

RAGE ACROSS THE WORLD



20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

WEREWOLF

THE APOCALYPSE

RAGE ACROSS THE WORLD



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Chris “Shallow-Tracks” Shaffer for demonstrating both the benefits and the drawbacks to embracing the Weaver.

Eric “Lobo del Lago Lunar” Zawadzki for touring the Wyld places of the world, and remembering that wolves are people too.

Mark “Caern Totem” Stone, for showing off what makes the Garou tick on a day-to-day basis.



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Introduction: Hunting Ground

The Dying World

Gaia is dying. The Wyrms would corrupt and then devour the world. The Weaver would strangle her in tight webs of stagnation. And the Wyld, weak as it is, would create endless things without form to swamp everything that is. Gaia may be dying, but she has defenders – the Garou, each one of whom feels a fraction of her pain burning within his heart. This Rage drives them to fight any threat to Gaia, anywhere in the world. From Cairo to Pripyat, from Norilsk to Botswana, the Garou fight. Too often, they die. But the werewolves will not stop.

What does it mean to be a people fighting a losing war? The Garou fought the Wyrms' forces for millennia, far longer than any human war. They fight humans and monsters alike, battling corporate malfeasance with the same fervor as nightmarish horrors. The Garou spend every day ready for battle, living lives of formality and ritual not because they want to, but because it's only through structure that a werewolf can find any peace.

War takes its toll. Wolves face new challenges around the world, and their dwindling numbers bodes ill for the future of lupus Garou. Enclaves of the Wyld spring up in the strangest places, but some places where the chaotic creator is at her strongest are in the heart of the Wyrms' taint. Crushed by the Weaver's webs, city-dwelling humans look for any way to release the pressure and face the consequences

as law-enforcement cracks down on protestors. The Wyrms' still winning – for every place that the Garou block a Pentex operation or destroy a nest of fomori, the Corruptor has ten plans that go unopposed.

Beyond Human Eyes

This book presents the world from a werewolf's perspective. It first turns inwards, looking at how the Garou live with one another on a daily basis. A sept in Mumbai may have different customs from one in Moscow, but both have a lot in common – werewolves the world over have more in common than some myths and rituals. Septs hold to strict systems of rank and position, much as with a military force, to keep the Garou focused on fighting the Wyrms, rather than one another. It also covers caerns, sacred places of power that don't look like much to human eyes, but that play a pivotal role to the Garou. Werewolves have a built-in idea of the structure of a caern, and so many share similar features – the separation of the caern heart from the bawn, and a number of areas that appear in the bawn of many caerns. Finally, it covers caern totems, powerful spirits who can bless entire septs of Garou in times of need.

The second part of the book is a tour of the world through a werewolf's eyes, as told by three Garou who have walked far and wide:

WHAT THIS BOOK ISN'T

Rage Across the World isn't a travel guide. Players and Storytellers — and **Werewolf** characters — have access to online travel guides and maps to get a general sense for what a place looks like and where characters might end up. If you don't have easy Internet access, the same information can be found in libraries.

The travelogue in this book presents a series of situations that occur in specific locations, often tied in to real-world events that affected those locations. While we've tried to be accurate, some details may not mesh with how things played out in the real world. Please accept our need for dramatic license — the real world doesn't have fomori and spirits of destruction trying to corrupt everything that is.

- **Jonathan Shallow-Tracks** relates his journeys throughout the world, sharing his expertise on the Weaver. While they're often great tools for the Garou, Shallow-Tracks' experiences in places from Cairo to Shanghai to London demonstrate both the benefits and drawbacks of the Great Spinner's methods.

- **Lobo del Lago Lunar** shares his findings on the state of lupus Garou and their wolf Kinfolk. His research took him to wild places all over the planet, from Australia to Ethiopia to Yellowstone. Along the way, he's become quite an expert on those places where the Wyld remains strong, and he has seen new creation in the most unlikely places.

- **Deidra Bone-Cracker** learned how to best fight the Wyrms in the Amazon and hasn't stopped yet. She's killed fomori, landed a blow against a subtle head of the Wyrms in New York, and led her pack into one of the most polluted places on Earth. Her tales serve as both caution and inspiration for any werewolf desperate to fight the Wyrms head-on.

Sept Chronicles

Sometimes, it's a good idea to take a step back from the action. Rather than focusing on your pack's daring exploits against the Weaver's forces or minions of the Wyrms, you spend a session or two dealing with the characters' home sept. It's up to the players and Storyteller both whether the pack uses these interludes as a chance to catch their breath — increasing Renown, seeking out new Gifts and rites, or petitioning other Garou for training — or whether they embroil themselves in sept politics, getting even with rivals and forging new alliances.

EXPERIENCED CHARACTERS

Storytellers may want to allow players to create more experienced characters, especially if those characters will take on significant positions in a large sept. Some **Werewolf** players prefer picking up at Fostern or Adren to starting out every new character at Cliath.

We recommend that players first create a Cliath character, then spend a quantity of experience points determined by the Storyteller to raise their Traits to levels suitable for their Rank. Characters start with the minimum Renown requirements for their Rank. In general, an "idle" Garou will have one Gift appropriate to his Rank, three of the next-lower Rank, and four Gifts each of any lower levels. Remember, the pack is likely not "idle" like Storyteller characters — if they're out taking the fight to the Wyrms rather than tending a sept they'll rapidly outpace this guideline.

Garou Rank Experience Points

Cliath	0-35
Fostern	45-75
Adren	85-220
Athro	250-500
Elder	600+

If the players would prefer to dive into the political side of the Garou, the Storyteller can create a Chronicle centered on the pack's home sept, with individual pack members taking positions of responsibility. This can work particularly well if the pack are relatively inexperienced Garou who have banded together with some other werewolves to found a new sept — either around a newly-discovered caern, or a sept without a caern in a place that hasn't had a strong Garou presence before. The young werewolves find themselves thrust into the limelight, where they must deal with trouble both internal and external. One story may involve rallying the other Garou to face down an attack by minions of the Wyrms, while the next features the pack resolving a dispute between other members of the sept before it spills over into bloodshed and slaughter. Further stories involve quests to appease the caern's totem spirit, tense negotiations with representatives of a neighboring sept, and the pack facing down accusations of terrible crimes (real or imagined) from their own septmates.

Sept chronicles grow in scale as the pack grows in power and Rank. While starting at the bottom is fun for some groups, other troupes may prefer to create experienced werewolves. That way,

the pack can start out as big players in a large sept like the Sept of the Green in New York. At that level, the pack is responsible for keeping the peace between many more werewolves, and facing down more powerful external threats — from concentrated assaults involving Black Spiral Dancers, fomori, and powerful banes, to local governments handing over the caern's grounds, to a corporation looking to build a new out-of-town mall.

The Storyteller should keep the sept's location in mind, as that can affect the kind of threats that work best. An urban caern will see planning challenges, infiltration attempts, and challenges in City Hall, rather than facing down a team of ex-special forces mercenaries. A sept in the Scottish Highlands is far more vulnerable to direct attack, especially from Black Spiral Dancers, but could still face threats from an eccentric billionaire who wants to make the caern heart into a feature of his new golf course. Septs who keep far from human eyes, whether in the Australian outback or the Siberian wilds don't have to worry about human intervention, but that same isolation makes them excellent targets for all-out attacks featuring terrifying banes and massed fomori. Even when the Wyrms doesn't have the sept in its sights, they still need to focus on food, fuel, and shelter.

Unless the players have made clear their desire to focus on one aspect of running a sept, the Storyteller should show off the variety of stories possible at any sept. She should frequently ask her players which stories they enjoyed most, and tailor the chronicle based on their responses. While it's true that a sept consists of multiple packs, the Storyteller should remember that the players' characters are the protagonists of the story, so it makes sense for them to be front and center of important events, rather than mere spectators.

Using the Travelogue

As a player or a Storyteller you can use the travelogue chapters in a number of ways. Perhaps the most straightforward is as a background resource — either have one of the featured characters visit the characters' sept, or encourage players to mention encounters with them in downtime, so they can draw parallels between the situations that the pack finds itself in and moments from the stories presented.

The Storyteller can also draw from the individual stories in each travelogue if a particular entry inspires her. One week the pack are swept up in a protest with the Occupy movement, the next they're trying to bring a rogue City Father on side, then travelling to investigate claims of Wyld energies released in Pripyat, and on to face down a Pentex subsidiary in Norilsk, and on to tracking down links between the mining company and a cult in New York. Each entry provides enough detail to either drop it into an existing story, and each section presents new antagonists, new totems, and the chapter's narrator in game terms.

Some troupes may prefer to play through the stories presented, with one player taking on the role of the narrator and the others creating the other characters featured in the story. Rather than listening to the Storyteller reading from the book, or handing the book over to the players, introduce the beginning of the story as normal. At a dramatic moment, the Storyteller should ask the players "What do you do?" The story progresses from there. If the players have read this book, they may want to stick to how things worked out for the narrator, or they may have a different idea. The Storyteller should improvise in return, building the story around the players' actions while keeping the original tale in mind.

If you use this last option, remember that the players are portraying characters in a story within the normal story of the game. The characters cannot die — if they did, nobody could tell the story to begin with — but otherwise, anything goes. If the players get into the idea of telling a story within a story, the Storyteller could allow them to spend a point of Willpower or Gnosis to add something to the scene that nobody had thought of, effectively saying "No, that's not how it happened, it was like *this*."

Don't be afraid to break from how things "actually" happened. Though you're using the travelogue as a way to frame the story, once the Storyteller hands control over to the players, it's up to them what happens and what the characters do. React to what happens in the story as you would at any other time in the game, and use the existing story as inspiration, rather than a straightjacket.

Spanning the World

One thing the travelogue chapters really bring home is that **Werewolf** is a global game. For all that a pack is usually based at a single sept, some spend months or years travelling the world. Most Garou prefer to travel by moon bridge between caerns, as they can bring all manner of weapons and cross national borders without alerting the authorities.

Somewerewolves deliberately maintain a full identity in human society, and use that to travel. While taking a commercial flight between two cities does bring the risk of security checkpoints, and limits what items a werewolf can bring with him, Garou who travel among humans can reach places without warning local werewolves. If a pack is investigating evidence of another sept's corruption or doesn't want to flag their arrival to any spiritual watchers, travelling with humans is often the best way to go about it.

If the pack's destination is on the same landmass, it's often easier to avoid borders and security checkpoints in lupus form. A pack of wolves travelling from Russia to the Ukraine arouses less suspicion (and has less chance of being seen outright) than a group of humans who may not have the necessary papers. The Weaver's webs enmesh human transportation authorities, and werewolves who want to avoid the Spinner's notice must do what they can to travel off the record.



Chapter One: Life Among the Warriors

Prelude: The Interloper

Luna hid her face that night. The only light came from scattered stars; the only sound was the soft whisper of the lake against its shores. It wasn't hard for Claire to pick out the sound of the interloper's feet scuffling in the clay. Even his breathing was too loud to ignore.

"You don't have to just stand there," she called out. "This dock is as much yours as it is mine."

As the young man tripped and stumbled his way out onto the dock, the night breeze carried his scent to Claire's nose, confirming his identity. Claire sighed to herself, confident that he wouldn't hear her over his own racket. Jacob had warned her that the pup might want to talk to her, but she'd hoped that he'd find his own way without her. Living her story had been painful enough, and the hard parts were far from over — Claire didn't feel like sharing it just yet.

But then again, it wasn't really up to her.

Claire turned to face the interloper. An aura of cool silver fire blazed to life on her skin. Suddenly, Claire was the brightest thing on the lake. The rising and falling water reflected her light back at her, temporarily dazzling her. However, the light also let her see the interloper's face.

Claire knew that her first change hadn't come any sooner than the boy's, but he seemed so young. Of course, Claire had enjoyed the benefits of an upbringing in the Garou Nation — this boy was a lost cub, raised by Kin who were ignorant of their heritage, or whose wolf blood had become so thin that they were little more than ordinary humans.

Claire arched an eyebrow and nodded to the duffel bag slung over one of the boy's skinny teenager shoulders. "Going on a trip?" she asked. The kid shrugged, letting the bag fall down onto the dock.

"This place sucks and you're all crazy. People act like I can't leave, but I don't think anyone will stop me if I decide to walk out of here tonight. Everyone keeps on saying 'if you think you've got it bad, talk to Claire.' So, you're Claire. What have you got to say that will convince me to stay?"

Claire sighed. "So, what do you know about me?"

"I know that you're, like, the old Alpha's daughter, and that's why the new Alpha doesn't like you."

Claire could have laughed. The first time she had to deal with one of the Garou who didn't know, and it was nothing but a pain in her ass. Instead, she just shook her head and looked the kid in the eyes.

"I'm a lesbian. If you know enough about your people to say we're 'all crazy,' then you know enough to understand why that's not an easy thing to be."

It was obvious that the kid was taken aback, but he didn't let it stop him for long. "So, just because you're gay you've got it tougher than me? You can tell me why I should put up with this?" He almost shouted the last few words, but Claire noted proudly that despite his anger he didn't lose control of his shape.

"No. Everyone thinks that you should talk to me because I know what it's like not to fit in perfectly."

"They want you to convince me?"

"I think so." She stalled his angry retort with a raised hand. "But, that's not what I'm going to do. I'm just going to talk to you. I'm going to teach you about the Garou Nation, and then let you make your own choice." She laughed. "Hell, if you still want to go when we're done, I'll give you a ride into town. All you have to do is listen to me for a little while. Do we have a deal?"

The boy narrowed his eyes, then shrugged and flopped down onto the dock. He didn't speak out loud, but his body language said 'go on.'

So Claire did.

Daily Life

At its heart, a sept is a group of Garou, living together under some version of the ancient laws and customs that have governed our people since the dawn of time. I could tell you about the history of our people, but that doesn't matter right now. What matters is that you know what a sept is. A sept isn't a caern. I've been to septs without caerns — a sad sight, but all too common these days. Once I was lucky enough to see a caern without a sept; we fixed that right away.

I'm sure you've walked around the sept. If you bothered to take your headphones out and look around, you'd seen what this place is really like. There isn't a single word for it in any human language I know. We've got homes, a mess hall, a place for us to gather, so I guess you could call it a village. We've got an armory, shooting platforms rigged up in the trees, and a defensive perimeter, so you could call it an armed camp. At the same time, with the caern itself, the bawn, and all the little shrines scattered around, so you could say that it's a temple.

I think the best word for a sept is a community, but in a way that most Western humans haven't had a community in a long time.

In any given sept, the Garou and Kinfolk fall into one of three different groups. Some try to balance their lives. They might have jobs and apartments — sometimes even families — somewhere else, but they also try to maintain living quarters here. They spend half the day working a human job, and the other half of the day performing some duty for the sept, though they have a hard time advancing in either world. These Garou sometimes give a lot of money to the sept, to make up for the time they can't spare.

Others prefer the human world. They only come out here when the need — theirs or the sept's — is dire. They might still be involved with their packs, but they aren't interested in the larger community.

If someone picks the world of the Garou, then they probably live in or near the sept itself. They might do something in the human world to make a little cash. Money is useful. But they also might not, trusting the sept to provide for them. Working for the sept lets them give something back for the resources they use.

Most have been one, two, or all three of these groups throughout his or her life. Some Garou find it too hard to give up their old, human expectations of life. They try to balance their lives out. Some stick with it, but usually one or the other side wins out, for a little while. Then something happens to upset their lives, and it starts all over again.

And, of course, you have the lupus. I don't much understand the appeal, but many lupus try to maintain lives as wolves, leading packs and siring wolf Kin. Others throw themselves into the world of the Garou — believe it or not, they have as much to learn as you. Believe it or not, a few lupus, usually the Ragabash, become fascinated with the weaver's world and spend a while living as humans.

Whatever your choice, your sept supports you. Some Kin and Garou stay a part of the world outside so that you don't have to, if you don't want to. Others dedicate themselves to the sept full-time so that you can have the luxury of a normal job, a normal home, and normal friends.

What's it like to live in a sept? I suppose it's a lot like living in a commune or a kibbutz, or maybe a really small town. You wake up in the morning, and there's usually a gathering of some kind. I've visited septs that had morning meetings like Quakers. I've been to septs where they had a breakfast in the great hall and everyone mocked each other for their hangovers. Communal breakfast is common.

Unless the sept is in serious trouble, most people go about their business without having to be told what to do. Everyone knows what their responsibilities are, even if it's just to meet their mentor and follow her around throughout the day. Garou can be irritable and territorial creatures, but to those who belong septs can be friendly places.

Communal lunches are rarer, but I've visited very few septs where everyone doesn't gather for dinner. After dinner, there's almost always some kind of ritual, even if it isn't a formal holiday. Those who aren't too tired from their day's labors have time to indulge themselves in the evening, hunting in the wilds or hitching rides into the nearest human city. Some septs have electricity — and even those that aren't have accepted the human technology of candles — so life doesn't necessarily stop with the sunset, but it does slow down.

Organization

When my father taught me about this, he put it like this: 'wolves like hierarchy.' Of course, that's too simple. In reality, there isn't a one of Gaia's children — except for the stupidest, I suppose — that isn't more comfortable when it knows who's above and who's below. Even humans, for all their intellect, like to jockey for position — only in some parts of the world, they're less likely to do it with violence. Even so, Garou hierarchy is more fluid than most animal hierarchies.

First and foremost, Garou respect rank. That's something you're going to have to get used to if you stay with us. Out in the human world it's much the same — even if you decide that you're going to spend the rest of your life on the streets and never get a job, you'll be expected to show respect to those who have been on the streets longer. The difference is that in Garou society, Rank is all encompassing. A Garou who ranks you is just plain better than you at everything — at least, that's how everyone is going to see it. Of course, that doesn't mean that you can't respectfully disagree or try to sway an older Garou to your way of thinking; it does mean that if you just contradict her, you're going to look like a fool.

Why are we like that? Part of it is that we're an old people, deeply seated in our customs. Part of it is our armed camp mentality. Enemies surround us, and the only way we're going to survive is unity.

And part of it is that it's true. This might seem odd to you, coming from the human world where people live to eighty without trying hard — it sounds odd to hear myself say it, given how many of the elders are the ones who give me the most grief — but if a Garou survives long enough to be called "elder," then he or she has got to be tough, clever, and lucky. Chances are that your elders do know better than you, and you should listen to them and learn what you can.

The smallest unit that Garou society recognizes is the pack. Oh, sure, we acknowledge the rights of the individual, and some sept duties are performed by individuals rather than packs. However, you've got to understand that you will be judged first by your pack. Your auspice, your tribe, even your personal reputation — all of this pales in comparison

to the company you keep. A typical Garou will assume that the Ahroun of a pack known for dealing with spirits knows more about the Umbra than the Theurge of a pack known for its combat prowess — especially if the former pack generally ranks the latter.

When you understand this, you'll get why I was so scared that my pack would turn on me when I came out, and why I was so happy that they didn't.

Most packs have a purpose. This can be as simple as supporting their leader in performing an important duty for the sept, or as complicated as hunting down corruption within the Garou Nation, as expansive as defending a territory from the Wyrms, or as specific as the quest for a storied fetish or lost caern. When the pack achieves its purpose — if it's the kind of purpose that can be achieved — it will either find a new one or drift apart. Some packs — like the Silver Pack, which you might have heard of — are always temporary and formed with a very specific purpose in mind. Elders will often arrange for a temporary pack to be created if they want something done and no existing pack is interested.

In addition to purposes, packs have status. It can be hard to wrap your head around this at first, because packs don't have rank in the same way that individual Garou do. Pack status is a lot less formal and more fluid than an individual's status; it relies a lot more on what the pack does for the sept. Hunting down Wyrmspawn is a path to glory, but improving the sept for Garou and spirit alike is a pack to status. Unlike rank, pack status is more of commodity. Packs trade it away to get what they want — this can include the time and attention of the elders, influence over sept policy, and borrowing or even claiming fetishes held by the sept — and they earn it by taking on duties for the sept. You can tell a pack's status by how they get treated. Do other Garou defer to them? Do they usually get what they want? Do Garou without packs compete for the chance to join them? Do other packs and other Garou try get the pack into their debt? If so, than chances are that this is a pack with high-ranking members, a good reputation, and plenty of favors owed to them by individuals and the sept itself — a high status pack. Odds are, they've done a lot for the sept in the past.

Within the most successful packs, Garou hierarchy is at its most informal and most fluid. Although a pack might have an alpha, that person is only the leader as far as wider Garou society is concerned, or whenever there is an internal disagreement that needs to be solved. Usually, the leader of the pack is whoever's expertise is most important at any given moment. The Garou with the most experience with spirits leads when the pack ventures into the Umbra, but the Garou with the best grasp of tactics takes command when the pack plans a battle, and when the pack has to venture into the world of politics, they listen carefully to what their most socially adept members have to say.



That's not to say that packs are entirely harmonious. It wouldn't be a Garou pack if there weren't the occasional struggle for dominance. But in case you haven't noticed yet, that's the way we like it; the Garou with the strongest personality and the greatest certainty that her way is right — she's the one who's likely to win out in any contest, claim control of the pack, and lead them to victory. Intra-pack relationships can also be surprisingly violent. Your pack is your closest family, and they know exactly what you can take. Of all the Garou in the sept, they're the ones most likely to respond to your stupidity with a friendly punch to the face. If you lose control of your inner beast, they're also the ones who will take personal responsibility for beating you into submission — as you get to know yourself better, you'll understand that this is a good thing. I know that this kind of casual violence seems odd to someone raised outside the Garou Nation, but remember that with our healing, it doesn't matter much. A beating that would leave a human incapacitated for a week is unlikely to take a Garou more than an hour or two to recover from.

That's the ideal, anyway. In truth, there are packs dominated by a single, strong alpha who does as she pleases and only listens to the pack's advice when she feels like it. Some Garou find that kind of authority comforting. Packs are families, happy and otherwise.

Generally, if you feel like Garou society is too rigid and too demanding, what you need is a pack. In all but the saddest cases, your pack is the place where you can be valued for your ideas and your expertise instead of your rank.

Sept

Standing above pack in the ladder of hierarchy is sept. I don't think I have much to say about sept — I already covered the basics earlier — but it's important that you understand how sept fits into everything else. Your sept is like your city. It colors your reputation, but doesn't determine it.

Think of it this way. You're from New York, right? What are the first three things you think of when you imagine people from Atlanta? We're racist — unless you're thinking about the black folks — in which case they're poor and oppressed, we're fake and superficial, and we all talk like we're out of a Civil War movie?

Come on, don't sulk. I'm not saying I think you actually *believe* any of that nonsense. But, you *do* think it. These are the stereotypes that come to mind as soon as you think of Atlanta, before your thinking mind has a chance to take over, and unless you're careful, they will continue to sneak in and influence your opinions. Of course, it doesn't help anything that stereotypes are often based on truth — Atlanta is a city with a history of racial conflict and injustice, and my

family, at least, is very status-conscious — but being based on truth doesn't make any stereotype true for all the people, all the time, and you're a fool if you act like it does.

Septs are the same way. Everyone knows that the Blood Clay Sept up near Cleveland, Georgia, are a bunch of dangerous and untrustworthy weirdoes. Is that true? Well, 'weirdo' is a pretty judgmental term, but it is true that the sept was founded in the 1890s by a preacher-Theurge who mixed evangelical Christianity, Hebrew mysticism, and Gaia worship, and they still practice a lot of the rites that he discovered and invented. That doesn't make them weirdoes, but it does give them a unique perspective on the spirit world.

Just like stereotypes, your sept gives others a starting point for knowing who you are. This can be an advantage in that it's flattering or true, and a disadvantage in that it's unfair and untrue. In some ways, it's just another part of how Garou society involves a lot of pre-judgment — another way in which we're backwards by modern human standards — but it's also something you can take pride in. Let them say that the Blood Clays are weird — I've known some of them who were able to find solutions that more traditional Garou couldn't even imagine.

If you join our sept — and I hope you chose to stick around long enough to join us — you'll be known as trustworthy, aggressive in the defense of Gaia, eager for glory and unwilling to rest on your laurels, and perhaps a little bit conservative and too ambitious for your own good.

Tribe

Tribe is a funny thing in Garou society. To hear people talk about it, your tribe is a deep truth about your personality. All Silver Fangs are arrogant, all Shadow Lords are untrustworthy, and all Uktena meddle in things they don't understand.

Of course, that's nonsense.

In reality, you chose your tribe and your tribe chooses you.

Most tribes will take anyone regardless of bloodline, provided you meet their other various qualifications. For example, the Glass Walkers are happy to accept any Garou with a mind to exploiting the tricks and technologies of the Weaver, the Black Furies will accept abused or under-appreciated women of any blood, the Uktena are happy to support almost anyone who seeks after knowledge, and the Children of Gaia will take just about anyone's cast-offs.

Some tribes do consider ancestry. However, for most of them it's only one of many factors. The Shadow Lords, for example, prefer to recruit from certain bloodlines, but if you have the right combination of ruthlessness and effectiveness, they're happy to take you. The Wendigo show similar favoritism for their favorite Native American tribes, and almost never accept Anglos. The Fianna and the Get of

Fenris are more or less the same way, to a somewhat lesser degree. Only the Silver Fangs are sufficiently picky to reject a cub entirely based on ancestry.

Once you consider all the tribes you *could* join, you need to decide which tribe you *will* join. On some level, that choice belongs to your elders. They'll get to know you during your training and Rite of Passage, and gradually influence you towards the choice they think is best for you. Unfortunately, this process can become political. In some septs, the tribes compete for the best cubs, or try to pawn the difficult cases off on each other. It's sad, but in septs that have gone that dysfunctional, the choice of tribe can seem like picking teams for a middle school basketball game.

One another level, the choice belongs to the spirits. In part, tribal spirits influence matters through the elders, who will consult with the spirits throughout your training. In part, the spirits can make the call on their own: if you or the elders chose a tribe that's wrong for you, the tribal spirits might reject you at your right of passage. It's embarrassing, but it happens, and the elders will just try again and find a tribe that's a better pick.

And on some level, it's up to you. Your heritage matters, but it matters a lot less than the kind of Garou you want to be, and the tribe that you think can lead you to that destiny.

Of course, not everyone has the luxury of choice. My father was a Silver Fang, as was his father, and his father before him in a nearly unbroken line of fathers and mothers going back until the names and deeds are lost to history. I think my family has a tiny thread of Fianna blood — a lot of Silver Fang clans in the American South do — but too little for the Fianna to really accept me. More importantly, if I tried to join any other tribe, I'd have faced unbearable censure from my family. I would have been cast out. They wouldn't have been much kinder if Falcon had rejected me, even if I'd wanted to be a Silver Fang with all my heart. They'd have seen it as my failure that Falcon didn't want me.

Why do the Garou talk about tribe as though it were black and white? Part of it is that it used to be. We have always followed the breeding patterns of our kinfolk, and our kin follow the breeding patterns of the human populations they're embedded in. As mankind has spread and different races and nationalities have mingled, our kin have done the same, and our kin's choices of mates have influenced us, gradually changing the meaning of tribe. This makes a lot of Garou, especially the older ones, uncomfortable. They miss the days when tribe was tied to bloodline. I'm not sure why they care so much — tribe hasn't been just a matter of bloodline for more than two hundred years, if it ever really was — maybe it made them feel more secure to imagine that world is still that knowable and uncomplicated.

Maybe that's something that elders have in common, among Garou and humans alike.

Tribe and Sept

A lot of people talk about sept and tribe as though they're almost the same thing. When you hear someone mention about a 'Black Fury sept' or a 'Child of Gaia sept,' what they tend to mean is that it's a sept dominated by that tribe's history and culture.

However, that's not usually the case. Outside of each tribe's heartlands — and not all tribes even have those any more — most septs are pretty mixed. Especially in places like America, with its huge immigrant population, you're unlikely to find a sept that's all anything.

In reality, when someone says a 'Glass Walker sept,' what they usually mean is a sept that has taken on Glass Walker ways. They embrace using the Weaver's tools against the Wurm, they take on human customs, and place emphasis on respecting humans and their achievements. It doesn't mean that the sept actually is entirely, or even mostly, Glass Walker. It could be that the sept was founded by Glass Walkers and no one has questioned their rules, even though another community has since come to dominate the sept. Maybe the sept has Glass Walker leadership who influence the sept's culture even though actual Glass Walkers are now a minority. Maybe it's an urban sept that's smart enough to adapt to the world around them, rather than clinging to customs that don't serve them in their current environment, even though it's never had more than an average number of Glass Walker members

More to the point, a sept isn't a Glass Walker sept — or a Black Fury sept, or a Child of Gaia sept, or whatever — because of its membership, even if one tribe dominates its demographics. Organizationally, culturally, and historically, every sept is its own entity. Tribes don't found septs — Garou do. When they do, they make choices informed by their tribes, true, but once founded, a sept has a life of its own, and it will grow and change — or wither and die — based on its own virtues.

Interlude: Conversation in the Dark

"I want to hear more about what they do to you when you screw up," the kid said when Claire paused to collect her thoughts. Claire grinned wolfishly in the dark — the flame of her spirit Gift had long ago died away. The one flaw in her strategy was the possibility that the young Garou would become bored and disengaged. That didn't seem to a problem.

"Why's that?" Claire asked.

"Well, a lot of people talk about you like you *are* a screw-up, just because you're gay. I want to know what these assholes will do to me if I screw something up. If I stick around."

"It's not always that bad," Claire admitted. "There's nothing in the Litany about sexual orientation, you know. Since I haven't actually broken any rules, no one can do anything to punish me, at least not officially."

"Then why does everyone give you shit?"

"Not everyone; just some people, a vocal minority. And why? For some of them, it's because of their own assumptions. They assume that just because I don't like men, I'll never do my duty to Gaia and have babies someday. They treat me like I've already dishonored my line and forsaken my family, even though I've done nothing of the sort." Claire swallowed the lump in her throat — her father had done just that, almost right until his death — then continued. "For others it's because of the biases they've picked up from the human cultures they were born in. You'd be surprised how often that happens, even in unbroken Garou lines like mine. I've had to overcome my own share of human prejudices that I discovered, when I really thought about them, were at odds with the Litany and Gaia."

Claire laughed before she could continue. "And for some, it's just a convenient excuse. They don't like my policies and they're looking for any reason they can to discredit me, or they're nursing some grudge against my father and don't want to see his daughter claim any honor for his family."

"But look, you want to hear about how the Garou handle crime and punishment. The first thing you need to understand is that the only law the Garou need is the Litany. Everything else is just custom..."

Law and Justice

A lot of lost cubs I've spoken to have a hard time with the idea of the Litany. They're used to some degree of secularity. Even the American Christian right wing wants laws inspired by their religion, not derived legalistically from the Bible. The idea of a religious law, literally interpreted, is pretty alien to most people on this side of the Atlantic.

The fact is, though, that that's what the Litany is: a received tradition, a law handed down by Gaia to help us to govern our behavior. No loyal Garou truly questions the basic tenants of the Litany. Even the most radical Glass Walker might do something a little odd with the Litany, like make a Litany App for his smartphone, and he might chose some interpretations that would make Elder Catherine Standing Stone blanche, but he isn't going to stop living the Litany as he sees it.

I don't want you to think that every Garou is faithful. Sure, we all know that Gaia and Luna exist, but that doesn't mean that we all worship them. Some Garou only give lip

service to the worship of Gaia and Luna and the Litany they gave us. Some Garou are mystically inclined and don't care much about the law, viewing it as the least sacred and transcendent part of our religion. The fact is, though, that the Litany contextualizes everything in Garou society. Even the ones who argue against the Litany have to do it in the Litany's terms. Even those who try to twist the Litany until it justifies them doing exactly what they were going to do anyway — and yes, I include a lot of the Garou who give me trouble about my sexuality in that — have to do it by using the Litany. This is something that the Garou have in common with other traditional theocratic societies.

I understand if you've got a problem with it, coming from modern America, but you're better off learning to deal with it than beating your head against the wall. It can be pretty jarring to go from a secular society to a traditional shamanistic theocracy. We're an ancient people, a significant portion of our population started their lives as wolf cubs, and we're pretty sure our myths are true because the world-eating devils we were made to fight are actually out there. If you judge us by modern standards you're just going to confuse yourself.

It's not so bad. The Litany is a lot like the Ten Commandments — you do know about those, don't you? — in that they're simple, straightforward, and hard to argue with. We can't stop combating the Wyrms wherever it breeds, because

even if we wanted to, the Wyrms isn't going to stop coming after us. You should respect the territory of another because failing to do so is a good way to get your butt kicked. And as much as I'd like to duel Elder Jeremiah and take back the position my father intended for me, I acknowledge that a time of open conflict is not the time to start infighting.

And just like the Ten Commandments, there's a lot of room for interpretation. What counts as war and peace for purposes of challenging the leader? It makes sense that the leaders of the sept should get the best share of the kill — after all, if they're worthy of their positions, they also accept the greatest share of the risk and danger — but what exactly does that mean?

Ultimately, deciding on the answers to these questions is something that each sept does for itself. These local customs aren't carved in stone like the Litany is. They change with the times and the leader's personal style — Gaia knows there are things I'll change around here if I ever take this sept back for my family.

Local customs can be messy. They're only rarely written down. Usually, they're a sort of an informal oral tradition. For example, in this sept right here, everyone knows that "Submission to Those of Higher Stature" means Elder Jeremiah has the right to boss around Thomas and the rest of the kin who work in the kitchen, and anyone who gets in between will be punished for defiance. You did the right thing when you stood



up for them last week, but you also violated an unspoken local custom that everyone else knows better than to question. Some local customs are related to the tenants of the Litany, while others are made up whole cloth. When you find yourself in a new sept — especially if you're only visiting — it's usually good to find a tell-it-like-it-is sort of Garou and have a frank conversation. Ragabash are good for this, as long as they aren't the kind who is likely to fill your head with nonsense for a laugh.

Like everything in Garou society, it all comes down to who makes the decisions, which varies from sept to sept. I can draw you a few generalities based on tribe, though. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that this is all literally true. There's no 'tribal councils' enforcing these customs, and a lot of septs these days have customs that are weird combinations of their founding or most populous tribes.

Some septs decide things by relying on groups of elders. Black Furies, for example, like to establish triads, one younger — but still high ranked and respected — one middle aged, and one as ancient as they can find. Children of Gaia, Red Talons, Shadow Lords, and Stargazers prefer for a single elder to lead, though that elder often has advisors, who may wield significant power and influence on their own. When someone is accused of breaking the Litany or trampling over local customs in a way that caused harm, the elder or elders will interview everyone involved and make a decision. Once the decision is made, there's no appealing it. A duel — the only higher law the Garou can agree on — is the only way out.

Other septs — especially those influenced by the Bone Gnawers, Glass Walkers, Silver Fangs, and Silent Striders — prefer trials that kind of resemble those in human society, modern or archaic. The sept elders sit in judgment, both the accused and the accuser are represented by professionals, usually Philodox. Bone Gnawer trials are pretty weird, with bribes, nepotism, and a great deal of informal and disrespectful behavior. It makes sense, in a way — the chamber of judgment is just another field of combat, and whoever can gain the most support and apply the most pressure is the one who will serve the Garou best whether he's right or wrong. The other tribes prefer a great deal of formality and ritual to their trials, sometimes going so far as to wear costumes. It sounds silly, but we are an ancient people, and we do love our pageantry.

And then there are the septs that prefer some kind of conflict. The Fianna, Get of Fenris and Wendigo prefer trials by combat. Like the Bone Gnawers, all they really care about is who's stronger, though their idea of 'strength' is a little more primal. Uktena-dominated septs like to summon spirits, who will then use their powers to ferret out the truth and reveal it to the assemblage. If the accused is clever enough to redirect or escape the spirit's attention, well, then he deserves to go free. It works for them, I suppose, but you wouldn't be surprised to find out that things usually go the way the most powerful Theurge present wants them to go.

Consequences

But what you really wanted to hear about was what happens when someone breaks the rules? The short answer is, it depends on what he did wrong. The long answer, of course, is more complicated than that.

The lowest kind of punishment is called shaming. When a Garou commits a petty crime — insubordination, misuse of sept resources, or irresponsible behavior that doesn't get anyone killed — we hold a mocking rite during one a sept gathering. The details vary from sept to sept — some septs even use rituals with real magic, like the Stone of Scorn or the Voice of the Jackal — but the gist of it is always the same: by the end of the ritual, the Garou being punished has been thoroughly humiliated. Everyone has a good laugh and the repentant Garou can count on being the butt of a few jokes over the next month or so. Until then, no one will take what she says seriously, and she's likely to end up being 'invited' to take on unpleasant responsibilities as a way of clearing her shame — that, and no one will trust her with anything else. Eventually, the shame wears off. It's even possible to win some honor in the sept's eyes by accepting the shame with a mixture of good humor and aplomb.

Shunning is a little more serious. It's sort of like a taste of exile. No one will speak to the Garou or acknowledge his existence until the punishment is formally lifted. Shunning rarely lasts for more than a lunar month, but can last for up to a year. Even her packmates will act like she never existed. No one will let her starve or freeze to death, if she doesn't have the resources to take care of herself, but she can count on eating food no one else wants and sleeping in dingy or flea-infested blankets. No eye contact, no acknowledgment if she says 'thanks'; just a plate of scraps out where she'll find it, an unclaimed jacket left on a peg. It's so bad that some Garou will actually let themselves waste away or seek honorable death in battle rather than wait for the punishment to end.

You can't turn shunning to your advantage, no matter how hard you try, but you can make it a lot worse. If you have a human life to retreat to, don't. That's cowardice. The only way to deal with shunning is to slink around the sept looking suitably pitiful and repentant. Keep a book in your pocket — only be careful that no one sees you reading it — or spend the time in your wolf shape, practicing your hunting skills.

The thing is, you only get shunned if you seriously screw up. If you steal from the sept, give in to your inner beast and do something incredibly stupid like attack your elders or flee your post, or anything else that puts other Garou in danger, you could end up with this punishment.

The Garou have the death penalty — though some tribes, like the Children of Gaia, use it so rarely that it may as well not exist — but we save it for the most serious crimes. The only crimes that call down death are treason and murder. By treason, I mean collaborating with the Wyrms, not just

cooperating with the political enemies of your sept's leaders. Killing one of your fellow Garou is really a kind of treason, since by your act you have denied Gaia one of her rightful defenders. Two, if you count the fact that you will die for your crimes, too.

And, yes, killing humans isn't punished the same way as killing Garou. I'm not proud of that particular quirk of our law, but it's the way things are. For all that many of us were raised among them, humans are too often either the enemy or deeply in our enemy's thrall for us to see killing them in the same light as killing each other.

In some ways, death is a mercy. If you commit a crime worthy of death, chances are that you'll just be hunted down and killed, informally. Receiving a formal execution means that you turned yourself in, accepted your trial with humility and dignity. Like taking a shaming with good humor, accepting your execution is about the only thing you can do for your family — and your own legacy — to save it from some of the shame of what you've done.

The very worst thing we can do to someone is called 'casting out.' It's a euphemism. Really, 'casting out' is the very worst, most painful and prolonged execution possible. The details vary between septs. Some use a ritual that causes everything of Gaia to turn into silver blades for as long as the condemned touches it. Then, the sept organizes a hunt, and the chases the condemned through the wilderness until her tattered legs can't support her anymore, and she falls to the ground, which turns into razored silver and just... devours her. Sometimes, before the condemned is killed, the sept use a ritual curse that sunders the condemned's soul so that she can never find peace or forgiveness in Gaia's embrace or take a place, however small, among her tribe's ancestor spirits. Sometimes they do both.

But you don't need to worry about casting out. If you're incredibly unlucky, you'll only see it done once in your life. It's even less likely that you'll be called upon to participate in one. Only the very worst criminals the Garou Nation has to offer are condemned to die in such a way: rapists, serial murderers, and Garou who devote themselves to the Wyrms in body and soul.

Septs are treated the same way. They can be mocked and shamed, cut off from other septs and shunned, or declared anathema and destroyed. Additionally, a sept can lose its kinfolk, either permanently or temporarily, be blacklisted by the spirit world, or have their leadership forcibly replaced. That gets into the politics of the greater Garou Nation. I learned about all of that from my father at the same time that my middle school social studies class was covering the structure of the United States government—but then again, I was born to be a politician among the Garou. I won't subject you to the same treatment unless you decide that you're interested in politics.

Interlude: Choices

Claire paused for breath. The sky was beginning to brighten with the first hints of dawn, and except for listening to her audience's questions and concerns, she'd been talking all night. The kid interrupted her before she had a chance to decide where to take the lesson next.

"So, why should I stay?"

"Pardon me?"

"That's what you're here for, to convince me, right? Yeah, I know, you said you just want to educate me. But you think I should stay. You want me to stay."

Claire spoke carefully, unwilling to strain their fragile alliance. "I do think it's best for you to stay with the sept, yes. Are you willing to hear me explain why I think so?"

"I just asked you to that, didn't I?"

Claire opened her mouth to respond, but the kid wasn't finished. He carried on angrily, almost speaking to himself.

"I know what you're going to say, though. You're going to tell me that it's my duty to stay, that I don't really have any other choice. You're going to tell me all about Gaia and Luna and all your other magic sky fairies. You're going to tell me that the 'Black Spiral Dancers' and the 'Banes' are going to kill me or brainwash me as soon as I leave. It seems to me like you're just trying to keep me here so that you people can brainwash me, first."

Claire bit back a laugh. "You don't believe in Gaia, Luna, the Black Spiral Dancers, or Banes?"

"Why should I? I haven't seen any myself."

Claire shook her head. "Not yet," she mused. *Was I ever that innocent? Certainly, I've never been that ignorant.* Then she turned her full attention back to the kid.

"How about this," she suggested. "I'll start by telling you all the reasons that someone might want to leave Garou society behind."

The kid looked incredulous. "Really?"

"Sure. I won't hold anything back. I won't tell you about why you should stay until I've told you everything crappy about the Garou, everything you might already know, everything that hasn't happened to you yet."

"And if I want to leave after that you'll give me a ride to the bus station?"

"And I'll do my best to make sure no one comes after you, and if they do catch you and decide to punish you, I'll take your punishment on myself."

The kid leaned forward, clearly interested. Claire steeled herself. This was it. So far, he'd heard almost everything he had to share, and somewhere behind his dark eyes, he was making his choice.

"I won't lie to you," Claire said, "I don't love everything about Garou society. We are an ancient people, and we've acquired a lot of scars over the years. We are divided against ourselves, riven by ancient grudges, and we have short tempers..."

The Bad

My father used to say that if the Garou could only unite behind a single leader, support a single vision for the world, we could turn the apocalypse into a rebirth for Gaia. I like to think that it wouldn't take some kind of totalitarian takeover — that all our points of view could learn to coexist and fight our common enemies — but he did have a point. For almost our entire history, our worst enemy hasn't been the Wyrms and its servants — it's been us.

First and foremost are the tribal divisions. These divisions can be fierce — sometimes even violent — but they are constantly undermined by the connections between individual Garou. For a long time now, most packs and septs have been inter-tribal. Some hardliners, political ideologues who continue to pursue divisive agendas, insist that inter-tribal packs go against Gaia's will. Most Garou have a hard time condemning other werewolves purely based on tribe because they know people from other tribes. They've fought together, called upon the spirits together, mourned together, celebrated together, and might even belong to the same pack. However, a vocal minority — those who have never belonged to a mixed community, or turned their backs on wider Garou society as a result of bad experiences with other tribes — can do a lot to influence politics. Even though these divisions are limited by inter-tribal connections, most Garou can't throw off the idea that the radicals are somehow the 'best' or 'purest' members of the tribe.

Ancient wrongs drive some tribal conflicts. Uktena and Wendigo are still angry about what was done to their kinfolk when European settlers first came to the New World. They think we should have done more to stop the settlers, and maybe they're right, though I still think that almost six hundred years is too long to hold a grudge — especially if that grudge stands to prevent us from uniting against the foes we were created to fight. Although they don't often show it openly, the Bone Gnawers are angry about how they have been treated by the rest of the Garou Nation. They have chosen to live among the hardest survivors of humanity, and they are upset that the Garou have failed to honor their choice because humanity's stalwarts are also the poor, homeless, and outcast.

Ideological divisions drive other tribes apart. The Red Talons, for example, want to take direct action against humanity. Unfortunately, their idea of 'direct action' looks a lot like genocide, or at least mass murder, to those of us born of human kin. The Black Furies embody women's anger,

which sometimes drives them to conflict with traditionally patriarchal tribes. The Children of Gaia — and yes, despite their reputation as gentle peacemakers the Children of Gaia can be some of the Nation's most divisive Garou — sometimes act like they want to muzzle us. While I respect that there is a time and a place for conflict, there is also a time and a place for peace, and we are a race of warriors.

However, I think that the most insidious divisions are based on tribal culture. You can apologize for ancient wrongs and offer reparations, and you can bridge ideological divisions can be bridged with compromise. 'They have *wronged* us' and 'their *ideas* are wrong' are both easier to resolve than 'they *are* wrong.'

One of the most famous conflicts of this nature is the one between the Shadow Lords and the Silver Fangs. We have fundamentally different styles of leadership. While the Silver Fangs want to be respected, the Shadow Lords merely want to be feared. While the Silver Fangs believe that honesty is a virtue, the Shadow Lords are ruthless and deceptive.

Almost every tribe has its foibles, and every foible can produce its own kind of conflict. Ask a dozen Garou and you'll hear three dozen negative stereotypes about the tribes: the Fianna are insensitive and hold grudges, the Silent Striders are aloof, the Stargazers are arrogant, the Get of Fenris are insubordinate unless you're willing to beat them into obedience, and on and on.

Within the tribes, the breeds also often fail to work together. Homid and lupus just don't get each other. No matter how hard they try, even homid and lupus who love each other dearly will always have divergent needs and ambitions. The Metis among us are a despised minority, and probably always will be. It's hard for many Garou to despise the sin that produced them without also despising the Metis born of that sin, even though it isn't their fault.

Shameful as it is, the Garou also have deep conflicts with our own kin. Some Garou think of their Kinfolk as nothing more than breeding stock; while others treat their Kin as cannon fodder — sometimes I don't know which is worse. Garou who sympathize with the Kin and demand that they be respected as members of the Nation fight those who don't. Worst of all, some Kin have turned against their Garou relations. They demand exorbitant fees for aid that they should give freely, humiliating us when we come to them for help. Some even divorce themselves from the Nation entirely — your grandparents or great grandparents might be just such kin. That's the case for a lot of lost cubs.

Divisions run up and down the entire ladder of Garou society. While some competitiveness can be healthy, as long as it spurs every side towards excellence, many Garou take it too far. Rival packs often forget that the quest for glory should be secondary to the war against the Wyrms, and when the time comes to battle they focus on shedding more enemy blood than their

counterparts, rather than actually winning. Sometimes it goes far enough that they skirmish in the wilderness, wounding each other rather than our natural foes. Rival septs usually fight more subtly, but I have seen septs destroyed by these conflicts. An argument over resources — water, kinfolk, spirit allies — turns into a feud, the septs start refusing each other aid or sending packs on missions of sabotage. Then the enemy finds out about the rivalry, and the next thing you know one of the septs is under attack. If the other can't find a way to forget the past, soon there is only one sept serving Gaia where once there were two.

You already know what it's like to be Garou, constantly struggling with your inner monster. We are a violent people, and we have never been able to confine our aggression to our enemies. It's true that internal violence is less meaningful for us than it would be in human culture. You can quickly recover from a beating that would put a grown man in the hospital. However, the fact is that even when the pain and disability are transitory, violence *hurts*. No one likes taking a punch. And when that pain can come from anyone, even your friends and family, it has consequences. A lot of Garou act as though might makes right and they can just challenge or informally beat down anyone who disagrees with them. Garou who are physically weaker learn to hold back, only contributing their wisdom when they are certain that there won't be painful side effects, while strong Garou can become overconfident, speaking their minds freely when the Nation would be better served by tact.

Of course, the Garou Nation likes its violence constrained by ritual and custom. Most septs will punish brawls outside of formal challenges. That's not to say that they don't happen, and a sept's leadership often chooses to turn a blind eye to a certain amount of unofficial violence, especially among the younger Garou, and when it serves their own agendas. Every sept has a Master of Challenges, a respected Garou whose job it is to make sure that everyone follows the rules and customs of the challenge. The Master of Challenge's word is final when it comes to challenges — though that isn't to say that he's immune to politics.

First, we have rules about who you can challenge and when. The best known of these restrictions comes from the Litany itself: "The Leader May Not Be Challenged During Wartime." However, the leaders of a sept can delay or even outright prevent any challenge if they feel that it would weaken the sept. Rank also affects challenges. We use challenges to determine who is right — or at least who is stronger — of two Garou when the issue is contested. You don't need to worry about your elders beating up on you — though there's nothing saying they can't let it be known that *someone* should put you in your place and wait for some ambitious young Ahroun to do it for them. At the



same time, an elder can ignore challenges by those who are far below him, which prevents young Garou from distracting their betters with a series of meaningless challenges.

We also have rules about how challenges proceed. Firstly, challenges have to be completely transparent. Someone – sometimes a Garou formally designated as the witness, sometimes the entire community – monitors the entire process, from the moment the challenge is issued to the duel itself. The presence of witnesses at the challenge itself is very important – in some septs, the entire community will gather to watch the duel. Challenges are also supposed to be fair. While a clever but relatively non-violent Ragabash might not be able to get out of fighting an Ahroun that he insulted, he can count on the Master of Challenges to include some mitigating factor to keep it from being a one-sided contest.

At least in theory, all Garou respect the importance of accepting an honorable surrender, especially during a challenge. Don't try surrendering to Black Spiral Dancers, though. Don't assume that you're safe during a challenge. Garou die by accident, and if your opponent hates you enough, there are some Garou who consider it worth the risk to make sure you don't leave the dueling circle alive.

However, it's a pretty big risk; most septs will investigate deaths during a challenge, and a Garou who makes a habit of killing his opponents will eventually become extremely unpopular. One of the only times I saw a challenge end in death and the matter conclude without further investigation, the deceased was a Garou well known for using duels to eliminate his rival. The sept considered itself better off without her, and they were right.

Of course, not every challenge is violent. Some challenges are spiritual, duels using spirit surrogates, or challenges of cunning and strategy. However, the fact remains that conflict is at the heart of Garou society. We believe in nurturing each other, to a point, but we also believe in sharpening each other. This way has served us, but it also makes us contentious and can waste time, blood, and lives.

In addition to being violent, Garou society is also dogmatic. As I've said before, we are an ancient people. Many of us believe that we shouldn't have to change with the times. I don't just mean the tribes that are commonly viewed as 'traditional.' A Glass Walker who refuses to see that the Weaver's web needs pruning because his people have always believed in using the Weaver against the Wyrms is as much a traditionalist as a Red Talon who stubbornly refuses to allow human kinfolk armed with submachine guns to provide covering fire during an assault on a Pentex facility.

Oddly enough, I think the biggest flaw of Garou society is something very pedestrian: poor boundaries. I'm sure you've noticed this already. We may be one family, but we are a clannish and insular family. For a people of warriors, we are also incurable gossips and busybodies. You can count on everything you do being held up to public scrutiny and

judgment. Your choice of mate, your choice of clothes, your political leanings, the totem your pack agrees on, the territory they chose to hold – all of it is up for public debate.

The constant attention of your family can be comforting, like a warm blanket. When someone dear to you is killed in battle and the entire community turns out to support you, it really does help. If you fall into Harano and everyone knows about it, so everyone crowds around you to pull you out of your shell, and help you find the wolf again, it can save your life. At other times, however, like when you're trying to keep a secret or just get some space, it can be frustrating and cloying. We're human, as well as wolf, and sometimes we need to be solitary.

The Good

With all of that division, violence, and intolerance, why would anyone ever stay?

The first answer is that the Garou Nation is your family. I know you might not feel that way right now, but it's true. No one will ever understand you like we will. Some of us already know that, because we were born here. Some of us – like you – aren't that lucky. You came to us later in life.

But think about it. Has any ordinary human ever really understood you, ever really accepted and trusted you? It isn't impossible – I know some Garou who maintain very meaningful friendships with humans – but I'm sure it was hard. We know what it's like for you to carry a beast inside your heart. We know what it means to struggle with strange urges, with the need to fight. We can help you channel those urges in constructive ways. Most importantly, we understand you. You have more in common with anyone in this sept than you do with any human in the world.

Born or chosen, we are your family.

And as your family, you can count on our support. I'm not just talking about supporting you in battle; I'm also talking about practical, everyday emotional and material support. Unless the sept you someday choose to settle in is completely dysfunctional, the Garou there will help you. Do you want a normal human life? Garou who have been maintaining that balance for years are there to teach you. Do you want to immerse yourself in sept life? Your community will be there to make sure that if you do need something from the human world, you have the human cash to pay for it. If there's a skill you want to acquire – anything from a Gift to learning how to set up a tent or make a fire – I can guarantee that someone in your sept will be happy to teach you. All they will ask in return is that you do the same for them.

Of course, there's a big difference between what you need and what you want. No Garou will ever go hungry as long as she has a sept to support her, but if you want luxury, you're going to need to either get a job or convince your sept that you are worth the expense.

However, the emotional support is even more important. Life is hard for the Garou Nation. People you care about are going to die — sometimes slowly and in pain, from wounds or Wyrms poisons, sometimes abruptly and without warning on the field of battle — and the Garou Nation is here to help you through that. You probably already know something about the emotional rollercoaster that is life as a Garou. Everyone here understands that, too, and they're happy to help. Whatever you need — whether it's to run wild in the forest or curl up and cry — there are Garou in every sept who know what it's like and want to make sure you don't have to do it alone.

You might think that leaving the sept means turning your back on the war against the Wyrms, but you're wrong. Even if you were the kind of person who could close his eyes to the harm agents of the Wyrms do to ordinary humans — and now that you know about it, you'll see it everywhere — the Wyrms and its minions aren't going to leave you be. Lone Garou are easy pickings, and they'll kill you even if you don't offer them any trouble. They'll kill you out of spite, or against the possibility of you rejoining the Nation one day. They'll kill you because they like to kill things, and even a young Garou on his own in the world offers a greater challenge than some human off the street. Or worse, they'll take you alive and change you. You could call what we do here indoctrination, and you wouldn't be wrong, but what they'd do to you is different. They'll break your mind, steal your soul, and transform you into a monster. They'll teach you to savor the taste of human flesh and human pain, and then they'll turn you out to kill and maim until we have to put you down.

On to happier topics — the Garou Nation is indispensable if you want to get a date. I'm not saying that you can't have sexual encounters with ordinary humans — it's foolish, but some Garou take pride in seducing and attempting to impregnate humans to spread our blood — but your inner beast sets you apart in the dating pool, too. Some humans find that Garou have a certain appeal, an animal magnetism, but try building a relationship on that. Remember how I said that I know Garou with good human friends? I don't know a single Garou who's managed to maintain a serious romantic relationship with a human. It's hard to love someone that you're afraid of.

Kinfolk, on the other hand, usually know what they're getting into. Some of them have been raised by a Garou parent, alongside Garou siblings. Some kinfolk understand the ways of our inner beasts as well as we do. The Kinfolk you're likely to meet in a sept — understand and accept, or at least put up with, their place as supporters and helpmeets. Even if they're wary of us — not at all uncommon among Kinfolk who are familiar with our violent, dogmatic ways — it's easier to overcome because there's no supernatural compulsion involved.

It might be hard for you to think about this seriously, young as you are, but the Garou Nation can help you find a mate. Even setting aside the Kin — and some Garou — who support the sept as professional matchmakers, Kinfolk are almost as rare as

we are. Out in the world, there's no guarantee you'll ever find anyone to share your life. Here, though, I can almost guarantee that you will, whether you're looking for a modern idea of love and partnership or a Kinfolk woman to tend your hearth and bear you strong children. At the very least, you'll have a chance.

Finally, and most importantly, you are Garou. We are an ancient people, made by the spirits to save the world. Some have called the Garou Nation 'the wolf of one heart, one mind, one soul.' We are a nation with a mission. We have a reason to exist that is higher and more universal than just pursuing our own prosperity. What human nation can say the same thing?

Why should you stay with us? Because you are already one of us, and you always will be. Do you think you can turn your back on the war? If you go back to your hometown and discover that a Bane has infiltrated your old high school and is turning your old friends into corrupted mockeries of themselves, could you really say that it's none of your business? If the forest where you run wild when the moon takes you is in danger of being clear-cut to make room for condos, will you really stand aside and let it happen? You won't. Being a werewolf is in your blood, but it's also in your soul. That's why Gaia and Luna chose you, personally, to be one of us, quickening your potential and making you Garou.

You can turn your back on us, Ismael, but you can't change what you are. Stay with us, be one of us, be part of the wolf of one heart, and help us save the world.

Postlude: The Family

"You know my name?" By the growing light of dawn, Claire watched his eyes widen with surprise.

Claire laughed. "Of course I do. You're my cousin, Ismael. I don't need to know you to be interested in you and care about you. Remember all that stuff I said about how the Garou Nation supports each other? Why else do you think I've been talking to you all night?"

They stood in silence for a few moments as the lakeshore came to life around them. Turtles, shaggy with lake weed, sunned themselves on rocks while the birds at the water's edge announced to the world that are here, that they own their territory, that they are ready to mate. Beneath it all, Claire felt the humming spiritual life of the caern. She knew that Ismael could feel it, too, and wondered how aware of it he was.

"I want to make a deal," Ismael said.

"More deals? Go ahead."

"I'll stay, but I want you to be my teacher."

Claire shook her head. "You don't want me, Ismael. I'll get you into more trouble than I'm worth. There are a lot of Garou who will look down on you for that choice. I can't teach you everything, and there are some who will be reluctant to educate you because you're associated with me."

Ismael stood up. “No, listen. I don’t really get it. I don’t really get what you’re talking about — all this stuff about being ‘one wolf’ — but I do get that you care about me, even though I can’t figure out why. The thing is, I’m not from some little village community or hippie commune. I grew up in Maryland. So if you want me to believe all of that, you’re going to have to show me yourself. You’re different from everyone else. You tell it like it is. I don’t want to take it from them — I want to hear it from you. Deal?”

“Deal,” Claire agreed. She shouldered Ismael’s duffel bag. “Now, let’s get back to the cabins and see if we can’t catch a couple of hours of sleep. If I’m going to be your teacher, then we’d better not waste any more time.”

Someday, Ismael might be revered as a hero. Someday there might be people who were alive because him — his own sons and daughters, and those whose lives he had touched and preserved — and after he was gone, they might sit together and recount his deeds.

But at that moment, Ismael was nothing so significant. He was just another part of the Garou Nation, a young man walking with his teacher across the bawn of his sept, in the light of a gathering day.

New Systems

The Pack Status and Sept Standing Backgrounds presented here, along with the expanded rules on Sept Positions, can help give weight to a game focused around a pack finding their place within a sept. They’re optional, and the Storyteller should work with her group to decide whether to include them.

Pack Status

Pack status differs from Rank or Sept Standing. Unlike the various forms of personal status respected by the Garou nation, pack status is fluid, more like a kind of social currency than a hierarchy. Packs spend their status in a variety of ways to make their lives more comfortable or open up new opportunities for glory and advancement. Pack status functions as a Pooled Background (see W20 p. 140 for details).

Pack status is not formal. When the sept is pleased with a pack, everyone is happy to do them favors and lend them resources. As members of the pack justifies its withdrawal from the sept’s stores by basking in their own glory, they eventually wear out their welcome and have to perform more great deeds in order to regain the social currency that they have spent.

Pack status is used in the same way as the Resources background. The chart below details how packs can spend their status to acquire various benefits.

If a pack performs some extraordinary service for the sept, the Storyteller might decide that it’s appropriate to reward the pack with a dot or two of extra status that last until the

pack uses it, or until the end of the story. As a general rule, any heroic deed that’s worth Renown could be worth half its highest Renown reward (round down) as dots of temporary pack status. Packs do *not* gain additional pack status for taking on sept duties, even though they can gain Renown for taking on sept duties. If a pack has taken on sept duties, that should be reflected with the Sept Status Background, since it is less a one-time boost and more a reliable source of goodwill.

Reward	Cost
Crash for a night in a tent on sept grounds	•
Borrow one of the sept’s vehicles	•
Gain a Talen from sept stores	•
Spend a night in a cabin at the sept	••
Take up permanent or semi-permanent residence in a tent on sept grounds	••
Borrow common tools and supplies from the sept’s stores	••
Borrow a minor (one to two dot) fetish for a week or two	••
Borrow rare or specialized tools and supplies from the sept’s stores	•••
Take up permanent or semi-permanent residence in one of the sept’s cabins	•••
Borrow a large quantity of cash (enough to make a single Resources •••• purchase) from the sept.	•••
Borrow a significant (two to three dot) fetish for a week or two	•••
Become the permanent owner of a minor (one or two dot) fetish	•••
Permission to open the caern and benefit from its blessing	•••
Live comfortably as guests of the sept for several months	••••
Borrow magical tools and supplies from the sept’s stores, of the sort needed to craft klaives and other major fetishes.	••••
Borrow a major (four or five dot) fetish for a week or two	••••
Benefit from the expertise of one of the sept’s high-ranking experts (e.g. a custom fetish made by one of the sept’s shamans, or combat training from the sept’s Master of Challenges)	••• to ••••
Live comfortably as guests of the sept indefinitely	•••••
Become the permanent owner of a significant or major fetish (three to four dots) in the sept’s stores	•••••

It's important to remember that many of these "rewards" are still available to packs that don't have the Pack Status to pay for them, especially if the pack needs them to perform a duty for the sept. Only the most poorly run or dysfunctional sept would ask a pack to dig a ditch and then fail to lend them a shovel! The difference is in how hard it is for the pack to get its hands on sept resources. When a pack purchases a reward with pack status, the items, training, or favors are given freely by a sept that already views itself as in the pack's debt. When a pack has to beg and borrow resources, they often find themselves having to perform favors for more influential Garou, or even kinfolk.

Secondly, the Garou have more respect for packs who contribute to the sept without drawing on its resources. Nearly anyone can defend a sept with the community's most powerful fetish; only a real hero can do so on his own, with the treasures that already belong to him. Anything that a pack acquires with Pack Status counts as something that belongs to the pack. In other words, if a pack achieves something by begging the shaman to lend them her powerful spirit guide for an Umbral journey, it counts for less than it would if they had done without any help, or if they had acquired the spirit guide by reminding the shaman of what she and the sept already owed them.

Most importantly, while any sept will loan its packs resources when they are on sept business, getting ahold of sept resources for personal matters is something else entirely. Anyone can borrow a van to bury some freshly killed Pentex executives — only a respected member of the community can borrow it to move house. Most Garou don't view using sept resources to pursue individual agendas as inappropriate or corrupt thanks to their "survival of the fittest" culture — to a point — but they are also clear that this is a "withdrawal" from an individual's social account with the sept, and needs to be paid for, before or after.

Sept Standing

You are accorded a greater degree of respect within your sept for one reason or another. You might perform some valuable function for the sept, come from an important or influential lineage, or your deeds might speak for themselves. Either way, you can count on your sept's support. Kinfolk characters can normally purchase up to two dots of Sept Standing, granting them some duties in the sept.

A character with an unusually high Sept Standing might have been tutored by a famous Garou or come from a well-known family — or perhaps she was thrust into an unusually advanced position when her elders and betters were killed. On the other hand, a character with unusually low Sept Standing for his Rank might be a newcomer, or grappling with a bad reputation, deserved or not.

A character's Sept Standing has two facets. The first is the degree to which his sept respects him and the second is a character's position within the sept — his job in Garou society. Each position in a sept has a Sept Standing requirement (see below). A character must possess that many dots

in Sept Standing to reap the rewards of the position. Any additional dots of Sept Standing grant one extra die per dot to social rolls when dealing with septmates, including Kinfolk.

Garou crave hierarchy, but they are also creatures of action. There's a limit to how far you can get by relying on how much people like you. The total bonus from social Backgrounds and Merits cannot exceed five dice; any additional dice can only cancel out penalties.

- Known: You have established yourself as capable of pulling your own weight.
- Respected: You are viewed as more than competent. Your septmates ask for your advice and the elders invite you to take on responsibilities.
- Valued: You are a resource to your sept. The sept does its best to make sure you are comfortable and appreciated so you don't seek a place elsewhere.
- Honored: Formally or informally, you are one of the sept's leaders, with much of the sept's resources at your disposal.
- Lauded: You are one of your sept's greatest heroes.

Sept Positions

Septs only survive because Garou fulfill their various functions, from simple cleaning and maintenance to organizing the caern's defense or rallying the Garou to attack the Wyrms. Septs — and their spirits — honor those Garou who take on these jobs, which makes sept positions an important part of the Garou struggle for dominance.

These positions are traditional, but not written of in the Litany, and vary from location to location. Some of these positions may be absent in some septs, due to local custom or practicality. For example, a very small sept might do away with the position of Keeper, forcing the Keeper of the Land to recruit informally when she needs help. Other septs might split more complex positions into two or more simpler positions — for example, embodying the Wyrms' ritual and tactical responsibilities in two different Garou.

Many of these positions, especially those that don't involve combat or interacting with spirits, can be filled by Kinfolk. In particularly small or troubled septs, Kinfolk will be called upon to fulfill even some of those positions that do involve combat or magic to the best of their limited abilities. Because Kinfolk are not full members of the Garou nation, they cannot take on leadership roles. Most of the time, Kinfolk are limited to positions requiring Sept Standing •• or lower. Kinfolk characters with sept positions reap the same mechanical and social benefits as Garou characters.

The sept positions — and the number of dots of Sept Standing required to take them — are described in more detail below. Every position also carries a special benefit for the Garou who fills it, reflecting the respect Garou earn for working on behalf of their sept.



Caller of the Wyld (Sept Standing •)

Responsibilities: It is the Caller of the Wyld's responsibility to summon the sept's totem spirits — including the spirit of the caern itself — to most moots. This requires knowledge of Garou rites, to perform that actual summoning, and Umbral politics, to ensure that a spirit is not summoned out of turn or accidentally snubbed. The Caller of the Wyld is only needed during moots, so this is a good position for a young Garou whose quest for glory and honor could take her far from the sept. Young werewolves, especially ambitious Theurges, also enjoy this position because it helps them build a relationship with the sept's local spirits.

Most Kinfolk cannot interact with the spirit world, which makes it impossible for them to serve as Caller of the Wyld, even in the most embattled sept. However, the rare Kin who have developed the skill to summon spirits occasionally fill this position.

Benefits: The Caller of the Wyld gains a +3 to Social dice pools involving interaction with the sept's totem spirits, and a +1 to Social dice pools involving other Gaian spirits in the region.

Keeper (Sept Standing •)

Responsibility: The Keepers do the maintenance work and heavy lifting around the sept. Most Keepers are young

Garou trying on serious responsibility, or those convicted of minor crimes trying to avoid a worse punishment. Keepers must spend some part of each day in the sept, looking for ways to contribute, but they have plenty of time to pursue their own business. Keepers work under the Keeper of the Land (described below) and assist her with her duties.

Kinfolk frequently become Keepers. Even the most conservative Garou agree that Kin can perform petty, but necessary, work for the sept. In conservative septs, Kin gain much more respect for taking on this job than they do for ambitiously claiming a responsibility that some Garou believe should be for werewolves alone.

Benefits: The spirits of the sept understand that the Keepers are the minions of the Keeper of the Land, and grant them some respect. Keepers enjoy a +2 bonus to Social dice pools involving spirits that live in the sept's Umbral reflection.

Master of the Howl (Sept Standing •)

Responsibilities: The Master of the Howl is a largely ceremonial position, often given to a young Garou as a gateway to greater responsibilities. The Master of the Howl is responsible for leading the sept in howls and songs, including the howl that formally begins and ends every meeting. Young Garou also covet this position because its public nature gives them an opportunity to showcase their skills and earn the respect

of the community, but it is still a position that leaves them plenty of free time to pursue their own agendas.

Only Crinos, Hispo, and Lupus forms have the anatomy to make the sounds necessary to fulfill the Master of the Howl's responsibilities. Human kin have the wrong bodies, and wolf kin lack the intellectual complexity. As a result, the Caller of the Wyld is always Garou.

Benefit: A character fulfilling this role reduces all difficulties to express himself through howls by 2, thanks to the constant practice. He also gains +1 die to Social rolls with anyone who attended a moot for three days afterwards, provided his performance was adequate, thanks to feelings of fellowship towards the Garou who led the community in howl and song.

Because the Master of the Howl has procedural duties, he also wields great power over the way the sept meets. A Master of the Howl can, in theory, convene a meeting at any time — or refuse to convene a meeting when called upon by the leaders. Abusing this power or using it politically will probably result in the Master of the Howl being replaced, but sometimes the sacrifice is worth it.

Gatekeeper (Sept Standing •)

Responsibilities: The Gatekeeper maintains the caern's moon bridges, opening and closing them for certain rituals or at the request of Garou who wish to travel through the Umbra to another sept. The Gatekeeper also keeps and defends the caern's Pathstone. Not all Gatekeepers are Theurges, but all must know the Rite of the Opened Bridge and the Rite of the Opened Caern, at least. The Gatekeeper is usually tied to the caern, especially when the moon bridge is in demand, making this an unattractive position for most young and ambitious Garou.

Like the Caller of the Wyld, the Gatekeeper's responsibilities are primarily spiritual. As a result, Gatekeepers are rarely Kin.

Benefit: The position of Gatekeeper conveys three bonus dice to Social dice pools when dealing with the sept's totem spirit. Although the Gatekeeper doesn't enjoy a bonus when dealing with the Garou of his sept, many Garou seek his favor, since he can either expedite or delay their requests to use the moon bridges.

Guardian (Sept Standing •)

Responsibilities: All of a sept's Garou are ready to lay down their lives to defend it on a moment's notice, but the sept's Guardians have made it their personal responsibility. Guardians act as a sept's sentries, patrolling its borders and responding to threats. They do not take the offensive or investigate potential danger, at least not in their capacity as Guardians. Most septs have between five and ten Guardians — the equivalent of one or two packs — and it isn't at all unheard of for an entire pack to collectively take on

this duty. In times of war, the Guardians are on duty at all times and cannot leave the sept. In times of relative peace, a Guardian might be able to work out an arrangement that lets her leave the sept to pursue her own agenda.

Most septs view it as an unforgiveable shame for their Kinfolk to take up arms. Even though almost every sept has armed its Kinfolk at one point or another, only a sept on the edge of extinction would actually name its Kinfolk as Guardians. Some progressive septs dodge this issue by giving their Kinfolk warriors some other title, like "commandos" or "support squads."

Benefit: A Guardian's constant training and familiarity with the terrain allow her to reduce all difficulties by 1 when fighting within the sept grounds.

Keeper of the Land (Sept Standing ••)

Responsibilities: The Keeper of the Land maintains the sept's physical appearance. However, she is more than just a glorified janitor — not only do the Garou deeply respect someone who takes responsibility for protecting and beautifying the natural environment, Gaian spirits find a well-kept sept more attractive. Thus, the Keeper of the Land is a combination gardener, park ranger, and shaman.

In an urban caern, the Keeper of the Land makes sure that the caern reflects the wishes of the local spirits. She spends a lot of her time rearranging piles of trash, moving dumpsters, and planting small gardens. Instead of shrines in secluded caves and hollow tree trunks, urban spirits prefer things that resemble community memorials to the victims of car accidents and gang violence, except with strange sigils replacing photographs and the addition of an offering bowl. The result looks like a strange combination of urban renewal and modernist feng shui.

The Keepers, described above, assist the Keeper of the Land in her duties, giving her plenty of free time to leave the sept and pursue her own goals with her pack.

The Keeper of the Land has limited interaction with spirits. It's possible, though difficult, for a Kinfolk to fulfill the Keeper of the Land's responsibilities, though she might have to rely on Garou to let her know if the spirits needs are neglected.

Benefit: The Keeper of the Land is beloved by all the sept's spirits and can count on their advice and help. A Garou who fulfills this position well enjoys a +4 bonus to all social dice pools when dealing with spirits associated with the sept, including the sept's totem.

Talesinger (Sept Standing ••)

Responsibilities: Technically a minor position, the Talesinger is honored far above her station. The Talesinger takes the stage during moots and tells stories that serve a variety of purposes, from entertaining and educating with

stories of the past, conferring news of the wider Garou nation, and keeping the wider sept aware of the great deeds — and embarrassing failures — of its packs. Like the other positions related to the moot, the Talesinger is a good position for a young Garou who wants the freedom to come and go from the sept as she pleases.

Because the Talesinger's responsibilities are mostly social, Kinfolk can theoretically fill this position. However, most septs have found that this usually ends badly. One of the Talesinger's jobs is to mock Garou who make mistakes. That's hard enough for some prideful Garou to bear, and almost impossible if the Talesinger were Kin. Worse, a Kin Talesinger would have a hard time defending himself if a Garou flies into a frenzy at his words. As a result, most Talesingers are Garou, even in septs with low Garou populations.

Benefit: The greatest benefit of this position is its political capital. Many Garou want to court the Talesinger's favor, since the Talesinger decides how to interpret their packs achievements and relate them to the rest of the sept. The Talesinger gains a +3 bonus to Social dice pools when dealing with all Garou of her Rank and lower.

Master of Challenges (Sept Standing •••)

Responsibilities: Given how prone the Garou are to internal fighting and disputes of honor, the Master of Challenges is possibly most important member of the sept. Her responsibility is to oversee challenges of all kinds. She protects the elders against distraction by meaningless challenges, and is the first line of defense for young Garou against being humiliated by their betters. The Master of Challenges must be a powerful and respected Garou, with the strength of arm and personality to enforce order on impassioned werewolves.

Unlike other members of a sept's judiciary, like the Truth-seeker or the Council of Elders, the Master of Challenges must remain at or near the sept at any time. When passions run hot, sometimes only the rituals of Garou society stand between a relatively normal conflict and a sudden frenzy that ends in tragedy.

Benefits: The Master of Challenges is widely respected and gains a three extra dice to all Social dice pools when dealing with septmates. In fact, the position of Master of Challenges is regarded so highly that even outsiders will bow to her will, granting her a +2 bonus to Social dice pools when dealing with outsiders in sept territory.

Finally, long practice dealing with the dangerous passions of the Garou grants the Master of the Challenge a special benefit. As long as she is acting in her capacity as Master of the Challenge, she does not need to make Rage rolls due to frustrating or infuriating trigger situations.

Master of the Rite (Sept Standing •••)

Responsibilities: The Master of the Rite is the sept's chief shaman. Almost always a Theurge, the Master of the Rite is responsible for overseeing all the rites and rituals performed in the sept. The Caller of the Wyld, the Gatekeeper, and to a lesser extent, the Talesinger and the Keeper of the Land are subordinate to the Master of the Rite. In addition to performing many important rites himself, the Master of the Rite must act as the sept's repository of spirit lore, whether this means memorizing extensive lists of local spirits and their preferences or maintaining a written library. When other Theurges and Umbralquesters need advice, they come to the Master of the Rite.

Although he needs to be available to the sept's members and leadership and must attend all moots, the Master of the Rite does not need to stay at the sept at all times. However, his knowledge and expertise is an important resource. The rest of the sept would see it as a sin against the principles of Wisdom for the Master of the Rite to risk himself unnecessarily.

Benefits: The aid and advice of the sept's various spirits counts as three dots of the Allies and Mentor backgrounds, which the Master of the Rite can call on at will. These Background dots are only available from the sept itself, and the spirits aren't as willing to aid a Ritemaster who spends too much time away from the sept. The Master of the Rite is known and greatly respected by the spirits of the sept, which grants him three extra dice to Social dice pools when dealing with the sept's totems and local spirits.

Wyrms' Foe (Sept Standing •••)

Responsibilities: The Wyrms' Foe's responsibilities are partly practical, partly ritual. At the end of each moot, the Wyrms' Foe leads the sept in declaring its solidarity with the Garou Nation and readiness to do battle with the Wyrms. More practically, the Wyrms' Foe is the offensive counterpart of the Warder, in charge of coordinating the sept's packs in their assaults against the Wyrms. When the sept needs to defend itself, the Wyrms' Foe works under the Warder to make sure that the sept's packs are armed and positioned for defense, instead of offense. Because he must submit to the authority of the Warder, the Wyrms' Foe is seen as a position of lesser status, and many Wyrms' Foes aspire to replace the Warder, either by serving honorably and receiving a promotion when the Warder steps down, or through scheming and challenges.

Benefits: The Wyrms' Foe is the focus of the sept's martial fury and discipline. He urges the Garou to make use of their inner beasts, but to do so constructively. All Garou who hear the Wyrms' Foe speak before a battle require an extra success on Rage rolls to give in to frenzy for the duration of the fight.

Truthcatcher (Sept Standing ••••)

Responsibilities: The Truthcatcher is a combination judge and jury, charged with settling disputes between members. In some septs, the Truthcatcher may also serve as a lawyer, advising and representing Garou when they stand before the sept's elders. The Truthcatcher needs to be intelligent, persuasive, and possess an exhaustive knowledge of the Litany. The Truthcatcher needs to hold court at every moot, and should make herself available at regular intervals between moots, but need not be available at all times. Any dispute that can't wait a day or two is probably the domain of the Master of Challenges, rather than the Truthcatcher.

Benefits: Everyone wants to court the Truthcatcher's favor, because no one knows when they might be called upon to defend themselves or stand in accusation of a Garou who has wronged them. The Truthcatcher has a three-die bonus to Social dice pools when dealing with the Garou of his sept. He also gains three extra dice to all Enigmas and Law dice pools when investigating a crime.

Warder (Sept Standing ••••)

Responsibilities: The Warder is the highest military position in the Sept. The Wurm Foe, martially inclined packs who follow her authority, and the Guardians all bow to his authority. When the sept is under attack, the entire community defers to the Warder to defend the safety of the

sept's resources, including Kinfolk and other non-combatants. The Elders have final say, but the Warder is usually the first to declare martial law, suspending the laws of challenge in favor of uniting against a common foe. When the sept is not under immediate attack, the Warder coordinates the efforts of the Guardians and makes final decisions about how much of the sept's military resources can be put at the Wurm Foe's disposal.

The Warder can only rarely afford to leave the sept — no Garou community can ever be completely sure that they are not about to be attacked — and when he does he usually deputizes his responsibilities to either the Wurm Foe or his most veteran Guardian.

Benefits: The Warder can bring a great deal of social might to bear. In times of relative peace, the Warder is still a highly respected member of the community and enjoys a three-die bonus to all Social dice pools when dealing with members of the sept. The Warder has nearly unlimited discretion to draw resources from the sept when need be. This translates to a pool of three dots of the Fetish or Resources backgrounds for personal use, provided he spends most of his time in the sept. He can also draw on an additional three dots to equip his Guardians or other packs under his command. The Storyteller should keep an eye on the resources the sept has on hand — no amount of authority can cause a klaive or a cache of landmines to materialize where none existed before.



STACKING BONUSES

At first glance, this seems like a lot of bonuses stacked upon each other. Between pack totems, sept totems, Gifts, and the natural blessings of Garou biology, a werewolf can rack up a pretty impressive set of abilities.

This is intentional because it reflects the Garou way of war. An individual werewolf is a powerful foe, but a pack is even more so — especially if they are bound together by the patronage of a totem spirit. An entire sept mobilized for war, packs fighting alongside each other, is a rare and impressive sight.

If the Garou can stack dice and dots upon each other, calling upon spirit allies and wielding pack tactics, how can they lose?

Firstly, their enemies have benefits, too. Pentex is an enormous multinational corporation with a private army of monsters and money to spare. Black Spiral Dancers have pack totems, “sept” totems, Gifts, and allies of their own. The Weaver controls corporations as well and has several courts of subservient spirits, not to mention the entire weight of human civilization on her side. The Garou are formidable, but their enemies are on a whole other scale.

Secondly, the Garou aren’t good at organizing themselves. Septs don’t fall because all of these benefits aren’t enough to keep them alive — they fall because selfishness and pride keep them from uniting. Septs lose the patronage of their totem spirits, cast out their revolutionary leaders, and pursue old grudges rather than uniting against a common foe.

Elder (Sept Standing •••••)

Responsibilities: The Elders are the leaders of the sept, though what that means varies from one sept to another. In some septs there is an alpha and his second, in some just an alpha, and in some large septs a council of seven, nine, or even thirteen Elders makes decisions. In some septs, the Elders are representatives of tribes or major political factions. In some septs, the Elders must be respected as warriors and are mostly Ahroun, in others they must be mediators and are overwhelmingly Philodox, and in others they are the

sept’s boldest and wisest shamans and magicians.

Benefits: The Elder is the leader of the sept. Her power is only limited by the Litany itself and the power of the sept to unseat her if she proves herself corrupt or incompetent. This translates as a +5 bonus to all Social dice pools when dealing with the Garou, Kinfolk, and spirits of her sept. Even outsiders will accord an Elder great respect, granting a smaller (+3 dice) bonus to social dice pools. The Elder also has the ability to marshal every resource the sept has at its disposal. The Elders can theoretically call upon every spirit ally, financial resource, and fetish the sept has to offer. The Storyteller should judge what is appropriate, since different sized septs have such radically different resources to offer.

Caerns

The heart of almost every sept is its caern. This is the sept’s sacred place, the focus of all sept rituals. This is where the sept comes to celebrate its victories, mourn its dead, and sanctify the turns of life’s wheel. Septs unlucky enough to lack a caern are barely real septs, and usually do everything in their power to find or build a proper caern. Caerns and septs are so closely related that sometimes the terms are used interchangeably. Technically, however, “sept” refers to a community of Garou living together, while their “caern” is the magical and spiritual center of the sept.

A caern has two parts: the bawn and the heart. The bawn is the majority of the caern’s area of influence, and contains the memorial, the living area, the shrines, and the assembly area. Garou consider a caern’s umbral reflection just as much part of the bawn as its physical surroundings.

The bawn consists of everywhere under the caern’s spiritual influence. In some septs, the edge of the bawn also marks the outermost border of the sept; larger septs, however, may claim far more territory. In most rural caerns, much of the bawn is a broad field with most of the trees and undergrowth cut away. This has the dual purpose of providing the Garou with an open place to run and play, as well as limiting an attacker’s cover and making it easier for a sept to erect defenses. In an urban caern, the bawn might be a block or two with an unusually low crime rate and an unusually high number of trees and small gardens. Some urban bawns are just the lobby of a single building, with the caern itself somewhere above — or below — the ground.

The bawn is a spiritual region, as well as a physical location. As a result, it might be separated from the outside world by natural boundaries, like a river or series of rocky outcroppings. In many cases, the sept marks the outer boundary of the bawn with fences, standing stones, or graffiti tags. In the bawn the spiritual energies of the caern usually come across as a vague feeling of peace and well-being, even in a sept dedicated to a spirit of Glory.

Almost all septs maintain a memorial in their bawn. Although this area may be called “Graves of the Hallows Heroes” or “Glade of the Honored Dead,” only a few septs can actually afford to inter their dead. Instead, most septs honor their dead with memorials. These memorials can vary wildly depending on a sept’s aesthetics and resources, from statuary depicting the hero in his prime, to a climate-controlled room where acid-free scrolls recall the life stories of the dead, to a forest clearing with simple Garou runes carved into the trees.

Most septs provide a separate living area so that as many Garou and Kin wish to can live within the bawn. The kind and quality of a sept’s living quarters vary wildly, from tents to cabins to grand rustic manors for rural caerns, and seedy dives to small apartments to penthouse apartments for urban caerns. Most communities interpret the Litany to mean that high-Rank Garou should also receive the best housing. Depending on the needs and culture of the sept, the living area may also include other structures dedicated to the practical needs of life, including kitchens, dining halls, an infirmary, a library, a practice field, and more.

Most caerns have many shrines to the sept’s various spirit patrons, including at least one dedicated to the sept’s totem spirits. Many septs also honor the totems of the tribes that make up the sept’s population, as well as the totem spirits of the sept’s packs. A few septs go so far as to build shrines to other members of the local spirit courts, including their totem’s allies and underlings. Some caerns gather all their shrines into one place, while others have many small shrines hidden all over. In old caerns, the shrines can be somewhat mysterious, honoring spirits that no one Garou in the sept recalls. Wise septs continue to worship at these shrines, making guesses as to which offerings will please their spirits; less thoughtful septs let these shrines fall into disrepair.

The living area of a sept always includes some kind of public assembly area. Some smaller septs just repurpose one of the living structures, clearing room in the center of the dining hall by pulling chairs and tables to one side or simply gathering in a likely part of the bawn. Other septs have a special area dedicated to meetings, like a natural amphitheater. Usually a central feature, like a large flat stone or tree stump, or ancient fire circle, acts as a focal point.

The most important part of the caern is its heart. This is the epicenter of the caern’s spiritual power, the place where the spirit world and the material world have achieved a sort of primordial union. The caern’s heart is where the Garou come to pray. When the caern is about to fall, this is where they come to make their final stand, warriors of Gaia until the end.

Caern hearts are as varied as the caerns that surround them. The form of a caern’s heart always reflects the emotions associated with the caern. A tiny sweat lodge that forms the heart of a caern of Glory might smell like blood and have walls decorated with weapons and grisly trophies, while

the heart of a caern dedicated to Wisdom might be a glassy pool that sometimes seems to reflect the sky of the Umbra rather than the sky of the physical world. The emotion of the caern leaks into the minds of those who stand at its heart, a subtle influence at first that can build into powerful waves of emotion given enough time.

Hearts also have practical uses. The heart always has a very weak Gauntlet, making this an ideal place to summon spirits, bind packs to totems, and craft fetishes. It is also the only place in the caern where a moon bridge can be opened.

Most importantly, the heart of the caern is its link to Gaia. If anything harms the heart, the entire caern will wither; if the heart is tended and protected, the caern might even grow. Some Garou believe that the connection flows both ways, that if they feed the hearts of their caerns, Gaia will become stronger. Even those who disagree usually lack the conviction to voice their thoughts — who can argue with keeping the heart of the caern healthy and strong?

The Umbral reflection of the caern is a strange place. Usually, the Umbra is an idealized version of the physical world. In a caern, however, the spiritual is an almost perfect mirror of the physical. In the caern heart, almost everything that could contain an awakened spirit does. Some Garou find the spiritual clamor unnerving, but most find it more like returning to a place where everyone speaks your own language after a long time abroad — busy, but comfortable.

Caern Totems

Much like packs, septs have totem spirits. The sept’s totem spirit rests inside the caern, basking in its spiritual energies, and can be called forth by the Master of the Rite to give advice, act as the sept’s emissary to the spirit courts, lay his blessing upon the sept’s packs, or even fight on the sept’s behalf.

Mechanically, sept totems are similar to pack totems, with three special considerations. Firstly, when the caern is opened, the totem spirit can grant bonuses to the members of the sept. Sept totems bless the entire sept, granting Common Traits to every member of the sept and Pack Traits to packs. When a sept blesses a pack, every member of the pack enjoys the bonus. Unlike pack totems, sept totems can divide their bonus dice up among packs. For example, as a sept totem, Boar grants every Garou in the sept a dot of Stamina, and can furthermore grant a single pack two dots of Brawl, or two different packs one dot of Brawl each. Bans and benefits related to Renown don’t apply to every member of the sept, but they do have narrative effects. For example, a sept dedicated to Bear has a mixed reputation, and its members might need to work a little harder to earn Honor Renown, but they don’t actually lose five points of Honor or reduce all Honor awards by one.

Sept totems are also willing to do battle alongside their Garou, either materializing to fight in the physical world or fighting in the Umbra. The Storyteller should design the sept totem as a spirit with (fifteen plus twice the Caern's Rating) points divided between Gnosis, Rage, and Willpower, and the following Charms: Materialize, Open Moon Bridge, Peek, Realm Sense, and a number of additional Charms equal to the Caern Rating. Thanks to their long association with the Garou, sept totems are very likely to employ spirit versions of Garou Gifts.

The sept can only summon their totem once per lunar month, and the totem's blessing normally only lasts for a single night, though a pitched battle may cause the spirit to extend its influence for longer. Sept totems cannot simultaneously bless the sept's packs and fight alongside them. When it is summoned, the totem chooses whether to manifest as a combatant or to bless the sept's warriors, though most totems choose to honor the requests of the Master of the Rite, Wyrms' Foe, or Warder.

Finally, unlike packs, every sept has a totem spirit. A sept may choose any totem spirit without considering its cost. Septs are free to pick the most powerful totem spirits with advantages that best suit their needs and are most compatible with being distributed among the packs of a sept, rather than to the individuals of a pack.

Sept totems don't have Bans in the same way as pack totems. The presence of so many Garou makes it nearly impossible for the spirit to be cognizant of all their choices at all times. Instead, the Ban applies to the sept as a whole, a sort of "guiding principle" of the sept. If the sept acts against its guiding principals then they will not be able to summon their totem for a lunar month. If a sept makes a habit of violating their principals, their spirit will eventually abandon them.

Almost every pack totem detailed in the **W20** rulebook and supplements could be an appropriate sept totem. A few spirits that are particularly suited to sponsoring septs include Chimera, Cockroach, Falcon, Fox, Grandfather Thunder, Rat, and Unicorn, which have been converted to sept totems below. The additional totems described below embody themes that are not appropriate to individual packs. Instead, these spirits act exclusively as the totems of entire septs. As such, they have Common Traits in place of the Individual Traits of pack totems.

Rite of The Guardian Spirit

Level Four Mystic Rite

This rite binds a spirit to a sept, making it into the sept's totem. The details of this rite vary depending on the spirit. However, the rite always begins with a lavish sacrifice to attract the spirit's attention. Then, one or

more champions acting on the sept's behalf proves their worth with a display of strength or skill. A sept hoping to attract the attention of a Totem of War might pit its champion against a captured Bane in ritual combat, while a sept attempting to woo a Totem of Respect might perform a play commemorating an ancient Garou victory. A Totem of Wisdom or Cunning, on the other hand, might be impressed by a ritualized debate on arcane details of the Litany. Finally, if the rite is successful, it ends with a second, even larger thanksgiving sacrifice and a celebration honoring the sept's new totem.

System: Although the champions and the sacrifice are necessary components, only the ritemaster needs to roll. This ritual must be performed in the presence of an opened caern (see **W20** p. 206). A sept can only have one totem at a time; this ritual automatically fails if the caern is already occupied.

Totems of Respect

Falcon

As a sept totem, Falcon demands unity, valor, and honor. Septs dedicated to Falcon are marked by just and fair leadership, though they are also stiff and devoted to hierarchy.

Common Traits: Falcon's children all gain the Truth of Gaia Gift when Falcon is summoned.

Pack Traits: When Falcon lays his blessing upon the sept, he can divide three dots of Leadership and four dots of Willpower among its packs.

Ban: Septs dedicated to Falcon must maintain an Honorable reputation in the eyes of other Garou. If Falcon ever withdraws his support, he will only return if the sept's leaders perform an act of heroism in his name... or die trying.

Grandfather Thunder

Grandfather Thunder is a patient and subtle totem. His septs act swiftly and decisively, and their leaders do not tolerate dissent.

Common Traits: Every member of a sept dedicated to Grandfather Thunder gains two bonus dice to Intimidation rolls.

Pack Traits: Grandfather Thunder can distribute three points of Etiquette to his sept's packs.

Ban: Grandfather Thunder demands that his septs' leaders are Garou of action, rather than words. He will support them as long as they lead from the front and earn the respect they demand from their septs and abandon them if they rest on their laurels.

Standing Stone

Standing Stone is an old and respected totem. He was born with some of the earliest human civilizations.

Standing Stone represents the desire of a community to come together and create something eternal. Patient and uncompromising, Standing Stone represents the desire for immortality through great works.

Common Traits: Standing Stone's children are as durable as the earth itself — they gain a point of Stamina.

Pack Traits: Packs that attract Standing Stone's personal attention can share three dots of Crafts and an extra two dice to all soak rolls.

Ban: In order to attract Standing Stone, the sept must come together to create an impressive feat of architecture. The feat is more important than the actual result, so a sept that erects a menhir using stone age techniques is as valid as a sept that builds and designs a skyscraper with modern tools. The sept must keep this monument in good repair and boast of it to visitors.

Totems of War

Rat

Rat is a totem of asymmetrical warfare, the master of hit-and-run attacks, stealth, and sabotage. His septs work mercilessly to weaken their enemies one step at a time, then overwhelm them. They fight viciously in defense of their own territory.

Septs dedicated to Rat often find it easier to coexist with the local Ratkin population.

Common Traits: Members of Rat's septs subtract one from the difficulty of all bite rolls, as well as roles involving the Stealth ability or otherwise remaining quiet and unseen.

Pack Traits: Rat can distribute five Willpower points among his sept's packs.

Ban: Septs dedicated to Rat cannot do anything to kill or drive away rats that nest in the caern.

Wasp

Wasps are dispassionate creatures, working together to hold territory and drive out invaders. Wasp is a totem of cooperation. She demands that Garou followers emulate her children: tireless, harmonious, and vicious in defense what is theirs. Because female wasps rule the nest, Black Furies have a certain fondness for this totem.

Common Traits: When she is invoked, Wasp grants all her children the Mental Speech Gift, though it can only be used to communicate with septmates.

Pack Traits: A pack that is imbued with Wasp's blessing deals an extra point of damage with all unarmed attacks. The pack's unarmed attacks deal lethal damage even in Homid form. The pack also gains the effects of the Resist Toxin Gift.

Ban: Wasp will abandon a sept if it is riven by internal strife. She also asks that her followers sing while they work.





Totems of Wisdom

Chimera

As a sept totem, Chimera seeks to build communities dedicated to learning and introspection. Chimera's septs often have some way of recording and protecting the wisdom accumulated by their members over the years. They always have many secluded spots where Garou can find a moment for quiet and contemplation.

Common Traits: Chimera's septs subtract two from the difficulty of all rolls involving riddles, dream interpretation, and other enigmas. They have the power to disguise themselves as other beings in the Umbra with a difficulty 7 Gnosis roll.

Pack Traits: When Chimera is summoned, she can divide three points of Enigmas and one point of Perception among the packs she chooses to bless.

Ban: Septs dedicated to Chimera must seek enlightenment above all things.

Cockroach

Cockroach is the patron of many urban septs. He is hardy and adaptable, always watching and waiting for the ideal moment to act.

Common Traits: Septs dedicated to Cockroach subtract two from all difficulties involving computers, electricity, and applied science. They have the power to perceive the content of data streams in the Umbra, including cellphone calls and information travelling through the Internet, with a difficulty 6 Gnosis roll.

Pack Traits: When Cockroach is summoned, he can divide three bonus dice among the packs he blesses. Those bonus dice apply to any roll to activate a Gift that effects technology.

Ban: Septs dedicated to Cockroach cannot do anything to kill or drive away cockroaches that nest in the caern.

Dog

Dog is a humble spirit who represents the power of co-operation and adaptability. Dogs have thrived by becoming mankind's companion, working alongside mankind to both species' benefits. Septs that follow Dog stress harmony over everything else. Some of the wilder tribes – especially the Red Talons – disdain Dog as a sell-out, but more patient Garou understand that Dog's ultimate victory has been to teach compassion to humanity.

Common Traits: Dog can grant all of his children an extra point of Stamina and an extra point of Survival.

Pack Traits: A pack that receives Dog's special blessing gain a pool of three Willpower points and an extra two-die bonus when they use Pack Tactics.

Ban: Septs must grant sanctuary to wild dogs, allowing them free run of the bawn.

Unicorn

Unicorn embodies the all-encompassing love of Gaia. She is a totem of peace, healing, and harmony. Septs dedicated to Unicorn are harmonious places, by Garou standards, with less infighting than a typical sept and a pervading atmosphere of calm.

Common Traits: Unicorn's children move at twice their normal speed in the Umbra. They also subtract two from all difficulties involving healing and empathy, but add two to all difficulties to harm other Garou (except Black Spiral Dancers and others tainted by the Wyrms).

Pack Traits: Unicorn may distribute three bonus dice among the packs of her sept. These bonus dice apply to Gifts of healing, strength, and protection.

Ban: Septs dedicated to Unicorn must aid the weak and exploited, though they must avoid accidentally aiding the Wyrms when they do so.

Totems of Cunning

Fox

Fox's septs use stealth, sabotage, and other dirty tricks to protect themselves and attack their foes. They tend to play fast and loose with hierarchy, and any Garou who takes

himself too seriously will be the subject of tricks and traps until he learns his lesson.

Common Traits: When Fox is summoned, he grants all his children one dot of Manipulation.

Pack Traits: Fox can divide two dots of Stealth, Streetwise, and Subterfuge among his sept's packs.

Ban: Septs must grant sanctuary to wild foxes, allowing them free run of the bawn.

Hidden Glade

Hidden Glade represents the secret beauty of Gaia. Even as the Wyrms and Weaver overwhelm the world, Gaia's beauty survives. Life blooms in blasted warzones, humans include parks in their biggest cities, and small glades and springs escape the notice of developers and despoilers. Among the most precious of Gaia's hidden redoubts are her caerns, and Hidden Glade's avatars are more than happy to dwell in such places.

Common Traits: Hidden Glade grants his children an extra dot of Gnosis. Garou blessed by Hidden Glade add one to the number of successes necessary on a Rage roll to succumb to frenzy.

Pack Traits: When Hidden Glade graces a pack with his presence they gain the Territory Gift.

Ban: Hidden Glade's septs must work tirelessly to found more septs and build more caerns.





Chapter Two: Weaver

You didn't catch me in the middle of anything important, cub, I can talk.

Yes, I'm aware you are not a child. But you're here because you have something to learn. I am older than you, although probably not as old as you expected when someone told you to 'go talk to the Stargazer bivouacking on the far side of the fire pit.' Were you expecting to snatch a pebble from my hand?

If you're too young to get the reference, then I have every right to call you 'cub.' Now let's talk. I don't know how much time we have so let's get this started.

No, another time wouldn't be better. I don't stay in one place long. So let's see how far we go today because tomorrow I might not be here. I'm not dying, but I tend to travel as the whim takes me.

Someone sent you to me for my perspective, I'd guess. I'm an outsider, you see. Wiser elders understand that some of their number might be... complacent regarding the lessons you have to learn. So they send you to me for an alternate viewpoint. Worst-case scenario, they get to 'set the record straight' later.

I'm Shallow-Tracks, Stargazer Galliard and perpetual wanderer. I'm here to learn new and interesting things to pass on to other Garou.

You are here to learn about the city. No, not this city, the City – urban life, with organs of concrete and glass and

steel connected by asphalt veins. That's mostly metaphorical, but I've seen enough different types of cities to question how long it remains a metaphor. Cities are growing and aging and renewing things. They consume and they excrete and they can even die.

The City is the place of the Weaver; her webs cover the buildings and she no more wants them disturbed than a mundane spider wants you to dust the corner where it has been catching flies. When you peek into the Umbra, you can see it in some places. The Weaver's web is more than just the strands of spirit-stuff connecting a pair of skyscrapers. Cities are made up of people as much as buildings and those people are using Weaver-webs to communicate like they were tin cans with string.

The World Wide Web

The Internet connects humanity in a way that was unthinkable 20 or even 15 years ago. The net was originally built for sharing research across physical distance and has become a place where most humans get their news, meet each other, and seek out entertainment. Their scientists say that the way our brains store information is changing because of it. We're becoming worse at remembering and better at indexing. Not to be alarmist, but you know what else generally has streamlined its thought processes to look up what it needs to know?



Pattern-Spiders. They're the most common of the Weaver's drone-like spirits. They exist to enforce those frameworks and most of them are parts of a hive-mind feeding off a central database. A Theurge can fill you in on the details of their communication if you want to work out a way to disrupt it..

Sure, the Glass Walkers could probably store every tale their Galliards have ever told on a gizmo small enough to dangle from an earring. Most Garou prefer to tell and sing these tales passing them from muzzle to ear so the actual telling of the tale is an event, something more impressive than just knowing which file name to reference. What would you rather be proud of: being able to speak your ancestors' deeds from memory with strength and conviction, or having a large library of stories that you've never so much as read?

Of course, I doubt that the sept elders sent you to me to get a lesson in how the Internet is a bad thing. Unless they wanted to make sure you heard an opinion from someone who doesn't take it all for granted, in which case they have proven their wisdom after all. We must consider all possibilities, these days. For instance, there is the likely possibility that it's not all bad.

Yes, I know I just got a little worked up and went off on a little rant about the dangers of the Internet. But it is still a tool like any other and even a simple sharpened blade carries the Weaver's touch. The original purpose of the 'net – sharing valuable information with people not in the room – remains as useful to us as ever. All manner of social networks exist for this purpose.

Sites like Facebook allow humans and Garou to coordinate with each other at unprecedented levels – and for every page dedicated to celebrities or video games there is one where activists and passionate humans are arranging protests to improve the world around them. Twitter allows a pay-as-you-go cell phone to broadcast messages to the world, and Youtube hosts footage to show everyone exactly what happens. Results vary, but that sort of visibility keeps some people in line and inspires others. I've seen a lot of good come of these networks in my travels.

What It's All For

The drive to protect one's territory from invaders and oppressors is powerful, and anything that threatens that drive riles up the people in power. Once upon a time, a man would fight for change in his country by taking up arms against his corrupt leaders. But we have gone far from muskets and cannons; a military on the defensive can mow down resistance like a scythe through wheat. Fighting back against such a force without killing even more innocent people than the tools of oppression is nigh impossible.

We have our claws, our physical strength, and the blessings of the spirits to aid us in these struggles. Those without must rely on communication, diplomacy, and bureaucracy to improve their lot, and it's heartening to see how well they make up for it. Weaver-tools or not, they use the Internet to coordinate public protests, resist the suppression of information, and get the message out to the world. When the Egyptian government shut down Internet access to stifle

the protestors, people in other countries provided phone numbers for old-fashioned dial-up modems to get messages out. Even the Glass Walkers didn't see that coming.

This is, as the old saying goes, an interesting time. For as much as people have pushed for progress and even seen substantial levels of success, those who resist such progress have pushed back even harder. The Internet may have given a voice to the people but it has also given a voice to hate-mongers and oppressors who feed the Wyrms to keep their own pockets lined and egos stuffed.

When someone asks if using the Weaver's tools in service of Gaia is ignoring a bigger problem, a sadly common — and not entirely incorrect — answer is that it's necessary when those same tools are used in service of the Wyrms. Enemies of progress use the Internet to build armies fueled by hateful hyperbole. The best way to fight back is to strip away their smiling facades. It's an arms race of information itself and I for one am thankful that it is not our only means of protecting Gaia.

Sometimes it seems that we only have one advantage over the victims of the Weaver's control and the Wyrms' corruption. Everyone who fights with us knows that we're fighting a battle and what that battle is for. A school administrator who cuts art classes for standardized testing doesn't know he's helping to build the Weaver's preferred people. The convenience store manager who accepts an absurd discount to let Kings Distilleries take over more shelf space doesn't know he's selling Wyrms-poison. They're not doing this out of any passion to strip children of creative outlets or sell liquid corruption and they don't have the dedication that we have when we serve Gaia and strengthen the Wyld.

We should remember the importance of our devotion because it's a spark of the Wyld within us, but we should also remember that not all of these people need slain in the name of Gaia. It's important to know, as in all things, how far is too far.

The Weaver's Tools

Let me show you an example of the importance of moderation. Let me see your cell phone.

Yes, you've seen through my cunning ruse: my point is that I knew you have one. That's not necessarily a bad thing, as I have one of my own. It's not one that plays games and identifies a song playing on the radio, but it's also not one that tracks my movements or broadcasts my personal information.

What I'm getting at is that you can assume almost anyone who doesn't have a smartphone knows someone who does. The cell phone has become the new pocket watch; ask what time it is and everyone checks their phone. Having the ability to reach out and contact someone at a moment's notice is useful, especially in the pace of today's world, but it's reached a point where most of the humans in any given group have an uplink to the web in their pocket. Few of them question

whether the world has sped up to justify the technology because they've become so dependent on it.

This is where we get into moderation. When used for positive ends, the ability to reach dozens if not hundreds of people wherever they are and put them all on a task or share information is an amazing one. But falling into the habit of living your life around the little box in your pocket is little more than an easy way of attaching yourself to a spider silk puppet string. It turns social interaction into a machine. A very efficient machine, perhaps, but who knows what that machine is doing?

In fact, that reminds me of a story...

Pittsburgh

My most recent visit to Pittsburgh was right after Halloween 2009. This was, oh, five or six weeks after the G-20 Summit. The president picked Pittsburgh specifically because 'Steel City' bounced back quickly when the economic prospects of most of the country went right down the spiral. You could do worse for a big economic summit.

My first contact with Pittsburgh's Garou set the tone for my trip. A Glass Walker calling himself Works-the-Lines with whom I spoke before arriving told me to meet him at a park that, as luck would have it, was only a few blocks from the bus station.

It had been a long time since I was last in an American city. The 'park' turned out to be a handful of trees and a fountain on the roof of an underground parking garage. I'm not one to curse cities in general but I had hoped for something more, something that at least aspired to wilderness. The route refreshed my memory of urban life, taking me through a typical city in a microcosm; over the course of only a few blocks I passed by greasy spoon diners, adult bookstores, neighborhood dive bars, and no less than three skyscrapers all in the shadow of the U.S. Steel Tower.

I was standing in this park of which the city is so proud — they claim it as early adoption of the 'green roofs' trend — when Works-the-Lines arrived. He worked in the Regional Enterprise Tower, a building with outer walls made entirely of aluminum right next to the park.

So here he was, showing me around the office that contained the large pack that managed the Tin Tower Caern, and—

Of course you can have a caern in a skyscraper! Have you learned nothing? They tend to be rather weak, the 'bawn' usually consists of extra floors rented as a buffer zone. Soundproofed meeting rooms ensure that moots don't cause a problem, but the same can't be said for revels. Urban caerns perform all of the same functions of a more traditional caern. I'm surprised nobody's mentioned this to you. For a long time, few tribes outside the Glass Walkers would spend any effort on one, but that's changed in the last few years.

This is one of the oldest in America – its name originated as mockery from other tribes, but the sept embraced it as a badge of honor. In big cities, you take what you can get and every caern is important. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

He showed me around the office, which was a pretty standard cubicle farm aside from glyphs scratched into the fabric walls of the cubicles and computer casings. We were in his office to get phone numbers of Pittsburgh Garou he thought I should meet when someone poking their head in to say "It happened again" interrupted us. Naturally curious, I asked what 'it' was.

Some unknown source was telling groups of humans, via messages on their cell phones, to go up to the roof of the U.S. Steel Tower. Given how many of them followed the instruction the sept suspected just a bit of supernatural coercion involved. It wasn't overtly sinister because it was just directing them to the roof where nothing at all happened to them. Nothing connected the people involved other than they were downtown when someone messaged the entire group at once. The police assumed it was just some prankster and the sept thought likewise – with the addition that it was likely a supernatural one.

My curiosity inadvertently revived an argument among the pack about theories involving techno-wizards and rogue Pattern-Spiders. I broke it up as politely as I could by asking what the city's other packs thought. Works-the-Lines told me that they hadn't checked since everyone knew his pack was taking point and would certainly tell them. After some chitchat I thanked them for their hospitality, took the list of phone numbers, and excused myself to get something to eat with a promise to let them know if anything came to me.

One of them recommended a Pan-Asian restaurant in North Oakland, a neighborhood centered on the Cathedral of Learning. It was a bit of a hike so I made the trip in the Umbra to get a better feel of the spiritual landscape and also to take the Lupus form for speed and insulation against the damp weather. Each city's Penumbra is different and I highly recommend stepping across for at least a few minutes in any city where you have time to linger. That said, the thickness of the urban Gauntlet means it's sometimes easier said than done.

I passed through a less-affluent neighborhood with many run-down buildings old enough to have substance in the Umbra. Strands of Weaver-web stretched from structure to structure like phone lines and the whole area bore marks of the city's identity. The webs resembled steel cable and rust flecked the walls of buildings. The U.S. Steel Tower was a monolith of ominous matte-black steel, looming visibly even when other buildings should be in the way. Newer skyscrapers appeared as translucent facades, like dotted lines indicating where a building would one day be, but the Tower was important enough to Pittsburgh that it was as a tree towering over high grass.

THE CITY FATHER

Three-River Rat, Bone Gnawer Ragabash, addresses a common question regarding Pittsburgh's City Father:

Nobody's ever found any evidence about whether Joe existed even in the folklore before he popped up in a newspaper article back in '31. Some folks think he was either made up by the steelworkers or the reporter that shared the story. It don't help much that 'Magarac' could translate as 'jackass.' I only say that because nobody's quite sure as to whether the City Father took his form because of the stories or whether he appeared as some sorta... oh, what's the word... archetype and some humans from the 'old country' who caught a glimpse started making up stories to explain him.

I will say this, though. When the Magarac stories went around, the workers took it as a badge of pride. Even came up with sort of a 'donkey ears' gesture to use with each other. And I think, in part, that it sums up Pittsburgh all too well: A city that finds its strength in places that some would find embarrassing or even dirty. As a Gnawer and a Metis, I've got untold amounts of respect for that. Just ask the Glass Walkers at the Tin Tower Caern, I think they understand.

Even from the Umbra I could clearly see the borders between the prosperous parts of town and the run-down areas. Steel and shiny glass stood right up against rusted slums that hadn't seen the benefits of Pittsburgh's economic health. No border or buffer more substantial than a line on a map separated these very different parts of the city.

Banes scuttled through the webs, more than I'd expected. Some looked like mutant spiders, belching diesel fumes and smoke. I wondered if these might be corrupted Weaver-spirits, but they gathered in enough numbers that I did not want to get too close I returned to two legs and found a place near my destination to step back across unmolested. As I entered the restaurant I dropped a few dollars into the cup of the panhandler on the front steps, and while waiting for food I left a message for a Child of Gaia Ahroun named 'Duck and Cover' at another caern in the city.

He called back as I was on my way out of the restaurant. A different panhandler was out there in the same spot with the same cup and I shared with him what change I had left over. My attempt to get directions from Duck and Cover became awkward acceptance of a ride in his pickup. Hays

Woods, the largest piece of undeveloped land in the area, held its own caern called — appropriately enough — the Hays Woods Caern. My host regaled me of how he had found a believed-lost bomb shelter, originally for the use of a nearby ammunition factory some decades back, which was put to the use of the caern and inspired his deed name.

The 630-something acres, despite having to fend off interest from developers and mining companies, provided a good bit of undisturbed space for a cosmopolitan mix of tribes beyond Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers. Unsurprisingly, it was a much stronger caern than the ones nestled amongst the steel, glass, and brick of the city and surprisingly traditional given the location. That said, the high Bone Gnawer population and the caern's dedication to a totem of the American Dream marked it as a 'city' caern nonetheless.

While being introduced around I discreetly asked about the impulse sending groups of people up to the roof of the tower. While nobody at the caern had witnessed the phenomenon first-hand, the Bone Gnawers had an extensive network of informants among the homeless population. The information let them put together a map of the spots where these impromptu flocks of people had simultaneously pulled out their cell phones, read a message, and walked towards the U.S. Steel Tower like zombies.

The sept at the Tin Tower Caern, earlier, showed me a map on a touchscreen monitor where I could tap a marker for an incident and see the time and date of the event with links to detailed files. It was extremely efficient. The Bone Gnawers of Hays Woods, conversely, had a road map from a gas station covered in scribbled notes and food stains. The information on both maps was the same, although this one also had assorted glyphs and markers scrawled in places indicating traditional stomping grounds and informal territory claimed by hobos in the city. While less efficient than Works-the-Lines' map, it indicated the Bone Gnawers' information network — more chaotic, but just as detailed, as any professional surveillance web.

What caught my attention was not the clumping of incidents along a particular stretch of blocks, running from the U.S. Steel Tower to a spot on Sixth Avenue, but a sketch at the far end of that stretch. It depicted a shirtless, muscular man ladling something from a vat. I asked what the sketch signified. Duck and Cover saw my look of ignorance, and explained.

"Joe Magarac is a local folk hero from the 30's and the City Father of Pittsburgh," Clang-Bang, a Bone Gnawer Galliard, explained. "Like a local John Henry."

"They say he was born in an ore mine to help the Slavic steelworkers," Duck and Cover chimed in. "And that he was physically made of steel. That spot on the map is an image of him on a building on Sixth Avenue."

"Where is the City Father normally seen?" I asked. "Has anyone asked what he thinks of this?"

Of course, normally, a pack or even a sept can't summon a City Father or Mother. They appear when they feel the city



is suffering some sort of crisis. Sometimes one sees a crisis before we do or it is simply having trouble coping with an upheaval. My instincts suggested that, given that the activity was stretched between an image of Magarac and the Tower (which boasts a statue of him in the lobby), he would definitely have an interest.

Works-The-Lines agreed to meet me on the roof of the Tower with a pair of Glass Walker Theurges who worked in the building. The Gnawer Galliard I met earlier was an expert on the lore of the city's industrial past, so Duck and Cover got him some clean clothes so he could join us at the Tower without drawing too many stares.

Duck and Cover introduced Clang-Bang and me to the Glass Walkers. Both were slightly confused as to what we were doing up on the roof. I asked them all to join me in the Umbra with promises of explanation once we were through the Gauntlet. Stepping across was an ordeal, as thick as the Gauntlet was, but I pushed through. A truth spirit taught me how to reflect upon myself to get by without, but the Walkers all pulled out their smartphones to use the screen as a mirror — remember that trick, by the way.

The broad, triangular roof of the building seemed broader at first, an optical illusion from the webs stretching off the edges of the roof to reach buildings below. The view was breathtaking even in the Umbra, but we had little time to take it in because the hulking form sitting at the edge of the roof immediately drew our attention.

The steel man, wearing a factory worker's coveralls, was easily the size of one of us in the Crinos form. He heard our approach and stood up to greet us. Though he looked pleased to see us, I thought I noted a hint of repressed sadness in the shine of his metallic skin.

One of the Theurges, Diane, glanced at me before addressing the City Father.

"Is there something we can do for you?" she asked.

"I thought they were going to do something with this." His accent suggested an integrated Slavic immigrant — or an English speaker's rough approximation of such. He made a sweeping gesture with his arm to indicate the empty rooftop. "They said they were going to build something here, and I think it should be done. This building — my tower — was once something glorious, but the world has forgotten it and must be reminded of what it can be. I want them to see it again."

The Glass Walkers all looked at each other, confused. Clang-Bang stepped up and cleared his throat for attention.

"Nobody with the money to do anything about it can agree what to do with the roof, Big Joe. But you're right, more people should see it. That's why you've been bringing them up here, isn't it?"

"I saw that if you send the messages on their little phones, you can get the people to go places and that will bring the news crews," he said with a slow nod. "So why isn't it working?"

"Because the people don't understand what they should be seeing," the Bone Gnawer said. "But maybe we can work together to do something about that?"

"If you can, I would be very grateful. We must work together to help make this building — and the city — as great as it can be. To begin, I give you a simple task. Build me something here. Not just a statue or a monument, something with a function, something people can use. If you do that, I would be in your debt."

Even if he's having trouble keeping up with what human advances can do, like a number of City Fathers and Mothers these days, the gratitude and benefits of pleasing a City Father can echo for years. Last I heard, they're still working on that little project for Big Joe Magarac but they've got someone working on making a memorial garden and observation deck up there. Works-the-Lines tells me he thinks that Joe's influence may help them get better business inroads in U.S. Steel Tower. Even if it doesn't always look like it, Pittsburgh's influence in the humans' economic landscape is an important one, and whatever you think of such things, you can't deny that importance in the bigger picture.

This reminds me, though, of another City Father with identity issues.

Shanghai

They say Stargazers walk in two worlds even more than other Garou. Which is true — we seek balance with our human sides as much as our wolf sides and try to embrace both the West and the East. I understand that a little more than most. The Stargazers adopted me, but I find myself occasionally having to reconcile my more traditional Gaian upbringing with my years spent learning the Middle Way. My late mentor, Lotus-on-the-River, always assured me that I am always what I was meant to be but sometimes the contrast between us made me stand out at those rare Stargazer gatherings.

I explain this to help give you an idea of just how alienated I feel whenever I visit Shanghai. Lotus-on-the-River had family there so I visit at least once a year to pay my respects to his Kinfolk in the area. They cared for him deeply but it still confuses them that he would take a *młiguórén* — an American — as his pupil, especially one who doesn't speak the local dialect. Lotus only taught me Beijing Mandarin and while it is more generally useful elsewhere and is enough to get by, in Shanghai it makes me stand out more than I already do. I do have a Gift that could allow me to get around the language barrier but it still doesn't do anything about my accent and I'd rather not become reliant on it.

But I was telling you about the City Fathers.

These days, what do the Garou call a powerful spiritual entity that watches over a city and helps represent it? Right, a City Father. Well, in older times every Chinese city had a god watching over it, often the spirit of a deceased official or soldier who received a promotion to the celestial bureaucracy. Important cities, prefectural capitals and the like, would have temples for the worship of their city gods and Shanghai was more than important enough that it received one. While this is an aspect of history now relegated to mythology, the Garou know the truth behind it.

While not every city today has a City Father, the cities of China used to each have several gods. Most of the City God Temples were destroyed or repurposed as part of a campaign of 'casting out the old ways and moving forward as a country,' but Shanghai's still stands. Even today it still venerates three historical heroes. Taoist priests care for it.

Shanghai's City Father appears as a composite of government officials and magistrates from the country's history. Today he answers to 'The General,' as the youngest city god was a general killed in the First Opium War back in 1842. But every now and again, he forgets that the old dynasties have fallen and for a little while one must indulge his anachronistic lapses. He does not lapse often, but twice now he has refused to aid werewolves because they do not know ancient rituals of praise that locals have long forgotten.

Shanghai is a very cosmopolitan and chaotic city, owing in part to its continued importance in international trade. It's one of the wealthiest cities in the world and one of the largest, balancing communist and capitalist concerns and thriving by that balancing act. France owned a portion of Shanghai until World War II and much of the Western architecture in that district remains, serving as a tourist trap and the home of St. Ignatius Cathedral.

The Beast Courts, a melting pot of different Changing Breeds, are the predominant force in the city. The Boli Zouhisze – the Hong Kong 'branch' of the Glass Walkers – maintain a presence there, as do the Stargazers and a single pack of Fianna from Beijing.

Yes, Fianna. They're descended from Celtic and Dutch traders that intermarried with the locals and brought with them a recessive gene for red hair. The bloodline is known, appropriately enough, as the Firehair Family. They have a single pack in Shanghai.

When I visited in the chilly spring of 2012, Shanghai was adapting as best it could to an ever-changing situation. The Three Gorges Dam, upriver, has been having issues with flooding for some time and it's been quite the battleground. Garou and other shifters from Shanghai have traveled there to fight the Black Spiral Dancers and their diseased Bane allies, while refugees from the flooding and the destruction of a sept have come to Shanghai to recuperate. I didn't

learn just how bad it was until later, though.

I first viewed it in the Umbra, called the Mirror Lands by Asian shifters. The Umbra is normally so vibrant there, almost appearing alive from the energy of the humans who work and pray in the area. Even with the Chinese government's grip on the country helping to layer on the Weaver's webs, a well-tended shrine is still a holy place and the contrast between the Weaver and Wyld energies produces an effect like an aurora. That's how it should look, anyhow.

I approached the temple in the Umbra and found the site under siege. Black Spiral Dancers and Pattern-Spiders were both clambering over the building, fighting each other. There was no way I was going to dive into that hornet's nest alone even if I knew the specifics of the situation.

I dropped into the Lupus form and took off running before they saw me. I hadn't been there in a while but the Five Constants Court was maybe a couple of minutes away on all fours even with dodging through the streets between the buildings of Shanghai's Old City. The court operates out of an old Confucian temple that was renovated back in the 90's. It also hosts a book market today, but they've held on to the site too long to give it up.

I stopped outside the front gate and quickly howled for help before returning to the Homid form. It was mere moments before a pair of shark-like monstrous guardians appeared, armored and carrying spears. Were they some Wyrms-creatures? No. You must remember that the Beast Courts have many strange Changing Breeds among their number. In this case I called upon the spirit of speech to make my words clearer. I explained the situation whereupon I was ushered to a 'waiting room' of sorts while a sentai – a war party, not unlike a pack – went to investigate my claims.

A few minutes after arriving, one of the Kitsune fox-shifters entered the room with some tea. Under the guise of pleasantries she introduced herself as Luo Wá and politely interrogated me as to where I'd come from, my purpose in town, how long I was staying – it was like going through customs at the airport again, only more polite. I told her the truth and even did so without Gifts so she wouldn't think I was attempting to deceive her. Fortunately for me the reputation of my mentor still lingered even now and that helped smooth things over.

After the interrogation transitioned into sincere pleasantries I was invited forth to introduce myself to the court. The sentai had returned, more or less intact, with guests. Some time after I left to get help from the Five Constants Court, a pack of Boli Zouhisze from the Suzhou Creek Caern heard the commotion and showed up to help protect the temple. Because of the attack, the two groups were arguing as to who should be the ones to guard the temple and the adjoining garden.



CITY FATHERS BEFORE THERE WERE CITY FATHERS

Chen Huà Canvas-of-History, Boli Zouhisze Galliard, offers a lesson:

Conventional Glass Walker wisdom suggests that the first known City Father was discovered in London in 1882. Conventional Glass Walker wisdom also has a firm view of how City Fathers may act or appear. There's evidence to suggest that City Fathers from outside that profile have existed for a long time. For instance, China's city gods.

It's possible that there's some fundamental difference between the City Fathers of earlier eras and the ones we know now. The stories we have tell of city gods that cared for the people who lived there, but modern City Fathers care more for the city itself — the bricks and stones, rather than the population. It's also possible that as a tribe that doesn't owe as much to oral tradition, somewhere along the line we've lost some vital knowledge. Papers rot. Libraries burn.

City Fathers are likely older than we know and still carry aspects of the cities that predate their emergence. The General is a good example—visually, he appears closest to Chen Huacheng but his clothing carries elements of civil servant uniforms from the Han, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties. Even the pocket watch of London's City Father carries hints of the city's Roman origins. A City Father or Mother can be a living relic of that city's history and they have much to teach us if we can find more of them.

As the one who inadvertently brought them together I suggested that we at least go down to the temple to find out what the Black Spiral Dancers wanted. Both sides glared at me, like this was all part of my plan from the start, but Luo Wá spoke up on my behalf and gave her honest opinion that I was trustworthy — or at least not dangerous. The pack of Glass Walkers, the sentai that investigated in the first place, and I all stepped sideways to return to the Umbral reflection of the temple.

We were quite the motley crew: An American Stargazer, five Glass Walkers from Hong Kong, a Kitsune, a Tengu, two Nezumi, and a Khan.

To translate for you, that's a Corax raven-changer, two Ratkin, and a weretiger. The guardians I mentioned

earlier were weresharks — no, I'm not messing with you. The Hengeyokai of the Beast Courts call them Same-Bito but coastal Garou might know them as Rokea. Many of the Garou here at this caern haven't even met other shifters with the possible exception of the Corax. I've traveled widely but even I can't get over what it was like to work with such a disparate group, all strangers to each other despite sharing such close space.

We arrived to find the Pattern-Spiders working overtime to web up the structure. Not only were they attempting to patch and brace damage to the Umbral side of the temple but the energies that normally kept them at bay were stunted and they took advantage of the opportunity to increase the Weaver's influence.

The Beast Court changers, much to the Glass Walkers' frustration, immediately started clearing off the Pattern-Spiders while the rest of us moved inside the temple to find that they had begun wrapping the City Father up in their web. And at that point, the Boli Zouhisze were honor-bound to help free him. He was hurt.

"The river," he said. "They were after the river and I am its chief protector. They've already struck the Dam, and now this end..." He trailed off.

"If something's not done," I thought aloud, "Then the river and its spirit could die. Surely that's a worthy reason to cooperate, regardless of whether you think I planned this or not."

After a round of grudging agreement, the representatives of the court and caern came to an arrangement. The Suzhou Creek Caern would protect the temple and the river in the physical world, while the Five Constants Court would deal with Umbral threats in the hopes of heading off whatever plans the Black Spiral Dancers have for the Yangtze.

I've been keeping an ear on that part of the world, and some time soon I plan on going back to check up on them. I think if there's any place to look for clues as to how we can fight threats to Gaia, it's in seeing how different societies of changers can work together.

This reminds me of another city that sometimes struggles with itself.

Cairo

With the events of the revolution, Egypt is a country that's changing on an almost weekly basis. During my last trip to Cairo in October 2011, the peoples' struggle against the corruption over their heads was reaching a fever pitch. The Supreme Council of Armed Forces, which had been put in charge following President Mubarak's resignation, had yet to follow through on its promises of stabilization and rebuilding and were lashing out at the protestors who called them to task. The country has seen vast improvements

and many successes since then but those are beyond the scope of my experiences there.

Before arriving in Cairo I'd had the very good fortune to share an evening of conversation with a Silent Strider by the name of Samir the Jackal. Judging by the look in your eye, I suspect that even you have heard of the Galliard Who Speaks 'Til Sunrise. Speaking of which, he certainly does.

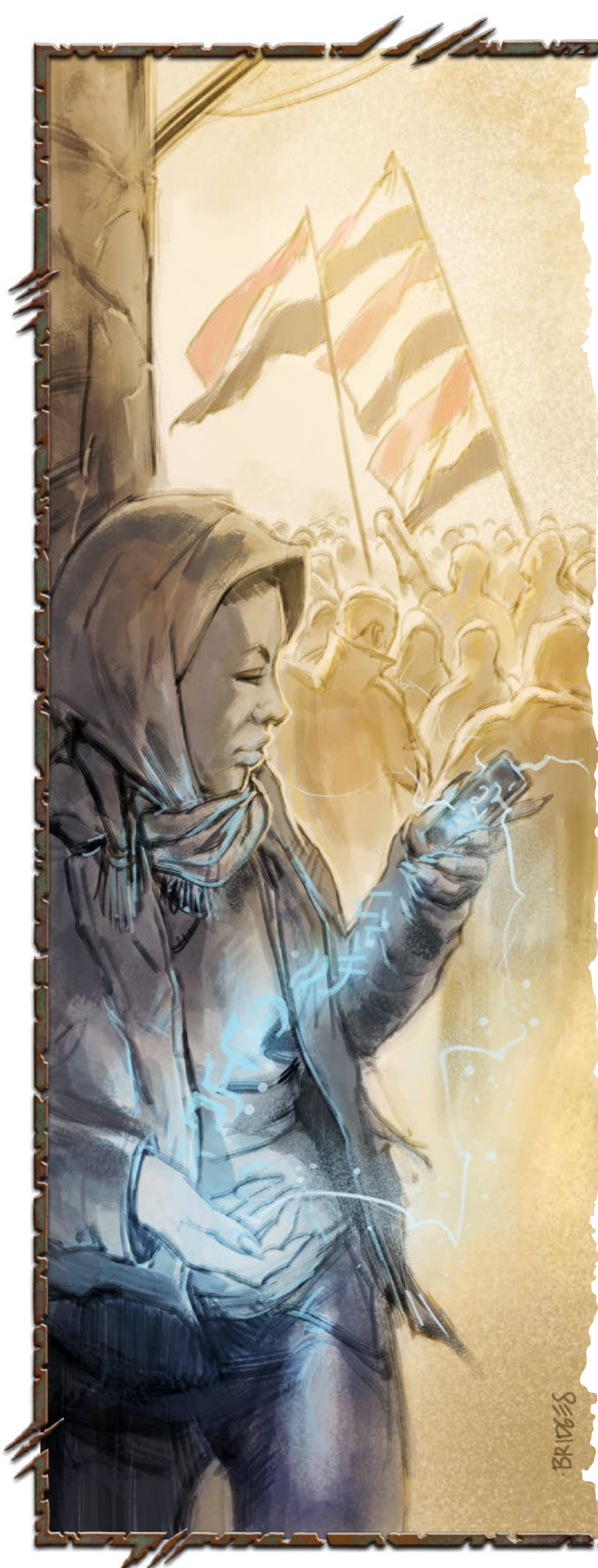
Samir and I swapped stories at his sept and it was he who encouraged me to visit Cairo despite the unrest. I'd expressed some interest in getting a first-hand look at the progress of the Arab Spring protests and he told me that even though he had difficulty staying, he felt that the Garou working and fighting there would appreciate my perspective. And I must admit, the idea that I might be able to genuinely do some good in addition to learning valuable lessons to pass on to others sounded too good to pass up.

To help get my foot in the door with the Glass Walkers at the Sept of the Solar Barque, he gave me a padded envelope filled with important data to deliver to a Theurge helping to coordinate the Garou's interactions with allied protesters. Next time I encounter him I'll have to thank him, because the delivery soothed a lot of nerves. The Glass Walker in charge of the caern, a woman named Leila Veil-Shredder, owes a lot of her ability to manage Garou and business affairs to a certain amount of paranoia. Being a woman of influence in a traditionally male-dominated region and also taking care of a particularly strong urban caern, it's understandable.

She wasn't inhospitable but I could even during our brief meeting that everything going on was demanding too much of her attention. Haytham Eyes-Across-The-World, the aforementioned Theurge and the caern's Gatekeeper, was doing a lot of work with Arabic Children of Gaia and other Glass Walkers to put spirits of electricity and technology to use in helping to protect the protesters' message and get it out into the world. I'm no slouch with spirits or technology, but I must admit that the sophistication of their work was definitely over my head.

One of their biggest problems at the time was the Leeches. Cairo is thick with vampires, many of whom worship some sort of Wyrms-creature that takes on the form of the Egyptian god Set. They often clash with Garou in the city but the government upheavals gave them innumerable opportunities to get their fangs into politicians and military figures who were still adjusting to new duties and authority. In the wake of the Maspero demonstrations the vampires stepped up efforts to connect protest activities to us to point police and military forces, eager for targets, at Garou supporters who may only have tangential connections. This only encouraged the efforts of a local Strider, Buries-the-Dead, in combatting them.

I took it upon myself to ask about the situation and see where I might be able to help while I was in town. I was



more than a little disturbed to see just how many incidents the sept blamed on the vampires' influence until I could see that a lot of Leila's information appeared born of paranoia and conjecture. I was particularly disconcerted to learn that the two Bone Gnawer septs in the city did not talk to the Sept of the Solar Barque, and that one of which was openly hostile to outsiders. Leila stressed that they had not necessarily rejected the Bone Gnawers but it was in fact the other way around, and for the sake of diplomacy I did not argue the matter.

Cairo is rather crowded. Vampires — not only the Set cultists, but Leeches of many 'tribes' — maintain control over large parts of the city and have profited greatly from unrest in the country over the decades. The ghosts of the human dead are exceptionally plentiful in the City of the Dead, a necropolis and slum known to the locals as *el'arafa* and containing one of the aforementioned Gnawer caerns. Many of Africa's shapeshifters, particularly the catfolk, put the city to use although I did not encounter any of them myself.

Leila invited me to accompany a few of the Garou of the Solar Barque to check in with a group of protestors, some of them Kin, who had been laying low since the Maspero massacre. They loaned me some clothes that blended in with local styles, something that would fit better in the slums. The others didn't say anything to suggest this would be the case but between the weapons they concealed and their body language I knew to be ready for trouble.

The sheer density of Cairo's population — the only part of the world more tightly-packed is India — made itself known once we were out of the Qasr al-Baron office complex. The city smelled of a uniquely human despair, mixed with an undercurrent of nervous energy. The crowds outside the car windows gave off a pall of fear as though it were a color tinting a photograph. Even in October, the city felt like an American summer and the heat pounded at us. As we approached the slums where the Garou-allied activists were hiding I got the distinct impression that the city was holding its breath, waiting for something.

The name 'Dar al-Salam' roughly translates to 'residence of peace' and I couldn't help but imagine that whomever originally applied that label to the neighborhood would die a little inside to see what it has become. We parked a distance away, in what we knew to be a safe spot, and the seven of us walked down the tightly packed streets past piles of trash. Aside from curious glances and people keeping their heads down out of habit, pairs of eyes watched us like living cameras.

"Pardon me," I asked one of the Glass Walkers with us, a young American Philodox by the name of FIGMO. "Are you aware we're being watched?"

STREET'S-EYE-VIEW

Nassir Tarnished-Scarab, Bone Gnawer Ahroun, offers some perspective:

The Glass Walkers live in a world where they think everything operates the way they do, like it's all about shadows cast by supernatural forces with money. They think every human who looks a little pale either is a gûl or is serving one. If Leila were any more paranoid she'd think sunset was a Leech plot. Whatever helps them sleep at night.

The problem comes when they see a vampire's hand in everything the government does, as if undead fingers pull every trigger. It's all too easy to lose sight and think that everything bad that happens to oppress the people or thwart our duties to Gaia is the work of a Wyrms-creature or something else. At the same time, you can fall into the trap of thinking that everything that strikes back against them is something you or one of your allies did.

Our people are the ones fighting and suffering and dying over all this. Not the Gnawers, but the poor and downtrodden, the ones who want help that's not looking down on them from a fancy office building. I've seen for myself that the enemy of the revolution is not the Wyrms or the Leeches. Sure, they profit a little more when good people lose hope or die for speaking up. But the dark forces shaping all this are human greed and hatred. At the same time, no matter how many Kinfolk organizers and Garou sympathizers you have, it's human hope and drive that's fighting it back.

This is a revolution of humans fighting humans with human strength and human weapons. It's not a supernatural chess match, no matter how much the Leeches or the Glass Walkers might like it to be.

"We're near one of the Gnawer caerns," he said grimly. "A plague ravaged the... less well-off humans some years back and both caerns have been a little anti-social ever since. Just leave them be for now."

"Shouldn't they be helping us?"

"You'd think," he murmured under his breath before he picked up the pace to cut off further conversation.

We approached the building where our human and Kin allies holed up. Haytham held a hand out to stop us a block

from the building. He'd seen a sign in a window suggesting a trap. I volunteered to scout out the Umbra, just in case, while the others performed mundane reconnaissance, and ducked into an empty alley to step sideways.

The heat was present even there, although the lack of a physical sun took the edge off. An Umbral wind blew more strongly, and the spirits were all foreign to me. They were a little less 'abstract' than I was used to and reminded me of creatures out of legends and stories that they either emulated or inspired. The city's despair bled through to feed and attract hungry things. I could understand why Silent Striders were so worried here, but I didn't see any immediate threats to the operation.

I stepped back across, left the alley, and slipped through the open door. Haytham was reassuring a slim — almost scrawny — Egyptian with three bandaged fingers. As I got my bearings the others scattered through the small house and made a big show of settling in, going through papers, and getting reports from our frightened allies. Nadir Night-Wire, a Ragabash serving under Leila, ducked into a dark corner and I lost track of her.

The building was small and cramped, with trash and papers strewn about. Smashed furniture was subtly piled up or shoved into the corners like a token effort had been made to clean up after a scene of violence. It was stuffy and reeked of old sweat and ozone.

"Count to ten, close the door, and watch our backs. Try to stay out of Crinos in here unless it goes south; it's awkward in this space and hell to clean up," FIGMO quietly said to me. "You wouldn't happen to be one of those 'Shaolin monk' Stargazers I hear so much about with improbable intergalactic kung-fu, would you?"

Despite being used to the question, I never know quite how to answer to anyone's satisfaction. As I usually do when asked, I gave a simple nod of assent as if to say 'close enough.' I took a deep breath and shifted to Glabro in case the extra muscle would be necessary, although normally I prefer the balance of Homid form. As much as I'd like to say we didn't do anything as obvious as holding our breaths, the fact remains that an ambush was coming and not all of us could pretend we didn't know it.

When my silent count reached ten, I nudged the door shut and stepped to the side. Less than a minute later, the door kicked open with a bang as did the back door and some of the closets. As predicted, some of them were waiting inside for the signal from outdoors. We were ready. The fight took only moments. I won't bore you with the details. Not all of the Garou in the group acted as a well-oiled machine but it startled me how ready the others were for this sort of violence. I did not hurt my opponents any more than necessary, for I knew they were likely misguided servants of a greater evil. By the end, half of our attackers

lay on the floor dead from bullet wounds or broken necks. They were clearly expecting a smaller group that would submit to a display of firearms, not experienced warriors with the gifts of Gaia.

"We need to move fast," Haytham said, rubbing at a massive knot on the side of his head that was already shrinking. "The one dead in the bedroom smelled of blood and Wyrmtaint and was much stronger than any human should be. Some of these men are direct servants of the Leeches."

"So what now?" one of the Silent Striders with us asked.

"You three," he indicated the two Striders and myself, "Stay here while we relocate our people. See who comes to investigate. I suspect that after dark at least one of the gûls will come to find out what happened. Find out what you can get from them and we'll check in with you."

"Pretty convenient, leaving everyone not in your current pack here while you take care of this. Is there something we should know?" I asked.

I wasn't trying to challenge him but wanted to make sure we were all on the same page.

"It's nothing personal," FIGMO chimed in. "But the fewer people that know our security precautions the better. And we have to leave *someone* here."

I wanted to hear them say it more than anything else, so I believed him. The others left as we heard sirens. We made our way to an abandoned apartment nearby, and waited.

We went back inside after the police had gone over the building with a fine-toothed comb and removed the bodies. We found a spot to wait until nightfall, passing the time by whittling wooden stakes from chair legs. We didn't have to wait long in the darkened rooms before someone came looking.

The two vampires moved with smooth, silent steps and left no scent in their wake. They murmured among themselves in Arabic and while I couldn't make out their conversation the Striders with me both tensed up and readied their weapons.

I followed their lead when they struck at the Leeches and the two of them went down quickly... but the third, which we hadn't seen, threw open the door and made a run for it. I was closest to the door so I gave chase as he pulled out a cellphone to report in to someone. He was familiar with the streets, and would have lost me were I not much fitter than him.

I followed him down an alley that came out into a small cul-de-sac. He was pinned to the ground by three Garou in Glabro and Crinos forms with ragged clothing draped over them. Four more stood around me, watching.

"This is our territory," one of them snarled in the Garou tongue. "You can go, but we keep this one."

The Garou tongue threatens well but rarely have I heard it sound so ominous. I remembered the earlier suggestions of anti-social Bone Gnawers and hesitated for a second. In the end, for the sake of diplomacy I did not argue the matter. I returned to the house, wary of followers, to find the vampires bound up for transport and later interrogation. When asked what happened to the vampire, I told them the Bone Gnawers got him and the looks on the Striders' faces told me more than I wanted to know.

That set the tone of my entire experience there. I remained for about a month, carrying messages when Facebook and Twitter would not do and helping to carry new phones and laptops with the blessings of Gaia to protestors allied to the Garou. When necessary, I chased snake-tongued vampires through the slums although I was fortunate to avoid any further entanglements with the Bone Gnawers. When things escalated in November with the reoccupation of Tahrir Square, the increased visibility forced many of the Garou to take a step back from the 'front lines.' I took advantage of a good opportunity to move on as well, and have spent a lot of time-sharing my first-hand accounts with other Garou.

What matters is that we weren't just arming the people against an oppressive regime that was in the pockets of vampires and oil companies, but we were also bringing them hope. The move back into Tahrir Square, while leading to setbacks for the Garou, was one born of the Egyptians' need to take back their government and their country. The goings on in Egypt reminds me of another experience of mine.

Seattle

Are you familiar with the networking site 'Voicebox'? It's one of a number of small tech startups that have popped up in the wake of the social networking boom, trying to get in on the action. Like so many others, it's building its foundations in Seattle. If it plays its cards right, it could be the next Facebook. One of my Kinfolk relatives learned enough about company law to follow the trail of ownership. Eventually, much of the startup's funding comes from Sunburst, a software company ultimately owned by Pentex.

I was out on the West Coast in the summer of 2012 when I received a call from Broken Staff, the younger brother of the Stargazer who mentored me. He'd learned I was in the area and invited me to come visit him in Seattle. Even if I'd wanted to I couldn't deny such an invitation.

Seattle is not as rainy as pop culture suggests. Their summers are actually rather mild and warm and the city's climate is pleasant at that time, as I learned first-hand. Broken Staff, who is practically an uncle to me, was waiting for me at Sea-Tac and we took the light rail into the city proper.

Seattle lives up to the hype of a city of the future between the affordable mass transit, technology-oriented companies, and Earth-friendly business concerns. The biggest concentration of Glass Walkers in the northwest is hard at work within various enterprises, keeping them honest and turning what resources they can to benefit Gaia and the Garou Nation. Garou of almost every tribe have found Seattle palatable enough for a city and our efforts have made sure there's plenty of light to go with the city's share of darkness.

We arrived in the middle of a protest at the Uwajimaya Village. Apparently the Uwajimaya company wanted to expand their shopping and residential complex, leading to opposition from locals who didn't want to see the neighborhood reshaped any more than it already had been. Things grew heated because of accusations that a manager of the complex had hacked the Voicebox accounts of some of the protestors and presented damaging private information that had ruined their reputations.

I was not familiar with the site and while asking a couple of people off to the side what happened, I met a Glass Walker blogger named Melissa Press-Pass who was writing up the protest for her website. According to her, the Voicebox website was likely the guilty party and if I wanted to know more she could get me into sort of a 'town hall' meeting hosted by a nearby sept. I was too intrigued not to get involved and Broken Staff came along to find out what was going on.

The meeting was held in Capitol Hill, an entertainment and nightlife center of the city, at a Walker-owned coffee house called the 'Coast of Java.' The crowd appeared to be mostly Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers with a light sprinkling of other tribes including a surprising number of Wendigo given the location. The crowd mostly consisted of Garou from the Menagerie Caern in Discovery Park and the Little Water Caern, which is located in a South Lake Union high rise.

A Glass Walker Philodox from the Little Water Caern, Jean Broadcast-Depth, led the meeting. She put the call out to ask local Garou to assist in an impending investigation into Voicebox centered on their office in South Lake Union. The website, she explained to us, was officially focused around bringing people together through the medium of discussion groups much in the same way some sites do it through common interests. This made it a natural fit for a lot of major protest groups, and had been used as an alternative to Facebook for a lot of event planning.

However, Jean had reason to believe that the site also intentionally directed disruptive elements to good causes. She suspected that Voicebox's influence in an incident where elements of Occupy Seattle used the 'People's Mic' to interrupt their own speakers and sow discord. The

website's security was also selectively dismal, causing some private conversations—all the more damning out of context—to appear on public pages while others vanish into the electronic ether behind inscrutable 'censorship' filters.

Jean and her pack asked for Garou to help them get into the Voicebox offices and see what they can do to disrupt their efforts and retrieve information to use later. The plan was to cause a disruption at the office so someone could sneak in and get a look at their files. A Wendigo in attendance asked why they just didn't hack in. She explained with some embarrassment that the company's security was not only watertight against everyone up to and including Anonymous—unless a leak suited them—but was backed up by unidentified spiritual assistance.

Broken Staff and I volunteered, as did most of the Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers in attendance and a couple of young glory-seeking Wendigo.

A few days of preparation later, we gathered at the Little Water Caern. As Broken Staff and I made our way towards the target we could *feel* the Gauntlet thickening around us like stepping out into high humidity. The concentration of human businesses, many of them Internet and technology-based, couldn't help but feed the Weaver and thicken the local Gauntlet.

Jean split us up into three teams. One team would cause a commotion outside and two more would go inside where one would cause more trouble to distract security while the rest of us moved in to get at the files we needed. Broken Staff was on the team outside while I was on the retrieval team, being what one of them referred to as 'the hitter.' We trickled in a few at a time, pretending to be there for the various companies in the building, while the protest they arranged ramped up outside. About the time police were to be called, the second team got into motion, pulling fire alarms and committing acts of random vandalism in a few different offices.

Employees in the building, not at all used to this sort of carnage, ran for the exits in a near-panic. Security guards from all over the building scrambled every which way trying to get ahead of the vandals and we managed to get into the Voicebox cubicle farm. We made a big show of directing employees towards the exits while looking around for their private files.

The place smelled, not only of faint Wyrms taint but also of rotten food. A couple of the Walkers on the team ducked into offices with fetish USB drives to steal information. That left me with a Bone Gnawer Ragabash named Grabby-Hands, so the two of us checked the corner office that was the source of the odd smells.

A skinny woman sat at the computer, staring dispassionately at the screen. Her hands rested on the

ALLIANCE?

Five-Rounds-Rapid, a Glass Walker Theurge, reports in:

The programmer encountered during the raid on the Voicebox office is colloquially called a Drone, a human with a Weaver-spirit bound up in her much like a fomor. They're as hard to kill as we are, can strengthen the local Gauntlet, and to our embarrassment can do a lot of the same technology-tricks that we can. Sometimes a human falls to the seductive song of the Weaver and is 'welcomed' into the fold.

Incidents like the Voicebox raid reinforce irrational fears that the Weaver and Wyrms work together. Sometimes an employee of a technological company that's already a thorn in our sides will lose himself to Weaver-song and be remade into a Drone. It's becoming more common now that the Wyrms' forces are getting more cutting-edge technology. We've yet to see anything to seriously suggest that it's more than just coincidence at the moment.

Of course, try telling the other tribes that.

keyboard, unmoving, as the computer appeared to work itself. Next to her on the desk sat four bags of O'Tolley's takeout, left by co-workers but untouched. She turned and looked at us, her body oddly clean for someone in a place like this.

Grabby feigned concern and rushed over to help her out of the office. The woman refused to move and explained how important it was that she be allowed to continue her work. Her voice reminded me of the hum of an A/C unit and Grabby's eyes glazed over. A fog settled in my own mind. I reflected on koans to snap myself out of it. I shook the Gnawer's shoulder and woke him. He jumped back, panic in his eyes, and his body tensed for a moment.

"She did something, I can't shift," he gasped, backing towards the door to yell for help.

Not being as reliant on my other forms to engage enemies, I moved in to get her away from the computer. I grabbed the woman and physically pulled her out of the seat but she calmly laid both hands on me and a massive electrical charge hit like a live wire had fallen on me. Next thing I knew I was laying on the floor looking up at her standing over me with a lazy, curious look.

A series of gunshots rang out from the doorway, bullets ripping through her and splattering the wall. She staggered and as she turned around to face one of the Glass Walkers with us I could see tiny filaments crisscrossing the bullet



holes and weaving together over the wound. I swept her legs out from under her and sprung to my feet. Another Walker at her computer yanked the fetish flash drive out, tossed it to me, and shouted for me to step sideways (since I can get by without a mirror) and get it out of there.

I made a run for the stairs, not wanting to step across into an empty Umbral reflection if I could help it. I heard more commotion downstairs, presumably from the vandalism team. Rather than wade through the chaos, I closed my eyes, put the USB drive in my mouth, and focused on stepping sideways. The Gauntlet was even thicker than I'd expected and it took a few agonizing minutes to push through to the Umbra. I shifted to Lupus in mid-air to better handle the landing, as the building was too new and not yet important enough yet to exist on both sides of the Gauntlet. The flash drive, a sturdy model for just this reason, was already held in my muzzle.

As I turned to leave the empty space I saw the programmer appearing in the Umbra. In the distance, Pattern Spiders skittered closer as if summoned. I didn't stick around to question how she was able to follow me.

I took off on all fours for the Little Water Caern, moving at the best speed I could manage. I didn't slow down until I was close to the caern. I stopped and returned to Homid form and thanked Gaia she hadn't followed me. All I saw were the buildings of Seattle's Umbra and flashes of light coming off the Weaver webs like dew caught in a spider's web. I slipped into the Umbral representation of the building where someone from the caern was waiting for me. I gave him the data and we stepped back across.

I told them what happened while I caught my breath and they started decrypting the data. The others returned, more or less in one piece. I took a moment to track down Jean while we were waiting for results on the flash drives.

I asked the obvious question: "Does the Weaver have any real stake in Voicebox?"

"No," she said with the weary sigh of having heard this question before. "She benefits, but no more from Voicebox than any of those other services. Honestly, slightly less given how much instability it causes."

I admit I wondered if making Voicebox more stable would be worse in the long run, then. But our goal was finding something that could be used to bring it down altogether so I kept any further commentary to myself. I found a quiet spot in the corner to meditate so I don't know how much longer it was before Broken Staff was gently shaking my shoulder to get my attention.

Jean and the rest of her pack explained that the prize was a beta version of the new website, complete with new privacy policies and security software. The new policies made it harder to prevent online harassment, sold users' personal information

to companies that were all known Pentex subsidiaries — the final confirmation some needed as to Voicebox's true masters — and also gave the company legal loopholes to withhold information from police in the case of child predators using the site. Melissa started emailing contacts of hers to leak the information and I asked Jean what that would accomplish.

"It should do a lot of damage to the company, although I imagine they'll find the funds to weather the storm. It will buy us time to find ways around their defenses for the long haul. Maybe we can find ways to exploit their ties to the rest of Pentex."

I nodded with sincere approval and then asked her about the obvious interest the Weaver's brood had taken with the place. After a moment's thought during which her face registered confusion, frustration, and a hint of defeat, she told me they'd do what they could.

Forest for the trees, cub. Forest for the trees.

London

Whew, I just realized what time it is. You still seem bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, so to speak. Ah, to be your age again; even with Garou health I already feel my youth leaving me. I think we've got time for one more tale. The conflict on Jean's face when I suggested the possibility of a Weaver 'problem' reminds me of a recent trip to London.

Recently, the British government has demonstrated what I will politely call an issue with priorities. They have, in the last few years, wasted a great deal of money on pompous displays of excess. It's been one spectacle after another. At about the same time all that began, the government slashed funding for education, and benefits for the poor and disabled.

I happened to be in the area when that particular bomb dropped in November 2010. I was visiting with a pack of Indian Stargazers living in North London and when the protests started they heard that some of their human Kinfolk were among the students marching. They headed down to catch up with the protestors as quickly as they could while I tracked down some of the Garou I thought might be close enough to be getting directly involved.

Most of the ones I could have contacted were already down at the protests. A number of Garou with the city, primarily Children of Gaia, Fianna, and Glass Walkers, had Kinfolk who'd be affected by the government's actions one way or another. Everybody who could get there was involved in some capacity or another, and to say that tensions ran high is like saying that Red Talons don't get along well with humans.

Some Garou marched with the students while others remained on the sidelines for fear of being pushed into

TERRITORIALITY

Duane 'Talks-the-Talk' Garrahan, Fianna Philodox explains what makes the Old City Sept special:

One thing that surprises American Garou is how a fair number of European septs are predominantly of a single tribe. They're not the majority, but we've got enough are traditionalists and hard-liners that you can still find someone who thinks mixing tribes in a pack is practically breaching the Litany right there. They may not have numbers, but those septs have power on their side – they're some of the oldest around. Old City is an exception, being a properly historic sept with attitudes that don't come from the fifteenth century. Between us and the Sept of Sun's Glory in the Alps, we're trying to force the traditionalists to get with the times. But it's an uphill struggle.

Single-tribe septs are one thing, but these days even they don't complain about multi-tribal packs – as long as their own members don't think of joining one. But that idea's settling in, and with examples from both Europe and America, we're finally giving the modern world a voice. Don't trust anyone who goes on about how we should "respect our history;" half the time that's just code for "stick it to the foreigners."

Just don't trust anyone who goes on about how we should "respect our individual cultures and histories," they're all just pining for the glorious days of the Roman Empire.

frenzy. As I was in a position to risk deportation I stayed back at first until things started ramping up at Millbank Square. The police, rapidly losing control of the situation, started corralling protestors who fought back in turn. As I watched, Garou pushed through the fray as best they could to get their packmates and Kinfolk out before things reached a boiling point. Something smelled a bit 'off' to me, however.

I focused and expanded my senses. A group of troublemakers caught my eye, about to blindside some already-edgy police officers. Wyrms taint wafted off of them and I grabbed the first Garou I could find, a small pack of Fianna, and pointed at the wild-eyed trio.

"Fomori," I said as quietly as I could while still being heard. "We need to get them out of here before they make this worse."

The Fianna and I rushed at the Bane-possessed humans to get them off the streets. It didn't take much to chase them off and the distraction, ironically, helped keep the Fianna from completely losing their cool at the police's impromptu incarceration of the marchers. Word spread among the Garou at the site; those capable of it drove off the fomori and those who'd been kettled kept the fomori pinned down as best they could. The nature of the scene, unfortunately, prevented us from doing much more than driving them off and capturing a few for interrogation or exorcism.

It was a mess. The actions of a few protestors, some of them possibly influenced by Banes at that, were being blown up and put on the heads of everyone at the protest. And the police, seeing that the situation was beyond them, turned to violence with blinding speed. I remained there at the site as long as I could, offering support to Garou and Kin still in the area well into the evening.

The other Stargazers returned to their homes but I found myself swept along to the home of the Old City Sept: a building with lofts altered and converted for Garou use with an atrium of sorts in the center. It was abuzz with activity, in between Garou seeking out legal contacts to protect their relatives, allies, and others gathering information on people who appeared to be shaping events at the protest. They were looking for police and protestors believed to be Wyrms agents and trying to track down those who got away. Things weren't going well for the sept, for all they had access to government systems, they had to share bandwidth and processing time with legitimate users without tipping anyone off.

Hey, look at me like that. I may look like I can barely spell 'Google,' but I've got hidden depths.

I recounted of what I'd seen and done to Nicola River-Runner, Fianna and elder of what's largely a Glass Walker sept, and volunteered my time to do what I could. Over the next couple of weeks, through some intense detective work, we managed to track down a few of the fomori who'd shown up at the protest. They were in the middle of trying to escalate other, low-key protests. They weren't strong enough to stop us from grabbing them and dragging them back to a safe location. We were even able to get a Theurge to force the Banes out of them, although we couldn't save them all from the resulting trauma.

The next big march was a couple of weeks after the first. Thousands took off work and school to be a part of the event. This time, we spotted fomori on both sides escalating violence and vandalism, knowingly playing off each other. The police charged at the protestors with horses and trapped protestors for over nine hours in the bitter November cold with no food, water, or toilet facilities.

Of course, the police denied the excesses on their side

and for the most part got away with it. For all of the talk of London having more CCTV cameras than anywhere else, the news networks avoided the protests and accepted statements from the Metropolitan Police Service. This bit of irony opened up a niche for the protestors to fight back, though, as they started using Youtube to show what was really happening to the world and garnered a lot of public support. Trust me, it may be 'just the Internet,' but you'd be surprised how much it helps morale to know how many people are behind you.

Starting with the second protest, the sept asked us to teach the younger Garou who wished to join the protest how to cope without giving in to their Rage. Personally, I thought even risking it was far too much, but when it occurred to me that they were going to get involved one way or another, we held a few basic meditation classes. I'm used to teaching, but I do it through anecdotes and stories. Actually leading a class was different.

If nothing else, though, it made it possible for more of us to be on the ground and put forth whatever effort we could to keep the worst elements under control. And in addition to the obvious, we also provided some basic first aid and brought in food and supplies for people trapped in the sealed-off areas. Some of us spent hours in the Umbra fighting off Banes that came to feast on the pain and anger just across the Gauntlet.

London's Umbral reflection is far different from what we are used to, here. The Weaver has been working on old European cities for a lot longer than anywhere in North America and her webs cover absolutely everything. In some areas, they bristle with spines like barbed wire, and it's like the smoke from the Industrial Revolution still clings to the webbing even now. It's ominous, to put it lightly, and I'm told it's getting worse all the time as events have given the government more and more reason to clamp down.

Just when we thought we had a handle on all of it, the attack came. There was a close call in early December between a royal motorcade and a protesting crowd. Nobody was hurt, but the incident gave a few people in high places all the justification they needed.

The police, by this point, were recording the protestors as much as the protestors were recording the police so they could track down participants later and target them. For most of them we were just faces in the crowd, but some of the well-placed fomori knew we were worth going after. We saw something like this coming so diverted anyone who showed their face at the protests to an impromptu safe house a distance from the sept with most travel back and forth taking place in the Umbra. We kept a few people at the safe house for appearance's sake, though, and to make room for those who came in from outside the sept to help.



The fomori who attacked weren't experienced soldiers, thank Gaia. They were willing slaves of the Wyrms, yes, but the small squad was more interested in violence than good at it. The attackers were a mix of police and anarchists, all corrupted by the Wyrms and united to sow discord. They came at us without official sanction or backup so they wouldn't have to answer any awkward questions later, armed only with their warped abilities and a pair of Banes to back up their need for destruction.

They caught us off-guard at first as we were still going over data after the protest, making sure our Kinfolk were okay. The whole place went dark – later, we saw that they'd cut the power and the phone lines, apparently not expecting us to have battery backups and cellular internet connections. Then they rushed in, lashing out at anything that moved. We couldn't hear them talk to one another at all, and when I distracted one he slew one of his comrades. Their movements told me that the fomori had never fought together. Inspecting their bodies, we found that they didn't even think to bring silver. On top of that we had three advantages that even their lack of planning couldn't have accounted for.

First was that surprised or not, we were still all on edge and ready for action. The second was that half of our forces were perfectly poised to come up on them from behind. The third was that far too many of us had been spoiling for the opportunity to tear something apart.

Were this a moot, I'd go into far more detail of a battle that even I found glorious. Were this a moot, I would describe what it was like for someone as repressed as me to indulge in some base desire and adopt the war form. Were this a moot, I would probably demonstrate some of the moves I made as I divided the fomori into tiny chunks.

But it's not a moot. It's me simply reliving an opportunity to cut loose for once. I may be a Stargazer, but my blood comes from a... more passionate tribe.

In the end, the students' message was sent and heard if not necessarily heeded. Since then, the ongoing struggle has shifted to a more even keel, for the most part. After staying a couple more weeks to make sure there wouldn't be any more attacks, I moved on having made a number of friends there.

Oh, what did we do with the bodies of the fomori? Okay, I'll admit I'm not as proud of this part but our options were few. After all, it's not like we could just tell the police that a number of their officers had become Wyrms-monsters and teamed up with some similarly monstrous anarchists to kill us.

The solution was simple. We had to get rid of a number of dead police officers and a number of dead anarchists. We had a safe house to hide dangerous protestors. The

Glass Walkers buried some paper trails and planted a few things in the police's files, but in the end we were able to make the problem take care of itself.

The Fire Dies Down

Speaking of problems taking care of themselves, if I don't get some rest soon I'm going to fall over.

Yes, I'll still be here tomorrow. I have many more stories to tell, and I still haven't had as much time as I'd like to catch up with a few people here at the caern. Come back tomorrow, with your elders' permission of course, and maybe I'll share a story I heard once about a Red Talon Ragabash who willingly ventured into the cities to learn for himself if any humans were worth saving.

I do want to ask you one thing before you go, though. Was it the Fury Crone, Deathgrip, who sent you to me?

I thought so. Maybe I'll have to have a long chat with my mother after our lesson tomorrow. Ah, and the look on your face is worth it. As I suspected. Pleasant dreams, cub. Pleasant dreams.

Mechanics

Jonathan "Shallow-Tracks" Rossini

Jonathan grew up in the Spot Pond Caern just outside Medford, Massachusetts, born to a Black Fury Philodox named Alice 'Deathgrip' Rossini and her Kinfolk husband, Keith. As the spirits made it clear that young Jonathan was almost certainly going to Change one day, he was raised close to the sept and with full knowledge of his heritage. Alice cared for her son, not minding that he would go to another tribe when he Changed. He was her son and he was Garou. That was all that mattered. Knowing he would likely be Garou, they taught him all they could.

When he showed an intense wanderlust as a boy, everyone thought he wanted some time to himself. Despite his parents' best efforts, about once a month or so he'd wander off and get into some sort of trouble. The rest of the sept kept an eye on him; afraid his wandering would take him to close to some dangerous spirit or Wyrms-beast. On more than one occasion he wandered off into the city with what little money he had and his journal, took a random bus to someplace else, and the police brought him home. Every time he had a new story to tell anyone who would listen.

By the time he was 13, the bus station had his picture posted up where employees could see it to cut off his escapes. Once he figured this out his next trip out of town began with a well-packed backpack and a random direction.

He walked out of town and this sudden change in tactics panicked the sept rather than simply frustrated them. They sent out search parties to comb the nearby woods and sent a young pack to nearby towns.

Jonathan returned almost two weeks later at the side of an old Stargazer Ragabash named Lotus-on-the-River, also an experienced wanderer. Lotus-on-the-River joked that he sensed a powerful kindred spirit in the boy and wanted to visit the sept of which he spoke so lovingly. Alice asked the Stargazer how she could repay him for bringing her son back and he simply asked for a couple of hours to talk privately to her and her husband.

Jonathan was never able to get the exact details of this conversation out of any of them, but the next day the old Ragabash approached him with a deal. If Jonathan could keep himself planted in one place and not wander off, Lotus would visit regularly with stories and souvenirs of other places. To seal the deal, Jonathan shared his travel journal with the Stargazer and asked him to record his own travels in it so Jonathan could read them. Lotus-on-the-River readily agreed and he became like a second father to the boy.

The two continued in this way for a little over two years. Lotus' visits were to him like a treasured grandfather or uncle coming by with presents and a few times Lotus even took Jonathan off on hiking trips. Given his past, it was a surprise to everyone that his First Change happened at home.

On a particularly difficult day at school right before Christmas break, a wave of illness and stress overtook Jonathan. His chest felt tight, like his heart was about to burst, but his knowledge of what he was told him what was happening. He took off between classes and ran as hard as he could for the nearest uninhabited spot. He ran through the forest on the edge of town, the sky growing dark with the early winter sunset, when everything blurred. The next thing he knew he was waking up at the caern with Lotus-on-the-River sitting on one side of him and his mother on the other.

The old Stargazer had arrived for his visit just in time to find the Rage-maddened Jonathan and bring him back to the caern. Alice, with tears in her eyes, told him their time together would be short; he was Garou, now, and could not take the Rite of Passage with her tribe. She explained that, traditionally, male Garou of Black Fury stock went to the Children of Gaia but for obvious reasons he should make his own choice. Jonathan turned to Lotus at this point, who suggested that the young man sleep on it before making his decision.

"I've been sleeping on it, sir," Jonathan said with a voice beyond his years. "I'm awake now and I know what I want."

The caern saw its first-ever Stargazer initiation ceremony the next morning.

Jonathan, deed-named 'Shallow-Tracks' for his inability to remain in one place, traveled with Lotus for the next thirteen years after that. The two of them traveled all over the world, visiting caerns and collecting stories and knowledge, until Lotus' death at the claws of Black Spiral Dancers while defending a caern. Since then Jonathan has continued alone, visiting new places and learning new things with the hope that he will have students of his own with whom to share.

Description: Jonathan, now 33, is 5'7" in his Homid form with dark hair and eyes and a complexion that shows a strong Mediterranean heritage. He's lean from years of living off the land but constant physical activity has kept him in shape. He wears loose, comfortable clothing with little regard for style although he has absolutely no shame in asking his allies to borrow outfits that match local styles. He's rarely seen without a battered duffel bag that contains everything he owns (mostly clothes, identification, a cheap cell phone, and some camping gear). In his Lupus form, he has a thick coat of black fur with a white star-shaped patch on his chest and streaks of white fur along his belly, sides, and flanks.

Roleplaying Notes: You don't waste a lot of time because you don't know if you'll be here tomorrow. You keep on the move as much as possible, for there's something new to learn around every corner and over every rise. If your skills or knowledge are needed, you're willing to stick around but you get stir crazy after about a month. While you don't embrace the enlightenment of chaos as readily as some of your tribe, it's important to lighten up with some irreverence when you tell stories. After all, you're sharing experiences — not reading off a memorized script.

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Galliard

Tribe: Stargazers

Rank: 3

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

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

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Empathy 1, Expression (Storytelling) 4,

Leadership 1, Primal Urge 3, Streetwise 1

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Crafts 1, Etiquette 1, Melee 2, Stealth 1, Survival (Navigation) 4

Knowledges: Academics 1, Enigmas 3, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Ancestors 1, Contacts 3, Rites 5

Rage: 5; **Gnosis:** 5; **Willpower:** 7

Gifts: (1) Falling Touch, Master of Fire, Perfect Recall, Sense Wurm; (2) Inner Light,

Speech of the World, Surface Attunement; (3) Calm the Savage Beast, Merciful Blow

Rites: Rite of Talisman Dedication, Rite of Passage, Rite of Summoning

Fetishes

The City's Pulse

Level Two, Gnosis 5

As cities become more like living things all their own, certain metaphors become literal. Just as fat can block a living person's circulation, so can the arteries of a city clog up with traffic. This fetish, made from a stethoscope and a spirit of flowing water, can find where the city's life flows. The werewolf puts on the stethoscope and presses the chestpiece against a permanent structure within the city. Activate the fetish and make a Perception + Streetwise roll at difficulty 6 to learn if the city's services are being blocked or cut off and roughly where. 'Services' in this case includes roads, utilities, or waterways big enough to carry boats. The fetish reveals traffic jams, power outages, or similar events, from power going out in a single apartment to traffic snarls that gridlock several blocks. The werewolf receives a vague mental image of the event and a rough idea of its direction and distance. Multiple successes can pinpoint specific buildings where the power or phone lines have been cut. The stethoscope can also find places where unusually high levels of pollution taint the water supply. This awareness gives the werewolf a better appreciation of a city as a whole rather than individual parts. For the rest of the scene, she gains a two-die bonus to Social dice pools when dealing with spirits of the blocked services.

In-A-Flash Drive

Level Two, Gnosis 6

Once upon a time there was an easily-reproducible technofetish that took the form of a 3.5" floppy disk bound with a spirit of a magpie (or another animal known for theft) called the 'Stretchy Disk.' Upon being inserted into a computer, it would copy the entire contents of that computer, regardless of size or software, onto the disk for later retrieval in an instant. The In-A-Flash Drive is a modern update using a USB drive. The user plugs it into the target computer and activates it. It takes about three seconds to copy every single byte of data on the computer, and just enough of the user's spiritual residue to unlock every password on the machine.. On plugging the drive into another computer, the werewolf can either search the cloned hard disk at incredible speeds,

or start the cloned copy of the machine. When running in that mode, the werewolf never has to enter a password or answer a security question, even for secure sites that require a keyfob or similar hardware 'key.' The In-A-Flash Drive can store one imaged machine at a time; cloning another computer overwrites the drive's contents. A level three, Gnosis 7 version of this fetish can store any number of cloned computers, and can steal from any machine it can contact over Bluetooth or that's attached to the same WiFi hotspot.

People's Microphone

Level Two, Gnosis 6

This fetish, common among the Children of Gaia and rabble-rousing Bone Gnawers, is a megaphone with a spirit of revolution bound into it. It has the ability to channel the ephemeral spirit that forms when a crowd of people gather, using the spirit's power to enhance the speaker's words. If the user of the fetish is speaking on behalf of (or to raise the morale of) a crowd of up to 100 people, his relevant Social rolls receive a +1 die bonus. A crowd of 101-500 people provides a +2 bonus, a crowd of 501-5000 provides a +3. Every 5000 people beyond that provides another +1 up to a maximum bonus equal to the speaker's Willpower. Normally, this fetish does not require spending Gnosis to activate but a werewolf who does can hand it off to a human or Kinfolk for their use.

Profile Skimmer

Level Three, Gnosis 6

This is an example of a variety of technofetish referred to as 'software.' It's not a device but a program that has had a spirit bound into it that can be sent off to do dirty work. This one in particular is bound with a Pattern-Spider and can be sent out to put together a profile on a target. The user searches for a person based on either name and a rough description, or a photograph. The software uncovers any available information about the target. The player rolls the Profile Skimmer's Gnosis with a difficulty set by the Storyteller based on how much information is available on the target, with 6 being the head of a country or famous television personality and 9 being an average Joe seen on the bus. With a success, the Skimmer comes back with a profile on the person composed of all publicly available information, along with police and government records, and full records for known aliases. With 3+ successes, the Skimmer can dig up information protected by supernatural security systems.

Videophone

Level Three, Gnosis 7

The Videophone is a perfect spy's tool, made with a mobile phone and a spirit of a hive-insect, like a termite or bee. It lets the user see what's happening on the other end of a phone call. The Garou activates this fetish while making a telephone call. The werewolf's player must then



make a Perception + Empathy roll with a difficulty equal to the Willpower of the person on the other end of the line (in the case of a speakerphone, the target is the person standing closest to the phone). If the werewolf succeeds, for the length of the call he can see through the eyes of the person on the other end of the line by looking into the phone's screen. If the target knows about the fetish and is willing, they can let the user automatically succeed.

Totems of Wisdom

O' Mighty Dolla' and Easy Credit

Background Cost: 4

O' Mighty Dolla' started as a Gaffling and worked his way up after World War I as the American economy grew. Normally he takes the form of a man wearing modern 'cowboy' chic with a ten-gallon hat, a suit with an obvious Old West influence and with a Bane-stuffed cigar clenched in his teeth. In the past he's been obviously 'well-fed' but the current state of the American economy has him looking a little ragged and hollow, like he's been on a diet — but he wouldn't dare let you fuss over him by bringing it up. He's still quick with a smile and a boisterous laugh although his bad knee's certainly not getting any better.

His recent competition has come out a little better. Easy Credit, who manifests as a seductive young woman in a sharp suit, has been around since 1995. She's been going

around to packs potentially interested in O' Mighty Dolla and has been offering them her 'support plan.' The two are obviously connected in some way but neither will explain how aside from the bitter rivalry they share.

Individual Traits: Each Garou serving either totem gets 2 dots of Resources.

Pack Traits: All rolls involving Commerce have a -3 difficulty bonus.

Ban: O'MightyDolla' insists that his 'children' use American currency when possible and won't adopt a pack outside the United States. When his packs are outside the country, they can only use his benefits to make a profit. In either case his packs are prohibited from using credit cards, which is becoming more and more of an issue these days.

Easy Credit is international, by contrast. She demands that her 'clients' always finish each financial year with more money than they started and never use coins or paper money.

Totems of War

City Father/Mother

Background Cost: 6

A City Father or Mother is the manifestation of the city's inhabitants both human and machine. It represents the city's history and quirks but is also capable of acting of its own accord to advance the city's interests.

The totem will only manifest in what locals think of as a city. In some parts of Europe, anywhere with at least 50,000 people living in it generates a City Father, while in much of the United States a city needs at least a quarter of a million people to produce a City Father. It cannot leave the city limits except to travel into the Near Umbra and even then it can only visit urban realms. The totem appears in an anthropomorphic form that somehow represents the city and its people. San Diego's City Father, for instance, takes on the form of a Spanish missionary. Paris' City Mother only ever appears to foreigners, as the city has always been its most beautiful in the imaginations of its admirers.

Individual Traits: Followers of the City Father may interact with the spirits of their city as if they had the Bone Gnawer Gift: Attunement. Glass Walkers gain one point of temporary Wisdom Renown when accepted by a City Father, but members of other tribes lose one temporary Honor. Also, the totem may on occasion offer warnings of impending danger, either directly or through a messenger.

Pack Traits: Packs of the City receive three additional dice to any Streetwise tests relevant to their city.

Ban: City Fathers or Mothers will often ask their packs to perform tasks for the good of the city. If the pack refuses, the totem will withdraw its support.

Some individual City Fathers or Mothers will offer slightly different traits based on their individual nature. A pair of sample specific City Fathers are presented here.

Big Joe Magarac, City Father of Pittsburgh

Background Cost: 6

'Big Joe Magarac' is a figure of Pittsburgh folklore, a literal man of steel born to help the immigrant steelworkers of the city. His only joy was in working as long and hard as he could and helping his 'brothers' in the factories. The 'character' has popped up in the stories of workers all along the Rust Belt but the City Father knows his true home is in Pittsburgh. He usually appears as a muscular 9-foot tall man made of living steel with an accent suggestive of non-specific Slavic extraction. He's good-natured, honest and generous and respects few things more than a hard worker.

Individual Traits: Big Joe's 'co-workers' can call upon a version of the Homid Gift: Reshape Object with the limitation that they can only affect steel, iron, or some related alloy. In Big Joe's version of the gift, the roll is Strength + Crafts instead of Manipulation. Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers gain one point of temporary Wisdom Renown when accepted by Big Joe, but members of other tribes lose one temporary Honor. Also, he may on occasion offer warnings of impending danger, either directly or through a messenger.

Pack Traits: Joe's packs each receive three additional dice to any Streetwise tests relevant to Pittsburgh.

Ban: Joe Magarac insists that his packs remain busy. Garou following him are expected to volunteer for whatever work needs to be done and cannot take time away from their assigned duties unless ordered by a superior.

The General, City Father of Shanghai

Background Cost: 6

The General first came into existence in the form of Shanghai's city gods. It's tough to say whether he's an amalgamation of the three city gods worshiped by Shanghai's population over the years or whether he is the latest in a series of City Fathers. He appears in roughly the human form of Chen Huacheng, a general who died in 1842 but his outfit contains aspects of a Ming Dynasty examiner's uniform and a Han Dynasty statesman. The exact makeup of the outfit shifts depending on his mood. He is unerringly polite and tactful except when dealing with leaders whom he feels haven't earned their place. He is often found in or near the City God Temple in Shanghai, where he accepts worship from humans even if they don't realize exactly what he is.

Individual Traits: Packmembers serving under the General can call upon a version of the Uktena Gift: Call Elemental. But owing to the Taoist temple where he is worshiped, he grants the ability to summon elementals of the five Chinese elements of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Glass Walkers gain one temporary Wisdom Renown when accepted by the General, but members of other tribes lose one temporary Honor. Also, he may on occasion offer warnings of impending danger, either directly or through a messenger.

Pack Traits: Packs under the General's leadership receive three additional dice to any Streetwise tests relevant to Shanghai.

Ban: The General, owing to an oath Chen Huacheng swore in life, insists that his packs protect the Yangtze River. Also, his followers are duty-bound to ensure that their leaders (both at the pack and at the court or caern level) are truly the best candidates for the job.

One Voice

Background Cost: 4

Spirits of revolution are nothing new and have empowered packs in some form or another for centuries. In the last few years, though, advances in instantaneous mass communication both cultural and technological have given rise to a new variety of totem. One Voice is the spirit of a crowd speaking in unison to make their voices heard, having quickly pulled together a full protest while the adrenaline was high. While it is not going to complain about planned protests, it prefers flashmobs and sudden protests thrown together through chains of telephone calls or Internet posts.

One Voice speaks in the whispers of forgotten thoughts. Its voice is a composite of words said to the dialing tone,

brought together to make new words, urging its pack to action. It communicates through cellphones whenever possible, either speaking to the pack directly or flashing up text messages from an unknown sender. If it must physically appear, it manifests as a faceless everyman with physical characteristics and clothing who is entirely average' for the local area.

Individual Traits: Packmembers each gain two dots of Leadership, the better to gather and coordinate crowds.

Pack Traits: One Voice's packs gain access to the Philodox Gift: Command the Gathering.

Ban: One Voice's packs cannot through action or inaction subvert the will or purpose of any group with which they're working.





Chapter Three: Wyld

The following are El Lobo del Lago Lunar's reports from his worldwide census of wolf Kinfolk populations, as well as some letters to Julia, Kinfolk in the service of the Hard Earth Sept. In them he identifies several places in need of Garou attention, as well as some places of general interest in their war against the Wyrn.

The Home Front

Respected Elders of the Garou Nation,

We Garou are used to thinking of the war against the Wyrn in terms of Banes slain, corrupted spirits destroyed, and fomori put to an end on our claws and fangs. That's a worthy fight, a noble fight, a necessary fight. But the fight is not the war, and if we ignore that, we can win every battle against the Wyrn and still lose.

During the first half of the 20th century, we very nearly did just that.

This is a provable fact, but most Garou have no idea how close the Wyrn came to defeating us even as we howled in victory over one corrupted enemy after another. The Wyrn is ruthless, and its servants can be very subtle. It was never the Wyrn's intention

to give the Garou an honorable battle, because it knows that in a toe-to-toe confrontation against our full strength we would defeat it.

But we Garou are not at our full strength — not even close to it. Why? Without a doubt the Wyrn's corruption has spread throughout the world, not because it is more powerful but because the Garou are less numerous. In every battle we fight, even undeniable victories, we place the lives of our brothers and sisters at risk, and each Garou death depletes our numbers a little more. That does not make their deaths empty gestures or meaningless. We are all called upon to die in the service of Gaia, to be the teeth at the throats of the Wyrn and its servants.

But the death of Garou is only half the equation. My mentor would argue — and I with her — that it is the less important half. The most serious threat to our victory in this war is our failure to breed more quickly than we fall in battle.

I know this prospect makes many homids uncomfortable. Humans do not view mating the way wolves do. Female human Kinfolk do not always want children simply because there is enough food and territory to support the enlargement of their pack. Most human

females have no more than three or four children in a lifetime and rarely give birth to more than one at a time. Even the outliers seldom whelp even twenty pups in a lifetime. Their bodies simply are not equipped to endure the stress of repeated childbirth. Moreover, her pups take sixteen years or more to mature, and that is considered very young among humans. Human Kinfolk are valuable members of Garou society, but we cannot rely on them to replenish the ranks of Gaia's fallen warriors.

By comparison, wolves have litters of 5 or 6 pups each year, if food is plentiful, and those cubs are full grown in perhaps two or three years. Those born Garou usually experience their First Change before their third year of life.

The Children of Gaia praise the wisdom of my mentor and grandmother, Cub Finder, for her role in saving the population of the Mexican wolf from extinction. Because of this, four more werewolves have joined the war against the Wyrn. If not for her intercession, none of them would even have been born. I wish to follow in her footsteps but on a larger scale.

I propose a survey of wolf populations worldwide, especially in areas where they are endangered by humans or by agents of the Wyrn. Werewolves quite often send news of their activities to the Garou nation, but they seem more interested in talking about their enemies than about their Kinfolk. As a lupus, I understand wolves better than my homid siblings do because I was born among them. I was born under the half moon, so I am adept at investigating situations, weighing the facts impartially, and identifying the most beneficial course of action. I ask only your leave to complete this survey and assistance in reaching each destination. If you wish to make me your envoy, I will accept that honor. If you would prefer I make these visits in a less official capacity, I can still carry out the survey by presenting myself as a traveler with a scientific interest.

Respectfully,

Lobo del Lago Lunar

Living Lupus

Letter to Julia from Lobo del Lago Lunar, Lupus Philodox Child of Gaia

What is it like to be born a wolf, you ask? Turn your question on its head. What is it like to be born a human?

How much do you remember of your first two years of life? An impression here, and image there? Perhaps a recollection based more on the stories you've heard of the event than something you can truly remember? And yet those experiences you have forgotten define you, shape you into a human. If you were cherished and encouraged in those early years it will echo in who you grow up to be. If you were neglected or abused, that too will mark you for the rest of your life.

My memories of my life as a wolf are a lot like that. It has been nearly eight years since my First Change. I was only a wolf for two. Certainly I was at least an adolescent by the end of those two years, but a wolf brain is not a human brain. I don't remember much about my life before I Changed, but sometimes I'll catch the whiff of a scent or hear the call of a bird that brings me back to my birthplace, back to that den a few yards away from Lake Luna in the wooded mountains of Arizona.

Homids often wax poetic about the sensations of being in Lupus form — the intensity of the sounds, the sharpness of the scents, the pure joy of running on all fours. These are all wonderful sensations, but lupus don't obsess over them nearly as much as homids do — or even as much as humans obsess over their own humanity. That's simply not our way. Lupus is a familiar form, a useful form — swift, strong, sharp of nose and ears, and capable of holding its own against most natural opponents. Crinos and Homid have their advantages, as well.

In spite of what you might hear, lupus are not wolves — at least no more so than homids are humans. Think about that for a moment. An ordinary human cannot understand a werewolf's Rage. A human who lost her temper as easily as a Garou would not survive very long. It's not your fault, but you're simply too physically frail to lash out at every enemy that opposes you.

A homid, though, is a different creature. Even in his breed form he knows he has Gaia's gifts to call upon. If things get really bad, he knows he can shift to Crinos and tear any opposition into bloody meat. What's more, a homid radiates that quiet confidence, that almost smug certainty that any fight with another human is really beneath him, and other humans pick up on that even if they're drunk and have no idea what kind of beast is grinning in the face of their empty threats.

A lupus is so much more than a wolf that can change shapes. A lupus is all the instinct, power, and cunning of a wolf, plus the full reasoning faculties of

a human. Yet in some ways this also makes us less-than-wolves, too. Homids feel more confident and closer to Gaia after their First Change. The rage introduces complications, but it makes decisions simpler somehow, renders all the tiny dramas of ordinary human life inconsequential. Who cares what brand of gizmo is in style when there are world-destroying monsters to fight?

The lupus come to the First Change from the opposite direction. Oh we're proud to be Gaia's chosen warriors, to be sure. You'll never find a prouder werewolf than a lupus! But we lose our innocence in the process. We can frolic and rejoice in our wolf bodies. We can hunt with our Kinfolk and rightfully lead their packs. But we are wolves no longer, for we cannot live entirely in the moment as once we did. We can look to the future. We can regret the past. These are gifts we did not ask for — could not even have imagined when we were still wolf — but they are ours.

How does the First Change feel to a lupus? Take all the cognitive development a human child goes through from her first birthday to about twenty years old — from facial recognition to “cogito ergo sum” — and cram it into a few minutes. All that happens at the same time that your body completely changes shape and size. Throw in a surge of rage that no wolf and certainly no human can comprehend. Sound terrifying? That's because it is.

Unlike a homid, a lupus can't just curl in on himself afterward and maybe pretend nothing happened. The rage rises and falls, and a quick bath can wash the blood out from under a human's fingernails. But a lupus cannot just walk away from his newfound self-awareness. We're stuck with it, and it takes us some getting used to.

Homids and lupus are both a little emotionally conflicted after their First Change. For homids I'd guess there's a sense that maybe they've become a monster, and all those fictional portrayals of werewolves wash over them. Maybe they even feel guilty if they hurt or killed someone. The flood of emotions a lupus experiences aren't colored with superstition or morality. On the contrary, I think that if we weren't so completely perplexed by our newfound sapience and confusing new bodies we'd probably immediately go on a killing spree.

It takes some time after the First Change to adapt to our new situation. We lupus often tease homid cubs when they first start spending time in Lupus form. They forget they don't have hands. They forget that humans react very differently to

wolves than to other humans. They are unnecessarily cautious and more than a little clumsy. They have a wolf's senses, but they haven't figured out what all those scents and sounds mean. Yes, we may even lose our patience with them, sometimes, but most of them practice diligently and grasp as much as they're likely to need of the tricks to being in Lupus. Those who let frustration win out simply avoid shifting into Lupus unless they absolutely have to.

Compared to the lupus, homids have it easy. Lupus have no native tongue to use in Homid — a form that's incapable of comprehensible wolf howls — so we're forced to learn human language. We don't have the benefits of an education in mathematics, science, or reading. Gaia in her mercy gives us as much coordination in our Homid form as most humans have, but that doesn't mean we automatically know what to do with our hands. And human social graces? Definitely not a part of the starting package, as the Glass Walkers say. Unlike homids, lupus don't usually have the option of shunning their human shape. Our enemies largely hide in or near human places, and a wolf would stick out there.

I know what a lot of homids say about lupus when they don't think we're listening: they think we're too stupid to understand human things like tools and technology. They think that we're too backward in our thinking to attend a human social event without acting inappropriately. They think that we're just too ignorant to grasp the nuances of politics and law. They think that they have to speak to us in human languages very slowly if they want us to understand what they're saying.

None of this is true. Lupus learn human skills quickly — much faster than humans do, in fact — but we start out knowing so much less that it still takes months or even years to achieve mastery. Our pride can also be an impediment. It goes against our instincts to admit weakness. It's often easier to snort in disdain about the weaknesses of Homid or complain about the uselessness of “monkey babble” than it is to master the form or become fluent in human languages. The impatience of many of our homid tutors does not help matters.

But we can learn all these things. It was not easy for me, either. If it hadn't been for my extremely patient mentor — a lupus who had spent most of her life in Homid form — I doubt I would have gotten this far in my human education. And I speak as a lupus who doesn't favor Homid form in the slightest. I've learned that all our forms serve a purpose, else Gaia would not have given us so many.

*Respected Elders,
Enclosed, find my first report on our wolf Kinfolk.
Respectfully,*

Lobo del Lago Lunar

Minnesota

Minnesota is a state in the Upper Midwest — the farthest north of the continental 48. Its weather tends toward extremes. It is no more a stranger to wildfires, tornadoes, and droughts than it is to ice storms, blizzards, and subzero temperatures. Its main geographic claim to fame is its 10,000 lakes.

Minnesota currently boasts the largest wolf population of any state other than Alaska, with a population of nearly 3,000 wolves. Wolf territories are expanding, and while that has led to more collisions between wolves and humans, our Kinfolk in the area are flourishing, especially in the less urban northern half of the state. Vast, wooded state and national parks shelter the wolf population and give Garou places to organize and train safely beyond the eyes of humans.

Although the state once had hundreds of caerns, only a handful remains. Most of those have passed out of the hands of the Garou, stolen by mages or corrupted by servants of the Wyrms. This is the story of the Garou in Minnesota, really. They look successful and healthy to outward appearances, but when you study their situation closely you can see ugly problems hidden beneath the surface.

Places of Note

Itasca State Park: This 50 square mile park of old growth red pine forests contains the headwaters of the Mississippi River. Established in 1891, it is the second oldest state park after Niagara Falls State Park. There are more than 30 known archaeological and cemetery sites in the park dating back as many as 8,000 years. Unfortunately, the practice at the time of excavating these sites erased the spiritual power of at least three caerns. The only one to have survived — Headwaters Caern — is probably the weakest of the ones the park once had.

- **Headwaters Caern:** Inhabited by ghosts and Ancestor spirits of the Uktena who once lived here.

Boundary Waters: The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, referred to by locals as simply “the Boundary Waters,” is a 1,700 square mile wilderness area within the Superior National Forest. It is renowned as a destination for canoeing and fishing and is the most visited wilderness in the United States. It is located in the northeastern part of Minnesota, along the Canadian border. Almost none of the lakes and campsites of the Boundary Waters are

accessible by automobile, a feature that has contributed to the area’s appeal to humans who come here to escape the trappings of modern life. Some of the forests in the Boundary Waters have never been logged, and that has allowed Garou to preserve two of the local caerns — the Misquah Caern and the North Woods Caern.

- **Misquah Caern:** Located on a steep, rocky hill near the highest point in the Boundary Waters, this caern was once a source of flint for warriors of two Native American tribes who made war long before the coming of Europeans to the area. It is frequented by Spirits of War and earth elementals. Members of several tribes act as caretakers for the caern and maintain its moon bridges.

- **North Woods Caern:** Hidden deep in a forest untouched by logging is a circle of eight small standing stones that mark the boundaries of this caern. The Black Furies currently control it, but they often let Garou of other tribes use the space for rituals in exchange for favors done or services rendered. Owl, Beaver, and Bobcat spirits come to the caern regularly.

Twin Cities Sprawl: Minneapolis and Saint Paul surely have problems the same as any large urban area, most of which do not concern wolves in the slightest. One trend that does is the sudden explosion of the cities’ suburbs that includes lands that wolves are expanding into. There used not to be many of these, and most of them were in a tight circle near the cities. Another circle of suburbs has sprung up around those suburbs, which they call the “outer ring.” Construction on the first developments of a third ring has just begun. Pretty standard Weaver behavior so far, right?

However, according to the Glass Walkers, these new developments are spiritually different from ordinary suburbs. They feel mystically sanitized, as if every spirit that once dwelled there had been driven away or destroyed. The Gauntlet is a nearly impenetrable barrier. Worst of all, movement in the Penumbral reflection of these suburbs is greatly impeded—like walking through deep water. This only seems to affect only spirits that are not related to the Weaver. Kinfolk who spend much time in the area—wolf and human alike—cannot pass their Garou blood to their cubs. Their offspring are born as ordinary humans without exception.

Threats

Minnesotans have a reputation for niceness—for being courteous, reserved, and mild-mannered. Some humans in Minnesota are nearly as pro-wolf as the Red Talons without sounding as unreasonable. Others politely recommend the slaughter of 80% of the wolf population annually until our numbers match some ideal they’ve plucked from the air. While “Minnesota nice” can be a boon for social interactions, it also allows some people with extremely dangerous ambitions to look harmless and likeable. And that’s the real danger in Minnesota. Our enemies hide behind well-meaning and eloquent pawns.



The official policy of the state is to control wolf populations to prevent them from killing livestock or straying into areas populated by humans. The state has not made any move to wipe out all wolves, and the population is growing in spite of these killings. However, Garou in the area are rightly concerned.

Humans are specifically targeting our wolf Kinfolk for extermination.

I don't know exactly how they tell the difference, but considering even human Kinfolk can learn to recognize the signs, this isn't unthinkable. The goal of these targeted hunts isn't to wipe out wolves but to wipe out *us*. This is exactly what I meant when I first came to you with my concerns about the dwindling wolf Kinfolk population. The Wyrms are at work here, and Garou have thus far done next to nothing to fight it on this front. Here are some of the tactics local Uktena believe agents of the Wyrms are using against us:

- **Culls:** In years past, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) culled wolf populations to prevent them from killing livestock. These hunters are government employees, which means that although they are few in number, they have access to cutting edge equipment to get the job done. Shooting wolves from a helicopter isn't exactly sporting, but these aren't sport hunters. They're just doing a job.

After Summer Laughter fell to one of these culls while she was in Lupus, Garou started taking these helicopter hunts more seriously. The high-powered rifle round that took her life was made of silver. As far as the local Uktena can tell, all the bullets used in such culls are silver. They all come from a single ammunition supplier that won a government contract—a supplier that is unquestionably the enemy of Garou but one that has thus far kept its identity hidden even from the Glass Walkers.

- **Traps:** Farmers who lose livestock to wolves are compensated for the damage by the state. The DNR dispatches a trapper to capture the offending wolves and move them to an area where they are less likely to come into conflict with humans—all carried out as humanely as possible. Something always happens to the wolves along the way, however.

Those wolves that are not Kinfolk are simply fitted with radio collars and other scientific tracking equipment. The trappers chemically sterilize or outright replace Kinfolk with non-Kinfolk wolves from other regions. In addition, the radio collars they receive are more advanced, with tiny cameras and microphones that no doubt turn them into spies for the enemy. Removing these radio collars invariably kills the wolf that wears it, and the last Garou who attempted an undercover investigation of these trappers disappeared completely.

• **Hunters:** In the past only DNR personnel were allowed to hunt Minnesota's wolves. This year the state announced that they would be issuing 6,000 wolf-hunting licenses for this fall and winter. The interest in these has been overwhelming, with 23,000 applicants so far – most of them local but many hailing from California, Florida, Texas, and Alaska, as well as a handful from foreign shores. Everyone, it seems, is suddenly very interested in hunting Minnesota's wolves.

If this doesn't have the stink of the Wyrms all over it, I don't know what does. Who are these hunters? Their identities aren't made public, so who can say whether this army of wolf-killers will be made up of *fomori*, Black Spiral Dancers, or ordinary humans supplied with the same silver bullets used by DNR's helicopter hunters? One thing is certain: it will be a bloody winter.

Recommendations

The Wyrms' quiet assaults on our wolf Kinfolk in Minnesota have been going on for several years, but these conflicts may soon escalate into a full scale war for which the local Garou are not currently prepared. A Kinfolk population spread out over a large area and a dearth of active caerns make it impossible for them to fend off the kind of all-out attack that may be coming.

They need reinforcements, and quickly. The Wyrms' aim in this hunt may not be to wipe out Minnesota's Garou, although it certainly could be given the size of the force they are directing into our wolf holdings there. It is more likely the enemy intends to strike a heavy blow against our breeding stock there. If we lose our wolf Kinfolk in Minnesota, we could lose the state entirely.

Yellowstone National Park

Yellowstone is widely held to be the world's first national park. It spans over 3,500 square miles of lakes, canyons, rivers, and mountain ranges, primarily in Wyoming but with parts in Montana and Idaho. Forests cover about 80% of its area, particularly sub-alpine forests. It's especially famous for its large number of geothermal features, including the geyser Old Faithful, most of which are fed by a massive and entirely active supervolcano.

The wolf population of the park itself is relatively small due to purges that took place in the first decades of the 20th century. Wolves only returned to the area in the late 1990s, and there are currently about 300 in and around the park. Despite competition with grizzly bears, which outnumber them by nearly 2 to 1 and compete for food, the wolf population is slowly growing.

The region has one of the highest densities of caerns in the world, and several tribes of Garou have disputes over control of them. The Uktena held these lands for millennia, but the wolf Kinfolk from Canada used to repatriate the region include Children of Gaia, Get of Fenris, Red Talons, Shadow Lords, Silver Fangs, and even Wendigo. All of these tribes have some claim on the region, though have only two or three werewolves in the area at any one time.

Places of Note

Mountains: The Continental Divide passes through Yellowstone, with approximately one third to its west and two thirds to its east. The Snake River and the Yellowstone River have sources quite near each other but on opposite sides of the divide, so the Snake River flows west into the Pacific Ocean while the Yellowstone River flows south and east until it ultimately empties into the Gulf of Mexico. There are 70 named mountain peaks in Yellowstone Park, and Garou control a few caerns of note in the mountains:

• **Snake River Caern:** This caern lies between the sources of the Snake and Yellowstone Rivers, on the Continental Divide exactly between them. The Children of Gaia currently occupy it, although it is open to anyone in need of healing. It is inhabited by Water and Wolf spirits, as well as peaceful earth elementals.

• **Eagle Peak Caern:** Named because the mountain resembles a spread eagle, this peak is the highest point in the park. The Silver Fangs currently claim this caern over the objections of the Uktena. Eagle and Falcon spirits visit this caern frequently.

• **Electric Peak Caern:** Electric Peak is the tallest mountain in the Gallatin Range of southern Montana. This caern lies near the top of the mountain, between two arms of rock on the northern face. The Shadow Lords guard it fiercely, and with good reason. The Get of Fenris have already made one attempt to claim it as their own and are unlikely to give up after the first sortie. It is inhabited by Storm spirits that take delight in destroying any electronics that enter their territory.

• **Roaring Mountain Caern:** Roaring Mountain was named for the numerous fumaroles on the western slope of the peak. These openings in the ground emit steam and were once loud enough to be heard for several miles. The Uktena control the caern located among these fumaroles, although they sometimes grant access to outsiders.

Rivers and Waterfalls: Although fire spirits make their presence known more keenly, water spirits have plenty of places to play among Yellowstone Park's dozens of waterfalls, many rivers, and deep canyons. As with its mountains, Yellowstone's waterfalls hold secrets:

• **Undine Falls Caern:** Between the upper and lower waterfalls is a small, swirling pool. Under the light of the full moon, it sometimes reflects events in far-off places or

even in the past and future. Water spirits called Undines are garrulous and friendly so long as visitors do not attempt to enter the pool. Legends say the river bed hides a secret treasure the Undines are tasked with protecting. The caern is nominally under the control of the Uktena, although a pack made up of three different tribes are its official guardians.

- **Tower Fall Caern:** The top of this 130 foot waterfall is flanked by numerous towers of stone created by the erosion of the soft volcanic stone on the upper ledge. This caern itself is located in the pool at the bottom of the falls, but any moon bridge opened here can only be accessed by leaping off the top of the falls from one of the stone towers. However, the range of this caern's moon bridges is much greater than usual, as it can open moon bridges to caerns up to 3,000 miles away. Get of Fenris lay claim to this caern, which is populated by spirits of Travel and Lunes, as well as water elementals.

- **Childhood Dream Falls Caern:** This caern is hidden in the woods a few hundred yards from the base of this small waterfall — just close enough for a wolf's ears to hear the murmuring of the water as it strikes the rocks below. A Garou who sleeps in Lupus under her auspice

moon at this caern dreams of one of her ancestors and can carry on a short conversation with him, possibly learning Gifts or recovering lost knowledge. On other nights, she may dream of Chimerlings. By day, spirits of Shadow and Forest gather in the caern. The Shadow Lords currently lay claim to this place, but the Wendigo have their eyes on it.

- **Yellowstone Hot Spot:** Yellowstone lies on top of the massive supervolcano that has produced four of the ten most violent volcanic eruptions the world has seen in the last 28 million years. The visions of some seers warn that the next such eruption is coming soon.

The Yellowstone Caldera, the ultimate source of Yellowstone's impressive geothermal repertoire, lurks beneath Yellowstone Lake. Fire spirits and elementals dominate in the fumaroles, hot springs, and geysers of Yellowstone Park, but they are playful insects compared to the spirit of the caldera. Uktena legends claim one of the few Incarnae left on Earth is imprisoned beneath Yellowstone Lake, in the magma chamber below the great caldera left after the last supereruption. The exact nature of the Yellowstone Spirit is

anybody's guess, but its province appears to be the primordial fire of Gaia herself.



YELLOWSTONE SPIRIT

The Yellowstone Spirit does not communicate with Garou directly, but sometimes it behaves in ways that seem to indicate restlessness. A thousand earthquakes in a year is normal for the region, but when that climbs to 3,000 in a year or a thousand in a month, every werewolf in the area knows the reason. The magma chamber below Yellowstone Lake fills more each year, pushing the roof of the caldera above ever higher, but when it rises eight inches in a single year, wise Garou enact rituals to calm the spirit. The annual forest fires are a sacrifice to the Yellowstone Spirit by the Uktena to placate it so it will not erupt yet.

You can feel the Yellowstone Spirit's power throughout the geysers and fumaroles of the park, in every hot spring and mudpot. It accepts the sacrifices of Garou who deliberately subject themselves to the furious heat of the area's geothermal features. A blast of boiling water or superheated steam scalds and scars but also fills the Garou to the bursting point with Rage.

Threats

Yellowstone National Park is perhaps one of the only places in the world that remains virtually untouched by the Wyrms. Wolves in the area are no longer considered endangered, but humans have shown little interest in hunting our Kinfolk. The greatest threat the wolf population faces is from the Wyld.

No one knows what if anything prevents the Yellowstone Spirit from leaving the magma chamber below the caldera. If some other power binds it there, what will it do if it breaks those bonds? If it chooses to remain there, what happens if something inspires it to leave its lair? How does an Incarna of Gaia's fiery rage behave if it is not confined to an underground sea of magma? I've heard rumors that some Garou in the area actually hope to bring forth the Yellowstone Spirit as a weapon in our war against the Wyrms. Never mind that we can't know whether it would devour our enemies or simply consume the world in its primordial fire.

The Yellowstone Caldera itself presents a potential deadly danger to all living things within a thousand miles or more. If its dome of rock collapses into the magma chamber, the scale of the resulting eruption would dwarf anything humans as a species have ever experienced. Empowered by an unleashed Yellowstone Spirit, such an eruption could

wipe out the entire population of wolves and humans on much of the North American continent. Uktena legends claim that these eruptions are inextricably linked to the Yellowstone Spirit, although they disagree on whether the next major eruption will release the Incarna or whether releasing the spirit will cause the first such eruption in the last 640,000 years.

Finally, the Yellowstone Spirit has an often-dangerous influence on local Garou, as it grants its powerful Rage to any who sacrifice a part of themselves to it. This is probably one of the main reasons the Wyrms has never gotten a foothold here, and even the Weaver's servants show respect for Yellowstone and do not disturb its caerns. However, this Rage enflames most Garou far beyond their capacity for self-control. Many succumb to frenzy with little provocation, and I've seen two incidents of Garou falling into the Thrall of the Wyrms during what was supposed to be merely ritual combat. Add to this the conflict between tribes over control of caerns, and you have a recipe for bloody and wholly unnecessary tribal war in the area. Of course, warning these Garou of the danger will likely only infuriate them, which is a losing proposition considering the degree to which they've allowed their Rage to rule them.

Recommendations

Increasing the wolf population in Yellowstone further may attract unwanted attention from human hunters. It makes a good breeding ground, however, and we can use it as a staging area for expansion into other parts of the continent.

We need to take steps to defuse the tension between Garou in the area. If we can bring them to bear against agents of the Wyrms their Rage will no doubt prove a valuable asset. I can imagine using the Yellowstone Spirit's blessing to raise veritable armies of shock troops where subtlety is less of a concern than brute killing power.

Finally, I would urge you to take steps to identify who is trying to set the Yellowstone Spirit free and put a stop to it. The battlefield value of a manifested Incarna, although not inconsequential, still is not great enough to justify the risk of loosing a weapon we cannot control and that may just as easily turn on us. Even if the Incarna ultimately joins our war, setting it free may well trigger a catastrophic volcanic eruption with consequences no less terrible than would have resulted from a nuclear war. I'm not convinced that the Garou behind the efforts to unleash the Yellowstone Spirit have not considered this. More than likely they consider such an eruption a doomsday device, a weapon of last resort capable of wiping out all the servants of both Weaver and Wyrms. That doing so would likely also obliterate nearly all of Gaia's creatures is simply an unfortunate side effect to them.

Iberian Peninsula

Western Europeans spent centuries hunting the native wolf population and were nearly successful in wiping them out in places like France, Germany, and Denmark. Until recently, it seemed certain that while Eastern Europe might still shelter our kin, our foothold in Western Europe was lost. This is no longer the case on the Iberian Peninsula.

The Iberian Wolf inhabited much of Spain and Portugal until the 1900s. An active extermination campaign in the 1950s and 1960s wiped out all the wolves in Spain except in the northwest part of the country, and similar policies in Portugal almost wiped out the wolves there. Conservationists successfully argued for the protection of the remaining population.

A sizeable population of Iberian Wolves roams in Sierra de la Culebra, and some isolated areas in Sierra Morena, and the population is expanding south and east. There have been reports of wolves returning to Navarre and the Basque Country, as well as the provinces of Extremadura, Madrid, and Guadalajara. A male Italian wolf found its way into Catalonia, where the last native wolf was killed in 1929.

In all, the wolf population on the peninsula is growing, and we have been able to reclaim a lot of abandoned territory. Three caerns have returned to our control, although many more now lie within the boundaries of human cities like Granada and Barcelona.

Places of Note

Sierra de la Culebra: This is a mountain range in northwest Spain and northeastern Portugal, forming a natural border between the two countries. The largest wolf population on the Iberian Peninsula lives here, and thousands of human eco-tourists visit the area to watch the wolves. On the Portuguese side, wolf hunting is forbidden, but the Spanish side sells licenses to hunt wolves — ostensibly to fund the upkeep of the park and to prevent overcrowding. These licenses are expensive and largely purchased by rich thrill-seekers who have convinced themselves that hunting with a rifle what Gaia only equipped with teeth is somehow sporting or even dangerous.

The Rock of the Three Kingdoms: This caern is a rocky formation in the Sierra del Marabón, part of the mountainous system of Sierra de la Culebra. It is located within Sierra de la Culebra at the meeting point of the medieval kingdoms of Portugal, León, and Galicia.

It has long served as a place for Garou to meet and overcome their differences and remember that we all serve Gaia first and foremost. In centuries past, homid warriors would meet here even if their home countries were at war. Tribes have ratified many treaties at this site.

• **Rock of the Three Kingdoms Caern:** Inhabited by spirits of Peace and Calm, as well as earth elementals.

Sierra Morena: This system of steep, rocky mountain ranges stretches about 250 miles east-west across southern Spain. In former times bandits and highwaymen haunted the mountains because the area was so inaccessible to patrols. Its Penumbra is still haunted by the ghosts of these desperados, some of whom have grown quite powerful.

Although humans have taken shelter in its caves and tapped its mineral wealth since prehistoric times, it has always been the domain of the Wyld. The Penumbra of its valleys, canyons, and caverns hides several chimares, glens, and trods. There are not as many wolves here as in Sierra de la Culebra, but it has the highest density of lupus in Western Europe.

Despeñaperros: This park in the Sierra Morena derives its name from the canyon that runs through its center. The main gorge cuts through the mountains in a natural pass flanked by walls as high as 1,600 feet, which has made it a choice route for human travel since Neolithic times. This canyon, as well as Cimbarra Falls and the area's caves, has many important examples of Neolithic cave paintings.

Of course, not all the cave paintings in Despeñaperros are so mundane. Some predate the arrival of Man on the Iberian Peninsula, placed there by beings that no longer walk the Gaia Realm, and no one has been able to decipher them. Others are the occult scribbles of the witches and sorcerers who took refuge in the area during the Spanish Inquisition so they could continue to practice their arts. A few cave paintings hidden deep under the earth are of great interest to Garou, as they imprison Banes or hint at something sinister lurking deeper still against which we must be vigilant.

El Camino de Santiago: The Way of Saint James is the pilgrimage route to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia in northwestern Spain, where tradition has it that the remains of the apostle Saint James are buried. It has been a Christian pilgrimage route for over a thousand years, and while it saw its peak during the Middle Ages, modern day pilgrims still travel this old path on foot. Shrines and rest stops along the way offer travelers shelter along the way. The scallop shell is the traditional symbol of this pilgrimage, for all the lines converge at one place as all roads lead the pilgrim to Compostela. Those who complete the journey usually bring a scallop shell home with them.

Despite this long history, human researchers have found no evidence of pagan origins for this pilgrimage. And with good reason, for it is actually a shadow of an even older Garou pilgrimage route that begins in San Sebastian near Spain's eastern border and leads to Compostela more than 400 miles away. A spirit of the ocean blesses Garou who make this pilgrimage on foot. It usually grants minor

boons, although it has been known to give greater rewards to those who choose to take a longer route — a thousand miles or more.

According to legend, Garou willing to make the pilgrimage entirely in the Penumbra find something other than the cathedral at Compostela at the end of their journey. The tales claim El Camino de Santiago's Umbral reflection works much like a moon bridge, except it can lead the wanderer to any caern in the world, even those thought to have been lost. If the Garou concentrates on a specific destination, she is more likely to reach that caern if she knows it well. If the Garou focuses on a problem instead of a destination, the pilgrimage ends near a place that holds a solution to that problem. If she embraces the journey without judging the destination, Gaia leads her to where she is needed most.

Alas, the journey hasn't been safe for hundreds of years. Spirits lurk like bandits along the Umbral route, and the road itself has many obstacles. Also, time seems to move more quickly on the pilgrimage route. Garou traveling it suffer the effects of Disconnection after only half a lunar cycle, but if they step off the road and through the Gauntlet the pilgrims must return to San Sebastian and begin the journey from the start.

A few wise ones whisper that if a Garou could make the Umbral pilgrimage from an even more distant starting place — France, Italy, or even Russia — the reward at the destination could change the course of our war against the Wyrms. Of course, that would be a truly impossible journey for any but the most resolute Garou.

Threats

As wolves reclaim territory they haven't dominated in a century, ever-superstitious humans inevitably worry over their flocks, herds, and children, and that creates conflicts. Wherever humans have taken to culling wolf populations for any reason, there is a risk that our pureblooded Kinfolk will be specifically targeted by the enemy, so we should remain wary. After consulting with the lupus who live in wolf territory, as well as with those Glass Walkers adept at following money trails, it does not appear that the Spanish wolf hunters are Wym-inspired. If they were originally initiated by servants of the enemy, any Wym influence they bear is a mere echo undetectable even by our sharpest Wym-sniffers. The money for hunting licenses pays for park patrols and maintenance. In fact, the recent decline of sales of these licenses due to the real estate crisis, which has hit Spain and Portugal particularly hard, is probably a greater threat to the wolves of the Iberian Peninsula than the hunters themselves.

The Wym cannot be ignorant of the resurgence of Iberian wolves, but for some reason it has chosen to concentrate on the heavy-handed gambits that are all too

familiar to Garou, at least on the Iberian Peninsula. The recent economic struggles and scandals in these two countries, although largely outside the scope of this report, are probably not accidents. They may seem like mere human problems to Iberian lupus, but something deeper is surely at work. Unfortunately, history has taught us that humans are only environmentally conscious when their civilizations are stable. When uncertainty grows as it has in Spain and Portugal, cuts to conservation funding cannot be too far off, and that can lead to acts of desperation like selling protected land to refill government coffers.

Recommendations

There is nothing I would immediately change about the way the Iberian wolf population is currently being managed by the Garou here. Improving the communications between rural and urban Garou might be helpful, but these two groups have a long history of conflict throughout Europe. In fact, it wasn't until quite recently that the tribes here stopped actively fighting each other for territory and wolf breeding stock.

Australian Outback

The outback is a vast, remote, arid area of Australia that is home to a diverse mix of animal species, including kangaroo, emu, and (of particular interest to Garou) dingo. The number of humans that scrape out a living in the dirt of the outback is quite small, and most of those are engaged in mining or in raising sheep and cattle on the sparse rangelands.

While dingoes are often described as wild dogs, pure-blooded ones are closer to wolves in pedigree than any domesticated breed of dog. However, the past century of contact with European dogs has tainted the blood so much that the pureblood dingo is dying out. Humans, who cannot generally tell half-bloods from purebloods and consider both nuisances, wage a never-ending war on them with guns, traps, and poisons.

The presence of Garou in Australia greatly predates the arrival of the first dingoes from Asia. We cannot think about Australia without recalling the tragedy that befell the Bunyip and their Kinfolk at claws of our ancestors. It is right that we should grieve for that terrible chapter in our history, but we are at war with an enemy that threatens Gaia herself, so we must put it behind us. The Bunyip are no more. They left behind and countless caerns that Garou have neglected far too long out of shame over the War of Tears.

Places of Note

The Dingo Fence: This pest-exclusion fence was built in the 1880s to keep the dingoes of the outback out of the relatively fertile southeast part of the continent (where they



had largely been exterminated) and protect the sheep flocks of southern Queensland. At nearly 3,500 miles in length, it is the world's longest fence and one of the largest human structures in the world—the Great Wall of China of fences. It is six feet high and extends a foot into the ground. The ground for 16 feet to either side of the fence is cleared of vegetation, and much of it is illuminated, which makes wolves approaching it by night easy pickings for a human with a gun, a grudge against dingoes, and too much time on his hands.

While the dingo fence is not impenetrable, it has been very effective at keeping our Kinfolk away from the areas it is meant to guard. Feral camels have knocked down parts of the fence in Southern Australia. Dingo pups squeeze through the fence when they are still small enough to do so, and this allows our Kinfolk to spread that way. However, the farmers and ranchers on the other side of the fence are zealous enemies of dingoes and shoot, trap, and poison them to protect their herds. Plans for restructuring the dingo fence to be taller and electric are in progress.

Mary Kathleen: Mary Kathleen was a mining settlement in the northwestern part of Queensland, Australia—in the Selwyn Range between Mount Isa and Cloncurry. Humans discovered uranium in the area in 1954. The uranium ran out after about thirty years, and the community

has become a ghost town. To all appearances, it looks much the way it did before humans arrived with the exception of a few concrete pads and the radioactive tailing pond.

The tailing pond unleashes the occasional rampaging Bane or campers-turned-fomori, but it is far enough from most population centers that local Garou have little difficulty identifying and eliminating these threats. They have had less luck cleansing the Wyrms taint from the mine site, as their three unsuccessful attempts attest. The Banes of the tailing pond are almost lazy in their assaults on the surrounding countryside, but they are terrible when defending their radioactive lair from Garou.

Also, local governments miss the revenue the mine once generated and point to nearby sites that show promise as uranium mines. One of those is near Battle Mountain, one of the caerns the Garou claimed before the end of the War of Tears. Is this simple human greed or the beginning of a Wyrms plot to corrupt the caern?

• **Battle Mountain Caern:** This was the site of the last stand of the Kalkadoon, an Aboriginal tribe that revered Battle Mountain as sacred. Once a place of peace and healing, the Kalkadoon's battle against the invading Europeans changed the spirit of the caern. It is inhabited now by War and Pain spirits, as well as many ghosts from both sides of that battle.

Central Ranges: This dry region of sandy plains and rocky highland lays near the center of Australia. The remote city of Alice Springs is the only large human settlement, and one doesn't need to go far from it before the wilderness closes in all around. Garou have traditionally shunned this region because it contains so many reminders of the War of Tears. Caerns lie fallow near the Ochre Pits, in the MacDonnell Ranges, at Gosses Bluff, and many other places in the region.

The last Bunyip Kinfolk among the Indigenous Australians who live in the area still guard these sacred places. Their truce with servants of the Weaver has prevented humans from disturbing the caerns, and they have even proven they can even hold their own against lesser Banes. However, local Garou point to the recent corruption of the Sad Spring Caern as proof that the Central Ranges cannot hold out against the servants of the Wyrms for much longer.

Dreamtime: The Dreamtime is Australia's Penumbra. In the Dreamtime, prehistoric and extinct animals live next to Aboriginal spirits. The boundaries between Dreamtime and the physical world have always been weak, and the Dreamtime of the outback has not been reshaped by Weaver and Wyrms the way the densely populated coastal areas have. Before their disappearance, the Bunyip placed powerful wards on the Dreamtime that have preserved the Penumbra of the outback as it looked when they first came to Australia. Moon Paths in the Dreamtime lead to the prehistoric realm of Pangaea and the mystical world of the Legendary Realm.

The Dreamtime of the outback is dangerous even for Garou who know the Umbral realms well. The Bunyip warded or left behind traps in the Penumbra of caerns and many other places once sacred to them. The invading European Garou largely eliminated the coastal wards, but the closer one comes to the center of the continent, the more powerful and dangerous and creative the Bunyip wards become.

Threats

The Garou of the outback face threats on a number of fronts:

- **Dwindling Kinfolk:** The dingoes appear to have unlimited capacity to breed and spread, and there is no immediate danger that they will be wiped out. However, interbreeding with domesticated dogs has reduced the population of pure dingoes to only 30% of its size a century ago. While the Red Talons often blame the depletion of our stock of breeding Kinfolk on human measures, the threat of thinning dingo blood is a much more serious one. Half-dingoes don't bear Gaia's touch: they are never Garou and cannot be Kinfolk.

- **Wym Predation:** Mining companies, some of them known Pentex subsidiaries, have identified several

uranium deposits in the region and are actively lobbying governments to open up mines. We all know that creations of the Wym often spring up out of radioactive waste. So far, humans in the area have resisted requests to tap these dangerous resources, but the servants of the Wym can be patient and convincing.

Recommendations

Respect for the dead is admirable. The War of Tears has been a tremendous source of shame for Australian Garou for centuries and rightly so. However, leaving powerful caerns unguarded does not serve Gaia. Rather, it affords the servants of the Wym ample opportunities to plunder and corrupt the sacred places of the Bunyip and to use them against us. Australia already has too many Hellholes because werewolves refused to reclaim and were too slow to defend Aboriginal caerns.

Many werewolves remember how terrifying the Bunyip could be when provoked, but they can neither aid nor threaten us now. At this point in the war, we need to move on the caerns the Bunyip left behind. Many of these places are dangerous, but Garou who snarl in the faces of Banes and fomori should not cower in fear of the sacred places of a tribe that vanished from the Earth a century ago.

We need to adopt the Aboriginal Kinfolk the Bunyip left behind and preserve them from further human purges. It could take decades or even longer to regain their trust, for they have every reason to resent and fear us. After all, we Garou stood by and did nothing as the Aboriginal Protection Board separated children from their parents for more than a century. Even the Children of Gaia fought this atrocity with empty words when we should have taken action.

Physiology of a Death Beast

Letter to Julia from Lobo del Lago Lunar, Lupus Philodox Child of Gaia

You're just full of questions, aren't you? An Ahroun might have better answers for some of these, but I suppose talking to a Full Moon about Garou battle forms can be a little intimidating to a Kinfolk — certainly more intimidating than asking a Philodox on the far side of the world. But I was never any good at sleeping in midair — I'm too curious for my own good — so I'll explain as best I can.

The bodies of werewolves behave differently than those of other animals. This has a lot to do with the spirit side of our natures. We're not just flesh-and-blood, so we don't follow all the rules humans have about how the world works. There are some humans out there who try to study or even capture Garou for exactly that reason. They think we're breaking their

laws of physics, but it's actually just their understanding of the world that's flawed.

A Garou in Lupus or Homid weighs much less than one in Crinos. This in itself is handy. Need to cross thin ice? Lupus is the best form for it — light-weight with a lower center of gravity. Need to keep an enemy you've grabbed from getting away? Crinos is ideal both because it is incredibly strong and much heavier than other forms.

Of course, being heavier or lighter, larger or smaller is just a tiny piece of the advantages of shifting. The form I choose says a lot about how I intend to solve problems in the near future. Hispo is more graceful than Crinos or even Lupus. Glabro is good when quarters are too tight for Crinos but the Homid form isn't strong enough for the task. Like I've said before, every shape has its purpose.

Most werewolves learn to shift rapidly during combat in order to keep opponents off-balance. Some take this a step further, using the shift itself as a weapon. They will shift to a smaller form to present a smaller target or to slip out of an enemy's grip. Or they will lock jaws in Lupus and then shift to Crinos to bring their claws into play, as well. A werewolf knocked prone while in Homid or Glabro shifts into Lupus or Hispo and can rejoin the fray without needing to stand up. Some tribes have created special fighting styles around shapeshifting in battle.

A Garou is also exceptionally resistant to physical punishment, healing most injuries in mere seconds. Does that mean we don't feel pain when we're injured? Yes and no. When a human is in a dangerous situation, adrenaline gets her ready to fight or flee, temporarily dulling the pain of any injuries she might sustain. Of course, once the danger passes all the pain comes flooding back and the human feels every pulled muscle and cracked rib.

Werewolves are creatures of supernatural Rage, so the pain tolerance we gain when we're under stress makes human adrenaline look like a sugar high by comparison. I've been in a more than a few fights, and even terrible injuries are little more than an itch so long as there's danger. You won't hear a Garou yelp or scream in pain no matter how vicious the blow, although he might growl with renewed fury. If our wounds slow us down at all it isn't because they hurt but because they have broken something. A severed hamstring might not hurt beyond a tingle, but it'll still make it difficult to run!

Of course, when the danger has passed so too does the pain tolerance. A shattered ribcage with a punctured lung hurts a lot, believe me. Of course, even pain serves a purpose, because it helps us stay focused on our Rage, and that stops our bleeding, forces the bone fragments back into place, and generally returns us to full strength shortly after the battle is done.

Garou healing is another one of those things that gets nosy humans too excited for their own good. While I've heard a few ideas about how it works, I don't think anyone can really say they understand it completely. My favorite theory goes something like this:

Garou are equal parts flesh and spirit, and these halves reflect each other. When something damages a werewolf's body, it makes the flesh an imperfect version of the Garou's spirit image. The spirit self knows what the werewolf's body should actually look like and works diligently to restore the body to its natural, proper shape. We don't need to reattach a severed hand or even eat and drink to restore our strength. Our spirit self simply spins new flesh and blood to replace whatever we lost.

Of course, some attacks can damage the spirit self, too — silver or fire, for example, or the claws of Garou or certain fomori. Fortunately it can usually heal its injuries over time, but it takes a lot longer. Moreover, these injuries hurt for as long as we have them. If the injuries are especially bad, they can scar the spirit self, and the physical body reflects that injury ever after.

Not all werewolves care for this explanation, of course. Some confuse the idea of the spirit self with what many humans think of as the soul, and they think that this is a case of the Children of Gaia telling them that the battle scars they earned make them somehow spiritually less than those who have not yet endured lasting harm. These are very different concepts, however. A round rock is a different shape from a flat one, but one shape is not morally superior to another. The same with a werewolf's spirit self. A battle scar changes who you are in some way, but it doesn't make you lesser or greater — simply different. The Garou Nation set great stock by scars, but their Renown is an external validation, not an intrinsic statement of worth.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is the second-most populous African nation and one of the oldest known sites of human existence. Ethiopia is an ecologically diverse country, with deserts, tropical forests, and an extensive highland complex of mountains and dissected plateaus divided by the Great Rift Valley. Ethiopian wolves roam in the higher altitudes of the nation, but only about 550 remain after a rabies outbreak in 1990 wiped out one third of the population in a matter of two weeks. Despite attempts to pin the blame for this outbreak on agents of the Wyrms, the culprit turned out to be nothing more sinister than infected dogs. This plague among wolves has put the Ethiopian wolf on the endangered species list – only a short step removed from those animals that are extinct except in captivity.

The caerns of Ethiopia are as powerful as they are ancient. Without them, the Silent Striders and Bone Gnawers that occupy in the area would have long since been swept away by the many Fera tribes that dominate the rest of Africa. While the tribes are used to working together, homid males hold many of the same attitudes toward women as their human Kinfolk. In a nation where nearly 70% of marriages are by abduction and almost three-quarters of women have undergone some form of genital mutilation, the handful of Black Furies who have come from Egypt to reinforce the caerns against threats from without have been forced to waste much of their energy resisting the attempts of their fellow Garou to “civilize” them. No doubt Fera spies are watching this development with interest.

Places of Note

Bale Mountains: Located in the southeast part of Ethiopia, this range of mountains is the territory of the largest part of the country’s wolf population. It acts as a sort of lookout point for the Silent Striders of North Africa. Populations of Fera control Hareenna Forest to the south of the mountains, and there have been several skirmishes with them even though the War of Rage officially ended long ago. These werewolves also act as guardians of Mount Tullu Demtu, the highest mountain in the range and the location of one of the powerful Ethiopian caerns.

• **Tullu Demtu Caern:** Bird and War Spirits are common sights at this caern. The Silent Striders who guard this caern know a special rite unique to this caern called the Rite of Luna’s Eye. With it, a Garou who looks out from the rocky outcroppings of this mountain caern can see impossible distances.

Semien Mountains: This mountain range lies in the northern part of Ethiopia and consists of plateaus separated by valleys and rising to pinnacles. The Semien Mountains are one of the few places in Africa with regular snowfall.

ARKWASIYE THUNDEREGG

These spirits take the form of a single thunderegg—a stone the size of a baseball with a nodular outer shell and a heart of crystal or agate—hidden in a difficult-to-reach spot. To complete the hunt, the Garou at the moot must work together to locate the spirit, climb sheer cliffs to reach it, and take turns trying to break it open. Once the werewolves reveal the heart of the thunderegg as a part of the ritual, they refresh their supply of Gnosis.

The population of wolves here is much smaller than in the Bale Mountains. Deforestation and encounters with humans in the small villages that dot the area have made the situation worse. Arkwasiye Pass is a ridge that connects the two highest mountains in Ethiopia—Ras Dashen and Mount Bwahit.

• **Arkwasiye Caern:** This caern lies in a cleft of rock just below the ridge of Arkwasiye Pass. Spirits of War and Cold are common here, but perhaps most notable are the strange Englings known as Arkwasiye Thundereggs that inhabit the area. [Level 3 Caern of Strength.]

Erta Ale: This continuously active volcano in northeastern Ethiopia lies in the Afar Depression, a badland desert area. The area surrounding the volcano is below sea level. It has one or sometimes two lava lakes at the summit that occasionally overflow on the south side of the volcano. The surrounding terrain is some of the most inhospitable on Earth, a desert stripped of any soil or vegetation at all. The native humans have a legendary reputation for viciousness toward outsiders.

The Wyld exerts a powerful influence over the area. Wyldlings and capricious elementals flit around the skirts of the volcano, alternately aiding and attacking anyone they meet. Rumor has it that one of the last Vortices on Earth dwells in the Penumbra at the volcano’s summit and occasionally materializes during major eruptions.

Blue Nile: Ethiopia’s highlands are the source of the Blue Nile, beginning at the sacred spring of Gish Abbai, flowing into Lake Tana, descending 150 feet from Tis Isaat Falls, and runs 500 miles through Ethiopian gorges as deep as 4,900 feet before entering Sudan. It provides nearly two-thirds of the water that reaches Egypt.

Sadly, most of the Blue Nile caerns in the Ethiopian highlands are now defunct. While ambitious Theurges propose rebuilding these dead caerns every few years,

nothing has ever come of it. The Garou in the area are not numerous, and they face troubles enough from humans and Fera without calling down the forces of the Wyrms.

• **Gish Abbai Caern:** Even humans have long felt the intense power of this place, and legends claim the spring marks the spot where the first humans were driven out of Eden in the book of Genesis. Additionally, some scientific theories about the origin of the human species claim that the first homo sapiens to leave the African continent were hunter-gatherers who lived near this caern. The waters of Gish Abai have miraculous healing properties that have made this caern an irreplaceable treasure for the Garou. The caern is positively thick with spirits of Healing and Water elementals.

Threats

The Ethiopian wolf is on the verge of extinction. Deforestation, attacks by humans, and rabies outbreaks have almost wiped out our wolf Kinfolk. Human biologists interested in preserving the remaining population are making plans to capture the remaining wolves and create a captive breeding program. While this may benefit our Kinfolk in the long term, in the short term (anything less than a century) it will be little different for the Garou than if those Kinfolk died out.

Nor are the wolves our only Kinfolk who are vulnerable to disease. HIV will not kill a werewolf nor even produce noteworthy symptoms, but we can still be carriers and our Kinfolk are no less vulnerable to it than other mortals. Given the proliferation of this disease in the human population of Ethiopia, even our human breeding stock is in peril.

Skirmishes with the Fera have likewise reduced the number of Garou and human Kinfolk. The caerns the Garou hold in Ethiopia are very powerful and so make tempting targets for anyone who can benefit from them. The Fera are simply the most numerous and obvious, but other supernatural beings have come sniffing around our caerns.

Recommendations

The situation in Ethiopia has become desperate, and the Silent Striders of North Africa and the Middle East are, to be perfectly frank, too tied up with the events of the Arab Spring and its aftermath to devote much attention to a country that isn't under relentless assault by servants of the Wyrms. We need to send reinforcements to defend the caerns. While I applaud the Black Furies' willingness to perform a necessary task that many werewolves have no interest in, I fear that the native Garou are not taking them seriously enough. We may need to send some high ranking werewolves who can win their respect. I honestly believe this is a job for the Silver Fangs.

THE WATERS OF GISH ABAI

In addition to the ordinary healing powers of a caern, those who simply bathe in the waters of Gish Abai — Garou, human, wolf, or otherwise — can heal one level of lethal or aggravated damage each day. Moreover, the spring has been known to perform more impressive miracles of healing. These impossible feats have included bringing life to the dead, reviving extinct species, and creating new species of animals. It does not perform these miracles often or easily, however.

Perhaps once a decade a gateway opens on the western edge of the caern's Penumbra and remains open for one lunar month. The gateway guardian, which looks like a winged human made of light and wielding a sword of flame, bars passage to the garden that lies beyond. The presence of this guardian has only fed speculation about the caern's spiritual significance.

No one has ever bested the gateway guardian in combat, but on a handful of occasions a Garou has persuaded it to bring wondrous healing gifts out of the garden. Only the wisest of all supplicants have won these blessings, and the guardian demanded nearly impossible tasks of them before bestowing them.

Central Asia

While the exact definition of Central Asia varies, my survey is focused on the five 'stans' of the former Soviet Union — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Historically, the main human livelihood in the area is herding, since the arid land is largely unsuitable for agriculture. Its millennia along the Silk Road made the region a crossroads for the exchange of ideas, but this central location also made it a battleground between groups of steppe nomads. Periodically, several of these nomadic tribes would unite into a powerful military force — the Huns who invaded Europe, the Wu Hu who attacked China, and the Mongol conquest of much of Eurasia. Many Silent Striders, Shadow Lords, and Stargazers lived among these nomads as great warriors among mortals, and they often had their choice of human Kinfolk as mates. The Red Talons spread their legacy among wolf Kinfolk, and the tribes fought each other often.

When the Soviet Union conquered the area, the Garou and their human Kinfolk suffered many losses during Stalinist purges. Perhaps even worse than this, the Soviets desecrated or destroyed most of the caerns and other places sacred to the few Garou who survived. The fall of the Soviet Union left several power vacuums in the region that were largely filled by dictators, petty warlords, and crime bosses. It will be many years before democracy truly touches these nations, if ever it arrives at all.

Approximately 40,000 wolves live in these nations (30,000 of them in Kazakhstan alone). In spite of a lack of government protection and, in the case of Kazakhstan, a bounty on their hides, wolves grow more numerous by the year. The Red Talons guard their Kinfolk jealously from rival tribes, who must rely almost entirely on human Kinfolk to replenish their numbers.

I would go so far as to say that the wolves of Central Asia actually enjoy better lives than many of the humans there. Dictator-presidents use sham elections to legitimize their repressive governments, and anyone who speaks out against them vanishes, often winding up in hard labor

prison camps. It often seems that every government official is corrupt, and local rulers often flout the law without hesitation or fear of consequences. Many people are hooked into drug addiction or lured into prostitution. The region also suffers from human trafficking, with victims sent to China, Russia, Iran, or even farther away as slave labor or as food for Wyrmspawn.

Places of Note

Aral Sea: This body of water shared by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is one of the planet's worst environmental disasters. Once one of the four largest lakes in the world, the Aral Sea has been steadily shrinking since the 1960s after the rivers that fed it were diverted by Soviet irrigation projects. By 2007, it had declined to 10% of its original size, destroying the nation's fishing industry and altering the local climate. The receding sea has left huge plains covered with salt and toxic chemicals — the results of weapons testing (including the biological weapons facility at the former island of Vozrozhdeniya), industrial projects, pesticides and fertilizer runoff — which are picked up and carried away by the wind as toxic dust and spread to the



surrounding area.

The heavy pollution of the lake and the economic hardships of the local humans have spawned many Wyrms threats. The Red Talons often point to this catastrophe as proof that humans are the enemy of the Garou and are largely responsible for betraying Gaia to the predations of the Wyrms. Some Get of Fenris talk of mounting a campaign to cleanse the Wyrms taint from the dry lakebed, but even the most idealistic Garou realize they can achieve victories much more easily elsewhere in the region.

Bayanaul National Park: This national park in Kazakhstan is one of the few areas in the country that was left largely untouched by the Soviet occupation. While many humans come here on camping trips or to take in the sights of its lakes and remarkable rock formations, the park largely belongs to wolves and Garou. The Baba-Yaga Stone, one of the few remaining caerns in Central Asia, stands in this park, as does the suggestive rock formation known as Masculine Dignity.

- **Baba-Yaga Stone:** This rock formation resembles a huge human head, complete with a crone's hooked nose. A path to Erebus appears in the Penumbra near the caern during on the first night of each new moon. The Shadow Lords and Red Talons maintain an uneasy truce, taking turns guarding and making use of the caern for a month at a time. Despite the wisdom aspect of this caern, it attracts a number of trickster spirits and faeries.

- **Masculine Dignity:** This rock formation looks like a penis standing upright on a cliff. Local humans have long come here for fertility rituals of all kinds. Although it is not a caern, Kinfolk who successfully breed in the stone's shadow are almost twice as likely to give birth to Garou. Unfortunately for us, it is also one of the main tourist attractions in the park, and its remarkable properties only work by day.

Ala Archa National Park: This national park is located in the Tien Shan Mountains of Kyrgyzstan. Although popular with human hikers, campers, and skiers, the park is large enough to support a sizeable wolf population. In centuries past, the Stargazers held sway here, but the Red Talons have since claimed the resources of the area.

The archa, a species of bright, many-colored juniper, is valuable in the making of certain Fetishes and Talens. The Kyrgyz have long believed that the smoke made by burning archa wood chases away evil spirits but that the living tree drains away the life energy of humans who spend too much time near it.

Fann Mountains: This mountain range in Tajikistan boasts hundreds of rivers, lakes, valleys, and mountain peaks. The Shadow Lords keep many human Kinfolk in the villages in the area, and wolf Kinfolk prowl the empty spaces in between. It is rare to see humans and wolves so

at peace as they are in this mountain range, with local humans even being permitted near Lake Moutniy, one of the region's two caerns. Kidnapping is on the rise, however, with many victims being sent to nearby Afghanistan to work the opium fields or perform other hard labor.

- **Lake Moutniy:** This small mountain lake is populated by Spirits of Peace, Calm, and Water elementals. Nomadic ancestor spirits often pass through the caern on their way to other destinations.

- **Chimtarga Peak Caern:** War and Ancestor Spirits guard this caern and discourage anyone — human, Garou, or otherwise — from climbing to its peak. These spirits reward those who overcome its challenges for the first time by replenishing all their Willpower.

Gaplangyr Nature Reserve: This nature reserve on a plateau in northern Turkmenistan was once home to many wolf packs. It lies within 30 miles of Sarygamysh Lake, which sits approximately halfway between the Aral Sea and the Caspian Sea and is not nearly as polluted as either. In 1971, during the Soviet occupation, the Get of Fenris established a base of operations in the area due to its proximity to these Wyrms-tainted bodies of water. They organized several raids on corrupted government operations along the lakes and in the desert. They destroyed a fertilizer company whose product would turn the little arable land in Turkmenistan into poisonous desert, drove supposed natural gas exploration companies away from areas where Banes lay buried, and put a stop to a plot to divert the flow of fresh water from Sarygamysh Lake into poorly constructed aqueducts and irrigation canals.

As the Wyrms sent more minions, the Gaplangyr Garou found themselves on the defensive. They determined they needed to build a caern in order to fortify their position in the nature reserve. They organized a coalition of Shadow Lords and Red Talons to simultaneously attack several targets in near the Caspian and Aral Seas, where Wyrms activity most often originated. They hoped this would hold the enemy's attention long enough for their Elders to complete the rite.

As the rite began, however, a great fiery hole opened up in the desert fifty miles to the south, at a place called Derweze. The official story goes that Soviet geologists accidentally tapped a vast cavern of natural gas and were forced to set fire to the 230 foot pit in order to prevent catastrophic methane pollution. In truth, a small army of Banes and scores of Black Spiral Dancers swarmed up from the crater in response to the rite. The Get of Fenris guards who served as a last line of defense fought to the last. By the time the Red Talons and Shadow Lords received word of the attack and reached the site of the rite, the Derweze Banes had massacred every werewolf, as well as all wolf and human Kinfolk for a dozen miles in every direction. The

Derweze crater — called “The Door to Hell” by locals — still burns 40 years later and shows no signs of ever being extinguished. Its reflection in the Penumbra is a path to Malfestas. It serves as a grim reminder of the terrible strength of our enemy.

Threats

The wolf populations of Central Asia are reasonably stable. They aren’t protected by law, but the humans in the region have bigger concerns than the likes of our wolf Kinfolk.

The Shadow Lords and Red Talons waste some of their energy growling at each other at the borders of their territories. This seldom escalates into open violence between the tribes, but a migration forced by ecological disaster, for example, could turn idle threats into bloody, large scale action. If this happens, the Garou of other tribes are likely to get dragged into it. No one trusts the Shadow Lords, but they’re a lot less stingy with their resources than the Red Talons have been.

The region is rife with Wyrms activity. The long history of pollution, weapons testing, and ecological catastrophe has made it as fertile a feeding ground for Banes as it is an infertile place for crops. The Wyrms gain the largest part of its power from the misery of the humans who live here. Yet humans are far too numerous to simply cull those likely to be seduced or ensnared into the ranks of the fomori, and wholesale slaughter of the population would only increase that suffering and so increase the Wyrms power. Besides which, these nations have nuclear weapons from the time they were part of the Soviet Union, so further destabilizing the region could make matters much, much worse.

Recommendations

We need to focus on reducing the suffering of Central Asia’s humans, to raise them up beyond the easy reach of the Wyrms. Yes, this may sound like a strange suggestion coming from a lupus, but I see no other solution to the endemic influence of the Wyrms in these five nations. The Red Talons and Shadow Lords of the area will not like it, but we need to bring in new tribes who are used to fighting these kinds of wars where Weaver meets Wyld. The Black Furies and Glass Walkers are the first ones to come to mind, but it also needs Get of Fenris warriors, Silver Fang generals, and Silent Strider scouts. The wolf population of Central Asia is large enough to support many more Garou than currently claim territory in the region.

Even then, this may not be a battlefield where we will carry the day. Gaia bears deep scars in Central Asia. With the exception of the wolves, there is really very little left of strategic value to the Garou Nation. I simply don’t know if we can spare the resources that would be required to wage war on the Wyrms’ minions here.

Chernobyl Exclusion Zone

Following the 1986 meltdown of Chernobyl nuclear reactor #4, this area was evacuated and placed under military control by the Soviet Union. Today, the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone is one of the most radioactively contaminated areas in the world and draws significant scientific interest due to the high levels of radiation exposure in the environment, as well as increasing interest from tourists.

Abandoned by humans, Gaia’s creatures have reclaimed the zone. This includes nearly 2,000 wolves, which face few natural threats. Make no mistake: all these animals are living in the shadow of a major victory for the Wyrms. The radioactive materials in the area haven’t disappeared, and something as simple as a grass or forest fire can release new radioactive fallout. While the number of animals living in the zone is higher than it was before the Chernobyl disaster, this is only because humans aren’t hunting or fishing there. The background radiation sets a hard limit on the number and diversity of the area’s flora and fauna. Even animals that survive in the area often suffer mutations ranging from sterility to partial albinism to hideous deformities usually seen only in servants of the Wyrms.

Places of Note

Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant: The power plant had four reactors, and two more were under construction. The infamous meltdown of Reactor #4 forced the evacuation of the area, and the 1991 fire in Reactor #2 convinced the post-Soviet government to shut down the plant entirely, which was completed in 2000. It is expected to take about 300 years for the site to be relatively safe for human occupation.

The human authorities locked the remains of Reactor #4 inside a concrete and steel sarcophagus to prevent its radiation from causing more damage than it already has. However, this sarcophagus is not reflected in the Penumbra, and the area within 10 km of the power plant is a particularly nasty Hellhole responsible for bringing countless Banes into the immediate vicinity.

Pripyat: Pripyat was founded in 1970 to house workers for the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. Pripyat was also intended to be a major railroad and river cargo port. It was officially proclaimed a city in 1979 but was abandoned in 1986 following the Chernobyl disaster, which required the evacuation of nearly 50,000 people.

Many of the building interiors in Pripyat have been vandalized and ransacked over the years. The roofs leak and most of the windows have long since broken, so many rooms have flooded. Trees grow on roofs and even inside



For the attention of the residents of Pripjat! The City Council informs you that due to the accident at Chernobyl Power Station in the city of Pripjat the radioactive conditions in the vicinity are deteriorating. The Communist Party, its officials and the armed forces are taking necessary steps to combat this. Nevertheless, with the view to keep people as safe and healthy as possible, the children being top priority, we need to temporarily evacuate the citizens in the nearest towns of Kiev Oblast. For these reasons, starting from April 27, 1986 2 p.m. each apartment block will be able to have a bus at its disposal, supervised by the police and the city officials. It is highly advisable to take your documents, some vital personal belongings and a certain amount of food, just in case, with you. The senior executives of public and industrial facilities of the city has decided on the list of employees needed to stay in Pripjat to maintain these facilities in a good working order. All the houses will be guarded by the police during the evacuation period. Comrades, leaving your residences temporarily please make sure you have turned off the lights, electrical equipment and water off and shut the windows. Please keep calm and orderly in the process of this short-term evacuation.

buildings, and these are slowly pulling down the vestiges of human habitation. There are about 30 high rise apartments in the city, as well as a Ferris wheel that is visible even in satellite photos. Although the clean-up efforts buried most of the radioactive materials, there are still many radioactive “hot” spots throughout the city ruins.

The Glass Walkers would not recognize the urban warfare going on here. By night werewolves trade blows with the fomori and Banes that seem to lurk in just about every corner of the city. Garou patrol the streets openly in Crinos, for the chance of a human glimpsing them is very low. While there are a few tactically valuable positions, the city has few useful resources. An entire night’s battle might be fought to reclaim the Fetish of a fallen ally. Minions of the Wyrms engage in these raids and skirmishes for love of killing Garou, while the werewolves seek only to destroy the corrupted servants of the enemy and annihilate the fomori spawning nests.

Red Forest: This area received the highest doses of radiation from the Chernobyl accident, and the pine trees turned ginger-brown as they died. Most of the trees were buried during the clean-up efforts, but the radiation they contain leaks into the soil and ground water. The Banes this corruption attracts find no humans nearby. However, the animal population of the Red Forest has swelled in the absence of humans, and the Banes are content to twist them into fomori. These corrupted creatures are little more than mindless monsters with many of the same twisted Charms as their urban cousins. Most soon join the endless war for the streets of Pripyat, but some stay in the forest or even leave the Exclusion Zone in search of fresh victims to corrupt. Most of our wolf Kinfolk in the area live in the Red Forest, so these Wyrmspawn pose a serious threat to Garou breeding stock.

Chernobyl: This port city nine miles south-southeast of Pripyat was abandoned after the meltdown. Once a town of about 14,000, it remains mostly uninhabited. A small number of people, including a handful of human Kinfolk, still live in houses here. Workers on watch and administrative personnel of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone are stationed in the city on a long-term basis, since it lies near the edge of the zone.

The port and its nearby parking lot are a graveyard of abandoned cargo ships and automobiles, including many trucks and rigs that were used in the human efforts to clean up or bury the most dangerously radioactive areas of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Banes and other Wyrms-tainted creatures frequently emerge from these husks, and the terrorist attempt to breach the dike to the Dnieper River so that radioactive water in the harbor could escape downstream was almost certainly a Wyrms-inspired plot.

Chernobyl-2: This former Soviet military installation located relatively close to the power plant consists of a gigantic transmitter and receiver belonging to the Steel Yard over-the-

SPONTANEOUS METIS

Elsewhere in the world, metis are the deformed offspring of two werewolves. Within the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, however, this is not always the case. Any werewolf and any human or wolf Kinfolk who has been exposed to the region’s radiation and would otherwise produce Garou offspring runs the risk of bringing a metis into the world, instead.

Exposed Kinfolk who become pregnant have a 10% base chance of birthing a metis (20% if both Kinfolk parents are exposed). Exposed werewolves instead have a 20% chance (30% if her Kinfolk mate has also been exposed) of producing a metis offspring. This condition is universally fatal in female Kinfolk, and most of these children do not survive the deaths of their mothers. Male Kinfolk and werewolves exposed to the radiation are just as likely to sire metis offspring.

This mutation risk appears to be hereditary, as well, although it diminishes by with each generation that hasn’t been exposed to the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone’s radiation. This has resulted in a much higher than average metis population in Belarus and the northern half of Ukraine.

The status of spontaneous metis among Chernobyl Garou is complicated. Some treat them with special respect as werewolves born with battle scars of the war against the Wyrms. Others see them as corrupted creatures little better than the fomori they fight. Some werewolves who have been exposed to the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone refuse to breed at all for fear that they will spread their corruption, while others use the excuse of spontaneous metis to hide their violation of the Litany.

horizon radar system. Due to the secrecy of this unit, rumor holds that it was the real cause of the disaster. Humans fear the accidental collapse of the rusting iron superstructures of the now-defunct station could cause a microearthquake that might damage the radioactive storage of the installation. The human government has vowed to dismantle the station before that happens, but they haven’t yet taken action. No doubt such a collapse will unleash more Banes.

A large underground military complex located about two kilometers from this installation was once used for anti-missile defense, space surveillance and communication,

and research. I am assured by the werewolves that the area is entirely abandoned and holds nothing of interest to Garou. They were unwilling to let me see these ruins because they feel that it is not safe due to high radiation levels. I have my doubts. The Soviet Union kept the location of most of their nuclear arsenal secret, and rumor has it that this facility conceals a stockpile of abandoned and stolen warheads. While the Chernobyl disaster had catastrophic effects felt as far away as Germany, Sweden, and Turkey, the detonation of a nuclear warhead would have far worse consequences.

Threats

This region is a war zone. In the nearly total absence of humans and servants of the Weaver, the children of Gaia and the creations of the Wyrms battle fiercely to contain or spread the damage the disaster caused. The Garou who patrol the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone do so at great peril. Even those werewolves who have not yet engaged with the enemy can be marked by merest proximity. I have met several of what the local Garou describe as “spontaneous metis” — werewolves born metis even though both parents were not werewolves.

In spite of dire government warnings and severe criminal penalties for illegal activities in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, the poaching of game, illegal logging, and metal salvage have been problems within the region. Intruders evade human police and infiltrate the perimeter to remove potentially contaminated materials, especially in Prypiat. The records of human authorities note that an average of 300 violations of the area take place annually. The Garou of Chernobyl know the problem is much larger than that, for they often encounter nests of fomori that clearly were once human.

Prolonged exposure to radiation has put the Garou of the zone at risk of being corrupted by the Wyrms far beyond the curse of spontaneous metis. Some of the deformities of local metis bear a worrying resemblance to those of the Black Spiral Dancers. I also witnessed no fewer than three Garou using Gifts in battle that have more in common with fomori powers than to anything taught by Gaia’s spirits. Because everyone and everything in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone carries the smell of the Wyrms to some degree or another, it is almost impossible for me to say how deep this taint has become. While I have no doubt that they are valiantly fighting against the Wyrms, I fear that in another decade or two the Chernobyl Garou will ultimately suffer a fate similar to that of the White Howlers.

Recommendations

The Chernobyl Elders tried to impress upon me their dire need for reinforcements. However, I remain unconvinced that this is in the best interests of the Garou Nation. The Chernobyl Exclusion Zone has too many secrets, far more than anyone there would admit — things

they would not let me see, places they would not let me go. I can’t help but wonder if the Wyrms has chosen it as a breeding ground for its minions and a place to train its Black Spiral Dancers — or even a place where it can create a new werewolf tribe devoted to Gaia’s destruction.

We may soon be called upon to contain a major incursion by the Wyrms in this region. Even now, it is probably for the best if we prevent werewolves and Kinfolk with any significant exposure to the area from leaving it to breed.

At the very least, we need to watch the zone carefully. Monitoring the spread of corruption among the Garou and Kinfolk population might give us a better understanding of the enemy and so allow us to fight it more effectively. Any such inspectors we send must not be allowed to spend more than a month or two at a time in the zone. Exposure can begin to corrupt the flesh of a Garou in as little as three months, and Kinfolk are even more vulnerable to its influence.

Close to Home

Letter to Julia from Lobo del Lago Lunar, Lupus Philodox Child of Gaia

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest is a 2.76-million-acre National Forest which runs along the Mogollon Rim and the White Mountains in east-central Arizona and into New Mexico. It borders both the Fort Apache and the San Carlos Indian Reservations. It has very little to recommend it to Garou — no caerns, no major Wyrms threats, and only a tiny population of Kinfolk.

It is dear to me, however, because it is my home and because it is a tiny success story in a world that has endured a century of disasters for our wolf Kinfolk. In the 1960s, the Mexican wolf was on the point of extinction and with it the last wolves native to the American Southwest. Too many Garou watched the tragedy unfold with a sense of helplessness. They had seen it happen in the British Isles and Western Europe and so many other places throughout the world. The human Kinfolk of the Children of Gaia refused to sit idle, though. They wrote letters to politicians, published newspapers, and pleaded with scientists in the U.S. and in Mexico in a desperate effort to save the Mexican wolf.

Humans rounded up all the Mexican wolves they could find to create a captive-breeding program. Many Garou openly questioned this move. Some even claimed it was tantamount to genocide, for a captive wolf population could never be returned to the wild. Even those who admitted that the movement these

Kinfolk started was well-intentioned largely doubted that anything of worth would come from it. However, one lupus Child of Gaia named Cub Finder spent the next twenty years in Homid so she could spy on the program from within.

During this time Cub Finder secretly included herself in the breeding program, adding several Kinfolk and even two Garou to the population. The humans in charge of the program declared the captive-breeding program a success, and in 1998 they reintroduced the Mexican wolf to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. To everyone's surprise the wolves returned to the wild with relatively few problems, and there are now over 40 wolves in the area. It is a small population, to be sure, but it's a start, and Cub Finder's werewolf children soon mated with wolf Kinfolk, one of which whelped me in the mid-2000s. Eight years later, and I'm traveling the world assessing the health of wolf populations for the Garou nation. Not bad for a young wolf, eh?

My next destination is Russia, which I understand has tens of thousands of wolves, so I'll have to break my report into chunks. Why is it that most of my wolf Kinfolk must live in places that are so much colder than my native climate? Actually I know that answer is humans prefer warmer places, too, but it still doesn't make me look forward to arctic temperatures. I'll send you a letter when I send my next report.

Mechanics

Lobo del Lago Lunar

History: Cub Finder took Lobo del Lago Lunar under her tutelage soon after his First Change, and he spent the first four years of his new life as her assistant. Recognizing he would need to prove himself to the larger society of Garou, Cub Finder sent him north to the Eldest Sequoia Sept — a longtime stronghold of the Children of Gaia.

In addition to participating in several attacks on the Wyrms' servants, Lobo del Lago earned a reputation as a teacher for helping homid cubs master their Lupus form. Garou of other septs invited him to provide similar instruction to their cubs. On one such trip to Ireland — an island where no wolf has roamed for centuries — Lobo del Lago experienced a revelation: it is so much easier to protect a wolf population than to replace one.

Lobo del Lago Lunar admired his mentor for her work with the Mexican wolves. Cub Finder had prevented the extinction of

an entire subspecies, after all. But that project had taken decades to bear fruit, and it would not have been necessary if the Mexican wolf hadn't nearly been wiped out. Lobo del Lago Lunar felt that the Garou were not doing enough worldwide to protect wolves from the minions of the Wyrms. Many werewolves didn't even know where in the world wolves were thriving and where they were threatened. Lobo del Lago Lunar vowed to change that. With some guidance from his mentor, he presented a formal proposal to the Elders, and he has been traveling ever since.

Appearance: Lobo del Lago Lunar has a golden brown coat except his white belly and dark grey back. He has surprisingly few scars for a werewolf of his rank — just one J-shaped scar on his chest that is usually covered by fur. When he takes Homid form, he appears as a short Latino man in his mid-20s with dark brown eyes and short black hair. Although he usually takes care to look and act human in that form, he almost always has dirt under his fingernails.

Roleplaying Notes: You're exceptionally observant, and your keen nose eventually gets to the truth about everyone and everything. A person's reaction to a question is often more important than his answer, so you're outwardly friendly and seldom confrontational when hunting for the facts. Even so, you're constantly measuring everyone you meet to ensure they are doing their duty to the Garou Nation.

You spend a lot of time thinking and talking about wolves in the same way that a military officer in charge of keeping an army fed thinks and talks about food. This survey of wolves isn't just some environmentalist mission to you. You know that what you're doing is critical to the war against the Wyrms' servants, and you have little patience for Garou who dismiss its importance.

Breed: Lupus

Auspice: Philodox

Tribe: Children of Gaia

Rank: 3

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

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

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Leadership 2, Primal Urge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Etiquette 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 2, Enigmas 2, Investigation 4, Law 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Rituals 3, Science 2

Backgrounds: Mentor 4, Resources 1

Rage: 4; **Gnosis:** 7; **Willpower:** 5

Gifts: (1) Brother's Scent, Heightened Senses, Jam

Weapon, Mother's Touch, Persuasion, Scent of the True Form, Truth of Gaia (2) Calm, Grandmother's Touch, King of the Beasts, Luna's Armor, Name the

Spirit (3) Sense Balance, Sense the Unnatural, Scent of the Oathbreaker, Spirit Friend

Rites: (Minor) Breath of Gaia, Greet the Moon, Hunting Prayer, Prayer for the Prey (1) Baptism of Fire, Moot Rite, Rite of Binding, Rite of Cleansing, Rite of Contrition, Rite of the Opened Caern, Rite of Talisman Dedication (2) Rite of Accomplishment, Rite of Summoning (3) Rite of the Omega Wolf

New Gift

• **Trapper's Bane (Lupus Level Two)** — Dingoes throughout Australia, but especially near the dingo fence, face a constant threat from human traps — snares, steel traps, and poison. The dingoes have become adept at detecting these dangers and even disarming them. This Gift allows the werewolf to identify lures, traps, and even ambushes. Dingo spirits teach this Gift.

System: The Storyteller rolls Perception + Primal Urge when the werewolf comes within (Gnosis x 5) yards of a trap's trigger. The difficulty is 5 for the werewolf to detect simple snares, pits, and poisoned bait in the area. Identifying more technologically complex traps such as electrified objects and motion-activated traps is difficulty 6. Supernatural traps are difficulty 7. Additionally, whenever the werewolf approaches an ambush, the Storyteller rolls Perception + Primal Urge against difficulty 6 for the werewolf to recognize the ambush before it springs. The werewolf does not have to activate this Gift, it provides a "sixth sense" at all times.

Rites

The Rite of Luna's Eye is one of the best weapons of the Garou of the Tullu Demtu Caern.

The Rite of Luna's Eye

Level Three

The War of Rage made the Garou many enemies among the Fera that claim most of Africa as territory, and werewolves travel those lands at their own peril. As well, Garou cannot keep vigil over every place on Earth to spot places where the Wyrms will strike. With this rite, however, nothing is beyond the gaze of those Silent Striders standing watch from Tullu Demtu (p. 72).

System: The ritemaster's player must make a successful Perception + Rituals roll against a difficulty based on the distance the Garou wishes to see:

Distance	Difficulty
Less than 500 miles	5
500-1,000 miles	6
1,001-2,000 miles	7
2,001-3,000 miles	8
More than 3,000 miles	9

The number of successes the ritemaster's player scores on this roll determines how much the Garou can focus on a particular place:

Successes	Effect
1	A view as wide as a satellite image of a single location.
2	A view of an area the size of a small forest, and the ritemaster can view several such areas before the vision passes.
3	A view of an area as small as an acre, and the ritemaster can maintain this watch for as long as she remains conscious.
4	A view as little as a few yards to each side, allowing the Garou to identify individual humans and animals.
5	The Garou can peer through solid objects, such that he can observe the interior of a house or scrutinize a cave deep under the earth.

Fetishes and Talens

A werewolf looking to create an Archa Torch or Monkeysbane must use the wood of the archa, found in the Ala Archa National Park, while the Compostela Scallop Shell is a reward for those Garou who complete the Compostela pilgrimage.

Monkeysbane

Level Four, Gnosis 7

This slender wand of still-living wood has a wolf or archa spirit bound to it. When activated, it incites panic in humans who can see it. This includes human Kinfolk, humans turned fomori, mages, changelings, and other largely human supernatural beings, but it doesn't affect Garou. The victim flees from the Fetish by the safest available route unless she either succeeds on a Willpower check (difficulty 8) or spends a point of Willpower. A human who stands her ground instead takes one point of lethal damage per turn until the werewolf no longer holds the Fetish in its hand or until the human flees. This damage ignores armor but can be soaked by other supernatural means.

Archa Torch

Talen. Gnosis 6

When lit, this torch emits sweet-scented smoke that shrouds an area a few dozen yards across for up to six hours (less in windy conditions). Banes and other spirits tainted or twisted by the Wyrms increase the difficulty of all their actions by +1 (maximum of 9) so long as they remain within

the torch's smoke. A spirit of an archa tree or a Wyld spirit must be bound to this Talen.

Compostela Scallop Shell

Talen, Gnosis 6

A werewolf who completes the Compostela pilgrimage (p. 67) often receives this as a gift from the ocean spirit at the end of the journey. To use it, the Garou thinks of a destination and activates the Talen. The werewolf wakes each day with the knowledge of the next step he must take to reach that destination. Once he reaches that destination, the power of the Talen guides him home in the same way. The Talen's spirit departs once the Garou returns home, even if he has not completed the journey he had in mind.

Features of the World

This section provides rules information for the caerns and other features detailed in Lobo del Lago Lunar's travelogue.

Minnesota

Headwaters Caern: Level 1 Caern of Gnosis.

Misquah Caern: Level 2 Caern of Strength.

North Woods Caern: Level 3 Caern of Wisdom.

Third Ring Penumbra

The Gauntlet rating of the area is 9. Travel through the Penumbra is slow — halve all speeds or double all travel times, and spending Rage for extra actions in the Penumbra costs 1 additional Rage per turn (regardless of the number of extra actions).

Garou Gifts that cost Rage cost 1 additional point of Rage. Gifts that cost Gnosis but not Rage cost 1 more point of Gnosis. Spirit Charms that cost Essence cost 1 additional point of Essence.

Weaver spirits are immune to all the deleterious effects of the area. Further, the difficulties of all their rolled actions are reduced by -1. This affects rolls to activate Charms, including the damage dice of Charms such as Blast.

Yellowstone National Park

Snake River Caern: Level 1 Caern of Healing.

Eagle Peak Caern: Level 2 Caern of Leadership.

Electric Peak Caern: Level 1 Caern of Rage.

Roaring Mountain Caern: Level 2 Caern of Rage.

Undine Falls Caern: Level 2 Caern of Visions.

Tower Fall Caern: Level 1 Caern of Journeys; using the Rite of the Opened Caern gives a bonus to Athletics and Survival rolls.

Childhood Dream Falls Caern: Level 1 Caern of Enigmas.

Yellowstone Spirit

The superheated water geysers eject deal damage the same way fire does (see W20, page 258), but the soak difficulty is 5. The hottest springs in the area can also cause devastating injuries, although many are harmless and most of the others have a soak difficulty of only 3. The steam emitted by fumaroles can have a soak difficulty of as high as 7.

A Garou who deliberately places herself in the path of a geyser's spray or submerses herself in a hot spring and suffers at least one point of aggravated damage as a result increases her temporary Rage to 10. A Garou may only benefit from this sacrifice once per lunar cycle.

Iberian Peninsula

Rock of the Three Kingdoms Caern: Level 3 Caern of Diplomacy; using the Rite of the Opened Caern gives a bonus to Empathy and Expression rolls.

Australian Outback

Battle Mountain Caern: Level 2 Caern of Rage.

Bunyip Caern Wards

The spirits that defend the many caerns the Bunyip left behind are not friendly to werewolf intruders. These include many Bunyip ancestor spirits who have shed their peaceful natures in order to defend their territory to the end. In addition, many Bunyip caerns have some nasty surprises in store for intruders. The Storyteller should select one of the following options:

- **Angry Dreamtime:** The Penumbra within several miles of the caern is actively hostile to travelers. Garou will be attacked by maddened beasts and lashed by wicked foliage, and earthquakes, sandstorms, and wild storms with torrential rain and deadly lightning smite them. Outside the Penumbra the effects of these attacks by Nature are up to the Storyteller and will probably involve appropriate Survival and Primal Urge rolls to avoid the worst effects. A werewolf suffers 10 dice of lethal damage per hour that she spends within the Penumbra.

The caern's anger is even more potent within a few hundred yards of its center. A werewolf outside the Penumbra suffers 10 dice of lethal damage per hour as the land rises up to smite her. Werewolves who enter the Penumbra within this area instead suffer 10 dice of aggravated damage per hour.

- **Shifting Moon Paths:** Moon Paths to and from the caern disappear, stop dead, turn in circles, change directions, lengthen, or otherwise change in ways that frustrate Garou traveling them. In some cases, the path instead leads to obscure Umbral Realms, particularly the Atrocity Realm. Recognizing this shifting of the Moon Path in time to turn back before being misdirected into a dangerous realm requires a successful Perception + Occult roll at difficulty 8.

- **Dreamtime Banishment:** Garou within several miles of the caern who enter the Penumbra find the Gauntlet resists their return to the material world, increasing the Gauntlet for that werewolf by 3 until next she successfully returns to the physical world. This holds true even if the werewolf travels thousands of miles from the caern before attempting the crossing.

- **Drain Gnosis:** Werewolves within several miles of the caern cannot regain Gnosis normally in the physical world or Penumbra. Further, the caern saps the Garou of 1 Gnosis each day at sunset for as long as he remains within the range of this mystic maelstrom.

- **Tears Unnumbered:** Garou within a mile of the caern experience intense guilt and sadness as long as they remain in the area and are unable to regain Willpower normally. At sunset of each day the Garou remains in the area, the

Garou must succeed at a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) or be overcome by a sense of guilt and futility, losing all temporary Willpower and motivation. Those already close to Harano tip over the edge into an abyss of self-loathing and despair from which only death is an escape.

Ethiopia

Tullu Demtu Caern: Level 4 Caern of Visions.

Arkwasive Caern: Level 3 Caern of Strength.

Gish Abbai Caern: Level 5 Caern of Healing.

Central Asia

Baba-Yaga Stone: Level 2 Caern of Wisdom

Lake Moutniy: Level 2 Caern of Healing.

Chimtarga Peak Caern: Level 1 Caern of Healing





Chapter Four: The Wyrms

My name is Diedra Bone-Cracker and I've been asked to tell you stories of my travels. The den mother thinks exposure to older and well-traveled Garou will be good for your education. While I am not the oldest, I am the worldliest in the sept, so here I am. Sit down and I will tell you all there is to know about fighting the Wyrms. I'm sure you have all heard the history of the Triat, so I won't bore you with those bits.

The Wyrms? What does that have to do with traveling?

I follow and investigate rumors of the Wyrms' control wherever they happen in the world. My duty in life is to seek out the Wyrms where it hides and destroy it. I am one of Gaia's champions, her chosen warrior, an Ahroun. If you were born under a full moon, you might understand better. Let's start with a story about the longest of the most recent wars with the Wyrms, the Amazon.

The Amazon

In the many years since the war in the Amazon started, the silent campaign against Pentex created a very good cover for the Garou in the Amazon. The deep cover and sleek campaigning gave the Ragabash a chance to shine. A few of them took up a propaganda war against Pentex that affected

the local population's desire to prevent deforestation. This created a hostile environment for Pentex within many of the local governments. Pentex is adept at changing tactics, that's why the war has gone on for so long. Now instead of cutting down the forest, they are working on building major roadways from the Chilean mountains to the coast of Brazil.

I first went to the Amazon when I was eighteen. Four of my septmates – Moon-Eyes, Strong-Back, Lorelei, and Long-Claws – and me had just finished our Rite of Passage and we formed a pack in search of Glory and Honor. In fact, we stylized ourselves For Glory. We were raised on stories of the war in the Amazon, and we foolishly wanted to get our teeth wet on Pentex' evils. I say foolish because we didn't know what we were in for, not because killing Wyrmspawn isn't an honorable goal.

My pack and I spent the first two months learning tactics and how to stay alive. You would think that this is an intuitive process, but in a wartime situation, the smallest mistakes could get you killed. We were taught simple tricks like fading into the jungle, hit and run tactics, and how to leave the right kind of trap to disable a moving truck. We trained with other packs who already knew the ins and outs of the jungle.



Our first missions were to watch and learn. We traveled through the forest looking for Pentex outposts and supply lines. We observed and follow, but do nothing more. I am impatient and these missions tested my limits. They were designed to do so; another form of training that forced me to keep my cool. The scouting wasn't futile though; the enemy followed patterns and repeated techniques. Our scouting taught us those patterns and showed us weaknesses in their organization. After a few days of watching, we designed our own plan of attack.

We needed to disrupt the supply line for road building and make the whole venture too costly for Pentex to continue. I had some ideas about tactics I thought would work, but I'm sure new ideas are a fable in war. Anything I could think of was something someone had done before and the enemy would be prepared for it. So, I decided to find out how they would react to our attacks and work around it. The Garou we learned from spoke of constant learning and adapting and I assumed the enemy did the same.

I led our first foray to gauge reaction times. We set up an ambush along one of the supply lines. I had Moon-Eyes

in a tree for sniping and we set explosives along the path. When the caravan arrived, Moon-Eyes shot at the lead caravan truck. The supply team stopped their vehicles and took up a defensive position. They watched the jungle, trying to spot us. I reminded my pack to not engage, this was a learning mission only. The enemy waited for nearly ten minutes. They fired a few warning shots into the jungle. When they loaded back up, they reversed and went back the way they had come. We didn't even get to see what would happen when the explosives detonated. When we went to the supply line for the next scheduled trip, they weren't using it any more.

We found a different caravan that made regular trips to camps with food and medical supplies. We tried our attack again, using the explosives first. The result was much of the same, but it took longer for them to scramble into defensive positions out of the smoking wreck of the lead truck. We did several test runs of different scenarios and each time we saw how the enemy reacted. I used that to come up with a plan that we could use multiple times before the enemy would adapt.

We set explosives along the trail for a food supply line. Most of them were at the edges, where the personnel would be setting up their defenses. The goal wasn't just to destroy or disrupt, we wanted to take the supplies for our own people. We watched the caravan trundle along until they reached the designated mark, and blew the explosives under the main truck. The truck rocked, but seemed unaffected by the blast. They had employed some kind of armoring to protect from the blast, and kept moving. Determined for my plan to work, we set off an explosive further to the back of the caravan, originally intended to prevent escape. The truck went up in a blaze of smoke and fire. The caravan stopped and the men scrambled, shooting wildly into the jungle. We blew the explosives under their feet. Blood and bits of bodies rained down around us as we moved in to secure the trucks. More men came out and we fought. Moon-Eyes in the trees picked off quite a few of them before they got to us, and we quickly killed the rest in a frenzied melee. Our enemies grazed two of my packmates, but we had four of the five supply vans intact and captured.

We rejoiced over our little victory as though we had turned the tides of war. For us, we had, and we were eager to do it again. We brought the supplies to camp like champions of war returning home to tell the commoners they had nothing to fear. Our attitude was met with relative calm. I am sure we weren't the first young pack to come tromping through the jungle with egos large enough to fill the entire river basin, nor would we be the last. The jungle is a rough place, and they knew that we would learn our lessons eventually.

We cleaned up, ate our fill, and set out again the next day, ready for success. The second time we tried our tactic, we managed to flip the armored lead truck and blast some of the infantry without losing any of the supply trucks. The ensuing fight was worse than the first. They expected the blast on the outside of the trucks and many of the men survived the attack. I took several gunshots to the leg during my initial charge. I figured they were using silvered bullets, because I felt like my leg would melt right off my body. I kept moving though, adrenaline and rage pushing me forward. Long-Claws took a bullet to the head; he fought for another full eight seconds before his body fell limp to the ground. I lost control of myself at the sight, changed quickly to Crinos and lunged at the nearest Pentex soldier.

These weren't normal men. They were shaped like men, but the resemblance stopped there. A dull gunmetal colored armored hide covered their bodies. Now that I was close, I could see that they were not carrying guns. Some of them had hands that were mutated and shaped similarly to assault rifles, but I could see large veins pulsing along the outside edges. Others had deadly edged blades instead of fingers. Their eyes were silver slits with red centers. Their mouths were grates that spewed noxious gas and exhaust. As I drew close I could smell the reek of phosphorus and oil emanating from them.

What were they?

Fomori. Men who turned to the Wyrms, now horribly twisted abominations. The one I attacked was ready for my teeth and claws and jammed his gun-arm up into my chest and threw me away with ease. Despite their armored appearance, they were wickedly strong and fast. I charged back at him, avoiding his attack, and knocked him to the ground in one touch. My claws sunk into his chest. He coughed and gurgled as blood poured out of his mouth grate. The blood was deep red, almost black, and burned like acid. I swore and jumped back from the thing, shaking my hand. I saw thin trails of smoke where the drops of blood touched the surrounding greenery. I wiped my hand clean and looked around for another enemy. Moon-Eyes shot three of the fomori during my short fight.

Lorelei bit one of the men's head clean in two and gouts of blood sprayed into her mouth and face. She howled in pain and clawed at her face in panic. I moved to assist her, fomor aiming at her blocked me. I jumped on him just as a stream of dark red blood exited the end of his gun-arm. They weren't shooting bullets, they shot their blood. I clawed at him, taking care not to get any of the blood on my skin. Lorelei fell unconscious before I could reach her.

Avoiding the acidic blood was difficult. Small points of burning sensation riddled my uncovered body. Six of the creatures were still alive and only Moon-Eyes, Strong-Back, and I still stood. Moon-Eyes abandoned his position in the trees to join us on the ground. The fight was taxing and just attacking the fomori was dangerous. We danced around the group making small cuts and slices where we could, but it was going too slow for us to keep it up for long.

I heard a rustling in the jungle just before I saw a large spotted creature in Crinos form jump on one of the fomor and claw into it. As the blood sprayed, it reared back in pain, a parody of what I had done earlier. My heart nearly leapt out of my chest for joy at the arrival of aid.

"It's acid." I called out, as I jumped on one of the closer fomor who was distracted by the newcomer.

It growled by way of reply. It attacked another fomor, this time avoiding the blood. The attack style was curiously graceful and lithe, at first I was confused since didn't realize what it was.

What kind of Garou was it?

It wasn't a Garou. It was a werecat, they're called Bastet. Specifically, it was a werejaguar, a Balam. We had heard a lot about them from the packs back at camp.

It made quick work of the thing and turned its attention to the next one. My pack took out the last two with a renewed energy from this unexpected assistance.

When we finished I turned to it and held out my hand in a greeting. "Thank you. I owe you my life."

The werejaguar let out a low guttural growl and charged at me. It had me on the ground with its teeth at my throat before I could react, I was so surprised by the attack. Thankfully, Strong-Back had better reflexes and barreled in and knocked it off me before it could sink its teeth in. I could still feel the points of teeth on my neck as I stood and readied myself. Strong-Back was no match for the lithe Bastet, who tossed him away like a rag doll. Moon-Eyes and I moved in tandem to maneuver around the cat.

"What is your problem?" I growled at it.

It didn't respond and rushed at Moon-Eyes. I followed to jump on it which gave Moon-Eyes a chance to latch on. Strong-Back jumped in as well, and the three of us wrestled it to the ground.

"Seriously, we don't want to hurt you. Why do you insist on attacking us?" We were so close that I could feel hot breath on my face.

"Intruder." It spat in a broken form of the Garou language. It arched its back and pushed with a surge of strength. We went flying. Turning with blinding speed, it gutted Strong-Back before he had time to stand. Moon-Eyes went into a rage and flung himself at the Bastet. They struggled and I jumped on the cat's back and sunk my claws into the flesh of its neck. It released Moon-Eyes and scrambled at me in an attempt to dislodge me. Moon-Eyes bit into its throat and we brought the thing struggling and fighting to the ground again. I pushed my claws deep into its chest, and Moon-Eyes held on tight until the struggling ceased. We stood and looked at a giant man's unconscious form. We could have killed him, and maybe we should have, but he had saved Moon-Eyes and my life, even if he did kill Strong-Back. We took Strong-Back and Long-Claws further out into the jungle and buried them there.

Our victory did not feel as sweet as the first. We returned subdued with the hard won supplies and Lorelei's unconscious body. We brought her to a healer to apply herbs and medicines to her wounds. We were told she would survive, and that was enough. Later, we howled the deaths of Strong-Back and Long-Claws. We were not the only ones howling deaths that night, and it was the first time that we noticed just how many howls were taking place.

With half of our pack dead and Lorelei out for a while, Moon-Eyes and I joined some of the other packs engaged in some larger raids into the mountains. When Lorelei recovered, she left the pack and the Amazon, the loss of her sept-brothers too much for her. Moon-Eyes and I stayed for six more months, but the rigors of war became depressing. We wanted to make a difference, but no matter how many small victories we won, the price always seemed too high, and the road construction continued. I think I mentioned that I'm not very patient. We heard rumors of Wyrms creatures invading the lands near our home caern

and contact with the North American septs was spotty. Moon-Eyes and I went to North America after only a year of being in the Amazon. I have never gone back.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

In 2010, the largest oil spill in United States history devastated the waters of the Gulf Coast. Crews from all over the country, both human and Garou, spent months cleaning the oil from the beaches all across the Gulf of Mexico. The Sept at Lake Pontchartrain sent calls for aid within days of the spill. What seemed a large accident to most of the world was clearly an act of agents of the Wyrms to the Garou. Oil Banes surfaced all along the coast of Louisiana, and it took all of our time to fight them off. The humans took three months to seal off the well spilling oil into the gulf. The delay was mostly due to corrupt Louisiana government officials. The fact that Louisiana was infested with the petroleum industry did not help matters either.

Several packs went down for cleanup duty, killing Banes with abandon. We spent the better part of a year rooting out and destroying Banes that had taken up residence within Lake Pontchartrain as well as the Mississippi River. My pack and I had sought out and killed a major Bane almost once a month during that time period, and we were not the only ones. The number of Garou in the Sept at Lake Pontchartrain swelled from fourteen to about fifty in the course of a few weeks, then the number settled to about twenty-six for the next year.

The presence of the Oil Banes emboldened a Pit of Black Spiral Dancers nesting in New Orleans. They moved into an abandoned area of St. Bernard Parish after its near destruction during Hurricane Katrina. The group fed the Banes to make them strong allies in strikes against the sept. With the increased number of Garou at the sept, we beat back the Dancers. As the Bane population dwindled, so did the Black Spiral Dancers' tenacity. Though they still infested New Orleans, we saw less and less of them. A few scouts checked on them, but when they failed to return, the missions were called off. Cleaning out the Banes was a higher priority at the moment.

My pack routinely scouted north along Mississippi River near Baton Rouge. We consistently found Banes near a huge refinery situated along the river. I assume they were drawn to the large amounts of crude oil in the plant. We just finished scouting the area one evening, and were returning to the sept, when Moon-Eyes caught the stench of petroleum coming from the river. We did not see the pollutant at first, until we realized that it completely filled the river from bank to bank. Without a contrast, it was hard

to tell the slick from the normal, murky, brown water. We followed it upstream directly to the refinery. We had been in that area a few hours before, and the river was clear, so we knew this was a recent development.

We called it in to the sept and they sent us the nearest Garou that could help, a Glass Walker named Jonathan. He came from Baton Rouge and showed up within an hour. During that time, I came up with a plan to break into the refinery, find out where the oil was coming from, and stop it. My pack and I were ready to go when Jonathan arrived, much to his dismay. He told me that breaking in would get us in trouble, maybe arrested, and that we should wait for him to do some investigation before barging into the building. The ensuing argument only lasted a minute before I was able to convince him of the merits of my plan.

How did you do that?

I Throated him. I also had the benefit of logic; time was an issue since the oil still spilled from the refinery. In the end though, we went with a combined plan of advanced scouting and infiltration. Jonathan found a blueprint of the refinery, and we planned a route to the most probable sources of the spill. Jonathan spent a few minutes trying to hack into the security cameras for the refinery only to find that the system shut down. This sent up red flags, something more than just a break in a line was going on.

I led my pack and Jonathan to the closest entry point to the facility, prepared to break the door down. This was wholly unnecessary; the door was slightly ajar showing the dark interior of the building. We moved slowly into the building and crept silently along, on the lookout for whoever had come in before us. I extended my senses all around me and heard scuffling sounds coming towards us fast. We pressed ourselves to the corridor wall, just as three men rushed from inside the facility. They caught sight of us and stopped short, two of them pulling guns from holsters at their sides. One of them was dark haired and greasy, one was light haired and greasy, and the third was completely covered from head to toe. These men reeked of Wyrms taint and oil, and I was certain that they had caused the spill flowing into the Mississippi River.

I kicked the nearest man's hand and sent his gun skidding away. The second gunman shot me, and the one covered up pulled off his jacket and began a quick change into Crinos.

"Shit, Dancers!" Jonathan cried as he pulled out a gun and fired. The barking of gunfire drowned out anything else he might have said as Moon-Eyes grabbed the fallen gun and joined Jonathan.

Stacey, a Black Fury that had recently joined the pack, changed quickly to Crinos form and rushed at the Dancer who was just finishing his transformation. She backed him down the corridor with her labrys. I quickly changed as well

and clawed the man I disarmed earlier, who also changed. Jonathan and Moon-Eyes continued to lay down covering fire as Stacey and I ripped into the three Garou. Though they were outnumbered, the three fought with a terrible force and a deadly pack mentality that rivaled our own.

I wouldn't say we were equally matched though. Stacey was deadly with her ancestral weapon, and was keeping her combatant at arm's reach, cutting into him if he got too close. Speaks-With-Trees and a Theurge Get of Fenris from my home sept flanked my gunman and we harried him with tooth and claw. Moon-Eyes and Jonathan abandoned their guns and fought dark and greasy together. I was impressed by how easily Jonathan fell into an easy cadence with Moon-Eyes. While Speaks-With-Trees distracted blonde and greasy, I slammed him to the ground with a touch. I fell upon him, my claws sliding easily into his flesh to disembowel him. I could see Stacey's target got a few claws in on her, but she wore him down. Jonathan suffered from a bite wound, and I directed Speaks-With-Trees to help him out as I joined Moon-Eyes to finish off dark and greasy. I bit into his neck, my teeth turned to ice and froze the flesh in my mouth. I gave one hard jerk and his head snapped off with a loud crack. His body dropped to the ground Stacey shouted her battle cry as she brought her labrys down on her enemy's head, cleaving it in two.

We looked at the forms of the Dancers while we cleaned our wounds and let Speaks-With-Trees tend us.

"What do you think they were doing here?" Stacey asked as she came over, cleaning her labrys.

"Probably causing that oil spill. If we are lucky, they were the only ones, but somehow I doubt it." Jonathan said.

"I wonder why?" I mused aloud.

No one spoke, so we sat and listened for the sounds of more Black Spiral Dancers coming up the corridor. I was certain we had made enough noise to alert the entire facility to our presence, so they should have shown up pretty quickly. We waited, but no one came, so I proposed that we continue on to find the leak and seal it up. We followed the foul trail left by the Dancers back the way they had come.

We tracked the scent deep into the facility to a pumping station. Pipes lead out of the building and up stream, possibly to a holding facility. The exhaust vents had been welded shut and the pressure valves closed, which more than likely caused a crack in the pipe further on. Jonathan took a look at it, and figured out how to release the pressure valves and seal off the pipe completely, stopping the flow of oil into the river. I wanted to make sure the leak had stopped. We backtracked to the entrance and Jonathan pulled out his tablet and marked on the blueprint where we had been and where the pipe should exit the facility on the outside. It only took us a few minutes to find the pipe on the outside. Oil drifted slowly up to the surface of the

river and made lazy swirls as it caught in the current and was swept downstream. As we watched, the last trails of oil plumed to the top and drifted away.

While we watched, Speaks-With-Trees looked downriver and snarled. I turned and the stench he caught on the wind wafted over the river, the noxious fumes stung my eyes. The oil slick bulged and convulsed in the river, and roiling bubbles released bouts of putrid air. The river level rose as the sludgy crude oil coalesced and rose into the air taking the form of a large cresting wave moving right towards us. We broke into run, Moon-Eyes and Speaks-With-Trees dropped to all fours as they changed to Hispo form. I heard the sickening glop and gurgle sound of the filth as it reached the east bank of the river and moved across land. I spared a glance back to see the grass and reeds near the river sizzle and smoke under the touch of the Bane.

"We have to fight it; it's going to spread filth everywhere if we don't." I called out to my fleeing companions and turned to face it.

For the second time that day, I changed to Crinos form and stood in the way of the Wyrms. Moon-Eyes and Speaks-With-Trees rounded to either side of the large mass of what looked like oil, trash and other waste runoff from the river. We tried to hedge it in, but it came at me, forcing me to move back. Moon-Eyes swiped at it, and the stuff sizzled and evaporated under his claws. This thing was larger than any of the other Banes we had fought and I guessed the Black Spiral Dancers had brought it with them to the refinery. The body of it snaked back all the way to the river and continued downstream. We were only dealing with the very tip of the creature, and even that was massive.

Stacey came back around and we clawed at the thing, trying to force it to go back towards the river. It pushed forward and washed over us like a wave. Wherever the goop touched us, it clung and burned. I wiped at it and only served to spread it around more. Stacey dropped to the ground and rubbed herself into the dirt, causing streams of smoke to plume up around her. I steeled myself against the pain and ran straight at the thing, claws flashing. My relentless attack forced the creature to back away from me, and the rest of my pack joined in. I even saw Jonathan at the edge of the mess trying to hem it in. I knew from previous experience that we would have to find the heart of the thing and cut it out before it would go away. I waded through the muck, healing the burns, and ignoring the pain as best as possible. Stacey and Jonathan followed me in, as Moon-Eyes and Speaks-With-Trees herded the thing back towards the river.

We were there for what felt like hours, but I'm sure was only minutes. Of course, as soon as I got good and in the middle of the Bane, Black Spiral Dancers showed up and started attacking Moon-Eyes and Speaks-With-Trees. I

yelled for Jonathan and Stacey to fall back and help them, but they were just as stuck in the muck as I was. I cut into the creature at a fevered pace trying to reach its center to destroy it. Stacey started in the other direction and Jonathan followed her.

I'm not certain if they were trying to get out to help the others, or if they were trying a different direction for the center. Either way, I lost sight of them in the sludge within moments. Unable to do anything else, I continued to cut my way through the Bane, my rage and fury building with each attack. The sounds of battle were loud in my ears, and it kept me on track as I waded towards the middle of the Bane. Soon I was half swimming, half floating in the thick grotesque body of the Bane. The river current pulled at me, threatening to take me under. I struggled to stay afloat, but the Bane worked with the river and plunged me into the murky depths. Sight, sound and smell lost to me, I felt cut off, completely alone. I felt the slippery mass around me and the warmer water cut through. I followed the slippery feel down and towards a center. As I moved deeper into the water, I felt the slick narrow down to a thin tendril. I grasped it and pulled hard, propelling myself towards the mass of toxic waste, oil and refuse that made up the heart of the Bane. By this time, my lungs burned for air and my eyes stung with the pollution in the river water. I gave a sharp tug and sliced into the heart with my claws, severing the tendril I was holding. The thing tried to slip and move away from me, but I kept an iron grip on it. It moved to slip around me and cover me, and the pain of its touch forced a cry out of me. Water slipped into my mouth and my lungs. I thrashed at the thing with all my limbs, claws digging deep into the pile of filth. I felt it stop moving and disperse around me, as I attempted a desperate swim for the surface.

I blacked out before I reached it. When I woke up, Speaks-With-Trees was ministering to my wounds. The pack killed three of the Black Spiral Dancers, and the other two ran off. Stacey and Jonathan had been released from the Bane when I severed its tie to the oil slick, and were able to join into the fight with the Dancers. Apparently, when the Dancers saw that their Bane had been defeated, they attempted to break and run. It had turned the fight in my pack's favor, and I was relieved to hear that no one had died in this trip.

We returned to the Sept at Lake Pontchartrain and reported our findings. Another pack that had been scouting around New Orleans found evidence that the Black Spiral Dancers were planning another large scale assault on the caern. We waited for nearly a month, but the attack never came. I deduced that they were trying to feed up the Bane in preparation for the assault, and after I destroyed it, they had to abandon their plans. The Bane also seemed to be

the last of the Oil Banes that had been plaguing the area, and after some long and heartfelt goodbyes, my pack picked up to move again.

I was so impressed by Jonathan's bravery and aplomb, despite being a Glass Walker, that I asked him to join our pack. He accepted, with some conditions attached.

What kind of conditions?

I think his pride was still sore about the episode outside the refinery. We argued about the practicality of going at a problem head first. His take was that the Garou Nation needed every werewolf it could get, while I think that some things are worse than death. It's why I fight as hard as I do to make sure the Wyrms don't win. While we both agreed on that point, I couldn't see how it would ever be advantageous to sneak about and just hope that the Wyrms will go away on its own.

So, how did you resolve it?

Let me tell you about New York.

New York, New York

The most insidious thing about the Wyrms in New York is how easily humans fall to its corrupting power. Sure, there's pollution from the 8 million or so residents and the infrastructure maintaining them, but the amount of money and power coursing through the city is a subtle influence that is hard to fight. Entire cults have risen out of greed, desire, and privilege. Some think they pay lip service to the Wyrms and have no idea how strong a hold it has over them. Others are full scale nut jobs that think the Wyrms gives them power and intentionally spread its corrupting force. The stock traders on Wall Street making insider deals, the corrupt bankers accepting millions of dollars in government bailouts, the politicians and city leaders who encourage a massive divide between the rich and the poor, the crazed wife beaters and child molesters protected by society from retribution are all tainted by the Wyrms. The city is inundated with their filth, and dealing with them is a constant unsavory task.

Jonathan said he had a test for me. He was going home to New York for a week and he wanted me to come with him to follow his sept's guidance in dealing with issues. I'm never one to decline a good challenge, so I agreed, sure that I could show him that taking on the Wyrms head first is never the wrong option.

Jonathan brought me to the Glass Walkers of New York and told them that I was there as a student. The sept was welcoming despite my Get of Fenris heritage. We were immediately set to task to find out some information about an ongoing issue having to do with the Glass Walkers' Kinfolk. While it wasn't the Wyrms per se, I was obliged to let Jonathan put his money where his mouth was.

The sept was concerned about the deaths of two younger Kinfolk. The first died the year before. His thymus had been removed to cure a rare autoimmune disease, myasthenia gravis, as a child. After struggling all his life with a repressed immune system, he died at twenty-three from the flu. While this was not completely strange, another younger Kinfolk in his early teens was diagnosed four months ago with myasthenia gravis and died shortly after his thymus had been surgically removed. The boy had shown signs of undergoing the change and the Garou planned to bring him in shortly before he died. Two weeks ago, another Kinfolk, again showing signs of the change coming on her soon, was also diagnosed with the autoimmune disease. The doctor told her parents that the only course of action would be to remove the thymus, but the Glass Walkers were concerned that she would die just like the boy. The Garou planned to kidnap her before she could undergo surgery, but they needed to determine the underlying cause of this disease and try to prevent more Kinfolk from contracting it.

Jonathan introduced me to the internet. While I am a modern American and I have a smartphone and I look at Facebook, I had no idea how much information was readily available on the internet.

What? Don't you know about Wikipedia and Google?

What? Oh no, I still just let Jonathan do all of that. But, it was eye opening to see what a great resource it is. I will point out that investigating is important for planning, even if your plan is to go kick it in the butt.

I suggested looking at background information or environmental exposure to something that might have caused the disease. Jonathan told me that we needed to understand the big picture first. His idea of big picture was city demographics. New York City had the highest diagnosis rate of myasthenia gravis in the country. Some of the best thymectomy surgeons worked in the city and people came from several states away to see them. New York is a big city, and so far, I wasn't convinced this was a theme. Most patients are diagnosed with the disease in their thirties and forties yet those diagnosed in New York were between six and thirteen. I was sure some kind of environmental influence caused the illness in these children. Jonathan wasn't convinced so we looked into the doctors and the patients. When Jonathan hacked into the hospital system to take a look, he couldn't find any of the patient files. They had either been deleted, or were under further security he couldn't breach.

I decided we should pay the doctors a visit, starting with the one treating the young Kinfolk girl. Though Jonathan complained that this was the exact attitude he was trying to dissuade, I told him that it was just an information-gathering mission. Jonathan came along, but was clearly not happy. Once we got to the hospital, I was at a loss for where to find them. Most doctors have offices, but I had no idea

how to find a surgeon. Jonathan suggested asking the desk clerk, which did not go well for me.

I asked for Dr. Busby and the plump woman at the desk told me that he didn't have any appointments today. When I asked her to tell me where his office was, she just stared at me. Jonathan had to step in and charm her into giving us the information. He said something about not making demands of people, but I'm not really sure what he was talking about. We went up to the ninth floor and were greeted by a nurse's station. Getting past them was actually easier than the front desk. I just walked to his office like I belonged there and no one stopped me. I opened the door on a thin lanky man in his mid-fifties with a bald spot shining through his graying hair. Though entire hospital smelled aseptically clean, his office smelled of cigar smoke and cinnamon. I was pretty sure there was some regulation about smoking in hospitals.

Dr. Busby looked startled to see Jonathan and me barging into his office, and he stood in surprise. "Who are you? How did you get in here?"

"My name's Deidra and I walked right in. Your nurses aren't very good door guards. We have some questions if you have some time." I told him as I pulled out one of the chairs in front of his desk and sat down.

Jonathan sat in the other chair, and it seemed that Dr. Busby's good manners had the better of him, because he sat as well. "What kind of questions?"

"Let's start with myasthenia gravis. How do you go about diagnosing such a disease?" I kept my tone conversational.

"Are you afraid you might have it?" He said.

"No, I think my younger cousin might though." I figured a little lie couldn't hurt.

His eyes lit up for just a moment, so brief that I would swear I was imagining it if I didn't see Jonathan react as well. "Oh how terrible. You would have to bring her in for a proper diagnosis." He was a master at schooling his emotions.

"You seem rather excited at the prospect of a new patient?" I wasn't going to play nice with this man. He was clearly doing something wrong, and I was going to get down to the bottom of it. I stood and stepped to his desk, leaned over and grabbed the front of his shirt. I pulled him towards me and growled into his face, "What are you doing to the children?"

His stammered, "What? Who sent you? Was it Chief Dudek? You can tell him that I didn't do anything to them, if his last order was bad it was because he was rushing me." That was completely unexpected.

Jonathan caught my eye, and I could see that he was just as surprised as me.

"Yes, Chief Dudek sent us. What, did you think we wouldn't notice?" Jonathan chimed in with a gruff voice, only a slight twinge betraying his nervousness.



"I'll tell you like I told him, there was nothing to be done about it. I have to cultivate for weeks to get the proper taste, and rushing me can't produce that. Not to mention all the records I have to go through just to get the thing out of here." He pulled on his shirt front, trying to loosen himself from my grip, indignation warring with fear on his face.

I tightened my grip and shook him once. "So you didn't do anything to the children?" I hissed. I wasn't putting on an act. Whatever this guy was doing was seriously wrong.

"What? No. I didn't do anything that would change the flavor. Of course, I gave him treatments just like the others, but those are necessary for the diagnosis." Fear rose so strong I could smell it wafting from him.

"Treatments?" Jonathan's cool collected calm was completely shattered.

Dr. Busby's eyes went round, "Wait, who are you?" He started shrieking and screaming and everything went to hell. A nurse ran into the office and saw me shaking the screaming doctor. She started yelling and ran out the office door. Soon two male nurses ran in and tried to pull me off of him, and I resisted for a moment until Jonathan yelled at me to let him go. By that time, the men were using brutal force to try to remove me, and I could see that they were starting to get anxious from being around me. I released my grip and made a run for the door. I ran right into a security guard who was hustling into the office and we tumbled to the ground. Another security guard grabbed my arms and thrust them into a thin plastic tie behind my back. A look from Jonathan told me that I shouldn't break the tie, normal people can't do that.

I let the security guards hold me until the police arrived, and then we took a nice trip down to the city precinct. Jonathan was not arrested, since he was not being violent, and he had some excuse that I was a mental patient that got out of his control. Somehow he had certifications to show them and they let me out on bail. As I was leaving, I noticed a placard on the wall reading Robert Dudek, NYPD Chief of Police. I pointed it out to Jonathan, whose eyes went wide.

We brought our new information to the sept, and they were able to help us piece together some more information. Chief Dudek was a member of a group of men in New York well known for acts of corruption and possible dealing with the Wyrms. He had suspected associations with the Seventh Generation, whose ranks were filled with some of the most vile and corrupt members of the city's political and economic sectors. Based on our disturbing conversation with Dr. Busby, we pieced together a grim story of doctors in the city removing children's thymus gland to later be eaten. Definitely by Chief Dudek, quite possibly by others he associated with.

Feeling rather sick, I suggested killing them all in retribution for their vile crimes against Gaia. This was immediately shot down, and Jonathan reminded me of my trip down to the precinct. These men were in control of the city and a direct attack on them was sure to bring trouble down on the Garou in the city. So, instead, I let Jonathan lead me through a more subtle plan of exposing their black market ring to the public to shut it down.

So, what did you do? How did you convince the community it was true?

That's a very good question. We went to the mother of the young girl and told her about the situation. She was skeptical at first, but we showed her the void in the medical files and told her that the treatment the doctor was giving was making it worse. She gave it a week, and afterwards the girl was starting to look and act healthier. That was all the proof she needed. She took the story to the other two families whose children had died and they compared notes. Then the three families took the story to a reporter, recommended by Jonathan, who did a short piece on it. A nightly news reporter who happened to be another of the Glass Walker's Kinfolk took the piece. His fact checkers discovered the strange disconnect between diagnosis ages in New York City versus the rest of the nation. We had a small hold up while they tried to quench the story, which only made the reporter more avid to tell the world. After that, the information caught like wildfire and families of misdiagnosed children came forward in droves to demand justice. Some payoffs were made and some money got dumped into a public relations campaign for many of the men involved, but the surgeons took the fall and the entire operation was shut down.

All in all, the plan was so simple and elegant that I'm not sure I could really call it a plan. It took no more than a month, but with the right push here and there, the cascade of reaction was remarkable. I didn't get to go out and murder the bastards, but I got to watch as an outraged community called for resignations and indictments of some very corrupt men.

I'm confused. You wouldn't have ever known what was going on if you didn't go talk to that doctor. So going at it head first was still the best way.

You're very smart. Just don't let Jonathan hear you say that.

Three Gorges Dam, China

A call for assistance went out from a small gathering of Stargazers from the Tranquil River Sept near Sandouping, China about a month before the Three Gorges Dam went



fully operational. For years the local Garou had fought against the Chinese government to delay the start up operations of the dam, but they had finally lost out. The initial flooding started much sooner than originally anticipated, and the caern was under threat of being lost to the flood waters. The sept wanted to expedite the move, and were asking for any able bodied Garou to come and help. It wasn't something my pack and I normally did, but I decided to go, if only to make sure they didn't leave anything important behind. I went alone. I wasn't expecting to do anything other than act as bodyguard to Garou moving across the moon bridges, so I took my time getting there.

By the time I arrived, the caern was cleared out. Not in that "we finished moving and you missed it," kind of way. More like the, "where the hell is everyone and why did they leave half their things behind?" kind of way. I could see signs of violence and a struggle. They didn't go without a fight, but I couldn't tell what took them. Blood splattered structures, but not enough to constitute even one dead body. Whatever came in hadn't left any tracks. I sniffed the air and smelled the sharp coppery scent of blood, the musky smells of sweat and spittle, and the dis-

tinct acrid odor of the Wyrn. With the city nearby and the dam looming in the distance, it was hard to tell where that particular scent was coming from. I hoped beyond hope that it wasn't coming from inside the caern.

All was quiet and still. The sept was gone, and I was the only one who knew about it. I wondered briefly about the other septs in the region, and where they all went. This is why I will never go anywhere alone again. I couldn't both look for the missing Stargazers and contact the other Garou. I would have to do one and then the other. So I set out to find what became of the sept, and either rescue them or howl their deaths.

Scenting a trail on the Stargazers was difficult, a thousand different smells of coming and going from the past few days' travel muddled everything. Instead, I tracked the Wyrn scent. I followed the trail into the small city of Sandouping and to the main entrance of the Three Gorges Dam. By that time, the stench was burning my eyes and making me sick to my stomach.

I couldn't find the source in the city, which meant it was in the dam. Men in guard uniforms and workers swarmed the place, and going in was tricky. I waited until

dusk for the workers to change shifts then waylaid one in an alley to take his clothes. The clothes were baggy on me, but I didn't think anyone would be checking. I followed another worker up the ramp and into the dam without molestation, and picked up my trail again.

My stomach lurched from the nauseating odor, and I had a hard time keeping myself together. Deep in the bowels of the dam, near the churning generators, I lost the trail. I don't mean that it suddenly went away. It was there all around me, filling the room with the putrid smell of decaying water-logged flesh and disease. I found it, whatever it was. I checked the room for evidence of the Stargazers, but only found a few oil-slicked water spots.

While I wandered around the room I became aware of the faint sound of trickling water. The sound was strange and unnatural, and made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. The water sounds moved through the room, creating an eerie sense of footsteps. I changed to Crinos form and readied myself for an attack. My senses sharpened and I could feel heaviness in the air, as though I was breathing water. I heard it move towards me and wheeled, but it landed on my back. Its scabbled at me with clawed hands, trying to get a good grip. The icy fire of its claws sinking into my skin sent shocks of pain through my body, and I spun around to dislodge it. It held tight and bit down hard on my shoulder. Blood welled up and I could feel cold numbness spreading through my arm and I quickly lost all feeling there. I reached back with my good hand and wrenched it off of me and hurled it into the far wall.

I could see it now, a small humanoid looking thing with pale watery flesh and long black hair that fell past its head and chest. The thing's face was a large toothy maw with grey sunken eye holes. It hissed at me and lurched forward, but I was expecting it this time and dodged to the side, letting it graze my bad arm. It had its back turned to me, and I sank my claws deep into the back of its neck, where the head meets the spine. It felt as though my hand passed through ice-cold water, and thick green pus oozed around the wound, knitting the flesh back together. The scent of pestilence and decay filled my nostrils. The thing pulled away from me and turned; its mouth a mockery of a toothy grin. I roared in frustration and charged at it. Every time I clawed or scratched it, I went through it like water. Its bites and scratches created a burning fever that drained my energy.

I knew that if I didn't get out of there soon, I was going to die. My Rage threatened to take hold of me and my fighting turned from tactical to brutal fury. I caught its thin frail arm as it made a pass to cut me. I gripped hard, yanked, and then I could hear a tearing sound and a sickening slosh as the arm popped off the shoulder and turned to oily slime in my hand. It fell to the floor with a thick splat and sat motionless. The Bane let out a howl

of pain and fury that sent chills up my spine. Invigorated by this new knowledge, I leapt on the Bane and grabbed its head in my good hand and twisted it off in one swift motion. Both the head and the body sloshed to the ground in an oily mess.

I stood panting and trying to regain my breath. In just the few moments I stood there, the ooze congealed into the top of the Bane's head, its grey eye hole fixed in my direction. I knew I couldn't go another round with that thing, so I did the only sensible thing I could do; I ran.

You ran?

Yes. Sometimes, part of being a successful warrior is knowing when you need help. The thing was more powerful than I could handle alone. I left the dam and the city behind me. I set out to find other Garou and tell them about the fate of the Tranquil River Sept. Travel to the nearest populated caern took me eight days of running in Lupus form. My Wurm tainted wounds took nearly as long to heal. I passed one other caern on my way, but it was half flooded and I could tell it had been abandoned months before.

A stout looking lupus with dark fur and a musky scent stopped me at the border.

"You stink of the Wurm, yet you look like a Get. Explain." He was succinct if nothing else.

"I came to assist the Tranquil River Sept with their move. When I got there the place was in disarray. I followed a Wurm scent to the dam. We fought, but I didn't kill it." This last admission kindled an anger I didn't realize I was harboring.

He looked at me and nodded. "I can see the wounds are not healing." He sniffed and stepped aside.

The sept was larger than I had expected, filled with refugees of the flooded lands further east along the river. I came before the sept Alpha and his pack, and was surprised to see a Silver Fang leading the sept. I nodded in deference and took a submissive sitting position.

"I am one of a few surviving from Russia. Ask me later, and I will tell you about it. Maybe you will want to go there and cut out the Wurm where it shelters?" He said, clearly noticing my surprise.

"Maybe, Jarl, when this is finished. Now I am here to deal with the Wurm infestation at the dam." I told him.

"What is your name?" He asked me, not yet dismissing formalities.

"Diedra Bone-Cracker."

"Your reputation precedes you, warrior. I am Nikolai Kozlov, alpha of the Sept of Ashes. We are a deliberate people, which I'm sure isn't to your tastes. You are in our territory and I expect you to behave as though you were one of us. Can you handle that, or should I send you on your way now?" His face was stern and his tone brooked no argument.

"I've worked with Glass Walkers, I'm sure I can handle your ways." I nodded in deference. "You have a Bane holed up in the dam."

"Do you think we don't know this already?" I could detect a hint of exasperation in his voice, though I could tell he was trying hard to hide it. "I like to make a plan before going into a fight. Something I'm not sure you are familiar with." I could see an internal struggle play across his face. He hardened his resolve and told me what was going on. Nikolai explained that a nest of Black Spiral Dancers brought the Bane from an ancient well in the Jiangsu Province. The river started flooding soon after. The Stargazers in the Tranquil River Sept were caught off guard by the speed of the rising waters, and weren't prepared to move quickly enough. The last they had heard, the sept was moving along slowly in their excavation, but there had not been news in several days.

I had to think about that for only a moment, and the realization that struck me made me angry. No news meant no survivors. "They are all gone. I saw blood and signs of a struggle, but no bodies. The only thing I found out that way was the Bane." I told him.

Nikolai's face drew together in consternation. "You saw the Bane?" He asked, genuinely curious.

"I fought it too. Hell of a piece of work you have there." I pointed to the wound on my shoulder.

"We haven't seen it. Our plan was to take a team to the dam, and flush it towards the Dancer nest dug in the dry riverbed on the east side of the dam. We would flood their Pit and kill them and the Bane as they tried to escape." The plan was sound, except for the part about the Bane.

"I think that plan will need to change some. We need a way to kill the Bane and without something that will truly threaten it, you can't flush it anywhere." I told him.

"What do you mean? Explain." He commanded me.

"It's made out of some vile ooze. It doesn't seem to be affected by claws. I ripped its head off and watched as it reformed itself before my eyes. Got any ideas on how to deal with it?" I had puzzled over this point during my entire run to the caern. "The only thing I could think of was fire."

"Fire?" He said tentatively. "Yes and no. We could use something that will make it evaporate. A chemical would work better. Something we can spray or throw on it. I'll talk the Theurges about something they might have on hand. Go rest now; be ready to leave at sundown. We will take the moon bridge to the caern by the dam. With the information you have brought, I can see that we have no more reason to wait."

Instead of resting, I had a Theurge tend to my wounds. The entire sept vibrated with energy and by the time the first rays of pink dawn stretched across the sky, we were ready to go. We arrived at the caern with the last vestiges

of light. We set out to the dam armed with powder packs that would supposedly evaporate any water they contacted; a handy weapon versus the Bane. My small team slipped into the dam through the Umbra and entered the Bane's pumping station. This time, it was easy to find.

The thing looked bigger than I remembered, and it smelled worse too. We herded it by tossing packets of the powder at it, which generated a deeply satisfying hiss when they hit. The Bane shied and skittered away from them. Once we got outside, it fled to the river and pulled water all around it as a protective shield. We ushered it further downstream and past the dam to a scheduled rendezvous point. The Bane was pulling the river water behind it and the level of the river rose dangerously high. It almost seemed too easy to me.

Then the Black Spiral Dancers came at us. Maybe they were attuned to the Bane, maybe they heard us coming. Better still, maybe the whole thing was a trap to begin with and they had attacked the Tranquil River Sept to goad the rest of the Garou into a fight they couldn't possibly win.

I'm certain Nikolai underestimated the Dancer's numbers. I lost count at about thirty when the nearest ones were within range to threaten me. My team's attention was divided between the Bane and the Dancers. I tossed my remaining handful of powder packets directly at the Bane's body. The resultant chemical reaction released a wave of heat and light that nearly bowled me over, but I expected it. The Dancers coming at me were not, and they fell back in surprise. I took the opportunity to dive at the nearest one on the ground and rip its throat out with my teeth.

The Bane fled under water, and the rest of the team turned their attention to the Black Spiral Dancers surrounding them. The subsequent fight was grueling. I could hear the sounds of battle all around, and knew that the rest of the Sept of Ashes was also engaged. Fighting without my pack was a challenge. I was surrounded with trained warriors, and they worked well together, but it just wasn't the same. All of my nonverbal communications were lost to them. We did well enough though and killed the dozen or so Dancers that had ambushed us with little casualty. Then we joined the main fray. The Dancers had us outnumbered three to one. Nikolai raised a call to fall back, and several Garou were already running. My team served to distract the Dancers long enough for some of the weaker Garou to flee. I stood fighting until the last of the sept was able to make a break for it. I would have stayed even longer if I hadn't seen a group of the Black Spiral Dancers break off to give pursuit. I dispatched those around me and followed the hunting party. A few of the sept warriors fell back to defend the fleeing party and between us we were able to beat back the pursuers.

I do not remember how many Black Spiral Dancers I killed that night. I do remember as clearly as if it were

yesterday every Garou we lost in that fight. I remember their names, faces, and how they died. We lost so much that night and gained nothing. We lost the Bane, and killed no less than fifty Black Spiral Dancers, but that wasn't even half of them. We lost twelve good warriors in the fight before we were finally able to make a full retreat.

We crossed back over the moon bridge and Nikolai decided to seal it off to prevent the Wyrms from spreading through it. The Tranquil River Sept members were never found. I suspect they were taken and murdered by the Black Spiral Dancers. Their hold on the dam was absolute, and all the surrounding caerns were lost to the Garou. Eventually, the flood waters forced the Sept of Ashes to move yet again, further inland and away from the river. The number of septs in the region has been reduced to just the one, and they hold a line against the spread of the Black Spiral Dancers further west into China.

I still have a scar from that wound on my shoulder. Do you want to see it?

Oh, yes please.

Norilsk, Russia

Nikolai Kozlov told me chilling stories about the history of Russia. Several cities turned over to military control and were sealed off to outside residents for decades. They were referred to as closed cities, and all the caerns in the surrounding areas had either disappeared or been irreparably tainted by the Wyrms. Initially, Kinfolk living there reported strange experiments and nuclear weapon productions. Soon communications with the Kinfolk stopped due to tightening regulations on travel in and out of the cities. Several septs attempted to invade to combat the Wyrms controlled leaders, and possibly rescue their Kinfolk. They were met with brutal force, and lost many lives in the attempts. Nikolai assured me that most of this was ancient history, yet the closed cities still remained. Norilsk was one such city, and was reportedly so polluted and covered in Wym taint, that Nikolai was sure it housed something particularly terrible.

The conversation sparked a desire to go and see these cities for myself, and test my mettle against what I found there. So, I gathered up my pack, and we set out for Russia. The nearest moon bridge brought us several days' travel away from the city via foot. Running kept us warm, and we got a good look at the scenery. When the forested landscape turned to barren plains we knew we were getting close. The signs of damage to Gaia were evident in every dead tree trunk and patch of shining metal-filled dirt we came across. The heavy metals in the air tasted like blood and rot. They choked us and slowed our run. The city materialized as a dark smudge on the horizon a day before

we were close enough to see buildings take shape. Military outposts blocked the roadways into the city, stopping and checking any vehicles attempting to pass through.

We set up a camp on the outside perimeter of Norilsk, as none of us wanted to spend a single night inside the confines of the polluted city. In the morning, we scouted to see if we could find out the largest source of Wym taint. Instead of passing through the checkpoints, we entered through the Umbra. We had to fight our way in anyway. Though we easily bypassed the human guards, we ran into a number of small Banes that were hanging around the city. Nikolai was not wrong when he said the place had fallen completely to the Wyrms. Larger Banes were near the nickel smelting facilities and mines. All of the spirits that would normally be in the area were long gone. The Umbra was as uninviting a place as it could be and we stepped back over as soon as we were well away from the outside border.

As with any other over-industrialized city, the people were downtrodden, the air was putrid, stagnant, and polluted with the sounds of industry. Traveling through Norilsk was both depressing and rage-inducing. We did not find evidence of any large Wym creatures or influence within the city proper. We went on to Nadezhda, the nickel smelter.

As we circled the complex, we caught sight of a few workers milling about the outside lot. They spotted us and walked over. At first I thought they wanted to talk, or maybe they were going to tell us to go away, but then I got a better look at them. They were repulsive. They had no visible hair on their bodies, which looked shriveled and pasty white. Some had open sores on their arms and faces; others had large pustules that clearly preceded the sores. Their heads were misshapen and their hands were elongated and enlarged. They jerked as they moved, as though their joints did not work correctly. One opened his mouth as though to say something, but I could see that his tongue was a black wormy mass in his mouth, and he just groaned as they moved closer.

Oh, I know. They were fomori, right?

At the time I thought they might be. They were definitely Wym tainted. Later, Speaks-With-Trees said he didn't see any Banes, so the answer is no.

Then, what were they?

I'll explain in a little bit, that is part of the story.

I wasn't sure what to expect, so I just stood my ground as they came. The rest of my pack took up defensive positions. The men shuffled forward and attacked us. I wasn't surprised, but it was completely unnerving. They were relentless, yet methodical. A few of them moved with the slowness of pain, yet they were determined to continue. They clearly were not trained killers either. We easily dodged their lumbering swings and ill-aimed kicks. Though they clearly wanted to do us harm, I almost felt sorry for them. That stopped when

one of the men with open sores caught me with a powerful left hook. Even though they were slow, they packed a lot of force when they did connect. I kicked him in the knee and was rewarded with the distinct sound of bones cracking as he collapsed in a howling heap on the ground. I didn't think I had kicked him hard enough to break bones.

Three of the more intact looking men scattered and ran, spooked by the sound of their friend's broken bone. My pack mates rounded up the remaining few, and knocked them unconscious. We checked each of them and found that they had neither identification nor other personal belongings. The life force filling them was sickly and twisted, and the foul Wyrms smell emanating from their bodies was strong enough to make me sick. After a lengthy discussion, we decided that killing them and putting them out of their misery was the best course of action.

We set out to follow the three who had run off. We had lost sight of them, and no one saw which way they went. I changed to Lupus form to better track them. I could smell their distinctive scent heading to the west, and began running that way, my pack trailing behind me.

I tracked them to the ore quarry just outside of Norilsk to the southwest. My heart broke to see the giant scar on the face of Gaia. The belly of the land had been laid open to the sky, and dust hung in the air just above the entire pit. The place also reeked of the Wyrms. We scanned the perimeter but saw no evidence that the men had gone around the mine. Miners worked in the pit, pulling ore from the ground and loading it into trucks with the Pentex symbol and the name Norilsk Nickel emblazoned on the side. After all we had seen, I was completely unsurprised to see that Pentex was involved.

The Umbra was full of Banes milling about the quarry, so we didn't dare enter the spiritual realm to continue tracking them. Instead, we waited until dusk, when the miners packed up to leave for the night. As they left, we watched for the mutated men, but they did not emerge. Wherever they had gone, they were not returning, and I suspected that we would find the source of whatever had caused their mutations in the mine.

The quarry was completely still in the hours following dusk. Lights from the smelting complex lit up the night



sky and cast a yellow gloom around the quarry. We passed the trucks and the mining equipment and ventured into the ore veins. We followed the Wyrms stench down into the deepest part of the quarry. I felt a prickle of something strange nearby. It was the kind of feeling you get when you know something is hot, but you haven't felt the heat yet. My hairs stood on end as the smell wafted to me and burned the inside of my nose. I turned and followed the scent down a crevice large enough across for two men to walk side by side. I could see a faint green glow from deep in the crevice and I knew what it was before I saw it, balefire.

What is balefire?

What do they teach you around here? Balefire is produced by the Wyrms, kind of like a waste product. It is by far the most corrupting substance found on Earth, and I had found an entire lake of the stuff. I scrambled away and out of the crevice as fast as I could, and I didn't dare look back until I reached my pack. I brought them to the crevice, and we scouted along the ledge I had found, careful not to make too much noise or to get too close to the balefire. Along one side of the lake was a large metal enclosure, nearly fifty feet long. Hundreds of men stood at the back of the enclosure, grouped as far away from the balefire as they could possibly get. They all had pale skin and sunken eyes. Some were covered in oozing pustules, but some still looked relatively healthy. The enclosure was clearly a prison of some kind.

These people were being intentionally exposed to the balefire. I didn't know why they were imprisoned there, but no one deserved that kind of torture. I hesitated for a moment then jumped off the ledge onto the near side of the lake and sprinted around to the enclosure. I moved so fast that the rest of my pack had to scramble to keep up. The sudden movement startled the men inside the pen and they huddled closer to the wall. Some of them were so far gone that they didn't even seem to notice the press of bodies around them. I grabbed the metal of the gate to rip it open and was thrown back from the force of the electricity flowing through it. I landed heavy on the ground with the wind knocked out of me and my left arm half in the balefire. Searing pain from the contact forced me back on my feet, burning all over with lack of oxygen as I gasped for breath between screams.

Did it leave a scar?

Yes. Look here at my left hand. See how it looks like it was on fire? That is the best we could do with it after the Rite of Cleansing. I can barely open and close it properly anymore.

Moon-Eyes was at my side, pulling me away from the balefire. Jonathan had cut power to the generator powering the fence. I shrugged Moon-Eyes off and gingerly touched the gate again, expecting the pain of shock. Nothing hap-

pened, and I bared my teeth at the burning pain in my left arm as I wrenched the gate away from the rest of the enclosure. The sound of tearing metal drew the attention of the men like moths to a flame. They came running at me, and I moved out of the way. They came through the gate in a disoriented mass. As they realized they were not alone, they became violent and those behind starting pushing the ones in front. They writhed and seethed forward. Soon, the entire mass of people was surging towards us. We moved to let them get past, but they turned on us. A violent madness had taken them and they seemed completely unaware of their surroundings.

The gate acted as a funnel, and we were able to maintain a fighting advantage, but their numbers threatened to overwhelm us. My left hand was useless, and burned with the residual balefire glowing green against my coarse arm-hairs. In the beginning the size of the group worked against itself. They trampled each other and pushed those in the front into the balefire. Despite their inhuman strength, they were still brittle and fragile. We engaged the horde gingerly at first, afraid of killing them. They seemed immune to pain and were freakishly strong. Soon we were fighting for our lives. I made a painful change into Crinos form, as did my other pack members. The men were not trained fighters, but their strength more than made up for what they lacked in skill. Several of them grabbed at my legs and succeeded in pulling me to the ground. I kicked at them and heard bones crunching under the blow, but they still pulled at me. They realized that my left hand was useless and a few tried to attack me from that angle. I felt like prey cornered by a pack of wolves. The irony of my predicament was not lost on me. I taught them that despite pain, I could still crush them between my teeth, which only seemed to make them more determined. I could hear the sounds of my pack fighting all around me, and the screams of dying men filled the air. I had the scent of blood in my nose, and it drowned out all the other smells from the quarry, which was an unexpected blessing.

Weariness mixed with the searing pain in my left hand to make me falter. Stacey called out inspiring battle cries in an effort to keep us moving. But even that started to lose its meaning after a while. Someone grabbed my left hand with such force that I was knocked off balance. I roared in pain and my Rage took over me. I lifted him into the air with the arm he was clutching and flung him out over the balefire. He landed with a hiss and disappeared. I tore into another man that had come up behind the first and then snapped the arm of a third man in two. This change in attitude finally seemed to invoke fear into the few remaining men, who attempted to flee. Jonathan and Moon-Eyes cut them down before they could escape the crevice. Suddenly, the fighting was over. Relief flooded into me, along with the bleary fatigue that comes after a long

battle. We assessed the carnage, and killed the wounded and the dying out of mercy. We didn't stay long after; the nearness to the balefire was taking its toll on us.

Once out of the quarry, the cool crisp night air felt almost clean and refreshing, despite the stench of sulfur. We regarded the place for a long moment, and then discussed a plan for burying the lake of balefire and cleansing the area. Speaks-With-Trees was certain that it would take more than his talents to cleanse the area, but burying the thing would be a start. I knew this would only be a temporary fix. Norilsk Nickel would more than likely dig right back into the land in search of mineral deposits, and Pentex would find another way to seek the corrupting presence of the Wyrms. But, it was the best option we had on such a short notice. I made a point of stopping by the Sept of Ashes to tell Nikolai of what we found there.

In the end, we packed all of the explosives from the mining equipment into the crevice and used the gasoline from the trucks as an accelerant to blow that portion of the quarry sky high. When the dust settled, more than half the quarry had caved in over the balefire and the dead mutants surrounding it. We performed Rites of Cleansing on the whole pack and set out the same night. None of us were eager to sleep in proximity to such a place, despite our exhaustion. We walked until sunrise and I called a halt. We collapsed to the frozen earth, warmed by the bright sunlight shining in a clear sky above.

Did you ever find out what really mutated those men?

No, but we were fairly certain that it was their exposure to the balefire. We talked about slaughtering them in that pit. Such a large scale loss of humanity worried me, but I felt we had done the right thing by putting them out of their misery. Speaks-With-Trees suggested that if we had more time and more Garou, we might have been able to cleanse them all of their Wyrms taint, just as he had done with my arm. I agreed, but we didn't have those things, and we had done the best for them we could have.

Francistown, Botswana

After the events in Norilsk, Jonathan decided that we should try to take out Norilsk Nickel to prevent them from ever reopening the balefire deposit we had found in Russia. I figured it wouldn't hurt to know more about the enemy. It was no surprise that they were a subsidiary of Pentex. The company owned one other set of nickel mines in the southern part of Africa, in Botswana. None of us liked the thought of Pentex mining balefire again, and we decided to check it out.

We arrived at a caern near Francistown, watched over by the Shashe River Sept, predominated by a Wendigo presence. I was a little surprised to find them here, and

expected Red Talons to be running the place. Francistown is the second largest city in Botswana, completely modern and very wealthy. The place was a host to diamond miners, with three mines within 150 miles of the city.

The Wendigo were welcoming enough. They knew of Norilsk Nickel, and mentioned the mines to the east as well as a smelting plant they had been fighting the Botswana government to shut down ever since it was built a few years before. They managed to introduce strict emissions laws to prevent an outpouring of pollutants into the fragile river ecosystem. The effort resulted in less pollution than what we found in Russia by leaps and bounds. They did not know that Norilsk Nickel was a subsidiary of Pentex, but they were not surprised by the news. They noticed an increase in violent acts of greed from the locals ever since the company had arrived a few years before.

We told them the story about the Russian operation, which set the sept on edge. The Elders gave us permission to lead a team into the nickel mines and find out what Pentex was doing there. We set out the next morning with three of the sept's defenders; Listens-Through-Winds, a Wendigo Ahroun lupus; Tsania, a Wendigo Galliard homid; and Anton, an Uktena Philodox homid. We rode in cars, since the mines were several miles away and we wanted to check both mines. They brought us first to the Phoenix mine, an open pit similar to the one in Norilsk. We explored the site, but it was clean of Wyrms taint, though we did spot a few of the Pentex trucks around the site.

The Selkirk mine was an underground mine about 10 miles away from Phoenix site. Tsania told us this mine had been out of commission since the early 2000s, due to ore depletion. I expected to find it empty and abandoned, but three dozen Norilsk Nickel trucks with Pentex logos were parked near the mine entrance. I knew that we could not sneak the eight of us into the mine without notice, at least not on this side of the gauntlet. Speaks-With-Trees was loath to bring us into the Umbra for fear that we might run into a Bane congregation like the one we found in Russia. Moon-Eyes and I offered to scout.

The mine entrance was unguarded, and we slipped in with relative ease. The mine was narrow and dark. Though our senses were dulled in Homid form, it was the easiest for traveling the tunnels. Both Moon-Eyes and I sensed for the Wyrms, but could detect no taint this close to the entrance. I was certain that we would find something deeper in. The mine twisted in on itself in a honeycomb pattern and delved deep into the earth. We traveled down all the lesser branches we passed, and followed them until we either hit the main thoroughfare or a dead end. Evidence of fresh mining indicated that we were getting close to the end of our route. So far we sensed nothing. We could hear men's voices and the sound of hammer



and pick echoing up to us from further down in the mine.

"I don't think we are going to find anything by going down there with them. I think this mine might be clean." Moon-Eyes whispered to me.

I nodded once and we returned to the group. They told us that while we were in the mine, three of the trucks left carrying crews of men geared for mining. We hadn't passed anyone in the mine, but the honeycomb formation easily hid movements in and out. I asked if they saw which direction the trucks went, and they pointed out west.

"Let's follow them, maybe they will lead us to the real reason Pentex is here. I doubt they would be in this country for so long and against such resistance if there wasn't something making it worth it." I said.

"I agree. The only thing to the west of here that Pentex might be interested in is the diamond mines." Anton told us.

"The diamonds cause corruption in this land. It spreads like a plague to consume the men." Listens-Through-Winds said. "I have fought long against greed and corruption because of those mines. The arrival of Norilsk Nickel has made it worse."

"I can see how Pentex would be interested in that kind of place. But why purchase the nickel mines when they could just buy the diamond mines instead?" I responded.

"Because the diamond mines are owned by the government of Botswana. As one of their largest sources of income, I can't see them being persuaded to sell, even by Pentex." Tsania said.

"So, the nickel mines give them a reason to be here. But how do they profit in that way? And what is so interesting in the Selkirk mine?" Stacey asked.

Jonathan chimed in. "They still profit. Look at how the Shasha River Sept has been fighting to get rid of the nickel smelter. I bet it's some kind of diversion to draw attention away from the real reason they're here."

"Then let's go follow those trucks." I told them, and started back towards the cars.

I am an excellent tracker, but I've never gotten the hang of tracking vehicles. Jonathan is excellent at using Weaver magic to find electronics, which made following the trucks easy. We drove for nearly two hours to the outskirts of a small town called Letlhakane. From there we could see the giant open pit of the diamond mine. The Norilsk Nickel trucks were parked some distance from the mine, the crew missing from sight. We parked and trekked up to the side of the mine pit. Crews were working in the mine with large bulldozers and dump trucks filled with rocks. I could feel an overwhelming sense of the Wyrms. Whatever was down in that mine was worse than the balefire we found in Russia. My pack and I gave each other knowing looks. The other Garou traveling with us picked up on the grave tension between us.

"It's bad, isn't it?" Anton asked.

"Yes." I said simply.

"Deidra, we should go back to the sept and inform the Elders of what we have found." He addressed me directly.

"And what have we found?" I asked simply. Anton was their alpha, if I could convince him to stay, then I wouldn't have any problems from the rest.

"The Wurm, and Pentex, is clearly involved." He pulled himself up to face me. I could tell he was stubborn, and I'm sure he had a lot of prejudices about taking orders from a Get of Fenris.

"We do not know anything yet. We have no idea what this is. The first thing the sept is going to want to do is send a scouting team to find out. So, let's cut the time in the middle and scout now." I stared him in the eye, putting as much authority and anger into that stare as I could muster. I'll give him some credit; he lasted for a good thirty seconds before he backed down and simply nodded his assent. The other two nodded as well, and we were decided.

We again waited for the cover of night to enter the pit. For the rest of the day, we watched the miners for signs of the Norilsk Nickel crew, but could not determine where they had gone. Moon-Eyes noticed a section of the mine that people avoided completely. This was the first place we checked on once we entered the mine. The area was clear of rubble and debris and looked as though the miners hadn't touched it for a while. A barricade indicating danger covered a hole near the wall on that side. I pulled the metal stand out of the way and walked into the cave entrance. It was large enough for one of the trucks to drive into, and it was cut out of the stone by hand. The floor was relatively clean, and we could see evidence that despite the warning signs, it had been entered recently.

The air grew stagnant and had a sulfurous tang as we traveled deep into the earth. The sense of the Wurm felt stronger here, and we knew we were on the right track. We walked for almost an hour in the dark, always going deeper, before Listens-Through-Winds stopped us and pressed his body against the wall. We all stopped and strained to hear what his superior wolf ears had picked up. Faint sounds drifted up to us, of voices and boots on the ground. Someone was coming up the shaft towards us. We pressed against the cave walls, attempting to blend seamlessly into the shadows. A light preceded them, and two men wearing Pentex uniforms walked past us, too busy chatting to notice the group of Garou pressed to the walls. As they passed, Stacey reached out and grabbed one by the shoulder, swung him around and punched him so hard in the face that blood erupted from his nose as he fell to the ground. The other man whirled just in time for Listens-Through-Winds to bite his leg and tear out his hamstring. He fell to the ground whimpering and crying. I pulled Listens-Through-Winds back before he could rip out his throat. I shook my head once and the lupus backed off. Stacey kicked the uniformed man in the head and knocked him unconscious.

"Grab the light, let's go." I told them and started down the tunnel at a run. The end of the tunnel wasn't far, and I stopped just before I would have run straight into a deep black hole. Thankfully, flimsy wooden boards served as a fence to prevent just that. Three more men were standing on the far edge of the hole and looked up at me with startled expressions. I didn't stop to think and instead ran at them and punched the nearest one in the jaw. One of them was faster than the others and had a gun pointed at me.

"Stop or I'll shoot." He cried at me, his hand shaking. I ignored him and hit his friend again. The sound of a gunshot echoed through the chamber. When I looked up, I saw that Jonathan had shot the gun wielding man. Stacey had wrestled the third to the ground.

I pulled the one I had been hitting to my face by his shirt front. "What are you doing down here?" I growled at him. He sputtered, blood and spittle splashing on my face. I put him down and wiped it away. "I said talk."

"We are watching the hole." He said, his voice lisping through broken teeth.

"Watching it for what?"

He started to laugh which devolved into a coughing fit. He didn't say anything more.

As I reached down to hit him again, Moon-Eyes grabbed my shoulder and pulled me away from him. I turned to ask him what he was thinking and I heard a dry crackling noise coming from deep within the chasm. The rest of the Garou were backing away from the pit, and some had started changing to Crinos form. I let Moon-Eyes pull me away from the hole and willed the change as well. Listens-Through-Winds changed to Hispo form and bared his teeth in a snarl. Jonathan pulled out a large gun – I wondered where he kept the thing. Stacey had unstrapped her ancestral labrys from its harness on her back.

Anticipation and tension filled the space and made my heart beat faster in my chest. Four creatures, about the size of large dogs and made entirely of gemstone climbed out of the hole. They had shards of metal embedded in their skin, and large slits at the front of their heads filled with sharp rows of metal teeth. As they climbed, we could see the gemstone was armor plating over thin ephemeral bodies. They crested the edge of the pit and caught sight of us then emitted an earsplitting screeching sound. Jonathan unloaded four shots into the one nearest him and it fell back into the pit with a spray of ichor. The rest of them sprang forward to attack.

Stacey and I cornered one and took turns snapping and swiping at it to divert its attention. They were slow but strong, and neither of us wanted to find out what happened when you got bit. Listens-Through-Winds pounced on the back of one of them and worried at the

space between its head and its body. He eventually worked his way between the armored plates and was able to snap its neck. I followed suit and leapt on the back of the one Stacey and I were fighting. Its diamond armor was near impenetrable, but my sharpened claws were able to gouge into it and chunks of stone went flying. It reared back to shake me, and revealed a soft underbelly. Stacey took the opportunity to cut into the creature with her labrys and it fell under my weight. I looked around to see that Moon-Eyes, Anton, and Tsania felled the third one.

Jonathan had his gun pointed down the hole and was firing shots at something that had yet to emerge. I could hear the ping of the shots hitting something solid below. A wide sliver of diamond armor crested the hole followed by another and two more before I realized that it was a large hand of a creature similar in shape to the smaller ones that had come up before. The thing's hand indicated it should be ten times their size, but I swear it was bigger. It barely fit through the edges of the hole as it came crashing out and filling the chamber.

"That." The forgotten miner gasped through choking laughs.

What was it?

Based on the reports from the sept, it was a Greed Bane. More than likely it had been sealed in the earth years before, and the mining operation had inadvertently uncovered it. I'm guessing it spent the years forming the gemstone shell around itself as armor for just such an occasion. Pentex more than likely heard about it and came to try to harness its power.

I fell back into the tunnel with Jonathan as he continued to shoot at the creature with little effect. The top of the chamber was high, more than likely large enough for the creature to emerge totally from the pit, but the tunnel wasn't quite big enough by my estimation. I called to my pack to join me in the tunnel in hope of luring the thing all the way out of the pit and exposing its underside. They followed my order, but the creature did not emerge any further. It nearly filled the entire chamber, but I knew we were only seeing about half of it. Anton and Tsania fell back as well, but Listens-Through-Winds continued snapping and biting at the thing, tenacious as hell. I reentered the room and took up a flanking position and started slashing at the creature with my claws. The stone chipped away, but we didn't seem to be hurting or slowing the creature at all. I remembered how Listens-Through-Winds snapped the neck of one of the smaller creatures earlier. The next time the creature came close enough, I sank my claw into its stony hide and latched on. I swung myself up and started climbing, hand over hand.

The other Garou saw what I was doing and rushed into the room to divert the Bane's attention. I crested its back and thrust my claws into the spot between its head and body and started to dig. The creature reared back and started whipping around, and I nearly flew off. Then it extended to its full height and crushed me against the chamber ceiling. I flattened myself across its back to reduce the force of the blow, but it started to grind me back and forth between against the ceiling. I could feel my bones bending under the pressure, and I was sure I had lost three layers of skin. The Garou on the ground



started attacking its vulnerable underbelly, forcing it to stop its assault on me. It doubled over and I was able to recover my grip on its neck. I started digging in again. This time I worked fast and furious and held on tight as it swung me back and forth. I cleared away the armored carapace and plunged my claws deep into its neck, my arms disappearing in reddish grey flesh. I felt a resistance and pushed harder until I felt my claws snap past whatever was there. It instantly stopped moving and crashed down sliding back into the chasm with me on its back. I pulled my arms out of the thing, but it was falling faster than I could move. I had just freed myself as I was falling past the wooden barriers and I leapt from the creature's back. I was off by only a foot, but it was enough to make the difference. Anton reached out and grabbed my hand as I hurdled past. Tsania was holding onto him and I swung hard into the side of the pit wall. Despite having the breath knocked out of me, I scrambled up and over the side of the pit.

I stood panting next to Anton as the other Garou took stock of the situation. The Pentex workers had been trampled in the fighting. Speaks-With-Trees checked us over for injuries and helped us heal. He also performed a Rite of Cleansing on the area and on me again, just in case.

We returned to the Shasha River Sept victorious, and Tsania sang our deeds to the sept in a moot called in our honor.

Okay, that's it for tonight. I think you have a better understand of how the Wyrms work across the world?

Is that is? There isn't any more?

There is more, but it will have to wait for another time. I think we've talked enough for one night.

Mechanics

Deidra "Bone-Cracker"

History: Deidra comes from a family of Get of Fenris Kinfolk. When she was ten, she was introduced to the Garou Nation, and was inundated with the teachings of a people she had nothing in common with. She experienced her first change when she was twelve, and spent the next six years living and learning from her tribe. She was raised in the traditional Get of Fenris fashion, with bloody lessons and near death experiences. She was always strong and these only served to give her discipline. As an Ahroun, she was prone to violence, and her tribe directed that rage against the Wyrms. After her time in the Amazon, rooting out and killing the Wyrms became more than a goal, it was a duty. She has always been a natural leader, and her conviction draws warriors to her side like flies to honey.

Description: Deidra is a tall Scandinavian looking woman with thick blonde hair and wide set blue eyes. She is not beautiful by anyone's description, and is riddled with scars from her numerous encounters with the Wyrms. The hard set of her jaw and the half crazed glint in her eye is enough to warn anyone that she is not a woman to be messed with.

Storytelling Hints: Deidra is not just a strong woman, she is cunning and thoughtful. Though her first inclination is to kill first and ask questions later, she will not needlessly endanger herself or her pack. She has learned patience over the years, but only for strategy and war. She will quickly lose her temper to frustration if she is presented with stupidity. She is always frank and open, even when she is being respectful. She never sees reason to hold back her opinions, or say what needs to be said. She doesn't believe in the concept of the elephant in the room.

Position: Pack Alpha

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Ahroun

Tribe: Get of Fenris

Rank: 4

Physical: Strength 5 (7/9/8/6), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

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

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Intimidation 3, Leadership 5, Primal-Urge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Drive 2, Firearms 4, Melee 5, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Law 1, Medicine 2

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Ancestors 4, Pure Breed 3,

Age: 8, **Gnosis:** 6, **Willpower:** 7

Gifts: (1) Falling Touch, Razor Claws, Sense Wyrms; (2) Fangs of the North, Spirit of the Fray, Staredown; (3) Cowing the Bullet, Might of Thor, Wind Claws; (4) Stoking Fury's Furnace; Heart of the Mountain

Antagonists

Disease Bane

The Bane released from the Jiangsu Province well is a type of H'rugging that spreads disease and pestilence through flood. It had been sealed away for hundreds of years before the Black Spiral Dancers released it on the Yangtze River during the construction of the Three Gorges Dam in a plot to flood out all of the Garou caerns in the area.

Willpower: 5, **Rage:** 4, **Gnosis:** 6, **Essence:** 15

Charms: Blighted Touch, Flood, Materialize

Oil Bane

The spill of crude oil in the Gulf of Mexico released thousands of barrels of crude oil into the waters. Wakshaani from all over were attracted to the spill and fed from the oil washing up in southern Louisiana, growing fat on the toxins. Even after the spill was mostly cleaned up, the Banes continued to thrive all along the Mississippi River due to industrial complexes routinely dumping wastes into the river.

Willpower: 8, **Rage:** 6, **Gnosis:** 10, **Essence:** 40

Charms: Blast, Flood, Materialize

Greed Bane

A particularly powerful Psychomachiae had been trapped in a volcano by Garou centuries ago. It had slowly worked its way up and through a vent before it was stopped by the immense pressure. Later, the Bane was freed when its prison was exposed by diamond mining. It immediately began influencing the local populous intent on pulling diamonds from the mine. Soon, Pentex took notice of the activity and moved in to harness the ancient Bane's power.

Willpower: 6, **Rage:** 8, **Gnosis:** 7, **Essence:** 30

Charms: Blighted Touch, Corruption, Materialize

Blighted Men

Attributes: Strength 4+, Dexterity 1+, Stamina 3+, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1+, Appearance 1, Perception 2+, Intelligence 1+, Wits 2+

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 1 or 2, Intimidation 3, Melee 1 or 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2 to 4

Powers: While The Blighted Men are not fomori, the effects of the balefire have given them each one of the following Powers as a fomori: Berserker, Numbing, Regeneration, Unnatural Strength.

Equipment: The blighted men wear tattered and worn clothing. They carry whatever was on them when they were picked up and imprisoned by their Pentex captors. Often they have wallets with identification and some have cellular phones with dead batteries.

Description: The Blighted men are mutated due to an exposure to an extraordinary amount of balefire. Those who do not die immediately from exposure develop a strange supernatural strength and resistance to pain. They are also driven completely insane by the nearness to the Wurm and the only thing they know now is violence.

Shock Troopers

Attributes: Strength 3+, Dexterity 3+, Stamina 2+, Charisma 1+, Manipulation 1+, Appearance (usually) 0, Perception 2+, Intelligence 1+, Wits 2+





Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2 to 4, Brawl 1 to 3, Intimidation 3, Firearms 3 to 5, Melee 1 or 2, Survival 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 2

Powers: Each fomor gains the power Fiery Discharge to represent their acidic blood. from the Bane infesting it. Chose two more from the following list for each fomor: Armored Skin, Body-Barbs, Chameleon Coloration, Extra Speed, Immunity to Delirium, Noxious Breath.

Equipment: These fomori wear military grade armored vests and clothing. They rarely carry spare weapons, as their own bodies constitute their weaponry – treat each one as carrying an assault rifle or assault shotgun. One of them might have a cellular phone or some other communication device to keep in touch with their paramilitary units.

Description: These formori are bound to Banes of violence. They have mutated weapon-like appendages and acidic blood that they can spit or shoot from their bodies. These troopers are covered in a thin metal covering which protects them. Unfortunately, they do not live long, as they are not immune to the acid in their own blood and it slowly devours them from the inside out.

Totems of War

Clashing Boom-Boom

Background Cost: 8

Clashing Boom-Boom is the ancient spirit of War. She chooses only the greatest warriors as her children, and expects to be obeyed at all times. She is not only a great

warrior, but also a great tactician and leader. She takes on the form of an iconic war machine of an age; while many of her packs still see her as a stealth bomber, some werewolves now see their totem as a Predator drone. The Garou that follow her are fierce and disciplined soldiers.

Individual Traits: Followers of Clashing Boom-Boom gain two extra dice on their Firearms and Melee rolls and the maximum difficulty for any roll involving weapons is 8.

Pack Traits: Packs that follow Clashing Boom-Boom gain three dots of Leadership.

Ban: Clashing Boom-Boom does not tolerate insubordination of any kind. Her followers must follow any orders given to them by a higher-Ranked Garou. Refusing a direct order from Clashing Boom-Boom herself will result in her turning on the pack.

Trapdoor Spider

Background Cost: 6

A cunning strategist, Trapdoor Spider is patient and aggressive. It will wait days for prey to come along before it strikes. It waits for the precise moment, and then attacks, quickly and efficiently. The target rarely knows it has fallen into a trap until it is far too late for escape.

Individual Traits: Followers of Trapdoor Spider gain one dot in Dexterity.

Pack Traits: Packs that follow Trapdoor Spider gain three dots of Athletics as well as four points of Willpower per story.

Ban: Children of the Trapdoor Spider are forbidden from entering any combat situation without a plan.

Honey Badger

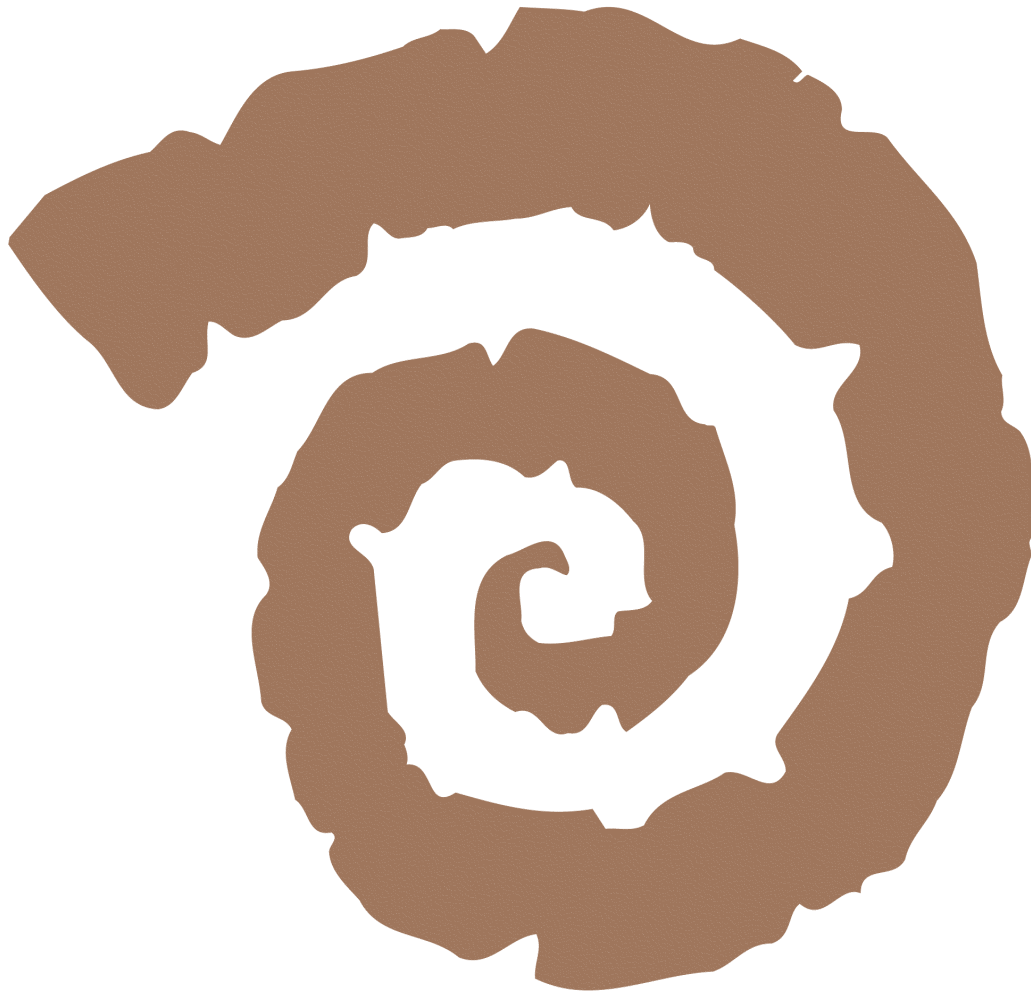
Most predators are loath to attack a Honey Badger, and they are right to do so. Not only is the Honey Badger a fierce and tenacious predator, but it is a tireless fighter and has a tough defensive hide that allows it to escape most dangers. The Honey Badger is reckless and will enter a fight even if the odds are against it.

Background Cost: 7

Individual Traits: Followers of the Honey Badger gain a dot of Strength and reduce all wound penalties by 1.

Pack Traits: Packs who follow Honey Badger gain access to the Gift: Resist Pain.

Ban: Honey Badger's children may never back down from a fight, no matter how bad the odds are against them.



Appendix: Gaia

(Why We've Lost)

"I'm just going to start off by apologizing. This is going to get preachy at times. As far as Children of Gaia go, I'm a pretty awful stereotype. Bleeding heart. Hippie. I do the liberal causes. I rip up fracking rigs. All that shit."

Thomas stood from an old leather executive chair, and looked over the bonfire to each of the cubs in attendance. The tanned, old blonde man kept his hands in the front pockets of a gray hooded sweatshirt. The bonfire acted was the centerpiece of a long-abandoned warehouse. Piles of musty old office supplies acted as a makeshift border march around the bonfire; the cubs each sat in an office chair that had seen better days. Some had missing wheels. Some had moldy, gaudy, 1970s style knit upholstery with holes torn in it.

The cubs were a rag-tag collection from various tribes and backgrounds. A young Silver Fang refused to sit, he crossed his Armani-laden arms, and looked to the old chairs with disdain. "So why are we even here? What can we learn from weaklings?" He rolled his eyes at Thomas's preface.

"What can you learn? Well, first off, you can learn a heaping helping of shut the fuck up and respect your elders." Thomas barked. The Silver Fang bit back a reac-

tion. Some of the other cubs repressed chuckles. "There's a lot to learn from people of different experiences and viewpoints. Tonight, I'm going to tell you about some of my travels. That way, you can learn all about the places I've been, without stepping foot outside your privileged comfort zones."

The Silver Fang stood stoic. The other cubs nodded and looked on with curiosity.

"I've been all over, and I've found some essential lessons I don't think we express upon our cubs. Fortunately, the sept's been kind enough to let me jaw at all of you. The first thing I want to say is that nature is overrated." The young raised eyebrows and looked among each other.

"I know, I know. I'm a Child of Gaia. I'm hurting the trees' feelings by saying this. Don't worry; I'll hug them later."

One of the cubs, a young African American teen in a purple flannel shirt raised her hand.

"Janelle?" Thomas motioned to her, nodding his head toward her, but not removing his hands from the hoodie.

"Mr. Thomas. You said nature's overrated. But isn't Gaia nature? Or, isn't nature Gaia?" She quickly ducked her head down, to avoid visual judgment from her peers.

"Of course. But that's the thing. Gaia is everything. Gaia is this office chair." He patted his leather seat. "Gaia is this bonfire, the petroleum I used to help start it, and

the black smoke curling up. Gaia is this cinderblock. Gaia is this can of Coke.”

The cubs looked between each other, suspiciously. One whispered, “Is this a test?” to another.

“Remember the Triat. Just because you’re taught from a young age that the Weaver and Wyrms are bad, doesn’t mean you get to ignore the places they take hold. But we’ll get back to that in a few minutes. I’m going to tell you about my travels.

“Before I get into travels, I want to warn you, I’m not a Galliard. In my experience, the best lessons don’t come from stories. Hell, most of my travels aren’t really stories. There’s no narrative arc. This isn’t *Breaking Bad*. This is *Friends*. In the big scheme of things, most lessons come from really corny teaching moments that don’t really relate to the real driving bits. Life isn’t that literary. If anything, it’s arbitrary. Beautifully arbitrary. Intelligently arbitrary.

“Because we’re doing the campfire thing, I’ll probably try to make it sound like a story. That’s how we work, right? We build patterns where there are none? So, if the first lesson is ‘shut the fuck up and respect your elders,’ the second lesson is that you have to let those patterns unravel. The Wyld is all about raw creation without order. You can find amazing lessons in disorder, but your human brains obfuscate disorder.”

New Guinea

Let me tell you about the time I traveled to New Guinea. I spent a few weeks in Port Moresby on a project dealing with the raskol gang epidemic. We brought a boat full of canned foods, and offered up carts full of food to anyone that turned a gun over to us. We destroyed a crate of automatic weapons. They took the food home to their families. A few people tried to steal food. We judged them. If we thought it was an honest effort to feed the hungry, we let them think they got one over on us. If we thought it was an effort to terrorize the people or to hoard for a gang, we went Crinos and eliminated a threat to the public good.

I used to like that shit when I was a kid. But in retrospect, it all feels like academic exercise. We never changed anything. We went all over the world, patching wounds and treating symptoms, but we never addressed the real problems. No amount of fur and claw will fix poverty. No amount of Umbral guerrilla warfare will fix a history of colonization. You can blame the Wyrms or the Weaver, but that’s a cop out. It’s never that simple, or we’d have solved world hunger by now. It’s not like we don’t have the desire, the will, or the strength.

The real adventure happened when I went outside Port Moresby. After the ship ran out of food, but we still had some time left on the schedule, I decided to go walking. Now, I figure most of you aren’t familiar with the area.

Most Americans don’t even know the capitals of most of their states, let alone other parts of the world. New Guinea is a thousand miles from one side to another; a thousand miles of rainforests, volcanoes, and harsh beaches. You’d think it would be a Garou paradise. It has all the things big, burly Ahroun brag about loving. But really, the Garou population is slim to none. This is partly because it was Bunyip territory, partly because frankly, homids need some degree of comfort, and they can’t get it there. In 2014, Garou follow the flow of their homid majority.

This walk took me through the rainforests. Let me just get it out of the way now: the rainforests of New Guinea are beautiful. They’re intensely, incomprehensibly beautiful, and you will never see anything like them. If you get the chance, go. It’ll give you a great story to tell your children, if you choose to have them.

The Birds of Paradise

While traveling through the rainforest, between the Umbra and the Earth, I found peculiarities in some of the animals. In particular, the birds of paradise appeared on both sides, and appeared sacrosanct to all but humanity. I spent some time watching them. Who couldn’t? They’re gorgeous. But while I watched, I noticed that the birds stood proud, without fear of predators. The wild birds fear very little in the rainforests; only the odd snake or larger bird could pose a threat. But mostly, the birds’ greatest predator is humanity. People have hunted them closer and closer to extinction.

What’s strange about this? Nothing, really. Species that would remain healthy were it not for humans are common all throughout the world. I’m sure your mentors have beaten you over the head with this fact. Also, the Exxon Valdez spill was awful, right? But what occurred to me was, before my trip to New Guinea, I’d never heard of the birds of paradise. Had they gone extinct I would have been none the wiser. While yes, it’s tragic to see Gaia’s creations fall to the wayside, it happens. We lose species every single day to both natural causes and manmade threats.

Do you know when this really hit home? When I returned. When I got back to the big city, our local soup kitchen closed. It was a complicated issue, one we’d seen coming for a while, but didn’t quite know how to fix. It was partly a public funding issue. It was partly due to local stigma from the high crime rates around the building. It also had a lot to do with a competing church that had more interest in filling seats than solving the underlying societal problems that made us need a soup kitchen. If I stayed home, if I stayed focused, that kitchen would likely still be open.

This is one of those places I’m going to be preachy, and this is part of the overarching theme of tonight’s campfire tales. If I focused on my territory, my territory wouldn’t be falling to shit. Those birds might have handled them-

selves, they might not. But while I was looking at their tails, contemplating the universe, that kitchen closed and now people are hungry. Those rainforests are amazing, and preserving them should be someone's priority, but I, like most of humanity, live in a city.

You know what's worse about that? I really love Columbus. It's a wonderful little city. It's full of interesting people. It's a very self-aware place, and one I'm proud to call home. But while I was out marching through the rainforests, I wasn't proud. Breathing that fresh air, seeing all that rare wildlife, and listening to the sounds of the natural world, I got smug. I looked back at my home with an elitist disdain. While I stood between those trees, if you told me the soup kitchen was closing, I'd have shrugged. I was that hippie.

I was stupid and shortsighted. My city comes from people. People are part of Gaia, just as much as everything else is. Hound Dog's Pizza? Sure, it's a great joke to say that it's good at the time, but in the bathroom later you'll think it's of the Wyrms. But it's just part of the city's ecosystem. It's easy to write off the city, because it looks like all the horror stories. "But fomori come from the cities," you say? Listen to yourself, and think a little deeper at what you sound like. Statistically, fomori are only a tiny percent of the population. Of course they're going to saturate cities; that's where the people are. But you can't blame the people for being victims. Is it okay when people blame all African Americans for crime, just because they see African Americans plastered all over the local news? Of course it's not. You're Garou. You can be better than that.

Rant aside, I met a single pack of Garou, a pack dedicated to Bird of Paradise.

Singing Dogs

The pack of four claimed to descent from none of the tribes we know. Part of me wonders if they're not an offshoot branch of the Bunyip; one divergent by a great deal of time and as close to their parent tribe as the Siberakh to the Silver Fangs. On the other hand, they could have been wanderers like I was who decided to stay. As far as they were concerned, Bird of Paradise was the only totem they needed. One, Wa, was lupus, two homid, and one metis. The lupus Garou was born among the New Guinea singing dogs. One of the two homids came from a Korowai clan, and one was native Indonesian. The Korowai called himself Boas. The Indonesian called herself Gema. The metis came from a past indiscretion from the late fifth and sixth pack members. It was called Megawati; it preferred not to be identified by gender, so I'm honoring its request.

It's worth noting that all their lupus forms were those of singing dogs, not common wolves. They're still canids, but they're pretty much extinct in the wild. From my travels, I know this isn't the case, but it's close enough to

worry. As far as I can tell, they're functionally identical to any other Garou. But it's interesting to see non-standard variations on the form. I tell you, they call them singing dogs for a reason. Their pack howls are amazing; you can hear them from almost anywhere on the massive island if your hearing's sensitive enough.

They're a great crew to run with. I met them in the rainforests, but they're technically from Jayapura. They have what's maybe the single biggest territory a Garou pack could hope to maintain — they patrol the whole damned island. Most of their dealings lately have them struggling with the border between Indonesian Papua and Papua New Guinea. It's hardly a black and white issue on either side of the Umbra. Without getting deep into the human politics, I saw terrifying creatures coming from Indonesia, and from Papua New Guinea. They were largely of the Wyrms, but otherwise unaffiliated. They crossed back and forth, mingling and infecting. Either side would have been manageable without the other, so the Birds of Paradise fight to keep the border marches strong.

Wa hates the border police. That's an understatement. The pack has to keep Wa from killing the border police. When asked, Wa wouldn't even explain it. Wa just spat on the ground and kicked dirt in response. Megawati's unfortunate condition left it with almost no visible flesh; its muscles bled and kept it from any significant interactions with humans. So Boas and Gema kept the border, and dealt with the border police, while Wa ran rapid patrols up and down the territory, and Megawati kept its eyes on both sides from a high vantage point just in case something snuck through. I've heard rumors that the Fera are doing something on the island, but I didn't come across them, and the Singing Dogs claimed that they didn't know what I was talking about. I decided not to press the matter.

Right along the border, they maintained a lovely waterfall caern. It was the type of place that was completely inhospitable to tourists, inaccessible to helicopters, and downright hostile to anything traveling on feet. The pack used the Gifts of Singing Dog to move through the trees, so they could access the bawn safely.

The waterfall's conflict related to the water itself. As lumber milling operations boomed in the rainforests, they dumped more and more contaminants into the water. Mines stripped the soil and poured Gaia-knows-what into the groundwater. You can fight off all the monstrosities that come into your territory, but you can't stop the water from flowing, so you can't stop those contaminants. They'll flow no matter what you do. So they're fighting this uphill battle that they can't attack as it comes to them. Sound familiar?

For years, they've fought off the lumber companies and mining tycoons. But as soon as you take one out, another pops up in its place. They told me a local Tok Pisin saying.

I can't remember the exact phrase, but the gist is that corporations are like herpes; you can treat the outbreak but the disease can't be cured, so you will always get blisters.

Their struggle sounds like our struggles. This isn't a coincidence. Just because they're in one of the thickest forests in the world, doesn't mean that our cities are really any different when you get into the thick of it. Our struggles mirror their struggles, because we're all of Gaia. When someone goes off on you, waxing nostalgic about the deep, dark woods of wherever, remember that their bullshit's the same as your bullshit. We Garou have a downright sickening manifestation of "grass is greener on the other side" syndrome.

So that's my bit about New Guinea. I told you it wasn't much of a story. That's why the Galliards usually do this. I'm Ragabash, I do dismissive, flighty, and sarcastic. But I also do relationships. I met Bird of Paradise and Singing Dog. I talked with them about spreading their presence. If they don't find packs to patron, both run the risk of dying off. While they're not Tribal totems by any stretch, it's always a sad day when there's an extinction. If you're starting a pack instead of joining an established crew, talk to me later about totems.

The Arctic Circle

Very few humans make their homes in the Arctic Circle. My perception of the Arctic Circle is unique. I've been on expedition there twice; once I was human, once I was Garou.

Mostly, I'm speaking of Siberia, but that's on account of my particular experiences. Different parts of the Arctic all suffer from the same ecological concerns.

The Rising Tide

Before my change, my father took me on a trip to Murmansk, where he worked with the climate scientists at the Murmansk Marine Biological Institute. This was back in the early 1990s, when every bright eyed and bushy tailed cheerleader wanted to be a marine biologist, but their fathers beat into their heads that climate science was liberal propaganda. Dad fought an uphill battle, working on conservation legislation proposals that used polar ice measurements and other inconvenient facts that flew in the face of big business.

Dad made headway. He fought for lofty goals, but he wasn't disappointed when the status quo argued his points down to less significant changes. But let's just put it out there: my dad made change. He fought the Wyrms. He did it because it was the right thing to do. He didn't have some spiritual imperative. He didn't know about the impending Apocalypse. He stared down some of the



most powerful men in the world during a United Nations summit on climate change, and he didn't fucking flinch. He probably made more change with pencils and paper than most of us ever make with tooth and claw. Rending and raging have their place, but let's not play the martyr game where we pretend the weight of the world is completely on our shoulders.

At the ripe age of 12, I imagined that being trapped on a boat to nowhere with a bunch of 19 year old blondes would be a dream come true. I couldn't have been more wrong. We traveled to Vaygach Island on an exploratory mission. The idea was to determine whether or not the island could be made into a valid wildlife preserve for dwindling polar bear and whale populations. Little did I know that this trip would become relevant later, even if we couldn't establish the preserve at the time.

When we got to Vaygach, we did the classic white guy thing. We found a settlement, I think it was Dolgaya Guba, and we offered the local Nenets people a bunch of cheap manufactured crap so we could stay with them for a few days. We ate their food. We learned a few choice phrases. In retrospect, it was painfully condescending. But then again, if you really want to see a people that embody the animist, Theurge outlook, learn from the Nenets.

Nenets Totems

The Nenets lifestyle centers on reindeer herding. Reindeer comprise much of the Vaygach Nenets diet, their transportation, and their textiles. Vaygach is known for its idols, over 200 ivory, wood, and stone statues observing traditional Nenets religious and spiritual practices. Many feature deities, many feature reindeer. Even among the Nenets, it's not clear what every idol stands for. Many Nenets people travel to the Vaygach as a pilgrimage.

While I was there, I visited as many of these idols as I could. I found them deeply fascinating.

At times, I've attributed this fascination with Nenets idols to my nature as Garou; I felt that since eventually I would change, some spark inside of me knew that, and drew to something so much like the Gaian truth. Then, I realized I was full of shit. We — the Garou — are not leaders. We're warriors. Cultures worldwide created, developed, sometimes abandoned, and practice rituals very similar to ours. This isn't a coincidence. We didn't teach all of humanity; they taught us. Everything we do is a mirror of culture. It's a warped mirror, a mirror covered in a predator's saliva. But it's a mirror. We're reflections of human animism.

Before you take up arms, I'm not saying that's a bad thing. It's a good thing, in my opinion. We're a strange mishmash of human mythology, belief, and ritual, all melted and dished out worldwide. It's really cool when you think of it. In essence, we're an iconic, homogenous expression of human devotional practice. We preserve that beauty

by our very natures, since we're going to be standing on the brink when everything ends. Sure, we have our little Tribal clichés, but that's all set dressing. We, Garou, are like museums of unwritten tradition. We're like shrines, homages to spiritual tradition.

Anyway, the idols. I felt like it was my first legitimate spiritual experience. I found one of the Nenets totems, it was maybe a penis, maybe a face. You can't really tell with old weathered rocks. It looked like a penis. But then again, I was 12. Everything looked like a penis. Unless — of course — it looked like a vagina. I couldn't keep my eyes off this idol. While my father dug around for animal dung, I stared for over an hour. Eventually, I gave in and fondled the statue. With my retroactive clarity, I know that I must have been looking into the Umbra. I saw ice spirits, death spirits, and water spirits. I saw a magnificent vista in the distance, where the Aurora Borealis is in the night sky. It's difficult to remember exactly what it looked like; at the time it was just an awe-inspiring streak of colors I didn't have words to describe. I've struggled ever since, trying to apply my Garou senses to the vision.

I don't know if it was just me, or if the Nenets could see what I saw with those totems. I want to assume it's the latter, but maybe that's hopeful thinking. It's such a touchy topic, even when I returned, I wasn't comfortable bringing it up. We have laws, after all.

Vaygach Redux

In 2006, I returned to Vaygach. A lot changed in a decade and a half. For one, I changed. I returned because my experience the first time was downright transformative, and I wanted to approach the island again with my Garou perspective. Again, I went with my father, but on the pretense of a vacation, a chance to spend some time with him in a familiar place. He couched it in another ecological study.

My return raised more questions than it answered. I spoke to the Nenets people this time, using my Gifts to bridge the language gap. They painted a bleak picture. They told me "the right doors are closing, and the wrong doors are opening". They weren't kidding. Stepping sideways felt like I never left the city. The Umbra didn't want me.

The worst part, that aurora I mentioned? It wasn't there. I imagined a sky that a child wiped paint across, but all I saw was blackness, with a red, almost eye-like hole that stared me in the face, no matter what direction I looked. You all know Siberia's cold, right? It's one of the coldest places on Earth. That eye was colder. It drew the warmth from all around.

The idols did not exist in the Umbra. That's strange — not everything has a mirror in the Umbra, but the idols were negative space, like you might imagine antimatter. You could see a gap where the idols should be, but if you

touch them, your hand goes right through; it like they are non-spaces or a dimensional anomaly.

The Nenets still make pilgrimages to Vaygach, but they aren't celebratory observances; they're voyages of lament. Their prayers are more like apologies and promises than devotionals and requests. They don't know what's going on any more than I do; they can't see that red hole in the sky, they can't see the voids where the idols should be in the Umbra. They just know something's wrong, and they feel responsible for fixing it.

The Ice Stalkers

I barely met any Garou on my trip. The Nenets had a Silver Fang and his pack among them. I had a brief conversation with the Silver Fang alpha, but mostly just for permission to camp on their island for a few weeks. They weren't keen on outsiders. What I did meet, though, was two Ice Stalkers. What's an Ice Stalker? They're a type of Gurahl, or werebear. Ice Stalkers — like you might guess — are polar bear shifters.

I admire the shit out of them. Basically, they stay in these ridiculously extreme environments, and they defend and heal wherever possible. They're surprisingly welcoming; they're open to anyone with an interest in protecting the frozen islands. I guess I gave off that air, or they assumed that any lone Garou traveling up there had to be traveling on good will.

I met two, but they are lone warriors. One, Nise, lived in a cave on the west side of the island. The other, Pirnu, lived in a house along the eastern shore.

The most exciting part of the trip was a battle against a cluster of ultraviolet jaggings. I don't usually fight spirits of light; that's a strange proposition. But these were infected, Wyrms spirits dedicated to destroying everything on the island. Let me just put it out there: if it weren't for Nise saving my ass, I would not be here tonight. She put herself on the line, and those jaggings tore him all to fuck. I've seen a lot, but I've never seen anything that could survive the brutality those jaggings brought to Nise. Nise laughed, and ripped them apart with her remaining arm. It was that kind of brutal.

As the jaggings fell to Nise's massive claws, they stopped fighting. They didn't resist their killer at all; they instead looked to the sky, to the terrifying red hole. Strange enough, Nise doubled down and intensified her assault to destroy them quicker. I asked her later what drove her urgency once the danger subsided. She said she doesn't have the ability to explain to something so young. I imagine she meant that Garou are younger, but I didn't press the issue out of respect. Well, partly respect. Partly because she regrew her arm while I wasn't looking.

Moral of the story? If you ever find yourself torn between fighting a Gurahl and not fighting a Gurahl, go with not fighting the Gurahl.

In Conclusion

We came because climate change is ruining the ecosystem. As temperatures increase, arctic ice melts and raises the sea level. I'm sure you've seen it all over the news. But I've seen it first hand. There's no embellishment. If anything, the media downplays the effects because they're afraid the public won't believe the whole truth.

From the 90s to a few years ago, it got worse. You could see the effects back then if you knew what you were looking for. If you knew the plant life, you'd see the structural weaknesses. If you knew the animals, you'd see the subtle differences in body mass. But when I returned, it would have been obvious to even the most fervent denier. You couldn't walk the ice without finding rotting carcasses.

Let's not forget, this is a part of the world too harsh for your average Silver Fang. Most Garou wouldn't make it for much longer than a short expedition. The people living in this region are some of the hardest imaginable, and their land is literally disintegrating under their feet. But then again, this happens all over. Wastewater destroys homes. Strip mining devastates entire regions. It's not like the nearly uninhabitable Arctic Circle has a monopoly on ecological devastation.

Natural gas fracking efforts produce toxic and radioactive waste. All over Ohio, all around Columbus, you can find patches where it's unsafe to live thanks to greed and oil. Recently, a family's drinking water exploded from methane infusion. Parts of Ohio have non-potable water that can give the runs to a Garou, Gaia knows what it'd do to a human. The whole state's known for its ghost towns. I think the term "ghost town" is a complete fucking cop out. It's not like those people just disappeared. Corporate interests decided the people were no longer viable after disasters, or just economic shifts.

You don't even need to go further than Columbus. On the north side, you can find remnants of Flint, a rail town that died with the old railroads. On the southeast, Hibernia used to be a little community that faded into nonexistence over the course of a century. Now, there's a cookie cutter apartment complex standing there; the old cemetery is the only remnant of the old village. If you go further, down toward McArthur, you can find the skeleton of Moonville out in the woods. It was a booming little town, and it thrived up until the corporations pulled every drop of coal and iron out of the Hocking Hills. If you go East to New Straitsville, there was a coal seam fire that damned near ended the town back in 1884. The fires burn underground

to this day; they'll probably never stop. Those fires might very well be a road to Malfeas. It was a disgusting story. The mining companies blamed striking workers for the fires. Nobody should have believed a word of it.

Dolgaya Guba's no bigger than any of these towns. It's never even compared to Moonville in its heyday. But nobody cares about Moonville. Nobody wonders what Ohio town's going to be the next Moonville. I'm not telling you to ignore the melting arctic ice, but be aware that external problems can sound sexy and epic, when they're really just the same problems on a different scale, or just in a different time zone. You've got to make your own bed, first.

The Bright Side

Before I move on to the next tidbit, I almost forgot: in 2007, we got our wildlife preserve. We're already seeing more whales, polar bears, seals, and walruses than before. We know that in the end, the big story won't have a happy ending for anyone. But I think this small story is shaping up better than I ever would have expected.

Tanzania and Kenya

If you haven't gathered this, I've done the whole backpacking thing. If it's a popular tourist hub, I've probably been there. If it's a classic challenge for foreigners, I've faced it. For a prime example, let me tell you about the time I went to Mount Kilimanjaro and the Serengeti. This is a little more story-like. This will make me sound much more like a character in traditional fiction.

Kilimanjaro is a classic exotic place for tourist validation. If you climb Kilimanjaro, you can somehow tell yourself that you're "authentic" or "traveled". I went as Garou, so I didn't feel particularly impressed with myself, but it is a lovely view.

The Simba

The area I visited primarily existed in the human bounds of Tanzania, but it bled a bit into Kenya. For the Gaian breeds, no such boundaries existed. The territory I visited was the land of a massive pride of Simba. Simba, if you're unaware, are lion shifters. And no, they're not named after the kids' movie. It's an old name.

When I arrived, I announced myself with a proper howl. The response was difficult to describe. The pride roared back. But the roar was unlike anything I'd ever experienced. Close your eyes for a second. Picture a large man, twice your weight. Imagine him punching you square in the chest, and following through with all his weight. Stand up to the pressure. Now, that's not what the roar feels like. But the moment afterwards, where your body bounces back, your lungs rapidly refill, and your muscles

all melt with the shock? *That* is what the roar feels like. Your blood pressure drops. You lose your sense of position and direction for just a split second.

I'll add, this was from miles away. From close, it's a whole different animal.

Curiously enough, that roar was the friendly variant. That's just their way of acknowledging someone, and telling them they're not currently being hunted. Very straightforward. You'll find that of the Simba; they like direct and they like honesty. If they don't like you, you won't be left wondering. You may be left breathing, if you're lucky.

There's no Fodor's Guide to traveling through Simba territory. They don't communicate in a familiar language to Garou. Don't forget this for a second, because ignorance of their language is no excuse to them. Come with someone that can translate with Gifts, or who knows a few rudimentary sounds. That said, it's difficult to explain their language. We just don't have the same vocal capabilities; anything I tell you is going to be told with Garou vocal chords. It'd be pale emulation. If you're going to rely on third person tutelage, make sure you know your shit.

They followed the message with a command to meet them, and a rough direction. This is a classic tactic; they tell you basically where to go, but not specifically. This way they can watch you, and control the circumstances of the meeting. I knew the tactic. I'm pretty sure they knew that I knew the tactic. But for them, it was a formality — a terrifying formality. You see, when I got so far on my path, they surrounded me. Twenty Simba, representing all their forms, circled in. A young woman charged, leapt, and shifted in air to her war form. I shifted if only to survive the assault. She knocked me to the ground, and quickly had jaws around my neck. I froze. Fighting would have been fatal. Seconds later, she released me, stood, and offered a hand to show me to my feet. She introduced herself as Rehema.

I shifted back to Homid as I stood, and offered a sculpture from my knapsack. This is a thing I do. I make sculptures out of iron, and I give them to people that impresses me in my travels. She took the sculpture, nodded, and motioned the pride to follow her. I ran with them, back to a outcropping they'd made into a lair. We cooked and ate a zebra. Before you ask, it was delicious. I think they cooked it for me, but that's just a sneaking suspicion. We told stories all night. You might have guessed it, but story time was like crack for me.

They told me an amazing story about their conflict with the Ajaba — the hyena shifters — about forty years ago. Without getting into the long of it, the hyenas refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Simba king Black Tooth. The Simba didn't really agree with Black Tooth's complete dominance; they figured they'd always find fringe elements outside even the mightiest kingdom. The problem

was, Black Tooth was a mean fucker, and would rip the throat out of dissidents in his court. So the Simba fell in line, and oppressed the Ajaba.

Black Tooth ruled for years. He kept allies amongst the leeches, and kept much of the continent down. From a political standpoint, he tried positioning the Ajaba as an inherent enemy of the crown. While the Simba complied with his orders, they never really bought into the line of thinking. Eventually, with the help of an Ajaba named Kisasi, and numer-

THE FALL OF BLACK TOOTH

The events depicted in this story happen after the death of Black Tooth. More information on the tyrant's fall, and on the Ahadi alliance, can be found in W20: Changing Breeds.



ous other Changing Breeds, the Simba overthrew Black Tooth. Those allies formed the Ahadi, a cosmopolitan council of Ajaba, Silent Striders, Bagheera, Makunguru, Bubasti, Kucha Ekundu, and whatever Simba stood against the tyrant.

You may have heard of the Ahadi, but even if you have, let that sink in: numerous Breeds banded together, and formed a council to peacefully govern and maintain mutual interest. Could you imagine? Here, we can't even get the Thirteen Tribes to get along most of the time. What if we tried forming an alliance with the Ratkin, the Corax, and the Pumonca in Ohio? Well, they succeeded somehow and the Ahadi stands today. Each representative breed has a council member. It's not perfect, but what is?

Rehema and I became fast friends. She was born homid. Growing up, she attended the Muhumbili University. She wanted to be a doctor before her change. I don't know if it's regular, but she changed much later than most Garou. I had similar aspirations as a teen, but my change kept me from medical science. It didn't keep me from dabbling. She and I spent the rest of the night drinking and sharing tales of our travels. If meeting her was the only take away from my trip, it'd be the best voyage of my life. But it wasn't. More on that later.

So, I shared my stories with them, they shared their stories with me, and after a night's sleep, I continued my journey.

The Ajaba

You probably know enough about me by now to know that I wasn't about to leave that story alone. A collective of different breeds working together for the common good?

I had to hear more. I sought out the Ajaba.

Interjection for important lesson time: just because a group is part of a larger group working toward the common good, does not mean that the given group members are inherently peaceful. Some of the Ajaba, apparently, have not gotten over Black Tooth's reign. They carry grudges, even though they're part of the Ahadi. So, when Simba travel alone through Ajaba territory, they're looked at as potential threats.

More importantly to this story, Children of Gaia that smell like Simba thanks to a night of drinking, feasting, and story time are looked at as a potential threat.

In this particular case, they pulled out all the stops. I walked through the Ngorongoro Crater, where I heard they nested. When you picture a crater, you picture a bowl, a dip into the ground. Ngorongoro is too big to see it as a dip. You can look from any direction, from great distances, and not see both edges of the volcanic caldera. So really, it felt more like the biggest valley you've ever seen, with wildlife-strewn plains all throughout. I hit a built-up area, with trees, numerous elephant skeletons, and a small pond. The moment I noticed that the wildlife seemed suspiciously vacant, the noonday sky around me turned dark.

Apparently, the Ajaba share an affinity for the day and night, the darkness and the light. They turned clear skies into a soupy, inky darkness I could barely smell through, let alone see through. I should have shifted. I snapped out a statement of peace, of non-confrontation. They didn't buy it. I don't know how many attacked, but they struck rapidly, with shallow, harrowing bites. Each time I tried to stop one, another attacked from behind. They weren't going for the kill, they wanted to tire me out. So I shifted. I stood, and I grabbed one by the snout. I told them I wasn't there to hurt them, but I would if I needed to.

They stopped.

It turns out, they couldn't tell me apart from the Simba because of the scent I carried. At least, not until I took my Crinos form. I dropped the snout, and they dropped the darkness. By the time my eyes adjusted, only one of the Ajaba remained. He asked my purpose for coming, I explained that I came interested in hearing the story of the Ajaba, Black Tooth, and the Ahadi. More of them appeared from behind trees, and from within bushes. They looked to one other, and yipped and chittered quickly. Either they had a method of blocking my Gifts, or they were simply trying to fool me, but I couldn't understand what they were saying.

They simultaneously quieted, and the one stood forward again to tell me they would share their story. Right around that time, though, the savannah shook with a Simba roar. It expressed a great danger, and a call to the local Ahadi to gather quickly. Despite their suspicions, the Ajaba broke into a run immediately.

My Folly

We convened at the pride's outcropping, along with representatives of all the breeds. Apparently, Tanzania had given the green light to a Pentex-subsidized power plant. Construction was underway near one of the rivers much of the population relies on for water. Because that never goes bad, right?

The plant exploded, probably as part of a nefarious plan. The explosion dumped thousands of gallons of toxic waste into the water supply. First reports suggested radioactivity. Worse still, the place hid a massive nest of banes. At the moment of the explosion, a swarm emerged and circled the ruined plant. They appeared to be guarding something.

The Ahadi debated and argued potential plans. They scrawled maps into the rock floor. Scouts described the enemy. Time passed. Far too much time passed. I lost patience, and stepped forward. I told them of a time our sept faced a meat packing plant full of nastiness, which had a similar layout and enemy population. It was one of those beautiful, Oscar-winning moments. Impassioned speech. Rallying cries. You know the gist, right?

Long story short, they went with my plan. They figured my experience and fresh perspective was the solution. Sure, there was some grumbling. But once the council decides, grumbling goes by the wayside.

We moved into position, and camped that night. We chose to attack in the morning, because the Simba are creatures of Helios, and have certain edges in the daylight, the way we rage under Luna. We surrounded the location in a series of strike teams, positioned to move in and cripple all avenues of escape. The idea was a fierce, heavy, thorough, and final strike to eliminate the threat by surprise. We'd move in from all angles, and guarantee at least some of the strike teams would maintain an advantage. With our Makanguru friends – the white-necked raven Corax of the region – we even had attacks from above.

Come dawn, we moved in for the kill. It was a sight to be seen. Warriors from so many breeds attacking in unison; for the moment, it felt like a full thematic reversal of the War of Rage. We tore through their ranks. The initial assault went without a hitch. The main force pulled back toward the center of the wreckage, toward the heart of the would-be power plant. We pressed forward to keep them on their feet.

Everything looked good for the Ahadi forces. By the time we fought to the center, most of the banes fell. However, when our first warriors found the heart, the battle shifted hands. Our Ajaba advance fighters screamed out a warning, a demand to withdraw. In my rage, I insisted we push on.

This, coupled with the voice of the Simba, kept us moving. Rehema roared to keep our forces fighting, not fleeing.

We should have fled. The whole thing, the power plant, the explosion, the hive, it was all a trap. The banes needed as many of us as possible in that plant when they released their secret weapon — they'd harnessed a Nexus Crawler to annihilate us. Almost all the advance forces fell within seconds, as it warped their bodies into different chemical structures. The Ajaba I only recently met became puddles and splashes. The Simba and Kucha Ekundu warriors stomped over the deceased to charge the fiend. They fought valiantly, but half of them fell to its first attack. I shouted for withdraw, but they were too embroiled to flee. The Makanguru dove to distract the beast, but time shifted and the building returned to its completed state, blocking their advance.

I had no choice but to charge, to help the Ahadi I had endangered. A dozen lions and wolves, alongside the few remaining Ajaba and a Mokole, swarmed and overwhelmed the Nexus Crawler. It dissipated into nothingness. As far as we can tell, we won.

As we regrouped, the Mokole, called Swali, told me that I'd be best served to walk the savannah for a week. I abided her commandment. When the week was up, I returned to the outcropping. The council, featuring new members representing the Simba and Ajaba, convened there. Because I urged them to rash action and cost them a significant part of their population, they ruled I'd be exiled from the region. Because I engaged with best intentions and good will, they would let me live. Head hung low, I couldn't argue the point.

In Conclusion

They didn't need me. I wasn't the Great White Hope. I taught them some valuable lessons, but ultimately, they've gotten by for thousands of years without me. Apocalypse permitting, they'll go on for many more. The Ahadi exiled me from their territory, and with good reason.

Rehema died because of my arrogance. Gaia lost an amazing warrior, because I couldn't get my head out of my ass. Why did I think I could guide them to success in an unfamiliar land, in an unfamiliar situation? I don't know. Maybe it was racism. At the time, I certainly felt capable. Maybe it's a Garou thing. What did I think was going to happen? That one werewolf from Ohio was going to lead

a pride of lions into victory? Of course I did, because I was an idiot.

I look back to the War of Rage. I wonder if this sort of benevolent prejudice might be to blame. I wonder if one arrogant Garou thought he was doing best for everyone, and if shit just snowballed from there. I've met many of our Changing Breed cousins. I've heard all the horror stories. They'll steal your fetishes. They'll murder you on sight. They'll sell your kin to the Wyrms. But in my experience, they're all just people. They may be suspicious, but mostly they just come from different cultures, so they have different expectations and traditions. Remember, the majority of us come from human stock. It's not like we can shake our upbringings. Others come from wolves. Which I don't need to labor the point, but wolves aren't lions, ravens, or bears. They have different backgrounds, and different values. Ironically, our metis seem most able to empathize with other groups, because they've always been on the shit end of our cultural stick.

Find beauty and grace in others. I guarantee you, you'll be better for it. With some of the other Breeds I've met over the years, I feel a closer kinship than with some Garou, because we don't have artificial tribal lines. When I met with the Ice Stalkers, they didn't assume I was weak and unwilling to fight because I'm a Child of Gaia.

Travel. Please travel. But don't assume that you're going to save the world. Let your travels save *your* world. Learn from other Garou, other shifters, other animals, and other humans. Take those lessons home with you, and apply those tools to the problems that stand before you. Those lessons will make you invaluable to your pack, your sept, and your tribe. If your tribe gives you shit about travel, ignore them. Yes, I said ignore them. This is 2014, and you need to be a global citizen if you want to be useful.

Good Night

I hope my ramblings helped. I hope you learned a little from my mistakes and my arrogance. If you have any questions, you can find me with my pack around Hound Dog's. My specialty is finding totems for new packs. So if I mentioned a spirit in my stories, and it sounds interesting, hit me up.

If you find yourself in Tanzania, tell Rehema's pride that I'll never stop being sorry.

Mechanics

Thomas Lives-Nowhere

History: Thomas's mother was a United States Marine, his father was a climate scientist. Both traveled the world as part of their work, dragging Thomas along. By the time he Changed, he'd already seen much of the world, and he refused to settle down just because he was Garou. He kept up his travels, even though his pack remained in Columbus, Ohio. They tolerated his wanderlust, because he had a knack for bringing home powerful fetishes and other curios.

During his time in Tanzania, he accidentally caused the death of numerous Changing Breeds. They exiled him from the region, and he never let himself live it down. He blamed himself for every life lost, and not a day goes by where he does not attempt some form of penance. Upon returning, he tossed himself head-first into sept duties, and vowed to keep the young of Columbus from repeating his mistakes, while maintaining open minds and global spirits.

Appearance: Thomas is in his mid thirties, and very healthy for it. He's fit, upbeat, and hearty. His skin shows extensive tanning from his travels, he keeps his sandy blonde hair short and functional. He has a handsome, confident look, though there's a strong burden in his eyes. He always dresses in extra layers, to accommodate for changing weather. He prefers handmade clothing, but it can come from anywhere in the world depending on his mood and most recent travels.

Roleplaying Notes: You're a teacher by necessity. You've learned lessons that you've got to share. Nobody can make the same mistakes you have, so you teach by whatever means you feel are best. Among the young, this means by getting in close and being friendly. With adults, it sometimes means hard, chiding lessons. You have a strong, sarcastic sense of humor. You prefer to question traditions and institutions whenever possible.

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Ragabash

Tribe: Children of Gaia

Rank: 3

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

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3 (1/0/0/3), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Leadership 2, Primal-Urge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Crafts 2, Drive 2, Etiquette 4 (Multi-Cultural), Performance 3, Stealth 2, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer 1, Enigmas 2, Investigation 2, Law 2, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Science 1, Technology 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 3, Resources 1, Rituals 1



Rage: 3; Gnosis: 6; Willpower: 9

Gifts: (1) Apecraft's Blessing, Blur of the Milky Eye, City Running, Free Flowing, Mother's Touch, Persuasion (2) Blissful Ignorance, Global Citizen, Grandmother's Touch, Speech of the World, Unicorn's Arsenal (3) Singing Dog's Cry, Speech of All Things

Rites: (1) Rite of the Hearthfire

New Gifts

For the purposes of learning their Gifts, the Singing Dog pack is considered its own Tribe. It's not, but if an outsider learns their Gifts, they're considered out-of-Tribe Gifts for experience costs. Are they really their own Tribe? That's a good question. They have a couple of unique Gifts. They have a totem (Bird of Paradise) that's in addition to their pack totem (Singing Dog). So technically, they could be considered a Tribe, if only in the same way as the Hakken or Siberakh. But only four Singing Dogs exist.

Free Flowing (Singing Dog Level One) – The Singing Dog moves through trees like a monkey. With this Gift, the Garou can move through the air at high speeds, so long as she has something to grab. In the rainforests, Singing Dog's followers move at blinding speeds through the trees and crags. Urban Garou with this Gift can move through windows, over rooftops, along laundry lines, and whatever else might be in their way. Singing Dog teaches this Gift.

System: This Gift costs nothing to activate. Once it's learned, the Garou can move her full running speed through the air while still taking an action, so long as she can climb, grab, or vault over something each turn. She must also move in the same general direction from one turn to the next.

Global Citizen (Homid Level Two) – Some homid Garou have a propensity for travel that has them able to fit in wherever they go. This Gift takes this principle a step further. The Garou blends into different cultures, and inherently understands minor cultural traditions, faux pas, and quirks. To the untrained observer, she appears part of the group. Her skin and facial structure doesn't change, but nobody seems to notice any difference in heritage. She does not become able to understand languages associated with the group; that's the purview of other Gifts such as the Homid Gift: Speech of the World and the Child of Gaia Gift: Speech of All Things (below). A chameleon-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: This Gift effectively makes the Garou part of whatever culture she immerses herself in. Any active efforts to out her as a non-member suffer a +3 difficulty. Any time she needs to fake a behavior with which she's unfamiliar, she can emulate it if she succeeds at an Intelligence + Etiquette roll. The difficulty depends on the commonalities with her

home culture. A culture similar to hers is difficulty 5, most other human cultures are difficulty 7, and cultures that are lost, unnatural, or alien are difficulty 9. With a point of Gnosis, she can temporarily establish relevant Allies and Contacts Background dots equal to her Wisdom dots, divided however she likes.

Singing Dog's Cry (Singing Dog Level Three) – The New Guinea Singing Dog is known for its intense, loud vocalizations. Alone, they can express complex, very clear sounds over great distances. As a group, they harmonize into a full choir. With this Gift, the Garou reaches out with the power and intimacy of her voice, and can touch others with her song. As long as a subject can hear her voice, she's considered to be touching them. Singing Dog teaches this Gift.

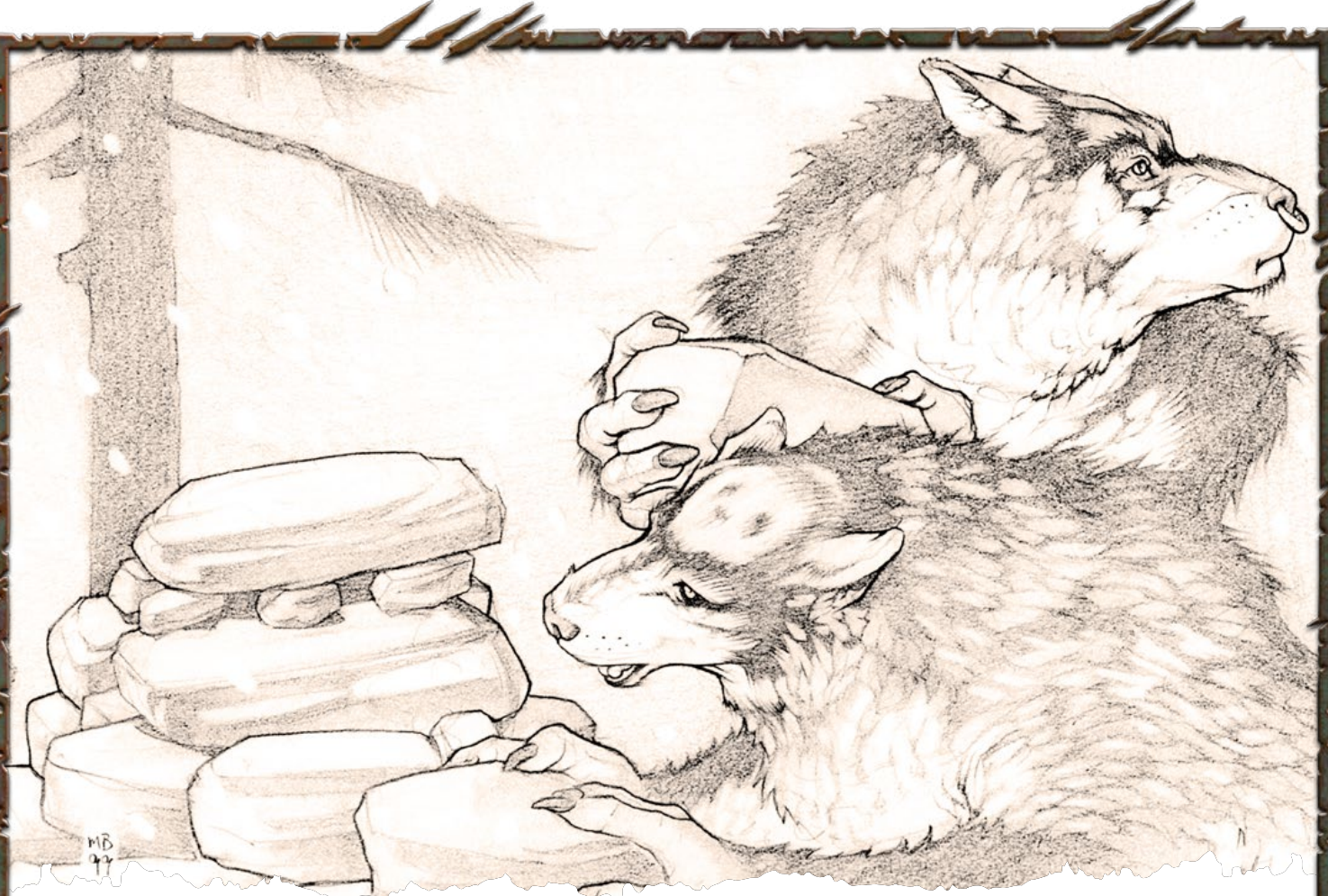
System: Spend a point of Gnosis to activate Singing Dog's Cry for the scene. Roll Charisma + Expression, difficulty 7. For each success, the Garou can effectively "touch" one person that hears her voice, as long as she continues singing. Each "touch" caused by this Gift uses one success, even if she touches the same character twice in a row. This "touch" counts for the purpose of other Gifts activation – she may use Falling Touch over a mile away, as long as the victim hears her baying cries. She can "touch" as many subjects as she wishes simultaneously, up to the limit of her successes, but each uses one success.

Speech of All Things (Children of Gaia Level Three) – The Children of Gaia must communicate if they wish to accomplish their goals of unity and understanding. This Gift is a greater version of the Homid Gift: Speech of the World. The Garou can understand, read, write and speak any language as fluently as she physically can. She can emulate the roars of the Simba, but any member of that Breed would know the difference since she does not have the vocal capacity to make the correct sounds. Within those limits, she can speak the languages of various Changing Breeds, she knows the secret rune languages of dead magi, and if she were so inclined, she could even understand the dread tongues of the Wyrms. This Gift does not protect the Garou mind from what she hears. A servant of Unicorn teaches this Gift.

System: The character can understand any language once she has learned this Gift. With an Intelligence + Academics roll (difficulty 7) she can read and write in those languages for the scene. If the language is not in common usage by more than a single, small group or culture – or does not have a written form – the difficulty increases to 9.

Rites

These rites reflect some of the cultural practices in Thomas's various travels.



Rite of the Hearthfire

Level One, Caern

The Nanets people have few Garou amongst their population. But those few Garou have taught this important rite to any gifted Kinfolk. The group make a fire and with a few quiet, contemplative blessings, the fire becomes the center of a small sanctuary – a warm field that remains protected from the elements. While the area within isn't luxurious, it becomes comfortable enough for safe, secure sleeping.

System: Once the fire is built, roll Wits + Rites (difficulty 7). If successful, the fire creates a safe zone, a bubble big enough for three people plus one per success. It lasts a full night. During this time, snow, wind, rain, and other environmental phenomena remain outside the bubble. Inside the bubble, people remain warm and the ground is comfortable for sleeping.

A level three version of this rite exists. This version affects a large area – equivalent to the bawn of a caern – and lasts one day per success.

Totems

The various packs and Garou in these stories patron the following totem spirits.

Bird of Paradise

Background Cost: 6

Bird of Paradise is a bright, colorful, small corvid; a distant cousin to Raven. What he lacks in Raven's wisdom, he has in pure glory. He uses his brilliant plumage to attract mates, in spite of the many vicious creatures in the rainforest. He fancies himself the king of the trees, and all evidence supports that claim. He laughs down at Crocodile, and flies far too fast for Cobra. His followers pride themselves in drawing attention.

Individual Traits: By reflexively spending a point of Rage when an opponent's player has announced an attack, the follower can force the opponent to attack her instead of the opponent's intended target. She can still roll to dodge and soak as normal. Additionally, Bird of Paradise's followers gain a dot of Dexterity.

Pack Traits: A pack to Bird of Paradise has access to three additional points of Rage, and two points of Willpower.

Ban: Bird of Paradise demands its followers bear bright obvious adornments to their clothes, and remain majestic and obvious at all times. His followers cannot hide, even when fleeing from an assailant.

Lion

Background Cost: 8

Lion is king of the savannah, and for good reason. His immense roars and powerful jaws put him on top of the food chain, and guarantee his position against any would-be predators. Lion's folly is that he is hardly a team player. His pride might work together, but his aloof nature keeps him distanced from them. While the women hunters of the pride work to feed the young, he rests lazily awaiting tribute.

Individual Traits: Followers of Lion gain a dot of Charisma and Strength. Additionally, on any contested roll using a Social Attribute, a follower of Lion wins on any ties as if she were the defender. This effect requires a point of Gnosis.

Pack Traits: Lion's pack can belt out a powerful roar. One member at a time can use the Shadow Lord Gift: Thunderclap, but focused on the sound of her roar. Additionally, Lion's pack can access two Gnosis and two Rage.

Ban: Lion is known as a glory hound, taking credit for his pride's kills. For this reason, followers of Lion lose one point from any Glory rewards, and increase the difficulty of any teamwork rolls by 1.

Polar Bear

Background Cost: 10

Bear is a long-standing totem among Garou. Due to Bear's ties to the Gurahl, his followers are considered less honorable than their comrades. Polar Bear is similar to Bear but specifically relates to the Ice Stalkers, the Siberian bear shifters. Where Bear is a resting defender, Polar Bear fights the rising tides and sinking landmasses of her homeland. This makes Polar Bear a much more urgent and violent totem.

Individual Traits: Followers of Polar Bear gain a dot of Strength, and a dot of Stamina. They can also use the Gift: Mother's Touch once per day. They can regrow limbs with a Willpower point. This heals any non-aggravated health levels that resulted in the disabled or removed limb. As with Bear's followers, adopting Polar Bear causes distrust within the Garou community. Followers lose five points of temporary Honor, and all Honor rewards are reduced by one point.

Pack Traits: Polar Bear's pack gains access to two dots of Medicine, and two dots of Brawl.

Ban: Unlike Bear, Polar Bear does not accept her honor loss as ban enough. She also requires her followers strike out at any threats that threaten to end a species.

Reindeer

Background Cost: 7

Reindeer stands tall, stands proud, despite the terrible conditions of his living space. Reindeer is a totem of pride and survival; he teaches his followers to not let setbacks and circumstance weigh them down. Reindeer is all the stronger for his ability to stand against the odds. He's not a Cockroach, who will hide from the environment.

Individual Traits: While standing their ground — not moving more than a few steps on their turn — a follower of Reindeer reduces the difficulty of soak rolls by 2. Additionally, Reindeer's followers gain a dot of Stamina.

Pack Traits: A pack to Reindeer has three points of Willpower available to spend, and can share three dots of Survival to share.

Ban: Reindeer's followers rise to the occasion, and they stay standing. While they can dodge attacks in the heat of battle, they can't dodge without attacking. Sometimes, Reindeer forgives avoidance of massive Wurm emanations, and other grievous attacks. But that's all at Reindeer's discretion.

Singing Dog

Background Cost: 7

Singing Dog is a shy, clever canid. She's an amazing communicator; her namesake voice is complex and carries over great distances. She's also adept with interpersonal interaction, her skill with body language is remarkable in the animal kingdom. She's immensely rare; singing dog is almost certainly extinct in the wild today.

Individual Traits: All members of Singing Dog's pack gain the Gift: Singing Dog's Cry (above) for free, and decrease the difficulty of the activation roll by 1. They also gain a dot of Charisma.

Pack Traits: Members of Singing Dog's pack gain access to three dots of Expression, and three points of Gnosis.

Ban: Singing Dog is all but extinct in the wild. However, her iconic howls ring out across New Guinea. For one full day of every full moon, Singing Dog's pack must go completely unseen, but a great number of people must hear their howls.



DON'T RUN HOME TO MAMA

WRAITH: 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION
COMING FALL 2014

RAGE ACROSS THE WORLD

Walking the World

The Garou fight their war against the Wyrn throughout the world. Werewolves fight a deadly three-sided war in the Amazon, facing both the Wyrn's forces and native shape-shifters who do not appreciate the Garou's incursion. In Cairo, the Arab Spring provides cover for the werewolves' enemies, but also opportunity and hope. In Iberia and America, the plight of wolves mirrors the Wyld's declining influence. At home, the Garou must be ever-vigilant for threats against their septs, both from within and without.

Through a Werewolf's Eyes

This book presents the World of Darkness through a werewolf's eyes, providing players and Storytellers with valuable information on what life is like for the Garou. In addition to a detailed look at septs and caerns, this book also includes stories from the travels of three Garou who have dedicated themselves to discovering more about the Triat. Storytellers who want to open up the world, and players who want their characters to take up a position in their home sept will find all of the information they need in this book.

Rage Across the World contains:

- An in-depth look at septs and caerns, including common features and rituals, sept positions, and new systems for caern totems.
- Stories from the travels of three Garou, highlighting the dangers and opportunities of the Weaver, Wyld, and Wyrn.
- New antagonists, totems, Gifts, rites, and fetishes.

