarks

A Pardoner's fingers have black stains from where he's touched or grappled with the Shadow. As the Pardoner's experience and power increase, the stains work their way up the hands and arms.

Since their split from the Solicitors (see below), the Pardoners' symbol has been an iron lantern. Hung outside a building, the lantern advertises a Pardoner's services; carried by her it illuminates his way in the darkest of places. Each lantern's unique to the Pardoner who owns it, for she either creates it herself as part of his "apprenticeship" (or, more rarely, gets it from a master who knows him well), but most Pardoners favor traditional designs with baroque, macabre adornments. A Pardoner's lantern usually produces a pale, ghostly glow, but may change color or intensity depending on the Pardoner's mood or personality.

The Guild

According to their own (contested) histories, there was a time, long ago, when no Pardoners existed. There were only Solicitors, or rather those wraiths whose practices would one day lead to the founding of that Guild. The earliest studies of Intimation, the Arcanos that explores dark desire, inevitably led some wraiths to delve into the negative emotions that create a wraith's Shadow.

Exploring the Shadow and what drives it became the primary interest of these proto-Pardoners. Eventually, new arts aimed at understanding and combating the dark side of wraiths' Psyches evolved from their work. Over the centuries they refined these powers until it became apparent they'd created an Arcanos separate from Intimation: Castigate.

The proto-Pardoners' work did not meet with universal approval. In fact, many Solicitors considered it dangerous and potentially destructive. Too many Pardoners touched the Shadow too deeply and became tainted by it, making them a threat to everyone around them. But the nascent Pardoners provided valuable services as well, and for many of them the struggle against the Shadow rose almost to the level of a religious crusade.

Eventually tensions with the Solicitors became too great — or so the Pardoners say. Adopting the iron lantern as their symbol because they "carried the Light against every Shadow," the Pardoners broke from the Solicitors and formed their own Guild. At first other wraiths didn't know what to make of them, and many looked on the Pardoners as some sort of Heretic cult. But Castigate helped other wraiths so much that Stygian society soon accepted the Pardoners on their own terms. Before long, the iron lantern hung outside at least one building in almost every Necropolis, no matter how small.

When the Guilds revolted, the Pardoners joined, but without great zeal. Focused as always on their mission to fight the Shadow, they really only cared about ending the Hierarchy's oppression of Heretic groups. Even when Charon broke the Guilds, he did little to punish the Pardoners. Without their efforts, Oblivion would long ago have overwhelmed Stygia, so he allowed them to go on conducting business as usual. To this day the Hierarchy and its Legions rarely trouble a Pardoner, and iron lanterns remain plainly visible wherever wraiths dwell. But the ancient discord between Pardoner and Solicitor remains, and neither Guild seems interested in taking steps to resolve the problem. However, with the Solicitors regarded as terrifyingly dangerous outlaws and the Pardoners as vital members of Restless society, it's clear whose side most wraiths take.

Factions

Although younger Pardoners often take a more psychological perspective on their Guild's Arcanos and traditions, many Pardoners remain steeped in the religious or quasi-mystical terms and concepts that have characterized their work since earliest times. This extends to the names and roles of many of the factions within the Guild. The *Crusaders*, for example, take the hardest line, always eager to pursue and combat Shadows, and often willing to use extreme methods that make even other Pardoners hesitate. The *Scriveners*, on the other hand, are the most studious of Pardoners. They fight the Shadow with carefully learned lore and wise debate, and also maintain the Pardoners' extensive records and libraries. The *Simonists* (who prefer the name *Brokers*) focus on the commercial possibilities of Castigate; as the name indicates, many in the Guild do not think highly of them. The *Confessors*, masters of the Devil's Dialectic, can shame a Shadow into remorse with their arguments.

Castigate

Castigate Systems

Unless noted otherwise, the difficulty for using any Castigate art on a Shadow is the Shadow's permanent Angst score or the wraith's Willpower, whichever's higher.

Failed attempts at Castigation are particularly dangerous for the wraith whose Shadow a Pardoner has confronted. They may grant the Shadow one or more points of temporary Angst, make it easier for the Shadow to control the wraith in the future, or otherwise enhance the Shadow's power in the short term.

• Soulsight (Common)

The most fundamental power of Castigate is to see the Shadow of another soul, and perhaps even gain understanding of it. A Pardoner cannot use this art on herself.

System: With a successful Perception + Castigate roll, a Pardoner can sense the target's Shadow. The more successes scored, the more details learned. One success indicates the Shadow's Angst rating relative to the Pardoner's (weaker, about equal, stronger) while five successes reveals the Shadow's Archetype, primary Thorn, and Dark Passions.

• Playing With Fire (Initiate)

A Pardoner tends to study her own Shadow a great deal, and thus learns ways to coax out its power with less risk to herself. Of course, less risk does not mean no risk.

System: Whenever the Shadowguide offers the player Shadow Dice to assist with a task (see page 235), the wraith may use Playing With Fire to add (or if he prefers, subtract) dice. The player rolls Charisma + Castigate (difficulty 6); every two full successes allows the player to add (or subtract) one die.

This art costs no Pathos. If the player fails the roll, the wraith gains one point of temporary Angst.

•• Bulwark (Common)

A Pardoner's knowledge of the Shadow allows her to shield herself and her companions from the effects of a Maelstrom.

System: To use this art, a wraith pays 1 Pathos per level of the Maelstrom. The player rolls Stamina + Castigate (difficulty of the Maelstrom's level +3). If she succeeds, Bulwark shields her and anyone she touches from the force of the Maelstrom and hides them from nearby Spectres. In most cases, this concealment works automatically. If the Storyteller thinks a Spectre has a chance to see the Pardoner, the Pardoner receives a –1 reduced difficulty on any Stealth or other roll she makes to hide from the Spectre per success she achieved on her Bulwark roll.

•• Catechize (Initiate)

Also known as *Dark Secrets*, *Put To The Question*, and *Inquisition*, this art allows a Pardoner to learn a wraith's deepest secrets by studying and questioning his Shadow. The Pardoner's power forces the Shadow to divulge reliable information — but only a fool trusts a Shadow completely.

System: The wraith spends 1 Pathos, gains 1 temporary Angst, and closely examines the target wraith's Shadow. (This requires a minimum of 1 turn, and possibly longer.) The player rolls Perception + Castigate (difficulty of the target wraith's Willpower). For each success achieved, the Pardoner may ask the Shadow one question. The character's Shadowguide must provide a truthful response, but he can shade the truth, omit non-crucial facts, and state half-truths. The more vague or open to interpretation the question is, the greater the Shadow's leeway to muddle the issue.

The target wraith may, if desired, allow his Shadow to make an Angst roll to resist the Pardoner's Catechize roll — after all, not everyone wants to have their dirty laundry hung out for everyone to see. This causes the wraith to acquire 1 temporary Angst, though. If the Shadow controls the wraith, he always chooses to resist, but doesn't acquire the 1 Angst.

••• Purify (Common)

The Pardoner focuses her power on another wraith's Shadow to weaken it through purification — but the process injures the wraith. Different Pardoners use different methods to accomplish this. The most common include: physical torment; rebukes, insults, sermons, or other speech; singing, dancing, and other performances; occult rituals; and religious chants/prayers. Any and all have been proven effective; it's simply a matter of the Pardoner's personal approach.

System: The player rolls the Pardoner's Charisma + Castigate (difficulty of the target wraith's permanent Angst rating; the target wraith may spend Willpower to improve this roll). Each success reduces the Shadow's temporary Angst by 1, but also causes 1 Corpus level of damage to the target wraith. Furthermore, the Pardoner gains 1 temporary Angst for each "1" rolled on the Charisma + Castigate roll.

If Purify reduces a Shadow's temporary Angst to zero, the targeted wraith gains a point of Willpower and his Shadow goes quiet and listless until it is able to recover some Angst to refuel itself.

••• Trimming The Black Rose (Initiate)

This rare but potent art temporarily deprives a Shadow of one or more of its most dangerous weapons, its Thorns.

System: The wraith spends 2 Pathos and the player rolls Intelligence + Castigate (difficulty of the target's Willpower). Each success means the Shadow loses the ability to use one of its Thorns for one turn. The Pardoner can use extra successes to extend the duration of Trimming as described below.

If the Pardoner knows two or more of the Shadow's Thorns (either because she saw it use them, or via Soulsight or similar means), she may apportion the total turns of effect among them as desired. She may also use one success to extend the duration by one turn. For example, suppose she has four successes and knows the Shadow has Tainted Touch and Shadow Call. She could deprive the Shadow of the ability to use both Thorns for 2 turns, or Tainted Touch for 3 turns and Shadow Call for 1 turn, or any other combination that adds up to 4 turns. If she only knows one of the Shadow's Thorns, she has to target that Thorn and can only use extra successes to extend the duration (if desired). If she doesn't know any of the Shadow's Thorns, the Storyteller determines which Thorns she affects, and for how long.

•••• Get Thee Hence (Common)

Just as a Pardoner can use her own purity to attack a Shadow, she can raise it as a shield against Spectres, barring them from entering an area (or forcing them to leave an area they already occupy). She doesn't have to know the Spectres are present to affect them, but for some reason this art doesn't work against Doppelgangers.

System: The Pardoner defines the area she wishes to ward and then spends Pathos. The larger the area, the more Pathos required. One Pathos wards an area of up to 800 square feet; each additional 1 Pathos doubles the size of the area.

The player rolls Charisma + Castigate (difficulty 7); the ward lasts for a number of turns equal to the successes. Any Spectres already present may resist by rolling their current Angst, but unless they win the resisted roll they are forcibly expelled from the affected area. Spectres not already in the area have no chance to resist. No Spectres can enter the area until the ward falls, even if one or more other Spectres resisted the original effect and are already inside.

•••• Cooling The Blood (Initiate)

With this art, a Pardoner can temporarily weaken (or remove) a Shadow's Dark Passions, diminishing the fires of cruelty that burn within its heart.

System: The wraith spends 1 Pathos and the player rolls Intelligence + Castigate (difficulty 7). The target wraith may resist by rolling Willpower. The number of successes indicates two things: first, the duration of the effect in scenes; second, the number of points by which the Pardoner reduces one or more of the Shadow's Dark Passions.

If the Pardoner knows what one or more of the Shadow's Dark Passions are (typically by seeing them with Soulsight), he may choose to target those Dark Passions, or may let the Storyteller determine which ones are affected. The current events of the chronicle may factor into this. For example, if the Shadow's currently focusing on one of its Dark Passions, that one's almost certainly going to be affected.

If one of the Shadow's Dark Passions is reduced to zero this way, the Shadow loses 1 temporary Angst. If Cooling the Blood reduces all of them to zero, the Shadow loses 1 permanent Angst.

••••• Defiance (Common)

The height of the Pardoner's art, Defiance allows him to resist his Shadow's attempt to take him over — or to help other wraiths do the same.

System: When the Pardoner's Shadow attempts to gain control of her, she can fight it off by spending 1 Pathos, plus an additional 1 Pathos for every success on the roll. The player rolls Charisma + Castigate (difficulty of the Pardoner's current Angst); the Shadow has no way to resist. Each success reduces her temporary Angst by 1. However, if the roll fails she gains 1 temporary Angst.

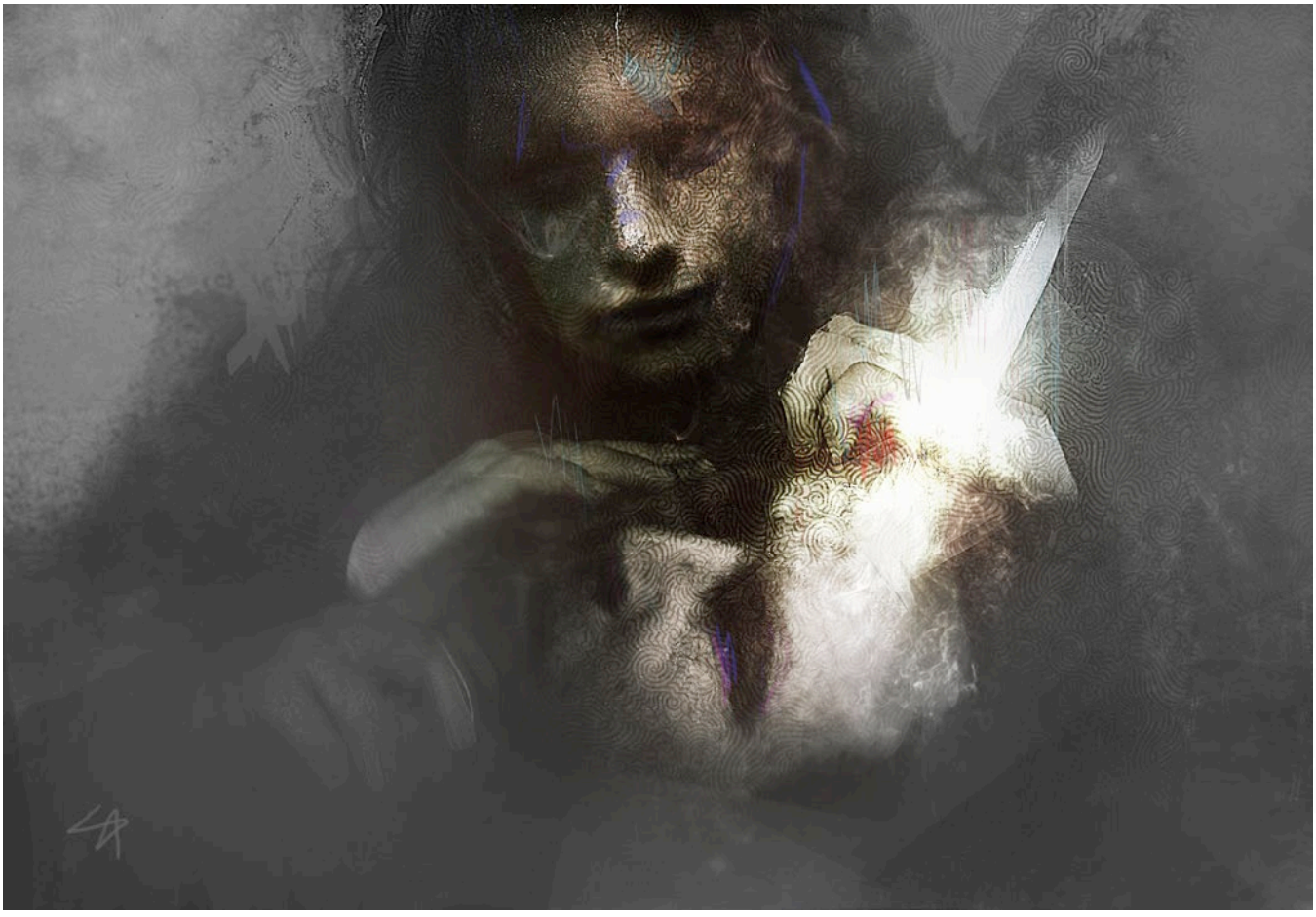
This art works the same when a Pardoner uses it to help a wraith other than herself, but this costs her 1 Willpower and the difficulty is the target wraith's permanent Angst +3.

••••• Purge (Initiate)

Also known as *Cathartic Reversal*, this art gives a wraith dominated by his Shadow a chance to regain control of himself.

System: The Pardoner spends 2 Pathos and targets a wraith currently undergoing Catharsis (see p. 236). The player rolls Charisma + Castigate (difficulty of the target's Willpower). If he scores one or more successes, the Shadow and its wraith must engage in another Catharsis roll (which includes the Shadow having to spend another 1 temporary Angst; if it cannot do this, it automatically loses the roll). The wraith receives 1 additional success on his roll for every two successes the Pardoner scored on his Purge roll. If the wraith wins the contest, he retakes control of himself. If the Shadow wins, it remains in control, but the Purge strengthens the wraith's Psyche — treat him as if he has one dot of Eidolon (or one additional dot) for the rest of the session.

Unless the Storyteller rules otherwise, a Pardoner may not use this art on the same wraith more than once per scene.



Proctors

Embody is the art of physically manifesting in the mortal world. Such passage through the Shroud is among the most egregious violations of Charon's law — at least, the letter of it. In practice, the ability to engage directly with the Quick is too useful to too many wraiths to stamp out entirely. Within the Hierarchy, all but the most hardline adherents to the Dictum Mortuum recognize the occasional need for this Arcanos and grudgingly tolerate the Proctors, though these wraiths may suffer onerous sanction and scrutiny. Beyond the empire's reach, masters of Embody are in high demand, for what wraith doesn't have occasional business on the far side of the Shroud?

Practical applications aren't the only reason to use Embody. Putting on new (albeit temporary) flesh carries a near-addictive sensory rush. Each manifestation renews the sensations that everyday wraithly existence dampens. For every wraith who pursues this Arcanos to reconnect with a lost love or to influence events among the living, another seeks tutelage for the selfish pursuit of mortal experience. Where Embody is regulated, such pleasure seeking assumes the cachet of forbidden vice, as much for its reputation as for its effects, and lessons in the art are integral to the local shadow (and sometimes Shadow) economy.

Embody relies on sensory input from across the Shroud as an anchor to which the wraith draws her consciousness. Emotional significance is secondary to raw intensity for this purpose. The din of a demolition site, the bustle of a neon-lit club district, or the noise and smoke of a natural disaster each resonates in the Shadowlands in its own way. An Embodying wraith follows this resonance to its source to drag herself into the Skinlands. Teachers of Embody tend to conduct lessons in the most chaotic locations available.

Guildmarks

The markings Embody leaves on Proctors reflect the foci the wraith use to materialize and the events she experiences in the Skinlands. A wraith who prefers to focus on visual input might have eyes that reflect the other side of the Shroud, while one who seeks out sources of heat may develop blisters or a heat shimmer on his fingers. If Corpus loss while manifested forces the wraith into a Harrowing, the injury that triggered the Harrowing often leaves a scar that even Moliate can't erase. A savvy observer with medical or supernatural experience can tell the difference between ordinary scarring and that which Embody inflicts.

The Guild

Embody and the wraiths who would found the Proctors' Guild arose together in Shroud's earliest days. As the dead encountered growing difficulty with passage to the lands of the living, several groups approached the problem from different directions. The Proctors' forerunners learned to subvert the Shroud through sensation, first extending their senses across the Shroud, then manifesting their own forms.

Embody is a difficult Arcanos to master, relying as it does on maintaining intense focus in the most chaotic surroundings. Many wraiths preferred commissioning Embodied intercessors to learning the arts themselves, particularly for a task among the Quick that needed to be done immediately. Early Proctors saw this as a service model and seized the opportunity to establish a monopoly on Embody. While the Artificers have deeper history, the Proctors

were the first Guild to take on the trappings of mortal trade associations and organize as a body of monopolistic service providers.

Since its inception, the guild has struggled with the fundamental question of how best to use Embody. Business-minded Proctors argue for the traditional model of Skinlands services for hire, while idealists see a higher calling than pure commercialism. A strong minority of Proctors reject both service-oriented perspectives, studying Embody simply to feel fleshly pleasures again. Few Proctors are neutral. Once experienced, Embody itself is a polarizing force, and the drive to feel its sensations again engenders myriad justifications for continued use.

Unsurprisingly, Stygian authorities saw Proctors as walking violations of Charon's will. Unmonitored use of Embody was prohibited, though local authorities' interpretation of acceptable practices varied widely. In more hardline Necropoli, the empire tried to establish a monopoly on the Arcanos, effectively subsuming the local Proctors into the Legions. Ironically, enforcing these policies fell to Legionnaires who also required proficiency in Embody to pursue offenders across the Shroud. Many of these wraiths developed Guild sympathies through their own Skinlands experiences, becoming de facto Proctors themselves.

After centuries of insult and repression, the Proctors were at the forefront of the War of the Guilds, striking viciously at their opponents' Fetters and mortal resources. Stygian retribution was harsh; few senior Proctors escaped the forges. In the following centuries, the guild became less centralized, adopting a resistance cell-like structure coordinated through mortal contacts, Skinlands dead drops, and other methods difficult to trace or interdict without Embody. As Stygian fervor has lessened in recent years, today's Proctors have become slightly more open, but they still maintain a healthy distrust of anyone in a position of power who appears a little too understanding.

Factions

The Guild's primary trade has always been in services performed across the Shroud. Simple manifestation is enough for a wraith to serve as another's hands and voice. The Proctors distinguish themselves from lesser parties through their ability to provide specialists. The surest path to advancement within the Guild is to be able to apply a high-demand skill set to Skinlands objectives — whether that's political manipulation, archaeological retrieval, or even removal of troublesome mortals.

Within the guild, Proctors tend to associate with similarly-skilled wraiths. The most notable such groups are *Agents*, who meddle in mortal politics and business, and *Secretaries* (as in "keepers of secrets"), who provide the Guild's intelligence tradecraft and sometimes can be convinced to use it on others' behalf. A rare few (and often short-lived) *Boojums* make a trade of turning the tables on ghost hunters. Proctors who join the Guild simply for personal gratification are *Tasters*, which is either a mild insult or a badge of honor, depending on one's bent. *Factors* coordinate the Guild's commercial endeavors as well as its quietly maintained Hierarchy relationships, and provide most of the structure for the Proctors' overall organization.

Embody

Embody Systems

Unless otherwise stated, the difficulty of any Embody roll equals the local Shroud rating.

When using Embody in the presence of a consort (see "Attunement," p. 149), the Proctor may draw on that attunement to ease his passage across the Shroud. This reduces the difficulty of all Embody-related rolls by 3 and the Pathos or Corpus cost of any power by 1 (if a power costs both

Pathos and Corpus, only the Corpus cost is reduced). However, any use of Embody that leverages a consort is perceptible only to that mortal.

Once Embodied, a wraith experiences the full spectra of mortal sensation, but he's also subject to the many dangers to which flesh is heir. When a Skinlands source inflicts injury on a physically manifested wraith, he suffers damage as if he were mortal, losing Corpus in place of health levels on a one-for-one basis (rather than the fixed 1 Corpus he would have lost if immaterial).

• Whispers (Common)

The wraith may briefly whisper across the Shroud, making himself audible to listeners among the Quick.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Charisma + Embody. The Proctor may speak one short sentence per success (in combat, one turn per success).

• Maintain the Material Form (Initiate)

The Proctor can draw on his inner reserves to extend the duration of other Embody arts. This is physically and mentally taxing but most wraiths willingly pay the price to prolong their time among the Quick.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and 1 Corpus and rolls Manipulation + Embody. The difficulty increases by 1 for each time the wraith already has used this art in the current scene. Successes on this roll add to the successes previously rolled to activate one Embody art that the wraith is currently maintaining. Maintain the Material Form does not cost an action and can be done at any time.

•• Phantom (Common)

The wraith manifests as a hazy, translucent, and intangible apparition, only vaguely reminiscent of his mortal body. Mortals witnessing this manifestation react with fear and are subject to the Fog (p. 284).

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Charisma + Embody. The wraith manifests for one turn per success. While manifested, the character may take an action to induce fear in one observer, rolling Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty 7). Each success reduces the target's Willpower by 1 for purposes of determining the Fog's effects. At the Storyteller's discretion, creative uses of other Arcanoi can reduce this roll's difficulty.

•• Cache (Initiate)

For some Proctors, relics make easier first lessons than their own plasm. This art allows an object to pass momentarily across the Shroud. With effort, the wraith can extend the item's stay in the Skinlands. In addition to the obvious communication with the Quick, this also enables the character to dump contraband for later retrieval, loan a relic to a mortal ally, or leave a secure message drop for another Proctor.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Charisma + Embody. The relic passes into the Skinlands, where it remains for one minute per success. If the player spends 1 Corpus when activating Cache, this duration becomes one hour per success; for 3 Corpus, 1 day per success. The player may spend 1 Willpower to end Cache prematurely, immediately returning the relic to the Shadowlands.

While a relic is in the Skinlands, it's considered the same as any other material object for purposes of wraithly interaction. However, if the relic is destroyed while in the Skinlands, it immediately falls into Oblivion and the wraith's Shadow gains 2 temporary Angst. Cache can't be used on Artifacts or Moliated wraiths. Soulforged materials, however, can be affected.

••• Statue (Common)

With this art, the wraith can assume solid, albeit immobile, form. The Proctor can materialize as a cold, hard, idealized version of his Corpus, a gory recreation of his mortal shell at the time of his death, a luminous apparition with blazing, accusatory eyes, or any other manifestation that reflects a single strong emotion. While using Statue, the wraith can take no physical action — he does not move, speak, or breathe.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Charisma + Embody. Each success allows the character to remain solid for one scene or to be touched once (whichever comes first). While manifested, the player may spend 1 additional Pathos and make an opposed Charisma + Embody roll against an observer's Willpower to invoke fear or dread in that observer.

Statue is a physical manifestation, allowing injury as if the Proctor were mortal. However, he has armor equal to his dots in Embody, which can soak aggravated damage. When the effect ends, no trace remains in the Skinlands that the wraith was ever there.

••• Skingrasp (Initiate)

The ability to physically manipulate objects in the Skinlands is one of the arts that enables the Proctors' cross-Shroud tradecraft. When a wraith invokes this power, his hands simultaneously exist on both sides of the Shroud, appearing solid, but pale and translucent.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos, plus 1 Corpus for each hand (or other appendage, in the case of Moliated wraiths) the character wants to manifest, then rolls Charisma + Embody. Success allows the character's hands to manifest for the scene. While this power is active, the character's physical Attributes cannot exceed the successes rolled. The Proctor's hands match each observer's expectations of what a corpse's hands would feel like.

Skingrasp is a physical manifestation, allowing injury as if the Proctor were mortal. Attacks targeting manifested hands suffer a +2 difficulty but do +1 damage.

•••• Life-in-Death (Common)

This art enables the wraith to manifest in a solid approximation of his mortal body. This manifestation's appearance is subject to the vagaries of memory and self-idealization, so minor imperfections are washed away. This form has darker hair and paler skin than the living original, tends to be more attractive, and has cold skin with no pulse or breath. Otherwise, the wraith is clearly recognizable, though close friends will notice the differences. The focus required to maintain this form leaves the wraith unable to devote his full attention to his surroundings, so he seems a bit oblivious and distracted, but he can move, speak, and interact with his physical environment.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Manipulation + Embody; each success allows manifestation for one scene. While the character is Embodied, the difficulty of all Mental and Social rolls increases by 1. The character must be in a humanlike form to use Life-in-Death; wraiths Moliated into objects can't use this art. The player may substitute the character's Manipulation score for his Appearance while manifested.

Life-in-Death is a physical manifestation, allowing injury as if the Proctor were mortal.

•••• Shroudguide (Initiate)

With Shroudguide and a sufficiency of resolve, the wraith can share the effects of his other Embody arts. The Proctors' Guild once guarded this art's existence jealously, as it threatened their monopoly on Skinlands action. When Charon's wrath descended on the Guild, the secret broke as fleeing Proctors bargained whatever they could to escape the forges. It's still not commonly practiced due to the toll it exacts on all participants.

System: The Proctor may activate Shroudguide in conjunction with any other Embody art that allows manifestation in the lands of the living, extending it to a maximum number of other wraiths equal to his Stamina. He must be in physical contact with all other subjects (though they don't have to maintain contact after the art is activated). The player pays an additional 2 Pathos, 1 Corpus, and 1 Willpower per additional traveler. Each other wraith loses 2 Corpus and 1 Willpower, and her Shadow gains 2 temporary Angst.

••••• Materialize (Common)

The wraith can reconstruct his mortal body in almost perfect detail, briefly assuming a semblance of his former life. While Materialized, any medical test reveals him to be a living human — though his true nature remains obvious to occult senses. He can breathe, eat, sweat, cry, bleed, and die as any other human. This art exacts a heavy toll on the Proctor, but few are unwilling to pay the price once they realize the benefits: A Materialized wraith has the full freedom of action that his former mortal form once possessed.

System: The player spends 3 Pathos and 3 Corpus and rolls Manipulation + Embody. The Proctor manifests for one turn per success. If the Proctor is attuned to all living witnesses, this increases to one hour per success. The character must be in a humanlike form to use Materialize.

Obviously, Materialize is a physical manifestation, allowing injury — and pain — as if the Proctor were mortal. Each health level of damage the wraith suffers while using this art gives his Shadow 1 temporary Angst.

••••• Harrow the Mortal Flesh (Initiate)

Most Embody arts focus on bringing the wraith to the lands of the living. Harrow the Mortal Flesh inverts this process. With this art, the Proctor can drag a living subject into the Shadowlands, enlisting her aid or giving her a glimpse of what awaits her upon death. Unprepared and unwilling victims of this art rarely react well to their experiences.

System: The wraith must touch his target. The player spends 3 Pathos and 3 Corpus and rolls Manipulation + Embody. If the target is unwilling, she may resist with a Willpower roll (difficulty 10 minus the local Shroud rating). If the target is another supernatural being (i.e., anything but a mortal), this art's Pathos cost increases to 6.

With success, the target enters the Shadowlands for one minute per success (one hour per success if the wraith is attuned to her). If the target was willing, she loses 1 temporary Willpower and the Proctor's Shadow gains 1 Angst. If the target was unwilling, she makes a Willpower roll (difficulty of the local Shroud). For each die that isn't a success, she loses 1 temporary Willpower and the Proctor's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst. If she falls to 0 temporary Willpower as a result of this roll, the Proctor's Shadow gains 3 more temporary Angst.

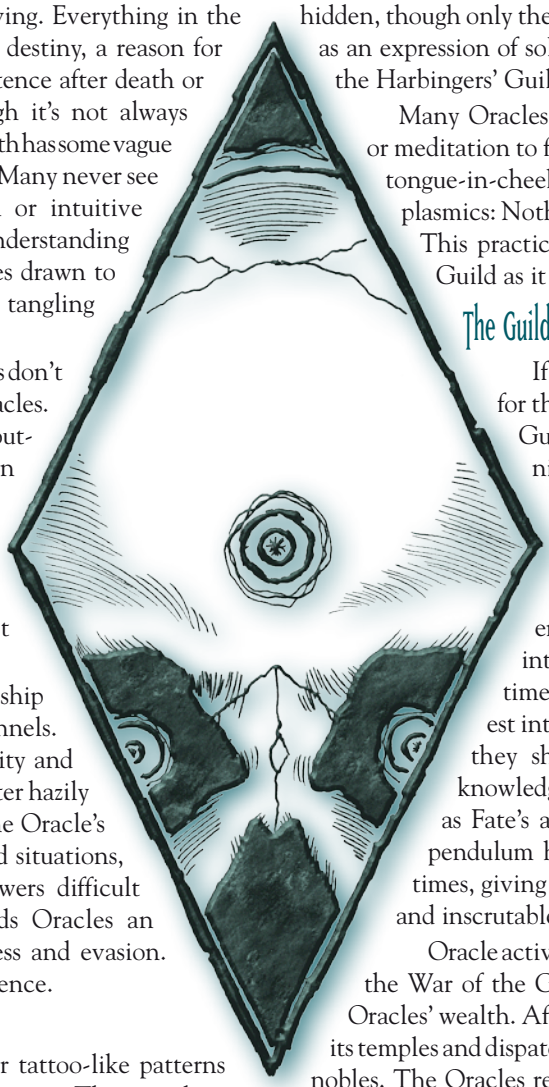
If the target dies or is Soulforged while in the Shadowlands, the Proctor's Shadow gains 10 temporary Angst. If she dies, she automatically becomes a Spectre.

Oracles

Nothing escapes Fate. The dead know this better than the living. Everything in the Underworld has a destiny, a reason for its continued existence after death or destruction, though it's not always obvious. Every wraith has some vague awareness of Fate. Many never see beyond the occasional premonition or intuitive leap, but those who seek a deeper understanding of chance and destiny find themselves drawn to Fatalism, the Arcanos of tracing and tangling the threads of Fate's tapestry.

Stygian wisdom holds that Oracles don't choose Fate; rather, Fate chooses its Oracles. Fatalism is a subtle Arcanos with few outward manifestations, one which often begins as a spontaneous manifestation rather than a deliberate attempt to learn Fate's secrets. Some of history's strongest Oracles had no interest in becoming Fate's tools before their first experiences with its power.

Each Oracle has a unique relationship with Fatalism and the forces it channels. Some insights come with crystal clarity and mathematical precision, but most skitter hazily out of reach, lurking at the edge of the Oracle's mind. Outside the most cut-and-dried situations, Fate's complexity makes simple answers difficult at best, a complication which lends Oracles an oft-warranted reputation for vagueness and evasion. Prophecy has never been an exact science.



Guildmarks

Each Oracle bears raised scars or tattoo-like patterns representing his preferred form of divination. These markings move of their own accord, though attempts to interpret the changes rarely bring any usable insight. Many Guildwraiths choose the gaudiest possible attire and go about with their eyes hidden, though only the eldest remember this fashion's origins as an expression of solidarity with their ancient partners in the Harbingers' Guild.

Many Oracles rely on a particular technique, tool, or meditation to focus their arts. Tarot cards, tea leaves, tongue-in-cheek relic Ouija boards, the entrails of rare plasmics: Nothing is too outré for the dedicated seer. This practice is as common outside the Oracles' Guild as it is within.

The Guild

If any group can challenge the Artificers for the title of eldest Guild, it's the Oracles' Guild. Since the Underworld's earliest nights, wraiths who share Fate's mark have sought out others of their own kind to share knowledge and burdens they couldn't begin to explain to outsiders. With this common experience, Circles naturally collaborated to interpret their members' visions — and, at times, to act upon them. The Oracles' greatest internal dispute has always been whether they should observe passively, share their knowledge with outsiders, or act aggressively as Fate's agents. Over the millennia, opinion's pendulum has swung through the full arc many times, giving the Guild a mixed reputation as aloof and inscrutable meddlers.

Oracle activity reached its most recent nadir during the War of the Guilds. Strict neutrality preserved the Oracles' wealth. Afterward, the Guild gradually reopened its temples and dispatched highly paid aides to select Stygian nobles. The Oracles restricted themselves to advisory roles, though, until Charon sought counsel from Grand High Oracle Serena. Furious upon hearing the first portion of his fate, he

exiled her from the Isle of Sorrows before she could convey the remainder of her prophecy.

This disgrace impelled younger Oracles to throw in with the Artificers' coup. Elder Guildwraiths held their tongues despite knowing the price to come — and, when the Legions responded with sword and barrow-flame, offered themselves as sacrifice. The resulting power vacuum allowed the coup's supporters to claim many leadership positions, reinvigorating the guild.

Today's Oracles' Guild is a visible and proactive force in Underworld affairs. Glimpses of the future impel many wraiths to intercede where they otherwise would have stood idly by. The guild offers a network that often succeeds where a lone Oracle's efforts would fail. Only in the most conservative Necropoli are the Oracles still a quasi-mystical Fate cult that maintains the full hoary rituals and trappings of its forebears.

Factions

The ancient argument over interpreting and using Fate's gifts (or curses) still shapes the modern Oracles. The *Hands* (as in "of Fate") are the guild's modern faces, wraiths driven to solve the problems that Fatalism shows them. They'd be dangerous if they could agree on priorities and methods. Almost as numerous are the *Gamblers*, genteel adventurers for whom Fatalism is a way to beat the odds, whether in poker or parkour. Born of Victorian occult practices and reinvigorated with New Age mysticism, the *Clairvoyants* are hedonists whose panoply of practices leaves them on the Guild's fringe — but does make for good recruiting.

Tradition-minded Oracles are on the decline, due in part to differences in technique that still hamper cooperation. *Delphics* fixate on ritual, from meditative trances to the finest sartorial subtleties. While they're the acknowledged masters of Fatalism, few wraiths have the patience for their painstaking exactitude. The grim-faced *Augurs* rely on sacrifice to fuel their divinations, which tints their visions towards Oblivion and leaves them on the Legions' target list.

The *Pantheonic Temple* centers its activity on the eponymous structure, once the Oracles' heart but now largely seen as a dusty library and museum. Selena, still the guild's titular head, leads the Temple in elaborate divinations, while a dwindling circle of archivists gamely catalogues the reports and visions which trickle in from Oracles across the Underworld. For much of the guild, the Temple is relevant only as their link to the Lady of Fate and, through her, the mechanisms of empire.

Fatalism

Fatalism Systems

Any use of Fatalism requires the Oracle to see or touch his subject. Unless otherwise stated, perceiving a subject across the Shroud has a difficulty of the local Shroud rating, while perceiving a subject on the same side of the Shroud has a difficulty of 6.

If a subject is aware of the Oracle's Fatalism use, she may spend Willpower to aid the roll. This stacks with those of the Oracle's own Willpower expenditure, if any.

• Kismet (Common)

Fatalism's earliest lesson is to perceive other beings' place in Fate's design — and their connection to death. Kismet is the art of reading deathmarks, the signs that portend a mortal's imminent demise or reflect the manner of a wraith's death. It also can reveal the subject's importance in Fate's grand tapestry.

System: The player rolls Perception + Fatalism. One success reveals the general manner of the subject's death (i.e., which Legion would rightfully claim her). With three successes, her death's proximate cause is obvious. Additional successes reveal more details of her death's circumstances or indirect causes.

Furthermore, even one success gives the wraith a sense of the subject's general importance in the "overall scheme of things." This is handy for determining who in a scene requires closer attention and who's just a spear carrier.

• Friendly Card (Initiate)

An Oracle knows nothing is truly left to chance. Fate's grand design affects even the smallest turnings. Through learning to read these details, the wraith can nudge the outcome of seemingly random minor events or consistently select the preferred option from apparently equal choices.

System: When the Oracle is confronted with a seemingly random choice (left Byway or right Byway, cake or death), the player may spend 1 Pathos to automatically select the best possible option. As "best" can be subjective, the player must specify whether he wants the most beneficial (or least damaging) option for his character or the option that will best further the story.

Divinatory Rituals

Most arts work as single actions or over a few minutes. Fatalism follows this pattern but the Arcanos and the Oracles' Guild draw inspiration from traditional divinatory practices that are more time consuming.

As an optional rule, the Storyteller may allow ritual divination to enhance Fatalism. The Oracle should have appropriate materials (relic crystal ball, Stygian paper tarot cards inscribed with Pardoner's Ink, soulsteel augural blade and sacrificial Thrall, or an equivalent) and an appropriate venue. The ritual working takes at least an hour. At the Storyteller's discretion, the ritual may reduce difficulties, add extra dice, or provide additional details or a glimpse farther into the future or past.

Botching a divinatory ritual should be spectacularly disastrous in a manner befitting the Oracle's ties to Fate.

In addition, whenever the wraith is involved in a game of chance or equivalent situation with a randomly determined outcome, the player may spend 2 Pathos to add the character's Fatalism to one related roll's dice pool, or to add or subtract the character's Fatalism from the result of one single-die roll. If the roll fails or the Oracle loses despite Friendly Card's intervention, the Oracle's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst (3 if it's a botch).

•• Foreshadow (Common)

The Oracle's attunement to Fate allows him to sense when it turns its attention to him. As a constant low-level awareness, it can give a few moments' warning of imminent danger. Concentration can reveal subtler signs of major events on the horizon.

System: The player adds the wraith's dots in Fatalism to any Perception-based roll to detect an ambush, trap, or similar source of immediate bodily harm. This is automatic and has no cost.

Additionally, once per day, the wraith may concentrate for 10 minutes to sense impending major events that will affect him directly. The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Perception + Fatalism. Each success grants one day's warning of a significant event and whether its net effect on the Oracle is more likely to be positive or negative. Each warning of a net negative event gives the Oracle's Shadow 1 temporary Angst.

•• Retrace (Initiate)

To the practiced eye, every tug on Fate's threads leaves evidence. This art enables the Oracle to follow up on these clues, discerning how a subject's destiny has previously been altered.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Perception + Fatalism. Each success reveals one prior alteration of the subject's fate, starting with the most recent and working backward. For each alteration, the Oracle learns when it occurred, who was responsible (at least in general terms, if he doesn't know the actor), and what the subject's unmodified fate would have been. The more profound the alteration, the more detail arises.

••• Reading the Bones (Common)

With this art, the Oracle delves deeper into Fate's designs for other beings or objects. The resulting visions are snapshots of what will occur without outside intervention, so Reading the Bones often prompts proactive oracles to move to reinforce or deter Fate's decrees.

System: The wraith concentrates on his subject for one minute. The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Perception + Fatalism. He may then ask the Storyteller one simple question per success about the subject's future as it currently stands (i.e., without intervention from anyone who knows Fate's plan). The Storyteller is within her rights to give cryptic or incomplete answers.

Reading the Bones has one blind spot: the Oracle himself. Any attempt to self-predict with this art gives the wraith's Shadow 1 temporary Angst per success as paradoxical visions of action and inaction overwhelm the Oracle. Such efforts only yield cryptic and incomplete answers.

••• Malocchio (Initiate)

The "evil eye" is an ancient and vicious art. With a whispered malediction, the Oracle taints the victim's threads in Fate's tapestry, cursing her with ill luck and marking her with signs visible only to other Oracles.

System: The player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Wits + Fatalism (difficulty of the target's Willpower). The wraith's Shadow gains 3 temporary Angst — though if it agrees that the target had it coming, the Shadowguide may immediately spend this Angst to add 3 successes to the roll. For one day per success, the target suffers bad luck. There is no standard mechanical effect, but the Storyteller should feel free to shower the victim with lost or broken possessions, Bad Luck (as per the Thorn), harassment from rival factions, and similar unpleasantness.

While Malocchio remains in effect, any character who perceives the victim with any Fatalism art automatically becomes aware of the curse and its author's identity.

The player may spend 1 Willpower to increase Malocchio's duration to one week per success. If he spends 1 permanent Willpower, this becomes one year per success. The Oracle's Shadow gains 3 more temporary Angst or 1 permanent Angst, respectively.

Malocchio's victim can remove the curse only through roleplaying. First, though, she must be aware that there is indeed an author to her bad luck…

Fatalism and Wheaton's Law

Accurate prophecy can be a plot breaker in roleplaying games. For this reason (and because it's appropriate to the source material), several Fatalism arts allow the Storyteller to provide answers that are less than straightforward. In all such cases, it's essential to keep in mind that the player paid experience points to buy the art with the understanding that it would be useful. Don't provide answers solely designed to frustrate and confuse your players. The information gained from Fatalism should always be worth the price of Guild admission.

Conversely, players who invest heavily in Fatalism should bear in mind that many legends of prophets and oracles are ultimately tragic. Having unique insight doesn't mean a character is in a position to change anything, nor will anyone else automatically believe him. Most wraiths who've been around for a while are familiar with Fatalism's limitations and take anything an Oracle says with a grain of proverbial salt. There's a reason the Guild invokes Cassandra's name so frequently.

•••• Sidestep (Common)

Heightening his attunement to immediate dangers, the Oracle gains preternatural awareness of attacks before the attackers swing or fire. This can allow the wraith to be where the attacks aren't, or to interpose himself between a friend and a bullet from a maggot revolver.

System: A number of times per turn equal to the character's Wits, the player may spend 1 Pathos to grant the wraith an extra defensive maneuver (p. 331). The Oracle can't perform more than one defensive maneuver against any given attack.

If the player also spends 1 Willpower when activating this art, the resulting defensive maneuver may intercept an attack targeting anyone or anything within the wraith's running movement distance (as modified by Argos or other effects). If the player's successes equal or exceed the attacker's, the Oracle moves to interpose himself between the attacker and her intended victim, then takes the attack upon himself, suffering full damage as if he had been the intended target. If the player rolls fewer successes than the attacker, the Oracle takes 1 health level of damage per success and the intended victim suffers the remainder.

Whenever an attack strikes the Oracle despite (or because of) Sidestep, his Shadow gains 2 temporary Angst.

•••• Entangle (Initiate)

Described by older Oracles as a binding rite and modern ones as an invocation of quantum mechanics, Entangle conjoins

two or more wraiths' very existences. This can be a blessing or a doom, as the entangled characters share experiences, energies, and destiny itself.

System: The Oracle must touch both subjects (or, if more than two subjects are to be Entangled, the whole group must hold hands or otherwise be in physical contact with one another and the Oracle). The player spends 3 Pathos and 1 Willpower per subject and rolls Wits + Fatalism (difficulty of the highest Willpower among the subjects).

With a number of successes equal to or greater than the number of subjects, all subjects are entangled until the Oracle chooses to end the entanglement. During this time, whenever any entangled character gains more than 1 Pathos in a single go, each other character gains 1 Pathos. However, whenever any entangled character's Shadow gains more than 1 temporary Angst, each other Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst, and whenever any entangled character suffers more than 1 health level of lethal or aggravated damage, each other character suffers 1 health level of bashing damage.

Each entangled character has a general sense of every other character's location and emotional state, including whether she's currently Shadowridden. In addition, entangled characters find themselves drawn toward one another or acting on each other's behalf during significant events. This latter aspect has no mechanical effect but the Storyteller should ensure that all entangled characters are somehow positioned to affect the outcome of critical scenes. This serves as an excuse for all manner of implausible coincidences as Fate conspires to put the characters where they need to be to play their parts in one another's dramas or tragedies.

Entangle works only on wraiths and no more than one application of Entangle may affect a wraith at any one time. The Oracle may include himself in any entanglement without paying Pathos or Willpower, and he doesn't count toward the required number of successes. He may spend 1 Willpower to end an entanglement of his creation at any time.

If an entangled wraith suffers a Harrowing, his entanglement is snapped and the rest of the group is instantly aware that something bad happened. The rest of the group's entanglement remains intact.

••••• Breathing the Mists (Common)

The Oracle immerses himself in events to come, gaining a measure of foreknowledge. Understanding at the time of these visions is rare. Most often, Fate provides only vague generalities. These aren't enough to issue intelligible warnings, but they are sufficient to inform preparations. The Oracle himself rarely knows the precise set of events for which he's readying himself until they're upon him, but to outsiders, it looks like he knew exactly what was coming.

System: At the beginning of the session, the player spends 4 Pathos and 1 Willpower and rolls Perception + Fatalism, noting his number of successes. Subsequently, at any time during that session, he may expend one or more of these successes to describe an action the Oracle previously took to prepare for the current scene's events. The action must be something the wraith plausibly could have accomplished "off-screen," and its complexity and specificity determine the number of successes the player must expend to establish it:

One success	Advantageous in a minor way ("Well, I have a relic handcuff key, but we'll still need to get out of the citadel before the maelstrom breaks.")
Two successes	Helps resolve a generalized, nonviolent plot obstacle ("Ah, Colonel Sexton, I see my letter of introduction from the Diamond Regent on your desk. Surely it's within your purview to grant us access to the Imperial Peace Museum?")
Three successes	Useful in combat, or specific to a given threat or complication ("I paid a fortune for this coat. Hoped I'd never need it, but I see the Alchemists' acid-resistant plasmic leather works as advertised.")
Four successes	Fits the scene's details, providing major advantage ("Contessa, if you sign that decree, the Legion will learn what happened to the last Anacreon. Don't think all your puppets went to the forges.")
Five successes	Exactingly specific and relevant to a major plot twist ("I suspected you might betray us, so I took the liberty of securing the loyalty of all of your soldiers through generous contributions of oboli at the barracks before the evening's festivities began.")

At the end of the session, any unused successes carry over to the next session. However, the Oracle loses them if he doesn't use Breathing the Mists at the beginning of the next session, too.

••••• Ensnare (Initiate)

The Oracle's greatest weapon grossly and irrevocably alters a victim's destiny. By entangling a subject in Fate's web, the wraith redefines not only her existence but her role in things to come.

System: The player spends 5 Pathos and 2 Willpower and makes an opposed Wits + Fatalism roll against the subject's Willpower. His Shadow gains 2 temporary Angst per success the subject rolls. If the roll succeeds, the player redefines the victim's destiny in broad terms, preferably ones suitably vague to make a good classical prophecy.

Unless the victim is actively working to fulfill her new destiny, all her rolls to regain Pathos have their difficulties increased by 1, all her Fetters are considered to be one dot weaker, and she can't spend Willpower. The only ways out of Fate's snare are to play out her new destiny to the logical conclusion or to roleplay her way back to Fate's original plan for her. The table at large — the Storyteller and all players — are the ultimate arbiters of when the victim has met either of these story objectives.

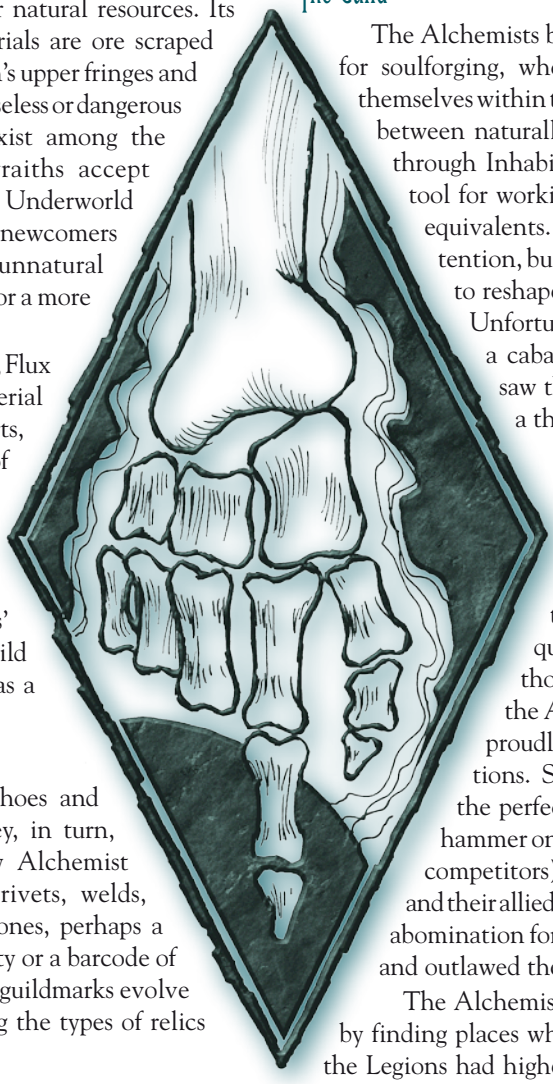
Alchemists

The underworld has little in the way of material wealth or natural resources. Its primary raw materials are ore scraped from the Labyrinth's upper fringes and souls deemed too useless or dangerous to continue to exist among the Restless. Most wraiths accept this process as the price of continued Underworld civilization, but every generation of newcomers has had its share of artisans and unnatural philosophers who seek innovation — or a more palatable alternative to soulforging.

An outgrowth of the study of relics, Flux is the Arcanos of working with material things and their memories. Using its arts, an Alchemist can reshape the echoes of objects that linger after their Skinlands prototypes' destruction. She can also reach across the Shroud to preserve or destroy physical items. Such power could easily threaten the Artificers' soulforging monopoly if the eldest Guild had not so thoroughly painted Flux as a feared tool of Oblivion.

Guildmarks

As a wraith works with the echoes and reflections of inanimate objects, they, in turn, mold her self-image. Parts of every Alchemist look manufactured: hinged joints, rivets, welds, mold flashing paralleling her long bones, perhaps a manufacturer's mark from her birth city or a barcode of a personally significant phrase. These guildmarks evolve with the Alchemist's tastes, reflecting the types of relics with which she prefers to work.



The Guild

The Alchemists began as Artificers with little aptitude for soulforging, who sought other ways to distinguish themselves within their Guild. Studying the relationships between naturally occurring relics and those created through Inhabit, they came to see Flux as an ideal tool for working with matter and its Shadowlands equivalents. Their first efforts garnered little attention, but once they demonstrated the capacity to reshape relics, Artificer leaders took notice. Unfortunately for the researchers, so too did a cabal of smiths and Nhudri cultists who saw the research as both blasphemous and a threat to their economic hegemony.

The "Alchemist" moniker came from opponents who used it to imply a connection between the Flux experimenters and the eponymous mortal charlatans who claimed to be able to turn lead into gold. The researchers quickly adopted it as a badge of honor, though, and when the final split with the Artificers came, the Alchemists' Guild proudly claimed the name and its connotations. Sadly, the *Dictum Mortuum* provided the perfect excuse for the smiths to lower the hammer on their wayward cousins (and potential competitors). Under pressure from the Artificers and their allied Guilds, the Deathlords decreed Flux an abomination for its entropic connections to Oblivion and outlawed the Alchemists.

The Alchemists survived the intervening centuries by finding places where the Artificers had little pull and the Legions had higher priorities. They weren't invited to

sign the Compact of Guilds, much less to join the revolt against Charon. Indeed, some aided Stygia, seeing the chance to pay back the Artificers for centuries of persecution. This aid didn't go unnoticed in all Necropoli. Today, in any Citadel where the Artificers hold little sway, it's likely that a Circle of Alchemists still does business while the local establishment looks the other way — or even relies on their wares. Some Alchemists also offer rogue Artificers fleeing their former guildmates protection, though they've long since learned to be wary of infiltrators.

Factions

Despite the Alchemists' Guild's small size, it's remained surprisingly formal, partly from its Artificer origins. Mostly, though, it's because Alchemists try offset their bad reputation with ostentatious professionalism. An elaborate arrangement of Circles acknowledges proficiency with Flux, while different Orders apply the Guild's body of knowledge to diverse ends. The *Ordinis Denarii* is the Alchemists' commercial arm, supplanting or competing with the Artificers where the local authorities permit such trade. Scientifically inclined Alchemists gravitate to the *Ordinis Velum* and study the Shroud, the processes of transition across it, and the relationships between Oblivion, entropy, chemistry, and physics. The *Ordinis Oxidato* attracts the guild's ill-regarded fringe of militants and nihilists, who are most likely to use Flux as a weapon or to instruct outsiders in it. Most Alchemists embrace disruptive trends ("catalysts," in Guild parlance) to some degree. The most egregious adaptor of modern mortal technology to the Underworld, and the Artificers' particular *bête noire*, is the periodically renamed *Ordinis Silicium*.

Flux

Flux Systems

Unless otherwise stated, each Flux art's difficulty is the local Shroud rating.

Any Flux art referring to a relic's "value" is shorthand for the number of dots the relic would be worth if the Alchemist purchased it with the Relics Background.

The weight of matter (or relic equivalent) an Alchemist can affect with any Flux art depends on her mastery of Flux and her strength of will. Treat this as a feat of strength (p. 320), substituting Flux for Strength and consulting the "Lift" column for the maximum mass the wraith can alter. As with a normal feat of strength, the player may roll Willpower (difficulty 6) to increase the wraith's effective Flux. However, unlike a normal feat of strength, each such attempt costs 1 Pathos.

• Rot (Common)

Flux's most basic application increases the rate of decay in a material object within the Alchemist's line of sight. Its effect on metal, ceramics, and other durable materials is too small to matter in most cases, but it can inflict months of dissolution on organic matter within a few minutes. This can hasten an object's destruction and possible transition to relic state, destroy organic evidence of wrongdoing, or revolt and terrify mortals who witness bubbling corruption claiming their dinner.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Dexterity + Flux. If the Alchemist isn't touching the object, the player also spends 1 Willpower. The number of successes determine how much the target object ages over the rest of the scene:

1 success	One week
2 successes	One month
3 successes	One year
4 successes	One decade
5 successes	One century

The Storyteller determines the effects aging has on a given object, including damage if appropriate. Rot can't directly affect living creatures or wraiths, though it does foster the growth of microorganisms that might inflict some nasty infections if ingested.

• Sense Fluxion (Initiate)

Flux can be a subtle Arcanos, and casual observers rarely can tell the difference between its entropic processes and those of nature or the Shadowlands. An Alchemist always knows her guildmates' work, though.

System: The wraith examines a subject for Flux effects. The player rolls Perception + Flux (difficulty 6). One success reveals whether or not Flux has affected the target. With three successes, the Alchemist knows which Flux art was used. With five, she can recognize the unique signatures each wraith's personal Flux applications leave, effectively seeing an

Arcanos "fingerprint" that she can match against other instances to identify another Flux user.

•• Reinforce (Common)

Reversing the entropic lessons of Rot, Reinforce makes a material object more resistant to decay and damage. This art is taxing, as the Alchemist infuses the matter with part of her own Corpus, lending it some of her deathless nature.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and 1 Corpus and rolls Dexterity + Flux. Each success increases the target's durability by 1 for the purposes of any feat of strength (p. 320) required to break or destroy it. This increase can't exceed the Alchemist's dots in Flux.

Reinforce's full strength lasts one day per success. After that, its effects dissipate at a rate of one point of durability per day.

•• Non-Euclidean Mechanics (Initiate)

As the Underworld echoes of destroyed things, relics are unitary objects to most wraiths. Disassembling a relic Mustang with relic tools results in its destruction, not an oil and Pathos change. The Alchemist skilled in Non-Euclidean Mechanics knows how to tease apart a technological relic, modify it, and reassemble it in a repaired or upgraded condition. This art relies as much on intent and metaphor as it does mechanical prowess. To outside observers, the Alchemist's work seems to violate anything they knew of Skinlands physics and geometry.

System: To repair a damaged relic, the Alchemist works on it for one hour. The player spends Corpus equal to the relic's value and rolls Dexterity + Flux (difficulty 6, increasing to 8 if the wraith lacks appropriate tools). With success, the relic is repaired. Each additional success reduces the working time by 10 minutes (minimum 10 minutes).

To improve a relic, the Alchemist works on it for one hour. The player spends 2 Pathos and 2 Corpus and rolls Dexterity + Flux (difficulty 7, increasing to 9 if the wraith lacks appropriate tools). The Alchemist may improve one numerical value of the relic by one point for one scene per success (e.g., increase a weapon's Damage by 1, add an additional soak die to armor, streamline a relic computer to grant a one-die bonus to appropriate tasks in which it's used). Normally, this effect's full strength lasts for one day per success, after which it dissipates at a rate of one point of improvement per day. To make the upgrade permanent, the player may choose to spend an additional 2 Pathos and 1 Willpower when invoking Non-Euclidean Mechanics.

No relic may have a total value of improvements greater than the Alchemist's rating in Flux.

A Bottle in Front of Me...

For the purposes of Usury, bottled Pathos is just like Pathos in a wraith's pool, but the bottle (or other container) has limited ability to resist. A container with no special properties is incapable of resisting any application of Usury to its contents. Consider an Artifact or relic container to have a Willpower equal to its Background rating. Further treat it as an involuntary subject unless the Usurer owns it (i.e., has paid the Background dots for it) or is in physical control of it.

••• Decay (Common)

This art causes deterioration in even the strongest relics or material objects. Metal oxidizes and develops stress fractures, ceramics turn brittle and crack, wood dry rots or molders, and so forth. Decay can target an entire object or only a portion of it — a gun's hammer spring, one leg of a table, or the bolts connecting a helicopter's rotors and hub. As with Rot, Decay can't affect living beings or creatures of the Underworld. However, its effects manifest much faster than Rot and encompass a wider array of materials.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Dexterity + Flux (normal difficulty in the Shadowlands, difficulty 6 in the Tempest, and difficulty 5 in the Labyrinth). The Alchemist's Shadow gains 2 temporary Angst. If the Alchemist isn't touching the object, the player also spends 1 Willpower. The target object suffers one level of aggravated damage per success.

••• Relic Dowsing (Initiate)

The Alchemist's affinity for the memories of matter gives her an intuitive sense for recently destroyed items that may have crossed the Shroud. Relic Dowsing allows the wraith to search for newly formed relics with a fair expectation of finding something (though not always exactly what she expects).

System: This art is usable only in the Shadowlands and requires about an hour of focused searching. The player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Perception + Flux. The roll's difficulty depends on the mortal population density and the amount of recent destruction or decay. A literal urban war zone is 4, while a pristine, unpopulated wilderness is 10. Most cities split the difference at 7.

Successes on this roll determine what the Alchemist finds:

1 success	A trivial relic with sentimental value to someone
2 successes	A minor relic with some practical use
3 successes	A useful or collectible/profitable relic
4 successes	A major, valuable relic, or one that's relevant to the Alchemist's interests or hobbies
5 successes	A powerful relic, immediately useful to the Alchemist's current needs

The Alchemist also can use this art to determine the location of a specific relic with which she is familiar (e.g., her favorite wrench). In this case, her difficulty is 9 minus the relic's value. More successes give her a clearer sense of the relic's position — though getting to it may be another issue entirely.

···· Render Relic (Common)

This art allows the Alchemist to sense the emotions that went into a relic's creation — and then to distill the relic down to the bare essence of those component sensations. This process destroys the relic but yields Pathos flavored with the moment the relic crossed the Shroud. The Alchemist can either absorb this energy herself or bottle it for later use. Render Relic isn't a universal solvent, though. Some relics are too large to succumb to this process, while others bear a strange immunity to it — along with the Flux signatures of Guild elders.

System: The Alchemist spends five minutes in concentration while touching the relic. The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Perception + Flux (difficulty 7). The wraith's Shadow gains 1 Angst. With success, the relic is destroyed, and the Alchemist receives 1 Pathos per success, up to a maximum of the relic's value. The player may spend 1 Willpower to channel all of this Pathos into an appropriate container (bottle, flask, spittoon) rather than the Alchemist herself.

Render Relic works only on naturally occurring relics, not those created deliberately via the effects of any Arcanos or other supernatural power. Nor can it dissolve Artifacts. Finally, it can't affect anything the Alchemist can't pick up and carry.

···· Sculpt Matter's Memory (Initiate)

As an Alchemist's understanding of relics grows, she comes to see the memories and emotional investments that bind and solidify their forms. With this art, she can exploit the flaws and blank spots in these echoes to temporarily alter a relic's appearance. While so altered, the item retains its original function, even if this is incompatible with its new form. Tales of Alchemists slaying enemies with silk bouquets or working the forges with quill pens are evidence of this art. So, too, are stories of impossible smuggling operations and disappearing criminal evidence…

System: The Alchemist spends five minutes in concentration while touching the relic. The player spends Pathos equal to the relic's rating (minimum 1) and rolls Perception + Flux (difficulty 6 if the relic's new form is compatible with its function, 8 if it's incompatible, 9 if it's utterly nonsensical). The relic's new form lasts for one scene per success. The player may spend 2 Willpower to extend this to one day per success.

The Alchemist can reconfigure only relics that she can pick up and carry, both in original form and sculpted appearance. She can freely change a relic's overall dimensions so long as it stays portable. If a relic assumes a form that's incompatible with its function (e.g., a sword button, a bicycle crowbar, a book toothpick), any skill check involving its use suffers a +2 difficulty (+3 for a truly outlandish transformation).

····· A Memory of Fire (Common)

As the Alchemist's familiarity with relics and their workings grows, she comes to understand the mythologies and analogies

by which they function in the Underworld. In doing so, she learns new manners of feeding them to ensure their continued function — and can release the stored Pathos of activated relics with but a glance.

System: The Alchemist can fuel any relic by infusing it with 1 Pathos or 1 Corpus. This replaces the relic's normal Pathos cost for activation. Each time she fuels a relic with her Corpus, her Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst.

In addition, she can deactivate an empowered relic as an action. The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Perception + Flux; if the relic is under another character's direct control, that character may resist with Willpower. If the Alchemist succeeds, the target relic becomes inert, as if no Pathos was spent to power it for the scene. Said relic cannot be repowered for the duration of the scene.

••••• Reintegrate Relic (Initiate)

Although none among the Restless have found a reliable way to return themselves to life (leaving aside several Arcanoi that create mockeries of it), elder Alchemists can return relics to the world of the living. This art restores a relic to its original material state and transports it across the Shroud. The Alchemist can apply Reintegrate Relic to aid mortal allies, to place dangerous relics beyond her enemies' reach, or even to convert her own treasured relics into Fetters.

System: The Alchemist touches the relic while concentrating on it for a number of turns equal to its value. The player spends 1 Pathos and 1 Corpus per point of the relic's value and rolls Dexterity + Flux. The wraith's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst per point of the relic's value. With success, the relic reverts to its material state and crosses the Shroud into the Skinlands.

If the relic is represented on the Alchemist's character sheet with the Relics Background, the player may spend any amount of temporary Willpower up to its recorded value. The relic becomes a new Fetter for the Alchemist with a value equal to the amount of Willpower spent.

Reintegrate Relic is usable only in the Shadowlands.

Relicforging

Though the Alchemists broke from the Artificers, they never foreswore soulforging, and some still practice it. More of Flux's students, however, learn soulforging only to apply its principles to their related practice of relicforging. Requiring sufficient mastery of Flux to be able to sense and work with the stuff of relics, relicforging uses the Underworld's remnants of destroyed material objects rather than once-human souls. It's not as efficient as soulforging in terms of the finished goods returned for a raw material investment, but most Alchemists consider it more reliable and humane.

A character capable of soulforging who also has Status (Artificers' Guild) ••• or greater is assumed to know relicforging. This craft operates identically to soulforging (p. 42), but it uses relics, rather than souls, as raw materials. Relic raw materials have far more spiritual impurities and less usable material than souls, so it takes a total of relics worth 20 dots of the Relics Background to equal a single wraith's worth of Corpus. All relicforging tasks use the same dice pool as the equivalent soulforging tasks.

Relicforging's output, relicsteel, closely resembles soulsteel and follows all its rules, but relicsteel items don't exhibit any of soulsteel's disquieting characteristics. Additionally, it's impossible to alloy relicsteel with soulsteel, death ore, or any other substance, so there's no such thing as "Stygian relicsteel" (as far as the Alchemists are admitting).

The phrase "ghost in the machine" is a rusted-out cliché when it comes to Inhabit, but if the Pagani Zonda fits, wear it. This venerable Arcanos allows a wraith to immerse his consciousness and form within an inanimate object, gaining increasing control over its operations and fate as his prowess increases. Masters of Inhabit can command machinery with a touch or imbue simple relics with the power of Artifacts.

Before the Arcanoi, there was soulforging. Nhudri, Charon's first and most trusted councilor, brought the secrets of hammer and flame out of the Labyrinth. Upon his disciples' forges was Stygia wrought — and out of their work came Inhabit. By its nature, soulforging transcends mere physical process, requiring a quasi-mystic empathy for the material's personality and properties. As Nhudri and his apprentices refined their techniques, they also explored their growing affinity for the form and energies of mortal engines. Inhabit is the best-known result of these experiments. Modern Artificers learn it separately from soulforging, though some of its ancient arts still highlight its origins.

Guildmarks

Artificers accrue wear and tear mimicking that of the objects they Inhabit. Those who prefer simple objects or physical machinery manifest scuff marks and gouges, smell of exhaust and hot metal, and seep lubricant from under their fingernails. Circuit patterns flicker under the skin of wraiths with a more digital bent, while running error logs of their internal dialogues with their Shadows scroll across their eyes.

Soulforging leaves its own residue on its tradeswraiths, and uninformed Stygian citizens often mistake these for Inhabit's guildmarks. Apprentices are scorched and charred from the forges. Longer-serving smiths take on some of the forges' own aspects, patches of their forms glowing with dull red heat. Smiths of the Guild wear an additional unique token that they forge as a rite of passage and a reminder of their trade's true cost: a coin hammered from one of their own hands.

The Guild

The Artificers' Guild is the modern incarnation of Stygia's oldest trade organization. As Charon drove Stygian expansion in its early centuries, Nhudri took on a trio of apprentices to satisfy the demand for tools and construction materials. These three legendary figures taught other wraiths the arts of soulforging and Inhabit, eventually giving rise to the Society of the Hammer. As Stygia emulated mortal feudal systems, so too did the Society, restyling itself as the Artificers' Guild.

The Artificers' monopoly on soulforging was always the key to its wealth and political power. Vital to the Underworld's economy, the guild enjoyed a strong symbiosis with the Stygian power structure. Its claim to the mantle of Eldest Guild gave it similar pull with its nominal peers — though Artificer heavy handedness also aroused envy and contempt. This fueled the War of the Guilds, and the Artificers displayed unexpected finesse by emerging from this conflict not only undiminished but at the head of the Council of Guilds.

The postwar years were the Artificers' high-water mark. Masterforgers enjoyed power and prestige second only to the

Deathlords', spurring the hubris that drove their fatal overreach in 1598. The failed rebellion cost the Artificers many leaders and shattered their monopoly on soulforging, as lower-ranking fugitives traded service or lessons for protection from Stygia's wrath. Over subsequent centuries, gradual reconciliation with the authorities allowed the Guild to reforge many of its old customs and rites. Recognizing that they can't soulforge the genie into its own bottle, the Guild's leaders grudgingly tolerate non-Artificer smiths, but any smith who doesn't wear the coin quickly learns the social cost of crossing the Eldest Guild.

Under the rule of the Council of Masters, the Artificers remain Stygia's most conservative Guild. Not all Masterforgers are active on the Council, but each one has a voice and a vote when he chooses to exercise it. Most focus on traditional arts; few specialists in electronics, let alone data, are admitted to their ranks. Beneath the Masterforgers are Journeymen, those wraiths skilled enough to earn their own forges, and Apprentices who are still learning their craft. Modern Guild customs superficially resemble labor union practices, though under the surface are a hundred secret societies and Nhudri-venerating mystery cults.

Factions

Though not what it was before the Breaking, Artificer unity remains proverbial. The Guild drills loyalty unto soulforging into every apprentice. Having said that, political differences and diverging specializations have yielded some internal divisions. *Hammerboys* specialize in soulforging, while *Wrench-wraiths* are masters of Inhabiting machinery. Wraiths who Inhabit Internet-connected devices and ride the infosphere tend to eschew labels, though older Artificers have several nicknames for them (none complimentary). *Ghostriders* are a Wrenchwraith subset whose domain is transportation infrastructure; they enjoy close ties with the Harbingers. Artificers who possess machinery for mischievous or malevolent purposes are termed *Gremlins*.

Inhabit

Inhabit Systems

If an object is destroyed while a wraith is Inhabiting it, he's ejected from the item's remains and suffers one level of lethal damage.

If a wraith is attuned to an object (see p. 149), his Inhabit rolls against that item are at –2 difficulty.

Unless otherwise specified, only one wraith at a time can Inhabit an object. If an Artificer attempts to Inhabit something that already contains another wraith, the current occupant's successes cancel the interloper's on a one-for-one basis. If the Artificer wins anyway, the initial occupant is ejected from the object and suffers bashing damage equal to the Artificer's net successes.

Each use of Inhabit on another wraith's Fetter grants the Artificer's Shadow 1 temporary Angst.

• Assume the Shell (Common)

Inhabit's most basic art allows a wraith to insert himself into an inanimate object. He has no control over it and can't perceive anything outside its immediate area, but he may study its inner workings and is undetectable to normal senses.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Inhabit (difficulty 6). Only one success is necessary for the wraith to enter the object; additional successes provide details of the device's principles of operation or information stored within it. If a character scrutinizes the object with any form of supernatural perception that could reveal the wraith's presence, she must beat his successes to detect him.

• Reveal Rider (Initiate)

An Artificer learns to read the subtle signs Inhabit leaves on objects. With a touch, the wraith can determine whether an object is currently Inhabited or has been in the past.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Inhabit (difficulty 7). Each success reveals one prior use of Inhabit, starting with the most recent and working backward. The wraith gains an innate sense of each Artificer's identity and will recognize her on sight; he also learns which Inhabit art she used if he knows it himself. In addition, each success on Reveal Rider counts as two successes for opposing Assume the Shell.

•• Misfire (Common)

By passing his hand through a mechanical or electronic device, the wraith may cause a temporary malfunction. Gears jam, combustion falters, electricity shorts out or surges, and complex electronics throw error messages or reboot themselves. Simple machines are unaffected; a target must have moving parts or run on electrical power to be susceptible to Misfire.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Strength + Inhabit (difficulty 6). The target device is disabled for one turn per success. The operator may attempt to fix the problem with a roll of Wits + an appropriate Ability (Storyteller's discretion; difficulty 6); each success removes one of the wraith's successes.

•• Forge Affinity (Initiate)

Inhabit's origin as an outgrowth of soulforging is evident in this art. While any wraith can learn the smith's art, the extension of one's senses into the soul being worked on the forge remains a closely held Guild technique.

System: The wraith's dots in Inhabit are added to any soulforging roll. Once learned, this art is always active.

••• Claim the Shell (Common)

The wraith may enter a relic or a Skinlands object and use it as a surrogate body. He has full control over all its functions and can move its parts on their own, though he can't make it do anything else outside its own capabilities. For example, a wraith possessing a revolver can cock the hammer, pull the trigger, and swing out the cylinder and eject spent shell casings, but he can't levitate or aim the gun, nor grasp and load fresh ammunition. His senses function normally, though they're spread over the object's entire surface. If a Skinlands object is destroyed while the wraith Inhabits it, he may bring it across the Shroud as a relic (though creating a relic from a container doesn't also create relics from its contents).

System: The player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Strength + Inhabit (difficulty of the local Shroud, or 8 in the Tempest). The number of successes required for success depend on the item's size:

1 success	Handheld: tablet or notebook computer, handgun, power tool, book
2 successes	Two-handed: small appliance, greatsword, web server
3 successes	Human-sized: motorcycle, crew-served heavy weapon, office furniture
4 successes	Vehicular: speedboat, garage workbench, assembly line laser welding robot
5 successes	Industrial: locomotive, marine diesel engine, newspaper printing press
6+ successes	Structural: house, airliner, ship

Claim the Shell lasts for one scene. If the object is destroyed while the wraith is within it, his Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst per success required to Claim it. However, he may convert the item into a relic by spending 1 Willpower, plus 1 Corpus per success required to Claim it.

••• Smith's Tenacity (Initiate)

Most common among Artificers who work the forges, this art allows a wraith to take on some of the attributes of his work's output. When using Smith's Tenacity, the character's skin takes on a metallic sheen and is uncomfortably warm to the touch.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos. For the rest of the scene, the wraith's dots in Inhabit are added to his soak dice pools and he can soak aggravated damage with his Inhabit.

•••• Wire Rider (Common)

With this art, the Artificer can slide into the global network of electricity and digital communication, passing through power grids and data transmissions at the speed of light. Wraithly senses are too slow and entropy-bound to perceive this environment as it truly is, so riding the wires is a vortex of information and electrical flows transposed into a synesthetic fast-forward blur. Imprecise use of Wire Rider, or simply incautious navigation, can land the wraith far from Stygian-claimed territory.

System: The wraith must have a material starting point and destination — while he can travel through wireless transmissions, he needs connected endpoints, even ones as simple as obsolete flip phones. The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Dexterity + Inhabit (difficulty 7). Successes determine maximum distance of travel:

1 success	Line of sight or local cellular tower's range
2 successes	Same city or local power grid
3 successes	Same national power grid or telecommunication network
4 successes	Same continent or satellites in low orbit
5 successes	Global or satellites in geosynchronous orbit

•••• The Tool Knows Its Master (Initiate)

Elder Artificers fear few weapons wrought by the hands of the Quick or the dead. This art infuses an object with a portion of the wraith's own essence, compelling it to act as if it were one with his Corpus — and what rebel portion of his own body would willingly harm the greater part?

System: The wraith must touch the object (material or relic) he wants to affect. The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Dexterity + Inhabit (difficulty 7). For a number of scenes equal to successes rolled, anything or anyone touching the object is considered to be in contact with the wraith for the purposes of his own Arcanoi — effectively, he can channel his touch through the object when using his arts.

In addition, if the object would damage his Corpus, its base damage rating is considered 0 (though extra successes on an attack roll add damage normally). The wraith may use this art reflexively on a weapon as it strikes him. The difficulty increases to 8 for a melee weapon or 9 for a ranged attack, but success takes effect before that attack deals damage.

••••• Empower (Common)

A wraith skilled in this art can imbue a relic with one of his Arcanoi, creating a temporary Artifact. While this power lasts, other wraiths who know the command to activate the relic's power can invoke the art it contains.

System: The player rolls Strength + Inhabit (difficulty 8, +1 if the relic is thematically inappropriate for the Arcanos to

be placed in it). The number of successes indicate the highest-rated art the Artificer may invest in the relic.

The player then selects a single art the wraith knows and pays that art's activation cost one or more times (including gaining any temporary Angst). If the art normally has no activation cost, it costs 1 Pathos for this purpose. If the art normally is always active, it costs 1 Pathos per day of use. This expenditure "fuels" the relic for the appropriate number of uses of that art. Finally, the player spends 1 Corpus and 1 Willpower to "seal" the newly created Artifact and chooses a word, phrase, gesture, or other command that activates the Empowered art.

Anyone who knows the Artifact's activation command may spend 1 Willpower and use the command to invoke the art it contains. If the art normally is always active, each invocation instead activates it for one day. The user pays no additional Pathos, Corpus, or Willpower — those costs were paid when the Artificer created the Artifact. However, if the art bestows temporary Angst, the user's Shadow receives those points. The user's dice pool for the Empowered art is normal, though she may substitute her Occult Ability for the appropriate Arcanos. Once all Empowered applications of the art are used, the Artifact becomes a normal relic again.

There is no way to "recharge" an Empowered item, save for a second invocation of this art.

Example: *Vincent knows Wayfarer's Resolve, an ancient Argos •• art. He wants to place this art into a relic St. Christopher medallion (invoking the Catholic patron saint of travelers). Vincent's player rolls Strength + Inhabit against a difficulty of 8, gaining three successes. This is sufficient to imbue a three-dot art and more than enough for the intended two-dot art.*

In normal use, Wayfarer's Resolve has no activation cost and is always active. Vincent's player decides to spend 7 Pathos to empower the Artifact for seven days of use, then spends an additional 1 Corpus and 1 Willpower to finish the Empowerment.

Vincent gives the medallion to Monique and tells her its activation phrase, (a Latin prayer for St. Christopher's protection). At any time — but hopefully not until she's in the Tempest, where Wayfarer's Resolve is most useful — Monique can speak this prayer and activate the Empowered art for one day. She can do this a total of seven times before the medallion's power is used up.

••••• Compel the Soulsteel (Initiate)

One of the Artificers' Guild's less pleasant aspects is the work it's done over centuries of turning once-living souls into material goods. Common wisdom holds that soulforged wraiths are no longer conscious (if the smith was competent, anyway…), but this art brings that comforting thought into question. Compel the Soulsteel allows a wraith to draw knowledge from the soul that comprises a soulforged item. Whether this is mere psychometry or actual communication with a fragment of someone's trapped consciousness is an ongoing, bitter debate in Artificer circles.

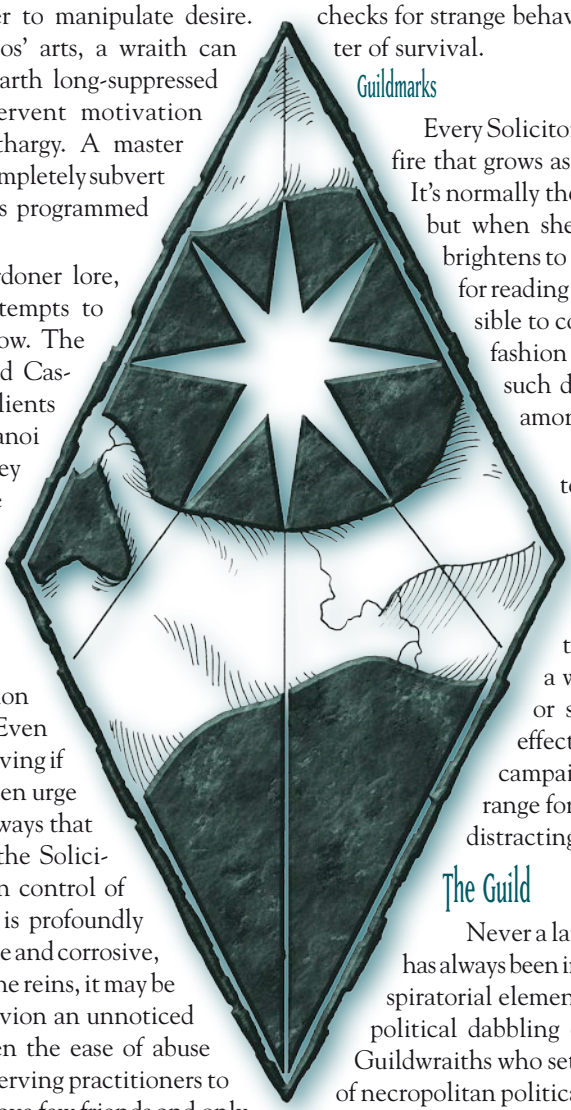
System: The player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Strength + Inhabit (difficulty 8). Each success allows the wraith to ask one question of the target item. If the soul that was forged into the item knows the answer, the character receives a brief vision or a moaned response. The soul can't lie or dissemble, though it only answers each question to the limits of its own residual memories. Compel the Soulsteel can only be used once on any soulforged item, *ever*, and each question asked grants the querent's Shadow 1 point of temporary Angst.

Solicitors

Intimation is the subtle but potentially devastating power to manipulate desire. With this Arcanos' arts, a wraith can inflame zeal, unearth long-suppressed urges, or turn fervent motivation into crushing lethargy. A master Solicitor can so completely subvert her target's will that only monstrous programmed obsessions remain.

According to Solicitor and Pardoner lore, Intimation arose from primitive attempts to understand and influence the Shadow. The relationship between Intimation and Castigate is one neither guild likes its clients to examine too closely, but the Arcanoi do share a common origin. Where they diverge is in focus. While Castigate uses the Shadow's desires to tame that particular shard of Oblivion, Intimation focuses on the desires of both the Shadow and the Psyche for their own sake.

Extreme applications of Intimation are nothing less than brainwashing. Even its minor arts can be profoundly unnerving if a self-aware target realizes that a sudden urge is of alien origin. It's easy to apply in ways that gratify someone's Shadow, whether the Solicitor's or the target's, and a Shadow in control of a Psyche with access to Intimation is profoundly dangerous. Because its effects are subtle and corrosive, particularly when the Shadow holds the reins, it may be the Arcanos most likely to give Oblivion an unnoticed foothold in a wraith's mind. Between the ease of abuse and the disquieting tendency of self-serving practitioners to become Spectres, known Solicitors have few friends and only the limited trust that they can build (or create) themselves. For Circles that count a Solicitor among their number, reciprocal checks for strange behavior aren't paranoia — they're a matter of survival.



Guildmarks

Every Solicitor's left eye has a glimmer of toxic green fire that grows as her mastery of Intimation increases. It's normally the approximate luminosity of a candle, but when she actively uses an Intimation art, it brightens to momentary incandescence, sufficient for reading (if anyone *wants* to read by it). It's possible to cover or hood this light — the Stygian fashion for masks certainly enables it — but such deception is itself cause for suspicion among knowledgeable wraiths.

Since the 15th century, the Solicitors' Guild has used a stylized Catherine wheel as its sigil, invoking the symbolism of breaking a victim's will. Modern Solicitors don't advertise their skills frequently, but they certainly use jewelry or accessories with a wheel motif for mutual identification or subtle intimidation. For more overt effect, a Solicitor conducting a long-term campaign against a particular target will arrange for small wheels to be rolled past him at distracting moments.

The Guild

Never a large organization, the Solicitors' Guild has always been intertwined with the decadent and conspiratorial elements of Stygian nobility. Its first known political dabbling came through a circle of Athenian Guildwraiths who set a price for determining the outcome of necropolitan political deliberations. Since then, it's made its reputation and fortune as a tool of intrigue and influence — and, at times, served less as kingmaker than as ruler in both

name and fact. Intimation's capacity to affect both deathless and mortal personalities made it a valued resource, not only for wraiths who sought power in the Underworld but also those with interests in mortal politics, economics, or theology.

Solicitor power reached its brief zenith at the end of the War of the Guilds, when the Black Death created a massive influx of new wraiths in the Shadowlands and triggered far-reaching upheavals across Europe. Business for Solicitors was brisk, as any titled wraith of note sought advantage over his peers. Distracted by the Skeletal Legion's sudden surge in power, Stygian authorities failed to regulate Solicitor excesses. The emboldened guild saw a chance to seize the reins of power on a massive scale and turned on its patrons — not in a sweeping conspiracy, as its enemies later portrayed, but in 1,000 personal betrayals and power plays that encouraged and fed one another when the involved Solicitors weren't acting at cross purposes.

Had the effort truly been organized, the result may have been the guilds, led by the Solicitors, successfully breaking away from Stygian authority a century before the Artificers' ill-fated attempt at a coup. As it was, the Solicitors suffered the fate of any tool that turns in Stygia's hand. Judging them too dangerous and unreliable to tolerate, Charon and the Deathlords outlawed them and the practice of their art. A concerted campaign of slander, led by the Legions and the Pardoners' Guild, ensured that most wraiths quickly came to mistrust and fear the Solicitors.

The Solicitors who survived their betrayals' consequences did so by forming the very conspiracy of which they'd previously been innocent. Abandoning contact with their former patrons, they turned their attention to the remaining Guilds, seeing them as a means of exacting revenge on the Deathlords. The events of the Guilds' subsequent overreach are well-documented…

Factions

The modern Solicitors' Guild is more secret society and social organization than trade guild, with elaborate initiation rituals (and attendant use of Intimation) to ensure new inductees' loyalty and co-opt would-be spies. Competition for prestige and influence is cutthroat, with only one ironclad law: *Thou shalt not use Intimation on accepted guildmates.* The Spoke of Leo enforces this dictum ruthlessly and without regard for rank. It also pursues knowledge of the Shadow and Spectres. The vindictive Spoke of Aries maintains endless ledgers of Stygian offenses real and imagined. Its leaders carefully tend their ancient grudges and keep their subordinates tirelessly working to infiltrate the Legions to disrupt Hierarchy affairs. Conversely, members of the Spoke of Capricorn see the Skinlands as a giant game board and count their achievements in mortal affairs bent to their whims. Solicitors who still ply their Arcanos commercially are drawn to the Spoke of Taurus and count their wealth in favors owed and wraiths bent to their will. The Spoke of Pisces maintains the Solicitors' few remaining connections with other Guilds and broader society, particularly the Pardoners' Guild and the Silent Legion. They're the Solicitors most likely to be willing to undo others' work for the right price, but also those most likely to be behind Heretic personality cults.

At heart, the Solicitors remain a cabal of political meddlers. Wraiths who learn enough Guild lore often wonder how far Solicitor control of the Underworld really extends. However, the Solicitors' Guild has always been its own worst enemy. An organization capable of manipulating desire in all its forms attracts personalities with strong desires of their own who refuse to sublimate their wants and needs to a greater agenda. Powerful Solicitors have suborned individual Necropoli, whispered poisoned honey into Legionnaires' ears, or become the secret masters behind Heretic cults, but none of their grand conspiracies reach beyond local power. A charismatic leader who could unify the Solicitors behind her own plans would shake

the pillars of Stygia. Fortunately for the Hierarchy, no one has yet aligned the factions' figureheads without succumbing to the temptation to use Intimation on fellow guildwraiths. In fact, the Spoke of Leo has been remarkably adept at exposing and destroying such would-be demagogues for a very long time…

Intimation

Intimation Systems

Unless otherwise noted, the difficulty of any Intimation-related roll is the target's Willpower. This has two broad exceptions:

- Arts that affect a wraith's Shadow use the higher of the wraith's Willpower or the Shadow's permanent Angst.
- Intimation can work across the Shroud to affect both the Quick and the World of Darkness' other denizens. In such cases, the difficulty is the higher of the target's Willpower or the local Shroud rating.

All uses of Intimation on another character require the Solicitor to have clear line of sight to her target's eyes (though mutual eye contact is not necessary).

• Impulse (Common)

Immediate desires are the easiest for a Solicitor to gauge. With a casual glance at a subject, the wraith can discern the desire that's uppermost in his mind at the moment. This isn't always immediately useful information — "I wish I had a pony" isn't terribly actionable — but it can give an advantage in tight negotiations or con jobs.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Intimation. With success, the Solicitor becomes aware of the target's strongest current desire. Additional successes provide more detail on the desire's focus and causes. If the desire in question is a Passion or Dark Passion, the Solicitor identifies it as such, and additional successes provide deeper insight into the Passion's focus.

• Know Thyself (Initiate)

The Solicitors' Guild forbids its members to use Intimation on one another, with the full weight of Oblivion levied against offenders. The most common of the Guild's secret arts ensures that any Solicitor worthy of the name knows when she's been subject to Intimation and strengthens her defenses against it. This art also provides some benefit against certain other Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi.

System: The Solicitor always knows when another wraith has used an Intimation art on her — no roll is necessary. Whenever this occurs, the player may spend 1 Pathos to roll Wits + Intimation (difficulty of the aggressor's dice pool for the art in question). Each success negates one of the aggressor's successes.

Know Thyself also can be used to defend against uses of Castigate and Contaminate, albeit at lesser potency (and it provides no automatic awareness of these Arcanoi unless the Solicitor also knows Adrestia's Communion). Every two successes on the Wits + Intimation roll negates one of the aggressor's successes.

•• Excise (Common)

Excise removes a want from its target. The affected desire can be as simple as a thirst for another beer or as complex as a five-dot Passion to restore the Roman Empire to its rightful place of global power. This art neither softens nor rationalizes its effects. The subject's behavioral changes are obvious, while the subject himself remembers his former desire but can no longer find any motivation to pursue it.

System: To permanently remove an ordinary desire, the player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Manipulation + Intimation. The number of successes determines the complexity and strength of desire Suppress can remove. One success is sufficient to make the victim disinterested in that beer, but curing alcoholism would require five or more. If the victim is unwilling, the Solicitor's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst.

To temporarily suppress a Passion, the player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Manipulation + Intimation. Every three successes reduce the Passion by one dot. Lost dots return in full after a number of days equal to the Solicitor's dots in Intimation. If the victim is unwilling, the Solicitor's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst per dot of Passion suppressed. If a target's Passion is reduced to zero in this manner, it cannot be used to acquire Pathos. Also, it is impossible for this art to be used to remove a Passion permanently.

•• Launch a Thousand Ships (Initiate)

Turning her art inward, the Solicitor makes herself an object of desire. Observers' reactions range from sexual fixation to artistic appreciation, depending on their individual ideals. First impressions are more favorable, performance art becomes more memorable, and charm and seduction have devastating effects.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos. For the rest of the scene, the Solicitor adds her dots in Intimation to her Appearance, even if this raises the Attribute above 5.

••• Unfold the Animal Heart (Common)

The wraith can peer deep into a target's psyche, mapping his wants and needs in detail. Though other Intimation arts may be more potent, this one made the Solicitors' reputation and

Intimate Issues

Even for a game as emotion-focused as **Wraith**, Intimation is potentially problematic. Its arts can easily demonize characters — or, worse, raise uncomfortable issues of control and trust for players. Storytellers should allow Intimation into their games only if all parties are comfortable with its effects and implications. Storytellers should feel comfortable declaring specific effects of Intimation out of bounds, or barring it from their games entirely.

drove their centuries of involvement with Stygian potentates' machinations.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Wits + Intimation. One success reveals the target's Archetype. Each additional success reveals one of his Passions, starting with the highest rated. If all Passions are revealed in this fashion, then additional successes display one of his desires that isn't mechanically represented as a Passion.

If the target is currently controlled by his Shadow, this art instead reveals the Shadow's Archetype and Dark Passions. In addition, the Solicitor's Shadow gains 2 temporary Angst.

••• Apple of Discord (Initiate)

One of Intimation's less-subtle arts, Apple of Discord applies an aura of desirability to a material object or relic. The item's physical appearance doesn't change but it evokes an acquisitive or possessive response in observers. This can trigger a schism within an affected group, as in the eponymous legend, or can be an "I win" button for a wraithly snake oil vendor.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Wits + Intimation (difficulty 7 for a target on the same side of the Shroud, otherwise difficulty of the local Shroud). For the rest of the scene, any other wraith near the ensorcelled object must succeed in a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) or gain a temporary but functional Passion focused on acquiring and protecting the object. This Passion's value is equal to the number of successes rolled. Characters who aren't susceptible to Passions (i.e., non-wraiths) must succeed in the same roll or gain an obsession derangement focused on the object. Any Passion or derangement gained through this art fades at the end of the scene.

•••• Ignite (Common)

This art implants a complex desire for anything, ranging from really good food to total conquest of all Bohemian Necropoli. This artificial drive becomes the obsessive centerpiece of the victim's existence. Like Excise, Ignite is unsubtle and psychically violent. Its behavioral effects are obvious to the victim and all around him.

System: The player precisely describes the craving she wants to create, then spends 4 Pathos and rolls Manipulation + Intimation. The roll's difficulty is modified by the desire's complexity and the effort required to satisfy it:

–2	Trivial (eat French food, fold a dozen paper airplanes)
–1	Routine (visit Paris, keep up routine maintenance on a small plane)
—	Problematic (gain fluency in French, rebuild a radial engine without a manual)
+1	Exhausting (become a French foreign policy expert, rebuild a salvaged warbird)
+2	Nigh Impossible (conquer France, design and build an airliner)

With one success, the Solicitor can implant a desire that naturally follows the subject's existing inclinations. With three successes, she can create a desire unrelated to his natural interests. With five successes, she can build a desire that's uncharacteristic of his normal behavior, so long as it doesn't oppose his Nature or lead obviously to Oblivion. The Solicitor's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst per success. The implanted desire lasts until the victim satisfies it or a number of weeks equal to the Solicitor's Willpower, whichever comes first. Ignite is responsible for many of the ghost stories of strange, sudden manias afflicting residents of haunted houses, and wraiths who attempt to intervene against a desire implanted in this way may find themselves dealing with an unexpectedly violent reaction.

Ignite can't create a Passion, nor can its victim gain Pathos from following the implanted desire.

If the target's Shadow is in control when the Solicitor uses this art, the Shadow, not the Psyche, gains the desire. The Solicitor's Shadow still gains 1 temporary Angst per success.

•••• Two Fires (Initiate)

Sufficient understanding of a subject's Passions allows the Solicitor to bind them to her own Psyche. In doing so, she and her subject benefit from each other's emotional experiences. Most elder Solicitors maintain entire coteries of Passion-bound wraiths, ensuring a constant supply of Pathos.

System: The player selects one of her target's Passions, spends 4 Pathos, and rolls Wits + Intimation. With success, the Solicitor gains one dot per success in the target Passion, with a maximum rating one less than that which the target possesses (e.g., if the target has the Passion at •••, the Solicitor can't gain it higher than ••). The target's own Passion is reduced by one dot.

These effects last for one day per dot of the Solicitor's Willpower. While Two Fires is in effect, whenever one of the characters gains any amount of Pathos from the affected Passion, the other also gains one point of Pathos.

If the target's Shadow is in control when the Solicitor uses this art, she must select one of that Shadow's Dark Passions, which she gains as a normal Passion. Whenever her target's Shadow gains Angst from the affected Dark Passion, she gains one point of Pathos and her Shadow gains one point of temporary Angst.

••••• A Single Thread (Common)

The culmination of the Solicitor's art, A Single Thread is an insidious power that can elevate the ordinary and cripple the mighty. The wraith can rewrite a target's desires so subtly that even close friends and the victim himself perceive the changes in the victim's psyche as a natural progression. At the same time, the range of possible changes expands to violent shifts in personality and obvious roads to Oblivion.

System: The art duplicates the basic effects of Excise and Ignite, using their normal dice pools. However, in place of those arts' usual costs, each use of A Single Thread costs 4 Pathos and 2 Willpower, and all gains in temporary Angst increase by 2. In addition, with more than five successes, the Solicitor can enact changes that directly oppose the subject's Nature or that are overtly self-destructive.

Successful use of A Single Thread is undetectable unless someone specifically assesses the victim for signs of outside influence, a process requiring extensive psychotherapy or self-examination. Even then, introspection requires the victim to beat the Solicitor's successes with an Intelligence + Eidolon roll (difficulty of the Solicitor's Willpower) to detect signs of tampering. An outside examination must beat the Solicitor's successes with an Intelligence + Empathy roll (difficulty of the Solicitor's Willpower).

••••• Adrestia's Communion (Initiate)

While no wraith reaches true accommodation with her Shadow, a Solicitor who knows this art understands what her darker half wants. Moreover, she can apply the same knowledge to others' Shadows, extending the reach of her Intimation to them. The price of such dark knowledge is a few more steps toward Oblivion's precipice.

System: The Solicitor can use any Intimation art on a target wraith's Shadow, even if that Shadow isn't currently in control. Each use of Intimation on a non-dominant Shadow grants the Solicitor's own Shadow 1 temporary Angst in addition to all normal costs.

Additionally, the Solicitor can apply Intimation to her own Shadow, though this is fraught with peril. Her Shadow always resists with its permanent Angst, and if it rolls more successes, it immediately takes control for the rest of the scene.

When the Solicitor learns this art, her own Shadow gains 1 permanent Angst.

Chanteurs

Music, the Quick say, has charms to soothe a savage breast. In the Skinlands, this is a romantic fantasy, but the Restless understand music's power to stir the emotions and provoke people to action. Keening draws upon this power, allowing those who understand it to make music that provides a soothing balm for the soul — or strikes their enemies as lethally as any blade.

Guildmarks

The Chanteurs' guildmark is aural rather than visible. If a wraith stands near a Chanteur and listens carefully, he can hear some version of the Chanteur's favorite song in life (or some other song with deep meaning for her) playing faintly, almost as if the Chanteur has her own soundtrack. Any significant noise, including any use of a Keening art, drowns out this background music (unless the wraith succeeds with a Perception + Awareness roll against difficulty 9), but it never goes away completely.

Many Chanteurs also like to travel with some form of musical instrument or instrument iconography — a relic guitar, perhaps, or a brooch in the shape of a harp. These are affectations, however, and are more likely to be found on wannabes and followers of true Chanteurs than on the genuine article.

The Guild

Given their tendency toward creative individualism, the Chanteurs didn't consolidate as a Guild for a long time. Even then the primary motivation (aside from shared love of music) was the need for "defense" against other Guilds, not any desire to work together. As solo performers or small circles they pursued their art in their own way, often taking advantage of their popularity as entertainers to gain access to (and influence in) the highest levels of Underworld society.

But in the years leading up to the revolt, the Chanteurs found their influence waning in the face of other forces. Some of the most powerful Chanteurs — including a few whose names the Quick still revere, such as Taliesin the Bright and Homer, composer of epics — took it upon themselves to combat the problem by founding the Guild proper. This "Council of Poets," as it soon became known, used logic, persuasion, and sometimes bribery to win many Chanteurs to its cause, but others rejected their overtures. Stubbornly refusing to give up their independence, these "Nightingales" sometimes actively worked against the Council or disrupted its attempts to band the Chanteurs together. Ironically, since they often had to work together against the Council, the Nightingales evolved into an organization themselves, and this was the key to their undoing.

The Council challenged the Nightingales' leaders to a musical competition, with the winning side to determine how the Chanteurs would move forward. The Nightingales, convinced their "freedom" meant they had the greater artistry, agreed. But a panel of Anacreon judges unanimously gave the Council the laurel wreath. Legend claims the Council won because its most talented quartet traveled to a place where two great Byways crossed to learn secret music of surpassing beauty from a mysterious, dark spirit — but if asked, any Chanteur will either deny or laugh at this explanation.

With the competition done, most Nightingales joined the guild. But the nascent group had barely established itself when the Artificers touched off the revolt against Charon. Romantics almost to a wraith, the Chanteurs couldn't help but join the noble struggle — whether it led to glorious victory or was a doomed cause from the start, it would inspire great songs. Few Chanteurs fought on the front lines of the revolt. Instead, from their positions in the courts of the Anacreons and homes of the wealthy, they wielded their influence as a weapon to misdirect anti-rebel efforts, or served as spies for the Guilds' cause. Many Chanteurs played their parts so well that even after the Breaking they were still able to subtly sway the great and powerful on the isle.

Since then the Chanteurs have mostly focused on their artistic and commercial pursuits rather than political machinations. But they know how the world works, so they keep their feet on the ground even if their heads are often in the clouds. And who knows when another cause may fan the heroic fires that burn in most Chanteurs' souls into a blaze that drives them to action?

Factions

From some perspectives, the Guild of Chanteurs is nothing *but* factions — often factions composed of a single Circle (usually known as "bands," "troupes," "orchestras," or the like). The Guild has authority in matters of interest to all Chanteurs, and arbitrates disputes among its members, but only an event of major significance gets the Chanteurs to work together in true Guild fashion.

Some of the differences of perspective or practice that divide the Chanteurs include: the *Troubadours*, ever eager for information, some of which they pass on through song and story, some of which they keep for themselves; the *Outcasts*, whose music emphasizes rebellion, discontent, and anger at "the system"; the *Romantics*, who believe music can lead to love, tranquility, and ultimately Transcendence; the *Hadean Symphony*, whose members seek to create elaborate musical performances (often using bizarre instruments), and who often serve as leaders of the Guild; the *Hard Corps*, who wield music as a weapon against Oblivion and its creatures; the *Jesters*, or "Comedians," who work Keening through humor rather than music; and the *Sanguine Chorus*, a network of Chanteur spies. It's not uncommon for a Chanteur to cycle between several factions over the course of her unlife as her philosophy of music and existence changes.

Keening

Keening Systems

Keening is a broadly focused Arcanos, able to affect or create nearly any emotion in the right circumstances. While Chanteurs have an easier time dealing with negative emotions, their songs can bring joy, inspire courage, or plant the seeds of love in a wraith's heart.

Most Keening involves singing and playing instruments, but Chanteurs don't have to make music to use Keening's arts. Some Chanteurs work through dance, acting, humor, mime, or other forms of performance in which music isn't a part. This is not commonly known, and Chanteurs who can use other forms of expression to channel their powers often find themselves with a significant tactical advantage.

Gaining Pathos from emotions elicited by Keening is difficult, since they're artificial. The difficulty is 9, or 8 for wraiths who have three or more dots in Keening. It is said that Pathos garnered from this source feels somehow blander and more artificial than that gathered naturally, though younger Chanteurs dismiss this as the grumbling of old fuddy-duddies who are too hidebound to seek emotion of their own.

Failed Keening rolls can create emotional "feedback," meaning the Chanteur's Shadow may gain 1 temporary Angst from the discord.

• Hearing Voices (Common)

The Chanteur can make it seem as if his voice comes from a nearby person or object rather than himself.

System: Hearing Voices costs 1 Pathos. The player rolls Manipulation + Keening (difficulty 7). On a success, the wraith may make his voice seem to come from an object up to 10 feet away (plus two feet per success). Determining the true source of the voice requires a Perception +

Awareness roll that achieves more successes than the Hearing Voices roll.

• Sotto Voce (Initiate)

The cleverest Chanteurs can hide their powers in ordinary song or conversation.

System: Sotto Voce costs 1 Pathos. The player rolls Manipulation + Keening (difficulty 6). If he succeeds, his use of Keening seems like ordinary music or speech. Any wraith that has even one dot in any Keening power can perceive the truth if he achieves more successes on a Perception + Keening roll than the Chanteur achieved on her Sotto Voce roll.

•• Mood Music (Common)

One of the basic arts of the Chanteur is to evoke emotions through music. "Dark" emotions are easier to appeal to than lighter ones, but a skilled Chanteur can create joy almost as easily as sorrow.

System: To create a "negative" emotion — for example, despair, fear, self-loathing, hatred, envy, bitterness, jealousy, or anger — the Chanteur must spend 1 Pathos. The player rolls Charisma + Keening (difficulty 7), with the number of successes indicating the depth and duration of the feeling evoked: 1 day per success for one of the Quick, one hour per success for a wraith.

To create a "positive" emotion — such as hope, love, courage, happiness, or tranquility — the Chanteur must spend 2 Pathos. The player rolls Manipulation + Keening (difficulty 8), using the same depth and duration rules as negative emotions. These emotions can be used to trigger Passions — or Dark Passions — as the situation warrants.

•• Cacophony (Initiate)

The Chanteur's discordant playing and singing deafens and disorients everyone near her and disrupts other Keening arts.

System: The Chanteur pays 2 Pathos. If she uses Cacophony to disrupt another wraith's Keening, she also acquires 1 temporary Angst.

The player rolls Willpower + Keening (difficulty 7). The number of successes indicates two things. The first is the number of turns anyone within hearing range is deafened and disoriented. This inflicts a +1 difficulty penalty on most rolls, and may make some actions (such as communicating by speech) impossible. Second, if another Chanteur is using some other Keening art within hearing distance, if the successes with Cacophony equal or exceed his successes with the art he's using, that art immediately ceases to have any effect. If the other Chanteur wants to reestablish it he has to pay any cost again, use another action, and restart his attempt.

A Chanteur cannot use Cacophony with Sotto Voce.

••• Satire (Common)

In the often politically charged Underworld, a wraith's influence and good reputation are among the most important assets she has — and this art can strip them from her in the time it takes to sing a song. The Chanteur composes a song or story that casts a particular wraith in a negative light (either for some specific sin, or in general), plays it to an audience, and then sits back to watch the subject's social standing evaporate as fast as gossip can spread.

System: The wraith spends 2 Pathos to use Satire. Additionally, if the Chanteur later discovers the subject genuinely didn't deserve to be Satirized, she gains 1 temporary Angst.

The player rolls Charisma + Keening. The Storyteller sets the difficulty based on the subject's popularity: Satirizing an unpopular nobleman or Hierarchy bureaucrat is difficulty 5, whereas trying to get the wraiths of a Necropolis to turn on a beloved centurion is difficulty 9 or 10. For every two successes achieved, the subject suffers the following effects:

He gains one dot of Notoriety based on whatever the Chanteur's song describes or accuses him of.

He loses one dot in Status (if he has any).

The difficulty of any rolls he makes involving Bureaucracy, Leadership, Politics, and any other ability the Storyteller deems relevant increases by 1.

Other problems may arise at the Storyteller's discretion. For example, Allies and Contacts may shy away from the subject, wraiths may not attend his speeches or performances, or his circle may expel him.

The difficulties caused by Satire typically last one week per success (or until something happens that would negate the Satire's effects, such as if a Legionnaire accused of cowardice demonstrates great bravery in public). But the Chanteur may suffer difficulties of her own as a result, since few powerful people take being Satirized lying down.

••• Siren Song (Initiate)

Some Chanteurs know a way to sing that attracts another wraith's attention to them in an almost obsessive way.

System: The wraith spends 2 Pathos to use Siren Song. She must also have the opportunity to sing to the target, talk to him at length, or interact with him in some similar way. Siren Song only affects a single target even if the Chanteur performs to a large audience.

The player rolls Manipulation + Keening (difficulty of the target's Willpower). The Chanteur receives extra dice equal to the number of successes for any Social Attribute-based rolls against the victim. Anyone else trying to make a Social Attribute-based roll against the victim loses a number of dice equal to the successes.

Siren Song's effects last for one hour per dot the Chanteur has in Charisma.

•••• Crescendo (Common)

Music is usually a gentle, subtle weapon, but not so this art, which uses the power of sound to damage plasm. The target has to be fairly close to the Chanteur to suffer the full effect,

but the Chanteur screams a blast of music so loud that wraiths a mile away can hear it.

System: The wraith spends 3 Pathos and gains 1 temporary Angst. The player rolls Stamina + Keening (difficulty 8). Each success inflicts one Corpus level of lethal damage to every wraith within normal hearing distance (other than the Chanteur herself).

If the Chanteur is Embodied, singing a Crescendo causes listeners to experience such intense fear that they take 1 health level of lethal damage per two successes.

A Chanteur cannot use Crescendo with Sotto Voce.

•••• Banshee (Initiate)

Ancient legends from the British Isles say that if you hear a banshee wail, you will soon die. Such stories may have arisen from Chanteurs' use of this art, which inflicts painful injuries that don't take effect until a specified condition occurs.

System: The wraith spends 3 Pathos and gains 1 temporary Angst. The player rolls Charisma + Keening (difficulty 8). Each success inflicts one Corpus level of aggravated damage to a victim who hears the Chanteur's song, but the victim doesn't actually take the damage until a condition specified by the Chanteur in that song occurs. The most common conditions are after the passage of a certain amount of time, after the victim takes a certain number of steps, or if the victim ever enters (or leaves) a defined location.

The Storyteller should veto any condition the Chanteur tries to impose that's unbalancing or inappropriate for the chronicle. For example, "if you ever do anything I don't like" often isn't a legitimate condition, but "if you ever attack [my loved one]" might be.

A Chanteur who imposes a Banshee on someone can remove it at any time; this requires one turn in the victim's presence and a point of Pathos. Many wraiths have tried other ways to get rid of a Banshee, but so far none of them has succeeded.

••••• Requiem (Common)

The Chanteur plays a song so profound that intense emotions afflict the victim, preventing him from doing anything but suffer the psychological storm.

System: The wraith spends 3 Pathos, plus 1 Pathos per success, to use Requiem. He then chooses what emotion(s) to afflict the target with. If the emotions are especially "dark," the Chanteur also gains 1 temporary Angst.

The player rolls Charisma + Keening (difficulty 7). A target who's prepared for the attack can resist by rolling Willpower; otherwise the target gets no defense. Each success paralyzes the target for one turn; he's so overcome with emotion that he cannot speak, move, use Arcanoi, or the like.

Especially strong Requiems inflict long-term harm on the target. If the Chanteur scores five or more successes using a "dark" emotion, the target loses one dot in a Mental Attribute chosen randomly by the Storyteller. If the emotions are "bright" or positive, the target becomes addicted to the rush and does whatever it takes to experience it once more.

••••• Out Of Tune (Initiate)

Like a Quick opera singer breaking a glass with a high note, this art allows a Chanteur to temporarily disrupt a wraith's attunements.

System: While in the presence of either the target wraith or the person/object the target's attuned to, the Chanteur spends 3 Pathos.

The player rolls Intelligence + Keening (difficulty 8). A target who's attacked directly and is prepared can resist by rolling Willpower; otherwise the target gets no defense. Each success achieved weakens an attunement as follows:

- With Embody, each success reduces the –3 difficulty reduction by 1 *or* reduces the reduction in Pathos or Corpus cost by 1 (Chanteur player's choice).
- With Inhabit, each success reduces the –2 difficulty reduction by 1.
- With Puppetry, the Puppeteer must roll Willpower (difficulty 6) on a contested roll or be temporarily evicted from his current flesh suit.
- With other Arcanoi, the Storyteller decides the effects based on how attunement works in his chronicle.

The effects of Out Of Tune typically last for one day per success. The victim may cut this period short by spending the appropriate amount of Willpower to reattune the person or object.

Monitors

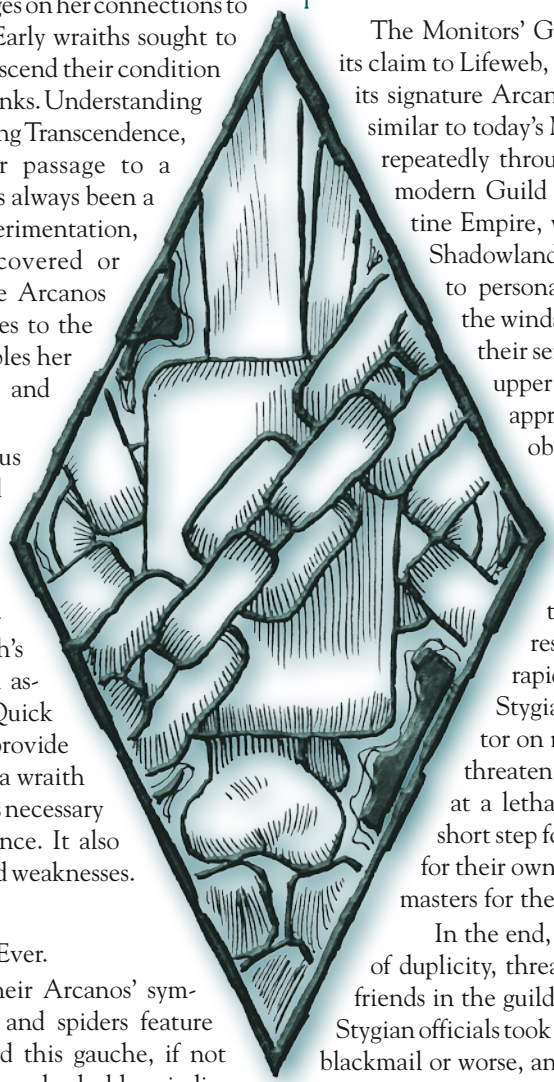
Every wraith's existence, at least in her initial Restless years, hinges on her connections to the living world. Early wraiths sought to understand or transcend their condition by studying these links. Understanding the bonds preventing Transcendence, reincarnation, or passage to a particular faith's promised afterlife has always been a common goal. Over millennia of experimentation, scores of the Restless have rediscovered or spontaneously recreated Lifeweb, the Arcanos that grants awareness of a wraith's ties to the living — and, with deeper study, enables her to affect both her own connections and those of other wraiths.

Basic Lifeweb techniques focus on the links between a Monitor and her Fetters. Indeed, the uninitiated tend to think of Lifeweb as dealing exclusively in Fetters. Subtler and less common arts, however, allow the Monitor to peer deeper into another wraith's existence, perceiving Haunts, mortal associates, and even the memories the Quick hold of the subject. Such insight can provide early warning of threats to the things a wraith holds dear or unlock the self-awareness necessary for the first steps toward Transcendence. It also can reveal an enemy's most closely held weaknesses.

Guildmarks

Monitors never close their eyes. Ever.

Some Monitors, enamored of their Arcanos' symbolism, affect styles in which webs and spiders feature prominently. Older Guildwraiths find this gauche, if not a foolhardy taunt of the many Restless who hold prejudices against the Guild.



The Guild

The Monitors' Guild has never distinguished itself by its claim to Lifeweb, but rather by the uses to which it puts its signature Arcanos. Like Lifeweb itself, organizations similar to today's Monitors have arisen and disappeared repeatedly throughout Stygia's recorded history. The modern Guild traces its origin to the early Byzantine Empire, when mortal turmoil reflected in the Shadowlands made it difficult for many wraiths to personally watch over Fetters scattered by the winds of change. The first Monitors offered their services exclusively to Stygian nobility's upper ranks, but as the Guild swelled with apprentices, it eventually welcomed the oboli of the average wraith on the street.

Access to Imperial society's highest strata offered many opportunities. When combined with ever-increasing refinements of Lifeweb's oracular arts, the temptation to intrigue proved irresistible to many Monitors. The Guild rapidly insinuated itself into every aspect of Stygian politics. A faction without a Monitor on retainer to blackmail its opponents or threaten their Fetters with destruction operated at a lethal disadvantage. From there, it was a short step for the Monitors to apply such leverage for their own agendas, abandoning their ostensible masters for the pursuit of personal or Guild power.

In the end, the Monitors went too far. Centuries of duplicity, threats, and intrusion left them with few friends in the guildhalls and fewer in the citadels. Many Stygian officials took the Breaking as an invitation to escape blackmail or worse, and fugitive Monitors found every door barred to them. Those who escaped the forges remained on the run far longer than most other Guildwraiths. Even today,

Monitors are a paranoid lot, as ongoing misdeeds and abuses of Lifeweb perpetuate their historical reputation.

Factions

Before the Breaking, the Monitors were a multifaceted jewel of treachery and plotting, with the occasional shining altruist or plodding tradesman standing aloof from the 100 shifting factions. Survival imperatives erased many of these differences during the years of flight. The modern Monitors' Guild maintains few orders or established lodges, though members tend to coalesce around shared agendas, some of which they inherited from pre-Breaking factions. *Mentors* work to locate and Reap new wraiths and acclimate them to the Shadowlands, either to rebuild the Guild's reputation through good works or to gain early leverage over fresh lemures. *Marmarans* carry on the Monitors' unsavory tradition of political meddling, occasionally coalescing into short-lived cabals that dissolve in frenzies of backstabbing. *Spinners* try to stick to business, offering Lifeweb services and (rarely) instruction for hire. *Tsuchigumo* are Lifeweb-empowered petty criminals, running protection rackets on other wraiths' Fetters or linking victims to Fetters that are about to be destroyed.

Lifeweb

Lifeweb Systems

Under normal circumstances, Fetters reside in the Skinlands, so when a Lifeweb art affects a Fetter, the difficulty is the Shroud rating at that Fetter's location. If the Fetter somehow winds up in the Underworld, the difficulty is as follows. If it's in the Shadowlands, 7; if it's in the Tempest 8, and 9 if it's in the Labyrinth, closest to Oblivion.

Even the subtlest Lifeweb uses can have an observer effect, potentially warning the target that the Monitor is examining him. When a wraith is subject to any Lifeweb art that isn't immediately obvious through other means, he may make a Perception + Awareness roll. One success alerts him to the fact that someone's toying with part of his being. With three or more successes, he identifies the Monitor as the source.

• Sense Strands (Common)

The Monitor develops a constant intuitive awareness of her Fetters' locations. By concentrating on one, she can extend her perceptions to its immediate vicinity.

System: Once the wraith learns this art, she always knows where her Fetters are. No roll is necessary.

When the Monitor extends her senses to one of her Fetters, the player rolls Perception + Lifeweb. Each success on this roll allows her to use one die of her normal Perception + Alertness pool to survey the Fetter's location.

If the player spends 1 Pathos when activating this art, she also may assess the Fetter's location with a Perception + Awareness roll, subject to the same dice pool limit.

• Vibrations in the Web (Initiate)

While Sense Strands focuses on the Monitor's own Fetters, this complementary art extends her perceptions outward, enabling her to perceive the connections between other wraiths and their Fetters.

System: When the Monitor examines another wraith, the player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Perception + Lifeweb. The target may resist with Willpower if he desires. Each net success gives the Monitor one piece of information about one of the target's Fetters: location, physical description, or emotional significance to the target.

The Monitor also may examine an object or person to determine if it is a Fetter. Again, the player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Perception + Lifeweb. Each net success gives the Monitor one piece of information about one wraith who has the target as a Fetter: location, physical description, or emotional relationship with the Fetter. If the Monitor is trying to determine whether the subject is a Fetter for a particular wraith, this is the first piece of information she gleans.

•• Strand Channel (Common)

The wraith can extend her presence to a Fetter, channeling her voice and Arcanoi as if she were standing beside it.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Intelligence + Lifeweb. For one turn per success, the wraith may use any Arcanos art she knows as if she were at the Fetter's location (though she may still use them normally at her own location if she so chooses). She also may speak through the Fetter, with her voice seeming to originate from it.

If the wraith isn't already using Sense Strands to perceive her Fet-

ter's location, every two successes on the roll to activate Strand Channel count as one success for Sense Strands. This applies even if the Monitor doesn't know Sense Strands.

•• Echoes in the Web (Initiate)

Once the Monitor learns to perceive the energy traces that bind the Restless to their Fetters, she can refine this sense to uncover more subtle relationships between the wraith and the world of the Quick. Movement in the Web reveals the emotional resonance between a given wraith and the collective minds of humanity.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and makes a resisted Perception + Lifeweb roll against the target's Willpower. Each success reveals one key fact about one of the target's Backgrounds that involves a connection to the living. Typically, these will be mortal Allies, Contacts, or Mentors, a Haunt, a Legacy, or Memoriam. If the scrutinized wraith has none of these Backgrounds, that's useable information, too…

••• Splice Strand (Common)

From sensing and using existing Fetters, the Monitor moves to building new connections to the world of the Quick. Through intense concentration and physical contact with a person, place, or thing, she can establish a temporary Fetter bond with it — or between it and another wraith.

System: The character first touches the living being, place, or material object that she wants to make into a temporary Fetter. The player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Intelligence + Lifeweb. With any successes, the target becomes a new one-dot Fetter for the Monitor.

During the same scene, the Monitor may transfer the temporary Fetter from herself to another wraith, whom she must touch. The player spends 1 additional Pathos and rolls Intelligence + Lifeweb (difficulty 7). If the subject wraith is unwilling, this becomes a resisted roll against his Willpower, and the Monitor's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst. If the Monitor succeeds, the temporary Fetter transfers from her to the target wraith.

The effects of Splice Strand last for one day per initial success (use the worse of the two results if the Monitor transferred the temporary Fetter). After that, the wraith holding the temporary Fetter may pay 1 Pathos per day to maintain it. No wraith may have more than one temporary Fetter at a time through this art.

The Monitor may use Splice Strand to repair the effect of Sever Strand. All difficulties increase by 2, but success restores the Fetter at its full strength and permanence (and ongoing Pathos maintenance is unnecessary).

••• Web Parasite (Initiate)

A Monitor who fully understands another wraith's reflections in mortal memories can attune herself to those connections, using their power as if they were her own. In doing so, she also assumes a portion of her victim's psyche. It's an unsettling metamorphosis, but one that's necessary to deceive the Underworld's metaphysics. Oblivion, of course, is not so easily fooled, and the Monitor's Shadow sometimes gains unpleasant insight into the victim — insight that the victim's Shadow reciprocally shares when Web Parasite's effects lapse.

System: The Monitor must understand (through Movement in the Web or basic investigation) another wraith's connection to a Legacy or Memoriam Background and must be in a place with an actual or symbolic connection to the Background in question. The player spends 1 Willpower and rolls Perception + Lifeweb (difficulty of the local Shroud rating). Each success transfers 1 dot of the Background from its rightful owner to the Monitor. The Monitor also gains the target wraith's strongest Passion at 1 dot.

The Monitor's Shadow gains 1 Angst per success. It also gains the strongest Dark Passion of the target wraith's Shadow at 1 dot.

Web Parasite's effects last for one week (save for the Angst, which functions normally). The player can extend it indefinitely at the cost of 1 Willpower per week, though each time she does this, the Monitor's Shadow also gains 1 additional temporary Angst. This art is immediately obvious, though the victim doesn't automatically know who's leeching his connections to the Quick.

•••• Sever Strand (Common)

This unwholesome art empowers the Monitor to rend wraiths from their Fetters. Unfortunate victims of Sever Strand suffer the usual effects of losing Fetters, plunging straight into Harrowings. Sever Strand closely resembles the dark arts by which some Spectres can rend Fetters, a fact which some critics have used to question the Monitors' Guild's relationship with the Labyrinth.

System: The Monitor must touch the target Fetter. The player spends 2 Pathos and 1 Willpower and makes a resisted Intelligence + Lifeweb roll against the Fetter owner's Willpower. Each net success reduces the Fetter by 1 dot and grants the Monitor's Shadow 1 temporary Angst.

If a Fetter is reduced in power but not completely severed, it recovers one lost dot per hour. A wraith whose Fetter is severed through this art (and who survives the subsequent Harrowing) may reattach the Fetter by touching it and spending a *permanent* Willpower dot. Alternately, he may use Splice Strand (or seek out a friendlier Monitor) to repair the damage.

•••• Walk the Web (Initiate)

Drawing on the spiritual tug of a Fetter, the Monitor can travel to it with breathtaking speed. This allows not only convenient travel for ordinary business but a swift rescue of a threatened Fetter. However, a wise Monitor looks before leaping — threatening a Fetter to lure a wraith into ambush is a time-honored tactic.

System: The player spends 3 Pathos and 2 Corpus and rolls Perception + Lifeweb. Successes determine travel time, regardless of distance:

1 success	One hour.
2 successes	15 minutes.
3 successes	One minute.
4 successes	15 seconds (5 turns).
5 successes	One turn.

While traveling via this art, the wraith is a hazy, intangible presence in the Underworld. To her perceptions, her surroundings are likewise a gray blur, save for a shining silver network of links between wraiths and Fetters. She may take no other actions while traveling, including using other Lifeweb arts.

The Monitor may bring along companions. All members of the group must hold hands. Each "passenger" who lacks Lifeweb increases the difficulty of all associated rolls by 1 (maximum 10). In addition, the Monitor pays 1 extra Pathos per passenger, and each passenger must spend 1 Willpower or be left behind when the Monitor departs.

••••• Souls Interwoven (Common)

A Monitor who masters the interplay of energy between wraiths and their Fetters may establish her own new, permanent bonds. The wraith using this art takes on a willing mortal as a Fetter. In return, the mortal can communicate with the Monitor at will. The mortal must enter into the bargain voluntarily, though the Monitor is certainly free to make promises she has no intention of keeping. That matter is between her and her Shadow.

System: The Monitor must touch the being she wishes to bond as a Fetter. The player spends 5 Pathos and 3 Willpower and rolls Intelligence + Lifeweb. The number of successes determines the new Fetter's strength:

1-2 successes	Fetter •
3-5 successes	Fetter ••
6+ successes	Fetter •••

As long as the wraith has the mortal as a Fetter, the mortal can spend 1 Willpower at any time to communicate with the Monitor for the rest of that scene, regardless of location or distance. Each party must speak aloud to be heard, and any supernatural power relying exclusively on speech may pass over this link (in either direction).

The Monitor can use this art on a living (or undead) supernatural being, but doing so requires an additional Pathos expenditure equal to the subject's Willpower. The subject also must spend 5 points of whatever supernatural energy it uses in lieu of Pathos (e.g., Blood, Rage, Quintessence, and if all else fails, Willpower). Using Souls Interwoven on a vampire or other undead creature also gives the Monitor's Shadow an amount of temporary Angst equal to half the deathless thing's Willpower.

Use of Souls Interwoven is a blatant violation of the *Dictum Mortuum*, which is why sensible Monitors claim it's impossible.

••••• Master in the Web (Initiate)

For all its powers of manipulation, Lifeweb is an Arcanos of seeing and knowing. Elder Monitors who study Lifeweb's signs and symbols in detail can transcend their perceptions to a state of near-omniscience. However, the constant, inescapable flood of information grinds away the Monitor's Psyche — and invigorates her Shadow with visions of the damage it can do.

System: Once the Monitor learns Master in the Web, she may use Sense Strands, Vibrations in the Web, and Echoes in the Web at will (even if she doesn't already possess the art in question) and without paying Pathos. For any involved roll that isn't a botch, the *minimum* outcome is 1 success for an art she doesn't possess and 3 successes for an art she does possess.

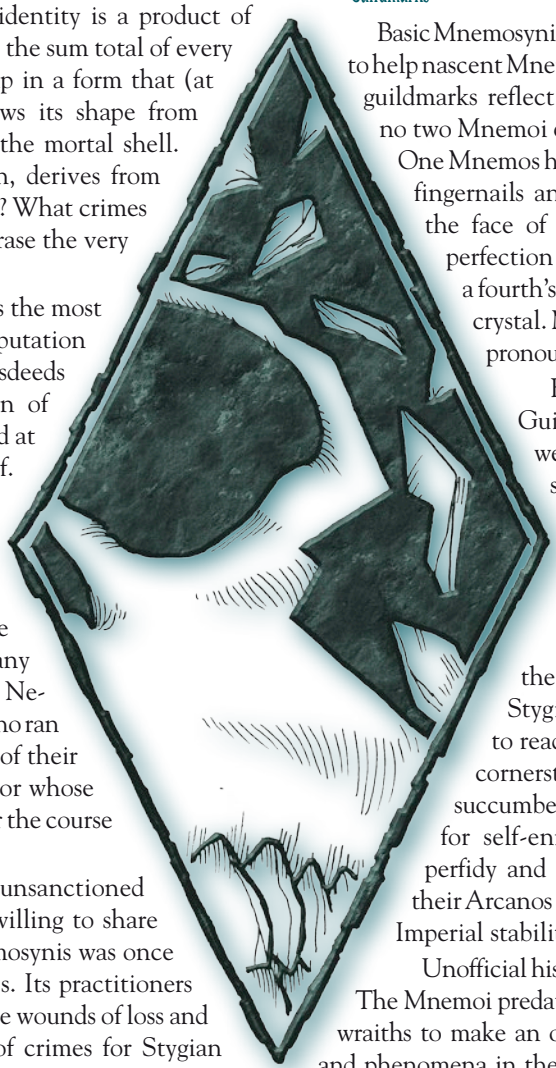
When the wraith learns this art, she gains a permanent Derangement related to her altered perceptions, and her Shadow gains 1 *permanent* Angst dot.

Mnemoi

Passion may create a wraith but memory defines him. His identity is a product of his experiences — the sum total of every moment, bound up in a form that (at least at first) draws its shape from remembrances of the mortal shell. What power, then, derives from an Arcanos that shapes memory itself? What crimes might wraiths commit if they could erase the very knowledge of their acts?

In modern Stygia, Mnemosynis is the most feared of the outlawed Arcanoi. Its reputation is one of abuse and manipulation, of misdeeds hinging on the erasure or alteration of memories, of a grand conspiracy aimed at usurpation of the Imperial throne itself. Among the recently-reaped, it's edgy to name-check Mnemosynis as the cause of any memory lapse or change in behavior. For older Legionnaires, this is an abhorrent mockery of a time when fear of Mnemoi control edged any discrepancy in recall or records. Every Necropolis has urban legends of wraiths who ran afoul of a Mnemos and were stripped of their very self-images and personalities — or whose closest friends utterly forgot them over the course of a single night.

Wraiths who dig deeper into unsanctioned lore — or who ask the few Gaunts willing to share their recollections — find that Mnemosynis was once an accepted, even respected, Arcanos. Its practitioners preserved historical records, healed the wounds of loss and hardship, and uncovered the truth of crimes for Stygian courts. But, of course, that's how the Mnemoi would want everyone to remember them.



Guildmarks

Basic Mnemosynis lessons use mirror or crystal metaphors to help nascent Mnemoi visualize their work. The Arcanos' guildmarks reflect this in the wraith's Corpus, though no two Mnemoi exhibit the exact same manifestation. One Mnemos has eyes with mirrored pupils, another's fingernails and teeth are multifaceted gemstones, the face of a third shimmers into stained-glass perfection at one particular viewing angle, and a fourth's voice carries undertones of shattering crystal. Mnemosynis guildmarks become more pronounced when the wraith activates his arts.

Before its destruction, the Mnemoi's Guild used the seal of a balanced scale weighing one eye, or one half of a bisected skull, in each pan. Today, Hierarchy officials find this symbol either revolting or alarming, depending on context.

The Guild

The official line says little about the Mnemoi's origins or former role in Stygia. They were wraiths with the power to read or alter memories, who once were a cornerstone of the Stygian legal system but succumbed to temptation and abused their arts for self-enrichment. Charon discovered their perfidy and ordered their destruction, outlawing their Arcanos to ensure it would never again threaten Imperial stability.

Unofficial history provides somewhat more context. The Mnemoi predate Stygia, having originated as the first wraiths to make an organized attempt at recording events and phenomena in the Underworld. Initially, they relied on trained memory and oral history (few plasmics provide usable vellum, while attempts to produce paper from the trees lining

the River of Death's banks ended in gruesome disaster). The rites and exercises of this training gave rise to the first sparks of Mnemosynis, and the Arcanos' first use was the preservation of accurate, objective records.

As the proto-Mnemoi further explored their art, they developed methods for sharing their memories to ensure accurate knowledge transfers. By the time Charon founded Stygia, they were a respected order of teachers and loremasters. The discovery of methods for reading and altering other wraiths' memories only gradually led to the capacity to reshape those same memories. Guild leaders quickly recognized the potential for abuse and clamped down on dissemination and use of such arts.

Two officially sanctioned applications of those arts (requested, some say, by Charon himself) expanded the Mnemoi's role in Stygian society. The first saw the Mnemoi working alongside the Pardoners to soothe or alter traumatic memories that provided fodder for Shadows' abuses or led wraiths toward Oblivion. The second introduced Mnemos expert testimony (and, in some cases, direct transfer and display of memories) as a feature of trials for capital crimes.

Most sources agree this latter role, and the access it gave the Mnemoi to the halls of Stygian power, paved the way for the Guild's eventual fall. Accounts vary on the specifics, perhaps because the Mnemoi so flagrantly abused their arts to cover their tracks, but whatever they did was enough for Charon to outlaw Mnemosynis and Mnemoi membership. The resulting military and secret police actions shattered the guild, leaving only a handful of forlorn, low-ranking survivors. Even today, Imperial policy is to apprehend and soulforge any wraith caught using *any* Mnemosynis art. The Legions take great pains to avoid Harrowing such targets, as a Shadow-ridden Mnemos — or, even worse, an ex-Mnemos Spectre — is as horrifying as the rumor of renewed Mnemos organization.

Factions

By preserving and sharing memories of the Guild's heyday, the remaining Mnemoi retain a surprising degree of cohesion. The fugitive guildmaster Minos and his right hand Phaedra remain in constant motion through the Hierarchy's hinterlands, making brief personal contact with each newly recruited Mnemos to ensure proper instruction — and sufficient loyalty. Beneath them are the Ancients, a council of Mnemoi who predate the Guild's fall, ensure its unbroken continuity, and recruit newly reaped wraiths or the occasional exceptional lemure.

Each Ancient inducts and trains new Mnemoi who are a good fit for his personal agendas. The Ancients themselves, and thus their students, self-divide by their goals for the guild. *Strigidae* advocate a return to the guild's origins as historians and cartographers, covertly preserving records in case of Underworld-spanning catastrophe. Strigid Ancients seem certain such an event is imminent, though they refuse to share specifics. *Alkionides* prefer more engagement with wider wraith society, carefully providing solace and understanding as a combination of teachers and psychic healers. Some rogues among their number approach this as a business proposition, selling the memories of experiences as the ultimate addiction — or a powerful weapon. The few surviving Ancients who once worked with the Stygian judiciary now lead the *Periphaeans*. The Mnemoi's militant arm, if they can be termed such a thing, they hunt the Underworld's most reprehensible criminals and deliver them anonymously to the Legions, along with irrefutable evidence of their guilt. Their work runs the constant risk of exposure but they also maintain the Mnemoi's last few ties to the Hierarchy.

Mnemosynis

Mnemosynis Systems

Unless otherwise specified, the difficulty of any Mnemosynis art that targets the Mnemos himself is always 6. Any art that targets another character requires touch and has a difficulty equal to the target's Willpower. Any involuntary use of Mnemosynis is a *resisted* roll against the target's Willpower.

Any Mnemosynis art that can target another character can reach across the Shroud. In this case, the difficulty of the art is the target's Willpower or the local Shroud rating, whichever's higher. In a resisted roll, the target still uses her Willpower as her dice pool, even if the Shroud is higher.

• Keys to the Memory Palace (Common)

Mnemosynis' foundational lessons give the wraith conscious control of his own memories. By visualizing a metaphoric structure, whether it's a library or a relational database, the Mnemos organizes his mind. This enables him to recall even the most trivial details that evaded his conscious notice at the time he formed the memory.

System: When the Mnemos tries to recall the details of anything he previously experienced or witnessed, the player rolls Intelligence + Mnemosynis. Successes on this roll serve as equivalent successes on a Perception + Alertness (or other appropriate dice pool) roll, effectively giving the character a second chance to gather information as he relives the event. This art only provides information that was within the Mnemos' perceptions at the time, though this may include any other perception-altering arts he was using or subject to.

As a side benefit, this art also enhances the integrity of the wraith's memories. Any attempt to use Mnemosynis (or another memory-altering supernatural power) on him without his consent has its difficulty increased by his dots in Mnemosynis.

• Memory Vault (Initiate)

This complement to Keys to the Memory Palace impairs recall rather than augmenting it. Its basic technique suppresses one of the Mnemos' memories, either temporarily or permanently. This is painless and establishes its own internal consistency, altering other memories that would otherwise point up the erased one's absence. With this art, the wraith can numb the pain of an unpleasant experience, augment a deception with

artificial ignorance, or render interrogation fruitless for his captors.

System: When the Mnemos attempts to erase his own memory, the player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Intelligence + Mnemosynis. With success, the offending memory is gone permanently.

At Mnemosynis ••, the wraith may set a trigger for restoring the memory: a code phrase, a location, a time, another character, a specific event. The memory remains suppressed and inaccessible until the Mnemos encounters the trigger, at which point the memory returns.

At Mnemosynis •••, the wraith may cauterize the memory removal. The memory can never be restored, even with the most powerful of Mnemosynis arts.

Memory Vault can't remove memories of Passions or Fetters, nor can it remove any dots of Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds, or Arcanoi. However, it can suppress the wraith's awareness that he has those capabilities.

•• Further Reflection (Common)

Developed as a teaching tool, this art became essential to the Mnemoi's historical work and later ensured the guild's continuity even as Stygia purged its leaders. With Further Reflection, the Mnemos can project his memories (or another being's memories that he's made his own) to someone else's mind. Depending on the memories being projected and the force with which the Mnemos applies, them, this can effect knowledge transfer, or soothe or exacerbate existing emotional turmoil.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Charisma + Mnemosynis. With success, the target experiences a sensory and emotional montage of the projected memories as she internalizes them. It's readily apparent to her that they aren't her own memories (unless the Mnemos is actually playing back the subject's own memories that he previously captured with another art), but her mind integrates them to the same extent that it stores her own normal experiences.

If the Mnemos uses this art to heal painful memories, the subject's Shadow loses 1 temporary Angst per success. Conversely, if the Mnemos uses Further Reflection to inflict emotional trauma, the target's Shadow and the Mnemos' own Shadow each *gain* 1 temporary Angst per 2 successes, rounded up.

At Mnemosynis ••••, the Mnemos can use a single application of this art to transfer knowledge — information only, and not a Trait — to a number of voluntary subjects up to his Willpower; at Mnemosynis •••••, this limit doubles. However, he still can't heal or harm more than one subject at a time.

•• Washed in the Lethe (Initiate)

When a Mnemos' very existence is illegal, it's only wise to avoid notice. This art cloaks the wraith in anonymity, making it difficult for witnesses to recall or record specifics of the Mnemos' identity or actions. They can clearly remember events and the Mnemos' actions but the Mnemos himself remains a nameless, faceless figure, impossible to describe or remember.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Charisma + Mnemosynis. This isn't an opposed roll, doesn't require touch, and doesn't take effect until the end of the scene. After the scene's end, any observer who tries to connect the Mnemos' appearance, name, or other distinguishing features to his actions during that scene must roll Willpower (difficulty of the Mnemos' Appearance + Mnemosynis). If she beats the Mnemos' successes, she has normal recall; otherwise, she cannot identify the Mnemos as having been present in the events of the scene in question.

Washed in the Lethe doesn't remove any other memories of the Mnemos. If a witness already knew the character from previous acquaintance, she doesn't forget him or any previous encounters. Nor does she forget that the Mnemos owns a relic Duesenberg. For that matter, she retains full knowledge of the fact that, in the last scene, *someone* burned down Legate Spinelli's office (and Legate Spinelli) with barrow-flame and escaped in a relic Duesenberg. She just can't remember that *that particular Mnemos she knows* was the arsonist in question, even though she clearly saw him do it.

The Mnemos can exempt a number of witnesses up to his dots in Intelligence from the effects of this art. In addition, any character who knows Keys to the Memory Palace is immune to Washed in the Lethe's effects unless she consciously submits to it when the Mnemos invokes it.

••• Open Book (Common)

Open Book triggers a subject's recall of a specific event, allowing the Mnemos to experience and remember it for himself.

To use this art, the Mnemos must know precisely what memory he wants to extract: "where you went last Thursday night" or "the last time you spoke to your friend Aristophanes." Searching for the subject's memory of "the time you dumped Chretien into the Nihil" works only if the Mnemos knows for a fact that the subject did, in fact, pitch someone named Chretien down a hole in the fabric of reality. If the subject doesn't actually possess the memory in question, Open Book provides only a headache.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Mnemosynis and spends an amount of Pathos determined by the memory's age. If the wraith has insufficient Pathos, the roll's difficulty increases by 1 per point of shortfall.

1 hour	0 Pathos
1 day	1 Pathos
1 week	2 Pathos
1 month	3 Pathos
1 year	4 Pathos
1 decade	5 Pathos
1 century	6 Pathos

With success, the character experiences the memory in question as it plays out in real time. His senses in this experience are limited to the subject's senses at the time the memory was made. While the memory plays out, the Mnemos is unaware of anything occurring around him except significant injuries (at least one Corpus level of damage). He may end the replay at any time.

Once the Mnemos has experienced the memory in full, he may subsequently recall it (through normal recollection or the use of other Mnemosynis arts) as if he were the original experiencer.

••• Tabula Rasa (Initiate)

The cornerstone of any Mnemos' covert activities, Tabula Rasa extends Memory Vault's lessons to other wraiths. This can be any specific recollection: memory of an act or a conversation, knowledge of a combat tactic, or the appearance or even existence of a suspected Mnemos.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and rolls Charisma + Mnemosynis; each success suppresses the target memory for one hour. If this is involuntary, the Mnemos' Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst.

At Mnemosynis ••••, if the successes rolled equal or exceed the target's Intelligence, the player may spend 1 Willpower to make the memory removal permanent. Involuntary use gives the Mnemos' Shadow 2 more temporary Angst.

At Mnemosynis ••••••, the Mnemos can remove a memory from a target's Psyche while leaving it accessible to her Shadow, or vice versa. This gives the Mnemos' Shadow 2 temporary Angst in addition to any other gains, even if this application of the art is voluntary.

As with Memory Vault, Tabula Rasa can't remove memories of Passions or Fetters, nor can it remove any dots of other traits. If the Mnemos removes knowledge that could provoke an existential threat (for example, making a vampire forget her vulnerability to sunlight), the memory returns in full as soon as the victim sustains any injury or other trauma related to that injury.

•••• Phantom Pain (Common)

The Mnemos can exploit the links between another wraith's memories of her physical form and the reflections of those memories in her Corpus. This offensive (in more than one sense) art projects memories of injury into a target's mind, opening psychosomatic wounds as the victim's Corpus reacts to the assault.

System: The player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Charisma + Mnemosynis, while the Mnemos' Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst. The target suffers one level of damage per success. A target who fails to roll at least one success on her Willpower roll to resist also loses her next action as a sensory explosion of someone else's disfigurement and agony detonates in her head.

When using this art, the Mnemos may call upon his Shadow for assistance. If the Shadow agrees to help, it gains 2 additional temporary Angst and the attack does aggravated damage.

•••• Soulkeeper (Initiate)

While lesser arts focus on specific memories, Soulkeeper enables the Mnemos to absorb whole periods of another being's existence. These stored memories reside within the Mnemos' own subconscious, where he can access them as if they were his own.

System: The wraith declares which memories he wants to store — up to a year's worth per application of this art. The player spends 3 Pathos and 1 Willpower and rolls Intelligence + Mnemosynis. With one success, the memories are hazy and dreamlike, bereft of specific details. Two successes provide the specifics of emotionally significant events, while three successes grant clarity equal to that of the Mnemos' own experiences. With five or more successes, the memories are transferred in exacting detail with perfect recall.

A character can absorb a total length of outside memories up to one year per dot of Willpower.

Using Soulkeeper on an involuntary subject grants the Mnemos' Shadow 1 temporary Angst per success.

••••• Muse of Lies (Common)

The most feared Mnemosynis art allows the Mnemos to craft and implant memories. The complexity and extent of these falsehoods is limited only by the Mnemos' imagination and attention to detail. Simple manipulations have covered up innumerable heinous acts, while complex constructs have sent kingdoms to war over decades of imagined offenses. Muse of Lies is the centerpiece of the Hierarchy's anti-Mnemoi paranoia: a power that can make *anyone* remember *anything*.

System: This art incorporates two distinct techniques. The first is the creation of a false memory or set of memories. This requires the wraith to enter Slumber for one day per year (or fraction thereof) the false memories span. During this time, the wraith gains none of the normal benefits of Slumber; rather, he inhabits a dream state in which he laboriously builds the desired memories from a first-person perspective. At the end of this process, the player spends 2 Pathos and 2 Willpower and rolls Intelligence + Mnemosynis. The number of successes determine the accuracy and clarity of the constructed memories. One success renders a dreamlike, abstract vision, three successes yield the desired broad strokes, and five successes create a perfect actualization of the Mnemos' intent.

Once the wraith has crafted the false memory, he assimilates it into his consciousness, where it functions as any other natural memory (including the ability to apply other Mnemosynis arts to it). However, it is compartmentalized, and the wraith remains aware of its falsehood.

To implant the crafted memory in himself or another subject, the player spends 1 Pathos per success on the roll to craft the memory, then rolls Charisma + Mnemosynis. The Mnemos' Shadow gains 3 temporary Angst. Success begins the process of implanting the memory. This takes one turn per year the memory spans (minimum 5 turns), during which both the Mnemos and his target are locked in a fugue state. Any damage either party suffers during this time breaks the trance and causes this application of the art to fail. If the time passes without interruption, the memory is implanted.

The subject's mind erases or rationalizes any conflicting memories, accepting the implanted memory as something she actually experienced. If there is a glaring error, or if an intimately trusted individual calls the memory into question, the subject may roll Willpower (difficulty 8). With success, she realizes her memories have been altered, though she isn't automatically aware of the source.

••••• Gray Man (Initiate)

This art underpins the legends of Mnemoi assaults on victims' very identities. It's the ultimate disappearing act, erasing a target from the collective memory of everyone who knew him. Written history, photographs, and similar records remain, but the Quick and the dead alike lose all personal recollection of him. Only this art's scarcity keeps it from surmounting Muse of Lies in reputation.

As is only to be expected of a Mnemoi secret, Gray Man has more than one face. The art is equally efficacious when a Mnemos applies it to himself. It's the ultimate in fugitive protection, providing near-perfect anonymity.

System: The Mnemos spends one month Slumbering within the target's Fetter (which means he first must attune it as his own Fetter, too). As the Mnemos emerges from Slumber, the player spends *all* Pathos and one dot of *permanent* Willpower, then rolls Charisma + Mnemosynis (difficulty 9). The target resists with Willpower (difficulty of the Mnemos' Charisma + Mnemosynis).

The Mnemos can't use this art on a wraith without Fetters. Against a non-wraith target, he must first acquire that character as a Fetter, then Slumber within her for the requisite time.

If the Mnemos succeeds, all living memory of the target vanishes, save for the Mnemos and the victim herself. Anyone examining a record of her existence believes her to be legendary, apocryphal, wholly fictitious, dead, destroyed, Transcended, or otherwise no longer among the Quick or the Restless. Any memories other beings form of her from this point forward are connected to whatever new identity she manages to scrape together. Observers who have seen her image may comment on her uncanny resemblance to her former identity but won't connect the two unless she makes it painfully obvious. Even then, realization is slow and nigh-impossible to share ("Pshaw. Everyone knows she disappeared in the Tempest a long time ago.").

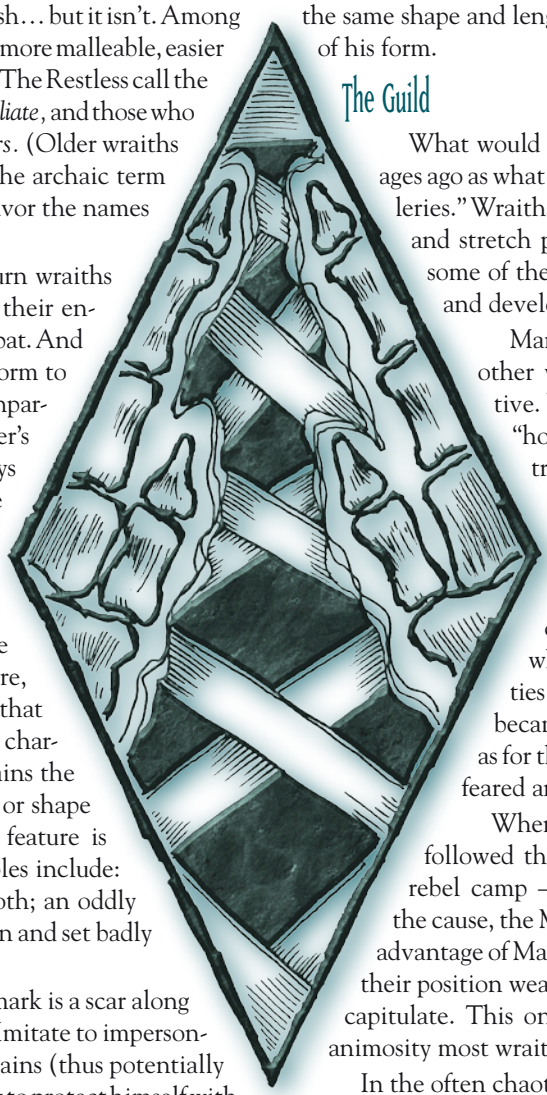
Mechanically, the victim loses all dots in Allies, Contacts, Legacy, Mentor, Memoriam, Notoriety, and Status. In their place, she gains a pool of experience points equal to *half* the total experience-point value of the lost Backgrounds. She may spend this experience to purchase replacements for these Backgrounds as events during play provide the opportunity for the character to solidify her new identity or scrape together fragments of her old one. The Mnemos' Shadow gains 5 points of temporary Angst, plus one additional point per dot of Background removed from the target.

If the Mnemos uses this art on himself, he spends one month slumbering within one of his own Fetters. The roll isn't resisted and his Shadow gains no temporary Angst. All other effects are as described above.

Masquers

Plasm, the stuff of which wraiths are made, often seems like flesh… but it isn't. Among other things, it's far more malleable, easier to mold and shape. The Restless call the power to do this *Moliate*, and those who practice it *Masquers*. (Older wraiths sometimes prefer the archaic term Soulshaping, while younger wraiths favor the names Fleshworking and Plasmatics.)

Using their arts, Masquers can turn wraiths into objects of great beauty, disfigure their enemies, or inflict horrific wounds in combat. And of course, Masquers can also change form to imitate other wraiths, making them unparalleled actors — and spies. A Masquer's most elaborate creations may take days or weeks to craft, but it takes very little time to turn one's fingers into claws and rip another wraith's throat out.



Guildmarks

Since a Masquer can change shape to remove or alter any physical feature, what identifies him as a Masquer is that he has one prominent, distinguishing characteristic he *cannot* change — it remains the same, *mutatis mutandis*, in every form or shape he adopts. The most common such feature is the color of his eyes, but other examples include: a notable scar or tattoo; a snaggle tooth; an oddly shaped finger; or a nose that was broken and set badly so it's got a distinctive "crook" to it.

For example, if a Masquer's guildmark is a scar along the left side of his face, even if he uses Imitate to impersonate another wraith's face, the scar remains (thus potentially spoiling the disguise). If he uses Armory to protect himself with a "barrel helm," the outside of the helm has a crease the same shape and length as the scar. If he Bodyshapes into a piece of furniture, the chair becomes will have a scratch or burn mark the same shape and length as the scar on the appropriate part of his form.

The Guild

What would become the Guild of Masquers began ages ago as what amount to fashion houses and "art galleries." Wraiths learned early on that they could shape and stretch plasm. Fascinated by the possibilities, some of them studied this phenomenon in detail and developed Moliate.

Many early Masquers focused on making other wraiths (or themselves) more attractive. Wealthy wraiths visited the Masquers' "houses" daily or weekly, chasing the latest trends in the shape of the self. But more practical Masquers — and those they served — saw beyond the cosmetic applications of their art. Espionage, assassination, infiltration, and even open combat are child's play for a wraith who can change the shape and capabilities of his body at will. In time, the Masquers became as well known for these "services" as for their artistic pursuits, and many wraiths feared and avoided them.

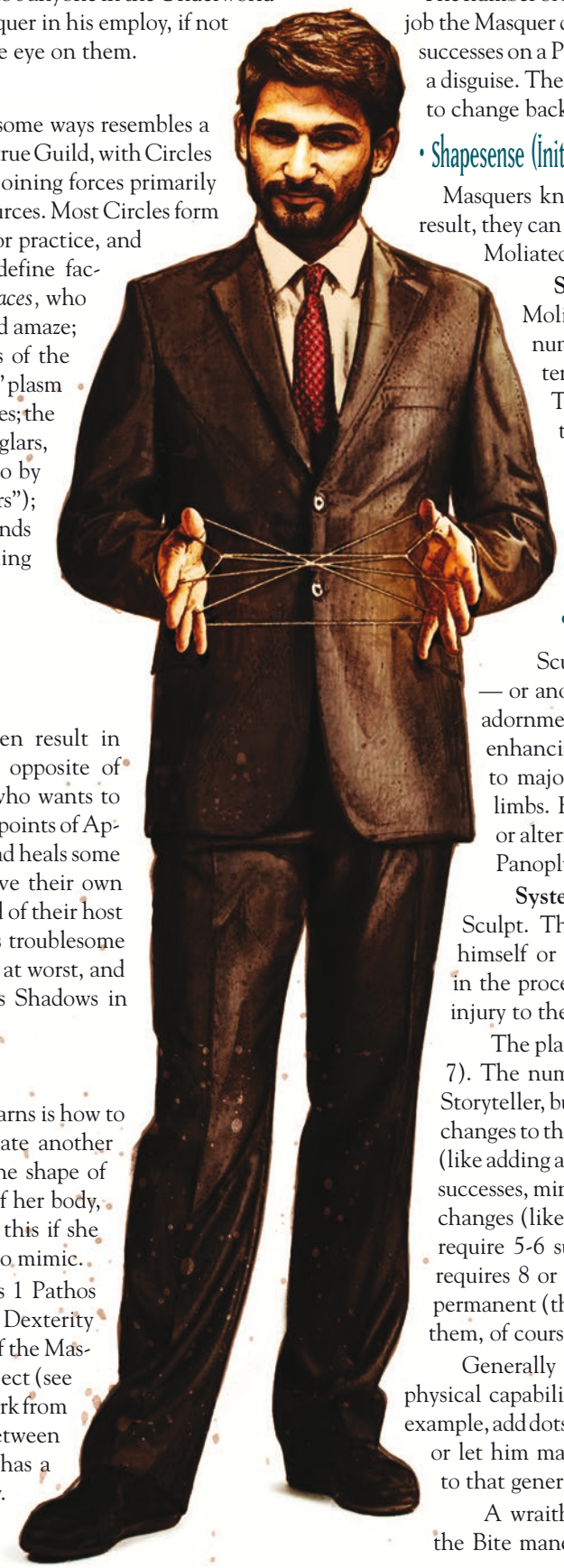
When the Guilds revolted, the Masquers followed their close allies, the Usurers, into the rebel camp — and when the Usurers abandoned the cause, the Masquers did the same. Deprived of the advantage of Masquer spies and killers, the rebels found their position weaker than ever and were soon forced to capitulate. This only further increased the distrust and animosity most wraiths felt toward the Masquers.

In the often chaotic times since, with Charon gone and much of the Underworld facing uncertainty or turmoil, the Masquers are in greater demand than ever. Trust and respect, on the other hand, are almost impossible for the masters of

Moliate to obtain. Anyone who's anyone in the Underworld probably has at least one Masquer in his employ, if not several — but he keeps a close eye on them.

Factions

The Masquers' Guild in some ways resembles a large partnership more than a true Guild, with Circles (many of them rather small) joining forces primarily to share information and resources. Most Circles form based on a common interest or practice, and these "interests" essentially define factions, such as: the *Chorus of Faces*, who use their skills to entertain and amaze; the *Fleshwrights*, practitioners of the ancient arts of molding wraiths' plasm for aesthetic or practical purposes; the *Secret Order*, master spies, burglars, and assassins (often referred to by fearful wraiths as "the Spiders"); and the *Janissaries*, feared bands of shape-shifting, flesh-rending warriors.



Moliate

Moliate Systems

Failed Moliate rolls often result in something more or less the opposite of what was desired: A wraith who wants to become more handsome loses points of Appearance; a Rend attack instead heals some Corpus points; new limbs have their own eerie intelligence and a hatred of their host body. Fixing these mistakes is troublesome and taxing at best, impossible at worst, and fuel for everyone concerned's Shadows in the meantime.

• Imitate (Common)

The first art a Masquer learns is how to change her face to impersonate another wraith. She may only alter the shape of her face, not any other part of her body, and has an easier time doing this if she can see the visage she wants to mimic.

System: The wraith pays 1 Pathos to use Imitate. The player rolls Dexterity + Moliate. The difficulty is 4 if the Masquer has a skinmask of the subject (see *Rend*, below), 8 if she has to work from memory, and something in between if she can see the subject or has a visual source on which to rely.

The number of successes on the roll indicate how good a job the Masquer did; another wraith has to achieve more successes on a Perception + Awareness roll to realize it's a disguise. The change lasts until the Masquer chooses to change back or is somehow forced to.

• Shapesense (Initiate)

Masquers know the work of their colleagues. As a result, they can usually tell when another wraith's been Moliated, and how.

System: The player rolls Perception + Moliate against a difficulty equal to the number of successes achieved on the Dexterity + Moliate roll to alter the subject. The more successes achieved, the more the Masquer learns. The information gathered could include what art was used to Moliate the subject, who did the work (or what faction he belongs to), and perhaps even what the subject originally looked like.

•• Sculpt (Common)

Sculpt lets a Masquer alter his own Corpus — or another wraith's. This ranges from simple adornments (adding colors, glows, or tattoos), to enhancing or changing a wraith's appearance, to major changes like creating fangs or more limbs. He cannot, however, create additional or alternate sensory organs. To do that requires Panoply of Eyes (see below).

System: The Masquer pays 1 Pathos to use Sculpt. The subject being altered (whether it's himself or another wraith) loses 1 Corpus level in the process, but Sculpt otherwise cannot cause injury to the subject.

The player rolls Dexterity + Moliate (difficulty 7). The number of successes required is up to the Storyteller, but typically depends on the extent of the changes to the subject's form: Mere cosmetic changes (like adding a tattoo or changing skin color) require 2 successes, minor changes require 3-4 successes, major changes (like adding or removing limbs and organs) require 5-6 successes, and altering the entire body requires 8 or more successes. All changes made are permanent (though another use of Sculpt can change them, of course).

Generally speaking, Sculpt can't alter a wraith's physical capabilities (or his deathmark). It cannot, for example, add dots of Strength, increase his running speed, or let him make extra attacks in a turn. Exceptions to that general rule include the following scenarios:

A wraith Moliated to have fangs can perform the Bite maneuver (p. 332), while one Moliated to

have claws or talons can perform the Claw maneuver (p. 332). Other than this, a Masquer needs Armory (see below) to shape his body into weapons.

A Masquer can add or subtract dots of his subject's Appearance equal to the highest number of dots the Masquer has in any Moliate art.

A wraith cannot use additional limbs to attack more frequently, defend himself, move more swiftly, or the like. But the limbs are otherwise as functional as their form permits and may allow the wraith to do things someone with their original number of limbs cannot (for example, use two hands to play the drums while holding up a relic trash can lid to protect himself from thrown relic bottles in his third hand). What can and can't be done, and whether any rolls are required to succeed, is up to the Storyteller.

Additional sensory organs created by Moliate are fully functional and may enhance a wraith's sensory capabilities (the classic example being to see behind himself). They cannot add senses a wraith doesn't already possess, though. Whether extra sensory organs provides any bonuses to Perception or Awareness is up to the Storyteller.

Additionally, a Masquer can use Sculpt to "repair" (and thus heal) aggravated damage. Each success achieved on the Manipulation + Moliate roll made for this purpose heals 1 Corpus level, but this costs the Masquer 1 Willpower, 1 Pathos, and an additional 1 Pathos per Corpus level healed.

•• Unmarked (Initiate)

While Sculpt cannot change or remove a wraith's deathmark, this old, largely forgotten art can.

System: The wraith pays 1 Pathos and the player rolls Manipulation + Moliate (difficulty 8). One success allows the Masquer to alter the nature of a deathmark (for example, from a scar to a tattoo), but not the mark's form or content. Two or more successes also let him change its form/content or remove it entirely. In either case, the change only lasts for a maximum duration of one day per success on the roll.

••• Armory (Common)

Many Masquers make terrifying warriors, hunters, and assassins because of this art, with which they mold their bodies into armor and melee weapons. These "items" ordinarily have a gray, mirrorlike sheen, but many Masquers shape and color their Armory creations in ornate ways to personalize them.

System: Using Armory costs a wraith 3 Pathos. He can only use it on himself. He cannot create both armor and weapons at the same time with Armory. As a result, creating both requires two distinct uses of the art.

To form a melee weapon out of part of a Masquer's body (typically a hand/arm), the player rolls Intelligence + Moliate (difficulty of wraith's Stamina +3). Each success achieved allows the wraith to roll one additional die in hand-to-hand combat. A Masquer can create whatever type of melee weapon he prefers (swords and daggers are the most popular), and automatically knows how to use it without penalty. On the other hand, shaping part of one's body into a weapon prevents that body part from serving its normal function. For example, a hand turned into a dagger can no longer grasp things. After all, it's now a blade, not a hand.

To sculpt the Masquer's body into armor, the player rolls Stamina + Moliate (difficulty of the wraith's Strength +3). Each success adds one die to the wraith's soak roll. On the downside, each success after the first adds +1 to the difficulty of any Dexterity-based roll because of the armor's stiffness.

Using Armory requires one minute or more, depending on the extent and ornateness of the changes. For an additional 1 Pathos a Masquer can mold his body in just one turn.

The changes wrought by Armory are obvious to anyone who sees the Masquer. A Masquer can disguise Armory armor, making it look like his ordinary skin or clothing, but this costs an additional 1 Pathos and increases the difficulty of the roll by 1. Weapons can't be disguised this way.

All changes a Masquer makes to his body with Armory are permanent until he chooses to change them back (at no cost in Pathos) or someone else uses Moliate to force him into another shape.

••• Panoply of Eyes (Initiate)

Masquers of advanced skill can create additional sensory organs — or even give themselves senses they don't ordinarily possess.

System: The wraith spends 2 Pathos to use Panoply of Eyes. The player rolls Stamina + Moliate. If the Masquer wants to create extra organs for senses he normally possesses, the difficulty is 7; if he wants to create organs for new senses, it's 9. In either case, the change lasts for one hour per success.

The most common use of this art is to create more eyes (often literal "eyes in the back of his head"), or additional sensory organs of some other sort. This makes it difficult to surprise or sneak up on the Masquer (increase the number of successes needed on any Stealth-based or similar roll by the number of successes achieved with Panoply of Eyes). It also enhances his perceptiveness (each success with Panoply of Eyes grants 1 extra die on any roll involving Perception or Alertness). But extra sensory organs (of any type) create the risk of sensory overload. Every turn the Masquer uses them in situations of high sensory input (most combats, artistic performances, and the like), he has to roll Stamina + Alterness (difficulty 7). Failure means he wastes the turn trying to comprehend the sensory input.

A Masquer can also give himself new physical senses, such as seeing in the infrared or ultraviolet spectra, hearing ultrasonic or infrasonic sound, or having echolocation like a bat or sonar like a dolphin. The Storyteller determines the exact effects, but this typically provides the same bonus to Perception/Alertness as extra sense organs do in appropriate situations. Unfortunately, the same risk of sensory overload exists.

•••• Rend (Common)

A Masquer who knows this fearsome art can inflict grievous wounds on other wraiths just by touching them, often leaving them mutilated and disfigured. With Rend, a Masquer can literally rip another wraith's face off. These horrific trophies, known as skinmasks, help the wraith Imitate the victim (see above).

System: The wraith spends 1 Pathos to use Rend, and also gains 1 temporary Angst. She must touch her target (this may require a Dexterity + Melee attack roll). The player rolls Strength + Moliate (difficulty of the target's Stamina +3). Each success inflicts one die of aggravated damage, plus an additional die for each additional 1 Pathos the Masquer chooses to spend. If the wraith achieves five or more successes, she may tear off part of her opponent's Corpus (an appendage or limb, his face, or just a chunk of plasm).

•••• Girding (Initiate)

Masquers who have mastered the art of Armory can use it on other wraiths, thus "outfitting" them for combat, Helldives, or other perilous duties. Given enough time and enough resources, Masquers with this knowledge can kit out entire armies.

System: Only Masquers who already know Armory can learn Girding. It works just like Armory, but the Masquer can use it on other wraiths.

••••• Bodyshape (Common)

The height of the Masquer's art, Bodyshaping allows him to transform his (or another wraith's) Corpus into practically anything imaginable: an animal, a piece of furniture, a different person, or a piece of art.

System: The wraith spends 4 Pathos to use Bodyshaping (and if the victim's unwilling, he gains 2 temporary Angst). The player rolls Wits + Moliate against a difficulty that depends on the complexity of the form being changed into. Something simple (like a large puddle of water, a wall, or a drab-looking chair) is difficulty 5. At the other extreme, the form of an Anacreon wearing his full regalia is difficulty 9.

It takes one turn per point of difficulty to use Bodyshaping. Each success beyond the first on the Wits + Moliate roll reduces this by one turn (to a minimum of one turn).

A Bodyshaped wraith retains his standard Attributes, Abilities, senses, Arcanoi, and so forth while transformed (unless this defies common or dramatic sense). He gains any additional physical capabilities the shape has (such as being able to fly, if he has wings), but not the supernatural ones.

A wraith subjected to Bodyshape cannot lose or gain more than 10% of his body mass or size. Not even the most powerful Masquer can transform a human-sized wraith into a tiny mouse, or Gorool.

Bodyshaping lasts for one scene per success achieved, after which the subject returns to his normal form. If the Masquer wants to make the change permanent, it requires the investment of one point of permanent Willpower.

••••• Savage (Initiate)

While Rend frightens most wraiths, this art, a secret jealously guarded by the Guild for centuries, utterly terrifies them, because it lets a Masquer rip away enough of a wraith's Corpus to damage him permanently

System: The wraith spends 3 Pathos to use Savage, and also gains 1 temporary Angst per success achieved. He must touch his target (this may require a Dexterity + Melee attack roll). The player rolls Dexterity + Moliate (difficulty equal to the target's Stamina or Willpower, whichever's higher, + 3, to a maximum of 10). For every two successes achieved, the Masquer permanently reduces one of his target's Physical Attributes by 1.

The only known way to restore Attribute points lost to Savage is painstaking "surgery" with Sculpt. This requires a number of successes equal to the number achieved to inflict the injury against difficulty 10 and takes days of effort. This can only be tried once per lost Attribute point. If that attempt fails, the damage can never be corrected.

Spooks

Wraiths are creatures of their Passions — even, perhaps *especially*, the darker ones. Outrage may be the Arcanos that expresses a wraith's will as kinetic energy, but every Spook knows that anger is the key to mastering it. Indeed, some wraiths spontaneously manifest Outrage's basic arts in times of stress, particularly when the object of their wrath lies across the Shroud and seemingly out of their reach. This makes Outrage's lesser arts relatively common, though dabblers rarely attain great proficiency in the Arcanos.

Wraiths who dismiss Outrage as a mere thug's weapon do the Arcanos and Spooks alike a disservice. Anger is the gateway to Outrage, but the Spook who masters his darker emotions can unlock higher arts which are tools of surprising precision and subtlety. Still, even refined applications of Outrage can feed the Shadow if used for wanton destruction, so wise Spooks learn to throw their weight around sparingly.

Guildmarks

Outrage's raw physicality transposes itself onto the Corpus of its students. Novice Spooks display uneven, anatomically unlikely muscle development. More experienced Outrage users take on hulking, 'roided-out physiques.

The Guild

Long before the Breaking, the Spooks' Guild built its reputation on unwholesome work. Spooks hired themselves out as muscle and worse, dirtying their Corpus with jobs the other Guilds couldn't or wouldn't touch. Their resemblance to mortal organized crime didn't stop there, as Spooks had their fingers in every Necropolis' black markets, trading dangerous Artifacts and Pathos bottled from large emotional events. Cross-Shroud damage and leverage were Spook specialties, too.

Careful cultivation of mutually beneficial relationships with corrupt officials avoided Stygian sanctions against the Guild as a whole,but many individual Spooks clashed with Imperial law, to both sides' detriment.

Vice, agitation, and demolition kept the Guild's casual associates busy, but Spooks who yearned for something greater found purpose in their organization's roots as a breakaway Haunter sect . Early Haunters shared frustration with the Shroud, but pursued a wide array of methods to overcome it. To some, the Shroud was primarily an obstacle to protecting the things that anchored them against Oblivion's pull: Fetters, Haunts, Memoriam, and ties to the Skinlands. This rejection of the Haunters' greater goals led to a passionate but ultimately non-destructive split.

As part of this schism, early Spooks turned away from Pandemonium and its unpredictable evocations. They found a more reliable tool in Outrage, then a commonplace but unrefined art, and set to studying its potential — and its ties to Oblivion. Already pragmatists with a penchant for direct action, the Spooks saw Oblivion itself as a greater challenge and a more immediate threat than the Shroud.

Experts in protecting their own connections to the Skinlands, the Spooks became Stygia's go-to Guild when other Restless needed immediate intervention to defend a loved one or rescue a former possession. This aspect of the greater battle against Oblivion became the Spooks' ostensible purpose and the public face of their identity as a Guild.

The Spooks' goals were noble. Their methods, however, brought them into immediate conflict with the *Dictum Mor-*

tuum. Two factors kept the Legions from their throats: their willingness to join any fight against a creature of Oblivion and the number of Stygian functionaries who secretly benefitted from their work. For many, the price of saving a Fetter was a promise to look the other way in the future. Calling in these debts during the Breaking spared the Spooks the worst of the Hierarchy's attention. Today, business continues much as it has for centuries.

Factions

Centuries of recruiting among practical-minded wraiths who are "good with their hands" has made Spook organization a cross between a labor union and a crime family. At the top is the Commission of Five, an elected body that sets policy and regulates conflict within the guild. Commissioners come from the 99 Bosses, who oversee regional activities. Local action within a Necropolis is the responsibility of a Controller, who manages the fractious business of his "made men" *Armadars*. Most Armadars run a circle of Defenders, with whom they share a philosophy and business model.

Lifeliners work to protect other wraiths' Fetters and are the loudest voicesfor the Spooks' original purpose. Defending death-related remembrance as a whole is the Mementomorians' agenda, and they support their efforts through trade in rare distillations of Pathos. Ties to the Haunters are strongest among the Shroudbreakers, who also combat mortal ghost hunters. The Spooks closest to street-level Stygian crime fill out the Gray Gangs and rarely get involved with more sensitive guild activities.

Outrage

Outrage Systems

Any use of Outrage across the Shroud uses the local Shroud rating as its difficulty. Using Outrage on a target in the Underworld has a difficulty of 7 in the Shadowlands, 6 in the Tempest, and 5 in the Labyrinth. However, in the Labyrinth, each invocation of Outrage feeds the wraith's Shadow 1 temporary Angst.

• Wraithgrasp (Common)

The wraith can push or lift inanimate objects in the Skinlands. Only simple, straight-line motion is possible with Wraithgrasp, but sometimes that's all that's needed to get a mortal's attention or affect the course of events among the Quick. This art is too slow for a direct attack, but it certainly can be used indirectly. Flowerpots mysteriously falling from high windows, runaway hot dog carts pushing pedestrians into traffic: freak accidents or Wraithgrasp?

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Strength + Outrage. With a single success, the wraith can exert a few pounds of force, just enough to press a button or start a pencil rolling. Each additional success grants one dot of effective Strength for lifting (see "Feats of Strength," p. 320). Thus, with 5 successes, the Spook can lift or shove a Skinlands object as if he had Strength ••••. The shoved object can move no faster than half the wraith's normal walking speed.

• Taptap (Initiate)

Unexpectedly subtle for a basic Outrage art, Taptap was once a Spooks' Guild trade secret. Centuries of leaks have spread it beyond the organization's control, but it's still uncommon, as the Arcanos' students tend to seek out flashier manifestations. Wiggling a finger, the Spook audibly taps on an object or silently presses someone else's skin within line of sight. This can be a distraction, but it's more useful as a signal — particularly if the wraith and his audience know a tap code (of which the guild has several). More recently, younger Spooks have discovered that this art is an excellent way to affect touchscreen computer interfaces.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Stamina + Outrage. For three turns per success, the Spoke can tap or knock lightly on a surface, or can silently tap or poke a single other being. In either case, this art works within line of sight. It isn't strong enough to move anything with more substance than a dust mote.

Communicating via Taptap is slow, as the wraith must spell out individual symbols: one word per turn in most cases. The Storyteller is the final authority on the complexity of messages that Taptap can convey.

If the player also spends 1 Corpus when activating Taptap, the Spook can manipulate touchscreens and other technologies that respond to physical input through similar principles.

•• Stonehand Punch (Common)

A simple, brutal telekinetic strike, Stonehand Punch allows the Spook to pummel a single victim across the Shroud or in the Underworld. He must touch a Skinlands target, effectively using Stonehand Punch to convey his normal strength across the Shroud, but he can strike Underworld targets outside his reach.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and makes a normal Brawl attack. If it hits, he may spend 1 additional Pathos to add the wraith's dots in Outrage to the damage dice pool. Against an Underworld target, this attack has a maximum range equal to the wraith's Willpower in yards. Stonehand Punch may target both characters and inanimate objects.

•• Stonehand Parry (Initiate)

Spooks get in a lot of fights. After a few Harrowings, smart Spooks look for ways to avoid being hit. This age-old Outrage art is the brawler's best friend, allowing a bare-handed Spook to block clubs, swords, or Moliated tentacles.

System: As the wraith is about to be hit by a close-combat attack, the player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Strength + Outrage. Successes on this roll cancel successes on the attack on a one-for-one basis. Extra successes become levels of bashing damage on the attacker or weapon that struck the Spook. Using Stonehand Parry is reflexive and doesn't cost an action.

The wraith may block thrown or archaic ranged weapon attacks at +1 difficulty. Firearm attacks and similar faster-than-sight projectiles are impossible to stop with Stonehand Parry.

••• Wings of Rage (Common)

Sometimes a Spook needs to *get there right now*. Wings of Rage starts as speed and strength born of desperation, allowing the wraith to undertake implausible feats of athleticism.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos. For the rest of the scene, he may add the wraith's dots in Outrage to his Athletics dice pools. Additionally, when calculating the Spook's running speed, his dots in Outrage add to his Dexterity.

••• Tantrum (Initiate)

A Spook using Tantrum stands at the eye of a telekinetic storm, hurling loose objects about with abandon. This art is exhausting to use, but it's an excellent means of impairing multiple aggressors or persuading groups of meddlesome kids to vacate. Tantrum simultaneously affects both the Skinlands and the Shadowlands, which makes it something of a double-edged mace.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and 2 Corpus and rolls Stamina + Outrage. The Spook's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst. In a radius equal to the Spook's Willpower in yards, random energies pick up every loose small object (less than one pound) and fling it about in a swirling vortex that lasts for one turn per success rolled.

The randomly moving cloud of debris makes combat difficult. Any hand-to-hand or firearm attack targeting a character in the Tantrum suffers +1 difficulty, and any thrown or archaic missile weapon attack suffers +2 difficulty. At the Storyteller's discretion, other rolls may suffer similar impairment from the distraction and interference. In addition, each character in the Tantrum at the beginning of each turn suffers 2 levels of bashing damage from constant battering.

The Spook himself is immune to Tantrum's negative effects, as he has enough control over the storm to keep it from blocking his own shots. The radius of effect remains centered on him as he moves.

At Outrage ••••, the player may spend 2 additional Corpus when invoking Tantrum to double the radius of effect or contract it to one yard. At Outrage •••••, he may alternately or additionally spend 1 additional Pathos to attach Tantrum to another target, centering its effects on an object or character rather than himself.

•••• Death's Touch (Common)

At this level of mastery, Outrage begins to require a steady hand more than a volatile heart. Death's Touch grants the Spook his full capacity for fine manipulation over objects in the physical world. In the Underworld, Death's Touch is a similarly refined Stonehand Punch, allowing finesse at range.

System: To use this art across the Shroud, the player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Stamina + Outrage. For one minute per success rolled, the wraith may handle physical objects with his full Strength and Dexterity. This includes wielding weapons or brawling, though each cross-Shroud attack grants the Spook's Shadow 1 temporary Angst.

In the Underworld, the player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Stamina + Outrage. For one turn per success rolled, the wraith may telekinetically project his hands at a maximum range equal to his Willpower in yards, manipulating objects or brawling at will. As above, each attack with Death's Touch gives the Shadow 1 temporary Angst.

If the wraith becomes intangible while Death's Touch is active, the effect ends immediately.

•••• Wyldfire (Initiate)

Some Spooks' rage burns hot, while others stoke a cold fury. Wyldfire literalizes the metaphor, enabling the wraith to conjure barrow-flame. This art's raw destructive potential delights the Shadow, all the more so because the wraith has no control over the fire once he releases it.

System: The wraith concentrates for a full turn, focusing on a target within his Willpower x 10 yards. The player spends 2 Pathos and 1 Corpus and rolls Stamina + Outrage. The wraith's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst per success. The size and intensity of the barrow-flame produced depend on successes:

1 success	Candle (soak difficulty 3, 1 level of aggravated damage/turn)
2 successes	Torch (soak difficulty 4, 1 level of aggravated damage/turn)
3 successes	Campfire (soak difficulty 5, 2 levels of aggravated damage/turn)
4 successes	Bonfire (soak difficulty 7, 2 levels of aggravated damage/turn)
5 successes	Inferno (soak difficulty 9, 3 levels of aggravated damage/turn)

As always, the barrow-flame does aggravated damage, and victims may soak it only if they have an appropriate art.

If Wyldfire creates barrow-flame in the Skinlands, the resulting conflagration triggers the Fog.

••••• Obliviate (Common)

Distilling his anger into raw destructive energy, the wraith unleashes it in a crushing, burning spasm of entropy. Obliviate is the Spook's nuclear option, unleashed when there's no choice but feed Oblivion and his own Shadow alike. Like most Outrage arts, Obliviate can affect targets in the Skinlands or the Underworld alike.

System: The wraith must touch his intended target. The player spends 3 Pathos and rolls Strength + Outrage. The Spook's Shadow gains 3 temporary Angst. Each success inflicts one level of aggravated damage that bypasses armor and is soakable only if the victim has an appropriate art.

A living being killed by Obliviate becomes a wraith but immediately falls into a Destruction Harrowing. A wraith reduced to zero Corpus through this damage likewise suffers an immediate Destruction Harrowing. In either case, failure at the Harrowing doesn't consign the character to Oblivion. Instead, she becomes a Spectre.

A destroyed Spectre or plasmic returns to Oblivion. The Labyrinth knows its own.

A destroyed inanimate object falls directly into Oblivion (unless it's Inhabited, in which case it becomes a relic — and the luckless Artificer suffers the same damage that the item itself took).

••••• Anger Enough for Two Worlds (Initiate)

Most Outrage arts reach across the Shroud. This one reaches *for* the Shroud, takes it by the throat, and beats it into submission. Never willingly taught outside the Spooks' Guild, Anger Enough for Two Worlds rends the barrier between the Skinlands and the Shadowlands to shreds. It exacts a terrible toll on the wraith who uses it, but *in extremis* dedicated Spooks are willing to pay its price.

System: Anger Enough for Two Worlds is usable only in the Shadowlands. The player spends 1 Willpower and 3 Pathos and rolls Strength + Outrage. The wraith loses 1 Corpus per success, his Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst per success, and every other character in the scene suffers 1 level of bashing damage per success. The local Shroud ratings drops by the number of successes rolled. It regains one point every turn until it's back to its normal value.

If this art reduces the Shroud below 4, the Shadowlands and Skinlands become one until the Shroud recovers. During this time, the Shroud is considered to be 3 for purposes of all rolls relying on it. All wraiths in the area can interact with Skinlands objects as if they had mortal bodies, while all relics become fully visible and tangible to Skinlands denizens. Any supernatural power that normally works on only one side of the Shroud can affect anything in the area. Such a condition invokes the Fog, gets Oblivion's full attention, and is immediately obvious to every supernatural being in the vicinity. The Storyteller determines what these latter effects do but they should have far-reaching repercussions.

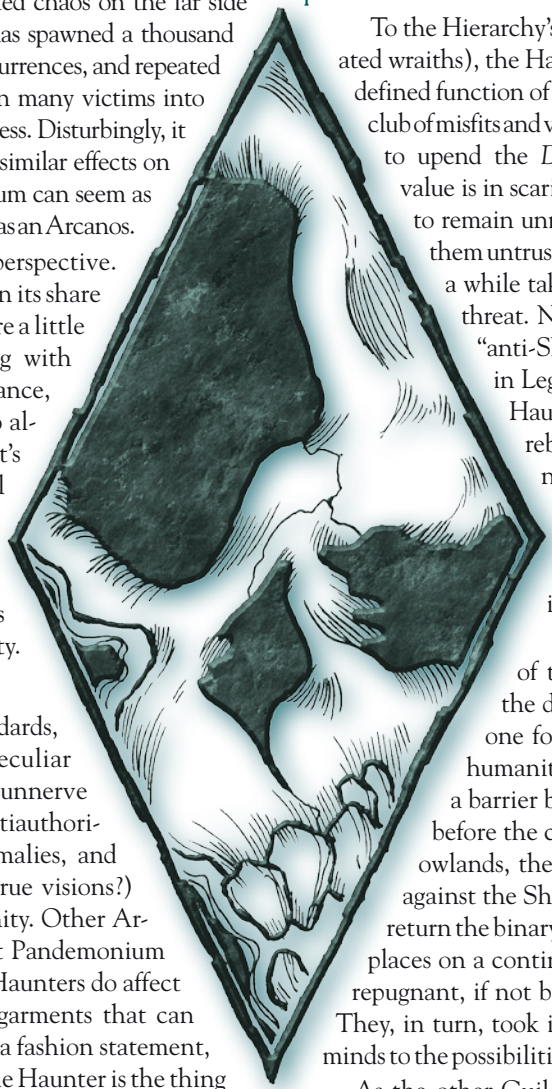
Haunters

Pandemonium is the Arcanos of invoking marginally controlled chaos on the far side of the Shroud. It has spawned a thousand tales of Fortean occurrences, and repeated exposure has driven many victims into gibbering helplessness. Disturbingly, it also seems to have similar effects on its own users. To outsiders, Pandemonium can seem as much an outward manifestation of chaos as an Arcanos.

Haunters have a more nuanced perspective. True, Pandemonium attracts more than its share of broken wraiths, but a lot of them were a little different *before* they began meddling with weirdness. Like any psychoactive substance, this Arcanos works best for users who already know what they want out of it. It's a tool of disruption. On the individual level, it messes with events or people's perceptions. On the macro scale, it wreaks havoc with the Shroud — or so the Haunters hope. No one learns Pandemonium out of a desire for subtlety.

Guildmarks

Even by the Underworld's standards, Haunters are quirky, exhibiting peculiar mannerisms that seem calculated to unnerve witnesses. Reflexive meddling and antiauthoritarianism, spatial and temporal anomalies, and eldritch hallucinations (or are they true visions?) nibble at the edges of the wraith's sanity. Other Arcanoi may sign a wraith's Corpus, but Pandemonium leaves its mark on the psyche. Many Haunters do affect cloaks, greatcoats, or other flowing garments that can billow dramatically on cue, but this is a fashion statement, not a true guildmark. What marks a true Haunter is the thing seen out of the corner of the eye, the disturbing hint of what's bubbling under the surface of the Haunter's self-control.



The Guild

To the Hierarchy's rank and file (and most other unaffiliated wraiths), the Haunters are bereft of the organization or defined function of a true Guild, looking more like a social club of misfits and vandals who practice arts custom-tailored to upend the *Dictum Mortuum*. Their only possible value is in scaring mortals away from places that need to remain unmolested, but their unreliability makes them untrustworthy. Hierarchs who've been around a while take the Haunters more seriously — as a threat. Neologisms like "security concern" and "anti-Shroud insurgents" feature prominently in Legion analyses. Taken as a body of data, Haunter activities resemble a multiheaded rebellion against Charon's laws. They're not blowing up citadels or hijacking ghost planes but they do lead a lot of mortals to ask the wrong questions about what exactly does happen after you die. And in its own way, that's just as dangerous.

The Hierarchy recognizes some of the symptoms but fails to understand the disease. Haunters have been around in one form or another since the nights when humanity's evolving religious beliefs first spun a barrier between the living and the dead. Long before the concept of Guilds arrived in the Shadowlands, these wraiths were slamming themselves against the Shroud in vain attempts to sunder it and return the binary states of life and death to their rightful places on a continuum of being. Charon's decrees were repugnant, if not blasphemous, to these proto-Haunters. They, in turn, took it upon themselves to reopen mortals' minds to the possibilities whose denial gave rise to the Shroud.

As the other Guilds evolved, Haunters mimicked their trappings for protective coloration. Their ostensible purpose — hauntings for hire, have ectoplasm, will travel — became the

reality for most outsiders and even their junior members. Any Guild alliances were tenuous and the War of the Guilds purified the Haunters by soulforging the overly political members.

Today, the business of Haunting continues apace. The Guild willingly takes payment for its services because each such transaction is a poke in the Hierarchy's unlidded eye. Its true agenda, however, is nothing less than constantly making mortals aware of the possibility of life beyond death.

Factions

Haunters ally for mutual interest or shared breakage. The scientifically-minded *Mandelbrots* seek new Arcanos manifestations that can manipulate and weaken the Shroud, or that affect the living so viscerally as to dissipate the Fog. The theologically-inclined *Dantes* explore and study the Shadowlands in search of an escape route. The hedonistic *Caligarians* create "art" through the transcendence of physical laws, inspiring mortals and fellow wraiths to beautiful insanity, while there's nothing artistic or beautiful in the *Bedlameers*' frothing assaults on mortal minds. The methodical and businesslike *Order of the Glass Menagerie* indirectly assaults the Shroud by working against the Fog, and its relative lucidity makes it the alliance least offensive to aliens. The Guild's "leaders," such as they are, mockingly refer to themselves (this week) as the *H.G. Dwellers*. Hewing closest to the proto-Haunters' original ethos, the Dwellers seek the Shroud's destruction so that they may roll back time, rejoining the living by resuming their own lives.

Pandemonium

Pandemonium Systems

While she's in the Shadowlands, a Haunter can invoke Pandemonium effects in the Skinlands. She also can use these arts in the Tempest while she's there. Skinlands manifestations are subject to the Fog and each roll's difficulty equals the local Shroud. In Stygia and the Tempest, each roll's difficulty is 6, but each die that comes up a one (even in a success) gives the wraith's Shadow 1 temporary Angst in addition to any gained as part of the power's usual cost.

Pandemonium and Oblivion interact strangely. In the Labyrinth, each roll's difficulty is 6, each die that comes up a 10 counts as two successes, and each die that comes up a one *or a two* counts toward a botch. Botches on Pandemonium rolls in the Labyrinth are, in a word, *epic*. However, the Haunter's Shadow never gains Angst from Pandemonium applications in the Labyrinth.

• Weirdness (Common)

The wraith inflicts a small, strange effect on a single living target. This art's subject may shiver from sudden chills, see a flicker of motion where none should be, or feel the tickling feet of spiders nesting in his esophagus.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Wits + Pandemonium. The target suffers a penalty to all dice

The Weird Go Pro

According to Haunter lore, the guild's forebears once quested deep in the Labyrinth, following legends of a weapon that could sunder the Shroud. Instead, they found a force called the Wyld, a font of primal chaos, and made a pact with it. In exchange for a portion of its power, they would bind themselves to the Wyld's own purpose of continuous dynamism. That power became Pandemonium and the pact still drives the Haunters' larger agenda of antiestablishment disruption.

The tale's veracity is questionable but it's true that certain Haunters have unlikely allies across the Shroud, particularly some factions of werewolves and fae. The idea of formal alliance or large-scale conspiracy is laughable, but on an individual basis, a wraith with ties to either party is more likely than not to be a Haunter. It's an occasional source of common cause and an advantage few other groups of dead can predict or counter. On the downside, this also brings Haunters into more frequent conflict with mortal ghost hunters.

pools equal to the wraith's dots in Pandemonium for one turn per success. This doesn't stack with wound penalties and can't affect the same target more than once per scene.

• Taste Chaos (Initiate)

The wraith's affinity for chaos enables her to detect its touch on others. This art's capacity to reveal the influence not only of Pandemonium but also of Oblivion has implications that few Haunters want examined too closely…

System: The wraith gazes quizzically at a target within line of sight; the player rolls Wits + Pandemonium. One success reveals if the target has been affected by Pandemonium, Spectre powers, or another manifestation of Oblivion within the past day. Each additional success reveals traces going back an additional week.

•• Befuddlement (Common)

The wraith momentarily confuses a target, disorienting him and making him forget where he is and what he's doing. This art is equally effective on living and wraithly targets.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Wits + Pandemonium. For one turn per success, the target must succeed with an Intelligence roll (difficulty 8) to act or to maintain any supernatural power requiring concentration. Multiple applications of Befuddlement add to the effect's duration.

•• Postmortemscript (Initiate)

A Haunter versed in this art can communicate across the Shroud via written words and symbols. Concentrating on her message and infusing her Corpus with chaos, she forces part of her substance through cracks in the walls between worlds, marking any solid surface. Pandemonium's unpredictability makes each manifestation different: One message may appear in moss, another oozes from the writing surface in clotted blood, while glowing gnats hover to spell out a third. This also renders exact dictation impossible. With practice, the wraith can convey her intent with acceptable accuracy, though a slip in concentration can reveal her subconscious worries and desires or even allow her Shadow to dictate the message.

System: When the wraith begins writing, the player spends 1 Pathos and 1 Corpus and rolls Intelligence + Pandemonium. She can write for one turn per success, with each turn allowing her to write one phrase or short sentence. All writing disappears at the end of the scene.

••• Strange Ether (Common)

The wraith can meddle with a small area's environmental conditions, altering temperature, humidity, wind, precipitation, and lighting conditions. While only the strongest Haunters can cause direct harm with Strange Ether, it's easy to arrange "accidents" through localized meteorological anomalies. Strange Ether can alter the environment on either side of the Shroud, but meddling with the Tempest is an act of desperation or insanity even for Haunters.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and 1 Corpus and rolls Intelligence + Pandemonium. Her successes determine the most intense weather she can invoke, as shown below. All Strange Ether effects last for one minute per dot of Pandemonium in a radius up to the wraith's Willpower x 10 yards.

1 success	Fog or slight temperature change (up to 10°F/5°C).
2 successes	Mild breeze and light precipitation.
3 successes	Ambient light change, in a range from "overcast winter morning" to "midnight under a stormy sky with a new moon."
4 successes	Strong wind and heavy precipitation.
5+ successes	As 4 successes, but each additional success grants one "ranged" attack with an airborne object; the player rolls Wits + Pandemonium with a base 1 bashing damage.

Haunters can't engage in Strange Ether duels to cancel out each other's applications of this art; multiple uses only worsen conditions until they're out of anyone's control. In the Tempest, any failed application of Strange Ether also generates an immediate localized Maelstrom (one bell, unless the situation demands something stronger).

The Going Gets Weird

A wraith invoking Pandemonium rarely has control over its precise manifestation. She can use a given art and have an idea of its net effect, but she doesn't always know the specific form it'll take. Storytellers and players are alike are encouraged to take this as license to describe meat rain, architectural eversions, and other phenomena that bury the needle on the weird-o-meter. When in doubt, err on the side of creepy over slapstick.

••• Escher's Stair (Initiate)

This art momentarily violates Euclidean geometry, connecting two doorways or other portals to one another via the Labyrinth. This art can link a door to a window, a sewer pipe to a piece of playground equipment, or the head of the eponymous staircase to its foot. Such a link goes both ways. Anyone passing through it suffers a moment of unsettling disorientation as they transit the Labyrinth en route to their destination. Multiple applications of Escher's Stair can create infinite loops — or intricate mazes of twisty little passages, all alike.

System: The player spends 1 Corpus and 2 Pathos and rolls Wits + Pandemonium. For one turn per success, she can link two similar planes within her line of sight so any object crossing one plane emerges from the other. Each plane must have a clearly defined border: a window frame, a doorway, the head or foot of a staircase or ladder, a tunnel mouth, a jet engine's intake, and so on. The two planes don't have to have identical dimensions or similar shapes, but must be roughly equal in area.

At Pandemonium ••••, the player may spend 1 Willpower to expend this art's duration to one minute per success. At Pandemonium •••••, she may spend 2 Willpower to stretch it to one hour per success.

If a character suffers severe injury (more than 2 Health levels of lethal damage) from passing through Escher's Stair, the wraith's Shadow gains 4 temporary Angst.

•••• Foul Humor (Common)

Forcing her Corpus through the Shroud, the wraith creates a Fortean eruption of anything from vermin to gore. She can generate frog rains, locust plagues, wasp swarms, rat eruptions, spider explosions… the list goes on. Alternately, she can summon raw meat, fresh or clotted blood, slime molds, buckets of phlegm, acidic or caustic mucus, or other noxious substances.

System: The player describes her desired effect, spends 1 Pathos and 1 Corpus, and rolls Intelligence + Pandemonium. The wraith's Shadow then gains 1 temporary Angst, regardless of whether the roll is successful. The manifestation has a maximum radius of the wraith's Pandemonium rating x 5 yards and lasts for three turns per success. If the effect is damaging, the wraith's

Shadow gains 1 additional temporary Angst and the vermin or goo inflicts one level of lethal damage per two successes.

More subtle and less disruptive manifestations are possible, though they go against the forces upon which this art calls. Summoning a non-disgusting substance additionally costs 1 Willpower for the necessary fine control.

•••• Grotesque Apparition (Initiate)

Instead of sliming or infesting an area with her cast-off Corpus, an adept Haunter can mold her cross-Shroud manifestation into an approximation of her mortal shape. This art spawns a short-lived, life-sized humanoid form that vaguely resembles the Haunter. It's incapable of self-expression more refined than inchoate gibbering, but it's distressingly robust and disgusting.

System: The player spends 3 Corpus and 2 Pathos and rolls Intelligence + Pandemonium. The wraith's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst. The manifestation lasts for one turn per success. When the wraith creates the apparition, she sets its general behavior (including whether it attacks and, if so, whom), but she can't subsequently control it — once unleashed, it's self-directing.

The apparition has attributes equal to the wraith's own, except Appearance, which is 0. It inherits her ability dots (if any) in Athletics, Brawl, Dodge, Intimidation, Melee, Repair (usable only for sabotage), and Stealth. It has Health levels equal to the Haunter's Stamina + Pandemonium.

When creating the apparition, the player can spend extra Corpus to enhance its physical form. 1 point of Corpus buys one dot of Strength, one dot of Stamina, or 2 Health levels.

••••• Tempus Fugit (Common)

The wraith can distort time's passage, slowing or hastening the actions of everyone in her immediate area. She can't, however, reverse or repeat time.

System: The player declares whether she's speeding or slowing time, spends 4 Pathos and 1 Corpus, and rolls Wits + Pandemonium. This art affects a maximum 10-yard radius and lasts for one turn per success. The player may exempt one character per dot of the wraith's Wits, including the Haunter herself, declared when she activates this power.

If the wraith successfully slows time, all affected characters and objects slow to half their normal speed. Slowed characters receive only one action every other turn, objects in motion move at half velocity, and slowed attacks' damage dice pools decrease by 2. In addition, slowed characters can't take defensive actions.

If the wraith speeds up time, all affected characters and objects double their speed. Accelerated characters receive one extra action per turn, objects in motion move at double velocity, and accelerated attacks' damage dice pools increase by 2.

The player may spend 3 additional Corpus to slow time to one-third its normal pace or triple it. Slowed characters act once every three turns, while hastened characters receive two extra actions. All other effects are commensurate.

A wraith can use Tempus Fugit once per scene.

••••• Tesseract Bomb (Initiate)

If a Haunter wills it with this art, her wrath is inescapable. Folding an entire structure in on itself, the wraith blocks all egress and ingress. Within this nightmare geometry, dead ends, infinite loops, and gravitational reversals upend the laws of physics. There are no records of Tesseract Bomb's effects in the Tempest or the Labyrinth, most likely because no one has survived to report the results — but it's notable that a Haunter's Shadow will do *anything* to prevent such experiments.

System: The wraith must be within the building, cavern, or other enclosed space she wants to Tesseract Bomb. The player spends 3 Pathos and 3 Corpus, then rolls Wits + Pandemonium. The number of successes rolled determine the maximum size of structure she can affect. If the target space is larger than the roll allows, she affects only a portion of it:

1 success	Single room
2 successes	One-bedroom apartment; small shop
3 successes	One-story house
4 successes	Two- or three-story house; strip mall
5 successes	Mansion; parking garage; shopping mall

For the rest of the scene, no one on the outside can enter the affected structure. Entrances are stuck, locked, or impossible to find. Attempts at forced entry fail unless the attacker both succeeds at the appropriate task and defeats the Haunter in a resisted Willpower roll.

Inside the structure, exits simply *aren't there*. Blank walls and dead-end hallways replace windows and outside doors, and exterior walls have armor equal to the Haunter's Wits in addition to their usual properties. In addition, if the Haunter knows Dark Ether or Escher's Stair, she can use each power without paying Pathos or Corpus while the Tesseract Bomb is in effect, though her Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst for each such use.

The "closest" most of the Quick ever come to truly entering the Underworld is when they sleep. Their dreams — or nightmares — carry them away from the tangible reality of the waking world and into a nether region which they sometimes find comforting, sometimes horrifying, and sometimes just bizarre as their subconscious plays hob with them. While they exist in this shifting lands of dream they come near to the Shadowlands — so near that certain wraiths can work their will upon them. These wraiths, the Sandmen, use the Arcanos of Phantasm to manipulate dreams — and the dreamers who spawn them.

Guildmarks

Just as a person who tromps through marshes gets wet and muddy, a Sandman who glides through the morphean landscape becomes marked by dreamstuff — and that marking never entirely disappears. At the lower levels of power, fragmented scenes from dreams currently experienced by nearby sleeping mortals play out across his eyes. As he becomes more powerful, the "screen" expands to cover first his face, and eventually his whole body.

Additionally, most of the schools within the Guild (see below) adopt emblems or symbols that have special meaning for them. For example, members of the School of Guignol often paint a circle of blood (or at least blood-red makeup) around one eye, while the Dreamaturges use the traditional comic-tragic masques associated with theater.

The Guild

Dreams have always had something of a mystical quality for humanity, with shaman and priest alike using them as a method of divination, spirit travel, and even attack. So, naturally, some of the first wraiths explored the relationship between their existence and the world of dreams in an effort to comprehend both. In time, these studies yielded the arts now known as Phantasm.

Phantasm's artistic potential attracted many like-minded wraiths. They gathered in appropriate Haunts and supportive Necropoli to practice their Arcanos, share techniques, and argue aesthetics and philosophy. Over time, these groups coalesced into circles often referred to as schools or "schola." Despite the frequent, and loudly voiced, differences between schools, their shared love of art and appreciation for creativity drew them together. In time the Sandmen, as other wraiths called them, weren't very different from the other Guilds.

The centuries prior to the Breaking were a golden age of Phantasm. Every Deathlord, Anacreon, and wealthy wraith competed to hire the most talented Sandmen to create "Oneiric Theatre." But some Hierarchy leaders realized that a Sandman who fooled an audience could just as easily dupe an unwary wraith out of his oboli or perform espionage missions. They persuaded or forced some Sandmen into these unsavory pursuits, and the Guild's reputation was soon tainted by its association with theft and blackmail. But thanks to their newfound wealth and influence, many Sandmen didn't care.

When the Breaking came, it lived up to its name with regard to the Sandmen. The Guild splintered along aesthetic lines, as old rivalries led some Sandmen to join the revolt and others to help Charon and his Legions. Even after the turmoil passed, the Guild didn't merge back into a unified organization; the Sandmen remained content to stay in their countless squabbling schools.

These days, provided a Sandman restricts herself to satisfying her fans' desire for entertainment the Legions pay no attention when she works. (For Sandmen who prefer *not* to restrict themselves, the realm of dreams provides a convenient place to meet and plan away from the Hierarchy's prying eyes — usually.) And as every wraith knows, sometimes one has a need — personal or otherwise — that only a Sandman can supply.

Factions

The Sandmen have always been highly factionalized, but over time the passing of key artistic figures into Oblivion, the falling out of favor of some styles of art, the evolution of aesthetic doctrines, and other factors have winnowed the vast number of "schools" that existed before the Breaking down to a much smaller count. Broadly speaking, though, all of them fall into two categories: the "aesthetic" schools, which tend to focus on art and questions of creativity and style; and the "practical" schools, which seek more… efficient… ways to use Phantasm to personal benefit. Into the former category fall the *School of Dreamaturgy*, whose members attempt to raise Oneiric Theatre to the creative heights and prestige it once enjoyed; the *School of Guignol*, known more commonly as "Night Terrors" or "Nightriders," which specializes in the creation of nightmares and similar horrific dreams; and the *School of Meditation*, which explores the sacred and mystical nature of dreaming. The latter includes the *School of Oneironmancy*, or Oneiromancers, which engages in spying, espionage, and dream-based combat; and the *School of Beguilement*, Renegades kicked out of the Guild who claim *they're* the real Guild. The Beguilers pretend to be entertainers but are really scam artists, con wraiths, and hustlers employing Phantasm for personal gain.

Phantasm

Phantasm Systems

Unless an art specifies differently, if a wraith uses Phantasm across the Shroud, the local Shroud rating is the difficulty. Using Phantasm on a target in the Underworld has a difficulty of the target's Willpower unless noted otherwise.

Failures on Phantasm rolls often have particularly disturbing or horrific effects (unless that was the wraith's intent in the first place). Dreams and illusions spiral out of control, becoming nightmarish, and often taking as their subject the wraith's Passions (or his Shadow's Dark Passions). In some cases, the wraith's Shadow may take over his manipulation of a dream or subject, leading to a truly nightmarish experience.

• Sleepsense (Common)

One of the foundations of Phantasm is the ability to watch the dreams a mortal or Slumbering wraith experiences, and in the case of the Quick to determine what stage of sleep they're in (non-REM ("N") stages, where sleep gradually deepens but no dreams occur, followed by REM sleep, in which dreaming takes place). Sleepsense also allows a wraith to perceive whether a wraith is Slumbering inside an object (and thus whether that object is one of that wraith's Fetters).

System: For a wraith to spy on someone's dreams, the player rolls Perception + Phantasm (difficulty 6). Each success allows the wraith to watch the dream for one turn.

For a wraith to determine if another wraith's Slumbering inside an object, the player rolls Perception + Phantasm (difficulty equal to the Slumbering wraith's Willpower or Pathos, whichever is higher). Even one net success lets him perceive whether there's a Slumbering wraith there or not.

• Dreamreading (Initiate)

Dreams often contain prophetic or useful information, and many wraiths have some ability to discern a dream's meaning. A Sandman skilled at Dreamreading has far greater oneiromantic insight than his fellows.

System: When the wraith wants to discern what a dream means (either one of his own, or someone else's that he watches via Sleepsense), the player rolls Perception + Phantasm (difficulty 6). Each success adds one success to the wraith's ability to interpret dreams correctly.

•• Dreamweaver (Common)

From watching dreams, most Sandmen go on to learn how to alter them. Typically a wraith does this to communicate information or try to subtly influence the sleeper's behavior once he wakes up.

Given enough successes, a wraith can change virtually anything, or everything, about a dream. For example, if a wraith's victim dreams of being a rock star playing a nighttime concert to a packed stadium, she could change it to a classical music performance, the stadium to an amphitheater, nighttime to day, the fans to tomato-throwing haters, and/or the good weather to a rainstorm. At the extreme, she could transform an ordinary dream into a nightmare that will haunt the victim when he awakens and prevent sleep from doing him any good.

System: For a wraith to alter a dream, he pays 2 Pathos and the player rolls Manipulation + Phantasm. The difficulty depends on the extent of the changes he wants to make: A few trivial changes is difficulty 3, changing half the significant details is difficulty 5, and changing all the significant details is difficulty 7.

Changing a dream has no specific game effect. How the sleeper reacts, if at all, is up to the Storyteller. However, it's possible for a wraith to alter a dream so that it becomes a terrifying nightmare. This increases the roll to difficulty 8 or the target's Willpower (whichever is higher). Each success achieved reduces the Corpus a wraith regains from Slumber by 1. If used on one of the Quick, the effects are the same as the "sleeplessness" function of Oneirataxia (see below).

The more successes a Sandman achieves on a Dreamweaver roll, the more vivid the changes to the dream seem, and the longer they last.

•• Dream Sequence (Initiate)

When one of the Quick pierces the Fog (see p. 284) and perceives a wraith, it can pose difficulty and even danger. Some Sandmen can cloud a mortal's mind again, convincing him that what he saw "was just a dream." Powerful wraiths can even extend this effect to other supernatural beings.

System: After a mortal succeeds at seeing through the Fog, the player rolls Manipulation + Phantasm (difficulty equal to the mortal's Willpower). Each success achieved reduces the mortal's successes on his Perception + Alertness roll to perceive nearby wraiths. If this reduces the mortal's success to zero or below, he becomes convinced that he didn't actually see anything — he just had a particularly vivid dream (or hallucination).

Against a supernatural being, Dream Sequence doesn't require the Fog; the Sandman just convinces another wraith, Spectre, or the like that he didn't see something he did. The Sandman must have three dots in Phantasm to do this to wraiths, Spectres, and most other Underworld denizens, and four dots to use Dream Sequence against Skinlands entities.

••• Morphean Embrace (Common)

A Sandman with this art can make other wraiths fall asleep, just as if they were mortal once more.

System: Morphean Embrace costs 1 Pathos to use. If the target wraith wants to experience Morphean Embrace, the Sandman's player doesn't need to roll to succeed with this art. But if the Sandman uses it against an involuntary subject (such as an enemy in combat), the player rolls Charisma + Phantasm (difficulty of the target's Willpower); the target may resist with an opposed Intelligence + Subterfuge roll.

If the roll succeeds, the target falls into an ordinary sleep. This isn't Slumber, and he doesn't enter one of his Fetters or regain Corpus Levels. Instead, he just drops to the ground and starts snoozing. Anything that would awaken a mortal sleeper (such as a loud noise or jostling him) will awaken a sleeping wraith as well. Unless something like that happens, the target wakes up about eight hours later.

A Sandman can use Oneirataxia (see below) on a sleeping wraith to keep him from waking up.

••• Deep Slumber (Initiate)

A wraith under the effects of Deep Slumber recovers Corpus more quickly when Slumbering.

System: A Sandman can use this art on himself before he Slumbers, or on another wraith while that wraith Slumbers. The player rolls Intelligence + Phantasm (difficulty 7). Each success achieved adds to the number of levels of non-aggravated damage the Slumbering subject heals. These extra levels apply even if the subject fails his Stamina roll after Slumbering (unless he botches).

•••• Phantasmagoria (Common)

Often considered the true height of the Sandman's art, Phantasmagoria allows a wraith to weave Pathos into convincing illusions.

System: Using Phantasmagoria costs 3 Pathos, plus an additional 1 Pathos per turn to maintain the illusion, if desired.

To create an illusion, the player rolls Charisma + Phantasm (difficulty 6), with the number of successes indicating two things: the maximum number of turns the illusion can last, and the number of successes anyone who sees it needs to achieve on a Perception + Awareness roll to resist its effects. If a victim achieves that many successes or more, he realizes the illusion is just that, an illusion, and can safely ignore it. Otherwise, he thinks it's real and reacts accordingly. If given reason to suspect the image isn't real (for example, if an illusionary loved one doesn't act affectionately toward him), he gets to make another Perception + Awareness roll to see through it.

Phantasmagoria affects sight, hearing, taste, and smell. The wraith can even make it quasi-solid to other wraiths, and thus able to affect touch, by investing it with Corpus. For each

1 Corpus the Sandman "donates" to her illusion, it acquires one health level. A Sandman cannot "heal" her illusion after something damages it. If she wants a more solid illusion she has to create a new one.

A Corpus-invested illusion can cause damage, if appropriate (*e.g.*, an illusionary weapon). To do this, the player rolls Dexterity + Phantasm (difficulty 7) to hit the target (the target can dodge). If the attack hits, roll Strength + Phantasm (difficulty 7). Each success inflicts one point of damage.

A Sandman can only create illusions in the Underworld unless she can Embody, in which case she can create them in the Skinlands as well.

•••• Tableau Of Terror (Initiate)

Some Sandmen have made special study of the art of Phantasmagoria (see below) in an effort to make their illusions more effective for specific purposes. The best known result of this work is Tableau of Terror, which creates an illusion so terrifying, horrifying, or simply disturbing that anyone viewing it runs screaming in fear.

System: The wraith spends 2 Pathos (plus an additional 1 Pathos per turn to maintain the Tableau, if desired). The player rolls Charisma + Phantasm (difficulty 5). The number of successes indicates two things: the maximum number of turns the Tableau can last and the number of successes anyone who sees it needs to achieve on a Wits + Awareness roll to resist its effects.

Anyone who fails to achieve this number of successes experiences extreme fear. If he fails by just 1-2, the victim just flees as fast as he can. If he fails by 3-4 his Shadow also gains 1 temporary Angst and he may attack in a frenzy instead of fleeing. If he fails by 5 or more, he becomes paralyzed or catatonic from fear and can't do anything.

Unlike a full illusion created by Phantasmagoria, a Tableau of Terror cannot be made solid by investing it with Corpus. It's just a highly convincing image crafted as a specific effect.

••••• Agon (Common)

The deadliest of the Sandman's arts, Agon allows a wraith to rip the soul from a sleeping mortal's body, causing excruciating, often debilitating, pain.

System: The wraith must spend 3 Pathos to use Agon, and his Shadow also gains 2 Angst when he does. The player rolls Strength + Phantasm (difficulty 8 or the local Shroud rating, whichever's higher). The number of successes indicates (a) the number of turns the wraith may hold the victim's soul out of his body, and (b) the number of health levels the victim loses when he awakens. However, the victim may resist this injury by rolling Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty 8).

••••• Oneirataxia (Initiate)

Also known as Sleep Manipulation (or, to less respectful wraiths, Insomnia Bomb), Oneirataxia allows a wraith to prevent the Quick and wraiths from sleeping, waking up, or dreaming.

System: Oneirataxia has three functions. Using any one of them costs 2 Pathos; if a wraith uses two or more functions simultaneously on the same subject, each additional one costs another 1 Pathos.

First, a wraith can use this art to prevent a mortal from sleeping or a wraith from Slumbering. The player rolls Manipulation + Phantasm against a difficulty of 8 or the target's Willpower, whichever's higher. Success indicates the target can't sleep for 24 hours.

For the Quick, lack of sleep reduces the victim's actions by 1 die on each day that follows until she gets sound, uninterrupted sleep. The Sandman's player may also apply an additional 1 die reduction for every 2 extra successes on the roll. (A Sandman can only use this type of Oneirataxia on a particular subject once each time she sleeps, but the effect is cumulative if applied on successive nights.) Furthermore, if the penalty equals the subject's highest Attribute + Ability combination, the subject experiences a nervous breakdown and requires medical assistance or even temporary institutionalization. Extended exposure past this point sends the subject into permanent catatonia. A wraith may try to combat this art by using Dreamweaver (p. 210) during the subject's nightmare.

For a wraith, the inability to Slumber means he cannot regain Corpus that way. A use of Morphean Embrace on a wraith affected by this type of Oneirataxia must achieve more successes with its roll than the Oneirataxia attack or it fails to affect the wraith.

Second, a wraith can prevent a sleeper from waking up. This keeps the Quick in a coma-like state and puts a Slumbering wraith into forced "hibernation." The player rolls Manipulation + Phantasm against a difficulty of 7 or the target's Willpower, whichever's higher. Each success indicates that the sleep/Slumber continues for one 12-hour period. A botch on this roll typically makes the Sandman himself go to sleep for 12 hours.

Third, a wraith can prevent a mortal from dreaming while he sleeps. (This function doesn't work on the Restless.) While this may affect the victim's behavior differently, the game effects are the same as lack of sleep (see above).

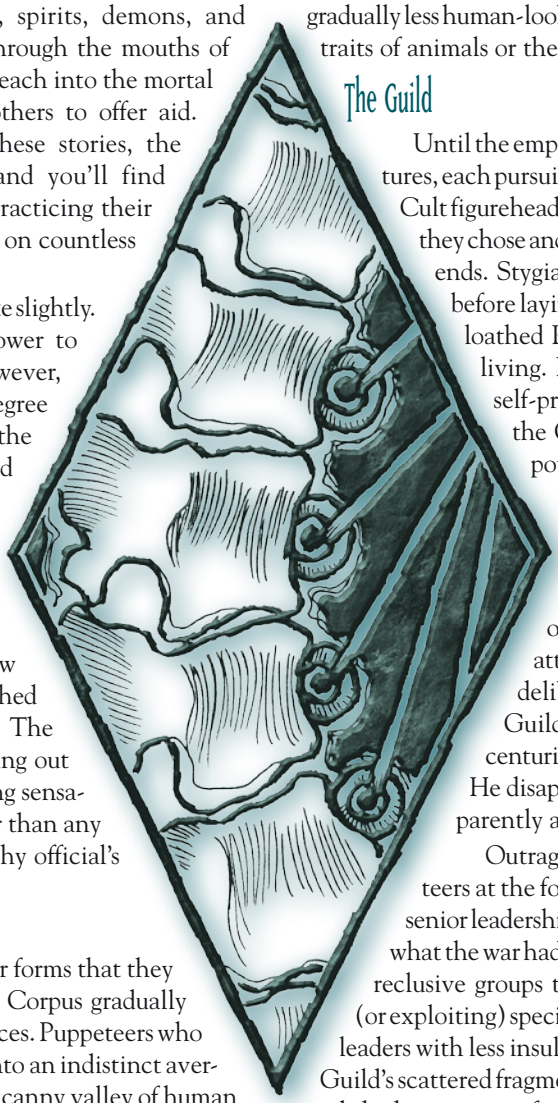
A Sandman may use two or more functions of Oneirataxia on a target simultaneously. This increases the difficulty for all rolls to the highest of any of them, +1 for each additional function used.

Puppeteers

Cultures around the world have myths of possession. Gods, spirits, demons, and ancestors speak through the mouths of the living. Some reach into the mortal realm to harm, others to offer aid. Scratch any of these stories, the Puppeteers say, and you'll find one of their number. They've been practicing their arts for millennia, leaving their mark on countless civilizations and religions.

The masters of Puppetry exaggerate slightly. They have no monopoly on the power to enter and control mortal bodies. However, few others have mastered both the degree of control that Puppetry grants and the understanding of human behavior and superstition that allows for most effective possession.

This Arcanos doesn't just cross the Shroud. It usurps mortals' bodies and, with some greater arts, their very lives. Puppetry abuse feeds the Shadow and is one of the empire's most-loathed violations of the *Dictum Mortuum*. The dangers don't stop wraiths from seeking out tutelage, though. The renewal of living sensation that Skinriding brings is stronger than any voice in the wraith's head or Hierarchy official's disapproval.



Guildmarks

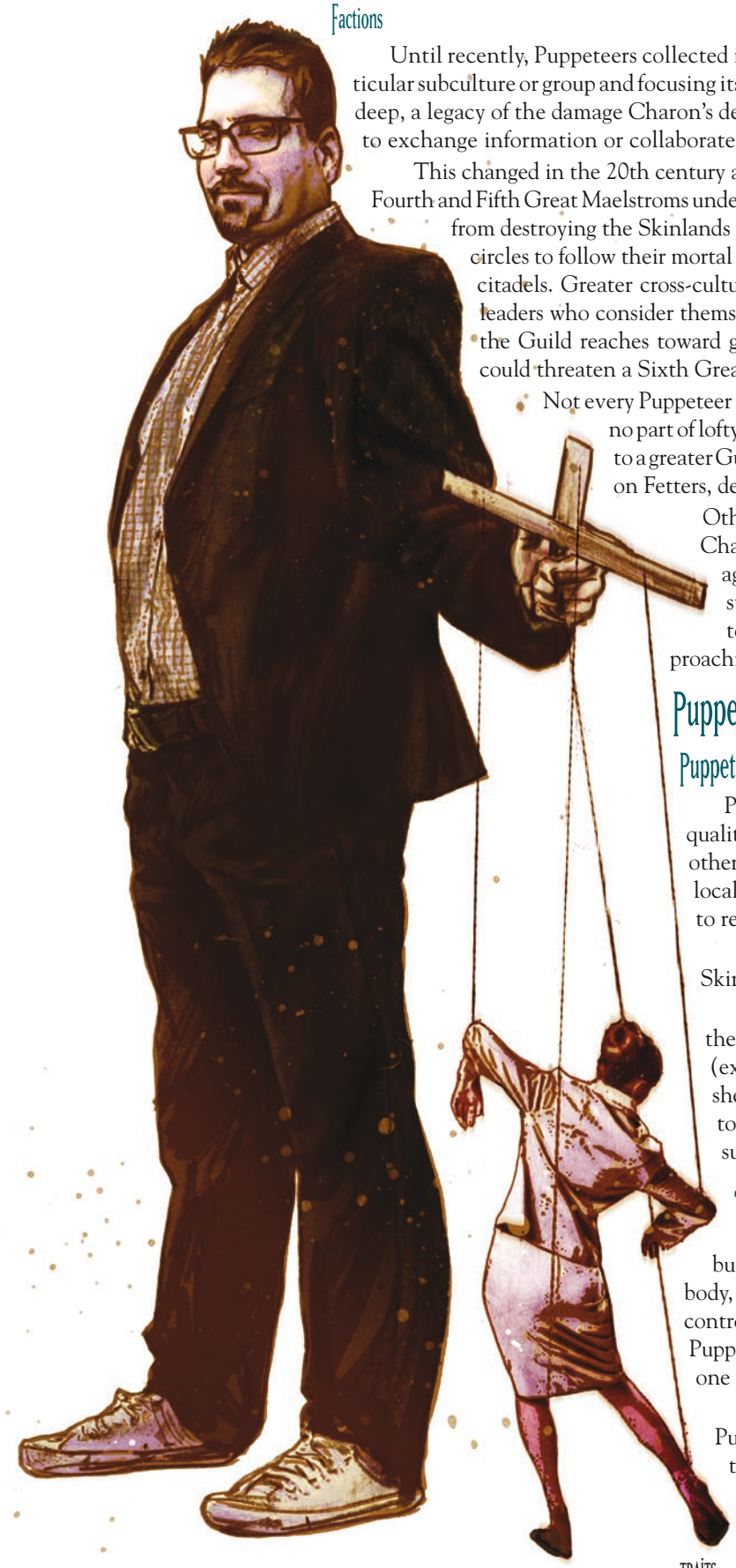
Puppeteers take on so many other forms that they can lose their own. Each Puppeteer's Corpus gradually becomes a blend of his hosts' appearances. Puppeteers who possess a wide range of subjects melt into an indistinct average appearance that approaches an uncanny valley of human norms. Those who specialize in a particular class of host undergo similar transformations, but with a bias toward their preferred vessels. Wraiths fond of possessing inhuman subjects become gradually less human-looking themselves, reflecting the physical traits of animals or the spiritual traits of supernatural hosts.

The Guild

Until the empire's rise, Puppeteers were solitary creatures, each pursuing their own agenda among the Quick. Cult figureheads, oracular voices, and ancestral guides, they chose and shepherded mortal herds for their own ends. Stygia's ascent ended these practices. Even before laying down the *Dictum Mortuum*, Charon loathed Puppetry for its direct power over the living. Early Puppeteers banded together for self-preservation, becoming early adopters of the Guild structure to attain the political power to deter the Hierarchy.

Puppeteer lore blames Charon for engineering their downfall through sleeper agents. Over several centuries, these wraiths rose to positions of prominence, with one eventually attaining overall Guild leadership. His deliberate sabotage during the War of the Guilds undercut Puppeteer efforts and lost centuries of knowledge to the Artificers' forges. He disappeared near the war's end, mission apparently accomplished.

Outrage over Charon's perfidy put the Puppeteers at the forefront of the coup, but the absence of senior leadership hobbled them. The Breaking finished what the war had started, scattering the Puppeteers into reclusive groups that limited themselves to protecting (or exploiting) specific mortal cultures. Only recently have leaders with less insular perspectives emerged to reunite the Guild's scattered fragments. Most are young wraiths who lived and died in an era of global travel and telecommunication, making them more open to interacting with cultures beyond those of their respective births.



Factions

Until recently, Puppeteers collected in small, local circles, each one drawing recruits from a particular subculture or group and focusing its activities on those mortals. Mistrust of higher authority ran deep, a legacy of the damage Charon's deep-cover agents inflicted. Circles might occasionally meet to exchange information or collaborate on critical projects, but extended contact was anathema.

This changed in the 20th century as wraiths without the old scars rose to local leadership. The Fourth and Fifth Great Maelstroms underscored the need for direct intervention to prevent the Quick from destroying the Skinlands and Underworld alike. Postwar migrations also forced many circles to follow their mortal beneficiaries, reestablishing themselves in foreign cities and citadels. Greater cross-cultural contact led to the *Marionette* movement among Circle leaders who consider themselves citizens of the world. Under their idealistic influence, the Guild reaches toward greater coordination, including the mitigation of wars that could threaten a Sixth Great Maelstrom.

Not every Puppeteer is so altruistic. Most cities have at least one Circle that wants no part of lofty agendas, preferring to aid only its chosen mortals. Resistance to a greater Guild structure ranges from parochial rhetoric to bloody assaults on Fetters, depending on the personalities involved.

Other goals drive Puppeteers, too. The *Harlequins* never forgot Charon's acts and maintain a centuries-old terror campaign against the Hierarchy, exploiting mortal extremist groups to strike Fetters. Conversely, *Silhouettes* see Puppetry as a means to Transcendence through resolving Fetters, sometimes approaching religious mania on the subject.

Puppetry

Puppetry Systems

Puppetry works only on living humans with no supernatural qualities (unless the Puppeteer knows Menagerie Mask). Unless otherwise specified, each Puppetry art's difficulty is equal to the local Shroud. Any nonconsensual use of the art allows the subject to resist with his Willpower.

Unless otherwise indicated, every Puppetry art other than Skinride requires the wraith to be Skinriding her target.

While a wraith is Skinriding, she's considered to be fully in the Skinlands. She's immune to any event in the Shadowlands (except Arcanoi that can reach across the Shroud). However, she suffers the same Skinlands effects as her host. This extends to injury: Whenever the host receives damage, the Puppeteer suffers an equal amount of the same type.

• Skinride (Common)

The foundation upon which all greater Puppetry arts build, Skinride enables the Puppeteer to slip into a mortal's body, briefly inhabiting his flesh as a passenger. The wraith has no control over her vessel's actions or thoughts. However, most other Puppetry arts require the wraith to be Skinriding her target. Only one wraith at a time may Skinride any given target.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Strength + Puppetry. With success, the wraith inhabits the host's body for the rest of the scene. If another wraith is already Skinriding the host, the Puppeteer must beat his successes to eject him and usurp his place.

• Menagerie Mask (Initiate)

Menagerie Mask expands the range of subjects that the Puppeteer can Skinride, allowing her to inhabit both animals and supernatural beings.

System: Upon learning Menagerie Mask, the Puppeteer can use Skinride on all primates, as well as supernaturally-gifted mortals. Further proficiency comes as the wraith increases her mastery of Puppetry.

At Puppetry ••, the character may Skinride all mammals.

Puppetry ••• enables the wraith to Skinride birds.

With Puppetry ••••, the Puppeteer can Skinride fish, reptiles, and amphibians.

A character *must* learn Skinride before acquiring Menagerie Mask. This is an exception to the usual rules governing the purchase of Initiate arts.

•• Twitch (Common)

The wraith may take fleeting control of one of her host's limbs. While complex manipulation is beyond her, she can grasp or release an object, cause or prevent a fall, or cause brief paralysis to forestall an attack or other action.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Strength + Puppetry. If the host resists, the wraith's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst.

Success allows brief control (one turn) as described above. With three or more successes, the movement feels entirely natural and the host writes it off to a muscle spasm, momentary indecision, or other internal factor.

•• Admix Humors (Initiate)

This art lets the Puppeteer influence her host's involuntary muscles and other bodily functions. She can adjust respiration, heart rate, blood pressure, digestion, blood chemistry, peristalsis, adrenaline production, and various secretions, and can smooth or exacerbate microexpressions. Subtle applications of Admix Humors can affect polygraph results, sustained exertion, or social interactions. More vigorous adjustments can simulate illness or trigger explosive voiding.

System: The player chooses the change she wants to invoke, spends 2 Pathos, and rolls Stamina + Puppetry. With success, she applies one of the following effects to her host:

- Add or subtract one die per 2 successes to all Strength and Stamina pools for the rest of the scene.
- Add or subtract one die per 2 successes to all social pools for the rest of the scene.
- Simulate the symptoms of one particular illness unless an observer succeeds in an opposed Perception + Medicine roll.
- Trigger sneezing, coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, or similar involuntary effects.
- Inflict 1 health level of bashing damage.

If the host resists, the Puppeteer's Shadow gains 2 temporary Angst.

••• Master's Voice (Common)

The Puppeteer can briefly seize control of her host's capacity for speech. The result is an eerie blend of the wraith's and host's voices.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos and rolls Stamina + Puppetry. If the host resists, the Puppeteer's Shadow gains 2 temporary Angst. The wraith may speak for one breath per success.

••• Shared Blood, Shared Breath (Initiate)

If a wraith's host suffers damage while she's Skinriding him, she shares his injuries. This art enables her to heal her host's body along with her own Corpus.

System: When healing damage the wraith incurred as a result of her host receiving damage, the player may double the normal Pathos expenditure and spend 1 Willpower. The wraith's host is healed of the same amount of damage that the wraith herself heals.

Shared Blood, Shared Breath can't heal aggravated damage. In addition, this art is effective only for a Consort.

•••• Rein in the Mind (Common)

With this art, the Puppeteer takes complete control of her host's body. The host remains in a semiconscious dream state, aware of what's happening but unable to act. When the wraith releases control, the host is subject to the Fog and reacts appropriately.

System: The player spends 4 Pathos and rolls Stamina + Puppetry. The wraith's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst if the host is willing, 4 temporary Angst if he resists. The wraith gains total control for one scene per success.

Once per scene, the host may spend 1 Willpower to make an opposed Willpower roll against the wraith's Stamina + Puppetry. Each net success the host receives reduces the art's duration by one scene. In addition, regardless of who rolls more successes, spending the Willpower gives the host one turn of control of his own body and gives the wraith's Shadow 1 temporary Angst.

If the host is a Consort, the wraith makes all rolls with the host's Physical Attributes and Appearance. If the host is not a Consort, all Physical and Appearance-based rolls use either the wraith's attribute or the host's, whichever is lower.

•••• Revivify (Initiate)

This art's name is misleading. The Puppeteer can't return the dead to life. She can, however, inhabit and control a freshly dead corpse for a brief time — long enough to terrify witnesses or wreak horrifying damage.

System: Although Skinride normally works only on living hosts, learning Revivify allows the wraith to use it on a relatively intact human body that has been dead no longer than a number of hours equal to her Stamina. The player spends 3 Pathos and 1 Willpower and rolls Strength + Puppetry. The wraith's Shadow gains 2 temporary Angst plus 1 additional temporary Angst per success.

For two turns per success, the wraith gains total control of the corpse. She uses the host body's Physical Attributes and Appearance for all appropriate rolls, but suffers a five-die wound penalty, reduced by one die per 2 successes.

While the host body is animate, it remains dead. Its heart does not beat, it does not respire unless the wraith consciously draws breath to speak, and the structural effects of all previously-received wounds remain in effect. It has a number of health levels equal to the wraith's Willpower. It suffers damage only from sources that affect its structural integrity. For example, poison is ineffective, but a shotgun blows off meaty chunks as usual. The wraith shares damage the body suffers, as per normal uses of Puppetry.

••••• Obliterate the Soul (Common)

Obliterate the Soul takes the process of creating a Consort to its logical and horrifying extreme. The Puppeteer assumes ownership of the host's body, feeding his Psyche to her Shadow. The result is an uninhabited mortal husk with no capacity to resist the wraith's Puppetry arts. It's a perfect vessel for extended occupancy — until the inevitable process of physical decay sets in.

System: Obliterate the Soul is usable only on a mortal Consort with no other supernatural qualities. Once per month, the player spends 5 Pathos and 2 Willpower and rolls Strength + Puppetry. This is an extended roll. If she misses a month, she loses all accumulated successes. If she botches a roll, the subject becomes immune to all further uses of Obliterate the Soul. When she accumulates successes equal to the host's Willpower, she succeeds. Her Shadow devours the host's soul, gaining temporary Angst equal to three times the host's permanent Willpower.

The Puppeteer may Skinride the uninhabited host body at will without spending Pathos. The body remains a Consort for all other purposes. When inhabiting the body, the wraith makes all rolls with the host's Physical Attributes and Appearance. While the body is uninhabited, it is catatonic.

Oblivion takes its toll. After a number of days equal to the wraith's Willpower, the wraith's Shadow gains 1 temporary Angst. The body suffers one health level of aggravated damage and loses one dot of Appearance (minimum Appearance 0). This damage can't be healed and additional damage continues to accrue at the same interval until the body dies.

••••• Legion (Initiate)

Repeated use of Puppetry leaves trace spiritual connections between the Puppeteer and her hosts. With Legion, she can exploit that network, asserting limited control over multiple Consorts at once. This is a profoundly dangerous art as each use feeds the wraith's Shadow, and loss of control can give it free rein over several mortal bodies.

System: While the wraith is Skinriding one Consort, the player spends 3 Pathos and 1 Willpower for every other Consort present in the scene. If any Consorts want to resist Legion, the Storyteller makes a single roll for all of them, using the highest Willpower among the resisting characters.

If the wraith succeeds, she may direct the actions of *all* Consorts for one turn per success, plus one turn per dot of Leadership. This direction is considered her action for each turn. Each Consort follows her directives to the best of his ability, using his normal dice pools, with a two-die penalty if he's resisting.

While commanding her Legion, the wraith may speak with their voices. Her words emanate from all affected Consorts simultaneously. In addition, she may spend 1 Willpower to switch bodies as a free action, though this requires a successful Skinride application. If she fails, she remains in the body she's currently Skinriding.

Killing the host body, knocking it unconscious, or driving the Puppeteer out of it immediately ends Legion's effects.

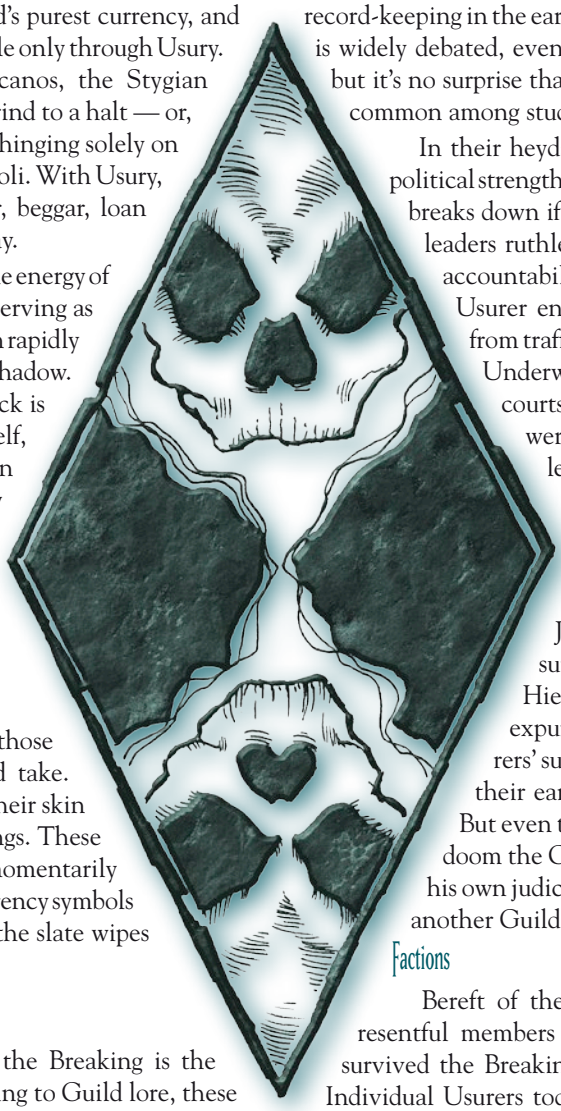
Usurers

In death as in life, nothing's free. Pathos serves as the Underworld's purest currency, and trade in it is possible only through Usury. Without this Arcanos, the Stygian economy would grind to a halt — or, worse, devolve to hinging solely on relic barter and oboli. With Usury, a wraith can serve as healer, banker, beggar, loan shark, and more — all in the same day.

As an art of directly controlling the energy of the Underworld, Usury can be as unnerving as it is essential. Careless applications can rapidly generate Angst, strengthening the Shadow. Using it to draw energy from the Quick is nothing less than the theft of life itself, no matter what spin the wraith puts on his actions. Experienced Usurers know the price of their arts. Experienced Usurers also are the Usurers who've survived their formative excesses and enthusiasms, and come to grips with what exactly they're doing.

Guildmarks

Usury demands precision from those who engage in its delicate give and take. Wraiths skilled in this Arcanos find their skin covered in a series of intricate markings. These patterns are in constant motion, momentarily resolving into the mathematical or currency symbols of the wraith's mortal culture before the slate wipes itself clean for the next equation.



The Guild

The Usurers' greatest regret of the Breaking is the destruction of their archives. According to Guild lore, these records contained not only centuries of transactions, but historical accounts of the organization's founding, concurrent with the invention of symbolic currency and commercial record-keeping in the early Bronze Age. These claims' accuracy is widely debated, even among modern Usurers themselves, but it's no surprise that meticulous documentation remains common among students of Usury.

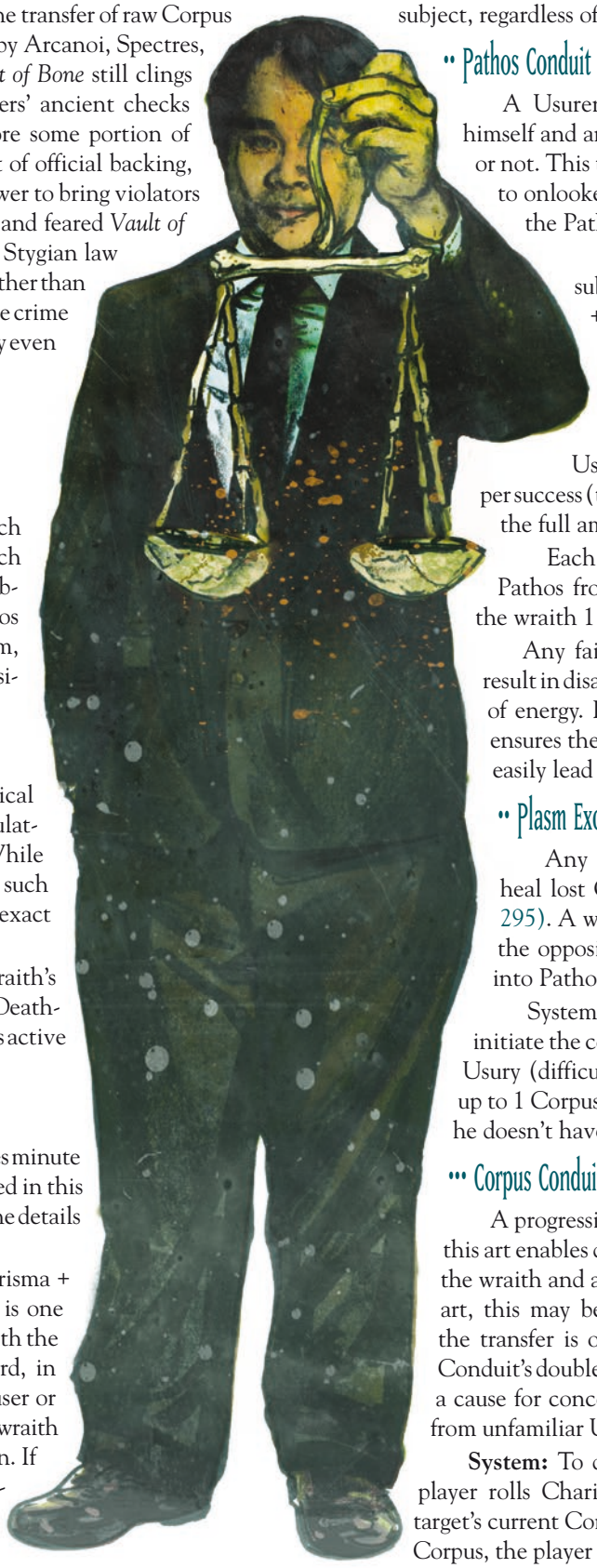
In their heyday, the Usurers enjoyed considerable political strength. Recognizing that any currency system breaks down if its controllers lose public trust, guild leaders ruthlessly enforced a code of honesty and accountability. The image of the incorruptible Usurer enabled the Guild to extend its reach from traffic in Pathos and Corpus to most other Underworld commerce, then into Stygian courts. By the War of the Guilds, Usurers were firmly entrenched in the empire's legal system and refused to jeopardize this position of power by aiding the other Guilds.

Such recalcitrance cost the Usurers the regard of their peers. Joining the coup against Charon was a survival gamble, balancing the threat of Hierarchy reprisals against the certainty of expungement if the Guilds won. The Usurers' support was never more than token, and their early withdrawal hamstrung the revolt. But even this slight participation was enough to doom the Guild, as Charon proved willing to gut his own judiciary and economy if doing so removed another Guild from power.

Factions

Bereft of their Hierarchy offices and targets for resentful members of other guilds, few Usurer leaders survived the Breaking's fallout, and the guild splintered. Individual Usurers today face an uphill battle to establish personal reputations for integrity. In the face of lingering mistrust, many forsake their heritage in favor of expediency and

personal profit. Among the exceptions are two of the guild's three extant orders. The *Vault of Breath* includes those Usurers who practice healing — not only the transfer of raw Corpus but the study of afflictions caused by Arcanoi, Spectres, and more outré sources. The *Vault of Bone* still clings to its duty of enforcing the Usurers' ancient checks and balances, and strives to restore some portion of the Usurers' former respect. Bereft of official backing, though, its members have little power to bring violators into line. Its nemesis is the fallen and feared *Vault of Eyes*, still intimately familiar with Stygian law but now committed to subverting rather than enforcing it. Wraiths of this order are crime lords acknowledged as formidable by even the most vicious Spooks.



Usury

Usury Systems

Unless otherwise stated, each Usury art requires the wraith to touch his target. To affect a Skinlands subject, this requires another Arcanos (e.g., Embody, Inhabit, Phantasm, Puppetry) that facilitates either physical or spiritual contact.

• Appraisal (Common)

Knowing another being's physical and spiritual state is key to manipulating its life and death energies. While all wraiths have some facility at such evaluations, Appraisal makes it an exact science.

System: The player adds the wraith's dots in Usury to all dice pools for Deathsight and Lifesight. This art is always active and doesn't require touch.

• Gray Ledger (Initiate)

Each application of Usury leaves minute traces on its subject. A wraith skilled in this art can assess this history, learning the details of prior "transactions."

System: The player rolls Charisma + Usury (difficulty 6). Each success is one prior Usury application, starting with the most recent and working backward, in which the subject was either the user or the target. For each transaction, the wraith learns which art was used and when. If the subject was the target of a transaction, the Usurer also receives a brief vision of the Usury-user who was involved. In addition, the wraith learns *all* applications of Suspended Usury arts (see below) that are pending on the subject, regardless of when they were applied.

•• Pathos Conduit (Common)

A Usurer may transfer Pathos between himself and another wraith, either voluntarily or not. This transferal is always clearly visible to onlookers, as a bright aura flares around the Pathos recipient during the process.

System: To donate Pathos to a subject, the player rolls Charisma + Usury (difficulty of the target's current Pathos). To siphon Pathos from a subject, the player rolls Manipulation + Usury (difficulty of the target's Willpower). The Usurer may transfer up to 1 Pathos per success (though he doesn't have to transfer the full amount).

Each use of Pathos Conduit to steal Pathos from an involuntary subject gives the wraith 1 temporary Angst.

Any failed attempt to use this art can result in disaster, as it reverses the desired flow of energy. If the intent is to give, a failure ensures the wraith instead takes, which can easily lead to Harrowings, or worse.

•• Plasm Exchange (Initiate)

Any wraith may expend Pathos to heal lost Corpus levels (see "Healing," p. 295). A wraith who knows this art may do the opposite, sublimating his own Corpus into Pathos.

System: The player spends 1 Pathos to initiate the conversion, then rolls Charisma + Usury (difficulty 6). The wraith may convert up to 1 Corpus per success into Pathos (though he doesn't have to convert the full amount).

••• Corpus Conduit (Common)

A progressive extension of Pathos Conduit, this art enables direct transfer of Corpus between the wraith and another being. As with the lesser art, this may be voluntary or involuntary, and the transfer is obvious to any observer. Corpus Conduit's double-edged nature is well known, and a cause for concern among all who seek healing from unfamiliar Usurers.

System: To donate Corpus to a subject, the player rolls Charisma + Usury (difficulty of the target's current Corpus or health levels). To receive Corpus, the player rolls Manipulation + Usury (dif-

ficulty of the target's Willpower). The wraith may transfer up to 1 Corpus per success (though he doesn't have to transfer the full amount), though he can't receive Corpus or health levels that would put him over his own maximum Corpus.

When a living being is involved in a Corpus Conduit transaction, health levels convert directly to Corpus on a one-for-one basis and vice versa. Each use of this art to steal Corpus or health levels from an involuntary subject gives the Usurer 2 temporary Angst.

••• Suspend (Initiate)

Used as promissory note, compulsion of obedience, or judicial mechanism of parole, this art of Damocles allows the wraith to delay the effect of another Usury power.

System: When the wraith uses any other Usury art that targets another character, the player spends 2 additional Pathos and makes a resisted Charisma + Usury roll against the target's Willpower. With success, the art used doesn't take effect immediately. Instead, it remains Suspended for a maximum time determined by successes rolled:

1 success	1 scene
2 successes	1 day
3 successes	1 week
4 successes	1 month
5+ successes	1 year per success

The target of a Suspended art doesn't automatically sense the Usury of Damocles hanging over her, though success with a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) gives her the feeling that *something*'s amiss. With three or more successes, she knows the Usurer is that feeling's source. In addition, a Suspended art is automatically evident to any wraith with Kismet (Fatalism •) and may reveal itself to other supernatural powers of perception at the Storyteller's discretion.

At any time before the suspended power expires, the wraith may spend 1 Willpower to "call in his marker." The power takes effect at that moment, regardless of the distance between the wraith and his target. If the suspended power is not called in before it expires, it dissipates with no effect. The Usurer has a constant intuitive sense of his Suspended arts and their remaining durations.

At any time, a wraith may hold a number of Suspended Arcanos applications equal to his Charisma. At Usury •••••, the wraith may Suspend the arts of other Arcanoi he knows.

•••• Facilitate (Common)

As a wraith's command of life and death energies grows, he learns to serve as intermediary, channeling Pathos and Corpus from one being to another efficiently and without pause. To Facilitate such a transaction, he must touch both the donor and the recipient.

System: When the wraith uses Pathos Conduit, Corpus Conduit, or Arcanos Conduit, he can transfer the specified energy from one target to another, rather than between one target and himself. The player chooses which of the art's two dice pools to use, accepting the associated difficulty, and successes rolled apply to both ends of the transfer. If the wraith Facilitates the transfer of stolen Pathos or Corpus, both he and the recipient gain 1 temporary Angst.

A wraith using Corpus Conduit also may spend 1 Corpus to use Plasm Exchange mid-transfer, converting the donor's Corpus into Pathos for the recipient. This requires a separate roll for Plasm Exchange, using that art's usual system (including its Pathos cost).

•••• Oblivion's Seal (Initiate)

In legal circles, a contract is termed a "meeting of the minds," a common agreement on a set of circumstances and actions. This art is the Usury-user's means of closing and enforcing such agreements with the full weight of Oblivion behind them. A breach of an agreement made under Oblivion's Seal brings immediate and crushing retribution upon the transgressor.

System: To initiate this art, the wraith must verbally state the terms of the agreement he intends to enforce, in the hearing of all other parties to be bound. The player spends any amount of Pathos and rolls Charisma + Usury (difficulty of 3 + the total number of characters to be bound). Each other bound party agrees to the terms and that player spends 1 Pathos. With success, this power affects all targeted characters — including the wraith himself, if he is to be a bound party — for one year per success rolled. During this time, any character who breaches the agreement immediately suffers a number of dice of aggravated damage equal to the total amount of Pathos spent by all bound parties.

The initial application of this art ensures that each bound party understands the terms of the agreement exactly as the wraith intends them — in both letter and spirit. If Suspend is used with Oblivion's Seal, the period of Suspension begins when a character breaches the agreement.

••••• Invest (Common)

The wraith can funnel his Pathos or Corpus into a relic, storing it for future use. He must focus on the relic in question, channeling his energy and carefully sealing it away with a gesture or command phrase. Anyone who knows this key may then access the stored energies.

System: The player spends 2 Pathos and 1 Willpower to begin the transfer, then spends the amount of Pathos or Corpus he wants to Invest and rolls Manipulation + Usury (difficulty 7). Each success invests one point of Pathos or Corpus, up to the amount spent, into the relic. Any excess points are lost. Any relic may contain either Pathos or Corpus, but not both at once.

Among this art's other applications, Invest is the means by which wraiths create soulfire crystals. All damage a Usurer takes from a soulfire crystal containing his own energy is lethal, not aggravated.

••••• Arcanos Conduit (Initiate)

Requiring either great trust or great desperation to use, this art allows the wraith to briefly loan or borrow mastery of an Arcanos. Usurers don't like to admit it — such knowledge wins them no friends — but Arcanos Conduit doesn't have to borrow Arcanoi from a *willing* subject.

System: The player designates a single Arcanos to be transferred, spends 1 Willpower and up to 10 Pathos, and rolls Charisma + Usury (difficulty 8). The Arcanos transfer lasts for one scene per success. The donor loses a number of dots in the specified Arcanos equal to half the Pathos spent, rounded down. The recipient's rating in that Arcanos becomes equal to the number of dots transferred, regardless of how many dots he had before, and he can use all of the donor's arts of an appropriate rating.

If the Usurer uses Arcanos Conduit on an unwilling subject, the roll to activate this art becomes a resisted Charisma + Usury roll against the target's Willpower. The Usurer's Shadow also gains 2 temporary Angst per Arcanos dot the Usurer steals.

If either wraith enters a Harrowing, Arcanos Conduit ends immediately and all stolen or borrowed Arcanoi return to their rightful owners.

Example: *Pham has Argos •••• , including Weather Eye (Modern •), Enshroud (Ancient •), Phantom Wings (Modern ••), Flicker (Modern •••), Turn the Anemoi's Wrath (Ancient •••), and Tempest-Eiders Canceleer (Ancient ••••). Miranda has Argos • but only Weather Eye. Pham loans three dots of Argos to Miranda. While the loan lasts, Miranda has Argos ••• and can use all of Pham's one-, two-, and three-dot Argos arts. Pham's Argos is reduced to • and he can use only his one-dot Argos arts until the loan expires.*

Chapter 6: The Shadow

The Shadow is the hidden half of a wraith, the version of her personality where the worst of her impulses and cruelty reside. No matter how vicious or kind she was in life, those dark aspects were present, a part of who she was. Once she died, however, those impulses and urges became something else — something powerful, self-aware, and dangerous. Every wraith has a Shadow, and every Shadow is simultaneously similar to others and yet terrifyingly unique. It is the dark secret every one of the Restless shares, and it is the enemy that each of them must ultimately face alone. And it is with the wraith, urging her to self-destruction, always.

At its core, a Shadow is everything in us we were taught to hate and fear about ourselves, and it has a direct pipeline to a wraith's attention because it lives inside his head. Dwelling in the wraith's subconscious, it knows the wraith better than the wraith knows himself. It knows the weak spots, the secret shames and hidden sparks of resentment that can be fanned into flame, and it is neither shy or ashamed of putting this information to use. It is the refined product of each wraith's inner darkness, given agency and a voice, and most terribly, a goal: Drag the wraith down to Oblivion.

The Shadow is in constant communication with the Psyche, offering a stream of threats, comments, and bribes. It speaks directly to the wraith from inside her head. No one else can here its whispered asides, its snide takedowns of the wraith's friends or its attempts to goad the wraith into inappropriate responses. Occasionally the wraith will forget who's talking to them and will respond out loud. Such moments are embarrassments. Everyone's got a Shadow, after all, but nobody likes to talk about it. Being forcibly reminded of the Shadow's presence makes everyone wary and uncomfortable.

Talking isn't the only way the Shadow gets its claws into the Psyche. It has powers, called Thorns, that enable it to warp reality to its wishes. It draws power from negative emotions that match its own Dark Passions. And it can offer "help" — loaning the wraith strength at key moments, but always with a potential cost. And woe betide the wraith who comes to rely on his Shadow's goodwill, as there will inevitably come the moment when the expected assistance is withheld, and the wraith goes down under the weight of the betrayal.

Then again, as the scorpion said to the frog, it's in the Shadow's nature.

To be clear, all Shadows may be on the side of Oblivion, but that doesn't mean they're solely about putting their wraith on the express train to annihilation. After all, that would be too easy. Instead, the path to Oblivion that a Shadow orchestrates is often a slow one. A Shadow relishes every second of the struggles against it, building carefully upon every victory it achieves over the Psyche. If the fight is over too soon, the Shadow is denied the pleasures of that journey. Shadows are not desperate and suicidal. It is self-destructive, and no other force in the Shadowlands hates a wraith as

much as her Shadow does. The Shadow takes its time because it's going to enjoy making her suffer. The fact that the evil the wraith does on her slow slide to Oblivion will help claim other souls? That's the icing on the metaphysical cake.

The Shadow doesn't always come across as purely adversarial. It can fake the qualities the Psyche possesses, such as restraint, a moral conscience, and even mercy. In truth, it has none of these things. But a Shadow is playing a long game, and can fake the higher emotions as necessary in the service of his larger goals. It can offer good advice, provide actual assistance, and other benefits, tricking the Psyche into thinking it's reformed or, even worse, wants to work together. It's all just stratagem, though, a way to lull the wraith into relaxing her guard against the Shadow's real agenda. In the end, the Shadow thinks it will get everything it wants, and this goal justifies any steps it takes along the way. If a wraith isn't careful, the Shadow will — for the brief moment before the wraith is swallowed by Oblivion.

The Shadow Speaks

Here's the thing. The meat, it forgets. Brain cells died. Memories went away. You could always drink yourself into forgetting, or try drugs, or just bury the bad stuff you did where it will never bother you again. And that works, for a while.

But it doesn't go away for good. It just gets all bundled up for when you cross over to the other side, and then it all comes back. All the bad thoughts and things you were ashamed of, all the lies and the cheats and the mean things you said about friends that you didn't mean — or that you did. That's what I am, and you can't make me go away. You can't outlive me. You can't drown me in booze and drugs and therapy. You have to face me every day for the rest of eternity, because I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to remind you of all the crappy things you did, and I'm going to get you to do more of them, because you're still you and you still have all those nasty little urges floating around. Only now I'm here to highlight the opportunities you have to indulge.

So go on. If you won't say how stupid your friend looks in her new Moliate job, that's OK, I'll say it for you — and I'll do it at the worst possible moment for you to bust up laughing. You're going to be good and share those relics you found with your friends? I'll be right there explaining why you deserve to keep the best stuff, and they never need to know about it. And then once you do, I'll be along to remind you that you screwed them.

You can't run. You can't shut me up. You can't get away from me, because I'm you, and I'm just as much a part of you as all the noble bullcrap about saving your family and protecting your favorite teddy bear. Accept that, and maybe I won't be able to end us the first chance I get. Accept that, and we'll get along just fine.

Drawing Lines in the Mind

Shadow is not simply a wraith's "evil twin." Shadows have, as previously noted, distinct personalities and voices, and are undoubtedly self-aware. Some go as far as to name themselves, doing so to underscore their differences from the wraiths whose subconscious generated them. But at the same time, they are not distinct and separate; no matter how much a Shadow denies it, they are part of that wraith. And so, the Shadow has to judge the degradation it wishes to inflict on the wraith against its own tolerance for pain. On a certain level, the Shadow isn't actively suicidal. It just wants to see the Psyche lose. At everything. Forever.

Nothing a Shadow gives or offers, whether it's advice or power, comes without a price. Wraiths can only do what they did in life when that wicked little voice comes calling, and struggle not to give in. No matter the promises or apologies a wraith gives after their Shadow lures them into havoc, odds are the damage of giving in will last for eternity. If a wraith accepts a single offer from his Shadow, that opens the door to the next, and the next, with the Shadow's vise-like grip ultimately squeezing out every hope and good intention.

The Shadow knows this, and as a result, can afford to pick its battles. A Shadow who is constantly blathering in its Psyche's ear is ultimately easier to tune out as white noise. A Shadow who waits for a desperate moment and then offers something that seems to come with no strings attached is far more difficult to resist.

Beyond its role as tempter, tormenter, and downfall, a Shadow also orchestrates Harrowings. These desperate personal nightmares are crucibles for the soul, dragging a wounded wraith down into the Labyrinth itself to face his worst fears made manifest. There are only a few ways these nightmare shadowplays end: the ultimate destruction of the wraith, the devastation and loss of one of his Passions or Fetters, or, if the wraith demonstrates sufficient courage and ingenuity, escape. But even those who emerge from a Harrowing theoretically unscathed bear the scars of what they have gone through, and what they hope to never face again.

Faced with all this, the struggle against the Shadow may seem impossible. Only vigilance, will, and the occasional visit to a Pardoner to sap the Shadow's supply of Angst can allow a wraith to hold the line.

But when a Shadow grows powerful, it is not restricted to speaking only to the Psyche that hosts it. It can reach out to the wraiths around it, even work with other Shadows, and seduce the companions a wraith loves most. If the Shadow grows powerful enough, watchful vigilance may be the only thing to stand between a wraith and Oblivion.

Shadowplay

Roleplaying the Shadow is simultaneously a tremendous responsibility and incredibly liberating. On the one hand, having the opportunity to be the bad guy while in character, spitting an endless stream of insults and snarky observations, can be a lot of fun. On the other, making sure never to abuse the knowledge another player entrusted you with can be a thin line to walk.

At its core, Shadowguiding is about providing a counterpoint to another player's character. It's about offering alternatives — not good alternatives, but alternatives — and giving voice to all the doubts and fears and frustrations that a wraith can have. It's not about competition, or trying to take down another player's character. It is about giving them more and better material to roleplay with by enabling them to riff off an enemy who knows them best: themselves.

In practical terms, Shadowguiding is a means of enriching the gameplay of your Wraith chronicle, adding a layer of adversarial intrigue and texture to the chronicle. That means, at the very least, talking to the Psyche on a semi-regular basis. What is said is entirely up to the Shadowguide. It can be threats, promises, offers, or even just running commentary. (And yes, Shadowguiding is a great way to get your otherwise-disruptive snark out productively.) What matters is that the Psyche isn't allowed to go about its business securely. There's always a reminder that someone else is watching, listening, judging, and most importantly, opposing.

Comments from a Shadowguide to a Psyche can be spoken out loud for the entire group to hear, or they can be communicated via note or text privately. Unless circumstances specifically dictate it, the other wraiths in the Circle do not hear the Shadow's voice. They do, however, hear any response the Psyche makes to the Shadow's commentary, which can make things very clear when a wraith is having focus issues.

The Shadowguide can also use the various powers at the Shadow's disposal to influence events. Offers of Shadow Dice should always be made directly to the Psyche, with the negotiation between the two playing out as long as necessary. Thorns, on the other hand, should be activated through direct communication with the Storyteller. Whether the Shadow then wants to take credit for whatever chaos follows is entirely up to the Shadowguide. Keeping the source of a sudden Spectre attack unknown can help keep a wraith off balance. On the other hand, gloating to the Psyche over what's just happened while knowing the Psyche can't tell anyone else has its benefits as well.

The third thing the Shadowguide does is guide Harrowings. As the adversary who knows the wraith best, the Shadowguide sets up — in conjunction with the Storyteller and other players as necessary — the parameters, scenario, and conditions of every Harrowing the wraith falls into. This doesn't mean coming to each and every session with a massive flowchart of potential Harrowing scenarios, but it does mean that a Shadowguide should be ready to take point on a Harrowing should that unfortunate situation arise.

Finally, the Shadowguide can, at appropriate intervals, initiate a takeover of the wraith's Corpus through a process called Catharsis. This should be a rare and momentous occasion, as it can have all sorts of implications for both character and chronicle. Even when a Shadowguide has the capability to initiate Catharsis, that doesn't mean it should be done immediately or automatically. A Shadowguide should treat the option to mount a short-term coup as a rare and golden opportunity, and not something to be gobbled up as soon as is humanly possible. For more on Catharsis, see p. 227.

Keeping It Separate

Making sure your character doesn't know what the Shadow you're playing does can be tricky. Putting together a cheat sheet of Shadow-only intel as a reference is a useful way to keep from crossing that metagaming boundary. Shadowguiding should never replace playing your main character. Nor should it be used as a resource for that character's adventures. What you learn as Shadowguide for one wraith should never be used to provide an unfair advantage for another.

Getting Started

Random selection of Shadowguides is the easiest and most straightforward method of assigning a Shadowguide to a character. At the beginning of the chronicle, the Storyteller simply drops every character's name in a hat and lets each player draw. The results indicate who's going to be whispering in whose ear for the foreseeable future. Alternately, the Storyteller can, based on her knowledge of the players, their characters, and the upcoming storyline, assign Shadowguiding roles to each player.

It is every Shadowguide's responsibility to know the Shadow character they'll be playing, and to be at least reasonably familiar with the Psyche that Shadow will be haunting. Taking the time to sit down and learn the Psyche's Passions, Fetters, backstory, and basic capabilities is useful in effective Shadowguiding. So too is learning the character's in-game history. This is especially important for someone stepping in as Shadowguide for an established character. Knowing who the player formed bonds with — or betrayed — can add depth to Shadowplay. The more specifics the Shadowguide has, the more specific she can be in her commentary and the more believable she is as the Shadow.

Players should always be prepared to accept changes in their Shadowy responsibilities. Taking on an additional Shadow if a player can't make a session, being asked to switch Shadows with another player for storytelling or party harmony's sake, or otherwise changing up for the benefit of the chronicle as a whole are all things every player should be prepared to do. As a result, it doesn't pay to get too attached to one Shadow.

Finding the Shadow's Voice

The basic tool at the Shadow's disposal is simply her voice. A whisper in the ear at the right time — a doubt sowed, a snide comment that elicits a laugh at a bad moment, a hidden fear voiced just when the wraith needs to be strong — all of these have power. Engaging the Psyche in debate distracts her from the task at hand; insulting the Psyche's friends or ideas can set off a geyser of rage that

Listening to the Shadow

While it may be tempting to deal with the temptations of the Shadow by simply ignoring them — and everything else the Shadow has to say — this approach is not recommended. For one thing, the struggle with the Shadow is an integral part of **Wraith**. Choosing to metagame one's way around it is cutting yourself off from some of what makes **Wraith** unique and interesting. It's also a great way to frustrate the unfortunate soul who gets stuck playing your Shadowguide. Nobody wants their roleplaying efforts ignored, and to do so unconditionally from the get go diminishes the play experience for your Shadowguide as well.

On the other hand, engaging with your Shadow — even when you're not forced to by Thorns and die rolls — can be a lot of fun. There's enjoyment to be had in verbally jousting, in agonizing over whether to take Shadow Dice, and getting talked into something against your better judgment because you know there *has* to be a catch, but you just can't spot what it is. Making those roleplaying choices can lead to great roleplaying opportunities and exciting moments, both for you and for the entire troupe. The risk of interacting with your Shadow can produce some remarkable rewards.

And then there's the fact that a smart Shadowguide will notice that you've shut her out and take advantage of it — say, by offering good advice that you'll resolutely ignore as you get sandbagged by your own stubbornness — and achieve her ends anyway.

Ultimately, the choice is yours. And yes, listening to your Shadow may not always be in your best interest as a character. But as a player, it makes for a richer, more interesting play experience.

can be tapped for a Dark Passion. Even without Thorns, Shadow Dice, or Catharsis, the Shadow can do plenty of damage just by saying the things the Psyche doesn't want to hear.

That's not to say an endless stream of negativity is the best way to go. Relentless chatter can wear a wraith down, but it can wear down players and Storytellers, too. Rather, waiting for the right moment — when the wraith needs to focus to succeed, when everything is riding on her — can make the Shadow's words that much more effective.

And not every line needs to be negative. A Shadow can play at being cheerful, supportive, and encouraging with the best of them. Cheering on a course of behavior that will lead to certain destruction is right in a clever Shadow's wheelhouse. So is going full frenemy on a wraith's Circlemates, carefully pointing out their flaws while pretending to compliment them. Hinting at unshared knowledge, lying, and even the occasional "are you sure you want to do that? Okay, it's your decision" can go a long way towards getting the Psyche off-balance and vulnerable.

Deploying Thorns can be expensive, but unleashing them at the right time can have a massive effect. Using Trick of the Light just after an announcement that there's a Doppelganger in the Citadel can make life very interesting for a wraith, and that's just one example. Carpet-bombing with Thorns tends to reduce their effectiveness. Picking useful moments and then using Thorns to encourage other wraiths to do the real dirty work is much more most Shadows' way.

Catharsis is when the Shadow really gets a chance to shine, taking over the wraith's Corpus and making it her own. While it's tempting to reach for the dice as soon as Catharsis is a possibility, holding off until the right moment can be more powerful. Keeping the Psyche in suspense about how potent his Shadow is can be an excellent distraction. Waiting until a key moment, whether it be in the midst of battle or standing in a Deathlord's throne room, to attempt a coup on the Psyche can make that moment of control really count. That's not to say big moments are the only moments, as there's much to be said for a quiet Catharsis spent sowing festering doubt between friends, but treating Catharsis as something to be used carefully can help make those scenes more enjoyable.

Certain Shadow archetypes, such as The Monster, have little use for subtlety and will charge ahead, throwing metaphorical bombs with both hands. But even the crudest, most vicious Shadow looks for weak points rather than simply mindlessly raging. At the same time, not every Shadow needs to be a Professor Moriarty, planning six moves ahead to harvest a single point of Angst a month down the line. The Shadow knows it has limited resources but all the time in the world, and so it can afford to pick its spots for greatest effect.

What the Shadow Wants

Shadows serve Oblivion. Shadows are not actively intent on self-destruction. Those two statements would seem to be mutually contradictory, but with Shadows, they work just fine. While every wraith's Shadow is devoted to feeding the Psyche to the Void, that doesn't doesn't mean that the express lane is the Shadow's only option. Rather, Shadows are interested in seeing the player fail – in watching and abetting the long, slow slide into darkness, and helping to do as much collateral damage as possible along the way.

For the Shadowguide, that means coming up with stratagems besides kicking over every available rock to see if there's a Spectre underneath. Merely acting out or attacking others will likely get the wraith soulforged, an altogether unsatisfactory outcome from Oblivion's point of view, and aggressively self-destructive behavior is going to limit the number of other wraiths willing to hang around. As such, focusing on small steps on the way to Oblivion rather than grand gestures can be a more enjoyable approach. Playing the Shadow as one note and bent only on self-destruction means missing a lot of the fun of Shadowguiding. Tricking the Psyche, setting traps for it, and watching its flailing responses cause more damage can be more satisfying, both to the player and to Oblivion itself.

Picking the Right Shadow

While some troupes prefer to assign Shadow roles randomly, others try to be more specific with the roles. Roleplaying should of course play into it — players should always be comfortable refusing a Shadow assignment they don't think they'll be able to do well, or that will make them or the player uncomfortable. Then there's the question of logistics. One of the great advantages of Shadowguiding is that it potentially keeps all the players in the troupe involved, even when the Circle splits up. Knowing which wraiths are likely to stick together and which ones are likely to split up can allow a Storyteller to assign Shadows based on those breakdowns. This in turn can make sure that players are always involved, even when their characters aren't in the spotlight.

Beyond that, a good Shadowguide should have input into the creation of the Shadow she's going to be playing, making sure its approach and tools are ones she can work with. That doesn't mean taking over the process of Shadow creation, but it does mean investing where possible in the character to make it as enjoyable a roleplaying prospect as possible. And while players spend their characters' Shadow experience, the Shadowguide probably has a few ideas as to where those points should go.

Confabs between player and Shadowguide can be a good thing as well. Having the two collaborate on character arcs can make for a richer experience for both and the rest of the group. That doesn't mean the Shadowguide has to tip his hand as to what he's planning, but a good working relationship between the two can go a long way toward establishing the trust necessary for good Shadowguide gameplay.

How Much to Say

There are two dangers in Shadowguiding: playing too much and playing too little. Getting wrapped up in one's own character

and completely ignoring Shadowguiding responsibilities weakens the game. Yes, it's strategically a good thing for the wraiths to have one of their number not distracted, but it also dilutes the flavor of the chronicle and denies the other player the full experience.

On the other hand, it can be very tempting to go overboard with Shadowguiding. The role of the Shadow is a great way to channel snark, and to have an in-game reason to unleash it can seem like a gift from above. However, the player who spends all their time on their secondary, Shadowy responsibility is neglecting his own character at the same time he's applying too much pressure to someone else's. This weakens the group by damaging two characters, and can lead the group into a cycle of escalating Shadow-driven retaliation that can drive the whole off the rails.

Instead, the optimal ratio of Shadowguiding is roughly 20% of the time. Obviously, there will be moments when more or less is called for, but keeping it around one-fifth of the time ensures that nobody's overwhelmed and nobody's neglected. The Shadow should speak enough to make sure no one forgets he's there, but not so much as to be omnipresent. Shadowguiding is ultimately a supporting role, and as such should cede the spotlight appropriately. Players should always feel free to mention if they feel like the level of Shadowguiding is too enthusiastic (or too diffident), and Storytellers have a variety of narrative devices — from wandering Pardoners to voices echoing up from the Hive-Mind demanding silence — to enforce the point.

Respecting Limits

By nature, the Shadow is transgressive. It knows the fears, pain, and weak spots of the character it grew out of, and it ruthlessly exploits that knowledge to drive the wraith to Oblivion. If taken too literally, this can produce an unwanted adversarial relationship between player and Shadowguide. If taken too far, it can devolve from pushing a character's buttons to pushing a player's, and suddenly there's more at stake than experience points.

Players and Storytellers should clearly delineate what's off limits to the Shadowguide. Even if it putatively makes character sense to go after a particular character trait, if it's going to make the player uncomfortable then the Shadow should leave that arrow in the quiver. Clear delineation between player and character is always important.

That being said, good Shadowplay can provide some of the most intense, moving roleplaying imaginable, especially if both player and Shadowguide are willing to go deep. If everyone's willing and ready, there's no reason not to explore serious and emotional material.

Cooperation

It is possible for a Shadowguide to cooperate with a player in the face of a greater threat. The possibility of going to the forges, for example, can inspire an unlikely alliance. There are fates far, far worse than death in the Underworld, and even the most antagonistic Psyche and Shadow can see the benefit in setting aside their differences to avoid being trampled by a herd of Mourners. It's what happens afterwards that gets interesting, however.

Shadows don't always have to be overtly confrontational. They are, after all, part of the same personality as the Psyche, and so they share deep knowledge of each other along with things like a sense of humor. And so, a Shadowguide can pepper her conversation with a player with asides for the wraith's benefit and amusement, seemingly building a certain level of understanding, if not friendship.

Best Dirty Tricks For Shadowguides

Get the player hooked on Shadow Dice, then withhold them at a key moment.

Pretend to have heard interesting things from a fellow party member's Shadow about what that wraith really thinks about the Psyche.

Draw the wraith into conversation while in a public space when they need to keep their cool. Nothing says "I don't have this under control" like arguing with your Shadow in public.

Laugh at random intervals, and when the Psyche asks what's up, saying, "Oh, you'll see."

Pass notes to the Storyteller. They don't have to say anything. Better yet, pass notes that say "Please roll six dice and then nod while looking concerned." Frantically and ostentatiously texting works, too.

Carefully write down what other characters say about the Psyche so you can pull up out-of-context quotes later.

Hum. It always makes the Psyche think you're up to something.

Be ostentatiously afraid of a choice the Psyche is considering making. Odds are, she'll notice and go for it. However it works out, claim that was your plan all along. Either way, you're training the Psyche to make decisions based on your reactions and not the facts on the ground. And that can be very powerful.

Agree with every decision the Psyche makes over the course of a session. By the end of it, they'll start second guessing themselves. After all, if you agree with what they're doing, it *can't* be right.

Repeatedly look up the rules for Thorns the Shadow doesn't have. When asked why, answer "Oh, no reason."

Whether the Shadowguide then chooses to respect that frail understanding, or to use it as cover for a more devastating betrayal down the line, only the Shadowguide knows.

Blaming the Shadow

Every wraith knows that every other wraith has a Shadow. And that means that every wraith knows there's a good chance that when a wraith they know does something out of line, whether it be an outburst at exactly the wrong moment or the use of a Thorn that trips up the entire Circle, that the Shadow may very well be at fault. That can produce a certain level of understanding, but also a certain level of frustration as "we've all been there" wars with "get yourself under control." And because the stakes can be so high and Shadow-tinged incidents are so unpredictable, that means that it's very difficult — or very foolish — for a wraith to trust any other wraith completely. And that means that even those in the same Circle, bound by a shared Fetter, must always look slightly askance at one another. It's simply the way the world of **Wraith** works.

Indeed, powerful wraiths are unlikely to accept "my Shadow did it!" as an acceptable excuse for losses of control or dereliction of duty. The inability to control one's own Shadow marks a wraith as potentially untrustworthy or weak, a potential asset for Oblivion, and those who hold the existences of many Restless in their hands are unlikely to have much sympathy for those who put their charges at risk.

This does not mean that every interaction between wraiths instantly becomes a *Reservoir Dogs*-style multi-character standoff, with everyone waiting for everyone else to make the first betrayal. Rather, it means that **Wraith** characters are always aware there are inimical forces in everyone's head, and that to ignore that fact is suicidal. How each wraith then chooses to deal with that knowledge is up to him. Some may draw back from close relationships, while others may look for metaphysical sureties or study Castigation in order to help keep their friends' Shadows at bay. But the knowledge is there, no matter which road a wraith chooses to follow.

Catharsis

Catharsis is the process by which the Shadow temporarily takes control of a wraith's Corpus, banishing the original personality to the Shadow's usual place as an observer and, at best, occasional commentator. Alternately, the Shadow can choose to block the events of the Catharsis from the wraith's Psyche, meaning that when she re-emerges in control, she will have no idea what damage her Shadow might have caused or what traps it might have laid while she was gone.

Unless a particular Thorn gives the game away, it is very difficult for an observer to tell when a wraith is in Catharsis. Behavioral clues are more likely to lead to discovery, as to all appearances the wraith looks, moves, and talks like herself. It's just what she's saying or doing that's different — and not in a good way.

Note that while the Shadow is free to pursue its own ends during Catharsis, it rarely goes straight for self-destruction. The purpose of Catharsis is more to terrify the wraith and perhaps to teach a lesson about resisting the Shadow's wishes, not a headfirst dive into the forges. However, a Shadow in Catharsis is free to sabotage relationships, commit acts that will get the Psyche in trouble, fail to honor the Psyche's commitments, and start fights with angry Legionnaires. Particularly long-sighted Shadows will lay down booby traps that will only be triggered much later, when the line connecting it to that moment of Catharsis has been blurred by time.

At the end of the scene, the wraith re-emerges and takes over her Corpus once again. Storytellers can choose how to end a Catharsis. In some cases, it might be as sudden as a snap of the fingers. In others, there might be an extended struggle for control, with the wraith's internal monologue becoming audible to wraiths in the vicinity. Or Shadow influence could simply fade, without a clear moment of demarcation. For the rules of Catharsis, see p. 236.

Shadow Creation

nce you've established your character on paper, there's one more character sheet for you to work on. Part and parcel of every wraith is a Shadow, the dark mirror of the Psyche, and each is unable to exist without the other. Because the Shadow will be in conflict with the Psyche for as long as your character is able to resist it, it's important to shape the Shadow to be something that has the capability to attract them as much as it repulses them. While Shadows can be distinctly different from the Psyches they're part of, the most similar Shadow is also the hardest to deal with, an inner voice that sounds just like you. Shadows aren't your evil *twin*. They're *you*.

Step One: Archetype

Just as the very being of a wraith is rooted in Archetypes, so is the Shadow. Archetypes are a way to express what your wraith and their Shadow are like. When you glance down and read the archetype, it's a reminder of exactly what kind of terrible creature your Shadow is. A character's Prelude is a good time to garner clues as to the personality of her Shadow, as whatever negative traits she displays in real life will literally take on a life of their own in the Underworld. The following sample Archetypes are possibilities for your Shadow.

If none of these Archetypes fit your character, feel free to create new ones.

Sample Archetypes

The Delver — Nothing is as simple as it seems, and nothing is worthwhile unless it involves some significant issue. This Shadow plumbs the depths of everything and anything,

looking for a subtext even if one doesn't exist. "What are you *really* thinking?" is her mantra; "Why did you *really* do that?" The Delver's not satisfied with easy or obvious answers; she has to pick everything apart until she drives you, your friends, and everyone you encounter stark raving mad.

The Delver isn't paranoid in the traditional sense; she may suspect conspiracies against you, but that's not her real focus. No, she just wants to figure out what lies beyond the obvious answers, and she will not accept that some things are exactly what they appear to be. When she takes control, the Shadow asks painfully probing questions, dissects every answer, and comes back for more. By seeking a root cause behind every gesture, joke, or glance, she throws you into a downward spiral where everything demands a second guess…and a third, fourth, and fifth. Her relentless overanalyzing makes her Psyche (at best) continually trying to the patience of everyone around her, even as the Byzantine nature of Stygian politics means that once in a while, she just might be right.

The Abuser — Hurt terribly once, this impatient and jealous Shadow exists to inflict his pain on others. He scrutinizes the failures of everyone around him, heaping scorn upon them whenever he can. This is done partially to bolster his self-image, but primarily to make everyone else hurt just as much as he does. The Abuser will often goad you to attempt the impossible, just to watch you fail so that he can dine upon the self-loathing your failure engenders.

Chaotic and crazed, the Abuser lashes out at any target other than his favorite one: himself. When dominant, the Abuser will spew his vitriol in all directions. Any excuse will set him off, and if no excuse is provided, he will create one. Demands for obedience, absurd requests, and systematic verbal or physical abuse are this Shadow's hallmarks. After all, why should the rest of the world hurt less than he does?

The Director — Quiet and organized, the Director will take you apart with clockwork precision. Icy in her hatred, she will strip your defenses away layer by layer, taking pleasure in the surgical nature of the torment she inflicts. There's nothing personal in what the Director does; she's just setting the record straight by removing any delusions you might have about your goodness, sanity, or any other worthwhile qualities you might have thought you had. The Director's usual *modus operandi* is to rifle through the back drawers of your mind, cataloging every weakness, every painful memory, and every personality flaw, no matter how minor. This ammunition isn't randomly flung about, either, but hoarded for special occasions. Should your grasp on reality start to falter, the Director knows just how much pressure to apply to push you over the edge.

When in control, the Director likes to lay long-range plans for the next time she is dominant, and to prepare little revelations for you to discover at carefully timed intervals. She also enjoys picking apart your companions, making cutting observations that will poison any friendships you make on the other side. And the worst part is that she's usually right.

The False Friend — Cheerful and personable, the False Friend doesn't *seem* like an enemy. Sure, it's fond of making nasty wisecracks about your associates when they're around, and of course it puts down any course of action you think up with a vicious *bon mot*, but it's just so darn much fun to be around that you don't mind. The fact that it's slowly poisoning your relationship with everyone you know by filling you with contempt for them just slides on by. Your Shadow makes you feel cool, so what do you need those other losers for? And when it's separated you from your friends, then the False Friend turns around and lets you know exactly what it thinks of you, how easily it fooled you, and how worthless and faithless you really are.

Ultimately, the False Friend is driven to tear you down with your own hypocrisy, driving you to mock the same flaws in others it will then turn around and point out in you. It's always thinking about how to slide the knife in, making you feel superior one moment then leaving you unable to turn to anyone for help the next. It'll get you to tear down everyone around you until they're all gone, and the only one left to target is you.

The Parent — No one else can love you as much, or as well, as the Parent. No one else can take care of you as well, or make you as happy. The Parent even accepts all of your little imperfections, which she' ll harp on endlessly in order to prove to you she loves you despite your nearly infinite flaws. She'll protect you from people who don't have your best interests at heart, and only she can decide who those are (usually, it's everyone else you know). You're her darling baby, so naturally she'll help you with the hard decisions, and even make them for you.

Mother (or Father) knows best, even if you break her heart by never listening to her and running around with those Renegade hooligans….

When in command, the Parent will seek to insulate you from any corrupting or dangerous influences (i.e., anyone and anything else). To accomplish this, she will do and say anything to alienate those who care about you, using the fact that they could be driven off as proof that they weren't really your friends in the first place. It just goes to show that she's right, and that no one else can love you the way that she does.

The Martyr — Noble self-sacrifice has its place, but what the Martyr offers is a shallow mockery of it instead. By constantly demanding that you give of yourself because you can take the pain better than anyone else can, the Martyr cheapens your faith and indulges your arrogance. Claiming your sacrifice will bring about a greater good, the Martyr will then take pleasure in demonstrating that your pain didn't do anything at all, and that your suffering was pointless…. Still, that won't keep him from urging you to give up yourself for others every chance it gets. After all, it's just looking for a good excuse to take the easy way out.

When the Martyr takes control, he will attempt to maneuver you into situations where, no matter what, in order to escape you'll have to give up something important. The Martyr also tries to arrange for witnesses whenever possible, so that its very public sacrifices can be used to shame others into similarly self-destructive acts.

The Monster — Brutally direct, the Monster is all about pain and greed. Whatever it wants, it will command you to take. Whatever it hates, it will demand that you destroy. If you refuse, it will try to destroy you as well, for it cannot stand to be resisted in any way. There's no compromise or subtlety in the Monster, and often it's the most dignified and delicate wraiths who have a Monster lurking behind their eyes. To see the Monster dominant is to see a sneak peek of Spectrehood. It will lay waste to anything in its path, taking what it wants and destroying everything else out of sheer spite. Guttural and vulgar, the Monster rarely has anything to say that isn't an obscenity. Why bother being polite to anyone else when they're nothing more than obstacles to your pleasure?

The Somnambulist — Life was a blur, unlife more so.

The Somnambulist sleepwalks through the afterlife, dripping ennui. Nothing is worthy of her attention unless it's directly in front of her, and then she won't do anything to remove the obstacle. The Somnambulist downplays the importance of anything and everything, claiming that the details are always irrelevant. It wants the Psyche to slow down and not give it a migraine worrying about what that growing patch of black on the wall might mean down the road. For the moment, the splotch isn't bothering anyone, and that's all the Somnambulist cares about.

When in command, the Somnambulist withdraws from any activities or commitments. She drops the ball, preferably in the most spectacular way possible (*Yeah, I know we needed those swords forged but I just didn't have the motivation. Oh, wait, are those Spectres?*). On the surface a relatively mild Shadow to have, the Somnambulist enjoys lulling its Psyche into a false sense of security, then drawing back the curtain on an unpleasant surprise.

The Perfectionist — Nothing you do will ever be good enough for the Perfectionist. Perform seven impossible things before breakfast, and he'll be screaming at you for nor having pulled off eight. Any imperfection can serve as a launching point for a tirade; any flaw will be a magnet for withering sarcasm. By playing up your inevitable errors, the Perfectionist inspires your self-hatred and saps your confidence in your own abilities. Then, once your confidence is shot, he'll be more than happy to step in and show you how to do things *right*. If you had any sense at all, you'd turn things over to him permanently and make sure that everything got done properly the first time. It's not like *you're* capable of it, after all.

When in control, the Perfectionist will take every example to criticize whatever or whoever catches his eye. He'll also take the opportunity to embroil you in impossible scenarios, anxiously awaiting your inevitable failure. Still, at least he doesn't play

favorites. When everyone around him is equally flawed, one target's as good as the next.

The Voice of Hope — You never really died. This is all a mistake. Once you figure out how to reverse this condition, you can return to your old life as if nothing happened. This whole thing is one long bad dream. You *will* wake up… you *have* to, sooner or later… right?

This cruel Shadow denies the reality that is your ghostly existence. He holds out a bright candle that sustains you through bad patches, but that becomes an unattainable torment as time wears on. How long could a nightmare possibly continue, anyway? Doesn't it ever *end?*

When he takes control, the Voice of Hope shuts out any possibility that the Underworld is anything other than an extended nightmare. If you ever manage to convince him that you are indeed condemned to this twilight existence, he shifts your concentration toward finding a "cure" for your Restless state. He'll lead you to elder wraiths, living sages, magical spells, and spiritual quests, all of which will supposedly undo your death and restore you to the living world.

Although he seems relatively cheery compared to say, the Monster, this Shadow inflicts endless pain by offering up hope, seeing it dashed, then repeating the process endlessly.

The Stormcrow — Always the bearer of bad news, the Stormcrow is convinced that there's a land mine under every speed bump. She is certain that every wraith harbors it ill will, that every action is going to be disastrous, and that every corner houses a lurking Spectre. More to the point, she will detail these worries *ad nauseam* to the Psyche, reveling in every gruesome detail she can invent. As far as the Stormcrow is concerned, it's not enough that a wraith's actions be doomed to failure. The wraith has to fail spectacularly, and in such a way that the wraith gets the chance to regret the error for a very long time.

A dominant Stormcrow does her best to dissuade the wraith's companions from any actions that might be beneficial to the Psyche. She dourly points out potential consequences and repercussions, all of which are bound to be catastrophic. She also puts effort into booby trapping all of the Psyche's work, making certain that the dire fate she foresees will inevitably come to pass.

Step Two: Angst

Just as Pathos fuels a wraith, Angst powers her Shadow. A wraith's Angst rating is indicative of the amount of negative emotional energy she is carrying a round with her. Angst is the measure of a wraith's fear, pain, and alienation, and the more of these counterproductive energies a wraith harbors, the higher her Angst score is. The higher the Angst score, of course, the more powerful the Shadow is, and the more fuel it has to use for its schemes.

A wraith's permanent Angst score always starts less than or equal to her permanent Willpower score. To determine a Shadow's starting Angst, roll a number of dice equivalent to the wraith's Willpower against difficulty 6. The number of successes indicates the number of permanent Angst points the wraith starts play with.

For purposes of this roll only, ones do not cancel out successes, and every wraith must start play with at least one point of permanent Angst. Wraiths without permanent Angst have a shortcut on the road to Transcendence, potentially leading to a very short chronicle. Like Willpower, Angst can be spent (by the Shadow only) in order to achieve automatic successes. Unlike Willpower, however, temporary Angst can exceed its permanent rating, up to a maximum of 10. When a wraith's temporary Angst exceeds her Willpower, the Shadow can attempt to usurp control of the Corpus by means of a Catharsis roll (see p. 236).

On the other hand, the Shadow can elect to keep stockpiling temporary Angst. When temporary Angst reaches 10, the Shadow immediately trades it in for another point of permanent Angst. When permanent Angst reaches 10, the Shadow assumes command permanently, and the wraith becomes a Spectre.

Temporary Angst ratings tend to vary wildly during play. Shadows use Angst to power their special abilities, called Thorns, and can expend vast amounts of energy in their war against the Psyche. On the other hand, a great many Arcanoi give their wielders temporary Angst, and all Shadows have Dark Passions which can be fed as well. It is up to the Shadowguide to keep track of how much temporary Angst a wraith has, and to convert it to permanent form if necessary. It is also the Shadowguide's responsibility to call for Catharsis rolls when appropriate. A wraith should never know quite how strong her Shadow is. After all, the uncertainty is part of what keeps life interesting.

Step Three: Dark Passions

Just as a wraith has Passions, her dark side has *Dark Passions*, and each wraith starts with 7 points' worth. These function in roughly the same manner that Passions do, feeding the Shadow instead of the Psyche. Each Dark Passion should be phrased in the same way a Passion is, with a brief description of the Dark Passion and its core emotion following in parentheses. Each Dark Passion also has a rating to indicate how strong the obsession is. For example, a wraith who was a frustrated artist in life might have the Dark Passion "Destroy works of art better than those I could have made (Envy) 3." Dark Passions often reverse a wraith's regular Passions, driving the Shadow to hurt what the Psyche wants to protect. On the other hand, some Dark Passions can be parallel to normal Passions, and many have nothing to do with a wraith's Passions at all. Dark Passions can be increased during the freebie-point section of Shadow creation.

Shadows can also possess Passions like "Dive into a Nihil (Self-Hatred) 2" or "Cause random destruction (Rage) 3." Emotions that serve as excellent cores to Dark Passions include

Envy, Lust, Twisted Love, Greed, Hate, and Fear. In the end, draw on the emotions that your character would suppress when they feel it, and actions they could take in response to that feeling — both the rational and the visceral.

Step Four: Freebie Points

When the basics of Shadow creation are finished, there are still 10 freebie points left with which you can round out your Shadow's personality and abilities. Freebies can purchase additional Angst (permanent or temporary), new or stronger Dark Passions, or the special abilities Shadows have, called Thorns. A wraith's permanent Angst score can never exceed her permanent Willpower score at the start of play, but temporary Angst can be bought up to nine points. Furthermore, while additional dots in Dark Passions can be purchased with freebies, the number of dots in Dark Passions can never exceed the number of dots a wraith has in her regular Passions.

Thorns

Thorns are certain, unique powers the Shadow has at its disposal. These range from minor tricks to potent abilities that can threaten a wraith 's very existence, and their use is entirely up to the Shadowguide. The Shadow can also use Thorns (when applicable) during Catharsis.

Spectre Prestige: 1 point/level — Many Spectres have the ability to communicate with wraiths' Shadows. Shadows with this Thorn have garnered the respect of the Shadow-Eaten, and will be treated accordingly.

Dark Allies: 1 point/level — A Shadow with Dark Allies regularly communicates and plots with Spectres, and can call on them for aid. This cannot be used to replicate Pact of Doom.

Tainted Relic: 1 point/level — This is a relic that only manifests during Catharsis, and the number of points indicates its potency. A Tainted Relic will always manifest when the Shadow does, even if it has been "lost" or "destroyed." A wraith's Tainted Relic will always have some significance to him, even if he doesn't admit it. A toy from an abusive relative he never mentions, or a shiv from time spent in prison that he's somehow avoided ever talking about are the kind of Tainted Relics he may strenuously deny knowing anything about.

Infamy: 1 point/level — Memoriam for the Shadow, Infamy is the measure of how much fear and loathing the wraith still inspires in the living. Just as the wrath's Psyche accumulates Pathos, Shadows can build up Angst. Every time a wraith with Infamy falls into Slumber, the Shadowguide rolls one die for each point of the Thorn possessed. The difficulty on this roll is 6, and each success gives the Shadow a point of temporary Angst. Botches remove temporary Angst, and just might cause the living to think more kindly of the wraith. No more than five points of Infamy can be taken, and an Infamous wraith had best be prepared to deal with the consequences of the hatred of the living.

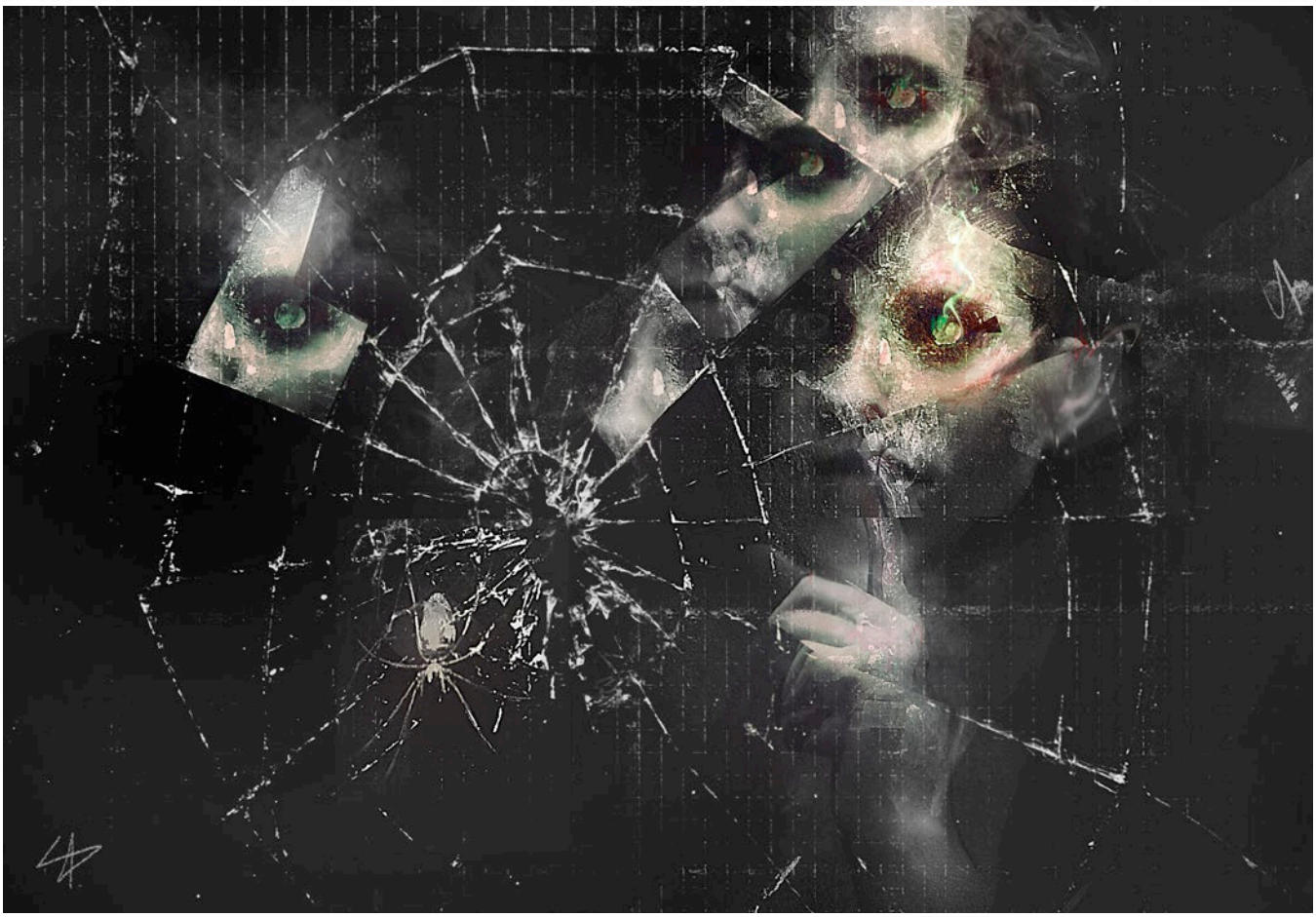
Death's Sigil: 1 to 3 points — Death's Sigil is a prominent sign of Oblivion's touch on the character that manifests no matter where she goes. Each Sigil is unique; one wraith might have wings of choking smoke, another might leave footprints of seawater in the Skinlands, and a third could exude the odor of burned flesh. This Thorn naturally makes a wraith very distinctive, with all of the advantages and disadvantages this offers. Only by spending a Willpower point can a wraith turn off the effects of this Thorn for a scene. The more points put into the Thorn, the more pronounced its effect is. A one-point Sigil might not be that noticeable, while the three-point version could go so far as to alter the effects of the wraith's Arcanoi.

Shadow Traits: 2 points — The Shadow can purchase one dot of any Attribute or Ability, but these extra points are only available during Catharsis. This Thorn can be purchased as many times as freebie points permit during Shadow creation.

Nightmares: 2 points — When the Psyche Slumbers, a Shadow with this Thorn may cause her to have intense nightmares. The visions this Thorn generates are so horrifying that the wraith must roll Willpower (difficulty 6) or immediately waken from Slumber, in the process losing all benefits accrued from Slumbering. Nightmares cost a point of Angst to inflict. A wraith can spend a point of Willpower before Slumbering to ensure that she is immune to this Thorn; only the Storyteller should be informed that such an investment has been made.

Aura of Corruption: 2 points — Through this Thorn 's effects, the Shadow somehow defiles the wraith's presentation of herself, making her presence unpleasant to other wraiths. The effect of Aura of Corruption is generally not grotesque; instead it is subtly disturbing. Indeed, it may have no overt impact, merely serving to make others uncomfortable. If light is somehow harder to come by near the wraith, or her teeth are subtly sharper, unease can quickly settle into the minds of her companions. If a wraith has Aura of Corruption, all difficulties on Social interaction rolls are raised by +2. This Thorn can be purchased only once.

Mirror, Mirror: 2 points — Related to the more powerful Trick of the Light, this Thorn alters a wraith's appearance briefly. Whenever a wraith whose Shadow possesses this Thorn looks in a reflective surface, the Shadow has the option of activating Mirror, Mirror. When the Thorn is used, the wraith's appearance in a mirror or any other reflective surface (a pool of water is a great favorite) is horribly distorted in some way. The distortion usually plays up one of the Shadow's Dark Passions, but the Shadow has a full palette from which to work when making his face monstrous. The distorted visage in the reflection is visible to all, not just the wraith himself, and it usually means that he's got some explaining to do. There is no point cost to activate this Thorn, but as repeated use dims its effectiveness, wise Shadows save it for appropriate moments. One of the more popular uses of this Thorn involves altering



a reflection when only the mirror, and not the wraith himself, can be seen by an observer.

Shadow Call: 2 points — Shadow Call allows a wraith's Shadow to summon nearby Spectres. This Thorn can only be used when a wraith is in the Tempest or standing at the mouth of a Nihil, otherwise it has no effect. The Shadow Call is audible on the edge of a wraith's consciousness as a thin, piercing shriek, and in time most wraiths will come to recognize its significance. To make a Shadow Call, the Shadowguide spends a temporary Angst point and rolls against his permanent Angst score (difficulty 7). The number of successes indicates the number of Spectres summoned, however, the type of Spectre that answers the Shadow Call is entirely up to the Storyteller.

Pact of Doom: 3 points — This Thorn is the apocryphal deal with the devil. If a wraith has this Thorn, she and her Shadow can negotiate a pact by means of which the Shadow will teach her a predetermined number of levels in an Arcanos. In exchange, the Shadow acquires permanent Angst equivalent to the number of levels taught. The terms of the Pact must be agreed upon by both Psyche and Shadow, as the arrangement is entirely consensual.

The knowledge that the Shadow imparts under this Thorn comes from the vast Spectral hive mind, and does not reflect the knowledge of the Shadow itself. Only Shadows with Pact of Doom can access this knowledge, and only when empowered by a Pact. At no other time can a Shadow call to the hive mind for this sort of knowledge or power. This cannot be replicated using Dark Allies. Dark Allies centers on the Shadow's relationship with Spectres and their willingness to aid it.

Trick of the Light: 3 points — By using this Thorn, the Shadow subtly alters the Psyche's perception of the scene. When the Thorn is invoked (at a cost of one temporary Angst per scene), the Shadowguide should inform the Storyteller what exactly the wraith perceives. The Storyteller then relays this to the player. Trick of the Light is not limited to sight, and any of the other senses can be affected by its use. However, only one sense can be affected per scene. This Thorn only affects the Shadow's Psyche, and not any other wraith.

Bad Luck: 3 points — For each Angst point a Shadow with Bad Luck spends, the wraith's player is forced to reroll one die (Shadowguide's choice). The use of Bad Luck does not have to be announced until after the original roll is made.

Shadowed Face: 3 points — With this Thorn, the Shadow completely changes its Psyche's appearance when it takes over. Shadowed Face allows the Shadow to have one other visage (not a variety), which can be either known or unknown to the wraith's associates. For an additional freebie point, the Shadow

can have the option of assuming the Shadowed Face or retaining the wraith's original appearance during Catharsis.

Honeyed Tongue: 4 points — The Shadow is almost preternaturally persuasive, and it can really turn on the charm when it chooses to do so. By spending a point of Angst, and rolling temporary Angst (difficulty is the target's Manipulation + Subterfuge), the Shadow can make any one sentence strangely compelling — and believable. This covers everything from *I'm sure Lucien won't mind if you steal his relic beer* to *The Shade won't bite if you just lean over and pet it nicely*.

A wraith can spend a Willpower point to counteract the effects of this Thorn. Honeyed Tongue can be used only once per scene.

Tainted Touch: 4 points — This Thorn makes a wraith something of a Typhoid Mary among the Restless. When afflicted with Tainted Touch, a wraith spreads Oblivion with the brush of a finger. Whenever a wraith with Tainted Touch comes in contact with another wraith's Corpus, he must roll three dice (difficulty 6). The number of successes equals the number of temporary Angst points that the victim suddenly acquires. However, if aware of the touch the victim can make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to resist, and every success on this roll cancels one of the offender's successes. A wraith with Tainted Touch can spend a Willpower point to turn the effect off for a scene. This Thorn can only affect a wraith once per day.

Shadowplay: 5 points — Shadowplay allows a wraith who has used up all of her actions during a turn to get another one, but at a cost. If the Shadow offers, the wraith can take an additional action, but she loses a point of Pathos and gains a point of Angst. The wraith cannot ask for the additional action; the decision as to whether or not it's available is entirely up to the Shadowguide. While the cost of activating this Thorn is deceptively low, a wraith who comes to rely upon it can feed her Shadow's strength very quickly, and also can find herself in dire straits when the extra action she was counting on suddenly isn't forthcoming in a crisis.

Shadow Familiar: 5 points — While the Shadow stays within a wraith 's consciousness, a Shadow Familiar can serve as its eyes, ears, and feet. Most Shadow Familiars take the form of ravens, rats, or other creatures of the carrion heap. The Shadows of other wraiths distract them from seeing the creature whenever possible. The Shadow Familiar is a minor servant of Oblivion and remains in constant contact with the Shadow, feeding it information and suggestions. Shadow Familiars can come in any form, but all are both small and harmless. If threatened, a Shadow Familiar will run away; if attacked, it will dive into the Tempest. If a wraith's Shadow Familiar is destroyed, another one will arrive within a week to take its place. However, this one will be considerably more circumspect in its dealings with the Shadow, as even creatures of Oblivion have a faint sense of self-preservation.

Freudian Slip: 5 points — At the cost of one Angst point, the Shadow can force a wraith to make a sudden, involuntary action or make a quick, unedited statement. Freudian Slip can also be used to put an unbidden thought into a wraith's mind. To resist this Thorn, the wraith must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). Two successes are necessary to counter the effects of Freudian Slip. This can be a hard Thorn to use, both to make up an appropriate action or statement, as well as to roleplay it. Shadow players should scheme with the other player when apt to craft a particularly effective use of Freudian Slip. This Thorn is powerful, and players it's used on should be able to handle the occasion maturely.

Shadow Life: 5 points — Whenever a wraith with this Thorn Slumbers, her Shadow takes control of their shared Corpus and sets out to do its worst. This will lead to no end of trouble for the Psyche, as she will constantly find herself encountering situations her Shadow has created and people whom her Shadow has wronged. Of course, all of the blame for the Shadow's actions will land squarely on the Psyche. Wraiths with this Thorn are aware that their Shadows do get up and walk around, but have no way of knowing what precisely their dark halves do. If characters wish, they can invest an additional freebie point in this Thorn and have their characters be unaware of their Shadow Life. The player, not the Shadowguide, controls the character while Shadow Life is active.

Whispers: 6 points — A Shadow with this Thorn can speak to the Shadows of other wraiths without the knowledge of their Psyches. This allows the Shadows to work together, sharing information and stratagems. A wraith can make a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) to determine if her Shadow seems somehow distracted, but otherwise there is no way for her to pick up on the fact that her other half is talking to someone else.

Manifestation: 6 points — By expending four points of Angst, the Shadow can materialize as an entity separate from the wraith. While in this state, the Shadow can converse, affect objects, and use Thorns. The manifested Shadow is in all ways physically identical to the wraith from which it came, and bystanders may have a great deal of difficulty telling the two apart. Even the auras of the two Corpora are the same. On the other hand, a Legionnaire coming across two identical wraiths may well shout "Doppelganger!" and charge in, sword in hand. A Manifestation lasts for a single scene and, after manifesting, the Shadow must rest silently for the next scene.

Devil's Dare: 7 points — Devil's Dare is the emotional equivalent of a game of chicken. To use this Thorn, the Shadowguide invests a number of temporary Angst points (marked off immediately) and writes down something that she dares the Psyche to do before the end of the session. The difficulty of the dare determines the cost, and if a player feels that the number is excessive, she can petition her Storyteller to have it lowered.

The dare itself consists of an action that the Shadow is daring the Psyche to take. It must be within the wraith's capabilities to perform; (i.e., "Tell the Centurion off to his face" would be acceptable while "Map the Labyrinth" would not) and an impossible dare simply loses the invested Angst. If, by the end of the session, the dared Psyche has not managed to

work the dare into her actions, she loses a number of temporary Willpower points equal to the number of

Angst points invested in the dare. If the Psyche succeeds, the Shadow gains temporary Angst equal to half the Angst used on the dare.

Vampiric Nature: 7 points — Related to the Dark Arcanos Larceny, this Thorn enables a Shadow to siphon Angst from others for its own purposes. Upon physical contact, a Shadow with Vampiric Nature can roll the Psyche's contested Willpower against any wraith or Spectre. The number of successes the Shadow achieves on the roll indicates the number of Angst points that it can absorb. The Shadow does not need to be dominant for this Thorn to operate, and it can gain Angst quite merrily with the Psyche never suspecting a thing. Should the Shadow's target be willing to donate some Angst, the Shadow can accept up to five points of temporary Angst at a time. This can be used once per target per session.

Example of Shadow Creation

nnys, Joshua, and David have made it through most of character creation and are now settling in to create a Shadow together. The Shadow Archetype that immediately leaps out at Annys for her character Robin is the Perfectionist. This Shadow is Robin's Critic Nature with no restraint and no qualms; the same intelligence that searches out hidden flaws can also relentlessly exploit buried fears.

To establish Robin's Angst rating, Joshua rolls seven dice (equal to Robin's Willpower). Against the difficulty of 6, he comes up with five successes; the Shadow will start out with five permanent Angst points. Next, Annys talks about potential Dark Passions with David, who's going to control Robin 's Shadow. Robin's most obvious weakness is his paranoia about his series of affairs with students. Therefore, Annys and David conclude that the Shadow will do its best not only to get Robin's secret out in the open (while constantly assuring him that of course he can and must keep it hidden), but also to reinforce his sense of remorse over his repeated losses of control. Joshua distills that into "Ruin Robin's reputation among the living (Self-Loathing)," and assigns it a rating of 3.

David then suggests that whereas Robin wanted to demonstrate his superiority to his fellow scholars, the Shadow would rather reach out to destroy all rivals. This produces a Dark Passion of "Hurt professional rivals (Hate)," with a rating of 2. After a little more joint brainstorming, Annys puts the last two points into "Ruin Robin's protégé's career (Jealousy)." After all, to the Shadow's way of thinking, it's not fair she lived while Robin died.

With the 10 freebie points allotted for the Shadow's Traits, Annys first purchases Pact of Doom. Robin's eagerness to expand his areas of knowledge makes him particularly vulnerable to this Thorn. She spends three more points on the Trick of the Light Thorn, knowing how heavily

Robin relies on reading others' body language and what that says about their intentions. David then encourages her to put two points into a Dark Passion opposing Robin's desire to safeguard his beloved copy of *The Canterbury Tales*. Annys docs this, deciding on the Dark Passion "Destroy Robin's favorite book (Spite)" 2. With the two points she has left, Annys gives the Shadow one dot of Temporary Angst. Robin's Shadow is now effectively complete. Annys, David, and Joshua then continue to discuss both the character and the Shadow until all three of them are sure that they understand the interaction of Robin's two personae and are comfortable with the roles each of them will play. Among mature players, the Shadowguide and the player who controls the Psyche should be able to exchange information about the Psyche freely. David being able to look over Robin's sheet gives him information out of character that will let him better tailor how the Shadow acts toward Robin.

Angst

ngst embodies the inner torment of unfulfilled passions, self-doubt, guilt, and unfinished business — all the things that result in the formation of a wraith. It is the nightmare that hovers on the edge of dreams, the devouring worm of defeat that eats away at hopes and desires, the unimaginable doom that lurks just around the corner. In short, Angst is the mind's own bogeyman, always ready to spoil the party. It is the negative energy that drives a soul toward self-destruction. And the Shadow needs it to power its ambitions. Without Angst, the Shadow is just a voice crying out. With Angst to draw upon, it can act.

In the Beginning

A wraith's initial Angst rating is determined during the generation of her Shadow. This score represents the number of permanent points of Angst a new wraith possesses, and also indicates the relative strength of the character's Shadow. During the course of play, a character's Angst rating may increase or decrease in response to the events of a story and the actions of the character (or her Shadow).

There are two kinds of Angst: temporary and permanent. Unlike most Traits, a Shadow's temporary Angst score may exceed its permanent rating, up to a maximum of 10 points. When a Shadow has accumulated 10 points of temporary Angst, it may trade these points for one point of permanent Angst, thus increasing its own strength. The character's main player should *never* know for certain how many points of Angst her Shadow possesses.

This reflects the uncertainty of a wraith's tenuous existence on the borders of Oblivion and her ignorance of just how powerful her dark side really is.

The Pitfalls of the Harried Soul

Angst symbolizes the power of Oblivion working within a wraith. The more Angst a character possesses, the stronger her Shadow grows and the easier it becomes for the Shadow to assume control of her actions. Since the Shadow's ultimate goal is nothing less than the destruction of the pesky Psyche which prevents it from fulfilling its darkest desires, it will attempt to place the Psyche in situations that offer high Angst potential. Because a Shadow uses Angst to power its activities, the more times it can force the Psyche to compromise itself, the more Angst the Shadow garners and the easier it is for the Shadow to work its will.

Acquiring Angst

The continual torment of life in the Shadowlands makes acquiring Angst inevitable, and opportunities for doing so are numerous. The natural condition of a wraith character's existence embodies internal conflict, and it is this inner war that results in the consistent accumulation of Angst. A wraith may gain Angst in one of several ways. Unless otherwise specified, all Angst gained is temporary Angst, which remains until spent or until converted into permanent Angst points.

• **Arcanoi**: The use of certain Arcanoi by a Psyche-controlled character automatically results in the accumulation of either temporary or permanent Angst (see Chapter Five). For example, a wraith who uses Castigate • (Coax) to acquire additional dice from her Shadow gains a point of temporary Angst each time she uses this Arcanos. Likewise, a wraith who uses Puppetry ••••• (Obliterate the Soul) to permanently possess a living human runs the risk of drastically increasing her Angst rating due to the exploitative and inhumane nature of the action.

Note: If the Shadow dominates a character when these Arcanoi are used, however, the Angst that would normally be gained is, instead, deducted from the Shadow's current Angst rating.

• **Shadow Dice:** In critical situations, a wraith's Shadow can offer her Psyche extra dice to increase the chances of successfully accomplishing some action. Each one rolled on those Shadow Dice results in the acquisition of one point of temporary Angst. The Shadow can offer up to five extra dice to any single roll. This is the most likely to be accepted when it's life or death for the Psyche and Shadow — matters of survival, saving a Fetter, or other times when the need for an edge will make the Psyche more willing to deal. Canny Shadowguides will use Shadow Dice wisely, picking emotional moments and exploiting the Psyche's desire for the best possible results of her actions. Even if they don't lead to more temporary Angst, Shadow Dice moments can be used to build the illusion of a positive emotional connection between the Shadow and Psyche. Particularly clever Shadows will build a dependence on those extra dice in their Psyches, then withhold them at key moments unless certain concessions are made….

Dark Passions: When the Shadow indulges its own Passions, a character's Angst score may increase. When the wraith indulges in an emotion that matches the core of a Dark Passion, the Shadowguide can roll against that Dark Passion (difficulty 7). Every success results in the addition of one point of temporary Angst. For example, if Morgan's Shadow has the Dark Passion "Acquire as many relics as possible (Greed)" and Morgan looks a little too enviously at his friend Sascha's relic knife, Morgan's Shadowguide would be free to make a Dark Passion roll. Note that in this case, however, Morgan is acting greedily of his own volition, and not because the Shadow forced him to. The Shadow may also attempt to evoke in someone else an emotion that powers one of its own Dark Passions (difficulty 9), gaining one point of temporary Angst per success. If Morgan's Shadow pestered him into ogling Sascha's knife against his better judgment, then this sort of Dark Passion roll could be made instead.

• **Storyteller Discretion:** The Angst rating of a character should also reflect the ongoing struggle to deal with the external and internal torment of wraithly existence in ways that are not as clearly defined by a system of rules. Roleplaying scenes in which a character confronts doubts, fears, or external dangers may warrant "awarding" a point of temporary Angst to the character by the Storytellcr. The player must agree that such an increase in Angst is appropriate to the situation, since such a decision is not determined by the result of a roll but is, instead, achieved through mutual consent.

Losing Angst

Gaining Angst is easy; losing it is hard, but not impossible. There are a number of ways in which a Shadow can lose Angst (usually at the instigation of the Psyche):

• **Botching a roll when the Shadow is dominant:** Shadows hate failure. A botch on any roll made by a Shadow-dominated character results in the loss of one point of temporary Angst per one rolled above the number of successes.

• **Castigation:** Largely the exclusive province of the Pardoners' Guild, this Arcanos is specifically geared toward the reduction of Angst. Unless a wraith possesses Castigate ••••• (Defiance), however, she may not use this Arcanos on herself, but must seek out another character to perform the appropriate rituals or actions necessary to rid her Shadow of some of its Angst.

Even in the Shadowlands, confession really is good for the soul.

• **Shadow-dominated use of certain Arcanoi:** Some Arcanoi automatically increase a character's Angst. Use of the Arcanoi when the Shadow is dominant, however, causes the amount of Angst that would normally he gained to be lost instead. Similarly, when a Shadow-dominated character fails or botches a roll involving any Arcanoi, Angst is lost rather than gained.

Note: Losing Angst in this fashion should *never* be intentional. It is up to the Storyteller to monitor carefully those situations in which a Shadow-controlled character seeks to use an Arcanos in order to make certain that the action is not primarily directed toward the possible reduction of Angst.

• **Storyteller Discretion:** When a character is making a serious effort to rid herself of unwanted Angst, the Storyteller may decide to reduce the character's temporary or permanent Angst rating as a reward for good roleplaying. This kind of bonus should be used sparingly, so as not to devalue the difficulty of losing Angst. As usual in situations that do not involve dice rolls, this should be a mutual agreement between player and Storyteller.

Harrowing and Angst

A wraith who survives a Destruction Harrowing may receive a reduction in temporary Angst as a reward for good roleplaying or clever handling of her situation. This reflects the increased confidence and sense of relief experienced by emerging victorious from a situation which threatens the character's very existence. Because a wraith rarely goes looking for an opportunity to experience a Harrowing, it should not be considered as a natural way to lose Angst.

The following actions may lead to the accumulation of Angst by a wraith character. In some cases, performing certain activities automatically results in increasing a wraith's temporary or permanent Angst. In others, a roll determines whether or not Angst is gained.

Being forced into an action that contradicts a personal code of morality or honor.

Experiencing a situation that arouses a state of inner turmoil or external helplessness.

Failure to succeed in accomplishing a vital task.

Inaction due to indecision at a critical moment.

Involuntary destruction of a Fetter.

Loss of a Passion through neglect.

Making a decision that later proves to be disastrous.

Using Arcanoi that cause an increase in Angst.

The Catharsis Roll

In order for the Shadow to take control of a character, the Shadow and the Psyche face off against one another. The Shadow spends a point of temporary Angst and rolls on her adjusted temporary Angst rating. The Psyche may resist by rolling her permanent Willpower, plus any Eidolon dice she may possess (see "Eidolon," p. 143). The difficulty for both rolls is 6, and the side with the higher number of successes gains (or, in the case of the Psyche, retains) control of the character. If the Shadow succeeds in seizing control, it dominates the wraith's actions for the entire scene following the takeover attempt. Afterward, control of the wraith reverts to the Psyche.

While the Shadow is dominant, it may pursue any of its own ends without interference from its Psyche. The Shadow may seek to fulfill its Dark Passions, making use of its Psyche's Arcanoi in addition to its own Thorns. Its actions will not result in gaining Pathos for its Psyche, although it must use the Psyche's Pathos to power any Arcanoi it uses. Any art that normally would cause the wraith to gain Angst instead subtracts it during Catharsis, and the same goes if the result is a failure or a botch. Furthermore, the Shadow cannot expend Willpower, nor may it reduce the character's Pathos below 1.

When the Shadow is in control, it may attempt to keep its actions secret from the Psyche. A wraith can only attempt to resist this effect by rolling her Eidolon dice against difficulty 7, assuming that she has any. Wraiths who do not possess Eidolon or who have used up their Eidolon dice for a session do not get to make any sort of resistance roll, and they (along with any wraiths who fail their Eidolon roll) will often find themselves haunted later by the actions taken by their Shadows during Catharsis. More than just a simple joyride, Shadows put their time during Catharsis to terrifying use. Engaging in any action necessary to damage the wraith's reputation, interfering with the Fetters of its Psyche — or even other wraiths — as well as imperiling their contacts and pissing off Legionnaires. It is well within the realm of possibility that a Psyche can return to control and never know what its Shadow put in motion until it's too late.

Alternate Rules

The rules of Shadowguiding as they are written might not work for your game. That's fine; if you need to try a different approach, alternatives to the traditional Shadowguiding rules do exist. Whether you go with a single solution or mix them, you always go with the choice that your players are the most comfortable with, and excited by. Choosing an alternate method to portray Shadows doesn't lock the troupe into that approach

Shadowguides and Catharsis

Some troupes may want to keep the Shadowguide of a character undergoing Catharsis involved in the action, even after the Shadow has assumed control. In this instance, it is suggested that while a character's regular player is portraying the Shadow, the Shadowguide take the part of the subdued Psyche and offer that part of the character's perspective on events. A Psyche involved in this manner cannot offer "Psyche Dice," nor can it do anything but advise. However, this does allow the Shadowguide to remain a part of the action. Plus, the experience of playing the Psyche, even under such difficult circumstances, will aid in the Shadowguide's understanding of the character she is trying to subvert. This is by no means a mandatory rule, and is recommended only for advanced **Wraith** troupes.

forever. It's simply picking the best way to use them in your game right now, and as your players progress, the way they want to deal with Shadows may change as well.

• Dedicated Shadowguide

Troupes can elect to have a player that's a dedicated Shadowguide, playing the Shadows of all player characters and forgoing having their own character. In this situation, the Shadowguide should be someone who can work well with the Storyteller. A dedicated Shadowguide gives the Storyteller someone they can collude with regularly in order to consistently tie Shadows deeply into the characters' existence, as well as the troupe's larger narrative at hand. For this kind of Shadowguide to work, they'll need to be as informed as the Storyteller is about character backgrounds, to best portray the Shadow of each character.

Since there's only one Shadowguide at work, Storytellers may want to plan with the Shadowguide on doing "spotlight" sessions when appropriate, giving an intense Shadow experience to a player, but keeping a light hand with them outside those spotlights. This gives a player a few sessions to recover from that fierce one on one with the Shadowguide, and allows the Shadowguide to cycle through the other players at ap-

The Shadow and the Line

The concept of the Shadow is integral to **Wraith**. It's also one that can ask a lot of players, both in terms of trust and in terms of execution. There's always the possibility that Shadowguiding can be too effective, that it can impact the player as well as the character and make the gaming experience uncomfortable. Players should always feel comfortable asking their Shadowguide to back off if they're pushing buttons too hard, and Shadowguides should always be mindful that they're in conflict with the character, not the player. If a Shadowguide is making another player uncomfortable, the Storyteller should have no compunctions about asking him to tone it down, switching Shadowguiding assignments, or even having that player stop filling the Shadowguide role. While **Wraith** can and sometimes should go into deep and personal territory, that's no excuse for making other players feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

propriate moments. Doing so can be a way to manage players wanting to have an intense Shadowguide experience outside of Harrowings, while keeping sessions between those largely one-character-centered Shadow experiences ones where the Shadowguide can speak out as needed as different Shadows. If a Shadowguide excels at playing each Shadow regardless of the number of players, spotlighting characters in your chronicle may not feel as needed to manage everyone's stories, but they can always be an option during critical periods of character growth.

• Storyteller Shadows

Putting the portrayal of Shadows entirely into the Storyteller's hands puts added work onto the Storyteller, but can be the best option for some troupes. If the players are new to **Wraith**, or uncomfortable for any reason with roleplaying a Shadow (or don't want other players seeing their character sheets), Storyteller control of the Shadow takes pressure off the players instead of forcing them into roleplaying something that's outside their comfort zone. This also keeps players from having to become familiar with each other's character sheets. It's easier for players to roleplay not knowing intimate details concerning character traits or backgrounds that haven't been revealed in play if they simply don't know them. Most players have the maturity and roleplaying skill to compartmentalize what they know as someone's Shadow versus their own character, but not knowing something at all about another character gives them the opportunity to react to reveals during play in as fresh a way as possible.

When it comes to Storytellers taking on the work of roleplaying the Shadows, it's important to use this method in a game where doing so would be practical. A six-person **Wraith** game is going to be strenuous at best for a Storyteller to run, and adding six different Shadows on top of it may be too much. This method can supplement traditional Shadowguiding; in this case the Storyteller will play the Shadows for players who don't want other players to be their Shadowguides, or will step in to be a Shadowguide instead of players who aren't ready to Shadowguide yet. In terms of troupe size, this approach shines the most when used by troupes with two to three players.

• Deterministic Shadowguiding

To keep the influence of Shadows present in the story, but freeing the table from the added responsibilities of Shadowguiding, you can use some basic information from Shadow Creation — and some Storyteller input — to make Deterministic Shadowguiding work for your group. Shadows will still need to be written for each character, and that can be done by the players themselves. Since there's no Shadowguide to consult, players helping each other with Shadow ideas is one way to help players avoid being stymied during the Shadow creation process. Storytellers should have some one-on-one time with each player to get a sense of their Shadow; Shadows have desires and aims different from the Psyche, and in this method Storytellers are going to have to do some pulling and guiding to make sure those desires don't go unused or unfaced.

During play, instead of a Shadowguide offering a player Shadow Dice, this offering is instead done by the Storyteller. Angst is still tracked normally, and the rules for Catharsis rolls still work the same. In this method of Shadowguiding, Storytellers are able to contribute color to scenes when appropriate if the Psyche loses their roll, whether that's at the table or away from everyone else. The player is still the one to portray the switch of Psyche to Shadow if the Psyche should fail. As the Angst of a player's character increases, a group could add a little atmosphere by writing a brief list together of ways a wraith may begin to think or act as their Angst becomes stronger. These can act as helpful hints for players who want to think about how their character's Angst influences how to play them, or how their character's thinking may be changing. This method puts some extra responsibility on the player in terms of their roleplaying, and doesn't work well for Harrowings. If your group decides this is the Shadowguiding method for them, Harrowings will need to be shifted primarily into the hands of the Storyteller, to make up for the absence of a Shadowguide providing input and driving force into the Harrowing.

• No Shadow

You can't have a Wraith without a Shadow. To remove it from its connection to the Psyche is to lobotomize the Psyche. Because Shadows are one of the strongest elements of **Wraith: The Oblivion**, removing them entirely from the game is impossible to do while still playing Wraith. But you and your players may choose to remove Shadows from the table during play. This would mean no one would portray a Shadow, and there would be no roleplaying that engaged with a player character's Shadow. Using Deterministic Shadowguiding is a best case option if your table is simply trying to remove roleplaying Shadows from the game. It allows players and the Storyteller to keep track of the Psyche's proximity to Oblivion, and helps shape how players portray their characters in relation to their Angst.

If your troupe decided it would like to forgo using Shadows entirely, determine what that means. Deciding to have no "on screen" Shadowguiding may fit your group consensus about the most important parts of your game to focus on during a session. Using that option could allow for doing brief narrative summaries of what your Shadow's been up to between games, whether that's done by the Storyteller, fellow players, or yourself. Should your troupe wish to completely remove Shadows from the table, how far they want to go with that is going to influence how your troupe engages with the game content and the rules. Shadows are ticking clocks that dog characters, a grim and uncomfortable reality of their life after death. Deciding to simply not focus on Shadows and figuring out how or if that influences the rules being used in your game is an avenue to not use Shadows, but keep them a thematic element in the background. It does change the tenor of the game to shift Shadows deeply off screen and out of play, so it's important to make sure everyone at your table wants to keep Shadows so far out of sight.

Shadow Example of Play

John and Mindy are members of Leah's troupe, and have been assigned as each other's Shadowguides. John's character Leo is a former artist from Chicago who's looking to stave off Oblivion through creating works of enduring beauty, and Mindy makes a careful note of some of the key elements on his Shadow character sheet: key Fetters like family and a favorite work of art, Passions related to creation and drive, and Thorns like Mirror, Mirror. Leo's Shadow also has Dark Passions like "Force Everyone to Acknowledge My Brilliance" (Ego) ••••, and the Archetype of the False Friend. That, Mindy decides, is plenty to go on.

In the game's current scenario, the Circle uncovered evidence of a Doppelganger working within the Chicago Necropolis' power structure. Every attempt to report this to the local authorities has backfired, as the Doppelganger is one step ahead of them at every turn. With the city turning against them, they decide to get out of the city and go to Stygia in hopes of finding someone who will believe them — and hope the Doppelganger's lies haven't poisoned the entire Hierarchy against them.

Originally, the plan is for the group to seek passage out of the city together. But Mindy decides that Leo's Shadow doesn't want any part of that. Instead, drawing on the False Friend Archetype, she leans over during the debate over what to do and, as the Shadow, whispers a cutting comment about one of the other wraiths in John's ear. John busts up laughing, which immediately gets him suspicious questions from the rest of the group (including Mindy's character, Lydia). Leo tries to explain why he's laughing without letting on that it's at a joke at one of his friend's expense, and things go predictably badly. By the end of the discussion, none of the other wraiths want to be around Leo right now and he announces that he can get them passage to Stygia faster than they can. The group splits up, with Leo (and his Shadow) headed one way and the rest headed another.

With the group split up, Leah decides to run the larger faction first. John participates as Lydia's Shadowguide, meaning that everyone's still involved even though the group has split up.

But the larger faction's attempts to get a ticket to Stygia fail for various reasons, and Leah declares that it's time to switch over to Leo's "solo" adventure for the moment. Most of the rest of the troupe decides this is a good time for a bathroom break or whatnot, but Mindy sticks around to play Shadowguide.

Wandering alone through the Necropolis, Leo starts to wonder if maybe he should have just apologized. His Shadow wants none of this, though, and Mindy engages Leo in a running debate about how the rest of the group is a bunch of small-timers and Leo's better off leading them — or without them. Leah eventually sends Mindy a note asking her to tone it down a bit — while the roleplaying is excellent, the constant conversation with the Shadow is getting to be a bit too much, and Leo needs some space to operate on his own. Mindy nods and backs off, and Leo heads for the ghostly banks of the Chicago River in hopes of finding someone who can help him.

As Leo's an artist, he's a little bit out of place among the ghosts of longshoremen, dock workers, and freighter captains. Leah suggests that he roll Perception + Streetwise (difficulty 7) to see if he can identify someone who'd be a good fit. Looking at his character sheet, John notes that while Leo has 4 dots in Perception, he's got nothing in Streetwise, and he's not feeling too confident about success. Mindy takes this opportunity to step in as the Shadow, offering him four extra dice to roll with. Torn between not wanting to rely on his Shadow and wanting to make sure he succeeds at this important task, Leo negotiates, asking for 1 die only. He and his Shadow ultimately compromise on three, and they roll. On the main dice, it's 8, 7, 2, 2, while the Shadow Dice come up 9, 8 and 1. Leah rules it's a healthy success, and points out a likely-looking target, an older wraith in bad-weather gear whose face shows clear Harbinger guildmarks. Meanwhile, Mindy adds a point of temporary Angst from the 1 on the Shadow Dice roll. She's now up to 6, not quite enough to launch a Catharsis attempt, but it's getting close.

Leo walks over and introduces himself to the wraith, who declares that he's the captain of a freighter headed downriver to Stygia in the morning, but that he's willing to take on passengers for a ridiculous number of oboli and the willingness to work their passage. Leo makes a counteroffer of some relics (mostly belonging to his Circlemates, his Shadow points out) and agrees to help defend the ship if it's attacked, and the discussion gets going in earnest.

As negotiations reach a critical moment, Mindy decides now is the time for the Shadow to really get involved. She passes a note to Leah saying that she's using Mirror, Mirror, a Thorn that temporarily makes the wraith appear horrific or threatening. It's Mindy's hope that doing so will scare the ship captain off and deny the Circle passage to Stygia.

Leah rolls Perception to check the captain's reaction and gets 3 failures. She decides this means that, rather than reading the flash of horror as proof that Leo's a dangerous passenger he doesn't want on board, he gets frightened instead and quickly agrees to transport the entire Circle to Stygia. Leo knows something's up but can't figure out what, and his Shadow certainly isn't going to enlighten him. So he just goes with the flow and takes the captain's change of heart at face value.

The Shadow is disappointed, but not for long. After the encounter with the captain wraps up, Leo rejoins the rest of the Circle. After they recount their exploits, he brags about what a fantastic negotiator he is and (egged on by comments from his Shadow) how the group owes him one for pulling this off. Mindy looks at the Shadow sheet and sees that 4-dot Dark Passion, and checks with Leah. Leah agrees — it's clearly a fit — and has Mindy roll 4 dice. They come up 9, 8, 8, 2: 3 successes. Mindy adds the points of temporary Angst to the Shadow's character sheet and smiles — that's up to 9 temporary, enough for her to attempt Catharsis and seize control. When the right moment comes along, she'll be ready…

Harrowings

Harrowing is a nightmare ride through the deepest parts of the Underworld, a psychodrama starring an unlucky wraith, and directed by the wraith's Shadow with a supporting cast of Spectres. Harrowings are specifically designed to torture a wraith, empower her Shadow, and force her into making mistakes, ones that may rip away her Passions, Fetters, or her very essence, and send her plummeting down to Oblivion. To some extent, a Harrowing is a test of self-knowledge, a challenge to the wraith from her Shadow to choose the right course of action. Make the right call and she escapes from the nightmare unscathed. Make the wrong one and the consequences are dire. And of course, the Shadow tries to stack the deck so that the wraith chooses incorrectly, or to make every choice seem so bad that it feels like there's no way out. Failure to puzzle out a Harrowing can lead to weakening or loss of Fetters or Passions, and in some cases, even destruction. Solving a Harrowing means the wraith escapes unscathed, but weary and wary. Though she may be unharmed, she is not unchanged.

When a wraith experiences something that threatens to weaken her connection to the world of the living, be it losing a Fetter, a Passion, or all of her Willpower or Corpus, her mind fights back against the break. Simultaneously, her Shadow works to encourage it, eager to divorce the wraith from anything that would anchor her against Oblivion. The eternal struggle of life urge and death urge plays out, the paradox of Restless existence embodied in the wraith's simultaneous need for Fetters and Passions to secure her existence while at the same time ultimately needing to let go in order to obtain Transcendence.

It is said that Harrowings were originally purely designed for teaching, ways for wraiths to come to grips with their Passions and Fetters and understand them better in order to grow beyond them. Wraiths who were afraid of the potential loss of self Transcendence might entail were, through Harrowings, forced to confront their Shadows and their anchors to their previous lives. This encounter would enable the reticent wraiths to deal with those challenges and prepare themselves to move on. They were cathartic events, giving wraiths a better self-knowledge and a chance to force their Shadows to stand down.

Somewhere along the line, Harrowings changed. What were once debates between Psyche and Shadow fell under the Labyrinth's purview. Now they have become vicious puzzles where wraiths are forced to confront their own weaknesses and risk their own destruction by doing so. Now Harrowings are things of horror and loss, and any insight a wraith manages to wrest for herself from the proceedings is bitterly won through

her own efforts. Transcendence no longer has any part to play here. Harrowings are now about survival.

What Actually Happens

When a character is pulled down into a Harrowing, he becomes the star in a perverse psychodrama scripted by his own subconscious. In essence, the wraith lands in a nightmare landscape where anything can happen and anyone can appear. Harrowings are nightmares, and it's nightmare logic that applies. Old lovers can appear out of nowhere, loving parents can be twisted into monstrous caricatures, and childhood heroes can step onstage only to reveal themselves as monsters. Within the players' comfort zones, anything and everything is fair game, and no idea is too illogical or strange. Once a wraith is trapped inside a Harrowing, there's no way out except by plunging deeper in. Only by understanding what the Harrowing is viciously and unfairly testing can a wraith escape. Failure, bad choices, and refusal to engage, on the other hand, lead inevitably to failure and force the wraith to pay a heavy price before moving on.

During a Harrowing, a wraith may use his Arcanoi, his Willpower (except for his last point) and any of his Abilities that seem pertinent. They must all, however, be used within the context of the Harrowing; using Arcanoi to try and rip a hole through the proceedings and climb out simply doesn't work. In its own way, a Harrowing is very real, and the very nature of the Underworld bends around it to ensure that there are no shortcuts.

A Harrowing occurs when a wraith is dragged down by Oblivion for various reasons (see below) into the Labyrinth, where Spectres await their chance to coordinate with his Shadow in order to use him as a temporary plaything. As soon as one of the Harrowing conditions is met, a small Nihil opens directly underneath the wraith and he plummets immediately down to one of the innumerable chambers of the Labyrinth devoted to staging Harrowings. There is no escaping the descent. Argos is helpless against it, and no Artifact has ever been known to stand against it. The descent is sudden and terrifying, and the Nihil generally closes so quickly after the wraith is sucked down that it is impossible for anyone to follow. And attempting to follow by conventional means is generally impossible. The speed of the descent is too great, the Labyrinth too large, the obstacles in the way too numerous and too strong. By and large, all a wraith's companions can do is stand and wait and hope for their friend's return.

As the wraith plummets, her Shadow is in constant communication with the Spectres waiting at the other end of the ride, filling them in on their victim's Passions, Fetters, and personal history, the better to plan the torments of the Harrowing. Phobias, regrets, missed chances, and bad choices — all are grist for the mill. The Spectres take this information and run with it, creating the setting for the Harrowing and pulling together the props, set dressing, and disguises necessary from the Labyrinth's vast storehouses of flotsam or the Tempest itself. Hasty Moliate jobs turn leering Doppelgangers into long-lost loved ones, the quality of the work aided and abetted by the reality-warping effects of the Harrowing itself. When the wraith arrives, deposited ever-so-gently in one of the vast caverns dedicated to Harrowings, the stage is set and all the players are in place.

Within the Harrowing, dream logic rules. Items can be plucked from thin air, the action can teleport form place to place, and new actors can simply materialize. This is a function of the Harrowing, and trying to understand what's going on will only make it worse. The one rule is that everything that happens does so at the whim of the Harrowing's creators: the victim's Shadow and the Spectre directing the action.

Wraiths leave Harrowings the same way they arrive: rapidly. Once the Harrowing is over, for good or for ill, they're not long for the Labyrinth. The lucky and successful ones are spat back out at a safe location near their original point of departure, or at a Fetter or Haunt. Those who fail Harrowings find themselves adrift in the Tempest, in no immediate danger but potentially far from home or help. Those who fail Destruction Harrowings are pulled down into the maw of Oblivion without help or recourse. It's all over instantly, with no time for a parting shot, either on the part of the departing wraith or the potentially disappointed Spectres. The Harrowing is essentially discrete, and once it finishes all involved must deal with the consequences immediately and move on.

The Directors of the Action

Within the Labyrinth there are cadres of Spectres who do nothing but prepare for and run Harrowings. While they haven't quite split off to form their own caste yet, they are self-contained and have little to do with the politics of the rest of Spectre-kind. Some say they serve a very particular Malfean, while others think they are merely so dedicated to their creative Dark Passions and so successful at doing Oblivion's work that they are granted a certain hellish autonomy. In either case, the makers of Harrowings cut across caste lines. Shades, Nephwracks, Striplings, and Doppelgangers all come together like a demented theater troupe, with all their efforts bent towards creating the most devastating Harrowings possible.

Each Harrowing has a Director, the Spectre who leads the Harrowing troupe and who is in closest contact with the victim's Shadow. Together, the two of them plan and shape the Harrowing, describing its contours and its solution and assigning roles to the Spectres who are going to populate it. Once the action starts, artistic control rests in the hands of the Spectre, though the Shadow continues to offer its insight and assistance.

Harrowing Logistics: A Guide

Q: How long does a Harrowing take?

A: As long as it needs to. Time flows differently inside the Labyrinth, more so inside a Harrowing. One can take seconds, minutes — or in extreme cases, years. How long it takes in a given play scenario is entirely up to the Storyteller.

Q: What does the Shadow do during a Harrowing?

A: Advises the Spectres who are mounting the production. As the Harrowing is purely a test of the Psyche, the Shadow cannot use Thorns, offer Shadow Dice or otherwise act directly on the wraith at the center of the action. Ideally, the local Spectres are keeping the wraith sufficiently busy anyway.

Q: Where does a wraith go after the Harrowing's over?

A: If she wins, back to where she started (or a safe place nearby — this prevents wraiths from being repeatedly bounced into and out of Harrowings as they fall, emerge, are attacked, and fall again.) Conversely, if the Storyteller feels it's more appropriate, she can emerge at a Fetter or Haunt. This potentially facilitates either the story or the process of getting the player characters back together, as needed. Wraiths who fail Harrowings are dropped into the Tempest, and must make their own way from there. Wraiths who fail Destruction Harrowings fall immediately into the Void and are seen no more.

Q: Can a wraith use Shadow Dice for a post-Harrowing roll?

A: No. And hopefully, they know better than to ask.

Q: What happens to my character's gear when she falls into a Harrowing?

A: If she's carrying or wearing it, it goes with her. If not, it stays behind.

Q: What if my character exits a Harrowing but has no Fetters and can't return to the Shadowlands, even if that's where the rules say that's where she's supposed to go?

A: In that case, the wraith is thrown into a calm area of the Tempest, or perhaps washes up on the banks of the Great River. In either case, she will be in no *immediate* danger while she recovers from the Harrowing.

Getting Out

The surest way to get out of a Harrowing is to solve the puzzle and roleplay a solution. Note that while the Storyteller and Shadowguide should agree on a solution to the Harrowing before play starts, a player who comes up with a sufficiently clever and appropriate alternate solution should not be penalized. The Storyteller has the leeway to award success for an alternate approach if she deems it worthwhile and dramatically satisfying, though this approach should not be overused.

Alternately, at the end of a Harrowing the victim has not successfully roleplayed her way out of, the Storyteller has the option of offer a dice roll that determines whether the Harrowed character succeeds or fails. It is important to remember that the roll determining success or failure is not just a random toss of the dice, but rather is a roll made *after* the character undergoes the Harrowing itself and has a chance to react to it.

As noted previously, all Harrowings have some sort of dilemma or test for the wraith at their heart. If the Harrowed wraith roleplays well and makes intelligent choices, thus finding and solving the core dilemma she is been presented with, there's no need for a dice roll. The wraith has earned victory — and escape — on her own merits, and does not need to resort to the dice for a second chance.

On the other hand, not every wraith will be able to solve his Harrowing through roleplaying alone. Sometimes it's luck, sometimes they can't figure it out, and sometimes the pressure of the Harrowing makes it impossible to find a way out. If that's the case, after a reasonable amount of time (10 minutes is a good baseline) passes and it becomes clear the wraith's not making any progress on the Harrowing, then the Storyteller should step in and move things along. The action of the Harrowing comes to an end, the sets crash down, and the player must make a roll (permanent Willpower, difficulty 9) to see if his character was somehow able to triumph in spite of it all. A single success is enough to grant victory and get the wraith out, intact. At Storyteller discretion, good roleplaying — even if it doesn't find the solution — during the Harrowing can reduce the difficulty of the roll, though it should never be made easy to escape a Harrowing. The Shadow cannot offer additional dice for this roll. To do so would run counter to the actual mission of the Harrowing.

Modifying the Odds

While Spectres and the Shadow set the scene for a Harrowing, the wraith is not entirely defenseless. Wraiths who have a rating in Eidolon may, one time per session, roll against their Eidolon (difficulty 9). Each success rolled allows the wraith to exert her will on the Harrowing, and to modify one aspect of the scenario to her liking. This should make it easier for her to figure out the solution to the puzzle the Harrowing presents. Any changes made by the player to the Harrowing must be in line with the overall concept of the scene. Suddenly adding giant robots to a Harrowing about the death of the character's mother is probably out of bounds; adding those same robots as allies in a hero fantasy makes much more sense. If the player chooses to roll on his character's Eidolon rating, he may do so at any time up until the ending of the Harrowing.

A player can also spend Willpower to affect a Harrowing. One Willpower point can be spent for an automatic success on the Eidolon roll or on the final escape roll (or on both if the character has enough Willpower remaining). Players can also spend Willpower during the action of the Harrowing, though this is not necessarily an optimal strategy for dealing with the situation. If the wraith is down to one Willpower point, they cannot spend it in this fashion, for obvious reasons. Running out of Willpower is, after all, one of the things that will drop a wraith into a Harrowing, making it impossible for a wraith to do so while actually *in* a Harrowing.

Harrowing Systems and Targets

There are two different kinds of Harrowings. While they have the same basic structure, they have different targets and potential outcomes, and as such can be differentiated from one another.

Targeted Harrowings

The first type of Harrowing is one in which one of a wraith's Passions or Fetters is targeted by her Shadow in an attempt to destroy it. Doing so weakens the wraith's ties to the world of the living. A wraith whose Passions and Fetters have been weakened in this way is colder and more distant, and has fewer things capable of anchoring her in the Shadowlands. In addition, a wraith whose Passions have been weakened is that much less skilled at harvesting Pathos, making them more vulnerable to future attacks.

The target of a Harrowing is called the Quarry, as it is the object of the metaphorical hunt the Shadow initiated. In some cases, the Quarry is predetermined, say, if the Harrowing is triggered by the loss of a particular Fetter or Passion. In others, the Shadow is allowed to pick the Quarry from the list of available targets. Regardless, having the action of the Harrowing reflect on the Quarry helps bring home what exactly is at stake. So, a Harrowing that is about a two-point Passion of "Protect My Family (Love)" could focus on putting family members in peril, or on the wraith being forced to turn his back on his family

because of another obligation, or about the wraith's family desecrating his memory. There are always plenty of options available. It's up to the Storyteller, Shadowguide, and troupe to pick the best one and make it memorable.

The following events can trigger a Targeted Harrowing:

• The wraith loses (or uses up) all of her Willpower. As she is on the verge of losing that final point, which would bring her to zero Willpower, she immediately undergoes a Harrowing that targets either a Passion or a Fetter of the Shadowguide's choice. For Willpower-driven Harrowings, the most likely targets are low-level traits, particularly ones that the wraith has neglected recently. Fetters that haven't been visited and Passions that haven't been indulged are ripe for a Harrowing to pick off. If the wraith succeeds at the Harrowing, she has the option of snapping back to a Fetter (preferably the Quarry) or Haunt, or to a safe spot near where she was originally pulled down into the Harrowing. She also keeps her last Willpower point, and adds an additional number equal to her Intelligence rating. If, however, she fails, she loses one point off the Quarry's current rating. If that drops the rating to zero, then the Quarry is considered lost forever. The bereft wraith then is ejected from the Harrowing, and instead finds herself hurled into the Tempest. Wraiths who fail in this manner do get Willpower points equal to their current Intelligence rating restored to them. In either case, the wraith emerges from the Harrowing with the same Corpus rating they entered it with, regardless of what might have occurred during the Harrowing itself.

• The wraith is on the verge of losing (not Resolving) her last point in an individual Passion. So long as she has one point in the Passion, she is fine. But when that last point is threatened — by neglect or enemy action — she undergoes a Harrowing. Wraiths can also lose Passions due to failing a Harrowing, but Storytellers should refrain from invoking a second Harrowing as a result of failing the first one — particularly over the same Passion, which may be gone anyway.

You Are the Quarry

At Storyteller discretion, the Passion or Fetter in question in a Willpower-based Harrowing can be replaced by the wraith himself. This is reserved for Harrowings after the wraith has done something particularly foolish or inappropriate, such as blowing his last Willpower point on a practical joke. In situations where the wraith is the Quarry, failure at a Harrowing costs the wraith one point of permanent Corpus. This in turn reduces the wraith's maximum temporary Corpus rating (which can never exceed permanent) by one, and thus makes it that much more likely the wraith is going to be Harrowed again — soon.

The Harrowing should focus on a theme that involves the Passion, and the Passion should always be the Quarry of the Harrowing. For example, if the Passion that is being threatened is "Protect my son (Love)," the Harrowing might seem to take place in a crowd in a disaster, with dozens of lookalikes of the son making it impossible to find the real one. Success has the same result as a success in a Willpower Harrowing, and the targeted Passion is maintained at its current level. However, if the victim fails, not only does he lose the Quarry Passion, but he also must roll against the rating of a different Passion (Storyteller discretion as to which Passion, difficulty 5) as well. A failure on this roll subtracts one dot from the rating of the second Passion.

• The wraith is on the verge of losing (not Resolving) her last point in a Fetter. When a living Fetter dies or a nonliving Fetter is destroyed, the character whose Fetter was lost is immediately thrown into this sort of Harrowing. This Harrowing proceeds just as one for a Passion does, but the Fetter is the Quarry, and it becomes part of the scenery or a player in the psychodrama. Successes and failures are handled in the same way as for Passions, though if the wraith just lost his last Fetter, he is no longer able to exist in the Shadowlands, as he has lost that which anchored him to the lands of the living. He must now dwell in the deeper Underworld for the rest of his wraithly existence — or seek to acquire new Fetters.

Failures are handled in a similar fashion to those in Passion-based Targeted Harrowings. If the wraith was pulled into this sort of Harrowing because of the destruction or death of one of her Fetters, succeeding in the Harrowing will still not allow the wraith to retain that Fetter. Instead, a success will allow her to consider the Fetter Resolved instead of destroyed.

• The wraith lost all of her temporary Corpus, or has taken a point of lethal damage while wavering. In this case, the wraith herself is the Quarry of the Harrowing. Again, success allows the wraith to escape back to a Fetter or Haunt, or to return to a spot near where she was originally Harrowed, and recover as many points of temporary Corpus as she has dots in Stamina. Failure results in the loss of one point of permanent Corpus. If a wraith loses her last point of permanent Corpus as a result of a temporary Corpus Harrowing, she immediately falls into a Destruction Harrowing (see below).

Destruction Harrowings

Destruction Harrowings occur only under extreme circumstances, as they directly threaten a wraith's continued existence. In these rare instances, the wraith becomes the Quarry, rather than a Passion or a Fetter, and the price of failure is utter destruction. A Destruction Harrowing is activated when:

• The wraith is on the verge of losing her last point in her last remaining Passion. Her emotions have become so numbed that she is a step away from feeling nothing and thus becoming nothing. Without functioning Passions, there is nothing to fuel her existence as a wraith. If the player does not succeed in the Harrowing on her own terms, she should roll permanent

Willpower against her Shadow's permanent Angst (difficulty 6). Should the wraith win, she is transported to one of her Fetters (assuming she still has any), a Haunt, or a safe location near her position when the Harrowing began, and retains that last point of her last Passion. Failure strips her of her last strong emotion, opening her to the nothingness of Oblivion and allowing her to dissolve into the Void.

• The wraith is reduced to zero permanent Corpus. With even her tenuous hold on the reality of the Underworld eroded to the point of dissolution, she stands on the brink. The system is the same as above, with the wraith rolling her permanent Willpower versus the Shadow's permanent Angst (difficulty 6). Success snaps her back to a Fetter (if she has any remaining) or Haunt, or to a safe spot near where she fell into the Harrowing. Once there, she immediately recovers a single point each of temporary and permanent Corpus. Failure results in the wraith's immediate destruction. The character is dragged screaming into Oblivion, and the player should consider what sort of character she'd like to play next. Alternately, the Storyteller can offer the player the option of having their character transform into a Spectre of the Nephwrack caste. The player can then attempt to continue to play that character, or hand it over to the Storyteller, possibly with the option of playing its Psyche should it ever encounter the group. Such options are best offered in private.

Rewards

Should a wraith successfully overcome the Harrowing, she should receive some sort of reward. For a Targeted Harrowing, if the wraith successfully "defended" a Passion or Fetter (especially one she may have recently neglected) with good roleplaying or clever thinking, it should be increased by one point. Thus, a Fetter that was a three point now becomes a four point. (Destroyed Fetters cannot, for obvious reasons, have their ratings increased.) For Destruction Harrowings, the wraith receives a decrease of one to three points (depending on the difficulty of the Harrowing and the specifics of the player's roleplaying) of temporary Angst. This represents a boost to the wraith's confidence due to her success and the relief at having escaped the Harrowing.

Group Harrowings

There are rare occasions when an entire group of wraiths undergoes a simultaneous Harrowing. This may come about through the loss of a Fetter held in common, or all of them may be stripped of their Corpus at the same time (say, in a firefight or Maelstrom). Whatever the cause, in instances like this the wraiths undergo a Harrowing all together, rather than as individuals. In general, the mechanics for a group Harrowing are the same as for the individual version, and all of the wraiths involved are tested in some fashion (the tests may be individual or group in nature, as per Storyteller preference). Obviously, in a group Harrowing the players are too busy with

their characters to play the parts of Spectres. This additional task instead falls to the Storyteller.

At the conclusion of the group Harrowing, either all of the wraiths succeed or all must roll to determine the outcome. There's no middle ground. If that happens and the Harrowing was caused by the loss of a shared Fetter, the group must decide whether they're all in this together or if it's every wraith for himself. If the group Harrowing was caused by Corpus loss, then it's the individual option, and each wraith's fate is personal.

If each of the wraiths is on her own, then each wraith rolls and succeeds or fails individually. If the circumstances allow and the group agrees that they're all in it together, then one wraith rolls for the entire group. Fortunately, that would be the wraith with the highest rating in the shared Fetter, offering the group as a whole the best chance of success. If she succeeds, everyone succeeds. If she fails, everyone loses the Fetter and suffers the consequences.

Self-Inflicted Harrowings

In circumstances of rare danger, a wraith can choose to throw himself into a Harrowing rather than face whatever's about to happen — be it the forges, a finishing blow from the claws of a Shade, or being shredded by the winds of a five-Bell Maelstrom. However, not every wraith knows this is an option, and not every attempt is successful. To self-inflict a Harrowing, the wraith must roll Willpower (difficulty 9) and score at least 2 successes. The Shadow can offer Shadow dice for this roll, and may have every incentive to do so. However, there is a time limit — extended dickering will likely mean the moment when the wraith could have Harrowed himself passed and it's now too late for Shadow and Psyche alike.

A self-triggered Harrowing is always a Destruction Harrowing, regardless of what the wraith's Corpus rating might be. Such a desperate gamble must truly be a last resort. The wraith who comes to rely on diving into a Harrowing is likely to find himself unpleasantly surprised, sooner or later.

Running a Harrowing

Running a Harrowing requires the cooperation of all the players involved, especially those not being Harrowed or guiding the Harrowing. It's a group effort focused on one character, where everyone's contribution is necessary and the group stays involved even as one character gets separated.

Once a wraith falls into a Harrowing, the first step is to determine what kind of Harrowing it is — Targeted or Destruction — and what incited it. That will determine everything that happens next.

At this point, the player whose character is being Harrowed should leave the room. The other players and the Storyteller should discuss the details of the Harrowing — what the Quarry is, what the escape condition is, what the setting of the Harrowing is, and what roles everyone's going to play in it. The Harrowed wraith's Shadowguide leads this discussion and directs the Harrowing, at least until such time as the action starts. This discussion should take no more than five minutes. Ideally, the Shadowguide has a good enough idea of the wraith he's been attached to that he can whip up a good concept pretty quickly, and keep things from bogging down in discussion.

Once the parameters of the Harrowing are set, the star of the show gets invited back into the room. The Storyteller sets the scene and the action begins, with the Harrowed wraith having roughly 10 minutes to figure out the resolution to the Harrowing. During that time, the other players take the part of the various Spectres putting on the Harrowing, with the wraith's Shadowguide ideally taking a lead role.

If the wraith figures out how to beat the Harrowing, it ends immediately and the wraith returns to the higher Underworld. However, at the end of 10 or so minutes, if the Storyteller feels that no progress is being made or that the wraith has failed, she can end the Harrowing by fiat. At that point, the Harrowed wraith gets one last roll to see if he escaped. If he fails this roll, then he deals with the consequences as detailed above.

If, as a result of the first Harrowing the wraith finds themselves tumbling into a second one immediately after, then the process repeats itself. This sort of scenario should be rare, but regardless, the Storyteller always has the option of declaring the Harrowing cycle over and removing the victim from the Labyrinth, in order to get the main storyline back on the rails.

Harrowings are intended as punctuation, moments of a chronicle when a wraith is particularly at risk and the stakes are high. If they happen too often or take too long, then they risk slowing down the main chronicle or focusing too much attention on one or two players. Keeping them infrequent, high-powered and tense supports and adds tension to the main storyline without desensitizing the players to what's at stake.

Roleplaying Inside a Harrowing

Roleplaying inside a Harrowing can be tricky for both the player and the other members of the troupe. For the target of the Harrowing, the important thing is to roleplay the situation. The wraith may be aware that she's in a Harrowing, but that doesn't mean she can simply refuse to play along. Loudly declaring "Nope, this is just a Harrowing and I'm not doing this" runs counter to the rules of the universe, the ones everyone — even the most stubborn wraith — implicitly accepts. The Harrowing is a gauntlet based on the wraith's own personality and history that must be run. To deny its validity to is to deny one's self, and to refuse to confront it, even on its own terms, is to surrender. Instead, the star of the Harrowing needs to take the scenario as it comes and work with its internal logic to find a reasonable solution. That means engaging with the scenario, the other actors in the scene (even if they are disguised Spectres), and the concept of the Harrowing as a whole. Harrowings are nightmares, obeying no logic except their own, and need to be engaged as such.

As for the other players, their part in the Harrowing is to support the scene's ultimate goal. That means agreeing on the part assigned to them and playing it within the context of the Harrowing. They're not there to "win" or to make it impossible for the wraith to succeed; they're part of the overall scene and are there to support its reality. So aggressively trying to force the wraith to fail her Harrowing is stepping over the line (unless specifically instructed to do so); working in concert with the rest of the group to make the best and most interesting Harrowing experience together is dead on target.

The Contested Harrowing

Not everyone may agree as to a Harrowing's resolution. The Shadowguide may feel like the subject didn't work out a reasonable solution, while the player may feel he was on target. In cases like this, the important thing is quick resolution and not allowing the disagreement to linger. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of success or failure, and while each player should feel free to make a case, it's ultimately the Storyteller's decision. Once that comes down, all parties involved should adjust their character sheets as needed and move on.

Of course, there's a potential story hook in a scenario like this. The Spectre responsible for staging the Harrowing with its unsatisfactory conclusion may now harbor a grudge. He might decide to seek out "the one who got away," developing a personal vendetta against the wraith in question. Or he might simply bide his time, waiting for the next time the wraith is Harrowed, and plan something particularly special for the occasion. Either way, having a master of Harrowings personally interested in a wraith's destruction is going to make things very interesting.

Example of Play: A Harrowing

In combat with a gang of renegade Reapers, John's character Leo takes a vicious hit from a relic blunderbuss. Already wounded, Leo takes enough damage to spiral down into a Harrowing. A small Nihil opens up underneath his feet and he's dragged down into the Labyrinth for a Harrowing.

Leah, who's Storytelling, decides to finish the encounter with the Reapers before dealing with the Harrowing. The combat finishes with the Circle routing the Reapers and freeing their coffle of prisoners. It's a satisfactory conclusion to the scene, but it hasn't been achieved painlessly. Leo's in big trouble.

Leah sends John out of the room, so the rest of the group can discuss what's about to happen to his character. Mindy plays Leo's Shadow, so Leah informs her she's in charge of setting up the Harrowing. Already familiar with Leo's character sheet, Mindy decides that the Harrowing is going to focus on one of Leo's Fetters, specifically, his love for Chagall's *America Windows* at the Art Institute of Chicago. The windows were Leo's major inspiration in life, and now that he's passed on they still exert a hold. If anything were to happen to them, Leo would be devastated. And that, Mindy decides, is why they should be the focus of the Harrowing.

Since the entire Circle will be acting out the Harrowing, Mindy asks the group how they think this should be handled. Another player suggests a scenario that puts the windows at risk of being physically destroyed. Mindy likes this, but points out that the Harrowing has to have some kind of puzzle or dilemma that John's going to have to roleplay through for Leo to escape unscathed. Leah, seeing that the group could use a little help, suggests that maybe Leo should have to choose between saving the Chagall windows and saving someone he loves. Mindy jumps on the idea and sketches out how she wants the Harrowing to go: Leo's going to be in the Art Institute, some sort of disaster's going to strike, and Leo's going to have to choose between saving the lives of his family or the art that matters so much to him. There's no way to save both. But, because this is a Harrowing, there's going to be an endless stream of new potential victims every time Leo makes a move towards the windows. The only way out is for Leo to come to grips with the fact that he's going to have to let something important to him go, knowing that the inspiration it gave him will be with him forever. Roles are assigned; the other players will take the parts of Spectres imitating Leo's loved ones or innocent bystanders in the museum, while Mindy plays Leo's "wife."

Leah points out that it's time to bring John back into the room. Mindy does a last check to make sure everyone's clear on how they're going to play it, and tells Leah that they're ready. Leah calls John back into the room, and starts setting the scene…

Leah describes the scene. Leo is walking through his favorite museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, with his wife. As he looks around, he sees other people he knows and loves, played by the other members of the troupe. They wave and greet him, talking about how wonderful it is to see him and how much they're looking forward to seeing the Chagall windows. John knows it's a Harrowing and that something is up, but so far there's nothing Leo can do — yet.

Then Mindy gives Leah the signal, and all hell breaks loose. There's a hideous rending sound and suddenly the earth shakes. The museum starts to collapse, with pieces of debris falling from the ceiling and trapping visitors underneath. Leo moves to help the nearest struggling victim, but Mindy, playing the Spectre imitating his wife, screams and tells him that the windows are about to be crushed and destroyed. Leo is torn; John can't decide what to do. The other members of the troupe put the pressure on, clamoring for help when Leo moves to try to save them, then turning around and demanding that he save the priceless, one-of-a-kind windows instead. Meanwhile, Leah describes the steadily widening crack in the ceiling that will drop tons of material onto the Chagall exhibit, destroying it beyond repair. It's an impossible situation, once that Leo can't possibly solve by himself.

John, knowing how important a Fetter *America Windows* is for his character, finally makes a decision. He decides that he can't save everyone but that he can save something that's important to the world, and makes a dash through the falling

debris to save the windows, willing to sacrifice himself if necessary to protect them.

That's when Leah tightens the final screw. She drops a beam on Leo's "wife," trapping her beneath. Leo stops and turns around. Mindy plays the role to the hilt, telling him to leave her, to save the thing that he truly loves.

And finally, Leo gets it. John announces that he's turning his back on the windows to try to rescue his wife. Mindy tries to talk him out of it, but his mind is made up: Leo will always have his memories of *America Windows*. It's time to focus on something more important.

Leah confers with Mindy. They agree that the terms of the Harrowing have been met successfully, and Leo's going to make it out intact. The scene collapses into rubble, the masks on the Spectres drop away, and Leo rises out of the Labyrinth at speed towards the safety of the higher Underworld…

Alternate Harrowing Systems

The basic Harrowing rules may not work for every troupe. Some players may not want to participate, some groups may find it too involved, and some players may not be comfortable playing out a Harrowing in front of their peers. If that's thecase, there are numerous alternatives to the classic Harrowing style.

Storyteller Driven Harrowing: If players are uncomfortable setting up Harrowings for each other — or a player doesn't want the rest of the group setting up a Harrowing for him — then the easiest approach is for the Storyteller to do so instead. This has the advantage of keeping other players away from too much knowledge about a player's character. While other players can still take part in a Harrowing designed by the Storyteller, in this approach they take lesser — and potentially less obtrusive — roles.

Mechanistic Harrowing: While Harrowings offer tremendous opportunities for roleplaying, it's also possible to skip to the end and simply have the Harrowed wraith roll to determine success or failure. This has the advantage of not requiring the troupe to spend time setting up and playing a Harrowing, and then trying to get back on track. On the other hand, it denies the Harrowed wraith the chance to roleplay her way out of the situation.

Solo Harrowing: In this variant, the Harrowing is run strictly between player and Storyteller (or optionally, with the Shadowguide in attendance as Storyteller support). The other players are asked to leave the room. The structure of the Harrowing remains similar to the basic rules — the player is asked to find a solution to the nightmare scenario — but it's done privately, without other players involved or watching.

No Harrowing: While not recommended, the No Harrowing approach can still be applied. In this instance, rather than falling into a Harrowing when certain conditions are met,

Example of Play: Failed Harrowing

John's having a run of bad luck, and his character Leo has tumbled into another Harrowing, this time by blowing all of his Willpower. Mindy, his Shadowguide, looks at Leo's character sheet again and decides to target his strongest Passion: "Get Things Done Myself (Determination)." It's a four-dot Passion, so weakening it would do Leo some serious damage. Normally, Willpower-based Targeted Harrowings focus on lower-powered Traits, but Storyteller Leah thinks about it and gives this one the okay.

Collaborating with the rest of the troupe, Mindy comes up with a Harrowing concept. Leo's going to be trapped in a dangerous situation that he can get out of easily enough by accepting offers of help. Leah wonders if that's overly simplistic, but Mindy feels there's a chance that John will overthink it and will doom Leo as a result. Leah agrees and nails down the final details — Leo is on a crumbling cliff and the offers of help will come from helicopter pilots, rescue technicians, and even incongruous figures like his mom. (It's a Harrowing, after all — the only rules it needs to obey are those of nightmare logic.) All Leo has to do is say "yes" to one offer of assistance and understand that he doesn't always have to do it himself, and he'll get away cleanly. But if he insists on stubbornly trying to do the clearly impossible out of pride, then he's going to fail.

Sure enough, once play starts Leo refuses every offer of help that comes along. He waves off the rescue chopper, tells the park rangers he's got it and even refuses help from mom (played by Mindy), after wondering what she's doing there. In fact, it's that last encounter that seals his fate. Leo decides that there has to be a catch in every offer of help, and that the only sensible thing to do is refuse. Likewise, he decides that there has to be a way out that only he can do, and that all of these helping hands are distractions.

After 10 minutes of increasingly frantic escape attempts on Leo's part, all of which fail, Leah rules the Harrowing over. She and Mindy agree that Leo did not escape under his own power, and instead fell victim to the Harrowing's insidious effects. John is directed to erase one dot from his strongest Passion. Leo, numbed by the shock, now feels less driven and more passive. The scene dissolves around him and he is expelled back into the Tempest. Meanwhile, his friends are no doubt wondering what happened to him…

the character is simply knocked unconscious and vanishes for a scene. If the Harrowing is induced by the loss of a Fetter or Passion, those are simply gone. If it's caused by loss of Corpus or Willpower, the character reappears after the scene with the appropriate number (equal to the wraith's dots in Stamina or Intelligence, respectively) points. Each Corpus-based Harrowing costs the player 1 permanent Corpus level, and when the character runs out, they're gone.

Book Two

I NEVER KNEW MUCH ABO
PEOPLE UNTIL I TOOK ONE APA
JUST TO SEE HOW IT WORKE
KMU 2017

Chapter 7: Storytelling

Ghost stories are a deeply human response to the fear of death and the need to share our experiences. Together those two elements merge to create something new, a way of contextualizing the eternal question of "what happens next?" The stories that come out of this are part of a time-honored tradition, handed down through the millennia from Homer to Charles Dickens to Toni Morrison, and adapting to the needs of the living along the way.

Wraith is an extension of the ghost story tradition, which is another way of saying that it's a means of storytelling, and that someone has to be the teller of the tales. To a certain extent, all the players in a **Wraith** game are storytellers, adding their contributions through their characters and the Shadows they control, but the bulk of the work and the responsibility falls on the singular Storyteller. The players may portray the heroes of a given chronicle, but it's the Storyteller who plays the villains, the noble allies, the informants and bit parts, and all the rest of the world entire. It's the Storyteller who gives shape to the world and places the narrative of the chronicle within it, and who comes up with the villains' schemes that the players must attempt to foil.

Newcomers to storytelling games may find them a bit different from what they're used to. **Wraith**, like other role-playing games, rests squarely on a foundation of improvisation. Gameplay consists of the players donning the roles of their characters, and then reacting moment to moment to the world and characters the Storyteller presents them with. The emphasis is on you to decide your words and actions, and while there are dice rolls to resolve conflicts and determine success or failure, the real heart of the game is the way the characters interact. This sort of storytelling freedom can be exhilarating, daunting, or both simultaneously. With that in mind, this chapter is a guide to Storytelling techniques, along with hints, tips, and suggestions for making your **Wraith** game run more smoothly. There isn't any "top-secret-for-Storyteller-eyes-only" information to be had, just ideas on what makes a good **Wraith** chronicle and what sort of pitfalls you might want to avoid. You might even want to have your players read this, too — after all, they're telling these stories along with you.

The Storyteller

The role of the Storyteller in **Wraith** is an involved but rewarding one. It's the Storyteller who builds the world anew every session, who populates it with every character not portrayed by a player, and who determines everything that goes on during play. Furthermore, the entire world needs to be shared on the fly with your players, who will interact with it in a manner of their choosing. They will

weave their own plot threads and create their own stories, ones that may not quite line up with the ones you envisioned when you were planning the chronicle. Unlike writing for traditional media, Storytelling for **Wraith** is an interactive experience. The best Storytellers understand that the best stories come from allowing things to develop naturally in conjunction with the players, not from imposing plot from above and competing with the players for control of the narrative instead.

Establishing the setting for the story is one of the Storyteller's largest responsibilities. Every personality the players meet, every place they go, and everything they see springs from your imagination, and it is important to keep that imagination flexible. You must define everything for the players, serving as their guide to the world of your chronicle. You may know everything that's going in that world, but until you manage to communicate that to the players — to get them to explore, to converse with the wraiths you've set up for them to interact with, to use their powers and skills to do something — they won't.

The more complex and detailed the setting you present to your players, the more potential stories can be told within that setting, and the better the stories will be. Creating a world like a Hollywood set, all flats and facades, will inevitably lead to disappointment. When the characters turn the corner and there's nothing there for them to do because you didn't prepare for them to go around the block, the players will understand that their options are limited and their ability to take meaningful action is limited as well. This can breed frustration, on their part and on yours as you struggle to keep the players in the bounds you've prepared.

Instead, as a Storyteller, you should be prepared to be flexible. You should be ready to adjust if the Circle decides to do something completely opposite what you intended, and to do so seamlessly, so that the players never get the sense that you intended something different. Some of this comes from knowing the world and characters you're Storytelling well enough so that you can change up on the fly. If the Circle decides to leave town instead of talking to the informant you wanted to guide them, there's no reason you can't transfer that character's knowledge to someone else, say, the conductor on the car of the Midnight Express the Circle is now riding in.

Your world and the characters who populate it must be detailed, so that you can have them respond believably to any action the players take. Regardless of how thorough you try to be, your players will always find a way to come up with an action that you couldn't have anticipated. If your world has depth and flexibility, you'll be able to integrate these situations into your story without any seams showing. If, however, you detail only the narrow path that you wish your players to follow, then once they stray from that path, both you and they will be lost.

Using Rules

A big part of the Storyteller's job is adjudication, deciding what actually happens in the world based on the rules. A large portion of this book describes the various rules needed for precisely this purpose, covering everything from how the various ghostly Arcanoi work to the best dice rolls for simulating a car chase. Ultimately, these rules exist as a guideline for you to use, but they're a starting point, not an absolute. Nobody's going to come to your house to yell at you if you decide to fudge the results of a die roll in order to keep the action moving.

Ultimately, you get to judge the validity and interpretations of the rules and their effect on your story. If you don't like the way the rules work for a particular situation, or something comes up that the rules don't cover, then you should feel free to improvise so long as you are consistent within the framework of your chronicle. Interpreting things differently for different players or during different sessions can cause issues that can damage a chronicle, and bog play down in questions of interpretation. The whole point of the rules is to allow for a quick, easy way to simulate the results when a player announces character intent, and that's all.

Entertainment

The most important part of your role as Storyteller, though, is to make certain that everyone, including yourself, has a good time. **Wraith** is a game, and as such it is supposed to be a pleasant experience for everyone involved. Don't confuse putting a character in an unpleasant situation with putting that character's player in an uncomfortable situation; make sure that everyone's on board with where you're going and what you're doing, and that even if you're dealing with heavy subject matter people are satisfied with their experience within the game.

Play vs. Fun

As a game, **Wraith** is intended to be enjoyable. However, it also touches on some weighty themes: death, faith, identity, grappling with inner demons, and more. Moments when these themes come to the forefront are often not "fun" in the classic sense of the word. They can be deeply emotional, cathartic, and difficult for players and Storytellers alike. That being said, there is absolutely a place for this kind of play in **Wraith**. Not every adventure has to be lighthearted, not every scenario has to be solved by simply punching a way out. Players and Storytellers who want to explore deeper themes within the context of **Wraith** should do so, making sure that all involved are okay with the material and the choices, and that if things get too real, anyone can call a stop at any time.

Keeping everyone involved is a big part of making sure that everyone has fun. Letting one player steal the spotlight in a solo adventure for half the evening's play means that everyone else is just sitting there waiting, and that's no fun. If the Circle splits up, it's far better to shift back and forth between the subgroups at relatively short intervals, ensuring that nobody has to wait too long to get in on the action. Plus, there's always Shadowguiding. Encouraging players whose characters aren't involved in the action at the moment to focus on their more Oblivion-centric responsibilities can keep them in the game even when their characters aren't.

Something to remember is that the key element of games is interactivity. Players want to play, which is to say they want their choices to matter and their actions to affect the world. Holding too tight to your idea of the plot when your players want to go elsewhere means that you'll be resorting to increasingly heavy-handed tactics to keep things on the rails. That in turn makes things less believable and reduces the impact the players can have on the game, and once the players feel that what they do no longer matters, they'll stop doing anything and the interactive aspect of interactive storytelling will fall by the wayside.

All of this is starting to sound like a lot of work. Why, then, would anyone want to be a Storyteller? The answer is that Storytelling can be the most enjoyable part of the game. Creating something unique and sharing it with your players, seeing the looks in their eyes when they finally come face to face with the big reveal you've been planning, and hearing them tell stories about what their characters did — all of these are magical, powerful moments that are unique to being the Storyteller. And with it comes the act of Storytelling itself, the creation of the story that your players become part of and help craft with you — that's the true reward of Storytelling, and one that's worth all the time and energy that goes into it.

The Big Canvas

One of the tools at your disposal in running a **Wraith** chronicle is the vast backlog of material that you can draw on. With a nod to continuity, you can bring in literally anyone or anything from history, because sooner or later, everything dies. Want to include Julius Caesar or Ada Lovelace in your game as characters? You can. Need to send the Circle chasing after a book burned with the Great Library of Alexandria or the original Amber Room, destroyed by an Allied bombing during World War II? That works, too. While the temptation is there to keep things tightly focused, remember that you have so much of history to use as a source for the people, places, and things you want to use to spice up your game.

Wraith Storytelling Key Elements

For all the discussion of the theoretical and finer points of Storytelling, at the core of things, the role of Storyteller is a simple one. To break things down to their simplest level, when play starts, the Storyteller sets the scene by describing the scenario to the players, and by acting out the roles of the characters in it that aren't controlled by one of the players. The players, for their part, then improvise their way through the scenario, referencing their character sheets to identify the traits their characters may or may not have, and thus what they can or cannot do. The Storyteller in turn reacts, extending the story based on what the wraiths did (or did not do), and the cycle repeats. If one of the players wants to try an action that doesn't fit smoothly and automatically into the flow of the story that's being told, then the Storyteller resorts to the rules — and the player rolls dice — to determine if the attempt was a success or a failure. This continues until the end of the evening's play, at which point the Storyteller hands out Experience Points as a reward, and players can spend them (or not) to improve their character's capabilities.

And that, basically, is it. Everything else is details.

But the nice part is that the details can be an awful lot of fun.

Elements of Wraith

Most ghost stories follow a few standard patterns, the most important of which is that the ghosts are the antagonists and not the heroes. In **Wraith**, that gets turned on its head. The player characters are the ghosts, not the intrepid ghost hunters, and this does some interesting things to the format and structure of the classic ghost story. There are wonderful things to be done with the narrative of a **Wraith** chronicle, but they do take a little thought above and beyond jump scares and ghost hunting clichés.

Theme

All stories have themes, and ghost stories are no exception. It's woven into the fabric of the tale. **Wraith** itself has a fair number of themes built into its DNA: horror, determination, loss, love, transcendence, the weight of history, and more, and any and all of these are at your disposal. You don't have to actively work every single theme into every single game session; most will work themselves into the subtext of the game on their own, and it's only to the ones that are particularly cogent that you'll want to give special emphasis.

Once you figure out which theme you want to surface in your chronicle, there are a variety of tactics you can use to bring it to players' attention without going overboard. One of the easiest is to work it into the setting. If your theme is horror, filling your descriptions with unsettling details and mysteri-

Props and Music

Sometimes, a little help can go a long way in setting the mood or inspiring a session. While not mandatory, background music can certainly help set the exact tone you want for an evening's gameplay. There's different ways to approach it — if a character has a Passion tied to a particular song, then working it into the playlist can serve as a thematic reminder. Old standards or classical music can reinforce the notion that the wraiths may be dealing with other Restless decades or even centuries older than they are. And, of course, there's music that's simply intended to set a tone. It's often best to refrain from using music that's too popular or that has lyrics for this sort of thing, as either has the potential to distract players from the game and demand their attention. Movie and television soundtracks, in particular, can make for good mood music. After all, they were composed to provide background music for stories, and to emphasize the emotions that scenes were intended to inspire.

Props can also be useful for immersion. Having something that can stand in for a sought-after Artifact or to represent a Fetter can bring a sense of tangible realism to the chronicle. Set dressing the gaming table to match a scene in the game can heighten the immersion of the moment. Even leaving items that reflect the theme of the game around the gaming space — and yes, there is more to life than skulls — can get your players into the **Wraith** headspace faster than they might have otherwise.

ous scuttling noises in the background goes a long way. If it's transcendence, play up the vertical lines of the architecture and places of pure light. The scuttling noises might turn out to be harmless roaches and the beams of light might be relic spotlights being tested in case of a Maelstrom, but the effect is what matters.

Over the course of a chronicle, you may find yourself dealing with multiple themes. This sort of variety is a good thing, providing a change of pace for the players, so long as you don't overload things and try to use all the themes all the time. It's a good idea to let the ones you choose — and you should choose not only to see which ones you like, but to see which ones work well together and provide good contrast — take turns in the spotlight, rising and falling in prominence based on the ups and downs of the chronicle. You may be heavily dialed in on that horror theme, but after a particularly intense gameplay moment, there's much to be said for letting the horror rest and elevating something a little lighter in tone. With that in mind, some of the strongest themes to use in **Wraith** are:

Adventure: There's a whole afterlife to explore, from the depths of the Labyrinth to the halls of Stygia's libraries to the Far Shores. Many of the Restless Dead are driven by their Passions to seek out the same thrills they did in life, and they do this in various ways. Some explore, some go Doomslaying, and some make trouble for the living. In any case, the quest to do something new and exciting doesn't die just because the flesh does, and the Underworld provides plenty of opportunities to indulge it.

Defiance: The mere act of existing as a wraith defies Oblivion. Others turn their back on Stygia and rebel against it, or turn their entire afterlives into acts of defiance against the demands of their Shadows. Fighting the power — whatever that power might be perceived to be — can give a purpose to wraiths' existences and strong thematic elements to your chronicle.

Fear: Even the dead have something to be afraid of. The Underworld is a terrifying and dangerous place. The characters are literal monsters, caught in a nightmare existence they never dreamed of. The living fear the dead, the dead fear Oblivion, and no one escapes fear's grasp. Perhaps the characters spend their time fighting back against fear, taking the most terrifying elements of the Underworld on directly. Alternately, fear for others — for loved ones left in the Skinlands or fellow wraiths — can lead characters into alliances and conflicts they might otherwise have avoided.

Immortality: Wraiths can, barring accident, malice, or the interference of Oblivion, go on indefinitely. What does it mean, then, to watch the centuries roll by and see your loved ones turned to dust? When the sturdiest Fetters have crumbled, why go on? Or you can turn it around and have the characters face those who are infinitely more acquainted with the costs and benefits of immortality than they are, ancient wraiths who have garnered deep understanding of what it costs to continue down through the slow centuries.

Inner Conflict: A wraith's worst enemy lives inside her head. Over the course of a chronicle, that inner conflict will manifest externally as Psyche and Shadow maneuver against each other. Will the wraith be able to withstand her other half's blandishments and traps? Does the need for constant defiance sap her ability to deal with the other perils of the Underworld? What challenges does a Harrowing bring? And most of all, what effect does each wraith's struggles have on her companions, all of whom are waging that same war within their minds?

Intrigue: Politics are eternal, and the Restless Dead have a great deal of time to kill. As a result, their dealings can be bizarrely byzantine, indulging in politics not only for power but also for their own sake. The web of intrigues, ancient conflicts, manipulative allies, and well-disguised enemies is enough to turn any wraith justifiably paranoid. A chronicle can play this up by trapping the Circle in a web of intrigue as various local Anacreons jockey for power within the Citadel, or it can be

the story of centuries of plotting coming to fruition just as the wraiths arrive on the scene.

Mystery: There's a lot even the dead don't know about death. Exploration of the Far Shores or setting sail in search of another Dark Kingdom, doing research into the nature of the Shadow in a Pardoner's basement laboratory, trying to figure out what really happened to Charon — all of these are mysteries that have consumed wraiths over the centuries. Now it can be your Circle's turn. Even the simple mystery of discovering the Underworld without a manual or guide offers all sorts of storytelling hooks, keeping the players guessing from moment to moment.

Triumph: Oblivion may feel inevitable, but there are still victories to be won across the Shroud. Maybe the players seek to wreck the foundries and end soulforging, or perhaps they just want to defend one mortal or one Necropolis. The victories they win stand as beacons against the Void, reminding all that some battles are still worth fighting, regardless of the odds.

Mood

If a chronicle's theme is its underlying concept, then its mood is its underlying feel. The mood you create should match the emotions you wish your players to experience, bringing them into the story instead of just rolling dice and taking notes. Once you've established mood, they'll more readily sustain it through roleplaying, and the entire system becomes self-supporting.

It's useful to try to establish mood even before play starts. Lighting, music, props, and furnishings can all help project a mood, drawing a line between the workaday world and the world of the chronicle. Separating players from their smartphones and tablets keeps their focus on the game, as does restricting out-of-character speech to the strictly necessary. It's up to you to figure out what's appropriate and to use it to get your players on board with the game's tone and intentions.

There are as many possible moods for a chronicle as there are possible chronicles. Some of the most powerful ones are:

Romantic: There is love beyond death — ask any wraith whose Passion burns for someone left behind in the Skinlands — and among wraiths love can truly be eternal.

Ominous: Something is coming. Maybe it's a Maelstrom, maybe it's a Legion patrol, maybe it's a line of Mourners. The details don't matter. What does matter is the sense of impending doom.

Tragic: It's one thing to worry about what's coming. It's another to know the outcome is foreordained and to stand

against it anyway. On a certain level, this is every wraith's story, with Oblivion the inescapable punchline, but the stand each wraith makes against the inevitable contains its own sad nobility.

Mysterious: The Underworld is shrouded in mystery. Not knowing may be half the fun, but when the unknown can destroy you for a single misstep, it creates a charged and deadly atmosphere. At the same time, the Underworld is full of discoveries — conspiracies to unravel, mysteries demanding answers, blank spots on the metaphysical map that can still be filled in.

Exciting: The raging seas of the Sea of Shadows, the thrills of fighting Spectres on the walls of a besieged Necropolis, the thrill of a heist in a hidden Guild hall — there's plenty of excitement to be had even for the Restless Dead. And if the Circle's Passions line up with this sort of thrill seeking, things can get very exciting indeed.

Lighthearted: Being dead doesn't have to be a drag. Friendly encounters, pranking the living and to hell with the *Dictum Mortuum*, setting up a peace-and-love festival in downtown Stygia with a cast of Sandmen and Chanteurs — all of these are possibilities. The afterlife is too serious not to have fun with it every once in a while. The alternative is too grim to contemplate.

The Big Three

Wraith has frequently been defined as a game of horror. However, fear, terror, and horror all have their place in the world of **Wraith**, and understanding their definitions and differences is key to using them effectively. They may be used interchangeably at times, but they are not the same.

Fear is the negative anxiety brought on by the anticipation of an unpleasant event. Fears can be directed at objects, peoples, places, and so on, and they can manifest in a variety of ways from rage to hopeless collapse, and pretty much everything in between.

Many people actually enjoy a good jolt of fear. The jolt we get on roller coasters, watching horror movies, or sneaking through a haunted house is enjoyable because it's in a safe space, and we can return to our everyday lives after receiving it without wondering if we're going to make it. In **Wraith**, this translates into presenting threats that are real to the characters and real enough to thrill the players while still making the scene "safe" enough for everyone to enjoy the rush.

Terror is different than fear in that it demands action and allows hope. More of a visceral reaction than an intellectual one, it's the response to the manifested threat and the reaction against it. More than anything else, terror contains the idea that both the fight and flight options are valid and possible. Terror might encourage a wraith to flee, but by doing so he has hope of escape. Terror might also inspire that same wraith to make a desperate attempt to fight back. As long as there's no definitive evidence that any action is futile, the emotion inspired is not fear, it's terror.

Horror is based on violation and hopelessness. It's a gut reaction to the intellectual understanding of a situation, a physical response to reaching the boundary of what is safe and acceptable and obliterating that boundary. Anything from the unexpected sight of a drop of blood to the imminent arrival of a horde of spider demons can inspire horror. It all depends on what players consider safe, and how much it takes to destroy that concept of safety.

Violation is at the core of horror, in the sense that the crossing of *any* boundary is a violation. This opens the door for horror to spring from the physical, the mental, and the emotional.

The other side of the coin is the sense of finality intrinsic to horror. If fear is the thought of the monster in the house, and terror is the moment it charges down the hall, horror is the moment a second later when you discover your feet are glued to the spot and you can only helplessly await the inevitable denouement.

Use of one of these does not preclude the use of the others, and they can work well in concert. Just remember to be aware of which one you're using, and of the consequences of doing the same.

The Big Question

Can wraiths have sex?

In a word, yes. It goes without saying that Passion exists beyond the Shroud. And, when you consider things like Moliate and how a wraith's Corpus is subconsciously defined by self-image, let's just say that more than a few relic neckties have been metaphorically hung on relic doorknobs over the centuries.

Pregnancy and childbirth, however, remain impossibilities.

Storytelling Tools

As a Storyteller, you have a series of tools in your arsenal that you can use to drive and direct your chronicle. The two most prominent are events and character, and how you apply those shapes the structure and content of your game.

An important thing to remember is that you have carte blanche to do whatever you see fit in the game. Need to add a character to provide the Circle with a vital clue they've failed to pick up on their own? You can do it. Need to spring a surprise ambush by a bunch of desperate Renegades because the characters are dilly-dallying around and they need to start moving in some direction? Go right ahead. The authority

of the Storyteller to add, subtract, or reorder the world of the chronicle is absolute, and when put to good use, that authority makes the game more enjoyable for everyone. While serving as Storyteller, you should never be afraid to bring a new element in (or strip an old element out) in a way that fits seamlessly with the rest of the chronicle. Real life doesn't get edited for pacing and content, but the world you're Storytelling is under no such restrictions.

Events

Events make up the meat of what actually "happens" in a chronicle. Fights with packs of ravening Spectres, a suspicious Legionnaire suddenly bursting into pursuit, a coincidental meeting with the very wraith a character needs to meet — all of these are the sorts of events that make for key moments. As the Storyteller, you have the power to make literally anything happen in the world. But that doesn't always mean you should reach for the biggest hammer in your toolbox without checking first to see if a little tap will suffice.

When planning your chronicle, it's a good idea to map out the key events that outline the arc of the story. Victories, defeats, betrayals, meetings, surprise revelations — all of these can serve as significant events in a chronicle's life, diverting or reinforcing the flow of the narrative to best effect.

That doesn't mean, however, that you have to stick with your pre-planned sequence of events. Sometimes the players' actions make it abundantly clear that the tidy schedule of key moments you, as Storyteller, arranged is no longer viable, typically by running off in a completely different direction than the one you've planned. At that point, slavish devotion to "what happens next" means trying to force the players back onto the primrose path, and that can provoke resistance and a failure to suspend disbelief.

Purpose

In a **Wraith** chronicle, everything happens for a reason, and you get to determine what that reason is. That's another way of saying that every encounter you build into your storyline should be there for a reason. Meeting a furtive Solicitor may feel like a random encounter to the players' Circle, but as Storyteller you should have a reason for those particular paths to cross. Maybe it's a setup for one of the Circle wraiths learning Intimation down the road. Maybe someone's intent on framing the Circle and having them associated with a member of a banned Guild is evidence that will damn them to the forges. Maybe the Solicitor set up the "accidental" meeting as the first step towards ensnaring the Circle in a complicated scheme. Or maybe you're laying a trail for the Circle to follow as they are given the chance to pursue this practitioner of outlawed arts.

Alternately, the purpose can be strictly structural. Dropping in a brief fight with a lone (and lost) Spectre as the Circle traverses a normally safe Byway can be a low-risk way for wraiths to blow off some steam after a couple of talk-heavy game sessions. Dropping a character down a Nihil can be an effective way to keep someone out of the way while their player is absent for a gaming session, even as the other characters react to her disappearance with shock and dismay, or even resolutions to go looking for her. Having a bedraggled Circle get picked up by a Ferryman for a ride down the Great River can be a way of boosting the spirits (and firepower) of a group that's been unlucky, and giving it some wins at a time when things don't seem to be going well. And bringing a monstrous plasmic out of the Tempest for some monster-fighting action can be a useful change of pace if your players are worn down from a frenzied bout of Stygian politicking. The trick is being clear-eyed about the purpose the events in your chronicle serve, whether they be narrative-driven or purely tonal or structural.

Scope and Scale

You should always tailor the things you drop into your chronicle to the characters' current state and capabilities. It doesn't matter if your schedule calls for the Circle to come face to face with a viciously potent Mortwight with an army of Stripling followers at their next session; if the characters are beaten down or beaten up, the fight will be brief, bloody, and disappointing. Instead, power the enemy down to make it one the characters feel they can win, and let them enjoy the moment. Alternately, make it painfully clear that the wraiths cannot win against so powerful a foe and set up a retreat so that they might fight another day. Conversely, if the wraiths of the Circle are at full strength, packing powerful Artifacts that they've pillaged from a Deathlord's private collection, it makes perfect sense to up the strength of an adversary enough to provide a challenge. If a fight's ending too quickly, you can always send more reinforcements into the room on whichever side needs them. You should not be ashamed of Storytelling reactively to the state of your chronicle. It's far worse to stick doggedly to a plot point that's no longer germane or fair to the actual chronicle you're running.

Bear in mind that not every fight is meant to be fair. Sending the Circle packing to demonstrate how powerful a foe is can teach a valuable lesson and set up a long-term nemesis character in one shot. A series of too-easy wins, whether on the battlefield or the council chamber, can generate overconfidence and set up a sudden reversal. And there's always a perfect moment for a supposed ally to go turncoat and change the odds, putting the Circle at a sudden and unexpected disadvantage. That's not to say that every encounter needs to be one-sided one way or another, merely that overly generous or dangerous moments have their place in inspiring roleplaying and driving future action.

Pacing

Pacing is the speed at which various elements of the chronicle occur in sequence. The closer together those events occur, the faster the pacing is said to be, and hyper-fast pacing isn't always the best bet for a mood-intensive game like **Wraith**. Giving the Circle space in between moments to rest, recover, discuss, and

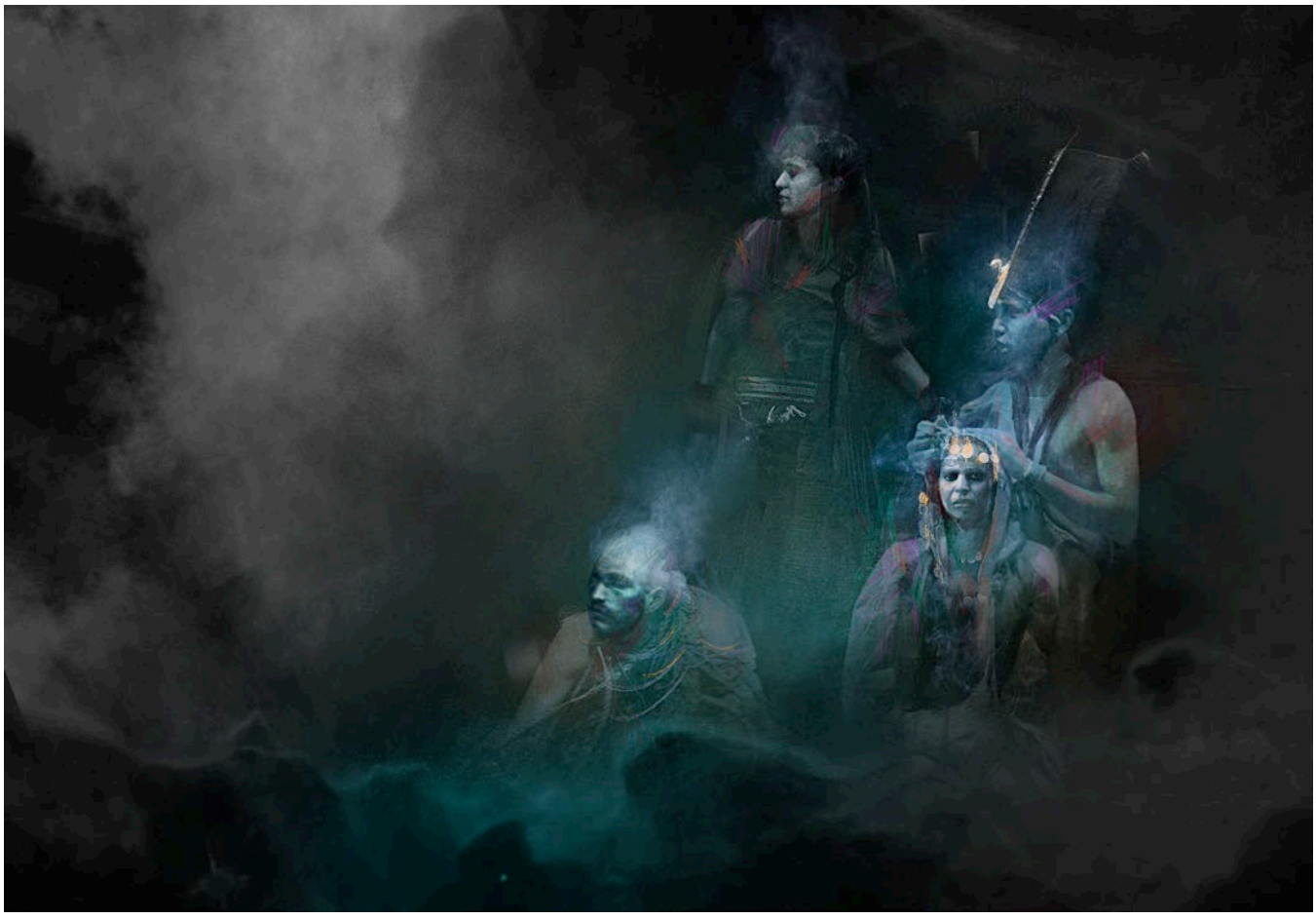
plan can be useful, while rushing events in a neverending array can feel about as satisfying from drinking from a fire hose.

For example, having the Circle decide they need to find a Pardoner for a friend who's on the verge of Catharsis and then bumping into one immediately is a prime example of poor pacing. The events — the discovery of the character's need and the discovery of the Pardoner — happen too close together, and without building. It could be much better to let the search for the Pardoner drag out, creating tension and worry. Alternately, you could follow up the meeting with the Pardoner with another slam-bang incident — say, the discovery that the Pardoner owes something to the local Spooks collective and the price of his helping the Circle with their problem is them helping him with his — providing a quick reversal on the heels of the obvious and easy reveal.

Leaving space between key events is also key to encouraging roleplaying. Leaving the characters to their own devices to plot and plan rather than feeding them event after event in a steady stream allows them to make their own fun. It gives them time to develop their relationships with the rest of the Circle or advance the plot in their own way, rather than reflexively reacting to the latest obstacle you've thrown at them. In addition, it grants time for the implications of an event to sink in. Letting the Circle know that the Anacreon whose office they burgled sicced a pack of barghests on them should inspire dread. Waiting to bring the barghests onto the scene gives time for the characters' dread to rise up, deepening the tone of the session and building anticipation. Then, introducing the barghests as a faint sound of howls off in the distance can drive action as the wraiths panic or prepare, as anticipation rises. Eventually the barghests will have to appear onstage, but by delaying their arrival you've made them more imposing antagonists.

Similarly, leaving time for players to appreciate the setting can be highly beneficial. Whether it's a wraith returning to her burned-out childhood home after the loss of it as a Fetter or the high strangeness of the corridors of the Labyrinth, giving the characters time to reflect on their surroundings instead of simply fast-forwarding to the next big set piece can yield big rewards, emotionally speaking.

That doesn't mean all events need to be doled out at a miserly pace. Hitting the Circle with a series of hammer blows — a beloved patron arrested, allies slamming doors in their faces without explanation, word on the streets that they're being hunted and the destruction of a communal Haunt — is a highly effective way to raise the emotional stakes and up the urgency of a chronicle. It's just not something you can go to every time. Varying pace — speeding up and slowing down in turn — is the best way to avoid falling into a routine and having your story beats feel predictable.



Storyteller Characters

The other major weapon in your arsenal is the array of characters you can portray. As a Storyteller, you populate the entire world apart from the player characters, from bit players the Circle passes in the street and random wraiths yelling out windows to beloved family members and Fetters, loyal allies, ancient and powerful patrons, and implacable antagonists. Wielded deftly, they can have an enormous impact on the player experience.

Every character in the world should have a valid reason for being there and, ideally, motivation behind their actions. Even if the character is "wraith the Circle bumps into while walking down the street in Stygia" and the purpose of the character is "demonstrate that the street, and by extension, Stygia, is crowded," there's a rationale for the wraith being there that grounds the character in the scene. Not every character requires a full character sheet and power distribution, as many will simply disappear off the stage after saying their one line or having their one moment. But due to the nature of roleplaying, even the most minor character has the potential to blossom into something more — say, if the Circle takes a sudden interest in the Stygian wraith they just bumped into on the street — and giving characters basic motivations and identifiable traits goes a long way towards preparing for this possibility.

More robust characters have a greater impact on the chronicle and thus can require more attention. If one member of the Circle has an Ally, knowing who that Ally is, why she supports the wraith, what she's capable of, and where she can be found means that you're ready to slip into that role any time the Circle feels the need to call on her. The same goes for all Storyteller characters the players are liable to interact with, from the stern Centurion who repeatedly warns them about their loose interpretation of Stygian law to the kindly mentor who brooks no tomfoolery when trying to instruct a wraith in the arts of his Arcanos to the Shadow-Eaten former friend who now hunts the Circle relentlessly, hoping to drag them down to Oblivion.

Something to bear in mind when creating Storyteller characters is that you have virtually all of human history to play with. If all of the wraiths in your chronicle are from Jefferson City, Missouri, there's no reason to have all of the wraiths they interact with be from there as well. You can add new color and tone, as well as new perspectives, to your game by adding wraiths from the American Revolution, 15th-century Prague, Berkeley in the Summer of Love and Blitz-era London. Going deep with your character choices gives you the chance to rationalize pretty much any experience or knowledge your cast might have, and introduces variety into the world.

Friends and Allies

Characters who support one or more wraiths in the Circle make the game world richer. Having them out there gives the characters a place to go if they need help or a place to hide, offers you ways to direct the chronicle by doling out information or advice, and makes the world feel bigger. Each one of these characters, whether they're derived from a Circle member's character sheet or not, needs to have a background and a history with one or more Circle wraiths. There has to be a reason to help the Circle or its members, and knowing that reason gives you greater leeway in your roleplaying with the player characters.

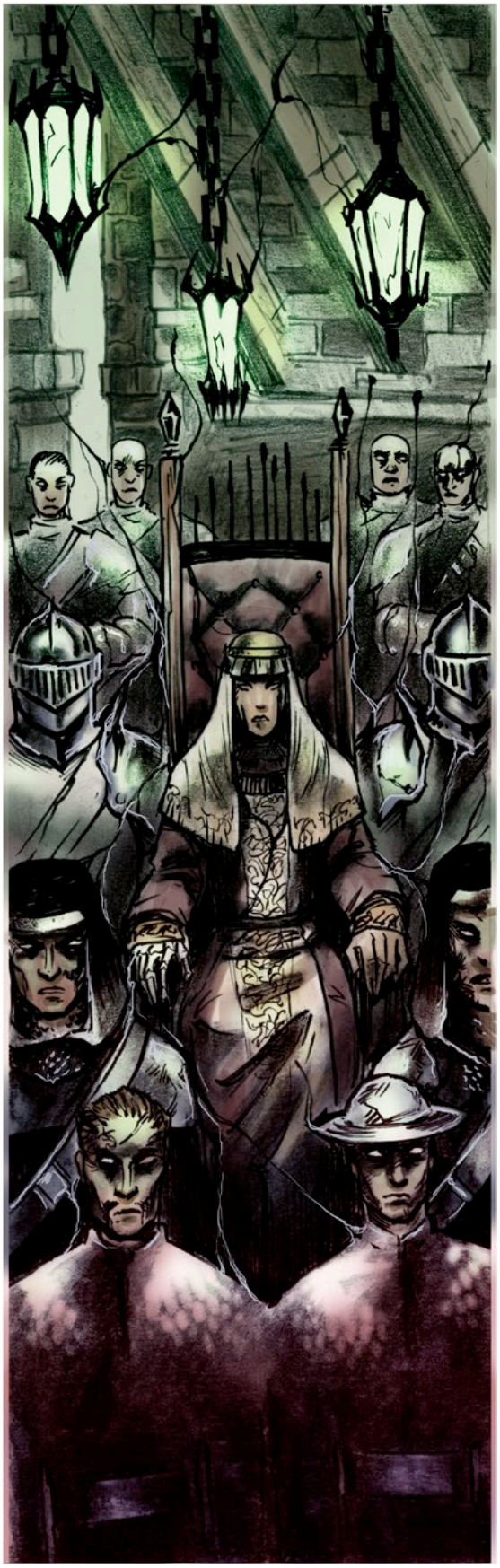
Furthermore, friendly characters need to provide something the Circle lacks. Maybe it's knowledge of an Arcanos or the local political scene. Maybe it's access to oboli or a stash of working relic firearms. Maybe it's muscle, or a particular Artifact the wraith is willing to lend out judiciously. On a basic level, this is why these characters are in the wraiths' lives, and understanding what they bring to the table can prevent wild goose chases and player frustration.

It's Okay to Cheat Sometimes

As noted above, it's often a fruitless effort to stat out every character the players are likely to interact with for even a moment or two. Unfortunately, it's all too possible for one of the characters to randomly decide to pick a fight with the anonymous sailor he just bumped into, or for one of the Circle wraiths to do something publicly stupid in a way that starts a stampede or a riot.

At moments like that, not having the exact stats for the wraith one of the Circle members just hit with the Stygian equivalent of a bar stool can make Storytelling the action sequence more difficult. But in cases where the important thing is not the specific combat but rather the context — the fight with the random wraith might be a brief distraction, the emergence of the rioting crowd could provide cover for a daring group escape – it makes perfect sense to improvise the stats of the random wraith on the other end of the metaphorical bar stool rather than painstakingly spread dots around. It's even permissible to throw the fight, if your narrative dictates that the player not get hauled off by Reapers for ransom, and instead provide the player with a smashing win. Letting the results of a random number generator or the need to calculate Arcanoi for a one-shot Storyteller character dictate the pace of your chronicle is putting the cart well before the horse. If "cheating" is what it takes for you to achieve the desired result, then by all means, cheat on your players' behalf.

This isn't license to cheat all the time, but the wise Storyteller understands that sometimes everyone needs a bit of a push to get over the hump.



Antagonists

Antagonists are the carriers of external conflict. Their actions and the threat they represent actualize the unspoken conflict of the game, and picking the right antagonist for your chronicle can go a long way towards making it a success. Match wraiths against an antagonist too big for them and they'll fail. Line them up against someone who's not powerful enough and they'll breeze through climactic showdowns and get bored in the process.

There's also the question of choosing thematically appropriate adversaries. If a chronicle focuses on lost love and romance, adding a horde of ravening Shades and a Nephwrack who's into extreme sports might not be the best aesthetic choice. A good antagonist ties into the theme of the chronicle and enhances it through opposition. A bad one merely exists to get in the way.

Antagonists are characters in the chronicle as well, and the best ones are treated as such. To make them truly engaging, they need the same things player characters need — goals and aspirations. An antagonist who doesn't want something can't hope to evoke emotion from a player, or satisfaction when beaten. Conversely, an antagonist with a well-defined set of goals, even if those goals are as clean and basic as "destroy the player character for revenge," lends direction to their actions and serves as a skeleton for their plotlines. Antagonists can change their goals over time, learn from their mistakes, and adapt their tactics. They have growth curves as surely as player characters do, and if they remain static they become progressively less interesting and inappropriate.

Scaling antagonists can be a delicate business. It's not inappropriate to be deliberately vague about an opponent's capabilities (and character sheet) on a first encounter; moving some points around (or adding or subtracting) to make the antagonist a better match for how the Circle reacted to her is a time-honored technique. Another approach is to create sub-antagonists. If the villain of the piece is a powerful general of the Skeletal Legion, it can make very little sense for her to be dealing with the Circle herself. She must have subordinates, adjutants, and the like willing to follow her orders, and these other wraiths (who also have their own motivations) can be closer in power level to the protagonists.

The best antagonists, like the best allies, offer something the Circle lacks. They are defined in large part by that opposition to the wraiths who comprise the Circle, and that difference can be key to their interaction. And so an excellent possible antagonist for a bunch of wisecracking young wraiths is a stodgy, ancient Grim Legionnaire who has no time or patience for their disorder. If the Circle is overly cerebral, a barely sentient and deeply ravenous Shade might make for a good fit. It's also possible that the difference is something smaller — the favor of a Deathlord extended to the Circle and denied to their nemesis, or Passions in direct opposition related to a shared Fetter.

It's also useful to give antagonists a distinctive trait and voice of their own. Otherwise, you risk having them drown in a sea of sameness, and having players get blasé about the endless parade of similar-looking and -sounding threats. That doesn't mean that you should turn your antagonists into cartoons, but rather that they should all have distinguishing and recognizable features that allow them to stand out — and to potentially frighten the characters by their merest expression. A monomaniacal Reaper who whistles out of tune, a corrupted Pauper bureaucrat who never uses

Character Voice versus Character Accent

One of the seemingly easiest ways to give a character a unique presence is to give them an accent. This can backfire, though — most accents are hard to do well and can come out sounding cartoony or repetitive. More difficult, but more rewarding, can be to give them a unique voice instead. Giving a character a very specific diction and syntax, on the other hand, can serve the same function while feeling more organic and real. The contrast between two Legionnaires, one of whom only speaks in short, precise sentences and the other of whom regularly launches long-winded digressions with the phrase "You want to know what I think?" is easily and intuitively understood. And giving each character distinctive voice elements instead of shared accents goes a long way towards helping define the character — as a role to play and as an entity in the players' minds — as well.

contractions when he's speaking, a self-absorbed Doomslayer who's decided that one of the Circle members is a Doppelganger and who's known for his axe work — these are quick and easy signifiers that make antagonists instantly identifiable as unique. And once you demonstrate that these unique antagonists are also dangerous ones, their particular traits become additional storytelling tools in your hands.

Setting

Where your chronicle is set can go a long way in helping you identify much of what's going to go into it. Setting defines who the Circle is likely to run into, what sorts of adventures they're likely to have, and what sorts of resources they're going to have to work with. A game set in Stygia is a lot more likely to feature ancient and powerful wraiths and their agents, and to have a significant intrigue factor as a result, than a game set in the Necropolis of a dying industrial city in the American Rust Belt. That game, on the other hand, is likely to have much more emphasis on dealing with the Skinlands and its inhabitants, and the wraiths the Circle encounters are likely to be younger and less powerful than their Stygian counterparts. Chronicles centered on Helldiving deep into the Labyrinth are more likely to have a mood of high strangeness and horror, and to feature Spectres as adversaries than ones set on board the Midnight Express. When you pick a setting, you're also picking everything that goes with it, and all the resources and limitations that implies.

Which means that you should be careful to select a base setting that supports what you want to do with the chronicle. If you've decided ahead of time that you want the focus of the game to be horror, then you'll want a setting where that horror can exist naturally and which supports that mood. A desolate Necropolis or the corridors of the Labyrinth, then, make better choices as a setting for that chronicle than do the brightly lit halls of power or a swashbuckling vessel exploring the Sea of Shadows. Architecture, lighting, and state of repair — all of these go into building the world of your campaign.

Similarly, the setting you choose should support the sorts of characters with whom you want to populate your chronicle. Even the lowliest dive bar in Stygia isn't going to be home to a crew of hard-bitten Reapers, mainly because there's no reaping to be done in Stygia. Ancient wraiths from the days of the Roman Empire are highly unlikely to be found lurking in the

Staying Together

Keeping all the characters in a **Wraith** chronicle together can be difficult. They can be separated by Harrowings, Maelstroms, the use of Arcanoi, or the simple pressures of the world, and separated members of a Circle inevitably means taking turns regarding which faction of the Circle you're going to deal with at a given moment. The more the entire Circle is together, the more the characters bond, the tighter knit the group becomes, and the more they can do when unified as a team. Also, the more the entire squad is together, the less time any given player spends sitting on the sidelines waiting for his turn.

To a degree, Shadowguiding mitigates this concern, as idle players can take up the roles of Shadows of their active friends. But making an effort to keep the group together can pay off in tighter scenes and cause less wear and tear on a Storyteller who might otherwise be forced to juggle five distinct plotlines, each with their own casts of characters and minutiae every session.

Basic techniques for keeping the wraiths of a chronicle together can involve something as simple as brute force — Nihils miraculously dumping lost characters out near their friends, or Legionnaires capturing them all and bringing them together as prisoners. More delicate techniques can involve a shared powerful enemy; this incentivizes the wraiths who might otherwise have gotten picked off one by one to stay together. And those who wish to weave this sort of togetherness deep into the fabric of their chronicle can go back to character creation. Shared Fetters can bring distant wraiths together, particularly if one is threatened. Shared histories or acquaintances and affiliations are huge for giving characters excuses to remain involved with one another.

local Citadel; they've got bigger fish to fry elsewhere, and odds are their Fetters are long gone, preventing them from traveling to the Shadowlands for long in any case. If you want to use characters of a certain type, then your setting should allow a good reason for those characters to be there.

You should also think about the links your characters might have to the setting. If the entire Circle shares an origin of dying in a bus crash in Los Angeles, then Los Angeles is a natural choice for the chronicle's setting. If everyone's character is a Renegade, shouting defiance at the ancient empire of the dead, then Stygia's a less likely place to set them down to start with. The characters may end up there, but initially, at least, a smaller Necropolis or a hideout in the Shadowlands is a better fit. If characters have Allies or Mentors, then making sure the setting provides for them is a must, and if a character concept is a sailor or pirate, you may wish to consider a shipyard, a floating haunt, or the Sea of Shadows as good places to kick off the action.

Conflict

All stories ultimately revolve around conflict. Someone wants something, someone tries to get something, and they do or don't succeed, depending on their own attributes and the things that stand in the way of that desire. Sometimes the conflict is internal, sometimes it's external, and in the cases of a complicated narrative like a **Wraith** chronicle, it could be both. Identifying the conflicts that are intrinsic to your chronicle and working directly with them to heighten tension, create obstacles for characters, and define character relationships is key to successful storytelling.

At its most basic level, conflict is what drives the action of the chronicle. Conflicting desires come into opposition, and the moment of collision of these wants is the conflict. This in turn sparks character reactions to this opposition, generating the meat of the story.

There's no shortage of potential adversaries to generate conflict with in **Wraith**. Other Restless Dead — Renegades, Heretics, Hierarchs, members of rival Guilds or Legions, or the relentless soldiers of the Unlidded Eye can all serve as the authors of conflict within a chronicle, but they're far from the only ones. Spectres provide an obvious nemesis, as do plasmics (for strictly physical confrontations), while conflicts with the Quick can be dangerous to vulnerable Fetters. Shadows, meanwhile, provide internal conflict, giving voice to a character's deepest fears and desires and saying the things the wraith can't bring herself to say.

Ideally, conflicts have resolutions. A foe is vanquished, or an object of desire is obtained (or placed forever out of reach). Any resolution to a conflict, big or small, should feel appropriate to the debate it's wrapping up. Nemeses who have been bedeviling a Circle for months shouldn't get whisked off in a two-turn fight; minor disagreements between Circlemates shouldn't result in one of them headed to the forges. Making sure the resolution matches the conflict's tone and scope is one

of the key elements of storytelling, and a failure to stick the landing on a resolution can undo much of the good work that went into a storyline.

Resolutions don't have to be permanent, nor do they mean a new conflict can't arise. A wraith who is humiliated by an opponent can swear vengeance and restart the conflict as soon as he is able. A wraith may win a temporary battle with her Shadow, but tomorrow it's still going to get another crack at taking over via Catharsis. Alliances can fall apart, promises can fail and oaths be broken. Alternately, defeating an opponent isn't just defeating an opponent. If the downed nemesis had friends, allies, or loved ones, it may be that taking out a rival is just the start of a longer vendetta. Coming to an accommodation with a local Anacreon may mean making an enemy of that wraith's rival. The possibilities are endless.

Bear in mind that not every conflict automatically maps to full on tooth-and-nail combat. Sometimes conflict can be over the right way to achieve a goal, or it could be a wraith trying to prevent a friend or loved one from going down a dangerous path. Scaling the level of conflict appropriately is as important to a good chronicle as identifying the right conflicts to play up. Having a high-ranking Hierarch place roadblocks in front of the players' Circle is one thing; having that same wraith relentlessly hound them at every moment simply because he can is another, far less productive one. Similarly, conflict between members of a Circle over what approach to take can be friendly and constructive, and a wise Storyteller lets the players handle that on their own instead of working to fan the flames of even the smallest disagreement. While there are times when ramping up the conflict is the right thing to do for a chronicle, knowing how to tune it up or down as necessary goes a long way towards keeping things emotionally true.

Some of the conflicts key to **Wraith** are:

Wraith vs. Hierarchy — This works even if a wraith identifies as a law-abiding citizen of Stygia. Political squabbles between Legions put many in the crosshairs of rivals before they know it. Alternately, a violation of the *Dictum Mortuum* — or a single misstep in the view of a vengeful opponent — can lead to the entire bureaucratic weight of the empire crashing down on a character.

Wraith vs. Renegades — Renegade wraiths have no love for those bound by the laws of Stygia. Trying to bring a dangerous Renegade to justice (or injustice, as the court system in Stygia has some deeply bad apples in it) can earn a wraith a lot of enemies who don't play by the rules. Having a wraith pursued by an entire Renegade gang can offer plenty of excitement; getting caught in the middle of a war between two Renegade gangs is more than most wraiths can handle.

Wraith vs. Heretics — Running afoul of a fanatical cult — whether they be Nhudri worshippers or recently deceased who view themselves as religiously obligated to help their fellow wraiths into the next life by bludgeoning them into Harrowings at regular intervals — can be very dangerous indeed. If the wraith foils a Heretic cult's plans, she has just acquired a fanatical set of enemies, ones who believe that divine right is on their side.

Wraith vs. Guild — While Guilds aren't persecuted with the ferocity of yesteryear, they're still officially illegal in Stygia. They're also, by and large, secretive and paranoid. Blowing open a Guild's cache of secrets or opposing a Guild's plan can produce legions of disciples of a particular Arcanos putting the wraith in their crosshairs, and most Guilds have adherents and allies everywhere.

Wraith vs. Legion — In theory, every wraith belongs to a Legion. Some wraiths are better about this responsibility than others, and some Legionnaires take brighter or dimmer views of this approach. Freshly Reaped members of a Legion who annoy a superior may be signing themselves up for lifetimes of bureaucratic hurt, or political rivals within a given Legion may attempt to sandbag one member of the group. Even if the wraith is on perfect terms with every other member of his Legion, there's still all the others to worry about, and the rivalry between Factions can be murderous.

Wraith vs. Circle — Conflict within a wraith's Circle is practically a given. No two people, living or dead, are going to agree on absolutely everything. Even the closest of friends are going to find themselves at each other's throat at some point, particularly when they have all eternity to hang out and their Shadows egging them on. Alternately, a real conflict may arise when a Circle is torn on what to do. If one member of the group wants to become Risen and some of the others don't wish to support her on this dangerous quest, it could tear the Circle apart. If a Circle of Renegades receives an offer of amnesty from the local representative of a Deathlord, there could be furious debate — or worse — between wraiths who want to take the offer and others who feel it's a trap. As long as the conflict isn't allowed to burn too hot or too constantly, jagged edges within a Circle can spark spectacular roleplaying.

Wraith vs. Spectres — The most basic conflict of the Underworld, the endless struggle between light and dark fuels many Chronicles. The conflict here can be as simple as Spectres wanting into a citadel during a Maelstrom while the wraith wants to keep them out. Or, it could be as complicated as a specific Spectre who knew the wraith before getting Shadow-Eaten deciding to target his old friend to be dragged down to Oblivion. Spectres can be as direct and brutal or as patient and subtle as needed, and the ally they have in a wraith's Shadow can make the fight a deeply unfair one.

Wraith vs. Quick — Mortals and ghosts don't always get along. When the activities of the living threaten the needs — or the Fetters — of the Restless, the conflict can blaze in defiance of the *Dictum Mortuum*. Human ghost hunters can annoy or endanger wraiths, while wraiths can target individual mortals for destruction in order to feed Passions of vengeance. The Shroud may keep the two sides apart, but there's plenty of conflict to be had between the living and the dead.

Wraith vs. Other Supernatural Creatures — Wraiths can have complicated relationships with the other hidden powers of the world. Some wraiths have vampires as Fetters, on the grounds that they're theoretically immortal, while others have spent centuries tracking down the particular Cainite who killed them in hopes of extracting revenge. Werewolves, mages, and other supernatural creatures also have their particular uses for and misunderstandings of wraiths, and even simple misunderstandings between supernatural beings can quickly flare into conflict.

Wraith vs. Shadow — The conflict between a wraith and her Shadow is constant and endless. The Psyche seeks to build the wraith up and endure while the Shadow looks to tear all of that down. As the wraith progresses, her Shadow uses every tool in its arsenal, from confidence-sapping whispers to diabolical Thorns to the overwhelming brute force of Catharsis, to bring the wraith down.

Wraith vs. Self — Extended verbal combat with the Shadow isn't the only form of internal conflict a wraith can engage in. The simple act of introspection can set a wraith against himself, causing him to question his decisions or the morality of his actions. A wraith torn between two incompatible Passions may find himself on the brink of breaking down or worse, succumbing to the Shadow, as the relentless toll he places on himself is counted out.

Chronicles

As noted earlier, a chronicle is an ongoing **Wraith** game featuring a core narrative arc. If the individual sessions are chapters, then the chronicle is the book they form together. By expanding the scope of the narrative beyond a single session, the chronicle opens up the possibilities of longer storylines, bigger casts, and a larger scale for the adventures the characters undertake.

A chronicle also brings continuity to the table. A one-shot villain is a nice thing to have, but an extended chronicle lets you bring in his employer, his friends, his Guild, the reason he was hired, other enemies he might have made, and much more. In other words, the chronicle form gives you a bigger canvas to paint on, and numerous ways to take advantage of that extra space.

Getting Started

Every chronicle has to start somewhere, and the best place to start is with a basic idea of what kind of story you want to tell. This should be in place before your players start on character creation, so you can guide them in making sure the characters they cook up fit your concept for the chronicle as a whole.

Since the World of Darkness is a dark, twisted mirror of our own, you can pull chronicle ideas from anywhere around you. Cast your net wide for inspiration — the latest political shenanigans, historical figures you think would be fun to interact with, places you think would be interesting to explore — all of these are fair game.

The basics you need for your chronicle are simple: Who's involved, where does it happen, and where does it take the characters?

The first question should get you thinking about the Storyteller characters you'll be portraying, particularly the ones the Circle will

be going up against. Knowing how they'll react to the characters and what they're after will go a long way towards helping you make them feel fully realized.

Where the chronicle happens is also key, as noted previously in the Setting section. Pinpointing the place you want at the heart of the chronicle helps describe the action. For example, there won't be much crossing the Shroud if the action's on the Isle of Sorrows. At the same time, knowing where you want to set things helps you with your research into local landmarks and figures of renown you can add into the mix. If you're setting your chronicle in the Paris Necropolis, then thinking about the Catacombs and Pere Lachaise Cemetery is a natural next step. This in turn will help you place the key moments of your chronicle in locations that are interesting and appropriate.

Finally, there's the question of where it takes the characters. You should have an end in mind at the beginning, even if it's only a rough one. Every action has consequences, every villain has allies or friends, and no good deed goes unpunished. Even if you're only planning to play **Wraith** with these characters once, laying groundwork for potential future sessions can help you focus on what you want to happen during the first one.

Speaking of which, it's a good idea to know roughly how long you want the chronicle to go. Sometimes a one-shot game is the best way to go, but often everyone involved wants an ongoing chronicle. A longer chronicle has the advantage of long-term continuity, as well as access to the continually expanding base of background material — locations, characters, and so forth — that has been developed as you go along. This wealth of material fleshes out the world, making it feel like it exists beyond whatever the Circle is doing at the moment, and gives you more margin for error as a Storyteller in case the players decide to leave the main plot behind. On the other hand, all that continuity has to be kept track of, lest inconsistencies creep in and manifest at the worst possible time. Still, the benefits of the larger chronicle setting outweigh the drawbacks by far.

Direction

Another key question to consider is whether the chronicle will be plot-driven or character-driven. Each approach offers advantages and disadvantages, and each can produce a memorable **Wraith** chronicle.

Plot-driven Chronicles tend to be linear, with a stated goal at the beginning and a clear resolution ("Defeat the Spectre who masterminded the attack on your home Necropolis") at the end. That requires some up-front work to map the probable route of the chronicle, as the story largely revolves around how the Circle deals with their enemies' plots. Story-driven Chronicles are relatively simple to run, as you don't have to rely on the players to advance the plot when you've got villainous Storyteller characters ready to do it whenever you need them. If the Circle waits, their enemies just get stronger.

Character-driven games are more difficult, as they lack the simple throughput of a plot-driven narrative. While there is an ultimate goal to be reached — Transcendence, becoming Risen and dealing with something back in the Skinlands, rising in the ranks of the Hierarchy or simply growing as a wraith — the path to that goal is much more nebulous, and the direction the chronicle takes is driven by what makes sense for the characters to do. Passions and Fetters serve as good guidelines for what might motivate characters; experienced roleplayers will pick these up and run with them, while beginners might require the impetus of an existential threat to a beloved Fetter to get moving. Storyteller characters, particularly those allied to the Circle, can also help propel the wraiths forward. If they materially benefit from what the Circle does, it drives the narrative and makes character sense.

Once the characters are moving in the right direction, you need to throw a few obstacles in their way. Encounters, rough terrain or Maelstroms, Spectre attacks, or the lack of a crucial piece of knowledge all serve as obstacles for the Circle to overcome. The main drawback to character-driven plots is that they can meander, as side objectives can take on a life of their own. Furthermore, there is often temptation for the various members of the Circle to follow their own agendas over the Circle's, fracturing the group. When character-driven narratives work well, though, they have all the excitement of plot-driven Chronicles with the added sense of accomplishment on the part of the players for driving the story themselves.

Chronicle Concepts

Each chronicle starts with a basic idea of who the characters are and what they're after. From there, things get a little more unpredictable. That being said, there are plenty of tried-but-true plotlines that can serve as the backbone for an entire chronicle.

Shadowlands

Guardian Angels — The characters have banded together to protect something precious to all of them. It can be a person, a group, an item, a neighborhood, or even a city, but regardless of the details, the wraiths will do whatever it takes to keep it safe. Of course, if they're trying to keep it safe, someone else is trying to destroy it. It could be Spectres looking to rend someone's Fetters, mortals proceeding with their own plans, or even rival wraiths plotting to eliminate something that gives the Circle strength.

As the conflict between protectors and destroyers plays out, more and more firepower gets brought to bear and the stakes get ever higher. Maybe one side brings in powerful allies, or change tactics from sneak attacks to full on assaults. If the wraiths succeed, they're likely to attract the attention of new enemies, ones who are tougher than anything the wraiths have faced so far. If the Circle fails, however, then the consequences of that failure play out. One wraith may lose a Fetter, another might lose a Haunt where he conducted his important plans — and now they have unfinished business. How they respond? Do they pick up the pieces? Look for revenge? Or do they find something new to protect to try to make up for their failure?

Poltergeist Party — Nobody's more fun to mess with than the living. The Circle's decided the hell with the *Dictum Mortuum*, and their business is haunting the living. Maybe they're working for hire, taking care of things for wraiths who can't take care of things themselves. Or maybe they're just doing it for the laughs — and the Pathos — they get out of terrifying the Quick in new and interesting ways. Of course, if they get too good at their job they're likely to attract attention from either ghost hunters or the Hierarchy, and that could put a whole new spin on their fun and games.

Dead Kids on the Block — For whatever reason, the wraiths all died together and emerged from their Cauls at the same time. Now they need to figure out how to survive while being dead, figuring out the rules of the afterlife without teachers or help. Unscrupulous Shadows "help" with this process, while the wraiths must dodge overaggressive Reapers, predatory Spectres, and all the other dangers of the Underworld until they figure out how, exactly, to be dead properly.

Necropolis Mine — All of the wraiths have positions of respect and authority — or at least responsibility – in their local Necropolis. It's their job to deal with unreasonable superiors, angry and occasionally Shadow-controlled residents, and the semi-regular horde of Spectres that arrive on every Maelstrom. Keeping the Necropolis running smoothly in the face of a never-ending stream of challenges can be a test for even the strongest wraith, and that's before they have to deal with things like traitors selling the Necropolis out, a Heretic cult setting up shop nearby, or clueless mortals threatening to tear down a beloved communal Haunt. By the end of the chronicle, the wraiths may have risen to control the city as Anacreons, or they could suffer political reversals that mandate they start the climb again.

Reapers Keepers — The Circle plays a roving band of Reapers, scouring the Shadowlands for wraiths who have newly crossed over and are ripe for collection. They're not alone, however — other bands of Reapers, some working for the Hierarchy and some independent — are chasing after those same new souls, and not all of them play fair about bringing them in. And even if the Circle comes up with the prize, there's the question of what happens next: Do they set the Enfants free, or bring them to the forges? Moving from place to place in search of the best crops of Enfants can keep the Circle on the go, or bring them in conflict with other Reapers whose territory they've usurped.

Deadeye Detective — The wraiths decide they're going to dedicate themselves to righting wrongs in the Skinlands. They chase down clues, torment the guilty, and serve as judge, jury, and occasional executioner as they take dangerous mortals off the streets of the Skinlands. There's always the chance that they accidentally target someone who's innocent — and who seeks revenge when he crosses the Shroud. Alternately, one of their targets could be protected by Restless as well, leading to a showdown between the target's patrons and the Circle.

Let's Be Dead Cops — The Circle works happily for the Hierarchy as enforcers of the *Dictum Mortuum*, and its good at what it does. Tracking down violators of Charon's Law seems like a straightforward enough job until the day they cross a red line. Do they turn themselves in? Continue to work knowing that they're now susceptible to blackmail for their transgressions? Try to atone by hunting down as many Spectres as possible? Cut deals with shady Heretics and Renegades in order to confront greater problems? And what happens when they need to break the *Dictum Mortuum* themselves?

Heretic Shuffle — As members of an outlawed cult, the wraiths must keep a low profile, moving from Necropolis to Necropolis while keeping their faith alive. The characters could be sent out to recruit, a dangerous task which could produce a Hierarchy bust as often as it produces a potential convert, or maybe they've been tasked with reaching out to a hidden co-religionist dwelling inside a tightly controlled Citadel, or they're embroiled in a bitter rivalry with another sect.

Oh Mama I'm In Fear For My Life — The Circle is a group of Renegades who've had it with Stygia. Stygia, unfortunately, feels the same way about them, so their existence becomes a blur of running, fighting and defying authority. If caught, they'll be hammered into umbrella stands, so every action needs to be carefully considered. Daring raids to free comrades sentenced to the forges or targeted strikes against Hierarchy targets provide exhilaration and danger in equal amounts, while the cumbersome Legions strive to respond.

Taking the Band on the Road — The Circle is composed of touring Chanteurs and Sandmen, entertainers for hire across the Underworld. Traveling from city to city, they provide valuable news, gossip, and beauty to their audiences. Maybe this is enough, or perhaps they've seen or overheard something they ought not to have in their travels. This could result in them being pursued or blacklisted, with former patrons turning into hunters and no one believing the words of some ragged musicians over that of noble lords from ancient families.

Chain Breakers — The Circle is made up of Thralls, brought in by malicious Reapers and destined for an eternity of servitude — or the forges. But fate gives them the opportunity to escape. Do they go on the run, or do they turn the tables and try to smash the chains of every wraith held like they were?

Stygia

The Great Game — The wraiths get caught up in the great game of Stygian politics, as their mentors, allies, and Deathlords involve them in tangled schemes that could have terrifying consequences. Perhaps they've been asked to find a way to unseat a particular advisor to the Smiling Lord, or to steal a powerful Artifact from an ancient and potent wraith, and there's no way to refuse. The stakes are high and the price of failure is higher as they try to match wits with wraiths who have been doing this for centuries.

Guild as Charged — Despite their being outlawed, the wraiths all belong to various Guilds. Not only do they have to make sure they don't get hauled in by Legionnaires, they also have to help sustain the Guild in the face of internal and external threats. The political dances between the Guilds are

longstanding and in some cases deadly, as they scrabble for status and power while still trying to keep their heads down. Meanwhile, internal Guild politics can be just as dangerous, even if the wraiths think they're only in the Guild to learn how to use their Arcanoi better. Maybe they've discovered a new expression of an Arcanos, one someone else is willing to kill to keep hidden. Or they get approached with knowledge that one of the Guilds has been infiltrated by Doppelgangers — but there's no telling which one. And then there's always the looming threat of the War of the Guilds reigniting, setting Guild against Guild and Circlemate against Circlemate. Who would want such a thing, and can the players stop him before he fans the flames into an open conflagration?

The Summons — One member of the Circle is arrested for crimes that she has no memory of committing. Did she commit them under the influence of her Shadow? Is she lying? Or is someone trying to set her up? The rest of the Circle can try to prove her innocence, but this could prove trickier than advertised if someone powerful in the Eternal City wants her locked up or forged into an ashtray. Alternately, they could try a jailbreak, turning the entire Circle into fugitives from Hierarchy justice and condemning them all to the forges if they're caught.

Stormcrow — An acquaintance of the Circle claims to have proof that a Great Maelstrom is coming. Maybe he's crazy but maybe he's on to something, and if that's the case, the wraiths have to try to convince the powers that be to prepare. Doing so isn't going to be easy, though, as the rivalries between Deathlords could sabotage any preparations before they get started. How the wraiths navigate the most rarefied corridors of power within Stygia without getting arrested or worse makes for a tight, politically taut chronicle, one that could see its climax when the Great Maelstrom unleashes its fury on Stygia's massive walls. On the other hand, maybe their friend is a fraud, leaving the players holding the bag with some angry Deathlords after the predicted Maelstrom failed to show.

New in Town — The Circle just arrived in Stygia, ready to carve out a new existence for itself there. From exploring the city to finding shelter and a place within the walls, newcomers to Stygia face a wealth of adventure options, as well as some very real dangers. This chronicle focuses on the wraiths exploring their new environment, seeing the wonders of Stygia, and making connections among the venerable dead of the city. And of course, whether it be through naivete, foolishness, or greed, they get themselves into trouble with wraiths who are far older and cannier than they are…

In Ranks — The wraiths are soldiers in the active ranks of their respective Legions, and the Legions are going to war. Marching off to relieve a besieged Necropolis, the wraiths find themselves in the middle of camp intrigues, with spies, traitors, and Doppelgangers running amok. Alternately, they could be taken into the confidence of a senior officer and find themselves playing a more prominent role in the military campaign than they would have imagined, for good or for ill. And then there's the actual battle — win or lose, it's going to be exciting, and then there's the aftermath. Who rises and who falls, who gets the glory and who gets the blame, and who's made eternal enemies through their actions? Too much conspicuous valor could attract the attention of a vengeful Spectre or a jealous rival. Observers from other Legions could carry the wraiths' names back to Stygia in their reports, bringing them under the watchful gaze of the Deathlords, or the Unlidded Eye.

The Tempest and Beyond

Doomslaying — The wraiths are the best at what they do, and what they do is kill Spectres. Willing to joust with the Shadow-Eaten on their own turf, these relentless warriors venture to some of the strangest and most dangerous places in the Underworld. Perhaps they'll explore the Labyrinth while chasing Spectres, or go for an unintended dip in the Sea of Shadows when attacked by their prey. Regardless, hunting down and killing Spectres on their own turf — or more — makes for an exciting, if sometimes brief, existence.

Chosen of the Ferrymen — For some unknown reason, one of the Ferrymen has chosen the wraiths of the Circle to be her personal agents. Receiving mysterious instructions from their distant patron, the wraiths struggle to accomplish their missions and try to unravel the mystery of why they were chosen. Some of the missions may make sense, while others are seemingly nonsensical, but all are apparently part of the Ferryman's plan.

Sailing the Sea of Shadows — The Circle operates a ship for hire that plows the great Byways and the Sea of Shadows according to its whim. One day they may be taking passengers upriver, the next, exploring the depths of the Tempest in hopes of snagging a rare plasmic beast. With pirates abounding in the Underworld and Spectres always willing for a wraith to get careless, the wraiths must struggle to survive. And then there are the Maelstroms…

Ambassador to New Lands — The wraiths are chosen to act as a Deathlord's personal emissary to one of the other Dark Kingdoms. It is the players' job to present themselves at the new court they're sent to, and to work for the interests of their patron while there. Of course, they could get a better offer, or decide to switch sides, and the intrigue surrounding a new court could very easily get wraiths, especially inexperienced ones, in trouble, and their ability to navigate this strange new world they find themselves in with charm and grace could determine whether or not they get dragged off to the forges.

Seeking Transcendence — This difficult and potentially lengthy chronicle revolves around one (or more) wraith's decision to seek spiritual fulfillment. As the rest of the Circle decides to support this quest, they must help their friend find guidance on the road to Transcendence and assist them in dealing with their unfinished business in the Skinlands. There's no guarantee of success, and the cost of even trying is high. Do they make it to the end of the road, or does something derail them along the way?

On the Dark Side — Having one or more players take the part of a Spectre can provide a very different experience. Maybe there's one Doppelganger infiltrating a Circle and working to

sabotage it from within. Alternately, the entire group could be playing Spectres in order to feed their appetite for roleplaying destruction. Infiltrating a Necropolis, bringing down a hated wraith, or haunting a Byway looking for targets of opportunity can all be satisfying Chronicles for a gang of Shadow-Eaten.

Early to Rise — One or more of the wraiths decides they want to pursue the myth of the Risen — wraiths who pierce the Shroud and climb back into their rotting corpses in order to deal with things directly in the Skinlands. With the rest of the Circle backing this play, the wraiths must find someone who can teach the arts of Returning, and then journey into the Labyrinth itself in order to cut a deal to allow for a wraith to Rise. And all that is before the Risen actually gets across the Shroud and starts wreaking havoc in the Skinlands.

Stories

Chronicles are made up of individual stories, and the best ones arrange their individual stories to support the arc of the entire chronicle and produce the greatest effect. Bear in mind that not every story needs to be a climactic masterpiece, full of blood and thunder. A steady diet of full-throttle can feel stale after a while, and if every week is the most important fight of the characters' lives, then eventually none of those fights is going to feel that exciting. Rather, it's more important to vary tone, mixing in quieter and more personal stories with the more explosive ones, and giving your chronicle time to breathe in between big revelations and earth-shattering throwdowns. The sample chronicles above contain plenty of story seeds. Here's a few more:

To the Walls — A Maelstrom traps the Circle in a Necropolis, and the wraiths are drafted to help defend the desperately beleaguered city. At its most basic, it's action-packed combat against a deadly foe. Beyond that, perhaps the wraiths make an ally through their valor in the fight — or an enemy by showing up the usual local hero. It could be they see something they weren't supposed to during the fight, like one of the local Legionnaires feeding a supposed friend to the Spectres, or perhaps one member of the Circle gets abducted by the rampaging Shadow-Eaten and the next move for the rest of the group is to try to get him back.

End of a Fetter — A mortal who serves as a Fetter for one member of the Circle is dying, and the wraith needs to deal with this. Maybe the emotional reaction is rage, maybe it's to try to comfort the dying mortal; either way, it's a highly charged, emotional story.

Mistaken Identity — A local Masquer has made someone else up to look like a member of the Circle, and that wraith has been getting into all sorts of mischief. Maybe the player character gets mistaken for their counterpart, maybe they're blamed for the other wraith's misdeeds, and maybe it's just a case of wacky hijinks ensuing. In any case, sharing a face with another ghost can be tricky — and that's before the respective Shadows get in on the act.

The Great Escape — The wraiths are imprisoned and have to get out before they're soulforged or worse. The members of the Circle must plan their escape, then put it into action before the ticking clock dooms them. Once they pull it off, they're fugitives, on the run from their former captors. On the other hand, the escape attempt might fail, putting the Circle in an even more dire position.

Take a Ride — The Circle boards the Midnight Express and finds themselves embroiled in some of the events connected with that legendary train. Maybe a passenger has disappeared and the wraiths must prove their innocence when they're accused, or perhaps the train is attacked by Spectres and must be defended. Alternately, the Midnight Express could deliver the wraiths to someplace other than where they wanted to be — and there may be a very good reason for why they were sent to this place instead.

Quid Pro Quo — Someone from whom the wraiths want something wants something in return. In order to have their contact teach them the secrets of becoming Risen, they need to go retrieve a long-lost Artifact. To get a favor from a local Centurion, they need to escort another wraith safely to Stygia. The possibilities are endless. Once the favor is done, theoretically the wraith the players struck the deal with has to pay up, though this isn't always the case. Sometimes they can't, sometimes they won't, and sometimes they've been warned not to or else something bad will happen to them. At that point, it's the wraiths' job to get what they were promised…

Passions and Fetters

Passions and Fetters are not merely the Traits that set wraiths apart from the other protagonists in the Storyteller games and from the other denizens of the World of Darkness. They are also integral aspects of **Wraith: The Oblivion**'s game systems, helping make its stories and focus unique. Just as players can use these Traits to further characterize their wraiths, you can use Passions and Fetters to create a resonant, poignant, and unique environment in which to tell stories about them.

During character creation, you should take special care to guide players in choosing their characters' Passions and Fetters. Players should be encouraged to pick innovative and creative Passions, going beyond the obvious to give their characters some unique flair. While "Kill the people who killed my lover (Hate)" can provide some good basic stories, players should be encouraged to go beyond the obvious and invent some meatier motivations. With this in mind, the most obvious emotion to describe a Passion is not always the best choice. The perfectly functional "Protect my lover (Love)" gets more interesting if it becomes "Protect my lover (Greed)," wherein the wraith desires that no other should have him if he cannot. You can also try "Protect my lover (Hope)," wherein the wraith wants to and helps the lover succeed, or "Protect my lover (Pity)," where a wraith watches over his still-living partner as he descends into a downward spiral of guilt and self-recrimination. Love itself could be love for people, love of an ideal, love for money, love of life (a bitter Passion for a wraith), or love of oneself. Other Passions can be similarly revisited and their full potential explored. You should

encourage your players to challenge their assignment of Passions to descriptions and find the emotions which most interestingly and accurately reflect their vision for their characters.

The relative levels of the Passions, as determined by the number of dots assigned to them, are important. The more dots assigned, the more important it is, and the harder for the wraith to resist the need to tend to it. Each wraith is constantly torn by different, often conflicting emotions, and you should try to acquire a sense for the conflicts raging inside the characters in your chronicle. Such contradictions and opposites can be exploited to force a character to make choices and to confront his Passions, deciding what is most important to him and further deepening the player's understanding of his character.

Both you and your players should make the characters' Fetters as detailed as possible. Instead of relying on a one-line description for the Fetter in question, players should consider writing up to a page about each one for their own reference and yours. The distinction between Passions (which are ideas, emotions, and aspirations) and Fetters (which are singular objects) can be capitalized on and emphasized. Having a player create a Fetter like "My old church (3)" is far less descriptive and helpful than that same description, as well as some notes on the church's history (Did anyone famous ever speak there? Any supposed hauntings? Was it ever burned down? What was the character's connection to it?), appearance (What does the interior look like? Is it the sort of place that would tempt thieves? Any unusual works of art or stained-glass windows?) and location (What sort of neighborhood is it in? Who worships there?). The latter will provide you with more ways to work the Fetter into the chronicle, instead of simply having it hang in the background as a place the character retreats to for Slumber's sake.

As Storyteller, your job is made both easier and more challenging by Passions and Fetters. Passions make the game easier to run, in that you should never be at a loss for something to keep the narrative flowing and the world detailed. Passions provide the Storyteller with kernels from which encounters, images and events which players will respond to automatically can be drawn, because they are automatically relevant to the characters. Threats to or changes in Fetters will also provoke immediate responses from wraiths, as they seek to protect what holds them to the Shadowlands. On the other hand, you must constantly bear all of a character's Passions and Fetters in mind (it's a good idea to have a reference sheet of them) so that the narrative of the game can reflect the mix of Passions present in each wraith and in the Circle as a whole. It is also worth noting that each Shadowguide should also have detailed knowledge of the Passions and Fetters of the wraith whose other half she portrays.

Having noted the various Passions and Fetters of the wraiths in the group, you are now armed with a set of ideas and emotions to flesh out your vision of the Shadowlands and the World of Darkness. Because wraiths are creatures of pure emotion, their reality is defined by their Passions. While our vision might be momentarily clouded by some strong emotion we feel, a wraith sees everything in terms of his Passions, because in a real sense, they are why he still exists. Therefore, the emotions represented by the Passions of the wraiths are those that will be reflected by the actions, events, characters, and stories that are told in that character's chronicle. While in most games it is good practice for a Storyteller who intends to design her own stories to take into account the characters and their predilections, in **Wraith** it is critical.

When the character rolls a Passion to regain Pathos, you shouldn't just let this go past as a rule of the game. Wraiths only regain Pathos by accessing their purest emotions and experiencing them; therefore, they should give demonstrable evidence of following their Passions. If a wraith is rolling against a Guilt Passion, for example, that character should be immersed in that emotion, truly experiencing it. To have a player simply say, "I'm rolling against my Guilt Passion" is, on some level, to miss the point.

Wraiths are constantly buffeted by their Passions. With no flesh to safeguard them against feeling, it hits them raw and sharp, and they are inevitably changed by the impact. You should feel free to utilize the surreal nature of the Underworld to evoke the Passions the wraiths access, to make them feel that they are creatures of emotion, and help them understand that Pathos is more than just a number on a page that allows them to use their Arcanoi. Similarly, when wraiths do spend the Pathos to heal or employ Arcanoi, they are bleeding pure emotion, and they and those around them should sense and be affected by this.

As well as providing you with events and encounters to detail and enrich your vision of the Shadowlands, Passions and Fetters can be easily and effectively used to create entire stories. This works on two levels. The first and more straightforward of these is the use of a Passion or Fetter as the focus for a narrative, placing one character at the center of the action and forcing the Circle to react to events that involve a Fetter or the object of a Passion.

Fetters are particularly suited to this kind of tale. They are objects that are vitally important to a wraith, that represent links to her breathing days and sustain her continued existence in the Shadowlands. Playing on this acute vulnerability of wraiths, a Storyteller can create situations that force a wraith to act to protect a valued Fetter. These threats can be as simple as potential destruction, or they can be subtle, hinging on the sale, damaging, corruption, abuse, neglect, or misuse of a particular Fetter. An effective story, for example, might involve the new owner of a wraith's favorite dive bar gentrifying it beyond recognition, or perhaps running drugs out of the back and turning it into someplace dire and unpleasant. Neither of these approaches threatens the Fetter with destruction, but both assault the identity it holds for the wraith, and each can spark an interesting story.

Stories can just as easily and evocatively be built around Passions, and there are two basic approaches (which are not mutually exclusive). You simply can choose an interesting Passion, or one of a generally neglected character, and make it the focus of a story. While this is a perfectly satisfactory way to initiate character-centered and character-driven narratives, Passions can be much more sophisticated storytelling tools. Rather than look at the specifics of a character Passion, you can build a story with that Passion (love, hate, greed etc.) as its theme. This kind of approach is well served by preparation, as it takes time and creativity to explore a Passion properly, but you can also run a rewarding improvised story in this way. While it's a bonus if more than one of the wraiths possesses the Passion you choose as your starting point, it is by no means mandatory. Wraiths are creatures of Passion, and all emotion is experience and sustenance for them.

Taking the Passion you've chosen, you can create a tight narrative that centers on events in which the Passion is prominent in the motivations of the Storyteller characters, the players, or the metaplot behind the events. Alternately, you can devise a series of encounters and scenes, each of which evokes a different shade or aspect of the Passion. These encounters can be independent or somehow linked, but they should always demonstrate the flexible and variable nature of the emotion at the center of things. A story that takes a particular Passion as its theme should consist of both a central plot and satellite encounters that explore and expose the Passion, posing hard questions along the way

As an example, the emotion *fear* could spark many encounters and different experiences. The wraiths might become involved in a story in which hope (in a typical sense) constitutes the central thread of the narrative. Perhaps a wraith could be looking frantically for her husband, a new Enfant who might have been Reaped and hauled off to the forges. The rest of the Circle helps in the search, and along the way they encounter enemies and other elements that reflect various aspects of fear: fear as resignation, fear as desire, fear as a type of hatred, and more. For any other wraith in the Circle with a fear-based Passion, this could be a particularly productive session, but that shouldn't mean the rest of the group will be left out. A wraith with a Passion centered on Hate could very well benefit from learning how hatred and fear are intertwined.

A series of scenarios, each of which takes a particular character's Passion as its theme, makes a satisfying chronicle and one which probes the characters' psyches, resulting in well-rounded and realized wraiths. This cycle of Passion plays brings each character face-to-face with her most important aspects. It gives the players insight into their characters and, more generally, into the nature of wraiths and even the nature of emotion. These stories can be used as a mini-chronicle from which you can launch into a more classically structured narrative, secure in the knowledge that the characters taking part have come to terms with their identities and understand what it is to be a wraith. Or, they can stand alone as a chronicle story cycle. This kind of an approach fosters long-term character development, and keeps the players engaged with their characters as they come to grips with who they are.

Passions and Fetters define wraiths. Passions drive them, Fetters anchor them. Both are rich tools you can use to make the experience of playing **Wraith** more beautiful, horrific, sad, funny, and rewarding. Wraiths are our reflections, creatures defined by their emotions, and just as no wraith can escape a story without using and facing her emotions, no player should escape a **Wraith** session unmoved.

Advanced Techniques

eginning, middle, and end are the basics of telling stories, but they're not the only way to do so. Playing around with sequencing and other elements of your chronicle can offer surprising rewards if you break outside the basics. Doing so may require some planning and some help and understanding from your players, but the benefits can be considerable.

Flashbacks

Understanding what was can lead to greater understanding of what is — and what will be. Playing through a character's personal history can give the player a better knowledge of what has gone before. Depending on how your chronicle's set up, you can flash back to the wraith's younger days, or to the time when they were still alive. Doing so can work as a character moment, or it can provide clues to current puzzles and obstacles. Realizing that a character met a rival wraith back when they were both still alive can reframe their relationship — or provide the player with clues as to how to defeat a rival.

Running a flashback can potentially give other players insight into a character's history as well, so being cautious with use of this technique is recommended. Functionally, it's often best to treat the flashback like a Harrowing in that the other players, instead of sitting off on the sideline, take the parts of characters in the flashback. This keeps everyone engaged, takes some of the workload off of you, and provides opportunities for spontaneous moments. Of course, with a flashback you have to have a fixed ending in mind — what has happened has happened, and regardless of the new elements the scene may introduce, the ultimate outcome is already fixed.

Foreshadowing

A foreshadow hints at what is to come without spelling it out, generating player interest and anxiety in equal measure. A good foreshadow doesn't come out and state what's going to happen next. Rather, it's a moment or an item of incongruity that demands the characters' attention and provides a clue as to what's on the way. Carrion birds foreshadow death far better than visions of bloody dismemberment, particularly if the ravens bearing the tidings of doom don't belong where they've been seen.

Don't confuse foreshadowing with visions of the future. The former consists of signs and portents for the players to guess at and interpret. The latter are straightforward views of possible futures, removing all ambiguity as to what's going to happen, and they have entirely different narrative uses.

Dreams

Even the dead sometimes dream, as the Sandmen's Guild will happily attest. Making a character's dream sequences playable can serve as an exploration of that character's subconscious, bringing up elements that may be necessary to help the Circle advance. Alternately, the rest of the Circle may enlist a Sandman's help to journey into a dreamscape in order to discover what troubles one of their own. Symbolism, abstract concepts, and endlessly mutable laws of physics are all on the table when dream logic is in play, but you should always remember that the dream itself is grounded in a character's mind.

Symbolism

In the best storytelling, things often represent more than they appear to be at first glance. They become symbols of something deeper — icons of a particular theme, or representations of a character or character trait — that infuses the story with more meaning than just the obvious. Some symbols are obvious; Shakespeare's putting the head of an ass on a character who was a bit of an ass himself in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was a bit on the nose, while others are subtler.

The best symbols are ones that are easy to understand but hard to pin down. If the villain of your chronicle is the councilor to a powerful Stygian wraith, salting your chronicle with nods to the character — owl imagery, for example, or other icons that evoke wisdom and counsel — can make the reveal of the character's villainy more satisfying, or lead the Circle in the right direction if they understand the symbolism.

As a general rule, you should avoid being too subtle with your symbolism. Not everyone has to get everything you put in the world, but if nobody uncovers any of it, you face the choice of having key elements of your chronicle go by the wayside or having to explain your work to your players in a way that can bog things down. Use of symbols should enhance, not derail, the flow of the game.

Lost Memories

One way to add mystery to a chronicle is to have chunks of time that one or more characters can't remember. The obvious explanation for this is a bad case of Catharsis, but even then, that begs the question: What did the character(s) do while the Shadow was in control? Tracking down the evidence of their actions and dealing with the consequences of same can be an excuse to add action ("There they are!") or emotional beats for which the Circle must build a context.

Another possibility is to have the characters affected by contact with a Mnemoi, with their memories erased for reasons of Stygian security or something more sinister. Making a nod to the *Bourne* series and involving the wraiths in a web of intrigue

they don't remember being involved with offers plenty of storytelling opportunities for investigation, chase scenes, and more.

Unreliable Narrators

Everybody lies, or so goes the saying. That can hold true for the narration of your game as well. Just because you're the Storyteller doesn't mean that every word you speak has to be the gospel truth, particularly when filtered through the mouth of a character you're portraying. For good or for ill, players tend to take a great many things on faith, and using a Storyteller character who appears to be reliable to spread disinformation can get the Circle in all sorts of trouble.

Alternately, you can have the world lie to the Circle. Starting the game inside a Harrowing, so that when the characters emerge they're not sure what's real and what's Labyrinthine artistry, is one way of making sure players aren't sure of the ground under their feet. Doing the same with a dream sequence is another. As a Storyteller, you're under an obligation to be honest when you speak as the Storyteller, but in other roles you're free to get a little more versatile with the truth.

Crossover Games

The World of Darkness is a densely populated place, and the Restless Dead aren't the only supernatural entities running around in it. You don't have to allow other supernatural creatures into your chronicle if you don't want to — many Storytellers find it simpler and thematically cleaner to stick to one kind of monster — but if you do decide to go that route, there are plenty of ways to incorporate vampires, werewolves, and other such entities seamlessly. Certain vampire clans routinely interact with the dead, Garou are in constant contact with the spirit world, Euthanatos mages very much have death on their minds, and among the fae, Sluagh often find they have much to discuss with the souls of the dead. And beyond that, you cannot overlook the proclivity of the various inhuman entities to rack up body counts, thus creating any number of wraiths as they go along.

If you're going to run a crossover game, it's important to figure out the scope of the crossover. Adding one vampire allows you to treat the character as a solitary, threatening monster, a unique addition to the chronicle's world. On the other hand, going full throttle with the crossover and adding every manner of Awakened imaginable creates a very different tone.

If the chronicle is going to rely heavily on crossover, it's also a good idea to collaborate with your players on the concept. By necessity, most of the other entities in the World of Darkness operate in the Skinlands, so the more Arcanoi the Circle possess to interact with them, the better and more connected the chronicle's going to be. Otherwise, you risk leaving players whose characters can't interact directly with the Skinlands out of the action.

The key to a successful crossover chronicle is cooperation. If the game dissolves into trying to resolve the question of which supernatural creature can beat up which other one, then there's no real point or depth. If, on the other hand, the players cooperate with their supernatural allies (whether run

Caution

As Storyteller, you are the ultimate arbiter of what crossover elements are or aren't allowed in your game. Feel free to restrict things to one type of supernatural creature, or to alter or adjust the rules around other supernatural beings to suit the needs of your storytelling. Just because it's in the rulebook — this one or another game's — doesn't mean you have to allow it if it works against what you're doing. If there's a logical reason for a vampire to serve as a character's Fetter, great. If there isn't, you're perfectly within your rights as Storyteller to say no.

by other players or by you) to use their different abilities, then there's the possibility of telling stories that a totally **Wraith**-centric game can't, and of opening up new aspects of the World of Darkness to your Campaign.

Endings

One of the most difficult aspects of Storytelling to master is sticking the landing. Every chronicle has a natural end point, and making sure that finale is satisfying to everyone involved is a tricky skill to master.

It's easier to wrap up a particular story or play session, knowing that the chronicle as a whole is going to continue. Cliffhangers are a perfect way to wrap up a given session, driving the narrative along and creating instant energy for when you pick up play. That being said, not every chapter should end in this manner, lest the technique lose its impact.

What you should do at the end of the night's play, however, is make a careful assessment of what you've done and where the story has gone. Make sure that players are all getting attention and time on stage, ensure there are hooks allowing the players to move forward and drive the action themselves, and keep track of what your Circle did so that you know who said what to whom in order to use it later. Doing this — and taking notes as needed — is a great way to avoid getting flatfooted down the road by either player concerns or players dredging up a minor incident that's long since slipped your mind, and trying to use that as a focal point of their actions going forward.

End-of-session assessment is also a good time to figure out where you need to be flexible. The best laid Chronicles can deviate wildly from their planned structures if the characters decide to swerve off the main narrative path, and as a Storyteller you need to be prepared for that. Figuring out how far you might have slid away from your intentions can help you plan for how much work you'll have to do to lead them back, if you choose to do so. It will also help you modify your notes and plans to match what's actually happened in play, and provide hints as to where you might need to anticipate where the characters might go the next time you play.

Character Destruction

Sometimes Oblivion wins. Not every character is going to make it through every scenario unscathed. While they are going to survive most of what gets thrown at them, every so often things go completely sideways and a character goes down for good. Maybe it's a Destruction Harrowing, maybe it's a trip to the forges, maybe they irritated a powerful Masquer and got Moliated into a lawn chair. Regardless, there will be moments in a chronicle when a character meets his end, and you should be prepared for what this does to the story.

What it means for the characters is different than what it means for the players. If the player of the late, lamented character isn't really fitting in with the group, then this can serve as a perfect moment to make a change. If, however, the player is well liked and wants to continue, you should sit down and help him create a new character. This new wraith can be informed by what the Circle has seen of the story so far, shoring up the group's weaknesses and bringing a new skill or bit of knowledge to the table that the rest are lacking. If you're feeling particularly devious, there's always the possibility of inserting a Spectre character into the game, and having the player take on the part of a Doppelganger, rather than a wraith. If you're feeling particularly sneaky and the character met his end in a Harrowing, you can always conspire with the player to have him come back as a Spectre, infiltrating the Circle and playing on old friendships for Oblivion's ends.

Then there's the character side. The rest of the Circle should react to the loss of a companion, particularly if the way she was annihilated set off either a Passion or a Dark Passion. They may not believe she's gone for good, and decide to quest after her to bring her back. They may seek revenge on the one responsible for her destruction. They might even decide to dedicate themselves to fulfilling her goals — if she'd been seeking Transcendence when she was dragged down to the Void, maybe the rest of the Circle will now seek that exalted state in her memory. Alternately, they may just decide to divvy up her stuff and keep moving. It all depends on the characters as described.

That being said, Storytelling death is tricky for the Restless Dead. For all that they're already deceased, wraiths are incredibly difficult to destroy permanently. There's only a few ways to do it, and a Harrowing is never a sure thing. Even so, things happen and you should always be willing to tweak things as necessary to keep a character going if a dice-dictated death would be goofy, annoying, or emotionally unsatisfying. Death is an incredibly powerful Storytelling tool and you should use a light touch with it. Too high a body count and players will stop getting attached to their characters in self-defense. Too low of one, on the other hand, means that the threats are insufficient,

and there may be a sense among the Circle that since they're the universe's favored children, they're not in any real danger.

At that moment, feel free to prove the Circle wrong.

A character death should always feel satisfying and it should always feel appropriate, even if sudden or shocking. Picking off a character at random just because you can doesn't serve the chronicle or the characters. A fight against impossible odds, a sacrifice to save the rest of the Circle, the well-planned triumph of an enemy: These are the sorts of things that can bring emotional satisfaction to the pain of losing a beloved character. A meaningless, sudden death, while perhaps truer to the ethos of **Wraith**, makes for worse Storytelling.

Chronicle Endings

Timing

The first part of getting it right is understanding the timing. If the Circle in your game is chasing a particular nemesis, then eventually they must be able to confront and defeat — or otherwise have a satisfying resolution with — that nemesis. Endlessly stringing things out because you're not ready to put the final boss on stage eventually makes things feel like they're being artificially stretched out, and as a result the chronicle loses the urgency that drives it. Also, doing so diminishes the Circle's progress towards their desired showdown with their enemy, and slowing that progress can feel discouraging. If the players get the sense that nothing they do will bring them closer to the final conflict, then they're going to question why they're doing anything at all, and that's a death knell for a continuing narrative. So, understanding the dynamics of your chronicle and sensing when it's time to kick things into gear for the grand finale means listening to your players, both to what they say and what they don't say. If momentum seems to be inexorably flagging or the characters complain that they're not getting any closer to winning, it may be time to consider bringing things to a smashing conclusion.

The flip side of this is avoiding rushing. Final showdowns are exciting, spectacular, and cool, but you should be wary of rushing into them for their own sake. As explosive as a duel with a Deathlord atop the Onyx Tower might be, having that moment hit three sessions in robs it of the buildup and anticipation that would help make it satisfying. A grand finale is only as good as the players' feelings about it, and if they're insufficiently excited about an ultimate triumph because the villain wasn't given sufficient development time to be hate-worthy, then the finale's going to fall flat. A full-out sprint to the end means you miss a lot of the interesting moments along the way, and that arriving at your narrative destination lacks impact as a result.

Power

The other half of the equation is making sure the end of the chronicle has sufficient and appropriate impact. The end of the chronicle has to mark a significant change, either in the world or in the wraiths of the Circle. To fight the big bad and win, only to have another, identical enemy rise up is unsatisfying, a reset button that puts the game right back where it started. Instead, the finale needs to be the summation of what the characters have done and experienced along the way to this moment.

That's not to say that the ending automatically has to be a happy one. Sometimes losing, or a well-timed reversal that puts a new spin on the Circle's world can be just as satisfying as putting a long-hated enemy out of business for good. What matters is that the ending draws from the rest of the chronicle in a way that feels organic and natural.

Aftermath

The chronicle shouldn't end with the end of the battle, however. There needs to be a denouement, time for the players and characters to come to grips with the new normal and get ready for their next adventures. Make sure there's enough time for all the questions that need to be answered to get answered, in order to make the players feel satisfied about what they've accomplished. If necessary, consider adding a Storyteller character whose function is to provide explanations of how the gaps in the narrative were bridged behind the scenes — the old ally who was more involved than they knew, or a servant of the defeated rival who's telling all in order to save his own skin.

You'll also want to establish what the world of the characters is going to be like going forward. If the Circle took down a Shadow-Eaten Deathlord, maybe one of them will be selected to fill the role going forward, and the other wraiths become her trusted advisors. If the big win was taking down a mortal threat to dozens of wraiths' Fetters, then giving the Circle visibly new status among those wraiths shows that what they did meant something. And if the finale was fighting a monstrous Spectre, then showing new monsters rushing to fill the power void — and demonstrating fear and loathing of the Circle — goes a long way towards demonstrating a satisfying impact.

End of chronicle can also mean end of game, though it doesn't have to. If you and some (or all) of your players want to continue with the same cast of characters, the end of one chronicle is the jumping-off point for the next. Make sure to establish hooks that will bridge the space to the start of the next story — the devoted servant of the disgraced Deathlord who's sworn revenge, the ominous tolling of Maelstrom warning bells, a cryptic prophecy from a Ferryman who witnessed their triumph — so that there's a sense of continuity in your Storytelling, and so that it feels like the next chronicle is the logical outgrowth of this one. Past character (and player) experience should inform future stories, giving you a wealth of knowledge about the characters to draw on in setting up new adventures, and giving players a deep base to roleplay from.

On the other hand, if ending the chronicle means ending the game, then make sure to leave everyone satisfied with how things end up. That doesn't mean the characters have to be perfectly content, but the ending of the chronicle should make the players feel like they weren't cheated by the ending. Check to make sure the big questions from each character's plot threads, whether they be Passion-driven or emergent from the chronicle's narrative, have been resolved so that everyone involved can feel comfortable saying goodbye.

Authority & Responsibility

raith can be a tricky game to Storytell and to play. Not everyone's a good fit for the game, in exactly the same way that not everyone's great at baseball or poker or whatever. If there's a player in your group who's struggling, you owe it to the entire troupe to help that person out. Maybe that means taking a little extra time with the player to find out what the roadblocks are. If it's uncertainty about the rules, knowing that means you can work around it. If Shadowguiding is too much work or the split in focus isn't enjoyable, you can assign those Shadowguiding duties to someone else and let the player concentrate on taking care of business.

And if it turns out that **Wraith** just isn't that player's cup of tea, that's fine. There's no shame in deciding that a player isn't right for a game or a game isn't right for a player. This isn't a failure of your Storytelling, nor is it a failure of anyone's play. It just means that sometimes player and game are just a bad fit, and both need to move on. If there's a player in your game who is obviously not enjoying it or is struggling to the point where it's impacting other players' fun, eventually you will want to step in and suggest that player drop out of the game. This should never be couched as "We don't want to play with you any more," but rather in the context of "You're not having fun and you shouldn't feel obligated to hang around doing something you don't enjoy."

Alternately, some players are just jerks. Ones who enjoy maliciously pushing other players' buttons, especially while Shadowguiding, have no place in a friendly troupe, and as a Storyteller you should have no compunctions about telling a griefer to hit the road. That doesn't mean that a rambunctious player should automatically get the heave-ho, but one who repeatedly and aggressively makes active moves to hinder others' enjoyment or cause emotional harm simply doesn't belong in a friendly game.

Ultimately, it's your game, and as Storyteller the greater part of the responsibility for keeping it running smoothly and enjoyably for everyone falls on you. Sometimes that means rewarding players who are beneficial to the group, sometimes that means helping out players who are struggling, and sometimes it means tossing a disruptive player for everyone else's benefit.

KM 2017

Chapter 8: Systems

There are certain things wraiths do differently than everyone else. Everything from walking through walls to gaining experience has a particular twist for the Restless, and understanding these unique approaches is key to understanding how certain key elements of Underworld existence work.

This chapter is broken up into three sections: Setting, Perceptions, and Character Development. The first is all about how to interact with certain wraith-specific elements of the setting, such as Haunts, Maelstroms, and how wraiths deal with injuries (and solid objects). The second, Perceptions, is about the quest for Transcendence, the elusive state of spiritual ascension that supposedly lifts a wraith out of the Underworld and onto a higher plane of existence. Most wraiths, if questioned, will say that they think Transcendence is a myth, but there are always those few who believe. Finally, Character Development is about the awarding and spending of Experience Points, allowing players to develop their characters over the course of a campaign.

Reaping

Reborn with A Caul

When a person dies with enough passion, determination, and sheer will to carry on to create a wraith, they emerge in the Shadowlands covered by a gauzy shroud of spiritual energy known as a Caul. This ectoplasmic wrapping shelters the new Restless during their transition to the afterlife and allows time for her mind to begin processing the fact of her own death. While the Caul is in place, the wraith can perceive the Shadowlands, but her view is distorted, with elements from it blending into her own thoughts and feelings.

Unfortunately for many wraiths, Enfants still wrapped in their Cauls are vulnerable to all manner of predators, from slave-taking Harvesters to marauding Spectres to manipulative organizations of all ideologies and persuasions. While it is easiest on the Psyche of a wraith to be gently helped out of her Caul — or find the strength to remove it herself — the unfortunate reality is that there isn't always time for her to do so. This factor, more than many others, goes a long way towards explaining certain behaviors in the Underworld. When your first interaction with your new existence is one of pain and confusion, it sets a tone that can be difficult to change.

A wraith emerging from the Caul must not only cope with the immediate reality of her surroundings and the actions of other Restless in the area, but also her new senses themselves. Lifesight shows flares and flashes of color in the Shadowlands, while Deathsight means that the longer she looks at any one thing the more she seems to see it wither, crumble, and fall into decay. Often, she has an encounter with the Incorporeal state early on as well, as she attempts to interact with the Skinlands out of reflex. Processing her new levels of perception and the mutability of her new body takes time, adding to early feelings of shock and disorientation.

As for the Caul itself, it vanishes in a rush of Pathos as soon as it is removed, making it a difficult subject to study. While there are stories of pieces or even whole Cauls remaining behind on rare occasions — and which supposedly bestow power over the wraith they belonged to — these claims aren't substantiated. Attempts to study intact Cauls by examining Enfants find it highly resistant to anything other than removal; it is not armor, but does resist being clipped or cut into smaller pieces. Wraiths handling a Caul describe it as cold but also pulsing faintly, like the memory of a heartbeat. If one puts their ear to it, he can hear a babble of voices, too faint and indistinct to make any sense out of. Seasoned Reapers might describe this as the memories of the Enfant wrapped into the fabric of the Caul.

This section details the systems involved in three different forms of Reaping: freeing yourself from your own Caul, gently guiding another wraith out of their Caul, and the Caul being forcibly torn away.

Removing Your Own Caul

A wraith who emerges in an isolated area, or in the wake of a great disaster that sees too many Enfants remove their Cauls just in time for the Harvesters to get to them, may find it necessary to remove her own Caul. Some kindly Reapers will even give an Enfant time to see if she has the strength of will to break free on her own, stepping in only if she seems to be struggling. Wraiths who manage the feat of removing their own Caul enjoy a small measure of respect — it takes a strong sense of self to be able to accept the reality of death and the subsequent transition to the Shadowlands, as opposed to being helped through it by another or simply forced into it all at once.

System: In order to remove her own Caul, a wraith must come to terms with the knowledge that she has died, and then spend 1 Willpower. The wraith then rolls Willpower, difficulty 4, with each success adding 1 Pathos to her normal starting total.

As removing the Caul is a singular experience in a wraith's existence, this infusion may take her over the usual maximum of 10 Pathos. As long as she exceeds 10 Pathos, she actually glows with emotional energy, and stands out as almost lifelike while over 10 Corpus levels. (Subtract 1 from the difficulty of all Perception rolls to notice or track the wraith while she is in this state, unless she uses some sort of Arcanos power to hide herself.) This excess Pathos remains until it is spent.

Guiding Hands

Though they are rare in the Shadowlands, there are Reapers who see the act as a noble duty, and who genuinely want to help ease new Restless into their existence as painlessly as possible. These kindly Reapers are scoffed at by more mercenary harvesters, but there are rewards for their work that more than compensate.

Beyond the likely gratitude of the Enfant in question, peacefully transitioning a wraith fully into the Shadowlands offers the Reaper an infusion of Pathos from the energy release of the

Optional Rule: Crucible Scenes

Many **Wraith** games begin with the characters already Reaped, or handle the removal of the Caul as a purely narrative device in a montage or flashback. However, Storytellers who are interested in delving into playing out the transitional period while a wraith is still wearing her Caul can run what is called a Crucible scene. This optional rule is particularly appropriate if the players have played their characters as mortals for a session or more and the death experience is being handled during ongoing play.

A Crucible scene involves the wraith reliving the moments surrounding her death, sometimes multiple times, an already stressful and confusing situation that is further complicated by the fact that sensations from the Shadowlands creep in as well. While still wearing her Caul, a wraith might see her mortal lover but hear the voice of one of the nearby Restless calling out to her, or watch in horror as a bloody Legionnaire strides into her memory of her suburban home and demands to know whose property she is. Though the experiences vary by each wraith, the ultimate goal of a Crucible scene is always the same — accepting that she is dead and emerging into the Shadowlands proper.

In roleplaying terms, a Crucible is handled much like a Harrowing in that each wraith must confront it alone, and so it can serve as a good way to transition new players into these sorts of intensive solo experiences. Other players may participate as the Storyteller permits, portraying characters from the wraith's memories or even the distorted perceptions of other Restless interacting with her in the Underworld. The emerging wraith's strongest Passions and Fetters also tend to figure prominently, as well as certain relevant Backgrounds such as Eidolon or Memoriam. Of course, the Shadow is there as well — not so strong as it will be in future Harrowings, but already whispering.

From a mechanics standpoint, this optional rule changes some Reaping systems. A character may not remove her own Caul unless she completes a successful Crucible scene, at which time she pays costs and receives benefits normally. (If this would interrupt the flow of play, the Storyteller may choose to declare the effort successful and simply play the scene later as a flashback.) With regard to a guided Reaping, the Reaper may enter the Crucible scene more directly and interact with the wraith without the confusion of the Caul distorting their words. Harvesting is unchanged, save that the Crucible scene of a Harvested wraith is likely to end abruptly, typically in the most disturbing and upsetting way possible.

Though it is most common at the beginning of a chronicle, the Storyteller may choose to play out or revisit Crucible scenes as flashbacks later on — remembering these emotionally charged early moments can provide insight into something later on during play, especially for Transcendence-oriented characters.

Caul. Thus both parties benefit — an all-too-rare circumstance in the Shadowlands.

System: A Reaper who wishes to peacefully assist in removing an Enfant's Caul can spend 1 Willpower to establish a link with the target. This allows the Reaper to interact more directly with the target despite the interference of the Caul. Even with the compressed time playing out in the Caul, this process takes at least 10 minutes and may take hours, depending on the Enfant's strength of will and ability to navigate her new Passions.

While doing this, the Reaper must stay close to her charge and concentrate on the process, but remains fully aware of her surroundings. She may break it off at any time, leaving the Caul intact or forcibly removing it as she desires when she does so. Rules for forcible removal are outlined under Soul Harvesting, below. There are no penalties for interrupting a peaceful Reaping, save that the Reaper must spend another Willpower point to reestablish contact.

Once a connection is created, the Reaper injects herself into the psychodrama of the Enfant's Caul in order to help guide the new wraith. The Reaper rolls Charisma + Empathy at a difficulty of 9 - the target's Memoriam rating. Success indicates the Reaper is able to help the wraith remove her Caul successfully and with a minimal amount of mental and emotional trauma. Note that due to the very personal nature of the Caul, the Reaper does not remember fine details of what he experienced while inside. Attempting to use this power to infiltrate the new wraith's mind to learn their secrets is therefore not likely to generate much in the way of hard intelligence. The Reaper remembers vague impressions and strong feelings, but that's about it.

However, their emotional connection to the Enfant does decrease the difficulty of Empathy rolls by 2 for the rest of the session; this time may be increased at the Storyteller's discretion if the Reaper remains in close contact with the Enfant. A successful guided Reaping like this one also grants the Reaper a number of Pathos points equal to the Enfant's Memoriam rating

+ 2. This does not allow the Reaper to exceed their maximum Pathos. Any excess Pathos is lost in a glowing golden haze that can be seen for some distance.

Multiple Reapers may attempt to help remove a Caul together, using the normal teamwork rules for the relevant roll. This tends to reduce the time required significantly, but the amount of Pathos resulting from a successful Reaping of this type must be shared by the group. Each Reaper must receive an equal amount if that is possible. If there is no way to share the Pathos equally, the Reaper who made the roll determines which Reapers receive any (extra) Pathos.

Soul Harvesting

Souls are the biggest business of the Underworld, and so many Reapers have neither the time nor inclination to work gently with the Enfants they find. Instead, the Reaper rips off the Caul, slaps on Stygian steel cuffs, and sends the poor soul packing to the market (or the foundries).

However, even less mercenary wraiths sometimes must tear off an Enfant's Caul with little regard for kindness or finesse, typically due to some looming threat: an inbound Maelstrom, an attack by hostile Nephwracks, or even simply to keep the Enfant out of the hands of unsavory Harvesters. Removing a Caul carefully takes time, after all, and sometimes that is simply not a commodity that can be spared.

System: Having the Caul forcibly removed incurs no cost or mechanical penalty, but the wraith is almost certainly going to be in a far worse mental and emotional state as their protective covering is abruptly ripped away. Players whose characters are Reaped in this fashion are encouraged to play up this disorientation and fear, as well as the confusion of suddenly plunging from a memory of life into the reality of the Shadowlands.

The Shroud

The Shroud is the name wraiths give to the barrier that separates the Shadowlands from the Skinlands. In truth, it is less a physical barrier and more of a filter — an invisible, intangible field that blocks out the reality of the Shadowlands from the senses of the Quick. It is the reason that a mortal can blithely ignore the existence of a wraith frantically trying to get her attention just inches from her face, and also what makes it difficult for the Restless to use their Arcanoi to affect the world of the living.

In game terms, the strength of the Shroud is expressed as a rating from 4-10, based on how conducive the area is to the belief in ghosts. The Shroud is strongest in times and places where the existence of ghosts feels easiest to dismiss, such as brightly lit office buildings at noon, city parks on sunny afternoons, or a brand-new outlet mall. It is weakest in places where the existence of the Restless seems much harder to discount, like an abandoned cemetery at night or a famous haunted house.

The Shroud rating of a location can fluctuate slightly depending on the time of year or even time of day, not to mention factors like the presence of large crowds. For example, an imposing old mansion visited on a large daytime tour might have a Shroud rating one or two points higher than it does when it's empty at night. Flip the calendar forward to Halloween, and it goes down again. Note that the beliefs of mortals in the area don't factor in to this calculation; the Shroud rating is based on the nature of the location itself. Ghost hunters who are true believers don't lower the Shroud rating of a sunny park just by their presence, for example, though they might trigger a Hysteria response if nearby wraiths begin using their Arcanoi (see "Did You Guys Hear That?" below).

As the local Shroud rating decreases, it becomes easier for the Restless to affect the Skinlands (and vice versa). Hypothetically, if a location ever reached a zero Shroud rating, the living and the dead would be able to see and interact without the need for any Arcanoi at all — but that also means nothing would be holding raw Oblivion back from infecting the Skinlands. Fortunately, the lowest Shroud rating possible is 4, and nothing known can reduce it below that.

Other supernatural creatures — vampires, werewolves, mages, changelings, etc. — naturally thin the Shroud by their very presence. (Certain powerful gifted mortals can have the same effect, especially talented mediums and other spiritualists.) The Shroud rating is reduced by 2 in the immediate vicinity of a supernatural creature, though it still may not fall below 4 at any time. This applies even if a supernatural creature has no particular affinity for the Shadowlands. Their mere presence naturally makes the Underworld feel more possible.

The Shroud also obfuscates evidence of the Restless when it comes to recordings, whether audio or visual. Images that are clear in person become blurry and indistinct, while audio is muted and garbled. Evidence is not destroyed outright, but rendered easier to discredit by the skeptical. This does not mean a wraith will not be punished for violating the *Dictum Mortuum* if he is caught on camera in this fashion, simply that the search for "definitive" evidence of the Restless is forever frustrating for investigators. Especially when it is combined with the mind-clouding effects of the Fog on the average mortal, the effects of the Shroud serve to cast doubt on any "proof" obtained of the actions of the Restless Dead.

While potent, there are limits to the Shroud's ability to cloud evidence. If a wraith is Materialized, anything she does is captured as clearly as one of the living, including any Arcanos used with visible effects. In addition, certain supernatural powers or technologies may be able to create accurate recordings. The empire employs specialists that aggressively work to distort or suppress evidence from such incidents, but they are not always readily available, and in the digital age material can get widespread attention faster than ever. The more the wraith does, the harder it is to remove this evidence.

"Did You Guys Hear That?"

Fear is highly contagious, and a special shared fright can temporarily weaken the Shroud as frightened mortals become more open to the supernatural. In game terms, this phenomenon is known as Hysteria, and can have a real (if short-lived) impact on the local Shroud rating. Each time the Restless succeed in seriously frightening a mortal with their actions, and that mortal spreads their fears to others, the Storyteller may invoke Hysteria and reduce the local Shroud rating by one.

The majority of the mortals present must be frightened — scaring just one or two in a large crowd is not enough — and so Hysteria generally works best when a wraith can isolate a small group to focus on. Hysteria cannot reduce the local Shroud rating by more than three points, and can never reduce it below 4 no matter what. In addition, each subsequent scare in a scene needs to be more chilling and effective to qualify. Hysteria must build as it goes on, requiring more impressively executed scares.

All Shroud reductions due to Hysteria fade at the end of the scene. These reductions also may be negated earlier if the mortals have time to collect themselves, if a strong leader is able to get a hold of the group, or if other factors quash the rising tide of panic. Hysteria is a powerful tool, but a fragile one.

Naturally, actively attempting to cultivate Hysteria usually requires a level of Arcanos use and interference with mortals that clearly violates the *Dictum Mortuum*, but wraiths looking to scare mortals away from their Haunt or harvest some intense Pathos are often willing to overlook the legal aspects of their behavior.

It is also worth noting that the Shroud is lower in a Haunt due to the constant presence and activity of the Restless in the location. When considering a Haunt, calculate the Shroud rating the place would have normally, and then decrease it by the rating of the Haunt. The Shroud still cannot be lower than 4, but if it would be lower, the Storyteller may permit wraiths to generate certain atmospheric effects without making expenditures — nothing as powerful as Arcanos use, but simply eerie elements befitting the nature of the Haunt and the wraiths inside.

The following chart details some average Shroud ratings for Storytellers to reference when deciding how strong the Shroud is in a given area.

	Shroud Rating
A busy shopping center on a sunny afternoon	10
A well-lit subway station in the morning	9
A tidy, well-kept home with no sinister history	8
An empty shopping center parking lot late at night	7
A remote country crossroads lit only by the full moon	6
That old mansion where all those murders took place	5
Abandoned cemetery at midnight of a new moon	4

The Fog

Many mortals claim they would love to see a ghost, if only to put the whole afterlife question to rest once and for all, but at the same time, deep down they're terrified of exactly what they might find. The Restless know this fear is well founded, as very few mortals come close to imagining the realities of the Underworld that awaits them. What's more, fewer still would want that knowledge even if they could find a way to obtain it.

As a result, when a human witnesses a display of supernatural activity by the Restless, they may accept and respond to it in the moment, but afterward their minds actively work to rationalize and repress what they have seen. Encounters with wraiths become little more than vivid nightmares, bad drug trips, or even a bit of undigested beef playing havoc with one's system. This phenomenon is known as the Fog, and while it can protect careless wraiths from attracting ghost hunters tramping through their Haunts with night-vision cameras, it can also make it very difficult to establish meaningful contact with friends and loved ones.

The Fog does not apply to all mortals, however. Children, animals, and some gifted humans react to the presence of the Restless however seems appropriate to them, without reverting to more instinctual forms of behavior. This does not mean that such individuals automatically see the Restless all the time, but they tend to notice their presence if the Shroud is low, the wraith is someone they recognize, the wraith is exerting a lot of effort, or if the Storyteller feels it is narratively appropriate.

Supernatural creatures also do not have their reactions dictated by the Fog. Their perspectives are naturally a bit broader than those of mortals; even if they have not encountered ghosts

before, the existence of the Restless does not shake them on a fundamental level. Note that most supernatural creatures cannot automatically see past the Shroud, but should a wraith be revealed to them somehow, they may react as they see fit rather than as dictated by the Fog chart. As a rule of thumb, Giovanni and Samedi vampires, Silent Strider and Stargazer werewolves, Corax wereravens, Euthanatos and Dreamspeaker mages, and sluagh changelings are the supernatural beings most likely to be able to detect nearby wraiths. For more on other dwellers in the World of Darkness, see p. 405.

The following chart describes how mortals typically react to witnessing overt Arcanos use or even coming face to face with one of the Restless, as based on the mortal's Willpower rating. The Storyteller may adjust these reactions based on the personality of the mortal in question, how well prepared she is for the encounter, her relationship with the wraith herself, or any other factors the Storyteller feels are relevant.

For example, the Storyteller may decide that despite having a Willpower rating of 4, an occult researcher might react more in keeping with a Willpower of 8 after studying the history of the location and preparing for the encounter. Or the Storyteller may rule that a mortal's ability to control herself may gradually increase due to repeated exposure, at least with wraiths she has encountered.

This sort of alteration should not come up too often, however, as terror is an inescapable part of the living making contact with the dead, and unpredictable responses are part of what makes the Fog so compelling dramatically. It is a staple of ghost stories that characters who seem strong crack under pressure, for example, while others that appear timid at first glance show real resolve when it counts.

However, remember that while mortals might be able to mitigate some of the worst effects of the Fog with experience and preparation, it is not something that can be totally conquered. It will always be a factor in dealings between the living and the Restless.

Fog Ratings

Willpower	Reaction
1	**Catatonic Fear:** Terrified into near paralysis, mortals can do little more than whimper softly and try to crawl to a hiding place. Rational thought, cogent conversation, and complex actions are completely out of the question.
2	**Panic:** The mortal shrieks and flees by the most direct route possible that is not immediately suicidal. They won't jump out a high window, but might run out into the street without checking too carefully.
3	**Disbelief:** The mortal is in utter denial, believing this to be some sort of trick or special effect or even a reality television show playing a prank. Attempting to convince them otherwise just increases the fervor of their denials, possibly to the point of violence.
4	**Berserk:** The *wrongness* of the wraith's very existence triggers a savage attack response, as the mortal lashes out with whatever's at hand to destroy the source of their fear. If such attacks seem to have no effect, the mortal settles for smashing objects instead.
5	**Terror:** Deeply scared but still in control of herself, the mortal attempts to get away from the wraith's presence as quickly as she can. It is, however, a reasoning retreat. She will not endanger herself and does not feel compelled to flee screaming into the night.
6	**Conciliatory:** While terrified, the mortal attempts to bargain with the wraith, offering whatever he thinks the wraith might want. Usually this means offering the sort of things he's heard of in ghost stories, like helping with unfinished business or undelivered messages.
7	**Controlled Fear:** A mortal with this degree of self-control is scared but able to completely control its influence on her actions, allowing her to make good judgments and execute complex actions normally.
8	**Curiosity:** Though not without fear, mortals at this level are more fascinated than anything else, and may seek to document their experience with a camera phone or other equipment at hand. Their interest can border on obsessive and intrusive, however, and often is more zealous than the wraith is expecting.
9	**Righteous Anger:** These mortals absolutely refuse to give ground, no matter how terrifying the wraith might appear to be or how vicious the Arcanoi being used. While they are not blind to the possibility of retreat, they show no fear and will do everything they can to fight back.
10	**No Reaction:** Rarest of the rare, these mortals have no particular reaction whatsoever. For whatever reason, the Restless are nothing special to him. Maybe he is particularly fatalistic, or perhaps he believes the wraith is some kind of higher being. He might just not be the sharpest tool in the shed, as they say. Regardless, he simply doesn't have a strong reaction to the wraith's presence.

Maelstroms

There is plenty to fear in the Underworld, but few threats inspire as much dread as the ruinous catastrophes known as Maelstroms. Spawned by great tragedies and mass deaths in the mortal world, Maelstroms boil up out of the Tempest and leave destruction in their wake. And none are more feared than Great Maelstroms, the direst form of this phenomenon, which result from the worst disasters in the mortal realm. Thankfully, these Great Maelstroms are also so rare and their damage so profound that they are used to mark eras of Underworld history.

Aside from already lethal hazards such as howling winds, choking ash, and searing lightning, Maelstroms also bring Spectres with them, riding unharmed on the winds of the storm to swoop down on wraiths caught away from shelter. Scholars ponder whether Maelstroms themselves are at least partially sentient, as they seem to strike in ways designed to cause the greatest damage to the largest number of wraiths. It is almost as if the storm tailors which hazards strike where so that the most vulnerable wraiths are exposed to a given threat.

While the Great Maelstroms are used to mark the end of one epoch and the beginning of another, even the smallest Maelstrom is dangerous. More serious Maelstroms pose a threat to all but the sturdiest Haunts and stoutest citadels, and are a major reason that few wraiths truly "go it alone" in the long run. There is simply no way to survive stronger Maelstroms without a strong Haunt or other fortified shelter, and such resources are too precious for any one wraith to hope to claim them alone indefinitely.

Storm Warnings

It is known that Maelstroms are generated by catastrophes in the Skinlands, but that does not mean they always arrive immediately in their wake. Maelstroms have been known to begin hours or even days in advance of events in the living world, acting as grim omens as much as destructive forces. This means that a vigilant wraith is sometimes able to take action to protect the Quick she cares about from the impending disaster, though this means braving the dangers of the storm. This is no mean feat in even a smaller Maelstrom, and almost certain suicide in the face of a serious storm.

Maelstroms have their strength rated in "Bells," a reference to the huge storm-warning bells found in most established Necropoli. These bells only sound in response to an imminent Maelstrom, and the number of times the bell rings indicates the strength of the storm. This ranges from a single bell for a "minor" Maelstrom all the way up to an utterly catastrophic five bells, which spells certain ruin for all but the hardiest of settlements.

Should the bell ring six times, or simply continue ringing continuously, it means a Great Maelstrom is approaching. Such an immense and overwhelmingly destructive storm is a force of destruction beyond human comprehension, and can very easily annihilate entire communities of the Restless. Should a Great Maelstrom arise during play, the Storyteller is encouraged to use the rules for a five-Bell Maelstrom as a starting point, but then intensify the storm in unexpected and utterly horrifying ways.

Hazards of the Storm

While exposure to a Maelstrom can simply be presented in terms of damage, the Storyteller does not have to leave it at that. The Restless compare these storms to hurricanes and typhoons because that is the best reference they have from their living days, but the comparison misses an essential element. While the storms of the Skinlands are simply meteoric phenomena, Maelstroms are the product of very different forces. They are produced by surging levels of suffering, pain, sorrow, and nihilistic destruction, stirred together with the dark energies of the Labyrinth and expelled through the chaos of the Tempest.

Some sample hazards are included below to give an idea of some of the terrifying dangers Maelstroms can present, but this is by no means a comprehensive list. Storytellers should adapt these hazards or invent new ones as needed, especially for more powerful Maelstroms, which often reflect some elements of the tragedies that spawned them.

Howling Winds

Maelstrom winds behave much like the winds of Skinlands storms in terms of battering structures and turning loose debris into dangerous projectiles, but they are also pose far more insidious threats. It is not uncommon for wraiths to hear heartwrenching cries for help as the Maelstrom rages, and while some of them are genuine, others are the storm itself calling out for victims, or even Spectres riding the winds looking for fresh meat. No matter their source, these false voices serve only to lure wraiths out of safety and into danger.

System: In order to tell the difference between genuine cries for help and false pleas generated by the Maelstrom, a wraith must roll Perception + Empathy (difficulty 5 + Bell rating). Success means he can differentiate and react accordingly, and is immune to this effect for the remainder of the storm. Failure means that the wraith loses 1 Willpower as the cries eat away at his resolve, and he may take some action to investigate (though not at the expense of others). A botch on this roll means the wraith becomes convinced that he hears the voice of a loved one in need of rescue, no matter how illogical this belief might be, and ventures out into the storm to search for them unless he is forcibly restrained. He will also attempt to call out loudly to this loved one unless silenced by others, which can draw attention from nearby Spectres.

Freezing Rain

Though a Maelstrom's terrible brute force presents great dangers to a wraith's Corpus, that isn't the only danger it offers. Some Maelstroms mix the raw negative energy of the Labyrinth into the storm, resulting in a type of freezing rain that leeches

the Pathos right out of a wraith. Afflicted wraiths caught in this downpour must seek shelter or quickly become demoralized and aimless. Should they be caught in the freezing rain long enough, they can even succumb to a Harrowing.

System: During a scene where this hazard is active, roll half the normal damage dice for the Maelstrom. (Affected wraiths still roll soak normally.) Any unsoaked damage suffered is subtracted from a wraith's Pathos points rather than his Corpus levels. Should the victim run out of Pathos points, remove Willpower points instead, with the usual Harrowing consequences if their Willpower points are depleted.

Isolating Fog

A Maelstrom with this hazard is accompanied by banks of thick, soupy fog. The fog persists even during periods of high winds, and seems designed to separate targets caught within it. Sounds are muffled and distorted, visibility is reduced to almost nothing, and even physical sensations feel distant and detached.

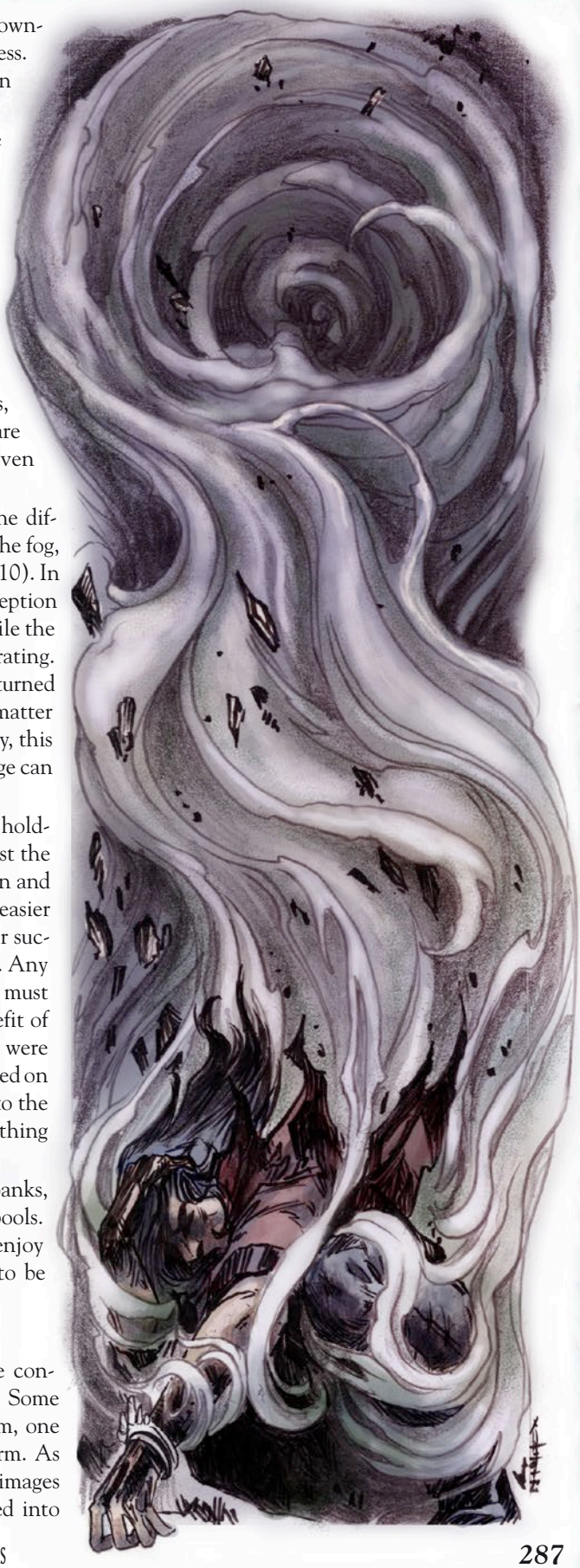
System: When a wraith is enveloped in the fog, increase the difficulty of all actions related to navigation, locating things within the fog, or simple sensory perception by the Maelstrom's rating (maximum 10). In addition, for each turn a wraith spends in the fog, he must roll Perception + Awareness against a difficulty equal to 5 + Maelstrom rating, while the Storyteller rolls a number of dice equal to the Maelstrom's damage rating. If the Storyteller scores more successes, the wraith is hopelessly turned around, and cannot make any progress in terms of movement. No matter how much he moves, he winds up back where he started. Naturally, this can present a serious danger in its own right, as regular storm damage can still occur while in the fog.

Wraiths in direct contact with each other — lashed together, holding hands, linked by chains — may combine their successes against the Storyteller's single roll. This hazard preys upon feelings of isolation and confusion, and so real connection with others actually makes it easier to navigate the fog. However, should the characters combine their successes and still fall short, they must each spend 1 Willpower point. Any wraith who fails to do so is immediately cut off from the others, and must find a way to locate his companions if he wishes to gain the benefit of teamwork again. This separation occurs regardless of if the wraiths were holding hands or even tied together. More than one wraith has tugged on a length of securely tied rope only to have the end drop uselessly to the ground, or squeezed his friend's shoulder only to find it is now nothing more than a handful of fog… or a Spectre.

Naturally, Spectres enjoy hunting isolated targets in the fog banks, and may add the Maelstrom's rating to any Stealth-related dice pools. Spectres gifted with talents of mimicry or disguise particularly enjoy luring targets to them by calling out in distress, or pretending to be separated comrades.

Searing Lightning

Lightning strikes accompany many Maelstroms and may be considered part of the usual damage roll for exposure to the storm. Some Maelstroms, however, bring a special kind of lightning with them, one that is an even greater threat to the Restless exposed to the storm. As the lightning flashes, wraiths in the area have bright, vivid afterimages of intense memories associated with their strongest Fetters seared into



their sight. These afterimages are extremely distracting, making it difficult to see reality through the haze of memory. At their strongest, they can cause a wraith to become lost in the memory as though reliving it.

System: A wraith who is exposed to searing lightning must roll her highest Fetter rating against a difficulty of 5 + Maelstrom rating. The Storyteller may lower the difficulty of the roll if the wraith takes measures to protect her eyes. Success means that she is able to shake off the memory flash and act normally. Failure means that the wraith takes a +2 penalty to all difficulties for a number of turns equal to the Maelstrom's rating, as it becomes difficult to discern the past from the present.

A botch on this roll means the wraith is not just distracted but actively retreats into the memory for a number of turns equal to the Maelstrom's rating. She translates her surroundings and other characters in the vicinity into her memory as best she can, and is treated as stunned for the purposes of taking effective action. Each turn, she may spend a Willpower point and make another roll to attempt to snap out of it; if successful, she still suffers a +2 penalty on difficulties for the Maelstrom's rating in turns as lingering images distract her.

Haunts

Unquiet Places

While the Shroud is a powerful barrier between the living and the dead, it is not immutable. Strong emotions can wear on it, creating areas where the two worlds are closer than normal, and where it is easier for the Restless to reach out and make contact with the living. Negative emotions such as fear or rage do this most often, but positive ones can also alter the Shroud. These thin places become known as Haunts, and are places of importance to the living and the dead alike.

While the stereotypical haunt is a graveyard or an abandoned mansion, the truth is that Haunts can form anywhere. What matters is less whether teenagers dare themselves into spending the night there and more if the sheer force of emotion expended in the place has rubbed the Shroud raw. A cemetery poisoned with disdain and empty beer bottles can make a far worse Haunt than the basement of an old row home where once upon a time, a small child was locked in the dark by her friends.

Even the most skeptical of the Quick feel something "different" when they enter a powerful Haunt. Some experience the more traditional feelings of shivers down the spine, or the sense of being watched. Others feel sudden surges of emotion or flashes of times and individuals gone by, as if the history of the place were reaching out to them. It used to be that most people either shied away from such places or brushed these feelings aside and went about their business, but now there's a whole new reaction for the Restless to confront.

Celebrity

While a certain sort of person has long been attracted to places thought to be haunted, and amateur paranormal societies are hardly a new innovation, in recent years popular culture has become obsessed with haunted places. Reality-show film crews flock to any place where rumors of ghost sightings abound, and while clueless television stars waving electronics and shrieking into night-vision cameras pose little threat to the Restless directly, the added attention they bring to a Haunt unlucky enough to be put on camera certainly can bring much more serious threats.

Whether it is a little-known place or subject to worldwide acclaim, however, there is no question that Haunts figure prominently in the society of the Restless.

Haunt Advantages

Wraiths guard their Haunts jealously, and with good reason. Haunts provide a number of powerful advantages and protections for wraiths. And these serve against both the perils of the Underworld and the intrusions of the Quick.

The Shroud

The barrier between worlds is thinner in a Haunt, making it easier for wraiths to interact with the mortal world there. The local Shroud rating is reduced by an amount equal to the Haunt's rating, to a minimum of 4. In addition, the Shroud does not fluctuate at a Haunt as it does in other locations — it makes no difference if you're visiting a deserted old cemetery Haunt on a bright sunny day or at midnight in the middle of winter.

Other factors may temporarily lower the Shroud rating at a Haunt, though never below 4, but they will not raise it above its base rating except under extraordinary circumstances. Even then, such increases are typically temporary unless significant supernatural power is used or regular, devoted efforts are made to ward off the encroachments of the dead.

While the mechanical effect on the Shroud may be the same from site to site, no two Haunts are alike when it comes to how the Quick react to the nearness of the Underworld. Most Haunts have a distinct feeling or sensation to them, a sort of "psychic signature" that sensitive mortals recognize almost immediately and even less aware individuals feel instinctively. This is also where echoes come in.

Haunt Echoes

Haunts have reputations as eerie and intimidating places to the Quick, and not just because of their resident wraiths. Over time, particularly powerful Haunts begin to generate persistent, low-level supernatural effects of their own, commonly known as echoes. While resident wraiths can suppress these effects at times, echoes are not under anyone's direct control. They are simply manifestations of the emotions and experiences that have "soaked into" a Haunt over time.

If the reduction of the Shroud rating due to the Haunt level would reduce the Shroud rating below 4, it remains at

4, but the owners of the Haunt may select one echo for each additional point that would have gone beyond that. A list of sample echoes can be found below. New echoes may be created at the Storyteller's discretion. Echo effects should never imitate or replace Arcanoi use. While they do have certain game effects, they are primarily ambiance.

Resident wraiths may choose to suppress the effects of an echo if they desire, either for an individual target or everyone present. Should there be disagreement about doing so, the wraith with the highest investment in the Haunt Background wins. In the event of a tie, roll the highest Willpower rating on each side of the dispute, difficulty 6, with the winner's choice taking precedence.

Note that echoes are only selected if the Haunt would reduce the default Shroud rating below 4; if other effects temporarily reduce the Shroud, these do not create new echoes. If an effect temporarily raises the Shroud rating, one echo is suppressed for each point of Shroud increase. The Storyteller determines which echo is suspended at any given time.

Echoes do not apply to the Restless, only mortals. Supernatural beings are affected by echoes unless the description specifies otherwise. Echoes themselves do not constitute a violation of the *Dictum Mortuum*, though wraiths must be careful not to let echoes draw too much attention.

Deadly: Sometimes it seems like a Haunt is simply out for blood. Injuries incurred in this location always seem to be worse than they should be, and even minor scrapes tend to leave lasting bruises or nasty scars. Subtract one die from all soak rolls made by mortals within the Haunt. In addition, the difficulty of rolls to hold one's temper, resist taking violent action, or otherwise maintain composure in an aggressive situation are increased by 1.

Forbidding: This Haunt gives off a palpable sense of menace that discourages casual visitors. Animals will not willingly approach the Haunt, and mortals must roll Willpower, difficulty 3 + Haunt rating, to enter. Each success allows a person to stay for one hour before needing to roll again. Failure means that he must leave as quickly as possible, and will not reenter until at least the Haunt's rating in hours has passed. A botch means he will not enter for any reason for at least a number of days equal to the Haunt's rating, and will become hysterical if forced to do so. Hysterical individuals will attempt to flee at the earliest opportunity, and if prevented from fleeing, will cower, babble, and otherwise be incapable of constructive activity. Supernatural beings receive a bonus on their Willpower roll equal to their Occult rating.

Isolated: A Haunt with this echo is naturally overlooked. Even if it's on a busy street where people pass it every day, nobody ever seems to actually notice that it's there. Maps don't list it, GPS devices don't find it, and even following directions there often results in getting lost. Individuals simply ignore it unless they have compelling reasons to visit that specific location, and even those who actively search for the Haunt increase the difficulty of all relevant rolls to locate or notice it by 3. This

applies even to individuals who have visited the Haunt — it is still just as easy for them to forget where they were going.

Jinxed: This Haunt is prone to bizarre accidents, sinister coincidences, and other moments of freakish bad luck. Once per story for each level of the Haunt, the Storyteller may visit some ill luck or unfortunate coincidence on mortal visitors or occupants in the Haunt. It is important to note that this misfortune is not something the resident wraiths can control. While these accidents definitely seem to "defend" the Haunt, they are unpredictable and can range from embarrassing slip ups to downright deadly accidents. They're also unselective in their effects, as they can target Fetters or friendly Quick.

Nightmarish: A Haunt with this echo provokes disturbing dreams and nightmares in mortal visitors, often ones related to its history. Reduce all Phantasm difficulties by 1 regarding affecting sleepers in the Haunt, as well as anyone currently suffering a fatigue penalty (see below). A person who sleeps for more than a couple of hours within its walls must roll Willpower against a difficulty equal to 3 + Haunt rating. Failure means that she suffers a +1 penalty on all difficulties the next day due to poor sleep and distraction. This penalty is cumulative, but a successful roll reduces it by one. Sleeping in another location removes all penalties after a single night. Supernatural creatures may spend 1 Willpower point to negate all penalties at any time.

Obscured: An increasingly valuable trait in modern times, this echo makes it difficult for mortal investigators to gather evidence at the Haunt. Batteries die suddenly, files are corrupted, audio is absent or distorted, and images appear either hopelessly muddled or so perfect they seem clearly faked. The difficulty to break or tamper with such devices is reduced by 1, and each time an investigator attempts to capture evidence, roll the Haunt's rating (difficulty 7). Success means that the evidence is somehow corrupted, or will be accidentally destroyed within hours of leaving the Haunt. On a botch, that device is immune to this echo.

Resonant: The Haunt radiates a specific emotion associated with its history on a subtle but powerful level. Mortals find this emotion constantly creeping into their state of mind and coloring their perceptions. Reduce the difficulty of Empathy and Arcanoi rolls related to that emotion by 2, and the Storyteller should reflect the Haunt's emotional resonance in the attitudes of visitors, especially long-term residents or regulars. Supernatural beings may shake off this effect for a scene by spending a Willpower point.

Slipping: A Haunt with this echo occasionally experiences slips in time — faces of people long passed show up in mirrors, old conversations drift down empty hallways, and scents of long-lost meals waft out of cold, dark kitchens. These slips are not ghostly manifestations, but one-way glimpses into the past, though the past is not aware of the present, and cannot be contacted or affected at all. Slips are focused on those events and individuals that left strong impressions on the Haunt, but otherwise cannot be predicted. Sometimes the same slip will repeat, sometimes not. The general atmosphere of oddness means that the difficulty of Arcanos rolls at this location is 1 lower.

Anchoring

Wraiths who have lost their last Fetters and thus their ability to remain in the Shadowlands for long find Haunts offer them a better foothold than nothing at all, if still a very temporary one. Add the Haunt's rating in relevant time increments to any power or ability that allows a wraith to return to the Shadowlands, provided he does so in the Haunt.

Note that this effect does not guarantee success on relevant rolls or replace the need to make certain expenditures. It simply boosts durations acquired by other means. If an expenditure of some kind is required to remain in the Shadowlands at certain intervals, that expenditure is still required for this additional time. Leaving the Haunt during this additional time immediately causes the wraith to vanish from the Shadowlands and reappear on the nearest Byway.

Example: Smiles is in possession of an Artifact that allows her to return to the Shadowlands for one minute per success on a Stamina + Enigmas roll. She rolls four successes, which would normally grant her four minutes of Shadowlands access, but since she used the item to enter a level-three Haunt, she adds three minutes to her time, for a total of seven minutes. (If she rolled no successes, however, the Haunt rating would not help her — it only adds to existing durations, it doesn't create them on its own.) If her access time was measured in hours instead of minutes, the Haunt would add its rating in hours, as appropriate. Lastly, if the Artifact required Smiles to spend 1 Pathos every minute she wished to remain, she would still be required to spend Pathos for the bonus minutes from the Haunt.

Maelstroms

One very important reason Haunts are so fiercely fought over is that they are some of the few places that provide real shelter against Maelstroms. To determine how much protection is provided, subtract the Haunt's rating from the Maelstrom level. If this reduces the effective Maelstrom level to zero or less, the wraith is completely protected from the ravages of the storm so long as she remains within the Haunt — or no one breaks in.

If the Maelstrom rating is not reduced to zero, the effects of storm will break through after a number of hours equal to the Haunt's rating, assuming the Maelstrom lasts that long. Any wraiths still in the Haunt at this time take damage as normal for the Maelstrom's effective rating, but may add the Haunt rating to their soak dice to resist the effects of the storm so long as they continue to shelter within what's left of the Haunt.

Haunts also provide limited protection from the attention of Spectres during a Maelstrom. Provided the wraiths inside are not doing anything to call attention to themselves, add the Haunt's rating to the difficulty of any Perception-based rolls of nearby Spectres to notice the Haunt or its inhabitants (maximum difficulty 10). If any Spectres do notice the Haunt, however, this protection is lost for the remainder of the Maelstrom. Naturally, a wraith's Shadow may decide that spotting a passing cloud of Spectres is the perfect time to force a sudden outburst….

Overcrowding sharply diminishes the effectiveness of a Haunt during a Maelstrom. This can lead to some very difficult decisions if too many wraiths are trying to take shelter together. As a rule, a Haunt may shelter up to five wraiths per rating level, assuming the actual size of the Haunt can accommodate so many Restless. Concerning larger Haunts with lower ratings, however, this is not necessarily a question of literally having enough space as it is the mystical capability of the Haunt to shelter wraiths from the storm. Hosting too many wraiths taxes its protective energies.

When there are too many wraiths in a Haunt for its capacity, its effective rating is immediately reduced by 1 for resisting the Maelstrom. This penalty is cumulative. A Haunt loses a level of effectiveness each time a number of extra wraiths equal to its normal rating take shelter inside. So a level-one Haunt ceases to be effective with one wraith over the limit, a level-two Haunt loses effectiveness every two wraiths over capacity, and so on. Note that if a Haunt runs out of actual space, no additional wraiths can be accommodated even if the Haunt still has effective rating left.

No Haunt is strong enough to withstand a Great Maelstrom for very long. Should a Haunt be subjected to such a catastrophic storm, the protected time is halved, and the Maelstrom's effective level is not reduced for the purposes of dealing damage when it finally breaks. Only the sturdiest of Underworld shelters, typically hardened for this specific purpose with thick Stygian steel walls, have any hope of warding off a Great Maelstrom for any length of time.

Injury

The living like to reassure themselves that the dead are beyond pain, but unfortunately if there's one thing wraiths understand better than the Quick, it's that pain is most definitely eternal. Wraithly existence is something of a walking paradox — a wraith can find herself briefly discorporated by her child's baseball passing through her, but at the same time shrug off a withering hail of Skinlands bullets with the same amount of effort. Even considering the weapons of other wraiths, the Psyche is incredibly resilient, and so Corpus can withstand a tremendous amount of punishment.

Indeed, as anyone who has witnessed Moliate at work can attest, a wraith's Corpus is less like the physical body it appears to recreate and more of a malleable expression of her Psyche's emotional determination. In that respect, it has more in common with a suit of armor than it does with their former flesh and blood. As the Corpus is damaged, the wraith becomes more translucent and less distinct, direct representations of the fact that her sense of self is literally unraveling under the strain of abuse. In short, wraiths are tough because they *must* be — because when that defense they call their Corpus does fail, it means a Harrowing.

Different Bodies

Players familiar with other World of Darkness games will notice that wraiths handle damage differently than mortals and even other supernatural creatures. This is not surprising when it's considered that wraiths are not living or even undead bodies, but expressions of their will to defy Oblivion itself. Players accustomed to other systems are thus advised to read carefully and be mindful of the unique qualities of the Restless Dead.

Or, as some more cynical wraiths like to say, "The living have it easy — they only die once." For the dead may find themselves torn apart and dragged to the darkest corners of their souls not once, not twice, but many times over the course of their existence. Each Harrowing risks returning slightly lessened; each time the Shadow's whispering grows a little louder.

As a result, it's important to note that wraiths do not record or heal damage the same way the living do. Most wraiths are capable of suffering far more damage than the average mortal or even many supernatural creatures could sustain — the weak willed don't last long in the Shadowlands, if they show up at all — and thus their systems for measuring and mending injury are correspondingly different.

Permanent Corpus

There are two traits that determine how resilient a wraith's Corpus is at any given time. Permanent Corpus measures the maximum amount of Corpus a wraith may possess, while temporary Corpus fluctuates depending on how abused or used up their spiritual body is at a particular moment. Temporary Corpus levels may never exceed the wraith's permanent Corpus rating; any excess Corpus that might be gained from such infusions is lost.

All wraiths begin with a permanent Corpus rating of 10, but this can be reduced by Harrowings, as the pull of Oblivion eats away at a wraith's very sense of self. Permanent Corpus cannot be purchased with experience points — once it is lost, it is gone forever.

As a wraith is injured, the boxes representing temporary Corpus levels are marked off in various ways, as described in the "Types of Damage" section, on p. 293. A wraith with all of her temporary Corpus levels filled with marks is in serious trouble, and depending on the type of damage may be immediately dragged into a Harrowing (or even a Destruction Harrowing).

States of Being

As befits the fact that a wraith is as much a being of pure emotional energy as it is a "body," things can become a bit fluid when it comes to what is going on with a wraith's Corpus at any

given time. There are five Corpus states: Corporeal, Incorporeal, Wavering, Material, and Harrowed.

Corporeal: The default state of a wraith in the Shadowlands, a Corporeal wraith interacts normally with other wraiths, but can also suffer damage through the Shroud due to the behavior of objects in the Skinlands.

Incorporeal: If a Corporeal wraith collides with a Skinlands object — whether it's a thrown bottle, a passing car, or a bullet — and that collision would normally cause damage to a living person, the wraith instead takes a single Corpus level of bashing damage and becomes Incorporeal for her Stamina rating in rounds. This happens automatically; the wraith cannot choose not to become Incorporeal in response to such impacts.

It's important to note that this state can only be caused by an object that would harm a mortal — a curtain fluttering through the wraith as she passes won't cause her to become Incorporeal, nor will rain or a casually discarded paper plate full of food. Even a person accidentally passing through part of them at a walking pace might not cause them to become Incorporeal, though a person running certainly would, and the wraith would also become Incorporeal if they deliberately placed themselves in someone's path.

Wraiths can choose to become Incorporeal voluntarily by walking through a wall or a door. This inflicts one Corpus level of bashing damage and renders the wraith Incorporeal for the normal amount of time, and is the basis for how wraiths are known to pass through such barriers in countless legends. Note that this only functions with respect to objects and barriers in the Skinlands; Shadowlands items damage and impede a wraith normally, and do not trigger the Incorporeal state. By way of example, a bullet fired in the Skinlands would inflict only a single Corpus level and cause the wraith to become Incorporeal, but a ghostly bullet fired in the Shadowlands would inflict normal damage, and the wraith would remain Corporeal.

As described above, a wraith that is Corporeal but passes through a Skinlands barrier or suffers a collision with a harmful Skinlands object briefly becomes Incorporeal. As far as observers are concerned, her Corpus becomes hazy and transparent, though not to the point where she becomes difficult to see. While a wraith is Incorporeal, she is effectively immune to damage from the Skinlands. Once this state is triggered, she simply cannot be harmed by collisions with Skinlands objects or attacks. However, she is still vulnerable to Shadowlands attacks.

Wavering: A wraith whose temporary Corpus levels have been filled with bashing damage (see below) becomes Wavering. Their form is translucent and flickering, like a candle flame in a strong wind. A wraith in this state is treated like a Corporeal wraith, except that she now suffers two bashing levels each time she becomes Incorporeal, as it is increasingly difficult to keep her Corpus together. In addition, a Wavering wraith is considered to have zero Corpus levels available for Arcanoi expenditures or other purposes, and is exceedingly vulnerable to suffering even a single point of lethal or aggravated damage.

A wraith does not have to remain Wavering. Instead, they may choose to accept the Shadow's offer and succumb to a Harrowing at any time. Choosing to succumb gives the Shadow 1 point of Angst, but it goes into effect immediately, even if an enemy is in midswing. This is an exception to the normal rules about acting out of turn.

Material: A wraith can only assume this state through the use of the Embody Arcanos, though some whisper that other supernatural creatures possess their own ways of granting versions of it. Speaking only for the Embody Arcanos, however, this means a wraith is fully physical in the Skinlands, able to interact with it like one of the living. As a being of solidified emotional energy, the wraith does not suffer wound penalties, but can be injured by attacks, same as the living. While Material, he does not turn Incorporeal in response to Skinlands threats. While in this state, wraiths are still subject to attacks and damage from the Shadowlands, but a Materialized wraith can attempt to soak damage from both worlds normally.

Harrowed: A wraith whose temporary Corpus levels are filled with lethal damage, or who suffers a level of lethal damage while in the Wavering state, can no longer resist the pull of Oblivion and immediately descends into the deeper Underworld. Upon arrival, she undergoes a nightmarish experience known as a Harrowing, where her Shadow will attempt to assert control and draw her ever closer to Oblivion. (Full rules for Harrowings are presented on p. 240.) Assuming she "survives" the ordeal, her Corpus will re-form near one of her Fetters, typically one that was involved in the Harrowing.

Corporeal States

Corporeal: The wraith's default state. Takes normal damage from attacks in the Underworld, but becomes Incorporeal in response to Skinlands objects.

Incorporeal: A wraith whose form has been disrupted by contact with the Skinlands, such as passing through a wall or being "hit" by a mortal car. Takes normal damage from other wraiths, but is immune to Skinlands damage.

Wavering: A wraith who has lost all of her Corpus levels to bashing damage. Flickering and fragile. Any lethal or aggravated damage will provoke a Harrowing.

Material: Physically present in the Skinlands due to use of the Embody Arcanos. Affected by both Underworld and mortal damage sources normally.

Harrowed: A wraith whose Corpus has been damaged so severely she is drawn into the deeper Underworld and a confrontation with her Shadow.

The Rules of Ouch and Excuse Me

Trying to decide whether Skinlands contact warrants a wraith taking a level of bashing damage and becoming Incorporeal can prompt some really weird table debates. The easiest and most important guideline to follow is the Rule of Ouch, which simply holds that if the impact in question is enough to make the Storyteller say, "ouch," then it's enough to trigger the Incorporeal state. Don't actually test these impacts in real life, though — nobody wants players lobbing baseballs at the Storyteller just to prove a point!

If the Rule of Ouch doesn't apply, but the matter still seems hazy, then try using the Rule of Excuse Me. If the wraith comes in contact with something in the Skinlands, but a living person could simply have briefly stepped to the side and avoided them with a simple, "excuse me," then it doesn't qualify for triggering the Incorporeal state. Thus, a wraith won't necessarily become Incorporeal just for casually brushing past a mortal on a wide-open street with plenty of space, but he will on a crowded subway where there isn't any space for the Quick, let alone the dead. This rule never applies if the wraith deliberately occupies a space that is then passed through, or if something passes through most or all of a wraith's Corpus. That's just too much a reminder of their ephemeral state to ignore.

A wraith who survives a Harrowing that was caused due to Corpus loss re-forms with a number of Corpus levels equal to her Stamina rating or her permanent Corpus, whichever is lower. Note that she has no particular protection after she re-forms, and can easily be driven into another Harrowing if she is unlucky enough to encounter more enemies while in this condition.

Types of Damage

While their Corpus differs greatly from a living body, wraiths still suffer damage along the same lines as most creatures — bashing, lethal, and aggravated. It might seem strange that Corpus would react differently to different sources of injury, given its nature as emotional energy in a semi-solid state, but some learned wraiths have theorized it is at least in part due to the fact that wraiths simply remember some types of injuries as being more serious than others.

In other words, even after death a wraith instinctively fears a punch in the face far less than, say, a knife in the ribs. And so even though the bones and organs that really defined the distinction in their living days are gone, their Corpus responds to their instincts, suffering less disruption from the punch than from the thrust of the blade.

While some guidelines are provided, the distinction between bashing and lethal damage is left deliberately open so that the Storyteller can suit it to their needs. A punch is considered bashing damage at the hands of an average wraith, for example, but the Storyteller may rule that the punch of a scythe-fisted, Moliated monstrosity is definitely lethal. The one thing to remember is to be consistent and fair in these rulings. If something is considered bashing damage in one case, it should still be bashing damage the next time that same source comes up.

Bashing damage is damage that in the Skinlands would typically result in bruises, scrapes, and possibly even broken bones, but which is unlikely to be immediately lethal: punches, kicks, being struck by a fastball, getting hit with a board, falling a short distance, and so on. Bashing damage is indicated with a single slash "/" through the temporary Corpus level box for each bashing level. Unlike lethal or aggravated damage, a wraith is not automatically thrown into a Harrowing when their temporary Corpus levels are filled up with bashing damage — rather, as more bashing damage is inflicted, simply put a second slash through each additional box, representing how it is becoming lethal damage (see below). Punches might not be as immediately dangerous as gunshot wounds, but add up enough of them and they'll kill you just the same.

A wraith whose temporary Corpus levels are filled up with bashing damage enters the Wavering state, described previously. This is a very precarious position, not just because the wraith effectively has zero Corpus levels to spend, but because even a single point of damage from an outright lethal source immediately plunges them into a Harrowing. Even worse, a single point of aggravated damage in this state sends them into a Destruction Harrowing. Outright lethal is defined as a source which normally inflicts lethal damage, such as a knife or a firearm.

***Example**: Jacob Pelkow has been caught preaching heresy by local Hierarchy heavy Malachai, who decides to have his guards teach the defiant wraith a harsh lesson. They begin beating Jacob, who has nine temporary Corpus levels, and in the first turn their punches and kicks inflict a total of six bashing levels of Corpus. Jacob's player Sean marks these by putting a single slash through six of his nine temporary Corpus level boxes. The next round the struggling heretic takes another five levels of bashing damage. Sean puts a single slash through Jacob's last three temporary Corpus level boxes, and since he still has damage to assign, he puts a second slash through two of the existing boxes, converting the bashing damage to lethal. Jacob also enters the Wavering state, as all of his Corpus levels have been filled up with bashing damage. If the attack isn't called off or Jacob doesn't get help soon, Malachai's soldiers are going to keep converting bashing damage into lethal and send Jacob right into a Harrowing. What's more, if one of them pulls a knife and inflicts even a single point of outright lethal damage, Jacob will also immediately enter a Harrowing, since he is Wavering. And if the blade is Stygian steel*

that inflicts so much as a single level of aggravated damage, that damage will send him right into a Destruction Harrowing.

Lethal damage is exactly what the term implies — injuries caused by things that are designed to be or are capable of killing in short order: knives, gunshots, high speed collisions, wild animal attacks, falling from a considerable height, etc. Lethal damage is indicated by putting an "X" through a temporary Corpus level box for each lethal level. Lethal damage "upgrades" bashing damage as it is inflicted — simply add another line to make an "X." If a wraith suffers lethal damage and all of her Corpus levels are full of lethal damage, she falls into a Harrowing.

Aggravated damage is a particularly horrifying form of damage, one that poses an immediate threat to a wraith's very existence. Aggravated damage reflects injuries from sources so severe that they cannot be easily repaired, as they represent damage to the very essence of the wraith's soul. Fortunately, there are relatively few ready sources of aggravated damage: weapons forged from Stygian steel; barrow-flame, the fire of the Shadowlands; the crystalized Pathos called soulfire; certain Arcanoi, such as Outrage and Usury; Spectres with certain Shade powers; and the natural weaponry of vampires, werewolves, and other supernatural creatures, assuming they find a way into the Shadowlands. Aggravated damage is marked by completely filling in a box with a "*" or solid shading.

In addition to the usual sources, the Storyteller may rule that any particularly severe trauma inflicts aggravated damage, such as a massive explosion or a tremendous disaster, but is cautioned to do so sparingly. If aggravated damage becomes too common, not only is it likely to start an increasingly rapid cycle of Harrowings, but such familiarity also robs it of much of its associated menace and terror.

If a wraith ever loses her last Corpus level to aggravated damage, regardless of any other types of damage she has recorded, she immediately plunges into the Labyrinth to face a Destruction Harrowing. She also enters a Destruction Harrowing if she suffers a single Corpus level of aggravated damage while in the Wavering state.

When a wraith suffers damage, unmarked Corpus level boxes are always filled up before any marked ones would be "upgraded" to a more severe damage type. For example, if a wraith with eight temporary Corpus suffers three levels of bashing damage, then two levels of lethal damage, she would have three boxes with a "/", two boxes with an "X", and three empty boxes. Only when all empty boxes are filled up with

damage do the bashing boxes start getting upgraded to lethal damage (or worse).

Healing

Though pain might be eternal and injury inescapable, the mutable Corpus of wraiths also isn't plagued by the many mysterious organs and systems of a living body. This makes it much easier to heal most forms of damage.

Bashing damage actually repairs itself on its own, as the wraith's emotional state slowly knits itself back together. A wraith recovers one Corpus level of bashing damage every hour, even if he is engaged in other activities during that time. Being punched in the face hurts, even as a ghost, but it's still a lot easier to recover from it than being mauled by Spectral claws.

***Example**: Doctor Caleb Rapture is in the Shadowlands following a mortal lover and goes Incorporeal three times in the process, incurring three levels of bashing damage. His player, Jaime, puts single slash marks through three of Caleb's Corpus boxes. Assuming he doesn't take more damage, he will erase one level per hour, and be completely healed in three hours.*

A wraith who has suffered lethal damage, or who wishes to heal bashing damage more quickly than every hour must resort to other options for healing their wounds. As the Corpus is itself a reflection of the Psyche's emotional drive, a wraith may spend one point of Pathos to immediately regain two Corpus levels of bashing damage or one Corpus level of lethal damage. Unless otherwise allowed by special powers or circumstances, only a single point of Pathos may be spent per turn in this fashion. As long as the wraith has Pathos to spend and is capable of even a slight bit of concentration, she may heal herself. The Usury Arcanos also offers the ability to repair Corpus damage, one of the many reasons the Guild remains highly sought after (if not terribly trusted).

***Example**: Caleb approaches an unscrupulous Reaper, who pulls a soulsteel blade on the would-be Samaritan. He tries to drive her back, but she stabs Caleb, inflicting four levels of lethal damage. Caleb's player, Josh, puts "X" marks through four Corpus boxes. The next round, Caleb spends 1 Pathos to heal, and erases one level of lethal damage. Caleb may still act normally as well, as healing in this fashion does not require an action.*

As suits such terrible injuries, aggravated Corpus levels of damage are painful and time-consuming to heal. Aggravated injuries may only be healed "naturally" if the wraith Slumbers or Meditates for eight hours and spends three Pathos points. It costs three Pathos points to heal one Corpus level of aggravated damage, and only one level can be healed in this fashion every eight hours.

***Example**: Madison escaped from the forges, but it was a close call — she suffered four aggravated levels due to contact with soulfire. It will take 12 Pathos and 32 hours of rest to heal it all. She can spread it out if she likes, but no matter what, recovering is going to be a long, costly process.*

At the Storyteller's discretion or the player's request, aggravated damage may even leave lasting marks on the victim's Corpus, "scars" that must be cosmetically mended with Moliate, if they can be mended at all. This represents the fact that the trauma has made such a deep impression on the wraith's Psyche that it has altered his self-image in a profound way. Note that some changes, notably Deathmarks and guildmarks, cannot be healed by any means.

A wraith may also opt to heal damage by Slumbering. A Slumbering character must approach one of his Fetters and fade into it. In order to gain any regenerative benefit from this rest, he must remain Slumbering within the Fetter for at least eight hours. Provided he does so, the wraith automatically clears all bashing damage, and the player may roll the character's Stamina (difficulty 6). Each success heals one level of lethal damage. Any interruption forces the process to start over with no benefit. A wraith may also use this time toward healing aggravated damage, as described previously.

***Example**: David Fogle, explorer extraordinaire, has returned a little worse for wear from his latest expedition into the Tempest. He currently has three bashing levels and four lethal levels of damage, but he doesn't want to spend a lot of Pathos to heal. Instead he returns to one of his Fetters and Slumbers. After eight hours pass, all of his bashing damage is healed automatically. As for the lethal damage, David's player Walt rolls his Stamina and gets three successes, so three lethal levels are removed. David has one level of lethal damage left. Walt could choose to let David stay in Slumber for another eight hours and roll Stamina again to attempt to heal the last lethal level of damage, or he can exit Slumber and heal another way.*

Sources of Injury

Wraiths can suffer as many forms of harm as there are ways to die, as well as a few methods unknown to the blissfully ignorant Quick. Some of the most common sources are described below.

Regardless of source, characters facing injury, whether mortal or wraith, can make Stamina rolls (difficulty 6) to soak damage. Each success indicates that the victim suffers one less Corpus level of damage, or health level for the living. Note that some especially dangerous and potent sources of damage reduce or even bypass soak rolls. This will be noted in their description.

Combat

The mechanics of combat are handled extensively in Chapter Nine: Drama, but the basics of it boil down to the notion that every success on the attack roll inflicts one Corpus level of damage, which may be bashing, lethal, or aggravated depending on the source. Damage can usually be soaked, meaning the target is allowed to make a Stamina roll in response, with each success removing one level of damage. Remember that damage from the Skinlands, such as gunshots or car crashes, inflicts only a single Corpus level of bashing damage (or two if the wraith is Wavering) and forces the wraith to become Incorporeal.

Stygian Steel

Most "ordinary" weapons in the Shadowlands are either relics or forged with soulsteel, and thus have no special properties when it comes to causing injuries — a relic gun or a soulsteel knife is still dangerous, of course, but "merely" inflicts lethal damage. Stygian steel weapons, however, are another matter. Supposedly forged from wraith plasm mixed with scrapings from the walls of the Labyrinth, Stygian steel weapons inflict aggravated wounds on any wraiths (or Spectres) unlucky enough to feel their bite. Many high-ranking Legionnaires carry Stygian steel weapons, and their terrifying capabilities makes their bearers formidable foes indeed.

Fire

Though the Shadowlands are a dank place, there is a fire all their own. Known as barrow-flame, Shadowlands fires burn deathly cold rather than hot, but they can still scorch or even melt the Corpus of wraiths. (Fires in the Skinlands can harm wraiths across the Shroud, but are treated just like any other source of Skinlands damage.) Barrow-flame poses no threat to the Quick, and cannot exist in the Skinlands at all. Any attempt to bring it over to the world of the living snuffs it immediately.

Barrow-flame tends to be found in places of great destruction in the Skinlands, and its appearance often presages new disasters. The Necropoli of Atlanta, London, Chicago, Dresden, San Francisco, and New Orleans, among others, are known for large, ever-burning barrow-flame conflagrations, though they are far from the only places with great concentrations of the unholy fire.

Regardless of its size, any exposure to barrow-flame can be harmful to a wraith. Each turn that a wraith is subjected to the flame, she must roll her Stamina against a difficulty determined by the intensity of the fire. Each success on this roll reduces the number of Corpus levels suffered by one, just like a normal soak roll. A botch on the roll not only results in damage, but also indicates some catastrophic injury has occurred, such as being blinded or losing the use of a limb. All injuries caused by barrow-flame are aggravated wounds.

Note that these rolls assume the wraith is doing his best to avoid as much exposure as possible and/or leave the proximity of the flames as fast as he can; if a character simply holds his hand in a flame or sits in the midst of a raging inferno, the Storyteller may increase the difficulty, add to the number of wounds per turn, or even disallow a Stamina roll in order to reflect the fact that the wraith is increasingly consumed by the blaze.

Difficulty	Heat of Fire
3	Heat of a candle (first-degree burn)
5	Heat of a torch (second-degree burn)
7	Heat of a Bunsen burner (third-degree burn)
9	Heat of a chemical fire
10	Heat of molten steel

Wounds	Size of Fire
One	Torch; a part of the body is burned
Two	Bonfire; half of the body is burned
Three	Raging inferno; entire body is burned

Though they are less commonly encountered than barrow-flame, soulfire crystals present similar dangers. Made from crystalized Pathos, they burn with a painful intensity, and can only be handled by wraiths wearing special gloves or Moliated for their own protection. Direct contact with a small soulfire crystal causes aggravated damage as though a wraith were in contact with a torch, while larger sources inflict correspondingly more intense damage. With enough preparation, soulfire can become hot enough to literally melt a wraith's Corpus, inflicting horrific aggravated damage as the targeted is melted while still screaming.

Maelstroms

The dread storms of the Shadowlands are sources of great terror for any wraith, boiling up out of Byways to wreak havoc on whole communities of the dead. As unholy mixtures of hurricanes and the essence of Oblivion itself, it is no surprise that unprotected wraiths caught out in the storms are in serious trouble — and that's not even counting the attendant Spectres that are carried along with the storm. The Storyteller has the final say on how to adjudicate the effects of a Maelstrom, as the arrival of one and how the characters react to it is the stuff that great stories are made of and should not be reduced to simple dice rolls, but a rough set of guidelines is provided to give an idea of the scale of destruction that accompanies these ruinous storms.

Maelstrom Bells	Damage per turn of exposure
One	Four dice
Two	Six dice
Three	Eight dice
Four	12 dice
Five	16 dice

Wraiths may resist Maelstrom damage with the Castigate Arcanos, by taking shelter in a Haunt, or by other means determined by the Storyteller.

Falling

Though it seems almost prosaic compared to more unusual and horrifying forms of injury wraiths may encounter, falling remains almost as dangerous to the dead as it is to the Quick. (Exactly why gravity seems to work on wraiths almost the exact same way as it does on mortals remains a subject for much esoteric debate among those who take time to ponder such things.) In fact, because falling is always considered Shadowlands damage, it's arguably more dangerous than some showier threats — a wraith that topples off a building does not become Incorporeal, and so can easily suffer enough damage to send them to a Harrowing.

Distance (in feet)	Injury
5-9	One Corpus level (bashing)
10-19	Two Corpus levels (lethal)
20-29	Three Corpus levels (lethal)
30-39	Four Corpus levels (lethal)
40-49	Five Corpus levels (lethal)
50-59	Six Corpus levels (lethal)
60-69	Seven Corpus levels (lethal)

…and so on, to a maximum of 10 Corpus levels. Falling damage requires a Stamina roll (difficulty 8) to soak, with each success reducing the damage by one. This difficulty may be modified by circumstance — if the wraith finds a way to break her fall a bit, for example, or is landing in a softer substance of some kind. Beyond 50 feet the difficulty of the soak roll increases to 10, and it is unlikely that much short of a supernatural power will reduce it, as the wraith is simply falling too far for much to be able to reduce the level of impact.

Falling through the Tempest deserves special mention, as many of the normal laws of physics are more like suggestions in that fluid place. Wraiths who fall through the Tempest are assumed to have reached a velocity of 60 feet per second squared, with corresponding damage. However, falling through the Tempest into a Harrowing is more of a figure of speech than a true fall. While the wraith feels as though she is plummeting, she is in a different state of being and does not take impact damage when she finally "lands" in her Harrowing.

Perceptions

Transcendence

s dark as the Underworld can be, it is not without its own form of hope for a better existence. Some seek it in the fabled paradises of the Far Shores, but other wraiths seek it within. "There is another way," these wraiths whisper, another state of existence that can be attained through great effort, enlightenment, and personal courage. They speak of virtuous wraiths who suddenly vanish in a bright beam of light, leaving profound feelings of happiness and peace in their wake. Though it has been known by many names throughout history, in the modern age most wraiths simply refer to this sort of fabled exaltation as Transcendence.

Legends abound concerning the nature of Transcendence and how to attain it, many of them as contradictory in their "truths" as the religions of the Quick are about the nature of the afterlife itself. Some seek it in austere denial of the living world, while others argue that embracing the life they once had is the only way to peace. Others urge the utter repudiation of the Shadow, while a dangerous few seek synthesis with their dark side as a means of escaping their current divided state. Indeed, scholars of the phenomenon assert that trying to define exactly what Transcendence is a bit like trying to precisely qualify a notion like *zen* — it is a state that cannot be described, simply experienced.

What makes this even more complicated is that possibly the only thing all Transcendence advocates agree on is that the process is a one-way trip. A wraith able to achieve this state moves on, utterly and completely, to whatever greater existence she has earned with her pains and labors. Some wraiths claim that the Ferrymen are actually Transcended souls who, Bodhisattva-like, have chosen to remain behind to help others reach enlightenment. This theory suffers somewhat from the fact that the Ferrymen refuse to comment on it one way or another — and if they know the true path to Transcendence, they are keeping it to themselves.

Still, despite the lack of evidence — or perhaps because of it — the concept of Transcendence hangs on, passed from one hopeful wraith to another like a candle in the darkness of the Shadowlands. Wraiths who begin to seriously study or pursue this state are known as aspirants or seekers, though whether these are terms of respect or muttered with a cynical sneer varies considerably. There are some that feel the very notion of the pursuit of enlightenment poses a threat to the status quo, and it's not always the first candidates who spring to mind.

Indeed, it is important to remember that Transcendence can be as terrifying as it is inspiring. Wraiths know full well the horror of finding themselves in an existence that they did not expect, much less desire. For many of them the notion that they would then rush blindly into yet another unknown state of being ranges from foolish to suicidal. While existence in the Underworld can be difficult, it is not entirely without its pleasures, and in time a wraith can come to grips with how it functions. Viewed from that perspective, gambling everything just for a chance at a mythical deliverance is almost impossible to contemplate, especially when the threat of Oblivion is right there every day. Some wraiths even wonder if Transcendence is another ploy of Oblivion, a way to get the virtuous to deliver themselves into its arms with a smile, only to find the same nothingness waiting for them on the other side of the light.

As a result, though many embark on the journey few stick with it for very long, as they soon learn that even apart from

any social pressure they might feel, the road they face is a long and difficult one. While the reward seems beyond price, the reality is that price will be paid many times over in ordeals and self-examination. Is it worth it in the end? Without evidence of what awaits on the other side, the idea of giving yourself over to another state of being — dying again, in a sense — is honestly terrifying for many wraiths. Only the Transcended would really know… and they are beyond asking.

But there is always hope.

The Calm Through the Thunder

While even steadfast believers will admit that it's difficult to verify something as fleeting and final as Transcendence, the sheer volume of material on the subject suggests that *something* is at the core of the phenomenon. There are simply so many philosophical treatises, religious musings, witness accounts of successful Transcendence, and of course any number of contradictory "how to" regimens out there for those willing to risk undertaking the research. While these materials frequently disagree on particulars, there are a few common elements that seem to persist in the majority of Transcendence literature.

The most universal aspect is the notion of Transcendence as something attained after a great ordeal, or perhaps more accurately a number of trials. For some aspirants, this is a matter of decades or even centuries, but there are also a considerable number of accounts of seekers attaining Transcendence after a much shorter period of time. There is no clock on enlightenment, after all, though those aspirants who succeeded in a shorter time also faced tremendous trials in their journey. As a result, it might be accurate to say that they didn't take shortcuts so much as had years of ordeals compressed into a much smaller timeframe.

Another common element in many tales of Transcendence is the concept of purification, particularly regarding the wraith's attachment to the basic elements of her existence: her Fetters, her Passions, her Corpus, even her Shadow. Some wraiths take this to mean a rejection of the "impure" aspects of these things, while others counsel acceptance of their roles in the wraith's existence. Virtuous behavior is commonly extolled, but exactly what that means in the Shadowlands can be hard to identify. Mastery of the self also figures prominently, though aspirants debate whether this means the Corpus itself, the mind within it, or the higher self (i.e., the Eidolon). Regardless, most wraiths on the path to Transcendence will do their best to strengthen their Eidolon, seeing it as both their aspirational self and a bulwark against the temptations of the Underworld.

At the heart of all these different and sometimes contradictory notions is one particular set of volumes that has guided countless potential (and some say quite a few successful) aspirants throughout history. Known as *The Tomes of Golden Light*, these hefty volumes contain the accumulated wisdom of millennia of enlightened seekers, collecting witness accounts of successful Transcendence, philosophical musings, theological discussion, and other lore of interest to potential seekers. Obtaining copies of *The Tomes of Golden Light* is often an early goal of an aspirant, as they are regarded as the single best "road map" to Transcendence for serious seekers.

In particular, *The Tomes of Golden Light* are the source of common Transcendence tenets known as the Eight Truths, which purportedly offer the most concise, direct framework to that exalted state. (Not that it makes it any easier to achieve in practice.) Most seekers memorize the Eight Truths early on, and slip in subtle references to these truths as a clandestine way of recognizing each other. Memorization is also a practical matter, as owning these texts is a criminal offense throughout the Empire, falling under the heading of "possession of seditious materials."

While many officials are content to turn a blind eye to a couple of otherwise harmless cranks, such laws allow them to crack down and impose harsh penalties if they feel idle preoccupation is becoming any sort of a threat. They are also a useful tool for making scapegoats out of seekers if necessary — finding some proscribed literature on a suspect makes it easy to slap a cultist label on them, which in turn makes it a lot easier to paint a wraith as guilty in the eyes of the community. As a result, an informal network for circulating copies usually arises in any area where aspirants can be found in numbers, typically employing dead drops and other anonymous handoff techniques to limit exposure in the event of investigation.

It is worth noting that there is no "definitive" edition of *The Tomes of Golden Light*. While the Eight Truths are constant, the underground nature of the subject and the hazards in making and passing on copies also inevitably leads to textual changes. Aspirants sometimes add their own thoughts and experiences to the text when making new copies, for one, not to mention discreetly alter or even remove passages they consider erroneous. All of this makes for an evolving body of work. This can also lead to heated discussions among seekers over differences in editions, or even how to interpret a single common passage found in more than one edition.

The Eight Truths of Transcendence

Practice patience.

Cultivate the higher self.

Conquer the Shadow.

Make peace with yourself.

Make peace with the world of the living.

Value identity over Corpus.

Value Transcendence over identity.

Perfect the positive virtues: compassion, courage, creativity, honesty, hope, humility, humor, love, perseverance, self-acceptance, and wisdom.

Enlightened Society

Given how difficult it is to achieve, much less document, many wraiths aren't quite sure what to make of the notion of Transcendence. Most would certainly love to believe that there's something better than the bleak reality of the Underworld. Given the effort even the most generous adherent feels it requires and the uncertainty of actually reaching the goal, however, it falls somewhere between wishful thinking and a fool's errand.

In the end, most are simply too busy with the day-to-day realities of their existence to seriously commit to something that might amount to an awful lot of nothing in the end. Like the afterlife itself to the Quick, Transcendence remains something to speculate about, but also something easy to brush aside in the face of the more pressing matters. And in the Underworld, there are always pressing matters.

As one might expect, the official line of the empire dismisses stories of Transcendence as credulous nonsense on the part of wraiths in denial of their new existence. It is not a proscribed subject among the loyal citizens of the empire, but at the same time it is seen as a frivolous waste of time that could be better spent on the necessary business of holding back Oblivion. Demonstrating avid interest in Transcendence will mark a wraith an eccentric dreamer at best, and a possible dissident at worst. This is no idle prejudice, either — many older figures in the Hierarchy have seen Transcendence cults spring up during their long existence, and know just how dangerous even "benign" fanaticism can be when it takes hold.

Naturally, a large number of Heretic cults not only embrace the notion of Transcendence, but are only too glad to offer volumes of literature and glowing testimonials from believers who witnessed the ascension of one of their fellow members. Many of these groups are true believers who feel that their philosophy offers the keys to a better state of being, though there are certainly also cynical charlatans who simply exploit the hope that Transcendence offers in order to draw more wraiths into the group.

Storytelling Transcendence

Characters or even whole Circles who wish to seriously pursue Transcendence present a Storyteller with tremendous opportunities for exceptional, in-depth roleplaying, but they can also seem extremely intimidating to portray as well. After all, most roleplayers are comfortable with fights and adventures and dramatic confrontations, but the notion of pursuing spiritual enlightenment in gaming may be new territory.

First and most importantly, both you and your players need to accept that there is no "mechanical" path to Transcendence. While game mechanics will certainly be relevant during the journey, in the end there is no "and then you roll Stamina + Occult, difficulty 9, to become one with the universe and enjoy enlightened bliss forever" mechanic. Only sincere, dedicated roleplaying and character growth offer a chance at the brass ring.

Playing Transcendence

There is no one right way to play a character on the path to Transcendence, or run a Transcendence-oriented story, but there are a few good do's and don'ts to remember.

Do respect that Transcendence is a difficult, long-term goal, and is not guaranteed. At the same time, if a player succeeds, don't deny it to them.

Don't try to reduce achieving Transcendence to "being nice all the time." It's about a wraith confronting hard truths and making difficult decisions about himself and his past, often with no clear "right" or "wrong" answer.

Do expect some very intense roleplaying. Transcendence is not a matter of rolls and stats, but an intense personal journey expressed through roleplaying.

Don't let one character's search for Transcendence push all the other characters to the background. Every character's story is important, no matter their goals.

Another element to remember is that Transcendence is a *long* journey, easily a goal for a chronicle or perhaps two or three. (After all, if it was quicker and easier, it would be a lot more common.) Players should understand that it will be a difficult process, full of setbacks and costs and reversals. At the same time, Storytellers should avoid rushing the process, making sure when it does come up, it isn't brushed off or reduced to a few die rolls and short interactions, or the players will feel cheated.

One very good step to take is to sit down with the players who are interested in pursuing Transcendence for their characters — or in some cases, players whose characters seem to be heading that way even if the player didn't plan it. Talk about what the players are most interested in exploring, what they find dramatic, where they see their characters heading, and what they are less interested in about the Transcendence process. This helps you craft compelling stories the players will respond to, as well as helping players recognize story hooks that are being baited for them.

It is worth establishing at least some notion of whether or not Transcendence is a goal that can actually be reached — if a player honestly pursues it only to have her Storyteller spring a surprise "ha ha, no such thing" twist on her, they're going to be justifiably upset. It's one thing for a player to willingly agree to pursue Transcendence even if they know there's a chance it's not "true" in this chronicle — and there is a whole lot of dramatic potential if they *know* it's not true and pursue it anyway — but it's poor form to deny them just to impose a facile twist. Remember, what the *player* knows is possible is not the same as what the *character* knows, and nothing is guaranteed even if Transcendence is an attainable goal.

Ultimately, Transcendence isn't necessarily about morality as most people were taught it growing up, and if it's religious at all, that's more likely a happy coincidence than the recognition of a deeper truth. Reaching Transcendence is not just about always picking the most goody-two-shoes answer in a situation. Portraying it that way — with lots of "tests" to see if the wraith always picks the saintliest response and punishing him if he doesn't — will lead to a lot of player frustration and efforts to "game the system" by selecting the answer they think you think is "right" rather than what their character would do. Transcendence does seem to involve working to improve one's better nature, but that can also mean making very difficult, painful decisions that aren't nearly so simple as "just doing the right thing."

In short, the decisions a wraith must make on the path to Transcendence should rarely be clear-cut situations with an obvious correct answer. If every choice reduces to something as obvious as "save this helpless kitten or push a kindly old man down an elevator shaft," there's no challenge and thus no feeling of real reward for succeeding. On the other hand, a wraith forced to decide between saving the life of his child or saving hundreds of souls in the Shadowlands has a much tougher choice to make. There is no right or wrong, just a decision whose consequences he will have to carry with him — but learning how a wraith faces such choices is the very essence of Transcendence stories. After all, a successful Transcendence story also means that the character in question is gone for good, so it is important to make it a meaningful and challenging journey.

Lastly, don't forget that while Transcendence is a great long-term goal, it shouldn't mean that the characters pursuing it are the only ones in the spotlight. Other members of the Circle should receive the same amount of attention regarding their own goals and roleplaying, otherwise the game might begin to feel like a special Chosen One and her sidekicks instead of a group of equals. Every player should feel as though their character is just as featured in the story, even if they are focusing on more immediate, less spiritual goals.

Just as there is no one "true" path to Transcendence for wraiths to follow, there is also no single "right" way to tell such stories. There is only what works for your chronicle and its characters. Don't worry about what other games did, just tell a story that thrills, challenges, and moves your players, and you can't go wrong.

Character Development

Experience Points

Awarding Experience

Experience points are a mechanical way of representing how characters grow and change during a story, and provide a concrete way for players to track their progress toward certain character goals. Players accumulate experience points at the end of game sessions, and spend them to purchase new or improved traits for their characters. Different traits have different experience-point costs, representing that some traits are harder to learn than others. The "Spending Experience Points" chart (p. 302) lists the costs associated with various traits. Note that some traits cannot be purchased with experience points, or require Storyteller permission to purchase.

Deciding exactly how many experience points to give out can be a difficult balance for a Storyteller. Awarding too many too quickly can lead to characters outpacing the threats they're facing, robbing the game of challenge and making players complacent due to earning great rewards for little effort. At the same time, awarding too few experience points can lead to player boredom and frustration, as it makes even the smallest character advancements seem impossibly difficult to achieve.

On average, Storytellers should award players 2-3 experience points per session. Players receive experience points for meeting criteria such as demonstrating good roleplaying, learning valuable information, or when their characters survive great danger. Guidelines for particular experience-point awards are listed under "Reasons for Experience" below. Storytellers may alter these awards or even add new ones to suit their chronicle if they wish. Keep in mind, however, that adding more awards means players will receive experience at a higher rate, which can throw off game balance. No matter what experience point criteria are used, 2-3 experience points per session should be the standard.

If certain players are never earning particular awards, the Storyteller should examine the criteria she's using to make sure the players all have a fair chance to earn it. Having a professional actor in the group shouldn't mean everyone else has to meet that standard to earn the roleplaying award. Likewise, a character should never earn zero experience points unless the player is disruptive and rude out of game — no matter how badly things went during the game, there is something to be said for simple participation and learning from one's mistakes.

The Shadow receives 1/3 of the experience points that the Psyche earns, rounded up. Exactly how this Shadow experience can be spent is described in the Shadow Experience section below, while more specifics on the traits being purchased can be found in the Shadow chapter, p. 222.

Reasons for Experience

One Point — Automatic: Each player earns one point per session, no matter what, unless he truly makes the game miserable for other players in a way that seriously impedes the function of the group as a whole. Such behavior includes but is not limited to such things as insisting on speaking in a silly voice all night, doggedly refusing to give up an argument about the rules, or constantly missing plot points because he's playing games on his phone.

One Point — Leaning Curve: The character acquired some important information or learned a crucial lesson during the session. Making a mistake can count, so long as the wraith demonstrates that he's learned from his error.

One Point — Roleplaying: Entertaining, moving, or otherwise exceptional character-appropriate roleplaying should be rewarded with an experience point. Note that this should apply to quieter, more reserved character concepts that are portrayed well, and not just handed to garrulous or outgoing characters (or players) who tend to take the limelight. Groups are encouraged to raise their standards over time in order to encourage more in-depth roleplaying.

One Point — Circle: Anyone who goes above and beyond to make the game more enjoyable for their fellow players deserves a point. This can include providing excellent roleplaying during another player's Harrowing or making a personal sacrifice that benefits the rest of the Circle.

One Point — Heroism: Not pointless stupidity. Not empty bravado. Not suicidal mania. Real heroism, defined as going above and beyond the call of duty — usually at dire risk, great cost or both — to achieve some higher purpose. Though subjective, as a rule of thumb, actions that qualify for this award are usually the sort that are likely to be retold multiple times after the session is over, because they are so inspiring, heartwrenching, or otherwise notably impressive.

Spending Experience

Experience point costs for raising existing Traits or adding new ones are covered below. Note that permanent Corpus cannot be purchased – once it is lost, it is gone forever.

Experience Tips

Don't purchase or increase a Trait if you can't reasonably justify how you acquired it or what you did to improve it.

Don't dilute your character concept by picking up lots of random Abilities. It's one thing if your formerly mild-mannered accountant decides to learn some self-defense after being beaten into a Harrowing, but it's quite another for her to suddenly take up krav maga, jazz piano, computer hacking, dog training, and mime, just because you had some extra experience points lying around. Focus on your concept and what makes sense for your character.

Don't, as the Storyteller, make experience awards a competition between players. For example, the roleplaying point should not be an acting competition with only the "best" performance of the night winning the prize, but a reflection of how each player portrayed their character that session.

Don't try to create a perfect, "unbeatable" wraith character who never fails at anything, always has the right powers at hand, and is never remotely tempted or threatened by her Shadow. Perfect characters are boring. This is a game about grappling with flaws and weaknesses. Embrace it. **Don't** hoard experience points so you can make huge changes all at once. Real improvement is almost always gradual, and big leaps require equally large explanations or they seem unrealistic.

Don't, as the Storyteller, give out extra experience points on top of the 2-3 points normally awarded unless you feel players truly have earned them. Doing so every once in a while can encourage great play, but doing it too often dilutes the value of experience points and throws off game balance.

Trait Cost Chart

Trait	Cost in XP
Attribute	Current rating x4
New Ability	3
Ability	Current rating x2
New Arcanos	7
Arcanos	Current rating x3
Willpower	Current rating
Passion, Fetter, Background, Merit	Special*

* Storyteller permission required. Requirements found in individual sections below.

End of Story

The end of a story deserves special consideration, as it marks the conclusion of a number of connected sessions. It also typically involves climactic events that will have a lasting impact on the characters and their afterlives. Think of the season finale of an ongoing drama series. Major secrets are revealed, serious villains are challenged, personal limits are tested, and massive undertakings are at last completed. For better or for worse, finales change the characters and their world in lasting ways.

It's only fitting, then, that when a story ends, characters receive a few extra experience points on top of their normal session experience. This reflects what they've just gone through, and where they find themselves in the story's aftermath. Many Storytellers also use this time to refresh characters' Willpower, Corpus, and Pathos ratings, unless events will resume immediately from where the old story left off when the new one begins.

One Point — Survival: It may not be pretty, it probably wasn't nice, and it certainly wasn't easy, but any character who survives to tell the tale gets an experience point at the end of the story.

One point — Success: The Circle succeeded in its immediate task, if not outright then at least to some meaningful extent. So long as the Circle can claim at least a partial victory in its endeavors, it deserves this point.

One point — Danger: The character hazarded great perils, battled long odds, or took serious risks with important stakes hanging in the balance. A character who carries himself well during an especially difficult Harrowing also qualifies; after all, the stakes are arguably higher there than anywhere else.

One point — Wisdom: Any character who exhibits exceptional cleverness or resourcefulness in the face of adversity can receive this point. Characters who had a major epiphany as a result of the story — not just the final session — also deserve this award.

One point — Shadow: The player did an excellent job portraying the Shadow's role in the story, whether their own or another player's (as suits the style of the group). This is not about "winning" as the Shadow, but rather about creating an enjoyable and challenging roleplaying experience in this difficult role. If the group chooses to have the Storyteller take on the Shadow's duties for the players, this point may still be awarded to players who depicted the struggle with their dark side especially well.

If a player's character is destroyed, removed from play, or otherwise "retired" at the end of a story, it is a customary courtesy to roll over the bonus experience she would have earned from the story to her new character. This helps ease the loss a touch and ensures that the player feels the same accomplishment for those climactic events as the rest of the group.

Shadow Experience

As a wraith grows and changes, so too does her dark side — after all, with new experiences come fresh mistakes to dwell

on, regrets to agonize over, and emotional turmoil to feast on. For this reason, Shadows receive experience points of their own, which can be used to purchase new Thorns with which to bedevil their Psyche or a stock of temporary Angst to fuel their malice.

It is even possible for the Shadow to increase the rating of its Dark Passions, or even gain a new one over time. This is rare and typically tied to a major trauma in the wraith's existence.

A Shadow receives experience points at a set rate — one point for every three points gained by the Psyche, rounded up. At the Storyteller's discretion, a single extra experience point may be awarded to the Shadow in recognition of truly excellent Shadowplay; not only does this reflect how the Shadow was particularly effective in that session, but also acknowledges the good work of the Shadowguide in question.

Shadows may pay the following costs for different Traits:

Trait Cost Chart

Trait	Cost
Thorns	Original Thorn cost
Angst	Current rating
New Dark Passion	2
Dark Passion	Current rating x2

Ability Training

Even the dead still learn new tricks. After all, if it's one thing they have, it's time. A wraith may purchase a new Ability or improve an existing one so long as it makes sense in the context of her actions during the story, and she can also reasonably justify suitable training in this new aptitude. Picking up the basics of a new Ability and rising to roughly •• or ••• worth of expertise isn't usually too difficult to explain, but mastering the uppermost levels of an Ability often requires access to a formidable trainer, a large investment of time and resources, or both.

Indeed, finding a suitable trainer to learn the highest levels of an Ability can make for an excellent source of stories in itself, perhaps even involving tracking down legendary masters from the past who still dwell in some remote place deep in the Underworld. Such reclusive characters may take on worthy students, of course, but tend to ask for favors in return…

Mastering Arcanoi

One of the most fascinating aspects of a wraith's existence is the Arcanoi, the strange powers of the Restless Dead. While some wraiths delve into the secrets of their origins and the metaphysics of their operation, most are simply glad to have access to such capabilities given the dangerous, uncertain nature of their existence.

Though the Guilds might wish it were otherwise, it is sometimes possible for wraiths to teach themselves some Arcanoi simply through practice and dedication (reflected by experience points), though the player should still be able to explain where this desire comes from. Simply waking up wanting to fly is much less convincing than wanting to emulate a Harbinger he saw in action.

Having a Mentor versed in the relevant Arcanos *is* useful, however, as is a membership in the appropriate Guild. If conditions permit, the player may roll the relevant Background rating when trying to learn a new Arcanos (difficulty 6). Each success reduces the experience-point cost of the Arcanos by one, to a minimum of one.

A wraith may continue working with teachers to attempt to reduce the cost of subsequent levels of an Arcanos, but a Mentor cannot help the wraith learn a higher level of an Arcanos than he possesses himself. A Guild can usually find a member with the requisite level of Arcanos mastery, given time, but the lower a wraith's rank in the Guild, the more the Guild will require of him in return for instruction.

Regardless of the source of the expertise, the relevant Background-rating roll to reduce the cost of higher-level Arcanos purchases is made against difficulty 8. This roll cannot reduce the cost below half the regular amount (rounded up), and Willpower cannot be spent on this roll.

Raising Attributes

Expanding one's innate capabilities is something of an unusual matter for the Restless, whose forms are reflections of their self-image (and self-doubt) mixed with residual memories of life, and often manipulated by Moliate and stranger things as well.

Improving Physical Attributes or the Appearance Trait is very different for the Restless than for the living. The physical capabilities and attractiveness of a wraith's Corpus are based in self-image and confidence as opposed to external factors such as exercise or cosmetic surgery. Improving these traits is a matter of the wraith changing her perception of her capabilities in a lasting way. It's also significant that improving Physical Attributes does not necessarily cause the wraith's outward appearance to change. While a wraith might appear more muscular if she improves her Strength Attribute, nothing says this sort of outward change must occur. The disconnect between a wraith's appearance and her actual capabilities can be very startling for Enfants, who are not programmed to expect a little girl to shrug off a knife wound or an old woman to casually kick open a heavy door.

Improving Mental and Social Attributes is a bit more like what a newly deceased wraith might imagine. Increasing Intelligence might mean periods of intense study as well as review of material to develop memory and analytical capabilities, while raising Charisma might involve learning new techniques for approaching people and winning their trust. That doesn't mean any of this is easy, much less quick, but a determined wraith can make it happen if he wants it badly enough.

Increasing Willpower

The Underworld is a crucible, and only the strong-willed survive for long. Wraiths may increase their permanent Willpower by spending experience points. This can reflect the wraith drawing a greater sense of purpose from something that motivates

her, or conversely the wraith internalizing the hardship and setbacks she's encountered and turning them into sources of strength instead. Harrowings and other brushes with Oblivion can whittle away a wraith's Willpower, making it ever easier to slide into Oblivion, so most players purchase more permanent Willpower for their character eventually.

A wraith who spends her last point of temporary Willpower immediately falls into a Harrowing, so investing in additional Willpower is an excellent additional line of defense. And should something terrible happen and a character lose her last bit of Permanent Willpower, she is either sucked into the Void (if she has no Fetters left) or reduced to a pitiful Drone (if she does). Once diminished in this way, there is nothing that can be done to rescue the Drone; the damage is permanent. Some legends talk of powerful Artifacts or even the favor of a Ferryman as being capable of reversing a Drone's descent into this state, but most wraiths dismiss those tales as wishful thinking.

Strengthening Backgrounds

Players cannot simply purchase new or improved Background Traits with experience points. The wraith must first demonstrate why they deserve them through their roleplaying and actions within the story. Given how deep the roots of many Backgrounds run, this may take considerable time. Some Storytellers choose to simply award (or remove) Background points to reflect changes in the story, and do not attach an experience-point cost for new or improved Backgrounds.

Purchasing Backgrounds is allowed solely at the Storyteller's discretion, and she may adjust the costs, delay acquisition, or even outright forbid the practice as she sees fit. Players who want to purchase or increase Backgrounds are thus advised to talk to their Storyteller and their troupe first, to see how they feel about the subject.

If experience-post costs are required, it is recommended that players spend 4 points to open a new Background, and then improve it at a cost of 3 x the current level.

Passions

Given all eternity to contemplate their existence, it's not surprising that wraiths sometimes change their Passions over time. Typically, this first begins to happen when a wraith starts losing touch with the Skinlands, as Fetters decay and their hold on the Shadowlands slips, and the wraith shifts her focus more to the Underworld. However, uplifting — or traumatic — events can inspire a shift in feeling at most any time, though given their power and resonance in the Psyche, changing Passions is more complicated for the dead than it is for the fickle hearts of the Quick.

Optional Rule: Compensation for Backgrounds

Unlike most other Traits, Backgrounds can easily be gained — or lost — in the blink of an eye. A Mentor might fall to a Destruction Harrowing, a scandal could result in loss of Guild membership, and so on. If the Storyteller simply awards and removes Background points once play begin, without an attached experience-point cost, this is less of a problem. However, if players are spending experience points, they can easily feel cheated to simply lose them due to a plot twist. This also discourages players from purchasing Backgrounds as opposed to "permanent" Traits such as Abilities and Arcanoi. There are a couple of ways to approach this problem. The first is simply to let players know that points spent on Backgrounds are inherently at risk, and let them gamble as they will. Even if they can be lost during play, until they are removed Backgrounds offer some powerful advantages, and so players assume the risk of losing them in return for the benefits of obtaining them. This is the simplest way of handling the issue, though not always the one players will find most satisfying.

Another method is to offer partial experience-point refunds for Backgrounds lost during the course of the story — half the value of the Background is usually fair. This allows the player to feel as though it was not a total loss, while still emphasizing that there is an inherent risk in many Backgrounds. Of course, care should be taken so that players do not suddenly spend a huge rush of experience points all at once if a powerful Background is refunded, so Storytellers should also consider a spending cap on large windfalls.

Note that with refunds, compensation should only be awarded if events out of the player's control force the loss; a player cannot simply callously destroy their own Mentor so she can recycle him for experience points. If the player deliberately abandons, destroys, or otherwise rejects a Background, those points are not refunded or replaced. Lastly, any Background losses suffered due to a Harrowing are *never* refunded or replaced. Oblivion doesn't have to play fair.

Passions are not only motivations for a wraith, though. They are his most potent source of Pathos as well. Whenever a wraith experiences his Passion — that is, performs a relevant action and feels the associated emotion detailed in the Passion description — he can attempt to regain Pathos. The player rolls the Passion's rating (difficulty 6). Each success grants 1 Pathos, up to the wraith's normal maximum. A wraith may only tap a particular Passion in this manner once per scene.

At the Storyteller's discretion, a wraith may also attempt to regain Pathos if he is near a mortal experiencing strong emotions of the same nature as one of his Passions. These "secondhand" feelings are much harder to tap into, however, making them a problematic source of Pathos. The player rolls the Passion rating against difficulty 8, and each success grants 1 Pathos. A mortal must be experiencing the same emotion in the same context specified in the wraith's Passion — if the wraith has a Passion of "Show my husband I miss him (Love)," then not just any mortal experiencing love will qualify. Only a mortal showing his spouse he misses him in a loving way is eligible, as that is the specific nature of the wraith's Passion.

Passions are also tied to the wraith ability known as Lifesight. This ability allows a wraith to read the emotional maps of human relationships, as well as potentially identify the Passions of other wraiths by observing how they respond in the presence of mortals demonstrating strong emotions.

Gaining Passions

Like Backgrounds, players cannot simply purchase Passions with experience points, though spending experience points is usually part of the process of their acquisition. Adding a new Passion or strengthening an existing one should be strongly reflected in the character's behavior as well as the events of the ongoing narrative, and it's advisable to discuss the idea with the Storyteller in order to make sure it makes sense for the story. Remember, Passions are not passing fancies or even strong reactions — they are emotional responses tied to the very reality of the Psyche itself.

A player who wishes to pick up a new Passion or improve an existing one should invest considerable roleplaying time in their portrayal of this rising emotional investment on the part of their character. It should also make sense in the light of the character's experiences and their goals — Passions are powerful but often inconvenient as well. They can cause wraiths to make dangerous or even downright foolhardy decisions

Should the Storyteller permit it, adding a new Passion costs three experience points, while increasing existing Passions costs three times the Passion's current rating.

Writing the Perfect Passion

Creating Passions that are both character appropriate and interesting to portray in play can seem like an especially daunting task, but it gets easier if you keep a few simple principles in mind:

- Passions tell the Storyteller what kind of emotional roleplaying you're interested in. If you don't want a love story, don't list love as a Passion. Think about the emotions that most interest you, and feature them prominently.
- Keep the phrasing simple and direct. A Passion should rarely include a comma, and never a conditional statement. If it's more complex than that, you should either simplify it or break it into two separate Passions.
- Make Passions assertions and imperatives that inspire your actions, not passive observations or prohibitions. "Do not allow harm to come to my children (Love)" is awkward because it doesn't necessarily spur the wraith to act; "Protect my children (Love)" requires direct action.
- Don't be afraid of unusual emotional choices, as they can lead to interesting and unpredictable roleplaying. "Make my wife remember me (Love)" is fine, but think about how much changes in the relationship if you try other formulations like "Make my wife remember me (Jealousy)."
- Try not to focus all of a character's Passions around a single subject or emotion, or your character may feel very one-dimensional and repetitive to play.
- It's alright to have two or more Passions that express conflicting emotions. A wraith could feel great love for his friend but also jealousy that now that she's getting credit for work they started together. That's the stuff of great drama!
- Don't try to create "safe" Passions. Even the nicest, noblest Passions could potentially drive your character to extremes. Trying to control that by making sure Passions are never dangerous or inconvenient misses their purpose, so just embrace where they may take you instead.
- All Passions are powerful emotions. The rating is not necessarily a measure of how deeply a wraith feels the emotion; it is a measure of how important that feeling is to the wraith's Psyche. A single-dot Passion is still a profound emotional connection; it just isn't as vital to the wraith's sense of self as some of his other Passions.

Waning Passions

A fire that can be coaxed to a roaring blaze can also be reduced to faintly glowing embers, and Passions are no different. Without proper tending, Passions can wither away, leaving a wraith increasingly starved for both motivation and Pathos. If a Storyteller feels that a wraith is not addressing one of his Passions, she can make it begin to wither away.

Passions weaken or die out in four ways. Of these four conditions, only Resolution offers a wraith any real upside, much less any progress toward Transcendence. Losing Passions to neglect or the ministrations of Oblivion wears down the Psyche, while Resolving them brings peace and a sense of fulfillment. It's the difference between giving your money to charity and having your wallet stolen.

Neglect: Passions are powerful forces, but without connection, eventually even these immortal longings will fade. If a Storyteller decides the wraith has been neglecting a particular Passion for too long — especially if he has ignored or outright rejected chances to indulge it in the process — then she can call for a roll of the Passion's rating (difficulty 9). Failure on this roll reduces the Passion's rating by one, while a botch decreases it by two. If this removes the Passion entirely, the wraith is immediately dropped into a Harrowing as his hold on the Underworld slips.

It is best to use this tactic sparingly, to remind players the importance of tending to their character's Passions. A warning before use of this rule is not unreasonable. Perhaps the wraith begins to doubt their conviction, or feels distant from something that once moved him, prompting him to take action before the withering can really take hold.

Harrowings: A Targeted Harrowing can attempt to weaken or eliminate a particular Passion, as the Shadow knows only too well what a powerful anchor these emotions are against Oblivion's pull. Rules for Targeted Harrowings can be found on p. 243.

Numbing: Not all of Oblivion's agents inflict bodily harm with tooth and claw. Some use a touch to infect a target's Psyche with Oblivion and attack his Passions directly. A successful Numb the Heart attack reduces one of the wraith's Passions (chosen at random) by one. If this reduces a Passion to zero, it triggers a Harrowing.

Resolution: See below.

Resolving Passions

Given that Passions are powerful motivations for a wraith's continuing existence, at first it may seem nigh-suicidal for a wraith to consider letting go of them voluntarily. There are, however, a few perfectly sane reasons that a wraith may wish to come to terms with these volatile emotions. While Passions do help anchor a wraith against the grip of Oblivion, that anchor also weighs a wraith down and keeps her from Transcendence, or so the seekers claim. Wraiths who wish to leave the Underworld behind must therefore calm their hearts and moderate the intense feelings that Passions incite, or they will never know the sublime joy that waits for them beyond this existence.

Even if a wraith does not believe in the notion of Transcendence, she still may wish to soothe these overwhelming feelings and desires. While a powerful source of Pathos, Passions can also spur a wraith into behavior he considers unsafe or unhealthy. They may even become a source of unbearable anguish if they were heavily associated with a Fetter that has been killed or destroyed, a constant reminder of what has been lost.

Regardless of her motivation for seeking it, however, Resolution is a goal that cannot be achieved lightly. Passions are emotions so strong they literally sustain the Psyche, desires so powerful they allowed the wraith to thwart the pull of Oblivion itself. Quieting feelings like those is no easy feat, but it can be done.

If a player desires to Resolve one of her character's Passions, the first step is to discuss the matter with the Storyteller, in order to make sure that it can be worked into the ongoing storyline. This is especially true of four- and five-dot Passions, as they represent emotional cornerstones of the wraith's creation and ongoing existence (though it's worth noting that even "mere" one- and two-dot Passions still represent emotional drives as powerful as the most intense feelings of the Quick). Resolution will require the character spend time contemplating her changing feelings, making peace with herself (and possibly others) regarding the nature of the Passion.

Though it is far from a perfect analogy, it is possible to compare Resolving a Passion to ending a long-term romantic relationship. Even if it is right, even if it is logical, even if it is amicable and mutually agreed upon — indeed, even if it is absolutely *necessary* — the heart still resists cutting ties completely. For better or worse, those feelings have been a major part of your life for a long time, something that motivated you and gave you a sense of identity, and walking away from that can be a terrifying experience. Part of you is gone and you need to redefine yourself, find new motivations and new reasons for living. Add on all the heartache, doubt, and regret that often accompany such changes, all of which make excellent fodder for a Shadow's whispering, and you begin to understand the difficulty wraiths have in approaching the idea of Resolution.

System: After the player has spent a suitable amount of time roleplaying her wraith's coming to terms with her emotions, the Storyteller requests a roll to weaken the Passion in question. The wraith must roll the rating of the Passion (difficulty 9), with each success reducing the Passion's rating by one. A passion cannot be reduced to zero in this fashion, however — that requires a Resolution roll, as outlined below. It is not necessary to reduce a Passion to a one-point rating in order to attempt Resolution, though as a rule of thumb it should be reduced to at least half of its original rating (rounded down, with a minimum of one) before any attempt is made.

When the Storyteller feels that the character has come to grips with her Passion and is ready to finally walk away from it, the player may make a Resolution roll. This requires a Willpower roll against a difficulty equal to the Passion's original rating + 5. If the wraith achieves successes on the roll equal to the Passion's original rating, she succeeds in reaching Resolution and may remove the Passion from her sheet. This has no mechanical benefit, but is considered an important step for those wraiths interested in Transcendence, and can ease the path to that goal.

If the wraith fails the Resolution roll, the Passion's rating increases by one, as the wraith finds herself not only unable to sever her ties but all the more invested in her emotions. Remember, Passions are deeply tied into the core of the Psyche's continuing existence, and so attempting to remove one can sometimes have the effect of making the Psyche cling to it that much tighter. A wraith that botches a Resolution roll is immediately drawn into a Destruction Harrowing; instead of finding peaceful acceptance, she has opened her heart to the numbing cold of Oblivion, and must find some way to close the wound before it consumes her. Should she survive this Harrowing, the Passion's rating is increased by one, and the wraith is not able to attempt to Resolve it again.

If a player attempting Resolution uses the Passion in question to regain Pathos at any point, doing so should set back their efforts in some significant way. (If a mechanic is required, delaying any Resolution progress for a number of sessions equal to the Pathos gained is a start.) To return to the above relationship analogy, tapping a Passion that the wraith is attempting to Resolve is like going on a date with their former lover — it's only going to make it harder to move on.

Fetters

As the people and places that exerted such a hold on a wraith that they helped allow her to stave off Oblivion itself, but also sources of worry that frequently require her attention, Fetters naturally occupy a conflicted place in the hearts of most wraiths. Without them, a wraith is denied all but the briefest of visits to the Shadowlands, not to mention a safe place to rest and recuperate. But protecting them is a source of great worry and frequent hardship, and losing one triggers a fast trip to a Harrowing.

Fetters are the physical reminders of unfinished business and things left behind, and sooner or later a wraith must find a way to Resolve what they mean and put them behind her. If

not, she may find them ripped away without warning, denying her the chance to make her peace forever.

One of the primary benefits to maintaining Fetters is being able to visit the Shadowlands. A wraith with Fetters may remain in the Shadowlands indefinitely; temporary Fetters created by Lifeweb allow a wraith to remain for as long as those Fetters last. There are also rumors of certain Artifacts that allow their owners to visit the Shadowlands, but if such treasures exist, they are jealously guarded.

A wraith with no Fetters must spend 1 Willpower point for every scene he wishes to remain in the Shadowlands. If he does not exit the Shadowlands under his own power when his time expires, he is drawn into the nearest Byway. This duration may be extended if a wraith successfully Resolves a Fetter (see below).

As a solid tie to their old life, a Fetter's presence also naturally strengthens a wraith's resolve. At the end of any scene where a wraith significantly interacts with one of his Fetters, the player may roll the Fetter's rating (difficulty 6). Each success restores 1 Willpower point, up the character's maximum. If the wraith interacted with more than one Fetter, roll each one separately.

Lastly, wraiths also regain Willpower more quickly if they Slumber in a Fetter. For every eight-hour period a wraith Slumbers, the player may roll the Fetter's rating (difficulty 4). Each success restores 1 Willpower point, up the character's normal maximum.

Losing Fetters

As difficult as they are to obtain, Fetters are only too easy to lose. Unlike Passions, which are internal expressions of the Psyche, Fetters not only exist independently of the wraith but are contingent on weathering all the malice, stupidity, and simple bad luck of the Skinlands for their continued existence. With that in mind, it's no small wonder wraiths guard their Fetters so jealously, and woe betide any mortal who dares pose a threat.

The Quick aren't the only threat to Fetters. Other wraiths know exactly how powerful Fetters are, as well as the disastrous consequences of losing them. Even accidental destruction of a Fetter is a serious offense, and a deliberate attack is one of the most heinous crimes known to the Restless. That doesn't mean it doesn't happen, of course, but it does mean an attacker tends to work as indirectly as possible in order to make it hard to trace back her. Wraiths known to attack Fetters are the most notorious sort of criminal in the Underworld, and if they are captured can expect harsh justice even by Stygian standards.

Revealing a Fetter to another wraith is thus a profound gesture of trust. Having others helping you makes protecting and maintaining Fetters easier, but even in close-knit Circles it is not unusual for members to "hold back" a Fetter or two from their comrades. While a wraith may trust his friends implicitly, their Shadows also know anything he tells them. That thought alone is enough to make even trusting wraiths cautious; not telling all ensures that should one of his friends fall to her Shadow, she cannot threaten all of his Fetters.

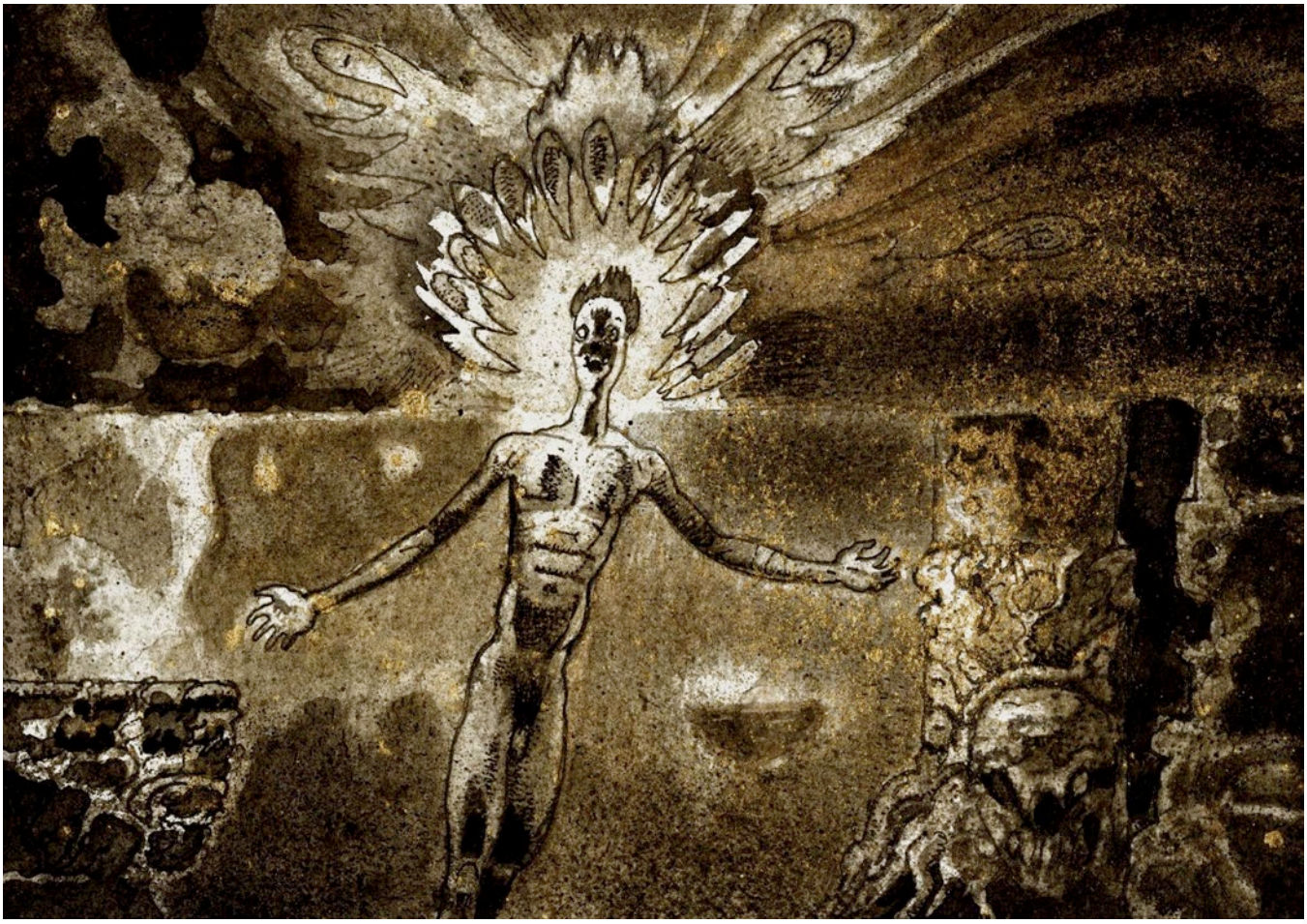
As noted previously, a wraith with no remaining Fetters can only remain in the Shadowlands for a very brief period of time. This time is slightly longer for wraiths who have Resolved at least one of their Fetters, but in the long term a wraith without Fetters must find a different place to dwell. The Shadowlands simply can't be his home anymore.

Destruction: Nothing in the Skinlands lasts forever. A wraith is immediately drawn into a Harrowing if one of his Fetters is killed or destroyed, and the corresponding Trait is erased from the character sheet. Needless to say, deliberately endangering or destroying another wraith's Fetter is one of the most vile acts known to the Restless, and one can be sure of a terrible and lasting enmity on the part of the wronged party. That is, assuming she returns from the Harrowing….

Optional Rule: The Ship of Theseus

A classic thought experiment, the Ship of Theseus asks the following question: How much of an object can you change or replace before it stops being the same object? This is especially pertinent for wraiths with object Fetters such as houses or cars — while burning down the house or totaling the car definitely destroys the Fetter, it is also arguable that completely renovating the house or overhauling the car could result in it no longer being the same object the wraith was attached to when she died. After all, many haunted-house stories begin when the owners start extensive additions or renovations. A wraith venting her fury at those responsible for "damaging" her Fetter in this fashion could very well be the basis for such tales.

The Storyteller may invoke this rule to reduce a Fetter's rating if an object has changed in a profound way, particularly if that change goes against the essence of what the object was at the time of the wraith's death. This should only be used for extensive alterations. Simply painting a house or changing the furniture should not damage the Fetter, but gutting it, completely reworking the floor plan, and tacking on an addition where the wraith's old rose garden used to be would qualify. This rule should not reduce a Fetter rating to zero — even if looks completely different, if the house is still standing there is still some tie — and this rule only applies to object Fetters, not living ones.



Neglect: A wraith may distance herself from a Fetter — or find herself unable to attend to it due to external forces restraining her from doing so — and thus feel her connection to it weaken. Neglect should not come into play due to a brief interlude, but as a result of extended separation or the wraith deliberately choosing not to attend to her Fetter at a critical time. The choice about when it applies is entirely up to the Storyteller. Should it be necessary to check for neglect, the Storyteller rolls the wraith's Fetter rating (difficulty 9). Failure decreases the Fetter's rating by one, while a botch drops it by two. If this reduces the rating to zero, the wraith is immediately thrust into a Harrowing.

Harrowings: Targeted Harrowings can reduce a Fetter's rating or even remove the attachment entirely, severing one more tie between the wraith and the Skinlands. Rules for Targeted Harrowings can be found on p. 243.

Rending: Using the Rend the Lifeweb power, certain Spectres are capable of attacking or even destroying a wraith's Fetter directly. A successful attack with this power reduces a Fetter rating by one, and will force a wraith into a Harrowing if this reduces a Fetter's rating to zero. For more on Rend the Lifeweb, see p. 360.

Resolution: See below.

Acquiring Fetters

It is rare that a wraith develops a deep-enough level of attachment to some new person or thing in the Skinlands to create a true Fetter, but it is not impossible. A wraith closely tied to a man might become equally protective of his newborn child, for example, or find that after death she is especially attached to a place she never really appreciated in life. Purchasing a new Fetter or improving an existing one is not simply a matter of spending experience points, however, and forging this depth of connection requires both Storyteller approval and extensive roleplaying and character investment during the story.

Players are advised to work with their Storyteller extensively to figure out how to justify a new Fetter, and should remember that new and improved Fetters are granted entirely at the Storyteller's discretion. Assuming the Storyteller approves of the new Fetter, the experience-point cost required is three times the desired rating. This must be paid all at once, not built up slowly over time, and it is thus advised that the player begin saving experience points while he is building up to the acquisition of the new Fetter through the events of the story.

Resolving Fetters

While Fetters provide a means for a wraith to remain in the Shadowlands, like Passions they also represent some deep attachment or unfinished business that is responsible for the wraith winding up in the Underworld in the first place. Despite the fact that many wraiths are fearful and hesitant at the notion of Resolving their Passions, the notion that a wraith should work to Resolve their Fetters is considerably more accepted, and not just by adherents of Transcendence.

After all, mortal Fetters will certainly die one day, and even the most durable-seeming object Fetter is still at the mercy of the wear and tear of the Skinlands. More than one wraith who thought their Fetter would stand the test of ages has howled in despair as war, disaster, or sheer mischance consigned it to the ash heap. If a wraith does not make the effort to Resolve a Fetter, sooner or later it will be ripped from her, and she will never be able to make peace with it. That's a heavy burden to carry over the course of eternity.

Much like Resolving a Passion, coming to terms with a wraith's attachment to a Fetter and Resolving it requires discussion with the Storyteller about working it into the story. It also requires intense roleplaying wherein the wraith confronts her connection to the Fetter and finds a way to walk away from it on her own terms. Though the exact details of this process vary widely, ultimately Resolution comes from being able to leave the Fetter behind without regret.

Players who are interested in Resolving a Fetter can think about it in terms of what it would take for them to walk away from an important part of their life, whether it's their childhood home, a beloved piece of heirloom jewelry, or even contact with a loved one. What would it take to be able to just walk away — without anger, without sorrow, without regrets, and without ever looking back? The answer is seldom simple and straightforward, especially when the extreme passions of the Restless are taken into account.

System: At any time the Storyteller feels the player has demonstrated sufficient progress in her desire to Resolve a Fetter, the player may make a roll of the Fetter's rating, at difficulty 9. Every two successes reduce the Fetter's rating by one, to a minimum of one. A Fetter cannot be completely eliminated in this fashion — that requires a Resolution roll, outlined below — but a Fetter must be reduced to at least half of its original rating, rounded down (to a minimum of one), before a final Resolution roll is possible.

Once the Storyteller feels that the character is ready to finally Resolve her Fetter, it is time for a Resolution roll. This is a moment of great risk, not just for the wraith but for her Fetter as well — severing such a critical connection invites the atten-

tion of Oblivion, and even a moment of doubt can destroy both wraith and subject. A Resolution roll consists of the wraith's Willpower against a difficulty of 5 + the Fetter's original rating. If the wraith gains successes on this roll equal to the Fetter's original rating, she has Resolved the Fetter successfully.

If the wraith fails a Resolution roll, the rating of her Fetter increases by one, and she must undergo another period of searching and reflection before attempting Resolution again. If a wraith botches a Resolution roll, the Fetter is immediately destroyed. A living Fetter dies suddenly, and often without apparent cause, while an inanimate Fetter is consumed in some freak accident or misfortune. (In the unusual event that a living Fetter is another player's character, death is not automatic, but he should be confronted by a life-threatening crisis that is difficult to overcome, and the Fetter rating is lost regardless.) As for the wraith, she immediately falls into a Destruction Harrowing. Should she survive, she will still have to face the damage she has done.

A Storyteller may grant bonus dice to rolls related to Resolving a Fetter, or even the Resolution roll itself, as a reward for exceptional roleplaying and dedication to the process of Resolution. However, the final moment of Resolution should always be handled as a dice roll, and not simply awarded outright. As outlined above, there is a very real risk to both the wraith and her Fetter at that critical moment, and automatic success (or failure) removes that risk. Even the best-prepared wraith with the noblest of intentions can still falter at that critical moment, but for those who risk it, the reward of being a step closer to Transcendence is well worth it.

In addition to progress toward Transcendence, Resolving a Fetter also makes it easier to remain in the Shadowlands even when other ties have been lost. If a wraith has no remaining Fetters, but successfully Resolved at least one Fetter in the past, he may remain in the Shadowlands for one day per Willpower point spent rather than one scene per point as normal. Supposedly, a wraith who manages to Resolve all of his Fetters can remain in the Shadowlands indefinitely, but if such success bestows this benefit, it is rare to the point of myth.

The Sleep of the Dead

Even the dead still sleep, after a fashion. They do not require it the same way that mortals do, though it does offer a respite from the hardships of their existence. Referred to as Slumber, this state is a first and foremost a restorative one for an injured wraith. A wraith in Slumber can heal all but the most grievous wounds, provided she has had the time to rest. See the Injury section on p. 295 for details on how Slumber aids in healing.

A wraith who still has active Fetters can only Slumber by traveling to a Fetter and melding into it, a process which takes approximately as long as a mortal falling asleep and requires a similar amount of quiet and relative inactivity. The size of the Fetter does not matter, and entering Slumber does not require Skinriding a living Fetter; simple proximity is enough. This merger offers a measure of protection, as a Slumbering wraith cannot be harmed directly and is easy to overlook. Other wraiths and mortals sensitive to the dead may make a Perception + Awareness roll, difficulty 7, to catch a glimpse of the wraith within the Fetter, but most never think to look. If the Fetter suffers at least one level of damage, the wraith is immediately ejected, suffers one lethal Corpus level, and is considered stunned for one round if she returns in a combat situation.

Slumbering in a Fetter does not protect the wraith against a Maelstrom. Those who Slumber too long or simply suffer poor timing may find themselves ejected right into a howling storm. A wraith has no awareness of her surroundings while Slumbering, and any external circumstances that normally force her into a Harrowing (such as the destruction of another Fetter) will still wrench her free and down into the Harrowing as per normal.

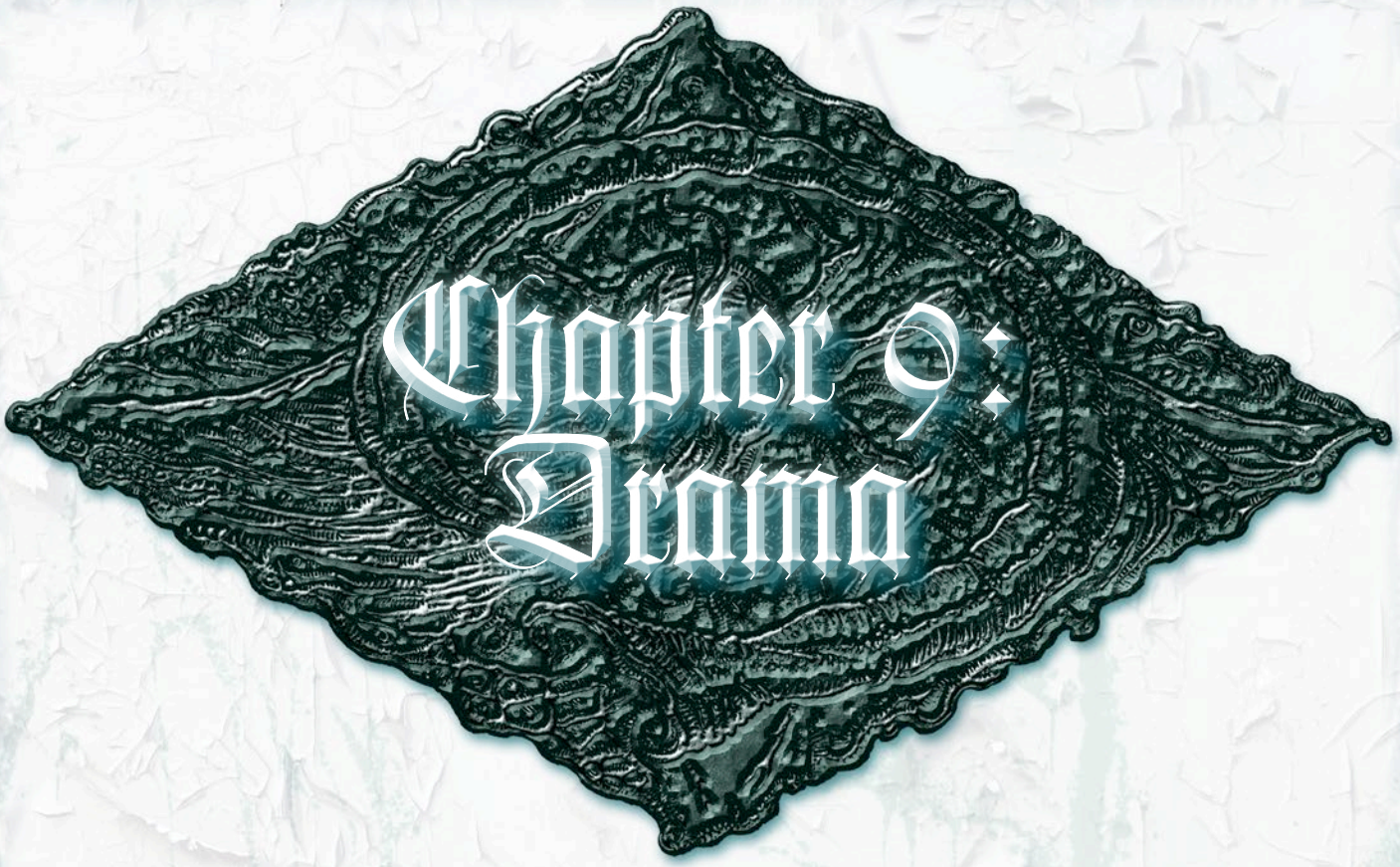
A wraith with no remaining Fetters, who did not Resolve all of those Fetters, can still Slumber. She simply finds a place to rest and enters a dormant state, which temporarily diffuses her Corpus in such a way that she essentially disappears. She is otherwise treated the same as Slumbering in a Fetter, as above, and is ejected if the location suffers damage, such as a fire or an explosion. She also suffers the same penalties for ejection and lack of awareness of her surroundings as she would leaving a Fetter. However, the difficulty of the Perception + Awareness roll to notice her increases to 8, and she may make a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 7) to avoid being stunned when she emerges.

A wraith who managed to resolve all of her Fetters may Slumber anywhere, as above, but the difficulty of the Perception + Awareness roll to notice her presence increases to 10, and she is not stunned when she reemerges. What's more, she remains dimly aware of her surroundings while she Slumbers. While she cannot make out conversations, read text, or pick up other fine details, she can perceive rough impressions of activity in the area and recognize familiar individuals or voices in the vicinity. She may choose to end her Slumber voluntarily in response to such stimuli. Doing so does mean that any Slumber advantages, such as regenerating lost Corpus, are considered interrupted and provide no benefits.

Assuming that she isn't jarred loose by damage, a wraith can choose to remain in Slumber for extended periods of time, and there are reliable reports of ancient wraiths Slumbering for decades or even centuries when it suits them. Most wraiths are afraid to go dormant for so long, however, as it means they cannot protect their Fetters or tend to their Passions, and thus may reawaken to find both much diminished.

Slumbering wraiths also dream, though the dreams of the dead are shot through with the bright hues of Passion contrasted against the dark intentions of the Shadow. As scenes from life mingle with experiences after death, a wraith may find herself dreaming of her living days but viewing them through Deathsight, for example, or seeing the Underworld as though it were part of the Skinlands.

Some wraiths claim to have experienced dreams related to important events and powerful figures by Slumbering in locations of great significance to them. The most famous are the wraiths who Slumber near the Onyx Tower in hopes of receiving dreams of Charon, though other "pilgrimage" sites exist throughout the Shadowlands and the Underworld.



While **Wraith** is about telling a shared story through roleplaying, some structure is required so that the more dramatic aspects of the game flow smoothly. The rules in Chapter Three provide the framework for what to do when a roll is required, but it's helpful to have references for specific situations that occur frequently. This chapter fleshes out the standard dramatic systems common to most chronicles, from handling the overall passage of time to managing individual combat maneuvers.

As always, the rules are merely guidelines. Remember the Golden Rule: If the Storyteller feels that modifying or outright ignoring the rules will benefit the story, that's fine. Just remember to explain any changes to the players before the start of play, so that everyone's on the same page.

Time

Much like in movies, time in a **Wraith** game compresses the boring stuff, and expands to focus on what's most relevant and interesting to the story. Uneventful weeks may pass in a moment of real time, while dramatic events — whether seducing an influential Renegade, confronting a corrupt Legionnaire, struggling to escape a Nihil, or fending off a pack of ravening Spectres — may unfold over most of a game session.

Roleplaying and "Roll Playing"

The more dice rolls you can avoid through roleplaying, the better. Immersing the players in story is central to a successful **Wraith** chronicle. Whenever dice start flying, it weakens the mood. If there's no compelling reason why a character wouldn't accomplish something she's trying to do, it's often best if the Storyteller simply grants the success and keeps the story flowing.

Even when the dice do come out, stick to rolls that are truly necessary. Requiring a roll each time a character performs even the simplest feat ("Roll Dexterity + Athletics against difficulty 2 to open the door") shatters any attempt at creating a compelling mood. Just like the rest of the game, each die roll should provide opportunities for strategy and surprises.

To help maintain a general sense of the passage of time without resorting to charts, **Wraith** uses six basic units to describe game time:

- **Turn:** The amount of time your character needs to take a simple action. There is no formal duration to a turn. It may last anywhere from a few seconds to roughly a minute, depending on the pace of a given scene. Think of it as one panel of a comic book —in some cases, it may be a small panel with some brief dialogue, in others a large splash page featuring dramatic action.
- **Scene:** Much like in movies, a scene is a compact period of action and interaction that takes place in a single location. This could be a raid on a Spectre nest or a whispered conference in a Skinlands haunt. As with a turn, there is no set length: A scene is as long as it needs to be. Combat might be over in a brief burst of action, while a suspenseful encounter might last for some time. Similarly, a scene has as many turns as needed. Alternately, it might not have any if it consists of nothing but dialogue and character interaction —actions that don't require rolls. Remember, in **Wraith**, the focus is on story and telling a shared narrative. You're not on a countdown clock.
- **Chapter:** A portion of a story, almost always played out in one game session. It consists of a series of scenes interconnected by downtime, not unlike a single television episode or a chapter in a novel.
- **Story:** A full tale, complete with introduction, rising action, and climax. Some stories may take several chapters to complete. Others may be finished in one, or even transpire in a scene or two.
- **Chronicle:** A series of stories connected by the characters themselves and their ongoing narrative, or possibly even by a common theme or overarching plot.
- **Downtime:** A passage of time in which players take no real action. Downtime is "glossed over"with description rather than played out turn by turn or scene by scene. The Storyteller is using downtime if he says, "You wait for almost two hours before the clerk escorts you to the Deathlord's chamber."The Storyteller should use downtime to move past trivial or tedious matters, or to allow characters to deal with simple, unchallenged activities. That said, a situation that begins as downtime might become a turn, scene, or even story if the players decide to undertake something more dramatic than the Storyteller originally expects… or if the Storyteller has some surprises of her own in store.

Balancing the flow of turns, scenes, and downtimes helps the story's pacing immensely. For more information on pacing, see Chapter Seven (p. 253).

Action Scenes

Complicated actions load many scenes, and require corresponding dice rolls to make them happen. Action scenes can involve fighting a barghest, swinging across a chasm, running down a wounded heretic, or hammering a door closed before an approaching Maelstrom hits. While fights, chases, and other perilous moments are among players'favorite scenes, they can be among the most complicated for Storytellers to manage well.

Action scenes can vary wildly and develop in unexpected ways. You can do a few things to help them unfold smoothly regardless of the specific events that occur.

First, it's vital to describe the setting vividly. This establishes the tone of the scene, makes it clear what the environment is like, points out any antagonists and bystanders, and lets the players know their options when planning their characters'actions. Failing to set the stage clearly can bog down the game and frustrate everyone ("You never said the door between us and those Nephwracks was open!"). That said, don't bother with information that doesn't create story opportunities or give players ideas for interesting things their characters can do. Going into excruciating detail on what brand of shoes everyone is wearing accomplishes nothing except throwing off the scene's momentum.

Next, employ a series of turns within an action scene (see "Organizing Action,"below). It's the one circumstance within the otherwise fluid time constraints of **Wraith** when having a formal structure is important. Turns in an action scene establish a consistent flow to events so that everyone knows what's happening and has a chance to react accordingly. Without action turns, a player may be understandably upset that her character didn't get the chance to stab a Doppelganger before getting punched the face.

Last, it's best to let players have their characters try just about anything, no matter how ridiculous or bizarre it might seem (though you may suggest a modification or an alternative approach to increase their odds of success). Be clear on how hard it might be to succeed at what they propose, of course, but there's no harm if they still want to give it a shot. Even with difficulty 10 and multiple successes needed, you never know —they just *might* pull it off….

Organizing Action

Just as the action scene is divided into turns, it's often helpful to break down the individual turns as well. Otherwise things can devolve into confusion with everyone calling out their actions at the same time and squabbling over who did what to whom first.

In action scenes, turns have three stages: *initiative*, *action* (or *combat*), and *resolution*. Each is covered below with the focus on how best to organize the narrative flow and establish character options within the scene (for detailed systems see "Combat Turns," p. 326).

As with all other rules, this approach is optional. Still, it's recommended to apply some form of structure in action scenes to sustain the story flow.

Roleplaying Action

While turns impose order on the chaos, it's important to maintain the narrative. Think of it as a mix of game and story: You describe what you want your character to do, and roll to see

whether it's successful. The Storyteller then describes the result, while making sure everyone is up to speed on what's happening.

Everything works together to create a dynamic narrative. It's dramatic to declare "I lunge from the shadows, bringing my cavalry saber down in a vicious slash!"then roll a successful hit which the Storyteller describes as "Your blade cleaves into his shoulder! The Spectre screams in pain and clutches at his sundered Corpus!" It's dull to say simply "I attack," followed by "Uh, he takes 4 levels of lethal damage."

Initiative

This establishes the narrative landscape for the turn and the order of when characters will perform actions.

The Storyteller should start the scene with a compelling description: the overall environment, any exits and relevant props (e.g., furniture, weapons), and the location of allies, enemies, and bystanders. This is a critical first step, since it sets the stage for all action that follows and establishes what options the characters have available. Springing unfair surprises on the characters or not sharing all available information about a scene ("Oh, right; it turns out there was a relic blunderbuss on the wall") is a sure way to achieve disorder.

Be as descriptive as possible when setting the scene. Doing so not only provides options for what characters might do, it can also spark the players'imagination and add tremendous depth to the storytelling aspect of the game. Merely saying, "You're in a room with a guy standing behind a desk"does nothing to maintain the flavor of the story. Instead, the Storyteller might describe the scene as "…a large study dominated by the relic of a mahogany desk, resting upon what looks to be a Moliated rug in a Persian pattern. A predatory-looking wraith stands behind the desk. On the wall behind him are numerous archaic weapons, obviously Artifacts, while on the desk itself, a soul-forged ashtray emits a high-pitched moan."This not only gives a better sense of the environment, it also injects menace into the scene and gives the characters some idea as to what — and with whom — they're dealing.

In subsequent turns, the Storyteller should update the scene briefly from each character's perspective.

Once the scene is set, everyone determines initiative. The default method involves rolling 1 die and adding it to their character's initiative rating (Dexterity + Wits). Regardless of the specific initiative system used, it's best if the Storyteller establishes some sort of order to the action about to take place.

Starting at the bottom of the initiative order, players and Storyteller alike announce their respective characters'planned actions. This gives a leg up to those with higher initiatives, since they're effectively thinking and reacting more quickly. By declaring their actions last, they can choose to build upon —or disrupt —whatever the slower characters are about to do.

Action/Combat

In this stage, characters take turns performing their declared actions, starting from the top of the initiative order. This is often a combat situation, though a scene may involve some other action —scaling a cliff rising from the Tempest, fleeing from a brace of hunting barghests, navigating the Tempest, etc.

The dramatic and combat systems in the following sections cover many actions that may arise in a game, but the Storyteller is the final arbiter of how each action is handled. She determineswhatever rolls are needed, along with associated difficulties and number of successes needed. These rolls can be as simple or as complicated as the Storyteller feels is necessary to resolve the action.

Resolution

As the term suggests, the resolution stage is where everyone works out the results of their actions. Any damage inflicted is applied at this time, and the Storyteller describes what happens in the scene as a consequence of actions taken during the turn.

Effectively, the Storyteller translates all the dice rolls and actions into description, story, and plot. While players declare actions and roll dice, it's the *characters* who engage in the conflict. Focusing on dice rolling ignores the central roleplaying element of the game. For instance, the Storyteller shouldn't merely confirm whether a maneuver was successful or simply state the amount of damage inflicted. She should describe how a daring escape unfolds or the devastating impact of an attack. The more evocative the description of what the characters do, the better.

By the end of the turn, everyone should update their characters'current status and physical condition as relevant. The Storyteller then declares the turn ended, and starts the next one as described above. Simply repeat this until the scene reaches its conclusion.

Dramatic Systems

uring a game session, characters will attempt any number of diverse and complicated actions. The Storyteller keeps these activities organized while determining their success or failure and resulting impact on the story.

The dramatic systems in this section make the Storyteller's job easier by supplying clear rules for a number of common activities. As noted elsewhere, the Storyteller may choose to roleplay everything out if she feels it's appropriate. This is not uncommon with Mental and Social dramatic systems, but Physical feats generally require some form of arbitration.

If these systems are used, be consistent in how they're applied. This avoids misunderstandings amongst players and keeps the game humming along smoothly.

Performing a feat typically involves adding a particular Attribute and Ability, which are noted next to the feat title. If

a feat falls within a character's specialty (p. 125), that character gains 2 successes instead of 1 for each "10" achieved on the roll.

Feat rolls are made versus difficulty 6, unless specifically noted otherwise in the description.

Many of these systems involve taking one or more actions over the course of one or more turns. In many cases, a character may try an action again if the first attempt is unsuccessful, though at the Storyteller's discretion, a difficulty penalty may apply (see "Trying It Again," p. 100).

Automatic Feats

Automatic feats require the character to take an action, but seldom involve a dice pool roll. The Storyteller may, at her discretion, declare additional feats as automatic in addition to the common ones listed below.

• **Activate Arcanoi:** A wraith character may spend Pathos to activate an Arcanos power. Activation occurs automatically and does not require concentration unless noted otherwise. Your character may spend an amount of Pathos equal to his per-turn rating.

• **Heal:** A wraith character may spend Pathos to heal bashing or lethal damage (p. 295). Your character must concentrate and do nothing else for one full turn. Trying to heal while performing other actions requires success on a Stamina + Survival reflexive roll (difficulty 8). Failing this roll means the wraith loses all expended Pathos points with no effect, while a botch causes the wraith to lose both 1 additional Pathos point and suffer 1 additional level of bashing damage.

If a character is struck while healing, first resolve the damage the character was in the process of healing at the time, then apply any damage from the new attack.

• **Movement:** Your character may walk, jog, or run without making a roll. A walking character moves at seven yards/meters per turn. A jogging character moves at (12 + Dexterity) yards/meters per turn. Running all out covers (20 + [3 x Dexterity]) yards/meters per turn.

Your character may move at up to half maximum running speed, then attack or perform another action. Your character may also move *while* taking another action. Doing so reduces 1 die from that action's dice pool for each yard/meter moved.

The Storyteller may call for a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 6) for your character to maintain footing and direction in hazardous conditions (slick surface, harsh weather, enemy fire). If your character tries to flee an encounter, he must actively dodge until he clears the immediate area.

If your character floats in the Tempest without benefit of an appropriate Arcanos (Argos, Tempestos, Tempest Weaving), he moves at one-half normal walking rate (rounded down), and can only change direction by spending a Pathos point.

Note that injured characters cannot move at maximum speed.

• **Power a Relic:** Certain relics — notably computers and other electronic devices, ranged weapons, and vehicles — require Pathos to function. Initial activation requires physical contact and occurs automatically with the appropriate Pathos expenditure. Neither sustained contact nor concentration is required afterward unless stated otherwise. After activation, anyone may use the relic and it remains powered for the rest of the scene.

More than one character may spend Pathos to power the same relic. Your character may spend an amount of Pathos equal to his per-turn rating.

The Relic Vehicle (p. 319) and Relic Ranged Weapons (p. 337) tables list Pathos costs required to activate various relics.

Your character may apply Usury powers to activate relics instead; simply use those systems as relevant (see p. 217).

• **Ready/Reload a Weapon:** This covers drawing a weapon or reloading with a prepared magazine. No roll is required so long as your character takes no other action that turn. Readying a weapon is a full action, doing so while attempting something else in the same turn requires taking a multiple action (see "Multiple Actions" p. 100) and making a successful Dexterity + Athletics, Melee, or Firearms roll as appropriate to the weapon (difficulty 4).

• **Stand Up:** Your character may get to his feet in one turn without making a roll. Standing up while doing something else in the same turn requires taking a multiple action (see "Multiple Actions," p. 100) and making a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 4).

• **Start a Vehicle:** Starting a vehicle takes an action, but normally requires no roll. If your character wants to start an unusual vehicle (e.g., motorcycle, semi, tank), the Storyteller may call for a reflexive Wits + Drive roll (difficulty 4).

Your character may apply appropriate Inhabit powers instead; simply use those systems as relevant (p. 173).

• **Yield:** Your character may reserve his action and let initiative pass to the next character. When yielding, your character may then choose to take his action at any point before the end of the turn. If everyone yields their actions, no one does anything that turn.

Physical Feats

These systems cover actions involving the three Physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina). As noted above, assume difficulty 6 for any maneuver unless a description states otherwise.

Remember that certain Moliate powers add dice to Physical Attributes when making many of these rolls.

• **Carrying Capacity (Strength):** Your character can carry 25 lbs/10 kg per point of Strength without penalty. Should your character exceed this total, the added weight incurs an automatic +1 difficulty to every action involving physical skills. Also, every 25 lbs/10 kg over the limit halves your character's base movement, rounding down. Your character cannot move if she's bearing a total weight of double her Strength allocation.

This system is a guideline to reflect being heavily laden. The Storyteller shouldn't call for an inventory check each time your character picks up something small. If only lifting or otherwise shifting weight, refer to the *Lift/Break* system (p. 320).

• **Climb [Dexterity + Athletics]:** This feat covers everything from clambering up a rocky slope to scaling the side of a building. Climbing is typically an extended action, lasting until you've accumulated enough successes to reach the desired height. Each success rolled indicates that your character has climbed two yards/meters. Botching a climb attempt can have drastic consequences,from slipping or getting stuck to falling outright.

The difficulty categories below provide a quick reference. The Storyteller may adjust the difficulty further depending on additional factors such as the degree of incline, weather conditions, and whether your character is under duress (panicked, being shot at, etc.). For instance, rain or gusting wind might apply a +1 to +3 difficulty. Conversely, using climbing gear grants a –2 difficulty to climbing. Additional factors can never adjust the difficulty lower than 2 or higher than 10.

Using Moliate to assist with climbing (creating claws or similar "climbing gear") grants a –2 difficulty.

Climb	Difficulty	Example
Easy	4	A ladder; a shallow, rocky slope
Standard	6	A cliff with some handholds; a tree with thin branches
Treacherous	8	A wall with few handholds
Extremely difficult	10	A metal-and-glass skyscraper wall

• **Drive/Pilot [Dexterity/Wits + Drive]:** No roll is required to steer even a relic vehicle under normal circumstances, as long as your character has at least Drive 1 and uses Pathos to power the vehicle for the scene (see "Automatic Feats," p. 316). However, a number of factors —road conditions, speed, complex maneuvers —can challenge even the most competent driver, as noted below. The factors are cumulative,so driving recklessly in bad weather while trying to lose a tail adds up to +3 difficulty. The Storyteller may modify the difficulty further, as appropriate to the circumstance.

Difficulty	Driving Factor
+1	Bad road conditions (cracks, potholes, gravel)
+1	Bad weather (hard rain, strong winds)
+1	Heavy traffic/obstacles (rush hour, pedestrians)
+1	Reckless driving (ignoring your surroundings)

If you activate Claim the Shell (Inhabit, p. 174) to control a vehicle, you may use your Inhabit rating instead of Drive for any maneuver rolls.

Since no two vehicles handle the same way (a sports car is designed for speed, while a minivan is built for safety), see the Relic Vehicle table for details on safe speed, maximum

Artifact Aircrafts

These unique aircrafts endure in the Underworld due to the indelible mark left upon the realms of both the Quick and the dead. The Storyteller is encouraged to come up with other crafts — as well as cars, ships, and other vehicles — as benefits the chronicle.

- **Leonardo's *Flying Machine*:** Legend claims that, four centuries before the Wright brothers, Leonardo da Vinci designed a heavier-than-air craft that achieved powered flight.

  Safe Speed: 10 mph/16 km/h

  Max Speed: 15 mph/24 km/h

  Maneuver: 3

  Corpus: 7

- ***Wright Flyer*:** First flown by Orville Wright, this aircraft is recognized as achieving the first sustained manned flight in a powered heavier-than-air vehicle.

  Safe Speed: 10 mph/16 km/h

  Max Speed: 15 mph/24 km/h

  Maneuver: 3

  Corpus: 7

- ***Hindenburg*:** The crown of Zeppelin's passenger fleet, this rigid airship used hydrogen for lift, which caused its fiery demise after only 14 months in service.

  Safe Speed: 50 mph/80 km/h

  Max Speed: 85 mph/135 km/h

  Maneuver: 4

  Corpus: 50

- ***Glamorous Glennis*:** Piloted by Chuck Yeager, the Bell X–1 experimental rocket plane was basically a "bullet with wings," and was the first manned aircraft to exceed the speed of sound.

  Safe Speed: 500 mph/800 km/h

  Max Speed: 950 mph/1,530 km/h

  Maneuver: 9

  Corpus: 21

speed, and maneuverability. For every 10 mph/15 km/h a vehicle travels over its safe driving speed, apply +1 difficulty to any maneuver. Additionally, the vehicle's maneuver rating dictates the maximum number of dice the driver can roll, regardless of whether the driver's total Dexterity + Drive dice pool exceeds that amount.

Your character can perform a special maneuver to evade or catch up with another vehicle, such as make a sudden turn, do a 180, or block off a Byway. When your character makes a special maneuver, any other drivers who want to stick with her must succeed at a similar maneuver. For details on how successes from special maneuvers are applied during a chase, see "Pursuit" (p. 320).

When driving or piloting a vehicle, solid objects present less of a hazard to wraiths than they do to the living. A wraith can drive a relic sports car right through an oncoming Skinlands 18-wheeler with minimal Corpus damage to her vehicle, herself, and anyone riding with her. Each wraith in a relic vehicle that passes through a solid object takes 1 level of bashing damage and goes Incorporeal for one turn (see "Corpus States," p. 291). If the relic vehicle is still within a solid Skinlands object when the wraiths' Corporeal states resume, each takes an additional 1 level of bashing damage and repeats the process.

A relic vehicle that passes through a solid object suffers the same fate —however, since inanimate objects do not heal, any damage suffered is permanent unless repaired. Bear in mind that characters can spend Pathos to repair a relic vehicle.

Relic vehicles affect each other normally, even if both are Incorporeal at the time.

• **Hotwire [Dexterity + Streetwise]:** To hotwire, roll versus difficulty 8. If successful, the vehicle starts and runs normally. Failure means it simply doesn't start on that attempt. On a botch, your character has ripped out the necessary wires, created a short, or otherwise wrecked the wiring so that she cannot start the vehicle at all.

On many vehicles, the wires are secured under a steering wheel cover or other panel. In that case, your character must first expose the wires by forcing the panel with a successful Strength + Repair roll (difficulty 6). On a botch, the cover breaks and cannot be put back in place.

If you use Inhabit to possess a vehicle, apply that system instead of making a hotwire attempt.

• **Intrusion [Dexterity/Perception + Larceny]:** Intrusion covers breaking and entering, evading simple security devices, picking locks, cracking safes —and preventing others from doing the same. Wraiths can bypass most Skinlands security for obvious reasons, but there may be times when interacting with physical security is required. Regardless, locks, safes, and other defensive measures are common in relics and soulforged objects throughout the Underworld.

The Storyteller determines the difficulty based on the security system's complexity; after all, beating a standard lock (difficulty 5) is far less challenging than breaking into Fort Knox (difficulty 9). Most intrusion tasks require lockpicks, jamming devices, or other

Relic Vehicle

Archaic Vehicles	Safe Speed (mph/km/h)	Max Speed (mph/km/h)	Maneuver	Corpus
Bicycle	15/25	30/50	8	7
Automobile (Model T)	30/50	45/70	4	15
Biplane (Sopwith Camel)	70/110	115/185	6	15
Light Aircraft (Piper Cub)	75/121	90/140	7	21
Airship (Zeppelin)	45/65	80/115	4	45
Tank (Panzer IV)	15/25	25/40	3	120
Modern Vehicles	**Safe Speed (mph/km/h)**	**Max Speed (mph/km/h)**	**Maneuver**	**Corpus**
Motorcycle (racing)	85/135	200/320	9	15
Motorcycle (cruiser)	75/120	125/200	8	17
Compact Car	70/110	130/210	6	17
Sporty Compact	100/160	140/225	7	17
Formula One Racer	140/225	240/385	10	17
Sport Coupe	110/175	150/240	8	21
Sports Car	110/175	160/225	8	21
Custom Car	130/210	190+/305+	9	24
Midsize Car	75/120	125/200	6	24
Sedan	70/110	120/195	5	27
Sport Sedan	85/135	165/265	8	27
Luxury Sedan	85/135	155/250	7	30
Minivan	70/110	120/195	6	32
SUV/Crossover	70/110	115/185	6	32
Bus	60/95	100/160	3	65
Truck (6-wheel)	60/95	90/145	3	65
Semi (no trailer)	80/130	130/210	5	80
Semi (trailer)	70/110	110/175	4	100
Tank	60/95	100/160	4	150

relevant tools. Also, certain tasks might require your character to have a minimum level of Larceny to succeed (e.g., Larceny 1 is sufficient to pick a simple lock, but not to crack a safe).

You may try multiple times to open manual locks. When bypassing active security, your roll must succeed on the first attempt. Failure triggers any active alarms. On a botch in either circumstance, your character's clumsy break-in attempt goes horribly awry.

Setting up security measures is a standard action. Any extra successes increase the system's quality, effectively adding to the difficulty required to breach it.

Note that Larceny is specific to the physical aspects of intrusion. Dealing with the technology that comprises the security system itself requires dots in Technology. So, your character would use intrusion to get into or out of somewhere, but could not rewire an alarm system or confound a surveillance camera feed.

Certain Inhabit arts can control or disable security devices from the mechanical to the electronic (see p. 174).

• **Jump [Strength (standing); Strength + Athletics (running)]:** To jump successfully, your character must clear the distance between her and her destination. Roll versus difficulty 3, with the number of successes rolled determining distance traveled (see below). On a failure, your character doesn't make it, but you may roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) to see if your character grabs a ledge or other safety as she falls. On a botch, your character may slip before the leap, slam into a wall, or fall to her doom.

By making a successful Perception + Athletics roll (difficulty 8) before the jump, you may gauge exactly how many successes are needed to make the leap.

Type of Jump	Distance per Success
Standing vertical (up)	two feet/50 cm
Running horizontal (across)	three feet/one meter

• **Lift/Break [Strength]:** Your character's Strength is often used alone, without an Ability, for actions requiring brute force. The Feats of Strengthtable shows the minimum Strength needed to perform a desired feat without a die roll. At the Storyteller's discretion, you may increase your character's effective Strength by 1 if she simply wants to drag something a short distance instead of pick it up.

Your character may roll to affect greater weight than her Strength rating allows. However, this is a Willpower roll (difficulty 9) and may be tried only once on a particular object. Each success advances your character up 1 level on the chart. Lifting is all or nothing —if you fail the roll, nothing happens. On a botch, your character may tear her Corpus or drop the object on herself or someone else.

Characters can use teamwork (p. 101) to lift an object together. Each player rolls separately, and resulting successes are combined.

A damaged tool, weapon, or vehicle may suffer negative modifiers to its use, at the Storyteller's discretion. To actually *destroy* an object requires inflicting damage equal to its Corpus (p. 329).

Note: A relic's durability is generally equivalent to its Skinlands counterpart (see "Object Corpus," p. 329). Soulforged and Stygian steel items are notably stronger: Bending or breaking a soulforged object requires a Strength rating 1 level higher than normal, and against Stygian steel requires a rating 2 levels higher than normal.

• **Open/Close [Strength]:** Forcing a door open or closed calls for a Strength roll (difficulty 6 for thin wood or metal, difficulty 8 for more substantial materials). The bigger and thicker the door, the greater number of successes needed to force it open or slam it shut, as listed below. This may be an extended action, and may involve teamwork (p. 101). Additionally, opposing forces on the other side of the door result in a resisted action.

Heavier doors may require a Strength minimum to even make an attempt, at the Storyteller's discretion.

To actually *destroy* a door requires inflicting damage equal to its Corpus (p. 329).

Door Type	Successes
Standard interior door	1
Impact resistant door	3
Reinforced door	5
Aircraft door	7
Vault door	10

Feats of Strength

Strength	Feat	Lift (lbs/kg)
1	Crush a beer can	40/20
2	Tear a piece of cloth in two	100/45
3	Kick open a wooden door	250/115
4	Pull free a wooden plank	400/180
5	Force open a metal fire door	650/295
6	Throw a motorcycle	800/360
7	Flip a small car	900/410
8	Bend a lead pipe	1000/455
9	Punch through a cement wall	1200/545
10	Rip open a steel drum	1500/680
11	Punch through 1"/2.5 cm thick sheet metal	2000/910
12	Snap a metal lamp post	3000/1360
13	Throw an SUV	4000/1815
14	Throw a panel van	5000/2265
15	Throw a locomotive	6000/2720

• **Pursuit [Dexterity + Athletics/Drive]:** Pursuit is often resolved automatically with the method for calculating movement. If one party is clearly faster than another, the faster one catches or evades the opposition eventually. However, there may be times when the parties have similar speeds, or when the quarry may get to safety before the pursuer can catch up. In such cases, use the system below.

Basic pursuit is an extended action. The target starts with a number of free extra successes based on her distance from the pursuer: on foot, 1 success for every two yards/meters ahead of pursuers; in a vehicle, 1 success for every 10 yards/meters ahead of pursuers.

For chases involving wraiths and mortals, remember that mortals tire, but the dead do not. Also, wraiths can pass through physical barriers (p. 292), while mortals must navigate around them.

Each turn, quarry and pursuer make the appropriate roll (depending on the type of pursuit), adding new successes to any gained in previous turns. If the pursuer accumulates more total successes than the target has, he catches up and may take further actions to stop the chase. As the quarry accumulates successes, she gains distance from her pursuer and may try to lose any opponents. Each success that the quarry accumulates beyond the pursuer's total acts as a +1 difficulty to any Perception roll the pursuer must make to remain on the target's tail. The Storyteller may call for the pursuer to make a Perception roll at any time (up to once each turn). If the pursuer fails this roll, his quarry is considered to have slipped away —lost in a crowd, escaped down a side street, etc. On a botch, the pursuer loses

his quarry immediately. If the quarry botches at any point, she's delayed in some way (runs into a Legionnaire patrol, stumbles across a Nihil, etc.).

For vehicle pursuit, combine this with the system for driving/piloting (p. 317). Simply use the maneuver rolls established in that system to determine success, then apply any extra successes from each participant's maneuver roll to resolve any relative gain or loss.

• **Sneak [Dexterity + Stealth]:** To sneak, your character uses Dexterity + Stealth in a resisted action against Perception + Alertness rolls from anyone able to detect her passing. Factors such as being noisy, having unsecured gear or lack of cover, or passing large groups of observers can modify the standard difficulty. Additionally, security devices, scanners, or superior vantage points may add dice to Perception + Alertness rolls. Unless an observer scores more successes than the sneaking character does, she passes undetected. On a botch, the sneaking character stumbles into one of the people she's avoiding, walks into the open, or performs some other compromising action.

Note that some Argos and Pandemonium powers may enhance a wraith's ability to pass unnoticed.

•**Swim [Stamina + Athletics]:** Swimming over a long distance or for a long duration requires a successful standard swim roll, though severe weather conditions may increase the difficulty. The first roll is made after one hour of sustained activity, and an additional roll is made every subsequent hour the activity continues. A single success is all that's needed to keep swimming. On a failed roll, the character loses headway or goes slightly off course. On a botch, she loses her orientation entirely or starts to sink.

Being able to swim requires a minimum of Athletics 1.

• **Throw [Dexterity + Athletics]:** Your character can throw an object that is not designed to be thrown (ashtray, beer bottle, book, rock, shoe) and weighs two pounds/one kilogram or less a maximum of Strength x five yards/meters. For every additional two pounds/one kilogram an object weighs, this distance decreases by five yards/meters (it's not easy to throw heavy things). If an object's weight reduces the throwing distance to zero, the most your character can do is shove it to one side —roughly one yard/meter of distance. If an object's weight is too great to be lifted, it can't be thrown (refer instead to "Lift/Break,"p. 320).

For an object that is balanced for throwing (grenade, javelin, throwing knife), your character can throw it up to Strength + Athletics x five yards/meters. The object is still limited to the maximum range for which it was designed (see "Thrown Weapons & Explosives," p. 336).

The Storyteller may reduce throwing distances for particularly unwieldy objects, or increase them for aerodynamic ones. Throwing an object accurately requires a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 6 up to half of the maximum range, difficulty 8 from half of the maximum to the maximum range). Wind conditions may adjust the difficulty further. On a botch, your character might drop the object or strike a companion with it accidentally.

If throwing an opponent, use the throw combat maneuver instead (p. 334).

• **Tail [Dexterity + Stealth/Drive]:** To tail someone successfully, your character keeps direct tabs on the target without necessarily catching him —*and* without being noticed herself. Tailing can be done on foot or in a vehicle. Someone else can drive the vehicle, as long as your character is the one navigating.

At the Storyteller's discretion, or if the target suspects he's being pursued, the target's player can roll Perception + Alertness whenever he has a chance to spot his tail (the Storyteller decides when such an opportunity arises). The tailing player opposes this with a Dexterity + Stealth roll (or Dexterity + Drive, if the tail is in a vehicle). Environmental conditions may modify the standard difficulty (heavy crowds, empty streets, bad weather, Skinlands interference, etc.). Use of certain Arcanoi may influence these rolls further.

As long as the tail gets more successes, she remains unnoticed (at least, until the Storyteller calls for another opposed roll). If the quarry scores the same number of successes as his pursuer, his suspicion of being followed grows, granting him a -1 difficulty to his next roll (to a minimum of 2). If the quarry scores at least one more success than his tail does, he spots her and may act accordingly —whether now trying to escape pursuit, turning to confront the tail, or continuing to lead her on seemingly unaware that he's being followed.

Two or more characters can trade off tailing responsibilities. As long as they've trained together, this is a standard teamwork effort (p. 101). Otherwise, a +1 difficulty applies to everyone doing the tailing.

Mental Feats

These systems cover tasks involving the three Mental Attributes (Perception, Intelligence, Wits), as well as tasks that use Pathos, Arcanoi, and Willpower. Mental tests can reveal information that your character knows even if you, the player, don't. Still, as always, you should rely on your own roleplaying and creativity when solving problems, not on dice rolls.

As noted above, assume difficulty 6 for any feat attempts unless a description states otherwise. Bear in mind that all Mental feats are subject to +2 difficulty when performed in the Tempest (see "Maneuver Conditions," p. 329).

• **Creativity [variable]:** Some wraiths were artists in life, while others may have discovered the spark of creativity only after death. The roll for creative expression depends on what your character wants to create: a portrait of Charon, a landscape of the Philadelphia Necropolis, a poem about the living world, stories featuring a hard-bitten ghost private eye —or even something that isn't focused on death, for a change. A common roll is Perception (to come up with a subject worthy of expressing) + Expression or Crafts (to capture the feeling in an artistic medium). Difficulty depends on the nature of the creation—it's easier to write a limerick than a Petrarchan sonnet.

The number of successes governs the quality of the finished creation: 1 success indicates a decent work, while 5 successes is a literary or artistic masterpiece. Some creative efforts might require extended success rolls (e.g., novels, large sculptures, vast murals). On a botch, your character unwittingly embarrasses a patron, leaves out key details, goes on a tangent that neglects her original intent, or creates the *greatest work ever known in the worlds of the living or the dead!*…while everyone else sees it for the crap it truly is.

At the Storyteller's discretion, a wraith who creates a particularly inspired masterwork might be eligible for advancement closer to Transcendence.

• **Computer Use [Intelligence/Wits + Computer]:** Although ubiquitous across much of the living world, many wraiths still dismiss computers as little more than a curiosity. Such views ignore the power that computers have to collect information, share knowledge and opinions, and coordinate like-minded individuals across vast distances.

For the purposes of this feat, a "computer"covers most anything from a traditional desktop machine to the latest smartphone, or even an old mainframe system. Most Computer Skill rolls are made to collect, display, or transfer information. Use Technology for physical results instead, like turning off a security system remotely or activating a restricted elevator. Similarly, use Technology to access or modify Skinlands devices that use software and computer systems (cars, security systems, checkout scanners, game consoles). That said, a player who makes a good argument for using Computer in a particular circumstance may try a roll, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Computer use typically falls within two distinct types of behavior:

Personal Use: Performing research, writing software, or participating in social networks. For example, using a search engine to research a topic might invoke an Intelligence + Computers roll. Such feats are straightforward unless performed in unusual circumstances (your character has but seconds before barghests come crashing through the door) or using unfamiliar devices ("what the hell's a 'Personal Data Assistant'?").

Computers are pervasive in the modern world, so it's seldom necessary to require a roll unless there are dramatic repercussions for failure. Also, there may be times when Computer isn't the relevant Ability for the task at hand. For instance, joining an online community of "monster hunters"is more appropriately a Wits + Subterfuge or Charisma + Expression roll.

If your character botches personal use, she may turn up misleading information, write buggy software that crashes the system, or accidentally broadcast embarrassing or compromising information.

Hacking: In game terms, hacking involves exploiting weaknesses in a computer system or network to obtain and/or manipulate information. When attempting a hack, roll Intelligence or Wits + Computer. The difficulty depends on the system being hacked:difficulty 6 for personal networks to difficulty 9 for corporate server clusters or old government mainframes.

(In some situations, hacking can involve turning a device or computer program against or beyond its original intent —putting an alert on a screen that doesn't normally display messages or fabricating official documents for a false identity. To keep things simple, resolve such situations in the same way as information-driven hacking.)

The successes rolled indicate the size of your dice pool for interacting with the system once it's been breached. On a botch,

the hacker may alert security to her presence or even reveal her identity to the system she's trying to breach.

Blocking a hacker is a resisted action. If the hacker wins, she accesses the system unopposed for a number of turns equal to the extra successes rolled. If the defender wins, the hacker is kicked from the system and may not try again for the rest of the scene. On a tie, the opponents' cat-and-mouse continues into the next turn.

Hacking is almost always an extended action, and requiring a high number of successes is recommended. After all, hacking isn't some magical "I can do anything I want because computers are magic"solution. It should take more than 1 or 2 successes to delete one's own birth records or put in a work order to destroy a target's Fetter.

You may use Claim the Shell (Inhabit, p. 174) to assist further with computer use. Simply add extra successes from a successful Inhabit attempt to subsequent computer use-rolls on the targeted device.

• **Investigate [Perception + Investigation]:** Any search for clues, evidence, or hidden contraband. This covers everything from reviewing a crime scene for evidence to searching a room for a trap door. The Storyteller may increase the standard difficulty if clues are particularly obscure or well concealed —for instance, an envelope in a drawer might be difficulty 6, while one hidden inside a hollow chair leg might be difficulty 9. The number of successes indicates the amount of information gleaned. At a crime scene, 1 success provides a basic idea of what happened, with additional successes offering deductions as to perpetrator and motive. If searching for a concealed door, 1 or 2 successes may be enough to find it, but more successes may be required to figure out how to open it. On a botch, obvious clues are missed or even destroyed accidentally.

• **Repair [Dexterity/Perception + Crafts]:** There aren't many repair shops in the Shadowlands, so wraiths must usually do the job themselves. Depending on the specialty involved, Crafts can be used to repair anything from pottery to automobile engines (for computers, use Technology). Before repairing a device, your character must first make a standard research roll to identify what's wrong with it. The Storyteller then sets the repair difficulty based on the problem's severity, whether proper tools and replacement parts are on hand, and if adverse conditions exist. An inspired result on the initial research roll may offset these factors somewhat.

Simple repairs take at least a few turns to complete, while more complex repairs are extended actions that last 10 minutes for each success needed (some repairs may be completed in more than one sitting, at the Storyteller's discretion). On a botch, your character may simply waste time and a new part, or even make the problem worse.

A wraith may repair a relic or Artifact by spending Pathos instead.

Repair Job	Difficulty	Successes
Reassembling a broken vase	4	3
Soldering job	5	2
Electronic repair	5	5
Fitting a new part	6	10
Changing a flat tire	6	5
Tough auto repair	7	10
System overhaul	8	20
Technical glitch	9	2

• **Research [Intelligence + Academics/Occult/Science]:** Research covers everything from poring over obscure tomes to searching computer databases. Whatever the case, the number of successes achieved determines the amount of information discovered: 1 success provides at least basic information, with extra successes turning up further details. The Storyteller may assign a high difficulty for particularly obscure data. On a botch, your character may not uncover anything at all or may misinterpret what she does find.

• **Track [Perception + Survival]:** Unlike trailing, tracking requires following physical evidence (footprints, fluid trails, broken twigs, smudges on walls, threads caught on fencing, tire tracks) to find a target. It's a standard action to track someone. Multiple successes provide extra information (number of subjects, rate of speed, estimated build). The quarry can cover his trail with a successful Wits + Survival roll, with each success applying a +1 difficulty to any tracking attempts (maximum difficulty 10). Abnormal weather, poor conditions (urban environment), and how much time has passed before tracking began also add to tracking difficulty.

On a missed tracking roll, you can try again, but your character suffers an additional +1 difficulty to the attempt. Upon reaching difficulty 10 (or if rolling a botch), your character loses the trail and must go back to the beginning to start over —though this time beginning at difficulty 8.

On a botch, your character not only loses the trail but also destroys any signs of the quarry's passage.

This system focuses on tracking in the Skinlands. As wraiths seldom leave footprints, attempts to track the Restless or Spectres without benefit of an appropriate Arcanoi starts at difficulty 8.

Social Feats

These systems cover tasks involving the three Social Attributes (Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance). As always, these systems are merely guidelines. While there are times when a player's abilities cannot match her character's, the Storyteller may ignore Social systems when a player exhibits particularly good —or excruciatingly bad —roleplaying.

As noted above, assume difficulty 6 for any feat attempts unless a description states otherwise.

• **Credibility [Manipulation/Perception + Subterfuge]:** Credibility applies when trust is in question. In game terms, it's used most often when trying to perpetrate or uncover a scam (e.g., impersonating someone in authority, looking for forged documents). The perpetrator rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge in a resisted action against the subject's Perception + Subterfuge. Credentials or other documentation may add to the difficulty of anyone trying to detect deception; conversely, teamwork may be used to scrutinize a claim. The Storyteller may also call for hacking and/or intrusion rolls to support claims of credibility.

If the perpetrator gets more successes, she is considered credible and is treated accordingly. On a tie, the subject recognizes the perpetrator's credibility grudgingly, but may keep a close eye on her. If the subject gets more successes, the perpetrator's effort fails but the subject is not necessarily alarmed; the perpetrator may try to withdraw without drawing further attention to herself. If the perpetrator botches, she is caught in a lie and draws significant unwanted attention. If the subject botches, he believes wholeheartedly in the perpetrator's claims despite any subsequent evidence to the contrary.

• **Fast-Talk [Manipulation + Subterfuge]:** When there's no time for subtlety, baffle them with nonsense. Fast-talking is a resisted action that pits your character's Manipulation + Subterfuge against the target's Wits + Subterfuge. If you get more successes, a series of almost-believable half-truths browbeats the subject into accommodating you. On a tie, you can continue babbling the next turn (or simply walk away before the target gets wise to your chicanery). If the target gets more successes, he grows wary, resulting in a +1 difficulty to any fast-talk attempt you make next turn. On a botch, your character's rambling goes too far, angering the target and making him immune to any further fast-talk attempts.

• **Interrogate [Manipulation + Empathy/Intimidation]:** Anyone can ask questions. When interrogating, your character asks questions with *leverage*. Interrogating someone peacefully involves making strategic inquiries designed to reveal specific information. This is a resisted action between the interrogator's Manipulation + Empathy and the subject's Willpower. The Storyteller calls for rolls as appropriate during key points in questioning, up to once per turn.

Violent interrogation involves torturing the victim's mind or body until she reveals what she knows. This is a resisted action between the interrogator's Manipulation + Intimidation and the subject's Stamina + 3 or Willpower (whichever is higher). Rolls occur each time the interrogator demands an answer, up to once per turn. Each time a resisted action occurs, the subject loses 1 point of Willpower if being tortured psychologically, or suffers 1 level of bashing damage if being tortured physically.

Multiple interrogators can work together, combining successes. This works even if one interrogator uses Empathy while another uses Intimidation (the classic "good cop/bad cop"approach).

Further, in death, a whole new range of interrogation options becomes available. Judicious use of Arcanoi can be used to enhance mundane techniques — whether Pandemonium to keep the victim off balance, or Keening or Moliate for new and unusual methods of "enhanced interrogation."

Whatever the method used, the interrogator gleans information for each success that exceeds the subject's resisted roll. Still, bear in mind that details may reflect what the subject *thinks* she wants her interrogator to hear. If the interrogator botches, the target goes mum and will *never* reveal anything —or perhaps even lies believably. Given this possibility, the Storyteller may choose to handle any rolls involved in interrogation.

Successes	Interrogation
1	Some minor details
2	A few useful facts
3	Clearly relevant information
4	Extensive revelations
5	Everything requested, plus key information unrelated to what was asked for

• **Intimidate [Manipulation/Strength + Intimidation]:** Your character can intimidate through subtle menace or outright threat. Subtle intimidation is based on a *perceived* threat (losing one's rank within the Legions, being arrested, pain and agony later in afterlife), and involves rolling Manipulation + Intimidation in a resisted action against the subject's Willpower.

Blatant intimidation is exactly that: direct threat of physical harm. This involves rolling Strength + Intimidation in a resisted action against the subject's Willpower or Strength + Intimidation (whichever is higher).

Whatever the method, the target must get more successes or be cowed. On a tie, your character may try to intimidate again on the next turn. On a botch, your character looks ridiculous and doesn't impress anyone present for the rest of the scene.

The Storyteller may also allow passive intimidation. This doesn't involve a roll. Your character simply gives off a vibe that guarantees plenty of space wherever she goes, whether on a subway platform or in the local pub. The more dots your character has in Intimidation, the less likely others are to get close.

• **Perform [Charisma + Expression/Leadership]:** Perform has two main expressions: oration to influence, or performance to entertain.

Oration: Roll Charisma + Leadership when your character gives a speech or presentation in hopes of influencing an audience. While you need not recite the desired speech verbatim, you must at least express the central message. The Storyteller may also ask for opening lines or a memorable phrase —and who knows? This may even encourage you to embrace the moment and give an actual speech.

Performance: Roll Charisma + Expression when your character strives to entertain an audience (singing, acting, reciting a monologue, doing improv, etc.).

When appearing before an audience, your character gets only one chance to succeed: A single roll represents her entire oration or performance. The Storyteller may increase the standard difficulty depending on the audience's mood (cynical, drunk, hostile, composed entirely of Spectres) and/or environmental factors (huge crowd, poor acoustics, inclement weather, other activities occurring nearby).

The number of successes indicates how compelling your character's effort was and how well she impressed the audience.

Successes	Performance	Audience Reaction
1	Decent	Polite, if not excited
2	Good	Approving
3	Superior	Enthusiastic
4	Exceptional	Enthralled
5	Brilliant	Mind blowing; a life-changing event

On a failed roll, your character doesn't capture the audience's attention and support (your speech rambled, you sang off-key). On a botch, your character damages her reputation, causes some mishap, or riles the crowd into outright antagonism toward her.

If your character has time to rehearse beforehand, roll Intelligence + Expression (difficulty 7). Success grants a -1 difficulty to the subsequent oration or performance roll. Failure has no effect, though a botch *increases* the perform difficulty (your character misses a gaffe in the script or becomes sloppy from overconfidence).

The Storyteller may allow this feat as an extended action, if the performance is vital to the story. However, a +1 difficulty applies each turn after the third as the audience grows restless.

For an oration or performance that stirs Passions, apply a –2 difficulty. Further, wraiths in the audience with relevant Passions may roll for Pathos gain.

• **Seduce [variable]:** Seducing is a contrived means of becoming intimate with someone; your character plans each step and does not share any real emotion. The particular situation and style of seduction determines which Traits are used.

Seduction is an involved process requiring several different rolls:

Approach/Opening Line: First, roll your character's Appearance + Subterfuge versus a difficulty equal to the subject's Wits + 3. Each success beyond the first adds one die to your character's dice pool for the next step. Failure means the subject isn't interested.

Witty Repartee: Next, roll Wits + Subterfuge in a resisted action against the subject's Intelligence + 3. Again, each suc-

cess beyond the first adds one die to your dice pool for the final roll. Failure means the subject breaks off contact, but may prove receptive at another time (you made a good first impression, after all).

Suggestive/Intimate Conversation: Finally, roll Charisma + Empathy versus a difficulty equal to the subject's Perception + 3. Success means the subject is enamored with your character and agrees to accompany her elsewhere for more intimate (and physical) interaction. What happens next is best handled with roleplaying (though use of Moliate does offer some fascinating possibilities…).

Note: a subject being seduced may use his Subterfuge score instead of the +3 listed with each of the rolls above.

A botch at any stage of seduction means the subject is disgusted or outraged by your crass moves.

• **Socialize [Charisma + Empathy]:** Your character encourages others to relax and enjoy themselves. This might include showing a potential ally a good time, loosening an informant's tongue, or assuaging a stranger's suspicions. This is a standard action, though the difficulty may increase when dealing with a large group and/or antagonistic audience. Certain Natures (Bon Vivant, Critic) can also influence the difficulty. On a botch, your character comes off as an obnoxious boor, or otherwise turns the subjects against her in some fashion.

Combat

Conflict is inevitable in a game where you draw upon strong emotions for power. In **Wraith**, combat systems are designed to be flexible enough to reflect both the vicious reality of violence and the spectacular manifestations of the supernatural.

As no rules can cover every possibility that may arise in battle, the Storyteller should be flexible when arbitrating combat situations. If the systems outlined here slow down gameplay or cause bickering, don't use them. Conflict should occur amongst characters within the story, *not* between the players and Storyteller.

Types of Combat

There are two types of combat. Each uses the same basic system, though with minor differences:

- **Close Combat:** This covers unarmed combat (Dexterity + Brawl) and melee (Dexterity + Melee). Unarmed combat is exactly that: any fight that doesn't involve weapons, whether a bar brawl or formal sparring. Opponents must be within touching distance (one yard/meter) to engage in unarmed combat. Melee involves handheld weapons, whether a baseball bat or a sword. Opponents must be within two yards/meters to engage in melee.
- **Ranged Combat:** Armed combat using projectile weapons of some sort —pistols, rifles, bows, thrown weapons, etc. Opponents must normally be within sight (and weapon range) of one another to engage in ranged combat.

Note that you can use a ranged weapon in close combat. In turn, throwing a handheld weapon is considered ranged combat.

Combat Turns

Combat is chaotic, with many things happening at once. This can get confusing in a game, though. So that it's easier to keep track of things, **Wraith** divides combat into a series of turns. Each combat turn has three stages: *Initiative*, *Action*, and *Resolution*.

Combat Summary Chart

Stage One: Initiative

- Roll initiative. All players and the Storyteller declare any character actions in reverse initiative order. The character with the highest initiative performs her action first. Actions can be delayed to any time later in the order of initiative.
- Declare any multiple actions (reduce dice pools accordingly). Declare Arcanoi activation and Willpower expenditure.

Stage Two: Action

- For unarmed close-combat attacks, roll Dexterity + Brawl.
- For armed close-combat attacks, roll Dexterity + Melee.
- For ranged combat, roll Dexterity + Firearms (guns) or Dexterity + Athletics (missile or thrown weapons).
- A character can abort to a defensive action (block, dodge, parry) at any time before her action is performed. This requires a successful Willpower roll, or expenditure of a Willpower point.

Stage Three: Resolution

- Determine total damage effect (weapon type or maneuver); add any additional dice gained from extra successes on the attack roll.
- Targets hit by attacks may attempt to soak damage, if appropriate.

Stage One: Initiative

This stage organizes the turn, and is when the players and Storyteller each describe any actions they plan for their characters. Various actions are possible —whether attacking with an axe, ducking behind a pillar, yelling a command, or even delaying in order to see what someone else does.

Note that while you declare your character's action in this stage, you don't implement the action until the *action* stage.

To kick off the initiative stage, everyone involved in the combat —player and Storyteller alike —rolls one die and adds their *initiative rating* (Dexterity + Wits). The Storyteller's single roll is applied separately to each Storyteller character's initiative rating.

The results determine each character's initiative score for the turn. The character with the highest result acts first, with the remaining characters acting in decreasing order of result.

(If the Storyteller wants a faster method, she may forgo any dice rolls and determine initiative using each character's Dexterity + Wits.)

If two characters get the same total, the one with the higher initiative rating goes first. If initiative ratings are also the same, the two characters act simultaneously.

With initiative established, the Storyteller goes through the list in *reverse order* to have each player describe his character's planned action. This gives faster characters the opportunity to react to slower characters' actions.

At this time, you must also state whether you will perform multiple actions, activate any Arcanoi, and/or spend any Willpower points.

All of your character's actions occur at his rank in the initiative order, with three exceptions:

- **Delay Action:** You can delay your character's action to occur at any time after his designated rank in the initiative —even to interrupt a slower character's action. When you delay, your maneuvers happen whenever your character finally takes the action. If two characters both delay and subsequently act at the same time, the one with the higher initiative rating for the turn acts first.
- **Defensive Action:** Your character may take a defensive action at any time as long as he has an action left in the turn (for further details, see "Abort Actions" and "Defensive Maneuvers" on p. 329).
- **Multiple Actions:** All additional actions occur at the end of the turn. If two or more characters take multiple actions, the actions occur at the end of the turn in order of initiative rating. An exception is made for defensive multiple actions —for instance, taking multiple dodges —which occur in direct response to an attack action.

Stage Two: Action

This is the heart of the combat turn. Here, you determine whether an action succeeds and what impact it has on the target (if any). An attack roll is made using a particular Attribute + Ability combination appropriate to the type of combat in which your character is engaged:

- **Close Combat:** Use Dexterity + Brawl (unarmed) or Dexterity + Melee (armed).
- **Ranged Combat:** Use Dexterity + Firearms (guns) or Dexterity + Athletics (missile or thrown weapons).

Remember, simply default to the base Attribute if your character doesn't have points in the relevant Ability.

A weapon may modify your dice pool or difficulty (due to the challenge to use, rate of fire, etc.). Check the weapon's statistics for details.

Arcanoi use occurs at this stage as well. Apply relevant Arcanoi power effects on any maneuvers and rolls as appropriate.

Attacks are made versus difficulty 6, unless adjusted for situational modifiers (weapon type, long range, cramped quarters). If you get no successes, the character's attack merely fails and inflicts no damage. If you botch, the character fails spectacularly with a nasty result appropriate to the circumstance —the weapon jams, the blade breaks, an ally is hit, etc.

Stage Three: Resolution

In this stage, you determine the damage your character's attack inflicts, and the Storyteller describes what occurs in the turn.

Normally, additional successes from a Trait roll mean that your character does something exceptionally well. In combat, each extra success on an attack roll equals one additional die that you add automatically to your damage dice pool. This can create cinematic —indeed, even lethal —results in combat.

Damage Types

Every attack has a specific damage rating, indicating the number of dice to roll for the attack's damage. This is called the *damage dice pool*. The attack maneuver dictates whether the damage dice pool is based on the attacker's Strength or on the weapon used.

Soak can reduce the damage rolled, but never to less than one die. Also, damage effect rolls cannot botch; a botched roll simply means the attack glances harmlessly off the target.

Damage rolls are made versus difficulty 6. Each success on the roll inflicts 1 Corpus level of damage on the target. Damage is applied as one of three types, based on the attack:

- **Bashing:** Punches and other blunt trauma that aren't likely to destroy a target instantly. All characters use their full Stamina ratings to resist bashing effects, and each level of damage is recovered in one hour. Use a slash ("/") to record bashing damage in the Corpus boxes on your character sheet. Once you run out of open Corpus boxes, any subsequent bashing damage is applied as a second slash ("\") to create an "X,"thereby converting it to lethal damage.
- **Lethal:** Attacks meant to cause immediate and fatal injury. Wraiths still use Stamina to resist lethal effects (though mortals may not); however, the damage takes longer to heal. Use an "X"to record lethal damage in the Corpus boxes on your character sheet.
- **Aggravated:** Certain attacks are especially deadly to wraiths. Only armor or specific Arcanoi can soak aggravated damage, and it takes a very long time to heal. Use an asterisk ("*") to record aggravated damage in the Corpus boxes on your character sheet.

Soak

Characters have the chance to resist punishment; this is called *soaking* damage. Your character's soak dice pool is equal to his Stamina. A wraith can soak bashing and lethal damage (mortals can only soak bashing damage).

Only certain Arcanoi (largely expressions of Moliate and Outrage) can soak aggravated damage. These can also add to the defender's soak rating against bashing and lethal damage.

Once the attacker rolls damage for a successful attack, the defender makes a soak roll to resist. This is considered a reflexive action: a soak attempt doesn't require taking an action or splitting a dice pool.

Soak rolls are made versus difficulty 6, unless stated otherwise. Each soak success reduces by 1 the damage inflicted, to a minimum of 1 level of damage. Any attack that strikes its target has at least a small chance of inflicting damage. As with damage rolls, soak rolls may not botch, only fail.

Armor

The armor's rating combines with your base soak for purposes of reducing damage. Armor can protect against bashing, lethal, and aggravated physical attacks.

Armor is not indestructible. If the damage rolled in a single attack equals twice the armor's rating, the armor is destroyed after soak is rolled.

Armor

Class	Armor Rating	Penalty
Class One *Example: reinforced clothing*	1	0
Class Two *Example: relic chain mail shirt*	2	–1
Class Three *Example: soulsteel breastplate*	3	–1
Class Four *Example: full suit of relic Kevlar*	4	–2
Class Five *Example: Stygian steel plate armor*	5	–3

If your character wears armor, add the armor rating to his soak dice pool. However, you must also subtract the listed penalty from all dice pools related to physical coordination and agility (most Dexterity-based dice pools, generally speaking).

To bypass an opponent's armor protection, an attacker may target an unprotected area. This incurs a +1 or +2 difficulty penalty, as determined by the Storyteller.

Object Corpus

Whether shaped in the soulforges or born as memories of things brought across the Shroud, all goods and structures have substance in the Underworld. This is translated as Corpus for game purposes.

The amount of Corpus an object has is based on its size (for Skinlands objects, assume an equivalent number of health levels). The size categories listed below are benchmarks for ease of reference. More granular Corpus ratings may apply in some circumstances, including with vehicles (see the Relic Vehicle table, p. 319). Further, the Storyteller may adjust an object's exact Corpus up or down depending on various factors: the material it was made of originally, the strength of the emotion used to first create it, how long it has endured, whether it has suffered any damage, whether it is an Artifact, and so on.

Soulforged and Stygian steel objects are more durable than the norm. Increase the Corpus for a soulforged object by 25%, and for a Stygian steel object by 50% (rounding up in each case).

Object Corpus is handled the same as for a character, except that an object cannot recover any damage suffered. Instead, an object must be repaired (p. 323), although you can spend Pathos to "heal" a relic or Artifact.

Apply object size to determine the damage required to destroy something. If the goal is to move, manipulate, or simply render an object inoperable, the Storyteller should use the appropriate systems (see "Physical Feats," p. 316). In either case, a damaged tool, weapon, or vehicle may suffer negative modifiers to its use, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Object Size	Corpus
Tiny *Examples: lock, penknife, pocketwatch*	1
Small *Examples: cellphone, dagger, manacles*	2
Medium *Examples: briefcase, chair, longsword*	5
Average *Examples: exterior door, guard shack, roll-top desk*	10
Large *Examples: garage workbench, sedan, speedboat*	25
Huge *Examples: panel van, plane, power transformer*	60
Enormous *Examples: crane, locomotive, tank*	120
Colossal *Examples: office building, oil rig, prison*	250

Combat Maneuvers

Roleplaying combat is more entertaining if you visualize what your character does instead of simply rolling dice. These maneuvers give you a variety of options in combat. Most require one action to execute.

Maneuver Conditions

This section addresses circumstances that can impact specific maneuvers performed in combat.

• **Abort Action:** Your character can abandon a declared action in favor of a defensive maneuver as long as he hasn't already completed his action in the turn. Your character can abort to perform a block, dodge, or parry (see "Defensive Maneuvers," below, for descriptions of each). To abort, you must make a successful Willpower roll (this is considered a reflexive action), or spend 1 Willpower point when declaring the abort.

• **Ambush:** Your character can try to surprise a target and make a decisive first strike. Roll Dexterity + Stealth in a resisted action against the target's Perception + Alertness. If you score more successes, you get one free attack roll on the target, adding any extra successes from the resisted roll to your attack dice pool. On a tie, you still attack first, although the target may perform a defensive maneuver. If the defender gets more successes, she spots the ambush and both parties determine initiative normally. Targets in combat cannot be ambushed.

• **Blind Fight/Fire:** Attacking while blind (or in pitch darkness) incurs +2 difficulty, and ranged attacks cannot be made accurately at all. The Storyteller may allow wraith characters to use Sharpened Senses to counteract the effects of darkness, depending on the circumstances.

• **Cover:** Cover increases the difficulty of an attack, depending on how much of your character's body is hidden (see below). The trade-off is that it can also hamper return fire. Apply a –1 difficulty to ranged attacks that a defender makes under cover (so, no cover difficulty applies to a defender firing from a prone position).

Cover modifiers are cumulative. So, if both combatants are lying prone but one is also behind a wall, attacks staged by the exposed prone character are at +3 difficulty, while attacks by the prone character behind the wall are at +2 difficulty.

Note that relic bullets and arrows have the equivalent of 1 Corpus level. As such, relic ammunition fired through solid Skinlands objects discorporates as soon as it hits the "solid" object, doing no damage to any wraith hiding behind this cover.

Cover Type	Difficulty
Light (lying prone, behind pole)	+1
Good (behind wall)	+2
Superior (only head exposed)	+3

Optional Maneuver Effects

If you're open to a more cinematic style of combat, you may choose to incorporate these optional maneuver effects. As with any other rules, they are meant to make the game more engaging and fun, and should not be included if they slow things down or prove distracting.

- **Aerial Maneuver:** Certain maneuvers require leaping, flying, or otherwise being in the air. When performing an aerial maneuver, sweeps and other crouching maneuvers cannot be used against you. Aerial maneuvers cannot hit opponents who are crouching or otherwise low to the ground.

  Associated Maneuvers: backflip, flying kick, flying tackle

- **Crouching Maneuver:** Certain maneuvers are performed very close to the ground. When performing a crouching maneuver, flying kicks and other aerial maneuvers cannot be used against you. Crouching maneuvers cannot hit opponents who are in the air or otherwise elevated.

  Associated Maneuvers: sweep, slide, tumble

- **Knockback:** Some maneuvers strike with such force that they may move opponents backward. You may declare a knockback attempt when making an attack. In this case, you apply extra successes from the attack to knockback instead of damage: For every 2 extra successes on the attack roll (discarding any single extra successes), the target is pushed back one yard/meter and is considered staggered (p. 337). The opponent encounters any obstacles as appropriate from being knocked back, including passing through Skinlands objects. Knockback cannot be used on a throw maneuver.

  Associated Maneuvers: charge, haymaker, spinning kick, crossbow, spear, large-caliber pistol, shotgun

- **Fend Off:** It's tough to get in range with fists or a knife if an opponent is wielding a sword or staff. A character in close combat who faces an opponent with a longer weapon must close within one yard/meter before striking, losing one die from his attack roll in the process.

- **Flank/Rear Attack:** When attacking a target's flank, you gain one additional attack die. When attacking a target from the rear, you gain two additional attack dice.

- **Movement:** You may have your character move half his running distance and still take an action in a turn. The Storyteller may consider other maneuvers, such as leaping or tumbling, to be separate actions depending on their complexity.

- **Multiple Actions:** To declare multiple actions, first state the total number of actions your character will attempt. From this, determine which action's dice pool is the smallest. Then, divide that number of dice between all of your actions. At the Storyteller's discretion, later actions in a sequence may incur an increased difficulty. See Chapter Three (p. 95) for more information. If a character performs *only* defensive actions in a turn, use the relevant system for block, dodge, or parry.

- **Multiple Opponents:** A character who battles multiple opponents in close combat suffers a +1 difficulty to attack and defense for each opponent after the first. This is cumulative to a maximum of +4 difficulty.

- **Range:** The Ranged Weapons table (p. 338) lists the short range for each weapon; attacks within this range are made versus difficulty 6. The weapon's maximum range is twice this distance, and attacks within this range are made versus difficulty 8. Targets within two meters are in point-blank range, and attacks within this range are made versus difficulty 4.

- **Target:** Targeting a specific object or location incurs an added difficulty. However, doing so can bypass armor or cover, or can result in an increased damage effect. The Storyteller should consider special results beyond a simple increase in damage, depending on the attack and the target.

Target Size	Difficulty	Damage
Medium *Example: limb, briefcase, rifle*	+1	No modifier
Small *Example: hand, head, cellphone*	+2	+1
Tiny *Example: eye, heart, lock*	+3	+2

- **The Tempest:** All actions using Mental Traits are subject to +1 difficulty (maximum 9) while in the Tempest, since the moaning winds and buffeting turbulence make concentration and communication challenging. A Maelstrom may apply additional modifiers and may even inflict damage to those caught within (p. 286).

Defensive Maneuvers

Attack rolls are made since it's understood that characters try to avoid being hit in the course of a fight. Sometimes your character may want to focus *only* on avoiding attacks. There are three types of defensive actions: *block*, *dodge*, and *parry*.

You can announce a defensive action during the initiative stage like any other action. Additionally, you can *abort* to a defensive maneuver at any time during the attack stage, as long as your character has an action remaining and your character's opponent has not yet made the attack roll. An abort requires

Defensive Maneuvers

Maneuver	Traits	Accuracy	Difficulty	Damage
Block	Dex + Brawl	Resisted action	Normal	None *
Dodge	Dex + Athletics	Resisted action	Normal	None *
Parry	Dex + Melee	Resisted action	Normal	None *

* The maneuver reduces an opponent's successes.

a successful Willpower roll; if it fails, your character must carry out the original action that you declared. Alternately, you may spend 1 Willpower point to abort automatically.

Each defensive maneuver uses the same basic system: The defensive action is a resisted roll against the opponent's attack roll. The attacker misses unless she gets more total successes. The attacker hits if she gets more successes than you, and adds these remaining extra successes to her damage roll. So, a defensive maneuver can still reduce an attack's effectiveness even if it doesn't avoid it outright.

It is not always possible to avoid an attack. You can't dodge when there's no room to maneuver, and you can't block or parry if you don't know an attack is coming.

Block, dodge, and parry can be performed as part of a multiple action on your character's turn —punching then blocking, shooting then dodging, parrying then striking. It's a good option if you don't want to rely on your character's base soak but would like to actually do something more than just avoid attacks.

If you declare that your character is being fully defensive for the turn, the normal rules for multiple actions do not apply. Instead, you get a full dice pool for the first defensive action, then remove one die cumulatively for each subsequent defense action made in the same turn. This gives your character a much better chance of avoiding attacks for the turn.

Remember that difficulty penalties apply to dealing with multiple attackers, even for defensive actions (see "Multiple Opponents,"p. 330).

• **Block:** This maneuver uses your character's own body to deflect a hand-to-hand bashing attack. Your character cannot block lethal or aggravated attacks unless he's wearing armor and/or has Arcanoi active.

Traits: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** Normal

• **Dodge:** This maneuver is handy for avoiding all types of attacks. To avoid Brawl or Melee attacks, your character ducks, spins, weaves, or even flips out of the way (you must block or parry if there's no room to maneuver). In a firefight, your character moves at least one yard/meter and ends up behind cover (or drops to the ground if there's no room to move or no cover available). If your character remains under cover or prone, cover rules apply against further ranged attacks (see "Cover," p. 329).

Traits: Dexterity + Athletics **Difficulty:** Normal

• **Parry:** With this maneuver, your character uses a weapon to block a Brawl or Melee attack. You may also use parry to deflect a thrown weapon attack, at the Storyteller's discretion. If your character uses a weapon that causes lethal or aggravated damage to parry a Brawl attack, the attacker may suffer injury. The attack and parry rolls are considered a resisted action. If you get more successes, roll the weapon's base damage plus the parry's extra successes as a damage dice pool against the attacker.

Traits: Dexterity + Melee **Difficulty:** Normal

Close Combat Maneuvers

This section lists common maneuvers that occur in close combat. Feel free to work with the Storyteller in developing your own moves.

All hand-to-hand attacks inflict bashing damage unless stated otherwise. Melee damage depends on the weapon type (see the Melee Weapons table, p. 335). Most melee weapons inflict lethal damage, though clubs and other blunt instruments inflict bashing damage.

Maneuver Characteristics

Maneuvers are performed versus difficulty 6, unless stated otherwise. Some combat effects may modify your attack roll, difficulty, or damage dice pool. Each maneuver description includes the following characteristics, as relevant.

Traits: The Trait combination used for the action taken. If your character doesn't have a rating in the needed Ability, simply default to its base Attribute.

Accuracy: Any dice added to the roll to hit an opponent. A "+3"adds three dice to that attack's dice pool.

Difficulty: Any additions or subtractions to the attack's base difficulty (typically a 6). A "+2"means the attack's difficulty goes up by 2 — so, difficulty 6 becomes difficulty 8.

Damage: The damage dice pool used. If this is listed as "Special,"read the maneuver description for details on the maneuver's outcome.

Close Combat Maneuvers

Maneuver	Traits	Accuracy	Difficulty	Damage
Bite	Dex + Brawl	+1	Normal	Str +1 [A G]
Breakfall	Dex + Athletics	Normal	Normal	None [R]
Claw	Dex + Brawl	Normal	Normal	Str +1 [A S]
Clinch	Str + Brawl	Normal	Normal	Str [C]
Disarm	Dex + Melee	Normal	+1	Special
Ground fighting	Dex + Athletics	Normal	Normal	None [C]
Hold	Str + Brawl	Normal	Normal	None [C]
Kick	Dex + Brawl	Normal	+1	Str +1 [S]
Strike	Dex + Brawl	Normal	Normal	Str [S]
Sweep	Dex + Brawl/Melee	Normal	+1	Str [P]
Tackle	Str + Brawl	Normal	+1	Str +1 [P]
Throw	Str + Brawl	Normal	+1	Str [P]
Trap	Dex + Brawl/Melee	Normal	+2	None
Weapon Strike	Dex + Melee	Normal	Normal	Weapon type [S]

[A] = The maneuver inflicts aggravated damage.
[C] = The maneuver carries over on successive turns.
[G] = The maneuver first requires a grapple maneuver (clinch, hold, or tackle).
[P] = The maneuver knocks the target prone.
[R] = The maneuver reduces an opponent's successes.
[S] = The maneuver has a chance to stagger the target.

The Storyteller may modify a maneuver's difficulty and damage, depending on your character's combat style and how you describe a planned action. As always, drama and excitement take precedence over rules systems.

• **Bite:** This maneuver is available only to characters with sharp teeth — for example, a Spectre or a wraith who has Moliated his Corpus to create fangs. To perform a bite attack, your character must first perform a successful clinch, hold, or tackle maneuver (see below). If successful, on the following turn you may declare the bite attempt. A wraith's bite inflicts aggravated damage.

Traits: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: +1 **Damage:** Strength +1

• **Breakfall:** Your character can attempt a breakfall when he would otherwise suffer damage directly from a fall. This is a reflexive action. For each success rolled, add one die to your dice pool to soak falling damage. This maneuver requires training to perform correctly, so the Storyteller may restrict its use to characters trained in an appropriate martial art (e.g., aikido, jujutsu).

Traits: Dexterity + Athletics **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** None

• **Claw:** This maneuver is available only to characters with claws — such as a wraith who has warped his Corpus to create talons or spikes. A wraith's claws inflict aggravated damage and may stagger an opponent.

Traits: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Strength +1

• **Clinch:** On a successful attack roll, your character goes into a clinch with the target. In the first turn, you may roll Strength damage. In each subsequent turn, combatants act on their orders in the initiative. Either combatant can choose to inflict Strength damage automatically or try to escape the clinch. No other actions are allowed until one combatant breaks free.

To escape a clinch, make a resisted Strength + Brawl roll against the opponent. If the escaping character has more successes, she breaks free; otherwise, the characters continue to grapple in the next turn.

Traits: Strength + Brawl **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Strength

• **Disarm:** This maneuver targets your opponent's weapon. On a successful attack at +1 difficulty, roll damage normally. If the result exceeds the target's Strength rating, your opponent takes no damage — instead, she is disarmed. A botch usually

means the *attacker* drops his own weapon or is struck by his opponent's weapon.

Traits: Dexterity + Melee **Difficulty:** +1
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Special

• **Ground Fighting:** You may employ this maneuver to fight while prone. On a successful reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll, your character may ignore the reduced damage dice pool for close combat maneuvers while prone (see p. 337). At the Storyteller's discretion, certain maneuvers may suffer from increased difficulty or may not even be performed. This maneuver requires training to perform correctly, so the Storyteller may restrict its use to characters with an appropriate martial arts background.

Traits: Dexterity + Athletics **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** None

• **Hold:** This maneuver inflicts no damage, as the intent is to immobilize rather than injure. On a successful roll, your character holds his opponent until the target's next action. At that time, both combatants roll resisted Strength + Brawl actions. The target remains immobilized (unable to take any other action) until she rolls more successes than the attacker does.

Traits: Strength + Brawl **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** None

• **Kick:** This attack covers everything from simple front kicks to aerial spins. The Storyteller may choose to increase the maneuver's base difficulty and/or damage depending on how complex you describe the attack (e.g., axe kick, flying kick, heel stamp, knee strike, roundhouse kick). Kicks may stagger a target.

Traits: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** +1
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Strength +1

• **Strike:** This covers any type of fist attack, from a sloppy punch to a judo chop. The Storyteller may choose to increase the maneuver's base difficulty and/or damage depending on the type of strike (e.g., elbow smash, haymaker, head butt, hook, jab, karate strike). Strikes may stagger a target.

Traits: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Strength

• **Sweep:** On a successful attack roll, your character knocks the legs out from under his opponent. The target takes damage and must roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 8) or be knocked prone (see "Maneuver Complications," p. 336).

Damage applied depends on how the maneuver is executed. Your character simply using his body (sweeping with arm or legs) inflicts Strength damage, while using an implement (staff, chain, etc.) inflicts damage per the weapon type.

Traits: Dexterity + Brawl/Melee **Difficulty:** +1
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Strength/ Weapon type; Knocked prone

• **Tackle:** Your character tries to tackle his opponent to the ground. After applying damage from the maneuver, both combatants roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 7) or are knocked prone (see "Maneuver Complications," p. 336). Even if the target's Athletics roll succeeds, she is unbalanced and suffers +1 difficulty to her actions for the next turn.

Traits: Strength + Brawl **Difficulty:** +1
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Strength +1; Knocked prone

• **Combat Throw:** On a successful attack roll, your character grabs and throws his opponent in a single move, flinging the opponent at a desired spot on the ground or into an obstruction. Do not apply extra successes from the attack roll to damage. Rather, for every 2 successes rolled, your character throws an opponent of up to equal size one yard/meter. If your character hits but does not succeed in getting any distance, the opponent is thrown to the ground where she was standing. The opponent is knocked prone and suffers Strength damage from the force of impact, and encounters any obstacles as appropriate (including passing through Skinlands objects).

For every size category that the opponent is larger than the attacker, reduce the throw distance by one yard/meter (see "Object Corpus," p. 329; a wraith is average size). The Storyteller may choose to increase the throw distance one or two yards/meters if an opponent has significant momentum already, such as running or leaping.

Traits: Strength + Brawl **Difficulty:** +1
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Strength; Knocked prone

• **Trap:** Your character uses his hands or a weapon to halt an opponent's close combat attack by literally catching it. This is a resisted action; if you get more successes, both attacking implements are held until the next character's action. At that time, both combatants roll resisted actions (yours remains at +2 difficulty). Both combatants' attacking implements (whether limbs or weapons) remain immobilized until one party rolls more successes and chooses to break the trap. Alternately, if the implement is a weapon, the trap is broken if one combatant simply lets go. Instead of maintaining the trap, your character may try a disarm on his next action, applying extra successes from the trap to the disarm attempt.

On a tie, your character simply deflects the attacking implement, similar to a block or parry. If you fail, the attacker uses their roll as the attack roll to hit.

If your character uses his hands, he cannot trap lethal or aggravated attacks unless his hands are armored and/or if he has Moliated his hands into claws.

Traits: Dexterity + Brawl/Melee **Difficulty:** +2
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** None

• **Weapon Strike:** This maneuver covers any attack — slashing blow, thrust, jab — as appropriate to the weapon used. Weapon strikes may stagger a target.

Traits: Dexterity + Melee **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Weapon type

Ranged Combat Maneuvers

This section covers common maneuvers that occur in a firefight. As with close combat, you're encouraged to suggest new ranged combat maneuvers for the Storyteller's approval.

Weapons may apply modifiers to attack or damage rolls (see the Ranged Weapons table, p. 338).

• **Aim:** For each turn spent aiming, add one die to your character's attack dice pool on a single shot, up to a maximum equal to his Perception rating. A scope adds 2 dice to the attack pool. Your character must have at least Firearms 1 (if using a gun) or Athletics 1 (if using a bow or sling) to use this maneuver. Your character may do nothing but aim during this time, and cannot aim at a target that is moving faster than a walk.

Trait: Dexterity + Firearms/Athletics **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: Special **Damage:** None

• **Automatic Fire:** If your character has an automatic weapon with at least a half-full ammunition magazine, he can unleash it all in one attack against a single target. While your character gains 10 dice to accuracy, the weapon's recoil applies a +2 difficulty. Extra successes add to the damage dice pool, which is treated as a single attack for the purposes of soak. Your character may not target a specific body part using automatic fire. Automatic fire may stagger a target.

Trait: Dexterity + Firearms **Difficulty:** +2
Accuracy: +10 **Damage:** Special

Melee Weapons

Weapon	Damage	Conceal
Axe	Str +3	N
Brass Knuckles	Str +1 [B]	P
Chain	Str +1 [B W]	T
Claymore	Str +4 [2H]	N
Club/Hammer	Str +2 [B]	T
Foil	Str +2	T
Knife/Bayonet	Str +1 [R]	J
Morningstar	Str +3 [R W]	T
Saber	Str +2	T
Sap	Str +1 [B]	P
Spear/Polearm	Str +3 [2H R]	N
Staff	Str +2 [2H B]	N
Whip [R W]	Str +1 [R W]	J

[2H] = The weapon is designed to be used with two hands. If used with one hand, reduce the damage dice pool by 2.

[B] = The weapon inflicts bashing damage.

[R] = The weapon has extended reach, and can be used against targets up to two yards/meters from the attacker (a bayonet must be affixed to the end of a rifle to gain this benefit).

[W] = The weapon functions like a whip, making it difficult to defend against (+1 difficulty to block, catch, parry, or trap).

Damage: The weapon's damage dice pool. Weapons inflict lethal damage unless indicated otherwise.

Conceal: P = Can be carried in the pocket; J = Can be hidden in a jacket; T = Can be hidden in a trenchcoat; N = Cannot be concealed on a person.

Ranged Combat Maneuvers

Maneuver	Traits	Accuracy	Difficulty	Damage
Aim	Dex + Firearms/Athletics	Special	Normal	None
Automatic Fire	Dex + Firearms	+10	+2	Special [S]
Catch	Dexterity + Athletics	Normal	+2	Special
Multiple Shots	Dex + Firearms	Special	Normal	Weapon
Strafe	Dex + Firearms	+10	+2	Special
Three-Round Burst	Dex + Firearms	+2	+1	Weapon [S]
Two Weapons	Dex + Firearms	Normal	+1 (off-hand)	Weapon

[S] = The maneuver has a chance to stagger the target.

Thrown Weapons & Explosives

Type	Damage	Range	Rate	Conceal	Pathos Use
Greek fire	3 [C E]	15	1	J	1
Grenade	6 [E]	15	1	P	1
Javelin	Str +2	35	1	N	0
Throwing axe	Str +2	20	1	T	0
Throwing knife	Str +1	20	2	P	0

[C] = Greek fire burns for a number of turns equal to the extra successes rolled, inflicting the listed damage each turn.

[E] = The explosive detonates upon impact, inflicting the listed damage in a two-yard/meter radius. Extra successes from the attack roll do not apply to the damage roll; instead, every 2 extra successes rolled increases the explosion radius an additional one yard/meter.

Damage: The weapon's damage dice pool. Weapons inflict lethal damage unless indicated otherwise.

Range: The medium range in yards/meters. A weapon may be thrown twice this distance, up to the character's Strength, but such attacks are considered long range (difficulty 8).

Rate: The maximum number that can be thrown in a single turn. More than one throw in a single turn requires a multiple action.

Conceal: P = Can be carried in the pocket; J = Can be hidden in a jacket; T = Can be hidden in a trenchcoat; N = Cannot be concealed on a person.

Pathos Use: The Pathos cost required to activate the weapon for the duration of a scene. Explosives cannot be reused once detonated.

• **Catch:** With this maneuver, your character catches an opponent's thrown weapon attack. This is a resisted action; if you get more successes, you've caught the thrown implement safely. On a tie, you merely deflect it. If you fail, the attacker uses their roll as the attack roll to hit. At the Storyteller's discretion, additional difficulty may apply to catch particularly small and/or fast-moving projectiles. This maneuver requires training to perform correctly, so the Storyteller may restrict its use to characters with an appropriate martial arts background.

Your character cannot catch lethal or aggravated thrown weapon attacks unless his hands are armored and/or if he has Moliated his hands into claws.

Traits: Dexterity + Athletics **Difficulty:** +2
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Special

• **Multiple Shots:** Your character can shoot at more than one target in a single turn (use maneuvers like automatic fire and three-round burst for multiple attacks against the same target). Divide your attack dice pool by the number of shots you want to fire at the same number of targets, up to the weapon's maximum rate of fire. Each attack is then rolled separately.

Ability: Dexterity + Firearms **Difficulty:** Normal
Accuracy: Special **Damage:** Weapon type

• **Reload:** Reloading a weapon takes one full turn and requires concentration. Like any other maneuver, a reload can be performed as part of a multiple action.

• **Strafe:** If your character has an automatic weapon with at least a half-full ammunition magazine, he can strafe an area up to three yards/meters in size. This empties the magazine and incurs a +2 difficulty due to recoil, but you gain 10 dice to accuracy on a standard attack roll.

Divide any successes from the attack roll evenly among all targets in the covered area, with any leftover successes assigned as you desire. If fewer successes are rolled than there are targets, you may assign only 1 success per target until they are all allocated. Assigned successes are also added to the damage dice pool against that target (if only one target is within the area, apply only half the successes).

Targets being strafed incur a +1 difficulty to dodge.

Trait: Dexterity + Firearms **Difficulty:** +2
Accuracy: +10 **Damage:** Special

• **Three-Round Burst:** You gain two additional dice on a single attack roll by expending three shots from the weapon's magazine. The weapon's recoil applies a +1 difficulty. Extra successes add to the damage dice pool, which is treated as a single attack for the purposes of soak. Only certain weapons may perform this maneuver (see the Ranged Weapons table, p. 338). A three-round burst may stagger a target.

Trait: Dexterity + Firearms **Difficulty:** +1
Accuracy: +2 **Damage:** Weapon type

• **Two Weapons:** Firing two weapons at once is considered a multiple action, complete with dividing the dice of the lowest pool between two different targets. Your character also suffers +1 difficulty with his off-hand (unless he's ambidextrous). Each attack is rolled and resolved separately (use automatic fire and three-round burst for multiple attacks made against the same target).

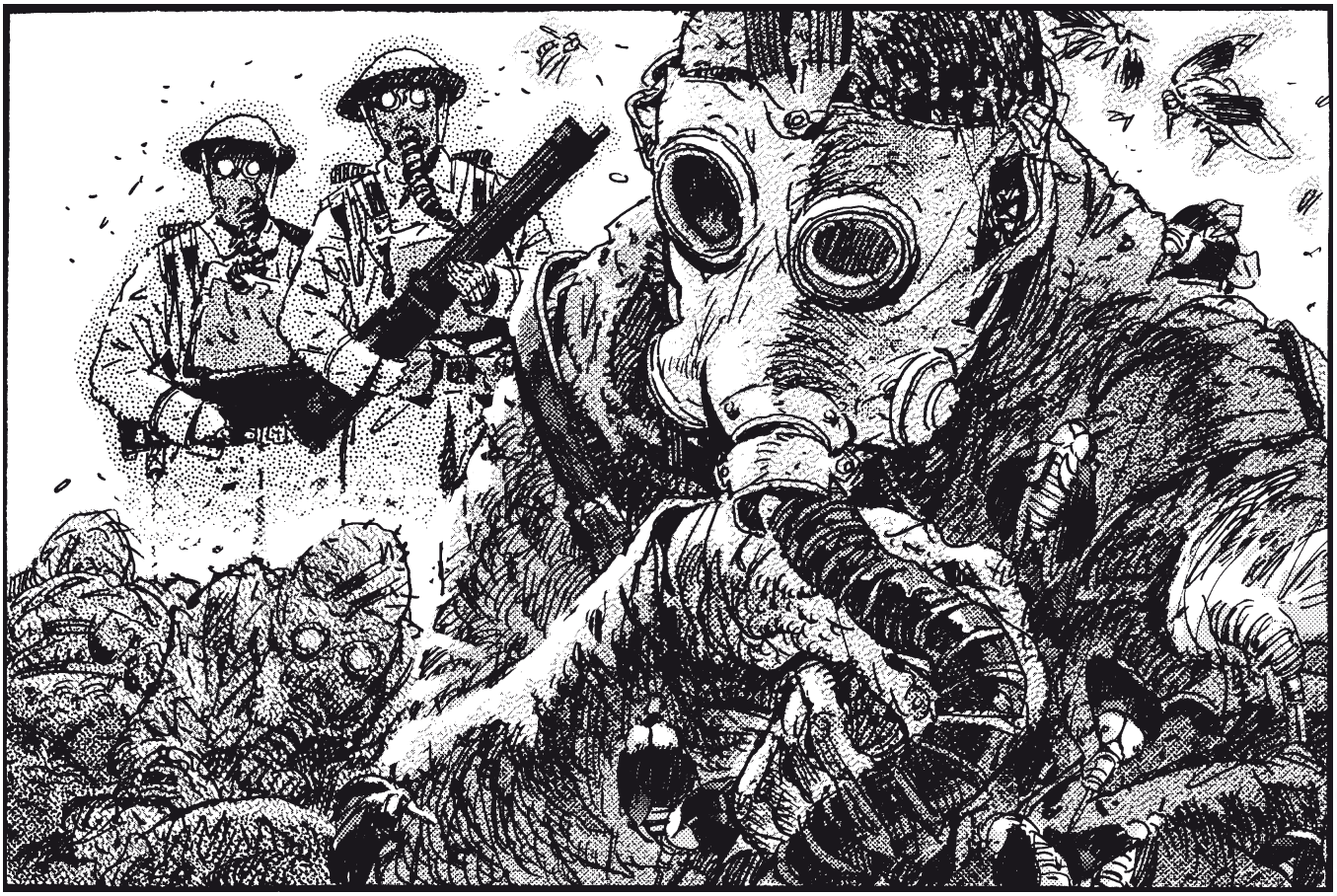
Trait: Dexterity + Firearms **Difficulty:** +1 (off-hand)
Accuracy: Normal **Damage:** Weapon type

Maneuver Complications

This section covers common combat complications. The Storyteller should add others as the situation warrants.

• **Blinded:** Add two dice to attack rolls made against a blinded target. In turn, a blinded character is at +2 difficulty on all actions.

• **Dazed:** A target is dazed if, after soak, he suffers a number of damage successes on a single attack greater than his Stamina



+ 2 (or simply Stamina, for mortals). The target loses his next available turn as he shakes off the attack's effect. Attacks against dazed targets are made at +1 accuracy. At the Storyteller's discretion, a dazed target may spend 1 Willpower point to overcome the effect instead of losing his turn.

• **Staggered:** A powerful impact can stagger a target. If the attacker rolls a number of successes on a single damage roll greater than the target's Strength (based on the damage result prior to the defender's soak), the target must make a Dexterity + Athletics roll to maintain his footing. If the target fails, he staggers backward one yard/meter or is even knocked prone, at the Storyteller's discretion.

• **Immobilized:** Add two dice to attack rolls made on a target who is immobilized but still struggling (e.g., being grappled, handcuffed). Attacks hit automatically if the target is totally immobilized (e.g., bound completely, paralyzed, unconscious).

• **Prone:** A target who is knocked down, thrown, or falls is considered prone. Close combat attacks against a prone target are made at +1 accuracy, while ranged attacks are made at +1 difficulty due to cover (p. 329). A character may perform maneuvers while prone, but is at –2 initiative and reduces his damage dice pool by 2 for any close combat damage he inflicts. The Storyteller may declare that a prone character cannot perform a combat throw or certain other maneuvers.

A character may get back on his feet immediately after being knocked prone by making a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll, but is at –2 initiative in the next turn. On a failed roll, the subject must spend his next action climbing to his feet if he wants to stand. On a botch, he lands particularly hard or at a severe angle, taking 1 automatic level of bashing damage.

Modern Ranged Weapons

Type	Damage	Range	Rate	Capacity	Conceal	Pathos Use
Revolver, Lt.	4	12	3	6	P	1
Examples: SW Bodyguard, Webley Mk.IV (.38)						
Revolver, Hvy.	6	35	2	6	J	1
Examples: British Bull Dog, Ruger Redhawk (.44)						
Pistol, Lt.	4	20	4	15+1	P	1
Examples: HK USP, Luger P08 (9mm)						
Pistol, Hvy.	5	25	3	13+1	J	1
Examples: Colt M1911, Springfield XDM (.45 ACP)						
Rifle	8	200	1	3+1, 25	N	2
Examples: Beretta Tikka T3, M1903 Springfield (30.06)						
SMG*	4	50	3	30+1	T	3
Examples: HK MP5, "Schmeisser" MP40 (9mm)						
Assault Rifle*	7	150	3	30+1	N	2
Examples: AK–47, FN SCAR–L (7.62mm)						
Automatic Rifle	8	200	3	20	N	2
Example: M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) (30.06)						
Shotgun	8	20	1	5+1	T	3
Examples: Remington 870, Winchester Model 1912 (12-Gauge)						
Shotgun, Semi-auto	8	20	3	6+1	T	3
Example: Benelli M4 Super 90 (12-Gauge)						

Archaic Ranged Weapons

Type	Damage	Range	Rate	Capacity	Conceal	Pathos Use
Atlatl	4	10	1	1	N	0
Blowgun	3	10	1	1	T	0
Bow	5	80	1	1	N	0
Crossbow**	5	20	1	1	T	0
Sling	4	30	1	1	J	0
Matchlock Pistol (1400s)†	5	20	1	N/A	J	1
Matchlock Rifle (1400s)†	5	40	1	N/A	N	2
Wheellock Pistol (1500s)†	5	20	1	N/A	J	1
Wheellock Rifle (1500s)†	5	40	1	N/A	N	2
Flintlock Pistol (1600s)†	5	20	1	N/A	J	1
Flintlock Rifle (1600s)†	5	40	1	N/A	N	2
Dueling Pistol (1770)†	5	25	1	N/A	J	1
"Brown Bess" Rifle (1700s)†	5	40	1	N/A	N	2
Percussion Pistol (1800s)†	5	20	1	N/A	J	1
Percussion Rifle (1800s)†	5	40	1	N/A	N	2

Damage: The weapon's damage dice pool. Weapons inflict lethal damage unless indicated otherwise.

Range: The practical shot range in yards/meters. Weapons may be fired twice this distance, but such attacks are considered long range (difficulty 8).

Rate: The maximum number of bullets or three-round bursts the weapon can fire in a single turn. This rate does not apply to full-auto or strafe attacks.

Capacity: The number of rounds a weapon can hold. A +1 means a bullet can be held in the chamber, ready to fire.

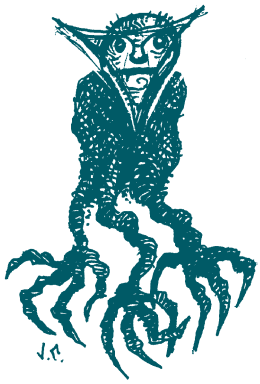
Concealment: P = Can be carried in the pocket; J = Can be hidden in a jacket; T = Can be hidden in a trenchcoat; N = Cannot be concealed on a person.

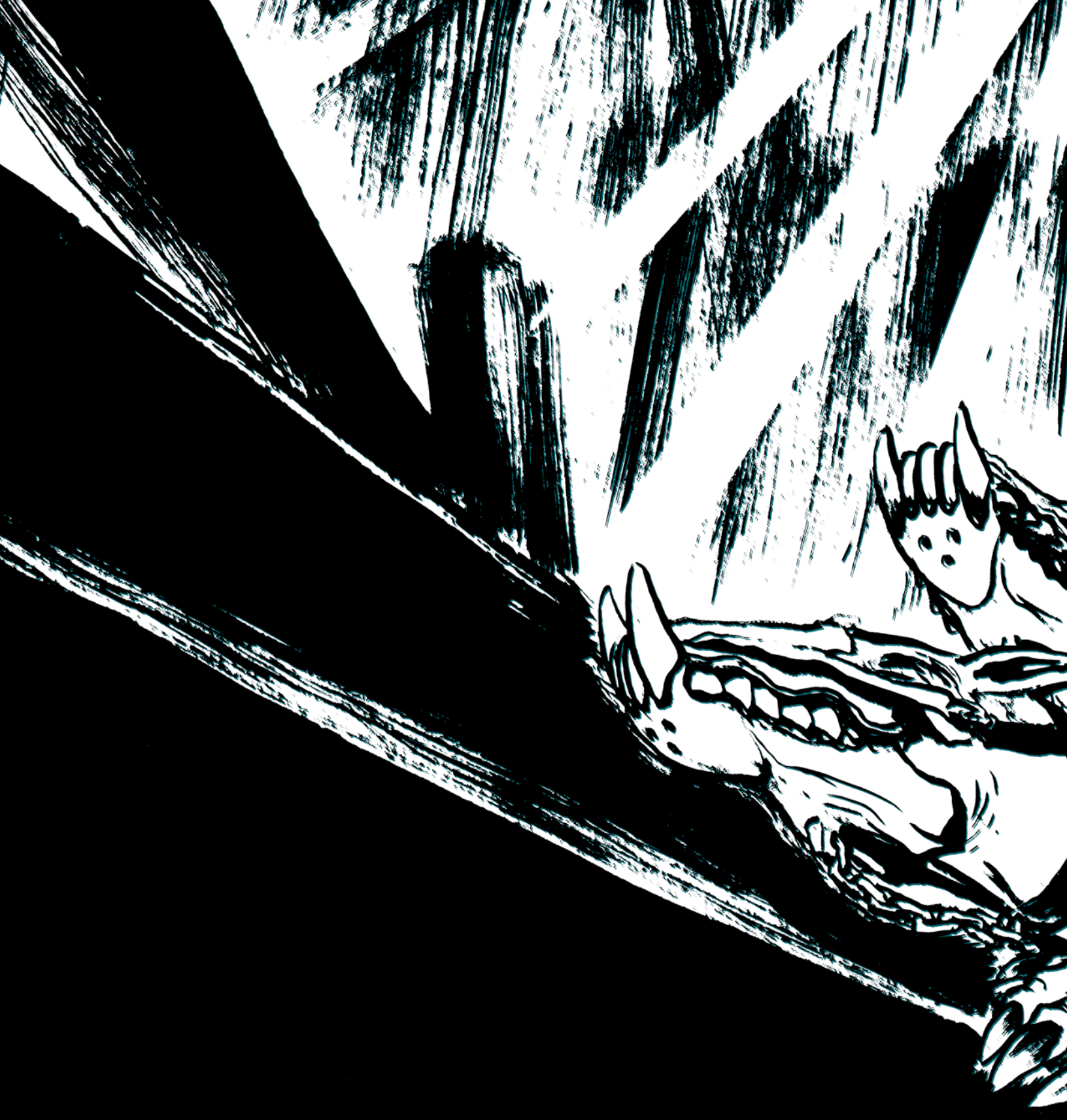
Pathos Use: The Pathos cost required to activate the weapon for the duration of a scene. Ammunition must be obtained above and beyond the Pathos cost for activating the weapon.

*Indicates the weapon can fire three-round bursts, full-auto, and strafe.

**A crossbow requires five turns to reload.

†These archaic weapons require a successful Dexterity + Firearms roll to reload or they will misfire. If you roll more than 5 successes, you may get off two shots in a single turn. If you botch, the weapon misfires.





Book Three

Chapter 10: Spectres

Spectres are the servants of Oblivion. They creep out of the Tempest through Nihils and lurk in the dark corners of Necropoli to seduce and destroy. They serve Oblivion directly by carrying out the commands of their Malfean masters, and indirectly by destroying every soul they can sink their claws into. With each soul lost, so goes the faith, knowledge, and power to keep Oblivion at bay. Spectres strive for the time at which the last great Maelstrom will sweep through the Underworld, scouring the last vestiges of the realms of the Restless until only Oblivion remains.

But Spectres are more than merely a buzzing hive mind of insanity in thrall to Oblivion. Also called the Shadow-Eaten, they are reflections of the wraithly condition, beings who embrace their dark urges and who understand that Oblivion is the ultimate fate that awaits us all. And, like wraiths, Spectres have unfinished business to take care of before succumbing to the Void.

Spectres are creatures of unbridled emotion, of dark rage and complex melancholy. They are cold, cruel, and twisted. They exist to inflict their pain upon others, and to end their own pain through the extinction of all reality. Along the way, they can also be sadistic, terrifying, sardonic and even pathetic. But they are never, ever not dangerous.

Spectral History

According to runes carved in the walls of the beating heart of the Labyrinth, the first Spectres were born from the pain of Life's separation from Death. These were the Neverborn Malfeans, Oblivion made incarnate. Birthed in agony, they desired only an end to their pain even at the cost of all existence. Their tunneling beneath the Shadowlands created the Labyrinth, their home and hunting grounds.

As Charon declared sovereignty over the masses of the dead in the Shadowlands above, so the Malfeans established dominance over their subjects in the Tempest below. The souls devoured by Oblivion were forged into armies that ventured forth to wrest cargos of souls from the Ferrymen. Oblivion grew stronger with each captured soul that was flung into the Void. In response, Charon ventured alone down the Veinous Stair and deep into the Labyrinth. Some Spectres claim that Charon swore secret allegiance after the Malfeans foretold that his fate was to be devoured by the Void unless he joined forces with them.

Whatever the truth, it is evident that Charon's rule failed to stave off Oblivion — indeed, it even encouraged it. His authoritarian methods fomented rebellion, which strengthened the Shadows of Stygia's citizens. When his agents aided the legions of Rome and encouraged the deaths of countless mortals in battle, many of the resulting souls were swallowed by Oblivion. The passage at one time of so many souls ripped open the Tempest, and through such wounds did the Maelstroms escape. Caused by the deaths of thousands, each Maelstrom claimed many thousand more souls for Oblivion.

During the Third Great Maelstrom, an army of Spectres under the notorious General Coldheart launched an assault against Stygia itself. While ultimately repulsed, they managed to infect the very darkness itself to rise up against the defending Legions. That darkness surrounds Stygia even to the present, where it roils with the Passions and memories of the souls that succumbed to Oblivion during the battle.

Spectres next triumphed during the Great War of the Skinlands, when the carnage in the trenches, on land, and at sea unleashed the Fourth Great Maelstrom. The shrieking winds carried an army of Spectres throughout the Shadowlands and the Dark Kingdoms. Many lesser Necropoli fell, and the Shadow-Eaten infiltrated many more. Oblivion grew ever stronger while the Shadowlands decayed even further, reflecting the despair that continental war spread across the Skinlands.

Even that was as nothing compared to World War II. The years of atrocities in both the European and Pacific theaters became the thudding drumbeat of doom as thousands of souls streamed across the Shroud. It built to a crescendo as the atomic bombs dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki triggered shock waves that tore the Tempest asunder. All sense and substance were gone; the Labyrinth's depths were exposed and, borne on the wings of the Fifth Great Maelstrom, the oldest Malfean of all, Gorool, woke from an eternity of sleep and burst out of the Tempest.

Charon took the battle to this most ancient of beasts, and, though victorious, was lost. Spectres claim that this fight was simply part of Charon's original betrayal from millennia before. Even now, they chortle, Charon lurks deep in the Labyrinth where he marshals Spectral armies in preparation for an apocalyptic assault on the Shadowlands.

While few wraiths believe such ravings, there is no doubt that Stygia stands weakened in Charon's absence. Nihils open in every Necropolis, from which slip Doppelgangers, Shades, and other horrors. The Tempest grows thicker with the Shadow-Eaten than ever before, including a new breed called Mortwights. They all work feverishly to undermine the security of Stygia and disrupt the uneasy peace of its citizens till the day in which the last Great Maelstrom will erupt, and Oblivion shall claim all.

Damned Existence

The Shadow-Eaten know they have limited time before they succumb to the Void's cold hunger. The manner in which Spectres cope with this is as varied as the Dark Passions that drive them. Some embrace reckless behavior, from rampaging through Necropoli to mounting suicidal assaults on Stygian Legions. Others are content to let Oblivion claim them in its own time, and pursue their own dark urges until that day arrives. Regardless, all are evil, implacable, and without mercy. Nothing can rival these creatures for their sheer malice. Spectres are the agents of entropy, leavened with sadism.

Birth of a Spectre

A mortal who dies in especially violent circumstances or a wraith whose Shadow claims her is "reborn" as a Spectre. This is more than a simple physical transformation. The individual's personality and psychological makeup, as well as her very physical form, are dissolved and rebuilt with the stuff of Oblivion itself. The specifics vary from Spectre to Spectre — some emerge as monstrosities, their Corpus scalded, warped, and stretched into a walking nightmare, while others seem little different save for the evidence of their death seared permanently upon them — but all bear the unmistakable mark of Oblivion.

The character's Nature and Demeanor — and the Shadow's archetype if the character was already a wraith — are the key variables in determining the Spectral outcome. Other elements, including the circumstances of the character's death, any postmortem adventures they may have had, and any contacts they had with the forces of Oblivion prior to transformation may also play a part.

When a mortal is claimed by Oblivion through violent death, or when a wraith's Shadow achieves a 10 permanent Angst rating, the character is swallowed by the Tempest in order to metamorphose into her Shadow-Eaten form. She lies

Spectres can wait ages to be released from their cocoons. The Tempest is vast and the chances of being found are lower than you might think, leaving newly minted Shadow-Eaten trapped inside their lightless prisons for months or even years. The longer a Spectre spends waiting for release, the more likely it is to have gone quite mad while waiting, which can have terrible consequences for anyone who releases one even above and beyond the usual attack of Rapacity. It is said that there are some cocoons that have been floating in the Tempest for hundreds, if not thousands of years. What will emerge from them, no one knows.

dormant while a dark cocoon made from the very stuff of the storm itself surrounds her. Once it hardens, the cocoon rises, glossy and translucent, to the surface of the Tempest, where it bobs on the currents until it's either opened or destroyed. The thick shell is extremely difficult to crack. Only rarely has a Spectre freed herself from it without aid. Those who do become figures of great import and weighty destiny, such as the Nephwrack General Coldheart.

Breaking open a cocoon from inside is an extended action using Strength + Occult (difficulty 9), and requires 5 successes. On a botch, the cocoon re-forms over the weakened spot, wiping away all successes accumulated to that point. Bear in mind that a botch causes the character to lose 1 permanent Corpus level (see "Brief Life," p. 348). Indeed, Spectres have been known to destroy themselves in the act of trying to hatch from a cocoon.

As such, most Spectres are forced to wait, floating on the tides of the Tempest until someone discovers and frees them, or a Maelstrom does the job for them. A cocoon ruptures more easily from the outside, cracking open upon suffering at least 5 lethal Corpus levels of damage.

With rebirth comes a connection to the Spectral hive mind, so other Shadow-Eaten often pick up on the distress that the fledgling broadcasts. Their intervention is far from altruistic — rather, it's a desire to stop the nagging panic that pierces the mass mind.

Rarely do wraiths encounter an intact cocoon. Those unaware of what it holds are usually in for an unpleasant surprise should they crack it open. An undamaged cocoon, however, can fetch quite a few oboli, so most savvy wraiths simply sell it off to the Hierarchy or a Guild for further study. And there are always private collectors in Stygia and elsewhere who want larval Spectres for their own purposes.

No Spectres remember precisely what happens to them in the cocoon. Some suppose that the Spectre is driven into frenzy by the ceaseless whispers of Oblivion, her greatest Dark Passion fanned to white-hot intensity. Others claim that Oblivion has no inherent consciousness, and a Spectre's manic state is the result of the transformation itself. Regardless of conjecture, a Spectre emerges from her cocoon disoriented, drenched in a viscous plasm — and shrieking in the grip of Rapacity (p. 349) to the point where she attacks her very liberators. Her fellow Spectres usually make a game of it, employing defensive maneuvers or nonlethal Arcanoi to play a kind of "keep away" until the fledgling Spectre calms down. Wraiths who free a Spectre aren't as understanding — or as likely to survive.

Spectre Motivation

The Hierarchy claims that faith, knowledge, and identity stave off Oblivion. Spectres know this to be true, and so they seek to destroy faith, erase knowledge, and eradicate individual identity to bring Oblivion ever closer. By spreading cynicism, hopelessness, and lack of faith in gods and governments alike, Spectres advance Oblivion's cause.

Spectres view Oblivion as a force to be encouraged, not feared. What comes after the end of everything? Few Spectres bother to even wonder. All that matters is that their torment will end at last. However, if surcease from pain were all a Spectre sought, self-destruction would be easy enough. The spark of Oblivion within them makes them want to end it all — to take others with them on their spiraling descent into nothingness until all that's left is the sentient void. This is what drives Spectres to sack Necropoli and ambush travelers in the Tempest, the terrible desire to end not only their own existences but everyone else's as well.

Some Malfeans perpetuate the concept of Oblivion as sentient, a deity incarnate, and claim to be its priests. Others promote *themselves* as gods — sometimes to Spectres, but most often to misguided mortal cultists and deluded supernatural disciples.

Regardless of creed, all Shadow-Eaten serve Oblivion. Every action they take is with the goal of spreading entropy and destruction, so that one day the Void will devour all existence.

Patience

It is a mistake to assume that Spectres are creatures of the moment. Oblivion hungers, but it is also patient, knowing that it will devour all in the end. As a result, many of its best servants are patient as well, drawing up decades-long plans to subvert and destroy Heretic cults, Necropoli, or notable wraiths, all in the service of the greater glory of the Void. A group of young wraiths who accidentally blunder into the machinations of one of these Spectral masterminds may find themselves in for far trouble than they're ready for.

Spectre Tactics

As described in subsequent sections, Spectres of various castes tend to focus on different missions as agents of Oblivion. Some of the more common pursuits are outlined here, including references to key Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi used in their execution. This is far from an exhaustive list. After all, the Underworld is a vast place, where all manner of shocking encounters can occur even in the most seemingly innocuous of places.

Byway Robbery

As the only stable paths through the Tempest, Byways are a primary means of travel for wraiths. Emissaries of all factions use Byways to make their way from Hierarch Necropolis to Dark Kingdom outpost, from Renegade fortress to Heretic shrine. Byways also make ideal spots for Spectral ambush. After all, it's much easier to attack wraiths deep in the Spectre-haunted territory of the Tempest than by raiding some Citadel.

One tactic involves using Wormhole (Tempest Weaving, p. 357) to open a Nihil in the middle of a Byway, from which Spectres spew forth in a violent swarm.

Another approach is to lurk off a Byway, then pounce upon travelers from within the Tempest itself. When attacking from the roiling chaos of the Tempest, Spectres gain 5 dice to their ambush attempts (Combat Maneuvers, p. 329).

Where the Tempest resembles a turbulent sea, Spectres may burst from the waves to drag targets from their vessels or even steer relic ships of their own to ram and sink their enemies.

Since Doppelgangers can pass as wraiths, these deceivers often slip amongst groups traveling on Byways to attack from within, or simply join the caravan to infiltrate a citadel. Some even drag off stragglers and take their place beside their unsuspecting companions.

Necropolis Infiltration

Since Doppelgangers can pass as wraiths, they often lead covert Spectre incursions into Necropoli. A common ploy is for the Spectre to enter a Necropolis in a group of wraiths, and establish herself as a provider of a rare Arcanos such as Mnemosynis or Usury (p. 190, 217). In trade, the Spectre receives information, thereby learning much about the Necropolis and its inhabitants — security, figures of influence, prejudices — that Spectres can exploit.

Another approach is to use Moliate (p. 196) to take the place of a wraith, typically someone with political or social standing. From this position, the Spectre can sow dissent and pit rivals against one another until the wraiths become so focused on each other that they are utterly unprepared to meet a Spectral incursion at the gates.

Doppelgangers are also on the lookout for wraiths whose Shadows are strong, and use arts such as Castigate and Contaminate (p. 155, 350) in an effort to trigger the long fall into Oblivion.

A Shade might take the lead on especially sensitive missions, infiltrating with Chameleon Parasite (Shadecraft, p. 358). For the most part, though, this is the Doppelganger's bailiwick.

Soul Harvesting

With mortals, Spectres' primary pursuit is to cultivate and eventually harvest the Oblivion that lurks within their souls. Although seldom able to actually see mortals beyond the Shroud, Spectres use Corruption and Larceny powers (p. 351, 352) to sense those who hunger for darkness.

Spectres employ Emotional Infection (Larceny, p. 352) to implant and nurture Dark Passions within mortals. As the mortals' levels of Dark Passions grow, making them increasingly aggressive, cruel, fearful, or homicidal, Spectres feed upon the emotions generated.

A mortal's psychotic break often triggers Rapacity in any nearby Spectres (p. 349). Such Spectral assaults are often the basis for stories of vengeful ghosts who cause victims to literally die of fright.

Haunting an area is also effective, whether the site of the Spectre's death or wandering the Shadowlands. Spectres may use the Embody or Pandemonium Arcanoi (p. 159, 204) as well as Maleficence or Shroud Rending Dark Arcanoi (p. 354, 355) to manifest as menacing figures, cold spots, bad dreams, bloodcurdling screams and the like, before dispatching any mortals who wander by. Materializing in the road to panic unwary drivers into an accident is also a favorite.

Spectres and Their Kind

While individual Spectre existence is brief, a complex social order has developed over time, based on caste. In this highly structured society, the Shadow-Eaten obey a system upheld not by violence and coercion, but by intensity of emotion. The stronger the Dark Passions a Spectre has, the more respected it is among members of its own caste, though such influence never crosses caste boundaries. Malfeans occupy the highest caste, followed by Shades, Nephwracks, and finally Doppelgangers.

Arcanoi Dirty Tricks

There are any number of ways that Spectres can use Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi to make afterlife hell for wraiths. The examples here are just the tip of the iceberg. Players and Storytellers are encouraged to come up with their own devious machinations.

- **Collogue:** First, weasel your way in among a bunch of wraiths. Then, when they're relaxing, send out a call for help. It's even better if you mix in the Gleaming Intimation and get the wraiths to run toward a Nihil just as their uninvited guests arrive. Other Spectres may get irritated if you do this too often, though, so be careful or you might get added to the buffet line.
- **Contaminate:** What better way to mess with a wraith than to get her own darker half to help? Call the Shadow is certain to give a wraith a bad day, but it's not for the faint of will. Not powerful enough to drag the Shadow into control? No worries, a quick infusion with Transfer Angst can give the Shadow all it needs to kick off Catharsis on its own.
- **Intimation:** What easier way is there to manipulate a wraith than to discover what she really, really wants? That's just the beginning. You can use this Arcanos to make her want something else (like a "live" relic grenade), or strip her of a desire (like wanting to stick you with something pointy). Loads of fun, if you can put up with your eyes glowing green — not to mention finding someone to teach you; the hive mind's a bit fuzzy on this one.
- **Mnemosynis:** Chock full of useful arts, but Mnemotechnics is always a solid choice. If you're in a tight spot, simply pop your attacker back to the memory of her death. While she's reliving that grand old time, you can go about your business (or stick around and soak up some nice, strong emotions). If you want to do a real double whammy, have a Doppelganger buddy follow this up looking like one of the major players from her past. Her cortex will be scrambled eggs before you can say "dirty pool."
- **Pandemonium:** This Arcanos has tons of options for confusing and disorienting your victim. For instance, say someone's close to figuring out your true nature, or about to take some action you'd rather they didn't (like hammering you into lawn furniture). Just lay some Befuddlement on them long enough for you to cut and run — or turn the tables and take *them* out first.
- **Tempestos:** Surrounded by some pissed-off wraiths (like there's any other kind)? Fire up Storm Squall — nothing like seeing the looks on their faces when a tsunami bursts through the ground to whisk you away as fast as a speeding car.

However, this rigid system is fracturing with the emergence of two new groups: Striplings and Mortwights. Neither is yet considered a full caste, but both are distinct enough in temperament and origin that their mere presence puts strain on the ages-old social order. For the moment, Striplings are simply categorized by which existing caste seems to suit them best, while Mortwights are provisionally inferior to Doppelgangers. Still, this may well change, should leaders step up from among their ranks to demand official status.

Spectre Characteristics

Regardless of caste, all Spectres have the same characteristics as wraiths (p. 111), with the following distinctions.

Angst and Pathos

As Spectres are dark reflections of wraiths, for any power that costs Pathos for wraiths to use, assume that Spectres must spend Angst instead. Likewise, when a power or a botch might give one or more Angst points to the wraith's Shadow, it instead bestows the listed amount as Pathos points to the Spectre's Psyche.

Brief Life

Wracked with pain due to Oblivion's constant gnawing hunger, a Spectre's Corpus deteriorates rapidly. Few Spectres last more than a decade in the face of this ceaseless agony, as only succumbing to the Void ends the misery.

System: Oblivion's influence is represented in botches. Each time you botch when playing a Spectre, lose 1 Corpus level *permanently* as Oblivion claims yet another portion of your soul.

Deathsight

Like wraiths, Spectres perceive the world as tainted and decayed. In fact, thanks to the greater influence of Oblivion upon them, the Shadow-Eaten see only the worst, most putrefied aspects of things. This can even be used as a kind of "spirit radar" to sense the presence of targets that may be otherwise hidden from sight.

- For Discern Weakness and Sense Health rolls, reduce the difficulty by 1 (to a minimum of difficulty 2).
- If you wish to make an instant assessment at -2 difficulty with any Deathsight power, your Psyche gains 1 Pathos point.

Dimmed Senses

Due to the dominance that Oblivion exerts over Spectres, their senses are dull compared to those of wraiths — sounds are muffled, touch is numbed, and sight is dimmed. This also makes it harder to penetrate the Shroud. The Shadowlands appear empty of mortals, and events in the Skinlands are hard to perceive.

- All Perception-based rolls are subject to +1 difficulty, except those made using Deathsight or Lifesight powers or the Contaminate Dark Arcanos.
- Interaction attempts with the mortal world that require Mental Traits are made at +2 difficulty.
- Attempts to penetrate the Shroud are subject to +1 difficulty.
- Spectres do not have access to Sharpened Senses powers.

Lifesight

For Spectres, it is not the vibrancy of the living world that draws them, but the black light of Oblivion. This embrace of the Void distances them from the living. The Shadow-Eaten move through a barren wasteland with only the faintest hints of the mortal world. While Spectres can employ Lifesight powers, it is harder for them to perceive the living. Events in the Skinlands are difficult to see, and the Shadowlands seem empty of mortals.

Additionally, a Spectre's focus is always on the negative, with the goal of twisting the

information gleaned to their own dark ends. This is managed largely through roleplay and description, but can be essential to convey the warped outlook that Spectres have.

• Rolls relating to Lifesight powers used on the living are at +2 difficulty. The Storyteller may choose to reduce this for Passion Sense attempts relating to emotions that correspond to the Spectre's own Dark Passions.

Hive-Mind

As they serve Oblivion's wishes before their own, Spectres are often linked telepathically. This allows them to communicate in the turbulent Tempest and to access information from the shared Spectral consciousness. Doing so is easiest in the Tempest, since it is saturated with the memories and experiences of beings who have succumbed to Oblivion.

- All Spectres have at least Collogue 1, though many have additional dots in this Dark Arcanos.
- For Collogue rolls performed while in the Tempest, reduce the difficulty by 1 (to a minimum of difficulty 2).

Tempest Affinity

Spectres are born from Oblivion, like the Tempest itself. As a result, existing in the howling tumult of the Tempest or a Maelstrom is second nature to all Shadow-Eaten.

- While in the Tempest or a Maelstrom, ignore any increased difficulties to Mental Traits due to environmental conditions (Maneuver Complications, p. 336).
- Spectres suffer no harm from being caught in a Maelstrom (p. 286). Objects tossed about by the savage winds may still cause injury.

Psyche

Just as a wraith is tortured by her Shadow, so too is a Spectre tormented by his Psyche. The Psyche is all that remains of a Spectre's higher self. Its ultimate goal is to guide the Spectre away from Oblivion and toward Redemption. See p. 382 for more information.

Rapacity

It has been said that Spectres are souls that the scouring winds of the Tempest have ground down to raw emotion. This erosion is most often expressed through Rapacity: an overpowering need to free the Oblivion contained within a creature — either by tearing the creature apart physically or by consuming their spirit.

- Roll Willpower (difficulty 7) when encountering a creature with a Passion or Dark Passion similar to your highest-rated Dark Passion. If successful, you hold Oblivion at bay for the remainder of the scene. On a failed roll, you become rapacious and attack the creature with the intent to destroy it. If you attack physically, you do not think tactically, and use only straightforward physical attacks or Arcanoi that inflict direct damage.

  You may instead attack a target's spirit. This is handled as a resisted action against the opponent's Willpower. Each extra success you roll reduces the target's Willpower score by 1; this is converted to 1 Willpower point that you add to your pool. Alternately, you may increase your own Willpower score by 1 for every 2 permanent Willpower that the target loses. Most mortals have low Willpower scores, so they can literally die of fright if a Rapacity attack reduces them to Willpower 0.

  While in the grip of Rapacity, you may make a new roll each turn to recover (assuming neither you nor the target is destroyed first). You may spend 1 Willpower point instead to stave off Rapacity for the scene, although the Storyteller may require additional Willpower expenditure under certain especially intense circumstances.

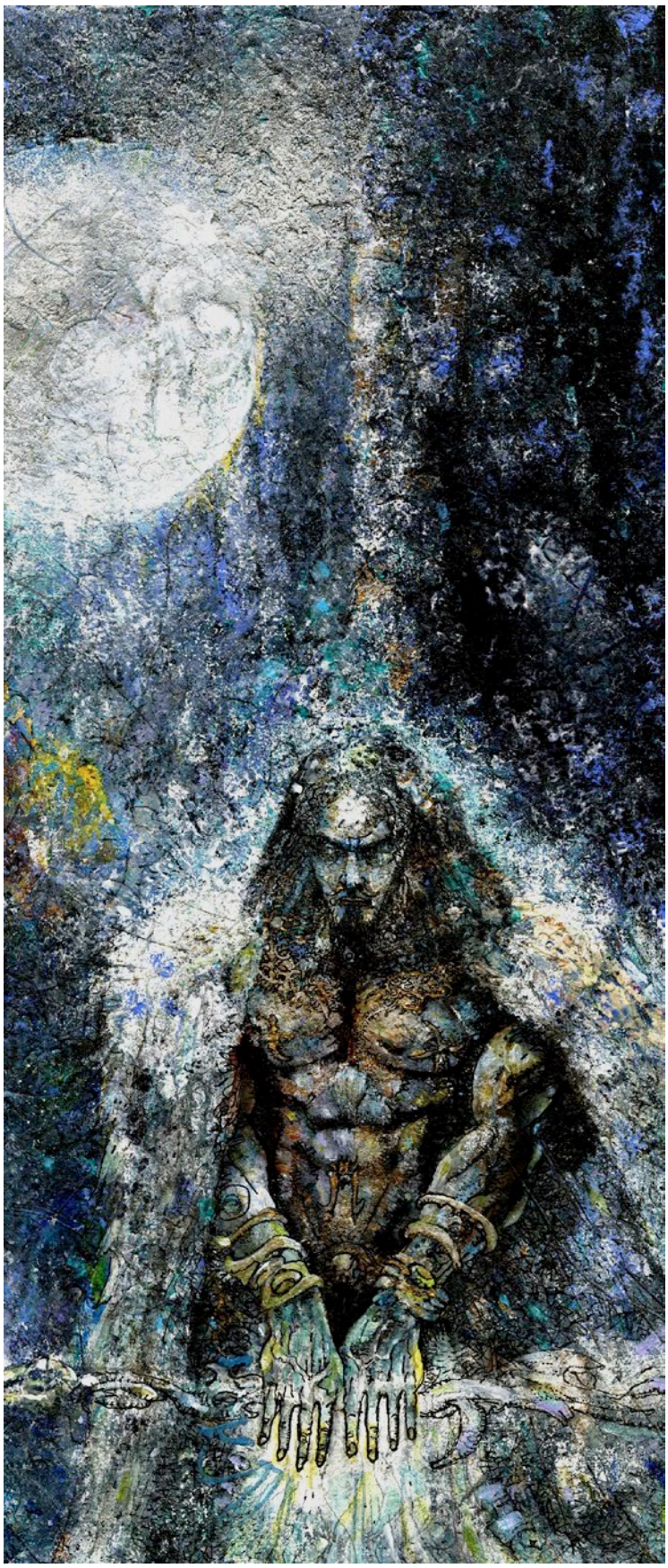
Dark Arcanoi and Shadecraft

These powers are unique to Spectres, as they alone channel the might of Oblivion. Only at the Storyteller's discretion and under exceptional circumstances might a wraith learn a Dark Arcanos.

Dark Arcanoi rolls are made versus difficulty 6, unless stated otherwise in the description.

Collogue

Known historically to some as "Hive Mind," Collogue does tap into the mass mind that connects all Spectres. However, a separate designation was created since this Dark Arcanos explores directed applications of power that not all Spectres learn. At its most basic level, Collogue is the means by which all Spectres com-



municate within the hive mind gestalt. Still, those who delve deeper into its potential can tap into memories from times long past and even direct others to do their bidding.

• Shared Whispers

The Spectre conducts a two-way telepathic conversation with any Spectre he knows, regardless of the distance separating them.

System: Roll Perception + Collogue. You and the target can carry on a conversation for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled. If you also have Swarm Network active, you can use Shared Whispers to communicate with everyone in your group. They can only "speak" directly with you, however, so you must relay — or rephrase — any messages they want to share.

On a botch, you all lose contact with the Spectral mass mind for a number of turns equal to the botches rolled.

•• Swarm Network

The Spectre shares up to the full range of his senses with other members of his pack.

System: Spend 1 Angst, then roll Perception + Collogue; the successes rolled indicate the number of your senses that you may choose to share. You determine which senses to share and need not allocate the full range. Likewise, this is not an intrusive act — recipients can accept or decline the sensory input as they wish. You may network a number of other characters equal to your Willpower rating, and the effect lasts for the remainder of the scene.

On a botch, you short out the entire group's Spectral mass mind for a number of turns equal to the botches rolled.

Spectres and Botching

Botches fit very well thematically with Spectres. As such, rules for botches are included throughout this chapter, with the understanding that it's every troupe's call whether or not to use them.

A Spectre suffers the constant gnawing, tearing hunger of Oblivion upon his very Corpus. As noted under "Brief Life" (p. 348), you lose 1 Corpus health level *permanently* each time you botch.

A botch may inflict additional negative effects as well. The Storyteller may declare that any botch effects listed with dramatic systems, Dark Arcanoi, Shadecraft, and the like are *in addition to* the Corpus loss.

A Spectre's existence is not particularly pleasant.

••• Racial Memory

The Spectre plumbs the depths of the hive mind to glean thoughts and memories, even from those that the Void claimed long ago. With this art, the Spectre can access details on matters with which he is vaguely familiar, or even find the answers to riddles, the locations of long-lost hoards, and other details that he could never know otherwise.

Systems: Spend 1 Angst, then roll Intelligence + Collogue. Each success indicates a piece of information that you "remember" on the desired subject. You may access this knowledge in detail for the remainder of the scene; after the effect ends, only a general recollection remains. This art applies solely to discrete information, and you cannot use it to access Arcanoi or other powers.

On a botch, your connection to the hive mind drops for the rest of the scene.

•••• Spectral Command

The Spectre compels another Spectre to follow a single command. This art is useful for getting one's point across in the moment without argument, but can cause escalating friction if used indiscriminately.

Systems: Spend 2 Angst, then roll Manipulation + Collogue in a resisted action against the target's Wits + Collogue or Willpower (whichever is greater). The target must follow the *spirit as well as the letter* of the command for a number of scenes equal to the extra successes you roll. A target under the influence of Spectral Command may spend 1 Willpower to avoid performing an action that is directly self-destructive.

On a botch, your connection to the target through the hive mind suffers a short, making you unable to ever attempt Spectral Command on that individual ever again.

••••• Manifest Arcanoi

The Spectre establishes such a deep connection with the Spectral mass consciousness that he may tap into the ability to wield any Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi.

System: Spend 2 Angst and 1 Willpower, then roll Perception + Collogue (difficulty 7). You may "learn" only one Arcanos or Dark Arcanos with each attempt, declared when you roll. On a successful roll, you access that Arcanos' 1-dot powers for the remainder of the scene, and may "learn" 1 additional dot for every two extra successes beyond this.

On a botch, you forget your own Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi for the remainder of the scene.

Each time you use this art, your Psyche gains 1 Pathos point.

Contaminate

Similar to Castigate, this Dark Arcanos allows you to commune with a wraith's Shadow, though the similarity ends there. Admired by Spectres and feared by wraiths, masters of this art cultivate the seed of darkness that is the Shadow, with the ultimate goal of overwhelming the target from within.

• Sense Nature

The Spectre can discover a wraith's Nature by peering in the dark reflection cast in her Shadow.

System: Spend 1 Angst and roll Intelligence + Contaminate. If successful, you learn the wraith's Nature. The target's Shadow does not assist with this process.

•• Shadowspeech

The Spectre converses directly with a wraith's Shadow. This is a telepathic connection, although the Spectre may speak aloud for dramatic effect. The Shadow may choose to respond verbally also by using the wraith's own voice — assuming the wraith doesn't try to resist the effort.

System: Spend 1 Angst and roll Manipulation + Contaminate in a resisted action against the target's Manipulation + Castigate. For each extra success you roll, you may make a single statement to or ask one question of the Shadow, and receive a corresponding reply. If conversing verbally, the wraith being targeted may make a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to keep her Shadow from speaking through her mouth.

••• Transfer Angst

The Spectre channels his own Angst to empower a wraith's Shadow. The targeted wraith must be in direct line of sight, but is unaware that anything is happening unless the Spectre draws attention in some fashion.

System: Spend 1 Angst and roll Stamina + Contaminate. If successful, you may transfer an amount of Angst points up to the number of extra successes rolled. The points transferred are added to the Shadow's Angst pool. Further, your Psyche also receives 1 Pathos point for each Angst point you transfer.

On a botch, the targeted wraith is instantly aware of both your presence and your failed attempt.

•••• Awaken Thorns

You encourage new Thorns to grow in the ashen soil of the Shadow with which to bedevil the targeted wraith.

System: Spend 2 Angst and roll Charisma + Contaminate in a resisted action against the target's Wits + Castigate. For each extra success you roll, the target Shadow permanently manifests a new, previously latent, Thorn. A Shadow has a number of latent Thorns equal to its Angst rating minus its current number of active Thorns. On a botch, the Shadow *loses* one already-manifested Thorn.

••••• Call the Shadow

The Spectre drags forth the targeted wraith's Shadow to take control, even if the Shadow's current Angst-point total does not exceed the wraith's Willpower rating.

System: Spend 2 Angst and 1 Willpower, then roll Strength + Contaminate (difficulty 8, or the wraith's Willpower, whichever is higher). If successful, you call forth the targeted Shadow, which may make a Catharsis attempt on the next turn (p. 236).

On a botch, you and the Shadow each lose 1 Angst point, and the Shadow is stunned into silence for the remainder of the scene.

Corruption

This Dark Arcanos is in some ways similar to Puppetry. However, with Corruption, you manipulate the target's mind and spirit so that she becomes a willing host.

Corruption arts only work on those of the living who are already stained with Oblivion. The target must be similar in temperament to you already, be a disturbed personality, or have a weak sense of self. Of course, Maleficence can be used to help lay the groundwork….

You must possess a target by rolling Manipulation + Corruption, difficulty 6, before you can employ Corruption upon her. Further, some powers require that the target first be attuned as a Consort (p. 149).

• Lurid Visions

This most simple of Corruption arts does not involve direct control over a target. Instead, it implants a brief vision — a flash of inspiration or simple imagery. Complex ideas and messages are beyond the scope of this art; at best, a Spectre may urge the target to make a left turn or "remember" to pick up a bottle of liquor.

System: While possessing the target, spend 1 Angst, then roll Charisma + Corruption (difficulty is the local Shroud rating). The successes rolled indicate the degree of detail possible with the vision — 1 success might flash a generic image, while 5 successes can display a specific, detailed subject.

•• Idle Hands

The Spectre directs the subject's body to undertake a particular task while her mind is distracted.

This art cannot be used to force a possessed target to perform a lethal or self-destructive action.

System: While possessing the target, spend 1 Angst and roll Dexterity + Corruption in a resisted action against the target's Willpower. The Storyteller may allow you additional dice depending on how relevant the proposed action is to the subject's current state of mind — for instance, you may get three additional dice if you want the subject to write "The bastard must die" 100 times while she's stewing over her hated ex-lover, but no benefit if you want the subject to build a pipe bomb while she's thinking about how much fun she'll have playing with her new puppy.

While a subject may not resist this effect by spending Willpower, repeated use of Idle Hands on an unwilling victim makes it increasingly unlikely that her attention will continue to drift.

On a botch, the target is disturbed at the thought of the action she almost performed, granting one additional die to her Willpower roll for any future Corruption attempts.

••• Mass Hallucination

The Spectre uses the possessed subject as a kind of spiritual antenna to broadcast a hallucination in the immediate area. This can be used as a distraction, a scattershot attempt to soak up some Angst, or simply for amusement.

System: While possessing the subject, spend 1 Angst and roll Dexterity + Corruption (difficulty is the local Shroud rating). The hallucination lasts but an instant, while the number of successes determines its intensity. With 1 success, you create a momentary distraction, a flicker out of the corner of the eye, while with 5 successes, you manifest a brief, yet intense, full-sensory event. At the Storyteller's discretion, 3 or more successes may trigger an emotional response strong enough to fulfill one of your Dark Passions.

On a botch, you're overwhelmed by psychic feedback; you lose 1 Angst and are unable use this power for the remainder of the scene.

•••• Urges

Employing this art overcomes the target's Willpower to undertake a single action of the Spectre's choice. The action must fulfill one of the Spectre's Dark Passions, and must be something that the target is willing to do on at least some level.

System: While possessing the target, spend 2 Angst and 1 Willpower, then roll Manipulation + Corruption in a resisted action against the target's Willpower. If successful, the target attempts the action you desire. If she succeeds, you gain Angst as appropriate for triggering a Dark Passion. The target may spend 1 Willpower to resist performing the action.

On a botch, the target feels revulsion at the thought of the action she almost performed, granting one additional die to her Willpower roll for any future Corruption attempts.

••••• Blissful Unity

The Spectre makes a special place for himself in the target's soul. In fact, the subject's soul and body survive the invasion. The target is actually aware of the Spectre's presence and remains conscious and in control of his body; he simply follows the Spectre's orders with no hesitation. In effect, whenever the Spectre is "in residence," he replaces the subject's free will.

System: After attuning a Consort through multiple uses of Corruption (at least 10 times), spend 5 Angst and subtract 1 from your permanent Willpower rating, then roll Manipulation + Corruption in a resisted action against the target's Willpower + 3 (maximum 9). There are no modifications for Consort status. The extra successes rolled indicate the strength of the corrupting influence — for permanent unity, you must accumulate a number of successes equal to the target's Willpower score.

If you do not achieve permanent unity with the initial roll, you may take an extended action each subsequent turn by spending an additional 2 Angst points and 1 Willpower point, then rolling Manipulation + Corruption in a resisted action against the target's Willpower until you accumulate the required extra successes.

The victim is aware that this process is happening (hence the resisted action). However, once you achieve permanent unity, any resistance vanishes. The target continues to live his life as normal, but he now accepts your dominance without reservation. When you possess him, he follows any commands promptly and to the best of his ability.

The target counts as a 1-point Fetter, and to "get behind the wheel" you may now simply spend 1 Angst point. A mortal subjected to this power almost always falls to Oblivion immediately after death, though some may become Mortwights.

A botch at any part of this process indicates spiritual incompatibility, rendering you unable to ever use Blissful Unity on the target.

Each time you use this art, your Psyche gains 1 Pathos point.

Larceny

The arts of this Dark Arcanos stave off the inevitable approach of the Void by stealing from the physical forms and minds of others to restore your Corpus and Angst. It attracts condemnation from many Onceborn and their priests, for each use strengthens every Spectre's worst enemy: the Psyche. Some feel the Malfeans are also against the use of Larceny because it conveys a greater understanding of the nature of Oblivion and how to manipulate it — an understanding the Malfeans prefer to keep to themselves.

• Steal Corpus

With a simple touch, the Spectre may steal Corpus from another Spectre or a wraith, and transfer it to himself or another. The theft is impossible to miss, manifesting as a sludgy fluid pulsing with the black light of Oblivion.

System: Spend 1 Angst and roll Manipulation + Larceny in a resisted action against the target's Stamina + Larceny or Willpower (whichever is greater). For every 2 extra successes rolled, you drain 1 aggravated Corpus level from the target. You may ingest this fluid Corpus yourself or pass it to someone else; a Spectre or wraith who consumes it gains that amount of Corpus, up to the character's maximum. If not ingested by the end of the scene, the Corpus fluid dissipates.

This art does not restore permanent Corpus lost due to Oblivion (see "Brief Life," p. 348).

You must be in direct contact to use this power. At the Storyteller's discretion, a clinch maneuver may be required first if the target is wary of you or actively resisting contact.

On a botch, you fail to transfer any Corpus; instead, you suffer 1 lethal Corpus level of damage.

This cannot be soaked or otherwise avoided.

•• Emotional Infection

The Spectre implants a Dark Passion in a target, whether mortal or supernatural, or increases the strength of an existing Dark Passion. This is a common means of preying upon mortals, by staining them with Oblivion over time.

System: Spend 1 Angst and roll Manipulation + Larceny in a resisted action against the difficulty of the local Shroud or the target's Willpower (whichever is greater). This is an extended action; implanting a new Dark Passion requires a total of 3 extra successes, while increasing the strength of an existing Dark Passion by 1 dot requires a total number of extra successes equal to the current rating.

The infection — whether new Dark Passion or increased rating — dissipates at the end of the scene unless the target exercises her Dark Passion and gains Angst from it. If the target does so for three scenes in a row, the infection becomes permanent.

The target must be in direct line of sight, and a wave of pulsing black light radiates from you to the target for the duration of the extended action. You cannot use this power to increase your own Dark Passions.

On a botch, you cannot make an Emotional Infection attempt on any targets for the remainder of the scene.

••• Savor Agony

The Spectre gains Angst from the agony of an injury inflicted upon a mortal or supernatural target. The energy is drawn out in a thick, smoky vapor that the Spectre inhales.

System: Immediately after a nearby target takes aggravated damage, roll Strength + Larceny in a resisted action against the target's Willpower. You gain a number of Angst points equal to the extra successes you roll, up to the amount of aggravated damage the victim suffered.

You must be in close combat with the target (p. 331), although anyone can inflict the aggravated damage.

On a botch, you suffer a kind of psychic whiplash and lose 1 Angst point.

•••• Withstand Oblivion

The Spectre can draw upon the pain of others to recover part of his essence lost through direct damage by Oblivion (which cannot be restored any other way). While this art can keep Oblivion at bay, it can also threaten the Spectre in another way by strengthening his Psyche.

System: Immediately after a nearby target takes aggravated damage, spend 2 Angst and roll Stamina + Larceny (difficulty 8). Each success rolled allows you to restore 1 point of any Trait lost to Oblivion. This is most often used to restore Corpus levels lost through botches (see "Brief Life," p. 348), but may also apply to an Attribute or other Trait reduced due to Oblivion-related circumstances. You cannot restore a Trait beyond its original level. Furthermore, your Psyche gains 1 Pathos point for each point that you restore.

You must be within arm's reach of the target, although anyone can inflict the aggravated damage.

On a botch, Oblivion lashes out to inflict 1 aggravated Corpus level of damage upon you.

••••• Defy Oblivion

The Spectre preserves himself by shifting the burden of Oblivion to other beings. While this is an effective way to avoid destruction, it is a damning betrayal of one's own nature as a servant of Oblivion. Even so, some claim that it is through this art that the Malfeans have sustained themselves for millennia.

System: Immediately following any activity requiring loss of Corpus, spend 2 Angst and 2 Willpower, then roll Charisma + Larceny (difficulty 7). If successful, you lose no Corpus; instead, you eject the gnawing force of Oblivion in the form of a mass of caustic parasites equal to the number of successes rolled.

Each one of these parasites attacks a target in the area, as determined by the Storyteller. Make a resisted Willpower roll against each target. If you get more successes, the parasite inflicts 1 aggravated Corpus level of damage (or 1 aggravated health level, if the target is mortal) as it burrows into the target.

On a botch, Oblivion rips through you for double the amount of permanent Corpus loss that would have occurred originally. You cannot try another Defy Oblivion attempt to counteract this.

Regardless of this art's final result, your Psyche gains 2 Pathos points for each aggravated Corpus level of damage that the parasites inflict.

Maleficence

Maleficence grants the ability to invest beings with the power of Oblivion. It is used most often in developing mortal Oblivion cults, and to send captured wraiths down the path to becoming Spectres. Users of this Dark Arcanos are often the Labyrinth's equivalent of evangelists. These missionaries spread the ideology of entropy in the Shadowlands and Skinlands alike. While openly proselytizing Spectres wouldn't last an hour in Stygia, fringe communities of Renegades and Heretics are less judgmental.

Remember that Spectres are subject to +1 difficulty when using powers across the Shroud.

• Black Whispers

The Spectre can communicate directly with the mind of a mortal. This art has a variety of uses, from driving deranged mortals over the brink to delivering faux-infernal proclamations to cult leaders.

System: Spend 1 Angst and roll Charisma + Maleficence (difficulty is the local Shroud rating or the target's Willpower, whichever is higher). The successes rolled represent the number of turns you may communicate telepathically with the mortal. On a botch, the target learns to ignore your mental whispers, applying a +1 difficulty to all future Black Whisper attempts on her.

•• Investiture

The Spectre invests a mortal with Angst, with the goal of later granting her Spectral powers (as covered with Empowerment, below). Mortals have a limited tolerance for such potent emotions and can become unstable if they receive too much.

System: Spend 1 Angst to trigger this art, along with as many points of Angst as you want to grant to the subject, then roll Strength + Maleficence (difficulty is the local Shroud rating). If successful, you invest the desired amount of Angst points, up to the number of successes rolled.

When you use Dark Arcanoi subsequently on a target who is invested with Angst, reduce the difficulty of any rolls by 2.

If the number of Angst points invested exceeds the mortal's Willpower rating, she is driven temporarily insane — anything from a psychotic break to catatonia, as dictated by the Storyteller. On a botch, you snap the mortal's mind permanently, leaving behind a gibbering wreck.

••• Discipline

The Spectre makes his displeasure known upon the mind and body of a mortal in whom he has invested Angst. This art is used to remind errant minions who is truly in charge, though sometimes it's employed simply for kicks or to fulfill Dark Passions.

System: Spend a number of Angst points equal to the degree of effect you wish to impose, then roll Dexterity + Maleficence in a resisted action against the target's Stamina + Survival. For each point of Angst you spend, all of the mortal's actions are reduced by one die as she suffers constant and severe pain — migraines, muscle spasms, or even bleeding from the eyes — for a number of scenes equal to the extra successes you roll.

On a botch, you go too far and trigger an aneurism or similarly deadly result.

•••• Empower

By grating away at a mortal's very soul with the power of the Void, the Spectre grants her supernatural abilities. These powers are a direct manifestation of the stain of Oblivion, resulting in the subject's noticeable physical and mental decay.

System: Spend 1 Angst and 1 Willpower to trigger this art, plus 5 additional Angst points for each dot of the Dark Arcanos power you wish to bestow (bestowing a basic ability costs 3 Angst points); then roll Manipulation + Maleficence (difficulty is the local Shroud rating, reduced by 2 if the target is invested with Angst already). You must roll a number of successes at least equal to the rating of the power to bestow it successfully.

You may only Empower the target with a Dark Arcanos power that you possess. The art is permanent once bestowed, and functions exactly the same as for a Spectre, including any required Angst and Willpower costs and any rolls required. Note that mortals cannot generate their own Angst, and must rely on Investiture from Spectres.

On a botch, you accidentally wipe clean the subject's current Angst pool and may never try another Empower attempt on her.

••••• Conversion

This art reveals to a captive wraith or Spectre audience the true power and depth of Oblivion, from which there is no escape save the Void. Conversion may be used to strip audience members of their Willpower or bolster their Angst.

System: When using the power, first determine whether you wish to decrease the target's Willpower rating *or* increase their maximum Angst pool. Next, spend 2 Angst and 2 Willpower and roll Charisma + Maleficence in a resisted action against the target's Stamina + Survival or Willpower (whichever the target chooses).

Conversion is an extended action that works only on a captive audience of wraiths or Spectres. It requires a number of successes equal to 3 times the combined total of the Trait being targeted. So, converting a group of eight wraiths with a combined Willpower score of 48 requires 144 total successes, while a group of four Spectres with a combined Angst pool of 26 requires 78 total successes. Once the required successes are collected, each member of the audience has her Willpower rating reduced by 1, or her maximum Angst pool capacity increased by 1 (as appropriate to your stated goal with the power) *permanently*.

As attempting Conversion is quite draining and time consuming, Spectres often employ teamwork (p. 101). Assume that it takes roughly one hour for every 5 total successes needed.

On a botch, your Angst pool capacity is reduced by 1 permanently, and all successes gained to that point are lost.

Shroud Rending

Normally, the Shadowlands appear empty to Spectres save for residents of the Underworld. You may employ this Dark Arcanos to peer through the Shroud and even manipulate it to impact the Skinlands. Mortals remain unaware of your presence — though the effects of certain Shroud Rending arts may be impossible to ignore.

Unless stated otherwise, the difficulty for all Shroud Rending powers is equal to the local Shroud rating; see "The Shroud" (p. 382) for more information. Also, remember that a Spectre's attempts to penetrate the Shroud are subject to +1 difficulty.

Often, botching a Shroud Rending attempt drags you into the Tempest from backlash.

• Virtuality

The Spectre employs this art to perceive events in the Skinlands for a brief period.

System: Spend 1 Angst, then roll Perception + Shroud Rending (difficulty is the local Shroud rating). The number of successes rolled indicates the strength of your connection across the Shroud: 1 success results in weak audio or visuals with bursts of supernatural interference, while 5 successes means a clear connection — as clear as the barrier between worlds allows — that captures every nuance of unfolding events. Since Shroud Rending impacts your senses only, the effect moves with you while the power is active. This lasts for the duration of the scene, although you may cancel it at any time.

On a botch, backlash from the Shroud overwhelms your senses, increasing the difficulty by 1 of all Perception-related rolls for the remainder of the scene.

•• Lurking Presence

The Spectre tears the fabric of the Shroud, leaving transparent tatters through which the living can perceive him.

System: Spend 1 Angst, then roll Manipulation + Shroud Rending (difficulty is the local Shroud rating); each success rolled equals the number of turns that you manifest to the perceptions of those in the Skinlands. While this art is in effect, subjects who view you are not affected by the Fog, as appropriate to their Willpower ratings (see "Fog Ratings," p. 284).

This art merely reveals your presence; the Shroud is not actually rent asunder, nor can you cross into the Skinlands. The gouge you carve in the Shroud is not unlike a window — you face a single direction, and mortals must be directly opposite to see you. Repeated use of Lurking Presence can lower the local Shroud rating permanently, at the Storyteller's discretion.

••• Nightmare

With a tearing of the Shroud, the Spectre allows the stain of Oblivion to seep into a sleeping mortal. While vaguely similar to Phantasm, the Spectre has no control over or knowledge of the nightmares he unleashes. Rather, he simply connects the sleeping victim's psyche directly to the terrible chaos of the Tempest itself.

System: Spend 2 Angst, then roll Dexterity + Shroud Rending (difficulty is the local Shroud rating); a successful roll

plunges the mortal into terrible nightmares. On a successful roll, the subject's actions are reduced by one die on the following day until he gets sound, uninterrupted sleep. You may also apply an additional one-die reduction for every 2 extra successes on the roll. This art can only be used on a particular subject once each time he sleeps, but the effect is cumulative if applied on successive nights.

If the penalty equals the subject's highest Attribute + Ability combination, he experiences a nervous breakdown and requires medical assistance or even temporary institutionalization. A wraith may try to combat this art by using Dreamweaver (p. 210) during the subject's nightmare.

Each time you use this art, your Psyche gains 1 Pathos point.

•••• Shroud Revenant

The Spectre uses the Shroud as a conduit to tap into the soul residue that lingers in a recently dead body, commanding the corpse to lurch into a zombie-like state for a short time.

System: Spend 2 Angst and 1 Willpower, then roll Manipulation + Shroud Rending (difficulty is the local Shroud rating). The corpse is animated for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled, unless it takes sufficient damage to be destroyed (assume it has 5 health levels). Even if the corpse is hacked apart, the limbs continue to move until destroyed (assume each limb has 1 health level)

The shroud revenant is literally a shambling corpse, with average physical traits, no powers, and only the barest of perception (for simplicity, use the Traits for a standard mortal). There is just enough soul residue to issue a single command, and the corpse can perform only the simplest tasks — attack someone, hold a door closed, walk in a circle, and so forth. Once you have given the command no further instructions may be given, and the revenant may not leave the area.

The corpse must be fresh for this power to work, at most a number of days dead equal to Stamina + Shroud Rending.

Each time you use this art, your Psyche gains 1 Pathos point.

••••• Transparent Memories

You can weave the Shroud itself to pierce a living subject's mind to tap into his thoughts.

System: Spend 2 Angst and 1 Willpower, then roll Perception + Shroud Rending (difficulty is the local Shroud rating or the target's Willpower, whichever is higher). You can read the target's thoughts for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled.

As a person's thoughts are seldom clear and regimented, the Storyteller should describe what you perceive in a series of unstructured impressions, snatches of phrases, or memory fragments. You may try Investigate (p. 323) or similar efforts to parse what's useful from the mental ebb and flow. If the subject's feeling strong emotions, the Storyteller may require you to make a Rapacity check (p. 349) — though at +2 difficulty, since you're tapped directly into the target's consciousness.

Tempestos

Spectres use this Dark Arcanos to ride and manipulate Maelstrom winds. Distinct from Tempest Weaving in that it focuses upon travel, Tempestos grew to prominence with the rise of the Third Maelstrom. Practitioners of this art are the shock troops of Oblivion, swooping in on the leading edge of a storm to strike at their foes.

• Storm Seeker

The Spectre sets himself adrift in the Tempest to be drawn toward a storm front by tapping into his affinity with the soul storms of the Underworld.

System: On a successful Intelligence + Tempestos roll, you navigate the Tempest's ebb and flow to find a brewing storm front. This can take hours or even days, depending on local conditions in the Tempest; the Storyteller may choose to reduce the time depending on the number of successes rolled. You have no control over the size of the storm discovered, nor its heading.

•• Storm Surfing

The Spectre cuts a path through a Maelstrom by surfing upon its turbulent winds. This is notably different from Tempest Riding (p. 358), in that the Spectre can steer himself actively amid the storm to chart his own course.

System: Spend 1 Angst point and roll Dexterity + Tempestos. On a successful roll, you can fly at up to the speed of the Maelstrom winds as long as you move in the same general direction of the storm. Further, you may add any extra successes beyond the first to your dice pool for any maneuver rolls you attempt, up to a limit of the Maelstrom's rating x 2. You must remain moving at all times, but you have precise control over your speed and trajectory — slowing to a virtual hover or making hairpin turns.

If you use Storm Surfing while piloting a relic vehicle, you are limited to the vehicle's maneuver rating for any special maneuver attempts (Relic Vehicle table, p. 319).

Storm Surfing remains active for the scene; however, you must activate it again if you leave the Maelstrom at any point.

••• Storm Squall

The Spectre can call up a minor storm from the Tempest to use as transportation. The squall might even rip open a Nihil along the way, depending on where the Spectre is located at the time.

System: Spend 1 Angst and roll Manipulation + Tempestos. You may carry a number of other characters or objects along with you equal to the number of successes rolled. You do not have to maintain physical contact; they're swept along by the same winds that you ride. Any other characters who try to hitch a ride suffer a +2 difficulty to any maneuvers, since the squall is so small and focused.

You travel at the speed of the storm winds (up to 75 mph/120 km/h) and may use Navigate for basic maneuverability, but Storm

Surfing is required for fine control. The squall is considered a level 1 Maelstrom and lasts for one scene before dissipating, though it may rage on longer at the Storyteller's discretion.

•••• Tempest Fury

The Spectre calls down the Tempest in a devastating attack, blasting through a Nihil if need be. This art is often used for breaching gates and smashing relic vehicles, though it's also handy for simply battering an individual wraith with the power of the storm.

System: Spend 1 Angst and 1 Willpower, then make a standard Strength + Tempestos roll. This is considered an attack roll on a one-yard/meter-diameter area within your line of sight. The successes rolled are then applied as a damage dice pool as the focused Maelstrom blast hammers the target. Each success on the damage roll inflicts 1 lethal Corpus level of damage on anything within the targeted area.

••••• Maelstrom Cauldron

The Spectre summons a minor Maelstrom from the very depths of the Labyrinth, bringing with it all manner of concomitant spectral debris. This art can take a lot out of the spectre — sometimes literally, as she must channel her very being into the summoning. Some Spectres have been torn to shreds in the process of calling forth a Maelstrom.

System: Spend 2 Angst and 1 Willpower, then roll Manipulation + Tempestos against a difficulty equal to the desired Maelstrom level + 5; the successes indicate the number of hours the Maelstrom rages. You also suffer 1 lethal level of Corpus damage for each success rolled. Once summoned, the Maelstrom is not subject to your control and rages like any other soul storm; refer to the section on Maelstroms for details (p. 286).

Tempest Weaving

With this Dark Arcanos, you manipulate the very substance of the Tempest itself. The Malfeans used it to carve much of the Labyrinth from primordial darkness when they first crawled from the Void. In current times, Mortwights are considered masters of the art. A Spectre versed in Tempest Weaving can traverse the farthest reaches of the Tempest in the blink of an eye, eavesdrop through a Nihil to overhear an Anacreon's whispered conspiracies, and shape the raw stuff of the Tempest into active nightmare.

• Wormhole

The Spectre can use a Nihil as a shortcut between the Shadowlands and the Tempest. You simply stretch the Nihil open and clamber in, emerging moments later from the other end (wherever that may be).

System: On a successful Stamina + Tempest Weaving roll, you pass through the Nihil without mishap, arriving safely on the

other side. Additional successes indicate that you may choose to hold the Nihil open for others to use as well. Otherwise, the Nihil closes immediately once you pass through.

•• Tempest Riding

The Spectre can travel across the Underworld by gliding upon the soul storms that rumble up from the Tempest and through the Shadowlands. While you have no control over your ultimate destination, you can nonetheless cover phenomenal distances in a short time. Spectres use Tempest Riding to propel mass assaults on Shadowlands citadels, and even the smallest Maelstrom is liable to be rife with jeering, bloodthirsty Shadow-Eaten.

System: Spend 1 Angst point and roll Dexterity + Tempest Weaving. On a successful roll, you launch yourself correctly to catch a passing soul wind. Additional successes mean you've caught an especially fast storm current. You must spend 1 additional Angst for each subsequent hour spent traveling. The Storyteller determines where you travel and the distance covered, though you may leave the storm current at any time.

While using this power, you may carry objects or even other passengers up to your carrying capacity (p. 316), though you must hold on to them for the duration of travel. Anything you lose hold of is whipped away randomly through the storm.

••• Tempest Grasp

The Spectre plunges a hand into the Tempest and pulls out the first thing that floats by. Flotsam found this way is not always useful, but is at least generally entertaining. Recovered items are either memories or minor relics (lingering memories from wraiths long since gone; the mask of a Skeletal Anacreon, lost in the 16th century; a mismatched pair of relic socks).

System: Spend 1 Angst point and roll Dexterity + Tempest Weaving. If successful, you pull an item from the Tempest. Memories retrieved in this manner may hold 1 or 2 points of a Dark Passion, which you may devour to boost your Angst pool. Minor relics may be used to decorate the set of a Harrowing, or even as weapons if appropriate. Anything retrieved in this fashion crumbles to uselessness at the end of the scene unless sustained by another method.

Each time you use this art, your Psyche gains 1 Pathos point.

•••• Favored Flotsam

The Spectre pulls something directly relevant to the problem at hand from the Tempest. The flotsam found depends on the specific nature of what afflicts him — whether a physical object (a relic boat if lost in a soul storm, an Artifact weapon to fend off a Legionnaire patrol) or a memory (an opponent's hidden desire that can be of aid in a negotiation; a painful recollection that can be used as a distraction prior to attack or escape). Some Spectres also use this art to hide valued relics and rare artifacts, in order to retrieve them later at their leisure.

System: To retrieve the desired object from the Tempest you must spend 1 Angst point and 1 Willpower point, then make a successful Wits + Tempest Weaving roll. To store an object using this art requires only a successful Wits + Tempest Weaving roll. The Storyteller determines the specific capabilities or impact the object has, and may require additional expenditures or apply limitations upon the object depending on what's desired — after all, this should not be a cheap way to equip yourself permanently with an arsenal of Artifact weapons.

Each time you use this art to retrieve an object, your Psyche gains 1 Pathos point.

••••• Chaos Carving

The Spectre forces his will upon the seething Tempest, reshaping it into whatever form he desires. This is the art used to carve settings for Harrowings from the raw stuff of Oblivion — anything from a long-forgotten family home to a company boardroom.

System: Spend 2 Angst points and 1 Willpower, then roll Intelligence + Tempest Weaving. The number of successes indicates the degree of accuracy and detail achieved — 1 success means a match of the room dimensions and basic furniture, while 5 successes produces a fully equipped and functional space with all the comforts of home. This art can only create items and objects. If used for a Harrowing, other Spectres must take on the roles of anyone in the space.

Shadecraft

In addition to Dark Arcanoi, Shades have access to uniquely monstrous abilities known simply as Shadecraft. A Shade has at least one of these arts, though it is not unusual for more powerful ones to have as many as four or five.

A number of these arts require the Shade to first get a target in a clinch; see "Close Combat Maneuvers," p. 331, for details.

Chameleon Parasite

This art allows a Shade to attach herself inconspicuously to a wraith. As long as she remains quiescent, the Shade goes anywhere the wraith does, even into the Shadowlands. Malfeans are known to spy upon the Hierarchy in this manner. It's also used to make tactical strikes by gaining entry into a wraith stronghold, where the Shade detaches herself and causes as much carnage as possible before vanishing into the Tempest.

System: Spend 5 Angst and roll Dexterity + Stealth in a resisted action against the target's Perception + Alertness. If successful, the Shade attaches herself almost invisibly to the target. Any extra successes are added to the Shade's dice pool for avoiding detection. The parasitical Shade is virtually invisible. The most effective means of detection is to hold a strong light source up to the wraith's Corpus, allowing observers to roll Perception + Awareness in a resisted action against the Shade's Dexterity + Stealth.

The Shade can maintain this state almost indefinitely, though she must spend 1 Angst each day that she remains outside of the Tempest. Upon detaching, the Shade inflicts 1 aggravated Corpus level of damage on her host.

Hound the Harrowed

The Shade can attach herself to a wraith who is undergoing a Harrowing. The Shade may try to intercept any Willpower or Pathos the wraith spends during the Harrowing, converting it to the Shade's own use.

System: Each time the Shade wishes to intercept a Willpower or Pathos use, roll Dexterity + Awareness in a resisted action against the target's Strength + Subterfuge or Willpower + 2 (whichever is higher). The Shade intercepts 1 point for each extra success rolled, and may apply it to her own Willpower pool or Angst pool as she prefers.

Imprison

The Shade twists her body to envelop a target completely. Shades often employ this art to carry wraiths off into the Tempest, though they have also been known to hide even more Shades within themselves, bursting open to release them at an appropriate moment.

System: In the turn after a successful clinch, spend 2 Angst and make a resisted Strength + Brawl roll against the opponent. If successful, the Shade envelops her opponent and compress him into a ball of Corpus roughly the size of a football. The victim is unable to take any action while imprisoned, and cannot be freed unless the Shade wishes it or is reduced to 1 Corpus level (or less). Once released, the victim returns to his normal shape within one turn.

Miasmal Breath

The Shade exhales a noxious vapor, akin to the black winds of Oblivion that moan through the Labyrinth.

System: The Shade spends 1 Angst point for each aggravated Corpus level of damage that she wants to inflict, then rolls Dexterity + Athletics in a ranged combat attack. Miasmal Breath spews from the Shade's mouth, covering a two-yard/meter diameter. As the Spectre is essentially exhaling the raw stuff of Oblivion, this damage cannot be soaked or resisted.

Numb the Heart

The Shade attacks a wraith's Passions directly, infecting them with the stain of Oblivion.

System: In the turn after a successful clinch, spend 3 Angst and make a resisted Willpower roll against the opponent. Every 2 extra successes the Shade rolls reduces one of the victim's

Ectoplasmic Tentacles

The Shade sprouts additional "limbs" — in truth, muscular, whip-like tentacles — that she can use as deftly as her hands. Shades that employ this art seldom use weapons.

System: The Shade may use her tentacles to make a second attack in the turn. The tentacles inflict aggravated damage. Further, they reduce the difficulty by 2 for any Athletics rolls. The additional limbs are permanent and require no Angst to use.

Passion ratings by 1 permanently, starting with the wraith's weakest Passion.

Pathos Drain

The Shade latches onto and literally drains the Pathos from a wraith. This art is a favorite of Shades, as there is nothing quite like the charge a Spectre gets from twisting a wraith's energy and mainlining it into Angst.

System: In the turn after a successful clinch, make a resisted Willpower roll against the opponent. For each extra success the Shade rolls, she drains 1 Pathos from the target and converts it to Angst to add to her pool.

Rend the Lifeweb

This art can be especially unnerving to wraiths, since the Shade attacks their Fetters by striking through the wraiths themselves.

System: In the turn after a successful clinch, spend 5 Angst and make a resisted Willpower roll against the opponent. Every 2 extra successes the Shade rolls reduces one of the victim's Fetter ratings by 1 permanently, starting with the wraith's weakest Fetter.

Shark's Teeth

The Shade's mouth is split into a gaping maw filled with multiple rows of razor-sharp teeth.

System: The Shade can make a bite attack that inflicts aggravated damage (see p. 294).

Siphon Emotion

The Shade attacks an opponent's Passions, actually draining and transferring the energy.

System: In the turn after a successful clinch, make a resisted Willpower roll against the opponent. For each extra success the Shade rolls, she drains 1 Passion point permanently from the target (starting with the weakest Passion) and transfers the point to the Dark Passion of her choosing.

Spectral Scream

The Shade unleashes a shriek into the Tempest that unnerves foes and calls additional Shades to her side.

System: Spend 5 Angst and roll Manipulation + Leadership; each success represents one Shade that appears, to a maximum offive Shades. The Storyteller determines the method and timing of each Shade's arrival, though typically they burst from a nearby Nihil within three turns. Further, any wraiths in the area who hear the scream's soul-scouring hatred are subject to a +1 difficulty on all rolls for the remainder of the scene.

Stampede

Shades often run in packs. By employing this deadly art, Shades of a single pack can combine their physical talents to inflict brutal damage on their foes.

System: Each Shade with this art who spends 1 Angst and 1 Willpower joins in a synchronized attack, using teamwork (p. 101). They must all perform the same physical maneuver (strike, claw, etc.); while each Shade rolls separately, the resulting successes on the attack are combined into a single result, as is any subsequent damage roll.

Talons

The Shade's hands end in wicked, tearing claws.

System: The Shade can make a claw attack that inflicts aggravated damage (see p. 294).

Tempest Wrack

The Shade infects the surrounding Tempest with her own inner turmoil, making it manifest. Turbulence erupts into storms, whirlpools suck down placid Byways, and similar upheaval explodes in the Spectre's immediate vicinity.

System: Spend 2 Angst and 1 Willpower, then roll Willpower. The number of successes indicates the additional difficulty applied to all actions within the area for the remainder of the scene. While all characters are subject to this increased difficulty, remember that Spectres ignore any increased difficulties to Mental Traits due to environmental conditions in the Tempest (p. 330).

Mortwights

Mortwights are mortals who died with such violence that they became Spectres instantly, never having existed as wraiths. While new to the Underworld, they have had an increasing impact on Spectre society since the time of the Fifth Great Maelstrom. Technically without a formal caste, and so the lowest of all Shadow-Eaten, the Mortwight population has swelled to the point where they may soon demand their rightful due.

As warriors of Oblivion, Mortwights are superb. Their greatest asset is their command of the Tempest, both in navigation and in summoning substance from the chaos. They excel at calling matter and memories from the storm to use as props in Harrowings, or as weapons when waylaying Byway travelers.

Appearance

Of all Spectres, Mortwights hew most closely to their mortal appearance. Their eyes are not Shadow-dark, nor are their bodies yet ravaged by Oblivion. Only their death wounds mark them as servants of Oblivion. In the Tempest, these wounds bleed constantly, though without causing harm, leaking minute amounts of Corpus that the Tempest itself replenishes instantly. However, a Mortwight who leaves the Tempest begins losing Corpus constantly until she returns to the healing embrace of the Tempest. Along with a lack of cohesive internal organization, this physical limitation is the main impediment to Mortwights' social ascension, as other Spectres perceive them as critically flawed.

Striplings

As the name implies, these Spectral children are born from those who died before reaching adolescence. While Striplings are technically found within every caste, as well as among Mortwights, they have bonded across caste lines over their shared temperament. The very idea of a group that ignores the rigid caste system has scandalized Spectre society, but these children of the Void have become so plentiful and powerful none yet dares move against them.

Prior to the 13th century, children reborn as wraiths were repurposed as raw materials the moment they entered the Shadowlands. Then came the Children's Crusade. Among the handful of child Spectres born in the aftermath of that event was one called Jemima Screech. She was the first of many Striplings who gave sufficient voice as to earn the right to be more than soulforge fodder. Then came the dawn of the mortal Industrial Age, and with it a veritable flood of Striplings caused by child deaths due to appalling factory conditions. Stripling numbers continue to grow into the 21st century due to the ravages of poverty, disease, and war across the globe, and the more Striplings created, the more there are to welcome other children to their macabre play circle.

Striplings exist to lure children closer to Oblivion. In the Shadowlands, they work to provoke the Shadows of child Enfants, posing as playmates tempting them to bad behavior. Striplings leverage their expertise at Shroud Rending to apply deadly influence over the Quick. In the Skinlands, they encourage children to lethal pastimes, whether toying with power sockets, playing with their parents' firearms, or simply chasing balls into traffic.

Appearance

Not surprisingly, Striplings appear as corrupt manifestations of children. Some are skeletal or disfigured, others are bloated and pus-ridden, still others weep worms from open sores. All speak with unnervingly soft, high-pitched voices, their sometimes lisped or childish pronouncements belying the malevolence behind their words.

Doppelgangers

Wraiths whose Shadows consume them are reborn as Doppelgangers. They remain much like wraiths in many respects — retaining their personalities, knowledge of Arcanoi, and Fetters. However, they are fully agents of Oblivion. As the name suggests, these Spectres are still familiar enough with their former condition that they make the perfect operatives to spy upon the Shadowlands.

Doppelgangers still have Fetters, which allows them access to the Shadowlands for extended periods. They insinuate themselves in wraith society in a number of ways — whether maintaining their previous wraith persona, establishing a new identity, or even Moliating themselves to imitate influential wraiths. Whatever the approach, they strive to learn all they can of Stygia's plans, while at the same time sowing discord and mistrust between wraiths. Doppelgangers are master manipulators, gaining the confidence of others so that they might use the secrets they learn to discredit and undermine their supposed "friends."

Fetters are the main reason that Doppelgangers place so low in the social order. This very ability that makes them so vital to the cause of Oblivion is seen by other castes as a weakness, a failure to embrace Oblivion fully.

Doppelgangers are also responsible for furthering the stain of Oblivion among the Quick. They delight in driving mortals mad, edging them ever closer to suicidal despair or homicidal rage. Doppelgangers spread negative emotions such as fear, despair, anger, and disgust throughout the Skinlands by targeting victims with cunning applications of Embody, Keening, Outrage, and Pandemonium. They also use Puppetry to spread chaos directly, possessing victims into performing all manner of horrific acts including abduction, mass shootings, rape, and terrorism.

Much like wraiths, Doppelgangers frequent Skinland haunts, though they are the only Spectres who do so. They often choose the scene of their death or some other location of similar importance to their past life. Their unseen presence contaminates the area with melancholy, fury, frustration, and other negative emotions that worm their way into mortal souls.

Doppelgangers also play havoc with wraiths' Fetters. A favorite approach for a location of importance to a wraith is to encourage reclamation and gentrification projects that destroy or transform the site beyond recognition. Those with a flair for the dramatic may instead encourage mortal firebugs to burn the place down. For direct assaults on Fetters, Doppelgangers are known to Skinride mortals, burning books, vandalizing memorials, shredding garments, and the like.

In addition to Argos, which allows them to move about the Tempest at will, Doppelgangers often become skilled in Arcanoi that help them in subterfuge and manipulation.

Appearance

While thinner, paler, and less substantial than wraiths, Doppelgangers are not so different as to draw attention. Deathmarks resembling postmortem lividity are often blotched across their Corpus, but judicious use of Moliate can disguise the stain of Oblivion. Indeed, even Castigate will not always reveal a Doppelganger's true nature.

The one thing that Doppelgangers can't hide is the triumphant Shadow that dances behind their eyes. Cautious wraiths have learned to look closely at the eyes of all those they meet, on the chance that the next stranger might be a Doppelganger in disguise.

Doppelganger Factions

Doppelgangers have the most complex social order of all the castes, due to their varied roles as agents of Oblivion. While individuals from different factions often work together, there is a constant rivalry and desire to prove one's faction superior to the others. This has been known to disrupt mission goals, though the Spectral mass mind usually keeps things from spiraling out of control. These intricate subcultures are typically of no concern to anyone except the Doppelgangers themselves, who take a perverse pride in their factions and accomplishments.

• **Actors:** These shapeshifters are the main actors in Harrowings. They take whatever forms are called for, to better torment the wraiths brought before them. They most enjoy assuming roles of a Harrowed wraith's tormented loved ones, as this evokes the most anguish. Still, they won't pass up the chance to take any role that assists a Shadow in threatening or torturing its wraith directly. Whatever their role, Actors relish a Harrowing, since it generates powerful emotions that refuel their pathos.

• **Assassins:** These Doppelgangers launch attacks on wraiths in Necropoli and elsewhere in the Shadowlands. In addition to the damage caused, these Spectres feed off the pain, fear, and anger their attacks generate. Assassins typically operate in small groups, though lone Assassins are not unheard of. Since striking from the darkness doesn't require interacting with wraith society, these groups may include Spectres from other castes, most notably Nephwracks due to their familiarity with the Shadowlands, and Doubles who take the place of destroyed or kidnapped wraiths.

• **Banshees:** Using Keening, these Spectres drive wraiths closer to Oblivion through subtle emotional manipulation. Virtuosos with this Arcanos, Banshees twist wraiths to desire only negative emotions and feed off the despair they engender. Banshees sometimes aid Assassins by paralyzing wraiths with emotion long enough to be overcome by attacking Spectres.

• **Conjurers:** As masters of Phantasm, Conjurers attack wraiths in their very dreams. As the name suggests, a favorite tactic involves first conjuring a horror that assaults the wraith's dreamself in a series of nightmares. Once these seeds are sown, the Conjurer unleashes an illusion of the same monstrosity while the wraith is awake. The Conjurer feasts upon the wraith's panic and agony as it suffers the illusion, unable to tell fantasy from reality. Indeed, sometimes the effect is so convincing that the wraith is actually destroyed.

• **Doubles:** These Doppelgangers disrupt Underworld society from within by assuming the appearance of particular wraiths. They may break up friendships, disobey laws and customs, or spread rumors about influential figures. Once the seeds are sown, they slip away and leave the wraith they've doubled as to face the consequences. Permanent doubling of a destroyed or abducted wraith is rare, since it can be challenging for even the most skilled Double to maintain another's persona in the long term without being discovered.

• **Goads:** While these Spectres infiltrate wraith society, they take no direct action against wraiths. Instead, Goads befriend wraiths and subtly encourage their darker urges. From the position of trusted friend or mentor, a Goad suggests actions designed to strengthen a wraith's Shadow self, or argue against beliefs and values to erode a wraith's confidence. Working with other factions, a Goad may set up an ambush or other situation that forces a wraith to embrace dark emotions or call upon the Shadow for aid. When a wraith succumbs at last, the Goad snatches her away to the Labyrinth and feasts upon her terror and despair.

• **Leeches:** These Doppelgangers are parasites, plain and simple. Nearly transparent, they attach themselves to wraiths and siphon off their Pathos and Corpus. The absorbed soul stuff is used as needed — whether as a direct transfer, converting Pathos to Angst, or changing Corpus to Pathos. A Leech who siphons sparingly may remain a parasite for some time as the host eventually weakens or is even destroyed. Conversely, a Leech steals enough Corpus in one go to plunge its host into the Labyrinth, where waiting Actors swarm for a Harrowing. Once the Corpus is gone, the Leech moves on to a new host.

• **Oddities:** These strange beings employ Arcanoi in unusual ways and craft intricate plans to entrap wraiths, making them among the most dangerous of all Spectres. Some Oddities befuddle travelers into becoming trapped in the sea wrack that floats in clumps through the Tempest, others transform themselves into animate weapons by Moliating shards of Stygian steel into their bodies, and still others peel off their outer Corpus to create hollow duplicates that they control with a variation of Collogue.

• **Riders:** These Spectres' focus is on the Skinlands. Riders control mortals through Puppetry, whether to perform violent acts and sow chaos, or to nurture cults dedicated to hatred, fear, torture, and death. The souls culled from these efforts are often primed to go straight to Oblivion. On occasion, Riders manage to dominate prominent figures, contributing to murderous regimes, war crimes, social unrest, corporate malfeasance, environmental disasters, and other tragedies.

• **Spiders:** These Doppelgangers are experts in Lifeweb. They focus on destroying wraiths' Fetters and claiming mortal souls for Oblivion. Destroying Fetters requires time and patience, as the Spider investigates a target to confirm that wraith's Fetters and her relationship to them — all while not drawing the slightest suspicion. Once confident that every Fetter is confirmed, the Spider destroys each in turn, thereby cutting the wraith's ties to the living world. The resulting anguish, fear, and anger this generates are a veritable feast to a Spider.

Seducing mortals is a much easier proposition. Mortals are often all too willing to promise their souls to Oblivion in the future in exchange for supernatural help in the present. Becoming a Spider's Fetter is a matter of little concern in the heat of the moment. The true price of the deal is revealed once the bound mortal is slain — often by the Spider's own hand — and the soul plummets to Oblivion to be remade into yet another Spectre.

• **Spies:** Into this catchall category fall Doppelgangers who are sent to infiltrate wraith enclaves throughout the Shadowlands and Dark Kingdoms. They share the knack for blending in with local cultures, where they glean rumors and take note of defensive capabilities. Some Spies gain positions of power that enable them to uncover even the most closely guarded secrets and manipulate wraith society to best benefit Oblivion.

Nephwracks

These twisted things are the result of prolonged exposure to the entropic effects of Oblivion. Warped and devolved, Nephwracks cannot hope to pass for wraiths, not that they would even wish to. These creatures revel in displaying an outward appearance as twisted and repulsive as the vile darkness that lies within. It is this purity of evil that makes them favored agents of the Malfeans.

Nephwracks act as emissaries and heralds, serving as the voices of their Malfean masters throughout the Underworld and even into the Skinlands. They are also known to serve as priests of Spectral society, interpreting the dreams of their sleeping masters for the Shadow-Eaten masses.

Nephwracks seldom venture far from the depths of the Tempest. Still, there are rare instances of Nihils leading directly to a Nephwrack lair.

Like all Spectres, Nephwracks possess some degree of Argos with which to navigate the Tempest. They often have high levels of Keening as well, which they use to bombard their enemies with dark emotions.

Appearance

Hideous even by the flexible standards of wraith society, the taint of Oblivion is obvious on a Nephwrack. Its touch warps them into mockeries of their mortal selves. A heroin addict's Corpus might bear ulcerated, gaping puncture marks, while a domestic abuser's Spectral body might be twisted into knots of rage, hands clenched into club-like fists.

Shades

Shades are born of wraiths lost to their Shadows during a Harrowing, devoured by the Tempest, or swallowed by Oblivion in a Maelstrom. The violence of such encounters strips away most of the wraith's personality and intellect, leaving a mindless, howling beast.

Shades seek only to corrupt and annihilate. They are the shock troops of Oblivion, knowing no purpose other than destruction. Whenever Spectres attack in force, Shades lead the charge. Whenever a Maelstrom sweeps through the Underworld, Shades are at the forefront of the soulstorm. Even other Spectres are leery of Shades, for they can be unpredictable, especially in groups. Their stampedes of devastation swarm over enemy and ally alike.

Appearance

Shades are the stuff of nightmares, the howling of Oblivion given physical form. Some appear as scaled demons from human myth, while others are little more than gaping maws and slashing claws held together by a tangle of sinew and torn skin. They radiate the cold blackness of Oblivion the most powerfully of all Spectres, save Malfeans. The more powerful a Shade, the greater the flickering black light that surrounds them.

Malfeans

The mightiest of all Spectres, Malfeans fall into two types: The Neverborn, great beasts that were never human; and the so-called Onceborn, former wraiths who have become godlike in their enduring evil. Regardless of their origins, they all grow to enormous stature and wield power unparalleled in the Underworld.

Malfeans make their lairs deep in the Labyrinth, in caverns gnawed out of nothingness at the time of the Sundering. Here they may slumber for centuries, direct invasions against this Dark Kingdom or that Necropolis, or speak of the dreams of Oblivion and the final peace that awaits in the Void. Nephwracks fawn around them in eager supplication, while armies of Shades swarm in the darkness awaiting their commands.

Malfeans are the god-kings of Spectral society. Terrible, twisted beings, they seldom leave their lairs within the Tempest. When they do, it is to spread chaos and suffering on an unheard-of scale. Perhaps the most infamous instance involves the devastating battle between ancient Gorool and the Stygian ruler Charon. Other Malfeans of note include Lamachis the Devourer, whose wanderings traverse the Shadowlands of the Americas; Rabark the Inhabited, whose corpulent mass serves as home to numerous lesser Spectres like so many parasites; and Mulhecturous the Putrescent, whose Nephwrack servitors spread disease and death among her mortal worshippers.

Indeed, many Malfeans spread Oblivion by setting themselves up as deities, worshipped by the Quick and the dead alike. They often employ Nephwracks to manifest and possess mortal cultists as evidence of their supernatural influence. Such mortal cults are often innocent of what it is that they worship, believing themselves to be servants of some other spiritual entity. Under the aegis of divine inspiration, these cults spread degradation and despair throughout the Skinlands.

Other Malfeans, such as Lamachis, seek more palpable power on both sides of the Shroud. In the Skinlands, their servants are often Skinridden mortals in governments and multinational corporations. In the Shadowlands, their influence extends over numerous Heretic cults and Renegade gangs though those wraiths are often unwitting minions, believing that their efforts promote Transcendence or freedom from the Hierarchy.

Storytelling Malfeans

A Malfean may serve as the great villain behind an elaborate plot that drives an entire campaign. Certainly, wraiths new to existence would have no chance if facing such an opponent. A Malfean is best employed as a background figure manipulating events from deep in the shadows, and whose influence, let alone existence, wraiths aren't even aware of for some time. Revealing a Malfean's involvement should be a watershed moment in the chronicle, and confronting one should be an experience that both characters and players never forget.

It can be challenging to create a Malfean character that is not simply a slobbering caricature of gluttony. If using a Malfean for something other than a terrible scare, the Storyteller is encouraged to delineate its powers and take the time to craft a unique personality and motivation.

By definition, Malfeans are stupendous in size and power. Going directly against even a lesser Malfean of the Onceborn would require a small army — and even then, the best victory wraiths could hope for is to survive the encounter.

The Neverborn

In the bleak nothingness before time, ravenous beasts — grim manifestations of destruction — rose from the Utter Darkness that lay beneath the Shadowlands and carved great tunnels to the heart of Oblivion. This network of chaos became the Labyrinth, and the beings that made their lairs within it were named Malfeans.

These ancient things came to be called Neverborn, to distinguish them from those Malfeans born of former wraiths. While cunning and unpredictable, these entities — also called Grotesques or Primordials — are slaves to their bestial natures. They respect only power as mighty as their own, attack anything that enters their territory, and venture forth in search of prey only when their hunger becomes great enough to wake them from their endless slumbers. Appetite personified, they are breathtaking in size, a result of consuming countless denizens of the Underworld over the course of millennia. Still, their hunger is never sated.

Most Neverborn hover on the border between dream and waking. Conscious enough to make their wishes known, they never fully emerge from sleep. This is for the best, as when they awaken they are howling, massive engines of unstoppable consumption. When a single Neverborn awakens, the very Labyrinth shudders, and ripples of the orgy of destruction that follows echo through the Underworld.

Onceborn

Some Spectres have echoed the behavior of the Neverborn — consuming wraiths, other Spectres, and any other source of sustenance they can find — to amass both physical stature and power sufficient to earn Malfean status. They came to be called the Onceborn, to signify their origins. Others called them Cabalists, due to their vast intellects as compared to the bestial Neverborn. Cabalists are also driven by hunger, but not solely for consumption; their appetite is for dominance.

When Doppelgangers, Nephwracks, or Shades embark on missions, it is usually at the behest of a power-hungry Onceborn. Some claim that they cause Maelstroms, hoarding energy and Spectre servitors for years only to unleash everything in a single destructive eruption.

Prodigies are far more active than their bestial brethren, though most prefer sending servants to do their bidding to risking themselves in battle directly. Their minds are agile and treacherous, and they endlessly war with one another through proxies over control of sections of the ever-shifting Labyrinth.

Spectres and the Storyteller

As Spectres have short, intense, and brutal existences, stories that focus on them should have a similar passion and urgency. This section begins with a discussion of using Spectres as antagonists in a wraith chronicle, followed by guidelines for creating a Spectre-oriented chronicle. This is, of course, just the starting point; the Storyteller is encouraged to develop whatever mood, theme, story arcs, and story hooks best suit the chronicle she has in mind.

Spectre as Foe

Spectres are the most common antagonists that wraiths will face. The two share many similarities — both are incorporeal and deathly, sustain themselves on Passion, and inhabit a reality ravaged by Oblivion and isolated from the mortal world they once knew. However, it's a mistake to think of Spectres as simply "bad wraiths." The Shadow-Eaten are uncaring and angry, despairing and hateful, bitter and twisted. They know that their existence is brief, and throw themselves fully into their roles as agents of Oblivion. As such, they serve as a reminder of the fate that awaits all wraiths who become detached from their Fetters and Passions, and who compromise too much with their whispering Shadows.

As the interests of wraiths and Spectres are often in direct conflict, the Shadow-Eaten are natural foes for a wraith chronicle. Additionally, Spectres are cunning, merciless beasts who may seduce wraiths into joining the ranks of Oblivion or destroy them outright. Spectres represent "the Other" — they are a manifestation of the Shadow, the embodiment of a wraith's fears and inadequacies. They understand Oblivion in ways that no wraith can, or would

want to. Still, some wraiths may see something seductive about the apparent freedom and power that Spectres enjoy.

The Shadow-Eaten are more than monsters wandering in the Tempest. Their motivations and agendas can create complex relationships with wraith characters beyond the obvious "fight or flight" dichotomy. Mortwights are horrifying and mysterious, born directly from violent death — a fate that the characters may have come close to suffering themselves. Striplings are a sickening combination of innocence and evil, evidence to the characters of an uncaring universe. Doppelgangers are skilled infiltrators and pose as wraiths in most Necropoli, and could become influential patrons or close confidants without the characters realizing it. Nephwracks may be old friends that the characters once knew, warped by Oblivion — though not quite beyond recognition — and come back to haunt them. Shades are relentless hunters, dogging the characters' every step once they get a whiff of their Shadows' nourishing Angst. Malfeans are mighty nemeses, marshaling forces that threaten all existence, — starting with the characters themselves.

Then there's the interaction between Spectre and Shadow. Being allies of a wraith's Shadow lends Spectres special significance as enemies. Spectres have embraced that part of themselves that the character constantly struggles against. Employing Arcanoi and manipulation, Spectres side with the Shadow in this fight, making them frightening adversaries indeed — for what is more terrifying than waging war against yourself?

Even so, wraiths can try a similar approach against Spectres. While a Spectre may strive to bolster a wraith's Shadow to drag her to the side of Oblivion, the wraith may support that Spectre's Psyche in a bid for redemption. Such maneuverings offer rich fodder for plots and adventures.

Spectres' plots and machinations, grand aims, and deadly schemes ensure them a memorable role in every wraith-oriented chronicle.

Spectre as Protagonist

Running a chronicle wherein players take on the roles of Spectres makes them the protagonists of the story, though certainly not the heroes. Creatures of utter nihilism, Spectres hope only that they might end their own pain by ending all existence. Creating and understanding this feeling is critical for a successful Spectre chronicle.

Mood

An atmosphere of decay and horror is the glue that binds a Spectre chronicle together. In addition, within specific stories that make up the chronicle, the Storyteller might emphasize certain moods that build off these cornerstones — fear, hate, isolation, and madness.

Decay

Oblivion clouds Spectres' perceptions. Everything they see is rotten and decayed. The Shadowlands are shrouded in darkness, while stained clouds blanket the sky at all times. The only illumination that Spectres see is the black light of Oblivion, its putrid glow illuminating the decayed hell of the Underworld.

When running a Spectre campaign, the Storyteller is encouraged to express the desolation with vivid description — thick shadows, grasping cobwebs, brittle shards of glass, crumbling concrete, oily fog, stinging rain, sour air, choking dryness, and so on.

Remember that, in most circumstances, Spectres only perceive other denizens of the Underworld. They are so far removed from the living world that mortals and animals are effectively invisible to them. Plant life is glimpsed here and there, but through the dark filter of spectral perception: gnarled trees devoid of leaves, twisting vines blackened with soot, coarse grass clattering in the dank breeze. Unpaved earth is bare, blasted by frost or scorched by fire. Ashes and sleet drift in on the relentless wind.

In contrast to the bleak Shadowlands, the Tempest is a nightmare of slick, towering waves, shrieking winds, and roiling clouds the color of static.

Horror

In **Wraith**, horror comes from being separated from the world of the living, and from the

knowledge that one's Shadow is waiting to take control the moment you relax your guard. The Shadow-Eaten are not concerned with such fears. They are truly malevolent beings, and playing one is not to be taken lightly.

A Spectre chronicle should not be an exercise in "torture porn," wherein players become inured to the brutality and vile acts that their characters espouse. Rather, a healthier and more enjoyable game experience revolves around the brief nature of Spectral existence. Remind your players that Spectres are fireflies, flitting about frantically for one moment in time until Oblivion claims them. Decay gnaws at their Corpus each day, their reward for acting tirelessly in service to the Void.

This should open new avenues to explore. Spectres are doomed; no matter how they might struggle, they will fall to the Void eventually. And yet, this frees them to take terrible chances. This perverse dichotomy is at the heart of the horror that the Shadow-Eaten experience, and can make for compelling roleplaying.

Fear

Fear motivates many Spectres. Stories within a chronicle may highlight a Spectre's fear of his Psyche, or a more pervasive fear of the Void. Indeed, this fear might be a primary motivation for the villain of the story (such as a Nephwrack seeking to stave off his dissolution at the cost of the characters' existence); alternately, fear of the Spectres themselves may draw other entities into conflict with the characters.

Hate

Hate is a powerful force that can create a driving urgency throughout the course of a chronicle. Individual stories can explore different outlets for hate, whether motivating Hierarchy forces to hunt the Spectres down, or brewing conflict between rival characters. Vivid descriptions of the environment can reinforce the mood effectively, from the growling fury of Tempest storms to the shadows that swell and flicker in the black light of Oblivion as if with a sentient hunger.

Isolation

While all Spectres are connected through the hive mind, few ever feel a sense of belonging or support. The Psyche is the only constant companion, and it strives to undermine the Spectre at every turn. Alternately, the chronicle may revolve around more practical interpretations of isolation — the Spectres may be lost in distant reaches of the Labyrinth, or navigating the Shadowlands in search of a rumored Artifact.

Madness

This is an obvious fit for any Spectre chronicle. Seen from the perspective of wraiths, Spectres are mad. Such stories might hold the Spectres' behavior as a mirror to other beings with whom they interact, whether mortal innocents who cry out for mercy at the horrors they're being subjected to, or the condemnation of Doomslayers who seek to unleash retribution upon them. Then again, the mood can support the idea that madness can be a gift as well as a curse, a way of dealing with the agony of Spectral existence.

Spectre Themes

A theme draws the many elements of a story into a coherent whole. Without a theme, a chronicle is simply a series of events, lacking cohesion, depth, and direction.

Despair

This theme lends itself to a chronicle with a philosophical bent. A despair-themed chronicle might have the characters suffering personal setbacks, or even consist entirely of stories in which their every action sends them spiraling further downward to the Void. Consider the larger scope as well: What could drive the Shadow-Eaten, creatures that literally sustain themselves on Dark Passions, to despair? Spectres have failed to destroy all existence despite centuries of effort, yet they strive on unflaggingly; what might it take to despair of reaching their goal?

After all, a Spectre is doomed no matter what she tries. Oblivion eats away more of her each day, and her Psyche hounds her without pause. In the face of such hopelessness, what's the point? Do Spectres revolt against the old ways, seek a new path? Amuse themselves by toying with mortals or warring among the dead?

Destruction

Destruction can be applied in myriad ways. The inventive Storyteller should have little problem deciding on a viable approach for his chronicle.

As agents of entropy, Spectres tear down individuals as well as things — whether their physical forms, their psyches, or their beliefs. A destruction-themed chronicle may focus on Spectres' plans to destroy a particular Necropolis, with stories about infiltrating the city, investigating its weak points (both physically and in leadership), compromising Hierarchy officials, and hijacking a transport to use as a Trojan horse, all leading to a full-scale attack that turns a Citadel to rubble.

Another chronicle may relate more to personal destruction, with the characters spreading disbelief and disillusionment amongst mortals, and focusing on scenes set at a Skinlands university or involving cultists and pawns.

Spectre Chronicle Concepts

The best Spectre chronicle is focused, intense, and short — ideally no longer than four to six sessions — dealing with one specific theme or issue. The Storyteller should steer away from complicated subplots and ensure that unnecessary detail does not slow down the action. This style of roleplaying makes for a fast-paced, yet memorable, chronicle, as the Storyteller pulls out all the stops and races the troupe toward a dramatic climax.

• **Conquering the Necropolis:** Arguably the archetypical Spectre chronicle, this concept focuses on the characters' efforts to infiltrate, assault, and destroy a Necropolis. Do the characters manipulate disgruntled Renegades or misguided exiles to sow unrest? Assassinate key Hierarchy leadership to weaken stability? Negotiate with a Malfean to add its minions to the assault? There are opportunities aplenty for subterfuge and action alike.

• **Dark Passions:** With this concept, each story centers on a particular Dark Passion. This could mean focusing on a different character's Dark Passion each time, or a Dark Passion that all the characters share. This chronicle is more about thematic coherence than a structured plotline, and could be dreamlike or surreal in execution.

• **Live Fast, Die Young:** In this concept, the characters are Striplings. Their mortal life over far too soon, they are even more confused than most in being "reborn" as Spectres. This chronicle should emphasize the fever-pitch mood of being a Spectre in every aspect, from the very beginning of coming to terms with their new state as Spectres to the inevitable fall to Oblivion.

• **The Meaning of Oblivion:** At the heart of this concept is the debate of whether Oblivion is a sentient force, an insatiable entity strengthened by the spread of violence, despair, and disbelief; or a literal force of nature, implacable entropy with no agenda; it simply *is*. This could venture deep into philosophical territory, an intimate chronicle focused on

interactions and dialogue between the characters. The Storyteller may decide the answer one way or the other in advance, or let the characters' actions and debates sway things so that they reach their own conclusions.

• **Metamorphosis:** This concept is split between the characters' wraithly existence and rebirth as Spectres. The logistics can get a bit complicated, as the theme and mood of each may be distinctly different — after all, wraiths aspire to Transcendence, while Spectres strive for Oblivion. Still, it can make for an engaging series of stories, as the newborn Spectres relate to past associates, one another, and even their Fetters in decidedly different ways than before.

• **Prophets of Oblivion:** This demanding concept puts the players in the roles of Nephwracks, the so-called "priests" of Oblivion. Stories might involve steering the course of Spectre society based on the characters' interpretations of Malfean commands or even the whispers of Oblivion itself. Other stories might focus on manipulating human cults and expanding the stain of Oblivion throughout the mortal world.

• **The World's End:** This concept delves into the characters' attempts to literally destroy the world. Such high stakes are sure to involve all manner of enemies and complications, from tangling with Hierarchy forces to striking deals with apocalypse-worshipping mortal cultists or even supernatural beings like Sabbat vampires or Black Spiral Dancer werewolves.

Spectre Story Concepts

Stories are the adventures that make up a chronicle, the meat in the sandwich. A story may have a narrow focus (the characters haunt a particular location) or a broad one (the characters scare a mortal to death, then must deal with the vengeful wraith hunting them down). Multiple stories may overlap or be self-contained. The examples below are simply starting points for generating ideas that best suit the chronicle's overall theme and mood.

• **A-Viking:** The Spectres go soul-surfing across the Tempest, or are carried on a minor

Maelstrom across the Shadowlands. What adventures are they caught up in along the way, and what other entities do they encounter within the storm? Where do they ultimately end up, and how will they get back to the Labyrinth? Are they trapped in one of the strange Shifting Zones in the Sea of Shadows? What happens if the characters find themselves tossed aboard the Midnight Express?

• **Reconnaissance and Reverence:** A typical day begins with the Spectres rising from Slumber in the glacial Labyrinth walls, answering the summons of a Nephwrack factor and presenting themselves in the chambers of a hibernating Malfean. As the colossus grumbles and snores amid its dark dreams, the

factor explains the duties that the sleeping Malfean decreed for them via the hive mind. The Spectres go on a reconnaissance tour in a distant portion of the Labyrinth, where their surroundings — from walls that ripple like mercury and ground that quivers with every step — reflect views dredged from their Psyches of their happy pasts. Why has the Malfean sent them here — or did it? Are they meant to discover something of use in spreading Oblivion, or did the Nephwrack want them gone while some other plot unfolds?

• **Objects of Worship:** After enacting a graphic haunting, the Spectres find that they have become the focus of a minor mortal or supernatural cult. How do the characters react? Will they attempt to build their influence to possibly rival the Malfeans themselves in clout and destructive potential? Will they turn the cultists against one another and incite a bloodbath? What if the cult draws the attention of exorcists, witch hunters, and others who might trouble the characters directly? Worse yet, what if the worship was meant for another, more powerful Spectre, who is none too pleased with the characters usurping its worshippers?

• **Spy Mission:** A Malfean commands that the Spectres pose as wraiths to discover certain information, perhaps including bickering Striplings or an arrogant Nephwrack as part of the infiltration team. How do the characters handle scouting the Necropolis and navigating wraith politics while avoiding discovery? How do they keep the less subtle members of the group from blowing their cover? Is the secret they're meant to uncover the end of the mission, or does it reveal a larger conspiracy? Do they inadvertently learn too much and become targets of a rival Malfean's forces — or of their own master?

• **To Hell and Back:** The Spectres are sent to one of the many hells that exist among the Far Shores. The ruler of this particular one has decided to retire, and his valuable collection of souls is up for auction. Perhaps the characters were sent to disrupt the bidding, or to ally with the strongest candidates only to betray them later and claim the souls for Oblivion. Can the characters navigate the dangerous waters of this foreign realm and find their way to triumph — or even simply survive?

• **The Making of a Harrowing:** This story has a darkly humorous bent, focusing on what goes into a Harrowing, rather than the Harrowing itself. The characters are roped in to help a prestigious Nephwrack nightmare director assemble his latest masterpiece. Like most productions, this is a frantic scramble as the temperamental director harangues everyone to assemble scenery, trawl the Tempest for appropriate plots and memories, and Moliate themselves to take on roles as extras. Confusion, bumbling assistants, and prima donna antics abound, not to mention a victim who won't play by the rules.

Spectre Conflicts

Given Spectres' turbulent existences, conflict is an intrinsic part of their chronicles. The Shadow-Eaten are trying to end all of existence, after all. Naturally someone will want to stop them. Other conflicts arise from the fractious nature of Spectral society, due in no small part to the whims of Malfeans. When running Spectre campaigns, one need never look far for a source of conflict and drama.

Spectre versus Wraith

The mere existence of Spectres reminds wraiths of what they can become. For this reason more than any other, this makes them the focus of wraiths' hatred and fear. Stygia is on constant alert against Spectral attack, and the Hierarchy regularly launches campaigns into the Labyrinth. Renegades alternate at the drop of an obolus between allying with Spectres "for the greater good" and fighting them. Heretics are likewise troublesome, as more than one Heretic cult has the means to raise an army as fanatical as any Shade.

Spectre versus Spectre

Spectres have as much reason to fear attack from within their own ranks as from external forces. Creatures without mercy or pity, Spectres can undermine or even destroy one another at the slightest provocation. Manipulators by nature, they enjoy intrigue as much as outright violence. Malfean plots often enmesh lesser Spectres, but the schemes of Doppelgangers can be just as lethal in their own way.

Spectre versus Psyche

A Spectre fears few things; foremost among them is her Psyche. The last remnant of its personality to have withstood Oblivion, the Psyche and its incessant nagging remind the Spectre that she was once human. The Psyche represents salvation, but at the cost of the Spectre's identity. This forms the core of a constant struggle for the entirety of a Spectre's short existence.

Spectre versus Mortal

Although Spectres are often the hunters, sometimes the tables are turned. Mortal parapsychologists might invent equipment that allows them to take the chase into the Shadowlands and beyond. Then there are those rare individuals with supernatural abilities, who can learn to bend Spectres' minds and even souls to their will. Mortals should never be underestimated, as more than one Spectre has discovered in the past.

Spectre versus Others

As most Spectres can leave the Tempest for only the briefest of moments, they are largely cut off from the rest of the World of Darkness. Still, don't forget that the Underworld is one portion of a vast reality that is rife with supernatural beings. Encounters with vampires, werewolves, and wizards are not unheard of. In some cases, they might share common goals, as in the case of the Followers of Set, Black Spiral Dancers, and Nephandi. At other times they clash, as when the Giovanni vampires try to bend spirits to do their bidding, or Silent Strider Garou cross the Shroud to battle those who would destroy their world.

Spectre Characters

A Spectre is a doomed thing, destined to be consumed by the Void. If any glory exists in being a Spectre, it is to spread the stain of Oblivion as wide as possible before succumbing to the inevitable. Yet resisting this destruction runs the risk of strengthening the Psyche, weakening the Spectre and making her less effective in her role as an agent of Oblivion.

Playing a Spectre, you are taking on a character that manifests humanity's worst aspects. Such roleplaying is demanding and intensive, and thus not for everyone. You may find the character functioning as an outlet for your personal frustrations, fears, and repressed urges. This can be a disturbing realization, but it can also be cathartic.

Still, it's important to remember that **Wraith** is a game, not psychotherapy. While it explores mature themes and can sometimes reveal surprising, even shocking, parts of yourself, it is intended as a safe, shared entertainment experience. Storyteller and players alike should support one another and always be clear that actions and experiences being roleplayed are rooted firmly within the context of the game.

Playing a Spectre

As covered in the following sections, there are two options for roleplaying a Spectre: transforming an existing wraith character (see "Becoming a Spectre," p. 371) or creating a new Spectre character (see "Creating a Spectre," p. 373) from scratch. Whichever method you use, bear in mind that Spectres desire no redemption and seek no understanding. Wraiths seek completion and finality through resolution of past inadequacies. Spectres are irredeemably evil, and they seek nothing but destruction. They are not given to introspection, and make no excuses for the deeds they perpetrate.

A Spectre chronicle can become tedious if there is no distinction between the various characters other than how many dots they have in their respective Dark Arcanoi. After all, just because the Shadow-Eaten are infected with the hive mind of Oblivion, that doesn't mean they comprise a mindless swarm. The mass mind merely facilitates communication and strips away any delusions of comradeship. The individual Spectres remain very much themselves, much to the regret of others they might meet. And if a Spectre remembers what she did as a wraith — all her goals, dreams, and achievements can suddenly be approached from a very different direction.

Two things motivate Spectres: surcease from the wracking pain of Oblivion, and their Dark Passions. When you play a Spectre, try to personalize the destructive urge. Much like a wraith character's Willpower is the essence of her Passions, you should have your Spectre character embody the destructive aspects represented in his Dark Passions.

It should be possible to say of a Spectre character, "he is pure jealousy," "she is hate personified," or "he embodies the essence of spite." Countless motivations may produce evil behavior with equal effectiveness — the key is to find one that allows you to focus on what makes *your* Spectre character distinct from the rest.

Spectres know that the constant, soul-searing pain of Oblivion will ultimately consume them. This truth empowers

Practicing Safe Oblivion

There's a tremendous amount of fun to be had playing one of the Shadow-Eaten. That being said, it's also easy for a Spectre character to unbalance or damage an ongoing chronicle, to the point where players' enjoyment is compromised. With that in mind, players and Storytellers should always remember these basics:

Don't wantonly wreck the campaign — A Spectre whose main motivation is to wreck the campaign and destroy the other characters generally reaches one goal by achieving the other, much to the irritation of the other players. A destructive, treacherous Spectrecharacter is great, but even the most insidious Doppelganger should be after something instead of just seeking to destroy what the rest of the group has built.

The Spectre has to want something — There's a reason a Spectre sticks around instead of just diving into the mouth of the Void to end their pain. There's got to be something worth enduring the torments of existence for. Whether it's the sheer joy of doing evil, a specific target they want to destroy, or a grand ambition to do Oblivion's work on a large scale, there has to be a goal the character is working towards in order to remain viable and appropriate for a chronicle. The Spectre (or the player) might not know what it is yet, but finding out can be part of the fun.

Don't be evil (to other players) — Spectres are right evil bastards, and playing one should involve doing evil things. That being said, always make sure the entire group is all right with any potential Spectral shenanigans. Making *characters* uncomfortable is one thing; making *players* uncomfortable or feel unwelcome at the table is an entirely unwanted other one. "I was just roleplaying my character" is no excuse for deliberately attempting to use the game to do harm to another player.

them with the strength to fight without fear of destruction, since their demise is assured already. As a result, there are no half measures where Spectres are concerned. Unconcerned with survival, they will attack relentlessly and take incredible risks, even when the odds are against them.

Considering that Spectres have a brief existence, it's best if players don't become too attached to their characters. This is not a game of slow-burn revelations and extended story developments. It's a fast and brutal exploration of fundamental ideas. In choosing to play a Spectre, you will take on the persona of a fanatical, remorseless, despairing monster without conscience or mercy.

Servants of Oblivion

To a Spectre, Oblivion is lover and ruler, confidante and torturer, history and future. Spectral existence is no process of spiritual cleansing. Rather, it's a ceaseless punishment with obliteration the only conclusion. Oblivion is a demanding master, and the Shadow-Eaten live in a reality of pain. How can they not despise that which will soon claim them, even as it fills them with destructive power? As much as they hate and fear Oblivion, Spectres feel even more outrage toward those mortals with the temerity to be alive — and the wraiths who cling pathetically to a dim mockery of that existence.

Duplicity is common in Spectral thinking. Doppelgangers seek to lure wraiths into the service of Oblivion, a service which they themselves loathe. The Spectres gain temporary relief from their pain by the thought of the wraith's impending agony; thus do the ranks of Oblivion swell. Wraiths may claim that Doppelgangers seek companions in their torment, but the ache of Oblivion quickly drives away such desires.

At the other end of the power spectrum, consider Malfeans. They defer the end by devouring the lesser Spectres around them (along with any captive wraiths whose usefulness has expired). In this way, as well as by employing Dark Arcanoi, Malfeans stave off Oblivion almost indefinitely. In the end, they serve nothing but themselves, motivated by their personal desire to cheat Oblivion and hasten it for others. Even those Malfeans who seek universal extinction directly often get caught up in plots and policies that swell to proportions as gargantuan as they are, with lesser Spectres ground up in the process.

It's difficult to generalize with the other Spectre castes about the role Oblivion claims in their existences. While some serve it willingly, others do their duty grudgingly or due to lack of alternatives, while still others embrace the madness and do the bidding of Oblivion out of a twisted form of love.

Becoming a Spectre

It is not uncommon for a wraith to become corrupted by her Shadow and be reborn as a Spectre. Incorporating a Spectre player character into a Wraith chronicle can make for intriguing roleplaying opportunities, but a Spectre's dark and destructive nature may disrupt some chronicles if given too much prominence. Balance, as always, is the key.

If a player is excited about the idea of turning her wraith character into a Spectre, she isencouraged to discuss it with the Storyteller. Conversely, the Storyteller may want to incorporate a Spectre into his chronicle. In that case, he should consider which of his players is best equipped to handle the roleplaying challenges that come with playing a servant of Oblivion.

Aside from making sure that both Storyteller and player are comfortable with the idea, the only other main factor is maintaining story balance within the chronicle. After all, exploring a wraith's corruption can give that character disproportionate weight in the story. In order to keep the character from unbalancing the larger campaign, the Storyteller should incorporate story hooks that offer equal opportunities to other characters.

Next, the wraith's Shadowguide must be informed of the direction in which the Storyteller and player wish to take the wraith character. The Shadowguide is vital to helping the player roleplay her wraith's transition, after all, since the Shadow's influence over its alter ego is central to the descent into Oblivion's service.

The Appeal of Evil

If your character will undergo transformation to a Spectre, the first thing you should do is look over your character — both the wraith and Shadow components. Look for reasons the wraith would fall — or be drawn — to ultimate corruption.

The most likely factors are found in the wraith's Passions and the Shadow's Dark Passions and Thorns; you may also find inspiration from "Shadow Hooks," below. Think about how the Shadow can not only twist the wraith's powerful emotions against her, but also use the wraith's hopes and dreams to feed the Shadow's evil desires. These warped feelings are at the root of the individual Spectre's motivations, and have their beginnings within the wraith's own mind.

Next, work with the Storyteller to determine the motivations behind the transformation. Discuss the impact it will have on the character, the troupe, and the chronicle until you're both satisfied that the approach is sound and any potential out-of-game conflicts are addressed.

Taking the Long View

A Spectre's existence is short, as the anguish of Oblivion eventually overwhelms even the strongest of the Shadow-Eaten. The most successful (and, not surprisingly, most dangerous) Spectres are those who endure *despite* their self-destructive natures. A Spectre looking for more than an eye-blink existence must cultivate a higher — or lower, depending on how you look at it — purpose.

That in mind, think about what you hope to accomplish by having your character become a Spectre. While roleplaying

someone nasty has its benefits, look for more than that. There's already ample opportunity for malice in guiding another character's Shadow without needing to convert a perfectly respectable wraith into a twisted parody of her former self.

Again, the best starting point is with the Shadow's Dark Passions. Consider not only the core emotion but also its meaning. One like "Make others look foolish (Spite)" may be entertaining and surprisingly effective at fueling a Spectre's Angst, but it won't help maintain an existence for any appreciable length of time. Similarly, "Topple the Hierarchy (Hate)" provides a solid long-term goal, but one that is quite challenging to achieve. On the other hand, something strong but self-sustaining like "Spread pain (Malice)" or even "Withstand Oblivion (Fear)" can give your character a powerful incentive to stick around. And more specific Dark Passions like "Bring my friends to Oblivion (Envy)" or "Destroy my home Necropolis (Hate)" can provide a good chronicle focus.

With the Dark Passion as the first step, you should then develop at least a broad idea of what sort of trouble you see your Spectre getting into. This might tie neatly into the Storyteller's current chronicle, build off of one of your wraith's Fetters or Backgrounds, or head off on a previously unexplored tangent.

In the end, look for a motivation beyond the obvious. Though driven by the pain and emptiness of Oblivion, Spectres can be just as complex as any wraith in their personalities, goals, and desires. Having a direction beyond basic destructive urges gives you a richer canvas upon which to work, and makes the experience more enjoyable for your fellow players.

Roleplaying the Descent

Once you, the Shadowguide, and the Storyteller have worked out the basic idea, key hooks, and possible pitfalls, it's finally time for the fun part: roleplaying your wraith's descent into Oblivion. The appearance of temptations of particular appeal to the wraith's dark side, inspired cunning on the part of the Shadow, and valiant (though inevitably futile) resistance by the wraith — all these elements make the downward spiral dramatic and enjoyable for all.

The Storyteller is encouraged to weave this plot thread amongst the others that make up the chronicle already. Be careful not to direct too much attention toward the wraith's temptation. Giving center stage to one wraith's discussions with its Shadow is sure to irritate the other players, to say the least.

The Shadowguide should maintain the same attitude and involvement for the Shadow as in previous sessions. A dramatic increase in its whispered antics might draw undue player notice, and can disrupt the mood and pace of the game.

Likewise, the player should allow the corruption to occur naturally — or as naturally as such things will. If your wraith jumps all-too-gleefully into her Shadow's waiting embrace, her fellow wraiths may well drag her off to a Pardoner before the desired takeover transpires.

For obvious reasons, it is recommended that the rest of the troupe be kept in the dark regarding the extent of their companion's corruption. Keeping the players unaware of the change ensures that their characters' actions and reactions are that much more authentic. Further, the less that others know about the plans, the more everyone will enjoy the eventual corruption and transformation. If the other characters figure out what's going on by themselves, that's one thing and they should certainly encouraged to react appropriately. But there's no reason to tip the player's — or the Shadow's — hand otherwise.

Dark Metamorphosis

Possibly the hardest part is the wraith's literal transformation into a Spectre, and how to deal with the immediate consequences. This is particularly tricky if the other players are to remain unaware of the change.

The Shadowguide should alert the player and Storyteller when the Shadow is ready to take over the wraith permanently. At this point, some sleight of hand is called for.

The Storyteller should set up circumstances where the wraith appears to fall into a Harrowing.

The character doesn't have to suffer the actual event as long as it *seems* so to the other players.

Then, when the Shadow engulfs the wraith, she plunges into the Tempest for her "Harrowing."

A fake Harrowing is then arranged for the troupe's benefit. The specific Quarry and circumstances are irrelevant as long as it is believable to the troupe. Success or failure on the wraith's part is also immaterial, although the player should roleplay the Harrowing as earnestly as any other.

At the Harrowing's end, the Storyteller changes focus to the rest of the troupe, keeping them busy so that they don't have the opportunity to check up on their vanished friend for some time. An ongoing plot works just fine; if nothing else, a sudden attack by Spectres should take care of it — and is quite likely, in fact, as the Shadow may have alerted them beforehand so that it can rejoin the Circle with no questions asked after the transformation is complete.

> Transforming into a Spectre fundamentally changes what a wraith is, but it doesn't mean starting from scratch. At Storyteller discretion, the new Spectre can and should retain her memories and capabilities. That being said, there's one exception — any points in the Eidolon background are lost immediately. Other Backgrounds, Abilities, and Fetters that the Storyteller and player agree are inappropriate for the fresh-hatched Spectre also go away. These lost things are not replaced with Freebie points; there's a price to pay in the service of Oblivion, and this is one of the first tolls.

Alibis

Many things are suspect in a wraith's existence, but a Spectre can use that to her advantage. A newborn Spectre has a wealth of means to account for her temporary disappearance. In the end, whatever the alibi, simple is always best.

- **Attacked by Hierarchy/Renegades/Heretics/Spectres/Plasmics:** A constant danger for solitary wraiths. Such an attack might also account for any changes in the "wraith's" appearance.
- **Lost in the Tempest:** Taking a shortcut to get back to her friends, the "wraith" got lost in the Tempest and only just found her way back.
- **Secret Meeting with the Guild:** The "wraith's" Guild mentor/contact/ally/superior demanded she come to a meeting. They discussed things that she's not at liberty to share (although if the troupe has a wraith in the same Guild, the "wraith" will be happy to take him aside later to bring him up to speed…).

It does take some time for a corrupted wraith to undergo the metamorphosis into a Spectre (see "Birth of a Spectre," p. 344). Upon her return, the newly emerged Spectre should be prepared to face questions regarding the length of her disappearance, as well as explain any physical changes that may have occurred. Numerous complications and detours exist to delay travelers in the Underworld, but she would do well to have her story straight.

Keeping the Secret

After the transformation into a Spectre, maintaining the ruse of still being a wraith is not without its challenges. Certain Arcanoi are perfect for sniffing out the Shadow-Eaten, and Castigate in particular has been the bane of many a Doppelganger. Numerous Artifacts can also sense the presence of Oblivion. Avoiding such pitfalls can make for tense, exhilarating roleplaying.

As long as no one in the troupe can sense the Spectre, there is no need to make special concessions. On the other hand, having a Pardoner in the group ensures that a fledgling is likely to enjoy a disappointingly short tenure. The Storyteller may consider lending some assistance in the form of a minor Artifact that masks the user's Spectral state for brief periods. Still, such aid isn't mandatory. No one said being a Spectre should be easy.

My Shadow Did What?

Or, When Bad Things Happen to Good Wraiths

Sometimes, despite your best intentions, your wraith's Shadow grows increasingly powerful and gains permanent control. Perhaps you relied overmuch on Shadow Dice, or entered into a Pact of Doom too often, or maybe your Shadow's Dark Passions were just particularly effective at gleaning Angst.

Whatever the reason, there are instances when your character becomes a Spectre before you or your Storyteller was prepared for it to happen. This doesn't mean the character is written off. Instead, an inspired event like this can open whole new doors of plot and roleplaying.

Once the Shadow's Angst rating reaches 10, your wraith plunges into the Tempest to begin the metamorphosis into a Spectre. The Storyteller should take a short break and discuss with you the ramifications of this change. The steps listed previously for premeditated Spectre transformation provide a useful guide to this conversation. As long as you wish to continue playing the character and the Storyteller feels the transformation won't disrupt the chronicle, there's no reason to change characters.

Creating a Spectre

For the most part, character creation for a Spectre is the same as for a wraith (see Chapter Four: Character). The information that follows points out any differences and additions that Spectres have. As when creating a wraith, this process assumes your character is a relatively inexperienced Spectre only recently claimed by Oblivion. At the Storyteller's discretion, your character may be new to death or have existed as a wraith for centuries before being devoured by his Shadow.

Step One: Concept

When thinking about the three initial questions covered on p. 107 — *Who were you? How did you die? Why are you still here?* — consider how they differ for Spectres. While your character's cause of death may inform aspects of his background, it is more relevant to determine how your character was devoured by Oblivion. Did it claim you at the moment of death or was it a slow and torturous battle against your Shadow? Were you lost in the Tempest, captured by a Malfean, or swallowed by a Maelstrom?

Nature and Demeanor

Select Nature and Demeanor in the same way as with a wraith (p. 114).

Caste

The manner in which you were claimed by Oblivion also establishes the caste to which you belong. Each Spectre caste has unique abilities and weaknesses, outlined below.

Mortwights

This group is comprised of mortals who were claimed by Oblivion at the instant of their death. Not an official caste as Spectres consider such things, Mortwights default to the lowest status of Spectral society despite their skill in battle.

- **Arcanoi:** A Mortwight character has access only to Dark Arcanoi and gains Tempest Weaving 1 automatically. You may distribute an additional 5 dots as you choose.
- **Weeping Wound:** A Mortwight's death wound seeps Corpus constantly. This is replenished instantly while you are in the Labyrinth and the Tempest. However, you automatically suffer 2 lethal Corpus levels of damage per day while outside of these regions. This damage cannot be soaked.

Striplings

While also not a formal caste, this group of literal child Spectres largely disdains such official conventions. Not all Spectral children are Striplings, but all Striplings are children. If you choose this group, you must also determine the formal caste to which you belong (or whether you are a Mortwight). However, apply the details listed below instead of those noted for the caste selected.

- **Arcanoi:** A Stripling character has access to all wraith Arcanoi, as well as Dark Arcanoi. You gain Shroud Rending 1 automatically and may distribute an additional 7 dots as you choose.
- **Child Form:** As a Stripling, you suffer the restrictions of being a child, including being limited to 6 primary, 4 secondary, and 2 tertiary points to distribute among your Attributes (p. 111).

Likewise, you have only 8 points to spend on Dark Passions. You may have Fetters, depending on what caste you selected.

Doppelgangers

Former wraiths who have been devoured by their Shadow, Doppelgangers are the rank and file troops of Oblivion. As the most "wraith-like" of Spectres, Doppelgangers are uniquely suited to infiltrating wraith society. Members of this group barely edge out Mortwights in respect amongst the other castes.

- **Arcanoi:** A Doppelganger character has access to all Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi, and you may allocate 6 dots among them as you choose.
- **Dark Reflection:** A Doppelganger shares certain similarities with wraiths. Most notably, you spend the same amount of points during character creation (aside from Arcanoi) and you retain Fetters, which allow you to remain in the Shadowlands.

Nephwracks

These are former Doppelgangers whose Corpus is so physically warped that they may no longer conceal the ravages of Oblivion. Nephwracks consider this a sign of Oblivion's blessing. Members of this caste take the roles of artists, priests, and public servants among Spectre society.

- **Arcanoi:** A Nephwrack character has access to all Arcanoi, as well as Dark Arcanoi. You may distribute 8 dots among them as you choose.
- **Unfettered:** As a Nephwrack you are scarcely different from a Doppelganger (a point of contention at times). The main distinction is your twisted physical appearance, which it is impossible to disguise even with Moliate. Also, you have no Fetters.

Shades

The personification of Dark Passion, Shades are former wraiths devoured by Oblivion when lost in the Tempest, while caught in a Maelstrom, or during a Harrowing. They are the shock troops of Spectral society and are second only to Malfeans in status.

- **Arcanoi:** A Shade character has access only to Dark Arcanoi. Y;ou may allocate 5 dots among them as you choose.
- **Shadecraft:** The unique nature of a Shade's creation unlocks unique abilities. First, you get 12 points to divide among your Dark Passions. Next, you have access to unique Shadecraft abilities (p. 358). You gain one for free to start, but may purchase more with freebie points (5 points for each Art) or later with experience (7 points for each power).

Malfeans

As beings of stupendous power and alien nature, Malfeans are not recommended as player characters. The Storyteller should consider thoroughly the ramifications of allowing a player to take on the challenge.

More likely, the Storyteller may need to craft a Malfean for her own purposes. In such circumstances, use the same process as with a starting character, then apply the following modifications below.

- **Arcanoi:** A Malfean has access to all Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi except for those that deal exclusively with the Skinlands; you may allocate 12 dots among them as you choose.
- **Malfean Nature:** Each Malfean has Willpower 10; aside from this, the full range of its powers depends on the concept you develop. As a rule of thumb, a Malfean has access to all Shadow Thorns and Shadecraft arts. Further, it can siphon from servitors any Pathos or Angst needed to utilize any powers. Spend between 1000 and 1500 experience points to increase Traits and amass powers according to the concept you develop. Bear in mind that it can be quite expensive to raise a Trait that is already advanced. See p. 377 for more information on spending experience points.

Step Two: Attributes

Prioritize the three Attribute categories as noted on p. 111 and modify by any caste restrictions listed above.

Step Three: Abilities

Prioritize the three Ability categories as noted on p. 112 and modify by any caste restrictions listed above.

Step Four: Advantages

Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi

As noted above, your caste determines which Arcanoi you have access to, and the number of dots you may spend on them. Not all Spectres have access to wraith Arcanoi, but Dark Arcanoi are unrestricted. Refer to p. 147 for complete Arcanoi listings, and to p. 349 for Dark Arcanoi listings.

- **Hive Mind:** In addition to the dots you may allocate based on your caste, all Spectres begin the game with Collogue 1.
- **Botching Arcanoi:** If you botch when using a regular Arcanos power, your Psyche gains Pathos (instead of the Shadow gaining Angst) where applicable.

Backgrounds

A Spectre character has access to the same Backgrounds as wraiths, with the following exceptions: A Spectre may not possess Eidolon, Notoriety, or Wealth; in turn, a Sspectre may take the Shadowlands or Labyrinth Backgrounds (see sidebar). The Storyteller may choose to restrict or even deny other Backgrounds depending on the nature of the chronicle.

You get 5 dots to distribute among your Spectre character's chosen Backgrounds.

Dark Passions

As noted previously, Spectres are motivated by their Dark Passions. The total points in Dark Passions also determine a Spectre's place within his Spectral caste.

You receive 10 dots to distribute among Dark Passions, modified by caste as noted above. You may adjust them further with freebie points.

Most significant Dark Passions include Hate, Greed, Malice, Envy, Lust, Bitterness, and Jealousy. Each is expressed as a sentence detailing the passion's meaning, followed by one word that sums up the particular passion involved — for instance, "Destroy the Hierarchy (Hate)" or "Advance the decay of the Edinburgh Necropolis (Envy)." Dark Passions should be broad enough to be widely applicable, but specific enough that they have a direct focus.

Think about your Nature and Demeanor when determining your Dark Passions. Dark Passions are also often directed at former Fetters the Spectre held as a wraith.

NEW BACKGROUND: SHADOWLANDS

- • You have heard stories about the Shadowlands, but have yet to see them for yourself.
- •• You have visited the Shadowlands a few times. You know no more about them than would a wraithly Enfant.
- ••• You have considerable experience in the Shadowlands, equal to that of a Lemure.
- •••• Your knowledge of the Shadowlands is legendary, but there are still secrets that you have not yet fathomed. You know as much as a Domem would.
- ••••• None know more about the Shadowlands than you — its backwaters, secrets, and mysteries. Your understanding is akin to that of a powerful Gaunt, and doubtless rivals that of most Malfeans.

NEW BACKGROUND: LABYRINTH

- • You have walked some of the shallower corridors, but never dared go deep.
- •• You have journeyed into the deeper maze once or twice, and you could probably find your way out if you had to.
- ••• You have explored extensive sections of the Labyrinth, and can find your way around them.
- •••• You've stood at the mouth of the Void and seen Oblivion's beating heart, and could find your way there from anywhere in the Underworld.
- ••••• The great maze holds no secrets from you, from the lairs of the Malfeans to the secret ways none dare tread.

Fetters

Only Mortwights and Doppelgangers have Fetters. A Spectre's Fetters often relate to painful moments in his life. The site of his death is a common one, but others may exist — the hospital delivery room where his wife died in childbirth, the liquor store where he bought the booze he later used to drink himself to death, and so on. A Spectre's Fetter cannot be resolved, but it can be destroyed.

If your character has Fetters, choose them in the same way described on p. 114.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Angst

Angst is a measure of the dark emotional energy that all Spectres possess. Your Angst is measured in a pool of individual points from a scale of 0 to 10. Only in exceedingly rare circumstances can your Angst pool exceed 10 points.

The pool total fluctuates during a chronicle as you spend and regain Angst. Unless noted otherwise, Angst points function exactly like a wraith's Pathos points (p. 114): You use Angst to power Arcanoi, regain it through your Dark Passions, and may spend it to recover Corpus.

You start with 5 dots in Angst, and may increase this amount using freebie points. However, your Angst score cannot exceed 10 points.

Willpower

Willpower determines a Spectre's emotional essence, spiritual strength, and self-control. In game terms, it functions the same way as with wraiths. A Spectre starts with 5 dots in permanent Willpower. You can use freebie points to increase this to a maximum of 10.

Corpus

A Spectre's body is made of the same otherworldly stuff as is a wraith's, and can be manipulated and harmed in the same way. It's common for Spectres to alter the appearance of their Corpus, sometimes in dramatic fashion. Often Oblivion does the job for them, twisting and decaying Spectres into mockeries of the human form.

You start with 10 Corpus, and may spend Angst points to heal any injuries in the same way that a wraith spends Pathos. A Spectre also heals damage through Slumber; however, Slumbering Spectres don't sleep inside a Fetter. Instead, they return to the Labyrinth and fade into its walls for eight hours. See Injury and Healing on p. 295 for details on recovering Corpus.

Remember that the constant scouring of Oblivion can reduce a Spectre's Corpus total, as expressed through botches (see "Brief Life," p. 348). Corpus lost in this manner cannot be restored by spending Angst nor through Slumber.

Unlike wraiths, when a Spectre's Corpus level falls to zero, she ceases to exist. Her fragmented essence is sucked into the Void through a Nihil, never to return.

Succumbing to the Void

When a Spectre finally falls to Oblivion (e.g., when damage or botching reduces a Spectre character below 1 Corpus), he is dragged at last into the Void. A Nihil forms around the destroyed Spectre, and anyone in the vicinity must succeed at standard Dexterity + Athletics rolls to escape its pull. Alternately, characters may use Argos, Tempest Weaving, or other appropriate Arcanoi (at Storyteller discretion) to get clear. Those who fail to escape are pulled into the Labyrinth — to the very edge of the Void itself, where the remnants of the destroyed Spectre's soul are drawn.

Freebie Points

You have 20 freebie points to spend on rounding out your Traits. This functions the same as with a wraith character, including being able to gain up to 7 additional freebie points by giving your Psyche a larger freebie pool on a one-for-one basis. However, unlike a wraith, you cannot spend freebie points to *reduce* your Psyche's pool.

Trait	Points per Dot/Power
Attribute	5
Ability	2
Arcanos/Shade Art	5
Arcanos Basic Ability	3
Background	1
Dark Passion	2
Fetter	1
Angst	1 for 2 dots
Willpower	2

Spectre Characteristics

Don't forget to make note of the characteristics that all Spectres possess.

Spark of Death

With your character's Traits established, you can finalize the remaining details.

• **Appearance:** A Spectre's caste has a major influence on appearance. As noted before, Doppelgangers look most like wraiths, including choosing to have the semblance of clothing. Most Spectres of other castes go naked to display their Oblivion twisted forms to best effect. Regardless of caste, many Moliate their appearance in some signature fashion. Spectres can be quite imaginative, if grotesque, in expressing their individuality. Consider your character along similar lines. Does he display his flayed form with pride, or is he bedecked in a suit that covers most of his mottled deathmarks? Has he Moliated his eyes into bug-like stalks, or his hair into a nest of thorns?

• **Idiosyncrasies:** Appearance aside, it's the little things — quirks and bits of business — that make a character unique. These details make your character memorable. Does he sing half-remembered pop hits, mangling the lyrics? Does he only hunt wraiths who remind him of his father? Does he insist on referring to himself in the third person? Does he claw at his face when stressed, leaving oozing gouges in the Corpus?

• **Psyche:** The Psyche is the last shred of your soul that defies Oblivion. It functions much like a wraith's Shadow, and so should be designed in collaboration with the Storyteller.

Spectre Experience

Since Spectres have brief-yet-intense existences, the Storyteller may reward more experience points than wraith characters usually receive. This allows for growth and development within the limited framework of a Spectre chronicle. Apply the same approach to awarding experience points as described under "Character Development" (p. 310), with the following adjustments:

End of Story Experience

If the Storyteller awards extra experience at the end of a story in a Spectre chronicle, the character gets 2 points (instead of 1) for each category — success, danger, wisdom (or any other relevant categories) — in which the Storyteller declares an award. Additionally, the Storyteller may award 1 point of experience if a character furthered the cause of Oblivion, especially at some cost to herself.

Spending Experience

Some costs for raising a spectre's Traits or purchasing new ones differ from those required for wraiths.

Trait	Cost
New Ability	3
New Arcanos/Shadecraft	6
Attribute	Current rating x 3
Ability	Current rating x 2
Arcanos	Current rating x 2
Willpower	Current rating

The Psyche

Just as a Shadow is that dark corner of the soul within a wraith, the Psyche is the last remnant of anything kind or good within a Spectre. The Psyche is an everpresent voice, a guilty conscience that reminds the Spectre how kind and good she was before Oblivion corrupted her. Most times the Psyche is weak, its voice thin and sickly. However, some actions a Spectre takes, including employing Larceny or other high-level Dark Arcanos arts, can help the Psyche to gain strength.

In **Wraith**, the Psyche functions in the same way as a Shadow, and should be played similarly. But while the Shadow can give a wraith an occasional bad day, the Psyche walks a much finer line with the Spectre. The higher urgings that a Psyche espouses are seen as weakness, and may get the Psyche — and its host — turned to ectoplasmic goo. As such, the wise Psyche grades the road to Redemption in an almost imperceptible rise.

Psycheguide

As with wraith and Shadow, players in a Spectre chronicle take on two parts: their own Spectre characters and another character's Psyche. Unlike the Shadow, the Psyche does not resort to cruel tricks to win over the character. Rather, the Psyche employs deserved praise, produces happy memories of the Spectre's mortal or wraith past, and otherwise tries to guide the Spectre with kindness and love.

On the rare occasions when the Psyche is dominant, the Spectre's player takes over the role, not the Psycheguide.

Redemption vs. Redemption

The idea of redemption for a Spectre is a complicated one. Most understand, if don't necessarily agree, with the idea of how doing some good might palliate some of the evil they've done, and why that might or might not be a desirable thing. (No Spectre not under the control of their Psyche thinks it is a good thing, for example.) However, the notion of Redemption as a singular concept, the act by which Spectres are metaphysically washed clean of their sins and thus rescued from the clutches of Oblivion is a tricky one. Certain Stygian sects believe in it wholeheartedly, to the point where they will deliberately attempt to capture Spectres in order to try to work this miracle upon them. And even among the Shadow-Eaten there are those who doubt Oblivion and who believe there is a way out of their hellish existence, whether they (or their Psyches) want it or not. But just because they believe it exists doesn't mean they're pursue it — it might mean that they're on the lookout for anyone else who does.

Psyche Character Creation

The Psyche is developed after all other stages of character generation. The Storyteller manages much of this process himself. While the Psyche is part of the Spectre character, details should be kept as secret as possible so that the player remains generally unaware of the heights of redemption to which the Psyche aspires. That said, the Storyteller should work with the player to understand the Spectre character she wants to play, so that the Psyche is not totally at odds with this concept. The Psyche is an integral part of a Spectre, after all, not some separate entity, and should be designed with due care.

If a player feels that she should create the Psyche, simply discuss the option with the Storyteller. There is no functional difference within the chronicle, of course; however, it does remove possible surprises that the Psyche might employ. Even so, having the player generate her character's Psyche ensures that it is consistent with the Spectre character's concept.

Step One: Archetype

Select a Psyche archetype from the list below. This represents the Psyche's general personality, but should also mesh well with the Spectre character's Nature. As with wraiths' Shadows, these are simply the most common archetypes; the Storyteller is free to modify one or create a more suitable one for the Spectre in question.

• **Agent:** This Psyche is always looking out for your best interests, seeking to find something constructive and positive for you to do. It wants to guide you and generally help you better yourself. And if the Psyche profits along the way, so much the better! Constructive criticism plays a major part in the Agent's repertoire; it helps you look at your performances and learn from your mistakes. If there is anything you need, your Psyche will promise to get it for you, so that you can get on with the important business of redemption. Remember, the Agent does it all for *you*, and genuinely expects nothing in return.

• **Comrade:** This Psyche is the shoulder to cry on, the friendly smile on a bad day. It's always ready to lend a hand or help you through a rough patch. Like any old friend, the Comrade knows you intimately, and accepts the bad along with the good. This Psyche always seeks to defend your reputation. Perhaps the Comrade is puzzled or hurt as to why you're behaving so maliciously. It may blame itself, or be insecure and thus cling to you, whom it admires unabashedly. By comparing your noble past to your present activities, and by showing that it supports you without judgment, the Comrade also strives to help you realize that you were once a kinder, nobler soul.

• **Confessor:** Stern but kindly, this Psyche's gruff exterior hides a fount of love and compassion. Although affronted by

the sins it witnesses, the Confessor would never think of revealing them to others. There is a bit of the martyr in this Psyche, though this doesn't stop it from confronting you with evidence of your sins, seeking to sway you toward penance. As far as the Confessor is concerned, judicious applications of guilt are all part of the road to redemption, and it feels no qualms about lecturing you. After all, such measures are good for your soul.

• **Counselor:** This Psyche is the person you can tell anything, that part of you prepared to listen to your problems without judging or berating you. The Counselor's role is to help you realize where your problems lie, and help you work out strategies to deal with them. This Psyche listens, asks open-ended questions, and offers observations designed to help you recognize and define your own weaknesses and faults. Rather than ignoring any problems, the Counselor wants to help you make them go away. This Psyche presents itself as emotionally removed from you, with no personal bias regarding your existence.

• **Nurturer:** This Psyche is maternal, supportive, and caring. It is concerned about the kind of Spectres you hang around with, and considers them a bad influence. Although the Nurturer may scold, it never loses its temper. It wants you to be safe, warm, and happy, and does its best to ensure that you are — regardless of whether you want these things or not. This Psyche has almost infinite patience, and cannot be intimidated or beaten down. The Nurturer knows what's best for you, and is determined that you shall have it.

• **Saint:** Proud, commanding, and authoritative, this Psyche stands out as an incorruptible beacon of purity within your soul. The Saint knows that evil exists, but has no time for it. It has no compunctions about torturing you with bold and unforgiving comparisons between you and its own stalwart demeanor. This Psyche's tone is matter of fact. It knows your sins and chastises you for them. Few Spectres are strong enough to stand up to this Psyche.

• **Savior:** This Psyche is the way and light, the road to salvation. Preaching to you constantly, the Savior wants you to listen only to it. No other can lead you to redemption. This Psyche is self-sacrificing, prepared to suffer any harm should that advance your redemption in some way. The Savior is both preacher and friend, and wants most of all to have you as an equal — understanding and infinitely forgiving. When this Psyche dominates, it loves to take the opportunity to debate and deliver sermons to anyone around. It advises forgiveness for you to any who will listen.

Step Two: Pathos

Just as Angst powers the Shadow, Pathos fuels the Psyche. This Trait represents the degree of serenity, peace, and compassion that the Psyche possesses. Pathos has both a permanent *rating* or *score* (indicated in dots) and a temporary *pool of points* (indicated in squares). The rating represents the degree of control the Psyche has over the Spectre character, and is used for any rolls or tests. The points function just like a Spectre's Angst pool, and are spent to accomplish relevant tasks, activate Fronds, and the like.

The Pathos rating only changes by spending experience to increase it, or through specific Arcanos and Dark Arcanos arts that can raise or lower the score permanently. The Pathos pool fluctuates as the Psyche spends points and gains them through the Spectre's actions.

The Pathos pool can, and often does, exceed the permanent score, typically as a result of the Spectre's actions, through use of certain Dark Arcanoi, and by fulfilling the Psyche's Passions. If the total Pathos points exceed the Spectre's Willpower score, the Psyche can attempt to assert control over the Spectre. If the Pathos pool ever reaches 10 points, the Psyche can trade them all in to increase its Pathos rating by 1. This not only makes the Psyche stronger, it also brings the Spectre that much closer to Redemption.

It is recommended that the Spectre player never know how strong her Psyche's Pathos rating is — and thus how close (or how far) she is from being Redeemed.

To determine the Psyche's starting Pathos, make a standard Willpower roll using the Spectre's Willpower rating. The number of successes is the Psyche's Pathos rating and corresponding Pathos pool at the start of the game.

Step Three: Passions

Just as with a wraith, Passions are concerned with the Psyche's higher morals and drives and can include Love, Honesty, Sincerity, Hope, and Faith. Likewise, fulfilling a Passion allows the Psyche to increase its Pathos pool. See "Passions" (p. 304) for options to choose from and details on how they are utilized.

Bear in mind that a Psyche's Passions should reflect the Spectre's Dark Passions. Much of the drama inherent in a Spectre chronicle is drawn from the clash of goals between a Spectre and her Psyche.

Assign 7 points to the Psyche's Passions. Freebie points can increase them further in the final stage of the Psyche's design.

Step Four: Finishing Touches

In this stage, you apply any final adjustments to the Psyche by spending freebie points. You can increase its Pathos and Passions, and determine its powers, known as Fronds (see the next section for details).

The Psyche's Pathos rating cannot be bought higher than the Spectre's Willpower score, although you may purchase additional points for the Pathos pool.

Trait	Points Per Dot/Power
Pathos (rating)	5
Pathos (pool)	2
Passion	1
Frond	Varies

Fronds

A Psyche's Fronds are the equivalent of the Shadow's Thorns (p. 231). The Psycheguide uses these unique gifts to harry the Spectre. Ideally, the Spectre's player should be in the dark as to which Fronds the Psyche has until they manifest in the game.

Allies (1 point/level)

The Psyche communes regularly with wraiths in the area. This Frond is the equivalent of the Allies Background, though applicable only to wraiths associated with the locale.

Inspiration (1 point/level, up to 5)

This Frond functions the same as the Infamy Thorn (p. 231), except that it measures the amount of hope, courage, kindness, or other positive quality that the Spectre's memory still inspires in the living. Every time the Spectre with this Frond falls into Slumber, the Psycheguide makes a standard roll using a number of dice equal to this Frond's level. Each success gives the Psyche 1 Pathos point.

Memories of Life (1 point)

The Psyche remembers all that the Spectre has forgotten about her former existence (as a mortal or a wraith). With the Spectre's agreement, the Psyche can provide the Spectre with any information or knowledge from that life. This can include forgotten skills, tidbits of information, or other nuggets that may come in handy to a Spectre struggling to remember something vital. If the Spectre accepts this aid, the flashes of memory associated with that worthier former existence trigger a Willpower roll. On a successful roll, the Spectre is discomfited but otherwise none the worse for wear. On a failed roll, the Spectre loses a number of Angst points equal to the Psyche's strongest Passion. On a botch, the Spectre loses *double* that amount.

Mirror (1 point)

The Psyche spends 3 Pathos to activate this Frond, which reveals, in every flat surface that the Spectre sees, an image of what the Spectre once looked like, or the most horrific aspects of her persona made manifest. Seeing what might have been, or the unvarnished truth of her current state, is troubling even to Spectres.

When confronted with this horrifying visage, the Spectre rolls Willpower in a resisted action against the Psyche's Pathos. If successful, the Spectre is subject to a +1 difficulty on any Charisma-related action for the next turn as she pulls herself together; if failed, the Spectre is wracked by self-loathing and unable to act except in self-defense for the remainder of the scene.

Psyche Sigil (1–3 points)

Similar to the Death's Sigil Thorn (p. 231), this Frond is a manifestation of the possible redemption that the Psyche represents. This sign is cheerful or uplifting in nature — the scent of roses or baking bread, the echoing song of a choir or a child's laugh, or some other sensory trigger — and lingers wherever the Spectre is present. The manifestation is subtle but noticeable, with all the corresponding advantages and disadvantages this offers. The number of points in this Frond indicates the sigil's strength. A 1-point sigil might impact the Spectre's efforts at intimidation or stealth, while a 3-point sigil could alter the effects of her Dark Arcanoi.

The Spectre can spend 1 Willpower to suppress the Frond's effects for a scene.

Pure Relic (1 point/level)

This Frond functions the same as the Tainted Relic Thorn (p. 231), except that the relic is tied to the Psyche and has some significance to the Spectre's previous existence.

Psyche Trait (2 points)

At the Spectre's request, the Psyche can grant her 1 additional dot to a specific Attribute or Ability for the remainder of the scene. The specific Trait must be decided when this Frond is purchased. The Psyche gains 1 Pathos point each time the Spectre draws upon this extra dot.

This Frond can be purchased multiple times, with each enhancing a different Trait.

Guilt (3 points)

The Psyche spends 1 Pathos to activate this Frond, which subjects the Spectre to tremendous guilt about a recent action. The Spectre rolls Willpower in a resisted action against the Psyche's current Pathos. If successful, the Spectre is subject to a +1 difficulty to all actions for the next turn as she pulls herself together. If failed, the Spectre suffers an agony of guilt and loses 1 Willpower point for each extra success that the Psyche rolled.

Indulgence (3 points)

Similar to the Pact of Doom Thorn (p. 232), this Frond represents a deal between the Spectre and her Psyche. In exchange for being unhindered by her Psyche in some imminent action, the Spectre agrees to grant it Pathos points. The Spectre can offer between 1 and 5 points, with the Psyche making counter offers until both sides either accept the terms or break off negotiation. Once an agreement is reached, the Psyche receives that number of Pathos points and must not interfere with the impending action in any way, even to berate or comment.

Freudian Slip (4 points)

This is identical to the Thorn of the same name (p. 233). However, the Spectre needs only 1 success to resist the effect.

Heavenly Light (5 points)

By spending a point of Pathos, the Psyche can illuminate the Spectre in a beam of white light that appears to come from above. This can be awkward, especially in an audience with a Malfean or while attempting to set an ambush, but the Psyche

must also be careful not to use it under circumstances that might get the Spectre killed. The effect lasts one scene per point spent.

Penance (6 points)

The Psyche can intercede when the Spectre might otherwise lose Corpus to Oblivion (through a botch or other means). If the Spectre accepts, the Psyche negates the Corpus loss, then prescribes a penance that the Spectre must enact at her earliest opportunity. The Psyche need not reveal what the act is until after the Spectre accepts. The penance is typically some kindness or worthy deed and should not take more than a scene or two to perform.

Secret Life (7 points)

Similar to the Shadow Life Thorn (p. 233), this Frond allows the Psyche to take control of the Spectre's Corpus while she Slumbers. The Spectre remains unaware of anything the Psyche does during this time. Since the Psyche is pursuing an independent existence, the Spectre may find herself burdened with responsibilities, allies, and enemies she does not recall making, or even falling into traps the Psyche devised for her.

Guiding the Psyche

Playing the Psyche in a Spectre chronicle is just as important as playing the Shadow is in a traditional **Wraith** chronicle. While the Psyche is a secondary character for the Psycheguide, it should be played with the same care and dedication that the player brings to her own Spectre character.

The Psycheguide must keep track of the Psyche's Pathos and the Spectre host's Willpower. They must also have a good understanding of the personality, goals, and history of the Spectre they're guiding, so that you can more accurately portray the Spectre's suppressed higher urges. An all-out stampede towards goodness and mercy, regardless of the character's personality, is missing the point. The Psyche is a part of the Spectre's personality just as the Shadow is a part of a wraith's, and it operates within that personality's framework.

Ultimately, the Psyche is the sole fragment of goodness that survives within the Spectre. Even if the character was cruel and malicious in life, she still had some aspects that strove toward the good and true. The Psyche is the last embodiment of these qualities, a tiny beacon of light within the Spectre's dark soul. Guiding such evil toward redemption is a herculean challenge,

but it is matched by the indomitable will of the Psyche in its all-out struggle for survival.

Psychic Healing

The Psyche battles to save the Spectre's soul, but the tools it uses are dramatically different from the abuse, deceit, cruelty, and brutality that Shadows use to corrupt wraiths. Instead, the Psyche seeks to bring light to the darkness of the Spectre's existence through kind words and pleasant memories. The path to redemption is a difficult one, requiring a delicate hand so that healing doesn't become nagging that drives the Spectre back down to depravity and ruin. Additionally, the Psyche knows well that it too is doomed if the Spectre falls to the Void, which lends an undercurrent of desperation to the struggle.

Acquiring Pathos

Pathos represents the power of redemption that lies within the Psyche. The more Pathos it possesses, the stronger the Psyche grows, until it can attempt to gain control of the Spectre and steer her more directly toward the light — or at least keep the Spectre from damning herself any further.

The Psyche's ultimate goal is Redemption, so it will leverage circumstances to put the Spectre in situations where she must rely on the Psyche for help. In this way, the Psyche gains Pathos, growing stronger and influencing the Spectre to a greater and greater degree. This is, of course, done only for the Spectre's benefit, and should never be confused with the sort of manipulation done by a wraith's Shadow.

From a systems standpoint, the Psyche acquires Pathos in a manner almost identical to how Shadows gain Angst (see p. 235). Any distinctions are outlined below.

• **Arcanoi:** The Psyche can gain Pathos points when certain Dark Arcanos arts are used; see individual listings for specifics. For Arcanos arts, if a botch would grant Angst to the Shadow, it instead grants Pathos to the Psyche.

The only exception is during Cartharsis; see "Arcanos Use During Catharsis," below.

• **Psyche Dice:** When the Spectre needs to roll for a task, the Psyche can offer extra dice for the attempt. The Psyche can offer a number of dice equal to its Pathos rating. Any Psyche Dice used are considered part of the Spectre's own dice pool for determining success, but the actual dice are rolled separately to help keep track of results (the Storyteller may even have the Psycheguide roll the Psyche Dice). Any 1s rolled on the Psyche Dice grant the Psyche that number of Pathos points.

Additionally, if the roll results in a botch, the Spectre does *not* lose 1 permanent Corpus level ("Brief Life," p. 348). This represents the Psyche's beneficent influence, and gives the Psyche additional leverage in guiding the Spectre along the path to the light.

• **Psyche Passions:** The Psyche can gain Pathos for fulfilling its Passions. Make a standard roll based on the appropriate passion whenever the Psyche accomplishes that Passion's goal. Each success awards 1 Pathos point. As with Shadows, the Psyche may also roll (difficulty 9) to gain Pathos points if it encourages someone else to indulge in an emotion that powers one of the Psyche's Passions.

• **Roleplaying:** A scene in which a Spectre confronts doubts, fears, or external issues that impact the Psyche's efforts at redemption may warrant an award of 1 Pathos point, at the Storyteller's discretion and if the player agrees. Since this occurs as a result of roleplaying rather than through established systems, it is important that the decision be mutual.

Losing Pathos

As with gaining Pathos, the methods of losing it are consistent with how a Shadow loses Angst. Any distinctions are outlined below.

• **Arcanoi Use During Catharsis:** When the Psyche uses Arcanoi or Dark Arcanoi while controlling the Spectre, any Pathos that might normally be gained is instead *deducted* from the Psyche's current Pathos pool.

• **Botching During Catharsis:** A botch on any roll the Psyche makes while dominating the Spectre in Cartharsis does *not* result in the Spectre losing 1 permanent Corpus level.

Redemption

No one knows what Redemption really means, or if it's even possible. Stories of Spectres who achieve Redemption and vanish instantly from the Labyrinth make the rounds, but they're always secondhand. Some say the vanished Spectres are reborn as wraiths and must trudge through existence in the Shadowlands chasing Transcendence. Others claim Redemption is actually a shortcut to Transcendence itself. Still others suggest that the soul is reborn as a mortal, given a new chance at life. Then there are those who mutter that it's all a scam, that the Psyche is simply another lure of Oblivion, and that Redemption is another word for the Void.

From a systems standpoint, a Spectre achieves Redemption if her Psyche attains a 10 permanent Pathos rating. What happens after is up to the Storyteller. Regardless, Redemption is a truly momentous event. The Storyteller should check each character's Pathos rating regularly to stay abreast of the Psyche's progress. Should a Psyche appear to be approaching the lofty goal of a maximum permanent Pathos score, the Storyteller may consider adjusting the course of the chronicle to address the possibility of Redemption — and what steps the Spectre's fellow Shadow-Eaten might take to prevent it.

Instead, the Psyche loses 1 Pathos point. This represents the Psyche's control slipping, however briefly.

• **Frond Use:** Some Fronds require Pathos expenditure to activate.

• **Roleplaying:** If a Spectre makes a serious effort to weaken her Psyche, the Storyteller may decide that losing 1 or 2 Pathos points is appropriate. This reward should be used only in rare circumstances, and only when central to the struggle for redemption between Spectre and Psyche. As with gaining Pathos, above, any result should be agreed upon between the Storyteller and the player.

Catharsis

Just as a Shadow can take over a wraith, so too can the Psyche temporarily dominate a Spectre. If the Psyche's current Pathos points exceed the Spectre's Willpower score, the Psyche can attempt to assert control over their shared form for the remainder of the scene. Other Spectres do not notice the change automatically; it must be deduced from the newly Psyche-ridden character's unusual behavior.

Catharsis is identical to the process described for the Shadow (p. 236), except for two key distinctions: the Traits used in the Catharsis roll, and who roleplays the Psyche-dominated character.

The Catharsis Roll

To try gaining control of the Spectre, the Psyche first spends 1 Pathos point. A Pathos expenditure that brings the Psyche's Pathos pool lower than the Spectre's Willpower does not negate the Catharsis attempt.

The Psyche then rolls its *current Pathos pool* — not its permanent rating — in a resisted action against the Spectre's Willpower rating. If the Psyche gets more successes, it gains control of the Spectre character for the rest of the scene.

Roleplaying During Catharsis

The Spectre's player, *not* the Psycheguide, roleplays the character while the Spectre is subject to Catharsis.

While the Psyche is dominant, it has access to all the Spectre's abilities and powers, including any Arcanoi, Dark Arcanoi, and Shadecraft arts. The Psyche retains access to its own Fronds as well. Otherwise, the parameters of Catharsis are consistent with that described in Chapter 6 (p. 221).

Chapter II: The Risen

From the Grave to the Cradle

There is a cycle to life and death. You are born, you live, you die, you are reborn as a wraith, and then you hurtle down the slope toward Oblivion. Then there are the Risen, and they are to the standard order of things what a mallet is to a plate.

When a wraith decides to return as Risen, it's the first step in an arduous and labyrinthine process. The dead aren't meant to cross back over any more than a butterfly is supposed to reinvent itself as a caterpillar. It doesn't happen, and it's certainly not supposed to. This, however, is a world of horrors, and sometimes the gate can be forced open the other way, the Shroud torn asunder by sheer desperation and will.

Players can choose to portray Risen in Chronicles as either new characters or preexisting wraith characters who need to reenter the Skinlands. Those characters who start as wraiths face a dangerous road for even considering becoming one of the Risen. It's not an easy task — the knowledge is rare and forbidden by the decree of the Hierarchy, so just asking questions about becoming Risen is in itself a crime. Once the wraith starts gathering the pertinent information on the down low, she still has to learn the proper Arcanoi to affect the transition. This takes time, and it's not even the hardest part yet. That comes when the wraith ventures into the Labyrinth to cut a deal with her own Shadow. One does not simply walk into the Skinlands. Securing the Shadow's cooperation is paramount to becoming Risen, and that means agreeing to unsavory terms after dealing with the Shadow…

Those characters in Risen-centric chronicles that start off as the returned, however, may face a constant reminder of disappointment and estrangement. It can be a study in frustration, because what's the point of returning to life if you can't return to *your* life? And when a Risen comes back, the details are all wrong because the lens of perception is different and the senses perceiving them have been dialed down. Colors, smells, sounds, taste…it's like dropping back from HD to cathode ray tubes. Everything is obviously grainy and distant and smaller, but when you consider a wraith has pierced the Shroud and seen the other side, mere human senses can't hold up against memory or death. The constant disappointment alone is enough to feed a Risen's Shadow, let alone the sharper pangs of existence as one of the walking dead.

And no, becoming Risen should never be easy. This is a thing of mythology, crossing into the land of the dead and returning. The act of Rising should reflect those stakes or the world would be awash in Risen, to the detriment of both living and dead. Crossing the Shroud to become Risen should be an earned privilege or hard fought to maintain, so that the risks and losses, the struggles and victories, are that much more meaningful.

So yes, it is difficult, but that means the victory of achieving it is that much more rewarding.

What Is a Risen?

A Risen is a wraith who has fought his way back across the Shroud and reanimated his body in order to achieve some concrete aim. The Shadow, without whose negotiated permission none of this happens, comes along for the ride. For most of a wraith's time as Risen, the Shadow resides in the Conduit, an object (or pet) that's dear to the Risen. If the Shadow takes over, it's the Psyche that then gets shoved into the Conduit temporarily.

In order to become Risen, a wraith must first acquire certain specialized knowledge and skills, particularly a few specific Arcanos arts. With those in her arsenal, she then must travel bodily into the Labyrinth to negotiate a Pact with her Shadow, essentially bargaining for the Shadow's willingness to come along across the Shroud. If the Pact is successfully made, she then utilizes the appropriate Arcanoi and climbs back into her body — assuming it's still in good enough shape to be climbed back into. At that point, she begins to function as a Risen.

Risen are exceptionally tough, fast, and strong. Designed to reach a goal quickly and deal with it efficiently, they have tremendous potential as killing machines — which is part of the reason the Hierarchy is constantly on the lookout for Risen, prime violators of the *Dictum Mortuum*.

Most wraiths are only Risen for a short time. The journey to becoming one of the returned is long and arduous, and the risks of Rising are numerous and deadly. As such, few wraiths actually make the trip, and most of those who do flame out spectacularly along the way. There are numerous things that can go wrong for even the best-intentioned Risen: the ease of gaining Angst in the Skinlands, the increased power of the Shadow, the potential to give one's self away as undead, and the temptation to just start ripping things apart and the hell with the consequences — all of these come together to make sure a Risen's stay in the Skinlands is potentially very bloody but generally very short.

The Risen Commandments

When it comes to the Risen, there are certain inviolate rules that bind their existence. Wraiths who don't abide by these rules simply fail to become Risen — they're lacking one of the essential elements that allows for the repossession of their physical forms. When in doubt, Storytellers should refer to these as guidelines in making hard and fast decisions about what's allowed and what isn't.

- **You Have Unfinished Business:** Those who return, return for a reason. It's likely tied into why you died or what forced you to stick around. The clinical word for it is objective, or agenda, but the reality is that it is an obsession that brings you back. It's one that pushes you to risk danger, censure, and even destruction, because you simply cannot stop.
- **You Are Not a Zombie:** Risen are the walking dead, but you are not a zombie. Your hunger is rooted in the Psyche and is an emotional need. It is never a physical desire that overrides reason, and you are not a mindless engine of hunger. The body unrots when you rise, and aside from some wear and tear and a paleness about the flesh, you can pass for one of the living (assuming no one checks for a pulse).
- **The Shadow Rules:** You cannot become Risen unless your Shadow agrees to loosen the ties that bind you both to the Shadowlands. If the Shadow does not agree to Rise, you cannot physically threaten it or overpower it into doing so. That said, the Shadow is made powerful by becoming Risen and the danger of falling to its machinations is much greater on the other side of the Shroud.
- **Returning is Forbidden:** This is true on multiple levels. The Hierarchy hunts down practitioners of the arts of Rising to quash the knowledge of it, while the practitioners try to keep the knowledge hidden to protect themselves, to protect their edge, or to protect everyone from another wraith tempting fate and their Shadow. A Risen who falls to her Shadow is a terrifying monster, one that can wreak untold havoc across the Skinlands.
- **Getting to the Other Side is Not Easy:** It's as simple as that. Finding the knowledge, putting it into practice, convincing the Shadow to cooperate, surviving on the other side… these are dangerous and difficult tasks. Becoming Risen is an endeavor of mythic proportion, and every Rising runs the risk of becoming a study of what happens when you get what you thought you wanted and it turns to ash.
- **Staying on the Other Side is Harder:** Returning to the Skinlands is never the homecoming a Risen expects. In the land of milk and honey, the milk tastes curdled and the honey is made from poisoned flowers. Somehow, people simply know that you're not quite right, and they'll ignore or avoid you if they can. The sensations you once experienced are somehow muted. It's easier to become frustrated, and Angst builds up more easily as a result. The Shadow already expected this, however, and that may have been its ultimate objective in letting you get what you thought you wanted.

Becoming Risen

ow does a wraith go about becoming Risen? There as many or as few steps as the Storyteller dictates, but based on canon alone, the following section details the unspoken but official steps in Rising.

- It starts with intent. Why does the wraith need to come back?
- Following that is the how, the investigation into the process of Rising, since the information is mostly apocryphal and difficult to find.
- Next comes the Pact, the bargain with the Shadow, and that means finding a way into the Labyrinth itself for a tête-à-tête. This is the where.
- Then comes the transition: the Rising, "who's reentering the character's body and for whom they might be doing this.
- After that, it's all about the what, as in "what's next?" and the Risen's adventures in the Skinlands.

Those are the five steps. The devil, however, is in the details.

Step One: The Intent

The *why* of it is the most important and the most personal step. All chronicles with Risen in them must consider this step regardless of their focus. The Intent is the driving force behind the desire to cross the Shroud and operate once again among the Quick.

While all wraiths have unfinished business, for a Risen it has to be something more powerful. A Passion so strong, so all-consuming that it subsumes everything else, it can be anything from avenging one's unsolved murder to needing to get hands on to protect a loved one from certain peril. Left unattended, the Intent will gnaw at and distract a wraith, putting himself and all the other wraiths around him at risk.

The locus of the Intent need is a quantifiable thing, something simple to grasp as a concept: a person, a place, an object, a secret. It has a verb attached to it, often with a sense of constancy to apply pressure to the need: protect, hide, destroy, inform, etc. A character trying to avenge his own death is seeking to destroy the person responsible. A character protecting the stolen money that's keeping her son's medical bills paid is either protecting the secret of the theft or the stash of money itself.

Players can make the agenda seem more complex, but it should always boil down to a straightforward object and an easy to understand verb. "I was murdered by my partner on the force because I wouldn't play dirty, and now the murderer is trying to seduce my wife" is fine so long as the player remembers that it's all about "Kill my murderer" or "Protect my wife."

These simplicities give the Shadowguide or the player a way of obfuscating the terms of the Pact so that what seems like one agenda is, in fact, another. The Shadow may gravitate more towards "Kill my murderer" because of the opportunity for Angst when the real driving force behind the wraith's actions might be "Protect my wife."

Player and Storyteller should discuss the Intent before starting any story involving a Risen. The duration of a Risen-centric section of the chronicle should guide the character's

Shortcutting the Steps

Storytellers are free to modify their chronicles as they see fit, and one option includes shortcutting steps to adjust to the playstyle of the game. While these options aren't canonical, they are here to offer versatility. The only steps that remain sacrosanct, however, are Step One: Intent, and Step Three: The Pact.

The Rabbi: In law-enforcement circles, a "rabbi" is someone who mentors subordinates and offers them political leverage or protection. In **Wraith**, this is likely a Renegade who knows everything there is to know about becoming Risen, and offers the characters the information and guidance required to succeed, cutting out large chunks of Step Two: The Investigation. The rabbi might have her own agenda, but if she's been purchased as a Background (Contact or Mentor), the rabbi shouldn't out to screw over the Circle, not deliberately.

The Artifact: The Artifact is a powerful item that replaces a wraith's need to understand the necessary Arcanoi to become Risen. Regardless of its form, it should not eliminate the risks of being Risen and it carries the high price tag of turning the wraith who possesses it into a target — such a valuable item is bound to be coveted by many other wraiths. Storytellers can make this a five-dot Artifact, but once the characters use it to become Risen, they can't bring it into the Skinlands with them. It remains in the Shadowlands and must be protected/hidden or be lost. The Artifact cannot work on more than one wraith at a time, and it should be treated as a deus ex machina under Storyteller control, and not the player character's.

No Labyrinth: This eliminates the need to venture into the Labyrinth completely. The wraith deals directly with the Shadow without a need to make the dangerous trek. It doesn't mean that it might not take days or weeks to convince the Shadow to reach a mutual accord, but it's a far less dangerous process than a Helldive.

obsession. If the story arc is short, the obsession can be easily solved ("Kill my murderer," "Tell my husband I love him," "Unearth the money from the robbery," etc.). If the game is a full chronicle, the Risen needs a longer obsession arc that requires detail, work, and attention ("Find my runaway sister," "Destroy my traitorous partner's life," "Protect my unit buddies who became hunters," etc.).

It Isn't All Altruism

One of the reasons the Shadow might want to enable the wraith to become Risen is because the obsession is dangerous and can easily be twisted into something else. "I love her," can quickly become "Nobody else can have her." "He got away with my murder," can transform into "I'll ruin everything he loves." "My children need protection" is a small step away from "They're useless without me." Everything can be twisted, every noble motivation broken and made selfish. The Shadow revels in tearing down the Psyche's delusions, and if it thinks it can turn an obsession against the Psyche, it will cheerfully do so.

Step Two: The Investigation

For characters that start as wraiths, the "how" is where their focus might lie for quite some time. The investigation into becoming Risen is a conflict and suspense-rich environment for the entire Circle of characters, and something that would require everyone's help given the potential number of smaller steps along the way to the ultimate goal.

There are three crucial steps involved in the investigation phase of uncovering the secrets of the Risen. The first is tracking down legitimate sources of knowledge, the second is convincing said sources to share their secrets, and the third is obtaining the components of the secrets to prepare for the attempt.

Tracking Down Sources

According to the Hierarchy, becoming Risen is illegal. Sure, the Hierarchy has Risen agents in the form of *The Order of Acherontia Styx*, but breaking the rules is the privilege of the elite. For everyone else, knowing how to become Risen is a crime in itself, officially punishable by a swift trip to the forges. This makes practitioners of the art very cautious about who they talk to and who they take in as students, and encourages them to be hard to find.

The fact that the process is illegal is but the first of many reasons the returned are relatively rare. Those who know how it works aren't talking, because those who talk aren't around for long. Atop that, Risen fall more quickly to their Shadows, and those in the know don't trust anyone else to use their knowledge safely. Additionally, there is no social networking, which means gossip never reaches widespread saturation in the Shadowlands. What does become widespread is invariably inaccurate or so

diluted as to be meaningless. Everything known about the Risen, unless taken from actual knowledgeable sources, comes from a game of telephone. The odds that any information a character receives is 100% accurate are laughably low.

Still, it's impossible to kill an idea, and becoming Risen holds the status of an urban legend in the Underworld. Everyone's heard about it, and everyone has a friend of a friend who crossed over before something terrible befell them.

Said sources of information, however, might have some or all of the information required to become Risen. They include knowing the correct Arcanoi and how they relate to inhabiting one's former body, how best to negotiate with the Shadow, where to go in the Labyrinth and even how to reach it "safely" (if there is such a thing), and the dangers a wraith faces in the Skinlands once she repossesses her body.

Negotiating with the Sources

Once the characters find a reputable source for the appropriate knowledge, then the negotiations can begin. The style of the chronicle should dictate the source's agenda, what they know, and what they want in return for teaching the character how to Rise. Anything is fair game, from access to characters' resources and social networks to having the Circle do a favor for the source. The trick is in making the players feel uniquely qualified to earn the knowledge.

Bear in mind, however, that while coercion and blackmail are also tools that can be used to learn the secrets behind tearing through the Shroud, it's likely that someone with the knowledge to become Risen has also been around long enough to be a threat in their own right. Meddling with these individuals is dangerous, and may have unexpected repercussions.

Training

After the appropriate knowledge is acquired, the would-be Risen requires some training. In order to tear through the Shroud and reinhabit her corpse, a wraith must have a grasp of Puppetry as well as an understanding of either Lifeweb, Inhabit, or Embody. All four involve touching upon and affecting the Skinlands in delicate ways. Specifically, the wraith must have at least 3 dots in Puppetry and at least one in each of the other Arcanoi. They must also learn the proper techniques for becoming Risen. These vary from teacher to teacher, but some form of guidance is necessary in order to focus the wraith's efforts. There are, of course, rumors of codices and tomes on how to become Risen, but these are rare at best, mythical at worse, and most likely kept very secure in any case.

Storytellers may want to parse out the secret of becoming Risen among several different individuals. One wraith might know who holds the secret of becoming Risen, the next knows the correct Arcanoi involved, while a third has Risen before and knows the dangers involved and how to avoid them. And of course, each of them wants something in exchange for their knowledge. Spreading the information out not only provides storytelling beats, but also meshes with the timing it takes for a wraith to learn the proper Arcanoi for her quest.

Storytellers can tackle this situation in one of four ways:

- The first is that it takes as long as it takes, and the characters can embark on other storylines and misadventures, but it's understood that their downtime involves learning the necessary arts.
- The second way is a slight twist in that the characters learn about the necessary Arcanoi early, so while hunting down more information on becoming Risen they are also learning and training.
- The third way is effectively a montage. The chronicle takes a leap forward in time and the characters emerge from

The Order of Acherontia Styx

The Order of Acherontia Styx is an arm of the Order of the Unlidded Eye, but it's the equivalent of a government basement operation receiving hand-me-down technology from a decade ago, featuring agents too talented to fire and too troublesome for the Inquisition to handle. Acherontia Styx is distrusted by the majority of the Eye for its offbeat approach to the Skinlands, not to mention their offbeat approaches to pretty much everything else. But someone has to investigate the worst, most dangerous breaches of the *Dictum Mortuum*, and these are the wraiths who drew — or volunteered to take — the short straw.

The Order carries the full power of the Inquisition. Their mandate is the Risen, which means everything from returning themselves to deal with catastrophic Risings to hunting down purveyors of knowledge of the process. They operate on both sides of the Shroud because they have to, and some of them are unsettlingly good at transitioning between wraith and Risen. They play their cards close to the vest and are granted a wide degree of discretion in how they pursue their goals. This makes them particularly unloved by their fellow Inquisitors.

Being part of Acherontia Styx means bending the rules because sometimes a little negotiation with the devil isn't just necessary, it's essential. To do their job means crossing a few lines, as each and every one of them has returned at least once. That gives them little patience for sticks in the mud and *Dictum Mortuum* literalists. Their work — tracking down Shadow-possessed Risen, preventing waves of returned from overwhelming mortal cities — is too important.

hiding having undergone the required training. There's no telling what happened while they were away, however, meaning that friends could be missing, enemies might be on their tail, or worse.

- The fourth option, but certainly not the last, is that the Circle can work together. So long as one of them possesses Puppetry and Lifeweb, Embody, or Inhabit, then they all benefit.

This last option is for Storytellers who want to get to the Skinlands in a hurry, but it is recommended that this method comes with some strict caveats to keep it from being abused.

In the end, though, nothing happens without this next step: the Pact.

Step Three: The Pact

Now comes time for one of the most difficult steps, the "where." To seal the deal, the wraith who intends to Rise must venture into the Labyrinth to bargain with her Shadow. It's a process akin to — but not precisely like — a Harrowing, with one of the key differences being that the wraith enters the Labyrinth voluntarily.

Wraiths who attempt to make the pilgrimage alone tend to have a poor survival rate. As such, even if it's only one member of a Circle who intends to Rise, it's best if the entire group accompanies her in order to get her to her destination (and to keep from sidelining the bulk of the Circle during the final stages of the character's quest).

Reaching the Labyrinth

There are a number of ways to reach the Labyrinth, most of them involuntary, but those wraiths versed in the mythology and process of becoming Risen also know of the safer ways into this dire maze. Most would recommend hiring Harbingers who specialize in transit to and from the Labyrinth using Argos, but there are other routes. Hooking up with Helldivers, following Spectres home through the Tempest — there are multiple ways, each with their own challenges. Storytellers should consider tying elements of the journey to the Labyrinth with the obsession behind becoming Risen. At what cost will the character become Risen? Will he betray comrades for a shot at it? Will she ignore others in peril to reach her goal? What does the journey itself reveal about the obsession to reach the Skinlands and how does it change that obsession?

It is entirely possible that taken this way, the quest to become Risen never happens because the discovery leads to character growth, and that growth allows the character to cope with their obsession in other ways.

All that said, venturing to the Labyrinth as a Circle means trusting one another on the deepest level. The Labyrinth is where whispers carry weight, where monstrosities swim beneath oceans older than recorded memory, and where Oblivion awaits, the ultimate end of ends. Asking friends and associates to go there has no precedent because it beggars simile and metaphor. The best one could hope for is that whatever happens in the Labyrinth, it is swift and decisive.

Wraiths belonging to a Circle need a better reason than "I need help" to go along on something like this, because while the wraiths themselves might still undertake such mammoth favors for a friend, their Shadows will not. So even before the journey begins, a group of wraiths better have damn good reason to say "yes" to the adventure.

Dealing with the Shadow

Once the characters arrive in the Labyrinth, the aspiring Risen can now deal and negotiate with the Shadow. At a suitably appropriate spot, his Shadow manifests itself, powered by the wraith's obsession and the nearness of Oblivion. The Shadow is merely a vision, incapable of physical interaction, but this first step to separation leads down the road to the Conduit.

No wraith can return to the Skinlands without the cooperation of the Shadow. The Shadow must agree to return and it cannot be forced except through applications of Castigate — ones that could prove very risky in the Labyrinth.

Coming to the Labyrinth is no guarantee that the Shadow will cooperate, either. While becoming Risen is something that most Shadows are interested in, largely because of the accelerated rate at which Risen accrue Angst, not every Shadow wants to take the risk. As for those who do, many of them are smart enough to adopt refusal as a negotiating tactic in hopes of getting a better deal. The terms of the deal can range from "Let me be in charge when we get back" to "You have to deliberately feed a Dark Passion" to "You must destroy your favorite Artifact before we go," and they're infinitely fluid until the moment the deal is formally struck. Then, they're locked in stone.

That being said, the negotiations do not occur in a vacuum. The Spectres who haunt the Labyrinth have no respect for the sanctity of the discussion, and will cheerfully set upon any interlopers they find in their halls. It is entirely possible for the aspiring Risen to be conducting feverish negotiations with his Shadow while his Circlemates fight off a shrieking horde of Striplings. It's just as possible that the Shadow summoned those Spectres to add a little bit of urgency to the negotiations.

If the entire circle is going Risen, then they'll need to follow these steps too, and there's no telling what the individual Shadows will do to get the Psyche sin trouble. Shadows have no need to cooperate with each other, and may do things to thwart each other's ambitions. Storytellers should be ready to deal with the repercussions of doing this, up to and including thwarting the Circle from Rising.

What the Shadow Gains

So, why would the Shadow ever agree to allow the wraith to reinhabit her body? It seems natural that either whatever the Shadow agrees to will be to the detriment of the wraith, or that the Shadow will automatically refuse any request to help the character, but those aren't the cases here. In these instances, it's all about risk versus reward for both parties.

For the wraith, the stakes are in tending to an obvious, immediate, and driving desire. For the Shadow, the appeal lies in the risks the Psyche faces by the attempt. By saying "no, you can't play," the ploy is straight-out frustration or perhaps even fear on the Shadow's side for the very real dangers it'll face in the Skinlands. To say "yes," however, means the opportunity to watch the character fail, to grow increasingly disillusioned with the life he can no longer have, or (best of all) to see him pervert the very reason why he went back.

The Pact

The Pact is a solemn agreement between Psyche and Shadow, unbreakable without dire consequences. To make a Pact, each side states their terms, and then the wraith invests a point of permanent Willpower. It's a steep price, but now both sides are bound and the Shadow cannot prevent the wraith from Rising.

What the Shadow gets from the Pact must be clearly defined, and the wraith must act in good faith within a reasonable timeframe to meet those terms. Failure to do so gives the Shadow a point of permanent Angst. Certain Shadows are not above diverting their Psyches from fulfilling the terms of a Pact in order to get the juicy payoff at the end, while others will hound the wraith incessantly until they get what's coming to them.

Step Four: The Rising

Now we come to the "who," the character's mortal remains and the act of actually diving back into them. For this to happen, the corpse must be relatively intact in the broadest sense. A cremated or decapitated body cannot be reinhabited, and there have to be the shriveled remains of a heart and brain for Rising to work. A fleshless skeleton is thus a no go as a vessel, and bodies that have been dead too long are also often unfitting.

If the body is able to Rise, however, the wraith must travel to her body's location in the Skinlands and settle in. This is where the necessary Arcanoi come into play, and a show of Willpower is absolutely critical when binding the wraith back into her own flesh.

Note that once the bargain has been struck in the Labyrinth with her Shadow, the wraith can take as long as she wants — or needs — to actually return to the Skinlands. Odds are, however, she won't want to wait. Getting out of the Labyrinth

and back into her body in order to take care of business will almost certainly become her highest priority.

Stitching one's self back into their corpse is no mean feat. The body carries the residue of traumatic memory, and as the soul hooks itself back into the flesh, those memories are a blast from a double-barrel shotgun, as strong and intense as thy were the moment they happened. The wraith relives her final moments with a sudden, terrible clarity of the senses.

After that, as the residual memory bleeds off, the body stitches itself back together. Tissue and tendons that are missing regrow like kudzu; bones reknit as they grind back into solid pieces; heart, brain, eyes, and tongue refill their cavities, inflating inside the Risen's body; skin tightens; muscles stretch, snap, and regrow; embalming fluids, maggots, worms, and anything else that doesn't belong in the human body comes back up in a torrent of vomit.

The process is incredibly painful. Thankfully, it is over in a matter of minutes, leaving the Risen with a new problem: getting out. Most Risen are buried, and a coffin is a terrifying place to wake up, especially with wraith senses. The sensory overload gives the Risen the panic-fueled strength to escape her confines. Fortunately, she doesn't need to breathe or eat. Thus, escaping the grave or the mausoleum is a matter of time and brute force, even though experience is screaming at the Risen that she should be suffocating.

Once the Risen emerges, things get interesting. Odds are she's broke and wearing her rotted funeral best, which means there are two immediate problems staring her in the face. How she deals with them can set the tone for her entire experience as a Risen, for good or for ill.

The Systems Behind Rising

To actually inhabit one's body and Rise, a wraith must ride the corpse as she would any other mortal. This means doing two things. The first is spending one point of Pathos and rolling Dexterity + Puppetry (difficulty 6). The second is spending one Willpower point to claw through the Shroud, and then making a Willpower roll (difficulty 8).

If the wraith fails to make the necessary roll in Puppetry, the attempt fails and she remains a ghost in the Shadowlands. If she succeeds in using her arts but fails in the Willpower roll, however, the Shadow slips into the body instead and the Psyche is relegated to the Conduit. If the player botches the Willpower roll, the Shadow gains control and the character gains a point of permanent Angst for each 1 rolled beyond the number of successes.

The Conduit

When a wraith steps into her body and reclaims it, the Shadow splits off to reside in the Conduit. The Conduit is one of the wraith's Fetters, usually the strongest one, and being separated from the Conduit pains Risen and Shadow alike. This constant distraction puts the Risen at +1 difficulty on all Willpower rolls as long as the two are separated.

The Conduit is critical for the Risen and, ironically, it's because the Shadow must be protected regardless of their relationship. The Conduit is a talisman of sorts, a physical part of the Risen, and its fate is tied to her. It's for this reason that the Conduit has 10 health levels.

If the Conduit receives damage, the Risen is equally hurt for said damage type and cannot heal. Destroy the Conduit, and the Risen is sent screaming into a Destruction Harrowing. Conversely, if the Risen's body is destroyed and the Conduit is left behind undamaged, it becomes a potent link to the Shadowlands, imbued with the malicious intent left behind by the Shadow. Hunters of such items would pay a fortune to get their hands on said Conduit or do their utmost to kill whoever possesses one.

Because of the significance of Conduits to the Risen and vice versa, the Fetter in question should be small and easily transportable so the Risen can keep it on their body, and more importantly, the Conduit should be near the Risen when she returns to the Skinlands. Some Risen insist on carrying their Conduit with them at all times for protection, while others prefer to risk the distraction and hide it in a safe place.

Sometimes, the positions are reversed and the Shadow slips into the body while the Psyche is forced into the Conduit. This can happen during a Catharsis roll, or when the Risen first attempts to occupy her body. When this occurs, the Shadow must still keep the Conduit safe, but the player still plays her Risen character with the objectives of the Shadow. This means trying to fulfill its Dark Passions, or undermining the Risen's objectives until the Psyche resumes control. As for the Psyche, during Catharsis, the Shadow can sever its connection to its body's senses, putting the character in utter, hellish darkness and absolute silence as long as the Catharsis lasts.

Animal Conduits

Sometimes, a Fetter is too large and the Conduit becomes something tied to it rather than the Fetter itself. A family home is too large to serve as a Conduit, but the family dog who lives there is a much more appropriate size. Should it be chosen as a Conduit, the animal's psyche is obliterated and the body becomes a husk for the Shadow, which can enjoy a newfound freedom not previously available to immobile Conduits. Animal Conduits tend to follow their Psyches closely, but they're not frolicsome pets. Empowered with mobility, fully aware Shadows guiding the bodies of animals can provoke all sorts of havoc.

If the Psyche is ever forced into the animal Conduit, it can use the animal's senses just fine, and even "run away" from its owner to force the Shadow to come after it (rather than embarking on mayhem).

Step Five: Existence as Risen

Welcome to the land of the living, also known as the "what" or "what next?" The Risen has emerged and this is as good as his body's going to get: passably alive. This is everything he's geared himself toward, pursuing the object of his obsession and putting matters to the right. This will not be the happy reunion a Risen expects, however. The Risen returns with senses that have beheld and were warped by the Underworld, and they can never see the living, breathing world the same way. Everything is doomed to die, and the wraith will often fixate on the ebb of that cycle.

The lost human senses don't return with the same clarity, and the reality of a rose cannot hold up against the memory of its beauty. More so, the Risen comes back with additional senses: their Deathsight, Lifesight, and Heightened Senses. Their eyesight and hearing are microscopes and microphones held to the living world; they no longer perceive the painting as a whole, but rather see the individual brushstrokes of dried, cracked paint. How can one appreciate the beauty of life when all they can see are its imperfections?

Then there's the obsession, the one compulsion that drove the wraith to risk damnation and destruction to get this far. The Risen is less likely to stop and smell the roses when all he can think about is his obsession. Everything becomes a distraction, with the clock ticking, the Shadow waiting, and the obsession that powered the wraith out of the grave not letting him rest.

As a result, Risen strive towards realizing the object of their quest with all speed. They don't sleep, they don't eat, and they power themselves endlessly towards their driving obsession. At the same time, they may need to collaborate with mortals to achieve their goals, and that means trying to fit in with humanity long enough to build the needed relationships to achieve the Risen's ends. Making human connections could ameliorate the Shadow's pernicious influence, but at the same time they could distract the Risen from the reason for returning, and that potentially opens the door to disaster. It's a fine line to walk, and a Risen is always caught in that tension.

Roleplaying: Risen & Wraith Alike

Risen chronicles can go one of two ways: Everyone's a Risen, or a small subset of the Circle — usually one wraith — Rises and his friends operate with him from the other side of the Shroud. Each offers unique challenges and opportunities.

If all of the characters go Risen, then the focus of the narrative shifts to the Skinlands, and to making sure everyone holds it together long enough to take care of business without succumbing to Catharsis or the perils of the material world. A Risen Circle can find themselves working together to track down the man who murdered them all, or they can find themselves working at cross purposes if one Risen's Fetter turns out to be another Risen's target. Note that not every Risen story needs to be about bloody vengeance. Tales of love, redemption, and preservation work just as well as Risen narratives as vindictive gorefests.

Alternately, if only part of the Circle returns, then the dynamic turns to one of interplay, with the wraiths potentially helping the Risen from one side of the Shroud while the returned wraith takes care of business (and maybe sees to her friends' requests as well) in the Skinlands. This sort of narrative can encompass anything from a heist story to a desperate drive to protect endangered Fetters to a straight-out quest for vengeance with the rest of the Circle insubstantially cheering the Risen on. That being said, there's also room for tension, if the wraiths who did not Rise start dealing with Hierarchy pressure, or someone's Shadow fuels resentment that his friend got to Rise while he didn't.

Happy Endings

Risen stories rarely end well, at least not for the Risen. It's impossible for one of the returned to have a "happily ever after." The best a Risen can hope for is to leave a loved one better or safer than they were before, and maybe with a little closure. But even if a Risen succeeds in his obsession to keep his widow safe from the hired killers pursuing her, what's next is inevitably a return to the Underworld and a constant fear that the victory was only a temporary one. This infuses even the most over-the-top Risen campaign with a hint of melancholy. Success, at least for a Risen, carries its own punishments with it.

Closing Time

All good things must come to an end, and that includes a wraith's time as Risen. In some cases, it's as simple as the Psyche choosing to renounce Risen status in order to flee back across the Shroud. If Shadow objects, there's a contested Willpower vs. temporary Angst roll (difficulty 7), with the winner making the call on whether to stay or go. Once the wraith leaves her body to return to the Underworld, it immediately begins decaying normally. Risen who wish to return at a later date often try to make arrangements for their mortal shells in order to preserve them against the ravages of time, but these efforts are not always successful.

A Risen who chooses to go back isn't always successful in her driving mission, and not every mission results on a Resolved Passion or Fetter. Sometimes the wraith is only able to score a partial victory, staving off immediate peril but aware of the dangers that lie ahead. Alternately, maybe the Risen's goal can't be accomplished, even with all the power at her disposal, and she has to admit defeat — for the moment. Such failures, partial victories, and tactical retreats provide rich fodder for the Shadow.

Other times, the choice is taken away from the Risen. If the Risen's mortal body suffers enough damage both Psyche and Shadow are booted unceremoniously back into the Underworld. The same applies if the Conduit is destroyed — both Psyche and Shadow are pulled into the Labyrinth immediately, and the wraith faces a Destruction Harrowing.

If the Risen actually succeeds in wrapping up and Resolving his driving Passion, then he loses his impetus to Rise and, within 24 hours, finds himself drifting back across the Shroud, Shadow in tow. The extra time should allow for appropriate

farewells and the return of the Risen's body to a proper location, granting closure on the story arc to player and Risen alike.

As for Transcendence, while it is theoretically possible for a Risen to Transcend if she has resolved her last Fetter and Passion while in the Skinlands, such an event would be extremely unlikely, not to mention liable to attract all sorts of attention.

The Systems of the Risen

Character Creation

raiths who become Risen already have a character sheet in place, which is modified by their experiences learning how to become one of the returned. Characters who start as Risen, on the other hand, go through a character generation process similar to that of a normal wraith. However, there are some key differences that come with starting off on the bright side of the Shroud.

Step One: Concept

Obsession is the core of the character, meaning that regardless of the character's overall concept, it must include elements that reflect a Risen's determination and desperation. It's all about the reason she came back, and that means: Who was she before she died? What elements of her former life brought her back? How far will she go to succeed?

Nature and Demeanor

These function as advertised during wraith character creation, but some Natures like Bon Vivant, Child, and Conniver don't necessarily make for focused, obsessive characters, at least not without a very good explanation.

Step Two: Attributes

There are two concrete limitations on a Risen's Attributes: a minimum Strength rating of 3 and a maximum Appearance of 3. The Strength requirement is necessary because the Risen must often claw and batter their way out of their tomb, and it's a sad day when someone goes through all that effort to Rise, just to be trapped screaming and helpless in their grave. The Appearance rating is set because while the body repairs the worst of the damage to one's physical appearance, death does take its toll.

Step Three: Abilities

As per wraith character-creation guidelines.

Step Four: Advantages

Risen require a specific toolset to return, and this means there are some must-have Advantages and special case mentions.

Arcanoi

All Risen must invest in Puppetry, with another two dots spent in or split between Lifeweb, Inhabit, and Embody. These Arcanoi encompass the bread and butter of a wraith's skill to rise, but it does leave newly minted Risen characters with only two dots to spend on other Arcanoi, including the two Risen-specific arts covered in this chapter.

Background

The adage "you can't take it with you" works both ways with Backgrounds. Risen only possess five dots in Backgrounds, and cannot pick Artifact, Mentor, or Status because those are exclusive to the Shadowlands. For others like Allies and Contacts, the player must specify whether those apply to the Shadowlands or to the Skinlands.

Fetters and the Conduit

A Risen requires 10 points worth of Fetters, with the primary one serving as their Conduit. On rare occasions, the Conduit can be something other than a Fetter, but in that case it must be something related to a Fetter, such as a loved one's wedding ring. Living mortals can never be used as Conduits, nor can noncorporeal items like favorite songs.

Players can also assign their characters 10 points worth of Passions, with the most powerful one being that which drove them to return. Resolving that driving Passion can also end a Risen's time in the Skinlands.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

The following are the final steps in creating a Risen character.

Pathos and Willpower

Risen possess an initial Pathos rating of 5 and an initial Willpower of 6. Players may use freebie points to buy more.

Freebie Points

Players may spend 15 freebie points to round out their Risen characters. They can also spend freebie points to gain the functional equivalent of a few select **Vampire: The Masquerade** Disciplines, specifically Celerity, Fortitude, and Potence. These are powered by Pathos instead of Vitae.

Consult the chart to determine the various freebie-point costs.

Trait	Cost per Dot/Power
Abilities	2
Arcanoi	5
Attributes	5
Backgrounds	1
Disciplines	7
Fetters	1
Passions	1
Pathos	1
Willpower	2

How Disciplines Work For Risen

Risen aren't vampires, and they don't actually "get" vampiric Disciplines. Instead, they acquire the functional equivalent of those powers, with very specific effects tuned to the Risen. The ability to use these powers is one of the reasons Risen are often mistaken for vampires, the other being that most people have a hard enough time believing in one kind of walking corpse, and two is beyond the pale.

Below are the ways these powers work for Risen.

Potence — Spend a point of Pathos (or Angst, if the Shadow's in control), get an additional number of dice in Strength equal to the Risen's Potence rating.

Fortitude — Spend a point of Pathos (or Angst, if the Shadow's in control), get an additional number of dice in Endurance equal to the Risen's Fortitude rating.

Celerity — Spend a point of Pathos (or Angst), gain an additional action that turn for each dot the Risen has in Celerity.

Back to Life, Back to Reality

There are some final touches that can be added. The following, however, are specific to Risen.

Basic Wraith/Risen Abilities

It's a given that Risen lose their insubstantiality, but they do retain their innate abilities of Deathsight, Lifesight, and Heightened Senses. They also know the location of their Conduit and have a vague impression of its location. If someone else is touching or holding the Conduit, the character can use Arcanoi on the target that would normally require eye contact or touch.

Risen are also dead, which means they don't need to sleep, they don't need to breathe, and they don't need to eat or drink. In fact, eating and drinking causes them discomfort and they vomit up anything they imbibe almost immediately. Risen also feel neither pleasure nor pain, except in rare cases of aggravated damage, and their failure to react to small sensations — a stubbed toe, a caress of a cheek — is sometimes what gives them away.

Appearance and Mannerisms

Upon returning, Risen heal most of the damage done to them by decomposition, but the wounds that killed them remain visible as scars. They're warm(ish) to the touch, appear alive to the casual glance, and don't smell unduly of decay.

But death doesn't leave the Risen completely. One Risen may itch uncontrollably where maggots once gnawed her dead flesh, while another could have the eerie pallor of a corpse that's spent too much time underwater. There's no hard or fast rule, but there's always something there that hints that the Risen's come back from beyond the grave.

The Shadow

Risen have Shadows, too. Ideally, they spend most of their time inside the Conduit, but on occasion they can take control and use the Risen's body to devious ends.

A Risen's Shadow should be created according to the same rules as those for a normal wraith. Risen Shadows do stay in the Psyche's mind like normal, even if the Conduit is miles away, and they can still use most of their Thorns. (Those that are Underworld specific, like Tainted Relic, don't function in the Skinlands.) Risen Shadowguides should always doublecheck Thorn effects with the Storyteller before unleashing them, as they may have very different results in the Skinlands than anyone could expect.

Wraith to Risen, Along for the Ride

If the characters begin as wraiths and go through the steps to become Risen, they must meet the minimum requirements for Attributes and Arcanoi as detailed previously, with a Strength rating of 3, a point in Puppetry, and two more in any variation of Lifeweb, Inhabit, and Embody. When it comes to Appearance, however, if the character has a rating over 3, it drops down to 3 when he Rises and only returns in the Shadowlands.

Backgrounds remain, with Artifact, Status, Contacts, and Wealth no longer applicable in the Skinlands. Storytellers can rule, however, that if Allies and Mentors can communicate or aid the Risen in the land of the quick, then the Background points apply as indicated. The same is true for arts and powers, with certain Arcanoi holding no power in the Skinlands and vampire Disciplines not crossing over into the Shadowlands.

Now if the rumors are to be believed, there are some kindhearted Storytellers out there who realize that characters will be disproportionately affected if the whole Circle Rises. Some characters may not suffer the loss of functionality, while others may be so gutted as to make the players feel useless. If this happens, the Storyteller can decide that Backgrounds or Abilities get swapped. Lost points in Arcanoi can become Potence, Celerity, or Fortitude instead. Backgrounds may revert to Skinlands variants instead; a criminal who loses Shadowland Allies and Mentors can call on help from former associates from among the Quick ("Hey, I heard you was dead.")

Risen Arcanoi

isen have two Arcanoi that are unique to them. No Guilds exist to preserve their knowledge and few Risen exist to pass them along. That said, they are instinctive enough that the returned find a way to learn them if so interested; it may speak to the legends

that once upon a time the Shroud was porous enough that some wraiths could come and go as they pleased, and that the knowledge they carried embedded itself in the Shroud like an insect caught in amber.

Because there are no Guilds to teach the Risen Arcanoi, they each have only a single path.

Fascinate

Fascinate is an extension of the Risen's own obsessive nature, a way of turning it without rather than within. It a focused, distilled version of that obsession that allows the returned to influence the Quick by inserting a compulsion into their thoughts. It's related to Keening, but where Chanteurs work the heart, Fascinate works the mind.

To use Fascinate, the Risen must make eye contact with the target, preferably when they are alone. This sense of intimacy increases the difficulty if other people are present. That said, Fascinate cannot force a mortal to do anything that is against his nature. Instead it serves a mechanism for persuasion, and remains on the mind until completed.

• Distraction

The target is forced to remember something else that needs attending to, breaking the mortal's concentration, if only briefly.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Fascinate (difficulty: target's Willpower). If successful, the target cannot focus on their original concern and suffers a +2 increase to all difficulties. The number of successes determines the length of the effect.

1 Success	Target is momentarily distracted.
2 Successes	Target is occupied for a turn.
3 Successes	Target is distracted for three turns
4 Successes	The target's attention is diverted for a scene.
5 Successes	The target feels compelled to leave the location to attend to other business.

There is no cost to this art. The Risen can only Distract the target once per scene, and a botch renders the target immune to further distractions for the next day.

•• Remembrance

Remembrance is the power to implant a set of simple instructions into the target, conditional on a trigger. Until that trigger is activated, the target doesn't remember the instructions or even that he received any, which means he can't be forced to give up any information about what he's been told to do. Once the trigger condition is met, however, the target suddenly remembers the instructions like he's known them all along.

The trigger is set when the art is used, and must be something simple like a phrase, a particular scent, or a specific length of time. The instructions must be clear, simple, and straightforward: "Remember this password" or "after three days, call this lawyer." Detailed instructions involving multiple, complicated steps are beyond the capabilities of this art.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Fascinate (difficulty: target's Willpower). The number of successes gained determines the length of time the target can remember the instructions and still be triggered. If the duration expires before the conditions are met, the mortal forgets that information forever.

1 Success	Target retains the information for a day.
2 Successes	Target retains the information for three days.
3 Successes	Target retains the information for a week.
4 Successes	Target retains the information for three weeks.
5 Successes	Target retains the information for a month.

Using this art costs 1 Pathos. A failure means no information was implanted but the Risen can try again next scene, while a botch means the target gets the instructions disastrously wrong.

••• Charge of Duty

With this ability, the Risen gives the target a simple instruction that cuts through everything else in their lives to become an imperative so long as it fits their Nature or is relevant to their circumstances. It won't force someone to rob a bank if that was never in their cards, but it might prey on the target's existing sense of guilt or obligation and force them to do the right thing. It's a push in the direction the target was already going, not a shove in a new direction.

System: Roll Charisma + Expression (difficulty: target's Willpower). The number of successes indicates the target's strength of conviction in the matter; one overall success on causing a husband to cheat on his wife might be met with tremendous guilt, while three or more successes might see the husband blame his wife for driving him to infidelity. A botch, however, allows the target to realize he was being manipulated, and renders him immune to further such attempts.

This art costs 2 Pathos. A botch gives the Risen's Shadow a point of Angst.

•••• Overriding Behavior

The Risen plants an obsessive-compulsive tic into the mortal's brain, forcing her into a rote of repetitive or ritualized behavior in order to function. So long as the compulsion is repetitive and does not put the target or her loved ones in obvious danger, there's any number of potential possibilities.

Inflicting obsessive-compulsive behavior may seem like an odd thing to do, more mischievous or cruel than useful, but Risen can use this ability to destroy the target's professional or private life by forcing them to commit questionable acts or creating a pattern of behavior to cast suspicion on the target. More often, however, a Risen uses it as leverage to force a target into following orders at the risk of having a loved one targeted.

System: The character must spend 3 Pathos and 1 Willpower point, giving her a point of temporary Angst. The player must then roll Fascinate + Intimidation (difficulty: target's Willpower) to succeed. The more successes gained, the stronger the implanted obsession's hold on the target, and the less they think it's an outside compulsion. A target can't receive more

than one Driving Urge, and if the Risen botches the attempt, the Risen's Shadow gets an extra 2 points of temporary Angst. Note that the victim won't do something diametrically opposed to who they are, but that still leaves plenty of latitude.

••••• Target Lock

If the Risen are driven by their obsessions, this is the ultimate expression of that overriding need. The Risen can force the target to fixate on a specific someone or something that consumes them like a mania. Even the most calm and rational human being becomes an automaton under the influence of this power, mirroring the strength of the Risen's own obsession. The obsession can be focused on an item, a person, or an action, but once it's triggered, it's relentless.

System: This power costs 3 Pathos and 2 Willpower points, and gives the Shadow 2 temporary Angst. The target must be within sight, after which the Risen rolls Fascinate + Manipulation (difficulty target's Willpower) and vocalizes the obsession. Each success strengthens the obsession and enables the obsession to have more complex parameters, so that a one-success suggestion like "he should be with you," can become a multiple-successes suggestion like "he'll only belong to you once you get his wife out of the way." Naturally, a botch turns that mirror on the Risen, causing the target to obsess over the character and adding one more unwelcome complication to his existence in the Skinlands.

Storytellers should feel free to place parameters on the boundaries of the obsession in question to make sure the play experience does not become an uncomfortable one for anyone at the table. Players should discuss their proposed uses of this power with the Storyteller beforehand to make sure that everyone's comfortable.

Serendipity

This art turns the Risen into the favored child of the fates, allowing her to be in the right place at the right time. It enables the returned to see the thousands of coincidences that happen every day, and to understand how they are interlinked and which ones are important. By grasping this web of interconnectivity, the Risen can position herself to take advantage of a situation that others might miss.

• Fortuitous Wandering

Mockingly referred to as "zen meandering" by some returned, this ability gives the Risen a general idea of a direction to follow when pursuing one of his Passions. Unfortunately, the player won't know which one his character might be pursuing, and there's always a chance that this will take them away from another Passion of equal importance. Regardless, it provides direction in a world that can be overwhelming to one of the newly returned.

System: The player rolls Serendipity + Awareness (difficulty 6), with the number of successes achieved determining how strongly the character feels that he should be going a particular way. The more successes, the clearer the path.

•• Flashback

This gives the Risen the ability to see images of events that unfolded near or around one of her Fetters. For this to work, the Risen must be in contact with the Fetter in question; the scene that she sees will be the most emotionally potent one since the Risen's original death. The images are clear enough to extract clues from the scene, like the face of a murderer or the words spoken during a heated argument.

System: When the character touches one of her Fetters, the player can spend 2 points of Pathos and roll Serendipity + Awareness (difficulty: 9 minus the Fetter's rating). The number of successes will determine the vividness and duration of the scene being recalled, meaning the character may see more or learn more. A botch will blind the Risen for a number of minutes equal to the difficulty value of the roll and give the Shadow a point of Angst. Repeated uses of Flashback on a particular Fetter will reveal scenes of increasingly diminishing emotional heft.

••• The Face in the Crowd

This ability enables the Risen to tell if someone she has met is linked to one of her Fetters or Passions. It may even define which one, but not how the person's connected or the reason for that connection.

System: The player rolls Serendipity + Empathy while speaking to the target, but the nature and length of the conversation determines the difficulty of the target value. If the conversation is short and forgettable like "Can you tell me the time?" then the Difficulty is 9. The greater the familiarity of those conversing and the longer the conversation, the lower the difficulty drops, to a minimum of 5.

The number of successes determines several things, starting with whether the target is tied to one of the character's Fetters or Passions. After that, more successes reveal which Passion or Fetter is involved and how important that connection might be. A botch, however, is full of wonderful tidbits of misinformation.

Using this art costs 2 Pathos.

•••• Fortuitous Meeting

This art is the ability to tweak the coincidences seen by a Risen with Serendipity to arrange to "run in" to someone in a manner that appears to be entirely accidental. The target never knows that the universe conspired to bring him into the Risen's path, and so will inexplicably turn left instead of right while driving, or might have a hankering for takeout Thai from a place across town… whatever it takes to bring him to the Risen while making it seem like a coincidence.

System: The player must spend 1 Willpower and 3 Pathos points to initiate the Fortuitous Meeting, and she must have met the target at least once. The player rolls Serendipity + Manipulation (difficulty 7), with the number of successes dictating how quickly the target stumbles across the Risen. A botch, however, results in the Risen receiving 2 points of Angst and the target being spooked into going the other way instead.

For the power to work, the target must be within 100 miles of the Risen and able to travel; targets who are being held hostage, imprisoned, or bedridden, for example, cannot heed the call. If the target's unable to come or out of range, the Pathos and Willpower are spent to no effect.

••••• The Drum Beats On

Serendipity and synchronicity converge in this art that allows the Risen to pull on one string of causality and create a chain reaction of events that bring about a desired outcome. It's like a series of dominoes falling, where the Risen can push the right domino at the right time to cause the others to fall into place; this art allows the returned to intuitively know how that sequence will happen even if he doesn't understand exactly which event might lead to another.

The Risen need only focus on a desired outcome, like "I need a way to sneak into that building" or "I need someone at the airport to overlook their luggage for a moment." She then sees the first loose thread connected to that desire, pulls on it, and lets the universe do the rest. The rest then falls into place as a series of events. For example, she wants to enter a building, and then spots a discarded hot dog on the street and the empty dumpsters in the alley behind the building. With her art telling her all three are interconnected, she drops the hot dog in a dumpster and waits. A hungry kitten appears and tries getting to the food in the dumpster, but it can't jump up that high. A maintenance worker exits through the building's alley door on a smoke break, sees the kitten, and, soft touch that he is, goes to help it out. The conveniently open door is overlooked for a few seconds, and the Risen slips inside.

System: The player spends 4 Pathos and 1 Willpower, then rolls Serendipity + Manipulation, with the difficulty based on the desperation of the need. The more immediate the desired result, the easier it is to predict the outcome of events, so anything that needs to happen within up to three turns requires a roll at difficulty 6, while a scene is difficulty 7, a day is difficulty 8, and anything up to a week is difficulty 9. Beyond that, there are too many stimuli and outside forces to accurately navigate cause and effect; only greatest masters of the Arcanos can reach out that far.

The greater the number of successes, the more Serendipity is on the character's side. Each additional success above the first can lower the difficulty of any roll associated around The Drum Beats On. So if the Risen is trying to enter a building (difficulty 6), and rolls 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, that's a total of two successes or one additional success. That means when he sneaks past the distracted maintenance worker, and rolls Dexterity + Stealth, the difficulty for that action is lowered by 1.

A failure produces no effect. A botch, however, focuses the universe's unwanted attention on the Risen, with the Risen simply having no luck and somehow attracting all the unwanted attention possible for a number of turns equal to the Shadow's current temporary Angst rating. In addition, the Shadow gets a point of temporary Angst.

Storytelling the Risen

ecoming Risen may be difficult for characters, but not for their players. A Risen chronicle can offer new possibilities to an ongoing **Wraith** chronicle, as well as changing up some of the base rules of the campaign in interesting ways.

The Rules of the Risen

The following deal with the unique rules surrounding the Risen and the dangers they may face from previously mentioned threats like Angst and combat.

Angst

Returning to the land of Quick does not make the Risen alive. They are, instead, tantalizingly close, and it is the frustration of being lifelike but not alive that makes being Risen so appealing to the Shadow. In addition to the constant frustration that being Risen entails, every use of an Arcanos besides Fascinate or Serendipity gains the user an additional point of Angst. Furthermore, the difficulty on all rolls to gain Angst is lowered by 1, thus allowing the Shadow to gain Angst more quickly and giving it greater leverage over the Psyche.

Risen Corpus and Damage

Risen have health equal to their Corpus rating up to a maximum of 10 equivalent health levels. Because the Risen aren't affected by pain, combat-related injuries will not distract them or slow them down. The only exception to this rule is from aggravated damage, specifically that done by fire, certain supernatural powers, and from werewolf and vampire claws and fangs. This means they do not suffer from penalties to their dice pool normally, unless that damage is aggravated. Fire, for example, will incur a dice pool penalty of -1 die per wound level (with a minimum of 2 dice available on any given roll).

A Risen can heal damage to her Corpus by spending Pathos, restoring 1 Corpus point per turn. If the Shadow is in control, it can do the same using Angst. In either case, if the Risen

Catharsis as Risen

For Risen characters, the rules remain mostly the same as wraiths, and Catharsis rolls are triggered foremost when a Shadow's temporary Angst rating exceeds the Psyche's permanent Willpower rating.

Additionally, however, the Shadow may also attempt to wrest away control of the Risen's body when either the Shadow converts temporary Angst into one point of permanent Angst, basically endowing the Risen's mission with a sense of desperation that she's losing her grip on what matters, or when the Risen burns all her Pathos and still has at least 1 Corpus level left. Admittedly, this is a godsend of sorts in combat, giving the Shadow a chance at taking over with its Angst reserves at the ready, and giving the Risen a second wind in combat that may catch opponents off guard.

Regardless, when the Shadow jumps into the driver's seat, the Psyche is forced into the Conduit. This is important, because the Shadow has the option of cutting off all the Psyche's senses in the Conduit, trapping him in utter darkness and silence, or allowing him to see and hear everything the Shadow does in his body. It's all a matter of which torment is worse.

Once a Shadow rides a Risen, it has no access to its Thorns, but it does have access to the character's Arcanoi. The only hindrance is with the Shadow's version of Serendipity, as the Shadow cannot locate people or objects related to the Psyche's Passions. It can only target those things related to the Shadow's own Dark Passions.

The duration of the Shadow's control depends on how the Psyche was relegated to the Conduit. For rolls involving Angst gain, the Shadow controls the body for a scene, but for Catharsis rolls involving the loss of all Pathos, the Shadow rides the body until the character starts regaining Pathos. The Shadow has a full 12 hours of control before the Psyche can roll to regain Pathos, and even then, the roll is made only if the Shadow has acted in accordance with one of the wraith's Passions. If the Shadow engages with the Risen's driving Passion, the difficulty on the roll is 8. If it's any other Passion, the difficulty is 9. A failure means no Pathos is gained, while a botch prevents further attempts for another 12 hours.

Once the Psyche has acquired Pathos equal to the Shadow's current Angst rating, she can initiate a reverse Catharsis roll (Willpower vs. current Angst rating) for control of the Risen's body. A failure leaves the Shadow in charge for another hour before the Psyche can try again; a botch strips the wraith of her Pathos, and she must start the process of securing Pathos all over again.

loses all her Corpus levels but still has Pathos/Angst, she will appear unconscious for an amount of time equal to Stamina + Fortitude (difficulty 10 minus current Pathos rating). The number of successes gained determines how quickly the Risen awakens, but if the Pathos rating brings the difficulty of the roll down to 1 or 0, then the Risen awakens instantly.

Bear in mind that a Risen who's fighting to achieve a driving Passion is likely to be generating a tremendous amount of Pathos as it goes along. That Pathos can then be spent to heal the damage the Risen takes in pursuit of her goal. This is the source of stories of Risen who are unstoppable killing machines, soaking up entire magazines' worth of bullets without falling as they wade their way through hordes of enemies who stand between them and their goal. It's also something that's potentially rife for abuse, and Storytellers should keep a careful eye on exactly how quickly a Risen's cycling Pathos.

Successes	Time Unconscious
Five or more	One turn
Four	One scene
Three	10 minutes
Two	One hour
One	Six hours
Zero	12 hours
Botch	A day or more

If a Risen goes unconscious, the Shadow can call for an immediate Catharsis roll. Alternately, if the Psyche thinks the Shadow is better equipped to handle a particular situation, then control can be surrendered voluntarily. Of course, handing the keys over to the Shadow comes with its own problems, but needs must when the devil drives.

If, however, a Risen loses all Corpus and Pathos points, the wraith's spirit is ejected from the body, which immediately returns to its normal, decayed state. The wraith, reunited with his Shadow, finds himself in the Shadowlands near where his body went down to its final rest, stunned for a number of turns equal to the Shadow's current Angst rating.

If an enemy somehow manages to destroy a Risen's heart and brain simultaneously, then the Risen falls into a Destruction Harrowing. Even if the wraith survives, he can never become Risen again, as his mortal shell is damaged beyond the point where it can be inhabited any longer.

To Slumber, Perchance to Heal

Risen cannot retreat into their Fetters to heal while Slumbering, so they must be in contact with a Fetter or their Conduit while attempting to Slumber for an uninterrupted eight hours. If the connection is broken before then, they fail to earn the full benefits of rest.

Risen do not rest easily, and to heal Aggravated damage in this fashion, the player must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 7), regaining 1 Corpus level for each success. This roll cannot be botched, but a failure means the wraith's obsession is too strong to allow him to rest and that the attempt to Slumber must be abandoned for an hour.

Alternate Destinations

There are always rumors of wraiths who've learned to Rise in bodies not their own. These have never been corroborated and according to the Hierarchy and the heads of the Puppeteers' Guild, are purest fiction. So, too, are stories of mortal scientists concocting cloned bodies that a Risen can leap into in sequence, or strange mechanical bodies that, with a little help from an Artificer, can produce the mechanical equivalent of a Risen. Anyone who believes these stories, according to Hierarchy sources, is at best deluded.

But those stories sure are persistent.

Traveling Between Worlds

Some Risen can travel between the Shadowlands and Skinlands, but it isn't easy given the dangers that await the character. To return to Shadowlands, the Risen should hide her body somewhere safe (and preferably cold) since it will start decomposing again once Psyche and Shadow are reunited on the other side of the Shroud. The journey requires a point of Willpower and 1 Pathos, and then a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). If successful, the newly returned wraith gains a point of temporary Angst. If botched, the Risen gets the Angst and stays in the Skinlands, and cannot try again for another 24 hours unless he spends an additional Willpower point to overcome the restriction.

Returning to the Skinlands, however, is trickier. To once again take up her mortal shell, the wraith must Skinride the corpse through a Dexterity + Puppetry roll (difficulty 5) and a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) after spending a Willpower point to tear through the Shroud. Failing the Willpower roll switches the Psyche with the Shadow in their respective vessels, while a botch means the attempt fails and the Shadow gains a point of temporary Angst.

While an already Risen wraith doesn't need to return to the Labyrinth, she must still negotiate with the Shadow to reanimate her body. The Shadow gets a second chance at the bargaining table, and depending on how matters went the last time, it may have new and bigger demands.

The Conflicting Issues

A Risen chronicle or series of sessions forces the Storyteller to confront a number of conflicting issues that work against the players' group and the characters' Circle. Left unaddressed, they can derail a chronicle. Alternately, if taken on, they can add more depth to the story and offer unexpected roleplaying opportunities.

Solo versus the Circle

At its heart, becoming Risen is about a driving obsession to return to the land of the living to deal with an issue. The obsession is often personal, however, which means it applies to one character but not all of them. The Circle may agree to shoulder the risk together, but it still becomes the story of one wraith whose agenda takes priority over everyone else's.

Fortunately, there are several options for dealing with this issue. The simplest for a Circle of Risen who work together is that their obsession is shared — they were all killed by the same person, or they all want to bring down a particular crime syndicate. Alternately, they wraiths are horse trading, everyone else agreeing to help the Risen in exchange for that one wraith taking care of their business as well in the Skinlands. And then there's old fashioned treachery, as one or more members of the Circle are looking to get the wraith Risen for some nefarious goal of their own. What's important is that one character's agenda doesn't subvert everyone else's play experience. There should be a reason for other wraiths to support one of their number going Risen, and more for them to do than just watch and wait.

Short Term Versus Long Term

Depending on the length of the chronicle, the obsession can be longstanding or something easily managed. Games that focus on the wraith side of things may consider a short-term obsession that can be readily solved. Those that are Risen-centric, however, will likelier have longer-term goals.

That said, the Storyteller should take into account that it isn't the type of chronicle that matters so much as the payoff to the effort behind becoming Risen. Making the players work through all the steps to become Risen also means giving their characters sufficient time to enjoy the fruits of their labors. Cut their experience short when they worked so hard to get there and you frustrate the players. If the experience as Risen is short, make the effort less time consuming for the players (though the characters might take longer doing things). If the experience is ongoing, then Storytellers can take the various steps through the process and really make the characters work for their reward.

Playing Well With Others

A presence in the Skinlands affords a Risen the possibility to interact with other denizens of the World of Darkness, be they vampires, werewolves, or even hunters of one sort or another. This allows Storytellers to include single Risen characters in crossover or other supernatural-centric World of Darkness games, or provides a way to introduce the larger World of Darkness into a **Wraith**-centric game. Regardless, odds are that the Risen and whoever he bumps into know very little about who or what the other is, what they need, and what their goals are. This creates fertile ground for conflict or even tentative collaboration, but at the end of the day, the Risen's driving obsession should never be set aside for the sake of palling around with other monsters. Some things are just too important to let go, no matter what.

Hard for the Characters versus Fun for the Players

What the characters find difficult shouldn't mean punishing the players to make it hard on them. Storytellers can't frustrate the players the way they do the characters, but where to draw the line? One trick is time lapsing, where the Storyteller condenses long periods of investigation and training for the players over a single session or two while their characters are engaged in the activity for days, weeks, and even months. Are the players learning Puppetry? Montage the training session without the 80s power ballad. Are the players trying to track down a lead? Condense the chase to the actual verbs of that investigation: talking to people in the know, haggling over information, entering the stronghold to steal a piece of knowledge, etc.

One way to keep the characters on edge but the players invested is the opportunity for risk versus reward, where the Storyteller offers players' characters potential rewards if they're willing to take the risk. This fosters debates within the Circle and challenges the player more. Would the characters do unnamed favors for wraiths in the Skinlands in exchange for information or training? Would they sacrifice a Fetter to convince the Shadow to play along? Would they destroy someone else's Fetter in exchange for help? Would they steal something from the Labyrinth for an easier way to become Risen? Risk versus reward is all about engaging the player to get them to consider the ramifications of their decisions.

Chronicle Types

The Storyteller has many options for chronicle types, including some quick and dirty ideas presented here, that may offer more unique experiences.

Agents of the Other

Becoming Risen is both difficult and time consuming, and only one character out of the entire Circle might be capable of crossing over. Rather than split the game down the middle, the Circle instead operates in tandem — Risen and wraiths — to help the Risen, while the Risen acts as the Circle's proxy in the Skinlands.

With the Hierarchy hunting down Risen, the characters might need eyes, ears, and fists on both sides of the Shroud. The wraiths can keep other Spectral entities off and away from the Risen, or act on her behalf, scout ahead, be the eyes in the back of her head, protect her conduit…whatever it takes to keep her safe. The Risen, meanwhile, helps her wraith allies

Resolve their Fetters and Passions by applying leverage where they can't.

Stopping the Rampage

A wraith known to the Circle tried to become Risen (a beloved non-player character perhaps, or a player character who can't participate for a while), but the process backfired. The wraith ended up trapped inside the Conduit and the Shadow has found a way to take over his body permanently. Now the Shadow is on a rampage, murdering people and framing the Risen to look like a serial killer. Everyone is after the Shadow Risen, including hunters, the Hierarchy, and the Skinlands authorities (FBI and police). The Circle is on his trail as well, trying to save their trapped ally and trying to locate and stop the Shadow from committing further mayhem. It's an investigation and race against time.

Turning the Screws

Things are never as they seem, and the concept is simple for a Storyteller willing to give her players the ultimate twist. The chronicle proceeds as normal for as long as it takes, but when the Risen finally finish off dealing with their Passion and settling their obsession to their satisfaction, the Storyteller reveals the twist: The circle was never Risen…it was all a Harrowing.

Working for the Man

This unusual option works as a Risen-centric chronicle, with the characters operating as agents of Stygia. The Hierarchy takes care of all the steps required to become Risen short of the pact with the Shadow; in exchange, the characters operate in the Skinlands, hunting after other Risen and dabbling in politics and subterfuge as they struggle to hide their own Angst-ridden battles with their Shadows.

In addition to featuring strong investigative and spy/subversive options, this also plays well with

paranoia-laced or drama-heavy games, since working for the Hierarchy is a double-edged scythe. There's the politics of the Deathlords and their followers to navigate, there's the internal scrutiny that casts a strict eye on the characters themselves for any sign of them succumbing to the Shadow, there's the Hierarchy's own issues in being marginalized, and there's the dictums of a bureaucracy that hamstrings effort and sometimes forces its own agents to break the rules to operate effectively.

Lone Gunman

A member of the Circle went Risen against the rest of the group's wishes, and they need to shut him down before he causes too much trouble. Maybe he's drawing Hierarchy attention, maybe the Passion he's working on puts him in conflict with the rest of the Circle's needs. In any case, it's friend versus friend as the Circle must find and deal with the renegade Risen before all hell breaks loose. And if that means that one or more of the other wraiths must Rise as well, that just makes things even more interesting.

Part of the Puzzle

An overarching mystery ties all the wraiths in the Circle together, but certain clues can only be followed up in the Skinlands. One or more of the wraiths is going to have to go Risen, or the mysteries of their deaths will never be solved. That doesn't mean that all the answers are waiting for the Risen wraiths in the Skinlands, just the next step in the investigation. But the mere act of Rising can put the Circle on Stygia's radar, and can give their enemies in the Underworld more time to prepare for the inevitable conflict.

Caveat Emptor

There's always a steep price to pay when bargaining for a return ticket to the Skinlands. The Shadow is under no obligation to say yes, though it will always listen. And although the Shadow's ultimate goal is always the same (feeding the wraith to Oblivion), the stipulations of the deal are done on a case-by-case basis. The art, and the devil, are in the details.

The following are approaches the Shadow might use:

- **Hooking the Customer** — The Shadow is a tricky critter that understands patience, the nature of risk versus reward, and the long game. It offers what seems like a small-risk entry into the Skinlands, but with one huge caveat, that it can renegotiate the terms of the contract after a certain amount of time or after the soon-to-become Risen has completed its first objective. In short, the Shadow appeals to a wraith's potential for short-term thinking like a drug dealer who offers the first taste for free, knowing the payoff is in the repeat business. Likewise, this Shadow realizes that Risen rarely want to go back home too quickly, and that's when it can negotiate from a stronger position… after the Risen's taken his first taste "for free."
- **The Denier** — Tease, insinuate, hint, intimate, but never make hard promises; this Shadow knows all the tricks to use a wraith's own hopeful, desperate, and trusting nature against him. The fact is, the Shadow may never say yes, but always leads the wraith into believing it might IF the wraith does something first. So it sends the wraith on quest after quest, waiting to see how long it can string the character along. Or perhaps the chance of reward grows stronger with each mission or request. Either way, the Shadow is a tease.
- **Get Out of Dodge** — Sometimes the Shadow needs the wraith to get the hell out of the Shadowlands because it's proven more difficult to saddle the wraith with Angst when she's surrounded by friendly Pardoners and a supportive Circle. The wraith has proven adept at handling what the afterlife has thrown her way, and the Shadow needs to change those circumstances to its advantage. Gaining Angst in the Skinlands can be easier, so while the Shadow may not immediately agree to cross the Shroud (to avoid tipping its hand), it will ultimately yield because it needs to.
- **Hidden Objectives** — The Shadow has its own reasons for going to the Skinlands, perhaps to provide muscle for a Spectre cult or to go after another wraith's delicate Fetters. With that in mind, it's happy to help the Psyche cross the Shroud, knowing that it'll be taking care of its own business soon enough. Wraiths should beware of a Shadow who doesn't drive a hard-enough bargain; it's bound to have something else waiting on the back end.
- **The Straightforward Deal** — Pure and simple, the Shadow has the wraith over a barrel. It knows the wraith is desperate to return to the Skinlands, and it can bluff well enough to make the character think that it holds all the cards. This means that the Shadow will use its knowledge to frustrate the wraith and prolong the process, denying her entry into the land of the living until it's squeezed out everything it can. Only then might it finally acquiesce, knowing that the payoff of becoming Risen is not all it's cracked up to be and will be the source of further frustration and more falls from grace.
- **Appetite for Destruction** — Some Shadows just want to watch the world burn. Ones such as these are happy to facilitate a wraith's passage back to mortal territory because they're secure in the knowledge that something will inevitably go terribly, horribly wrong. There's just too much potential for disaster when you turn an obsessed, near-invulnerable revenant loose on the world, even one with the best of intentions. And when the wraith inevitably screws up and starts wrecking things, the Shadow will be sitting there munching popcorn, watching it happen.

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Chapter 12: The World of Darkness

By definition, wraiths are not the only denizens of the World of Darkness. After all, if there were no people, there'd be no ghosts. But there's people, and then there's people, and then there are the things that either used to be people or never were, and these all crowd the universe so that it's inevitable that sooner or later, they'll cross the path of one of the Restless Dead. Normal humans, mediums, ghost hunters — all of these have interactions with ghosts. So too do vampires, werewolves, mages, mummies and even changelings. And while some of these interactions are friendly and uplifting, others have the potential for violent conflict.

Humans

By far the most populous of the other dwellers in the World of Darkness, mortal humans are the raw materials of which wraiths are made. Most, blinded by the Fog and cut off from visions of the Underworld by the Shroud, have no experience of ghosts. They don't see them, don't hear them, and most likely don't think they exist. This holds true even for mortals who are linked to wraiths, serving as Fetters or the focus of Passions. For the majority of mortals, ghosts have no impact on their daily lives.

However, there are still plenty of mortals who can and do see ghosts, whether the ghosts want them to or not. Innocents have the ability to see the Restless Dead. These are most often children, and they are unburdened by the strictures of the Fog. Furthermore, they have a chance to see any wraith reaching across the Shroud; with a success on a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 6), they can see and hear the wraith, whether the wraiths want to be seen or not.

Mediums

Medium is a catchall term for humans who can see wraiths. Some are born with the ability, some acquire it in life, and some have it pushed upon them by magical ritual or scientific experiment. The end result, however, is the same, a human who is aware (and occasionally can't get away from) the Restless Dead.

However, what humans gifted or cursed with the sight do with their ability covers a wide range of possibilities. The default image of a medium for many is the fortuneteller, who communicates with the dead on behalf of their loved ones. While many such "mediums" are frauds, there are many who do have the ability to talk to the dead, and if they can't summon up Uncle Alfred on demand to talk about how wonderful the afterlife is, they probably have a deal with a wraith or two who'll put on a good show on their behalf.

Others, however, don't think so small. There are those who work with ghosts on bigger schemes. The quartet that

Invisible Playmates

One of the most common forms of hauntings is the so-called "invisible playmate", where a child's imaginary friend turns out to actually be a ghost. In these cases, what happens is that the child is conditioned to interact with the playmate, to the point where they can interact normally on every level except touch. This can be quite disconcerting for parents, who see their child playing quite happily with someone who, in their eyes, isn't there.

calls itself "The Serpentines" uses wraiths to gather blackmail information on behalf of wealthy clients, ensuring congressional votes, zoning hearings, and business deals all go as the client wants. Others use them for more personal blackmail, and there are persistent rumors in certain circles that an office inside the CIA has begun using wraiths as spies on particularly hazardous operations.

Why wraiths work with mediums varies. Some do it out of personal affection for the medium, whether it dates back before the wraith's death or is a later development. Others enjoy the Pathos buffet that working with a medium provides, the endless stream of customers offering endless variety. There are those who do it in exchange for protection of their Fetters, or favors done their living loved ones. And then there are those who are blackmailed into it by unscrupulous mediums who obtain Fetters and then threaten to destroy them unless the wraith does what the medium wants.

Ghost Hunters

Not all mediums are ghost hunters, and not all ghost hunters are mediums. Still, there is significant overlap between the groups.

Ghost hunters are those who actively go out seeking ghosts for whatever purpose. Some want to get evidence of ghosts' existence, some are there just for the thrill of it, and some actually want to put ghosts down, once and for all.

The most popular ghost hunters are those with television shows, though few of the "famous" groups get anywhere near a wraith. These hunters, armed with EMP meters, video cameras, night-vision goggles, and the like are fond of camping out in supposedly haunted locations and collecting data, though most tend to wildly overstate their results. Wraiths, by and large, know better than to get anywhere near these types, for fear of having their *Dictum Mortuum* violations splashed all over the internet.

There are hunters who live up to the name, however. These mortals are interested in one thing: getting rid of ghosts. Armed with technology considerably more lethal than NVG, low-level objects of power, or True Faith, these hunters, some of whom are outlined below, are on a relentless crusade to get rid of troublesome wraiths wherever they might be.

Amateurs

Sometimes, doors swing open wider than expected. There are plenty of amateurs who like to play at talking to the dead. And while they have no special talent for doing so, the tools that they use — tarot cards, Ouija boards, candles and the like — often provide a handy conduit for wraiths who feel like communicating in their own special way. Any attempt to invoke ghosts in this manner lowers the local Shroud rating by 2, and lowers the difficulty of all cross-Shroud related Arcanos rolls by 1 for any attempt to communicate or interact with the would-be mediums.

Some wraiths take this opportunity to reach out in friendly or gentle fashion. Others have no patience for human dabblers and will cheerfully turn a session with a Ouija board at a pajama party into a scene of terror. There are even those wraiths who actively seek out charlatans and frauds who use these trappings to pretend to communicate with the dead and punish them for their effrontery.

Secret Orders

There are also any number of organized groups dedicated to interacting with and in some cases, waging war on, the Restless Dead.

Benandanti

There is only one way to join the Benandanti, and that is to be born with a caul, which is then removed by another Benandante. This rite is called "The Unhooding," and it begins a student-teacher (called respectively *sapienzia* and *novizio*) relationship that lasts until the infant reaches her 20th birthday.

Key to a Benandante's powers is her caul, which she keeps with her at all times. When drawn across a Benandante's eyes, the caul allows her to see through the Shroud. It's also useful in many key Benandanti rituals, including Ekstasis (which allows spiritual projection into the Underworld) and the forging of the traditional weapon, the fennel sword.

The Contract

Certain mediums, while not "gifted," can create an arrangement with a wraith to allow for occasional contact. The interaction comes through a mechanism referred to as the "Contract." Contact for a Contract is always initiated by the wraith, who demonstrates her presence to the would-be medium in a way that suggests she's open to further communication.

Once the medium and wraith have established contact, the medium can offer his emotional energy to the wraith in exchange for certain considerations, such as being able to sense the wraith's presence. If the two sides can come to terms, the mortal gives up some of his psychic energy and the Contract is sealed.

System: The would-be medium rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 8). A success indicates that the Contract has been made. Entering into a Contract costs a mortal a point of permanent Willpower. However, it also turns the medium into a walking dot of Memoriam for the wraith. Furthermore, the Contracted medium can see and hear the wraith normally, even when he doesn't want to, which may be more of the time than he anticipated.

As a group, the Benandanti trace their lineage back over 700 years. Loosely headquartered in Lombardy, at the *L'Ospedale dei Viaggiatori Perduti*, they gather regularly at conclaves called *Raduni*. The purpose of the meetings is twofold: to discuss the group's business, and for the various factions among the Benandanti to try to proselytize their rivals. The biggest groups are the *Dannati*, who view all wraiths as damned, the *Redentori*, who see them as lost souls who need guidance to the next life, and the *Isolatori*, who counsel separation from the Underworld.

The Ekstasis can only be performed between sunset and sunrise. Any Benandanti still in the Underworld when the sun rises and the gateway home closes are trapped there until they can find another way back. This can take days or even years.

The other key element of Benandanti practice is the fennel sword. Each novizio forges his own, in a ritual passed down through the generations. Part of the Benandante's caul is forged into the blade, which is hammered out twice: once in the Underworld and once in the Skinlands. Each fennel sword has a name, one which gives power over both blade and Benandante if learned by an enemy. Once it is fully crafted, the sword goes with the Benandante into the Underworld when Ekstasis is performed, where it effectively functions as a Stygian steel blade.

The Sons of Tertullian

The Sons of Tertullian are ghost hunters in the truest sense of the word, religious fanatics who view all ghosts, wraith and Spectre alike, as evil creatures who must be destroyed. Brutal in their efficiency and muscular in their adherence to hardline Christianity, they will seek out those they suspect of being possessed and torment the ghost (if there is one) right out of the target. If the victim dies, at least they die nobly. Members of other faiths are not permitted to join the Sons, though there have been some tentative alliances with ghost hunters of other religions on particularly tricky cases.

The Sons — roughly 75% are male, though the ratio has been tipping more towards equality in recent years — are governed by a council of elders called the Host. The group has no central base, but instead operates out of a series of monasteries located at strategic points around the world. What they know about wraiths is deep but narrow; they're good at the things that will drive a wraith away, but have no idea that there's any difference between wraiths and Spectres, or that the deeper Underworld exists at all.

The AEG

The Alternate Energy Group is a multinational think tank, and one of its branches is known as the Paranormal Research Wing. At other groups, the PRW would get laughed out of the building, but the AEG has a big enough endowment from an organization called the Pinch Trust that it can afford to support a wide range of projects — and the PRW is about to pay off, bigtime.

While for many years, the PRW worked with what were called Ectoplasmic Converter Engines, devices that boiled wraiths down to raw Pathos (and which the human scientists, led by one Ruby Mather, were unable to utilize), now they're focusing on the so-called Stochastical Extrusion Engine. The goal of the SEE is to set up a permanent viewing window into the Underworld. Based at the group's HQ outside Rutland, Vermont, the SEE is in its final stages of construction, and it's had an unexpected side effect: Due to all the work with ghosts at the lab, the Shroud onsite is currently hovering around a rating of 3. At any moment, all sorts of supernatural hell could break loose.

Members of the PRW tend to be bright, highly motivated, and competitive. They've been lured into a field that might otherwise be a job killer by promises of great pay, great support, and wide latitude for projects. All of these have combined to make the staff both driven and loyal, and any questioning of their work gets shot down immediately.

The Virgilian Foundation for Thanatonic Research

An academic group, the Virgilians offer a unique perspective on the Restless. Members all fully believe in the Underworld, and they are dedicated to researching it and publishing papers on it (in a nonintrusive way). Membership is often anonymous, though the group's board has no qualms about publishing their names.

The unique twist to the Virgilians is their publishing arm. Not only do they believe in ghosts, they talk to them regularly and make a point to reach out to the wraiths of famous thinkers, artists, composers, and writers. They then make those wraiths an offer: to publish new works in the Skinlands. A nontrivial number of wraiths have taken them up on this, and there now exist new works by everyone from Sigmund Freud to Virginia Woolf. These are sold strictly to members of the VFTR and its related groups, and as yet have not caught the attention of either the Hierarchy or any human authorities. This is, perhaps, for the best.

The Orphic Circle

A mixed bag of mortals, mages, and monsters, the Orphic Circle is headquartered in Thessaly. The group's goal is straightforward enough: to understand death. To achieve this understanding, they will go to any length, including drugs, torture, and the sacrifice of both the living and the dead. Ultimately, the hope is that when death yields up its final secret, the members of the group will finally understand how to move beyond such petty concerns as life and death, and attain a new level of existence.

The Orphics, among the groups who interact with the Restless, have the best grasp on how the Underworld actually works, and there is no love lost between the Orphics and the Hierarchy. The latter fears that the Orphics know too much and cheerfully share what they know with other Underworld factions, and there are persistent rumors that members of the Orphic Circle have cooperated with wraiths in strategic operations in the Underworld — assassinations, kidnappings, and

other, more esoteric pursuits. After all, why bother trying to decipher a moldering scroll from 2,000 years ago when you can go straight to the source, kidnapping and interrogating the author.

However, if the Hierarchy knew the true nature of some of the Circle's pet projects, their objections to the Circle might get a great deal more active. The so-called Great Work of the Orphic Circle is nothing less than the destruction of the Shroud itself, once again bringing together the lands of the living and the dead. Other projects involve working on reliable methods of projection into and communication with the Underworld, more efficient tools for imprisoning ghosts for study, and even the construction of a so-called "spirit nuke". The latter is the pet project of a young Void Engineer named Xerxes Jones, whose intention is to find a weapon that can cleanse the Labyrinth. Whether he will succeed is anyone's guess.

The group counts roughly 300 members in good standing, and once inducted, members are members for life — or beyond. More than one Orphic has willingly gone to her death with unfinished business in order to try to manifest as a wraith, and thus give the Circle an active agent on the other side of the Shroud. Indeed, there are multiple cells of wraiths who owe their allegiance to the Orphic Circle, and not any afterlife authority.

Members of the Orphic Circle worship a being they call Diké, whom they believe to be a stern but benign guide to the mysteries they are investigating. Some in the group question how benign Diké really is, after witnessing its too-enthusiastic approval for some of the Orphics' gorier experiments, but the doubters remain isolated, each afraid to speak their mind.

The group is divided into two groups, the Inner and Outer Circles. The Outer contains all of the members of the group, while the Inner is reserved for the greatest scholars, boldest thinkers, and the members of the Ebon Bench, the nine-member governing body of the Orphic Circle. Currently the Ebon Bench is in turmoil. One seated member, Sergei Krilov, has gone missing, and the debate over his replacement has neatly mirrored the split within the wider group. On one side are the Orgiophontes, who like the group as it is. They are opposed by the Dikea, who wish to return the Circle to its all-female roots, and while the struggle has remained strictly a matter of debate to this point, there are those who mutter that Krilov's disappearance is part of a plan to give the Dikea full control of the Ebon Bench, and thus, the group as a whole.

Awakened

wakened is the catchall term for supernatural beings in the World of Darkness, including wraiths. They come in a dizzying variety of forms, from bloodsucking vampires to ravenous Garou, and from mages fighting for the soul of reality itself to changeling souls in human bodies, looking to stave off the slow death that is the Autumn of the soul.

Humans in the Underworld

Humans crossing into the Underworld stand out. Literally, in a world bound by the vagaries of Deathsight, their condition renders them almost blindingly bright. Any wraith seeing a human can make a Perception roll at difficulty 6 to identify the mortal as such. As the Benandanti cross in spirit form, their auras are subtler, and the difficulty is raised to 8.Other Awakened

Naturally, with this many Awakened around (many of whom may have been responsible for creating a wraith or two at some point), there's bound to be points of intersection with the Restless Dead. Some of these moments are intentional, some accidental, and some adversarial in the extreme.

Vampires

Sleek, stylish predators who feed on the living, vampires are like wraiths in that they may be dead but the refuse to take it lying down. Unlike wraiths, vampires (or Kindred, as some call themselves) are active in the Skinlands, manipulating everything from small businesses to the course of history itself to suit their ends. It's all part of the millennia-old war between the elders of their kind, which is called the Jyhad. Younger vampires are often unaware of this grand puppet show behind the scenes, and stalk the streets for blood and other thrills; older vampires view industries, cities, and even nations as their prey. More than a few wraiths have wound up in their current condition due to vampiric machinations, and as such have a particular interest in the undead.

Some vampires have the ability to detect wraiths based on their auras, but only if they are specifically looking for wraiths. However, once a wraith has been spotted, he can generally be tracked as well. Some of the vampiric Clans and bloodlines have powers over and knowledge of the denizens of the Underworld that surpass those of the ruck and run of bloodsuckers. The sorcerous Tremere, for example, know thaumaturgical rituals that can bind even the Restless Dead, while the Venetian-born Giovanni are students of the art of necromancy.

Just like ghosts, vampires have a complicated mythology woven around them that contains equal parts truth and legend. Vampires do and must fear the sun, open flame, and a stake through the heart, but only a few are affected by garlic or running water, and a well-placed stake immobilizes a vampire instead of killing it. Holy symbols of any creed or religion have no power over the so-called Kindred, unless that icon's wielder possesses True Faith, and that's in rare supply.

Depending upon how recently a vampire has feasted and what (or whom) she dined upon, her ability to perform supernatural feats varies. When they have blood to invest in their powers, they can move faster than humans, call and control animals,

manifest ESP, and all of the other legendary powers ascribed to literary, mythological, and cinematic vampirekind. A vampire who is low on blood, however, has far more limited options, and can be pushed into a state of uncontrolled, ravenous hunger.

Each vampire has a statistic called a Blood Pool, which functions in the same way that Pathos does for wraiths. Vampires refill their Blood Pools by feeding on animals, humans, and even other vampires, and can use the blood thus obtained to heal damage or increase their Physical Attributes.

Arcanoi: Vampires have certain powers called Disciplines, which are similar but not identical to Arcanoi. The Arcanoi listings for the sample vampires below match vampiric Disciplines to those Arcanoi that arc most similar. For example, a vampire listed as having Puppetry cannot in fact Skinride others, but can control their minds. If you wish to be more precise in your accounting of vampiric Discipline powers, full write-ups of those abilities can be found in **Vampire: The Masquerade** and its related sourcebooks.

Neonates

The youngsters among the Kindred, neonates rarely have more than a century under the fang. Often rebellious, they are the vampires most likely to wander into Necropoli by accident, and many have the sort of feeding habits, i.e. sloppy and brutal, that either create or bring them into conflict with the Restless.

Character Creation: Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 13/9/5, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 7, Arcanoi 4, Blood Pool 10

Suggested Attributes: Assume minimum ratings of 2 for all Attributes

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Drive 2, Etiquette 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Melee 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Suggested Arcanoi: Puppetry 2, Keening 2, Argos I

Equipment: Black leather jacket, shades, .22 handgun, small basement apartment with foil over any windows.

Elders

More experienced and powerful than neonates, elders have generally been vampires for at least three centuries (vampires in the intermediate social stage arc called ancillae), with some as old as a millennium. Most are either the vampiric rulers of their cities or know the ones who are. The Traits below are for a typical American elder. European elders tend to be older and thus have slightly higher statistics.

Character Creation: Attributes 10/7/5, Abilities 21/13/ 9, Backgrounds 12, Willpower 10, Arcanoi 10, Blood Pool 20

Suggested Attributes: Assume minimum ratings of 3 for all Attributes

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Etiquette 4, Expression 2, Intimidation 5, Melee 3, Occult 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

Suggested Arcanoi: Puppetry 4, Keening 4, Outrage 3, Pandemonium 3, Argos 1

Equipment: Expensive designer clothing, sword cane, entourage of ghoul retainers, chauffeur-driven, armored Cadillac Escalade limo.

Tremere

A cabal of wizards who achieved vampirism through the unusual route of dark magic, the Tremere are masters of the vampiric Discipline of Thaumaturgy. Most also possess the Discipline Auspex, which allows them to perceive wraiths. The vast majority of the members of this Clan are well aware of the existence of the Restless, and will take steps, should it become necessary, to ward and guard their homes against intruding ghosts. Others actively seek out ghosts for bargaining or experimentation. Needless to say, the Tremere do not have the best reputation among the Restless who know of them.

Character Creation: Attributes 10/5/3, Abilities 17/9/5, Backgrounds 11, Willpower 9, Arcanoi 7, Blood Pool 12

Suggested Attributes: Tremere have Mental Attributes of at least 4, with the other Attributes far less important.

Suggested Abilities: Tremere should have high ratings in areas like Occult and Enigmas, and often they have specialized Knowledges relating to magic, wraiths and other supernatural beings. Otherwise, the above statistics should serve as a good base for creating a Tremere character.

Suggested Arcanoi: Outrage 4, Puppetry 3, Pandemonium 3, Keening 2, Argos 1, Lifeweb 1

Equipment: Grimoire in digital form, tablet, conservative business suit, black business card.

Giovanni

Tightly knit and not very numerous, the Giovanni are necromancers *par excellence*. Embracing strictly from within their own mortal family, the Giovanni are both proud and fanatically protective of their heritage. Those Giovanni who are not Embraced can still be privy to some or all of the family secrets, and often times they will serve the cause as ghouls (see below).

International commerce and the Discipline of Necromancy are the two studies at which the Giovanni excel. Vampires and scholars of the Clan have been handing down (or refining) knowledge of wraiths for centuries, and no other Kindred know as much about the Restless as they do. With this in mind, a Giovanni vampire can make a potent ally for a wraith — or a powerful enemy, and it's more likely the latter. Giovanni are fond of binding wraiths and then either experimenting on them or using them as spies, messengers, and suchlike.

Character Creation: Attributes 10/5/3, Abilities 17/9/5, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 7, Arcanoi 5, Blood Pool 12

Suggested Attributes: Giovanni vampires usually have Mental Attributes of at least 4, with secondary focus on Social Attributes. On the other hand, it is very rare for a Giovanni to have a rating of 1 in any Attribute; the Clan values well-rounded individuals.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 2, Dodge 1, Etiquette 3, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Melee 1, Occult 4, Politics 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Suggested Arcanoi: Puppetry 3, Keening 2, Argos 1, Lifeweb 1

Equipment: Tailored silk suit (Italian design), elegant handgun, Rolex.

Ghouls

Ghouls are mortal creatures — and not just humans — who sit in the gap between life and unlife. They have been fed vampiric blood without first being drained themselves, and thus have remained alive, if not quite what they were. Regular feedings of Kindred blood can allow ghouls to live indefinitely and acquire some of the vampiric Disciplines. On the other hand, once her normal lifespan has passed, a ghoul must have vampiric blood in her system at all times, or she will rapidly revert to her true age and quickly crumble to dust.

Suggested Statistics: Ghouls are still mortal, so they should have statistics similar to those of normal human beings (or dogs, or cats, or whatever creature they might be). A few extra dots in Physical Attributes is the most common enhancement for ghouls, and some of the older ones might possess the equivalent of one or two dots in an Arcanos.

Werewolves

The wild places of the world are not defenseless. They have guardians, and those guardians are mighty indeed. Endlessly fighting those who would despoil or corrupt nature, the Garou (as werewolves prefer to be called) show no mercy and ask for none. With one eye on the material world and the other on the spirit realms, the Garou stand at the boundary, doing their best to serve as protectors of both.

The Garou are not the only shapechangers on earth. They are, however, by far the most numerous, and they have an oral tradition that dates back thousands of years before the first human written records. Defending the forests and infiltrating cities from time immemorial, they have cast themselves as the defenders of Gaia, the Earth Mother. Against them stands the Wyrm, the corrupted spirit of destruction, whose influence can be seen behind every move made to desecrate the earth. Garou claim they can sense the "taint" of the Wyrm on others, and they are merciless to those they think have been touched by its corruption.

Modern Garou are divided into 13 tribes that stand against the Wyrm. A 14th tribe, called the Black Spiral Dancers, consists of Garou who are corrupted and who now serve their ancient foe. Each tribe has its own identity and agenda, from the scroung-

ing Bone Gnawers to the ferocious Red Talons, which consists entirely of Garou born to wolves and not humans.

Powers: All Garou have a variety of shapes they can assume, ranging from full human (Homid) to horror-movie wolfman (Crinos), and so on through intermediate forms to full wolf (Lupus). Always fearsome, Garou are at their most dangerous when in Crinos form. This shape can be up to nine feet tall, and is gifted with inhuman levels of strength and stamina. Garou are capable of healing any damage inflicted upon them almost instantly, unless the damaging weapon is silver. They can soak most aggravated damage (though such damage heals slowly), but Garou cannot soak damage from silver weapons. Granted powers called Gifts by natural spirits (some of whom serve as totems to the 13 tribes), Garou make effective use of these powers on top of their natural ferocity and strength. The effects of Gifts range from enabling a Garou to make edible stew from literally anything handy to arts of incredible battle prowess. Werewolf shamans can also bind spirits into objects, creating Artifact-like devices called fetishes. These also grant their wielder powers that can be crucial in a fight.

With their close ties to the spirit realm, Garou can "step sideways" and enter the so-called Umbra, or spirit world. As wraiths dwell in what Garou define as the Dark or Low Umbra, which most werewolves have tremendous difficulty accessing, it is rare for a Garou to encounter a wraith in the wraith's home territory. In fact, most werewolves have little or no dealings with wraiths period. The main exception to this is the tribe known as the Silent Striders, Garou who are keepers of ancient death lore. Wanderers and speakers to spirits, the Striders know the secrets of how to reach the Dark Umbra and, more importantly, how to deal with its inhabitants. Even the most powerful Garou rarely make the trip, as the journey is perilous.

While they may not travel to the Dark Umbra, many shamans from other tribes do know Rites and possess Gifts that allow them to affect wraiths or even to bind them against their wills. More information on the Garou can be found in **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**.

The sample statistics below are for a Silent Strider capable of journeying to the Dark Umbra. It should be noted that any werewolf who reaches the Underworld is likely to be quite powerful, even by Garou standards.

Character Creation: Attributes 11/7/5, Abilities 21/13/ 9, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 7

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 3

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Etiquette 2, Meditation 2, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Enigmas 4, Investigation 1, Medicine 2, Occult 3

Special Rules: Garou are capable of switching back and forth between wolf and human forms. However, for combat and other purposes, they can take on the intermediate Crinos form, which is essentially a nine-foot tall wolfman. In Crinos form, a werewolf adds three dots to all Physical Attributes, has claws and teeth that do aggravated damage, can regenerate one health level per turn (except for damage caused by silver, fire, magic, or the teeth and claws of a supernatural entity), and is immune to dice pool penalties for being wounded. Humans who view one of these nine-foot monsters, or indeed any Garou in Crinos, usually full into delirious fright. The effect, which is similar to the Fog, is known as the Delirium.

Mages

The reality of the World of Darkness is not static. Certain mortals, Awakened individuals collectively known as mages, can rework the fabric of reality itself in ways great and small. Mages divided into four factions in what was called The Ascension War, an endless struggle for the soul of consensual reality. How a given mage views and deals with wraiths depends in large part on where the mage stands in relation to this conflict. Regardless, there are enough mages capable of reaching across the Shroud with their powers that it pays for a wraith to be polite when dealing with them.

With the exception of the so-called Marauders, most mages prefer to keep a low profile when performing magickal feats. Conversations wraiths have had with Euthanatos mages have introduced the notion of something called Paradox, which can be described as the static reality of the universe snapping back to its original form when some hapless mage stretches it too far. Most mages fear Paradox, and seek to avoid it by making the effects of their magicks appear coincidental. Showy, or "vulgar," magicks run the risk of drawing Paradox down on the responsible mage's head, with deeply unpleasant consequences.

Powers: Mages can call on a broad range of powers, allowing them to create practically any effect. Rather than attempting to shoehorn such wild power into Arcanos descriptions, it is often easier to assume that any mage can accomplish any reasonable effect desired within her fields of expertise, remembering always that Paradox is always one mistake away. Giving the effects difficulties ranging from 5 to 8, the Storyteller can determine the power of the effect achieved from the number of successes rolled. Botches or even failures could incur Paradox.

The majority of magicks do not inflict aggravated damage. The sole exceptions are magicks of fire, electricity, and pure eldritch force (also known as Prime), which inflict aggravated damage if they score three or more successes (two levels of damage per success for every level over the second). Mages should roll two to six dice when trying to determine the damage of their attacks on a wraith, depending upon the power of the individual magician. Areas of expertise in magick are referred to as "Spheres."

This serves as a quick guide to integrating mages into a Wraith chronicle. For more in-depth information on mages and a fuller explanation of their magick system, see **Mage: The Ascension**.

Euthanatos

Numbered among the Traditions faction in the Ascension War, the Euthanatoi are death-mages and reincarnationists. The Tradition's stated aim is to hurry those who are suffering, or those whose existence is karmically detrimental, to their next station on the Great Wheel of Being. Euthanatoi euphemistically refer to their work as the "Good Death," while others view it as plain murder. As the Euthanatoi generally don't take time to explain their actions to others, it's largely the other side's views that get disseminated, and as a result, Euthanatoi are feared and distrusted.

Most Euthanatoi make at least one visit to the Shadowlands around the time of their initiation. For the vast majority, one trip is enough. Others, however, find themselves returning again and again. Unfortunately, Euthanatos mages specialize in Entropy magicks, and use of that particular Sphere has interesting effects in a realm where Entropy itself manifests as Oblivion.

Character Creation: Attributes 9/6/4, Abilities 20/8/5, Backgrounds 10, Willpower 8, Magick Dice Pool 5

Suggested Attributes: A rating of at least 3 in Physical Attributes, 2 in Social, and 4 in Mental.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Empathy 2, Enigmas 2, Firearms 2, Intimidation 2, Meditation 1, Occult 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1

Suggested Magicks: Entropy (magicks of destruction and decay), Life (magicks of living things), Spirit (allowing contact with the Restless)

Equipment: Functional black clothing, portable digital recorder, ritual accessories, multiple concealable weapons, large sunglasses.

Dreamspeakers

Also of the Traditions, the Dreamspeakers are more shamanistic in their approach to wraiths and other spirits. Drawn from across the globe, the Dreamspeakers regard the spirit with a perspective similar to that of the Garou. While a Dreamspeaker will occasionally deal with wraiths, she will rarely attempt to destroy or bind one. These masters of Spirit magick can occasionally visit the Underworld, but they dislike sojourning to a place where the only spirits are spirits of the dead.

It is a mistake, however, to view the Dreamspeakers as merely a collection of kindly, harmless rustics. Most members of this Tradition come from societies that have been displaced and plowed under by the relentless pressure of European colonization, often sponsored by the other Traditions or even the Technocracy. As such, there is more than enough rage to go around among the Dreamspeakers. It is merely a question of whom it is directed against.

Character Creation: Attributes 9/6/4, Abilities 20/8/5, Backgrounds 10, Willpower 8, Magick Dice Pool 5

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of at least 3 in Physical Attributes, 3 in Social, and 3 in Mental.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 4, Brawl 1, Crafts 1, Dodge 1, Empathy 3, Enigmas 3, Firearms 1, Intimidation 2, Medicine l, Meditation 3, Occult 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1

Suggested Magicks: Time (magicks of time and prophecy), Life (magicks of living things), Spirit (allowing contact with the Restless)

Equipment: Drum, comfortable clothing, small stash.

Void Engineers

Seekers of frontiers in all things, the Void Engineers are the freest spirits left among the buttoned-down members of the Technocracy. While most Technocrats wish to lead the masses to Ascension by neatly ordering the world into a tidy place — one with little room for ghosts — the Void Engineers prefer the traditional scientific tasks of exploring and cataloguing what they find.

Unfortunately, the Underworld is not particularly friendly to tourists, surveyors, or collectors, which leads to them constantly bumping up against wraiths with no desire to be gawked at, measured, or collected. Furthermore, as the Void Engineers continue to chart the frontiers of perception, they continually refine their tools and techniques for seeing what ought to be imperceptible, like ghosts.

Character Creation: Attributes 9/6/4, Abilities 20/8/5, Backgrounds 10, Willpower 8, Magick Dice Pool 5

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 3 in Physical Attributes, 2 in Social, and 4 in Mental.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Computer 3, Drive 3, Enigmas 3, Firearms 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Repair 4, Science 4, Stealth 2

Suggested Magicks: Forces (magicks of elements), Prime (the core magick of creation), Spirit (allowing contact with the Restless)

Equipment: Portable Disruptor Cannon (Level 4 Device) — Fires Prime energy linked to Spirit magicks, allowing it to disrupt wraiths. Each success on a Dexterity + Firearms roll (provided the wielder of the cannon can actually see the wraith he's aiming for) inflicts one level of aggravated Corpus damage. Most of these devices have 10 charges. Spirit Goggles (Level l Device) — These allow the hunter wearing them to see into the Shadowlands on a successful Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 4). Trenchcoat, camera, plastic bags for collecting specimens.

The Others

Nephandi and Marauders make up the other two factions in the Ascension War. The Nephandi are of particular concern to wraiths, as they serve twisted, monstrous masters who have many goals in common with Oblivion. It has been suggested that the things the Nephandi worship are the manifest dreams of the Neverborn, evil phantasms given form and strength by their dreamers. If that is so, it is merely another testament to the sheer, terrifying power of the Neverborn. Few wraiths are so depraved as to seek an alliance with a Nephandus once the mage's true nature becomes apparent. Spectres, on the other hand, are not nearly so picky.

The fourth faction, the Marauders, are chaos and madness made incarnate in flesh. Those among them who are sane enough to have goals and linear thought patterns seek to bring that madness to the rest of reality. Fortunately for wraiths, they're not really part of the Marauders' day-to-day plans, as they are more concerned with taking the consensual reality of everyday humans and putting it through a rainbow-colored strainer made of barbed wire and LSD. That's not to say that Marauders are unaware of wraiths, merely that they're not concerned with them at this time. Wraiths, for their part, quickly learn to stay far away from Marauders or risk getting wrapped up in their endless schemes.

Changelings

Changelings are strange even by the standards of the Restless Dead. Fae spirits bundled into mortal shells for protection against the icy winds of mundane existence, they are occasionally capable of seeing wraiths. Despite often having old souls, many changelings are physically young, and they have not surrendered to a consensual reality that tells them ghosts are nine kinds of impossible. This type of innocence is most common among childlings, the youngest (physically) among the changelings. Wilders and grumps, the successively older forms, have generally been too exposed to Banality (a kind of Oblivion of the creative soul) to buy into the existence of ghosts, even if they once did. Just as wraiths are driven by Pathos, changelings' unnatural existences are fueled by Glamour, a refined essence of creativity. The two can often be garnered from the same source, and this can lead to either cooperation or conflict between changelings and wraiths. Cooperation in the sense of encouraging mortals who are generating both forms of emotional energy; conflict in terms of a battle over a scarce resource. Practitioners of Phantasm, in particular, often run afoul of changelings when harvesting their precious "sand" — pure dreamstuff — which can be thought of as another manifestation of Glamour.

Changelings exist in two worlds, the enchanted and the mundane. The latter is everyday existence, and changelings wear their mortal guises when moving in it. But with the application of Glamour, everything changes. Changelings reveal their true selves, at least to those who are also enchanted and can see them. Nor does this ensorcelled version of reality restrict itself to revealing changelings' true visages; dreams and fears given form, called chimera, roam the landscape and transform it into a glorious explosion of the fantastic.

Divided into a pair of conflicting Courts (Seelie and Unseelie), a plethora of noble houses and social distinctions, and a bucketful of Kiths (types of fae), changeling society is almost

as conflicted as Stygia's. There are some basic guidelines — in all likelihood a Seelie changeling will be friendlier than an Unscelie one, and a noble troll is more likely to be friendly than a hungry (and omnivorous) redcap, but with changelings you never can tell. Throw in their occasionally head-scratching sense of honor, and the end result of how a changeling will react to a wraith is almost impossible to predict.

Powers: While changeling magic is not necessarily as flashy or powerful as that of mages, it is a mistake to underestimate it. Often requiring a short ritual or an ingredient or three to set in motion, changeling cantrips arc less about brute force than they are about trickery, misdirection, and personality. That isn't to say that a cantrip can't wreak devastating havoc, but rather that a changeling is more likely to convince an enemy to chase his own tail until he falls down from exhaustion rather than simply zapping him with a streak of lightning.

There are two things changelings fear most: cold iron and Banality. The latter strips Glamour from them and drags them inexorably into the mundane world, where the memory of fae existence slowly fades to nothing. Cold iron, on the other hand, presents a more immediate and existential threat. Cold iron inflicts aggravated damage on changelings, and whereas death by means of a chimerical weapon merely dumps a changeling back into the mundane world, death from a cold iron blade is quite permanent.

Sluagh

Unnerving dwellers in darkness, the sluagh are the gatherers of secrets and the speakers to the dead of the changeling world. Unable to raise their voices above a whisper, they dwell in shadowy and cobwebbed spaces, collecting secrets from whatever source is willing to offer it. They will often trade secrets, but the Kith as a whole places great value on formality and secrecy.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Investigation 3, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 3

Arts: Legerdemain (Arts of illusion), Soothsay (Arts of prophecy and knowledge), Chicanery (Arts of misdirection and trickery)

Becoming Restless

Awakened beings rarely become wraiths upon their passing. Even though vampires often have unfinished business when they go, the chances of a destroyed vampire becoming a wraith are exceedingly slim (though not unheard of).

Mages by and large reincarnate, but some can be delayed in their journey around the Wheel to learn some lesson that can only be imparted in the Underworld. No rhyme or reason has ever been detected as to which mages are likely to become

wraiths, though the Void Engineers have spent considerable resources exploring the matter.

Garou, like mages, reincarnate, and as such it is almost unheard of for one to become a wraith. Changelings are only susceptible to becoming one of the Restless Dead if killed with cold iron. Otherwise, their spirits are sent back to a new body.

The powers of other Awakened do not travel with them into the Underworld. It does not matter how powerful a mage was in life, once they become wraiths they are no different from any other Enfants entering the Shadowlands, and just as susceptible to its dangers. For that reason, many work hard at laying low for as long as possible, in order to prevent the notoriety of their previous existences from catching up with them, fatally.

The one exception to the rule is the Giovanni. Certain members of the Clan have developed a rough technique for forcing the soul of a deceased ghoul to become a wraith. These wraiths are protected and cared for by the Clan, and in return, they do spy work in the Underworld.

Note that the ultimate decision as to whether an Awakened entity can become a wraith is in the hands of the Storyteller. However, having a favorite character become one of the Restless can be a good way to maintain chronicle continuity, and allow a player to keep playing a favorite character even postmortem.

Arcanoi and the Awakened

Arcanoi can affect more than just the Restless Dead. Some have the power to punch through into the Skinlands and have tremendous impact on things — or people — there. Nor are the Awakened dwellers in the World of Darkness immune to the powers of wraiths. While most wraiths (not to mention most vampires, werewolves, mages, and changelings) are blissfully unaware of the powers that can be levied from the Shadowlands, some Restless are quite aware of what they're capable of. A few cut deals with other Awakened beings, while others go hunting.

Argos

Most uses of this Arcanos are restricted to the Underworld, so there's little interaction with other Awakened. Embodied wraiths can use Enshroud, but they cannot wrap others in those same shadows.

Embody

When Embodied, a wraith can be affected by other Awakened beings. That includes everything from being Dominated by a vampire to being turned into lawn furniture by a particularly adept mage. All of these will work on an Embodied wraith as they would work on a human. The effects do not automatically reverse themselves once the wraith goes back across the Shroud, which can lead to some interesting moments.

Fatalism

Certain Fatalism powers can be used on those in the Skinlands. The information uncovered will be vaguer than it might be for a wraith, but it will still be useful, and combining Fatalism with Embody will clear things up nicely.

Kismet can be used on dwellers in the Skinlands, though it's often of limited usefulness. Using this art on something with a tendency to reincarnate, like, say, a Garou, can provide glimpses of other lives, instead of the here and now. Vampires are also problematic, as they've technically already died. A glimpse of a Kindred's mortal death, however, can contain some element linking it to how the vampire will meet their ultimate end.

Inhabit

Artificers love messing with the cybernetically enhanced minions of Iteration X. Even with the high Shroud rating of secure systems, they're still susceptible to a sufficiently motivated wraith's efforts to hack things from the other side. And as most Technocrats flat out don't believe in ghosts (with a few exceptions among the Void Engineers), they certainly don't build defenses against ghostly incursions.

On the Tradition side of things, mages are a little better prepared to deal with gremlins from the afterlife. Any Virtual Adept with a Spirit rating of at least 2 can put together a basic defense against Artificers cruising their networks (Wits + Inhabit, difficulty 8 to engage with a system defended thus).

Sons of Ether, on the other hand, have tech that's easy to penetrate but difficult to escape from. Due to their passing acquaintance with the normal laws of physics, Sons of Ether devices require an Intelligence roll (difficulty 7) to escape once a wraith is inside. The imprisonment lasts up to one day. Certain sharp-eyed Sons of Ether have noticed their unwanted guests and gone into the business of making ghost traps, moebius loops of circuitry that can trap an overly curious wraith in an endless loop unless the mage chooses to free them.

Keening

Keening is among the most impactful of the Arcanoi when it comes to other Awakened. It has a particularly interesting effect on Garou, with Mood Music able to steal Rage points (difficulty 9) or add them (also difficulty 9). There are even reports of Silent Striders allying with Chanteurs, who sing battle fervor into their allies' hearts in exchange for cross-Shroud assistance.

Garou aren't the only ones who can be affected, though. An Embodied wraith can spend a Willpower point while using Requiem and force a vampire either into or out of frenzy. If the target's prepared for the auditory assault, he can resist with a Willpower roll. Otherwise, no resistance roll is allowed.

Changelings are also susceptible to Keening. If the wraith is visible to the changeling, then Embody is not necessary for an Art to have an effect. Songs of particular beauty can infuse a changeling with a point of Glamour per success.

Beyond that, Crescendo can be used as a physical attack on any target in the Skinlands by an Embodied wraith.

Lifeweb

Soul Interwoven can affect other Awakened, but no Awakened in their right mind will sign up for that deal. Considering the level of violence and potential for sudden death that infuses the World of Darkness, few Monitors are interested in linking their fates to that of a creature who could face sudden destruction at any moment.

Moliate

Moliate only affects the Restless Dead. Its effect is limited to plasm, and flesh and fur remain unaffected even if the Masquer making the attempt is Embodied.

Outrage

Outrage is all about interacting with the Skinlands, and as such most of the arts function normally. Or to put it another way, a Stonehand Punch doesn't much care who the target is.

The Obliviate art also works as normal. As yet, no Awakened beings have figured out an effective defense against it.

As for Death's Touch, while it can be used to set fires, it cannot be used to set another entity on fire. Or, to put it another way, a wraith cannot ignite a vampire. She can, however, set the material in his pockets alight, and let him deal that as he may.

Pandemonium

The normal restrictions on Pandemonium apply to most arts when it comes to interacting with other Awakened. Blood created with Foul Humour will be nasty and undrinkable by even the most desperate Kindred. Insect hordes created can be irritating and annoying, but not lethal — gnats yes, killer bees no. Flesh that is created is foul and inedible, and so forth.

Tempus Fugit can impact Awakened using Celerity, Rage, or time-based magic, not to mention the rare vampiric Discipline of Temporis. A vampire or Garou using Celerity or Rage cannot get extra actions by being influenced by Tempus Fugit, but they can have actions removed by the effects of the art. Mages can counter the effect with either Time or Correspondence 3, but only if the mage is aware of what's going on.

As for Temporis, it is believed that that Leaden Moment and higher-rated powers of the Discipline may be able to counter the effects of Tempus Fugit. However, practitioners of Temporis are so rare that the odds of one ever coming into conflict with a Haunter are vanishingly small, and as such no one's ever had the chance to test the theory.

Phantasm

Sandmen routinely deal with other Awakened, far more than most wraiths. Whether it's slipping old souls into new bodies for the Progenitors or communing with Silent Striders and Dreamspeakers, Sandmen pay the *Dictum Mortuum* little heed when it comes to their Awakened neighbors.

Phantasm works the same way on Awakened as it does on regular mortals. Vampires and Garou can be pulled into Pageants as easily as anyone else. However, an Awakened being may be able to recognize what's going on (Willpower, difficulty 6) and act accordingly.

Puppetry

Being a vampire (or a Garou, or a mage, or a changeling) does not render you invulnerable to Puppetry — quite the contrary. All Puppetry arts can be used on Awakened beings. However, unlike mortals, they can fight back. If an Awakened being is aware she's being meddled with, she can spend a Willpower point and make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to attempt to counteract the effects of Puppetry. Certain arts, such as Skinride, are almost impossible to anticipate, and thus can only rarely be blocked. On the other hand, repeated assaults can eventually be countered.

When a wraith attempts to use Puppetry on a Dominated individual, the Puppeteer and the vampire responsible for the mind control make a contested Willpower roll. This only matters for cases where the Puppeteer and the controlling vampire are at loggerheads; otherwise the two Disciplines can work together smoothly (as is the case with Presence).

Usury

Usury works on all Awakened beings just as it would on a mortal. Usurers can steal health levels from any manner of Awakened. At Storyteller discretion, the wraith can also avail himself of Blood Points, Gnosis, Quintessence, or Glamour, though this requires identifying the target as Awakened before beginning the assault, and many of these entities can retaliate, making this a risky maneuver.

On the other hand, Usurers can also restore these energies. This makes for some interesting alliances between Usurers and Awakened beings.

Dwellers in the Storm

The nightmare depths of the Tempest are home to more than just Spectres. Called *Whistimmu* by the oldest wraiths, these beings are neither wraith nor Spectre, but something entirely *other*. Shaped from the raw plasm of the Underworld, the Whistimmu, or *plasmics*, as scholars of the Tempest prefer to call them, come in an endless variety of shapes and sizes. However, they can be divided into four broad categories. *Phantasies* are beings that mostly resemble the wild beasts of the Skinlands, from cats and dogs to hawks, orcas, and bears, though often with unearthly features like curving ram's horns or glowing red eyes. Like their Skinlands counterparts, these plasmics tend to avoid contact with wraiths, though individuals with the proper talents or Arcanoi can sometimes interact with them. *Deleriums* are largely identical to phantasies, but, as their name implies, they are malformed or twisted somehow, as though shaped in the depths of a fever dream. These plasmics

are unpredictable at best, malevolent and predatory at worst. *Legendaries* are rarely seen plasmics that take their shapes from creatures of ancient myth: dragons, unicorns, manticores, and more. Some legendaries are benign, others sinister; nearly all are intelligent, though their motivations are often inscrutable. Finally, there are the *Wyrd*, beings so vanishingly rare that even many Tempest scholars debate their existence. There are no recorded tales of wraiths interacting with one of the wyrd — only terrifying glimpses of alien, unknowable shapes in the depths of the eternal storm — but the legends serve as stark warnings to those who would explore the Tempest's outermost reaches.

Tindlehound

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 4
Skills: Tracking 5
Knowledges: N/A
Arcanoi: Argos 5, Moliate 3
Powers: Hellfire, Choking Cinders (see below)
Passions: N/A
Fetters: N/A
Willpower: 9
Permanent Corpus: 10
Angst: 8

Description: Tindlehounds are nightmarish beasts shaped like enormous black dogs, with multiple snarling heads and blazing green eyes. A tindlehound is a massive creature, standing four to five feet high at the shoulder, and leaving a heavy trail of soot wherever it goes. Its multiple heads — as few as two or as many as 15 — belch gouts of green fire when on the hunt, and its corpus emits a choking veil of cinders to blind and incapacitate its prey. Most tindlehounds have short or docked tails, but some have been reported to possess a long, whip-like appendage tipped with a cluster of viciously barbed hooks.

Background: According to popular legend, the first sighting of a tindlehound was during the late Victorian era, when one of the beasts erupted from the chest of Henry Tindle, an infamous wraith and former occultist residing in the London Necropolis. As the story goes, it was Tindle's vicious temper that birthed the multi-headed beast, shredding his corpus, leaving a trail of torn victims, and dripping plasm all the way from Tindle's parlor to the closest Nihil. There are many records in the Stygian archives that cast doubt on these claims, however, with accounts of hellhounds and *kerberoi* stretching back for many hundreds of years. It's far

BARGHEST

The terrible hunting hounds of Stygia's Legions, barghests are wraiths that have been transformed into fearsome beasts by a ruthless combination of Moliate, psychological torment, and Stygian steel. Legion kennel masters select the most violent prisoners and subject them to a ruthless regimen of abuse and torment, transforming them into unthinking, savage beasts. By the time he is ready to be Moliated into his new form, the barghest's mind is a blank slate, ready for imprinting on its handler and trained to hunt and destroy on command.

Barghests are fitted with a spiked collar of Stygian steel — a minor Artifact that compels them to obey the commands of their handler, along with a matching iron chain that mostly keeps their murderous impulses in check. A chained barghest makes a vigilant sentry dog; an unchained one is a swift and savage hunter that lives to run prey to ground and tear it to bits. Barghests typically hunt in pairs (called braces), but the Legions will sometimes run them in packs of six or more when hunting large groups or especially dangerous targets. Fearless and single minded, they will fight to the last gasp unless called off by their handler.

During training, barghests are taught a form of Keening that lends their hunting howls the power to terrify their prey. When a barghest catches the scent of its quarry, it can unleash a Dreadful Howl, forcing its prey to abandon whatever she is doing and flee unless she makes a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 8). The howl is designed to foil ambushes and flush prey from hiding, allowing the barghest to run the quarry to ground.

Generally, barghests take the form of large, fearsome dogs, but each Legion has its own variation depending on their tactics and philosophy. The Grim Legion favors giant, savage mastiffs, while the Iron Legion's barghests typically resemble huge, long-legged wolfhounds. The hounds of the Skeletal Legion resemble jackals; the Penitent Legion favors hyenas, and so on. The Grim Legion has also taken to fielding braces of powerful mastiffs trained specifically for the battlefield. These barghests are even larger than normal, their teeth replaced with jagged shards of Stygian steel for bringing down Spectres and the like.

Barghests have roughly animal intelligence, and are violent and unpredictable creatures at the best of times. Ones that lose their collars can to fly into berserk rages, lashing out at anyone or anything in their path, while others display hound-like affection for their handlers.

Sample barghest traits:

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 0, Manipulation 3 (Intimidation purposes only), Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 0, Wits 3

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

Skills: Tracking 5

Arcanoi: Argos 3, Keening 4

Powers: Dreadful Howl (see above)

Passions: Serve (Loyalty) 5

Fetters: 1 point remaining

Willpower: 5

Pathos: 5

Angst: 7

Permanent Corpus: 8

Equipment: Collar of Stygian steel (Artifact), Stygian steel teeth (war hounds only)

more likely that Tindle was merely one of the hounds' most recent victims, having caught their attention while traveling — or worse, attempting to bend them to his will.

Tindlehounds prefer the farthest reaches of the Tempest, and are very rarely seen in the Shadowlands. They exist to hunt, and are relentless when provoked; it is said that once a tindlehound has tasted a wraith's corpus, it can find her no matter where she hides. Because of this, some legends hint at rituals that can be used to summon the beasts and unleash them on one's enemies — but woe to the summoner who fails the rite, or does not provide the hounds with the sport they crave.

Roleplaying Tips: Hunt. Track. Kill.

Storyteller Notes: Tindlehounds are cunning and patient hunters, savoring the chase as much as the kill. They hunt in packs of three to six, using teamwork and guile to disorient their opponents and bring down the most vulnerable. Though feared for their relentlessness, they have been known to withdraw temporarily in the face of superior numbers before returning to strike at a more opportune moment. There are legends of tindlehounds waiting for months — even decades — before returning to finish what they began.

A tindlehound can track its prey even through the storm winds of the Tempest using its preternatural senses (Perception + Tracking, Difficulty 7), or, if it has inflicted at least 1 Corpus level of damage on its prey, it can home in on its target with a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 8). If the prey is a considerable distance away, subsequent Willpower rolls may be required to reach her; if the roll botches, the tindlehound loses the scent entirely, and no further rolls may be made.

The flames a tindlehound breathes burn extremely hot, inflicting two additional levels of aggravated damage with a successful bite, or one level of aggravated damage per turn while grappling. Further, the cloud of hot cinders that emanates from the tindlehound's Corpus envelops opponents in melee range, blinding and distracting them during battle. Wraiths in melee range of a tindlehound suffer a –2 modifier to all dice rolls unless a successful Willpower roll is made each turn.

Aileron

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 0, Wits 1
Talents: Brawl 3, Dodge 4
Skills: N/A
Knowledges: N/A
Arcanoi: Argos 3
Powers: Flight, Leeching (See below)
Passions: N/A
Fetters: N/A
Willpower: 4
Permanent Corpus: 5
Angst: 4

Description: An aileron — sometimes known as a storm leech — is an aerial predator with a long, whiplike reptilian body and broad batlike wings. The plasmic's head is little more than a rounded knob of pseudo-cartilage and a circular, lamprey-like mouth full of razor-sharp teeth. The aileron possesses only rudimentary sensory organs, manifesting as a cluster of small bumps above its pulsing mouth. Like chameleons, the creatures can alter their coloration to match their surroundings, making them extremely difficult to spot.

Ailerons are typically small beings, generally no more than two or three feet in length. Larger examples are rumored to exist in the further reaches of the Tempest, some reaching lengths of 12 feet.

Background: Ailerons have been a menace to travelers as long as wraiths can remember, soaring the Tempest on their wings in search of prey. Though not much of a threat individually, ailerons are drawn to the scent of spilled plasm, and will swarm in large numbers around a wounded or struggling wraith. Over time, these plasmics learned to prowl the edges of Byways, where prey was more plentiful. Eventually, they became such a menace that the Hierarchy once deployed specially trained units of Legionnaires equipped with Artifact weapons and nets to keep the ailerons in check. Lately however, with the Legions spread thin, the swarms' numbers are growing once more.

Ailerons feed by ambushing their prey, typically striking from behind and wrapping tightly around their victim. Once they've got a good grip, they fasten their fanged mouths tight and begin leeching away the prey's Corpus and Pathos. The victim's struggles draw other ailerons nearby in a piranha-like feeding frenzy, piling on until the unfortunate wraith is overcome.

Roleplaying Hints: It's a feeding frenzy! Eat! Eat! Eat!

Storyteller Notes: Ailerons are mindless eating machines, and they are always hungry. They instinctively attack slow-moving or injured prey, but can be easily confused when faced with multiple targets. Sudden motions or loud noises can startle and disorient them, causing them to abort an attack if spotted in time. Once they've clamped onto their prey, however, they have to be killed or physically removed to stop their feeding. Because of their small size, ailerons drain 1 point of Pathos and 1 point of Corpus every *two* turns, and the Corpus damage may be soaked as normal. Ailerons also possess long, sharp stingers at the ends of their prehensile tails, which they can use to defend themselves or subdue struggling prey, inflicting lethal damage with a successful hit.

Ailerons are silent, stealthy hunters. Combined with their small size and camouflage, this makes them extremely hard to detect. Attempts to spot them are at a difficulty of 9 until they successfully grapple their target.

Cerement

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Talents: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 4

Skills: Stealth 4
Knowledges: N/A
Arcanoi: Argos 4, Inhabit 4, Outrage 5
Powers: Entangle (See below)
Passions: N/A
Fetters: See below
Willpower: 7
Permanent Corpus: 8
Angst: 6

Description: A cerement — also known variously as a mind reaper or memory thief — is a filmy, translucent mass of ectoplasm with a roughly human shape. Its Corpus is laced with a fine network of veins and arteries, which pulse hypnotically when the plasmic entangles a victim.

Background: Cerements are thought to be mindless remnants of wraiths that failed to escape their Cauls and were lost to the Tempest, though no evidence has yet been found to prove or disprove this notion. Light as mist, they drift silently upon the storm winds until they cross paths with an unlucky wraith — at which point they spring to sudden life, enfolding the Restless and trying to force her into a perilous trance. Many victims are taken before they even realize they are in danger.

Cerements steal the memories of their victims. The longer a wraith is entangled, the more that is taken, until even Arcanoi, Passions, and Fetters are lost. Some legends claim that the cerement can use these stolen traits to become a wraith once more, but again, no proof of such a transformation has ever been found.

Roleplaying Hints: Snare the Restless. Grant them the peace of the grave. It is a gift that cannot be denied.

Storyteller Notes: Bereft of their own identities, cerements exist vicariously through the memories they steal from others. Silent and nearly invisible against the backdrop of the Tempest (attempts to spot them are at difficulty 9), cerements seek out wraiths with strong Passions and then settle over them like a shroud. Most Restless are caught completely by surprise, never realizing their danger until they find themselves enmeshed in the cerement's clinging folds. The cerement grapples with its victim; if successful, it then tries to force the wraith into Slumber. A contested Willpower roll is made. If the cerement wins, the wraith is forced into Slumber for a number of days equal to the cerement's uncontested successes. The wraith loses one year of memory for every day she is trapped in Slumber. The wraith's most precious memories are lost first; after that, she starts to lose her Arcanoi, Passions, and even the ties she has to her Fetters. Cerements can assume the attachment to these stolen Fetters as their own, even using them to travel to the Shadowlands for short periods of time.

Cerements trap their victims for as long as possible, trying to drive them back into Slumber every time they awaken. If a wraith remains Slumbering for a number of days equal to her Willpower, she loses all recollection of who she is and becomes a cerement herself.

The only way for a wraith to regain her stolen memories is to kill the cerement herself and consume its Corpus.

Shroudripper

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 5
Skills: N/A
Knowledges: N/A
Arcanoi: Argos 3, Pandemonium 5
Powers: Lightning Ride (See below)
Passions: N/A
Fetters: N/A
Willpower: 9
Permanent Corpus: 9
Angst: 10

Description: One of the many horrors spawned during the last Great Maelstrom, the shroudripper is a melon-sized knot of muscle and cartilage surrounded by 10 long, bony appendages. Thin webs of rubbery flesh stretch between each appendage, creating broad, bat-like wings. Each "finger" is tipped with a curved talon that's harder and sharper than honed Stygian steel. The shroudripper's lumpy central body features a series of orifices along its back and rear that are used to spray a cloud of powerful acid. In death, the pseudo-fingers curl tightly around the central body, resembling nothing so much as a pair of skeletal hands gripping a half-formed fetus.

Background: Shroudrippers appear in the midst of every Maelstrom, when the storm winds are at their height. Forcing air through a series of spiracles along the edges of their batlike wings, they are capable of flying at incredible speeds, staging hit-and-run attacks with their iron-hard talons and then darting away before their prey can react. They are drawn especially to wounded or suffering wraiths, and scholars theorize that they feed on the suffering they inflict on their victims. Fortunately for the Restless, the shroudrippers cannot reach the Shadowlands without the winds of the Maelstroms to sustain them, and their attacks subside along with the storms.

Roleplaying Hints: If it moves, it's a target. Make it suffer!

Storyteller Notes: Shroudrippers move extremely fast, capable of reaching speeds of 120 miles per hour, and can alter course up to 180 degrees without effort. They strike from the depths of the Tempest, emitting wailing shrieks as they approach maximum speed, raking their talons across their prey as they fly past, then altering course and darting back into the storm. In addition to their claws, shroudrippers also spray their victims with clouds of glowing acid as they fly past — something Stygia's Legionnaires refer to as the dreaded "Lightning Ride." This acid burns the skin and eyes, leaving its victims even more vulnerable to attack. Wraiths caught in this cloud of acid suffer

a 2-dice penalty to all soak rolls unless a successful Stamina roll is made (difficulty 8).

Kraken

Physical: Strength 10, Dexterity 3, Stamina 10
Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 0, Wits 0
Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 5
Skills: N/A
Knowledges: N/A
Arcanoi: Argos 1
Powers: N/A
Passions: N/A
Fetters: N/A
Willpower: 10
Permanent Corpus: 100+
Angst: 10

Description: No wraith has ever fully seen the Kraken. There have been glimpses — a clutch of massive tentacles here, a bloated and unblinking eye spotted there, and even quick glimpses of a beak that dwarves the largest ships in the Stygian navy. The sheer size of this legendary creature is more than most Restless minds can comprehend.

Background: There are tomes in the Great Library of Stygia that speak of the Kraken rising from the Sea of Shadows as the foundations of the great city were being laid. The behemoth is thought to be trapped in a realm beyond the Tempest; only when conditions are right can it reach through the swirling mists to seize victims and feed its insatiable hunger.

Roleplaying Hints: Rise up from the cold depths when the currents align and sate your endless hunger.

Mourner

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5
Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Intimidate 5
Skills: N/A
Knowledges: Enigmas 5, Investigation 4
Arcanoi: Argos 3, Keening 4, Lifeweb 4
Powers: Chaining (See below)
Passions: N/A
Fetters: 1 (This is not a true Fetter, but takes the form of a single wraith or human who calls out to the individual mourner.)
Willpower: 10
Permanent Corpus: 13
Angst: 10

Image: There are few things lurking within the depths of the Tempest that inspire the kind of fear the mourners do. These enigmatic beings vaguely resemble Ferrymen, but carry no weapons save the heavy chains looped around their arms and torsos. Mourners are robed entirely in black, though the substance appears to have a life of its own, sliding like oil around their skeletal frames. Their faces are hidden within the shadowy depths of their hoods, and the only sound they are known to make is a low, mournful moan that fills those who hear it with icy dread. The gaunt figures seem to move with funereal slowness, yet cover more ground than would seem physically possible.

Background: From time to time — no wraith can say exactly when or exactly why — the Tempest disgorges a shambling assemblage of mourners into the Shadowlands. Their dismal wails echo through the Necropoli, warning the Restless that one among them has been marked and will soon be taken. Numbering between five and 20, the mourners are drawn unerringly to the wraith they seek, crushing anyone who dares to stand in their way. When the mourners at last find their intended victim, the chains that bind them reach out of their own volition to capture the hapless wraith. They then drag the victim to the nearest Nihil and depart the Shadowlands once more. The next time they appear, the wraith that was taken will have taken on the chains of one of the mourners herself.

Few wraiths attempt to stand against the mourners for one terrifying reason: those who strike a mourner, even slightly, eventually become one of their victims as well. Worse yet, sometimes the mourners come for a wraith's loved ones instead, even those still among the living. Years or even decades might pass between encounters, but the mourners always return. They do not forgive, nor do they forget.

Roleplaying Hints: When will it ever end? Somewhere there is a soul that can free you from this eternal pain. Find her. Bind her to you. Only then will the chains release you from this torment. Until she is found, you will suffer the agony of death again and again and again.

Storyteller Hints: The mourners are forever seeking the one soul that can set them free. Though they appear certain and implacable to outsiders, the fact is that they do not know who that fated soul actually is. They have no leaders; they simply have an urge to seek, and a general sense of where they must go. The closest thing the mourners have to an organization is one of seniority; the group hunts for the benefit of the oldest among them. When that mourner has put aside its chains, then the next oldest among them takes up the search.

The mourners may be used as the start of a long and difficult quest to save a stolen loved one, or they can simply be used as a device to remove a Storyteller character than has outlasted her welcome. If you decide to use the mourners against a player character, you are encouraged to devise a means whereby the other members of her Circle can free her, creating an opportunity for a difficult and challenging chronicle.

The chains and cloaks of the mourners have a life of their own, and react independently to their surroundings. The chains are as strong as Stygian steel, and will move under their own power to attack a target chosen by the mourner. These manacles and

chains attack with the same dice pool as the mourner, and are considered to be Strength 10 for the purposes of grappling a victim.

Angelics and Demonics

Angelic

Nature: Fanatic
Demeanor: Fanatic
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 2, Appearance 6
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 4, Awareness 5, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4, Expression 1
Skills: Etiquette 3, Leadership 5, Meditation 5, Melee 5
Knowledges: Enigmas 5, Linguistics 5, Occult 5, Religion 5
Backgrounds: Artifact 4 (flaming sword)
Arcanoi: Argos 5, Castigate 5, Fatalism 3, Lifeweb 4, Moliate 4, Usury 5
Willpower: 10
Pathos: 10
Permanent Corpus: 15

Demonic

Nature: Fanatic
Demeanor: Fanatic
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 6, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5
Talents: Acting 5, Alertness 3,Awareness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 5, Expression 4
Skills: Etiquette 4, Leadership 4, Meditation 4, Melee 5
Knowledges: Enigmas 5 , Linguistics 5, Occult 5
Backgrounds: Memoriam 5
Arcanoi: Argos 5, Fatalism 3, Intimation 5, Lifeweb 4, Mnemosynis 3, Moliate 4, Pandemonium 5, Usury 5
Willpower: 10
Pathos: 10
Permanent Corpus: 15

Description: Twin sides of the same coin, these plasmics appear as creatures either divine or infernal. They look like entities out of holy writ, the angelics limned in holy fire while the demonics are wreathed in infernal flame. Neither speaks,

though wraiths who have encountered them claim to have felt waves of powerful emotion wash over them when confronted with the creatures. With angelics, it's love and peace; with demonics, it's fear, self-loathing, and despair.

Angelics and demonics can both be found dwelling in the Far Shores. Recently, they've been spotted in the Tempest, with some of the sightings uncomfortably close to Stygia itself.

Researchers from the Masquers' Guild claim that angelics and demonics are actually just one species, and that individual specimens can morph back and forth between multiple forms as needed.

Background: The best guess anyone has as to the origins of these creatures is that they were formless plasmics who picked up on the thoughts and prayers of the Fishers and gradually morphed to meet those travelers' expectations.

Roleplaying Hints: You truly believe you are a creature of the divine — or the infernal. It is your duty to shower blessing or punishment upon those troubled souls whose paths you cross. And as for those you speak to, is it not the will of the ineffable that has brought you together, predestined and thus righteous?

Storyteller Hints: It doesn't matter that the angelics and demonics aren't actually hellspawn or divine; they believe they are, and that's the key. Stage entrances for maximum shock and awe impact, as the sight of an angel with a flaming sword stepping onto a Byway should be impressive as hell.

Relics and Artifacts

Relics and Artifacts are toys in the Cracker Jack box of the Underworld. They range from the common to the unique, and their effects run the gamut from incredibly beneficial to terrifyingly malign.

Not all Artifacts and relics have special powers. A relic pistol that still fires relic bullets is quite useful, as is a relic knife that keeps its edge. Likewise, a soul hammered into an ashtray is technically an Artifact, even if it is good for nothing except grinding out soulfire cigarettes. But the ones listed below do have some unique abilities above and beyond the obvious.

The main difference between Artifacts and relics is their origin. Relics are or are based on objects that were originally in the Skinlands and then crossed over, while Artifacts are 100% products of the Underworld. Artifacts tend to be more durable, but no wraith in her right mind is going to refuse a useful relic if one is offered.

Relics

Avery's Sweets (Level 1 Relic)

When the beloved Avery's Sweet Shoppe burned to the ground in 1957, a surprising amount of the store's wares came across the Shroud. While the idea of relic candy is laughable to some, nobody refuses one of Avery's sweets when they're offered.

The sweets are exactly that — candies in shockingly bright wrappers of red, blue, pink, green, and yellow. They remain incredibly sweet, and any wraith — or Spectre — who eats one is immediately overwhelmed by a feeling of warm nostalgia. Functionally, this translates to 2 additional points of Pathos being granted to the wraith for as long as the sweet lasts (one scene). When the candy's gone, so is the Pathos.

Far more of these candies have popped up in the Underworld than one would think a single candy store could hold. This has led to the popular belief that Hiram Avery himself now roams the Shadowlands, and that he's mastered the art of postmortem confectionery for some unknown end.

Thornstick (Level 2 Relic)

Thousands of these relics litter the Underworld. Derived from any manner of club or baton that was particularly beloved of its owner and used for ill intent, in relic form these riot batons and nightsticks sprout thick coats of razor-sharp thorns on the business end. Thus equipped, they do an additional two dice worth of damage on every successful hit. Should a blow from a Thornstick be parried by another Thornstick, however, both will immediately lose both their thorns and the bonus said thorns provided.

Slumberbook (Level 2 Relic)

Derived from favorite bedtime storybooks, Slumberbooks are instruments of peace in the conflict-riven Underworld. When read out loud to an audience of up to 10 wraiths, the story contained within soothes and calms the listeners' Shadows to the point where they lose a point of temporary Angst. Any additional listeners feel no effect.

Once a wraith has had a Slumberbook read to her, she can only receive benefits from that specific book. Hearing a different Slumberbook read to her will actually give her Shadow an additional temporary Angst point.

A Slumberbook can be used once per day. Any attempt to use it more frequently than that will cause the book to crumble to dust.

Old Glory (Level 3 Relic)

The tattered remains of a battle flag, Old Glory does not show one country or movement's colors. Rather, it endlessly cycles, bouncing from a Civil War regimental flag one moment to the Tricolor the next, to the Jolly Roger. Supposedly it has never shown the same flag twice, though when it is unfurled, anyone watching it is missing the point.

For Old Glory is a battle flag, one that inspires all who fight under it to feats beyond what they might have thought themselves capable of. While Old Glory is flying, everyone fighting on its side gets an additional +2 on all Willpower rolls, and 1 point of Pathos. These benefits vanish once the flag is furled.

Furling Old Glory after the fight is over is generally a good idea. If it's kept flying for more than one scene, anyone fighting on its side will go looking for a fight, inspired perhaps a little too much to seek blood and glory.

It is rumored that for years, Old Glory resided in the armory of the Smiling Lord, but that it was recently stolen. It is further suggested that the Deathlord is *very* interested in getting it back, and will no doubt reward anyone who returns it to him.

Sweeney's Pride (Level 4 Relic)

This unassuming straight razor, with a finely honed blade and mother-of-pearl inlay in the oak handle. appears fairly innocuous. However, it has claimed far more than its share of wraiths over the three centuries it's existed. Passed from hand to hand and owner to owner, the razor, sarcastically named Sweeney's Pride, gives its wielder 2 additional points in Strength while she's wielding it. The razor also does aggravated damage, and it bestows 5 Pathos on its owner whenever her work with the blade drops someone into a Harrowing.

Any wraith slashed into a Harrowing by Sweeney's Pride who then escapes acquires a new Passion: "Destroy the razor's owner and take it for my own (Obsession 4)." Once the razor is acquired, this Passion is considered Resolved, and a new one takes its place: "Keep the razor happy (Bloodlust 4)." This Passion is also acquired by anyone picking up the razor. If the razor is somehow taken away from the owner, he immediately loses the latter Passion and reacquires the former.

According to legend, Sweeney's Pride is indestructible. This may or may not be the case, but what is known is that none of its wielders have wished to risk losing it. Scores of wraiths, former wielders who were stripped of their possession by force or guile, prowl the Underworld, looking for the chance to reclaim what they all think is rightfully theirs.

Emperor's Nightingale (Level 5 Relic)

A cunningly crafted clockwork bird dating back to the glory days of Athens, the nightingale has been thoroughly and repeatedly reworked. Now sporting a coat of precious gems and endless improvements to its articulation, it has also acquired a most peculiar power. Namely, the owner of the nightingale can infuse the bird with 2 points of Pathos and whisper the name of something, or someplace, or someone, that he wants found. The bird will immediately take flight and head for the requested target. It flies at a slow, but steady and unbroken pace so that its owner can follow, though anyone using the nightingale must be prepared for rough travel. The bird will literally go to the ends of the Underworld as needed to find its target, whether that be the Far Shores or the heart of the Labyrinth.

Once the nightingale arrives at its destination, it deactivates and patiently waits to be reclaimed. If the owner does not arrive with it, though, or shortly thereafter, it will consider itself abandoned and start chirping in hopes of attracting a new owner, one who will hopefully treat it better.

Artifacts

Bell of Summoning (Level 1 Artifact)

Imported from the Jade Empire, this item resembles a small jade bell and hammer. Wraiths may choose to invest as many points of Pathos into the bell as they want. Thereafter, any time the bell is struck, any wraith who still has Pathos invested in the bell will be able to hear the summons and answer it, instantly aware of the bell's location. Each time the bell is rung, one Pathos point a wraith has invested in the bell dissipates. The bell rings one minute for each wraith who's invested in it, and it rings indiscriminately. Everyone who's put Pathos in the bell hears the summons, and it cannot be tailored for just one listener. Once a wraith's charge of Pathos is expended, she can no longer hear the bell when it is rung, even if she is standing right next to it.

Masks (Level 1 Artifact)

As noted on p. 47, most masks are symbolic of the offices the wearer holds. The most bedraggled looking ragamuffin wearing the mask of an Anacreon will automatically receive the respect due that office. As such, there is a thriving black market in both stolen and counterfeit masks. A good forgery can get a wraith into a Citadel unquestioned, though it may not get him out again.

By and large, masks are highly stylized in ways that align with their wearer's role. Barghest trainers' masks have a hound-like cast to them, while grinning skulls form the basis for most masks worn by Grim Legionnaires. Official masks also somehow seem to magically adjust themselves to their wearer. They're always a perfect fit, even if stolen.

Instant Nihil (Level 2 Artifact)

A favorite among criminals, Renegades, and Legionnaires at isolated outposts, Instant Nihils look like glass bottles full of ink. They're fragile and must be handled carefully lest they break, but when activated (which is to say, broken), within one turn they produce a Nihil six feet wide. A wraith in close pursuit of the user of the Instant Nihil must make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) to avoid falling in and winding up in the Tempest. Conversely, a non-Harbinger who finds himself cornered might use one to facilitate his escape from a tight situation.

The Hierarchy's official stance on Instant Nihils is that they should only be used in direst emergency. The Nihils they create tend to linger for a week or two, rendering areas less than safe to travel through. Also, for whatever reason, they attract the attention of Shades, which can be problematic for anyone who dives or falls in.

Nobody knows where Instant Nihils come from. Some speculate that the Ferrymen make them as byproducts of some research, while others claim a Spectral origin in the Labyrinth. What is known is that they are easily accessible on any Necropolis' black market, and any wraith even the slightest bit connected can obtain one with no trouble.

Redeyes (level 2 Artifact)

Beacons used for setting waypoints in the trackless Tempest, Redeyes earned their name when a Legionnaire sardonically

noted that from a distance, they were dead ringers for the eyes of the dreaded Nephwrack, General Coldheart. The fact that said Legionnaire disappeared three days later is widely seen as proof that he may have been a little too close to the truth.

A pair of soulfire torches in relic glass spheres, Redeyes blaze with a light that can be seen up to a mile away through the froth and churn of the Tempest. Each set of Redeyes is rated to last a full year, and at least one set is carried by each Legionnaire on patrol in the storm itself. When released into the Tempest, a set of Redeyes hovers in position until the soulfire crystals powering the lanterns burn out. They are useful for marking patrol routes for wraiths detailed to the Tempest, search-and-rescue teams, and work details caught far from a Byway.

There is no cost to activating a set of Redeyes. However, breaking the relic glass that houses the torches effectively extinguishes them.

Scribbler's Pen (Level 2 Artifact)

Gifts from Nhudri to the keepers of the Great Library, Scribbler's Pens let a wraith transcribe the words that otherwise would have gone unspoken. Trained in its use, a wraith can use the pen to write down either Pathos or Angst, transforming it into words of either shimmering silver or inky black that never appear to dry.

An hour spent with the pen will let a trained wraith transcribe 1 point of Pathos to parchment, in the form of words relating to one of the wraith's Passions. Two hours allows the same for temporary Angst, though these words relate to Dark Passions instead.

A wraith must be very careful with the parchments on which he uses the Scribbler's Pen. Any wraith reading them gains immediate insight into the wraith's personality (+2 on all rolls involving Manipulation). Furthermore, if the parchments are destroyed, all the emotion stored comes rushing back to the wraith immediately. There are some wraiths who spend hours painstakingly creating "Pathos shots" in the form of papers designed to be destroyed at opportune moments, such that the owner gets an immediate boost of emotional energy. This remains a risky strategy, however, and more than one hoarder of this sort has had the plan backfire when all the parchments fall into enemy hands and are destroyed at once.

Soulfire Mask (Level 2 Artifact)

Not every mask is just a symbol. Certain Hierarchs have combined symbology with deadly practicality. Designed for use as weapons, these masks, which are largely the property of high-ranking Hierarchs, sport an arrangement of soulfire crystals (on average, 10 Pathos points' worth). When activated, the mask can belch out a tongue of flame (Dexterity + Firearms, difficulty 6) that inflicts (4 + number of successes) dice for every point of Pathos expended. Alternately, it can surround its wearer with a blazing aura that can absorb 2 dice worth of damage for every Pathos point spent.

Soulfire Lantern (Level 2 Artifact)

Rather than illuminate, this lantern shrouds its holder in shadows, hiding her from sight. The lantern's light is a 10-Pathos soulfire shard. When the user activates the crystal, a point of stored Pathos is consumed and the lantern and its wielder vanish from sight. All that's visible is a dim, bobbing light that, curiously enough, is also visible across the Shroud. While the lantern is in use, the holder is at -2 difficulty for all Stealth-related rolls. The effects of the lantern last one scene per Pathos, and it can be recharged when its soulfire crystal is emptied. Wraiths using the lantern can see normally. Note that the effect works only as long as the lantern is held aloft by its user. Should she drop or set down the lamp, the effect immediately ends and both lantern and lantern owner become visible.

Star of the East (Level 2 Artifact)

Looking like nothing so much as a Christmas-tree ornament made from spun sugar, the Star of the East is considered an eccentric affectation by some, a lifesaving tool by others. When inactive, it will maintain an irregular orbit around its owner's head. Once activated with a point of Pathos, however, the star immediately flies off in the direction of the most pressing danger facing the wraith. If the threat is within 10 yards, the star will hover over it. Otherwise, it will hold position in the direction of the threat for a full hour before needing to be recharged, or returning to its normal orbit.

Stars of the East must be attuned to their owners. This requires the investiture of 3 points of Pathos and 1 of Willpower. The star must also be held in the hand of a wraith seeking to attune it for 24 consecutive hours. Any break, and the wraith has to start again.

Stars are most commonly found in the Shadowlands. Nobody knows what their origin is, or why they're found there. A free-floating star can be caught by a wraith who makes a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 8) and a Strength check (difficulty 7). A failure means the star escaped; a botch means the wraith broke it. A Star of the East has only 2 Corpus and cannot be repaired once it has been damaged or broken.

Candelabra of Souls (Level 3 Artifact)

As evil as it is sought after, the candelabra appears to be a gracefully crafted work in polished brass. Each one has nine branches, with a variable number of arms coming off each branch, and each arm ends in a sconce for a fat candle, into which a wraith Moliated into candle form is meant to be set and set alight.

When a soulfire crystal touches the tip of one of these candles, it immediately begins burning. When all of the candles have been set alight, they begin to break down into raw Passion. One point of Corpus per candle per hour is transformed into a haze of ambient Pathos that fills the room. Each candle possesses between 7 and 10 Corpus, so they can burn for quite some time before needing to be replaced. As soon as one candle gutters out, however, the candelabra's effect fades.

These items are thought of as decadent and cruel, which is why they're mandatory accessories for most high-end Stygian parties. The price of the candles with which to stock a candelabra is exorbitant, but the effect it produces is such that many wraiths will gladly pay it.

eMap (Level 3 Artifact)

It's easier than it looks for an Artificer to get lost on the Electron Highway, particularly one who is young and inexperienced with Inhabit. Without proper guidance or a lot of luck, it's easy to run smack into a dead end or wind up miles from the intended destination.

Which is why the Artificers' Guild, ever practical, created eMaps. Sheets of hammered souls, they glisten bright green, and somehow manage to map the entire Electron Highway. Capable of being folded up like an earthly road map, the eMap waits for its owner to visualize her destination, then maps the shortest route to it. It takes a point of Pathos and a single touch to activate the eMap; once that is done, the route to the target site appears on the map as a bright line, one that the wraith can follow all the way there.

Stygian Steel Armor (Level 3 Artifact)

Not many can claim to own such a prize. Highly ornate and often decorated with crests and other seemingly nonfunctional elements, the armor is actually quite serviceable. Each suit is different, ranging from expansions of hoplite armor to full-blown medieval plate mail. What matters is that in each case, the wearer's torso is protected.

Stygian steel armor can take 10 full levels of damage before being destroyed. Suits can be repaired if damaged, and some of them have additional powers, such as amplifying the wearer's Arcanoi.

Stygian Wall Flies (Level 3 Artifact)

Messengers and spies, these cunningly crafted simulacra of Skinlands insects can go anywhere in the level of reality (Stygia or the Shadowlands) to observe and report, and only the sharpest-eyed wraiths (Perception + Awareness, difficulty 7) can spot them.

By spending 2 Pathos, a fly's owner can look through the eyes of his Artifact, no matter how far away it is. Add a third point, and he can hear as well; a fourth allows him to speak through it. All effects last for one hour, at which point more Pathos must be spent.

Though they are versatile and wide-ranging, Stygian Wall Flies are also fragile. For this reason, they're generally used in safe areas or on assignments where they're not likely to be detected. they can fly at 2x normal walking pace, but can only sustain 3 levels of damage before becoming disabled.

A rare variant of the Stygian Wall Fly (level 4 Artifact) can teleport back to its owner, though this power is generally used under only the most dire of circumstances.

Living Chains (Level 4 Artifact)

Made from Stygian steel, not soulsteel, these chains are not used to imprison. Rather, they empower the wearer. Once activated, the chains anchor themselves in the back of their user, doing 1 point of aggravated damage (which cannot be healed until the chains are removed). The remainder of the jet-black links wrap themselves around the wearer, effectively giving her the equivalent of a set of soulsteel armor as well as an offensive weapon. At the wielder's command, the chains can strike independent targets up to 20 feet away.

Living Chains cost 1 Pathos to activate for a scene. They're considered to be melee weapons, and offer the user an additional 3 dice in combat. They can either grapple the target (3 successes on a Strength roll, difficulty 6 to break free) or inflict Strength + 3 non-aggravated damage on a successful strike.

Fetterguard (Level 5 Artifact)

Few Artifacts are more precious — or more precarious — than the Fetterguard. Appearing as nothing more than a small soulsteel box, inside it holds miniature versions of its owner's Fetters. Each of these must be made by the wraith herself, though whether she does it through the forge, through Moliate, or through putting together bits and bobs she recovered in the Underworld makes no difference. As long as these icons remain safe within the box, no harm will come to them in the real world, and even supernatural attempts at damaging them will somehow go awry.

The downside is that the wraith must have the Fetterguard with her at all times. If anyone opens the box who is not the owner, the protections on the Fetters fade instantly and the miniatures melt away. This shock costs the wraith a point of Willpower for every Fetter represented, down to a minimum of 1.

To activate a Fetterguard, a wraith must first craft the representations of her Fetters. Next comes the investment of a point of Willpower and a point of Pathos in each. Then finally, the box is sealed at the cost of 2 more points of Pathos.

Soulfire and Souled Weapons (Variable Level Artifact)

Soulfire crystals are Pathos given solid form, and their concentrated energy is enough to do anything from melt souls in a forge to powering weaponized masks to keeping relic turntables spinning. Distilled by the Usurers' Guild, the blood-red crystals can be used to fuel relics and Artifacts so that the item's user doesn't have to.

The smallest soulfire crystals hold 1 point of Pathos and are tiny; the largest are the size of an engine block and can hold 50 points of Pathos. Most common, however, are crystals about the size of a 12-ounce can that can safely hold 10 points. Relics designed or modified to be run on soulfire crystals generally have a socket for this size crystal, which can be plugged in and allowed to power things up. Such items are called "souled."

For firearms, crystals can be affixed to the grip or butt by an Artificer. Each bullet fired requires spending the weapon's Pathos cost, which gets deducted from the crystal. This can get expensive quickly, so clever Artificers have come up with multiple crystal mountings and other devices to ensure that hunting expeditions don't run out of juice at a bad moment.

It is said that Spectres have their own version of soulfire. These reddish-black crystals, called bloodfire, contain Angst rather than Pathos, but otherwise can be used in precisely the same way.

Skin Artifacts

The first Skin Artifacts were made from the carcass of a titanic plasmic, which was dragged to Nhudri's forge by Charon himself. There, Charon instructed the great smith to make good use of the slain beast, and left him alone to do his work. Nhudri labored night and day over the pieces of the carcass, finally creating the first Skin Artifacts and swearing he would never work with that material again. Never had he worked something that seemed to willfully thwart his every intention.

Since then, the term has come to mean any Artifact made from part of a killed plasmic. All Skin Artifacts require 2 Pathos a day to maintain their active status, otherwise they deactivate. To reactivate a Skin Artifact requires a full day and 4 Pathos. Any botch rolled while using one of these items gives the wraith a point of temporary Angst, and as a result, most Legionnaires don't like using Skin Artifacts any more than they have to.

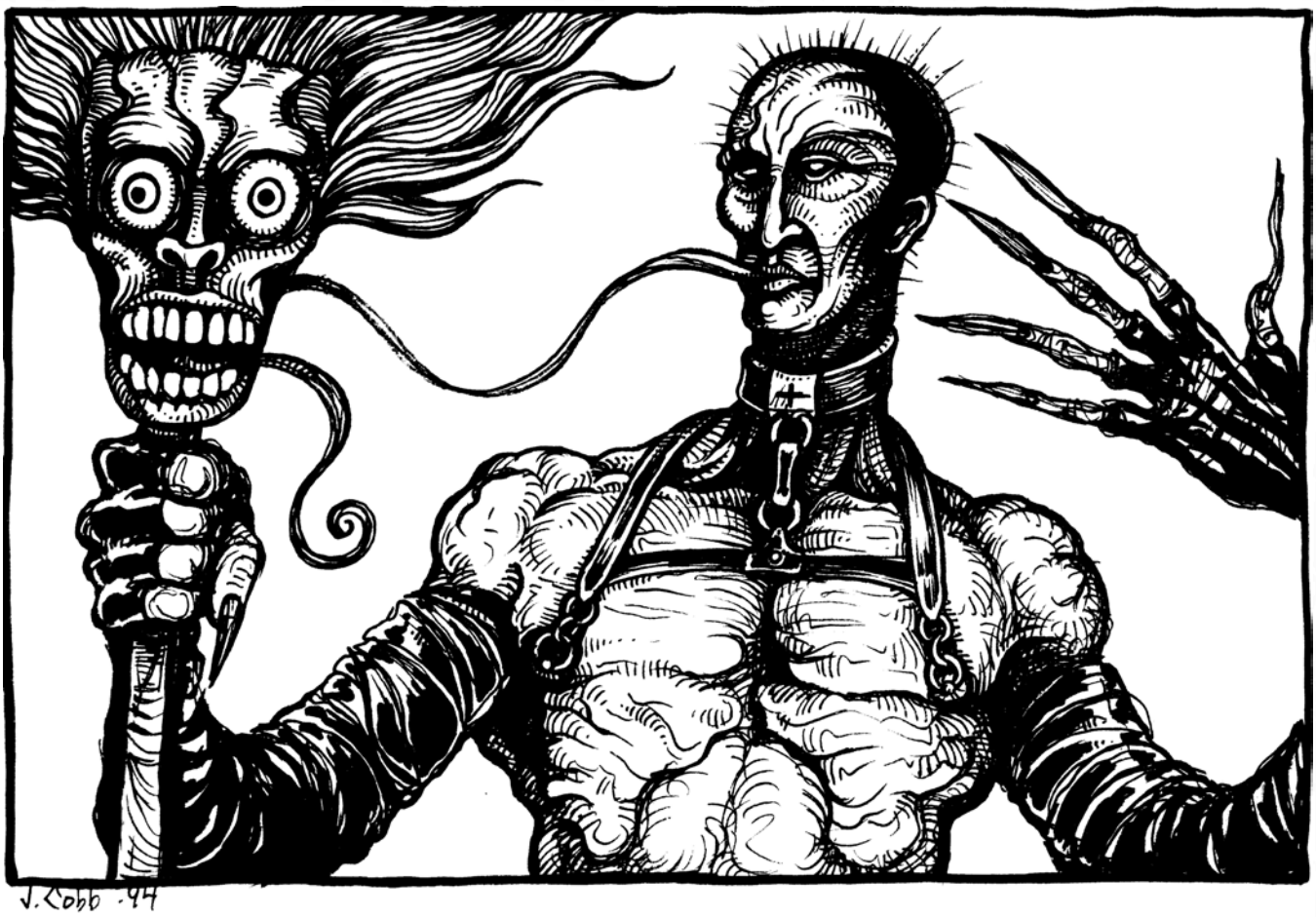
Beasthide (Level 1 Skin Artifact)

Beasthide is exactly what it sounds like, a square of tanned skin taken from a plasmic or other such beast. The skin is rough and scaly, and is a noxious green in color, but it does have one admirable quality. When used to polish a relic or Stygian steel blade, it somehow sharpens it beyond what it was capable of holding before, giving the blade +1 damage dice in the next conflict. The effect lasts for the duration of the battle. The typical piece of Beasthide has a dozen uses in it before it falls to shreds.

Bloodwebs (Level 2 Skin Artifact)

Nhudri took Charon's commandment that nothing go to waste seriously, as evidenced by his creation of the Bloodwebs. Blue-black netting formed from the veins and arteries of the great beast, Bloodwebs can be thrown over a target at a range of up to 10 yards (difficulty 6, two successes needed). Once they hit, they will entangle their victim and start sucking Pathos out of him. A Bloodweb will steal 1 point of Pathos for every turn they remain on a wraith. anyone hit with a Bloodweb must roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 5) to stay on his feet. Escape requires another Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7); otherwise, the victim is entangled.

A Bloodweb may store up to 10 points in Pathos before becoming sated. At that point, it glows bright blue and drops off its victim to sit, twitching, on the ground. The Pathos contained within can be harvested by any wraith willing to suck on one of the veins and arteries of the Bloodweb to draw it forth, as all other methods of extracting it have proven a



failure. A sated Bloodweb cannot be used until at least some of the Pathos has been drained.

Shroudripper Gloves (Level 3 Skin Artifact)

Made from finest plasmic-skin leather and crowned with the carefully harvested talons of Shroudrippers, these gloves are a deadly addition to a wraith's arsenal. In addition to being able to soak up one die's worth of damage for each glove worn, the gloves also do an additional two dice of aggravated damage on any successful attack. Furthermore, they leak Shroudripper acid into any wound they cause, making the wound impossible to heal for 24 hours.

Wail Tongue (Level 4 Skin Artifact)

It is said that the Wail Tongue is what made Nhudri decide once and for all that he was done working with Skin Artifacts. It's a sliver of the tongue of a plasmic, inlaid with a network of fine, Stygian-steel wire. This foul device must then be placed by a wraith in his own mouth, where it will immediately and painfully devour the wraith's own tongue. The procedure costs the wraith 2 Corpus points (which can be healed normally) and adds 3 temporary Angst. In addition, the wraith's speech patterns permanently change, becoming harsher, more metallic, and oftentimes flat-out chilling.

Once the Wail Tongue is in place, it gives the wraith access to both level 5 Keening Arcanoi, which the wraith can use as if he had earned the powers naturally. The wraith can also talk to Spectres in such a way that he's immune to immediate attack.

A Wail Tongue can only be removed by hacking it out. Even Moliate won't work to remove it once it's taken root. Only the blade, followed by cauterization with soulfire, will do.

Guardian Orb (Level 5 Skin Artifact)

Bulky but incredibly potent, this Artifact consists of a milky white, beach-ball-sized eyeball, complete with optic nerve, set within a thin circular brace made of Stygian steel. A smaller ring is worn by the Orb's user, behind whom the Orb will bob and float. Not only does the Orb allow its owner to see behind herself, it also maneuvers itself between its owner and any incoming projective attacks. Each Orb has 20 Corpus points, and it will move to intercept anything from a paper airplane to a careening relic truck. To do so requires a successful roll (Dexterity + Dodge, difficulty 7), with the number of successes indicating how many attacks the orb can deflect that turn.

Orbs can be regenerated with the infusion of Pathos at a rate of 1 point per hour. If a Guardian Orb takes all its Corpus level in damage, it splits open and a foul-smelling, corrosive humour spills out and covers the entire immediate area.

Spectre Artifacts

Spectral Artifacts have but one goal: pain. Created by Artificers, Masquers, and Alchemists who have succumbed to their Shadows and become Spectres, they display a twisted ingenuity and a sadistic genius in their design. Lovingly crafted, they are then dropped into an unsuspecting Underworld in order to wreak havoc in the hands of those who really ought to know better but who can't resist.

Forgebait (Level 1 Spectre Artifact)

A Forgebait looks like an obolus. Close examination (Perception + Awareness, difficulty 8) will show that it's a clever forgery, but most wraiths would have no reason to suspect such. The Forgebait will continue to act like an obolus (moaning, etc.) until such time as the wraith tries to use it to pay for something. At that moment, it will disintegrate into a foul-smelling slime. The stink will stay with the would-be buyer for a week, letting all who pass know that this is a wraith whose coin is not to be trusted.

Lucky's Mr. Bunny (Level 2 Spectre Relic)

All Lucky's Mr. Bunny does is talk, but that's enough. Appearing as the relic of an adorably cute stuffed animal, the relic has been modified by Spectral artisans. Its voice apparatus, which used to spout things like "I love Mommy!" now belts out a constant barrage of belittling insults, barbed put downs, and general insults. Capable of walking under its own power (and of following a wraith or Circle it's decided it's attached to), the bunny will have a field day taunting them with occasionally funny, always cutting remarks. Even the strongest wraith will ultimately have enough, and that's where the fun starts.

As soon as a wraith gets angry enough to attack the bunny, it will start spurting fake blood everywhere, its limbs will detach and go flying, and its eyes will fill with tears. It will mournfully howl things like "Why are you hurting me?" and "I love you!" as the assault continues, and the voices of invisible children can be heard bawling in the background. Just before it dies, the bunny will say "I'm sowwwy," and then flop over and disintegrate, leaving plenty of juicy material for even the most reticent Shadow to work with.

It is unknown how many Mr. Bunnys there are in the Underworld. What is known is that the company that manufactured them in the Skinlands went out of business after their warehouse mysteriously caught fire and their entire stock, thousands upon thousands of Mr. Bunny dolls, went up in flames.

Memory Net (Level 3 Spectre Artifact)

Skilled Spectres can often pull useful flotsam from the Tempest, but even the most talented have uneven luck. However, they can up their odds if they use a Memory Net. Supposedly made from the hair and bone of a captured angelic, a Memory Net is a golden net of shimmering strands attached to a bone hoop and rod construction. The entire structure, on close examination, bears a suspicious resemblance to a human arm. The diameter of

the hoop's opening is three feet, which is the maximum size for something to be plucked from the waves.

There are precisely 17 Memory Nets in existence, and all are identical. They also have a tendency to move from owner to owner at a remarkable pace, as any Spectre possessing one is likely to lose it, be killed, or otherwise find themselves divested of their treasure before too long.

When utilized properly, a Memory Net increases the Spectre's chance of pulling a desired item or memory from the roiling Tempest. All Grasp the Passing rolls are at -3 difficulty when a Memory Net is employed. As for those inexperienced Spectres with no knowledge of the Tempest-Weaving Dark Arcanos, they can still try to use the Net. By rolling Wits + Awareness (difficulty 7), then can attempt to rescue something useful from the storm.

Wraiths attempting to make use of a Memory Net run some risk. They too can try to use the device to pull something out of the Tempest (Wits + Awareness, difficulty 8). However, any passing Spectre seeing the Net will recognize it and immediately go about attempting to repatriate it. Even worse, on a botch the wraith will catch a hold of *something* large swimming in the depths of the storm, and will be dragged under by whatever they've managed to accidentally snag.

Maggot Revolver (Level 4 Spectre Souled Weapon)

Foul in name, foul in function, the Maggot Revolver does exactly what one might suspect. Based on a Colt Anaconda (difficulty 7, range 35 yards, rate 2, Angst cost of two per round, damage 6) with a bloodfire crystal affixed to its grip (12 Angst). Rather than shooting bullets, however, the gun launches revolting creations called Shadow Maggots, one maggot is delivered on each success on a damage roll, and the turn after impact the Shadow Maggots begin boring their way into the target. This attack delivers an additional die of damage per maggot present in the target's Corpus each turn until they are removed. In addition, the pain from a maggot's feasting is so excruciating that the victim is at +1 difficulty on all rolls for each maggot he is infested with.

Burrowing maggots can be removed either through Moliate or by simply digging after them through their boreholes, though the latter process tends to wound the victim rather severely. Castigate 3 (Purify) can also be used, killing one maggot per success rolled without doing any further damage to the wraith. Any wraith foolish enough to use the revolver receives a point of temporary Angst for each round fired. Wraiths who undergo Catharsis while firing a Maggot Revolver tend to suddenly turn the gun on their friends and allies, or on themselves.

Bean Nighe Caul (Level 5 Spectre Artifact)

One of the most revolting Spectral Artifacts known to exist is the hideous bodysuit called the Bean Nighe Caul. Crafted from the tattered, torn remains of various wraiths' faces, the Caul's components have been caught forever in moments of tormented anguish. Any Spectre who owns the Caul must spend a Corpus a week to feed it, or the Caul will start to feed on itself until there's nothing left of it.

The very things that make the Caul anathema to wraiths make it a prize among Spectres. The faces in the Caul never stop moaning and weeping, and in combat they give the user the equivalent of Keening 4 (Initiate and Common arts). Furthermore, anyone wearing the cloak is gifted with 360-degree vision, making him insanely difficult to sneak up on. He can also draw on the memories, emotions, and skills of any of the wraiths making up the Caul (Subterfuge + Charisma, difficulty 7, costs 2 points of temporary Angst). A success indicates that the Caul has dredged up a useful memory or emotion (negative ones are particularly useful for feeding enemies' Dark Passions), activated a skill not readily available to him, or augmented his existing related skills by one die for every success made on the initial roll.

Any wraith attempting to put on the Bean Nighe Caul is making a terrible error. Not only is the wraith unable to use the Caul's abilities, but any attempt by the wraith to use her own Arcanoi is at +3 difficulty. Furthermore, the wraith loses a point of Corpus per turn the Caul is worn, and the suddenly difficult task of taking it off requires a Dexterity roll (difficulty 7, two successes needed). Spectres enjoy watching unsuspecting wraiths try on the Caul, realize their mistake, and then flail about trying and failing to escape.

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Chapter 13: The Other Dark Kingdoms

Stygia is but one among many of the kingdoms of the dead. It may (or may not) be in ascendance now, but this was not always the case, and it may not be the case in the future.

Over the centuries, every culture has had its own version of the Underworld. Some evolved and changed and endured, informing those that came after. Others retreated back into the deeper Underworld when their earthly counterparts died out or transformed to new identities. Still others were brutalized, wiped out in wars of conquest and aggression, their afterlives falling to Oblivion as their Skinlands homes were overrun.

And some — no one knows how many — endured. To date, Stygia has made contact with a bare handful, establishing diplomatic, military, and trade relations despite differences in outlook and metaphysics. Some are allies, some are uneasy trade partners, and some are rivals, hidden or overt. But regardless, every land of the dead is its own power.

Each Dark Kingdom has its own model; each Dark Kingdom's wraiths manifest in their own way. The dead of the Yellow Springs (or as Stygian wraiths might refer to it, the Dark Kingdom of Jade) would no sooner manifest a Shadow than Stygian wraiths would emerge from their Cauls with the *hun* and *p'o* of a subject of Qin Shihuang.

The journey between Dark Kingdoms is long and perilous. While access to the various realms' Skinlands are a mere matter of geography (tricky enough for most wraiths), finding the deeper heart requires journeying deep into the Tempest. Traders and Harbingers who know the routes between Dark Kingdoms become fabulously wealthy, assuming they're not swallowed up by the storm en route.

The Dark Kingdom of Jade

Ruled by the Emperor Yu Huang, the Dark Kingdom of Jade is perhaps the best known of the other Dark Kingdoms in Stygia; trade often flourished between the two, and the numerous Chinatowns spaced throughout various Necropoli provided a chance for familiarity to grow. The Chinese afterlife has been to all observers one of the most stable, populous, and rich kingdoms of the dead.

An Empire of Hun and P'o

Whereas Stygian wraiths view their postmortem internal struggles in terms of Psyche and Shadow, wraiths from the Yellow Springs use the terms *hun* and *p'o*. However, the terms don't directly translate. In the Yellow Springs, the very notion of a soul is different than what is taken for granted in Stygia.

Chinese wraiths see the soul as two distinct parts, *hun* and *p'o*. These exist simultaneously, and conflict and cooperate in a yin-and-yang-like manner. Each portion of the soul has different goals and responsibilities, and at death they are supposed to separate and each go their own way.

When they don't, what results is a wraith, one whose soul is fractured but unable to separate. That very lack of separation prevents the wraith from fulfilling its duties and moving on. Indeed, most Jade wraiths are shocked and horrified when their Cauls are removed.

The *hun* is roughly analogous to the Psyche. It represents the spirituality, or perhaps the higher functions, of the wraith. This can represent compassion and love, but also deviousness and other antisocial behaviors connected with the consciousness and mind. There is nothing morally or ethically superior or enlightened about the *hun*; it is of the spirit, with all that implies. What the *hun* does have is a connection with the ebb and flow of the universe, as this is the part of the wraith meant to reincarnate into future lives.

The *p'o*, on the other hand, represents the part of the spirit that identifies most with the physical remains of the wraith and to the physical world. It is baser and more materialistic. But at the same time, this is the part of the spirit most tied to family and to Fetters, and the obligations of life. Because the *p'o* is the part of the spirit that stays and guards the body, the burial sites, and the family obligations, it cares not for Transcendence or Oblivion.

Of the two, the *hun* is the portion stuck in the afterlife without guidance. It could try for P'eng Lai, Paradise, or Nirvana, based on the complete denial of the *p'o* and its Fetters. But many choose to live in Shadowlands, adapting to their new situation as best they can.

The Imperial Map

Geographically speaking, Jade reapers securely control all of China and extend their reach northwards into Mongolia where it borders Stygia in Siberia. Eastward, they occupy Japan and Korea. Southwest, the empire reaches Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Thailand is in its sphere of influence, but not without its complications. Jade reapers can be found expanding as far as Polynesia as the emperor extends his influence, carried by waves of mainland emigration. Rumors claim that the western Necropoli of North America and thus of Stygia are the next targets of Yu Huang's agenda for expansion, but it is a mystery if those are his true targets or if it's simply fearmongering propaganda from sources in either Stygia or Yellow Springs.

Yellow Springs is composed of a little over 20 provinces, which mirror many of China's modern-day provinces, which in turn resemble the ancient kingdom borders of history. The main or middle capital is in Xi'an, which is close to the ancient burial palace of Qin Shihuang. He now rules as the Yu Huang, Jade Emperor, undisputed conqueror and leader of the Dark Kingdom of Jade. The Jade Emperor has at least 4 other capitals and numerous palaces throughout Yellow Springs to firmly establish an imperial presence wherever he needs one, but the beating heart of the empire, at least in the Shadowlands, is in Xi'an.

Each province is headed by a governor who is responsible for maintaining the peace and productivity of his territory, as well as the Necropoli within. He is in charge of a bustling bureaucratic and security detail to help with domestic issues, but will almost always remain deferential to imperial decrees and authority. In turn, Necropoli have mayors with much the same responsibility and reverence to provincial authority.

There are, of course, exceptions. Willful and ambitious mayors may only be superficially deferential if their Necropolis is powerful or important enough. And in certain provinces, capitals' mayors are more responsible to imperial, not provincial, authority.

In the Shadowlands, pagodas are more common than not. Modern high rises are starting to creep in, but have not yet taken hold. Ancient family homes and commercial stores of ghostly mud and wood still dominate behind the ancient city walls. Narrow alleyways wind their way through the Necropolis, with never a right angle to be found. Outside the city walls, where for centuries there was nothing but farmland, shades of industrial parks are slowly taking shape.

From the perspective of a citizen in Yellow Springs, this is strange indeed. It's true that times change and buildings are built and razed — but for the most part this change was always a subtle one. But in the last 20 years the changes seem like a cataclysm. The high rises and industrial parks became a wilderness surrounding the city and home they know well, threatening to engulf them in a wave of alienating modernity. Only the extremely recently dead have any idea what these

structures are, much less how to navigate through them, which gives them an edge on older, more powerful ghosts who might normally expect deference.

With a living society and a dead one thoroughly indoctrinated by both Legalist and Confucian teachings, a Yellow Springs societal unit firmly resembles nothing so much as an extended family, and indeed, that is what they are called. Some families are related by actual blood, but just as many are adoptive. Over the centuries, these family units splinter and merge, though at a much slower pace in the Shadowlands than in the Skinlands. In the meantime, however, they exercise a tremendous amount of power both politically and over their members. A wealthy, prestigious family with members in high-ranking positions is a force to be reckoned with, just as a new, poor family without patrons or ranking members is liable to make only slow progress.

But when you are in a family or clan in the Dark Kingdom of Jade, family hierarchy demands corresponding respect. The more senior the wraith, the more respect should be given. Naturally, there can be family friction and, depending on their previous lives, aging patriarchs in life might chafe at being junior clan members in the afterlife.

The reality is, being a wraith in Yellow Springs requires knowing the rules both written and unwritten in the afterlife; a wraith needs the experience and support of their family to prosper. Regardless of the family's focus, wraiths still address each other using familial terms (e.g. aunt, older brother, younger cousin, grandmother.) It is rare that multiple generations of families all become wraiths. But the matter of having a family or clan to watch your back is one of necessity and familiarity.

If one is too willful or independent, there is always the option of joining the imperial army. Yu Huang is an ambitious leader, and his plans for expansion coupled with the empire's need of souls for the raw material of White Jade is insatiable. The outer territories of Japan, Korea, Mongolia and others are for the most part conquered and occupied by his legions.

Not all imperial soldiers are orphans or misanthropes. In fact, there are more than a few clans made up of retired veterans. It's no secret that many of the souls of the Jade Kingdom come from those occupied territories outside of classical China. But as more and more contact is made with other Dark Kingdoms, there is a need to defend the realm and expand the Jade Emperor's beneficial rule to other parts of the Shadowlands, across the Tempest.

Bureaucracy

Of all the various Dark Kingdoms, ghost stories of the Dark Kingdom of Jade usually begin not with the details of tragic death of the wraith but instead with the position the wraith holds in the government bureaucracy of the afterlife. To be sure, not all imperial wraiths are mandarins whose greatest dream is of government service. But the bureaucracy is a large part of the Jade afterlife. It is definitely a certain path to security and fortune, at least for the well learned and studious.

> While being well versed in the texts of the old classics is important for testing, the wise student knows that some scholars did not allow their deaths to put a stop to their works. In fact, dying gave them a grand new perspective on philosophies that they couldn't possibly have had in life. The required reading for the all-important civil service exam is intimidating and long, but it is not restricted to works written in the Skinlands.

The Seat of Empire

While Xi'an is the capital of the empire in the Shadowlands, there is a more remote seat of power as well. The emperor's Jade Palace sits deep within the Tempest, reachable by the great Imperial Highway which leads there from the Necropolis at Xi'an. Here the emperor spends most of his time, moving at will between the 251 palaces he maintains within the larger complex.

Surrounding the emperor is his court, a seemingly endless cluster of bureaucrats, hangers-on, sycophants, petitioners, and more, all drawn to the emperor like moths to a flame. The Four Magistrates, the leaders of the four branches of the imperial government, can be found here, as can the emperor's personal advisors, and representatives of the more powerful families, as everyone seeks to bend the emperor's ear to their advantage.

And while Yu Huang is the emperor, the empire cannot function on his dictates alone. It is too big, there are too many decisions to be made, and the emperor's time is valuable. As a result, the empire is divided into four equal departments, each of which has its own responsibilities and rights. They are:

The Protectors of the Prosperous Realm — The so-called "watchdogs of the common good," they are the ears and eyes of the emperor. They can go anywhere, make any request of any citizen and expect to have it obeyed, and search where they will. Note that the Protectors are not, however, judge, jury, and executioner. They investigate and, if they find evidence of treason, they can make accusations to the appropriate authority in one of the other three branches. Still, they are much feared. The appearance of a member of the Protectorate can make even the most innocent and devoted wraith feel as if the weight of the empire is about to descend.

The Judges of the Dead — The Judges of the Dead interpret and adjudicate the laws of the empire for the citizenry. They are the ones who hear cases and hand down decrees, and it is an open secret that they have considerable latitude in their interpretations of the law so long as the areas they are responsible for are kept happy and prosperous. Judges hear both civil and criminal cases, and can draw upon a nearly limitless volume of statutes and precedents in making their judgments.

The Imperial Army — Technically, every wraith in the empire can be called up for military service. In more practical terms, there is an extensive body of soldiers, both professional

and volunteer, dedicated to enacting the emperor's will on the battlefield. Only members of the military are allowed to possess weapons, and as such every family generally encourages a few members to join up for a tour of duty or two. Furthermore, the imperial army is a great path to promotion, wealth, and opportunity for those that can take it; the Conquered Territories are key to supplying the empire with the raw materials of white jade, and great riches can be made there.

The Jade Censors — The Censors are responsible for ensuring new wraiths are reaped and treated appropriately, as well as for deciding all questions of ownership of relics, Artifacts, and souls. They are also tasked with cataloging every soul who enters the empire, and they assign the tax duties on items brought into the Underworld.

Entering Imperial Service

The civil service examinations are given once every 10 years. They are used for both placement and promotions. Those who've taken the examination multiple times know that it is weighted towards the more classically educated, and heavily favors Legalist teachings. Naturally, teachings that are patriotic and almost worshipful of the Jade Emperor are mandatory knowledge. But teachings of math, poetry, and Arcanoi are also heavily represented. Ideally, this means the civil service is filled with well-rounded, diligent wraiths with wide interests and knowledge. In actuality, it tends to favor those who know the test's foibles and how best to take advantage of them

Those that do well on the test can begin climbing the ranks of the bureaucracy. However, the skills needed to enter the ranks are very different from those needed to advance in them. Intelligence will allow a wraith to enter the ranks, but a keen sense of cunning, clan influence, and luck are what allows one to climb.

At first glance, the pace of movement up the ranks can seem glacial. Wraiths here cannot rely of old age and death to clear the ranks of seniority and create opportunity. For the impatient wraith, then, the answer to this conundrum is twofold. The first is opportunity in the Conquered Territories. While growth in Yellow Springs is slow, there are always lots of positions to be filled in the Conquered Territories, both to replace those who fail to do their duties and keep their quotas and to succeed those who successfully leave dangerous positions through promotions back to the kingdom proper.

The second way has do to with the economics of pathos.

The Economics of Pathos

A unique symbiosis occurs when a person who follows Chinese funeral traditions passes away. The Chinese Quick have a great deal of lore concerning dealing with the dead. Lanterns are lit, creating a path to the grave and final resting place, and much care is taken to not allow the wraith to attach to the home as a haunt. *Feng shui* is used to carefully choose gravesites where the wraith can look upon his family home from a respectful distance without interfering with day-to-day life.

Offerings and prayers are submitted to the dead. Paper money known as hell money is burnt, as well as paper objects resembling useful objects. As the paper burns, the wisps of smoke rising towards the heavens transport economic support and gifts to the intended receiver. The objects take form in the Shadowlands, but not as usable relics. They rather become raw materials that can be transformed into portable, tradable Pathos. As such, a great deal of a wraith's wealth is determined by the actions of their living descendants.

This is not the only way Jade wraiths get Pathos. They can get Pathos much like Stygian wraiths, though their Passions are usually tied to their families. These familial obligations require the wraith to try to ensure the prosperity of the blood they've left behind. After all, the more prosperous the family, the better they can afford to make offerings to their ancestors.

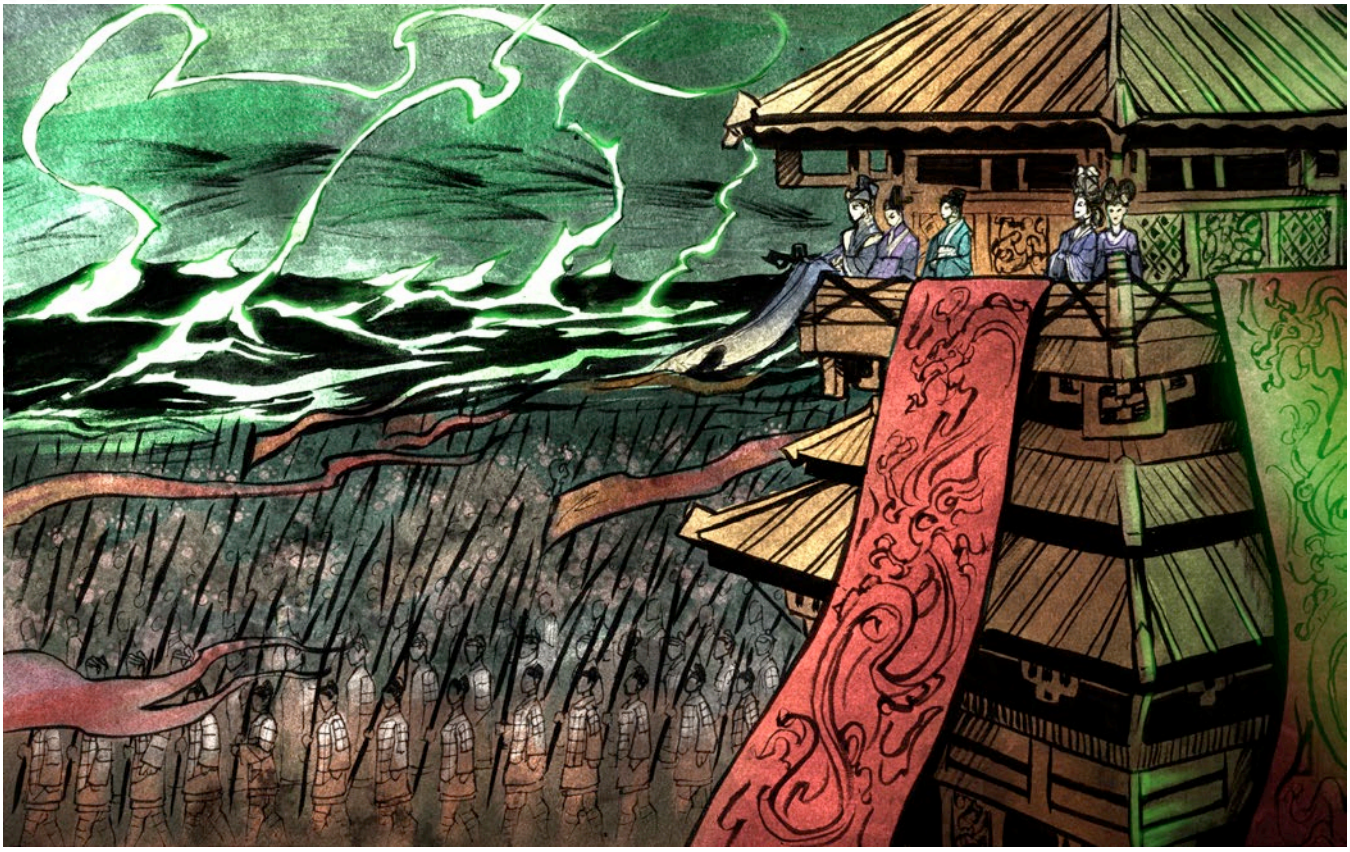
However, unless you are an ancestor so famous or so renowned as to echo down through the ages, your personal offerings are forgotten within a generation or two. This gives the most recently deceased wraiths the most access to the paper Pathos currency. The currency can be used to help enrich the coffers of the family or it can be used to help bribe one's way up the bureaucratic food chain. The influx of new wraiths and new currency help ensure a natural turnover in the heavenly ranks.

The Rise of Qin Shihuang

As far back as written history extends, empires would rise and fall in the Yellow Springs. Emperors and kings, revered in life and honored in death, would establish a kingdom where they would rule, supported by soldiers and offerings as long as they were remembered. They would induct wraiths into their kingdoms until a newer or more powerful wraith arrived with their own supporters, and then the cycle would repeat.

Separated by language, by clans, and by generations, dynasties would rise and fall in the Shadowlands of the east. In truth, politics of the Shadowlands mirrored those of the Skinlands. That is, until the arrival of Qin Shihuang. Known as the first emperor to unite China, Qin Shihuang conquered an empire and succeeded in uniting all of China under his rule. He created an imperial bureaucracy that could rule over multiple provinces. He established standardized weights and measures, connected roads, and started connecting the walls of many separate states into what became known as the Great Wall. But most importantly, he burned books until the only surviving written script was the one his empire used, thus uniting China under one single written language.

Fearful of death and of the many enemies he sent to the Shadowlands. Qin Shihuang started a two-pronged strategy. One was to attempt to prolong his life with an elixir of immortality, the other to prepare for his demise and protect himself from the dark spirits waiting to kill him in life and to torture him in death. Five years before his death, Qin Shihuang ordered the construction of his tomb at the foot of Li Mountain, a half day's journey from the city of Xi'an.



The tomb was a city in and of itself. Rumored to be have been built by over 700,000 men, the palace tomb had moats of mercury, jade, and gold, and mystical artifacts plundered from the conquered kingdoms that made Shihuang's empire. In the meantime, scholars, magicians, and necromancers from all over the empire were ordered to study and learn as much as they could about the afterlife.

When Qin Shihuang died in 210 BCE, his arrival hit the Shadowlands like a thunderbolt. He arrived with thousands of his most treasured servants and advisors, hundreds of jade Artifacts and relics, the magicians and scholars he had begun to collect years prior, and the spirits of thousands of his imperial guardsmen imbued into living terra cotta statues in full armor and on horseback.

Known as the Immortal Guard, these soldiers were nigh invulnerable, with unstoppable mystical powers and Arcanoi never before seen. Ghostly Chinese kings and warlords quickly tried to form alliances to stop this new threat, but they were systematically swept aside by clever campaigning and mystical might. From his relic fortress, Qin Shihuang stood resolute against waves and waves of enemies he had conquered just years before.

Lung Wang

During the last, desperate days of the initial resistance to Qin Shihuang's march across Yellow Springs, an opposing general named Li K'un made an alliance with an ancient Malfean calling itself Lung Wang. The great beast first opposed the emperor at a climactic battle at the Great Wall, but when that proved inconclusive, it resorted to more devious means. Disguising itself, it lured the emperor into the Tempest, and there the two did battle. The emperor, armed with the legendary Ju-i, a magical scepter of True Jade made by the magician Fu Xia, smote the beast, cast it down, and wrung its secrets from it. Then, the emperor emerged, transformed and brimming with power, and once again took up the reins of power in order to build his empire.

Or so the official story goes.

Unfortunately for the second emperor of the Qin, but fortunately for his father, rebel forces in life had slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Qin soldiers in a successful attempt to overthrow Qin dynasty rule in the three years following Qin Shihuang's death. Now the first emperor of China could expand his control in the Shadowlands at the expense of his legacy in the lands of the living. His enemies and subjects of his enemies were enslaved so he could continue building his empire in death where he couldn't in life. Except now, he had all the time in the world.

With fresh levies from his son's defeated armies and the mystical juggernauts that were his Immortal Guard, Qin Shihuang quickly secured the eastern Shadowlands in less than a decade. It was then that he decided to anoint himself with the name of the highest of gods in the Chinese Pantheon. Qin Shihuang became Yu Huang, god of the heavens, the Jade Emperor. And as such he has reigned, though Maelstrom, war, rebellion and even peace, ever since.

The Empire Today

The empire finds itself at a crossroads. The ever-increasing size of the empire means the emperor's forces, particularly the Immortal Guard, are stretched thin, and brushfire rebellions spring up everywhere. Japan, in particular, continues to resist. Meanwhile, the empire's demand for White Jade remains insatiable, demanding more conquest and continuing the cycle.

And yet, the Emperor remains, eternal and untouchable, secure in his power.

Denizens of the Empire

Kuei

The wraiths of those who were buried improperly, *kuei* are mindless, hungry ghosts. While normally a *p'o* stays with and protects the body of the deceased, when the proper rites are not observed the *p'o* can become warped and vengeful, and transform into a *kuei*. They are not Spectres, but rather something unique and uniquely dangerous.

Kuei rarely stray far from their bodies, the corpse serving as their only Fetter. They have only basic motivations — find peace, get vengeance on those who wronged them, and find an end to their pain. It's impossible to communicate with them on more than an animal level; even the best *kuei* trainers the Empire has to offer understand this. The Way of the Farmer Arcanos can be used to control *kuei*, but beyond that, they can only understand simple orders.

Kuei often organize into packs, and their teeth and claws make these groups fearsomely dangerous to lone wraiths wandering in their territory. Captured *kuei* are sometimes turned into the equivalent of barghests. These creatures, now called *kuei-go* or "bad dogs," are used for sentries or hunting. *Kuei-go* pit fights are also popular in certain, less savory areas of the empire, though they are officially frowned upon.

Kuei do have certain limitations. They are destroyed by exposure to sunlight, or by repeated contact with human bodily

fluids. *Kuei* can also be trapped within their own corpse by the application of jade to the eyes and tongue, imprisoning the hungry ghost within their body. And even if a *kuei* avoids these fates, it only has three years before succumbing to Oblivion. Rare cases have been known to endure longer, but they are few and far between.

Kuei can be rendered into White Jade, but the material that results is of inferior quality, and breaks down after a few months. They do have a few basic Passions, all related to family or corpse, and some possess mastery of a single level of various Arcanoi.

Sample *Kuei* Statistics:

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 0, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 4, Intimidation 3, Stealth 3

Arcanoi: Argos 1, Embody 1, Pandemonium 1, Outrage 1, Moliate 1

Passions: Five points related to their former home or their grave.

Willpower: 3

Pathos: 4

The claws and fangs of a *kuei* do aggravated damage.

Eunuchs

Eunuchs are the walking, talking, mindless repositories of knowledge of the empire. Drained of all Willpower and Moliated into a form best suited for functional record keeping, they store knowledge of imperial decrees, local proclamations, and whatever else they are told to record by their masters. Many are guarded by locks, with the key formed from the Eunuch's own Corpus.

Each of the branches of the imperial government has its own particular use for, and special type of, Eunuch. Eunuchs cannot lie, nor can they alter the information kept within them, and for these reasons they are considered utterly trustworthy.

The Immortal Guard

The most powerful force within the empire's military, the backbone of the emperor's power, and the most terrifying and awe-inspiring of the Emperor's servants, the Immortal Guardsmen are the elite soldiers that helped build an empire. Created by the legendary Fu Xia, they are the spirits of the best of the emperor's soldiers, bound up in the terra cotta bodies of the army buried with Qin Shihuang upon his death. Now, in the afterlife, they maintain their stone-hard exterior while being able to move with too-perfect smoothness and agility. Furthermore, they glow unnaturally in shades of red, orange, and other bright colors that have no place in the Underworld. To see them is to see something that by all rights should not be, and the discomfort their mere presence inspires is part of their power.

Originally, there were three regiments of Guardsmen, each 6,000 strong. And while it is almost impossible to destroy a member of the Guard, their irreplaceable numbers have been whittled down over the years. No one knows how many remain or where they are stationed, though the ever-expanding reach of the Empire dictates many must be deployed to the colonies. And yet, there always seems to be a small squad of Guardsmen present when needed.

The Guardsmen are the only wraiths who know the secrets of The Emperor's Chains. Only members of the Guard can use this Arcanos, and to even attempt to teach it (fruitlessly) to one outside the Guard means death. Guardsmen spend all their time training or in active deployment. They are given the best weapons the empire has to offer, and stand in the front line against rebels, Spectres, plasmics, or whatever other foes of the empire present themselves.

The Guard's great secret is that its members cannot acquire Pathos in the usual manner. Rather, they must be fed souls, with each soul supplying the Guardsman with the equivalent of several hundred stored Pathos. Only the emperor can feed the Guard, and the feeding takes place only in the greatest secrecy at the imperial palace at Xi'an.

Sample Guard Statistics

Footsoldier/Archer

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Conformist

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Martial Arts: *Shuai-Chiao* (soft) 3

Skills: Archery 4, Melee 4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Etiquette 2, Investigation 2, Law 3

Arcanos: Argos 2, Fatalism 2, Moliate 3, Chains of the Emperor 3

Pathos: 100 maximum

Fetters: Necropolis at Xi'an 5

Willpower: 7

Corpus: 12

Armor Rating: 5

Weapons: Jade spears, swords, and bows, all of which cause aggravated damage

The Wonders Beyond

Jade

Many of the Artifacts found in the empire are made from White Jade. This is a milky white material created from rendered wraiths, one which can be crafted into a variety of shapes. The garden-variety implements of the Yellow Springs are made of White Jade, which is sturdy enough and generally lasts a good long while. It can be shaped into weapons, armor, and pretty much anything else needed.

Most White Jade is forged from the unfortunate wraiths sentenced to hell; indeed, hell's real purpose is not the punishment of the wicked, but rather the relentless manufacture of White Jade for the empire's needs. Wraiths sentenced to hell

are relentlessly abused and worn down until they finally take their place on the Wheel of Law, which determines what they will be molded into. These wraiths are then fed to a grist mill and ground to bits. The resultant material is then smelted into an Artifact of White Jade.

Much rarer is True Jade. Pale green and much sought after, True Jade is what results when jade is buried with the body of someone who becomes a wraith. Skilled artisans can hammer True Jade into almost any form. It is incredibly hard and durable, and can hold an edge for centuries; a True Jade blade can slice though White Jade like it's cutting through water (difficulty 4). True Jade Artifacts are treasured. Many have been adapted to store Pathos, and they are rare and guarded jealously by their owners.

Ti Yu

Ti Yu, the Earth Prison, is the capital of what is colloquially known as hell. Set up by the emperor as a means of sourcing White Jade, it serves to punish criminals and dissidents. Now a thriving city in the Tempest, it can be reached only from the mountain Feng-tu. The journey to hell takes seven days, each of which features its own unique torments, and at the end, the prisoner is then subjected to a trial, found guilty, and turned over to all the new agonies the residents and architects of Ti Yu can conceive.

Chinatowns

In major Stygian Necropoli such as London, New York, and San Francisco, the skyline and architecture will suddenly shift to a series of gabled, inclined roofs with sweeping curvatures that rise at the corners. Bored guardsmen lounge at the pillars of giant gates that proclaim the entrance to the historical Chinatown. Many of the wraiths bustling to and fro will be those of Asian descent. While the Chinese wraiths are in the majority, Korean, Japanese, and other east-Asian nationalities are represented en masse. Even members of other Dark Kingdoms might be present, because this is a place of lower commerce, unofficial communication, and darker vices.

There are also equivalent Stygian settlements in Yellow Springs, often centered on churches. Macau, Singapore, and Shanghai's Bund are all marked by such. There's even a Midnight Express stop in Hong Kong, though this is heavily guarded by Imperial troops.

Mrs. Meng

There is one bit of respite on the road to hell, an evening at the house of the entity calling herself Mrs. Meng. Those wraiths who accept her hospitality, behave honorably and politely while they are her guests, and who refuse the offer of hellnotes she makes to bribe the guards may find themselves on a different path altogether, one that leads either back to the Yellow Springs or to Paradise. Or so the story goes.

Did You Try the Chinatown?

The markets of Chinatown are dense with competing stalls all selling the same product or stalls selling the most unique items or services. Many skilled wraiths with talents in Arcanoi usually only found in the Jade kingdom or elsewhere might be found here plying their trades. Others might be trading in Pathos coins, and still others might be slinging various relics new and old. Lost and stolen Stygian steel and White Jade objects can also find their way to the market. But buyer beware; not everything is what it seems.

Arcanoi and the Yellow Springs

By and large, the Stygian Arcanoi are known and used throughout the empire. In addition, there are a handful of Arcanoi that are unique to Yu Huang's domain. Teaching an outsider one of these is grounds for being sent to Feng-Tu, and one, Chains of the Emperor, literally cannot be taught to anyone not of the Immortal Guard.

For more on the Jade Arcanoi, see p. 458.

Lexicon

Conquered territories: The conquered non-Chinese Shadowlands under the emperor's dominion.

Feng Tu: The mountain entrance to the hell the emperor created for his enemies.

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

Immortal Guard: The emperor's elite troops. Incredibly strong and fanatically loyal, they are made from the terra cotta soldiers buried with the emperor.

Jade Palace: The emperor's massive home, located deep within the Tempest.

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

Peng Lai: Another term for Paradise.

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

Qin Shihuang: Yu Huang, the Jade Emperor. In life, the first emperor of a united China. In death, the absolute ruler of an empire of the dead.

White Jade: The term for the milky white substance into which enslaved wraiths are often transformed; similar to Stygian metal.

Yellow Springs: Another term for the Shadowlands.

Yu: The Chinese word for jade, which has mystical powers in the Underworld.

Yu Huang: The Jade Emperor, ruler of the lands of the Chinese dead and many conquered territories.

Zhongguo: The Middle Kingdom; China and the Skinlands thereof in general.

Svarga, The City of Delights

Western society is focused on the tangible. Ghosts cannot be seen, they cannot be touched or measured, and therefore they do not exist. The lines are not so clean in southern Asia. Indian wraiths are afforded a very different existence than their Stygian counterparts, simply because Indian culture is, on the whole, far more sanguine about the presence of ghosts and malevolent creatures of the night. Spirits are blamed for any number of occurrences in daily life. An unhappy spirit might break dishes, or a stressed worker might suffer illness via ghostly possession. Unlike the west, the veil between the worlds is thinner simply because the people of India believe. Every city or village hosts at least one wise old man or woman who claims to know the mantras, spells, or curses required to interact with the dead. These Mantriks call upon the spirits to settle disputes, find lost information, help allies, or hinder enemies.

The View from Without

To the Stygian visitor, Svarga feels deceptively similar. It's easy to equate Bhuvar with the Shadowlands, the Sea of Shiva with the Tempest, or Pisachas with Shades, but assuming those correspondences tell the whole story can lull a wraith into a false sense of security. Even with simple concepts, a slightly different outlook can cause affronts and misunderstandings between visitors and native wraiths. For example, western wraiths tend to place a higher value on individual independence than residents of Bhuvar. Most Indian wraiths believe they have a responsibility to tradition and their personal cycle. The distinction between "unfinished business" and "karmic debt" can be a confusing one.

Samsara, the Cycle of Rebirth

The corporeal being is composed of three parts. The *Karana Sarira*, or "causal body," is the seed, the "beginningless ignorance," from which the other two parts spring. The *Shula Sarira*, or "gross body," makes up a being's physical form, while their *Sukshma Sarira*, or "subtle body," is the being's spirit, or Corpus. When a person dies, their *Javi*, or soul, is still tethered to the now-useless Shula Sarira. Proper care of the soul requires an elaborate ceremony called *Antyesti*, a process of releasing the soul and preparing the Sukshma Sarira. Without the Antyesti ritual, even the most virtuous soul can be warped and deformed by their imprisonment in the Shula Sarira, and return as a broken, evil thing. Over the course of 10 or 11 days, the Suskhma Sarira is built. Each day develops another part of the subtle body, providing a head and neck, heart, spine, navel, genitals, thighs, knees, ankles, and feet.

Similarly, the Javi itself is divided into a number of qualities, called *Gunas*. A soul's qualities fall into three distinct classes. The first is *Sattva*, which relates to divinity or purity, and most directly relates to a western wraith's Psyche and Eidolon. The second class is *Tamas*, which contains the darker qualities, like the Shadow and Angst. Finally, there is *Rajas*, which represents qualities related to activity or change, such as Passions or Pathos.

What About the Others?

Southern Asia is home of any number of religions, including the faiths that originated in the area (Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism) as well as Christianity, Islam, and more. Each of these has their own vision of the afterlife. In India, the vast majority of believers are Hindu. Consequently, the Dark Kingdom that western wraiths have found is predominantly Hindu. It is possible that Svarga simply dominates, just as the majority of the Western underworld falls under the structures and psychogeography of the Stygian Empire. Other Dark Kingdoms may exist in the storm-tossed Sea of Shiva, but no Stygian wraith has returned to speak of them.

Gray Wastes and Brilliant Oases

The universe is a complex thing, comprised of many levels and worlds. The upper worlds are known as *Lokas*, while the lower levels are called *Talas*. The world of the living, or *Bhur*, is the Loka we are most familiar with, the concrete reality that surrounds us. Layered atop that is *Bhuvar*, the Loka of the ghosts. Those souls who, for whatever reason, cannot move on in the continuous flow find themselves in Bhuvar.

Bhuvar is a dark, desaturated place. The overgrown fields lay fallow and colorless. The temples and homes are dilapidated, crumbling ruins. Everything is gray and decayed. But in the distance, the city of Svarga bursts with color, a shimmering Oz locked away behind gleaming walls. The reward for all the wraiths' toil and labor lies just within sight. Wraiths learn quickly that if they work hard and liberate themselves from their Fetters, either through Resolution or (for the desperate many) destruction, they may eventually earn the right to move on to the next stage, within the fertile garden of delights.

For all intents and purposes, Bhuvar is identical to the Shadowlands. The primary difference is one of outlook, and it is a surprisingly important distinction. To those who find themselves in Bhuvar, it is a waystation on the road to reincarnation, a temporary stop where the wraith must pay their karmic debts.

Those souls who do not make their way to Bhuvar are assumed to have been judged by Yama and sent on their way to the next stage of the cycle. The wraiths of Bhuvar don't believe they are in some kind of punitive hell analog. Rather, they have simply been found in need of some sort of karmic cleansing, to be determined by Yama's servitors, the judges.

In many ways, the judges are similar to Stygian Reapers. They free newly dead wraiths from their Cauls and welcome them to Bhuvar. It is their task to help the Enfant find her place in wraith society. Unlike Stygia, manacles and chains are replaced by tradition and faith. This is, if not familiar, then at least a feasible part of the newly arrived wraith's worldview. Ostensibly, the judge is to examine them with Fatalism, while the wraith is asked to recite the litany of her life. The judge decides how the Enfant can best serve the Heavenly Regent and gain entrance to the City of Delights. The process is a long and arduous one, complicated by an enormously baroque bureaucracy and little to no recognition of merit or hard work. On the rare occasion that a call for justice *does* wend its way through the system, it does so with all the speed and urgency of a somnolent turtle.

Of course, judges are as human as the wraiths who depend on them, and they are as susceptible to corruption as any other. Some merely make a show of judgement and promptly deliver the new wraith into the hands of a predetermined master in return for favors or other compensation. Either way, the Enfant is usually taken to the nearest enclave and put to work in whatever role is deemed necessary. While the caste system has loosened in modern Indian society, there are many in Bhuvar who still hold firm with the old ways. Whatever the Enfant's status in the living world, he may suddenly find himself on the bottom rung in the Shadowlands. The highest-ranking caste, the *Brahmin*, are the rulers and inhabitants of the City of Delights, while the *Kshatriya* make up the officers of the Host and the leaders of the various settlements of Bhuvar. Minor functionaries and traders are considered part of the *Vaishyas*. The bulk of the population of Bhuvar are *Sudras*, laborers who perform whatever tasks their "betters" require of them.

Depending on the situation, the new wraith might find herself clearing fields that never seem to be planted or built upon, assigned to watch over a ruined temple that might attract Naga, or join a trading caravan as servant or guard. She might be enlisted into military service as part of the Host of Svarga, or slotted into the increasingly complex and bizarre structure of minor officials who seem to exist solely to make work for other officials. In some rare cases, a wraith is evaluated and the judge declares that there must have been some kind of divine clerical error. The wraith is shuttled directly to the palace and their eternal reward. Those left behind whisper behind closed doors that it can't be that simple, and the wraiths who enter the palace are never seen again… but if they moved on, they wouldn't be, would they?

The Naga

Not all those who toil within sight of the city accept the status quo. They whisper to one another, and they resent the elite who exist in luxury while their existence is hardly better than slavery. Life was enough of a hardship. They refuse to suffer through a second life of servitude on the hope that *this time*, the promise of reward will be kept. No, it is better to war on the Holy Regent and the City of Delights, just as the serpentine Naga of myth war on the gods for their wealth. The wraiths who take up the banner of the Naga work to breach the walls of Svarga in any way they can. The Naga have occasionally attempted to force their way through the gates, to take what they have lost hope of earning. Thus far, the beautiful and terrible Host of Svarga has repelled every attempt, crushing the rebels and dragging them away, never to be seen again.

The Naga coil in one of the lower Talas, a disphotic place called Patala. In the darkness there, they built a series of palaces and cities, pale reflections of the riches of Svarga. It is even said that they recreated small gardens of their own. But those miniature paradises provide little comfort; they must be kept up through constant raiding and sacrifice, and merely remind the Naga of the sheer abundance being kept from them. Recently, the Naga turned their attention to the outposts of Bhuvar, where they are less likely to encounter the full force of the Host. They may not reap the same rewards so far from Svarga, but they are far more likely to succeed.

The Asura

The Naga are not the only faction lurking in the lower Talas. Like the Naga, the Asura oppose the Host of Svarga, but where the Naga envy the luxury of the City of Delights, the Asura reject it outright. Though the Asura do not know the secret of Svarga, they believe that the abundance of the city is maintained at great cost. Some say that the price is a tithe of accumulated karma; others that it requires a step back down the wheel. There are nearly as many rumors as there are Asura, but all of them oppose what they view as spiritual extortion. They view accepting whatever cost it requires to become part of the City of Delights as, at best, a distraction from the cycle. The Asura do everything they can to discover the truth behind what they call the Great Lie. They fight to save wraiths from whatever fate awaits them within Svarga's walls, and they surreptitiously proselytize among the working class of Bhuvar.

The Walled City of Svarga

The wraiths of Bhuvar dream of the City of Delights. A riot of color bursts from within its enormous walls. Inside lies the glory of Svarga; countless boulevards bristle with palaces and temples, and the avenues are lined with verdant gardens and luxurious courtyards. The air is as full of music as the city is stuffed with loveliness. Every inhabitant of the city was Moliated into forms of great beauty and awe, often adopting aspects of divinity such as blue or red skin or a third eye. The most talented Gandharvas sing, and dancers called Apsaras perform while alluring courtiers mingle with the reveling elite in lush garden courtyards. The Holy Regent and his citizens indulge

The Secret of Svarga

The flourishing gardens and sumptuous feasts of Svarga are simply impossible. While it may be comforting to pretend otherwise, there is no cheating death, even in the so-called City of Delights. As with the other lands of the dead, there is no life where death holds sway. No plants may grow; no crops can be harvested. Within the Dark Kingdoms, the only things that exist are wraiths and the cast-off detritus of the living world. But the Holy Regent believes that it is better to rule through hope than fear. The city is a shining jewel of hope for the masses of Bhuvar, a better yoke than shackles could ever be.

Within the City of Delights, a group of experts named after the god of artisans, Tvashtriyas, specializes in the creation of technicolor dreams. They dissolve unfortunate wraiths and literally shape the distilled stuff of their souls into plants, food, water, and *soma*. The ritual of dissolution and reformation is no small thing, requiring an enormous amount of skill and knowledge. A number of Arcanoi are involved, including Inhabit, Moliate, and Usury. The Tvashtriyas are highly respected and prized within Svarga and it's no surprise; without them, the false paradise would collapse, and the elite of the city would have to acknowledge their own bleak mortality.

Make no mistake, the secret of Svarga is an open one, at least within the walls of the city. Every inhabitant is complicit. The beauty is not complete; the foliage murmurs in torment. The burbling water begs for release. But it is a subtle sound, easily countered with stirring songs and animated conversation. The courtiers and Gandharvas entertain in large part to maintain the illusion of paradise. To satisfy the endless appetite of Svarga, the Host must engage in nearly constant campaigns against the city's enemies. The bulk of the souls used to sustain the city come from the ranks of the Nagas, Asuras, and Spectres like the Pisachas. Soldiers who fail to heed their orders — capture over annihilation or escape — often become an example to their fellows. Someone has to take the place of the souls that are lost or "wasted" by an overzealous soldier, after all.

every sensual urge. Here, unlike the gray lands outside the walls, the trees burst with delicious fruit and the clear water is cool and refreshing. *Soma* is the drink of choice among citizens of Svarga, a powerful and intoxicating beverage that is one of the many resources produced by artisans within the City of Delights.

The Sea of Shiva

The roiling Sea of Shiva surrounds Bhuvar on all sides, separating it from the other Lokas and Talas. Nightmarish creatures of legend slide through the depths of that pounding, tumultuous water lying in wait to prey upon foolish travelers. Familiar to western wraiths as the Tempest, only the bravest or foolhardiest of wraiths make the trek across those waters, and only the most suicidal do so alone. The Byways are thick with Spectres, known here as Pisachas and Bhuta, who prey upon careless wanderers and would-be good samaritans. Canny travelers never greet or stop to help other wraiths in the Sea of Shiva, regardless of how they appear. Many voyages have ended in ambush after a wraith begging for aid turned out to be one of the perfidious Bhuta.

As in Stygia, wraiths use Argos to navigate the sea. However, Indian wraiths do not view the Arcanos as a skill, so much as a matter of purification. The more refined one's Sukshma Sarira, the more easily one travels the sea. Conversely, a wraith whose "subtle body" is uncultivated is thought to have a harder time traveling between the Lokas and Talas.

Talas

As there are seven upper worlds, there are seven lower twins, or Talas. These lower realms are Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatala, Talatala, Mahatala, and Patala. Whether these realms of the dead are the Talas or simply analogs named by wraiths trying to identify and understand their world is up for debate. Whatever the truth, the seven Talas surround Bhuvar and Svarga, resting at equidistant points in the Sea of Shiva.

The Naga stage their assaults from the rocky plains of Patala, in strongholds and palaces built from the relic ruins that dot the landscape and furnished with spoils pilfered from outposts in Bhuvar. The greatest Naga stronghold is Bhogavati, and it would be a glorious jewel if its inhabitants weren't so preoccupied with the ways it falls short of Svarga's splendor. Bhogavati is ruled by three chieftains known by custom as Shesha, Vasuki, and Takshaka, after the greatest Naga of legend. They raid the settlements of Bhuvar and, on occasion, the Asura, to provide their followers with all the comforts and riches the Host of Svarga denies them. The opulent palace in Bhogavati even has a small but verdant garden tended by a renegade Tvashtriya. Of all the things the Naga have acquired from the Holy Regent's lands, the Tvashtriya is the only true wound they have struck, and the Host zealously suppresses rumors of her defection whenever they appear. The garden is an enormous tax on Naga resources, but it provides invaluable fuel to stoke the raiders' fire, so the chieftains happily pay the price. Officially, captured soldiers of the Host are the only sacrifices made to the Tvashtriya's ministrations, but upstarts and rivals of the chieftains have been known to disappear when times grow lean.

Mahatala and Talatala also fall under the auspices of smaller Naga factions. True to their bandit natures, the Naga are not a monolithic force, and the Naga of these Talas raid one another as often as they do Bhuvar. But even these feuds are easily put aside for mutual profit when a raid on Svarga forms.

The Asuras control Sutala and Rasatala. Their communities are less ostentatious than the Naga's, owing to their differing values. This is not to say that all Asura settlements are puritanical affairs, but they do tend toward the practical, rather than the sumptuous. The Asura separated themselves from the citizenry of Bhuvar for a multitude of reasons, ranging from the ascetic to the skeptical. If, as so many of them believe, the cost to maintain Svarga is so dear, then it would be immoral to nurture even a shadow of its splendor themselves.

The Heavenly Regent of Indra

According to tradition, the Loka of Heaven is ruled by Indra, the leader of the Devas, a golden-skinned, dancing god. Svarga's Heavenly Regent speaks for Indra, and his word is law. The Heavenly Regent is said to be an avatar of Indra, one aspect of the god who deigns to guide the wraiths through their cycle. He takes the form of an intensely attractive, well-muscled man with a full beard and sensuous lips; in essence, the very image of Indra.

Everyone knows the Heavenly Regent rarely leaves the lush utopia of Svarga. He is rarely seen by himself, preferring the company of an entourage of unearthly courtiers. On the rare occasion that he does leave, his caravan is a wondrous sight, a moving technicolor oasis in the drab countryside. The Regent's presence radiates beauty and life, even if it is only a temporary blossoming. In truth, the Regent leaves more often than his people realize. Through judicious use of Arcanoi, he visits his citadels in drab disguises — the better to know what his lieutenants and acolytes are *really* up to. An ostentatious caravan tends to advertise itself too far in advance for the Regent to gauge the real situation in Bhuvar.

In general, the Heavenly Regent chooses the carrot over the stick. He believes the wraiths of Bhuvar are more powerfully motivated by their desire to gain entrance to Svarga than they would be by fear of their overlords. In troubled times, the Heavenly Regent mounts offensives against the Nagas or the Asuras, making certain that his army is augmented by the troublemakers and ne'er-do-wells who don't toe the line. At other times, a search for duplicitous Bhuta can serve as an equally effective distraction. With the right finesse, the citizens become paranoid, examining one another for indicators of evil — and what could be a more telling sign of iniquity than questioning the Heavenly Regent's divine order?

Interaction with the Mortal World

While cemeteries sprawl across western countries, most westerners believe their loved ones have passed on, whether

to some great reward or an ineffable beyond. In India, it is commonly accepted that death is simply another state of being. Hundreds of thousands visit "ghost fairs" in villages like Malajpur for exorcism or invocation. If a person acts oddly or falls ill, the malady can be attributed to ghostly interference. Enterprising wraiths with appropriate Passions can harvest a cornucopia of Pathos just by drifting through the ecstatic crowds that flood the ghost fairs for weeks at a time.

Exorcism is easily the primary duty of India's hedge sorcerers. Different traditions employ varying methods and rituals to enact the exorcism, from fasting and ritual chants, to coercion and bribery, to literally beating the ghost out of its host with a broom. Ultimately, the ritual is merely a focus for the exorcist's faith. Exorcising a wraith using Puppetry or Inhabit (in the case of objects) requires a resisted roll between the True Faith of the exorcist and the Willpower of the wraith. If the wraith botches, he must leave that body or object, never to possess it again. Should the exorcist botch, he may never again attempt to force the wraith to leave that particular form.

According to local lore, a ghost may only possess a person with a similar Guna to their own. The truth is that a wraith may possess anyone, given the appropriate Arcanoi, but it *is* far easier if the target's current emotional state matches one of the wraiths' Passions. By the same token, it is more difficult for a wraith to possess a target whose emotions are drastically different from her Passions. The bonus (or penalty) is determined by the intensity of the target's emotional state, at the Storyteller's discretion. The modifier also applies to attempts to exorcise the wraith — it's much harder to evict an aggressive wraith from a livid host than from a peaceful one.

Sorcerers also petition ghosts on behalf of their clients, summoning them to engage their services through force or bribery. The easiest method to get a wraith's attention is acquiring one of her Fetters, but it's certainly not the only path a sorcerer might take. For less discriminating needs, a noisy ritual wherein the sorcerer destroys food or other objects will draw wraiths like moths to a flame, allowing the sorcerer to make his bargain while the ghosts gather the resulting relics in Bhuvar.

Spectres

Pisachas

Brahma's son Krodha was the embodiment of rage, and Krodha's wife Himsa was the avatar of violence. Together they begat Kali, the archenemy of Vishnu. It is also said that Himsa gave birth to deformed, flesh-eating demons called Pisachas. The shadowlands of Bhuvar are beset by malevolent Shades with more than a little resemblance to the vicious children of Krodha and Himsa. These Pisachas make solitary travel through the Sea of Shiva all but impossible, and even endanger wanderers in the relative safety of Bhuvar. They set upon wraiths with no regard to allegiance or mercy. Their ravening brutality is one of the only things that can inspire the Asuras, Nagas, and the Host of Svarga to put aside their differences, even for a short time.

Bhuta

If the Pisachas are deadly, implacable foes, at least their gruesome appearance gives their enemies some warning. The Bhuta are Dopplelgangers, moving unnoticed among the masses, causing as much suffering as possible. Commonly considered to be wraiths who suffered violent deaths but did not receive funeral rites, the Bhuta are malevolent due to spiritual circumstance rather than an inherently evil nature. It is unknown if that is the true origin of the creatures, or if Bhuta are created in some other way entirely. Whatever the case, they are cunning and subtle creatures who spurn the blunt, bludgeoning violence of the Pisachas in favor of insidious corruption. A Bhuta might choose to ingratiate himself with a Citadel's taskmaster, subtly introducing miscommunication and mistrust within the chain of command or changing work orders to cause dangerous shortages. Another might act as the herald of an imminent Naga strike, quietly riling the workers into attacking their masters, only to slip away before the erstwhile rebels realize that no reinforcements are coming.

It's the easiest thing in the world to blame a Bhuta when something goes wrong, so they have become a convenient scapegoat across Bhuvar. Within Svarga's area of influence, wraiths live under the "if you see something, say something" rule, and more than one innocent wraith has been accused of being a Bhuta by a jealous rival. The fate of such a wraith is rarely pleasant. The process of interrogation is difficult, to say the least, and it is not unheard of for a wraith to succumb to Oblivion at the judges' hands. Even if a wraith survives interrogation and is exonerated, the suspicion can poison their relationships and bedevil them for the rest of their existence. On the other hand, should proof of a false accusation come to light, the judges have even less mercy for the accuser who abused their sacred authority just to oust an enemy.

Glossary

Apsaras: The female class of courtesans within the City of Delights, highly regarded for their superb dancing.

Asuras: Wraiths who oppose the enforced servitude of Svarga.

Atman: The soul and the self; the individual.

Brahman: The highest reality. Unification of the Atman and the Brahman is the goal of Samsara.

Bhur: The Loka of the living.

Bhuta: Indian spirits roughly equivalent to Doppelgangers.

Bhuvar: The Loka of wraiths. Known by Stygian wraiths as the Shadowlands.

Gandharvas: The male courtesan class of Svarga. Magnificent musicians and singers.

Gunas: The qualities of the soul, or Javi.

Loka: One of the seven upper worlds in Hindu cosmology.

Nagas: Rebellious wraiths who wish to enjoy the fruits of the City of Delights without serving the Holy Regent of Indra.

Pisachas: Evil, malformed wraiths, essentially Shades.

Rajas: The Guna pertaining to change or activity, corresponds to Passions and Pathos.

Samsara: The karmic cycle of rebirth leading to enlightenment.

Sattva: The Guna pertaining to divinity or purity, corresponds to Psyche and Eidolon.

Sea of Shiva: The Indian term for the Tempest.

Soma: An intoxicating beverage available in Svarga and desired everywhere else.

Shula Sarira: The physical body of the living.

Sukshma Sarira: The Corpus of a wraith.

Svarga: Used by Indian wraiths to refer to the Loka of the Host of Swar, wherein lies the City of Delights. Often used by outsiders to refer to the entire Dark Kingdom.

Tala: Traditionally, one of the seven lower worlds. The *talas* are the lesser realms surrounding Svarga.

Tamas: The Guna of coarseness; Tamas corresponds to Shadow and Angst.

Tvashtriyas: An artisan class of wraiths responsible for maintaining the City of Delights.

Yama: The god of death who is believed to judge all souls. Ostensibly, the judges are servants of Yama.

The Dark Kingdom of Obsidian

tygian scholars interested in the ancient history of the Shadowlands will sometimes discuss the lost Dark Kingdom of the American continents. Most often, they will call it the Dark Kingdom of Obsidian. Rarely, they deign to recognize that there were, in fact, at least *three* loosely confederated empires of the dead. When they bother to differentiate, they call the three lands the Islands of Flint and Obsidian, and the Lands of Gold. But of course, they say, those Kingdoms are long gone. At best, one might find a desolate place bereft of all but the most faded memories of what once was. At worst, the foolhardy will come across a hive of maddened Spectres, shattered and incredibly dangerous.

Just as in the living world, thriving empires existed in the Americas long before the first Stygian wraith set foot on the continent. When the Europeans found their way to the New World, so too did Stygia. Entire cultures were unraveled through war, pestilence, assimilation, and conversion. As the Native Americans across both continents ceded ground to the invaders and colonists, Stygia claimed more and more of the Shadowlands, and eventually the Obsidian kingdoms were lost in the violent flux of the Third Great Maelstrom.

While the living may forget, the dead rarely have that luxury. Oblivion may take individual souls, but in a land where long-burned libraries full of knowledge still echo, nothing stays buried forever. An uncomfortable truth is that the empires and kingdoms of the Underworld are all too often subject to the tides of change that wash across the living world, as well as the strange politics of the dead. Stygia's empire may spread, and old kingdoms may fade and disappear into the Tempest, but it is foolhardy to assume anything in the Underworld is ever truly gone.

The Birth of the Flayed Lands

Everything turns upon the wheel of creation. The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth rolls ever onward. According to the Legend of Five Suns, the world has been wrought and torn asunder four times, the people created and destroyed by the gods again and again. In the beginning, Ometeotl was all of creation. It unfolded itself into gods who in turn unfolded themselves and so on. Every person, plant, animal, and object is a fragment of creation. Everything that has been or will be came from — and will return to — Ometeotl. When someone dies, their energy is reabsorbed into creation and used to create some other part of the universe.

At least, that's how it's supposed to work.

The last age ended in a great flood. The sun was struck down and the sky was ruptured, unleashing a torrent of water that covered the earth. In the darkness, the great feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl descended into the earth and brought forth two skeletons made of obsidian. He breathed life into the skeletons and made a man and a woman. The man's name was Mixcoatl, and he became renowned as a proud and powerful warrior. He guided and cared for his people until he died of old age. Rather than be folded back into Ometeotl and reborn as he expected, Mixcoatl found himself on the outskirts of the capital of his empire. He wandered the city in a daze, searching for someone who could help him. He grabbed at his subjects, shouted in their faces, but nobody could see or hear him. Mixcoatl felt drawn to the feast hall, where he found his family and friends feasting and exchanging gifts. At the head of the table lay Mixcoatl. He looked on his own face, and he fled into the wilderness in terror.

He should have been taken in by Ometeotl, reformed into something else. Why had the gods forsaken him? He was in the world he had always known without being a part of it. The gods must have done this for a reason! Mixcoatl was created by Quetzalcoatl to repopulate the earth and to care for it. His calling was to bind the people together so that they might better serve the gods. He refused to believe that they would simply abandon him. So, he reasoned, the gods must have put him here to continue caring for his people in a new way. Though there is honor in sacrifice by death, death was not the greatest sacrifice one might make to please the gods. Remaining separate from Ometeotl, trusting in the gods and doing his best to serve them even in this dark place, *that* was the sacrifice the gods required.

With new resolve, Mixcoatl learned how to affect the living world. From beyond the grave, he helped to guide his people and provide for them. He summoned nourishing rains when the Olmec farmers were struggling; he frightened the enemies of his people when they dared to come too near. In time, he found others like

What about the Islands of Flint and the Lands of Gold?

The Dark Kingdom of Flint was never a single entity, at least not in the sense that Stygian histories describe. Rather, the kingdom was itself a loose confederation of five large power blocs of Native American wraiths: The Iroquois Nation, the Council of Tribes, the Cherokee Nation, the People of Peace, and the Inuit. Even among those power blocs there lay fragments, small shifting alliances made up of over 500 individual tribes, with a dizzying array of social systems and beliefs.

According to Stygian history, the Islands of Flint are officially destroyed. Nothing is left of the First Nations in the Shadowlands except Spectre-haunted burial mounds and battlegrounds, and long, jagged, wood and iron scars haunted by shadow locomotives. Legion patrols tend to avoid those places, or they are never seen again. It is rare that Stygian citizens find their way into the Islands of Flint, and even rarer that they find their way *out*.

The Lands of Gold bore the brunt of the horrors that led to the Third Great Maelstrom. As European explorers sought El Dorado, Stygian Renegades and Heretics also sought to escape the inquisitors. By Skinriding sailors leaving Iberian ports, they descended upon the Lands of Gold as hate and fear grew within them. When their Shadows seized control, they unleashed decades of war and atrocity. The deathly triple alliance of Obsidian, Gold, and Flint fought together against the invaders throughout all three empires, but it was in the Lands of Gold that Ix Chel, known to the Deathlords of Stygia as the Obsidian Queen, was destroyed by the Heretics and Renegades. The Lands of Gold themselves were hurled into Oblivion, churning the Sea of Shadows into a Tempest that has never ended.

Whether the Lands of Gold have truly been destroyed, are lost on the other side of some unexplored Byway, or have intentionally closed their gates to visitors and hidden themselves away is unknown. Rumors pop up of artifacts and treasures waiting for adventurous wraiths within the golden ruins, but thus far, nobody in Stygia has produced proof one way or the other.

him, and he taught them the same tricks he had learned. The Olmec Empire blossomed under Mixcoatl's guidance.

The Four Houses of the Flayed Lands

When Mixcoatl was building his shadow empire, the Olmecatl began to attribute the haunting effects of his assistance to an elusive spirit-god they called the Werejaguar. Their artists created icons and tributes to the Werejaguar, and Mixcoatl was pleased. He took on the mantle of the Werejaguar and his followers organized under the banner of the House of the Werejaguar. The sacrifices of the Olmec people worshipping the Werejaguar served to make Mixcoatl ever more powerful, and he found his way into the dreams of several Olmec seers to demand more sacrifices. The ranks of the House of the Werejaguar grew, and with them grew the Olmecian Empire.

But the Olmecatl began to rely too heavily on the interference of the Werejaguar. They became debased and spoiled under Mixcoatl's care. Rather than hunt, they were too willing to wait for game to be led to them. When a small tribe from the south had the gall to stand up to the swelling tide of Olmecian influence, they went to war. The House of the Werejaguar did what they could, but the Olmec warriors had grown soft, and could not fight for themselves. The Empire crumbled under the weight of its own decadence.

When the Olmecian Empire collapsed, Mixcoatl went with it. At first, the higher-ranking members of the House of the Werejaguar concealed his disappearance, but it soon became apparent that the House had lost its stranglehold on the Flayed Lands. Until now, only those who had been Olmecatl in life found their way into the afterlife. With the fall of the Olmecian Empire, the worship of the Werejaguar became déclassé, and the faith that flowed from the Skinlands dried up. Wraiths from other tribes began to appear, with the names of other gods on their lips. Werejaguar no longer held the sole position of power in the Skinlands, and as the followers of Xipe Totec, Ix Chel, and Itzamna died, their faith spread into the underworld.

Here, as in the living world, they denied the power of the Olmecs, and built their own houses named after the gods of their people. Each tribe gathered their own and groomed their living descendants for greatness, just as the Werejaguar had. They ignited wars that were fought on both sides of life and death. The living tribes were kept from reaching their potential, lashed to the foolish ambitions of leaders long dead through their priests and seers. The houses waged brutal wars amongst themselves, and many souls were obliterated in the conflict. The members of the House of the Werejaguar had experienced this folly for themselves, and they saw that this war was everything Mixcoatl had railed against. So, they brought the dead together for a summit.

The summit very nearly failed before it began. The new houses were suspicious of the Werejaguar's motives, and wary of their enemies in the other houses. It had been some time since the House of the Werejaguar held any real power in the Skinlands, but they were still a force to be reckoned with in the Flayed Lands. Through sheer willpower and faith in Mixcoatl's message of unity, the Werejaguar held the summit together.

Eventually, the houses came to an agreement. The wraiths of the Flayed Lands would no longer concentrate all their influence on a single tribe. Instead, they would come together to improve the lot of all of Mesoamerica. Rather than join one of four houses based on which tribe one came from, they would be divided according to the way they had lived their lives. Each house would be made up of polar opposites, to maintain the balance of duality that fills every part of creation. Each house would be dedicated to one of the gods, and its leader would take on that god's name as well. The houses would take in wraiths who represented the values of their patron deity. The four leaders would govern as partners, each with an equal voice in the new Council of the Flayed Lands.

Despite this decision or, perhaps, because of it, tensions ran high in the days after the formation of the council. Mesoamerica was a land of many different gods, and the Flayed Lands were now home to as many different bands of wraiths who championed those gods. Those who weren't included in the final four houses resented those who were, and they chafed under the new system. The council itself had no leader; the idea of a society of equals left nobody to moderate the four houses as they maneuvered among themselves to gain the most power for their constituents. Even now, after the Conquest, there is no voice that unites the interests of the Council. The four houses squabble over scraps, each trying to attain dominance over the others in a land still scarred by the coming of Stygia and the Maelstrom that followed.

The Ball Game

The most popular sport in Mesoamerica is a precursor to basketball known simply as "the ball game." It was played by every major civilization from the Olmecs to the Aztecs. In the Flayed Lands, it was possibly even more popular, since it helped the various tribes and houses to find common ground, as well as an outlet for their competitive spirit.

In the Skinlands, the mortals used the ball game as a crucible of sorts, training their warriors to work together and attain the peak of physical prowess, and sacrificing the losers to maintain the power of the ghostly kingdom supporting them. In the Flayed Lands, the ball game still holds a spiritual and martial significance. The teams symbolize the struggle between Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, and the constant fight for balance. The teams are groomed by each house, and their victories are a source of pride for all the members of that house.

Even now, as modern spirits trickle into the Dark Kingdom of Obsidian, with their basketball and football, the ball game remains at the center of Flayed Lands society.

The Fifth Sun

As the Mesoamerican tribes spread, the Flayed Lands grew with them. The houses, working in concert, helped the mortals build a complex and vital society. The wraiths of the Flayed Lands discovered the different layers of their world, from the Shadowlands to the Tempest. Their attention no longer divided by internecine war, they began to carve a unified kingdom out of the tumultuous and stormy seas.

They named this new kingdom the Fifth Sun, in honor of the age in which the Flayed Lands were established. There, the four houses built up an enormous metropolis, with massive temples to their patron gods, elaborate palaces, and even sports stadiums.

The Fifth Sun was prosperous. Their symbiotic relationship with the mortal priests provided a constant flow of Pathos, which they forged into one of the greatest empires of the dead the world has ever seen.

Then the ships arrived.

The Conquest

When the first Spanish ships arrived in the New World, they brought passengers. Heretics, fleeing the political and religious persecution of Stygia, stowed away among the living explorers and missionaries, and sought freedom from the oppressive regime of Charon and his Deathlords. When they arrived in the Flayed Lands, they were tired and desperate, and they did not expect the elaborate kingdom that awaited them. Unwilling to return to the hell from whence they came, and unable to understand the civilization they had stumbled onto, the Heretics chose war.

The xenophobic Stygian wraiths quickly learned that the sacrifices that human priests made to their gods fueled the power of the Flayed wraiths, so the Heretics possessed bands of Spanish warriors and generals, and manipulated their living counterparts into war against the tribes.

When the Heretics first arrived, the Obsidian Council weren't quite sure what to make of them. The House of the Werejaguar called for assimilation and unification, as they believed Mixcoatl would have wanted. Ix Chel and Xipe Totec both argued that the Stygian wraiths brought nothing but trouble, and demanded that the Flayed Lands prepare for war. Unfortunately, the council was still locked in deliberation when the Heretics struck. The council was too divided to mount a cohesive defense against foes attacking on both sides of the Shroud. They failed to stop the Heretics early, when a decisive victory was still possible. The war drew out, and as the Spanish forces overwhelmed the aboriginal population, the flow of Pathos stopped.

The Flayed Lands crumbled, and the once-powerful Obsidian wraiths ceded more and more of the Shadowlands to the Heretical Stygian wraiths. The battle spread to the Lands of Gold and the Islands of Flint, and still the houses argued amongst themselves. Most, faced with the loss of their power, favored retreat. Some Flayed wraiths had the foresight to understand what was happening when the Spanish forces overthrew the first priests. They dug down into the Tempest and began to build a new realm, a New Sun to replace the one they could see setting behind them. They called the new realm Mictlan.

The leader of the House of Ix Chel refused to retreat. She argued that the Heretics had overextended, that the help of their allies from the Lands of Gold would easily repel the invaders. She managed to gather her house and the House of Xipe Totec behind her. Many of the wraiths who had so recently argued for retreat found themselves preparing for a new push in the long war, driven by Ix Chel's confidence and the power of her rhetoric. But Ix Chel and the others didn't understand how the tide was turning.

Before the Heretics came, the wraiths of the Flayed Lands only knew one way to harvest Pathos; the sacrifices made by the human priests. As those priests were slaughtered, the conduit of power was irreversibly cut. The Flayed wraiths exhausted their power and found themselves unable to use their Arcanoi. Ix Chel refused to give in. She fought to the last with her most loyal followers upon the battlefields of the Lands of Gold. When the Heretics finally brought her low, something deep within the Underworld recoiled in horror. The ground buckled and cataclysm wracked the Lands of Gold. The Heretics savaged the Flayed Lands and brought an entire civilization low. The abomination they committed unleashed the Third Great Maelstrom, tore apart the Lands of Gold, the Fifth Sun, and even wrought destruction upon Stygia itself.

Only those few Flayed wraiths who had retreated to Mictlan survived the desolation that followed. By using the last reserves of their Pathos, the refugees were able to conceal the New Sun from the Heretics. Their empire was shattered, the leaders of their houses were dead, and their living descendants were assimilated and barred from the old ways. They were trapped underground with no outposts in the Shadowlands and no purpose. But they had survived.

Mictlan Today

Hidden in the Tempest, it took the council centuries to decide that the time had come to reopen the Byways of Mictlan and venture forth again. The first scouts discovered that the Heretics had been banished from the Fifth Sun, but that the Hierarchy stood in their place. Where the houses had existed to support the living, the Hierarchy only fed off their passions. Without the balance of sacrifice and support, the Flayed wraiths were forced

to adopt the Stygian method of gathering Pathos. In the past, the sacrifices had been willing, the power given freely and with honor. Now, the Flayed wraiths felt like thieves. Someday, things might return to the old way, but until then, there seemed to be no other way to restore things to their rightful place.

The council reestablished a few outposts in the Shadowlands, and began to recruit souls into the houses once more. For now, they have to be taken surreptitiously, a few at a time. But as they are whisked out from under Stygia's nose, the Flayed Lands become more powerful, an inch at a time. The houses become more confident, and bands of Flayed warriors hunt the Shadowlands of Mexico, striking back where they can at the complacent wraiths who stole their world so many years ago.

Mictlan itself is still small, a network of caverns buried beneath the ruins of the Fifth Sun and occupied mainly by ghosts who died almost 500 years ago. Newly reaped wraiths are even more lost than usual when they find themselves in the rocky vaults of Mictlan. This is a time capsule, the afterlife of a civilization that exists mostly as words in books, or tourist attractions. While there are active Nahuas extant in Mesoamerica, the vast majority of the spirits recruited by the Flayed wraiths are Catholic. These are lawyers and shop owners, street kids and teachers, and they have no investment in fires that stopped burning hundreds of years ago. They're still trying to cope with the idea of their own deaths, trying to figure out where they are and how things work. The Werejaguars have seen this before. They know what happens when new wraiths and their new gods wend their way into the Flayed Lands. It's only a matter of time before the status quo shifts again, and this time the Werejaguars are determined to see Mixcoatl's dream through.

Who's in Charge

The Dark Kingdom of Obsidian is ruled by the Obsidian Council, which is made up of leaders from each of the four houses. Ostensibly, there is no head of the council. Theoretically, the group is supposed to exist as a parliament of equals, but in reality it is constantly shifting, as each house attempts to shift policy to favor themselves. In the past, the House of the Werejaguar attempted to play moderator, but their tactics have shifted recently, and the leaders of the other houses aren't quite sure why.

The House of the Werejaguar

Once the only house, the Werejaguar is now one of four. It has been millennia since Mixcoatl disappeared, leaving the house rudderless. Shattered by the loss of their leader and their empire, the Werejaguars suffered through centuries of lethargy. Recently, a fiery cult of personality has grown up around a new leader. Driven by Lord Eight Deer, the freshly minted leader of the house, the Werejaguars seem refreshed, ready to reaffirm their commitment to Mixcoatl's vision of unification and expansion.

They stopped accepting members when the Olmecian empire fell, but they have recently begun to take in new recruits under Eight Deer. For the moment, the House is still small, however, the bulk of its members are ancient and powerful wraiths who have existed for thousands of years. It is uncertain exactly how the newly active Werejaguar Reapers recruit souls to their cause, but Eight Deer seems to have less trouble communicating with the new wraiths than his peers. The other houses whisper that the Werejaguars plan to take over the council. One thing is for certain though, their sudden reinvigoration is sure to shift the landscape of the Flayed Lands.

The House of Ix Chel

Ix Chel is the War Woman, the Jaguar's Midwife. She is the red goddess of earth and the bringer of the floods. The members of this house achieved great success or suffered great failure before their death. Therefore, the house is populated with leaders and losers, kings and businessmen and beggars. When the Heretics arrived, Ix Chel counseled defiance, and it was Ix Chel's wraiths who fought to the bitter end, even as other houses stole away to the New Sun. The house is only now beginning to recover from the devastating losses it suffered.

The House of Xipe Totec

This is the House of the Flayed God, the god of crops and war. Those who were takers or givers of life join the House of Xipe Totec. On one hand, the house welcomes farmers, warriors, and nurses, but the house also holds murderers and rogues of all stripes. Xipe Totec is a house divided. Its members come from such incompatible paths, it is inevitable that they find themselves constantly at odds with one another. If they could unite, the house could be unstoppable within the council, but it's so difficult for the house to find common ground on any issue that it remains paralyzed instead.

The House of Itzamna

Itzamna is a creator god, the invisible and mystical ruler of the heavens. He is Ix Chel's counterpart, the sun to her moon, and father of her 13 children. It is said that Itzamna was the first shaman, that he brought writing, knowledge, and medicine to the Maya. Itzamna is an enormous bird whose wings fill the sky. He is a symbol for the entire universe, and any wraiths who fit into no other houses are more than welcome here. Itzamna is by far the largest house, but its members are considered aimless wanderers and misfits, and there is very little in the way of a powerful leader drawing the Itzamna together. Legends have long foretold the rise of Itzamna, but for the moment, the house has very little influence in the council.

Duality and the Obsidian Wraith

Wraiths of the Flayed Lands believe in the oneness of all things. They value purpose and duty, and believe that when their purpose is complete, they will be folded back into Ometeotl, to become one with the universe again. This, to them, is Transcendence. If they fail at their purpose, if they fall to Oblivion, it is much more than the loss of an individual. It is the loss of a piece of the universe itself. It is blasphemy, an affront against Ometeotl itself.

When Ometeotl unfolded itself into all the things that make up the universe, it first unfurled into two aspects of itself, two pure urges of creation and destruction. The aspect of creation was Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent who created Mixcoatl and his mate. Destruction's darker urges were personified in Tezcatlipoca, the "invisible god," who helped to form the earth. These two aspects are not forces in conflict, however. They are opposite urges that work in conjunction toward the goal of a perfect world. As spring and summer must give way to autumn and winter, so too do Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca take turns in ascendance. In this way, they build and destroy each world in turn, improving upon the last and working toward perfection.

Or they did, until the Third Great Maelstrom tore the balance from its axis.

The aspect of creation has been known by many names. He was Kukulcan, or Q'uq'umatz, or Quetzalcoatl, the morning star who guided the sun into the sky, the lightbringer and lifesaver. He was Ehecatl, the Lord of Wind, who brought the rains and fed the crops. He was the protector of all things that grow, and in each one, Quetzalcoatl unfolded a piece of himself. The act of creating art was, by its nature, a magical rite dedicated to the feathered serpent, for it was unfolding a portion of his spirit and causing it to manifest.

Destruction is not a mindless force. Entropy exists in a necessary balance in Mesoamerican culture. Tezcatlipoca is the Evening Star who chases the sun from the sky. He is the trickster spirit who baited the great Earth Monster with his own foot, and forced her to remain on top of the sea so that the people would have something to walk upon. His name means "Smoking Mirror," symbolizing the obsidian that replaced his lost leg, and the way in which he communicates with his priests.

The Center Cannot Hold

When Cortés and his fleet landed in Mexico, Tezcatlipoca was ascendant. As was his nature, the Smoking Mirror encouraged the destruction of his people, pushing toward the end of the Fifth Age. When the Heretics committed the abomination that destroyed the Fifth Sun and caused the Third Great Maelstrom, something shifted in the great balance. Tezcatlipoca took the opportunity to avoid his predestined fate, and dove into the vast storm. He was torn by the Maelstrom, wounded, infected, and corrupted; the Smoking Mirror became a force of Oblivion.

Every wraith in the Flayed Lands is a dual spirit, made up of both Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca. Before Ix Chel was cast into the Tempest, the Shadow was merely a part of the balance, influencing a wraith but never actively driving her toward Oblivion. Now, the Flayed wraith's Shadow is literally an unfolding of all the hate and pain that erupted from the conquest, intent on destruction and Oblivion. The distinction is a subtle one, and mostly manifests in more aggressive tactics, but in instances where the Shadow is influencing the wraith on matters that echo the conquest — incidents of oppression or incursion, for example — any Eidolon rolls may have their difficulty increased by 1.

The Bush of Ghosts

Everything Stygia knows about Africa is a lie.

To Stygian ambassadors and traders, the dead of Africa are gathered under the aegis of the so-called Dark Kingdom of Ivory, ruled over by a benevolent queen. This kingdom unites the dead of the continent and presents a single face to the outside world.

And it is a sham.

There is no Dark Kingdom of Ivory, only a front put together by several of the rulers of the true kingdoms of Africa's dead to distract and distance outsiders. The queen is a figurehead who wields no real power, and the "Dark Kingdom" is the only part of the Bush of Ghosts that foreigners are allowed to set foot on.

Beyond the facade, however, rests the truth.

The Bush, Ocean and the Kingdoms

The cities of the African Shadowlands are akin to most cities throughout the Underworld: decaying, dangerous, and built of wave upon wave of history. Beyond them, however, things change. Away from the cities is the Bush, and here can be found the ghosts of trees and animals long gone from the Skinlands. Here, too, the Shroud is thin, and occasional bursts of sunlight peek through to illuminate the great ghostly herds and forests. Nevertheless, the Bush does have its dangers, and few *abambo* are willing to traverse it alone.

Surrounding the Shadowlands is the constantly roiling Ocean. Within the Ocean's depths, time appears to act differently; wraiths who swear they were lost for hours emerge from the storm years or even centuries later. And of course, there are the endless storms that rumble through its depths.

It is said that all of reality was created from the chaos of the Ocean. Whether this is true or not is unknown, but what is known is that Byways through the Ocean are few and hard to find (except for those well-maintained ones leading to the façade of the Dark Kingdom of Ivory). It is also said that the Creator tricked the Ocean into giving humans souls, and that ever since, the Ocean has sought to reclaim what was its own.

Deep within the Ocean are the so-called Lost Kingdoms, potent empires of the dead largely ruled by powerful beings who have taken the title *Orisha*. Dependent on the reverence of the living for their power, the *Orisha* face an uncertain future as Christianity and Islam sweep across the continent, old ways are lost or forgotten, and younger wraiths with decidedly more materialist viewpoints seek to remake the afterlife. Several of the Lost Kingdoms have been taken over by *abambo*, and one is rumored to be under the control of animal ghosts.

The Four-Part Soul

A wraith from the Bush of Ghosts is known as an *ibambo*. Rather than just a Psyche and Shadow, *abambo* have four-part

souls. There is the Soul, which roughly corresponds to the Psyche, and the Shadowself, which equates more or less to the Shadow. Beyond that are the Dreamself and the Heartlife. The latter is the *ibambo's* connection to the lands of the living, while the former is the aspect of the wraith that can harvest and use Pathos.

Because of the unique nature of their souls, *abambo* have access to a unique Arcanos called Behest. While outsiders have seen it in action, it cannot be taught to outsiders. For more on Behest, see p. 465.

Animal *Abambo*

One of the foundational elements of the Bush of the Ghosts is that life and death are one, that the living and the dead are connected, and that one without the other is incomplete. What then to make of the plight of the animal *abambo*, whose numbers in the lands of the living are decreasing catastrophically even as they swell in the afterlife? Justifiably, the animal spirits — who have their own villages, councils, and laws — are angered by this, and there have been incidents where the ghosts of rhinos, elephants, and others have exacted revenge on humans they felt were deserving, or who were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Sikinda

Sikinda are monstrous, cunning creatures intent on waylaying and destroying as many souls as they can. Possessed of devious intelligence, they set ambushes along Byways in the Ocean and venture into more populated areas stalking their prey. Grotesque of visage, they are roughly equivalent to Shades, but far more intelligent and dangerous.

Mla Watu

The Mla Watu, the ghost eaters, believe that by devouring the Corpus of talented wraiths, they can absorb the best qualities of their victims. At least one Lost Kingdom is under Mla Watu sway, and though their numbers may be few, fear of them and their spies is widespread.

Glossary

Abambo: Plural of *ibombo*.

Anina: Plural of *inina*.

Dark Kingdom of Ivory: A false front put up to deceive Stygian and other foreign wraiths as to the social and political composition of the African Underworld.

Ibambo (pl. *abambo*)**:** Wraith. Refers specifically to the ghosts and ancestors of one's own people.

Inina (pl. anina)**:** The *abambo*, Sinkinda, and other spirit forms of Africa's dead.

Ivory Queen: Ruler of the Dark Kingdom of Ivory. A figurehead for relating to other lands.

Lost Kingdoms: The many individual lands found within the depths of the Ocean.

Mia Watu: The ghost eaters; kingdoms of wraiths who try to gain their victims' strengths by devouring then.

Ocean: The sea of utter chaos surrounding the Lost Kingdoms and bordering on the Shadowlands; equivalent to the Tempest.

Old Gods: The mythical original rulers and denizens of both the Dark Kingdom of Ivory and Africa. One of their number allegedly created the world, and eventually animals, plants, and humans.

Orisha: A ruler of one of the Lost Kingdoms. In medieval times, they were worshipped as gods by the Yoruba.

Sinkinda: Twisted, malevolent spirits; the African equivalent of Spectres.

Karta: The Dark Kingdom of Clay

Shadowlands

The Shadowlands and the deeper Underworld of Australia are distinct and separate. The Shadowlands, for all intents and purposes, are part of Stygia. They consist of dim, dingy Necropoli huddled along the coast, all of which hearken back at least 150 years in construction and style. Each of the Legions is represented here by a full complement of Anacreons and Legionnaires, but the streets also teem with avowed Guildwraiths, Renegades, and even Heretics. Stygia seems very far away, and the law is perhaps more accommodating to would-be rebels and outsiders.

The land outside the cities is cracked, dry, and dusty. Maelstroms here are swirling clouds of choking red dust, not the roiling clouds common elsewhere. Between Necropoli, the Shadowlands are barren and by and large deserted.

The Tempest surrounding Australia, however, is another thing altogether. A roiling black ring of endlessly storming clouds, it is fearsomely dangerous. Byways through are rare and fragile, and wraiths traveling them are always at risk.

It is said that the cloud is a manifestation of the guilt and shame felt by Stygian wraiths for the crimes they and their ancestors committed against Australia's aboriginal people. What is known is that the Shadows of Australian wraiths are linked via a loose hive mind akin to the one manifested by Spectres, and that this vast shadowy intelligence works to force wraiths to succumb to despair and guilt over what was done. Supposedly, each time a wraith plummets to Oblivion for this reason the storm around Australia's Shadowlands lessens, though many dismiss this as wishful thinking.

The Island

The ancient island of Karta rises up from the Tempest, its sheer sides made of red rock. 50,000 years old or more, it dates back to the Sundering, when life and death first became separated. Its surface is a heat-blasted plain of scorched earth and caves. Here, originally, only the ghosts of infants and elders

came after death. Now, however, Aborigines of all ages find themselves in Karta after death, there to work on resolving their connections to the living world and preparing themselves to enter the Dreamtime.

The first arrivals in Karta were a pair of brothers who reached there from the Dreamtime, Kungaru and Kurulba. Finding themselves trapped, they reacted in different ways. Kungaru, the elder, set about learning what he could of death and what lay beyond, and he guided those who came after him in search of the Dreamtime. He himself reputedly returned home, several centuries ago.

The other brother, Kurulba, was a cruel, vindictive monster. He waged war on Kungaru constantly, and after his brother moved on, sought to seize for himself the kingship of Karta. He could muster only a few wraiths to his cause, however, but to this day these Children of Kurulba continue to fight, murder, and mock wherever they may. They still seek rule over Karta, even though their leader has long since succumbed to his Shadow.

Western wraiths have not yet found their way to Karta from Australia's Shadowlands, though Aboriginal wraiths have been known to move back and forth. Native wraiths, however, shun the cities and are more likely to be found dealing with their business in the Outback.

Dreamtime

Dreamtime is at once a place and a state of being, where the dead of Australia pass on to in order to be reborn once they have moved on from earthly concerns. It is the present, the past and the world around them. Wraiths in Karta prepare to enter Dreamtime through resolving their links to the living world, as well as following those laws they may have ignored or broken in life.

Once a wraith is ready to journey to Dreamtime, he heads to one of several special caves dotting the island's landscape. These caves lead straight to Dreamtime, and they are forbidden to those who have not yet prepared themselves for the journey by resolving the issues from their earthly existence. The Children of Kurulba claim that the caves instead are simply Nihils leading to deep within the trackless Tempest, and that those who venture into them are instead simply lost.

Wulgaru

Wulgaru is the self-appointed judge of the dead, a creation of twisted magic. Made from carved wood, mud, river stones, and red-ochred wax, it roams the Outback, looking for Restless who have, in its somewhat erratic opinion, broken the law. The definition of "breaking the law" wavers, as Wulgaru is an inconstant creature, but it often includes having dealings with the Quick. Should the wraith be found guilty, and Wulgaru delivers its verdicts with great haste after short deliberation, the creature will attempt to devour the wraith in hopes of adding the guilty one's Pathos to its own.

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5
Social: Charisma l , Manipulation 1, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Abilities: Alertness 5, Awareness 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Intimidation 5
Powers: Hound the Harrowed, Numb the Heart, Pathos Drain
Willpower: 10
Angst: 9

The Mirrorlands

he wraiths of the Caribbean are, by and large, a mystery to those from outside. Their domain touches three continents and the whole of the Caribbean, a region thick with Spectres and home to some of the Tempest's worst weather. To journey to the Mirrorlands takes strength, luck, determination, and a sure knowledge of the way, and these ingredients can be hard to find.

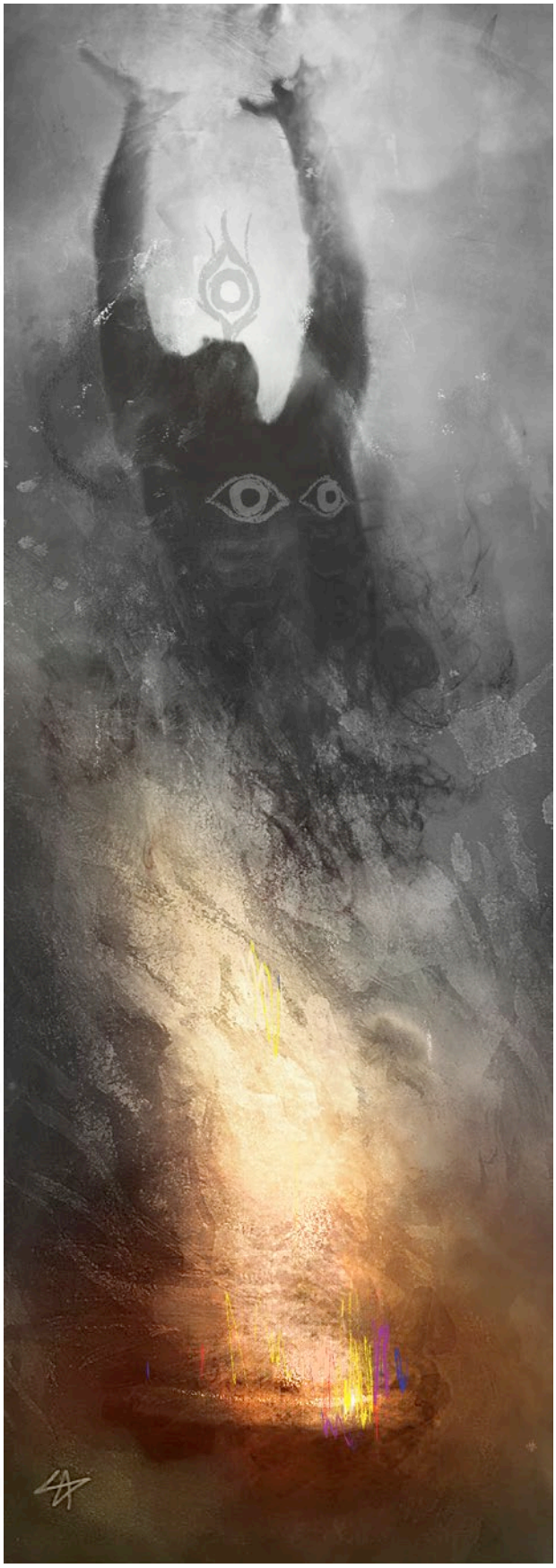
Residents of the Mirrorlands believe in reality as the Cosmic Mirror, its two sides being the Visible and Invisible. Each side can affect the other. Wraiths call themselves Les Invisibles, while the living are Les Chevaux, or the horses. They take this name from the habit of being Skinridden by Les Invisibles, as a rider mounts a horse. This ritual is of vital importance, providing benefits to both Les Invisibles and Les Chevaux in ways that go back centuries.

Metaphysics

When a person dies, it is their soul — the *gros-bon-ange* — that moves into the Invisible. The *ti-bon-ange*, essentially the conscience, separates (in most cases) and what is left is one indivisible soul with both good and bad. The Shadow is not to be destroyed, but rather accepted as part of the whole. Wraiths who succumb to their dark side are called Baka, though they are not hunted down. Rather, Les Invisibles' unique Arcanos of Connaissance enables wraiths to defend themselves against the Baka's predations.

If the wraith's family wishes to stay in touch with them, they will contact a priest or houngan, to perform a ceremony called *retirer d'en bas l'eau*, "Reclaiming the soul from the waters of the Abyss." This ties the *gros-bon-ange* to an earthenware pot known as a *govi*, which is then entrusted to living relatives. They in turn use it to contact the departed. Functionally, this establishes the *govi* as a Fetter for the wraith.

When the family wishes to ask something of the ghost tied to the *govi*, they return to the houngan, who uses it to summon the wraith. Sacrifices of items — which materialize in the Invisible as useful relics — are made, as well as Pathos-providing sacrifices of animals and food, which is devoured by Les Chevaux when mounted by the family ghost. In exchange



for this, Les Invisibles share knowledge with and offer protection to their families.

Origins

The wraiths of the ancestors of those taken in human bondage Skinrode their descendants, unwilling to be separated from them But in the Caribbean they found an inhospitable home. The Abyss was too dangerous to consider, while the Mirrorlands were constantly battered by Maelstroms and hordes of Baka. So many and so constant were the attacks that Les Invisibles decided their only hope for survival was to take the fight to the enemy, and wipe the Baka out at their source. During calm seasons in the Abyss, hunting parties went out, seeking the source of the floods of Baka. Many vanished or were destroyed, but one group found success.

Deep in the Abyss, a lone hunting party located an island that the Baka would not approach. Dwelling there on The Island Below the Sea were beings known as Les Mysteres, entities of immense power who were nevertheless unable to reach the Mirrorlands. They proposed a bargain: Bring more wraiths to the island and pledge to serve them, and in exchange receive knowledge and the ability to manipulate the Baka. Many wraiths took them up on this offer, learning the ways of Connaissance. Others were suspicious and refused, but upon their attempt to return home, they found they had been un-Fettered by their descendants' forced conversion to the Christianity of their masters, and could no longer enter the Mirrorlands. With storm season in the Abyss approaching, these wraiths faced destruction. Thus was created the *retirer d'en bas de l'eau*, a way to Fetter older wraiths. Many were saved this way from the Abyss's seasonal fury; many more were not.

But once the immediate crisis had passed, Les Invisibles set about reconnecting with their descendants. Possession through Puppetry became common, and the old rites and rituals were passed down. Both the living and the dead took strength from this, with Les Invisibles fanning the flames of revolt and resistance against the horrors of slavery.

Many years later, the first servant of Les Mysteres, calling herself a Loa, appeared. She repeated Les Mysteres' offer and asked other wraiths to journey with her to the island. Some of the wraiths of the original hunting party remembered their suspicions and spoke against her, but still many wraiths heard her tales and journeyed with her to meet Les Mysteres. Now the majority of the wraiths of the Mirrorlands view Les Mysteres as something to serve and be served, and a seasonal traffic flows back and forth through the Abyss to the island.

Factions

There are two major factions among Les Invisibles, named after their founders. Those who follow Rada are suspicious of Les Mysteres. They hold a generally peaceful philosophy, and favor aiding their descendants and others among the living indirectly.

Followers of Petro, however, are more aggressive and interested in direct action. This faction appeals to a great many younger wraiths, and is considerably larger than the Rada faction. However, each side

respects the other, and Les Chevaux call upon wraiths of both groups for assistance. Rada Invisibles are asked for guidance and healing, while Petro wraiths offer protection and strength.

Some of Les Invisibles are also pledged to a Mystere. Such wraiths are called Loa, and they often take on aspects of the personality of the power to which they have pledged themselves. Only those who devoutly wish to serve can become Loa, and they act as the eyes and ears of their Mystere in the Mirrorlands. When it is one of Les Invisibles who seeks guidance or knowledge, more often than not she will contact a Loa.

When the Abyss permits, there is plenty of traffic between the island and the Mirrorlands. Not only the Loa go. Others of Les Imvisibles make the journey as well, looking for an audience with a Mystere, or to trade for the marvelous items found on the island, or simply to satisfy their curiosity. There are even those among Les Invisibles who have made the journey multiple times and who now serve as guides between the Mirrorlands and the iIsland, albeit for a price.

Cosmology

There are two aspects to the Cosmic Mirror, the Visible and the Invisible. The Invisible is made up of the Mirrorlands, the Shadowlands of the Caribbean, and the Abyss, the Tempest. The Abyss is often roiled with storms and small Maelstroms, but these come in patterns matching the seasons. A wise wraith can usually tell if journeying into the Abyss is safe or not.

The Surface of the Mirror is the barrier between the Visible and the Invisible. In some places, it is thinner than others, and Les Invisibles can pass through more easily. Many of these spots become the locations of temples set up by houngans, called Hounfors. Often a group of wraiths, called a *Nanchon*, will inhabit the Hounfor as a Haunt.

Glossary

Abyss: The dark and chaotic expanse in the Invisible; the Tempest.

Baka: Wraiths dominated by their darker side; Shades.

Connaissance: The Arcanos used by Creole wraiths to manipulate Baka.

Cosmic Mirror: The Creole term for all of reality.

Creole: Term used to designate anything native to the Caribbean, especially Haiti.

Founts: Areas of the Mirrorlands where the Abyss has seeped through; Nihils.

***Govi*:** An earthen pot used as a Fetter by Creole wraiths; see *retirer d'en bas de L'eau*.

***Gros-bon-ange*:** The closest Creole approximation to a "soul" or Psyche.

Hounfor: A communal Haunt shared by a Nanchon; place where a houngan performs ceremonies to a Nanchon.

Houngan: A Creole mortal go-between for Les Chevaux and Les lnvisibles; a practitioner of hedge magic.

Invisible: The half of the Cosmic Mirror inhabited by Les lnvisibles; the Underworld.

Island Below the Sea: The location in the Abyss where Les Mysteres dwell.

Les Chevaux: The Horses; the term used by Creole mortals to describe themselves.

Les lnvisibles: The term Creole wraiths use to describe themselves.

Les Mysteres: Beings of great power that reside upon the Island Below the Sea; see Loa.

Loa: Les lnvisibles that have devoted their unlives to the service of a Mystere.

Mirrorlands: Shadowy reflection of the Visible; the Shadowlands.

Morts: Term used by Les Invisibles to describe non-Creole wraiths.

Mount: The Creole term for possession.

Nanchon: A group of Creole wraiths bound to the same family; Circle.

Petro: The aggressive faction of Les Invisibles who believe in direct interaction with Les Chevaux.

Rada: The passive faction of Les Invisibles who believe in indirect interaction with Les Chevaux.

***Retirer d'en bas de l'eau*:** "Reclaiming the soul from the waters of the Abyss"; ceremony performed by a houngan that fetters a Creole wraith to a *govi*.

Surface: The mystical division of the Visible and the Invisible; the Shroud.

***Ti-bon-ange*:** The "conscience" of a person that separates from the *gros-bon-ange* immediately after death.

Visible: The half of the Cosmic Mirror populated by the living; the Skinlands.

Arcanoi

While the Arcanoi known in Stygia are also known in other afterlives, some of the Dark Kingdoms also have Arcanoi that are unique to them. Some of these are jealously guarded secrets, while others are better known, and when a non-Stygian wraith finds herself in the Dark Kingdom of Iron, there may be considerable demand for her unique talents. Alternately, there could be pressure from local Hierarchs or Guildwraiths to shut her down. It all depends on circumstance and location.

Under very rare circumstances, if not specifically stated otherwise, Stygian wraiths may be able to learn some of the Arcanoi of other Dark Kingdoms. Doing so

As far as Stygia knows, the non-Stygian Arcanoi do not have Guild equivalents (at least not in the Dark Kingdom of Iron). As such, they do not have Initiate arts, or at least not ones that are known in Stygia.

Arcanoi of the Jade Empire

With the exception of Castigate, all of the Arcanoi known and practiced in Stygia also have their adherents in the Jade Kingdom, though Yu Huang has ruthlessly rooted out even the slightest hint of Guild influence. Inhabit and Usury, while not unknown, are rarely used by upstanding wraiths, in as much as one is considered unseemly and there are superior alternatives to the other.

There are a half-dozen Arcanoi, however, that are native to the empire. Four are based on Confucian teachings, the so-called Four Ways that reflect the four stations in society. These — the Ways of the Farmer, Merchant, Artisan, and Scholar — are the most commonly known of the Jade Arcanoi. Less popular but equally potent is the Way of the Soul, which is derived instead from Taoist teachings. And restricted only to the emperor's Immortal Guard is the last, the fearsome Chains of the Emperor. Rumors abound of those outside the Guard who have learned its secrets, but the official position is that such a deed would be impossible.

The Way of the Scholar

The Way of the Scholar is most often studied by magistrates, especially members of the Protectorate and Judges. It allows those who have developed their *hun* to become sensitive to others' psyches, to the point where eventually they can control others' minds.

• Discern the Lie

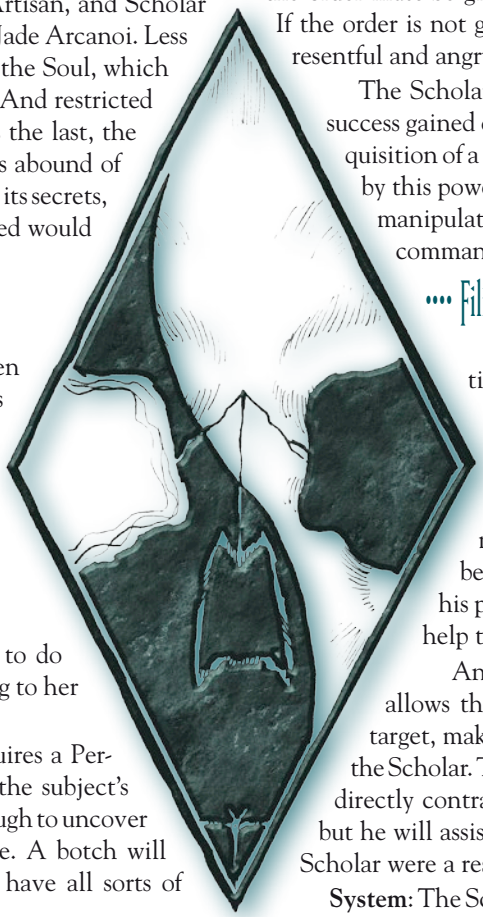
Discern the Lie allows the Scholar to do exactly that: discover if someone speaking to her is in fact lying.

System: To use Discern the Lie requires a Perception + Empathy roll, (difficulty 5 + the subject's Subterfuge rating). A single success is enough to uncover falsehood, while a failure is inconclusive. A botch will produce an incorrect result, which can have all sorts of consequences down the line.

•• Inquiry

Inquiry allows a Scholar to force a subject to answer one question with absolute honesty. The target is allowed to express the truth however he sees fit, but he cannot lie. However, this still leaves broad room for interpretation, meaning the Scholar had best choose the words of that single question carefully.

System: The wraith spends a point of Pathos and makes a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (difficulty of the subject's Willpower). A single success allows for a simple question to be asked. More successes allow for more complexity. A botch drains a second Pathos point and adds one point of temporary Angst.



••• Word of Yu Huang

With this power, the Scholar an issue a single command to the subject that must be followed. The subject cannot be commanded to perform a self-destructive act, and they are free to take advantage of any ambiguity in the Scholar's phrasing.

System: The Scholar makes a Manipulation + Leadership roll against a difficulty of the target's Willpower. The more successes, the more complicated the command that can be given. One success allows for a one-word command, while five successes permits orders up to a paragraph in length. However, the order must be given (and will be followed) immediately. If the order is not given at once, the power fades, leaving a resentful and angry subject.

The Scholar must spend 1 point of Pathos for every success gained on the roll, while each 1 results in the acquisition of a point of temporary Angst. Those targeted by this power generally have no idea they have been manipulated thus unless the Scholar screws up the command, as above.

•••• Filial Duty

This is a subtler use of the Scholar's abilities to influence an individual's *hun*. The Scholar manipulates the subject's mind in such a way that the subject willingly wishes to cooperate with the Scholar, as if the Scholar were a dear and honored member of his family. The subject cannot be forced to do things that directly contradict his previous convictions, but he will willingly help the Scholar in all other things.

An insidious use of the Arcanos, Filial Duty allows the Scholar to manipulate the *hun* of the target, making him willingly wish to cooperate with the Scholar. The subject can't be forced to do things that directly contradict long-held convictions or positions, but he will assist the Scholar in all other things as if the Scholar were a respected member of his family.

System: The Scholar makes a Charisma + Expression roll (difficulty of the subject's Willpower), spends 3 Pathos and 1 Willpower. The number of successes obtained determines how long the subject will remain sympathetic to the Scholar.

One Success:	One Hour
Two Successes:	Six Hours
Three Successes:	One Day
Four Successes:	One Week
Five Successes:	One Month.

A botch gives the Scholar 3 additional temporary Angst, and creates a lifelong enemy.

Once Filial Duty wears off, the target recognizes what has been done to her and reacts accordingly.

••••• The Emperor's Servant

Useful in creating Eunuchs for the Imperial Government, The Emperor's Servant is an expression of mastery of manipulating the *hun*. With this power in her arsenal, the wraith can fully control the minds of others, planting permanent orders within their minds.

System: The action requires an entire day with the subject and costs 1 point of Willpower and 3 Pathos. To activate the power, the Scholar rolls Manipulation + Leadership against a difficulty of the subject's Willpower + 2. The more successes gained, the more complex the order that can be seamlessly implanted. This order cannot run contrary to the wraith's convictions or personality, but anything else is fair game. A botch gives the Scholar an additional point of temporary Angst and costs a Willpower point for each 1 rolled.

The Way of the Artisan

The techniques for manipulating jade and relics are the purview of the Way of the Artisan. Through careful work with relics, White Jade, or even True Jade, an Artisan can create nearly anything.

It is implicitly understood by all Artisans that everything in the afterlife is made from the souls of something from the living world, be it a mortal human or an object. Thus, once the Artisan comprehends the nature of the soul she is working with, she can shape it as desired.

• Shape True Jade

With enough time and raw material, an Artisan can use this power to create a simple object from True Jade. A handful of True Jade is not enough to make a sword, but master Artisans can make efficient use of what they are given.

System: When attempting to work with True Jade, the Artisan makes a Wits + Expression roll (difficulty 6). The number of successes needed depends on how complex the desired end product is. A failure means the working was unsuccessful, but the material has not been ruined and can be shaped into something else. A botch wrecks the True Jade, rendering it useless for anything else.

•• Work White Jade

This power allows the Artisan to work with White Jade just as the previous power covers True Jade. However, due to the inferior nature of the material, it takes three times as much White Jade as True Jade to create a given object.

Wraiths who have mastered Work White Jade can also work with the prepared Corpus of a *kuei*.

System: The roll and results are the same as for **Shape True Jade**.

••• Rework Relics

With this power, the Artisan has become skilled enough to manipulate objects crafted from things other than souls. The Artisan can change the form of a relic, and possibly even the nature of the material itself, although this is very difficult.

Using this power, the Artisan has the ability to work with objects made from something other than jade. A skilled Artisan can change the form and even the nature of a relic.

System: The Artisan rolls Dexterity + Way of the Artisan (difficulty 7) to change a relic's form. Modifying the material the relic is made from requires three or more successes on the same roll against a difficulty of 8. A failed roll leaves the relic as is, while a botch means that the relic has been functionally destroyed.

•••• Empower Jade

With this power, the Artisan can imbue jade items with Pathos or other Arcanoi that she might possess. Any jade item — White or True — can be used to store the powers of a single Arcanos as well as the necessary Pathos fuel. However, the Artisan can only infuse the item with her own Pathos and Arcanoi.

System: The Artisan spends 3 Pathos plus whatever he is investing in the item, and makes a Wits + Crafts roll. The difficulty is 5 for True Jade and 7 for White Jade. True Jade items can maintain the power imbued in them indefinitely, while White Jade items lose their powers after a number of months equal to twice the number of successes rolled. If the Artisan is attempting to imbue an Arcanos power, it costs a Willpower point plus another Pathos for the level of the Arcanos power being imbued. Failure leaves the jade unempowered, while a botch drains an additional 3 Pathos points (to a minimum of 1) and adds a point of temporary Angst.

••••• Create White Jade

A useful but terrifying power, Create White Jade allows an Artisan to craft a soul into White Jade. Before a soul can be transmogrified, it must have its spirit broken (Willpower and Pathos ratings of 0). Once that has been achieved, the Artisan spends three days working the unlucky soul into White Jade.

System: To use Making White Jade requires a Manipulation + Crafts roll (difficulty 6). When 10 total successes are gained across three days (the entire time must be invested), the effort is successful and the soul has transformed into White Jade. Roughly three pounds of White Jade emerge from each forged Corpus, and a botch during the process transforms the captive soul into a *kuei*.

Before starting the process, the Artisan must identify what sort of White Jade she is creating, i.e. whether it is to be hard and rigid (useful for weapons and armor) or soft and flexible (best for furniture, garments, etc.). Once the decision has been made, it cannot be changed.

Using Making White Jade gives the Artisan a point of temporary Angst and costs 1 Pathos per day of the process.

The Way of the Farmer

While Scholars work the *hun*, Farmers work the *p'o*. Using fear and intimidation, Farmers harness and train untamed souls. They have a particular knack for reaping and wrangling *kuei*.

• Finding the Hidden Ghost

This ability allows the Farmer to sense the location of *kuei* and those wraiths who are currently being controlled by their *p'o*.

System: The wraith makes a Perception + Investigation roll (difficulty 6) to sense the location of every being within range that is dominated by their *p'o* (or Shadow). This includes *kuei*, Spectres, and wraiths in Catharsis. Each success on the roll expands the radius of the sphere of detection by 15 feet. Failure on the roll returns no information, while a botch either provides false positives or causes the wraith to miss targets she'd normally spot.

•• Cowing the Bestial Spirit

By using forceful, direct language, the Farmer can intimidate any *kuei* or other wild soul into not attacking. In some cases, the Farmer can even command the obedience of the target.

System: The Farmer makes a Charisma + Intimidation roll (difficulty 7) and speaks in a threatening manner to the target. The effects of the power last 10 minutes per success rolled. The number of successes determine the effect.

One Success:	The subject flees in terror.
Two Successes:	The subject cannot advance towards the Farmer, and may only retreat slowly.
Three Successes:	The subject is frozen in place.
Four Successes:	The Farmer may render the subject "unconscious."
Five Successes:	The Farmer can control the subject's movements.

The power costs 1 Pathos. On a failure, the Farmer is ignored. A botch gives the Farmer a point of temporary Angst and causes the target to attack immediately.

••• Purify

This power has the effect of reducing a *p'o*'s temporary Angst score. It has no effect on permanent Angst.

System: The Storyteller rolls the Farmer's Charisma + Way of the Farmer against the subject's permanent Angst score. Each success removes a Corpus level and 1 temporary Angst from the target. Any 1 rolled gives a point of temporary Angst to the Farmer. This power costs 1 Willpower.

•••• Deaden Spirit

With this power, the Farmer soothes the savage *p'o* through calm and soothing words. This deadens the raging jealousy and hatred that power them, bringing them some form of temporary peace.

System: The Farmer makes a Charisma + Empathy roll (difficulty 8) and spends a point of Pathos. On a success, the Farmer mollifies the beast, deadening its emotions and causing it to calm down. The target will take no violent action for a period of one turn per success scored, instead muttering to itself or just curling up and grumbling. A failure has no effect on the target. A botch causes the target to attack immediately, and gives the Farmer 3 temporary Angst.

••••• Reap the Hungry Ghost

With Reap the Hungry Ghost, the Farmer may render down the Corpora of *kuei* into rough blobs that can be easily transported or stored. This power only works on subdued *kuei*, preferably those that have been deadened, and does not work on wraiths controlled by their *p'o* or on Spectres.

System: To render down a *kuei*, the Farmer spends two points of Pathos and rolls Manipulation + Crafts (difficulty 7). This power also requires half an hour per Corpus level harvested. With success, the *kuei* is worked down into an easily transportable lump. A botch ruins the Corpus being worked and gives the Farmer a temporary point of Angst.

The Way of the Merchant

In the Middle Kingdom, the Merchant serves as an essential middleman. While the Arcanos may not come with the respect given to practitioners of other arts, every wraith in Yu Huang's realm must know someone with access to this Arcanos or they will be unable to use the sacrifices their living relatives make to them.

• Transfer

With Transfer, a Merchant may give Pathos or take it from another wraith as desired. This power only works on direct contact regardless of whether the target is willing or unwilling, and a yellowish glow is emitted from the point of where the two touch.

System: To perform a Transfer, the Merchant rolls Manipulation + Way of the Merchant. To give Pathos, the difficulty is the Wraith's current Pathos rating. To steal it, the target difficulty is the subject's Willpower. Each success rolled translates into 1 point of Pathos that can be transferred. Each 1 rolled gives the Merchant a point of temporary Angst. Transfer costs 1 Willpower to use.

•• Cash Money

The most popular ability in the Way of the Merchant, Cash Money is where most Merchants stop their studies. It allows the wraith to fully utilize any sacrifices made by living relatives, converting them directly into Pathos, which can be kept or shared with another wraith as needed.

System: Converting a sacrifice into Pathos requires a Manipulation + Way of the Merchant roll versus the number of Pathos points in the sacrifice. A success means that the sacrificed item has been transformed into its equivalent in Pathos. Once this has been done, Transfer can be used to share the Pathos with other wraiths. If Transfer isn't used, the Merchant simply keeps the Pathos. Each 1 rolled causes the loss of a point of Pathos from the sacrifice.

••• Withdraw Essence

With this power, the Merchant can pull Pathos from the Corpus of *kuei* that has been converted by a Farmer, or from raw, unshaped White Jade. White Jade that has been worked cannot be used for this, nor can a *kuei* that has already been forged into a new form.

System: The Merchant spends a Willpower point and then makes a Manipulation + Way of the Merchant roll. The difficulty is 5 + the number of Pathos points to be gained. Thus, an attempt to gain 1 point of Pathos would have a difficulty of 6, 2 points would be at a difficulty of 7, etc. On a botch, each 1 rolled adds a point of temporary Angst.

•••• Returning the Favor

This ability lets the Merchant aid her living relatives much in the same way that they aid her. The Merchant may imbue a mortal with Pathos, giving them a boost of emotional energy. The results of Returning the Favor vary, depending upon how much Pathos was given.

Returning the Favor does exactly what its name implies, allowing a Merchant to send Pathos back across the Shroud to a mortal. The results of this transfusion vary, based on how much Pathos is given, but the boost of emotional energy given the mortal is always beneficial.

1 point will allow a mortal to reduce the difficulty of a single action by 1.

2 points will allow the mortal to reroll a failed dice roll.

3 points of Pathos will restore a point of Willpower.

A Merchant can return a maximum of 3 points at any given time.

System: Returning the Favor requires only that the wraith be within five feet of her target. She spends a Pathos and a Willpower point, then rolls Charisma + Empathy (difficulty equal to the number of Pathos transferred + 4). A failure means no Pathos was transferred, and a botch gives the Merchant temporary Angst equivalent to the number of 1s rolled.

••••• Mint Money

With Mint Money, the Merchant is able to turn his Pathos into a physical form that can be transferred easily. Most Merchants create coin strings or wads of paper money, although more exotic tokens are possible. Some Merchants prefer to create unique "moneys" that serve as their personal signature, and thus achieve some personal notoriety.

Mint Money lets the Merchant turn Pathos into physical tokens that can be easily transferred. Wads of paper money and strings of coins are common, though other forms are sometimes used as well. Indeed, some Merchants make distinct tokens that serve as their signatures, which can then be seen as a sign of quality.

System: To use this art, the Merchant spends 2 Pathos and a Willpower point, then rolls Manipulation + Way of the Farmer (difficulty of the amount of Pathos converted + 4). The wraith's own Pathos then drains out of them and manifests as freshly minted currency. It will last in this form for one day per success. A failure results in the loss of the Pathos the Merchant was attempting to convert. A botch gives the Merchant 2 temporary Angst points for each point of Pathos lost.

The Way of the Soul

Unlike the other four Ways, the Way of the Soul is not grounded in Confucian teachings. Rather, it is based in Taoist thought, enabling Jade wraiths to battle their own demons rather than turning to outsiders to assist them. It is rare for a follower of the Way of the Soul to be able to affect another's *p'o*, but mastery of the art gives a wraith considerable power over her own.

• Coax

Coax allows the wraith to modify the number of Shadow Dice its *p'o* offers, thus allowing the wraith to minimize certain risks taken when dealing with one's dark side.

System: To use Coax, rollWay of the Soul against a difficulty of 6. Each success allows another die to be removed from or added to the Shadow Dice pool. Use of Coax adds 1 temporary Angst point.

•• Nullify Thorns

Through the use of this power, a wraith is temporarily able to prevent her *p'o* from using one of its Thorns.

System: The wraith spends a point of Pathos, then makes a contested roll of a wraith's Stamina + Meditation versus her temporary Angst. If successful, the wraith can prevent the use of a single Thorn for one half hour per success. On a botch, the *p'o* gains a point of temporary Angst.

••• Give Higher Passions

The wraith can use this power to attempt to induce some of his own Passions into the *p'o*, temporarily replacing one of its Dark Passions.

System: To successfully implant a Passion, a wraith must spend 2 Pathos and make a Manipulation + Meditation roll versus a difficulty of the *p'o*'s temporary Angst + 2 (maximum 10). Each success rolled equals one day that the wraith's Passion replaces her choice of the *p'o*'s Dark Passion. A botch results in the wraith gaining 2 temporary Angst.

•••• Alter Demeanor

With this power, the wraith can talk to her *p'o* in such a way that it cares about different things, such as love and accomplishment instead of simple envy and hatred. By doing so, the wraith can make the *p'o* take on a new Archetype for an extended period of time, even one normally reserved for the *hun*.

System: This art costs 3 Pathos, and requires a Charisma + Manipulation roll against a difficulty of the *p'o*'s Angst + 4. For each success, the effect lasts for a week. However, if the player botches, then the *p'o* gains 4 temporary Angst. Even if the player merely fails without botching, she still gains 1 temporary Angst.

••••• Inner Peace

Rather than standing in opposition to an assertive *p'o*, Inner Peace allows the *hun* to join with it, allowing the two halves of the wraith's soul to act as a unified whole. This moment of unity often reminds the *p'o* of days gone by, making it reluctant to act aggressively against its other half.

System: The wraith makes an opposed roll of his Willpower versus the *p'o*'s Angst. If the wraith wins, the two may act together, allowing the wraith to gain Pathos from Passions, Dark Passions, and the use of the *p'o*'s Thorns. The wraith may not be entirely in control of himself during this phase, but the *p'o* is not in control either.

The joining of the two aspects ends when the wraith exhausts all of the *p'o*'s temporary Angst, or 24 hours have passed. A failed roll on Inner Peace rouses the *p'o* to new heights of fury; a botch gives it immediate control and 3 additional points of temporary Angst to play with.

Chains of the Emperor

It is said that only members of the Immortal Guard have access to the powers of Chains of the Emperor. Created by the emperor himself, in conjunction with Fu Xia, this Arcanos is designed to subdue, not kill. In that, it is extraordinarily effective.

• Brilliance

The Guardsman's painted skin glows even brighter than normal when Brilliance is invoked. The magically enhanced paint on the Guardsman's skin glows in eerily bright colors, piercing the eternal night of the Shadowlands with the hues of a bizarre sunset.

While the eerily painted forms of the Immortal Guard are already brighter than is normal for the Underworld, with Brilliance comes an enhanced glow that shines out brightly enough to blind enemies.

System: This process takes three turns to reach full brightness. At their full brilliance, the colors blind all those near the Guardsman who do not make a Stamina roll (difficulty 7). Attacks against the Guard when Brilliance has been activated have their difficulty increased by 1 for the first two turns the art is in play, and by 2 for each consecutive turn after that. It costs 1 Pathos to use Brilliance for five turns, and a botch blinds the Guardsman for one turn per botch.

•• Shackles

Using some of his own Corpus, the Guardsman can create a pair of shackles with which he may bind either the hands or feet of an opponent who has already been immobilized. These cannot be removed by anyone but a Guardsman unless rent through the use of Moliate. The shackles share the same eerie color scheme as the Guardsman

System: The Guardsman rolls Dexterity + Chains of the Emperor (difficulty 5) to manifest the shackles and place them on an immobilized foe. Shackles take one turn to place on the subject. They cost 2 Corpus and 1 Pathos. A failure results in the loss of 2 points of Corpus, while a botched attempt at Shackles causes the Guardsman to lose the 2 points of Corpus as aggravated damage.

••• Snare

With Snare, the Guardsman can cancel out another wraith's ability to use Argos. Tactically, it's used to keep enemies from fleeing the field of battle or prisoners from trying to escape hell.

System: Any wraith the Guardsman is in physical contact with (this includes Shackles) must win an opposed Strength + Brawl roll with the Guard or she will be unable to use Argos.

•••• Lariat

Similar to Shackle but useful up to a distance of 50 feet, Lariat can be used on a moving target. To use Lariat, the Guard takes part of his Corpus and flings it at the target.

System: Successful use of Lariat costs 1 Pathos and 2 Corpus, and requires a successful Dexterity + Chains of the Emperor roll (difficulty 7). Each 1 rolled is taken by the Guardsman as a level of regular damage.

••••• Net

This Art has a shorter range but a wider effect than Lariat. It can be flung 20 feet, but consists of a net rather than a single pair of shackles, and thus can be used to target a group of wraiths.

System: With an expenditure of 3 points of Pathos, the Guardsman produces a colorful web, 12 feet in diameter. The Guardsman then casts this net at his targets, using a Dexterity + Chains roll (difficulty 6). The net completely ensnares any victim it touches, wrapping around them with sticky fibers so that they are completely immobilized.

Breaking a strand of the net requires a successful Strength + Brawl roll. It takes between three and six successes to escape the net completely. True Jade can be used to cut the net, though White Jade will shatter on the attempt.

A botched attempt at using Net gives the Guard 3 health levels of aggravated damage, as well as 2 temporary Angst.

Tvashtriya

Arcanoi of Svarga: Displace

Displace combines elements of Kinesis, Moliate, and Usury. In Swar, the Arcanos' chief use is for "creating" all the splendid "foods" and comfortable accoutrements which characterize that Dark Kingdom. Basically, wraiths who belong to that kingdom but who attempt one of the three aforementioned Arcanoi in Stygia find themselves facing certain restrictions and having certain advantages — none of which apply to Stygian wraiths. Conversely, no Stygian wraith can ever practice the art of the Tvashtriya.

Tvashtriya

Death strands numerous Rajput, Punjabi, and Bengali troops and trench-diggers — whom the British export from colonial India — in the Dark Empire of Iron. Unlike wraiths of the other Dark Kingdoms who turn up in Stygia, the Tvashtriya are not necessarily Renegades in the Dark Kingdom of Iron. Stygia has no treaties with Swar, so the Hierarchy isn't opposed to seeing such wraiths enthralled or integrated into the bureaucracy in more pleasant ways. However, all Tvashtriya experience dreams of Swar, with its seeming ease and plenty. Stygia's relative bleakness is something to be fled for most of these wraiths.

Once such wraiths master their Arcanos, they can render another wraith into amorphous soulstuff, a substance they can then reshape into all manner of Artifacts. What distinguishes Displace from Moliate and Usury is that a Tvashtriya must wraithride a target before he can have any other effect on her. Although Straddle (and the detection of other wraiths using it) is a basic ability for practitioners of this Arcanos, Tvashtriya can have no further interaction with objects across the Shroud. Every other aspect of this art involves wraithly Corpora.

A Tvashtriya wraithriding another faces risks similar to the ones that affect someone who is Straddling: Damage inflicted on the ridden wraith affects the wraithrider equally. This rule includes Arcanos damage such as what Early Withdrawal might inflict (i.e., a Usurer directing that art at someone who is wraithridden gets *double* Corpus levels). Tvashtriya cannot insert their Corpora into mortals, relics or Artifacts.

Practitioners of Displace obviously make great spies, a fact that makes these wraiths welcome in any Renegade Circle and hunted by the Legions. The Artificers', Usurers', and Masquers' Guilds pursue them relentlessly in effort to learn the Displace Arcanos — which they can never do. Many individual wraiths are uncomfortable with the invasiveness of the Arcanos and therefore seek Moliation by Tvashtriya — or Pathos infusion from them — only as a last resort.

Botches

Depending on what a Tvashtriya is attempting inside another wraith, botches can have a range of results. Typically, a botch causes a boomerang effect wherein attempted theft of Pathos drains it from the Tvashtriya or efforts to infuse a wraith with Corpus instead drain the target of health. Nasty failures can trap a displacer inside his subject.

• Wraithride

A Tvashtriya who can make contact with the Corpus of another wraith can invade the target's Corpus and remain there for an indefinite time. A successful wraithrider finds herself in a dark, quiet place. Normally, she has no perception of events outside the host wraith except for the host's entry into Slumber (which causes a Displacer's "environment" to brighten) and attempts to detect the rider's presence (which the Displacer might notice as a buzzing noise).

Wraithride provides no control or influence over the host wraith. It also exposes the rider to all damage the host wraith suffers, including Harrowings and theft of Corpus or Pathos. Also, should a wraithriding Tvashtriya fall into a Harrowing, she drags her host along with her. A Usurer who receives "extra Pathos" from a wraith can sometimes infer the additional presence of a wraithrider.

System: The player rolls Stealth + Displace to invade a target's Corpus. The number of successes achieved must be exceeded in a resisted roll for another wraithrider to force the first out of the host. Although a successful wraithrider can be *intentionally* detected only through the use of Sense Rider or Sense Kinesis, a wraith who uses Transfer (or other applicable Usury ability) on a ridden wraith can determine the presence of a rider in her target's Corpus with a successful Intelligence + Usury roll (difficulty 8).

•• Deflect

Deflect allows a Tvashtriya to combat others' attempts to sense his presence when he's riding an object or another

wraith. This art also lets a wraith channel damage from his own Corpus to that of a wraith he's in contact with as the damage occurs.

System: Obviously, a Tvashtriya must first successfully ride an object or Corpus before he can attempt to deflect efforts at detection. Also, he must realize that someone is attempting to detect him, which requires one success on a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 6). To avoid detection, the player makes a contested roll of his character's Manipulation + Displace against the seeker's Perception + Kinesis or Perception + Displace, as appropriate. Detection by a Usurer *cannot* be deflected; in that instance, the cat — or, rather, the Corpus level/ Pathos — has already left the bag. It's up to the Usurer to make sense of the excess profit.

To deflect damage, the wraith must make physical contact with a target who can receive it (the wraithrider cannot deflect damage). The player rolls Manipulation + Displace. The number of successes equals the number of Corpus levels of damage the Displacer can channel.

••• Transfuse

A Tvashtriya riding another wraith's Corpus can lend Pathos to her host or take Pathos from her host. If the host is not in Slumber at the moment of transferal, he can notice the event, as can onlookers. Bestowal of Pathos produces a momentary scintillation around the host's Corpus, whereas theft of Pathos causes fleeting waves of darkness to sweep across the host's Corpus.

System: Once the Tvashtriya is successfully wraithriding a target, the player rolls Stamina + Displace to bestow Pathos or Dexterity + Displace to steal Pathos. The difficulty to bestow Pathos equals the host's current Pathos, whereas the difficulty to steal Pathos equals the host's Willpower.

Pathos theft with this art grants the Tvashtriya 1 temporary Angst.

•••• Reconfigure

With Reconfigure, a Tvashtriya can make various changes to his host's Corpus. Minor alterations can be effected during the host's Slumber without rousing the host. Such changes include making part or all of the host's Corpus luminescent (as with the Moliate ability Glow), transparent (to let the Displacer visually reconnoiter his surroundings; a wraithrider looking out while her host Slumbers inside a Fetter sees only impenetrable darkness), or resonant (so he can hear the host's surroundings; dead silence means the host is inside a Fetter). Any more extensive alteration attempted with Reconfigure on a wraith in Slumber may rouse the host. Major alterations with this art include new appendages or sensory organs, modified teeth or extremities. A favorite Tvashtriya trick is to make the host resemble the Displacer, then abandon the lookalike host, who serves as a decoy.

System: Once a character has successfully wraithridden a host, the player rolls Intelligence + Displace (difficulty 7), with the number of successes required to be determined by the Storyteller, based on the goal of the Tvashtriya. Changes made with Reconfigure to the host's Corpus can likewise be undone with Reconfigure or the Moliate ability Sculpt. Otherwise, Reconfigure's effects are permanent. If a Tvashtriya attempts to use Reconfigure on a host in Slumber, the target's player should roll Perception + Awareness and be roused on a successful roll (difficulty 8).

This art costs 1 Pathos to use, and the host loses 1 Corpus level. Use of Reconfigure on an unwilling host grants the Displacer 2 temporary Angst; on a willing host, 1 temporary Angst.

••••• Transmogrify

Masters of Displace can change a host's corpus into nearly anything (mostly inanimate stuff, though), including a form that can be consumed for Pathos "nourishment."

System: Once a character has successfully wraithridden a host, the player makes a contested Wits + Displace roll against the host character's Willpower (difficulty 7 for both). Three or more net successes for the Tvashtriya allow her to render the host into an "edible" form that grants Pathos to the consumer.

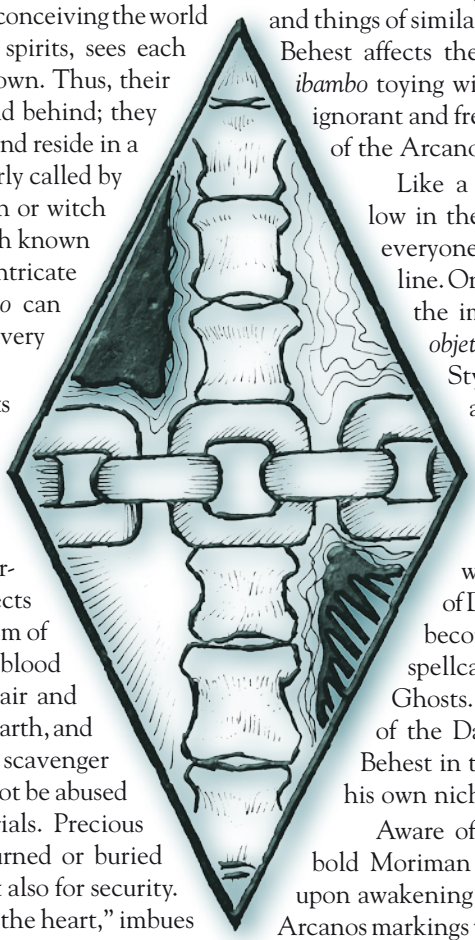
Many users render a target into a form resembling a cluster of grapes. Each "fruit" a wraith ingests confers 1 Pathos; a cluster contains one grape per point of Pathos the target possessed at the time of transmogrification.

Any use of Transmogrify costs 2 Pathos and grants the Tvashtriya 3 temporary Angst.

Moriman

Arcanoi of the Bush of Ghosts: Behest

The African *ibambo* is a four-part entity combining a soul's "immortal essence," the dark "shadowself," the sleep-traveling "dreamself" and the entwining "heartlife" that bridges the physical and spiritual worlds. Much of living Africa, conceiving the world to be abundant with spirits, sees each animal and plant as housing a soul of its own. Thus, their human dead do not leave the living world behind; they merely slough the body from themselves and reside in a "spirit Africa." They respond when properly called by one among the Quick — a medicine man or witch doctor — or among the dead — the wraith known as a Moriman. Belief spins reality in the intricate Web of the Dead. With Behest, *abambo* can intimately sense the strands touching every wraith... and *pull!*



Behest is an Arcanos that melds aspects of Lifeweb, Puppetry, and Fatalism. It parallels the practice among the Quick of bewitching others through effigies or personal belongings, for

both derive from the African understanding that a person is a spirit who affects (and can be affected by) the spiritual realm of the world. In the Skinlands, menstrual blood buried or washed away in a river, cut hair and fingernail clippings secretly buried in the earth, and bodily remains completely disposed of by scavenger or flame all ensure the owner's spirit cannot be abused by magic that incorporates these materials. Precious items or personal weapons are often burned or buried with their owners, in part for respect, but also for security. Caring for things, holding them "close to the heart," imbues them with a link to the human spirit that still binds in death.

This link applies all the more so to wraiths. African wraiths can sense, with their heartlife, the

imbued connection of all things in the Underworld. The truly gifted master of Behest can even follow the lines of spiritual bonds to living Fetters across the Shroud. Although any wraith may learn from skilled Puppeteers to manipulate unsuspecting Quick, only the *abambo* may do such to another *wraith*. Individuals learned in Behest find employment as the most valuable assassins, extortionists, and saboteurs among the dead. Location, physical manipulation, and energy drain are potent weapons against an unsuspecting wraith… especially when the target can be utterly destroyed from a distance.

The average wraith lavishes intense concern on her Fetters, people, or objects of importance on the other side of the Shroud, while being relatively oblivious about the persons and things of similar importance to them in the Underworld. Behest affects the Shadowlands and their residents. An *ibambo* toying with Behest outside the Bush of Ghosts is ignorant and free of the stringent laws that restrict abuse of the Arcanos.

Like a neighborhood of gun owners, crime is low in the Dark Kingdom of Ivory; knowing that everyone is similarly armed keeps miscreants in line. On the other hand, Europeans are not taught the importance of protecting their cherished *objets de morts*. For most Moriman dwelling in Stygia, the combination of vengeance and advantage afforded them by their power is simply too much to resist.

The Western mind sees death as the absence of life. Africans know death is still part of the Web of Life, but, for one who is dead, there is also access to the Web of Death. Normally, these *abambo* would have become revered witch doctors, spiritualists, or spellcasters for their tribal faction in the Bush of Ghosts. But without the framework or guidance of the Dark Kingdom of Ivory, a practitioner of Behest in the European Underworld is left to carve his own niche.

Aware of the premium placed on their services, bold Moriman abandon the uniform shirts they wore upon awakening in Stygia. They display their distinctive Arcanos markings with pride and defiance — for few wraiths are foolish enough to draw the wrath of Behest's masters. Of course, a few individuals manifest in tribal garb from the start.

Right Hand/ Left Hand

There are two Hands in the art of Behest: location and manipulation.

The ability to master each Hand is enhanced by the object with which the Arcanos is being guided, and the expertise of the Moriman herself. But one must exercise both Hands equally in order to be truly strong. The Right Hand seeks and finds. The Left Hand steers and strikes.

Botches

Botch results vary considerably depending upon what aspect of the Behest Arcanos was (unsuccessfully) attempted. Most often, the target wraith simply cannot be located, leaving a cold trail or sometimes a false one. Mimicry is the curse of Moriman who flub efforts to control another wraith. That is, the target unknowingly dictates the motions of the Moriman.

This outcome can be merely humiliating or completely disastrous. Behest is a superb weapon, as long as you can avoid being its target.

Restrictions

Lifeweb and Fatalism cannot be practiced by an *ibambo* in any other fashion than through the channels of Behest. Puppetry, on the other hand, is an element of Behest, but may also be taken as a separate Arcanos to be used specifically on the living. Behest is purely a manipulation of wraithly and soulstuff energies; Puppetry affects the living, man or beast. These fields of play are separate, and both are open to the *ibambo* Moriman.

Behest has no spatial range or limitation to its use — as long as the target is somewhere on the planet, it can be found. What varies is how much time may be required to follow the connective strands to their source; the closer in proximity the Moriman is to his target, the sooner the task may be accomplished. The target "eluding" Behest is the cover-up term for a Moriman's failure to produce results. And in the European hells, time is not to be wasted, for as long an African wraith remains outside the Bush of Ghosts, his very soul mutates into the dyad soul of a Stygian wraith, into Psyche and Shadow. With their four-part self vanishes the ability to ply Behest. Practice of this Arcanos is a finite trade outside the Dark Kingdom of Ivory, and clients must pay handsomely for the Moriman's sacrifice of precious time.

• Delve

A Moriman armed with the appropriate link to another wraith can enter a trance state and experience what that wraith has recently undergone. Although Delve lets the practitioner detect the recent surroundings — and feelings — of her target, this Right-Hand art does not confer "mind-reading" abilities or control of any sort.

System: The player needs at least one success on an Intelligence + Meditation roll (difficulty 6) before she can attempt Delve. Thereafter, she rolls Empathy + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). One success bestows the target's recent mood. Two successes give visual impressions, including faces the target saw and details about his environment. Three successes add fragments of auditory information to the mix — incomplete sentences and ambient noise, for example. Four successes vividly recreate the target's surroundings, and five or more successes reveal when the target had this experience and how he felt during it. This art costs 1 Pathos.

•• Trace

By grasping an item belonging to the wraith under examination, *or* by occupying a space recently vacated by that individual, the Moriman can determine his target's current location. When using an object, the practitioner must surround it with a nimbus of exhaled smoke; when using a locale, he must occupy the *exact* space that the target did and surround himself with smoke. Within the exhaled cloud, the strands of Fate glow and shift. The strand that extends outside the smoke leads to the target.

System: Roll Investigation + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). One success merely points in the target's direction, whereas five successes establish a glowing thread between the practitioner and the sought wraith. A player may not turn down successes, so extreme success can have the disadvantage of alerting a target (who needs only one success on a Perception + Alertness roll [difficulty 5] to realize something's up). However, a player can use less than his total dice pool for the roll. Strands made visible by Trace remain that way for a number of scenes equal to successes on the roll. This art costs 1 corpus and 1 Pathos.

••• Scry

The third level of the Right Hand lets a Moriman with a usable link enter a trance state to simultaneously perceive what another wraith perceives. Scry, like Delve, does not make the practitioner aware of a target's thoughts, but it does reveal some of the descried wraith's emotions.

All successfully applied Behest arts, Right Hand and Left at this level of expertise and higher, are visible to other wraiths using Soulsight. A glimpse with Soulsight at a wraith "invaded" by a Moriman's consciousness shows knotted strands

shaped just like the ones that merge on the practitioner's chest (no two Moriman have identical Arcanos markings), but radiant, not dark. The Shadows of a Moriman and her target can communicate freely during any use of Scry.

System: The player needs at least one success on an Intelligence + Meditation roll (difficulty 6) before she can attempt Scry. Thereafter, roll Empathy + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). The target may make a Perception + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 6) to realize someone is using Scry on him. One success allows the target to make a Willpower roll to resist the Behest user. Should the Moriman win this contest, her successes determine the amount of information she receives exactly as they do with Delve. Scry lasts for a number of turns equal to successes on the Empathy + Behest roll. This art costs 2 Pathos and 1 Willpower.

•••• Divine

Although rumor has it that further Right-Hand powers exist for practitioners of Behest in the Bush of Ghosts, Divine is the uppermost such ability for a Moriman dwelling in Stygia. It allows the user a glimpse of what Fate holds in store, either for the Moriman herself or for another wraith. Practice of this art does not require a link, only meditation upon the individual seeking divination. After meditating, the Moriman expels smoke that coalesces into a scene of the future.

System: The player needs at least one success on an Intelligence + Meditation roll (difficulty 6) before she can attempt Divine. Thereafter, roll Intelligence + Behest (difficulty 8). One success gives a blurry tableau, whereas three allow a silent play in miniature, complete with recognizable individuals and settings. The smoke representation endures for a number of turns equal to successes on the roll. This art costs 1 Corpus, 2 Pathos, and 1 Willpower.

••• Twitch

Use of the Left Hand stems from mastery of the Right Hand — a Moriman cannot affect wraiths she cannot find. Thus, the practitioner must first successfully Scry her target. The effects of Twitch on a victim are limited to the most minor of bodily manipulations: a stumble, a rolling of the eyes, an irritating tingle... Such changes are tiny, but potentially devastating if well-timed and ill-intentioned. Moriman dabbling with the Left Hand routinely cause missteps that throw unsuspecting wraiths into walls or other wraiths, and off staircases into space.

System: After successfully using Scry on the target, roll Dexterity + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). At this point, the target (if aware of what's happening) gets a second chance to use Willpower to resist the Moriman. The number of net successes determines what minor Corpus stimuli or spasms the Moriman may cause, and to what degree. One success might cause the target only to nudge that jugged Spectre someone foolishly left on the parapet, yet fail to push the container off. Two successes make the action more of an elbow lunge, something a suspicious onlooker *might* believe was intentional. Three or more successes take things up to an open-handed shove. Players should be encouraged to pantomime whatever actions they wish the target to commit; irritations are portrayed by the Moriman player pinching or tickling herself. This art costs 1 Pathos and confers 1 point of temporary Angst.

•••• Murmur

The second level of the Left Hand lets the Moriman speak through another wraith's mouth (or whatever orifice the target commonly uses). The practitioner's utterances sound exactly like the victim, unless the Behest user consciously wills otherwise.

System: The Moriman must successfully Scry the target. Thereafter, roll Intelligence + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). As with Twitch, the target may resist with Willpower. The number of net successes determines the number of turns that the Moriman may speak through the target. This art costs 2 Pathos, and it confers 1 point of temporary Angst.

••••• Veer

Through exertion of will and mastery of her Arcanos, the Moriman makes another wraith into a puppet squatted upon the practitioner's expert hand. Veer encompasses all wraithly "motor skills," and it allows the user of this art to march her victim into the nearest Nihil, or to defend himself from an attack that the Moriman anticipates but that the target of Veer does not.

System: Once the Moriman succeeds in using Scry on the target, roll Dexterity + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). As with Twitch, the target may resist with Willpower. The number of net successes determines the number of turns that the Moriman may control the target. This art costs 2 Pathos plus 1 Willpower, and it confers 1 point of temporary Angst.

Items with a closer link to a targeted wraith lower the difficulty of most Behest arts. For example, a Moriman who has a skinmask of a wraith he's attempting to control or find has will do so more easily than a practitioner who has only relics belonging to the Restless in question.

Item	Difficulty
Skinmask/ severed extremity	5
Fetter	6
Chief Haunt	7
Personal Artifact/ relic	8
Recently handled object/ recently visited locale (Underworld)	9

What if death wasn't the end?

What if you could die and return to your body to live again?

What if science could render death an inconvenience?

Your loved ones haven't passed on. They're here among us, and now the living may walk alongside the deceased.

- If you've ever felt a feeling of existential dread…
- If you've ever seen a spook, specter, or ghost…
- If you feel as if your greatest love or hated rival holds on, even after they've departed…

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eath is not the end.

Many believe this, but few truly know it. Ghost stories are often relegated to tabloids or horror movies in the mainstream, but plenty of mortals believe in something following death without voicing their suspicions. It still takes many wraiths by surprise when they first cross the Shroud and discover their new existence. Hardened atheists and pragmatists are the largest group of unbelievers, doubting the spiritually inclined no matter the evidence.

The Orpheus Group is out to change this disbelief, one mind at a time.

Through drugs and a technological blending of science and spirituality, the firm claims to be able to eject their agents' souls from their bodies, enabling them to walk amongst the dead without permanently departing the land of the living. For a fee, the Orpheus Group will send agents capable of projecting to investigate suspected hauntings. They can put you in touch with your departed loved ones, or rid your life of a relative who simply can't let go. For a slightly higher fee, Orpheus can be quietly contracted as private investigators who will never be seen and who can't be stopped by petty things like doors or walls or locks. Pay a little more, and Orpheus will send a projector to sit in on a board meeting, view assets firsthand, and otherwise engage in corporate espionage no company can stop, physically or legally. After all, nobody's managed to legislate against ghosts yet.

Be very quiet, and pay a *lot* more, and Orpheus can make your enemies disappear, die of a heart attack, or perish in a freak accident. Of course he killed himself — what, do you think a *ghost* did it?

For now, Orpheus' exposure is limited. They show up in select tabloids, they're whispered about by their corporate and ultra-wealthy clients, and they're discussed in hushed tones among those paranormal researchers who consider themselves "in the know."

Glossary

or the most part, Orpheus projectors use terminology derived from popular culture, leading to confusing interactions with seasoned wraiths. Experienced projectors tend to pick up Stygian slang and lingo over time.

Beach: Vacation or downtime between missions requiring projection.

Black Heroin: Pigment (q.v.).

Cradles: Sleeper cryonic-suspension tubes. Also called "coffins."

Crucible: Orpheus term for a circle of wraiths and projectors; disparate interests working together.

What is Orpheus?

The Orpheus Group is a corporate group in the Skinlands of the World of Darkness. They advertise in coded websites, spread their service via word-of-mouth, and appear in personalized catalogues for important officials. They're a Silicon Valley-esque startup company that has the technology to pierce the Shroud and attempt to engage with the dead on their own terms. Orpheus hires individuals who've had close brushes with death and uses meditation, spiritually active drugs, and cryogenic technology to forcibly eject these individuals' spirits as pseudo-wraiths who can walk as ghosts do. Orpheus holds only a dim knowledge of Restless society. Orpheus possesses little knowledge of Stygia, operating exclusively in the Shadowlands and only now slowly starting to scratch the surface of death's mysteries.

Fumigation: A mission involving ridding a place of wraiths or projected entities, usually by destroying them or their Fetters.

Gauze: A wraith's Corpus, so named for the weblike consistency formed by plasm passing through solid Skinlands objects.

Ghost: Nonprojecting **spooks** (q.v.); a wraith.

Horror: Arcanos.

Hue: A ghost who was a pigment user in life, essentially different from a wraith.

Lament: Project Echo terminology for the different "classes" of ghost.

Malkovich (slang): A Consort, especially that of a Skinrider.

Meat, the (slang): Term for the physical body **projectors** (q.v.) leave behind and return to.

Near-death experience: Close calls and personal experiences with death, any time a mortal is forced to directly confront their mortality. Shorthand is NDE. An NDE can be anything from surviving a drive-by shooting to narrowly missing a fatal car accident to contracting a terminal illness, thereby lessening the grip of the Fog on the character.

Networking (slang): Sharing Pathos amongst a crucible.

Pigment: A hallucinogen that, rumor has it, allows the living to perceive the dead. Addictive, but cheap, and gaining popularity amongst casual drug users.

Post-Life Entity: The clinical term for a wraith or hue.

Project Echo: Orpheus' ongoing research into wraith society, ghostly metaphysics, and the refinement of projection technology.

Projector: Humans who can send their souls out of their body. Some are **skimmers** (q.v.), some **sleepers** (q.v.).

Projector Firm: A company capable of employing and maintaining post-life operations. Orpheus is currently the only projector firm in existence.

Repeater (slang): A Drone.

Shade: Orpheus Group slang for the seven types of personality groups that wraiths fall into.

Skimmer: An agent who projects from her body using drugs and yogic techniques.

Sleeper: An agent who projects from his body via flatlining and cryonic suspension.

Spook (slang): A wraith or projecting entity.

Stains: Physical deformations of a ghost's gauze, the manifestation of violent passions and personal bitterness.

Squatter (slang): A self-willed wraith who chooses to remain in a certain area, like an office or abandoned building.

Spoiler Alert

Wraith: The Oblivion ended in 1999 with the supplement **Ends of Empire**, detailing a series of events culminating in the rise of the final, catastrophic Maelstrom that consumes the Underworld. **Orpheus** was a core book published four years later, with a limited release of five supplements, covering the rise of the titular projector firm. **Orpheus**' supplements delved into the secret history we're going to reveal below, and ultimately the fate of the entire Underworld. This history is mostly the same as it's presented in the **Orpheus** supplements.

If you're a player who'd rather not be spoiled on the deep and heinous history behind Orpheus, skip ahead to the rules section on p. 477.

History

The technology that bridged the Shroud, like so many revolutionary scientific discoveries, came about as a complete accident.

Orpheus began its existence as JDG Cryogenics, a startup firm like so many others in the mid-1990s, drawing a talent pool from its affiliation with Caltech. Bob Jackson and Anne Del Greco founded the company based on the precept that individuals with terminally advanced physical conditions could be cryogenically suspended until such time as their illnesses could be treated successfully. The medicine of the future, JDG's pamphlets proclaimed, held the secrets of life and death. The key lay in surviving until those secrets could be uncovered. The company managed to attract a few investors, and while they never were precisely popular, they did put enough wealthy and progressive clients into cryonic suspension to remain solvent.

JDG had one tremendous advantage over their competitors: Dr. Eduardo Fernandez, a cryonics specialist and one of the few people in the world with the scientific skill to freeze and reanimate a human body. Before JDG, the greatest impediment to true cryonics was the fact that portions of the human body possessed different tolerances to freezing; while one set of organs would freeze cleanly, the adjoining tissue was completely destroyed by the process. Dr. Fernandez relied on mummification through a protein-rich, cold-tolerant suspension fluid that prevented ice from forming and damaging tissue within the body.

Remarkably, it worked, generating a serious breakthrough in cryonics: JDG thawed and revived their first client just after the millennium. Surviving terminal illnesses, deep-space travel via cryonic suspension, keeping blood and organ tissues viable for donation for years on end — the future seemed bright. They'd pulled off a legitimate medical miracle, and JDG boasted that they could bring their clients back from the dead.

And it turned out, they had, just in a more literal manner than the press releases meant. Out-of-body experiences were frequently reported from thawed clients, and the patients reported being privy to conversations they couldn't possibly have been party to. One client in particular, Jane Kennedy, had a long flirtation with Eastern esotericism and holistic medicines, transcendental fascinations she developed between lifelong rounds of chemotherapy, and she put this to use once she was in the chamber. Having died on the operating table twice in her life, she found herself well suited to out-of-body experiences. While her fellow clients found themselves merely floating above their bodies, Jane ventured out much further. For weeks at a time, she wandered the areas around JDG Cryogenics, marveling at the shattered, ruined buildings and hiding from what she described as roving bands of armed ghosts stalking the streets.

Kennedy approached the board with an offer of funding and a new mission. She'd been to the afterlife, she said, and she could prove it. Thanks to insider knowledge gleaned from long months of sitting in on private board meetings, Kennedy's personal worth doubled, then quadrupled, then quintupled again. The rest is barely concealed public history: Kennedy became the mother of projectors, and JDG rechristened itself the Orpheus Group with a mission to explore the afterlife for human advancement, with a vision to profit from projection into the land of the dead.

The private history was far more sinister.

Dark Days

The scientific potential of the cryonics breakthrough was well heralded, but few rushed to take advantage of the expen-

sive process, and JDG soon found themselves approaching insolvency. Kennedy's experience and patronage allowed the newly dubbed Orpheus Group some breathing room to explore the new side of their technology, yet early experiments generated inconsistent results. Scientists of every stripe were hired right out of colleges and promised glorious, groundbreaking futures, but were unable to precisely duplicate (or explain) the science of projection even while backed by the firm's specialized resources. Even after Orpheus' transition, several banks of cryotubes remain dedicated to rich clients, waiting for resurrection. In the meantime, Orpheus tapped (and continues to tap) into its trust funds to fuel talent acquisition.

Orpheus knew that projecting was possible, but getting replicable results took time and money. Still, by analyzing the histories of clients still in suspension, the researchers determined that those likeliest to succeed in "projecting" had survived an above-average number of near-death experiences in their lives — they were familiar, even *comfortable*, with the idea of their own mortality. Then the botanist team headed by the famed Dr. Amours Katlilian discovered that certain plant-based drugs, especially derived from psychoactive plants found in the Central American rainforests, could greatly facilitate the act of projecting when introduced into the protein strains in Dr. Fernandez's suspension fluid. Funded by the last of Orpheus' cash, Katlilian led a group of interns (most of whom still work at Orpheus, sworn to fearful secrecy) into the heart of the Bosawás Biosphere Reserve on a quest for a plant strain that held the qualities he knew would unlock the secrets of the dead.

Against all odds, the botanist succeeded, returning as a driven and darkened soul completely dedicated to his work. The plant he discovered — *Kakos stromithicarum* — was highly addictive, but easily facilitated projection. The newly territorial Katlilian grew batches of the plant in an Orpheus warehouse, allowing none other than he to tend the plants. Orpheus attempted to culture seeds and cuttings, but all efforts to replicate his work with the plants failed utterly, even when they reproduced the environment of Bosawás exactly. Even with this breakthrough, Orpheus exhausted all available funding, and was facing bankruptcy and the cessation of all operations.

Then another backer stepped in.

Project Flatline

The National Security Agency greatly expanded operations during America's War on Terror, finding themselves in possession of a vastly expanded operational mandate and several black budgets. Certain elements of the

A Crusade of Ashes

Despite the Orphic Circle's name and far-reaching reputation, they had absolutely nothing to do with Orpheus' creation, mandate or salvation by the NSA, at least not at first. The group discovered the hidden Orpheus — how not, with that name? — but never moved to investigate or infiltrate the secretive cryogenics company. The reason for their early lack of interest in the fledgling projector firm lies in the Circle's worship of the Underworld goddess entity, Diké — better known as Zyras, the All-Consuming.

The myriad Spectre cults under Zyras saw their counterpart cults worshipping Lamachis behind the creation of projection technology. Powerful Spectres wielding scissors in honor of their master swept through the Shadowlands, purging the NSA projectors while cultivating the Marion Flatliners. It was enough for the Orphic Circle to back off, with other longtime hunter and medium groups taking their lead.

agency were intrigued by Kennedy's obvious act of economic espionage, and certain (smaller, quieter) elements held suspicions of a ghost world that lay adjacent to our own. Soon enough, the NSA adopted Orpheus as a "skunkworks" project — dedicated to the exploration of technology that could breach the Shroud.

Complications arose from Orpheus' irate CEO, who disdained the company's new partners and objected to the agency's pressure to test the addictive *stromithicarum* extract on human subjects. A single, too-convenient heart attack ended all dissent on the matter, and the NSA provided the projector firm with test subjects: twelve death-row inmates with no appeals left, all of whom had multiple near-death experiences and nothing left to lose.

The NSA shrouded Marion Federal Penitentiary in secrecy, paying off the warden to use the facilities and inmates, with none the wiser. Combining Katlilian's drugs and Fernandez's cryonic admixture, Orpheus placed all 12 inmates— dubbed Flatliners — into suspension. The head researchers naïvely believed that by holding the prisoners' bodies hostage, the inmates would remain docile and compliant. They were wrong; the Flatliners discovered that not only could they exist as wraiths, going wherever they pleased, but they could also afflict the living, to the point of manifesting. Following charismatic kingsnake con Uriah Bishop, a demagogue convicted of poisoning 40 Southern Baptist parishioners at a picnic, the Flatliners strode into the Underworld, binding the Reapers who came for them in their own slavers' chains and laughing at the hand of Fate.

Orpheus panicked, now responsible for a dozen comatose corpsesicles who couldn't be revived to be executed. Its NSA handlers reacted with more aplomb: Within a day, a fire swept through the prison, killing dozens of death-row inmates and annihilating any physical evidence of the Flatliners or the project. The entire incident was swept under the rug, and Orpheus owed the NSA a favor.

The aftermath of Project Flatline seemed disastrous, but it was actually a triumph for Orpheus. Katlilian was found dead almost immediately following the Marion Penitentiary event, his death a complete mystery even post autopsy. However, Orpheus was able to seize his research notes and warehouse full of *stromithicarum* plants. With Katlilian's drug under their control, Orpheus knew skimming was theoretically possible, and they ventured into Underworld. The casualties were appalling, but they persisted.

A year after the Marion fires, the NSA demanded a return on their investment: the new projectors Orpheus had taught, to be brought under the agency's auspices for espionage and intelligence missions. Orpheus complied, cutting its losses and taking the last of the agency's skunkworks money to train a new batch of projectors who never knew about Flatline or the previous generation. The only remaining vestige from the NSA's involvement was the strict NDA preventing Orpheus from making any findings from their investigations public, no matter the client. Breaching this at any point would provoke further government interference, and potential shutdown.

Project Echo

Orpheus rededicated itself to its core mission: exploration of the Underworld and development of technology to help bridge the gap between the living and the dead. At this point, it was keenly aware that the Restless Dead it had under its protection were helping them in violation of the Laws of the Underworld, so Orpheus altered its training crucibles to emphasize stealth and defensive techniques over analysis and research skills. Rechristened Echo, the ongoing initiative concerned itself with research projects inside the afterlife itself. As far as most employees know, it's the first project Orpheus had.

The NSA never allowed Orpheus to go public with their projectors and revelations about the Underworld, despite arguments from several important players. The constant argument arose that Orpheus would learn far more about the Great Hereafter and the powerful ghosts that resided there if people were inclined to let Orpheus know when incidents occurred — offering, even paying, for their domiciles and property holdings to be investigated. This way, Orpheus could act as a clearinghouse and intelligence fusion center, determining the agendas of powerful clients while interacting with the elements of wraithly society least likely to draw attention. Along the way, they could identify items and structures in the Skinlands of interest to wraiths. This permission was strenuously denied, with emphasis placed on Orpheus being disallowed from retaining stocks of client and Underworld knowledge. They were told in no uncertain terms

to act as explorers of the Underworld purely as an application for clients, rather than for private research, with threats of takeover should they pursue too much of the latter.

Of course, rumors were spreading (on both sides of the Shroud) that projector technology existed. Fernandez had long since left the company, and leaked information to several interested parties. Still, Orpheus remained secretive, protecting its technology and methods from duplication. The closest competitors, Terrel & Squib (with superior pharmaceutical knowledge) and NextWave (a private security company using techniques out of the old Soviet psychic programs), were years — even decades — behind Orpheus.

Shadow Games

Orpheus only emphasized secrecy during projection operations after the first batch of projectors were brought under the NSA's auspices — those early projectors never properly learned to keep silent or remain hidden. However, they had less contact with Stygia than might be expected, considering that the agency restricted their movements and missions to spying on the Quick and the occasional assassination.

Unfortunately for them, Spectres took particular offense at this invasion of the Underworld by the living. They boiled out of Nihils, surging over the NSA projectors and dragging them deep into the Labyrinth. Powerful Doppelgangers stalked and murdered the embodied projectors by possessing nearby bystanders, then destroyed the wraiths they left behind. One by one, each of the NSA's projectors died screaming. In several cases, partially manifested sleepers were torn to shreds by enemies that nobody else could see, their pods cracked open to let the frozen meat thaw and spoil.

Horrified, the NSA quietly decided to contract out Orpheus for their espionage and wetworks missions, a relationship that continues to this day. Orpheus hushed the matter up in turn, and lets its new recruits blissfully believe there's no danger Oblivion's monstrous servants will hunt them down and destroy them.

But the past won't stay buried. Several NSA agents have moved on to other agencies, and won't let the matter drop. Even now, Orpheus has several powerful enemies on both sides of the Shroud, quietly waiting for them to make that one fatal mistake.

Finally, though Orpheus had perfected the process of creating and training projectors, their drug stocks were almost completely gone, and they needed an alternative. They found it in *pigment*. Given that their skimmers tended towards the thrill seeking, Orpheus got wind of pigment long before the DEA ever did. Project Echo's researchers realized the brand-new street drug facilitated projection just like their plant stocks — except pigment was far more addictive. Orpheus substituted the drug for the majority of their projector training, weaning their skimmers off before their addictions became too overwhelming.

The Quick and the Dead

Two years have passed since leaks surrounding the Orpheus Group reached message boards, blogs, and conspiracy journals. Such revelations don't cover the titanic city of the dead, nor the great colonial Citadels that stretch above the ephemeral skyline of cities in the Shadowlands. Most simply add to the growing belief in ghosts among today's youth.

Today, Orpheus offices are an eclectic mix. The brass are polished technocrat executives, fueled by a desire make a killing by exploiting their access to the land of the dead. The researchers are a mix of fringe scientists and college graduates looking for a sweet paycheck. The field agents come from all walks of life, by necessity — the only qualification is a collection of near-death experiences. Cliques form rapidly, though researchers and field agents find plenty of things to talk about, and the competitive nature of R&D means that researchers occasionally waylay agents and ask them to test a particular theory or piece of equipment. Agents and researchers are instructed to focus only on "operations-related" questions about the Underworld and actively discourage staff from trying to draw metaphysical conclusions or learning more. This doesn't stop groups of employees from privately collating data and drawing their own terrifying conclusions.

Project Echo focuses on six areas of interaction with wraiths and pursuit of projection refinement: recruitment, intelligence gathering, espionage, retrieval, removal, and salvation.

Recruitment

Temp agencies rarely staff the caliber of person Orpheus requires for projection. Orpheus do their best to appear like an altruistic, medical tech-company, but their past betrays them. Any monumental good deeds accomplished come alongside equally monumental avarice. Increasing mankind's knowledge of the Underworld is a noble goal, one that drives the researchers of Project Echo, but their superiors see a revenue stream stretching beyond death. The management of Orpheus holds that gazing long into Oblivion can result in profit, without truly grasping that Oblivion gazes right back.

Pigment

Black heroin. Ghost dust. *Pigment.*

The drug has only been on the club scene for six months, but it's already red hot. Chic and easily available, adored by the casual and hardcore users aside, pigment provides a hallucinogenic high like no other, because it allows the user to see the dead. Smoke it, pop it, shoot it up: Whatever you want, pigment can do.

The DEA is on the verge of appointing a task force to address the growing issue. Pigment largely defies chemical analysis — pigment crystals sometimes appear similar to highly refined crystal methamphetamine, other times LSD, but always with some added impurity that radically alters the effect on the brain. This impurity is in fact the basis for Orpheus' current strain of projection drugs, a fact that would ruin the company if it got out. Consequently, Orpheus' researchers don't *tell* projectors what they're slamming into their veins, and actively discourage missions that put projectors into contact with pigment. However, given how closely guarded a secret the projection drugs are, the brass passing missions to Orpheus employees might ignore the prohibition for all the wrong reasons.

Pigment's also connected to hues, but exactly *how* is unknown.

Pigment is notable in that it has different effects depending on how it's introduced into the body. Each effect persists for (8 – Stamina) hours:

Smokers get a hallucinogen, one that produces a trippy, memory-focused high, losing one die to all rolls for any action undertaken while high. A successful Wits + Awareness (difficulty 6) roll focuses on the happy memories, while a failure produces a bad trip (and a botch results in horrifying memories rising to the fore). While the smoker receives intermittent Lifesight and Death in this state (and thus, can occasionally see wraiths and auras), it's usually chalked up to errant hallucinations.

Pill poppers enjoy a high something akin to a hallucinogenic form of heroin, a sedate and sexually-aroused state of mind that causes a two-die penalty to all actions and a temporary halving of permanent Willpower. Synesthesia is common, but the affected character's able to see wraiths and projected entities. By spending two Willpower points, the character is able to project as a skimmer.

Mainlining pigment into the bloodstream via injection produces an even more potent high (and a three-die penalty to all actions), and the user can see, hear, and speak to wraiths. Spending one Willpower point allows the character to project, using their Willpower rating as effective maximum Pathos (though as noted above, their Willpower rating is halved).

Orpheus monitors web forums and ghost-themed blogs, social media and veterans' associations, and support groups for the terminally ill. They fund several horoscope and ghost hunting apps, innocuously asking users if they've been close to death. The researchers are looking for commonalities and stories indicating a near-death experience — and potentially, a viable recruit. Some projectors still suffer from life-threatening illnesses, lured by Orpheus' promise of total medical coverage. Others, such as police officers or ice road truckers, have performed dangerous jobs for low pay — and Orpheus recruits start just below six figures, more if you're willing to undergo hazardous operations deep in the Underworld or black-ops missions within the Skinlands.

Orpheus has also retained the services of some wraiths, who can obviously pass far more easily unnoticed within the Underworld. They also tend to retain employment of dead projectors who manifest as Restless, as they often don't have anywhere else to go. Only the youngest Enfants, or wraiths with a decidedly different agenda, ever accept an offer of employment — it's a direct, open violation of the *Dictum Mortuum*.

Intelligence Gathering

Project Echo's primary mission involves performing paying jobs for paying clients while staying away from the deepest parts of the Underworld. Though there are researchers fascinated with the nature of the afterlife, and interacting with the Stygian Hierarchy and their satellite citadels, few clients pay for such intelligence, and they are under strict mandate to not pursue such avenues. Intelligence gathering missions often involve posing as a new wraith and attempting to discern secrets or, more rarely, question ghosts. Several projectors have heard of the various Guilds, but as Orpheus' agents rarely leave the Shadowlands, it's rare they encounter a wraith guildmember. As far as Orpheus is concerned, the Necropoli are unknowable

edifices in the dim distance, and approaching any of them results in a swift disappearance.

Orpheus primarily uses sleepers for lengthy research missions. Their periodic absences are explained to those rarely interviewed wraiths as Harrowings or Fetter maintenance (which isn't a lie, after a fashion, considering projection trauma and the need for a sleeper's body to heal up between missions).

Salvation

Orpheus' advertisements are limited, but word-of-mouth tells stories of their ability to restore contact with the loved ones of private clients, or laying to rest of a troubled ghost bothering the living. While many wraiths interact with their living Fetters in subtle ways to avoid violating the *Dictum Mortuum*, Orpheus has refined their techniques enough to proactively solicit clients and inform them they've got a haunting. Along with their ghost hunting tech, the internal Orpheus communication devices convert a smartphone camera into a Kirlian device to perceive ghosts (and ping the company's servers every time it picks up a positive result).

Only the richest and most dedicated clients would be able to afford the thousands of hours and immense amount of work Orpheus would need to help a loved one pass on after death, if Orpheus could even make that work. Orpheus researchers are intrigued by the possibilities, but not knowing whether Transcendence is possible, do not consider it a cost-effective exercise to demonstrate.

The majority of agents operate under a "do not interact with the wraiths" policy, using projection more for observation, information-gathering, and recording of wraith activity. A handful of operatives have discovered they can act as proxies for the dead and in turn be paid by the living, but Orpheus as a company refuses to entertain this avenue. Individual agents do, however, risking destruction in the Underworld by promising Fetter maintenance and Quick aid in exchange for fat sums.

The fate awaiting an agent caught practicing such illicit activity would be unpleasant.

Where desired resolutions such as Transcendence cannot be pursued, and neither the living nor the dead can pay enough, there's a more direct option to making a ghost pass on.

Removal (Fumigation)

Orpheus has agents trained in Lifeweb, able to track a wraith's Fetters. If the Quick are bothered enough and a wraith decides to get belligerent and play hardball, Orpheus plays hardball right back. For those wraiths who refuse to deal with Orpheus (or those clients who specifically ask for a wraith to be fumigated), Orpheus will attempt to track down the wraith's Fetters and either destroy (in the case of smaller Fetters) or sever them (in the case of living or massive Fetters, like a building). Agents have killed beloved pets, melted down priceless jewelry, and occasionally engaged in light arson in order to properly fumigate a ghost.

Quietly, Orpheus trains the frontline task leaders for the future. While the brass and investors believe the Underworld to be an unlimited font of potential wealth, those who've projected know the deeper they delve into the Underworld, the greater a risk they take of waking the sleeping giant that is Stygia. Should open war ever erupt between Orpheus and the Hierarchy, the living will suffer more than the dead. The more frontline projectors explore the Underworld, the clearer the reality becomes: Orpheus doesn't have the experience or the resources to survive.

They believe, however, that they'd be able to lop a few heads off on the way down, so agents make a point to identify the most dangerous ghosts in an area and who they were in life. This research exists in a perpetually premature stage, until Orpheus decides to cast off the limits on their research and delve deeper into the Underworld.

Retrieval

Retrieval missions generally result from heavy intelligence gathering or salvation efforts. They account for Orpheus' attempts to acquire objects, Artifacts, or relics on either side of the Shroud. In the past, Orpheus has also attempted to capture Spectres, though these missions usually resulted in catastrophic failure. Still, though it's an empty warehouse in the Skinlands, Orpheus' primary relic storehouse is a small but varied treasure trove of ghostly items and lesser Artifacts. Experienced, trusted projectors often counsel younger crucibles to stash away prized or powerful relics for their own ends, depositing them in caches accessible by projectors.

Espionage

Espionage jobs usually fall into one of two categories: investigative and corporate. Investigative is much more common (and more pedestrian), and doesn't pay as well. Corporate is lucrative, glamorous, and incredibly dangerous.

For richer clients looking for a private investigator who will remain truly unnoticed, or corporate clients willing to spend a great deal, Orpheus employs their agents on external espionage missions, spying on the Quick from the Shadowlands. All projectors have access to the same suite of senses wraiths "enjoy" — especially Sharpened Senses and Lifesight — and unless the living have some sort of necromantic protection or pay Orpheus a retainer to not be spied upon, they're exceptionally vulnerable to a projector gaining intimate corporate knowledge. While some decry Orpheus as a protection racket, retainers are slowly growing and represent a stable and steady income rather than the large lump sum of a single espionage mission.

No court, as of yet, is willing to admit the testimony of the dead, though one projector has been brought up on charges of insider trading. She was acquitted, but only after a lengthy court battle after her claims of "projection" were dismissed as the influence of psychoactive drugs or an outright deception. Orpheus considers lobbying for testimonies from the dead a long-term goal, but for the moment it encourages its projectors to pursue a private detective's license and simply lie about how they came upon their information if called to the stand. This has led to several news stories surrounding the cryogenics company Orpheus. These tell-alls always rumor forays into the world of ghosts, but are accompanied by crackpot conspiracy theorists and bad science, adding to the company's cover. They do not desire public scrutiny.

Wetwork

As the Smiling Lord recognized so long ago, the dead make exceptional assassins.

Besides espionage, the NSA and through them the CIA and Homeland Security, continues to employ Orpheus for the occasional targeted killing. Orpheus only gives such missions to its most trusted and reliable projectors. A powerful spook projects, finds the target, and either possesses them or finds some other way to kill them. All it takes is a single foot jammed down on the accelerator or a faulty stoplight to cause a fatal accident, while a Befuddled jogger can fail to realize he's running far too hard for his heart to keep up. Disposing of any wraiths that might result from the kills, of course, is part of the service as well.

Beyond that, projectors can observe network passwords being typed in or precisely measure the server architecture of national rivals, greatly aiding the agency in pursuit of signals intelligence.

Rumors abound about this kind of work, both inside and outside Orpheus. As a side effect of wetwork training, certain agents have taken it upon themselves to act as vigilantes, punishing those whom they feel have escaped retribution: drug dealers, mobsters, crooked politicians. Even with the need for secrecy drilled into every Orpheus projector, it's only a matter of time before they're found out, and trouble follows.

Flatlining – Orpheus Systems

Projectors vs. Wraiths

Projectors, whether astrally projecting *skimmers* or cryogenically frozen *sleepers*, differ from wraiths in a few ways:

None possess a Shadow. Instead, they have Stains, partially controlled expressions of self-loathing.

Their Pathos, Willpower, and Corpus are subtly bound together in a concept Orpheus calls Vitality. This concept renders projectors tougher in some ways, yet more vulnerable than wraiths in others.

The psychological makeup of projectors expresses itself more fully, determining which Arcanoi they favor.

They don't have Fetters, but instead have *Tethers*, which are functionally similar but automatically repair themselves due to their living nature.

Projectors cross the Shroud as wraiths, or as something very much like a wraith. Subtly altered by their Quick nature, projectors are set apart from "true" wraiths in a number of different ways. The specifics of what differentiates a true wraith from a projector (signified by a class Orpheus calls the *Lament*) are of great interest to Project Echo.

Projector Character Creation

Follow wraith character creation steps, except where noted.

Step One: Character Concept

Choose Concept, Shade, Lament, Nature, and Demeanor.

Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Arcanoi (1 Shade Arcanoi, 1 Embody, 1 Lifeweb, plus 2 points), Backgrounds (7 dots), Passions (5 points), and Tethers (10 points, 5 of which must be spent on the physical body).

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record beginning Pathos, Willpower, and Angst (all 5).

Apply Shade modifiers. Spend freebies (18).

Projection

Anyone with the proper psychological makeup can learn to project. Repeated NDEs and spiritually active drugs loosen the connection between body and spirit. Generally, this requires three to four NDEs — enough, psychically speaking, to render the character familiar and practically comfortable with the experience of nearly dying. Initial training requires drugs (either pigment or Orpheus' proprietary hallucinogen cocktail) and coaching with an experienced projector. If a candidate has the requisite talent to skim, it emerges during these coaching sessions, but even if a projector flunks their yoga sessions they still qualify to be a sleeper.

The first projection is always the worst (and should be played through in the Prologue, in lieu of a death scene). Orpheus takes great pains to have the skimmer feel comfortable — projecting couches, dim lights, soft music — but the skimmer feels her soul tearing out through her chakra points as her NDEs flash before her eyes in rapid succession before she dies and flows out of her body. The sleeper's experience is even more disconcerting, though less personal: His eyes lose their focus to the sight of his blood draining into a series of clear bags, being replaced by drug-filled cryonic fluids. He's so, so cold, until the cold is replaced by a numbness that slowly warms. And then the world snaps into focus, and he's standing by a cold tube with a small window displaying his frozen corpse.

The appearance of a projector is determined as a wraith's is: Usually, they look very much like they do in the Skinlands, though some elements of the person's sense of self manifest on their body. They do not enter the Shadowlands with a Caul — not even the first time, though Fatalism scrutiny reveals faint deathmarks from multiple NDEs like a bright light reveals faded scars.

Default Abilities

A character receives the same characteristics as wraiths (Deathsight, Lifesight, Sharpened Senses, and Insubstantiality) any time she projects. Her soul crosses the Shroud into the Shadowlands and separates from her body.

While separated from their bodies, sleepers bear a strong similarity to true wraiths, while skimmers are a different breed of ghost. Both types of projector may travel through the Underworld, communicate with and physically contact wraiths, and become intangible and walk through walls of the Skinlands. A projector possesses both Pathos and Angst, though the effects of this fade while she's back within her meat.

Orpheus agents have a predilection towards one or more Arcanoi, and this natural talent —combined with the tutelage of a few unscrupulous members of various Guilds — means the Orpheus Group is capable of teaching most of the modern Arcanoi. Projectors may learn Arcanoi as normal and utilize the arts while projected. Projectors cannot use Arcanoi while in the meat (though certain Fatalism and Serendipity arts may

activate themselves, at the Storyteller's discretion). Of the standard Stygian Arcanoi, Castigation is the least familiar; without Shadows, projectors cannot glean the greatest benefit, nor do most Pardoners know how to handle a projector's Shadow taint without an actual Shadow to focus on. Accordingly, most Castigation arts simply fail, though Purify (Castigation 3) functions at +3 difficulty.

Other powers that affect wraiths, such as a vampire's necromancy, *generally* affect projectors as well, with some exceptions — a power that would bind or compel a projector to a location fails when that projector is in the meat, and powers that would expel a projector's soul cause them to skim instead. Any necromantic power that works on Fetters suffers a +2 difficulty when applied to a projector.

Tether

Projectors do not have Fetters, yet successfully surviving death requires a connection to the living world. As a consequence, projected entities have *Tethers*, which function identically to Fetters save for a few important distinctions.

- A projector's strongest Tether (rated at five dots, connected to their body) is visible to users of Lifeweb as a slick, shiny silver cord.
- Destruction of a Tether does not drop the projector into a Harrowing, though death of the physical body causes the projector to become a true wraith. Additionally, Tethers represent ongoing connections, so they can be neither neglected nor resolved.
- Tethers *can* suffer a Rending; use of Sever Strand can sever a Tether or the silver cord. However, the damage (and rating) repairs itself if the projector reintegrates with her body.

Silver in the Wind

Orpheus is aware of Harrowings from firsthand accounts, theorizing that they represent some sort of tough-love process inherent to the Underworld. Yet the living cannot be Harrowed, so Project Echo has little in the way of firsthand knowledge. Still, this doesn't mean projectors can't be *in* a Harrowing.

Harrowings take place in physical locations deep within the Labyrinth. It's just barely possible that a targeted Nihil could drop a projector (or any wraith) into another wraith's Harrowing. Once there, the living projector is adopted into the foreign Harrowing, taking on some character of import to the Harrowed wraith. Spectres swarm the projector, letting him know the way he should act, encouraging him to commit some sort of abuse against the Harrowed wraith. Once here, unfortunately, Spectres gleefully try to hang on to their new, exotic toy. Getting out of the Labyrinth is much tougher than getting in.

Any condition that would otherwise result in the projector suffering a Harrowing that doesn't somehow kill him causes the projector to return to his body, suffering one level of aggravated damage.

Dead-Eyes

Projection changes an agent. Once they've seen the Shadowlands with their own eyes, the sight never truly leaves them. Projectors in the meat can activate Lifesight and Deathsight for a scene with a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7), allowing them to perceive wraiths and Shadowlands structures. The multiple near-death experiences that are a prerequisite for projection weaken the effects of the Fog, and after their first projection, a projector's never subject to it again.

Vitality

The Orpheus Group has grasped the links between Passions and Pathos, but the relationship between Willpower, Pathos, and Corpus eludes it. Hampering its efforts is the fact that the incomplete death of a projector seems to deepen and muddy the relationship between the three.

A projector's *Vitality*, or maximum Pathos, can't exceed her *temporary* Corpus rating; suffering damage causes her to lose Pathos as well as Corpus. On the flip side, a point of Willpower may be spent to energize the projector's gauze, immediately providing three points of Pathos (which may exceed the projector's Corpus rating, but which must immediately be spent towards restoring Corpus).

Emblem of Protection

When the first projector encountered a Maelstrom, some of her Pathos somehow transformed the biker jacket she wore, transforming it into chainmail stronger than steel and lighter than silk. Emblems are unique to the projector, taking on a wide variety of forms — it's not unusual to see riot gear, chainmail, shields and robes, or anything even more esoteric the projector subconsciously associates with protective garb. Regardless of form, the mechanical effect is the same: By spending 2 points of Pathos, the character gains armor with a rating of 4B/2L/1A that also downgrades a Maelstrom's destructive effects on the character by one Bell rating. For an additional point of Pathos, the rippling emotional energy manifests as an arcing electric current on the projector's skin, causing one level of lethal damage to whomever grasps her. The Emblem lasts for a scene.

Orpheus speculates that this ability is somehow related to projector's living nature and is intrinsically linked to the gauze relics some projectors manifest, but as of yet, Project Echo has been unable to identify the source of the protection or provide a thesis for developing more Emblems.

Laments – Skimmer and Sleeper

There are two types of projectors, *skimmers* and *sleepers*, defined by the means by which they separate their souls from their bodies to project into the Shadowlands. Both are more vulnerable than wraiths, albeit without the ability to be drawn into a Harrowing.

Skimmers

Skimmers have mastered the ability to separate their spirits from their bodies naturally, through spiritually active drugs and unique biofeedback techniques married to Kundalini-inspired yoga.

Advantages: A skimmer regenerates Pathos at a rate of one point per hour spent resting in her physical body. She can project from the meat virtually at will, and may then travel as normal for a wraith as far from it as she wishes. To return and revive herself, she merely needs to return to the meat. She may also snap back to her body reflexively by tugging on her silver cord. She may "ripcord" to her body as long as she's in the Shadowlands, at a cost of one bashing damage (usually manifesting as a nosebleed).

Disadvantages: Every scratch and wound suffered by a skimmer's Corpus reverberates along her silver cord and manifests on her body. The claws of a Spectre slashing the projector's face leave long purple bruise lines on her cheek. Any bashing *or* lethal damage she receives as a wraith manifests as bashing damage to her body (halved, rounding up, before application). Skimmers don't suffer wound penalties from damage until they return to their bodies and make all soak rolls while projected at difficulty 5 (rather than 6). Aggravated damage is translated as lethal; damage rolls over to the next type as normal.

A skimmer must spend one Pathos point per hour projecting or suffer one automatic level of bashing damage to her body. Additionally, skimmers must purchase Meditation to project within a single turn; otherwise, they need one minute to project. Lastly, skimmers are largely active only within the Shadowlands — while they can theoretically descend to the Labyrinth and the Tempest, this would stretch their silver cord too thin for them to ripcord back. As a consequence, they must plan sojourns to the deeper Underworld carefully, lest their bodies die from accumulated damage incurred along the way. Orpheus protocol demands a ripcord if the projector gets into a fight they think they can't win, lest they be kidnapped or dragged somewhere they can't get back from.

Sleepers

Like skimmers, sleepers' souls leave their bodies and enter the Shadowlands. Instead of a comfortable little death, sleepers have their blood replaced with chemicals in order to drop into cryonic suspension, a brute-force expulsion of the soul from the frozen, somnolent body.

Advantages: Sleepers need not expend Pathos to project or to stay projected. Additionally, a sleeper can voluntarily shunt Angst points from his gauze back to his body, providing respite from that malignant energy. For each temporary Angst point channeled in this fashion, the sleeper's body suffers one level of bashing damage (which he cannot soak), a spiritual punishment that the character cannot heal until he emerges from suspension. Once shunted, the points cannot be recalled or washed away via Castigation or another art. Outside of this channeling, projecting sleepers do not suffer health level damage. Almost all damage applied shreds Corpus as if the sleeper were a true wraith.

While the Angst persists as bashing wounds, the rehabilitation process to heal the sleeper's body and mind enables him to drain himself of one Angst point per day. Should the sleeper project again while still suffering these bashing wounds, the remaining Angst points immediately convert over to the character's overall temporary Angst pool.

Disadvantages: A sleeper cannot project at will or in a hurry. Instead, he's chemically flatlined in the cryogenic cradle, a process that takes about five hours. The sleeper cannot reenter his body until the unit warms the corpse back to living temperature and replaces the cryonic fluids with blood (which also takes five hours). While in suspension, the sleeper cannot recover Pathos. Once a sleeper is back in his body and awake, he recoups Pathos at a rate of one per hour. The projecting sleeper recovers Pathos as any other wraith.

Shades

Orpheus defines seven different Characteristic Templates, or **Shades**, that projectors fall into. Partial roadmaps for how the projector approached life (and thus how they begin their journey into death), Shades help to define a projector's traits and capabilities through Favored and Prohibited Arcanoi.

On Terminology

Orpheus uses multiple terms, such as Shade, that have very different meanings in the Underworld. Some of this comes from an imperfect understanding of terms they've heard or overheard from Restless over the years. There's also sheer institutional bloody-mindedness to consider, as no one at Orpheus wants to change the forms and databases they've painstakingly constructed. Regardless, the conflicting uses of those terms often leads to confusion or even outright hostility in interactions with the denizens of the Underworld, as there are quite a few wraiths who hear the term "Shade" and are ready to use Arcanoi first and ask questions later.

Nature dictates a character's identity, and Demeanor their outward face, but a projector's characteristic Shade determines her approach to the Underworld. A Haunter may have any number of reasons why she can't rely on others, but the ultimate result is always that she feels better relying on tools and machines than the fickle whims of others. Wisps may be altruistic or masochistic in equal measure, but they always charm and negotiate their way through both life and death.

Someone's Nature may be Competitor, constantly striving against others to prove himself, but he could also be a Poltergeist (his Shade), believing that the best way to win out over others is through anger and force. His Nature might even feed his spiteful fury every time someone challenges him. Alternatively, a Wisp Bon Vivant might combine his enthusiasm for slick deception and fast talk with his desire to enjoy life, seeing each new exploit as amusement rather than work.

Each Shade has a recommended list of suitable Natures that fit well with the concept. These suggested Natures are not exclusive, and players are encouraged to choose the Nature and Shade that best fits their character. Each Shade has also two **Favored** Arcanoi, which they learn at a slight discount (–1 XP/level), and a **Prohibited** Arcanos, which is more difficult for the Shade to learn (+1 XP/level). Shades are limited to common arts when learning Arcanoi. Finally, belonging to a particular Nature group also grants modifiers to starting Pathos, Willpower, and permanent Angst. Wisps, Phantasms, and Marrows are rarer than other Shades.

Misery Loves Company

A general power inherent to the Shade system allows the projector to spend 1 point of Pathos to empathize with a wraith in her same Nature group. Connecting in this way grants her +1 dice on all Social rolls involving that wraith.

Sense the Strands

A Projector receives a global –1 difficulty to Lifeweb rolls against someone in her Nature group, and a further –2 against someone with the same Nature.

Nature Groupings

Banshee

Characterized as possessing natural insight into the psychological and the metaphysical, Banshee Shade Natures tend to be introspective souls empowered by their insight and empathy. They typically aren't shy about much. They can, however, be slow to act by dint of being too willing to play devil's advocate or trying to see all the sides of a situation.

Suggested Natures: Caregiver, Martyr, Mediator, Optimist, Penitent

Favored: Keening and Fatalism

Prohibited: Outrage

Pathos: +0 **Willpower:** +1 **Angst:** –1

Haunter

Haunters constantly adapt, making themselves at home wherever they may be. Driven towards new experiences, Haunters are never content with their current situation. They are the spirit of enterprise and adaptation, making themselves a vital part of their environs, wherever that may be. This expresses itself in a predilection towards possessing objects.

Suggested Natures: Deviant, Explorer, Rebel, Rogue, Survivor

Favored: Inhabit and Flux

Prohibited: Keening

Pathos: +1 **Willpower:** +1 **Angst:** +0

Poltergeist

Poltergeist Shade Natures are passionate, wrathful souls, drawing strength from the ability to chain and unchain their inner fury when necessary. Poltergeists master their frustration, using that energy as a blunt force. While experience grants their anger a razor's edge, there's still a huge wellspring of activity quivering underneath. Their frustration is difficult to control by definition, but it gives them power, and they cannot exist without it.

Suggested Natures: Activist, Bravo, Critic, Eye of the Storm, Pragmatist

Favored: Outrage and Castigate

Prohibited: Fascinate

Pathos: +1 **Willpower:** +2 **Angst:** +1

Skinriders

Characterized by an immensely strong sense of self, Skinrider Shade personalities revel in physical and mental contact. Skinriders are the essence of control — of others, of themselves, of the situation. The world needs sorting out, and only they have the will and power to make it so. Organizers and manipulators, they're the strong hands where other Shades may be soft touches.

Suggested Natures: Bureaucrat, Competitor, Leader, Pedagogue, Traditionalist

Favored: Puppetry and Lifeweb

Prohibited: Moliate

Pathos: +0 **Willpower:** +3 **Angst:** +1

Wisp

Orpheus categorizes Wisp Shade personalities as subtle and charming, preferring indirect action and rarely taking a blunt approach to anything in life or death. Gifted with an ability to charm, Wisps are the life of the party. Supporters say they act to cheer others and to grease the wheels of social interaction; detractors note their tendency towards manipulative social-engineering experiments using everyone around them as guinea pigs.

Suggested Natures: Bon Vivant, Child, Conniver, Jester

Favored: Fascinate and Argos

Prohibited: Puppetry

Pathos: +1 **Willpower:** +0 **Angst:** –1

Phantasm

This Nature group consists of dreamers who seek to share their vision with others. Creatives of all stripes, they want to express themselves in whatever medium is at hand. Always eager for an audience, they're endlessly enthusiastic when gripped with inspiration.

Suggested Natures: Architect, Avant-Garde, Gambler, Visionary

Favored: Phantasm and Pandemonium

Prohibited: Inhabit

Pathos: +2 **Willpower:** +1 **Angst:** +1

Marrow

Social chameleons who embrace novelty and alternate perspectives, Marrow live to reinvent themselves. While Haunters make a place for themselves within their circumstances, Marrows change themselves to fit and blend in. The key phrase for the Marrow is *"I change,"* as they often define themselves by their ability to adapt to transforming circumstances and situations.

Suggested Natures: Enigma, Fanatic, Follower, Scientist

Favored: Moliate and Embody

Prohibited: Sandman

Pathos: +3 **Willpower:** +0 **Angst:** +1

Optional Rule: Shades of Gray

The Shades as presented here are reserved for projectors, representing another differentiation between the *mostly* dead and the *all* dead. Orpheus isn't precisely aware of this distinction, instead classifying all post-life entities into Shade personality groupings.

If a Storyteller wishes to make Shades available to a standard **Wraith** game as a character creation template and "splat" axis, the template should be applied before freebies are spent. Memoriam should no longer affect a character's starting Pathos, and Shade Favored Arcanoi should cost 4 freebie points (while Prohibited Arcanoi cost 7 freebie points). Characters should not be permitted to "double down" on Guild Arcanoi and Shade Arcanoi experience discounts. Wisps should be offered *either* Fascinate or Intimation as a Favored art, depending on how much contact the game will have with the Quick.

In general, this ties wraiths (and a **Wraith** game, in turn) far more strongly to the Skinlands and the concerns of the living, while dramatically ratcheting up tensions between Stygia and its Necropoli over the *Dictum Mortuum*.

Crucibles

Orpheus Group teaches its projectors to be more tightly bonded than most wraith Circles, forming close-knit groups Orpheus calls *crucibles*. Crucible membership offers certain advantages. Characters within a crucible may share Pathos with one another so long as they touch, an experience that leaves one partner emotionally enlivened and the other drained. They also can take part in what's called yoking, a means of magnifying the ghostly powers they're bringing to bear.

Most crucibles are carefully put together based on psychological profiles and a willingness to work together, since forming the crucible requires a measure of intimacy and trust that's normally reserved for close friendships. There's no upper limit to the size of a crucible, though they tend towards groups of three to five. More than that makes it increasingly difficult to find compatible individuals.

The actual process of forming the crucible takes several weeks of intense "together time," where the members become sufficiently comfortable with one another to be able to share spiritual energies. At the end if this time, there is a formal ritual of bonding. This requires a Willpower point from each member, and any hesitation can cause the crucible's formation to fail.

Benefits

One effect of the crucible system is the ability of a projector to link with another spook, augmenting the Arcanoi of the linked spook. This ability is called *yoking*, between donor and beneficiary. Orpheus trains their crucibles for weeks to properly master yoking, which provides yet another reason for crucibles to remain together. Each Benefit is linked to a specific Shade, and is treated as an Arcanos activation costing one point of Pathos.

Banshee: Natural team players, Banshees make everything easier. Lower the difficulty of an Arcanos art by two. This effect lasts for one turn.

Haunter: Efficient souls, Haunters help to maximize a power's efficacy. Double the duration of another Arcanoi.

Marrow: A master of adaptation, the Marrow makes herself useful to her entire crucible. The projector acts as a nexus for multiple Benefits, allowing two other crucible members to yoke to her while she passes both Benefits to a third beneficiary.

Poltergeist: Poltergeist fury hits like a sledgehammer. Add +3 damage dice to the next Arcanos-powered attack. Lasts one scene or until a successful hit.

Phantasm: The subtle power of the Phantasm renders the yoked power difficult to resist. Add +2 to the difficulty of the roll to resist the Arcanos, or add 1 success if there isn't a roll.

Skinrider: Flesh is not Corpus, but the Skinriders know that many of the same principles that apply to one apply to the other. Lend two dice to a Physical Attribute roll for an Arcanos' effect. This effect lasts for one turn.

Wisp: Calm yet mercurial, a Wisp prefers to offer her aid indirectly. The beneficiary may reroll any two failed dice on an Arcanos roll (except for dice that show a one).

Stains

No projector has a Shadow. Though they don't suffer Catharsis or find themselves subject to the endless psychic battle of the Shadow, projectors still grow angrier and more choleric when their current Angst rating rises above their Willpower. Rather than give the Shadow purchase over the Psyche, Angst ascendant mutilates the projector's corpus with *Stains* — visible, physical reflections of their worst fears and self-loathing.

Manifesting Stains

A character gains one Stain for every two dots of permanent Angst. A projector may manifest a Stain for the cost of a point of temporary Angst, bringing forth the chosen Stain for a number of turns equal to his permanent Angst rating. The projector may manifest as many Stains as he possesses, so long as he's willing to take the Angst points.

When temporary Angst rises above permanent Willpower, the character immediately and uncontrollably manifests his Stains, making the hideous mutations apparent on his Corpus. By spending a point of Willpower, the character may suppress

the Stains for the duration of the scene, but they manifest immediately afterwards. If the character's Willpower is 9 or above, her powerful will keeps her worst instincts in check until the moment they overwhelm her forever.

When permanent Angst reaches 6, one of the character's Stains manifests permanently. For each dot of permanent Angst above 6, the character gains a new permanent Stain. Some permanent Stains can be Moliated away, but always return after a session (or the next projection, whichever comes first).

Using Stains

Considered a social stigma among wraiths and a mark of distinction among Spectres, the harsh and spiteful demeanor evinced by Stained characters causes difficulty in relating to wraiths. Each cumulative Stain the character manifests increases Social difficulties by 1 among wraiths (and decreases such difficulties amongst Spectres by an equal amount).

Each Stain carries with it both an Advantage and a Disadvantage.

Adder's Scales

This Stain turns the character's skin into dappled green-gold snake scales, rendering them better protected and more supple, a trait of those who hate being pinned down by anything.

Advantage: Difficulties to escape bonds or effect athletic maneuvers decrease by one. The scales also grant the character an extra soak die.

Disadvantage: The character is more easily startled and likelier to react by lashing out first. The player must succeed in a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) when surprised to not inadvertently lash out physically or verbally. Also, they look like a snake.

Armor of Corpulence

A character manifesting this Stain grows grotesquely huge. Although he can barely move and see over his enormous mass, he's resistant to harm.

Advantage: The character is immune to bashing damage and takes only one *quarter* the normal damage from lethal weapon attacks. Fire, electricity, poison, and other environmental sources of Underworld harm still inflict normal damage.

Disadvantage: The character finds it difficult to move, as their vast bulk inhibits their actions. All movement-based actions suffer a +2 difficulty, and movement is restricted to a maximum of three yards a turn.

Barbed Corpus

Some people feel their appearance isolates them from the world, and put up barbs to keep other people away. This Stain manifests that feeling of isolation.

Advantage: The barbed hide offers one soak die, and inflicts one die of lethal damage against unarmed opponents who strike a character with this Stain. The character can also grapple or punch opponents to inflict the lethal damage.

Disadvantage: Each scene the character manifests this Stain, the character must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) or accidentally brush up against an object or Circlemate, inflicting a soakable level of lethal damage.

Brutish

The character grows into a hulking version of himself, three feet taller and 100 pounds more massive.

Advantage: The character gains one additional soak die and three extra dice to Strength rolls.

Disadvantage: The character is slow and plodding, dropping his initiative by five and halving his movement. The character also loses one die from all Intelligence and Appearance dice pools.

Chameleon Skin

For some, being noticed is deeply disconcerting, and they'd much rather fade into the background. The character's Corpus shifts color to blend into their surroundings.

Advantage: The character gains three bonus dice on all Stealth rolls.

Disadvantage: The spook has no control over this Stain. Whenever it manifests, the character's Corpus shifts color and texture according to the background, rendering the wraith hard to see and his body language difficult to discern. In these situations, the character's Social difficulties increase by +1.

Compound Eye

The character's eyes grow and form to be like those of a fly — huge, scintillating red domes that slide to the sides of their head, composed of hundreds of small hexagonal lenses.

Advantage: The character has a much wider range of visual acuity, allowing her to see everything within a 360-degree radius.

Disadvantage: The character loses distance vision while this Stain is active, incurring a penalty of +2 to all difficulties involved in ranged combat or trying to spot anything at a distance.

Corpus Cilia

Small, gentle quills cover the wraith's arms, allowing him to measure the flow and displacement of air.

Advantage: Perception difficulties are reduced by one, and all impairments to the character's vision (from injury, fog, etc.) are completely nullified within a 30-foot radius.

Disadvantage: All Wits-based rolls suffer +1 difficulty, due to the character's concentration on the information coming from those extra senses. Additionally, the character suffers –4 to all rolls in a Maelstrom rated one bell or above.

Dark Speech

A spook who sees himself as caustic or bitingly witty when pressed might develop this Stain, which transforms his tongue into a sharp dagger, gout of black flame, or liquid column of acidic spittle that can extend up to seven feet away

Advantage: The character acquires a ranged Brawling attack that inflicts Strength + 2 lethal damage at range.

Disadvantage: The character has no internal editor to censor his speech, inflicting spiteful verbal abuse on all within earshot. He must succeed at a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to speak properly and stop from tinging his speech with insults and veiled threats. Success or failure lasts for the duration of a scene.

Gossamer Webs

It's difficult for some people to let things go, and they feel like every new challenge tears a little bit of their soul away. The character's Corpus grows layered and sticky, allowing him to slough off a web to snare opponents or encase targets.

Advantage: On successful Brawl attack, the character may leave behind a sticky swath of Corpus to trap, blind, or pin an opponent. Each Corpus level expended in this matter creates two dots' worth of Strength binding. If the Brawl attack succeeds by three or fewer successes, the Storyteller dictates the effect, but if the player succeeds by four successes or more, he may dictate which part of the body is hampered. Valid targets include eyes (blinding), legs (hinders mobility), or arms (increases Brawl difficulties by 2).

Disadvantage: The character automatically loses Corpus when entrapping an opponent or passing through objects within the Skinlands. He can still remain intangible for the scene, but he loses one Corpus for each large object he passes through (and it can't be reabsorbed).

Hammer Fists

Some people ruin all they touch, and find that expending more effort makes the situation much worse. The character's hands grow massive and are covered with massive chitinous protrusions. The character may throw incredibly powerful punches, but can do little else with their hands.

Advantage: The character delivers Strength + 3 dice of bashing damage with unarmed attacks.

Disadvantage: Difficulties for all tasks requiring manual dexterity increase by 3.

Spider's Bristles

People are capable of surprisingly vile things, especially under trying circumstances. This Stain causes a carpet of hairy bristles to erupt from every pore of the character's extremities, giving the appearance of a thick, wiry coat of fur.

Advantage: The character can climb up walls and other sheer surfaces as a spider would — only soulsteel or the slickest surfaces of the Labyrinth cause her to slip. If she tries to adhere to another wraith, she fails.

Disadvantage: All difficulties involving a light touch are at +1. The projector may negate this with a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to disentangle from an object accidentally glommed onto.

Optional Rule: A Stained Soul

With the biochemistry of life suppressing the Shadow, Stains remain the only expression of the impurity of the soul on projectors. Wraiths are already capable of utilizing their Shadows for additional Angst and Shadow dice, but allowing them Stains allows the opportunity for outright cultivation. Storytellers who wish to allow their players to manifest Stains should set them as the equivalent of a 5-point Thorn for a Shadow, similar to Shadowed Face. Shadows can offer to activate a Stain at their discretion, though they are limited to one voluntary activation per session, and doing so grants them two points of temporary Angst.

Spite-fueled Arcanoi

Spite is fundamentally a negative emotion, but it can also be a fuel for greatness. Bereft of Shadows offering dice to enhance Arcanoi, some projectors turn to directly powering the arts with their dark sides. This is common Stain, and rumors abound of training centers where certain projectors can teach a spook to replace one of their extant Stains with this one.

This Stain causes the Corpus to glow with a sickly orange-purple light.

Advantage: The projector adds two dice to all Arcanoi rolls.

Disadvantage: The corrosive elements of Angst add a dark side to the Arcanoi. Keening may not incite positive emotions, while Puppetry causes health levels in damage to the possessed (one level per minute). While the effects are ultimately up to the Storyteller, tainting Arcanoi with Angst always nullifies benefits and intensifies destructive, negative effects.

Hues

Wraiths in washed-out colors, fading and translucent even in the Underworld, hues perpetually feel as if they're less than they should be, mostly because they *are* less than they should be. And the faded colors are literal. Hues appear drained entirely of color, ghostly even to ghosts.

Like all wraiths, hues possess enough ties to the living world and Passion to come into the next with self-awareness once they've been Reaped. But one other thing ties hues together: pigment.

Every hue tried pigment in their lives, even if they only smoked it once at a party. Many were addicts, and most lost their lives to the drug's effects. Some hues even say that the scratchy, syrupy craving still crawls over their Corpus, giving them a Passion that remains unfulfilled unless the hue Skinrides a mortal high on pigment. Hues are generally Reaped and recruited by the Emerald, Grim, or Skeletal Legions, as the deathmarks of

hues tend towards the ravages of drug abuse, regardless of how the hue actually died.

The quiet, malignant Shadows of hues (called the Quiescent) don't help the situation. With dampened Pathos, hues have little time before succumbing to Spectrehood or falling into Oblivion. A hue is already his own worst enemy, and their Shadows compound the situation by refusing to conform to expected behavior.

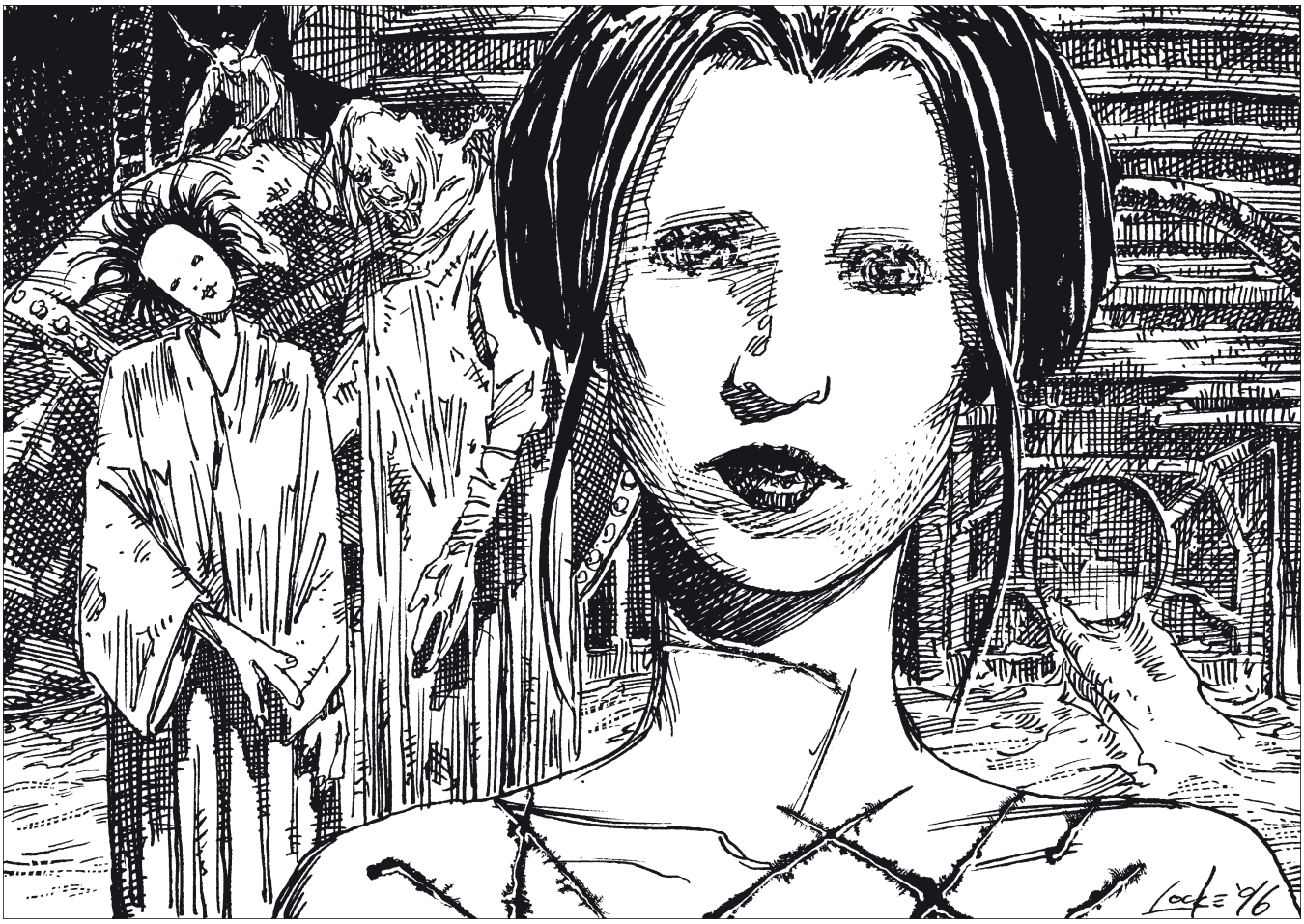
The few Pardoners who've examined hues are puzzled by their odd Shadows and inconstant deathmarks, but nothing aside from their monochromatic demeanor seems to directly distinguish them from a normal wraith. Their ability to manifest Stains and tendency to gain Angst at catastrophic rates aren't apparent at first, or even prolonged, glance.

New Shadow Archetype: The Quiescent

All warfare is based on deception, and the greatest trick this Shadow can pull is convincing you it doesn't exist. Nearly ubiquitous in hues and unknown in other wraiths, the Quiescent speaks only rarely, and the Psyche may legitimately believe they're "merely" dialoguing with themselves. Quiescent Thorns tend towards the subtle, and even Catharsis is viewed as the hue merely "losing himself" for a bit. Shadow Dice are offered during periods of emotional duress or anger, and while a hue's cognizant that they're feeding their darker instincts, they usually don't recognize how literal that metaphor has become. As a result, hues are notably reticent and reluctant to undergo Pardoner examination ("No, I don't hear voices in my head!"). Even seasoned Pardoners are stymied somewhat by the terse communications of a Quiescent Shadow, though Castigation functions normally on them.

Incoming

Orpheus and the Hierarchy haven't yet grasped the true horror of pigment. Pigment's secret is that *everyone* who tries the drug becomes a wraith. Most cross the Shroud as Drones. It's only the few who would've likely become wraiths anyways who can determine that they're *different* from the Restless around them, and that more and more wraiths with their particular quirks are coming across the Shroud as the use of pigment expands. What this ultimately means, no one knows — it could be more fodder for the forges, or a population explosion that swamps the ability of Necropoli to assimilate them.



Hue Character Creation

Follow wraith character-creation steps, except where noted.

Should a hue manage to purge the spectral ichor from their plasm, they *literally* brighten, with the difference in Backgrounds and Fetters immediately granted to the character. If they possess Memoriam, it now factors into their starting Pathos calculation.

Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Arcanoi (5 points, no Guild Arcanoi), Backgrounds (5 points), Passions (10 points, but one must be a Dark Passion), Fetters (8 points) and Stains (3). Hues may manifest *all* of their Stains for the scene at a cost of 1 Pathos.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record beginning Pathos (5) and beginning Willpower (5).

Spend freebies (15). Pathos may not be raised higher than 7.

Shadow Creation

As Chapter Six (p. 221), but every Hue possesses a Quiescent Shadow.

The Dark Passions of a Quiescent Shadow mirror the regular Passions of a hue — even if the emotional resonance isn't attached to a normally negative emotion, the Quiescent may draw Angst from it. Whenever a hue draws Pathos from his Passions, his Shadow likewise grows stronger. If a hue manages to purge his pigment taint and become a full wraith, the Shadow immediately converts to another Archetype, with Dark Passions more appropriate to the character.

You Can't Take It With You – Orpheus Backgrounds

While Orpheus *does* employ a small number of Enfants (and a few Lemures and Doppelgangers with their own agendas) by offering family stipends, Fetter maintenance, and all the streaming video a wraith could watch, the vast majority of Orpheus agents are still alive. As such, Eidolon, Haunt, Legacy, and Memoriam are unavailable to living characters. Most other Backgrounds — Contacts, Influence, Resources, etc. — describe relations within the Skinlands rather than Stygian society. Certain other Backgrounds, such as Relic or Notoriety, are of limited utility and unlikely to be possessed at high ratings. In return, however, projectors benefit from Destiny, Gauze Relic, and Reincarnation, which are unavailable or rare among wraiths.

Destiny

For whatever reason, Orpheus projectors often seem touched by destiny. They find themselves gravitating towards a particular role in life, edging towards some heroic sacrifice or grand tragedy. For each point in Destiny, a character's player may reroll one dice roll per session. They *must* take the second result of the roll, and may not reroll any set of dice more than once.

The Storyteller may allow some wraiths to take this Background, if fulfillment of their ultimate destiny involved their death. Such wraiths invariably cross the Shroud with the markings of Fate on their Corpus, as do any projectors with this Background.

X — You stand without Fate's protection, but also without Fate's constraint.

• — One reroll.

•• — Two rerolls.

••• — Three rerolls. The markings of Fate shine clearly on your gauze, and characters at this level will be of interest to those who dwell on the Isle of Eurydice.

•••• — Four rerolls.

••••• — Five rerolls. Your projections are portents that thunder throughout the Shadowlands. The Labyrinth buzzes in anticipation and fear of your approach, and the Lady of Fate sends her agents to aid — or obstruct — your endeavors.

Gauze Relic

Project Echo's researchers believe, correctly, that relics are themselves ghosts of items, with some undefinable emotional link keeping them bound to existence. While projectors are not yet dead, they're able to harness the energy of their volatile Corpus more ably, channeling the emotional links to manifest an item's ghost. By focusing on an item of personal significance to them and spending Pathos, the projector's Corpus shimmers, melts slightly, and literally congeals into a relic. This relic must be chosen when this Background is purchased, and may not be altered thereafter.

The act of manifesting a gauze relic is highly disturbing to most wraiths, who aren't capable of such a feat. Most assume the projector Moliated a hidden pocket into their Corpus, or used an Argos variant to hide the motorcycle that suddenly birthed itself from the wraith. Others assume the relic to be tainted, and immediately address the projector as if he's succumbed to Catharsis. Regardless, the Background's use immediately marks the projector as something different.

A gauze relic requires one point of Pathos to congeal for the scene. Once a relic's fully manifested, it may separate from the projector. A congealed relic lasts for the duration of the scene, regardless of whether the scene lasts for two hours or two turns (the aforementioned motorcycle would last a single uneventful trip). Once the time is up, the gauze relic dissolves back to where it came from. If the gauze relic is destroyed,

the projector loses a point of Willpower and take a level of Aggravated damage.

Under no circumstances may a wraith take this Background. Should a projector die, their dots in this Background are refunded as experience, a small compensation for the loss of their life.

X Your gauze refuses to manifest an item. Do you have no material possessions that you value?

• You have a small relic, such as a knife.

•• Your gauze relic is more powerful, like a handgun, though you're on your own for the ammunition. Relics at this level possess general functions or grant +1 to an Ability roll related to the item.

••• At this level, gauze relics are capable of electronic interactions when invested with Pathos, such as a wi-fi connection that reaches across the Shroud. Alternately, larger objects can be manifested (such as a bastard sword or assault rifle), or relics that grant a –2 difficulty bonus to one Ability roll.

•••• Gauze relics are now more akin to Artifacts, and are capable of intricate mechanical or electrical operations (such as a motorcycle that works without fuel).

••••• You possess some sort of powerful talisman that does something truly unique, allowing for +4 to an Ability roll, or +1 to an Attribute roll.

Reincarnate

Many cultures believe in reincarnation, and whether or not it's a belief your character ascribes to, the temporary death the character suffered has lain bare the deceased elements of past souls within their own. Dormant flashes of past lives rise to the surface when the need is great, and the character's muscle memory isn't always their own.

This Background's rating operates as a free dice pool, which the player may use each game session to supplement his existing dice pool (or even roll on Abilities he doesn't normally possess). With each level in the Background, the character gets one additional die for the pool.

The Storyteller may rule instead that each dot in the Background represents one predetermined Ability that the character may draw one die for, thereby restricting the player from intruding on another character's specialties.

X You have no remembrance of your past lives.

• You have a case of déjà vu that allows you to draw upon a skill from a past life.

•• You may derive capabilities from quick flashes of the past.

••• Past friends you've never met are in your mind, and you occasionally remember their names.

•••• The quick flashes evolve into extended flashbacks, which are often pertinent to the situation at hand.

••••• You remember portions of past lives the way an adult remembers kindergarten.

Storytelling

An **Orpheus** chronicle differs significantly from a standard **Wraith** game. **Wraith** usually begins after the characters have died (or when their fate is inevitable) and handles the deceased character acclimatizing to the Underworld. **Orpheus** characters are still alive, of course — but they meet wraiths on a relatively equal playing field.

At least, that's what they'd like to imagine. For all their powers and the ability to retreat to the Skinlands, projectors are interlopers in the land of the dead, playing with forces they cannot truly comprehend. The survival of Orpheus and projection technology relies on the characters being smart and cautious, both things the Orpheus Group requires them *not* to be.

Mood: Ghost Stories for Ghosts, by Ghosts

An **Orpheus** chronicle focuses on humanity's experience with the world of ghosts, rather than the Underworld and the fullness of life after death. It's a horror story and an unravelling mystery thriller, the story of brave but unwary souls walking deep into the world that lies beyond the grave. There's far more of a focus on the Shadowlands and the liminal barrier of the Shroud, on the machinations of the living world and a sun-dappled company trying to dig deep into death.

Theme: Mankind Descendant

Humanity's reach exceeds our grasp. Mortality is fundamental to the human experience, a constant with which everyone must grapple. Yet now, technology has granted mankind the ability to prematurely enter the world of death and return. When mortality is conquered by the human experience, when the Shroud becomes as simple to cross as a journey of a few hours, death begins to lose meaning, and thus the human experience becomes radically altered. The consequences of Orpheus' technology are potentially dire — even apocalyptic — for both Quick and dead. Definable, reproducible proof of the afterlife will inevitably cause massive shocks in society and religion, with devastating wars erupting as nations and companies seek to exploit the lands of the dead — and the dead fight back.

A Skinlands Chronicle

While projectors can theoretically venture to Stygia, many of their Favored Arcanoi — not to mention their clients, bodies, and employer — remain focused on the Skinlands. As a consequence, Orpheus projectors tend to stay within the Shadowlands, interacting with wraiths in Necropoli and focusing their powers where they'll be most effective. **Orpheus** games remain there as well, with the Shadowlands and the greater Underworld being a place to which the characters very rarely venture, rather than where they spend the bulk of their time and energy.

Antagonists

Orpheus pays extraordinarily well, both in terms of salary and benefits, but asks incredible, dangerous things of its employees. Even experienced operatives still find themselves doubting what they're dealing with on a regular basis, and the Underworld constantly churns up new, deadlier surprises. Still, crucibles find reasons to stick together once the agents take the field.

The Orpheus Group considers its greatest enemies to be rival projector firms, unfaithful business partners, and underperforming projectors. This alone speaks to their ignorance and their priorities, as they rarely consider the existential threat the Dark Kingdom of Iron or the Shadow-Eaten pose. Ultimately, the greatest threats to Orpheus have yet to take notice of the fledgling projector firm, and both sides are far safer that way. As Orpheus continues to explore the Underworld, however, things will inevitably fall apart. They cannot remain unnoticed forever.

Stygia

The powers that be in Stygia are not stupid, contrary to what any given Renegade Circle might think. Reports of strange wraiths have made their way back to the isle, and various Legions have begun sniffing around at the anomalies. For now, investigation is all that's going on, but that could change should any of the Deathlords feel threatened. Local Anacreons, more likely to have to deal with an influx of hues, are already taking their own steps to secure their citadels, and there are places in the Shadowlands where any anomalous "wraith" will get tossed into the forges, "just to be safe." Those wraiths most likely to deal with Orpheus agents are those on the fringes — Renegades and Heretics, or nominal Hierarchy subjects more concerned with their own day to day than with the hoary edicts of the *Dictum Mortuum*. The more involved a projector becomes in the workings of the Empire of the Dead, the more precarious their situation becomes.

The Living

Society at large and most governments laugh at the claims Orpheus makes to its clients, and have yet to truly consider projection technology a viable area for legislation. In the meantime, Orpheus has a small team of lawyers working on legal briefs for any potential situation.

It's a well-kept secret that the biotech firm Terrel & Squib is close to cracking the secrets of projection, though they can only duplicate skimming — Orpheus alone holds the patents and technology to create sleepers, allowing for months-long forays into the Underworld.

Spectres

Orpheus doesn't truly understand Spectres, but they think they do, which is perhaps the most dangerous mistake they could possibly make. The Spectres most often encountered by Orpheus agents are Doppelgangers, whose pleasant appearances belie their knack for ruthless, deadly manipulation of projectors. Bereft of Shadows, projectors have no personal experience with the Shadow-Eaten beyond fighting them in the Shadowlands, and as such they're terrible at identifying when their new friend is actually an agent of Oblivion. While Orpheus is theoretically aware that there are bad people on the other side, few of their agents are skilled at Castigate. As a result, they're often easy prey for Spectre infiltrators offering help to wayward projectors.

Two Malfeans were instrumental in the creation of Orpheus: Zyras, who opposed the projector firm and destroyed the first batch of projectors; and Lamachis, who engineered the creation of pigment and, indirectly, projection technology itself. It was a Spectre under the command of Lamachis who possessed Dr. Amours Katlilian, and more of her cult used their corrupting influence to empower the rare plants that could absorb spiritual energies across the Shroud. The same Spectre who possessed (and murdered) Dr. Katlilian now holds sway over Dr. Lionel Squib, a genius biochemist and one half of Terrel & Squib. Having intimidated his partner into silence, the Oblivion-compromised Squib devised the chemical formula for pigment, farming out production to maintain his anonymity. Slowly but surely, the Shroud weakens around the areas hardest hit by use of the drug, and the hue population continues to grow.

Involving Orpheus

If the Storyteller wishes to involve **Orpheus** in a **Wraith** chronicle, it will shift the focus of the game towards the Skinlands and resolution of Fetters. Projectors are liminal beings, and Orpheus encourages staying close to the Skinlands. Cutting deals with the Restless Dead is part of Orpheus' modus operandi, giving wraith characters attached to their living Fetters an introduction to the Orpheus Group. They might seek out Orpheus to work their Passions in defiance of the *Dictum Mortuum*, or Orpheus might come to them, seeking to lay them to rest for some mysterious benefactor. Alternately, Legionnaires intent on enforcing the *Dictum Mortuum* could decide to shut Orpheus operations down, or there could be some modus vivendi reached between projectors and their Restless counterparts to mutual benefit.

Defunct Projects

While Project Echo dominates and defines Orpheus, two other projects cast a long, dark shadow over the optimism that ironically pervades the attempt to understand and conquer death.

Project Flatline: The secret experiment to create the first sleepers using 12 death row inmates as test subjects, detailed in the History section. It ended in success, though all the inmates escaped as wraiths. Orpheus has assiduously scrubbed all references of Flatline from its databases and destroyed the hard copies of the project reports, attributing its success to an early version of Echo. Unfortunately, the research notes were particularly treasured by the researchers who gave their lives for the project, and the notes persist as relics across the Shroud.

Project Prometheus: With the loss of the first projectors to Angst, Orpheus speculated as to whether or not Spectres could return to wraithhood. The Prometheus research project aimed to discern the essential nature of Spectres and whether Lifeweb manipulation, Pathos therapy, and emotional treatment could have an effect on their psychological makeup. Despite several promising avenues of approach, the project was discontinued when the lead researcher was possessed by a Spectre subject, murdering three interns before killing himself. The lead researcher persisted as a wraith, but has shown a notable dislike for the idea of continuing his work. The final subject remains at large, whereabouts and status unknown. The project comes up for reactivation each quarter, and it's been passed on every time.

Mixed Chronicles

If a Storyteller permits a mixed chronicle, there are multiple ways to bring the characters together. They could all be in Orpheus' employment, with the Restless agreeing to assist their living colleagues in exploring the Underworld. Alternately, the wraiths and the projectors could be facing a mutual enemy, whether it be Legionnaires hunting down *Dictum Mortuum* violations or living enemies looking to shut down the projection labs by hook or by crook. And then there's always the possibility of having one player take the role of a Doppelganger, there to lead the hapless mortals down the pleasant path to Oblivion.

Wraiths willing to work with Orpheus are likely to be younger and potentially disaffected with Stygia and the *Dictum Mortuum*. Some may have worked for Orpheus before their demise, while others might be hues unable to assimilate fully into Stygian society and looking for any allies they can find.

The Shape of Things to Come

Deep in the Labyrinth lie the temples of the Neverborn, the nightmares of creation themselves dreaming new horrors into existence in their restless slumber. But at the very heart of the Labyrinth is a place where existence and nonexistence meet. Wraiths call it the Mouth of the Void. It is the literal point of no return, beyond which there is only the nothingness of Oblivion.

Spectres, however, know it by other names — the All-Devourer, the Infinite Maw — even as they work to feed its eternal hunger. By far the most pervasive title is a simple one: the Grand Maw. In the murmurs that float into the deepest reaches of the hive-mind, this slurs into a single word: *Grandma*. Over time, the belief has crystalized that Grandma — referred to more respectfully as Grandmother by the Onceborn who hope to someday curry her favor — is aware, and that a terrible intelligence guides the vast hunger of the Void. Whether this is true or not is largely a matter of hushed debate, as no one has ever returned from beyond the all-consuming gate to speak of what might be behind it.

WtO is the rule of inspiration. Like we wrote will, it is a story about the world that flows after death and someone who wants to interference.

I'm sure that no rule can make you think about life and death like this. Especially in Asia, we have theory about hun (the spirit that leaves) and P'o (soul that left behind). Among them, story about soul wraith (although it was characters story) will make you think about the life that you spent.

Well... sometimes it is too harsh that marginal men speaks 'instead' about shadow.

Jaemin Jung
Seoul, Korea

• • •

Wraith was not my first role playing game, not the one I have spent the most time in my life, but it is undoubtedly the one that made a most resounding impact in my life.

Its atmosphere and ambiance caught me from the first chapter: characters torn between love and hate, suffering and hope, empathy and selfishness... Stories of Life coming from Death that make you asses not only who you are in that world but who you are in this one. Those rules of the supernatural that help you become more human.

This 20th Anniversary edition is a gift to all those unconditional fans who, as myself, do not play it as much as we would want to, but keep the feeling that we never stopped playing and there's no Maelstrom to snatch that away from us.

Gustavo Astudillo Romero
Madrid, Spain

• • •

I witnessed The Beast Within with Vampire and the strength of a pack with Werewolf. I felt the wonders of Magick — but then something completely different arrived. Grim chains and a strange lock on the cover, a totally different concept of play where you also get to play the thin voice in another players ear... And the most weird place of the World of Darkness I ever had the opportunity to lurk my players into. Oblivion, forgetting as a key concept — so very different to the other games. So different themes. So much horror. So much beauty. So many stories, forgotten, — or worse....

Andreas G Schramm
Itzehoe, Germany

• • •

La muerte es necesariamente el asunto más serio y por lo tanto el más poético. A lo largo de un plazo muy corto de tiempo perdí en circunstancias muy dolorosas a varios miembros de mi familia, **Wraith** me hizo una pregunta, ¿qué haces vos en tu vida diaria para no llenarla de Olvido? No es un asunto moral sino ético, pensar sobre el comportamiento propio. En **Wraith** las decisiones pesan, la trascendencia reclama responsabilidad consigo mismo y con los otros, no hay un derrotero fácil. Y allí radica la esperanza sincera, desinteresada: en los actos propios; jugar en serio.

Heyder López Cabrera
Medellín, Colombia

• • •

Wraith: the Oblivion is one of the most creative role-playing games I ever loved. The authors played with the myths of the afterlife and developed a perfect setting, cynical and ruthless. Perhaps the most desperate, original and bold White Wolf effort to provide verisimilitude to a supernatural subject. Its remarkable innovation was the role of the shadow: the perfect template for character's dark side.

When I read the first review of the game, I thought it was crazy. When years later I tried it, I had an unforgettable immersive experience. With its attention to internal conflict, this game has certainly helped me to improve my taste as gamer and organizer of gaming sessions.

Antonio Ferraro
Roma, Italy
President of Camarilla Italia

• • •

I bought the first edition of **Wraith**, with the glow-in-the-dark cover, on its release and the book left me both confused and excited about the premise of the game. It was my first foray into ST-ing a WoD game and as supplements were released, my understanding of the game's setting grew. The several **Wraith** campaigns I ran throughout the years (and editions) brought out the best in my players, and often the worst in their characters, in ways I never experienced with any other game. The bleakness of **Wraith** definitely made it not everyone's game, but I always felt that besides the dark and gritty, there was always room for hope in the World of Darkness gloomiest game.

David Benoy
Antwerp, Belgium

• • •

There are many fascinating game lines in the World of Darkness, but **Wraith: the Oblivion** is not only one of them — while other games tell stories about humanity and bestiality, **Wraith: the Oblivion** draws the players into the dark corners of a human soul. Dead, but not able to forget, the fettered souls are beings of passion — and forgetting. This is a game, where a character has to choose between love and transcendence, where his memories might be the biggest obstacles. A game, where your fellow player is the voice of your darkest wishes and deepest fears, trying to drag you down into the eternal void of oblivion. **Wraith: the Oblivion** is one of the most intense games I ever played!

Christian "Effi" Hellinger
Mannheim, Germany

• • •

I first was hooked into ghost stories by Orpheus. After ten month of playing it I realized how much I love the whole ghost-theme and started exploring Wraith: the Oblivion. The Wraith revealed before me as the most painfully beautiful, emotional, psychological and deep part of WoD setting. I always loved stories that left me sobbing quietly for days because of them, and Wraith: the Oblivion consists entirely of such stories.

Kasia "Vargnatt" Szuliak
Kiev, Ukraine

• • •

Ghosts as characters that give physical manifestation to deep personal impulses and ambitions have always been fascinating to me. And **Wraith** was the first RPG to show me how this particular drama can be played in a way that actively involves at least three people at the table. A game that doesn't have to be about the mission, the city or the afterlife, but it's definitely about your character.

Ricardo Tavares aka "Jogador-Sonhador"
Game Designer and Podcaster
Matosinhos, Portugal

• • •

I do not have any personal experiences with being dead yet, thankfully. Also records of experiences from others are as unreliable as mine at best, to understand death I have no choice but to put forth theories about it. Telling stories about it is one way to understand death and what, if anything comes after it. **Wraith: The Oblivion** is a very good framework to create the stories (and perhaps comforting lies). It also gives a very humane approach to one of the biggest certainites about death, that one would have longings, unsolved problems, unspoken words, and unexperienced life... perhaps as shallow as the next installment of your favorite series... We may not be able to "complete" a life, but we sure can tell stories of our protagonists who has the ability to do so... and perhaps find the peace to rest in...

C. Hasan Uzunoğlu
Istanbul, Turkey

Army of the Night

Alexander Porter
Alfredo Tarancón
Alyssa Hillen
Andrew Hauptman
Archibald S. Jeeves
Ash Walter
Benjamin Syn
Bill Bridges
Cameron Harris
Christopher Taylor
Daniel Bell
Dheyrdre Machado
Eric Crabtree Pardoner of the Damned.
Gadsden High RPG Group
Gareth Hodges
Gionata Dal Farra
Itsuki Myoudouin
Jeff Cauley
Jeremiah J. Tuhn
Jim Schofield
Johan Eklund
Jonathon Myers
Josh Epperson
Joshua Shawndall Butterfield
Julian Falk
Julian L Burns
Karina Gillis-Bugg
Keith A. Garrett
Kristastic
Kyle Gould
Kyle Griffin
Kyle Hickok
Larel Anorien
Larry Lennhoff
Livia von Sucro
Lou Silvers
Marcin W. 'rehael' Dąbrowski
Mark Huba
Matt M McElroy
Miguel Esteban Carrero Torres (Col)
Moreno Bianconcini
Otrembo
P.K. Sharp-Garcia
Paul Marzagalli
Quinicillin
Quinn Sanchioni
Ronald Corn
Rt Mora
Ryan Chaddock
Samuel Montgomery-Blinn
Simon Linder
Sir Francis Xavier "the Risen"
Tamsyn 'Destroyer of Worlds' Kennedy
Thomas Tobias Conrad
Tigran Mujukian
Tom Myers
Zach Glazar
タコ霊

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Aaron C. Vecka
Angi Shearstone
In memory of Dan
Lee Dignam
Louis Danhoff
Reginald Lafontaine
Richard Hess
Wendy Gale
Wes Platt

The Quick

Ashley Miller
Jonathan Korman
Maxime Béland
Nicole Lazzaro
Rabbit Stoddard
Rob Celada
Storium.com

Enfant

A. Ghost, Jr.
A. L. Brennan
Adam "Slade" Loyd
Adam Lake
Adam Weston
Alex Helm
Alexander "SquidLord "Williams
Allison Kvern
Amanda "Hyena" Johnson
Amaro Cabello
Ana Mizuki
Andrew Hatchell
Andrew McGraw
Andrew Twyman
Andrew W
Andrew Wilson
Ann Lemay
atamajakki
Beckett
Ben Bonds
Ben Phillips
Ben Richetti
Björn "Brence" Bonten
Braden Kanipes
Brandon Paul
Brennan Dawson
Brian "Chainsaw" Campbell
Brian Gates
Brodie Bensend
Bronx Coyle
Brother Teosio
Bruce Baugh
Bryan Fowler
Burak "Harvester of Dreams" Türköz (on behalf of Anadolu Hikaye Anlatıcıları)
Calder Rooney
Calipha the Unbound
Cesar Cesarotti
Charan DuFrançois

Charles Lines
Chase Schack
Chris "Chaki" Stumpfer
Chris Allen
Chris Ank
Chris Froste
Chris Hartford
Chris Michael Jahn
Chris Tihor
Chris 'Warcabbit' Hare, City of Titans
Christian Stenz
Christopher Alan Slater
Christopher Campione
Christopher McDonough
Christopher Wiegand
Claire Reynolds
Clarence Washington
Conor Brennan
Dan Hagy
Daniel "Arista"
Daniel Arbuckle
Daniel Hahne
Daniel Rabinovich
Darkshifter
Darrius
Dave Weinstein
David A. Cuneo
Dr. Fasih Sayin
Dr. Plague
Drusela Echo-Walker
Dylan Cockell
Elthanes
Emily Mentrek
Endre Enyedy
Eric C. Magnuson
Eric Castle III
Eric Thompson
Erica Stevenson
Eris, the Crone Who Screams in Silence
Ethan Bremner
Federico Guridi
Felipe Nascimento
Fikealox
Frances Rowat
Francis Renault
Frank Toich
Gareth Attwood
Garrett "Bioascension" Ellanson
Genevieve Cogman
George Koutsikos
George Williams
George Wright
Gerard Aksomitis
Grant G. Gruenbaum
Grant Hoeflinger
Gunner Gawith
Ho Dracon
Hsieh, Wei-Hua
Ian Ruark
Inyx
J.T. Mahany
JAB
Jack Stone
Jack West
Jake Kesey
James Holden
James Howard Jr
James Kiley
Jarvis Mishler
Jason Hockley
Jason Ramboz
JD Simmons
Jeff Combos
Jeffrey K. Price
Jeffrey Zimmer
Jens Mikkelsen
Jim Burdo
Jinnapat Treejareonwiwat
João Mariano
Joe DaSilva
John "Telgar" Dearing
John Bogart
John Doe, Shade of No One Important
Jonathan D. Harter
Jonathan Lang
Jordan Etherington
Jordan Springer
Jörg Fick
Jose Ryan Garcia
Josh Baum
Josh Huls
Julian
Julien "Selpoivre" Rothwiller
Kairam "this one is for you, Baugh!" Hamdan
Kasper Melchior Christiansen
Keith "OH GOD, I THINK I'M MY SHADOW!" Scholz
Kenneth "Kacey" Close III
Kergonan
Kevin Lawler
Kevin Skoog
KImberely Altomere
Kristine Roper
Lady Lucia Constatini, Crusader of Fate
Lance Hosaka
Leonard
Lethe
Lim Seong-Ji
Link Hughes
Louis S
Łukasz Korzeń
Łukasz Rączkowski
Lycaina..
M. P. McCully
MADCAP
Mark Couture
Mark 'Keleas' Webb
Mark W Roy
Martin Trudeau
Matt Dempsey
Matt Shursen
Matthäus Cebulla
Matthew Earlywine
Matthew Finco
Matthew Junge
Matthew Madden
Maxime Berar
Meghan Fitzgerald
Mercy Lena Brown
Michael Brewer
Michael J. Chernicoff
Michael Lalaian
Michael Lonetti
Michael Nelson Wagner
Michael Pietrelli
Mike K
Mike Kanarek
Mike Spector
Mike Wolf
Miles Stokes
Miss Mint
Mizuho Shiraishi
Nate B
Nicholas Cheech Perez
Nicholas Kirkpatrick
Nicholas Peterson
Nick Edwardsen
Nick Keyuravong
Nick Nigro
Nick Pilon & Sasha Dillman
Nicola Went
Nikolas Braren Blanchet
Ole T.P.
Ondřej Böhm
Oomizuao
Owen
Pamela Ibis
Panagiotis Papakos
Patricia Wright

Patrick Bright
Patrick Sandoval
Patrick Willette Healey
Penny Schauderhaft
PERROT Claude-Arnaud
Perverseness
Peter Gates
Peter Rolf
Phichak Somdee
Phil Hattie
Philip Jaques
prototype00
Quentin Kowalski
Rachael Peters
Ralph Gadbois
Ramnesis
Randy Greenback
Richard Addy
Richard Bellingham
Richard brooks
Richard Javier "Blaque" Stephenson
Richard Morris
Richard Nigel Downs
Richard Ross
Rick Jones
Rob Carroll
Robert Sullivan
Robert Vance
Robert Wyatt
Rocjol
ron beck
Rory "TrippyHippy" Hughes
Ryan McWilliams
Sam Hilliard
Sam Polak
Scott Andrews
Scott Rick
Seth Stauffer
Shafi Ziauddin
Shaun Hayworth
Shireroad
Simon Brake
Simone "Samira Hammadi" Lohmeier
Soren Haurberg
Sparrow Lynch
Stanley Swierzewski
Stephane Blais
Stephen Childs
Steve Lord
Steve Shearer
Steven Thesken
Sylvain "Sly" Pronovost
Tácito "Tremere" Reis
Tathel
Ted Ludemann
Tememn
Teresa Oswald
Theo
Thomas Martin
Timothy Paul Groth
Timothy Vollmer
Tobias Dornbusch
Tom Breeze
Tom Pile
Uirá "Mad Count" Resende
Vesp
Vincent "Digiconda" Arebalo
Vladislav Lazarov
Wade Jones
Weltwandler
Willard Nations
WIncent Balin
Wynand CJ Hart
Yuyue Sun
Zach Bush
Zargyl aka Wolfi
Zed Lopez
Zeke Hubris

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Alexander Burnett
Amber Vietzke
Benjamin Franklin Sequoyah Craft-Rendon
Brad Bazor
Brian Johnson
C Frascella
Chad Eagleton
Dan Keller
Daniel Skrivanek
Darryl "V. Kamenov" Johnson
David Starner
Dender Cage
Devin "Nazfool" Curtiss
Drew Wendorf
Elias Helfer
Eric Grab
Geeklich Mtz. S.
J D Herbert
Jason Petry
Jonathan Green
Karl "Uncle Yo" Custer
Lewis Clifford-Coote
M. Librizzi
Mark Carroll
Matthew Pascal
Mike Jeffers
Mike Travis
Oliver Lind
Philippe York
Rónán "Chaka" Comaskey
Roxane Tourigny
Simon Ainslie
Sune Sejberg Nielsen
The Plaid Mentat

• • •

Adam Daniel-Wayman
Alyssa C
Courtney
Crystal A. Chappelle
Dave Harrison (V RIP)
Greg Peterson
Joshua W. Pittman
Justin Haynes
Michael David Stein
Mitchell

• • •

Burt Hopkins
Chris Thomas
Douglas Early
James Alan Gardner
Jason F. Broadley
Jérémy Bouthot
Meles Badger
Micheal Meyer
Min-Hyung Yoo
Robert G. Male
Tom Ladegard
Trevor Ramirez

• • •

Adam Bousum
Adrian Bigland
Bob Ooton
Chris 'AkatsukiLeader13' Gawne
Derrick Sigmon
Dr Simon Exton
Gunnar Högberg
Gwendolyn R Schmidt
Harley Morse
Jamie Denholm
Javid Tandras VanGren
John "Mad Ratter" Kennedy
Lee Sims
Lyoness
Marc T. Davies
Megan Greathouse
Mike & Brian Goubeaux
Mortimer rathstone
Patrick H Higgins
Rick Smathers
Robert Kemp

Romain PESSIOT
Sam Blake — Doomslayer
Sarah Williams
Seana McGuinness
Stefan Weaver
Stephen Smith
Wright S. Johnson

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Alexander "Lxndr" Cherry
Brandon Robinson
coraxbio
Edwin Bell
Flint Olsen
Gregory Walter
J, Paul "Beatle" Ring
J. Arin Wolfe
James Ristig
Jennifer Lilith Xancre
Jeremey Pinckney
Kathryn Tucker
Matt "switchblade" Bauman
Matthew Whittaker
Michael Bruner
Ninjar
Robert C. Recckia
Robert Sawyer
Spry Sam
Whithers

Wraith

"Bookmark Ana" Silva
"Exciting" Jeff Dieterle
"Plain Jane" Janelle
NIKOLAI STEEN
A. Leif Olson
Aaron Nowack
Aaron Riutta
Abner Rodrigues
Abraham Lincoln
Adam Koebel
Adam Lowrey
Adam Smith
Adam Young
Adam Zielinski
Adrià "942" Seguer
Adrian Benningfield
Ahrtimmer
Aizen Blood Fury
AJ VanOrden
Alasdair Watson
Alec "Michel" Wills
Alex Chobot
Alex Harper
Alex Myers
Alexander Brown
Alexander Childress
Alexander Ducharme
Alexander Kratochwill
Alexander Stone-Tharp
Alexandra Körner
Alexis & Jeremy
Almoni
Alvaro "Sixaola" Madrigal
Ambrosia
Amikos Vas
Ammariel Melwasul
Andara Shadowfang
Anders Holmström
Andreas G Schramm of the Gangrel
Andrew Diroll-Black
Andrew Heston
Andrew J. McDole
Andrew Maddock & Grace Boyd-Pollack
Andrew 'Whitenoise' Rogers
Andrzej Kubera
Ang Lee
Anja Kraus
Anna Price
Annabel Lee - wb
Annida Christofi-Clark
Anthony Damiani
Anthony James Pirri
Arinaldo Junior RX
Arnout Montald
Ashton
Aubrey Billy Jack Daisy Henri
Aurély Sabourin Messina
Ayjona
Azrael Kaine
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Baudry
Beachfox1@gmail.com
Beck
Ben Dinsmore
Ben May
Ben 'stpdfool' McKenzie
Benegot Kirberg
Benoit Devost
Bernadette Evans
Billy Critzer
BJ McManus
Bob Lewis
Brad D. Kane
Brendan Kently
Brian Adam Ellis
Brian Campbell
Brian Harper
Brian Johnson
Brian Misamore
Brian Storoe
Brittany "FemtoKitten" Holmes
Bruno Pereira
Bruno Zilli
Bryan C. Smith
Bryan J. Dolan
Bryce Perry
Butch2k
C Arnoldus
C.James Blukacz
C.W.Richeson
Caille E. Jensen
Caitlin Eckert
Calixte & Gold
Cameron Hays
Cameron Murtagh
Cari McAskill
Carlo Ledezma
Casey Geyer
Cedric Wonkerson II
Cédryck Mimault
Cesar da Mota
Chad Hazel-Kepler
Charles Siegel
Chasym
Chris "Echo" Harvey
Chris and Kat Wilde
Chris Bieser
Chris Chambers
Chris Greene
Chris Jackson
Chris Shaffer

Chris Snyder
Chris W "Spooky" Mercer
Christian Funken
Christina Z. Mitton
Christoph Laurer
Christopher Hauschild
Clarissa M.
Claude Martel-Olvier
Colin Anderson
Colin Jessup
Collin Smith
Colm O'Labhradha
Conrad Julian White
Cory Vill'Neuve
Craig Bishell
Craig Gaddis
Craig Oxbrow
crawlkill
CtrlAltFaceroll
Cynesra James
Cyrus Blue
D. L. Hector
Dacar Arunsone
Dan Suzzi
Daniel "Sir Whiteout" Guariento
Daniel "Spooktacular" Hermle
Daniel Beauleau
Daniel Corn
Daniel Flood
Daniel Gochnauer
Daniel Ley
Daniel Sellers
Daniele "Chojin" Cappelletti
Dante Laughing-Coyote
Danthulhu
Darker Days Radio
Darren MacNeil
David Doucey
David Paul
David Rego
David Spektorov "Specter, of David"
David Stoddard
David Tapanes
David Tveraas
David van Nederveen Meerkerk
Dean Black
Desmond "Giovanni Say Hello" Woolston
Dice Boy
Dirk W.
Donnie Howard
Doug Kohler
Dr. Jimmy
Drazx "They're Huge" Mehare
Duncan "vadersson" McEwen
Dustin Headen
Dylan "The Venkavian" Moore
Eben Lowe
Edward Reinhardt
el Mîko
Emmanuel DENIS
Ephie Florensky
Erasculio
Erik Bear
Erik Kemnitz
Erik Thurman
Ernie Sawyer
Ethan Skemp
Evan "Virgil" Odensky
Evo Shandor, aka Scott R
Fabio Vitanza
faux
Felipe Recka de Almeida
Felix Lucini
flawed mechanics
Florent 'Killerklown' Didier
flowerysong
Franco Frare
François Labelle
Frank Precissi
Fraser Imrie
fredDC
Fredrik Lyngfalk
Furtwangler Dickgeisser
Gabe miller
Gabriel gothmate Correia
Gareth "No Angels" Willcock
Garron Lewis
Gary R Smith II
Gary Stephen
Gavin Downing
George Pitre
Giuliano Gianfriglia
Glen Adams
Glenn Berman
Gorkem Ekiz
Gorsedd ap Aeddan ap Cunedda
Greg Berry
Greg Stevenson
Gregory Faber
Greta Reinhardt
GreyBow
Guy Reece
Hagen Mann
Hammer
Hantu Raya
Harakani
Harold Berube
Harrison Furmidge
Heath Banyai
Heather Grove
Heinrich
Helder Lavigne
Henri Härkönen
Henrik Augustsson
Hermes Pinto
Holden Shearer
Hugh Massingbird
Hyades Luine
Iain Stevens-Guille
Ian A. A. Watson
Iarlais
Ignacio Granados Jiménez
Imran Inayat
Isaac Carr
Issar
Issiri Ait Basdin
J.D. Cohen
Jack Barone
Jacob Santos
Jacques DuRand
Jaime M Garmendia III
James 'ChaoticCore' Roberts
James Dyer
James Iles
James Monty-Carbonari & Edwin Friend
James Vogel
James Yarton
Jared Fattmann
Jared Koon
Jaron Kaplan-Parr
Jason "Marakeb Guardian of the Gates of Bubastis" Pennel
Jason C Marshall
Jason Freston
Jason MacGillivray
Jason Marks
Jason Ross Inczauskis
JDEXCAL
Jean "Troll Traya" Faiderbe
Jeff "Shadow" Fowler
Jeff Howard
Jeff Vansteenkiste
Jeffrey Palmer
Jeffrey Taylor
Jeffrey Taylor
Jenny Langley
Jeremey David Walker
Jeremy Kostiew
Jeremy Putman
Jeremy Zimmerman

Jesika Wolff
Jesper Aagaard Petersen
Jessa "Demon Cat" Denmark
Jesse T.
Jim Ennis
Joan Anonical Sartori
Joe Dunham
Joe Evans
Joe Parrino
Joe Robbins
Joel "Pika" Keeney
Joey Zuercher
Joh Oso
Joh Oso the Illusorily Superior, Slanderous the Sadly Accurate, and Shoah the Appropriator
Johan Nilsson
Johan Utstrand
John "King" Roberts
John Mathys
John Noble
John Pasanen
John Stegall
John Tuckey
John Yngve Fredrik Lundgren
jon hicks
Jon Wright
Jonathan Woodward
Joonas Teurokoski
Jordan Gibson
Jordan Schmerer
Josh Mack
Joshua Machonga
Josue Insua
Julien "Kiraen" Pouard
Julius the Two-Worlder
Justin Delaney
Justin Mohareb
Kalasmourn
Karoly Kopataki
Kathandras
Katy Crumb
Keith W. Davis
Ken & Sandy Love Brandon
Ken Carlson
Kevin "How does it get even worse?" Warmerdam
Kevin Lietz
Kevin Vastavel
Kevin Walsh
Khrystof
Kim Acuff Pittman
Kirsi Snow
Kiska the Unbroken
Kjell Kenneth Moens
Kjetil Kverndokken
Korax
Krellic
Krzysztof Zajkowski
Kyle Fischer
Kyle Henderson
Kyle Krebs
Kyle McCarty
Kyle Monroe
Kyle Ray Lewis
Kyle Walker
L Wyatt
Lachlan Smith
Lana Mason
Lancaster Byron
Laura Bennett
Lauri Hirvonen
Lee Rimmer
Leonard Helding
Lesley Madigan
Leslie Weatherstone
Lethrack
Liam Murray
lobachevsky
Logan Steele
Lord Vox Anteron
Lucas Bonsignore-Boisset
Lucas van toren
Lyttleton L Callender
M.R. Innes
Magus
Malcolm Sheppard
Mandavar the Seeker
Marc Blinn
Marc de Diego
Marc van Wanrooij
Marc-André Perreault
Marcin "MrWy" Wróbel
Marcos Twaf
Marcus Greenacre
Marino Santirso Ruiz
Marinos "Storyteller" Louros
Mark Horne
Mark Hunter
Mark Irwin
Mark Owens
Martin Brown
Martin Burgess
Mat Hulett
Mat Segal
Matt & Miranda Gnepper
Matt Carman
Matt Donaldson
Matt MacGregor
Matt Petruzzelli
Matthaeus Schumacher
Matthew Barker
Matthew Dashner
Matthew Dive
Matthew Hedge
Matthew McFarland
Matthew Oakes
Matthew Palsson
Matthias Dohmen
MaTThias Svensson o Sara Törnström
Mattia "Nuvalis" Michelotti
Maya "belly-up" Lyon
Michael "Monghani" Watkins
Michael & Danielle Beekman
Michael Buchheim
Michael Carricato
Michael Ehrhardt
Michael Fellows
Michael Frantz
Michael Gunn
Michael Holt
Michael M.
Michael Richard
Michał Smaga
Michele Ranaldi
Mikael "Krank" Bergström
Mike Spera
Miles "Sean Knight" Ward
Milosz Nawrat
Miranda Silva
Molly Auldington
Monsieur Mal
Monsieur Pattus, marchand de sable.
Morani Jacob
Morgan Davie
Moshe Zioni
Mr. Doomy
Nate Swalve
Nathan Allan Bjerke
Nathan B Crocker
Nathaniel Stokes
Nathanielstarr
Neal MacIntyre
Neall Raemonn Price
Nejlah Al-Rahab, Gangrel Antitribu
Niall Paton
Nic Matuzic
Nicholas Cler
Nicholas Guidotti
Nick Esposito

Nicodemus deLaurent
Nicodemus Locke
Nicola Buskell
Nicole Porter
Nicole the Lamplighter
Nikolaus 5$ Keuter
Nimrod Vaise
Nino
Nistine
Obrad Mutlu
Octavio Arango
Old Man Jenkins
Ols Jonas Petter Olsson
Omer Ahmed
Oscar Price
Oubliette
Oz "Ferryman" Sozen
P. L. Manning
Pablo Pérez
Pablo Saldaña
Pascal Alexander
Patric Owen Thomas
Patrick "often the late" Chapman
Patrick "Scarabus" Hanna
Patrick Chandler
patrick flannigan
Patrick Joynt
Patrick Sullivan
Paul Boooodreau
Paul Imboden
Paul Singleton
Paweł Paradowski
Pedro Aguilar Paredes
Pedro Henrique Mello Magalhães
Per Nyrud Kaas
Peter De Kinder
Peter Smyk
Peter Thoenen
Petri Leinonen
Phil Edwards
Philip K. Creswell
Philip May
Philipp Neuber
Philippe Fenot
Pip Padden
pookie
Pröhl
PsyberOwl
Quintus Livius Cassius, Artificer
R. Sean Callahan
Rafael Villanova
Rain Donaldson
Raleigh Dunne
Randy Justice
Rastel Excir
Raul Urbina
Red Cairo
Redfuji6
Relic Bus Road Trip
Remy Handler
René van den Berg
Reuben Israel Beattie
Rhea Shelley
Richard "HardwareJedi" Frost
Richard Alford
Richard Barry
Richard Berrigan Popham
Richard Pruiett
Rob Justice
Rob Wieland
Robert "Jefepato" Dall
Robert Daley
Robert Wall
Robert Watson
Roberto Hoyle
Robin Schulz
Rodolfo Rosini
Rodrigo Garcia Carmona
Rodrigo Moreira Fagundes
romanov
Rose Bailey
Roy Berman
Ruben L Z Tan
Rudolph Smith
Rusharn
Ryan Green
Ryan Junk
Ryan Reynolds
SaintOn
Saleem Halabi
Sam Garamy
Sam Myatt
Sam Zeitlin
Samuel & Erica Tesla
Samuel Noetzel Kelly
Sandy Petersen
Sarah Despars
SaxMan
Scott "PlagueRat" Shnider
Scott Cullinane
Scott E. Robinson
Scott hiers
Seamus "I died peacfully in my sleep, unlike my passengers" Butler
Sean "Ariamaki" Riedinger
Sean "Garg" McAlister
Sean Riley
Sean Schbley
Sean W
Senhor dos Ossos
Sergei Petrikov
Sergio Delgado
Seth Johnson
sev
Shawn Barrick
Shelton Windham
Shianra
Shoshana Kessock
Sirlovecraft
Skafte
Skjalg Kreutzer
Spellforger
Stalks-the-Reef
Steeve Gagne
Stefan Axelsson
Stefano Miorelli
Stelio Passaris
Stephen Bond
Stephen Lea Sheppard
Stephen Nurse
Steve "I owe Dansky scotch" Jaros
Steve "Rip" Russell
Steve Huntsberry
Steve Richard Garcia
Stoney the Gray
Stuart "Spider" Adam
Stuart Quinton
Syal
Taylor Dale Wright
Ted Pertzborn
Thalles R.B. de Mello
Thalos
The Late Eric Smailys
The Madjack
The Mordak
The Outlander
The Spirit of Jason Best
themagicrobshow
Thomas
Thomas Kisselbach
Thomas Schindler
Thomas Schlesier
Thomas Weinbrenner
Tiago Barão
Tiffany Korta
Tim Boser
Timothy & Mitzi Gousie
Timothy Mushel
Timur Hahn
Tobias Schulte-Krumpen

Todd Grotenhuis
Tommy Svensson
TomsDad
Torgeir Johansen
Trevor Stamper
Tristan Smith
Tronoth Sarum
Tshonka
Tyler Wirth
Tyson Collins
Tyson 'Daji' Pink
Valcabiz the Unseen
W Ryan Carden
Wade Overly
waelcyrge
Wajanai Snidvongs
Wayne Welgush
Weston Harper
Will Hart
Will Inskip
Willem van der Horst
William "Bill" Evans
William Cook
William Dovan
William 'Tattersail' Tate
William Teebay
WR3N
Yoshi, Rocky and Tobie
Yvette Morris

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17-Mar
"Irrefutably" Thor Thorson
(un)reason
.
A. Quentin Murlin
A. Vesseur
Aaron Buttery
Aaron Shue
Aaron W. Scott
Aaron Woodside
Abraham, TaxiArgosCab
Adam 'Beyonce' Lowe
Adam Jones
Adam Mock
Adam Nathanson
Adonijah
Alan Douglas
Alan McNevin
Alan Orr
Alan Thagard
Alec Humphrey
Alec McClain
Alessandro "Blink" Rossi
Alessandro Balderi
Alex
Alex Brohm
Alex Cullum
Alex Shade
Alexander "Almacov" Overton
Alexander Jarvis, Doomslayer
Alexander Sandrén
Alexandre "Magnamagister" Joly
Alexandre Simard
Alvhild Sand
Amadeus
Amanda Plageman
Amaranth Westfield
András Babós 'Babszem'
André Roy
Andrea Migone
Andreas "Sockis" Spovfelt
Andreas "Zanity" Bengtsson
Andrei Antonio Gonzalez Reyes
Andrés Montañez
Andrew Jay Cardinal
Andrew Laliberte
Andrew Peregrine
Ángel Martínez Murillo
Angelborn
Anna "Chains of Shadow" Ashcroft, protector of souls
Annabel Lee
Anonymous
Anthony Howell
Anthony Jennings
Arcade Lancelot de Isengard
Ari Suntioinen
Ariel Hawksquill of the Poisoned Rose
Ariel Kaiser
Arno "Loup Blanc" Le Blanc-Ringuette
Arthur "Torakhan" Dreese
Arthur Boff
Arthurbeamex
Asger Nielsen
Ashley Jason Bennett
Ashley.W
Astoria Morris
Athena Foster
Athena Mace
Ayabane Koin
Bael the Cruel
Barry McIvor
Barry Sheppard
Baylor Erikson, Lord of the Night
Ben Bogaerts
Ben Kesner
Ben Neilsen
Ben Treeby
Ben Wari
Benjamin "eSca" Reed
Benjamin O'Quinn
Bert "Radio Free Stygia" Garcia
Bertil Jensen
Bill James
Bill Randall
Bill the Storyteller
Billy Barnes
Björn S
Björn-Ole Kamm
Blake Deakins
Blake Thomas
Brendan Falconer
Brendan R. McCann
Brendan W
Brett Easterbrook
Brian J. Burke
Brian Lynch
Brianne M. Sifert
Brightfires
Bruno "Jack" Pereira
Bruno Giuliano Nicolau
Bruno Soares Jardim
Bryan Allen Hickok
Bryan Pearson
Brynjar Sigurðsson
Cale Hawthorne
Calvin Kok
cantrip
Caoimhín
Carl Sargent, Danielle Schreber, El3ctr0sag3, Erik
Carl Söderberg
Carlos "ChecaWolf" Checa Barambio
Carpe Noctem
Carsten Bolk
Casidhe Nebulosa
Casubon
Cathy Raven
Cauê Guimarães
Chris "C. Case" Foster
Chris "Diablerist" Hitchcock
Chris Cowger
Chris Eggers
Chris 'Errant' Harper
Chris K. Cook
Chris Pallante
Chris Reay
Christiaan Hattingh
Christian A. Nord
Christian Emminger
Christian Lennertz

Christoph Schulz
Christopher A Bell
Christopher A. Barney
Christopher Bertell
Christopher Frances
Christopher Gunning
Christopher R. Wain
Christopher Sturges
Christopher Wallace
CJ Sauter
Clan Ploeger
Clay S. Broeker
Clement Debaecker
Colin Oldwood, Sin-Eater SFPD -Greg D-
Cornelius Milertens
Counselor Bill
Coyotekin
Criss Walker
Cristian Trincone
CSN
Dain Germscheid
Dale Andrade
Damien Starlurker
Dan L. Nielsen
Daniel "DM" Martins
Daniel "Hunting Moon" Weber
Daniel "Nameless One" Fernandez Rubio
Daniel "Nameless1" Gaghan
Daniel & Trista Robichaud, A.R. & Haz Nakama
Daniel C. Barton
Daniel Connelly
Daniel Ferraresi Araújo Silva
Daniel J. Lawler
Daniel Lundsby
Daniel Niekerk
Daniel Peterson
Daniel Yauger
Danilo Javarotto
Danilo Perucchi | succubus.com.br
Danni Feveile Börm
DannyK
dark_Pincho
Darkshmoo
Darran MacMaghnusa
Darren Buckley
Daryl Abell
Dashekita N. Brooks
Dave Ellis
David "Coop" Cooper, Friend of the Mediums, Haunter Extraordinaire
David "Glitz" Levesque
David "JustDave" Talboy
David "Yoda" Odie
David B. "Capricorne"
David Benoy
David Bjorne
David Farris
David Gallo
David Ghosh
David Gordon Buresh
David Harrison
David Huston
David Lucardie
David Rose Fraser
David Rubenach
David Vincent Tarrant
David Weidendorf
Davin Wärter
Dawid "Salubrus" Wojcieszynski
Dayne Shemick
Deathlord Emeritus Sir Fluffy Bunny IV
Decai
Dennis McFaull
Derek "Pineapple Steak" Swoyer
Derek Guder
Devin Scott
Devon "All Daggers" Anderson
Dirk Vanleeuw
Doktor Oster
Dominic Lund
Dominic Parent
Doug Atkinson
Dougal Cochrane
Douglass Kern
Dr.Bang
Dragosmire Akoimetai
Dumon
Dustin Dickerson
Ed Shannon
Edouard Contesse
Eduardo Oliveira Ribeiro de Souza
Eduardo Pavez Goye
Eidan Rodriguez
Elizabeth Chaipraditkul
EmanantVolition
Emilio J. "Krusmir" Sánchez-Sierra
Emily Brumfield & Susann Hessen
Eric "Lameth" Folco
Eric J Brann
Eric Nathaniel M. Henson
Erik Lydon
Erik Musick
Erol Mazhar "Croc" Aksoy (on behalf of Anadolu Hikaye Anlatıcıları)
Ethan Slater
Étienne Lapointe-Blackburn
Evan "JabberWokky" and Sarah Edwards
Everynne Winters
Felipe "Ditrian" Novaes de Abreu
Ferdinand von Schenk
Fernando Autran
Filwinn
Forrest Spilker
François Labaye
Frank Metro
Frank Tenace
Fredrik "Frippe" Nilsson
Freyja Everett Davisson
Gabriel Night
Gabriel Sorrel
Gareth McVicker
Georg Lukowski
Gerardo Villarroel
Glen R. Taylor
Gordon G. "Eldagusto" Gordon
Gramps
Greg "Nitemare" B.
Greg "Oriri" Meyer
Greg Foster
Grimly
Guido Gerritzen
Guillaume "Lenny" Asset
Guillaume Leclef
Gustav Lindquist
Gustavo "Brujah" Mattioni
Gustavo E. Astudillo Romero
Guy-Samuel Dussault
Gwendolyn Gifford
Harald Hellerud
Harold Bambridge, Sr
Haseroth
Héctor Gómez Herrero
Helldiver72
Henry F. Bruckman Vargas
Henry Lopez
He-Zin "Yasseira" Kwon
Hobbie Regan
Hunter McAdam
I love you Pelyte
Ian "Squee" Sargeant
Ian Asha
Ian Hamilton
Ian Johnston
Ian MacRae
Iker Marín
In loving memory of Sylvia
Ingo Beyer
Invasor Odin
ipsi
Isaac Armaros

Ivan Nevill
Ivo de Mooij
J Quincy Sperber
J. Noah Wiley
J. Sterns
Jackson Brantley
Jacob " J-G" Guldbrandsen
Jacob Gann
Jaime Sandoval
Jamaal White
James A Youhas
James A. Todd
James Heche
James Morrison
Jan "Helm" Richter
Jan-Hendrik Fuchs
Jan-Willem Kaagman
Jason and Amy Berteotti
Jason Brennan
Jason Conners
Jason DeForge
Jason Dickerson
Jason Geis
Jason Kenney
Jason Lund
Jason Place
Jassin Nasr
Javier Palenzuela
Jay (Spooky von Spooky Pants) Lawrence
Jayna Pavlin
JAYSON "the14thguest" TURNER
Jeff and Jen
Jeff Tressler
Jeffrey Pittman
Jennifer Fuss
Jens "Spacejens" Rydholm
Jeremiah L. Schwennen
Jeremy Brown
Jeremy Dunn
Jeremy Millller
Jérôme Couvrat
Jesse & Sketch
Jesse Goble
Jesse Heinig
Jesse Morgan
Jim Groves
Jina Ellias
Joacim Meibrandt
Jody Bowman
Joe "Big Dog" Bianco
Joe Sul - Memento Mori
Joe Wolz of 2 GMs, 1 Mic
Johan Staaf
John "The Fog" Holt
John "Wolfe" Kelley
John Davis
John Doe
John Ibarzabal
John Lambert
John P. Baggett
John R. Trapasso
John T Horler
Jonathan Head
Jordan Kael Johnson
Jordan Millward
Joris Van den Bergh
Joseph Baranello
Joseph Schuster
Josephine Wicker
Josh "JP" Parrish
Josh Mosqueira
Joshua L.
Joshua Lewis Myren
Joshua McGinness
Joshua Ramsey
jp kopf
Julián Navarro
Justin Caletges
Kaalia Raine
Kai Schiefer
Karhu
Karl Fiebiger
Karri Kejonen
Kat Rhodes
Kate Gryn
Kate Hix
Kaze
Kees D. van den Berg
Ken Finlayson
Ken Marquetecken
Kerry Birmingham
Kevin C. Wong
Kevin Caldwell
Kevin Miller
Kevin Satra Schwarz
Kieran Carder
Kimberly Morris
Kirk Foote
Kody W. Stinson
Kris Deters
Krister M. Michl
Kurt Fastiggi
Kurt Freeman
Kylan Day
LAD
Lark Cunningham
Lauren B. Harrison
Lauri Lepola
Lauritzen
Leandro Fernandes Caruso
LeAnn 'Ellyham' LaFollette
Leath Sheales
LEUNG Ming Yiu
Lewis Davies
Liam Eyers
Lifestealer
Lin Liren 林立人 "Mourns For Honour"
Lina Weingård
Linus Råde
LiQUiD
Lonch' de Bourgogne
Lord Ember
Louis
Luca Sacchini
Lucas Salim Sanches
Luis Antonio Avalos
Luis E. Gomez
Luis Eduardo Anguila Gómez "Misfit"
Luis Eduardo Garcés Rodríguez
Luis Martinez
Lund
Luzbhel
Majdi Badri
Malabron de Malafas
Manny Sabatino
Marc Collins
Marc Kuczborski
Marcello Larcher
Marcellus
Marcelo Eugênio Amaral de Faria
Marcelo Sepulveda
Marcin Segit
Marco Klomfas, Jonas Rosenfeldt
Marcos Almeida Leite Bomfim
Marcus Kerensky
Mario Morales
Marisa Preciado
Mark Austin Fleming
Mark Hope
Mark Lazure
Mark Moore
Mark Pryce
Mark S
Martin A. McDowell
Martin Blum
Martin Bourque
Martin Coulter
Martin Insaurralde
Martin Karsten

Mashkan Shappir
Mathieu Guittard
Matt "Psychochink" Hee
Matt Pinkerton
Matt Ross
Matt Timm
Matthew "Ogrebeef" Seagle
Matthew Bullock
Matthew Dames
Matthew Dawkins
Matthew Galloway
Matthew Garner
Matthew Koelling
Matthew Nixon
Matthew Sanderson
Matthew Wasiak
Matthew York
Mattia "Ebrithil" Pellin
Max McComb
Maya Mary Kennon
Mehmet Ortaç
Melody Haren Anderson
Menno RIeff
Methandrela
Michael "Amityville Mike" Curtis
Michael "Montrose the cute little fox" Brosens
Michael Calabrese
Michael Herrinton
Michael J Kuhn
Michael Jennings
Michael Laengauer
Michael Lenzo
Michael M.
Michael Mephisto
Michael Morvus
Michael Murr
Michael Muske
Michael Patrick Foight
Michael Pearson
Michael R. Harding
Michael Watts
Micheal J Elliott
Michele "MKI" Beltramini
Mike Montgomery
Miranda Polsean
mirko a. Mitta
Monika "Kirke Rafael" Biskupska
Monsieur Meuble
Monsieur Meursault
Mouseychan
Mr Pendulum
Mr. DeCegama
Mr. Stoffel
Murilo Sarno
N. Ohnesorge
n0thingX
Nadia Cerezo
Naked 904
Nancy Calvert-Warren
Nathan Henderson
Nelson Candanedo
Nicholas A. Tan
Nick Ball
Nick M. Davis
Nicolas Heitz
Nicolas Villatte
Niels-Martin Trier Josefsen
Nik Morgan
Nikika Giovanni
Nimbral Montes
No One of Consequence
Noble Thayer Graves, Clan Tremere, Binder of Souls
Nochtal & Dennis B/LC
nos4artu
Oliver Steckmeier
Olivier Jobin
Olivier Nowak
Oracle Antonius, Gaunt of the Legion of Fate
Orastes
Owen Milton
Panu "Possessed" Laukkanen
Parn
Patrick O'Donnell
Patrick R. Dunn
Paul & Stacy Schulze
Paul E. Kane
Paul Howie
Paul Stefko
Paula Toledo Palomino
Pawel Lubkowski
Payton Barrett Hill
Pedro Santos
Pedro Ziviani
Pensman
Pete Woodworth
peter peretti
Petri Wessman
Phil Baxter
Phil Lowe
Philatis
Phillip "Funranium" Broughton
Phillip Bailey
Phillip Karst
Pierre 'Victor' Brun
Pierrot la Lune
Psycho the Cat
Quasi Mortuus
Qui-Gon The Ferret Jedi
R.I.P. Michael "Queen" Cichoracki
R.R. Callaway Rea
Rafael Rodrigues
Randall Crawford
Randall J. Harris
Raphael Fernandes Corrales Neto
René Reinhold Schallegger
Renee Knipe
Rhett Greenfield
Ricardo Foureaux
Richard Chilton
Rob Buck
Rob Gatlin
Rob Skipper
Robert "Rev. Bob" Hood
Robert Applegate
Robert Hausch
Robert Jason "Mason" Branham
Robert Preston
Robert Thomas
Roberto Hiroshi Kina Filho
Roberto Salles
Rod Diaz
Rodolphe Duhil
Rodrigo André da Costa Graça
Rodrigo Andres Cuevas Espinoza
Roman Adamaszek
Rui AVELINO
Rune Printzlau
Russ Trippett
Ryan Chaddick
Ryan Evans
Ryan L. Van Every
S L Koch
S. Scott Mullins
S.A. Wolf
Sabit Şahinler (on behalf of Anadolu Hikâye Anlatıcıları)
Sabrina Stark
Sam Benke
Sameer Yalamanchi
Sandgirl Lilly
Santiago Giovanni
Sarasnar
Scathaigh
Scott Banks
Scott Drebus
Scott E. Vigil
Scott Forward
Scott Mullock
Sean Ashcraft

Sean F. Smith
Sean K.I.W. Steele/Arcane
Sean Mattox
Sebastian Menke
Sebastian N. Behrndtz
Sebastian Pusch
Seiji Kato
Sethreich Ardestahdt
Shan "Shanathan" Morris
Shane Rose
Shaun D. Burton
Shawn "Sutekh" Glass
Shawn Campbell
Shawn Hanson
Shawn P
Shea Anderson
Silent Slade
Simon Andrews
Simon Boot
Simon Chadwick
Sir William Morris
Socrates Moura Santos Junior
Somalucard
Someonelse(Slc)
Sonny "Keeper of the Crypt" Bertels
Spilios Aggelos Spiliopoulos
Stanley "Oz" Oswald
Stefano Monachesi
Stephen Joseph Ellis
Stephen Mackie
Stephen McElvaney
Steve "Korbeau" Bouchard
Steve Hinck
Steven Ball and Kennidee Jones
Steven Lau
Steven M Jones
Steven P. Alfer Jr
Stick
Stuart Cathro
Stuart McKay
Suguru Oikawa
Sven Grünig
Sylvain "OgGy" Tanguy
Talon Dunning
Terry Zimmerman
Thaddeus Ryker
The Bard
The Disreputable Mog
The Gentleman's Society
THE KLF WILL RISE
Thiago Gonçalves
Thiago Henrique Righetti e Silva
Thibaut GAILLARD
Thierry De Gagné
Thomas J. Wood
Thomas Maund
Thomas Roy Salemi
Thomas Stewart
Tiago Marinho
Tifereth
Tim Diaz
Tim Flannigan
Tim Holton
Tim Parrotte
Timothy Jay
TJ Wilson
todd estabrook
Todd Glasspoole
Tom "Sagacious Paunch" Webster
Tony Koford
Topher Marohl
Tory Middlebrooks
Totenrand
Tracy Cook
Travis B. Boles
Tristan "Under the bus with you" Marks
Tristan Lhomme
Troy A. DuJardin
Turbo Bash
Tykorandia
Vegard Kivle
Velxundussa
Víctor Jiménez Merino
Victoria Barasini
Victoria Torres
Victorio Dante "The Victor" Argento
Virgile "Mafalda" Gaspard
Walter "Amantiado Giovanni" Dudek
Wesley Williams
Weston M.
Will Rotenberry
William Lyon Mackenzie King
William McBane
William Paul Sanford
William Rodrigue
William Rullenraad
William Santos
Willy Kaceres
Witch Hammer
Wolfgar Lyles
Xane the Black
Yann Krehl
Yuri Leite
Zachary J. Walton
Zero Ishida
Ziv Ragowsky

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Blackstep, Angel & Heinrich
Aaron Jacob Kelly & Eleanor Mae Kelly
Alejandro "okashi no dokuro" Castro, Leopoldo "Moltisimo piu Avanti" Monsivais
Andrew Cummings, Peter Krulder II
Anonymous, Amy Banker
Carlos "Senshi" Prats ; Fabián Álvarez López ("Libros y Espinas", Madrid)
Carlos & Victor Vergara
Charles Dockum, Ben Quo
Chris Bryson
Christopher C, Basoco & Mikel Smothermon
Dale 'Clayton' Millward Allicia York
Daniel "Illuminos" Persson and Adam "Mengroze" Persson
Darryl Park, Rory Bader
feralminded, GrinsAtDeath
João Paulo "JotaPê" Giannocoro Blanco and Lars & Ratinhos Caramelados
Henrik Lindén, Charley Gustavsson
Horshack T. Biller, Captain Pablo The Hot Needle of Inqusition
J. H. Frank, Eric Brennan
Jansen Low , Dhillon Singh
Jason Robinson / Rachel Rogers
Jeanette Musselman Rosemary Schebler
Jeffrey S. Leger and Thad Green
Jesse Zmick and Johnathan Dempsky
Josaphat Niebler, Eadee
Jose Mariano "El Capitan" Morante España and Hector Hoyos Castillo
Josh Traub, Daniel Rachels
Junior ''Madmenquill" Blais, Judas ''whisperer of Quebec" Leclerc
Jürgen Mayer, Ingmar Juhnke
Lars Pedersen
Manolis Kemerlis, Petros Panagiotidis
Marcia Keglevich, Annabel Moreau
Marco Palou and Ignacio Gallegos
Marcos "Mictlantecuhtli" Rivas / Emmanuel "Manny Calavera" Torres
Mark Churchill / Severen Graves
Matt Diggins, T-Dawg
Matt Lyons; The Undertaker - Victor Randal
Matthew G Payton
Morten "CoffeeZombie" Tellefsen, Frederikke "Frix" Høyer
Diana Wiener Rosengard, Sam Seo (D. B. Rosengard)
Nicholas D. Dragisic, Tim Prisching
Nicolas Milovich

Nito Marcus, Craftlove
Nymeros Martell and Zafar Al-Ladid ur Baal
Perrin Rynning
Piotr Koryś, Tomasz Chmielik
Shawn Pace, Riley Pace
SieferVII, Comrade Buttons
Styx // Heike Vollnberg
Viviane Lopes da Costa; Tiemi Hashizume
Will & Mark

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Aidenn Ossorio & Rain Pletcher
Andrew Fritz
Andy Kwong
Chris Avery
David Zurek
Derek Grimm
Ian W
John Ivancovich
Malte Schultz
Matt "The Ripper" Guinard
Michael Kelly
Mown
Porter Wiseman
Richard Clayton
Shayne Lebrun
Tiriel eid Nimuil
Zeven
Zurotzu

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"Stytch"-Francisco Martinez
Adam "Emilio" Fry
Adam Whitcomb
Alexander Rodriguez
Alonso O. Rubio
Anthony "Selketh" Dennetiere
Bae Nam-gyu
Bill Shaffer
Bill Sorensen
Bob Stauffer
Brett Bozeman
Bryce Undy
Casey Ingram
Choi, Wonjin
Christopher Crossley
Clete D. Collum
Colin Urbina
Craig Bonnes
Daniel C. Mainwaring
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Darin Kerr
David Connell Olsher
Devin & Linny
Drew McMahon
Esben Andersen
Felix Shafir
Harrison Outram
Heinrich Krebs
Henry R. Moore III
Howard
J. W. Bennett
Jason Van Pelt
Jim "Jericho Caine" Teeter
Joseph Edge
Junas
Kevin Chauncey
Kieran Hughes
Kim "Lightning Hawk" Wallach
Lilliane
Marcus Arena
Martin Mehaffy
Michael Wayne Dabb
Outis
Patrick Pocher
Paul Jonathan S. Tio
Peter Bemis
Richard 'Vidiian' Greene
Roger Aberdeen
Scott "Tobin" Kelly
Sean Burke
Shad Scarboro
Shawn Kehoe
Sofia
Steve Proud
Steven Bobula
Talita "Setheus" Amaral
Todd Rieger
Troy Lenze
William "Smiling Shakes" Delmar III
William "The Nightmare Lord" Smith
Xavier Aubuchon-Mendoza

• • •

Arithanas, Ernesto Yip, Omar Ivan Toledano Landero, Mario Martinez, Hector Hoyos.
David Baity, Kathy Heatherly, Mesa Templeton, Walter Underwood,Sadie Baity
William James, Jason Seitz, Wizards Asylum

• • •

Ril, Spectre, Quantum, Precious Magia Blackwell, Archer, Casanova

• • •

Arthur Noseda; Jérôme Bianquis; Hvedrung Laymore; Jonathan Churin
Trollune; Yannick Peyrède; Charles Trécourt; Louis Trécourt; Spirit of Chantelouve

• • •

Mannika Krause, Christian Klinkewitz, Twistet Geisterhand, Elias Ebert, Christian Reimann/Sabine Domaradzki

Reaper

Aaron J. Schrader
Andrew Augustine DiNovo
Anthony "Runeslinger" Boyd
Arthur Tudor
Austin Haught
Bozhidar "Bave" Grozdanov
Brian Gilkison
Bryant Durrell
Chris Green
Claus Larsen
Cullen Bunn
D Morris
Dash Handsomely
Dave Brookshaw
dr. Eperjesi Andras
Edd Duggan
Edwin Ab Enion
Emmanuel Betancourt aka Tito
Everett Lo
Faith Trust
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