



ABOMINATION CODEX

CJ CARELLA'S
Witchcraft



CJ CARELLA

Abominations lurk in the dark corners of the world.

SHAPE-SHIFTERS HAUNT BACKROADS AND LONELY HIGHWAYS. IMMORTAL BEINGS WALK THE STREETS UNNOTICED AND PURSUE CENTURIES-OLD AGENDAS. SECRET SOCIETIES MANIPULATE WORLD EVENTS AND DECIDE THE FATE OF MILLIONS. ANCIENT AFRICAN CULTS CALL ON GODS AND SPIRITS TO DO THEIR BIDDING. AND THOSE MARKED WITH THE TAINT OF THE MAD GODS MUST MAKE A CHOICE -- SERVE ENTITIES FROM BEYOND REALITY OR FIGHT TO PRESERVE THE WORLD AND THEIR VERY SANITY.

THE APPROACHING RECKONING WILL SPARE NO ONE, HUMAN OR MONSTER, MORTAL OR UNDYING. HIDDEN COVENANTS ARE FORCED TO SET ASIDE ANCIENT FEUDS OR LONG-HELD VOWS OF SECRECY, AND STEP FORWARD TO FACE TERRIBLE NEW FOES. THEIR CHOICES MAY HELP SAVE HUMANKIND, OR DOOM IT COMPLETELY.

Fear not the monsters, but the beings the monsters fear.

Abominations Codex is a supplement for the WitchCraft roleplaying game.

In it, you will find:

A new Character Type, rules for Ferals, bestial shape-changers, and True Immortals, reincarnated undying children of a lost civilization

New Associations: the near-invisible Knights Templar, the voodoo-wielding Covenant of Legba, the shape-shifting Nomads, the immortal Lodge of the Undying, and the desparate, Tainted Mockers

New Metaphysics: The Keys of Solomon, Spirit Patrons, Familiars and Taint Powers, as well as information on Voodoo Magic and Atlantean Arcana

Background on Elementals, Nature Spirits, Zombies, Fiends, Ethereals and Creatures of Taint

Compatible with All Flesh Must Be Eaten™, Armageddon™, and all other Unisystem™ games.



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Reader discretion is advised.

Comments and questions can be directed via the Internet at www.edenstudios.net/witchcraft, via e-mail at edenprod@aol.com or via letter with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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A Word to the Wise

The WitchCraft RPG is, first and foremost, a work of fiction meant to entertain. A number of facts have been mixed with a liberal dose of fantasy in these pages, and people who seek information, spiritual guidance, or an excuse to do stupid things should look elsewhere. The witches in this game are as unrealistic as the wizards in Tolkien's tales; none of the secret organizations and conspiracies in this book are meant to be exact replicas of real world groups.

Having said that, I would like to point out a few real facts. Wicca is a real world religion, based on ancient folk beliefs and practices from Europe. During the Middle Ages and the Reformation, followers of Wicca were persecuted by the Christian Churches. Wicca has nothing to do with Satanism, and is a religion with as much legitimacy (if perhaps a less comprehensive organization) as Christianity or Buddhism. The "Wicca" in this book (Wicca is nothing but the female form of the ancient Anglo-Saxon word Wicca, or

Wise One) are portrayed as having some of the beliefs and principles of real world Wiccans, but are as fantastic as the Christian-oriented, monster-hunting Sentinels also depicted in this game. To learn more about Wicca, go to a local library or bookstore; there are plenty of non-fiction books on that subject.

Finally, anybody who has problems distinguishing fantasy from reality and who thinks this or any other game depicts actual occult practices should stay away from this and similar books. They should also stay away from television, books of all kind, and most forms of mass media; in fact, they should not leave their homes. Any off-beat soft drink commercial may prompt them to jump off a tall building. Parents of minor children should, of course, exercise their judgment as to whether this and other roleplaying games are appropriate for their children. Everyone else, I hope you enjoy this book.

-- Carlos J. Martijena-Carella



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Chapter One: Introduction



BOMBING CONTINUES OVER SERBIA

Skopje, Macedonia -- The fighter-bombers flew round-the-clock sorties against numerous military and in-

Northern Serbia

4:45 P.M. Local Time

The facility had been built in a hilly area, accessible only by a narrow road. Its existence was known only to the local villagers and to the drivers of the supply trucks that came and went with military regularity. Signs in half a dozen languages trumpeted privacy; tall electrified fences, regular armed patrols and attack dogs reinforced it. The smoldering corpses of one such patrol were now in a ditch a hundred yards behind Ismail Foxha and his men.

Ismail had killed one of the men himself; a burst of 9mm subsonic bullets to the head had seen to that. The Heckler & Koch MP-5 submachine guns their patron had provided were exquisite weapons, almost noiseless with their built-in silencers. The weapons, and enough money to keep the Kosovo Liberation Army operating for a month, had been the payment for this operation. Ismail and five hand-picked men, all former soldiers of the Yugoslav armed forces, all experienced woods-men and trackers, had been sent deep into enemy territory.

A quiet Englishman accompanied them — a man Ismail only knew as Mr. Moorcroft. Dressed in army fatigues like the rest of the team, his eyes hidden by dark glasses, he could have passed for a local, although his skin was perhaps a shade too pale. His blonde hair was cropped closely to the scalp, and his mouth was a thin, humorless slit. He wore a ring with a sword-shaped symbol, or perhaps a cross.

There had been four men in the patrol detail they had ambushed. Ismail had killed one; the other three and their two dogs had disappeared in a wave of fire that had consumed them so quickly they hadn't had a chance to scream. It was a miracle that none of their ammunition had detonated in the heat. Moorcroft had claimed he had used a special type of incendiary grenade. That might be so, but Ismail had never heard of such a weapon. Even white phosphorous did not burn so quickly, and most of all so quietly, with no sound greater than a strong gust of wind. Was he from the CIA, and the fire attack some sort of super-weapon?

Perhaps Moorcroft was *shaitan*, a devil, Ismail told himself as his commandos crept closer to the target. That didn't matter, of course. After what the Serbs had done to his family, he would deal with anyone in order to have his revenge. He had smuggled drugs and acted as a paid assassin in the past. This, an attack on a facility in Serbian territory, was nothing, even if the man leading the group could conjure fire like a Djinn of legend.

"Stop," Moorcroft said softly. He and Ismail had just cleared the top of the hill, covered by a row of trees that followed the ridgeline. From there, the Kosovar could see the facility, surrounded by more wired fences. It wasn't very impressive, except for the four guard towers: three small buildings and a garage. He could see a helipad, but no aircraft.

"Research facility," Moorcroft said absently. "Pharmaceutical research." He looked at Ismail. "In most countries, experimenting on human subjects is against the law. The Serbian government needs money. And research subjects could always be found among undersirable elements in society."

Jsmail paled. "You mean — my people . . ."

"And Bosnians and Croats, criminals, homosexuals, the insane . . . About two hundred people a year, for the last five years. Not a lot, not compared to other things they've done, but enough. There is a mass grave some two hundred yards away from the facility. U.S. satellites spotted it, but we decided to keep the information quiet. Shine a light on a rat, and the rat simply moves away and starts over somewhere else. What you have to do —"

"— is kill the rat," Jsmail finished, clenching his fists. How many innocents inside the plant? At least several dozen, perhaps a hundred. He nodded, silently condemning them to death.

"Do what you must."

Moorecroft pulled out a cellular phone and pressed the speed-dial button. "Now it begins," he said, and hung up.

Forum: alt.conspiracy.reports

Thread: Re: Corp Human Experiments

Author: HYPERLINK

mailto: iseeall@skippy.dot _iseeall@skippy.dot_.

>>candyarse@awol.snip

>> Oh, give me a break. Corporations aren't going to risk conducting human experiments anywhere in the world. Making money is one thing. Risking being jailed for life is another. <<

Believe what you want. Do you think they would do such experiments in the good ol' USA or Europe, where the free press would descend on them like a pack of hyenas? They don't have to. What they do is pick some piece of shit country -- the post-Soviet Eastern Block is perfect; enough technological infrastructure to support the needed facilities, a need for hard currency, and no shortage of ruthless people (I ask you, would Molosevic give a ratsass if some non-Serbs end up dying in some pharmaceutical tests? Don't think so, either). Some places in Asia, too, now that their economy has gone to the crapper. Or Colombia. You rent out some space in the mountains from the drug lords, and you're home free.

Anyway, I have some documentation to back this up. E-mail me, and maybe we can set up some dead drop exchange (for those of you who don't read spy novels, a dead drop is a place where one agent hides/"drops" a message or other info, which is later picked up by his contact. That way you never have to see the contact (and vice versa). Oh, and don't bother tracking me through my e-mail. I've taken precautions.

"Well secluded, I see all."

New York City, New York

9:50 a.m.

When the call came, Desmond Hawkins was looking out the window. The view of the city was spectacular, but almost nobody in the skyscraper ever paused to appreciate it. The rat race was too intense. You schmooze, you lose. New York City has more wealth per capita than almost anywhere else in the world, and most of it is concentrated in a few blocks of real state. To make it there, and to stay there, you had no time to concentrate on anything else. Even Hawkins rarely thought about other things, except at night, and when he dreamt. He had already made it here — his net worth was equivalent to the assets of a medium-sized corporation, the rise of his company a small legend in Wall Street — and even he rarely had a chance to stop and smell the roses.

The ringing phone snapped him to attention as sharply as a drill sergeant's command would have. It was the sound; not the buzz of his secretary's intercom system, or the shrill ringing of his regular phone. He had purposefully gotten phones with different rings, and this was a sound he had only heard once since he started working on the Street. This was his private line, unlisted and unknown even to the phone company.

He picked it up on the second ring, vaguely aware that he had started to sweat. "Hawkins here."

The instructions on the other side went on for two or three minutes. He absentmindedly rubbed his damp forehead. "Understood. The Temple stands." He hung up. Lay back on his chair for a long moment. Took a deep breath.

He picked up his regular phone. "Reed? Hawkins here. Good. Listen very carefully. I want you to start selling the following stock. All of it. Pharmicore. Jakessen and Jakessen. De Klerk." A pause to listen to the slightly shrill voice at the other end. "Don't care. Screw the SEC. Sell it all off." Another pause. "Never mind why. Just do it, or I'll find someone else who will." Hawkins closed his eyes and leaned back. "Sure I can give it to you in writing. I'll fax it over right away."

It was done. The stocks he had liquidated were substantial, and he knew he'd lost no less than thirty or forty million dollars in the transaction. What mattered was that the sale would cause the value of those stocks to dip considerably — enough for the automatic systems that controlled most transactions on the Street to take notice. The automatic systems would then start selling those stocks as well, dropping the price even more, which would in turn alert other investors, who would sell, and the price would drop even more . . . It only takes one mad cow to start a stampede, and Hawkins had let a nice handful of cows loose. The Dow would drop a couple hundred points, a whole host of "experts" would offer up reasons for it — and no one would know what had happened.

Almost no one. The Enemy would know. How soon? Hawkins was betting his life it would take them a few hours to find out, a couple more to take action. He needed four hours, five at worst.

One more call to make. The phone rang seven times before his wife picked up, and he almost panicked. He cut off her greeting. "De Molay. Did you hear me? De Molay." Mrs. Hawkins hung up without saying a word. The plan was simple enough. Pick up the children from their exclusive schools. Head for the private plane at its current location — it flew randomly between half a dozen airports, and she wouldn't know the location until she made the call and spoke the password. His family had a protective detail nearly as good as the U.S. President's. Better: he knew exactly where their loyalties lay.

He gave them a three in five chance of being alive by day's end.

Sawkins opened the combination drawer in his reinforced desk and took out a gun and shoulder holster. He put them on, put on his sports coat, wiped the sweat off his forehead, and stepped out.

"Cancel all my meetings for this morning," he told his surprised Executive Assistant. "I'll be back by two." A lie, but maybe a useful lie. They'd detail a team to watch the building, and that might thin out their resources a little bit. They couldn't be everywhere at once, could They?

Forum: alt.conspiracy.reports

Thread: Re: Nice Try Asshole (Was Re: Corp Human Experiments)

Author: stbernard@canttrackmenowcanyou.stuff

>>_ HYPERLINK mailto:iseeall@skippy.dot _iseeall@skippy.dot_ wrote:

>>This is my last post under this address. Apparently, one of the three people who got my information (or >>maybe all three) tried to get cute and track me down. Well, shitheads, you almost got me killed. If you >>aren't working for them, then you'll probably get killed pretty soon. Serves you right for leading them to >>me. And now I have to move, get a new identity, all that crap. I just hope at least one of you did >>something useful with the info.<<

We did. Thanks for the tip.

OPKCTS

Northern Serbia

5:03 p.m. local time

The Stealth bomber's pilot did not like covert missions. "Covert" usually meant your ass was in the air while you did something you were not supposed to. But orders were orders. He had flown high and quiet over Serbian territory, and launched the missiles when the signal was given. He then returned to base in Italy, and promptly forgot everything about the mission.

The missiles struck like the wrath of God. Jsmaile saw three contrails flash into the compound, moments before it was consumed by fire. Moorecock put away the small laser designator he had used to guide the missiles towards the target, and he curtly ordered the group to get moving. Jsmaile spared a glance to the burning compound, then shrugged and moved on.

There was a war to fight, and no time to question why some things happened.

DOW DROPS 400 -- PHARMACEUTICALS HIT

API -- The Dow Jones Industrial average dropped 407 points in a sudden flurry of trading. Other exchanges were similarly affected. The selloff primarily centered around a number of pharmaceutical companies. Pharmicore International led the

decline, following news that several new products due to be submitted to the FDA for review had hit "unexpected snags" and would not be available until later this year at the earliest. Pharmicore stock suffered a 60% drop in value, and reports in-

Introduction

The Abomination Codex describes some of the darker secrets of the world of WitchCraft -- spirit entities that can grant humans great power, but often at a terrible price; the horrors of Taint, the spiritual opposite of Essence that fuels the Mad Gods and their minions; and strange beings like the shape-shifting Ferals or the undying True Immortals.

Several new Covenants are also detailed. Although they are not as large or widespread as the ones described in the WitchCraft main book, they are all influential and destined to play a role in the approaching Reckoning. They include the Knights Templar, secretive descendants of the Crusading order of the same name; the Covenant of Legba, a Voodoo association locked in a mortal struggle against an ancient foe; the Nomads, wandering Ferals and Gifted who serve two ancient deities; the Mockers, survivors of encounters with the Mad Gods who devote their efforts to battling them; and the Lodge of the Undying, a gathering of Immortals seeking to unlock the secrets of their existence.

Most of the Covenants described in this book are not commonly known even in occult circles. The Knights Templar are perhaps among the most misunderstood and mysterious organizations in the world of WitchCraft. Are they part of the Combine, a heroic group fighting to protect humankind, or something else altogether? Few know. The Covenant of Legba is a large organization of Voodoo practitioners, but to most outsiders they are hard to distinguish from other Voodoo gatherings. The Nomads never stay anywhere for long, and try to keep a low profile. The Mockers avoid contact with other groups, since they are likely to be mistaken for a Mad God cult. And, finally, the Lodge of the Undying is highly secretive and unwilling to trust outsiders.

The Covenants, supernatural species and new Gifted powers in this book may not be appropriate for some WitchCraft games. The Templars, for example, tend to dominate games where they are included, since they know so many secrets about the world. Some Chroniclers may prefer to use them as shadowy allies or adversaries for the Cast. As always, the Chronicler should determine what works best for any WitchCraft group and game.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter One: Introduction contains these introductory remarks, and an overview of the entire book.

Chapter Two: Rules covers new game mechanics for any WitchCraft game. A new Character Type, the Lesser Supernatural, is presented, as are new Qualities and Drawbacks, skills and equipment. An introductory discussion of several new Covenants is also given.

Chapter Three: Inhumans discusses two new non-humans that may be used as Cast Members to enhance Stories: the ferocious Ferals in all their different forms, and the unaging True Immortals and their ancient alchemy.

Chapter Four: Associations provides more in-depth background information on the Covenants touched on briefly in Chapter Two: Rules. This information is intended primarily for Chroniclers, but players may have access to it.

Chapter Five: Metaphysics presents a number of different abilities of Gifted characters. From the Keys of Solomon to Taint Powers to Atlantean Arcana, these Arts expand the powers available to Cast Members. Extended discussions of Voodoo, a special blend of Invocations and Necromancy, and Spirit Patrons are also supplied.

Chapter Six: Supernatural reviews a number of the more fantastic elements of the WitchCraft world. Background information on various forms of Elementals, Nature Spirits, Zombies, Fiends, Ethereals, and Creatures of Taint is detailed. Finally, a new evil Covenant is set forth.

Appendix includes a glossary, a number of handy reference charts, an index and character sheets for the Character Type presented in this book.

Conventions

Text Conventions

This supplement has a number of graphic features that identify the type of information presented. The text presented here is standard text, and it is used for general explanations.

Certain other text is set off from the standard text.

This material is fiction presented to enhance or describe WitchCraft Stories and the WitchCraft world. For the most part it appears in this font. On special occasions, the look is different (see newspaper articles and newsgroup postings at the beginning of this chapter) but the intent is the same.

This is sidebar text. It contains additional, but tangential information, or material supplementing the standard text.

This information provides ready-to-use examples of Supporting Cast Members that can be used as allies or Adversaries.

Dice Notations

D10, D8, D6 and D4 mean a ten-sided die, an eight-sided die, a six-sided die and a four-sided die, respectively. When a number appears before the notation, that number of such dice should be rolled, and their results should be added together. For example, 2D6 means roll two six-sided dice, and generate a result between 2 and 12. Multipliers are expressed after the dice notation. For example, 3D10 x 4 means roll three ten-sided dice, add the results together, and multiply that total result by 4. This generates a number between 12 and 120. A number in parentheses after, or in the middle of, the notation is the average roll. This number is provided for those that want to

avoid dice rolling and just get the result. So the notation D6 x 4(12) means that players who want to skip rolling just use the value 12. Some notations cannot provide a set number because their result depends on a variable factor. For example, D8(4) x Strength is used because the Strength value to be plugged into that notation will vary depending on who is acting.

Gender

Every roleplaying game struggles with the decision about third person pronouns and possessives. While the male reference (he, him, his) is customarily used for both male and female, there is no question that it is not entirely inclusive. On the other hand, the "he or she" structure is clumsy and unattractive. In an effort to "split the difference," this book (and all books in the WitchCraft line) uses male designations for even chapters, and female designations for odd chapters.

Measurements

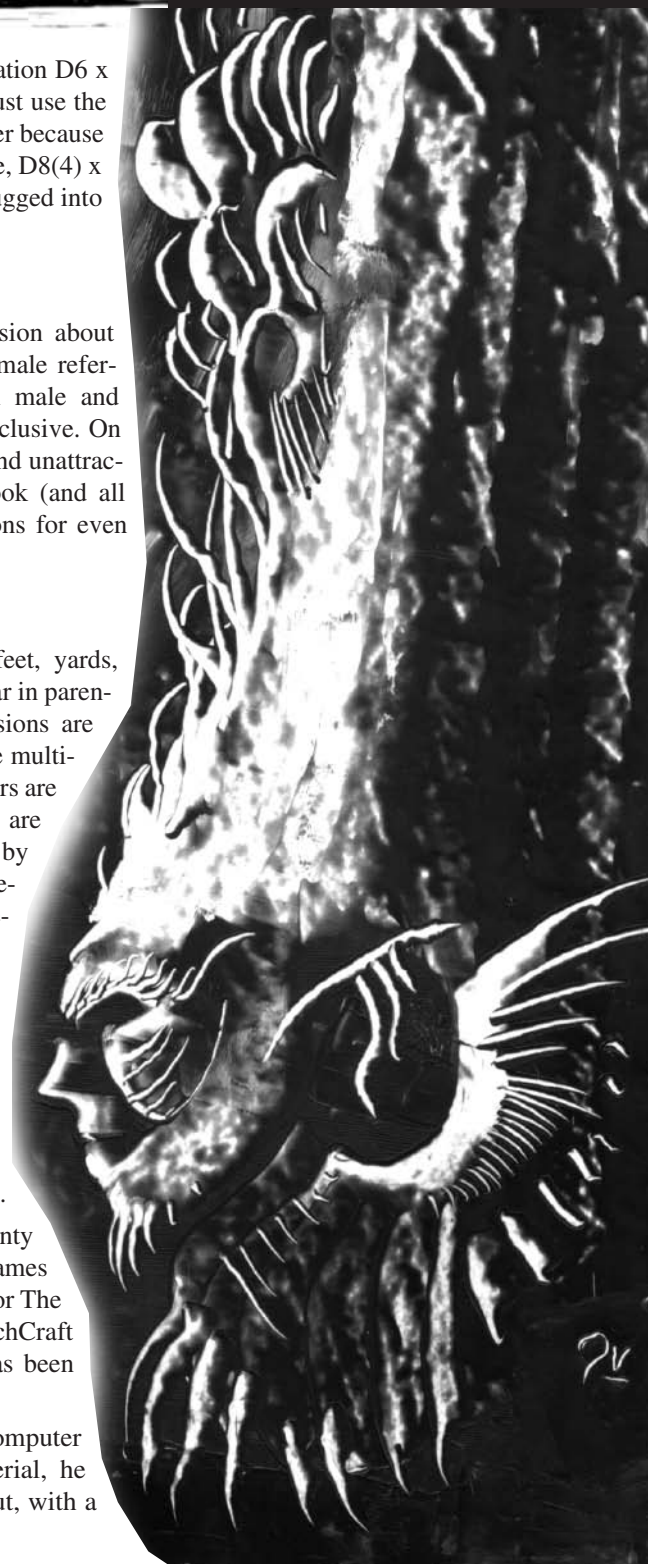
This book primarily uses U.S. measurements (feet, yards, miles, pounds, etc.). Metric system equivalents appear in parentheses. In the interests of ease of use, the conversions are rounded relatively arbitrarily. For example, miles are multiplied by 1.5 to get kilometers (instead of 1.609), meters are the equal to yards (instead of 1.094 yards), pounds are halved to get kilograms (instead of multiplied by 0.4536), and so on. If a Chronicler feels that more precision is necessary, she should take the U.S. measurements provided and apply more exact formulas.

About the Author

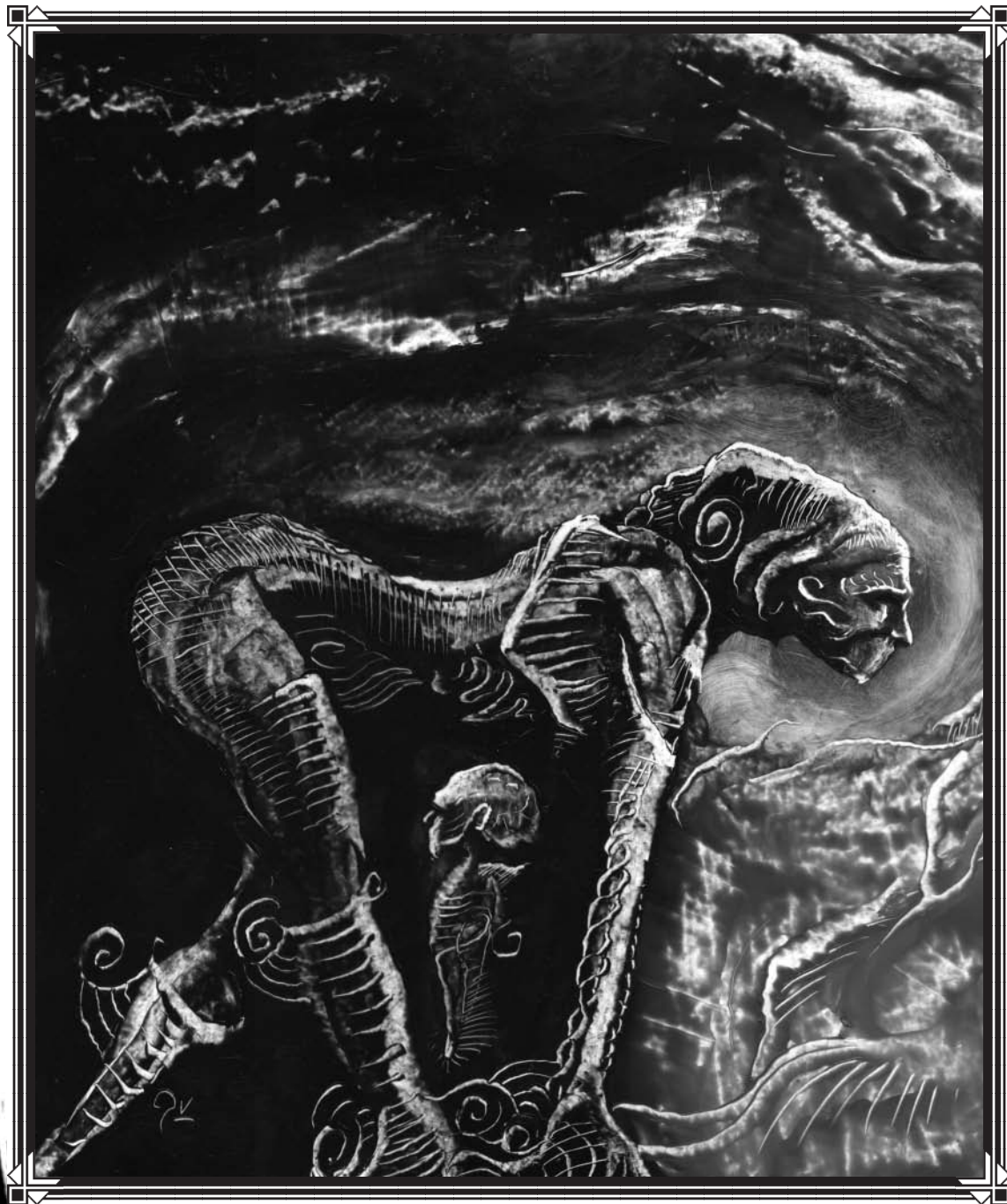
C.J. Carella was born in New York and has lived in Peru, Venezuela, Connecticut, Florida, Michigan, and Connecticut once again. During his travels he has yet to experience any genuine supernatural events -- and he is not going out of his way to do so.

A full-time writer, C.J. has authored some twenty RPG books for such companies as Steve Jackson Games and Palladium Books, as well as numerous articles for The Familiar, Pyramid and White Wolf magazines. WitchCraft was originally written for Myrmidon Press, and has been revised and reissued by Eden Studios.

When not writing, C.J. spends his free time on computer games, novels and comic books -- research material, he says. He currently lives in New Haven, Connecticut, with a feline familiar.



Chapter Two: Rules



"Father Ferrelli, is this right?" Michael's austere face was marred by indecision as he spoke. "Why are we joining forces with a . . . a heathen?"

"Jose is not a heathen, Michael," Father Ferrelli said patiently. Jose glared at Michael, but said nothing. The two of them made an unlikely pair even before accounting for their religious differences. Michael was six-foot four, had played college football and might even have had a future as a pro if he had not received the vision from God that changed his life. Jose looked like a Puerto Rican street thug — short, wiry, and not well-dressed. He had a number of colorful tattoos on his arms and chest, symbols of the Voodoo gods he treasured.

"I can sense strange spirits hovering near him," Michael said. Ferrelli had sensed them as well — ghosts, he thought, although one of them felt entirely too alien to be a mere spirit of the dead.

"Watch who you call strange, pendejo," Jose snapped back. "They are my friends. You two gonna help me, or do I have to go there alone?"

"We're here to help," Father Ferrelli said calmly. Michael bit back an angry reply, and nodded. There might be trouble later, but for now the young Sentinel was willing to defer to Ferrelli's judgement.

Satisfied, Jose led the group from the alley behind the crack house. Ferrelli's own gift allowed him to sense the thoughts of others, a gift he always prayed he would use wisely. His senses confirmed what Jose, a practitioner of Santeria, had told them. The house was more than a place to peddle drugs; it was inhabited by some powerful, malevolent presence that fed on those who entered it.

For weeks now, the stories of strange disappearances had been growing in number. Most of the missing were junkies who had apparently gone to make a purchase and never came back. Even if Jose had not visited him, Ferrelli would have suspected something was happening. Jose had brought actual evidence, however, and it had been convincing enough that the priest had called his Sentinel contacts. They had sent an eager young warrior to him. Michael had power and conviction, but he hadn't seen much of the world. He needed to know that things were not clearly defined in places such as this.

"Orishas, vengeance aqui," Jose muttered. "Legba, ven aqui. Oggun, dame fuerza . . ."

Even Ferrelli's limited powers could feel the unearthly forces that flowed into the young Hispanic man. Something materialized briefly behind Jose, and Ferrelli caught a glimpse of a solemn young boy with a bloody face floating in the air. Michael tensed again, but the house was occupying most of his attention. Something was stirring in the house, alerted by the display of power from the three allies. Michael cast his eyes down in prayer, and his faith made him strong.

The front door of the crack house was solid metal. Jose and Michael charged it together, and knocked it off its hinges with a loud crash. Ferrelli followed a moment later, and the three braved the unknown.

Introduction

This chapter adds new rules material for incorporating the concepts and elements of Abominations Codex into a WitchCraft Story or campaign. A new Character Type, several new Associations, a number of new Qualities and Drawbacks, a new skill and new equipment are introduced.

New Character Type

The following should be added to the list of Character Types available for generating WitchCraft characters. The Lesser Supernatural Type is only applicable to Feral characters (p. 29) for purposes of this book, but it is expanded upon in other Unisystem games, such as Armageddon.

A handy comparative reference chart listing all the generation points and special traits of the various WitchCraft Character Types is included in the Appendix. A separate character sheet for the new Lesser Supernatural Type is also provided there.

Lesser Supernatural

"I am no longer human – maybe I never was. I dwell among your kind, hiding myself from the masses that would kill me out of fear. Perhaps, then, we have something in common."

Where the Gifted and their ilk remain essentially human, Lesser Supernatural beings were transformed, or born, as something else. Their souls are different; their supernatural nature closes some doors to them, and opens new ones. Lesser Supernaturals have unique powers beyond the abilities of Gifted humans, but by the same token they find it difficult or impossible to master some of the crafts that are the inheritance of humankind.

This character type is appropriate for Heroic games (see WitchCraft, p. 293). It is meant to portray a relatively young or inexperienced supernatural being. The full-fledged Supernatural character (introduced in Armageddon) is better suited to Legendary games, where the characters are powerful and important members of the occult underworld.

Lesser Supernatural beings start with 15 points for Attributes, 15 points in Qualities (and up to 10 in Drawbacks), 25 points in Skills, and 25 points in Metaphysics.

Optional Skill Point Calculation System

For those using the Optional Skill Point Calculation System (see WitchCraft, p. 55), Supernatural Character Types are treated the same as Gifted and Bast. They start with a base 15 Skill Points.

New Associations

Following the format of other WitchCraft books, short descriptions of several new Associations are presented in the following pages. This material provides all the information a player would need in creating a character of that Association. More detailed information is reserved for Chapter Four: Associations. This enables Chroniclers to work with Cast Members who are new to the Association or, for one reason or another, are not privy to more than the most surface knowledge about that group.

The Associations presented here and in prior WitchCraft publications, and their special features, are gathered in a reference chart in the Appendix.



The Knights Templar

"I swear, on my soul and my body.

I swear to stand by the Temple.

I swear on the four corners of the Square.

May the All-Seeing Eye watch over me.

I fear nothing, for I am already dead."

-- Oath of the First Baptism

"History is a machine; those who control the levers decide the path it takes. We control some of those levers. A bullet in the night, a corporate takeover, a scandal that topples a government; they are our levers. Our Adversary has many more levers than we do. Always remember that, lest you become overconfident. Once, we were the greatest power of Europe; now we slink in the shadows. Let that be a lesson to all of you."

-- Knight Madeline Van Buren,
addressing a gathering of Chaplains.

Description: The Knights of the Temple of Solomon are the mortal enemies of the Combine -- or perhaps are a part of the Combine themselves. They believe they are the defenders of the world against the quiet tyranny of a secret conspiracy that has conspired against humankind for untold centuries. Their struggle for the fate of humanity predates the official founding of the order in the Middle Ages, and continued on long after the Knights were supposed to have disappeared. Many Knights lead double lives and infiltrate organizations ranging from corporations and governments to other Covenants. They gather information and bide their time, but when they are ready, they strike quietly and ruthlessly. Their weapons range from the manipulation of political events to mystical powers; the Templars study the magical arts, and control the Keys of Solomon, special mystical patterns that grant their wielders a number of supernatural powers.

The Knights operate singly or in small groups, rarely revealing themselves to outsiders -- except when the outsiders are unlikely to live to tell any tales. They work tirelessly to fight the Combine, and any Dark Covenant that tries to gain power over the world. Ironically, the Knights use the same tools as

the Combine -- manipulation of the media and the masses, political assassination, and covert operations. To an outsider, the difference between the two would appear to be minimal -- although no Templar reacts well to hearing such statements.

Attributes: Most Templars are best described as "James Bond" types. Their Attributes should be well rounded, with good physical and mental scores. Even Gifted characters are not expected to be weaklings.

Qualities and Drawbacks: Most Templars have an Obligation to their order (see p. 24). Zealots are common. Knights often have good levels in Contacts, Influence and Status. All Knights have an Adversary in the Combine, worth at least 2 points (more for prominent and very active Knights).

Skills: Most Templars have a number of combat and espionage skills. Covert operatives know the skills most appropriate to their cover profession.

Metaphysics: The Knights Templar can have Magic, the Sight, or Divine Inspiration, although the latter precludes Magic. This is one of the few Covenants where Magicians and the Inspired often work side by side. Additionally, Templars can learn the Keys of Solomon (see p. 97), special mystical patterns that grant their wielders a number of powers.

Special Abilities: Knights (Gifted or Mundane) gain either a +1 bonus on any two physical Attributes (this cannot raise Attributes beyond 6 for humans), or 2 points that can be put into any Social Quality (like Resources, Status, Contacts and Influence). Or, if the player so chooses, he can assign 1 point to Attributes and 1 point to Social Qualities instead.

Common Professions: Templars leading a double life come from all walks of life, but usually work in places where they can gather information and wield influence: lawyers, policemen, politicians, corporate executives, or members of law enforcement and intelligence-gathering agencies like the FBI and the CIA. Those working as direct operatives have no employment outside the organization, and in fact have very little in the way of a private life beyond its confines.

Roleplaying the Knights Templar: You wanted to know the truth about the world, and now you do. It isn't pretty. Shadow organizations decide the fates of millions in secret board meetings, and their disputes can lead to war, famine and pestilence. Humankind is being herded like cattle towards some hideous destiny. You and your fellow Knights are the only thing standing in the way of these plans.

It is not an easy life. You were probably chosen because you have experienced the Combine's evil first hand. Such encounters are likely to leave scars, physical and emotional.

What drives you to carry on? The cause, of course -- the knowledge that you are helping everyone. The Knights had a hand in the development of such principles as democracy and equal rights, and the downfall of monarchy and other tyrannies. The Combine is always at hand to pervert such accomplishments, but perhaps you will live to see the downfall of the conspiracy and the moment of Truth when the peoples of the world realize they've been pawns. That day, humankind will be free to choose its own destiny.

There may be other, less lofty reasons, of course. The risks are many, but you also have power, more power than most cops and soldiers and even heads of state ever wield. Your actions help shape the world. Sometimes you read some major item on the front pages of the newspaper and smile knowingly, quietly congratulating yourself for a job well done.

And, although you probably don't dwell on this much, once you are in the Templars, you can never quit. You may retire eventually -- put out to pasture as an instructor in some remote facility somewhere -- but you know that those who try to leave are never heard from again.



The Covenant of Legba

"We are the bastard children of three continents and a dozen cultures. Candomble, Santeria, Voodoo -- they are all facets of the same crystal. We know the same gods, even if we call them by different names or plead to them in different languages. Divided, we shall fall. We must forget our differences, or we are doomed."

-- Michel "Papa Doc" Lefevre, Ph.D.,
King of the New Orleans Gathering

"There is fear in the streets. Most people, the ones with nice homes and jobs, they see nothing wrong. Stocks are up, they are making money, they don't care. But the homeless, the poor and the insane, they see what is happening. We must remain here, to find our enemies before they grow stronger."

-- Gregorio Dos Santos,
to the East Coast Gathering

Description: The Covenant of Legba is the largest gathering of practitioners of Voodoo, the unique blend of African mysticism and European magical systems that is widespread throughout the Americas. Its main concern is the interaction between this world and the spirit realms. The patron deity of the Covenant is Legba, the god of crossroads and the passage between worlds. The group's goal is to act as mediators and defenders between gods and men, between the living and the dead.

The followers of Legba are among the few Gifted who make a living (albeit rarely a very good one) performing their Craft. In rural areas of Third World countries, they are respected and admired as doctors, councilors, and defenders. The same is true in some ethnic neighborhoods in the cities of developed nations, where people still remember the old ways.

Attributes: The Legbans favor wit and intelligence over physical prowess.

Qualities and Drawbacks: Legbans tend to have low or average Resources and Status. In the U.S. and Europe, they also tend to be members of racial or ethnic minorities. Nerves of Steel is not uncommon for people who routinely speak with deities and traffic with ghosts. Voodooists in large cities may also have Contacts with the slums' seedier inhabitants.

Skills: Legbans usually know Occult Knowledge (Voodoo) or Myth and Legend (Voodoo). Inner city practitioners are likely to know Streetwise.

Metaphysics: The Covenant combines Magic and Necromancy; most members are proficient in both areas, although they tend to concentrate most of their attention on one of them. Additionally, Legbans often adopt a Spirit Patron (see p. 25). The Second Sight is not unknown, although not very common. Other powers are very uncommon; a Legban must have the Legban Esoteric Quality (see p. 24) to possess them.

Special Abilities: Legban characters get one free level of Necromancy Skill and one free level of Increased Essence Pool.

Common Professions: Legbans are among the few Gifted practitioners who often make a living plying their wares. Their customers tend to be in poor or remote areas of the world, or among racial minorities in the developed world -- "superstitious" peoples who pay the Gifted for their labors. Modern Legbans often join other professions: physicians, lawyers, social workers, and community activists are fairly common.

Roleplaying Legban Characters: You believe in the Christian's God. You also worship pagan deities, and the spirits of your ancestors. Somehow, you are not bothered by the contradictions. The world is full of strange and wonderful things; you've seen quite a few of them. Who are you, then, to judge whose God is stronger, or the "right" one to worship? Better to deal with all of them, get to know them, and then make your decision.

In the spirit world, you deal with two orders of being: the Voodoo gods, and the spirits of the dead. The gods you work with are not omnipotent or all-knowing; that One is beyond you and your magicks, although you acknowledge His existence. The gods you deal with can be petty and fickle, but you can cajole them into doing your bidding, although not without risk. Ghosts are easier to work with -- when you have to, you can use brute force -- but they are no less complicated. In the physical -- what most people think of as the "real" -- world, you have to contend with humans and things that can pass themselves off as human. It is hard to tell which of the two is the more dangerous and unpredictable.

This troubled time has particularly affected your Covenant. The disturbances that are becoming apparent even to the mundane are painfully clear to you. Gods and spirits are becoming more daring, more frantic. Something is scaring even them. Soon the crossroads between worlds will become a savage battlefield, and you will stand in the middle of it.

The Nomads

"Look, we don't want any trouble. Let us get back on our bikes and we'll be on our way. No? Okay, you're beginning to piss me off. And you wouldn't like me when I'm pissed off."

-- Karl D'Arcy, Bekter family, moments before the deaths of six Hell's Angels.

"We are truly free. Most people are bound to the land -- to their jobs, mortgages, and paltry lives. Today, we travel through upstate New York. A month from now, we'll be in Vegas. A month after that -- maybe Mexico, maybe Canada. Our kind was not meant to be caged in a condo or chained to a desk. We must run with the Moon."

-- Gretchen Engels, Machui Family

Description: Ferals are humans whose souls have become intertwined with Animal Spirits, particularly the spirits of predatory creatures. They are the werewolves (and other were-creatures) of legend. For the most part, existence as a Feral is an unmitigated curse, rendering the victim unable to control the savage impulses of their bestial side.

A few manage to gain some measure of independence from their curse, either through sheer strength of will, the use of magical rituals, or the intervention of some powerful entity. The Nomads are mostly a gathering of the latter type of Ferals. Founded by a handful of werereatures during the dawn of history, the Ferals made a pact with two ancient Moon deities, gaining control over their animal impulses in return for a pledge never to settle down permanently among humankind. The deal protected both Ferals and any potential human victims, and in time members of the Covenant came to relish their wandering existence.

The Nomads now haunt the highways and back roads of the world. They can be found running fairs and concert tours, driving big rigs, or simply drifting aimlessly, staying in one place long enough to make some money before moving on. Wherever they go, the Nomads seek other Ferals, trying to recruit them into their ranks before their curse consumes them. They are also pledged to hunt supernatural beings who prey on humans.

Attributes: Any combination is possible. The Nomads number both dumb strongmen, frail mystic types and everything in between.

Qualities and Drawbacks: Many Nomads have a negative Social Status (-1 to -3 as “roadies” or “carnies,” regarded with distrust by police officers and parents of teenage girls). Resources are rarely very high, although there are exceptions.

Skills: Most Nomads have at least one Pilot/Driving skill. Nomads are also likely to have Occult Knowledge and Myth and Legend Skills, especially those related to Ferals and the Moon Gods.

Metaphysics: A large proportion of the Covenant are Ferals: of those, the majority belong to the Five Families, Feral bloodlines, each with its own animal species. Besides Ferals, almost any other type of Gifted or Supernatural character is possible, as well as Mundanes. In their travels, any wanderer who proves himself to the Covenant may be accepted in its ranks. Courage and loyalty are the primary qualities of any would-be Nomad.

Special Abilities: All non-Mundane members gain the favor of the Moon Gods, who become the Spirit Patrons of the characters. Feral members gain the Boon to control their transformation, enjoying a +2 bonus to all Tests and Tasks related to resisting spontaneous transformations, or becoming berserk (this is cumulative with the benefits of being a Born Feral, see p. 31). Non-Feral non-Mundanes gain a 2-point Boon (player’s choice) from their Spirit Patrons. Mundanes among the Nomads have become hardened to the presence of the supernatural; they gain a +3 bonus on Fear Tests dealing with supernatural manifestations (this may be cumulative with the Nerves of Steel Quality).

Common Professions: Ferals cannot hold down jobs in a fixed area. Common professions include carnival and circus workers, concert roadies, truckers, and other types of performer or merchant.

Roleplaying Nomads: You are set apart from the rest of the human race, even more so than most Gifted. If you are Feral, you have to struggle with your bestial side: not an easy task, even with the help of the Moon Gods. Even if you aren’t, life on the road prevents you from forging long-lasting relationships with strangers. The only people you really get to know are your fellow travelers, and it is easy to adopt an “us versus them” mentality, especially when most outsiders feel some measure of distrust from you. Many Nomads place the well-being personal group or “pack” ahead of everything else (including their own interests, or that of the Covenant as a whole).

The reasons for your wandering life vary from case to case. Many Nomads are born into the life, descendants of the original Ferals who founded it. Those with the Feral curse had no choice but to follow the nomadic path; the rest of you joined out of loyalty, or because you were fleeing something, be it the law, or personal problems, or a past you wished to forget.

The times are changing, however. For most of your life, you’ve rarely encountered trouble on the road. Now, other things are traveling there -- things that hunt humans, or even your kind. Some of you are talking in ways unheard of previously. They are saying that coming events will force the Nomads to break with tradition, to choose certain ground and to make a stand.



The Mockers

"So you want me to give you some pretentious little speech about what it's like to be one of us? No thank you. Go talk to Doctor Pedro over there; maybe he can help you."

-- Pauline MacNamara, Mocker

"Oh, it sucks. It hurts and it's cold and you see things out of the corner of your eye that aren't there, except they can see you too, and one day they are going to come out and get you. But at least we know. You have no idea of what it's like, to know the truth. They are out there, in the folds between spaces, and they are gnawing through the walls, trying to get through. We keep plugging the holes, even though one day a big one is just going to leak through. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to put my makeup on; I'm hunting monsters in the sewer, and I like to feel pretty when I do it."

-- Doctor Pedro, Mocker

Description: Most people who become tainted with the substance of the Mad Gods die, go hopelessly insane, or become the slave of those entities. A few manage to survive with some remnants of their former selves intact. Some of those few have banded together. They call themselves the Mockers, and may be the most despised, misunderstood and isolated Covenant in the world of WitchCraft.

The Mockers are deadly enemies of the Mad Gods. They have intimate knowledge of those alien beings: their Essence has been corrupted by them, become something deadly and sinister -- Taint. These dark energies of anti-creation are a constant strain on the Mockers' minds and souls, but they also make them strong. The Mockers use the powers of Taint against their makers, fighting to prevent creatures from beyond reality from securing a foothold in our world. In the end, it is always a losing battle, for the Taint cannot be controlled forever. The Mockers have little choice, however. They simply make the most of the time they have.

The typical "Lovecraftian" occult investigator has a place among the Mockers, but most members are cut from a different cloth. They hold down menial jobs, read tabloids and cruise the weirder Internet

newsgroups, and they have an odd, disturbing sense of humor. Something allowed them to withstand the mind-destroying influence of the Mad Gods -- maybe love for a person or a place, or sheer hatred, or plain stubbornness -- and they must always keep that "anchor" firmly in their mind, using it as an amulet to ward off the growing madness.

Attributes: The most important Attribute is Willpower. Few Mockers have a Willpower lower than a 3, and most have it at level 4 or higher.

Qualities and Drawbacks: Not surprisingly, a variety of Delusions, Emotional Problems and other mental Drawbacks are universal among Covenant members. Resources and Status tend to be low or at best average. All have powerful Adversaries: servants of the Mad Gods (usually 2-4 points' worth), and, for the particularly unlucky, a Mad God itself (even a minor Mad God would be worth no less than 5 points as an Adversary).

Skills: Occult Knowledge (the Mad Gods) is held by almost all members. Combat skills are not unknown, but not widespread, either -- to many Mockers, violence is a last resort, as they fear losing control of their Taint. Investigators will have a number of scholastic and research skills, to better detect signs of their enemies.

Metaphysics: The majority of Mockers have a variety of Taint Powers (see p. 120). Some practice Magic, usually powered with Taint. Any other Gifted power is possible; many Mockers also have the Disciplines of the Flesh (see Mystery Codex, p. 164).

Special Abilities: Mockers with Taint Powers gain one free Anchor level (see p. 118). Other characters, Gifted or Mundane, gain a +2 bonus to all Resisted Tasks or Tests (including Fear Tests) involving the Mad Gods or their Minions.

Common Professions: The Mockers have a hard time holding down regular jobs. A few, especially among the untainted, work in academia, unearthing the secrets of the Mad Ones through their research. Most Tainted Mockers work only to get enough money to live on; temporary work, or menial, part-time jobs are the preferred sources of income. A few turn to petty crime.

Roleplaying the Mockers: You have seen things that no mortal should ever experience. Unlike most, you escaped with your life. Your sanity did not survive intact, but sanity is overrated, especially in this world. Your best weapon in this war is a measure of irreverence and gallows humor. You have learned to laugh at the people who go on with their daily lives, blithely oblivious to the things that lurk not too far away. Laughing is better than screaming until your throat bleeds and tearing your eyes out of your head.

When you joined the Mockers, you were able to share some of your burden with others who understood it. You also made a pledge to seek out more manifestations from Beyond, to prevent other beings like the one who marked you from bursting through our world. You are a cancer cell that has chosen to fight the growing cancer. Perhaps, one day, you will be cleansed by your actions.

The day of Reckoning is near. Some of you blame yourselves for it; maybe if you had been more diligent, you might have earned another decade or century of peace for humankind. Others just smile grimly and prepare for the final battle. You have no doubt that the apocalypse will be fought not between angels of demons, but between Essence and Taint.



The Lodge of the Undying

"Do you want to live forever? You and I can. The rest of the world can't. Not our fault, but do you think they'll be understanding if they ever discover us? Keep your nose clean and your mouth shut, and you'll live longer. A lot longer."

-- Dagobert "Dago" Ferrell,
to a new Lodge member.

"Laugh at my 'New Age crap' if you will, but the evidence is clear. We are the reborn children of Atlantis, destroyed millennia ago by the wrath of god-like beings. And I fear that this civilization is about to undergo a similar catastrophe. We cannot stand by and do nothing."

-- Serena Carroll, 1,200-year old Immortal

Description: There are many types of immortal in the world of WitchCraft. Some Gifted humans live far longer than normal people, with careers that can easily span centuries. Undead Vampyres are also effectively unaging, although they have other problems. True Immortals are a different breed, however, people who were born with seemingly eternal life. The Lodge of the Undying is a gathering of these Immortals. For quite some time, it has served as a semiformal mutual assistance society, a place where a young Immortal can rub elbows with others of their ilk and learn the finer points of eternal life.

The Covenant is also concerned with learning the truth about their kind. Most Immortals have visions and dreams of their previous lives, glimpses of a glorious past where Immortals ruled a powerful civilization, often identified with such mythical lands as Atlantis and Ultima Thule. The Lodge is trying to discover the truth about these visions. So far, it has gathered little concrete evidence. Some members have been able to recreate some "Atlantean" super-science, however, and that is very definite proof that there is something to those dreams.

Attributes: Immortals come from all walks of life, so any Attribute distribution is possible. Immortal members also gain a number of bonuses (see p. 42).

Qualities and Drawbacks: Almost all members must have the True Immortal Quality, for obvious reasons. However, other long-lived beings and people have on occasion been accepted. For the older Immortals, Age and high levels of Resources are standard. Many Immortals have Adversaries (typically other long-lived people and creatures). Some have accumulated impressive lists of Delusions over the years, too.

Skills: Any skill combination is possible, since the Undying have the time, and usually the resources, to pursue any occupation. Long-lived Immortals should spend at least some points on archaic skills, to represent their past accomplishments. Those archaic skills do not have to be at high levels, however (representing "rusting" through lack of practice).

Metaphysics: Immortals cannot have most normal Gifted abilities, but they have their own array of unique powers (see p. 41-43). The few non-Immortals can have almost any power.

Special Abilities: Because of their extensive research materials, all members gain one free level of Occult Knowledge (Immortals).

Common Professions: Younger Immortals can belong to any profession; the older ones tend to have enough wealth to make a job superfluous, although others own their own businesses or work as artists or in similar freelance occupations.

Roleplaying a Lodge Member: You have been told you can live for hundreds of years, and never age a day. That has a way of putting things in perspective. The Lodge offers you a place where you can talk to

people like you. Most of the time, it is little more than a very exclusive social club, but you cannot put so many ancient and powerful beings in one place for very long before sparks start to fly. There is always someone with some scheme: maybe an expedition to Antarctica looking for ancient artifacts, or an attempt to manipulate the world market. Then there are the requests for help: Immortals who fell afoul of Vampyres or another Covenant. And there is no shortage of internal conflicts and petty scores to settle. You keep busy.

Most of the time, however, the Covenant does not interfere with your main goal: to live your life. With centuries ahead of you, there is so much you can do, so many things you can try -- learn a new trade, travel to exotic lands, become wealthy beyond your wildest dreams. Sometimes, you have tried to learn more about what you are, and there the Lodge can be very useful -- it has collected the combined memories and wisdom of hundreds of Immortals over the years, giving you a chance to study the evidence, compare competing theories, and perhaps contribute your own.

It seems that Immortals are appearing in greater numbers than ever before. This has been accompanied by an upsurge in supernatural activity. Some of you are growing concerned, and talk about the downfall of Atlantis and a new danger is becoming more common. In all fairness, however, similar talk was common during World War One, and, if the older hands are telling the truth, back during the Black Death in the Middle Ages. Whether or not this time will be any different remains to be seen.



New Qualities and Drawbacks

Familiar

Variable Supernatural Quality

A familiar is a spirit entity that works side by side with a character. It may be little better than a slave, forced into service through magic or other power, or it may be a free agent who helps because it wants to. Familiars can be very useful, working as agents, assistants or bodyguards. On the other hand, they can be dangerous, especially when the creature in question is being held against its will or is a malicious being who delights in tormenting others.

In game terms, the value of a Familiar depends on its power and reliability. The base cost of a Familiar is equal to the sum of its Primary Attributes, divided by 6 (rounded down), plus the sum of its Vital and Energy Essence, divided by 20 (rounded down). So, an Elemental with all six Attributes at level 4 (24 levels), and a Vital Essence of 40 and an Energy Essence of 40 (80 Essence total) would have a base cost of 8 points (24 divided by 6, plus 80 divided by 20). The creature also has all the normal abilities of a being of its class. Special powers add 2 extra points each to the base cost (this may be increased to 3-4 points for very powerful abilities at the Chronicler's discretion).

Relationship with Familiar

The cost of the Familiar is modified by the type of relationship it has with the character.

Compelled: The Familiar is bound through magic, the will of a more powerful Spirit Patron, or some other supernatural means. The being follows orders to the letter, but resents its "owner" and is likely to try to bring about his downfall in any way it can. Compelled Familiars resist any command from its master at a -2 penalty. Having a Compelled Familiar costs 2 points, cumulative with all other costs.

Pact: Pact Familiars enter into an agreement willingly. This is usually the case when the spirit and the character share a common goal or interest. Pact Familiars are more like friends or allies than servants. They expect to be treated as partners or equals, and will be offended if ordered around. As long as the

relationship between the two is cordial, however, the spirit works willingly and even devoutly for the character's interests. Pact Familiars resist control attempts with a -3 penalty; this represents the willingness of the spirit to take risks or even demean itself for its friend. If the relationship has become strained, however, control attempts are resisted with a +2 bonus! Having a Pact Familiar costs 2 points, cumulative with all other costs.

Free: The Familiar serves of its own free will, and can come and go as it pleases. It cannot be controlled; the character must plead, bribe or otherwise convince the spirit to do anything. Generally, however, a Free Familiar is there because it likes or sympathizes with the character, so it generally goes along. Free Familiars cannot be controlled normally. Having a Free Familiar has a negative value of -5; this is applied to the cost of the Familiar, but cannot reduce its value below 2 points.

Controlling the Familiar

Most of the time, Familiars subject to control follow orders without problems. When ordered into danger, or forced to perform a task that goes against its morals or beliefs, the character may have to force a Familiar through an act of Will. This is treated as a Resisted Test, pitting a Simple Willpower Test by the character against a Difficult Willpower Test for the Familiar. This is modified by the relationship type of Familiar (see above), as well as by the following.

Lengthy and Tedious Task: The Familiar gains a +1 bonus to resist.

Dangerous Task: This is anything that has a large risk of severe injury or worse. The Familiar gains a +2 bonus to resist.

Repulsive Task: These tasks include any chore that the spirit is naturally loath to perform. This is resisted with a +1 to +6 bonus, depending on the circumstances. Ordering an animal spirit to destroy a baby animal of its client species, for example, would be resisted with a +6 bonus.

Suicidal Task: A Task that almost certainly results in the spirit's destruction. The Familiar resists such commands with a +5 bonus.

If the character fails to control the spirit, he must try to regain control as soon as possible, or the link to the Familiar is lost. This requires either a second Resisted Test with the same modifiers as before, or the use of a specific power, like the Spirit Mastery Invocation or Mindrule. If that second attempt fails, the spirit is free to do as it pleases -- flee to its native plane, attack its former master, or something else altogether. The points spent on the Familiar are normally lost. At the Chronicler's discretion, up to half the amount may be used to acquire a new Familiar.

Feral

Variable Supernatural Quality or Drawback

Ferals are humans whose souls have become intertwined with an animal spirit. These dual beings have many strange abilities, including the power to shift into a bestial, fluid form.

Most Feral Cast Members are creatures who have managed to exert some measure of control over their transformation. In that case, they must pay for it as a Quality; costs for different sub-species of Ferals can be found on pp. 36-37. Players who wish to be Ferals must choose the Lesser Supernatural character type, and then purchase this Quality. The Feral Quality grants certain powers and abilities that are included in the cost of the Quality, as well as access to certain others that must be purchased separately. Further information on Ferals is included on pp. 29-38.

Characters who are incapable of controlling themselves when transformed are Accursed Ferals; this is a Drawback with a value equal to 1/3 of the regular "cost" of the Feral form (rounded up). All Accursed Ferals have the Moon Slave Vulnerability (see p. 37), but gain no points from it. Furthermore, when transformed, Accursed Ferals are under the control of the Chronicler. In fact, the character has only fragmentary memories of what happens while in his bestial form, and is quite capable of attacking his friends and loved ones. No Feral powers or bonuses are accessible to the character. In short, it is a real curse, with no redeeming qualities, and which should be rid of as soon as humanly possible (which may turn out to be impossible, of course).

An Accursed Feral may be able to learn to control its urges if he finds a willing teacher and is prepared to spend a long time battling his inner demons. In game terms, this is costly both in time and experience points. First, the Drawback must be bought off, and then the value of the Feral Quality must be purchased with experience points (this can be done in "installments" over the course of a game, of course). If the character was Gifted or Lesser Gifted, and lost his powers as a result of the transformation, the Chronicler may let the player use the points originally spent on those powers to buy the Feral Quality. This process takes a minimum of 1 week for every level of the Drawback, and requires the character to spend no less than two hours a day undergoing meditation or mystical treatment. Missing a day means the process must start over.

Influence

3 points/level Social Quality; Prerequisite: 2 or more levels of Wealth and Status, in any combination desired

The character has powerful connections, and can make things happen. Maybe it's money, maybe it's fame, or maybe his family is wealthy and powerful, but however he does it, the normal rules do not apply to him. The character can make or break careers and get away with murder (at the higher levels, literally). Powerful people return his calls; he may be able to get through to heads of state, and they will listen, although they may not agree with him.

Either high Wealth or Status, or a combination of the two, is necessary to garner significant levels of Influence. An Influence level can never exceed one half of a character's combined Wealth and Status. So, to get Influence 5, a minimum of 10 Status levels, or 6 Wealth and 4 Status levels, or any similar combination is needed.

The "Home Ground" Advantage: People with Influence tend to have more weight in their "local" turf: their home state, or the city they dwell in. In those areas, their Influence is considered to be one level higher than purchased.

Level One: Most of the influence is localized: a city, town or county. Everywhere, though, the character can throw his weight around and get results. He knows wealthy and powerful people; if he calls them, they won't hang up, and will hear him out, albeit briefly. Examples: medium-sized city mayor, major functionary of a state or province, or a movie star.

Level Two: The character can fix most legal troubles -- up to minor felonies -- with a few phone calls and by greasing a few palms (this assumes nothing too overt, however). He can call for a press conference, and will get it. When he calls other important people, they listen; only those with 4 levels of Influence or higher feel free to ignore his calls. The character can make or break careers in his area of influence. Examples: governor of a small state, mayor of a large city, A-list movie star or moviemaker, CEO of a large corporation.

Level Three: At this level, the power broker stands in the center of a network of favors and obligations like a royal spider. He can literally get away with murder, if he isn't too overt about doing it. Lesser crimes are routinely glossed over, although, as always, the character has to be careful not to get publicly caught, at least in most democratic countries. His influence extends over other powerful people, who exert their own Influence in his behalf, provided he remembers the favor and reciprocates at a later date. Examples: mayor of one of the top five U.S. cities, governor of a large state, member of Congress or Parliament, Fortune 500 CEO, the president or prime minister of a small country.

Level Four: This worthy can make or break anyone; if his connections are right, he could have people killed, and get away with it with a minimum of circumspection. Almost nobody refuses to hear a call from him, and the only people who can touch him are other powerful people (Influence 3+). The character is not quite above the law, but fairly close. Examples: President of a First World nation, multibillionaire.

Level Five: At this level, the master manipulator can exert influence on every level. Most people with this level of influence are not in the public eye, or, if they are, are not clearly identified as having it. Major Combine agents would have this level of power.

Murder is trivially easy for people at this level; a convenient patsy can always be found, and no investigation even comes close to the real culprit.

Legban Esoteric

2-point Supernatural Quality

Most members of the Covenant of Legba are familiar with Necromancy and Magic. A few possess the Second Sight. In order to have access to any other Metaphysics, a Legban character must purchase this Quality. This represents the difficulty of finding teachers and spirit guides, and perfecting the training in other Arts. This Quality must be purchased for each separate esoteric Art desired by the Legban.

Obligation

Variable Social Drawback

Some rights are accompanied by duties. An Obligation must be followed to various degrees, and grants a number of points depending on the strictness of its dictates.

Minimal: The character is expected to obey the basic precepts of the organization or creed and not to betray its members. This is worth no points. All members of a Covenant have this Minimal Obligation. In some cases, the basic precepts of the organization put members in danger (the Sentinels are a good example), but this is usually offset by the bonuses and benefits of membership in the group.

Important: The character is expected to routinely risk himself for the organization, and go above the basic precepts of the membership. An Important Obligation is worth 1 point.

Major: The character is expected to put the welfare of the organization above his own. He is always on call, and does not have time to pursue such activities as a normal job, or much of a personal life. The penalties for disobedience or selfishness are severe, and may include death. This is worth 2 points.

Total: The character is expected to die for the organization, if need be. Missions for the organization are all extremely hazardous, and the character is constantly in danger of imprisonment, torture or execution. This is worth 3 points.

Skin-Changer

Variable Supernatural Quality; Prerequisite:
Spirit Mastery (Type) 4+, Warding 1+

Skin-Changers are sorcerers who simulate Feral powers by magically linking themselves to a spirit. Unlike the Feral curse, this process is fully voluntary and under the control of the magician.

Skin-Changers have certain advantages over “normal” Ferals, and vice-versa. They are not subject to spontaneous transformation, and they are fully in control over their bestial shape. On the other hand, they require the specially treated fur of the animal in question, so the magician cannot transform quickly or without forethought. Finally, none of the Ferals’ special powers (see pp. 33-35) can be acquired.

The cost of being a Skin-Changer is equal to the cost of being a Feral of the same species (see pp. 36-37). The needed prerequisites must be paid for separately. While in bestial form, the character may not use Invocations, although previously performed Invocations will remain in effect.

Acquiring this Quality after character creation is detailed on p. 32.

Spirit Patron

Variable Supernatural Quality

A powerful spirit has forged a special bond with the character. This may provide a number of special powers, but is often balanced with several duties or obligations. Spirit Patrons are fully described on pp. 104-105.

True Immortal

15-point Supernatural Quality

You cannot die, and are almost impossible to kill. Players who wish to be Immortals must choose the Gifted Character Type, and then purchase this Quality. The True Immortal Quality grants certain powers and abilities that are included in the cost of the Quality, as well as access to certain others that must be purchased separately. Further information on True Immortals is included on pp. 39-45.

New Skills

Magic Bolt

This Combat Skill is used by magicians or other Gifted to “throw” a bolt or blast of energy. It works like any other ranged skill. The specifics of the skill depend on the mystical effect attempted.

New Weapon

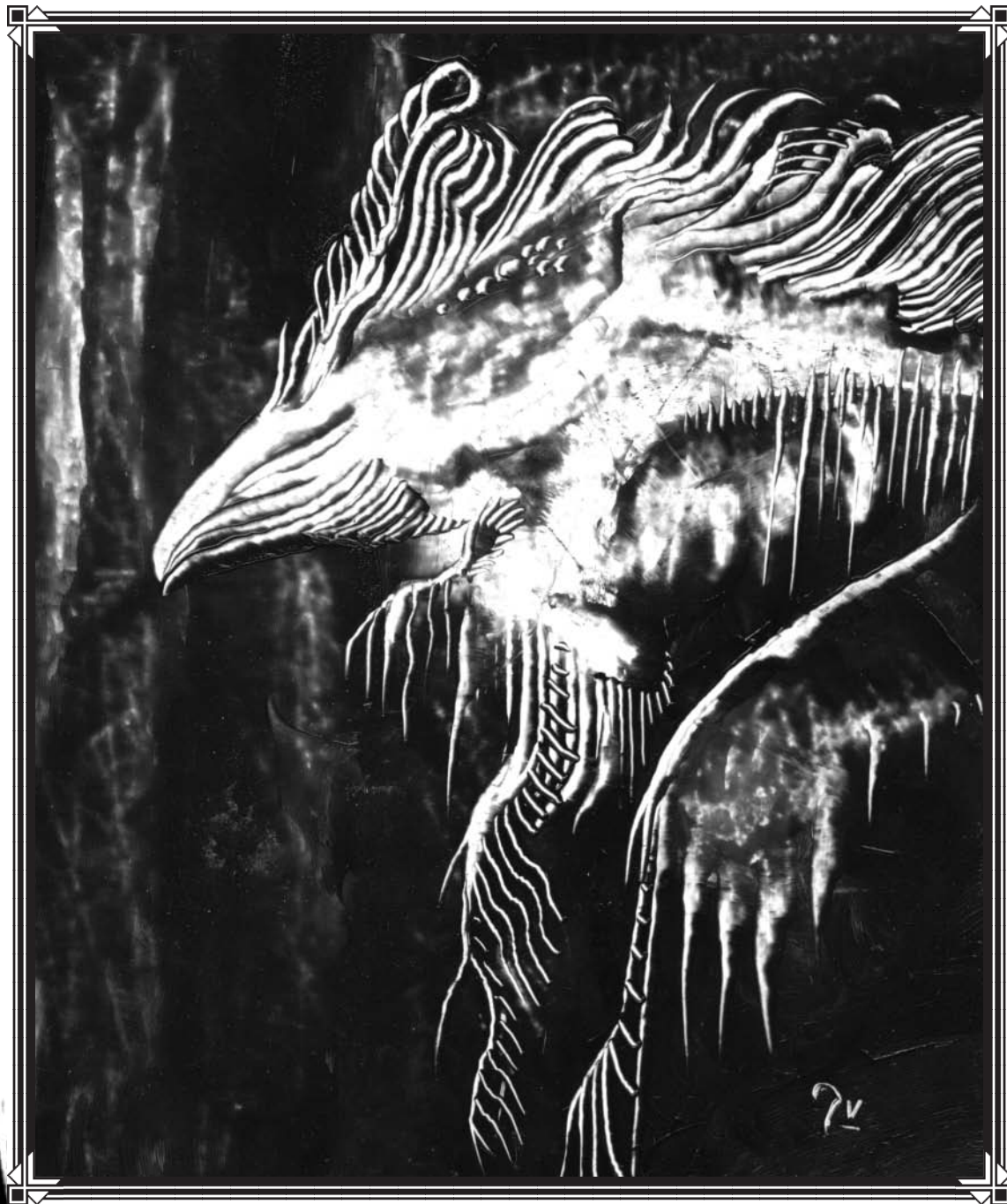
Flamethrower

This weapon consists of a rifle-sized gun attached to one or more tanks of incendiary gel. The gel is propelled out of the gun and ignited, creating a stream of flame. The burning liquid splatters, runs and ignites any flammable liquid. Flamethrower ranges are 30/40/50/60/65 for modern weapons, and 10/20/30/40/50 for WWII-era weapons.

Gel may be fired in bursts, and no more than three bursts may be fired in a Turn (each counts as a separate action). If a burst of flaming gel contacts a person, he takes D6(3) points of damage per Turn. The gel may also be sprayed at one or more targets at medium range or less by continually depressing the trigger. The later expends D6 bursts per Turn; each Success Level in the Dexterity and Guns (Flamethrower) Task means one burst hits (the firer decides how many hits are allocated to each target in range). Those engulfed in flaming gel (being hit with 3 or more bursts) take D6 x 2(6) points of damage per Turn. Flaming gel is very difficult to extinguish. Each tank contains 10 “bursts” worth of gel.

Flamethrowers are very vulnerable. Those targeting the tanks with piercing/slashing/bullet weapon attacks suffer a -2 to the Task, and must overcome an AV of 6. Still, penetration almost guarantees explosion. Roll D10, only on a 1 or 2 is the wearer safe. Exploding tanks engulf the wearer in flames, and hit all those within 5 yards with a burst. A bulky protective suit is available to modern-day soldiers that reduces damage from the burning gel to 1 point per Turn. Note that U.S. troops are not equipped with flamethrowers, but those from other countries are.

Chapter Three: Inhumans



"I dunno about this, Uncle Joseph."

"You'll do as yer told, boy," Joseph Coburn said as he fitted the night vision goggles over his nephew's eyes. First time is always the worst, he told himself. He had been out first when he was thirteen, three years younger than Frankie here, back when that Pope-loving Democrat was in office. Things had gone to Hell since, even after the Pope-lover had gotten a bullet in the head, shot by a crazy Commie of all things. Well, the Lord worked in mysterious ways.

"Can you see all right? Good. Now mind your gun." Frankie had a Ruger 10/22, a little semi-automatic rifle. It was a wimpy .22, but Frankie was coming along just to watch and learn, not to make the kill himself. That was going to be left to the men, to Joseph and Lorne and Bob. Bob's son Bobby was on leave from the Army, and he'd be along too. Good old boy; he was going to try for Green Beret next year. As long as their kind served in Army green, the country might survive the adulterous whoremonger the masses had seen fit to elect this last time. For now, all Joseph and his kin could do was to try and keep their little corner of the world clean.

It wasn't too often that you got two so close together. The ones before that had been, what four years ago? Three of them at once, two darkie punks and their wetback friend out on a joyride on a stolen car. Sheriff Hawthorne had picked them up and then called Joseph. Yeah, four years ago, Joseph had been madder than a wet cat at the last election results — elected him twice, by God! — and he'd been more than ready to vent some steam. And now, two in one week. First, the black reporter who said he was driving through but was sniffing around. And two days later, some cousin of his that came looking for him. Sheriff Hawthorne had moved quickly, though, and the man was now handcuffed in the back seat of his patrol car.

Time for another 'can shoot.

"All right, chamber a round, then put the safety on," Joseph told Frankie. "And don't forget to keep your finger off the trigger 'till yer ready to shoot." Things Frankie should know by heart, but people always got nervous their first time.

"Sure thing, Uncle Joseph," Frankie said. He was a good kid. Not his fault he had been raised by a woman after his Daddy died. Well, this 'can shoot would help him become a man.

"Just shootin' 'cans, boy," he said. "Ri-cans, Afri-can Ameri-cans, Mexi-cans." He chuckled at his own joke, but Frankie didn't seem to relax. Too bad for him.

Ahead of them Sheriff Hawthorne was taking the cuffs off the black man. "I'm lettin' you go, boy," he said as the man silently rubbed his chafed wrists. "Go into the woods. You oughta hit a road half a mile north." The man remained silent. "Now, git!"

Without a word, the man moved into forest with a careless loping pace that worried Joseph. This boy seemed to know his way around the woods. His cousin had broken into a desperate run, slamming into trees and low hanging branches and sobbing in terror and desperation. This one just rushed forward and after a few seconds Joseph could not pick him up even with the night goggles.

"Shit!" Joseph hissed. A few yards away, Bob and Bobby broke into a run after the quarry. Joseph smacked Frankie on the shoulder, making the boy jump. "Let's mount up and go, Frankie!"

Joseph and Frankie plunged into the forest. They could see Bob and his kid rushing ahead, their night vision goggles making them look like alien insects. Joseph still couldn't see the black man, but he wasn't worried. Even if he managed to outrun them, Lorne was high up on the tallest tree in the woods with a .30-06 sniper rifle.

"I see 'im!" Bobby's shout was followed by the dry report of his Uzi carbine. Bobby fired three shots in quick succession, the flashes glowing eerily in the green light of the low-light goggles. "I got 'im! I got 'im, Pa!" Bobby shouted triumphantly. Joseph felt a vague stab of disappointment. It had been a short chase.

Bobby started screaming in abject terror.

Joseph and Frankie froze in mid-step. They heard two more shots, pop-pop in the darkness. Then Bob's voice. "Bobby! What —" suddenly cut off in mid-sentence. And then silence.

"Uncle Joseph, I'm scared," Frankie blubbered.

"Shut up," Joseph said. He scanned the forest, strained to listen. The entire area had gone completely silent.

"Godalmighty, what is that?" The shout came from far away. Joseph recognized Lorne's voice. Then Lorne's .30-06 roared in the night, once . . . twice . . . three times.

"Come on, Frankie." Joseph headed towards Lorne's position, careful to stay out of his field of fire. Apparently their quarry had been tough enough to take down Bob and Bobby, which might mean he now had a couple of guns and a shotgun to his name. And that meant . . .

"Uncle Joseph!" Frankie was pointing to his left. Joseph followed the outstretched arm and found Bobby and Bob. They had been flung aside like broken dolls. The rich smell of blood and waste filled Joseph's nose as he examined the bodies. There were pretty torn up, but their guns were right next to them.

"Get back to the car, Frankie," Joseph found himself saying. "Get back to the car and drive yourself home." Frankie threw his gun away and ran. Joseph couldn't blame the boy. He wanted to run himself.

It wouldn't do any good. Still, Frankie really didn't deserve to be here.

Lorne fired again. Joseph crept forward, shotgun ready. Something sliced through the air, and there was a loud, meaty thock sound. Joseph reached a clearing and saw Lorne dangling limply from his harness on top of the tree. A sharpened branch sprouted from his chest.

Something growled behind Joseph. He whirled around and fired at the onrushing figure. In the muzzle flashes, what he saw was not human. It still wore scraps of the clothing, but that was all. Joseph caught a glimpse of striped fur, formidable jaws and flashing claws.

His first shot went wild. The second hit dead on, and he saw flesh and blood splash away from the impact. Joseph had a brief feeling of triumph, and then he felt a brutal impact.

The world was spinning, spinning. Joseph hit a tree. In the green light of the goggles, he saw a headless body start to slump to the ground.

Hey, that's me, he had time to realize, before the darkness claimed him.

Introduction

This chapter deals with two supernatural races that inhabit the world of WitchCraft -- the Ferals, supernatural shape-shifters, and the True Immortals, the reborn heirs of the Elder Kingdoms. Using the material presented here, each can be played as Cast Members. As with other supernatural types, these characters are powerful and may unbalance a group of Cast Members, particularly if a Pre-Heroic campaign is chosen (see WitchCraft, p. 292).

Ferals

Ferals are humans whose souls have become enmeshed with -- some might say infected by -- a beast spirit. They are aberrations, hybrid creatures of spirit and flesh with characteristics of both. They are the lycanthropes and werewolves of legend, the man-beasts that hunt at night or are driven to madness by the full moon. Ferals are more than mindless predators, however. Their dual nature gives some of them powers over both animals and spirits. Despite this, being a Feral is a terrible burden. Often, the victim is unable to repress her urges and emotions; a Feral is likely to reply to a slight insult with a murderous rampage. To be a Feral is to fear oneself -- or to let go and become a true monster, viewing the world as a place to satisfy one's instincts, with a complete disregard for the consequences.

There are three types of Feral: Accursed, Reconciled and Born. Accursed Ferals have been "infected" with the curse of lycanthropy; they have little or no control over their curse, and usually lead short, unhappy lives before their rage consumes them. Reconciled Ferals have, through some means, gained a measure of control over their dual nature; they are more likely to survive for a few or even several years. Born Ferals are the descendants of other Ferals, whose curse is passed down through the generations. This type has a better chance of not being destroyed by the curse, as their heritage may give them some ways to control the change. No Feral is likely to lead a normal life, however.

Being part human, part animal spirit, Ferals can alter their bodies, assuming a bestial shape. This form is not fixed. It actually shifts from one moment to the next, ranging from a mostly human but hair-covered form to a full animal shape. Usually, the Feral shifts to the most useful form for the circumstances; this is an instinctive reaction, and it may not always be in the best interests of the person. For example, a frightened Feral may go on all fours and turn into a full-fledged wolf -- making it impossible to use a weapon, tool or vehicle that might have been enough to deal with the situation.

The curse is both transmissible and hereditary. Once a human turns Feral, her curse is passed down from generation to generation. The curse does not strike every child, or even most descendants, but it will manifest at some point, sometimes generations after the original curse. As long as the offspring of a Feral exists, there is a chance their dual nature will manifest itself. Most Ferals living in the world are the descendants of previous victims. This ratio is beginning to change, however, as more and more spirits pass unbidden into the world and, by chance or design, forge a link with some unfortunate mortal.

Ferals come in several species. All known Feral "races" are predatory mammals, however. There are no known cases of "cow Ferals," "snake Ferals" or "insectoid Ferals." Some occultists believe that non-predatory spirits lack the individuality and thirst for revenge required to afflict humans, and non-mammals are too alien and different for such mergings to flourish. Semi-human creatures of those species do exist in the world of WitchCraft, but are created through different mechanisms; they belong to different orders of being.

Accursed Ferals

Becoming a Feral is mostly an involuntary process. A few occult societies (including the Nomads, see p. 68) have rituals of initiation by which a person is transformed, but those situations are rare. For the most part, a Feral is created in three ways: by attracting the wrath of an animal spirit, by being critically injured by a Feral, or by killing a Feral.

An enraged animal spirit may infect a particularly offensive human. This is how “first generation” Ferals are created. Hunting animals is rarely enough to warrant the curse; the spirits accept the predator-prey relationship as a fact of life. Pollution, wanton killing, and lack of proper reverence for the creatures one kills may be enough, but only the most extreme acts of this nature would attract the wrath of the spirit world. Committing such a crime in a sacred place (a holy grove in a forest, for example) increases the likelihood of such a curse. In game terms, the Chronicler should decide whether a character’s sins warrant a curse from the spirits. The spiritual attack is most likely when the offense takes place in a Place or on a Day of Power. Like the gods of old, these entities are often whimsical and unpredictable; a crime that gets one person cursed may have no effect on another. Use a Resisted Test, pitting Simple Willpower Tests of the spirit and the target (in this case, there are no bonuses for being Gifted). Only one attempt can be made at a given time. If the spirit loses, it may not attempt to curse the human until another suitable occasion (usually another crime or offense) presents itself.

Those who are transformed as a punishment gain few benefits from their dual lives. They become Accursed Ferals.

When a Feral attacks people, the curse may be spread. Merely being bitten by a lycanthrope is insufficient, myths and legends notwithstanding. The injuries must be life-threatening -- enough to send the victim to the Threshold, a realm between life and death (see *Mystery Codex*, p. 181). At that point, the animal spirits that hover around Ferals like a metaphysical entourage may take the chance to invade the victim’s soul, and “infect” her with the curse.

In game terms, this requires the victim to be reduced to -10 Life Points or below. If the victim survives, she must pass a Simple Willpower Test; Gifted characters gain a +4 to this Test. If failed, the character is affected by the curse, and becomes a Feral of the same species as her attacker. Even if the character fails a Survival Test and dies, at the Chronicler’s discretion, the invading animal spirit might “save” the character in order to afflict her. In that case, the Chronicler may rule that the character survives

regardless of any Survival Test outcomes -- but that the character is automatically cursed. The victim is transformed into a Feral of the same “species” as her attacker; typically, the victim will be Accursed Feral, until she finds a way to control the change.

It is also possible to become infected if one kills a Feral, especially if silver, magic or other supernatural means were not used. In such a case, the person who delivered the final, killing blow must pass a Simple Willpower Test with a +3 bonus; Gifted characters, or those using silver or magic, gain a +6 bonus. On a failure, the victim is cursed, as above, with the victim becoming a Feral of the same animal type as the one she killed.

After character has become Feral, a small scar appears somewhere on her skin, resembling three claw marks. Among those who were attacked by a Feral, the mark appears at the site of the wound.

The first transformation occurs on the first night in which 10 or more ambient Essence points become available -- midnight during a full moon is the most common such occasion (see *Spontaneous Transformation*, p. 34). The first time is the most traumatic, and is likely to come as a complete surprise to victims, especially non-Gifted characters. The Gifted are more likely to sense the transformation; a Simple Perception Test reveals that their aura has been altered. Invocations like *Insight* immediately reveal the presence of the curse.

The Feral Curse cannot be easily removed. Death usually cleanses the curse from the victim, but then the soul either enters the cycle of reincarnation or is transported to one of the Otherworlds. In a few cases, the Feral Mark is so powerful that it actually carries over to the next life! No commonly known Invocations have the power to sever the curse. It is rumored that some Black Magic rituals will remove the curse -- but at the price (in addition to whatever the Black Magician wants) of passing the curse onto someone who loves or is loved by the victim.

While removing the curse is very difficult, helping reduce its effects is possible. Through the use of Gifted powers, or sheer strength of will, the victim may eventually become Reconciled. This should be a lengthy and difficult process, however (see p. 31).

Soothing the Savage Beast

A number of Gifted and supernatural powers can help a Feral resist the urges of their bestial side. Described below are some examples; players may no doubt come up with more possibilities.

Invocations: The Affect the Psyche Invocation provides a flat +2 bonus to either resist the transformation or to resist committing violent acts. The Spirit Mastery Invocation (with the Nature Spirits specialty) can help the victim control her urges. In game terms, a Spirit Mastery and Willpower Task, and the expenditure of 3 Essence points, gives the character a bonus to resist any Feral-related urge equal to the Success Levels of the Focus Task.

Seer Powers: Seers with Mindrule can try to take control of a Feral, but with great difficulty. Ferals resist such attempts with a +5 bonus. Once she is in control, however, the psychic can try to force the Feral to "stand down" and change back to normal. This requires a Difficult Willpower Test on the part of the psychic.

Other Supernatural Powers: Vampyres with Manipulate Emotions gain the same benefits of the Affect the Psyche Invocation. Spirit Patrons (see p. 104) often grant Feral followers the power to resist their animalistic side.

Reconciled Ferals

Some among the afflicted manage to gain some control over the transformation. This is often a case of the human victim's will proving stronger than the animal spirit's, although metaphysical help can be a big factor. The Reconciled are still dual-natured beings, and many find it difficult to resist the animalistic urges of their bestial side, but, unlike their Accursed brethren, they often can transform back and forth willingly, and can control their animal shape. Although the struggle with their inner beast is a constant element of their lives, Reconciled Ferals are more likely to avoid a violent end. Some even manage to lead more or less normal lives -- as normal as of any Gifted human or supernatural being in the world of WitchCraft, that is.

Born Ferals

All those born of a Feral have a chance of manifesting the curse. The heirs of a Feral may live a normal life; unlike infected Ferals, the transformation does not occur spontaneously. If they avoid any major traumas that might awaken their bestial spirit, the transformation may never occur, even during Times of Power that usually trigger it. Triggering traumas include extreme emotional distress (especial-

ly involving the more violent emotions like anger or fear), near-death experiences (where the soul may become temporarily unfettered from the body), and supernatural events (being targeted by hostile magic or other metaphysical powers, for example) where enough free Essence may flow to spark the change. At those times, the person's Feral nature may assert itself, often with tragic results. Thus, the curse might pass over one, two or more generations without manifesting itself, until it strikes someone decades or centuries later.

Some Feral bloodlines make it a point to trigger the transformation in their children, preparing them for it rather than letting them become monsters without warning. The methods vary widely, from mystical ceremonies like those performed by the Nomads (see p. 68), to violent rites of initiation that leave the child scarred physically and emotionally.

To Born Ferals, lycanthropy may be a burden, but it is often not a curse. Over the generations, they often strengthen their connection to the spirit world, and use it to their advantage. Getting rid of their heritage is even more difficult than for the Accursed, on the other hand, because the two spirits are so tightly enmeshed. It is rarely possible to separate them without destroying them both.

Skin-Changers

Not all shape-shifters in the world of WitchCraft are Ferals. There are other animalistic supernatural species in the world, and, more significantly, some of the Ferals' abilities can be duplicated with magic. The distinctions between magicians who can assume bestial shapes and true Ferals are subtle, but significant. Shamans and sorcerers need special rituals and empowered items, the most important one being the fur of the animal whose shape they intend to assume. Since the transformation is voluntary and not inborn or imposed from above, the shape-shifting magician has greater control over herself than most normal Ferals.

Finally, it takes a great deal of time and effort to become a skin-changer. Persuading or forcing an animal spirit to bond with the magician is no easy task, and most magicians who manage such a feat have little time to master many other Invocations and rituals.

Becoming a Skin-Changer

The magician must have the Spirit Mastery Invocation of the appropriate animal spirit type.

She must also procure the fur of a recently-killed animal and tan and cure it herself (this requires the Craft Skill Furrier, or defaults to the Survival Skill of the appropriate climate, with a -3 penalty). Then a lengthy series of rituals is needed, each at least an hour in length and performed as often as once a week, until the connection between the spirit and the caster is finally forged.

In game terms, the prerequisite for this ability is Spirit Mastery (Appropriate Spirit) at a high level. During character creation, use the Skin-Changer Quality (see p. 25). This assumes the character already went through the process of performing the rituals and has successfully linked her soul to the animal spirit.

To acquire the skin-changer ability after character creation takes time, a number of rituals, and the expenditure of both Essence and experience points. The character must also fulfill all the prerequisites, and must acquire the animal fur -- a tricky proposition if the desired species is rare or endangered. Then, a series of monthly rituals are in order. Each ritual attempt has a -4 penalty; this represents the spirit's resistance. If the magician fails for two rituals in a row, she must start over, and all accumulated Essence and Success Levels are lost (any saved experience points aren't, however). The magician must accumulate a total of 50 Success Levels, spread over a number of Invocation castings (up to one attempt can be made every month), and spend a total of 2,000 Essence points, also spread over the rituals. The character's total Essence Pool, plus any ambient Essence from Times and Places of Power and ritual magic can be used on each ritual, but none from group rituals, consecrated vessels, and other sources. Finally, the character must have enough experience points to pay for the Quality; this cost may also be spread over time, but must be paid before the final ritual is performed.

Skin-Changers in Action

To transform, the character must put the prepared skin over her naked body, successfully perform a Spirit Mastery Invocation, and spend 10 Essence Points. The character then becomes a Feral-like creature, with all the common powers of their kind, including regeneration, Attribute bonuses, and the fluid shape-shifting ability. The only major difference is that the Skin-Changer does not transmit the Curse to others through infection (see pp. 30, 33).

Life as a Feral

The life of an Accursed Feral is likely to be short and miserable. Unless help is available, the wretch suffers from blackouts during which her animal side runs rampant, possibly killing livestock or people. Given the reckless nature of the beast, it is only a matter of time before someone kills her -- usually, the local community organizes a hunting party to deal with the threat (typically believing that the Feral is a mad animal and not a supernatural being), and kills the Feral. The second most common cause of death among the Accursed is suicide. Only the very lucky or strong-willed survive their transformation for long; those that do become Reconciled.

With the proper education, most Reconciled and Born Ferals can learn to control and manage their animalistic side, but it is a hard path even for those who have the understanding and support of their families or allies. The animal side of the Feral affects the character even when she is in human form. After the transformation, the sufferer becomes less inhibited, more likely to react without thinking, and more likely to follow her instincts. The results vary widely depending on the circumstances. A Feral may be the first to throw a punch during a bar fight -- or she may meekly retreat in the face of someone she considers a superior or "Alpha male." As lovers, Ferals can be fiery and passionate -- or totally selfish. Leading a normal life is hard in the best of circumstances.

As a result, many Ferals find themselves shunning the company of others, preferring to lead lonely lives, or to deal only with a select group of people, those few who can understand them. Gifted humans and other "inhumans" are the preferred companions, since they have secrets of their own and are more likely to make allowances for a Feral's behavior. In the past, such alliances were rare, since there were few Gifted and even fewer Ferals. They are becoming more common of late, and mixed bands of Gifted, Ferals, Undead and other beings are no longer unique. Usually, these alliances occur when the "supernaturals" find some common cause, be it an enemy that threatens them all, a political cause they all espouse, or even a criminal undertaking.

Playing Ferals

Accursed Ferals are not meant to be used as Cast Members, but can make for a challenging roleplaying experience. Even among the two basic types of Feral normally used as characters (Born and Reconciled), a wide range of potential personalities exist. While the number is growing, only a few hundred Ferals exist worldwide. Thus, it would be fair to say that each of them is a unique individual. Their common feature is a closer contact with the savage, predatory side that exists in all humans. Some are passionate beings, and are often overpowered by their lusts or impulses. Others keep their emotions under very tight rein, fearful of losing control. For many Ferals, getting rid of the curse is the overriding goal of their lives, but a sizable minority consider their dual nature part of who they are, and would not give it up.

Creating Feral Characters

Ferals use the Lesser Supernatural Character Type (see p. 14), and must purchase one Feral Shape (see pp. 36-37). Otherwise, they are created normally.

The shape-shifters have two sets of Attributes, one for their human form (which is purchased normally), and another for their bestial form (which is modified from the human form based on the shape chosen).

Common Feral Powers and Vulnerabilities

All Ferals have a number of common abilities and detriments. Some characteristics are determined by their shapes (see pp. 36-37), and others are the result of special training or affinities. The abilities listed below vary from the Feral description in *Mystery Codex*. Cast Member Ferals should use this material; Chroniclers may use either for other Ferals.

Feral's Curse

Ferals can transmit their condition onto others. Being injured by a Feral, or even killing a Feral may trigger the transformation. If a person is reduced to -10 Life Points or below by a Feral's claws or bite, she must pass a Simple Willpower Test; Gifted characters gain a +4 to this Test. If failed, the character is affected by the curse and becomes a Feral of the same species as her attacker.

It is also possible to become infected if one kills a Feral. The person who delivered the final, killing blow must pass a Simple Willpower Test with a +3 bonus; Gifted characters, and those using silver or magic, gain a +6 bonus. On a failure, the victim is cursed, as above, with the victim becoming a Feral of the same animal type as the one she killed.

Regeneration

Ferals in animal form are extremely hard to kill. Most types of damage suffered are rapidly healed, at the rate of 1 point per Constitution level every Turn. In human form, Ferals are relatively normal, except that they do heal wounds more rapidly than others, regaining lost Life Points at the rate of 1 per Constitution level every hour of rest, or every two hours of activity.

Injuries sustained in one form carry over to the other, however. If a severely injured Feral transforms into a human being, the sudden shock to the system is likely to kill her. So, a Feral who suffered 50 points of damage, and transformed into human form before regenerating it, transfers the damage to her human (and far frailer) form. Crippling injuries (like lost limbs or eyes) carry over from bestial to human form, but not vice versa. This means that a Feral who is a quadriplegic in human form could be perfectly active in bestial form, but if the creature lost an arm while rampaging in animal shape, the human form would have that injury when it next transformed.

Unlike other supernatural creatures, Ferals can be killed with conventional weapons. If reduced to -10 Life Points or below, Ferals must pass Survival Tests normally. Killing a Feral can be dangerous, however.

Restrictions

Ferals are no longer fully human. They lose the ability to acquire or use most Gifted powers, including Magic, Seer abilities, and Necromancy. Spirit Patrons may allow Ferals to perform magic, however. A Gifted human who is transformed into a Feral during a game loses most of her powers unless she can be cured (a cure is not described in this book; finding one should be a quest unto itself). The Chronicler should allow the character to shift the lost points towards paying for the Feral Quality, however.

Spontaneous Transformation

If enough ambient Essence is available, the Feral transformation may be triggered involuntarily. The most dangerous times for a Feral are midnights during a full moon, the Solstices and Equinoxes, and the evenings of the four major Days of Power (see Witchcraft, p. 203). During those times, the Feral transforms into lycanthropic form unless she can pass a Difficult Willpower Test. Every 10 minutes after that, the character can try to regain control by passing a Difficult Willpower Test. During the time of the transformation, the spirit animal form is very much in control of the creature. The Feral tends to react to everything with "fight or flight" instincts, and often ravenously eats any edible substances available -- or hunts for food otherwise. Friends of the creature usually have nothing to fear from the Feral even under these circumstances; the animal mind recognizes and usually respects them. Any acquaintance who has offended or angered the Feral is likely to be attacked on sight. The animal spirit has little self-restraint and acts on any urge the character might feel.

Essence released by strong emotions can also cause the transformation. This Essence can come from the Feral herself, or anybody within 5 yards (meters) from the creature. Fear, anger, lust or pain causes the release of D4(2) to D10(5) Essence points. If that release is combined with a time of power, that might be enough to trigger the transformation, as above. Essence used in Invocations or Gifted powers is not "raw," however, and it will not trigger the transformation. An Essence Channeler could trigger the transformation, but would have to do it on purpose.

Superhuman Attributes

Ferals gain enhanced physical attributes while in their bestial shapes. These increased attributes vary from species to species (see pp. 36-37).

The Essence Pool of Ferals is increased by 10 points (use the human form's attributes to determine base Essence). Additional Essence can be purchased normally (see WitchCraft, p. 87).

Life Points are determined normally for the human form. The bestial form uses its enhanced attributes and the following formula: ((Str + Con) x 5) +50.

Supernatural Senses

Ferals can see spirits, including ghosts, nature spirits, and Elementals. They can also see through the Seemings and Glamours of the Sidhe, and can "smell" the presence of large amounts of Essence in people and places, which enables them to uncover probable Gifted characters. This ability works even while in human form; when the character senses something strange, her nostrils flare up and she involuntarily makes sniffing noises.

Transformation

Ferals have the ability to assume a bestial shape, half-animal and half-human. This shape can change instantly, becoming more or less human depending on the needs or mood of the lycanthrope. Characters facing a Feral should be struck by the fluid, dream-like "morphing" of the creature. A typical werewolf, for example, may shift from second to second between the form of a fully animalistic wolf to that of a vaguely wolf-like human.

The bestial form is not fixed -- it shifts fluidly, from fully animal (identical to a large member of the appropriate species) to humanoid, although fur-covered and with clear animalistic characteristics. The Feral unconsciously assume whatever shape she needs instantly. For running, she drops on all fours and turns into a regular animal; for combat, she

assumes a humanoid shape and strikes with clawed limbs, or even uses a hand weapon if one is available. This happens so fast that, in game terms, the attribute bonuses are in effect for as long as the transformation occurs. In all manifestations, however, the Feral is covered in the fur of the animal shape, and her features remain consistently bestial, with sharp teeth, snout instead of nose, and inhumanly-shaped ears.

Any clothing worn by the Feral is torn apart by the transformation. Only light, elastic garments can survive the change.

Changing into animal form costs 10 Essence Points. The effect lasts an hour, at the end of which another 10 Essence must be spent to maintain the shape. This lost Essence is not regained until after the character assumes her human form once again. At that point, it is recovered at the normal rate (see WitchCraft, p. 154).

Vulnerability

Attacks that normally drain Essence (like the Soulfire Invocation) do Life Point damage to Ferals in bestial form. Also, silver has some of the properties against Ferals ascribed to it by legend. Silver weapons inflict double normal damage (slashing weapons inflict triple damage). Silver weapons are less effective than normal metal weapons, however; subtract 3 points from any damage rolled (before the doubling effect), to a minimum of 1 point of damage.





Feral Shapes

Listed below are some of the possible Feral Shapes, with their character point costs and game stats. In general, any mammal predator can become the source of a Feral Shape. All forms have the equivalent of Acute Senses (all senses). The cost of this ability is included in the shape's cost.

The character point cost of the Feral Shape can be paid from the Qualities or Metaphysics Point pools. A character may only have one such shape.

Bear: This shape covers most common bear types, from the Black Bear to the Polar Bear. In animal shape, the character is a huge creature of the appropriate breed. Bonuses: +7 to Strength, +1 to Dexterity, +4 to Constitution, +2 to Perception, +5 to Speed. Armor Value 3. Natural Attacks: Bite: D4 x Strength slashing. Claw: D6 x Strength slashing. Cost: 29 points.

Coyote: This predator and scavenger is also the living avatar of the trickster deity of some Native American tribes. Some Ferals adopt that god as a Spirit Patron (see p. 109). Bonuses: +2 to Strength, +2 to Dexterity, +2 to Constitution, +2 to Perception, +10 to Speed. Armor Value 1. Natural Attacks: Bite: D4 x Strength slashing, Claws: D4 x Strength slashing. Cost: 21 points.

Hyena: Common in parts of Africa, the Hyena is a powerful scavenger and predator. Bonuses: +3 to Strength, +2 to Dexterity, +2 to Constitution, +1 to Perception, +10 to Speed. Armor Value 1. Natural Attacks: Bite: D6 x Strength slashing. Claws: D4 x Strength slashing. Cost: 23 points.

Jaguar: One of the great hunting cats, the Jaguar is common in the Americas. Bonuses: +4 to Strength, +3 to Dexterity, +2 to Constitution, +1 to Perception, +10 to Speed. Armor Value 1. Natural Attacks: Bite: D4 x Strength slashing. Claws: D6 x Strength slashing. Cost: 24 points.

Lion: The so-called King of Jungle is a prolific hunter of the African wilderness. Bonuses: +5 to Strength, +2 to Dexterity, +3 to Constitution, +1 to Perception, +10 to Speed. Armor Value 1. Natural Attacks: Bite: D6 x Strength slashing. Claws: D6 x Strength slashing. Cost: 26 points.

Tiger: The largest hunting feline on the planet, tigers dwell in the Indian sub-continent and parts of Asia. Bonuses: +6 to Strength, +3 to Dexterity, +4 to Constitution, +2 to Perception, +10 to Speed. Armor Value 1. Natural Attacks: Bite: D6 x Strength slashing. Claws: D6 x Strength slashing. Cost: 30 points.

Wolf: One of the most common shapes, at least in Western Europe and America, the wolf is a social predator that operates in packs, and can be found from Russia to North America. Bonuses: +3 to Strength, +2 to Dexterity, +2 to Constitution, +2 to Perception, +10 to Speed. Armor Value 1. Natural Attacks: Bite: D4 x Strength slashing. Claws: D4 x Strength slashing. Cost: 22 points.

Special Feral Powers and Vulnerabilities

These are abilities and disadvantages some Ferals have. Most powers can only be acquired by Born or Reconciled Ferals; the Accursed rarely get a chance to learn any. After character creation, some of these powers can be acquired by paying double the base cost with experience points; they are gained through mystical revelation, although having a teacher would help. Some powers (like Inborn Feral) cannot be gained after character creation, for obvious reasons.

In addition to the powers below, Ferals can also have Spirit Patrons (see p. 104). The Patrons can give them a number of special abilities, including the power to use magic, at the price of owing a measure of allegiance and servitude to their Patrons.

Camouflage

3-point Power

By spending 5 Essence Points and passing a Simple Willpower Test, the Feral can change her coloring to match that of her surroundings. The result is near invisibility -- a Perception and Notice Task with a -5 penalty is necessary to spot the character while she remains immobile; a -2 penalty is applied when she is moving slowly. If the Feral betrays her presence, she will be spotted, but ranged attacks against her still have a -1 penalty.

This power can only be used while in the Feral Shape. The Camouflage remains in effect for 1 minute, at which time a new Test and Essence expenditure is needed to maintain it.

Inborn Feral

2-point Power

Ferals who gained the curse through their ancestors have a number of advantages. First, they are less likely to lose control, or to spontaneously transform. Inborn Ferals gain a +2 bonus to resist all such impulses. This power is a prerequisite for some other special abilities.

Moon Slave

2-point Vulnerability

This affliction is most common among Reconciled or Cursed Ferals. Moon Slaves are at constant risk of losing control of themselves when in their Feral Shape. They are also unable to resist the transformation when enough ambient Essence is present to trigger it; the most common such time is midnight during the full moon, but also the Solstices and Equinoxes, or when the Feral inadvertently enters a Place of Power. In game terms, Ferals suffer a -2 penalty to Willpower Tests to resist the transformation whenever they are exposed to enough ambient Essence.

Spirit Claws

2-point Power

Ferals with this ability can harm ethereal beings like ghosts and spirits with their physical attacks. Each attack using Spirit Claws drains the Feral of 1 Essence point, whether it strikes the target or not.

Strength of the Beast

6-point Power; Prerequisite: Inborn Feral

Some Ferals have such a strong connection to their animal soul that they can enjoy some of their strengths even while in human form. Invoking the Strength of the Beast requires a Simple Willpower Test and the expenditure of 5 Essence Points. The character gains the physical bonuses of her Feral Shape, while retaining her human visage. The Feral's natural attacks (like claws and bite) do not carry over, however. The power lasts for 1 minute, at which time a new Test and Essence expenditure is required. While invoking her animal powers, the character is at a -1 penalty to resist a spontaneous transformation (cumulative with any other bonuses or penalties).

Summon Animal Spirits

4-point Power

By calling upon her totemic animal, the Feral can summon a number of “spirit fragments” to materialize and do her bidding. The Feral must be in her bestial form to summon her brethren. The summoning requires a Simple Willpower Test, and the expenditure of 5 Essence per spirit summoned. The maximum number of spirits the Feral can summon cannot exceed the Success Level of the Test, regardless of how much Essence is available. Some sample summoned spirits can be found below.

In *Mystery Codex*, this ability was triggered by a Task. In the interests of simplicity, the Task has been replaced by a Simple Willpower Test.

Feral Sample Character

A sample Feral character, the Nomad Road Warrior, can be found in *Chapter Four: Associations*, p. 76

Summoned Spirit Stats

All summoned spirit fragments have Acute Senses, and are able to track with a Simple Perception Test (plus Acute Senses bonuses). They attack or Dodge by making Simple Dexterity Tests. They fight until destroyed, never retreating or fleeing no matter how bad the odds are. These beings take Life Point damage from Essence-draining attacks like Soulfire, but they are no more or less affected by silver than any other non-Feral being. The creatures have neither Essence Pools nor Endurance Points. Note that these game stats reflect the fragmentary nature of the entities forced into existence by the Feral's will. Their stats vary from fully formed, or true Animal Spirits.

Wolf

Strength: 3 Dexterity: 3 Constitution: 4 Perception: 3 Intelligence: 1 Willpower: 2

Life Points: 33 Speed: 25

Attacks: Bites for D4 x 3(6) slashing damage

Bear

Strength: 8 Dexterity: 3 Constitution: 5 Perception: 2 Intelligence: 1 Willpower: 3

Life Points: 60 Speed: 20

Attacks: Bites for D4 x 4(8) slashing damage; claws for D4 x 8(16) slashing damage

Jaguar/Panther

Strength: 5 Dexterity: 4 Constitution: 5 Perception: 3 Intelligence: 1 Willpower: 3

Life Points: 30 Speed: 30

Attacks: Bites for D4 x 3(6) slashing damage, claws for D6 x 5(15) slashing damage

Tiger/Lion

Strength: 7 Dexterity: 4 Constitution: 5 Perception: 3 Intelligence: 1 Willpower: 3

Life Points: 60 Speed: 25

Attacks: Bites for D4 x 7(14) slashing damage, claws for D6 x 7(21) slashing damage

True Immortals

Immortality has been the elusive goal of many humans since time immemorial. Heroes, magicians and philosophers have searched for the key to true immortality. The Gifted can attain immortality of a sort, greatly reducing the aging process and, for the most powerful among them, living on for centuries or even millennia. There are some, however, who need neither magic nor mental powers to remain young. They can live seemingly forever, and are almost impossible to kill. The men and women born with this godlike power are known in occult circles as True Immortals, beings who do not have to seek ways to cheat Death, but who do so naturally. They are envied and feared by those who know of their existence. Many Immortals have found themselves being subjected to unspeakable experiments by those seeking to discover the secret of eternal life.

Most Immortals live among humankind, but they set themselves apart through a veil of secrecy and lies. A few try to manipulate humankind for their own ends. Many concentrate on living life to the fullest, spending lifetimes pursuing different goals; they can be explorers, scholars or dilettantes, spending a few decades on one pursuit before moving on to the next. For the most part, they find comfort only among their own kind, although their differences are often greater than their common traits. Some are incredibly old, but the vast majority of them have been born only in the past century -- their increasing numbers yet another sign of the approaching Reckoning.

Being Immortal

The few scholars (most of them Immortals themselves) who have managed to study the lives of several Immortals have found very little in the way of common patterns in their origins or mundane lives. Immortals come from all racial, social and economic groups, and are born in all parts of the world. Their early lives are for the most part unremarkable, except perhaps for their good health. Most Immortals never suffer from any disease, even during childhood. Those few that do always recover with uncanny speed. The only other common trait is the bizarre

dreams of strange places and peoples that most are afflicted with from early childhood. It is not until the event known as the Change, however, that their abilities become manifest.

The Change occurs at some point in every Immortal's life. It is most common between the person's nineteenth and fortieth birthday, although exceptions have been noted, usually triggered by some physical trauma. The person is suddenly struck by a seizure, and slips into a deep coma lasting several hours. During that time, the Immortal's mind is flooded with images from a strange land where science and magic are one, where men fly the sky in flame-covered vessels, fight with swords and beam weapons, and walk side by side with gods and angels. For most of them, these images are hard to remember clearly, and the Immortals only retain fleeting glimpses of them.

The budding Immortal then recovers with no apparent changes. After the time of Change, however, they heal mortal wounds in a matter of seconds, and they grow no older. Unless they find themselves in violent times (historically very common, of course), they may not realize this for years or decades. In time, however, the Immortal notices that she remains unchanged while everyone else does not. In the course of the years, some Immortals also discover a number of unusual abilities -- they may find themselves capable of bursts of superhuman strength, of insights into matters supernatural, or of fits of inspiration and creativity. Some find themselves building strange, wonderful devices out of outlandish materials. Those who are lucky find another Immortal, someone who can teach them about themselves and their heritage. Historically, most live for centuries before they meet someone of their kind.

Elder Immortals are more likely to cross the paths of other occult beings, from magicians and psychics to Ferals and Vampyres. The results of those encounters are as varied as the Immortals themselves. Some forge deep friendships with these fellow outsiders, while others have been hunted by supernatural beings or ancient conspiracies -- and vice versa.

Children of Atlantis

All Immortals dream of a mythical land where men are as powerful as the gods. The name of this land, as far as most Immortals can remember, is Athal Kananthu. When enough Immortals had finally compared notes, it became clear that these dreams were some sort of ancestral memory from their past lives. The general consensus in Lodge of the Undying (the largest group of Immortals in the world) is that Athal is the fabled Atlantis, the antediluvian empire of myth and legend. Outside the Lodge, there are as many opinions as Immortals; the dreams are believed to be anything from delusions to memories of a distant planet or dimension or the prehistoric past.

The memories of Athal/Atlantis are fragmentary and confused. For one, it appears that the city-state flourished for hundreds or even thousands of years, and people's memories come from different periods of its history. At some point, the people of Athal, or at least the elite among them, managed to give themselves the gift of immortality. The process appears to have transformed them body and soul, and left an Essence imprint that manifests itself even through reincarnation. The down side is that once an Immortal dies, it takes a very long time for him to come back. No Immortal can remember more than one past life, and only as an Atlantean (in game terms, the Old Soul Quality is never available to True Immortals). Since the city-state has left no archeological or historical records (as far as anyone knows, at least), it is hard to know when it stood and fell. Most Immortal scholars are sure it predates all known historical civilizations, and place its origin and downfall somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 B.C.E., possibly towards the end of the last Ice Age. That would mean that most Immortals did not reincarnate for several millennia.

Not all Immortals faced with this interpretation of their dreams agree with these conclusions, however. They point out that no archeological remains of Atlantis or any of the great mythical city-states has ever been found. If the remains of dinosaurs millions of years old can be found, why not traces of these supposedly colossal cities? True believers counter that the powers that destroyed Atlantis sought to eradicate all traces of its existence. As proof for their

assertions, they can point to the Artifacts some Immortals can produce. These Artifacts are a strange combination of magic and super-science, ranging from nearly indestructible weapons and armor to strange vessels that can travel in the air or under water at tremendous speeds. Such creations can hardly be the product of common delusions.

Playing Immortals

How to play an Immortal often depends on her age. Most Immortals are relatively young (less than a century old), their powers having manifested recently. They are largely normal people who are just now beginning to grapple with the existence of the paranormal. In that way, they are not very different from most beginning WitchCraft characters.

At the other end of the spectrum are the ancient Immortals, who have lived for a number of centuries. They can be played as jaded and weary people who have seen it all, or eager people seeking new experiences. Some may face the modern world, and the speed of technological development, with confusion and fear. Others may revel in it and consider it the best time to be alive since the fall of Atlantis. Their motives may range from the base to the noble; some Immortals believe it is their duty to protect their short-lived brethren, while others care only for themselves or, at best, for the welfare of all Immortals, disdaining the rest.

At heart, Immortals are essentially human. They lack the obsessive lusts of the Vampyre, the driving fury of the Relentless Dead, or the bestial instincts of the Feral. Like all humans, they can be saints or monsters, or something in between. Their long lives can give them a greater degree of wisdom, or it may make them unwilling to accept or tolerate change. The younger breeds are likely to be somewhat reckless at first, until they discover that death is not the only danger out there, and that some things are far worse than dying. Although Immortals cannot die by conventional means, they can still feel pain, and they can be imprisoned and brutalized. A widely-spread cautionary tale warns of the Immortal who got involved in a war with the local Mob and found himself dumped into the foundation of a building and encased in concrete. He remains there to this day, alive and helpless like a fly in amber.

Creating True Immortal Characters

Immortals use the Gifted Character Type. They do not have to purchase the Gift, but must pay for the True Immortal Quality (15 points). This Quality grants them the common True Immortal abilities and restrictions. Otherwise, character generation is unchanged. Those with the True Immortal Quality may also purchase special abilities (see p. 43)

Common True Immortal Powers and Vulnerabilities

All True Immortals possess the following abilities and restrictions.

Ancestral Memories

All Immortals have brief flashbacks of their previous lives as citizens of Athal, the mysterious city-state that may be the fabled land of Atlantis. Most of these visions have little relevance to the modern world, but they may reveal important information about other Immortals who might have been the character's acquaintances (or enemies) in her past life, or when dealing with powerful and ancient beings like the Seraphim or the Mad Gods. A few Immortals can actually remember how to manufacture certain tools and weapons from those fabled times. They are known as Makers.

Immortality

Immortals are almost impossible to kill, and they never die of natural causes. They can contract diseases, but they shake them off in a matter of days (even a Terminal disease disappears in 15-Constitution days). They never suffer from cancer or genetically inherited diseases, and can endure lethal levels of radiation. The latter causes the symptoms of radiation sickness for several days until their bodies metabolize and eliminate all contaminants. To kill an Immortal through conventional means, the body must be completely dismembered and the pieces burned to ashes and scattered. Being on ground zero of a large explosion (something inflicting over 300 points of damage) would also do the trick, as would some event that disperses most of the mass of the Immortal.



Supernatural beings can also try to kill the Immortal through the Severing, a mystical attack that cuts the connection between the Immortal's soul and his body. To attempt the Severing, the Immortal must be reduced to -10 Life Points through wounds or other means. Then the supernatural or Gifted must expend Essence equal to the Immortal's Essence Pool (the normal maximum amount, not his current Essence). If enough Essence is spent, a Resisted Simple Willpower Test between the Immortal and her attacker must be resolved. The Immortal gains the bonus from the Hard to Kill Quality, if she has any levels in it. If the attacker wins, the link is severed, and the Immortal's soul is cast out, not to be reincarnated for thousands of years (this effectively removes the character from most games). If the Immortal wins, she lives, and no further Severing attempts can be made on her for 24 hours.

Although normal injuries are not likely to kill an Immortal, they still inflict pain and unconsciousness. Immortals are subject to the same shock and unconsciousness rules as normal humans, but they quickly recover from them. An Immortal reduced below 0 points will probably be knocked unconscious, but she will awaken as soon as her regeneration powers bring her back to 1 or more Life Points.

Magic Resistance

Immortals resist any Invocation (provided the Invocation allows a Resisted Task or Test), and any supernatural power meant to affect the mind with a +2 bonus.

Manipulate Essence

Immortals do not need Essence Channeling. They can spend Essence at whatever rate they wish, provided they have enough in store. This Essence expenditure can only be used for Immortal powers, however; they cannot use it to fuel Invocations or other Gifted powers.

Regeneration

Immortals regain lost Life, Endurance and Essence Points much faster than normal humans. Even mortal wounds can be completely healed in less than a minute. The regeneration rates are as follows:

Life Points: 1 point per Constitution level per Turn. So, an Immortal with a Constitution 4 would regenerate 4 Life Points at the end of every Turn.

Endurance Points: 2 points per Constitution level per half-hour of sleep, or 1 point per Constitution level per hour of rest.

Essence Points: 2 points per Willpower level, every minute.

Restrictions

Immortals cannot acquire most Gifted powers. Their souls have been altered somehow; this has given them near-eternal life, but at a price. Immortals cannot gain Essence Channeling; they may learn Invocations, but have to release Essence through ritual magic, a lengthy and difficult task (see WitchCraft, p. 201). Immortals cannot acquire most other powers, including Necromancy, Miracles, the Sight, Tao-Chi and the Disciplines of the Flesh.

Superhuman Attributes

Immortals are somewhat stronger, more graceful and tougher than humans. All True Immortals receive the following Attribute bonuses: +1 Strength, +1 Dexterity, and +1 Constitution. All attributes except Intelligence and Perception have an upper limit of 7; the other two have the normal human limit of 6.

Unlike normal humans, an Immortal can improve an Attribute with experience points up to three levels above her starting level (see WitchCraft, p. 158). Also, Immortals can use Metaphysics Points to increase Attributes, in the same way that Drawback Points are used (see Witchcraft, p. 71). As always, bonuses are added after the player purchases Attribute levels.

As to Secondary Attributes, Endurance and Speed are figured normally, but the following formula determines the Immortal's Life Points and Essence Pool:

Life Points: $((\text{Strength} + \text{Constitution}) \times 5) + 15$. Immortals can gain up to 10 levels of Hard to Kill (see WitchCraft, p. 78), purchased normally.

Essence Pool: Sum of Attributes + 25. Immortals can purchase the Increased Essence Pool Quality (see WitchCraft, p. 87) normally.

Supernatural Senses

An Immortal can, by concentrating, sense the flows of Essence around her, both in things and people. By spending one Turn of concentration and passing a Simple Perception Test, the Immortal can sense the presence of magic, the relative strength of a human being's Essence pool, and the presence of supernatural beings. Other Immortals can be recognized by making eye contact, which produces a flash of psychic recognition. An Immortal can also sense the presence of another of her kind within 30 yards (meters) away, but not her exact location or direction.

Unaging

Immortals stop aging completely at the time of the Change. This event generally occurs between the ages of 19 and 40; most Immortals undergo the Change during their mid- to late twenties. Exceptions may occur when some traumatic incident earlier in life awakened the Immortal's abilities. At worst, such an event may occur when the character was barely a teenager, or even a child. Those Immortals have the Child Vulnerability (see p. 44), and their bodies are permanently frozen at that early age. Immortal Children are not common, and they rarely lead happy or satisfying lives.



Special Powers and Vulnerabilities

These abilities and flaws exist among Ture Immortals, but not everyone has them.

Awareness

3-point Power

Immortals with this ability have greatly enhanced supernatural and physical senses. They gain a +2 to all Perception Tasks or Tests. Furthermore, they automatically sense the presence of ghosts, spirits and other invisible entities, and detect Gifted abilities, supernatural beings masquerading as normal humans, and all other Immortals in a 100-yard radius. Their ability to see Essence patterns also allows them to sense a person's emotional state.

Battle Boost

5-point Power

The Battle Boost uses Essence to temporarily augment the character's physical Attributes. These increases are balanced out by temporary weakness when the power elapses, however. Any of the three physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity and Constitution) can be raised at the cost of 2 Essence points per +1 bonus. These bonuses do not affect Secondary Attributes, except for Speed. The increases last for 1 minute, unless more Essence is spent on them. When the power expires, the character is weakened; each +1 bonus becomes a -1 penalty to the same attribute, for a period of one hour. So, if an Immortal increases her Strength by 3 levels (at the cost of 6 Essence), she suffers a -3 penalty to her Strength after the power expires. Essence spent on the Battle Boost cannot be recovered while the power is maintained (after that, it is recovered normally). Attributes cannot be lowered below -1 in this way, however, so the maximum boost allowable is equal to the normal Attribute level +1. Characters with a physical Attribute at -1 are able to move, but find themselves unable to perform most physical tasks (walking very slowly is probably the upper limit, or lifting small weights). For example, a character with a Strength of 3 could gain a maximum bonus of +4; her Strength would become a -1 (barely able to move herself) for an hour afterwards.

Child

1-, 2-, or 3-point Vulnerability

The term Child refers to those Immortals who underwent the Change before the age of maturity. This often occurs when the character suffers a mortal wound, disease or accident, which triggers the transformation into an Immortal. The unfortunate side effect is that the character's biological age is permanently frozen from the moment of the Change. A 12-year old Immortal girl still looks that age several centuries later. She may be stronger or wiser than any adult in the world, but she remains a child in the eyes of the community and the law. When she fails to grow up, people think she is suffering from some sort of developmental problem. Medical check-ups reveal something strange in her, and the child may end up being targeted by the Combine in an attempt to cover up her existence. Children from earlier eras soon learned to hide their identities and regularly move from place to place.

The younger the character's biological age, the greater the value of this Vulnerability. Being 17 or 18 is no major disadvantage (1 point), since the character can easily pass for someone older -- she might get carded at a bar, but otherwise does not suffer greatly. For ages 16-13, the value is greater (2 points); for ages 12 or less, the value is even more (3 points).

Destiny Rider

1-point Vulnerability

Some Immortals have the ability to unconsciously sense the streams of Essence that determine the flow of time, causality, and fate. Destiny Riders have the ability to reach places where they are needed before that need arises. They are carried by the winds of chance to places where they can make a difference -- and where danger awaits. This ability is more of a burden than a boon, since the characters find themselves dragged towards potentially lethal encounters, whether they want to or not.

In game terms, this vulnerability makes for easy plot hooks. Destiny Riders often find themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time. If a Rider decides to take a walk in the park, for example, she is certain to stumble upon a band of cultists ready to sacrifice a

victim. If she stays a home, the fleeing victim may jump through her living room's window, with the cultists a few steps behind. The "curse" does not strike all the time, however; Chroniclers should be careful not to overuse it.

Gaze of Dominion

4-point Power

Some Immortals have inherited the ability to manipulate men's thoughts. The ancestral memories sometimes recall a Guild of the Eye in ancient Athal, made up of Atlanteans who could project their will onto other people. The Gaze requires eye contact, the expenditure of 3 Essence Points, and a Resisted Test. The victim resists with Willpower (Difficult Test for Mundanes, Simple Test for others). If the Immortal wins, she can project one mental command on the victim. Simple commands like "Stop," "Run away," or "Drop your weapon" work best. More complex orders, and things that go against the victim's wishes and interests, are resisted with a +1 to +7 bonus, at the Chronicler's discretion.

Characters who practice this ability may learn a Gaze Skill. This works as a regular skill, and is purchased using Skill Points. In the Resisted Test detailed above, the Immortal uses a Simple Willpower Test until the Gaze Skill is greater than the character's Willpower. At that point, replace the Willpower Test with a Willpower and Gaze Task.

Maker

6-point Power

True Immortal Makers have enough awakened memories of Athal's past to create some of the advanced artifacts of that culture. The strange super-science of Atlantis cannot be duplicated through conventional means, however. Only Makers have the know-how and Essence manipulation capabilities to produce the Artifacts described in Chapter Five: Metaphysics (pp. 123-129).

Shetarri Warrior

17-point Power

Some True Immortals remember the Shetarri Warriors, a sub-breed of Immortals transformed by the weird science of Athal into deadly warriors. The Shetarri were apparently not very popular, as they were only created for a brief period of Athalian history, and their kind was exiled from the city centuries before the Flood.

When a reincarnated Shetarri undergoes the Change, her body gradually becomes heavily muscled, until the character appears to be a dedicated body builder. The character's skin also becomes tougher and more resilient than normal. The Shetarri transformation affects the Immortal's Essence matrix even more than the norm, however. The character is unable to learn most Immortal powers (with the exception of Awareness), and most other Immortals and even humans feel an instinctive loathing and distrust towards them.

There are very few Shetarri in existence. The Lodge of the Undying (see p. 84), the most knowledgeable about these things, puts their number at around twenty worldwide, six of which belong to the Lodge itself. One of the others is making a very good living as a professional WWF wrestler.

Shetarri Powers: Shetarri gain +5 to Strength and Constitution (cumulative with the Immortal bonuses). They also have 25 extra Life Points. Their skin has an Armor Value 5, cumulative with any other armor worn. All Shetarri are attracted to weapon skills of all types, and seek to learn them at the first available opportunity.

Shetarri Drawbacks: Shetarri have a base Charisma -2 Drawback, in addition to the other social interaction penalties. They also are Cruel (1 point). Shetarri cannot gain any other Special True Immortal Powers. All other restrictions and abilities are the same as other Immortals.

Spirit Voice

4-point Power

A few Immortals have the ability to project thoughts in a manner similar to the psychic power Mindtalk (see Witchcraft, p. 228). They can also "hear" a response thought back at them, but they cannot read minds beyond that level. The Spirit Voice costs 1 Essence Point per minute to activate. During that time, the character can send telepathic messages to anyone in line of sight. For 3 Essence per minute, the character can try to communicate with anybody she knows, as long as the person is on Earth and not blocked by some sort of Essence barrier, like a Ward or magical Shielding.

Thought Wall

2-point Power

It appears that the people of Athas had to face enemies with psychic powers at some point in their history, and they protected some of their warriors with a powerful mental shield that rendered them all but immune to mental attacks and domination. The Thought Wall grants the character a +6 bonus to resist all forms of mental attack, from Mindrule to the Affect Psyche Invocation to the mental powers of Vampyres. This ability is always active, being a part of the character's Essence matrix. On the down side, her presence can be easily detected by psychic and other sensitive beings, as the mental shield glows like a beacon for those with the right senses.

Immortal Sample Character

A sample IMMORTAL character, the IMMORTAL TREASURE HUNTER, can be found in CHAPTER FOUR: ASSOCIATIONS, p. 90

Chapter Four: Associations



The telescopic sight's crosshairs slid gently onto the target. The old man in the business suit walked confidently out of the building toward the waiting limousine. His four bodyguards — two flanking him, the other two positioned unobtrusively down the street — were alert and well-trained, but you can't cover every angle, even if you are a flunky for the Combine. In a city full of skyscrapers, there were just too many places to secret a shooter. A target's safety lay in unpredictability — putting a shooter in the right place at the right time is almost impossible if the target is careful.

Almost, of course, is all the difference between another day at the office and this.

Exhale. Squeeze the trigger. Follow through.

The old man in the business suit stiffened. Blood splattered behind him. The bodyguards were good — one had the old man on the floor before the gun's echoes had died out — but it didn't matter, not with the damage the pre-fragmented bullet had inflicted. The Adversary had access to the best medical care in the planet, but they couldn't bring back the dead.

At least, he hoped they couldn't.

He left the gun behind and calmly headed for the elevator. Down below, car horns were blaring, and the first screams were starting. When he reached the street, there was a large crowd, and a nasty traffic jam. The limo was still there, although the body was gone, dragged into the car by the panicking bodyguards. He knew that the bodyguards' first impulse would be to get away with the body, fast, and pretend this public murder had never happened. By doing it on a busy street, he had ensured that wouldn't happen. The Adversary would cover it up, no doubt about that, but it would use up a great deal of time and energy.

Another day in the war was over.

Across the street from the victim, a young woman walked past the gathering crowd, her face impassive — apparently, just another bystander, pausing for a second to watch the unfolding drama, then moving on.

Appearances can be deceiving.

She was careful to hide the strange mixture of satisfaction and chagrin she was feeling. For nearly sixty years, she had tracked down the man now laying broken a few yards away. The trail that had started in the ruins of Nazi Germany had ended here, and she had been cheated of the revenge she had pursued with relentless patience. Decades of investigation, research and danger — even the Immortal must tread carefully when confronting the group that the dead man belonged to — and it had been over in an instant, without her playing any part. She laughed inwardly, at herself, at the wasted time, at the fact that fate and chance respected neither age nor power. She had seen nations rise and fall; she should have known better.

Her preternatural senses picked up the man walking not too far ahead of her. His aura was powerful, his emotions clearly visible in it. He was the one. Powerful, confident and proud of his kill. She allowed herself a small smile. Deep in her heart, she could not hate this young killer; he surely had sufficient reasons to kill her quarry. She could not resist sending him a parting gift. Her eyes focused, and she projected her thoughts forth.

Well done, young man. Very well done.

The killer paused for a moment, and almost gave himself away by looking nervously around. The seemingly young woman smiled again and went off in another direction. Perhaps the unexplained mental message would make the young killer a bit less complacent.

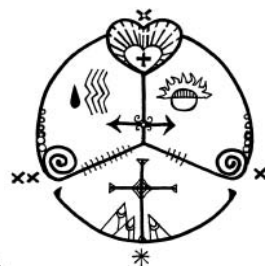
With a shrug, she dismissed six decades of hatred and dedication. The first day of the rest of her life had just begun.

Introduction

This chapter describes five new Associations operating in the world of WitchCraft. Each group's history, organization, goals and relations with other Covenants is provided, as well as a treatment of their status in the Armageddon setting. After each write-up, a sample character Archetype for that Covenant has been constructed. These Archetypes may be used as is, modified to suit the player, or simply reviewed when creating another character from scratch.

The largest and most influential is the Order of the Knights Templar, a covert organization locked in a secret struggle with the Combine. The Templars also comprise one of the most secretive groups in the world of WitchCraft; most Covenants know little about this organization, and much of what they "know" is wrong. The Covenant of Legba operates mostly in the Caribbean and the East Coast of the United States, where a number of Voodoo practitioners have grouped together to battle an ancient evil. Although the Legbans do not speak for all Voodoo practitioners (any more than the Wicce speak for all pagans, or the Sentinels represent all Christians), they comprise the largest and most cohesive gathering of magical practitioners of that persuasion. The Nomads are the largest Feral Covenant in the Western world; its members travel the land in the service of two ancient deities. Although Ferals dominate this group, many other wanderers, both Gifted and Mundane, can be found among their ranks. The Mockers are Tainted humans who battle both the Mad Gods and their slow descent into total insanity. This is a very small and often misunderstood Covenant; its members constantly risk the wrath of other Gifted in addition to the danger of succumbing to the allure of Taint. Finally, the Lodge of the Undying is a loosely knit group composed mainly of True Immortals, members of an ancient human sub-species that cannot die of natural causes. While it is mainly concerned with protecting its members and learning more about their mysterious past, the Lodge often finds itself braving the dangers of the world of WitchCraft.

Some of these Covenants may not be appropriate for all WitchCraft games (granted, that can be said of any Covenant, including those in the main book). Games of gradual discovery of the supernatural might not work with a group of Nomads, who live side and side with all manner of freakish beings, for example, while Templar characters can present some problems for games involving "mixed" groups from different organizations. The Chronicler should decide which of these Covenants, if any, work for his specific Story, and let his players know beforehand.



The Knights Templar

History remembers the Order of Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon as a band of pious men who founded the first order of warrior monks in the 12th century C.E., not too long after the First Crusade. The Knights of the Temple were sworn to guard the Holy Land of Jerusalem and Christians who traveled there. Well-known for their fanaticism and courage, the Templars fought in many of the battles between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East, although they failed to prevent the fall of Jerusalem -- and eventually of all Christian holdings over the next two centuries. As the Order grew, it came to own ships, and to engage in trade and money lending. Eventually, the Templar Order became an international banking and mercantile concern, wealthy enough to buy and sell kings. At the same time, rumors of heresy, homosexuality and even devil-worship started circulating about the Knights. In 1307, the Order was openly accused of these crimes, and members throughout Europe were arrested and put to torture. The Grand Master and several others were convicted, and died at the stake. In 1313, the Pope officially disbanded the Order, and the Templars ceased to exist.

The truth of the matter is far more complex, however. Not only did the Templar Order exist before the Crusades, but it remains active to this day. Its secret war against the Combine has spanned continents and centuries, and has involved assassinations, economic chaos, and international conflicts. Its battlegrounds have included the American and French Revolutions, the rise of technology, and both world wars. Its deeds are often identified by wild-eyed conspiracy theorists, although its motives are mostly misunderstood. It is one of the most powerful Covenants in the world, but it faces an implacable and far mightier foe.

The Templars' weapons in this conflict are far subtler than in the past. Like the Assassins of old -- with whom they share a historic link -- the Knights are masters at infiltration and subversion. Their agents can be found in presidential staffs, corporate boards, the councils of the Vatican, and inside many Covenants. There, they play their roles to the hilt,

spying and waiting for the time to take action. They wield great mundane and magical power, but rarely use it openly. When they do, however, they strike with the sudden brutality of their sword-wielding forebears, and rarely leave witnesses. They are a ruthless, cunning force; it's the only way they have survived for untold centuries.

As the Reckoning approaches, however, the Knights are feeling a premonition of defeat. Their Adversary appears to be winning. Worse, some Knights fear that they have been fighting the wrong enemy, and that they have ignored a far greater threat.



The Templar Utopia

The Templars believe that humans are essentially good. The world, however, has been set up as an endless struggle for survival, a struggle that is ultimately meaningless (for all living things eventually die) and yet a defining element of our existing. Thrust into a world where resources (food, shelter, wealth) are limited, humans are forced to take from one another. The tyranny of governments, the crimes against life and property, and most other evils result from the fact that most people live in a world where there is not enough for everyone.

The solution to this dilemma is manifold.

First, resources must be expanded, and used more efficiently. Technology and exploration has been a major tool here. Better plows and cultivation techniques allowed for more food to be cultivated; better tools and machines made it easier to make more of everything, to the point that a poor family of the 21st century enjoys luxuries undreamed of a few centuries ago. This by itself is not enough; many rich people, who have more than they could ever use, still crave for more. Unfortunately, the instincts humans need to survive are not so easily damped, even after they are no longer needed.

Humankind must be educated, taught to realize that all humans are brothers and sisters, equally valuable.

The ideal society will be free from want, generous towards others, and dedicated to learning and the arts, a place where individual rights and self-determination somehow are balanced by feelings of community and brotherhood. Even to the Templars, however, this perfect world seems impossibly far. Many have become cynical, and think that most humans are too ignorant, lazy or stupid to be helped. A few think that maybe a great culling may be needed before humanity is ready for change. To them, the Reckoning may be just what the world needs.

History

The official founding date of the Order is 1118, when nine knights banded together to protect pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. For several years, the order remained small, a handful of knights and servants with little money or power. Then, with amazing speed, the Knights gained momentum, recruiting thousands of new members and receiving enormous donations of land and money. The sudden acquisition of power and wealth has never been fully explained. Less than two centuries later, the Knights were disbanded, their possessions seized (although much of their treasure and their huge fleet of ships mysteriously disappeared) and their members imprisoned or executed. The order lived on in a number of countries, however. The Portuguese and Spanish Knights of Christ, for example, was a direct descendant, and it produced a number of sailors and explorers that opened Africa and Asia to European traders. These men may have been influential in Columbus' trip to the Americas as well.

Initiates to the Order learn a different history, one that reaches back three thousand years. The Order of the Temple of Solomon, the legend claims, dates back to the real King Solomon, the ruler of Israel during the 10th century B.C.E. Solomon led the golden age of Israel, reigning over a unified kingdom that traded with the great nation-states of the ancient age. He was also a student of matters arcane, who sought to discover the truth wherever he could, be it in pagan teachings or the practice of magic. As the legend goes, his Great Temple was an attempt to directly communicate with God, a place to bring the Metatron -- the voice of God -- to this Earth. At the opening of the Temple, Solomon had an epiphany. He saw that the world had been enslaved and corrupted by Gods' wayward servants, who had adopted the roles of angels and gods, and who slew and misled humankind at their whim. Only an enlightened world, united in mind and spirit, would be able to find God once again.

Solomon shared this moment of truth with others, and founded a secret order, a society that sought to set aside the differences among men (and, to a lesser degree, women) to one day create a united world. The Seraphim, who had assumed the role of God, did not take this kindly, and the Kingdom of Israel suffered for

it. Solomon's order remained small and secretive, fleeing the Assyrians, Persians and Romans, suffering under Pagans, Jews, Christians and Muslims, not least because of their belief that there was no difference between the faiths, lesser or greater.

In the 12th century, members of the order inducted the nine knights who putatively "founded" the Templar Order, and through them a number of prominent members of the Church and nobility. Through a combination of conversion, magic, blackmail and bribery, the Order gained a number of privileges. As the Order grew, the true Templars remained hidden, an order within the order. They let the ignorant majority remain fanatically Christian (often culling the most ignorant among them by letting them die in hopeless battles against the Saracen), while quietly working for the goal of a nation of nations where all men were equals. Among their inventions was the first large-scale banking system, which they saw as the initial step towards an international government. They dealt with Jews, Muslims and those of other faiths, often inducting them into their order. They even had a women's auxiliary branch, little publicized but very active, often gaining the favor of powerful noblewomen and, through them, their husbands and children.

The ambitious attempt failed miserably. In the Middle East, all efforts at forging a lasting peace between Christian and Muslim were thwarted by fanatics on both sides (often within their own Order). And the servants of those who would enslave humankind eventually discovered the true purpose of the Templars. They struck quickly and almost too efficiently. The arrests of the Templars of France in 1307 (on a Friday the 13th, of all days) were all made on the same day, at the same time (dawn) -- an amazing feat of coordination in an age of low literacy where the most common form of communication was horse messenger. The move went off so well because the Adversary -- the Medieval version of the Combine -- used its own mundane and supernatural resources. Even so, the Knights were not caught wholly unprepared. The Grand Master sacrificed himself, but many knights fled or went underground, taking with them much of the wealth. As he faced death by the flames, Grand Master Jacques DeMolay cursed the Pope and the King who had destroyed his order, and both died within a year of the execution.

Freemasonry and the Templars

Masonic societies have existed in Europe for some three centuries. Depending on who is asked, they are little more than social men's clubs, secret societies with a decidedly anti-clerical, internationalist world view and definite political agendas, satanic conspiracies, or one of the fronts for the Great Conspiracy -- the New World Order, Them, the Illuminati or the Combine. One undeniable fact about the organization (or, more accurately, the set of different organizations) is that a number of prominent people -- many founding fathers and

U.S. Presidents, for example -- have been members of Masonic Lodges. Many of Freemasonry's principles -- social equality, freedom of religion, the brotherhood of man -- were adopted by those behind the French Revolution and the U.S. Constitution. The group has the distinction of having been denounced and persecuted by Catholics, Fundamentalists, Communists and Nazi Germany.

In the world of Witchcraft, Masonry is a bit of all the above. For the most part, it is a largely harmless group of societies. Many covenants, cults and organizations have used them as recruiting grounds, fronts for their activities, or even convenient scapegoats. The Rosicrucians and the Templars often operate through Masonic fronts, for example, as does the Combine. Most members, however, are normal humans and have no ties or allegiances to any of these groups, and they rarely, if ever, cross paths with them.

Beliefs

The Templars believe they are warriors in a struggle for the souls of all men. Their enemy is commonly known as the Adversary, or as the Jubelites, named after the three Unworthy Craftsmen of Masonic legend, who murdered Hiram Abif, the mythical architect of the Temple of Solomon. The Adversary is a group (or groups) whose primary goal is to keep humankind ignorant, divided, and exploited, and to rule from the shadows, manipulating the economies and politics of all world nations. They do not control everything, or even most things; normal human beings can screw things up without any help often enough. But the Jubelites exert their influence in many ways. A little nudge here, a discredited presidential candidate there, a military coup further down the line, and suddenly a nation's government has been taken over, subverted, and bent to the Adversary's will. They make sure that any great invention is perverted into a deadly weapon, that any reform movement becomes as bad as the evil it was trying to eliminate, that any new philosophy develops an ideology strong enough to justify murder or even genocide. In short, the Adversary corrupts absolutely.

The Templars' main goal is to counteract those plans. Their influence was enough to allow humankind to break free of the endless cycle of misery of the pre-modern era, and to develop technologies that might one day bring forth a golden age. Even then, however, the Adversary was ready to twist those achievements to serve its needs, and now it embraces technology as another tool to control and mislead the masses.

The ideal Templar world would have one government, elected by the people from the people, with equal rights for all. Education would be available everywhere and religion would be tolerated, but prevented from controlling the lives of unbelievers. In this world, the human race would be free to forge its own destiny, for good or ill. The Templars do not expect this utopia to happen anytime soon, but that is their goal. Their enemies, whether ruled by the Combine or not, include those who fear and hate for no good reason, people who place faith above reason and good works, and those who seek to rule others.

Unfortunately, the Templars often use their enemies' means in service of their goals -- media manipulation, assassination, and market manipulation. While the modern-day knights try to minimize the damage they do, they will not let innocent bystanders stop them from doing what they think is right. To those who know of the Covenant (including a number of Templars), this callousness makes the Order no different from the Combine.

To a lesser degree, the Templars also try to defend the world from other threats, such as supernatural predators and the Mad Gods. They watch other Covenants closely, wary of signs of corruption or Combine infiltration. The bulk of their efforts go towards finding Combine activity and stopping it. Often, however, apparent Combine activity turns out to be the work of supernatural beings, Dark Covenants or even greedy mundanes. This does not stop the Templars from putting a stop to such activities by the most efficacious means available.

The signs of the Reckoning seem to be as much of a surprise to the Adversary as to the Templars themselves. The last major crisis (in the early part of the 20th century) saw the Templars and their enemies too busy in their tug-of-war over world government to stop the great disasters that afflicted the planet. The rise of Nazism and Communism, the plague and world wars that killed nearly a hundred million people, and the narrowly averted rise of a number of Mad Gods occurred with minimal Templar action or reaction. This new crisis, so close after the last, is likely to be worse, and the Templars do not wish to be caught unprepared. Unfortunately, the Adversary seems to have the upper hand; it continues to divide people on the grounds of race, religion and politics, and rules over the shattered world with an iron fist, as fearful people stand on the verge of giving up all rights in the name of safety.

World History, Templar Style

If one believes the Order's records, all history can be explained as part of the hidden struggle between the Combine and the Knights Templar, a struggle in which the Knights have been the heroic underdogs and champions of humanity. Many Templars privately agree that not all the claims of the Order can be true, although there must be some truth to their assertions. The more idealistic (or fanatical) members consider it all to be the gospel truth, however. Whether or not any or all the Templar claims are true is up to the Chronicler, of course. Described below are some historical events and the Templars' (alleged) role in them.

The Inquisition and Religious Persecution:

The Combine infiltrated and corrupted the Christian Church early in its history, using it as a tool to keep humankind ignorant. Illiteracy, ignorance and unquestioning obedience were encouraged, and free thought and inquiry (both in matters scientific and mystical) were persecuted. As the Middle Ages came to a close, the Combine tightened its grip on the Church and led a wave of persecutions the likes of which had never been seen before. Witches, scientists and reformers all were targeted by the Combine's puppets, and thousands (some claim, millions) of people were killed, tortured or exiled. The public face of the Templar Order, not coincidentally, was among the first to fall under the wrath of Church and State; they were not the last.

The French and American Revolutions:

The Masonic connection with those momentous events is well documented. Several founding fathers were Masons, for example, as were the leaders of the French Revolution. Many of the principles espoused by both movements echo core beliefs of the Masonic movement. The Order worked behind the scenes, helping overthrow the monarchical rule in France -- the site of the greatest Templar defeat -- and creating the first great Republic of the modern era (the United States). The Combine quickly rebounded, however -- the chaos of the French revolution was in no small part due to the Jubelites' cunning manipulation (and selective murder) of the leaders of the movement.

The problems of the nascent U.S. were not wholly coincidental, either. The United States has long been the subject of Templar and Combine conflict. Many Templars believe that

the Civil War, most presidential assassinations and every national crisis were, at the very least, partly caused by the struggle between the two organizations. In many ways, the United States represents the Templars' greatest dreams -- and fears. A nation that embraced liberty as a fundamental principle, the U.S. seemed the living embodiment of the Templar ideal. But it never came even close to being a utopia: the "free" nation was built upon a foundation of slavery and profiteering. The same nation that wrote a constitution and amendments that guaranteed personal rights also destroyed whole peoples and stole their land. The Templars might want to blame the Combine for all of these evils, but they can find little evidence to support most such claims. In any case, the U.S. remains a special case for the Templars, and the largest concentration of agents and observers from that Covenant can be found in North America.

The Rise of Technology: The Templars see technology as the great liberator of humanity, a force that is greater than magic (although they wish to find a place for both in the world). Technology can free people from toil, from the depredations of old age and sickness. It is the great equalizer -- a peasant with a gun can bring down an expensively trained and equipped knight on horseback. Fighting against the best efforts of the Combine and its agents in the Church and the monarchies of Europe, the Templars helped introduce a number of inventions, like the printing press, gunpowder and the steam engine. Most of the time, their help was limited to protecting the lives of the (non-Templar) inventors. For example, according to Templar records, no less than six people developed the movable printing press before Gutenberg -- and all of them died in mysterious accidents that also destroyed all evidence of their work. Gutenberg was just the first one who survived long enough to publicize his findings. When the tides of change proved irresistible, the Combine adapted, however; it soon used technology to better control the masses. Before, an angry mob could take over a city and overwhelm guards armed with swords. Now, soldiers could sweep the streets clean of life with massed musketry and cannon fire. People once forced to work the land as serfs now had to labor in factories or face starvation. Technology proved to be a two-edge sword, and the Jubelites wielded it with great skill.

Organization

The Templars are organized in five ranks of ascending order: Turcoples, Sergeants, Knights, Commanders, Seneschals and the Grand Masters.

Non-members who perform services for the Order are referred to as Turcoples, borrowing a Crusader term for native auxiliaries. Turcoples are almost always normal humans, and for the most part have no idea of who their employers or patrons really are, or even that the Knights Templar exist at all. Many Turcoples are members of mainstream Masonic Lodges around the world, who occasionally are asked to provide some small services or information for the Templars. Others are simply mercenaries, members of the local criminal community, or even simple professionals in diverse fields, ranging from private detectives and doctors to secretaries and construction workers. They all do their jobs and collect their paychecks never knowing who their bosses are. The Turcoples number in the tens of thousands.

The Turcoples' activities range from the trivial to the dangerous. For one, they often act as couriers and messengers, or provide transportation or safehouses (usually under the cover of being "time shares") for full-fledged members. The more trusted Turcoples provide a variety of illegal or semi-illegal activities, such as unrecorded medical services (from first aid to plastic surgery), money-laundering, disposing of incriminating property (and even, in some cases, bodies), and running background and credit checks on individuals or organizations. A few hundred Turcoples worldwide are mercenaries or career criminals, who can be trusted to commit robberies, acts of intimidation, and the occasional murder.

The Sergeants are the rank and file of the organization, are trained in combat and intelligence-gathering activities and are almost exclusively human, with varying levels of skill and abilities. Many work undercover, or oversee a larger group of Turcoples.

Knights are the core members of the Templars. About half of them are Gifted of varying power levels, and the rest are mundane men and women. Knights are engaged in many covert activities; many hold positions of power in a number of public and

secret organizations, although they rarely if ever assume the most visible posts, preferring to work behind the scenes. A Templar agent is far more likely to be a Senator's Chief of Staff than a Senator himself, for example, although exceptions do occur.

Within the Knighthood there are three ranks: Knights of the Sword, Knights of the Lance, and Knights of the Grail. Knights of the Sword are the most numerous and lowest ranked; they are usually given missions to perform (some of which may take years, or their entire lives, however short they may be). Knights of the Lance are more trusted and experienced, and can act on their own initiative. Finally, the Knights of the Grail would, to any outsider, appear to be the leaders of the Templars. They control large, powerful organizations (corporations, security and consulting agencies, semi-legal government agencies) that act as fronts for Templar activities, and they issue most of the orders and communications to the rank and file.

The Seneschals usually assume quiet, unimportant lifestyles, and control and oversee the actions of their underlings from the shadows. They can be found running corner stores, or living as hermits in remote locations -- locations with discreetly placed satellite dishes -- or even wandering city streets disguised as homeless men and women. They are all surprisingly humble, and never enjoy the trappings of wealth, but their power -- mystical and mundane -- is undeniable.

The Grand Masters are the overall leaders. Their identities, numbers and location are a mystery to all but the most trusted and powerful Seneschals. In fact, any Seneschal might be a Grand Master. Nobody really knows the specifics.

Each rank above Turcopole has certain minimal requirements, as detailed in the following paragraphs. The requirements for Seneschals and Grand Masters are far beyond what beginning characters can achieve, and are not provided.

Sergeants: Two Combat Skills at levels 3+, Two Military/Spy Skills at level 3+, an Obligation to the Order (3-point Drawback), and at least 2 levels of Contacts. Sergeants are generally mundane -- they can use the Mundane Character Type, or be created with more or less points in some areas, depending on

their specialties. For example, a businessman is less likely to have 25 points in Attributes than a trained soldier. As usual, the Chronicler should adjust the Supporting Cast's attributes as suits the character, rather than following Cast Member templates.

Knights: Three Combat or Military/Spy Skills at levels 3+, and a Key of Solomon or, alternatively, Essence Channeling 1+, and at least one Invocation at level 2+. In some cases, other Gifted powers may be substituted. The most common are Magic, Divine Inspiration and the Second Sight. Mundanes must have Contacts 4+, five Combat/Military/Spy skills at 3+, a professional skill (like Law or Finance) 3+, and 2 levels of Influence, Status or Wealth.

Knight Colors

Knights sometimes wear the traditional garments of the Order; that is, white clothing with a red cross.

In the modern world, this often means white business suits with a red eight-pointed cross pin or other decoration. This "uniform" is only used when attracting attention is not a problem -- a secret gathering, for example. Most of the time, Knights prefer to be as unobtrusive as possible, and wear whatever will help them blend among the population. During rituals in their secret Sanctums (see below), the Knights often wear medieval vestments for ceremonial purposes.

Templar Sanctums

Although the Templars believe that each member is an incarnation of the Temple of Solomon, they have places where they can gather together and conduct ceremonies. These Sanctums are usually hidden inside a larger, mundane building, and are built by Knights and Sergeants, with no help from outsiders. Common hiding places include warehouses, large office buildings, and underground facilities. There are seven Sanctums in the United States: one in New York City and one in Washington D.C. -- the others are scattered through the Midwest and West Coast.

In an emergency, all Knights and Seneschals in the area will gather in a Sanctum, under the strictest level of security possible. Such gatherings represent a terrible risk to the Covenant. In the last hundred years, there have been only a handful of such regional gatherings worldwide. The one gathering of all Seneschals and Grand Masters, held in France in 1944, remains a mystery to those who were not present.

Allies and Enemies

The Templars know a great deal about the Covenants in the world of WitchCraft (and has even infiltrated many of them), but the opposite is not true. Most members of other Covenants know little or nothing about the Templars, and what they know is often distorted. In fact, many people who have seen the Templars in action mistake them for Combine agents; a number of conspiracy theorists allege the Templars are the true leaders of the Combine.

The Wicce: The lack of cohesive organization and goals makes this Covenant hard to infiltrate, so the Templars rarely bother. On occasion, they will cooperate with individual Wicce practitioners, especially those who fall afoul of the Combine.

The Rosicrucians: The Templars and the Rosicrucians both claim King Solomon as a member, although the Templars believe he is the founder of their Covenant, while the Rosicrucians just consider him a prominent magi-king. Templar agents have penetrated the Brotherhood of the Cross -- at least two Rosicrucian Tribunes in the U.S. are Templar moles, although the upper ranks are free of such infiltration. The Templars have ambivalent feelings towards the Rosicrucians, praising their quest for personal enlightenment while decrying their policy of non-involvement. On occasion, Templars have masqueraded as Rosicrucians to strike against the Combine, bringing retribution down on that Covenant. The Rosicrucians know little about the Templars, but some have had dealings with them.

The Sentinels: The Society of Sentinels was either founded or increased its membership and activities at the same time the Templars became a public organization. Some documents and records seem to indicate the two groups were either working together or even were part of the "true" Templar society at



some point. If that is the case, however, they split up early in their history. Sentinels often led the persecution of Templars after the order was outlawed in the 14th century and the Templars are listed as a Dark Covenant in the records of the Society. For their part, the Templars have infiltrated the Society to the point that they know the identities of a few of the members of the Sentinels' Assembly (see *WitchCraft*, p. 177). They suspect the ultimate leadership of the Sentinels may have its own secret agenda.

The Cabal of Psyche: The Templars have little dealings with this Covenant. Recently, however, they have come across a (thus far unnamed) group of psychics who seems to be bent upon world domination, and they are trying to determine if a connection between it and the Cabal of Psyche exists. So far, Cabal members know little, if anything about the Templars, considering them (if at all) a faction within the Combine.

Twilight Order and the House of Thanathos: The Knights care little for the worlds of the dead, although some among them are adept spirit summoners. The Thanathoi's quest for immortality (see *Mystery Codex*, p. 125) has intrigued a number of Templars, but so far they have been content to watch.

The Fellowship of Judas: This Undead Covenant (see *Mystery Codex*, p. 121) has been fighting the Combine for nearly two millennia. Unfortunately, the corporate paranoia prevalent among both the Iscariots and the Templars has prevented the two groups from working together with any regularity. Sometimes, teams from both Covenants run across the same Combine plot -- and they have ended up tripping over each other or even in conflict as often as they have worked together.

Other Covenants: The Templars have few dealings with other groups. Either their sphere of influence is beyond the scope of the Order (the Storm Dragons and the Covenant of Legba fall into this category), or they are too small or inconsequential to be worthy of attention.

Templar Stories

The Templars have two basic types of Story: the all-Templar game, where all or most of the characters serve the Order in its war against the Combine, or the infiltration game, where one of the Cast Members is a Templar, operating secretly on behalf of his Covenant. In the first case, the Knights combine espionage and subversive tactics with their mystical powers: think La Femme Nikita meets The Craft. Missions include investigation (spotting and discovering the webs of conspiracy and influence woven by the Combine), strikes (assassinations, commando raids, and the like), and infiltration (join the conspiracy and undermine it from within). Paranoia is the order of the day in those games.

In a combined group, a Templar is unlikely to trust his companions with his true identity; more often than not, the Knight will be masquerading as a member of another Covenant (often a Rosicrucian or a Sentinel). When not fighting the Combine, favorite targets include any would-be manipulator of world affairs, human or supernatural -- cults, terrorist groups, corrupt politicians, and organized crime.

Hidden Agenda: The characters are given an unusual mission -- they must assassinate the leader of an environmentalist group. A background check shows no Combine connection -- if anything, the leader has been a thorn in the side of several Combine-controlled corporations for several years. Then, an unknown man who identifies himself as a Templar (and who knows all the right passwords and handshakes) contacts a member of the group and claims that the "hit" is actually a Combine operation, and that the group has been infiltrated and compromised by Combine agents. Do the characters carry out the assassination, try to learn more, or refuse outright? Is the mysterious stranger a Templar or a Combine agent? The answers should be complex and convoluted, and difficult to unravel.

Secrets and Lies: A group of radical Sentinels discovers a Templar in its midst. Under torture, the Knight reveals the existence of another agent in the area -- a Cast Member who has infiltrated a group belonging to a third Covenant (the Wicce or the Rosicrucians are likely candidates). Convinced that

the Templars are servants of evil, the Sentinels launch a strike against the character and all his friends and associates -- the other Cast Members, who are not Templars and do not know of the true identity of their friend. When the Sentinels come gunning for them, the Cast Member's true identity may come to light, with unexpected consequences. Does the Knight take his companions into his confidence, risking the wrath of his true Covenant, or does he attempt to maintain the deceit to the last?

The Templars in Armageddon

The Order's long struggle against the Combine came to a climax in the early 21st century, when the Cult of Revelations became too large a threat to be ignored. The Templars have learned that the followers of Leviathan infiltrated and took over several sections of the Combine. This discovery came too late to do them any good -- the Munich Holocaust took the Order almost completely by surprise. Among the dead in Munich were several dozen Templar agents who had just arrived in the city to investigate rumors of a powerful magical ritual being conducted there. When the Dark Apostle rose from the ashes of the dead city, there was little the Covenant could do. The Combine in Europe and other parts of the world was just as helpless -- the great enemy of the Templar Order had been brought to its knees, only to be replaced by a worse evil.

After a few misguided moves -- including three disastrous assassination attempts against the Dark Apostle -- the Knights are carefully considering their next step. For the time being, they are quietly lending support to other groups, and in some cases are openly collaborating with the Alliance and the Watchers. The Covenant also works hard at unearthing any signs of Church influence in the remaining free world. Some Seneschals and Grand Masters are even considering opening negotiations with the Combine; they feel the situation has become so desperate that they must cooperate with their millennia-old enemy.

Templar Agent

Sometimes -- late at night, usually -- you wonder if you made the right decision a few years ago. You chose the path of revenge, and became a warrior. If the Order had not rescued you, you would have died, just another unfortunate accident that nobody would investigate. For ten years, you have served the Order, undergoing rigorous physical and mental conditioning, and perfecting your mystical abilities. You have seen more death than the most hardened war veterans; you have experienced betrayal, mind-numbing horror, and worse.

No one could see or do the things you have, and remain unscathed. You have dealt by trying to view things with cold detachment. Even to other Templars, you come across as grim, cold and unfazeable. What they cannot see, however, is that you are no longer exclusively loyal to the Order.

Origins

Sometimes, normal people cross the Combine in some inadvertent way. Your father was a government official who stumbled onto some secret or another -- it was nothing much, a small plot in the sea of conspiracy you have since discovered -- but it was enough. Your family was destroyed -- your father murdered, your mother crushed by sorrow and poverty, your sister dead by her own hand at age sixteen. You swore, at the tender age of fifteen, to find those responsible. Armed with a few computer files your father had left behind, and an inflated regard for your computer hacking abilities, you quickly got yourself in trouble. You were marked for termination, and only the intervention of a Knight Templar saved your life. Joining the Order was as inevitable as a drowning man's grab for a piece of flotsam. Your Gift surfaced during training, a less kind and gentle version of Marine boot camp.

After a while, however, you started to lose your way. Mission after mission produced no apparent results. The Knights started to resemble children attempting to halt the tide with a wall of sand. To abandon the struggle was not an option, however. For one, you still hate the Combine, and feel a savage pleasure when destroying their works. More importantly, nobody quits the Templars without risking the wrath of the entire Order.

Your loyalty is now to your friends, those who risk their lives alongside you. They are the only people you can count on. Nobody knows this, of course; you have learned never to open your heart to others, and even your closest allies do not suspect that you will do anything in your power to protect them.

Allies and Enemies

The Templar Agent works with a team: a Knight, two Sergeants and three Turcoples. Passing yourself off as a solitary practitioner, you have run into a fellow victim of the Combine, the Wicce Healer of Nature (see Witchcraft, p. 104). You count that Wicce as a friend, and will do anything to help her.

Besides the Combine, you have another Adversary: a Templar Seneschal who is beginning to doubt your loyalty to the Order. So far, you have done nothing to justify your superior's suspicions, but you have learned to be on your guard whenever the Seneschal comes calling.

Roleplaying the Character

Ruthless, cold, and impassive, you actually bear a close resemblance to the Adversary's Men In Black. Unlike Combine agents, you have scruples against harming the innocent and letting the guilty go unpunished, and you have become creative with the interpretation of a mission's parameters in order to follow your principles. You hate the Combine with a cold passion, but your first loyalty is to your friends, and, again, you will bend the rules to the breaking point to protect them.

* This character has been created using the Optional Skill Point Generation System (WitchCraft, p. 55). If using the basic system, 9 skill levels must be dropped.



WITCHCRAFT

Name

Association

Knights Templar

Concept

Avenger

CHARACTER
POINTS

SPENT

UNSPENT

CHANNELING
LEVEL

2

Primary Attributes

STRENGTH	4	INTELLIGENCE	4
DEXTERITY	4	PERCEPTION	3
CONSTITUTION	3	WILLPOWER	4

Secondary Attributes

LIFE POINTS	44
ENDURANCE POINTS	38
SPEED	14
ESSENCE POOL	47

Gifted
Lesser

Qualities

Point

Drawbacks

Point

Gift

5

Adversary (Combine)

3

Contacts

3

Adversary (Seneschal)

1

Essence Channeling 2

4

Duty

3

Increased Essence Pool

5

Honorable

1

Hard to Kill

2

Humorless

1

Nerves of Steel

3

Emotional Problems (Fear of Rejection)

1

Skill

Level

Skill

Level

Bureaucracy

2

Dodge

4

Guns (Handguns)

4

Guns (Rifle)

4

Hand Weapon (Knife)

3

Intimidation

3

Martial Arts

3

Notice

3

Occult Knowledge (Templar)

2

Questioning

3

Streetwise

3

Power

Level

Insight Invocation

2

Soul Projection Invocation

2

Key of War

Key of Life

The Covenant of Legba

Voodoo -- the synthesis of African and European mystical systems practiced in the lands of the Caribbean -- is a magical religion, or a spiritual sorcery. To the believer, the spirit and physical world are deeply intertwined, and those who can see this fact can work wonders, propitiating good spirits and confronting evil ones. The practitioners of Voodoo work with the spirits of the dead, and with the ancestral gods of their people. Their arts are a unique blend of Magic and Necromancy, and are highly effective.

This Art has many practitioners. Many Covenants -- some quite small, others large enough to span continents -- practice its arts. The followers of Legba, the Voodoo god of crossroads, are one of the largest such Covenants. Its members make an oath when they are initiated to protect all believers and to confront those who use their Arts to exploit and hurt others. Their chief enemy is the Brotherhood, a secret society of dark magicians -- known as *bokkor* -- who use their powers to kill and maim for their own gain.

History

The history of the Covenant, as told to beginning members, dates back to prehistoric times. The first Houngans were two brothers, each favored by God because of their wisdom and courage.

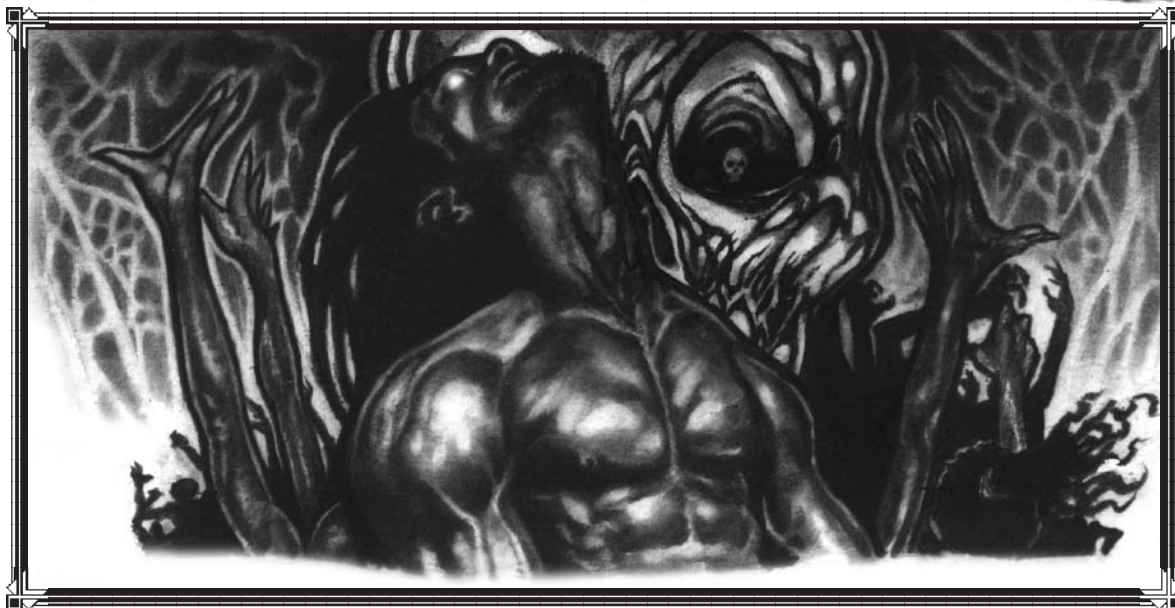
Long ago, while traveling back home after one adventure or another, the two brothers came across a crossroads. The great Loa known as Legba was waiting for them. He told the brothers they could choose three paths. They could go forward, equals forever in the eyes of gods and men. Or they could walk separate paths, and in time one would be proven to be better than the other. The older brother wished to go forward, but the younger one, who secretly harbored jealousy in his heart for his elder, chose to go a different path. The road to the left led to power and strength -- it was the Red Path, marked in blood. The right road was the Sun Path, which led to power through the veneration of the gods. The Red Path was shortest, and the younger brother, who was impatient, chose it. His choice soon led to the creation of the Brotherhood of Blood. The older brother had no choice; he could not go forward alone, so he took the

Sun Path. His descendants became followers of Legba and the Snake Gods. Since then, the Covenant of Legba and the Brotherhood of Blood have been deadly enemies.

The modern record of the Legbans begins in the 16th century. At that time, power struggles in Africa often ended with the losing side being sold into slavery. Many Legbans suffered this fate, and found themselves in the Americas, purchased by European slavers. On other occasions, it was the Blood Brethren who ended up in chains, shipped to strange lands. Most of the enslaved Legbans were the less accomplished or powerful magicians and witch-doctors of the original Covenant. The leaders of the Covenants were too dangerous to be enslaved; instead, they were killed outright. Even worse, the Brethren made sure the souls of most Legban leaders were destroyed, preventing their ghosts from acting as teachers and guides for any survivors. Eventually, the Legbans succumbed. The Covenant all but vanished in Africa. It survived in America, but in a highly modified form.

The young practitioners among the slave population had to recreate the lost lore of their people and hide it from their European oppressors, who had little patience with magical pursuits from anyone, let alone slaves. The Legbans started adopting some of the trappings and lore of their new home. Their worship of spirits was disguised as the permissible veneration of Christian saints, and some magicians absorbed some European and Native American magical rites and traditions into their own practices. Over time, the Covenant evolved into something new, a synthesis of different religions and occult teachings from a dozen nations and three continents.

The Legbans fought fiercely against slavery. Sometimes, Gifted slaves managed to flee and liberate small numbers of prisoners. They founded independent communities deep in the jungles of South America, or the most inhospitable islands of the Caribbean. These Maroon or Cimarron communities often survived unmolested for centuries, and they would become the stepping stones of the regrowth of the Covenant.



Unfortunately, the Blood Brethren also had representatives among the slaves. They used their powers to abuse and intimidate, often forcing others to do extra work so the witch-doctor could enjoy some leisure time, or bullying slaves into giving up whatever meager possessions they had. The struggle between the Legbans and the Blood Brethren raged on, and it does to this day.

In more recent times, the Covenant has spread through America and parts of Europe. Its members come from all races and walks of life, although it is still a largely African-American organization.

The Brotherhood of Blood

Mortal adversaries of the Legbans, the Brotherhood (also known as the Red Path Covenant, or the Followers of the Blood Path) are a loose gathering of Voodoo practitioners. Like the Legbans, the Brethren share contacts that cross national, linguistic and ethnic borders: the Haitian *docteur* and the Cuban *brujos* are welcome among their ranks.

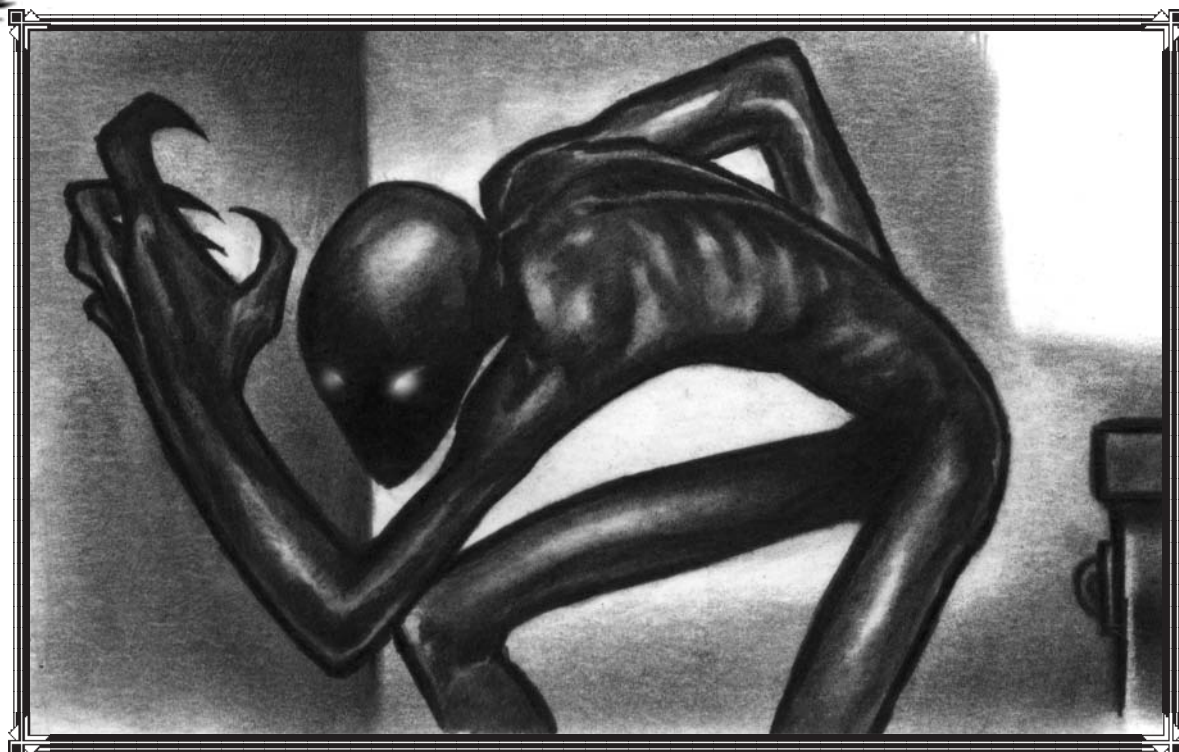
The Brotherhood respects and pursues power above all things, and uses any means necessary to gain more power. Their powers are very similar to those used by the Legbans (and by non-affiliated Voodoo practitioners), except that they are more willing to harm people.

The creation of zombies is a common practice of the Red Path.

Most members are magical mercenaries, putting curses on people for pay. In the U.S., they can be found in the employ of gang leaders, or working in the slums of cities for the highest bidder. A few use their powers to amass mundane power, especially in Third World countries where their occult reputation often intimidates people by itself.

The Brethren in those situations usually work to further the interests of corporations and perhaps other shadowy groups like the Combine.

There are few rules binding the membership of this Dark Covenant, and many of them are routinely broken by the bolder and more powerful. Brethren are supposed to come to the aid of each other, to never betray other members to outsiders, and never to reveal their secrets. In practice, only the third precept is followed with any regularity, and conspiracies and infighting are common.



Beliefs

To the Legbans, the material and spiritual worlds are but two sides of the same coin. Most Legbans have the power to see the spirits of the dead, and to communicate with many “gods.” To the Legbans, death is a different state of existence, and they accept the idea of reincarnation as strongly as they do the notion of an afterlife away from this world. Both beliefs are true in their eyes, applying to different people and circumstances.

Two types of spirits dominate the Legban belief system: the spirits of the dead, and the Voodoo gods. The spirits of the dead are to be respected and honored; ancestral ghosts often remain on this world to provide help and advice for their relatives. The existence of ghosts on this world is not considered wrong or evil. Instead, Legbans believe these spirits have a place in the affairs of mortals, and that most of them eventually tire of dwelling on Earth and leave on their own, without need of exorcisms or banishing rituals.

The Voodoo gods are usually referred to using the terms *loa* and *orisha* (but a precise differentiation is not always made). The loas are believed to be a different order of being from the spirits of the dead. They are gods and goddesses, each embodying some aspects of reality. They are powerful and yet limited beings who often crave the sensation of walking the Earth while wearing the body of a mortal. Like many gods, loas can be mischievous and capricious, and must be appeased or persuaded before they agree to do anything beneficial. Loas are quite capable of killing or injuring innocents in a fit of anger, although some of the more beneficial gods (including Legba, the patron deity of the Covenant) rarely do so. Unlike the Rosicrucians, who favor rigid control and compacts, and the Wicce, who prefer to deal with spirits as friends, the Legbans favor bribery and trickery. They will, if necessary, bind a spirit and force it to do their bidding, but they prefer to pay for any favors they receive. The most prominent loas are described in Chapter Five: Metaphysics (pp. 111-113).

Legbans see themselves as members of their community, bound to use their gifts for the welfare of that community. Their role is in theory no different from that of bakers, carpenters or other skilled workers; they simply offer a wider range of services, from mundane advice and mediation services to protecting the victims of curses and supernatural predators. Covenant members are more likely than most other Gifted to actually make a living practicing their craft. The restrictions imposed by the Covenant are simple: never take a life without good reason (such as self-defense, or to punish a capital crime); never accept more in payment than your client can afford; do not allow any Gifted or supernatural being to abuse the members of your community; and render hospitality and assistance to any Legban who requests it.

Organization

Legbans can most often be found in low-income neighborhoods of large cities, or in rural communities, especially in the Third World or the poorer regions of developed countries. Their membership is largely Hispanic or African-American.

Within the group are four major cultural subgroups: the Spanish Caribbean, the French New World, the British West Indies, and the Portuguese colonies. Each group has its own language, terms, and rituals. For a long time, it would have been fair to say that there were four different Legban Covenants, one for each region. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, the Covenant had managed to become more coherent, with a central leadership and some basic rules that applied to all members.

There are few formal ranks within the Covenant. A Houngan, Mambo (the name for female practitioners) or Santero is a full-fledged practitioner, someone who has spent several years or even decades honing his skill. They take on students at their own discretion. Houngans and their students gather at a Temple, a place where they live and work. Traditionally, one Houngan or a Houngan and a Mambo live and rule over each Temple, and their students remain until they are promoted and can found their own Temple. In more recent times, this has changed. Now, many practitioners live in the same Temple, or at least make

use of its facilities. The older and more experienced Houngans eventually rise to the level of Doctor (also known as King or Queen), a title that can only be granted by a Gathering (see below). Doctors are called to mediate disputes within a Temple or between Temples, and can investigate charges of improper conduct or forbidden practices. Their requests are rarely ignored.

The overall leadership is held by the Royal Gathering, a group that comprises all the Doctors or Monarchs of the Covenant. It makes decisions that affect all Covenant members, from expelling an entire Temple to promulgating a new law or amendment to a law. The Gathering rarely meets; five or six years is a typical span between meetings. There are more frequent Lesser Gatherings, usually restricted to the leaders of a given region or country, that occur whenever a Houngan or Doctor calls for it. These Lesser Gatherings deal with local problems, the selection of new Doctors, and so on.

Allies and Enemies

Since many Legbans practice their arts relatively openly, other Covenants are aware of their existence. More accurately, they are aware of Voodoo practitioners of all kinds, including Legbans, the Blood Brethren and the dozens of other small Covenants or Solitaires who make up the majority of Voodooists.

The Wicce: The open and eclectic nature of this Covenant agrees with the Legbans' own practices. There are a number of urban pagans who have incorporated Voodoo rituals into their lore, even as some Voodooists identify the Wicce Goddess with their own Ayida-Wedo (see p. 111). Communication and mutual assistance is becoming increasingly common, both on the supernatural and mundane fronts.

The Rosicrucians: Contact between the two Covenants is limited. The Rosicrucians are suspicious of any Covenant that deals with entities that cannot be fully controlled, and frowns on the trafficking with the dead routinely performed by Voodoo practitioners. Racial and social tension also plays a role in this, since most Rosicrucians are white and upper-class, and most Legbans are not.

The Sentinels: Having endured persecution from missionaries and inquisitors, the Legbans have little love for the Sentinels. The Society tends to lump all Voodoo practitioners into one group, and ascribes any crimes committed by such practitioners to everybody in that group. Clashes are not uncommon. Sentinels often watch Legbans carefully, ready to step in at the least provocation. On an individual basis, however, several Legbans have proven themselves to be honorable and courageous allies, so many Sentinels have learned to see past the prejudices that generally dominate the Society.

The Twilight Order and the House of Thanathos: These Necromantic Covenants share many common interests with the Legbans. The three groups deal with ghosts and phantasms, and explore the Death Realms. The three groups also compete for members -- those with the gift of Necromancy or Mediumship may be approached by all three Covenants, for example. The Twilight Order is viewed with some degree of wariness, especially the more scientific-oriented "ghost hunters," who are regarded as ignorant troublemakers. A few Order members have actually studied Voodoo necromancy, however, and have been friendly and respectful enough to become friends. The House of Thanathos (see Mystery Codex, pp. 125-129) has a large number

of Undead in their ranks. These beings are anathema to most Legbans, who consider the living dead to be at best objects of pity (Zombies, for example), or at worst monsters to be destroyed (like Vampyres and the Relentless Dead). The two Covenants have a tense relationship as a result.

Other Covenants: The Legbans have limited dealings with most other Covenants. It numbers few Seers among the membership, and thus has little contact with the Cabal of Psyche. In large cities, they often encounter such groups as the Storm Dragons and the Pariahs (see Mystery Codex, pp. 130-141), and will on occasion work with these Covenants. Ferals are considered to be unnatural monsters or victims of a deadly curse, which makes relations with the Nomads a chancy thing at best. And the Legbans know little about both the Templars and the Undying Lodge.

The Combine: The Legbans are aware of a secret organization that works behind the scenes to manipulate world affairs. The Covenant's investigation of such things as the connection between government agencies and the drug trade has led them into contact with the Combine. Unfortunately, the Legbans lack the resources to effectively deal with the conspiracy, and those who try often find themselves in trouble, from being fined for sacrificing animals to dying in mysterious accidents.



The Mad Gods: All Legbans consider Taint to be evil, and those who bear its signs are monsters to be destroyed or banished from our world. Some Voodoo cults (although not the Blood Brethren) have dealt with the Mad Gods from time to time. When they discover them, the Legbans usually concentrate on destroying them as soon as possible, and are not afraid to use any resources (including working with other Covenants) to do so.

Legban Stories

Many settings are possible in this Covenant, from exotic places in the Caribbean to the urban jungles of the developed world. The interaction between ghosts and humans also plays a role, although the Legbans are somewhat more likely to take the ghosts' side than, say, the Twilight Order.

Corporate Zombies: Renaissance Industries seemed like a great company to work for. It had set up shop in the slums, and in less than a year, it had cleaned up one third of the city, turned a handsome profit, and earned its owner a number of city and state commendations. Problem is, a lot of the homeless and poor in the neighborhood didn't just get evicted - they plain disappeared. One or more of the missing people could be friends or relatives of the Cast Members. An investigation reveals that Renaissance Industries' real production facilities are underground,

where a small army of zombies is making handcrafted products twenty-four hours a day, for no wages. The owner of the company has found the ultimate labor force, and is willing to kill hundreds of people and "recycle" them into undead workers. As far as he is concerned, he is doing the world a favor and "turning welfare mothers into model workers." He is a powerful Voodoo magician, perhaps affiliated with the Red Brethren.

The Inheritance: One of the Cast Member's teachers, an old and wise Voodoo "Doctor," has just died. A reading of his will is to be held in his hometown in Haiti. Upon arriving, the characters discover the death was no accident, and that a group of Voodoo cultists are attempting to launch a coup d'etat and have killed the old teacher. To make matters worse, the Combine has dispatched teams of Men In Black to suppress the attempted coup and perform a general clean-up of Voodooists in the area -- including the Cast Members. The Knights Templar may also send operatives in to try to take advantage of the situation. The characters find themselves in the middle of a three- or four-way war, far from home and any aid. Maybe the inheritance will be worth the trouble: perhaps it is a valuable magical item, or the name of a powerful Spirit Patron, or simply a big suitcase full of money. On the other hand, nobody knows where the inheritance is -- was it hidden or stolen?

The Legbans in Armageddon

The 21st century was not kind to the Covenant. As magic and supernatural events became more common, all Voodoo practitioners, because of their lack of secrecy, became favorite targets of the anger and fear of the public. Many hounsans were attacked and murdered by angry mobs, and many others found themselves trapped inside the Safety Zones built to contain and imprison the poor.

Then the Dark Apostle rose from the ruins of Munich, and the world was wrecked by war. Many Legbans have joined in the fight against the Church of Revelations and its minions. The children of several Voodoo gods now walk the Earth, as do their living Avatars, and both are granted a great deal of respect and status. The Covenant views all Seraphim with suspicion, however.

Legban Speaker to the Dead

You live in a small apartment in a large city. You have no job, and yet you have never received one cent in public moneys. Every day, you leave a can outside your door, and every day the people of the neighborhood drop some money in it -- never a lot, but enough to get by. You never lock your door, and yet you have never been robbed. The neighbors know you, but their greetings are subdued; you are *el brujo*, the man who can call ghosts to his aid.

The world of the dead is as real to you as the pavement under your feet and the smog you breathe on the streets. Since you were a child, you could look into it, and the experience has set you apart from the rest of the world. In many ways, you are more comfortable dealing with the dead: their wants and needs are more basic, more primal. You never forget your duties to the living, however. You protect the *barrio*: there are less robberies, less drug dealing, less trouble in the area you call your turf, and you work hard to keep it that way.

Your door is always open, although few come to you, only those that need help badly, or think they do. You do your best to help them, and often a kind word or some pointed advice is all they need. Sometimes, however, their trouble is of a darker sort -- battered wives, victimized children, ruined families. And some of those who come to you are the dead themselves, seeking help with unfinished business. Of late, supernatural beings have started to trespass into your territory, and you can sense that dark times are ahead.

Origins

It started when you were a child. You could see things that others could not. Dead things. They spoke to you, and you spoke back. When your brother died in a car accident, he came back to say goodbye to you. When you started speaking of what you saw, people responded with unbelieving ridicule. Soon you found yourself withdrawing into the world only you could see. Your mother (your only living relative) was poor, and lacked the resources or the sophistication to send you off to a psychologist. That proved to be a blessing, because she sought help from a local *santero* who recognized you for what you were. Not a deluded child, but one of the Gifted, with the ability to speak to the dead.

Your talent was very strong. You were an indifferent student of magic, and instead devoted yourself to the arts of necromancy. When you were finally made a Houngan, you founded your own Temple in the neighborhood where you grew up. It took a while, but you have earned the respect and even a degree of affection from the people in the community.

Allies and Enemies

Your main allies are the ghosts of the dead, who come to you for help and who return the favor by assisting you. You also still keep in touch with your aging teacher, who presides over a Temple elsewhere in the city. Other possible contacts include the Wicce Private Eye (WitchCraft, p. 106) or the Bast Alley Cat (WitchCraft, p. 112). In recent times, you have discovered that some unknown supernatural predator dwells in the sewers beneath your neighborhood. Your spirit allies are afraid to go near it. You fear that whatever it is, it may be more than you can handle on your own -- and it seems to be hunting for you.

Roleplaying the Character

To the mundane world, you appear to be a lonely man, but you actually have a busy social life, interacting with the ghosts who haunt the neighborhood. Still, you have some difficulty dealing with the living, and you are beginning to feel alienated from the world you have sworn to protect. You would like to find a worthy student, or even better, someone to share your thoughts and fears, someone who understands your situation.

* This character has been created using the Optional Skill Point Generation System (WitchCraft, p. 55). If using the basic system, 4 skill levels must be dropped. Skills:



WITCHCRAFT

Name

Association

The Covenant of Legba

Concept

Weird One

CHARACTER
POINTS

SPENT

UNSPENT

CHANNELING
LEVEL

2

Primary Attributes

STRENGTH

3

INTELLIGENCE

3

DEXTERITY

2

PERCEPTION

3

CONSTITUTION

2

WILLPOWER

4

Secondary Attributes

LIFE POINTS

30

ENDURANCE POINTS

32

SPEED

8

ESSENCE POOL

32

Gifted

Qualities

Gift

5

Contacts

2

Essence Channeling 2

4

Increased Essence Pool

2

Nerves of Steel

3

Drawbacks

Adversary

3

Charisma -2

2

Recurring Nightmare

1

Resources (Hurting)

4

Skill

Brawling

3

Intimidation

1

Hand Weapon (Knife)

3

Myth and Legend (Voodoo)

3

Notice

3

Occult Knowledge (Ghosts)

2

Rituals (Voodoo)

5

Stealth

3

Streetwise

4

Skill

Level

Power

Necromancy Skill

4

Death Lordship

3

Death Speech

2

Death Vessel

1

Warding Invocation

2

Blessing Invocation

1

Nomads -- Children of the Moon

Some people never seem to like staying in one place for long. The Gypsies are one of the oldest such groups, but they have plenty of company, from the traveling performers and craftsmen of the Middle Ages to modern-day truckers, roadies, and carnies. Some of these drifters are not what they appear to be, however. A few have powers that set them apart from the rest of humanity; some are no longer (or never were) human. The Nomads are among them.

The core membership of this Covenant belongs to a handful of families who can trace their ancestry to the Bronze Age. These bloodlines all have one thing in common: they carry the curse of lycanthropy. Every new generation produces a number of Ferals, humans with the partially bestial souls (see p. 29). The rest of the Covenant is evenly split between Mundane or Gifted (but essentially human) members of said families, and other nomadic humans and creatures who, over the years, have joined their caravans.

Part religious cult, part mutual aid society, the Nomads follow -- but not quite worship -- two entities that claim to be the ancient Sumerian Moon Gods. Their blessings protect Ferals from the worst part of their bestial nature, and in return, the members of the Covenant must follow a number of rules -- the main ones requiring them to never dwell among humans, and to hunt down those who would prey on humanity, especially other Ferals. For most of its history, however, the Nomads have concentrated mainly on surviving and living their lives; their wagons and cars and big rigs have been a haven for misfits, oddballs and fugitives of all kinds. It is not easy to join the Nomads, but those who do are wholly accepted, any past sins or crimes notwithstanding. Fiercely loyal to one another, the Nomads consider treason to be the worst possible crime.

History

The legendary origins of the Nomads have been passed down orally from generation to generation. A number of artistic members have woven the tale into poems, songs, and even a few full-length novels -- and were not above taking a degree of creative

license with it. At the heart of all the tales, epics, ballads and overwrought prose, a few alleged facts stand out. Over three millennia ago, thirteen Ferals from different parts of the world, such as the woodlands of Northwestern Europe, the steppes of Asia, and the heartland of Africa, arrived at the shores of the Tigris River. All of them had been kings, warlords and high priests in their own lands, until their pride, cruelty or arrogance brought the Feral curse upon them, and an uncontrollable rage that had destroyed their lives and those of their loved ones. Some had traveled enormous distances, through vast wilderness and ferocious tribes, following rumors and visions of a cure for their condition, while others already dwelled in the land of the Two Rivers, the ancient cradle of civilization. There the travelers were greeted by the avatars of the God and Goddess of the Moon, Nannar and Ningal.

The gods did not have a cure for their condition, however. All the Ferals involved had committed some great sin or crime, and had been punished for it with the curse. What Nannar and Ningal offered was redemption and a measure of comfort, for themselves and for their entire lineage. The Ferals would never rule again, but must instead serve. Those who accepted would be doomed to walk forever the Earth, unable to call any land their own. They would own neither cattle nor slaves, and make a living through trade or services.

Seven Ferals accepted this. The other six refused, and a fight broke out. The seven fought the six, and, although they lost two of their number, were victorious. They killed the six and offered their bodies to the Moon Gods as a sacrifice. This is called the Last Sacrifice, as the Moon Gods decreed that the Five and their descendants should never spill blood in their name again.

The Five gathered what few possessions they could carry, and those who had chosen to follow them in their quest and now in their permanent exile. They set to wandering, never to call any land their own. As the group grew, it divided into smaller ones.

The Nomads served as scouts and mercenaries for the Assyrians and the Persians, for Romans and Greeks. They rode with the Scythians and Huns, or stood against them. They traded on the Silk Road and on the shores of Britain. When the Old World discovered the Americas, many Nomads traveled there. They were on the early wagon trains heading West, and worked as cattle drivers and railroad builders. And they never stayed in one place for long.

Although they rarely went out of the way to fight supernatural predators, the mandate of the Moon Gods could not be ignored. The Nomads found themselves battling undead monsters in plague-ravaged Europe, demonic cults in war-torn Middle East, and servants of the Mad Gods in the Himalayas. Often, they had to track down and destroy former members of their Covenant who had surrendered to their bestial side.

During World War II, many Nomads were classified as Gypsies and killed by the Nazis; that period also saw some of the strongest supernatural events since the great plagues that shook the Middle Ages. Most surviving Nomads fled to North America, where there was still plenty of elbow room for a nomadic lifestyle. There still are many Nomads in Europe, Asia and Africa, however, from truck drivers plying ancient trade routes to mercenaries fighting little dirty wars.

Beliefs

The Nomads can look at the world in two very different ways -- half full, or half empty. On the one hand, most members are cursed, which means that they are likely to turn into a dangerous monster, or their children are. On the other hand, most Covenant members like traveling through wide open spaces, seeing new things and people, and setting themselves somehow apart -- and above -- the common run of mankind.



Organization

The Covenant does not have much in the way of a hierarchy. The bulk of the Nomads are considered roughly equal and without formal status other than member of a Family -- although they tend to follow the lead of the strongest of their immediate group (the equivalent of an "alpha male" in wolves). Groups with more than ten Nomads must have a Chief, who usually owns the business the group works for, or, in some cases, is elected by the group. Chiefs do not

have to belong to a Family, although over half of them do. The highest rank in the Covenant belongs to the Heads of the Five Families, who are chosen by the previous Heads, and named as their heirs. They are supposed to be the wisest and most experienced members of the Family in question, and are usually chosen from among the Chiefs. More than rank, tradition and consensus bind the Covenant. The Nomads are very conservative when it comes to the rules, and those who try to break them are almost always rejected by the entire Covenant.

The Nomad Way

Honor the Gods: The Moon Gods did not demand worship from the Nomads, nor to be set up above any other gods. They do expect to be remembered, however. Most Nomads conduct a ritual of thanksgiving at least once a year, while the more pious do so once a month, on a night of the full moon. During those rituals, valuable or symbolic items (depending on the piety of the characters involved) are tossed into a bonfire, while an ancient Sumerian prayer to the Moon Gods is chanted. Some members have images or statues of their gods, or crescent moon symbols. Freedom of worship is a basic Nomad right, however; like most other pre-Christian deities, the Moon Gods are not unwilling to share their place.

There are Christian, Agnostic, Jewish and Pagan Nomads.

Spare the Innocent: Nomads are strongly enjoined against hunting humans for sport, or for any reason other than self-defense or to avenge a grave wrong. Using one's powers (Feral or otherwise) frivolously is also considered a major sin. Punishments range from a severe beating (usually administered by a gauntlet made up of the Nomad's friends) to banishment or outright execution. Catching and stopping rogue Ferals is an important Nomad responsibility -- doubly so when the rogue used to belong to the Covenant.

Own No Land or Cattle: The Nomads are forbidden from owning land or raising herds of animals. When they live anywhere, they rent or lease any properties they inhabit, and their most common residence is a (seldom stationary) trailer, or a motel room, with a postal office box (or more recently, an email address) for correspondence purposes. In times past, they worked on cattle drives, but were enjoined against actually owning the animals they herded.

At best, ownership of a horse (now largely replaced with motor vehicles) was allowed.

Serve But Do Not Lead: Nomads are enjoined against being leaders of any community not directly linked to the Covenant. The only exception is military service, although the Nomads are discouraged from seeking the highest ranks even there. By the same token, the Nomads judiciously stay out of politics and government affairs, having forsaken the trappings of power. When the Nomads take sides in a war, they do so either as mercenaries (see Trade and Services below) or to protect or avenge fellow Covenant members.

Trade and Services: Since the Nomads are barred from owning land -- the primary source of wealth for most of human history -- the only other ways to make a living (barring outright thievery) are to act as traders or provide some sort of service. Besides trading and smuggling (Nomads have performed both over the centuries), "services" range from entertainment (bards, circuses, theater performances and the like) to specialized crafts (traveling farriers, tinkers and doctors were not unknown) and specialists in other fields (artists, engineers and, quite often, mercenaries).

Roughly one half of the Nomads belong to one (or in some cases, two) of the Five Families, bloodlines that can be traced back thousands of years. All members of these Families are linear descendants from the five Ferals who achieved a great deal of power and enlightenment. They lived for centuries, begetting hundreds of children before passing on. These Ferals were all present at the first Gathering in the lands of Mesopotamia, some 3,000 years ago, and they founded the first Tribe, which some generations later broke apart and spread through the land.

One is born into the Families by either the male or the female line; all that matters is that one of the person's parents belonged to one of the Families. The only other way to join a Family is by marriage; Family members tend to marry outside the Family, although they most often choose Nomads (if possible, from among those not belonging to one of the Five Families). Adoption occurs, but is very rare, and only a Feral of the appropriate species is considered. When members of two Families marry (which is discouraged to prevent inbreeding), a mystical test determines which "lineage" applies to the child.

Not all Family members are Ferals, and not all Nomad Ferals are Family members. The Families have traditionally more rank and status, however, and this has often generated some resentment from the other Nomads. In an internal conflict, Family members typically stand with each other against the rest, and some Nomads put the interests of their particular Family above those of the Covenant at large.

A little more than half of the members of the Covenant do not belong to the Five Families. They are people who have been inducted into the Nomads for any number of reasons -- fellow wanderers who have proven their worth or performed a valuable service for the Covenant, for example. Ferals are the preferred candidates for invitation, for obvious reasons, but they are not the only ones. Any Nomad can sponsor the admission of a new member, but full acceptance is only possible from a Chief. If a group of Nomads too small to have a Chief wishes to "adopt" a new member, they must find the nearest large group and gain an audience. The candidate is asked formally why he wishes to join, and given an impromptu test of the Covenant's rules and traditions.

Some Chiefs may require that the candidate pass some form of test, usually of bravery, wisdom or strength. This usually happens only when the sponsors are themselves relatively young and untried, and it always is taken to mean that the Chief does not fully trust their judgment in these matters -- a rather insulting gesture, in other words. Once the "newbie" is admitted, there is usually some hazing involved, especially in larger groups, like a traveling sideshow.

Non-family Nomads never rise to the highest ranks in the Covenant, but other than that their status is roughly the same as everyone else's. They share the secrets and responsibilities of the group, and are expected to follow the basic rules and laws of the Covenant. Over time, some of these members have started their own family lines, but they do not have the same status as the Five Families. Relatives, even offspring, need to be invited into the Covenant just as any other outsider.

Besides Ferals, who make up about one fourth of the membership of the Covenant, other Gifted or supernatural members include Magicians, Necromancers (Nannar is a Death God, after all), Bast, Fey characters (this is particularly true for traveling shows), several Ghosts and Phantasms, and the odd Undead. The Nomads will accept almost anybody, regardless of their species or powers.



The Five Families

Described below are the Five Families that dominate the Nomad Covenant. Keep in mind that these Families have married with individuals from hundreds of nations and peoples over the centuries, so there is no longer a clear racial component to them; almost all Families have Caucasian, Black or Asian members, and all manner of mixed races as well. What remains is the name, the animal shape Ferals form that Family invariably assume, the basic traditions and skills passed down over the generations, and the myths associated with them.

Bekter

The first Bekter was a great hunter, and a Wolf Feral, who hailed from the steppes of what would one day become Russia. It is said his crime was to slay a she-wolf and her cubs for his amusement. When he first turned into a wolf, he killed his own mate and children in blind fury. The Bekter way is to cherish all children, animal and human, and never to permit them to be harmed.

The Bektors are taught the ways of the wilderness. Traditionally, children learn to hunt, track and shoot; the more hidebound members also teach their offspring the use of the traditional weapons, like the bow and the spear. Some travel the world and become experienced big game hunters, although of late fewer of them follow that tradition. Some are skilled animal handlers, who never have to rely on the brutal methods of normal animal trainers to get results. Others favor more exotic prey -- Vampyres, evil spirits and other Ferals. Together with the Verken Family (see below), they are the most accomplished hunters of supernatural predators.

The Bekter's head is always a Feral, and the current one is a woman, Janelle Bekter. She is the co-owner of the Walker Carnival & Fair, a traveling show that operates from Canada to South America, and until recently had her own beast show in it, performing with several wolfhounds that could do amazing tricks.

Sanjee

Sanjee was a priestess. Her name meant "Enlightened One," and she came from some place in Asia, where the natives worshipped the spirits of nature. No one knows what she did to deserve the Feral's curse; some claim she took it upon herself willingly.

Sanjee retained her magical gifts even after her transformation, and she was able to teach her human children. Her Feral offspring could not follow in her magical footsteps unless they gained the favor of a deity. The Sanjee Feral form is a Siberian Tiger, proud and magnificent.

This Family values wisdom, nature and magic. In some ways they resemble the Wicce, and have often married Wicce women and men over the centuries, strengthening that connection. Traveling Sanjee sometimes imitate the Gypsies, although they have little if any true Romany blood.

The current head of the Sanjee Family is Teresa Gianella-Sanjee. She is not a Feral (although her sister is), but instead practices magic and necromancy. Gianella-Sanjee duells mainly in Europe.

Mishatt

Mishatt came from the land of Elam. He was a great warlord who might have one day become a great king. Unfortunately, he was cursed by a sorcerer and turned into a lion in front of his troops. The terrified soldiers set upon him with sword and chariot and bow, and Mishatt had to flee for his life. After centuries of living in the wilderness, he sought out the Moon Gods, and became a Nomad. His descendants have kept his martial spirit alive. Mishatt children are taught a number of martial arts, and Ferals (all of them kindred to the now-extinct Middle-Eastern lion) are encouraged to make the most of their animal powers.

The Mishatt value discipline and courage. Male Family members (and more recently, female as well), both Feral and Mundane, are encouraged to serve in the military of any nation. There have been Mishatts among the ranks of the Union Army during the Civil War, and in many of the Indian Wars; Mishatts fought and died in the World Wars, Korea and Vietnam. If a Family member is found guilty of cowardice in the face of the enemy, he is expelled from the Family and his

name is never spoken again. The dishonored person can redeem himself only through some heroic (and often suicidal) deed. Some members become mercenaries after their discharge.

Colonel Walter Mishatt, U.S. Army (retired) is the current head of the Mishatt family. An intelligence specialist, he has connections around the world, and he has been linked to arms smuggling and other international incidents. Some Nomad Chiefs suspect Mishatt has used members of his family in a number of questionable operations.

Machui

The daughter of an African chieftain, Machui was vain and lazy, and used her rank and beauty to avoid work and responsibility. She enjoyed it when men fought over her, even to the death. One day, she asked her suitors to bring her a leopard skin as a present; whoever brought her the best one would win her hand. That night, she was transformed into a leopard, and was chased by the very men she had enticed.

Grievously wounded, she survived only through her feral regenerative abilities. Still, she was cast out by her own father. Machui was forced to travel north, where she was enslaved by the Egyptians for several years. Ultimately, she escaped and journeyed the cities of the Middle East, making a living as a thief and prostitute. Her feral abilities were unpredictable, often not manifesting themselves when she needed them, and sometimes transforming her at the worst possible moment. It wasn't until she accepted her sins and sought redemption that the worst part of her curse was over.

The Machui family values humility and it mocks vanity. The Machui are known to play cruel jests on men and women who think they are above others because of their looks, wealth or power. They are trained to understand human nature, which makes them great counselors, seductive lovers, and effective con men. Members of the family must help others in any way they can; their favorite tasks involve using their skills and powers to help the poor and defenseless against the wealthy and powerful.

Currently, the Machui family has no leader. The previous Head, Karl Machui, died when his truck went over a cliff in a mysterious accident. His chosen successor died a day later, shot through the head, before he even knew he was the new Head. This unprecedented event has the family reeling. It is likely that a council of all the Machui Chiefs, and possibly the other family heads, will be convened at some time. It is rumored that the Machui's penchant for angering powerful people (and supernatural beings) is to blame for the current situation.

Verken

The man who called himself Verken was a great warrior wandering the woodlands of Northern Europe. His skill with spear, axe and sword was so great that none dared stand up to him. One day, however, his enemies hired the best -- a band of skin-changers, the ancestors of the people the Vikings a millennium later would call the bear-skins, or berserkers (see p. 92). The bear-men came upon Verken's hall and slew his warriors. They left Verken alive, and forced him to watch as the were-bears tortured and killed his wives and children. In a fit of desperation, Verken broke free and killed one of the bear-men using only his hands. Doing this released the captured bear spirit, which entered the warrior and turned him into a true feral. Verken could now turn into a giant bear.

Verken family members are taught to defend the helpless, and to avenge any crimes committed against those who cannot avenge themselves. Their favored prey are supernatural beings, especially other ferals, Wildings, and similar monsters. Verken are trained in a number of martial arts, and they are encouraged to develop their strength and endurance.

The current Head, Roger Verken, is known as the Old Mountaineer. He haunts the mountain regions of the U.S. and Canada, staying in one place for a few months and then moving on, only coming down from the mountains when he is informed of some worthy adversary. Over 150 years old, Roger Verken appears to be in his early fifties, and he grows weary of the ways of vengeance. He can be found only with difficulty, and whoever calls on him should have a very good reason.

Allies and Enemies

The Wicce: The Nomads have often encountered practitioners of the Old Craft in their travels, and in general have a good relationship with that Covenant. Many Wicce have married Nomads in the past, and their children, Feral or Gifted, may travel in Nomad caravans if they desire.

The Rosicrucians, the Cabal of Psyche and the Twilight Order: The Nomads have little contact with these Covenants. Their secretive nature, and the Nomads' transitory stays makes encounters unlikely.

The Sentinels and the Storm Dragons: The Nomads often hunt supernatural predators, as do the Sentinels and the Storm Dragons. Sometimes, the Covenants find themselves pursuing the same individual, perhaps following different trails. The Sentinels consider all Ferals to be accursed people, unintentionally dangerous at best, a deadly threat at worst. The Storm Dragons are somewhat more tolerant, but they will be suspicious until convinced of the Nomads' purposes. If a group of Nomads realize either of those groups are after their quarry, they may try to avoid them, or just let them have the "kill." The more hot-headed Nomads, on the other hand, view the situation as a contest of sorts, and redouble their efforts to beat the haughty monster-hunters.

The Knights Templar and the Combine: Since the Nomads are forbidden from seeking to rule others, they rarely have the chance to become involved in the shadow organizations that vie for control over world affairs. Dealings with the Combine are very limited; occasionally, a Nomad group inadvertently derails a Combine plot, and has to deal with some form of reprisal.

Other Covenants: Most Covenants are dealt with on a case by case basis. Encounters are likely to be brief and localized, and most Covenants have only sparse knowledge of a wandering Covenant (often mistaken for Gypsies) with an unusual number of shapeshifters in their ranks.

Nomad Stories

Travel is a key element in Nomad Stories. Whether the Cast Members are truckers, roadies for a major concert tour, Renaissance Fair regulars, or aimless drifters, they are usually on the move. Chroniclers need to be careful not to populate every town and city the characters visit with a small supernatural zoo, however. Sometimes, the Cast should be confronted with more mundane threats -- money problems, for example. Or maybe a group of animal rights activists breaks into the character's traveling circus and "liberates" several wild animals that now run wild through the streets. Hunting supernatural predators, especially Ferals, can also be a dangerous challenge. The Cast needs to find their quarry without attracting the attention of the authorities (likely to be suspicious of recently arrived strangers anyway) and any other Covenant in the area. For long-term games, the Chronicler may wish to play up rivalries or power struggles within the Family structure. While feuds are not common, they do exist (the Bektors and the Machui had a nasty feud during the 1890s, and there is still tension between the two Families).

Undead on Wheels: A pack of Vampyre bikers are on a rampage. Their M.O. consists of running people off the road at night (typically truckers); neither the victims nor their vehicles are ever seen again. The Undead are careful to cover their tracks. No traces are ever found of the victims, and their vehicles and cargo are "processed" through a body shop that specializes in such things. The Cast Members may just happen to be the next victims of the group (although they are more likely to survive the experience), or they are on the killer's trails, possibly because some of the missing victims are members of the Covenant. The hunt may end as a massive fight with the gang, or lead to something more sinister. Perhaps the Vampyres are in the service of something more sinister -- a cult of Undead servants of a Mad God, bringing in victims for a massive ritual (this might also attract Mockers investigating the same perpetrators from a different angle).



Who Killed Karl Machui?: The mysterious death of the head of the Machui family and his chosen successor has stirred a hornet's nest of suspicions, accusations and fear. Was the killing the result of an internal power struggle, or is someone stalking the entire Covenant? Some possibilities: Karl Machui recently conducted an elaborate sting operation against a ring of car thieves, an operation that resulted in the theft of a couple of million dollars' worth of spare parts from the thieves. The car thieves, unfortunately, had Mafia connections -- is organized crime involved,

and if so, how have they learned enough about the Nomads to destroy the leadership of an entire family? Maybe the Mafia has its own supernatural backing. Another suspect includes a member of the Bekter Family, a long-lived Feral who was involved in the century-old feud between the two clans. Finally, some Machui members have started to acquire an interest in the occult arts; mystics of the Sanjee Family fear that the Machui might have stirred some forces better left alone.

The Nomads in Armageddon

The Church of Revelations has given two choices to all Ferals in its territories: submit to Leviathan or die. Most Nomads sought to escape; only a few made it. Most of the European branch of the Covenant has been utterly annihilated; the handful of survivors brought back horrifying tales of the torments those Ferals who were caught alive endured before being finally killed. The Nomads have sworn vengeance on the followers of Leviathan.

With the return of the Old Gods, the patron deities of the Covenant have become far more active. The number of Feral members has grown, as well as the occasional Avatar or Inheritor. Angels and demons and other beings are also becoming more common, however, and many of them have little use for shape-shifters. So far, this Covenant has not joined the Alliance, but members from both groups have worked side by side.

Nomad Road Warrior

You used to be a hothead, and craved a good fight. Even before your Feral nature was awakened, you thought you were tough enough to deal with anything. Now you now better, and realize that knowing how to fight is not enough; one must also know when to fight.

You now are part of the security contingent of Staged Larvae, a Nomad rock band that tours around the world nine months of the year. Your large size and forbidding expression deters even the most determined groupies from getting out of hand, and you very rarely have to raise a hand in anger. The band does more than just play music, of course; sometimes a situation arises where you must use fists, weapons, or your gifts.

Origins

Your mother had a fling with a roadie and you were the result. Your early life was a mess, living in a trailer littered with empty beer bottles and copies of the Enquirer. A battered TV set was your first friend, babysitter, and teacher. You were always big for your age, and other kids in school saw it as a challenge. When a couple of them ended up with dislocated (and in one case, broken) limbs, you got in trouble. When you turned 17, you joined the Marines, and for a while things were fine. You didn't mind the discipline. It helped you become a warrior, an expert in a variety of weapons, highly motivated and dangerous. Until one night, during a training exercise, you turned into a bear.

Luckily, you were the only one who realized this. The others just saw a huge bear lumbering around the camp, and being who they were, they opened fire on it. The bear got away. Later, you crawled back into your tent, bloodied, naked and dazed. You were discharged for psychiatric reasons two months later, after a second transformation led to you being found naked on top of a tree, munching on nuts and berries. Somebody at the base was a Nomad, however, and he realized what you were. You met your new father shortly afterwards, and were formally inducted into the Verken Family.

For a while, your newfound powers made you think you were invincible. A bloody incident in Montana taught you otherwise. Lying on the damp earth, trying to hold in your spilling entrails while something bigger and badder than you was chased away by your fellow Nomads, you realized that you, too, are mortal.

Allies and Enemies

You live and work with the band and the entourage of roadies, drivers, make-up and FX experts -- a small host of people living in two large buses. You prefer to ride alongside the buses in your prized possession, an original Harley Davidson. Most of your friends are fellow Nomads.

The creature that nearly killed you in Montana is still at large; one of your friends did not survive the encounter. Whatever it was, it was very ancient, and very hungry. A sage from the Sanjee Family thinks it might have been the legendary Wendigo, the cannibal spirit of Native American mythology. You are considering taking some time off to go hunt it down. Until you slay that demon, you will never feel like a whole man.

Roleplaying the Character

You are tough but fair. Your childhood and military life have not taught you the finer points of etiquette, and you often come across as rough and uneducated. You try to think about what you do before you do it, and some people may think you are a bit slow on the uptake. You are certainly no intellectual giant, but neither are you stupid, as some people have learned the hard way. You have learned to master the ways of your bear form, and know how to use its strength and fearsome appearance for the best results.

* This character has been created using the Optional Skill Point Generation System (WitchCraft, p. 55). If using the basic system, 1 skill level must be dropped.



WITCHCRAFT

Name

Association

Nomad

Concept

Warrior

CHARACTER
POINTS

SPENT

UNSPENT

CHANNELING
LEVEL

2

Lesser
Supernatural

Primary Attributes (Feral/Human)

Secondary Attributes

STRENGTH

12/5

INTELLIGENCE

2/2

DEXTERITY

4/3

PERCEPTION

4/2

CONSTITUTION

7/3

WILLPOWER

3/3

LIFE POINTS

125/42

ENDURANCE POINTS

71/38

SPEED

27/16

ESSENCE POOL

28

Qualities

Point

Drawbacks

Point

Feral

5

Attractiveness -1

1

Bear Shape

27

Obsession (Find the Wendigo)

2

Charisma +2

2

Recurring Nightmare

1

Fast Reaction Time

2

Cruel

1

Covenant Boon

0

Code of Honor (Nomad)

1

(+2 to resist Feral Transformation)

Addiction (Habitual Smoker)

1

Skill/Power

Level

Power/Vulnerability

Level

Brawling

4

Inborn Feral

2

Dodge

3

Spirit Claws

2

Driving (Car)

2

Common Feral Powers

Driving (Motorcycle)

2

Common Feral Vulnerabilities

Guns (Handgun)

2

Guns (Rifle)

3

Intimidation

3

Smooth Talking

2

Stealth

3

Tracking

2

The Mockers

When a Mad God or one of its minions manifests itself, the results are always tragic for any unfortunates in the vicinity. To behold such creatures is to become irrevocably changed, to lose all sense of complacency about the world and one's place in it. The Mockers are survivors of one of the worst experiences a human being can know. Not only have they seen the works of the Mad Ones, they have been infected by their unreality. Unlike most of their ilk, however, the Laughing Ones have neither fallen under the control of the Mad Ones nor succumbed to total madness. Their first line of defense is the strength of will; their second one is sardonic humor. The Mockers laugh at the Universe, because they have seen it in ways no mortal was meant to.

This Covenant is small and very loosely organized. They do not recruit members -- they look for other victims of the Mad Gods, and try to reach them before it is too late. For every Tainted victim they rescue, they have to kill four or five others who are beyond help. More importantly, they try to make sure that what happened to them does not happen to others. The best way to do that is to nip in the bud any incursion of the Mad Gods. They work alone or in small groups, gathering newspaper articles, net surfing, wandering through select occult circles, on the lookout for any signs of trouble such as strange disappearances, outbursts of madness or plagues, unexplained events. Often, they find something else. Instead of Mad Gods, they may run into a nest of Vampyres, a mundane serial killer, a pack of Wildings, or even a harmless Gifted human who has inadvertently revealed his power. The result then depends on the Mocker, on what he finds, and how he was feeling that day.

History

The Mockers first appeared in the Dark Ages, the chaotic times that followed the decline of the Roman Empire in Western Europe. In this time of destruction and death, when many thought that the end of the world was at hand, some people turned to old, forbidden practices. The first Mocker rose from just such an encounter.

What the first Mocker had been before his transformation is a matter of speculation, but most believe he was either a warrior or a monk. The seminal event occurred in a monastery that was attacked by Viking raiders. In the middle of the fight, something rose from the earth, destroyed the monastery and the raiders, and vanished again. The first Mocker was the sole survivor. Something -- maybe his faith, or perhaps simple stubbornness -- kept him from sinking into utter madness, at least for a while.

He went on to become a semi-legendary figure, a man who wore mail armor over a monk's habits, a fearsome warrior that was believed to be one of the horsemen of the apocalypse by those who saw him too closely.

The first Mocker eventually found others like him. The group was small -- no more than a dozen for several centuries, with new members never doing more than filling the place of those who had fallen or lost their battle with insanity. The Mockers traveled with pilgrims and participated in the Crusades. There, some tales claim that they encountered both the Sentinels and the Knights Templar, and that members of all three Covenants, together with the Islamic Hashishin, stopped the incarnation of the Mad God Gog-Baal. The alliance was short-lived, however, and the Mockers went their own way afterwards.

Centuries passed. Some Mockers were burned as witches, or run out of towns. Their numbers remained small, swelling only during the ripple-reflections of the Times of Reckoning. The Black Plague was one such time, and some of the dark humor of the time, the illustrations of bishops and merchants and beggars dancing merrily with Death and the sardonic literature produced by the survivors, bears Mocker influence. The American Civil War was another such time; some Mockers claim that writer and journalist Ambrose Bierce was one of their kind, and, if nothing else, the tone of his writings reflects the feelings of cynicism and despair that often afflicts members of this Covenant.

The 20th century has turned out to be the most active period for the Covenant. They found many

new members among people exposed to the horrors of war -- and to the horrors that prowled the battlefields in the dark. Now, the Mockers are growing certain that another Reckoning is at hand, and this one may be worse than anything the Covenant has experienced in its history.

Beliefs

The Mockers have experienced things no mortal should. They have learned to live with that trauma, and now know only one certainty: to allow the Mad Gods to win means to suffer even worse horrors. Most Mockers fear that even death may prove no refuge from the torments of the beings from Beyond -- the ones who do not often end up taking their own lives. Beyond that basic belief, the Mockers have faith only in their own strength, and occasionally the loyalty of their brethren. They all share a cynical, skeptical view of the world. They are often atheistic: as far as they are concerned, the only god-like entities that exist are monstrous entities with unfathomable goals and desires, who care for humanity even less than humans care for bacterial life. Their cynicism extends to most other things -- politics, social issues, love and war. Many of them admit that if they did not think doing nothing would just bring about worse ordeals for them, they would not fight the Mad Gods.

The Mocker's symbol is the laughing mask of classical theater. A few members go as far as wearing clown make-up when preparing for war. They take very few things seriously, the Mad Gods being the only exception. Even then, they try to mask their true feelings by cracking jokes or taking insane chances. They can be unpredictable and even violent in their dealings with others, and sometimes extremely cold-blooded about such things as innocent bystanders. If the incarnation of a Mad God appears imminent, a Mocker will do anything necessary to prevent it. If doing so requires him to detonate a nuclear device in downtown New York, so be it. Fortunately, this type of situation does not come up often -- in 900 years of Mocker history, there have only been a handful of instances where a major entity seriously threatened to manifest itself. Most of the time, they deal with temporary (but still destructive) manifestations, the

appearance of minor creatures from Beyond, or, most often, the activities of human cultists.

Beneath the cynicism and the skewed view of the world, however, the Mockers are a tightly-knit community. They all share similar experiences, pain and fears, and they try to give comfort to one another, even while pretending they do not care. Unless the situation is desperate, they will never betray or deceive one another. Most also show some degree of concern towards others -- those who don't eventually become psychopaths and lose their battle with Madness, that is.

Organization

There are less than two hundred Mockers in the world. Of these, some sixty or seventy operate in North America, and a similar number in Europe, with the rest concentrated mainly in the Middle East, North Africa and South America. They operate in small groups, rarely more than a handful, or alone, although lone Mockers often have contacts with other Covenants in the area. There isn't much of a leadership; older and more experienced Mockers act as teachers or mentors to the new generation, and their lead is usually followed.

A little over one half of the membership are Tainted humans (see p. 115). The rest are mostly Gifted, with Disciples of the Flesh (see Mystery Codex, p. 164) being the most common non-Tainted members. A few magicians, psychics and mediums, survivors of encounters with the Mad Gods, round out the group. Mundane members exist, but their mortality and insanity rates are very high; most of them rarely last more than a handful of encounters with the Mad Gods. Fortunately, such encounters remain rare.

The Covenant's major source of income is a handful of foundations bequeathed to them by wealthier Mockers. They provide just enough funds for a few libraries and research facilities, mostly located in Europe and North America, as well as some money for travel expenses, expeditions into remote areas, and so on. Money is often a problem, however. Most Mockers hold down temporary and low-paying jobs -- even those who were professionals or academics are rarely able to maintain a normal life after their initial expe-

riences. A few are career criminals, or use their powers to rob criminals to support themselves. Some literally live on the streets.

Allies and Enemies

Mockers' Auras

All Gifted humans, and most supernatural beings, can sense auras and thus gain a measure of someone's personality and power. Tainted beings often stand out; their anti-Essence shines like some toxic phosphorescence. Some creatures of Taint can hide their corruption from prying eyes, however. The Mockers, because of their dual nature (being creatures of both Essence and Taint), and thanks to the Anchors that allow them to retain their humanity, are also capable of hiding their nature from others, although with difficulty.

In game terms, whenever a Gifted or supernatural being attempts to "see" a Mocker's Essence matrix, they need to achieve a number of Success Levels equal to the Mocker's Anchor level. The observer gets a bonus equal to 1/10 of the Mocker's Madness Pool (see p. 118, for information about both the Anchor and the Madness Pool). If the Task or Test is not successful enough, they "see" the Mocker as a Gifted human with unknown abilities, and may perhaps get a hint of strangeness about the subject. Attempts to probe further (using Invocations like Insight, or psychic powers like Mindsight) are resisted by the Mocker with his Willpower and Anchor level, unless he is willing to let his full nature be known.

The Wicce and the Rosicrucians: The Mockers often deal with these Covenants, especially when they need assistance to deal with an incursion from Beyond. Mockers often try to establish some sort of "working relationship" with members of these Covenants, although their attitudes and worldview often offend them. Some Mockers find it more expedient to simply pass on any information they have to those Covenants, and let them do the dirty job, stepping in only if

absolutely necessary. The Wicce tend to be more tolerant of the Mockers, although they do not trust the Tainted, and rarely put themselves at their mercy. The Rosicrucians often regard Mockers as abominations as dangerous as the monsters they hunt, and prefer to keep contact with them to a bare minimum.

The Cabal of Psyche and the Twilight Order:

There is minimal contact between these groups and the Mockers. The Cabal's dislike for taking action means they have little to offer to the Mockers. The Twilight Order concerns itself mostly with the spirits of the dead, and they interact with the Mockers only when a Tainted spirit is involved.

The Sentinels: The Sentinels have worked with the Mockers in the past, but they are as likely to hunt down a Mocker as to assist him. Tainted humans are often considered to be Damned, and likely to be beyond redemption. Some of the more humane Sentinels try to cure the Mockers, and sometimes may help them reduce their Madness. Most of the time, contacts are limited and on an emergency basis only. If a Mocker is facing something beyond his power, he seeks help elsewhere, and the Sentinels tend to be well-organized and funded, which makes them too convenient to ignore. The Sentinels find it hard to take the Tainted nature of the Mockers, and their cynical, biting sense of humor, at least for any length of time.

The Knights Templar and the Combine: The Knights' secrecy makes them too hard to find, and the Mockers do not care about their struggle with the Combine. As far as they are concerned, fighting about who rules humanity is idiotic, like children fighting for a toy in the middle of a street while an oncoming truck bears down on them. Some Mockers think the Combine may be the work of a cult of the Mad Gods, but that sounds too organized and deliberate for most of those entities. For its part, the Combine usually ignores the Mockers, and on a few occasions it has covered up their activities.

The Pariahs: These humans have endured horrible experiences, and thus have some common ground with the Mockers. The two Covenants often share the slums and homeless shelters, and some Disciples or

Tainted people actually belong to both groups. The Mockers are often called when a Pariah surrenders to the lure of darkness and becomes a servant of the Mad Gods. The two groups have a good working relationship, although they often make each other a tad nervous.

Other Covenants: Since the Mockers are relatively few and spread out, they try to find out who else is in their local area. They use their skills and powers to spot other Gifted groups (sometimes uncovering Dark Covenants or Mad God Cults along the way), and attempt to figure out a way to work together -- or maybe to simply use the other Covenants as tools or weapons. This occurs on a case-by-case basis.

Mocker Stories

Mocker Stories revolve around the hunt for the Mad Gods, and finding and rescuing those that the Mad Gods have victimized. The Cast Members spend their free time (how much depends on their job and wealth) tracking down any indications of Mad God activity in their area, which, given the small numbers of the Covenant, can be rather large. If a suspicious event is found, the character or characters needs to investigate it, and see if there is anything to it. Complications are always possible, of course. Sometimes, the Mockers run into other Covenants investigating the same situation, or discover a threat that has nothing to do with the Mad Gods.

Khaos Theory: A local techno band, Khaos Theory, is gaining popularity and looks like it may be going national any day now. Any Mocker who hears their music, live or otherwise, feels his Taint somehow responding to it. Prolonged listening actually increases a person's Taint Pool (in game terms, about 1 Taint point for every 2 hours of listening -- this is cumulative, although the Taint gained is temporary)! Khaos Theory's CD back copy claims that some of the lyrics come from some ancient tablets from the Middle East. Are the songs acting as a powerful summoning incantation? Can the songs Taint normal humans, and if so, what will happen when the band plays in its first large venue (due to occur any day now)? The Mockers need to find out.

Boy's Town: The small town of Bridgedale was nothing special -- until the night a meteorite landed next to the local highway as a bus carrying the local high school football team drove by. The high schoolers stopped and examined the strange rock, and they even got their pictures on the paper (page one in the local newspaper, page 12 in the city paper). Unfortunately, the meteorite was not a normal rock, and the football players soon discovered they could make things happen -- and that they were no longer in control of their lusts and fears. Soon, bizarre deaths began to occur, as some of the boys embraced their powers. Others tried to resist their lure. The Cast Members can be members of the football team, Tainted by exposure to the bizarre rock, or Mocker investigators arriving to the town -- just in time for the pep rally from Hell.

The Mockers in Armageddon

Leviathan is a Mad God, possibly one of the most powerful beings of its kind. The Mockers discovered the existence of the Church of Revelations, and they actually foiled some of their plans. The Covenant thinks it was their work that ensured the U.S. was not taken over during the first stage of Leviathan's plan.

Unfortunately, when the Dark Apostle rose from the ashes of Munich, all Mockers in Germany, and many of the ones living in Western Europe were killed or corrupted outright, their Taint acting as a conduit to Leviathan, attracting its power like a metal rod attracts lightning.

The surviving Mockers are concentrating mainly on fighting Leviathan's minions, while keeping a low profile. With self-righteous angels walking the Earth, any Tainted being risks being killed out of hand. The Alliance seems more willing to work with Mockers, but the inevitable personal-ity conflicts abound.

Mocker Cat Burglar

You were a damn good thief, until an encounter with the Beyond left you scarred body and mind. Now you use your skills -- and a little something the Cult of the Rending Shadows gave you -- to fight the good fight. You are angry -- at the world that gave you no breaks, at yourself for waiting for breaks instead of doing what was needed, and at the Mad Gods for destroying what little harmony remained in your life.

Like all Mockers, you are constantly looking for signs of trouble. You remain a criminal, and use your contacts in the streets as your eyes and ears. You are funny, but your jokes and grins have a nasty edge to them, and it makes people nervous. The nasty scar on the left side of your face doesn't help, either. Despite the best efforts of a plastic surgeon, your left cheek looks like it was chewed up and then stabbed with a hot iron. When asked about it, you smile and say, "Oh, it's nothing. Something I disagreed with ate me -- tried to, at least."

Origins

You thought your life was tough before. Being poor and smart was no picnic; you knew exactly what you were missing. Then one day you were caught holding a baggy of pot and ended up doing time behind bars. It wasn't fun, but you learned something while you were there. You studied under the best lockpickers, second-story men and car thieves in the business (or so they said). When you got out, an ex-con with no prospects, you had a plan. To get what you deserved, you'd just go ahead and take it.

A couple of high-stakes capers later, you were doing pretty damn well. You had learned your lessons well, and things were beginning to look up. They were, that is, until you broke into the wrong penthouse. The wealthy collector you targeted was no normal yuppie with more money than sense. This yuppie specialized in forbidden books and summoning rituals, all dealing with the Mad God known only as the Rending Shadow. You neutralized the alarms, entered the empty apartment, and looked in the wrong golden box. Something screamed as it tore flesh and flowed like water. You don't quite remember what happened next, although you dream of it very often. There was a struggle, and your face was hideously scarred -- you can still feel the sensation of liquid shadow teeth tearing at your face -- but you managed to break the box and banish the creature.

You got out as fast as you could, covered in your own blood and nearly dead. You survived, but the owner of the box was mad as hell, and the cult he had formed was looking for you. Fortunately, the Mockers were looking for the cult, and they saved you.

Allies and Enemies

Your street contacts include a number of well-established fences in the city, including one that specializes in antiques and occult paraphernalia. The unsmiling old man who runs the pawnshop in question has been a valuable source of leads, even though you suspect there is more to him than meets the eye. At the Chronicler's discretion, the fence could be any number of things: a Gifted human with mysterious powers, a Templar Seneschal, a Seraphim or demon giving out information for its own purposes, or something even stranger.

The Cult of the Rending Shadow never forgave you for breaking their toy. When you later hunted down their leader and several prominent members, you just made them angrier. They have tried to kill you twice.

Roleplaying the Character

You use the language of the streets to cover your lack of formal education. You are full of anger and hatred, mostly to overcome your fear. As long as you are doing something -- researching a Mocker's library, rappelling down a museum's wall, or shooting it up with a gang of cultists -- you don't have to brood on the way the world stopped making sense when a shadow that screamed and bit and leaped for your face.

* This character has been created using the Optional Skill Point Generation System (WitchCraft, p. 55). If using the basic system, 6 skill levels must be dropped.



WITCHCRAFT

Name
Association
Concept

CHARACTER POINTS		SPENT		UNSPENT
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CHANNELING LEVEL
2

Gifted

Primary Attributes

STRENGTH	2	INTELLIGENCE	3
DEXTERITY	4	PERCEPTION	3
CONSTITUTION	4	WILLPOWER	4

Secondary Attributes

LIFE POINTS	34
ENDURANCE POINTS	35
SPEED	16
ESSENCE POOL	20

Lesser

Qualities

Qualities	Point
Contacts (Criminal)	5
Gift	5
Taint	5
Taint Pool	25
Taint Channeling	4

Drawbacks

Drawbacks	Point
Adversary (Cult of Rending Shadow)	2
Attractiveness (Scars) -2	2
Charisma -2	2
Clown	1
Recurring Nightmares	1
Status (Convicted Felon) -2	2

Skill

Skill	Level
Acrobatics	1
Brawling	3
Climbing (Rappelling Specialty)	4
Dodge	3
Driving (Car)	3
Gun (Handgun)	2
Lock Picking (Mechanical Lock)	3
Lock Picking (Electronic Systems)	3
Notice	4
Occult Knowledge (Mad Gods)	1
Smooth Talking	3
Stealth	3

Skill

Skill	Level
Streetwise	3
Climbing	2

Power

Power	Level
Anchor	4
Negaphysics	
Taint Touch	

The Lodge of the Undying

True Immortals (see p. 39) are both few in number and, for the most part, fierce individualists. Even an Undying One needs friends sometimes, however, and on occasion small groups of Immortals have banded together, be it for protection, to share knowledge, or simply for companionship. After all, who can understand an Immortal better than one of his kind?

The Lodge of the Undying is possibly the largest of these organizations, but its numbers are still very limited. Its purpose is twofold: to understand the origins and nature of the Immortal breed, and to help and protect its members. The Covenant has amassed a great deal of wealth and influence, which they have used to study the lore of the Immortals, and to keep it secret from the rest of humanity.

History

The Lodge of the Undying is a relatively young organization, especially given its membership. The Covenant was created in the late 18th century, by a 1,000-year old Immortal known simply as Quintus. Quintus had traveled extensively throughout the world, and had encountered and befriended several dozen Immortals. He was among the first to start gathering the Immortals' collective lore, in an effort to discover the secrets of Atlantis. His hope was to eventually lead the way for a new, greater Renaissance, one where the lost powers of the antediluvian kingdoms would lead humanity toward a new golden age. Some Immortals who lived through that period are somewhat more cynical about Quintus' goals, however, and they claim that Quintus wished to be the ruler of the new world his discoveries would create.

In any case, Quintus sponsored the first meeting of the Lodge. Immortals from Europe, America and the Middle East traveled to Paris in unprecedented numbers. According to the Lodge's records, no less than forty Immortals were in attendance. After some heated discussion, during which some Immortals left in a huff, the basic rules of the Covenant were agreed upon. For a few years, things went well. The Lodge was patterned after the Freemason societies of the time, with a complex initiation ceremony and secret signs and handshakes. A central College was established in Paris. By 1771, associated Colleges had been established in London, Vienna, and Boston.

Tragedy struck during the French Revolution and the Terror that followed it. Quintus was arrested and executed -- beheaded, and his corpse completely incinerated. The way his body was disposed of revealed some knowledge of how to kill Immortals. It appears that Quintus had attracted the wrath of some powerful third party. The rest of the Lodge went underground, but managed to survive the ensuing wars and chaos. It continued recruiting Immortals, especially those who had recently discovered their abilities and desperately needed guidance.

In recent times, the membership of the Covenant has grown in size very quickly. About half of the current members are Immortals born in the last fifty years, sure proof of the increase of Immortal incarnations. No one is quite sure what this means, but few think this is a good omen.



Myths of Atlantis

The Lodge of the Undying has tried to build a body of history and science dealing with the mythical civilization that spawned its race. Unfortunately, it has precious little material to work with -- the ancestral memories of Immortal members, and the few artifacts Immortal Makers can cobble together in violation of most physical laws. Not having concrete proof has not stopped many of the younger and more impressionable members from coming up with a number of theories, often based on little more than a half-forgotten dream fragment. Described below are a few of the most interesting ones:

Atlantis Was Destroyed by the Seraphim: Many past life memories feature angelic beings who visited Atlantis and spoke to its rulers as equals. At some point, however, the Seraphim turned against Atlantis, and caused its destruction, first with a devastating firestorm, and then with an overwhelming flood, perhaps triggered by melting the great glaciers of the last Ice Age. The Seraphim were so thorough in their destruction of the ancient civilization that they left no recognizable traces behind. This works well as an explanation for the lack of physical evidence of Atlantis, although most Lodge researchers find it unsatisfactory.

Aliens Visited Atlantis: Some Immortals claim that Atlantis hosted embassies from other worlds, among them a race of pale-skinned humanoids that resemble the popular depiction of UFO aliens. These aliens had ships that could match the Atlantean Thought Ships, although they used different methods of propulsion and control. Many Lodge members dismiss these tales as pure fantasies, however.

Atlantis Was In Another World: This is another proposed explanation for the lack of archeological remains of Atlantis. The great city and its neighbors were never on Earth, but existed in a different plane of existence.

The Elder Kingdoms: Based on other ancestral memories, some Lodge scholars claim that Atlantis did not stand alone, but was merely one (perhaps the greatest one) of several Elder Kingdoms. Some proposed neighbors of Atlantis include Avalon, the mythical home of the Fey races, Lemuria, ruled by necromantic kings who had developed their own brand of immortality, and Ultima-Thule, a place of magic that ultimately became Atlantis' greatest enemy.

Beliefs

The Lodge is particularly concerned with the legends of Atlantis. Members may disagree (sometimes violently) about the details, but all believe that some time in the world's prehistoric past, a number of great human civilizations rose to prominence, and were destroyed through some still undetermined means, although the Flood seems to be the best candidate.

After comparing the notes of several hundred Immortals over its history, Lodge archivists have amassed a great deal of knowledge about their previous existence. Still, the information is still incomplete, and often contradictory. Some Immortals' recollections of Atlantis/Athal depict a fairly primitive land, while others (the vast majority) show a place of incredible beauty and power. By organizing the different accounts in a powerful computer database,

scholars have sketched a tentative timeline of Atlantis. This timeline is not precise -- anywhere between 1,000 and 20,000 years may have passed between the foundation and the fall of the empire. If the latter figure is true, that would mean that Atlantis outlasted all the human civilizations that followed, combined (the accepted historical record is less than 10,000 years old). The possibility that a once-glorious civilization could vanish with little more than a trace is sobering.

Learning more about the past is a major goal of the organization. A number of Immortals have become involved in the archeological field, and have tried to uncover any physical evidence of Atlantis. So far, they have found a few ancient artifacts of dubious origin but nothing solid. These researchers have uncovered some evidence that interesting finds have been destroyed or suppressed by a shadowy organization.

Studying the past is not the only scholarly pursuit of the group. Many also study Immortal physiology, the special powers some Immortals have, and try to find ways to replicate the lost arts and crafts of Athal. Unfortunately, this line of research has produced even fewer results than the exploration of the past. Immortal physiology appears human. DNA analysis has revealed nothing unusual (although a few scientists hope the full mapping of the human genome may provide more clues). The Immortal regenerative and rejuvenation powers cannot be explained through any biology or molecular biology. Some physicists claim the process works at the subatomic level, or even at the sub-quark level, which, as one wit once said, "means they don't have a freakin' clue."

The Covenant also provides a support network for Immortals. Any member who needs help (establishing a new identity after outliving an old one, for example) need only make a phone call, and the Lodge will use its considerable resources to assist him. In the past, the Lodge has helped cover the tracks of dozens of Immortals, even engineering a number of prison breaks. Lodge members are expected to help any new Immortal they encounter. The first experience of a young Undying is likely to be traumatic, and ideally a more experienced person should be nearby to provide guidance.

The Lodge has few rules governing the conduct of its members, but they are followed very strictly. Immortals found guilty of murder (as opposed to killing in self-defense), of trying to set themselves up as rulers or celebrities, or of betraying the Lodge's confidences to outsiders, face expulsion from the Covenant. An expelled member can expect no help whatsoever from the Lodge, and in this age, knowledge of the expulsion is quickly known by everyone.

The main reason for those restrictions is more pragmatic than altruistic. Immortals need their secrecy to survive. Wanton killing, self-glorification and publicity threaten their safety by risking discovery. Should their existence become publicly known, Immortals would be persecuted, haunted, and possibly vivisected to discover the secret of their eternal youth. The worst part is, since there is no scientific explanation for their powers, an Immortal in that position would suffer for no good cause.

Organization

The Covenant is organized along geographical lines. The Undying maintain some thirty "Colleges" -- facilities that combine the characteristics of social clubs, libraries, and meeting places. The size and features of these Colleges vary from place to place. Typically, they include at least three or four guest rooms for visiting (or hiding) Immortals, live-in facilities for the Dean of the College and his assistants, and a decent library, which in recent times also includes several high-power computers with Internet connections (getting some of the older Immortals to use them is often impossible, however). Each College has a Dean, an Immortal who assumes the responsibility to maintain and administer the area. The Deans are selected by the Lodge Masters, a group of twelve Immortals, all of whom participated in the creation of the Covenant.

Currently, the Lodge maintains twenty-nine Colleges around the world. Most of them are in the West -- five Colleges in the U.S., another six in Canada and South America, ten in Europe, one in Africa (Egypt), one in the Middle East (Jerusalem), one in Australia and the rest in Asia.

The Lodge presently has some three hundred and fifty "charter" members. Less than one fifth of the members are really active in the organization; they are the ones who maintain the Colleges, conduct research, and manage the funds of the Covenant.

Most charter members are Immortals, but, over the years, other beings have been accepted into the ranks of the Covenant. Almost all of them are unaging or long-lived people -- a couple of Magicians (former Rosicrucians) with large Essence capacities, some Seers who have learned how to stop the aging process, and even a couple of Vampyres. To qualify under those circumstances, however, the non-Immortal must have performed some great service for either the Covenant or an influential Immortal, and the application requires the approval of the Lodge Masters themselves.



The Secret Masters

One of the most popular Immortal myths is the belief that a remnant of Atlantean civilization survived the Flood. According to the legend, these Secret Masters escaped destruction by hiding in some remote or obscure area. Some tales name the Himalayas as a possible hiding place; others, the North or South Pole, the Amazon Jungle, or the Heart of Africa. The Lodge has organized a number of expeditions to those areas, looking for answers. Most returned empty-handed. A few did not return, prompting new rumors and speculation. Perhaps the missing Immortals encountered the Secret Masters, and were destroyed or recruited by them. No expedition returned with any concrete proof of the existence of a current Atlantean civilization.

The UFO craze of the 1950s provided more food for thought. Some of the glowing vessels described by witnesses appeared to resemble Atlantean Thought Ships (see p. 125), which many had seen in their visions. In some cases, the ships proved to be Thought Ships -- except that they had been built by Immortals who had "remembered" some of the lost arts of Atlantis. These Makers had no more knowledge of the Secret Masters than anyone else -- or so they claimed, the more paranoid Immortals would whisper to each other.

So far, the Secret Masters remain a myth, a tale to excite young Immortals and to make older ones shake their heads with amusement. A few remain obsessed with the idea, and they risk their lives (and, sometimes, the veil of secrecy that protects the Immortals) to try to find these elusive beings.

In addition to the full members, the Lodge employs a small army of research assistants, servants, bodyguards and security officers, secretaries and so forth. Most of them are wholly ignorant of the true nature and purpose of the Lodge, but many know the truth -- they couldn't perform their duties otherwise. Many of the more loyal servants are given Ambrosia (see p. 124) as a gift, greatly extending their life spans; several employees are in their late fifties and sixties, but look half as old.

Allies and Enemies

Although all Lodge Members are required never to reveal themselves to humanity, this prohibition does not fully extend to other Covenants, all of which must also hide from the mundane world. Generally, however, Immortals prefer not to get involved with these groups unless absolutely necessary.

The Wicce and the Twilight Order: Contacts with these groups have been minimal at best.

The Rosicrucians: This Covenant had some contacts with the Lodge shortly after its foundation, and some Immortals still remember the powerful and somewhat arrogant mages they met. Contacts since then have been relatively scarce.

The Cabal of Psyche: Some Immortals remember the Elders of the Cabal, many of whom have lived for centuries or even millennia. The Lodge respects the Cabal's power and admires their staunch non-interference. The two groups work together once in a while, although their interests lie in different areas.

The Sentinels: This group is avoided like the plague. To most Lodge members, they embody their greatest fear, hunters of the supernatural who may target Immortals simply because they are different. Fortunately, since most Immortals do not prey on human beings, they rarely have reason to fear the Sentinels' wrath.



The Knights Templar and the Combine: Some Undying have encountered both the Templar Order and its mortal enemy. Immortals who try to set themselves up as rulers of nations and peoples have almost always come to grief at the hands of either or both of these groups. The Lodge Masters realize that if their existence becomes public, the Combine will become the Covenant's worst enemy, so they do their best to keep a low profile.

Other Covenants: Typically, contacts are limited and sporadic. Some Immortals belong to the House of Thanatos (see *Mystery Codex*, p. 125), for example, and scholars from both groups have on occasion corresponded, but most members have no idea that the other Covenant exists.

Lodge Stories

Immortal games can span centuries and mix intrigue and mysticism with straight adventure. In many cases, however, the Lodge does not play a central part in the games. Most Lodge members lead their own lives and use the Covenant mainly as a social club. Most challenges and dangers come from outside -- ancient feuds between two Immortals, or between an Immortal and a supernatural creature, for example. Most Lodge-centered games deal with the quest for the past -- searching for more information about Atlantis, and learning more about its incredible sciences. The Covenant has facilities to allow Makers to devise new, wonderful toys. Often, their experiments yield disastrous results.

The Rampage: A new Immortal has been found -- but this newest addition to the ranks of the Undying is a serial killer, a soulless monster who had already committed multiple murders before his Change, and who now has gone on a terror spree. The Lodge needs to find and stop the killer, lest he be captured by the authorities and his Immortality discovered.

The UFO Caper: A rash of UFO sightings is plaguing the Cast Members' hometown. The vessel in question appears to be an Atlantean Thought Ship. Is it a lone Maker playing with his new toy, or a vessel of the Secret Masters, performing some secret mission? Whatever it is, the ship has attracted a horde of Men in Black, and perhaps some Templars to boot.



The Lodge in Armageddon

Some Immortals believe that Leviathan tried to manifest on Earth once before, and that Atlantis fought its minions in the final war that led to the Flood and the fall of the Elder Kingdoms. This appears to be borne out by the fact that the Church of Revelations kills any Immortal it captures, with no exception or hesitation. The Lodge was ill-equipped to fight a war, however, and it has been basically absorbed by the Alliance -- the surviving Lodge Masters agreed unanimously to turn in all its documents and artifacts over to the Alliance, to be used against Leviathan and its minions.

Immortal Treasure Hunter

For a hundred years, you have traveled to exotic locations, visited ancient ruins, and searched for rare and unique items. Even before you knew you could not die, you had been fascinated by ancient peoples, and had become an accomplished archeologist just at the dawn of modern archeology. When your Immortality manifested itself, it gave you a new goal -- to discover the sites of prehistoric civilizations, of kingdoms that dwarfed Egypt and Sumeria both in age and accomplishments.

So far, you have only discovered tantalizing hints of the Elder Kingdoms -- an ancient sculpture of a Thought Ship in Iraq, fragments of a Crystal Skull inside an Akkadian ceramic vase, a bas-relief that might represent Atlantis in a Mayan ruin. Some of your other discoveries have been more disturbing than rewarding, however -- tales and inscriptions of strange beings from other realities. There are things that even Immortals fear, and yet you cannot stop looking for more.

Origins

You were the younger scion of a British aristocratic family. Since your early childhood, you were fascinated by tales of ancient civilizations, and you soon became an amateur archeologist, digging for the ruins of Roman forts in your family lands. As soon as you were able, you secured passage to the Middle East, where the real history was.

Many adventures later, your Change took place, an event you mistook for some exotic disease. Not too long afterwards, a Kurdish tribesman ran you through with a dagger -- and you didn't die. Frightened and confused, you eventually met an old hermit who had lived in the same patch of desert since the times of the Persian Empire. He taught you a few things about your heritage, and gave you some clues as to where to look for more. A few years later, you were inducted into the Lodge. You continue to do what you love best, and you have been doing it for decades.

In recent years, you have discovered a great deal of information about the Mad Gods, inscriptions and drawings that worry and disturb you. Some of your ancestral memories seem to recall a great struggle between the Atlanteans and vast beings of immense power and unknowable purposes. You feel you are fated to participate in a new phase of that struggle.

Allies and Enemies

You operate mainly with other Lodge members, both mortal and Immortal. Your discoveries about the Mad Gods have led you to both the Sentinels and the Mockers, and you have some tenuous contacts with them. The same research has also earned you the enmity of a mysterious cult that has tried to kill you at least twice.

Roleplaying the Character

You have spent a hundred years going from dig to dig, looking for questionable antique dealers, and matching wits with criminals, unfriendly natives, rival treasure hunters, and, more recently, insane cultists. You seek both knowledge and thrills, although you'd probably only admit to the first goal. Your recent discoveries have shaken your self-confidence somewhat, but you are still determined to carry on, no matter what obstacles fate puts in your way.

* This character has been created using the Optional Skill Point Generation System (WitchCraft, p. 55). If using the basic system, 12 skill levels must be dropped.



WITCHCRAFT

Name

Association

Lodge of the Undying

Concept

Daredevil, Seeker of Knowledge

CHARACTER
POINTS

SPENT

UNSPENT

CHANNELING
LEVEL

Primary Attributes

STRENGTH

4

INTELLIGENCE

4

DEXTERITY

4

PERCEPTION

2

CONSTITUTION

4

WILLPOWER

3

Secondary Attributes

LIFE POINTS

50

ENDURANCE POINTS

35

SPEED

16

ESSENCE POOL

71

Gifted

Qualities

Point

Age

5

Increased Essence Pool

5

Immortal

15

Nerves of Steel

2

Good Luck 1

3

Drawbacks

Point

Adversary (Dark Cult)

0

Code of Honor

2

Obsession (Discover Atlantis)

2

Reckless

2

Skill

Level

Brawling

3

Dodge

4

Driving (Car)

3

Gun (Pistol)

3

Hand Weapon (Knife)

3

Humanities (Archeology)

4

Humanities (History)

4

Language (Arabic)

1

Language (French)

1

Language (Greek)

1

Language (Latin)

1

Language (Spanish)

1

Skill

Level

Occult Knowledge (Immortals)

2

Research/Investigation

3

Stealth

3

Streetwise

2

Survival (Desert)

1

Swimming

1

Power

Level

Awareness

Battle Boost

Spirit Voice

Common Immortal Power



Solitaire Group: The Berserkers

This is less an organized Covenant than a Solitaire-extended tradition of magic. The Berserkers are a grouping of skin-changers and the occasional true feral that flourished in the Scandinavian countries during the Dark Ages and then all but disappeared. Less than a hundred Berserkers remain in the world, scattered as individuals or in small groups, rarely aware of more than a handful of others of their kind. About half of them can be found evenly divided between Western and Eastern Europe, one fourth in North America, and the remaining spread over the rest of the world. Many Berserkers avoid large cities and towns, preferring to live in forests and other remote locations. Of late, this is beginning to change, however.

History

Berserkers became relatively commonplace during the Viking era, when warriors and traders from the northlands swept over Europe. They were Norsemen who had learned the secret of skin-changing, and used it to become terrible warriors. Berserkers were respected and feared, but not loved. They were mercenaries with no clan or family affiliation, shunned by most folk when their services were not needed. When Christianity swept over Europe and the

Old Gods were relegated to the status of demons or evil spirits, most Berserkers were hunted down and killed. Always resented for their bullying and brutal ways, they found all hands raised against them. The few survivors retreated into the wilderness of Europe, where the majority eventually died without passing on their lore. A tiny remnant carried on their traditions, however, and survived to this day.

Organization

The Berserkers have no formal organization whatsoever. Each practitioner has his own code, students, and lore, although most of them fall into a general pattern: little magic is known outside the prerequisites for skin-changing, and strength and combat skills are prized above most other qualities. Some Berserker groups value honor and respect for life, while others sell their services to the highest bidder. Membership is mostly restricted to Gifted humans; a few Ferals have also joined.

Allies and Enemies

Some Berserker individuals or small groups have been absorbed by the Nomad Covenant. Beyond that, relationships with other Covenants are determined on a case-by-case basis. The Sentinels persecute any violent Berserker gang, for example. A few Wicce Covens with Germanic or Nordic influences also admit Berserkers into their midst.

Lore

The two Feral Shapes commonly known are Wolf and Bear, and usually each group knows one or other, but not both. Beyond that, and the Invocations needed to achieve the change, the Berserker lore is very limited. The only known Invocations are Insight, Shielding, Spirit Mastery (Wolf or Bear Spirit), and Warding. Other Gifted powers are all but non-existent.

Berserker Characters

Typical Berserker characters are Lesser Gifted, with a handful of Feral and other Gifted or Supernatural beings thrown in. The more mercenary Berserker gangs may allow Undead, Fey beings, and other creatures into their group, provided they are fierce fighters and willing to take risks.

Chapter Five: Metaphysics



Mel Gallouly had become a private investigator at age twenty-one, dropping out of college to do so. At the time, he had thought it would be an interesting, lively profession. Ten years later, he was considering abandoning his vocation and finding something more satisfying — the Post Office, perhaps.

Most of his job was spent in front of a computer nowadays, checking credit information, following up social security numbers, and handling assorted clerical work. Only occasionally did he take the field, invariably in the employ of a jealous spouse trying to find proof of infidelity.

This latest case, however, appeared to be everything young Mel had dreamed of. It had an unnamed, mysterious client who insisted on meeting him in the strangest places — an airport parking lot the first time, an abandoned warehouse the next, and now a motel room way out of town.

It had an even more mysterious subject: Jessica Sanby, an attractive woman in her thirties who worked as a secretary for a local newspaper. Except that secretaries rarely had Ph.D.'s in Archeology and Paleontology. It was even rarer for the secretary to live under an assumed name, Jessica Sanby having allegedly died in a freak car accident six years ago. Something weird was going on.

Mel's employer had sent him on the trail of one Jennifer Harrison. The P.I. had soon discovered that Harrison was an alias, her social security number belonged to a dead woman of that name, and that the current Ms. Harrison had seemingly sprung out of nowhere six years ago. Clearly a case of someone getting a new set of papers, using a dead woman's name and vital stats. The plot thickened.

Mel had gotten "Harrison's" fingerprints. A contact with the FBI had found her true identity — the Sanby persona. Ms. Sanby had a criminal record, a couple of arrests and one conviction, all from political activism during her college years. Still, like Harrison, Sanby was supposed to be dead. Definitely a cover-up of some kind going on here.

The mysterious employer had wanted Mel to dig deeper, and he had. It appeared that Ms. Sanby had faked her death shortly after a trip to Greenland. Some former colleagues remembered her babbling about some ancient ruins she had found in Greenland, which she claimed were millions of years old. Mel was no expert, but that sounded kind of nutty, and apparently Ms. Sanby's colleagues agreed.

So now Mel was in front of the motel room, a nice package of pictures, transcripts, letters and other information on the little madwoman. Maybe the mysterious employer was some relative trying to get her committed.

The quiet, stiff-faced man let Mel in, and listened silently while the detective went over his information. "And Ms. Sanby/Harrison has few friends," he concluded. "She hangs out at a soup kitchen on weekends, so I guess you might count some bums as friends."

"Do you have their names?" the man said.

"Well, no. I didn't think that you cared about some homeless . . ."

"I don't pay you to think!" the man shouted. "I need names! I need places! You give me nothing I didn't already know!"

"Calm down, buddy," Mel said firmly. He had dreamed of this moment — the time when he would Lay Down the Law on an Unreasonable Client. "First, you don't yell at me. Second, if you want me to put her under 24-hour surveillance, I'm going to need some serious cash-ola. Third, I'm going to need more information. What's this dame done that you have such a hard-on for her?" Cool — I even said "dame," he thought.

The man was looking at him strangely. "I think," he said in a very hoarse voice — he must have strained his vocal cords pretty badly — "that your usefulness has come to an end."

Great, Mel thought. I just got fired. "Hey, why don't . . ."

Any further words were choked off when the man, moving surprisingly fast, grabbed Mel by the neck with one hand. His grip was like a metal vise. Mel sputtered, flailed at the man uselessly, and was lifted off the ground, still grabbed with but one hand. He looked at his tormentor, and tried desperately to scream in horror.

His employer had changed. Little writhing limbs were bursting through the skin of his face. Thin, slimy blood ran down from the openings. "You shouldn't have made me angry," the creature said, its voice utterly inhuman now. "Really, really shouldn't." Mel's vision started to swim. He was going to pass out any —

The motel door burst open, and there stood Ms. Sanby. "I followed your hound back to you, Rochester," she said coldly. She extended her hands, and they grew to twice normal size. Claws the size of switchblades tore through the tips of her fingers. The mystery employer — Rochester? — flung Mel aside like a rag doll and . . . tried to run away. Ms. Sanby sprang on him, hissing like a cat, and started tearing pieces of him with her huge claws.

Mel was no fool. As soon as he found an opening, he ran out the door, into his car, and out of the P.J. business. The incident haunted him for the rest of his days, but he never told anybody, not even his fellow postal workers.

Introduction

This chapter discusses a number of new Gifted powers: the Keys of Solomon, Tainted Powers, and Spirit Patrons. It also details Voodoo practices, explaining the common lore and knowledge of the school that blends magic and necromancy.

The Keys of Solomon

King Solomon was said to have the power to bind and control all types of spirits and entities. The Knights Templar have that long-lost knowledge, and they use it in their war against the Combine. The Keys are the final achievement of the wizard-king Solomon. They are Essence patterns, requiring a spoken mnemonic component to be triggered. The Keys are not Invocations; they do not require rituals or Channeling to release Essence to empower them. What they are exactly is not commonly known. They may be the True Names of spirit beings. They could be basic elements of reality, more fundamental than Invocations. Some Keys allow their wielders to duplicate Inspired Miracles; others grant protection or dominion over spirit beings.

Acquiring Keys

Of all known Covenants, only the Knights Templar have access to the Keys of Solomon. The Rosicrucians have known of their existence for some time, but have failed to discover a way to duplicate their effects. Renegade Templars rarely live long enough to teach any new disciples, although it might be possible to have a small Solitaire group founded by such a renegade, with access to the Keys she knew (rarely more than three or four). The Templars have also discovered that some Combine agents know the Keys. Whether the knowledge was tortured out of Templar captives or acquired by some other means remains unknown, however.

In game terms, each Key costs 6 character points during character creation, and 12 points when purchased with experience points.

Using Keys

Activating the Keys requires one Turn of concentration and the expenditure of Essence, which varies according to the specific Key activated. A Simple Willpower Test is also necessary, with a +2 bonus if the character is in no immediate danger, and a -2 penalty if the character is in the middle of a fight or other stressful situation. If the Test is failed, the Essence is spent and nothing happens. With success, the desired effect takes place. Unless otherwise specified, the effects of all Keys last for five minutes; while the Key is active, the Essence spent in activating it cannot be regained through Essence Channeling or other means.

Unlike Invocations, Keys must use the character's personal Essence Pool. The character is basically reweaving her own Essence matrix into a special pattern. For the most part, the Key's benefits affect only the person invoking them. Also unlike Invocations, Essence Channeling is not necessary to activate the Keys; the necessary Essence can always be released, as long as it is available.

The Nine Common Keys

The nine Keys listed below are known to the majority of the Templar Covenant. It is rumored that there are four more (bringing the total to 13), but only Master Templars are allowed to learn them, and they first must have all nine Common Keys. The powers of the Greater Keys are rumored to include eternal youth, near-invulnerability to conventional attacks, and the ability to survive the wrath of the most powerful Seraphim.

Key of the Dead

With this Key, the Templar gains a measure of mastery over the spirits of the dead, and some resistance against the powers of the undead. Activating the Key costs 15 Essence Points. A character protected by the Key has a +3 bonus to all attempts to control and summon Ghosts, Phantasms and other spirits of the dead. Furthermore, the character receives a +2 bonus to resist any ghostly or undead power that can be resisted. Spirits of the dead and the undead feel uneasy and uncomfortable in the presence of the protected character. They often seek to attack the wielder if possible, but a -2 penalty is applied to all combat Tasks.

The Elemental Keys

Each of these four keys (Air, Earth, Fire and Water) must be acquired separately, but their effects are similar enough to be listed under one heading. Their wielders achieve a degree of mastery over the element represented by the Key.

Activating an Elemental Key costs 15 Essence Points. While the Key remains active, the character gains a +3 bonus to all attempts to control and summon elementals (the character must have a power or Invocation that allows such attempts, of course). Furthermore, the character takes half damage (or suffers half the effects) from attacks based on the designated element, whether natural or supernatural in origin. For example, a character protected by the Key of Earth would take half damage from rocks, metals (including bullets) or the fists of an earth elemental, while one protected by the Key of Water could survive twice as long underwater, and take half damage from water or liquid attacks (like acid). Finally, elementals are loath to attack the protected character, and must pass a Simple Willpower Test every Turn they are in a combat situation with her to avoid fleeing her presence.

Key of Life

This Key focuses the character's Essence into herself, augmenting her body's natural healing properties to supernatural levels. Activating the Key requires the expense of 15 Essence Points. While the Key is active, however, the character regenerates damage at the rate of 3 Life Points per Turn, and has the equivalent of 5 levels of Hard to Kill (cumulative with any existing levels of that Quality). Furthermore, if the character touches a wounded person and concentrates on healing him, the victim gains 1 Life Point per Turn for as long as the healer maintains physical contact and the Key remains active.

Key of Seraphim

The wielder of this Key has great power over angelic beings (including the Seraphim, Kherubim, Qliphonim, Fiends and Ethereals). Angels and demons alike have cause to fear a Templar wielding this power.

Activating the Key costs 25 Essence Points. The wielder gains a +5 bonus to all Tasks or Tests to resist the powers of the Seraphim, and a similar bonus to any Spirit Mastery Task to control or banish them. Furthermore, neither Celestial nor Infernal fire can harm the character, and angelic or demonic beings suffer a -3 penalty to any combat Tasks while fighting the protected character. Finally, the wielder can use her Essence as a weapon against those beings; each Essence Point channeled for that purpose inflicts D6(3) points of damage to the Seraphim's Life and Essence Pools. No aggressive or defensive Tasks or Tests are needed -- the damage is simply applied to the target.

None of the powers of the Key work against any beings other than the Seraphim and their ilk. Seraphim confronting a wielder usually react in one of three ways: become submissive and appeasing, flee the scene, or try to slay the character as quickly and messily as possible.

No Templar is given the knowledge of this Key until she has achieved the rank of Knight of the Lance and mastered no less than two other Keys.

Key of the Spirit

This key affects all nature spirits. Activating the Key costs 15 Essence Points. The character has a +2 bonus to all Tasks involved in controlling, summoning or banishing those spirits, and gains a +1 bonus to resist their powers. Spirits can still attack the wielder directly, however.



Key of War

When this Key is activated, at the cost of 20 Essence Points, the Templar is infused with tremendous martial power. Occultists that have seen it in action believe it is roughly equivalent to the Strength of Ten Miracle -- which opens the door to questions as to the origin of both the Key and the Miracle. Are both -- or neither -- expressions of the Divine, or simple manifestations of Essence?

In any case, while the Key is active, the wielder gains +3 to Strength, +1 to Dexterity, and +1 to Constitution (these bonuses incidentally raise the character's Life Point pool by 16 points). Additionally, the character will not be stunned or suffer any wound penalties, and can fight on, no matter how much damage she has taken, until she fails a Survival Test (see WitchCraft, p. 150), at which point she simply expires.

Augmenting Powers

Many Gifted and Supernatural powers increase the beneficiary's Attributes, often to superhuman levels. While most characters rarely have access to more than one such power, it is certainly possible that some will have two or more. This leads to the question of whether all those attribute bonuses "stack," allowing for insanely high attributes.

Suppose a character somehow ends up with Mindhands, the Solomonian Key of War, and the Inner Strength Tao-Chi power (see Mystery Codex, p. 173). The player joyfully announces, "My character activates the Key of War, uses Inner Strength for another +3 Strength, and adds her Mindhands Strength of 6, so when I punch the cultist, I have a +12 to my Strength!" This will no doubt disrupt even the most carefully wrought story.

In most WitchCraft games, augmenting powers should not be allowed to stack their benefits. Instead, the largest bonus from a single power applies -- in the example above, the character would get a +6 to her Strength by focusing her Mindhands into her punch. The remaining augmentations have no effect on Strength level. (If they have other benefits not related to Strength, those remain applicable.)

On the other hand, if the Chronicler chooses to run a superhero-style game where characters can have attributes in the teens and twenties, then allowing players to "stack" bonuses might not be unbalancing. This is entirely a choice for the Chronicler.

All in all, characters in WitchCraft should specialize in a few different abilities, rather than getting numerous powers at low levels and then trying to mix them together for maximum benefits. Such rules manipulation goes against the mood of the setting, and against realism; after all, a student of magic should find it difficult or impossible to master martial art powers and develop psychic powers at the same time.

Voodoo Magic

Voodoo is the magical religion of the Americas, a unique mixture of the beliefs and mysticism of many different cultures. Described below are the common powers and lore exhibited by practitioners. Voodoo is above all an inclusive mystical system: whenever a practitioner -- a houngan or Santero -- finds something that works, she will adopt it for her own uses if at all possible. A houngan's workshop may include crucifixes, pentagrams and athames side by side with the traditional vever drawings, rattles and fetishes.

The description below applies equally to the Covenant of Legba, the Red Path Society, and the hundreds of independent Voodoo and Santeria mini-Covenants that can be found throughout the Caribbean, parts of the U.S., Europe, and Western Africa.

Basic Powers

Houngans always have a combination of Magical Invocation and Necromantic abilities. The typical beginning practitioner has the following abilities, at Level 1 or greater. They are normal Invocations and Necromantic powers; they simply represent the basic knowledge most Voodoo practitioners are expected to have. Chroniclers may allow exceptions for individual characters, of course, reflecting either individual choices, or perhaps rushed or interrupted training.

Warding Invocation

Blessing Invocation

Necromancy Skill

Death Lordship

Death Speech

Like the Wicce, the practitioners of Voodoo in WitchCraft are fictional creations loosely based in actual practices. Voodoo, Santeria and Candomble are real life religions with millions of followers. Nothing in this book, or any other WitchCraft product, is intended to belittle or mock such deeply held beliefs.

Thus, a minimum of 12 Metaphysics Points must be spent on the basic Voodoo "lore."

Common Voodoo Lore

These Invocations, along with all Necromantic Powers, are commonly learned by Voodoo practitioners. They are normal Invocations, described in the WitchCraft main book. There is nothing special about them; they simply reflect the normal "curriculum" most Voodoo teachers follow. Character do not have to know them all, but they are more likely to know these Invocations than any other, and their selection should include at least several choices from the list below. When new Invocations are taught, most teachers first insist on training in these Invocations before moving on to others.

Cleansing
Consecration
Lesser Curse
Lesser Healing
Shielding
Spirit Mastery (Ghosts)
Spirit Mastery (Nature Spirits)
Spirit Mastery (Voodoo Gods)



Voodoo Patron Gods

The Gods of Voodoo (also known by some as “Saints”) are entities of great power. These beings were (and in some places, still are) worshipped by the peoples of Western Africa. Some of the slaves brought to the Americas secretly kept worshipping them, often combining their beliefs with Christianity and renaming their gods after Catholic saints. Most Voodoo rituals and Invocations call upon those deities to a lesser or greater degree. A few hounsans are able to be “adopted” by those gods, acquiring a “patron” god (or saint) or “guardian angel.” To have a Patron God is a two-way street, however; the character gains a number of special abilities, but usually must honor and obey his patron, or risk losing those abilities and even incur the wrath of his benefactor. The rules of Spirit Patrons can be found later in this chapter (see p. 104).

Greater Invocations

The following Greater Invocations are generally available only to houngans of the highest levels of mastery. It would be highly unusual to find them practiced outside the Voodoo tradition.

Mount of the Gods

Prerequisite: Spirit Mastery (Any Voodoo Deity)

This Invocation calls forth one of the deities of the Voodoo pantheon and sends it forth to possess a "mount." Under some circumstances, this can be the magician himself. First, the magician must summon the god in question; this is resolved as a normal Spirit Mastery Invocation. When the deity has arrived, the magician can direct it toward a person (anybody within the caster's line of vision, including the caster herself). Most Voodoo gods are more than willing to manifest themselves in this world – overcoming the will of the mount is a job for the caster, however.

Become Mount

The Santero may also call the gods unto herself, gaining the powers of the mount, while retaining a measure of self-control. This costs 15 Essence Points, and lasts for 1 minute per Success Level in the Focus Task. The caster gains the physical bonuses of possession, but remains in control. If the "rider" wishes to do something badly enough, the magician may have to struggle for control. This requires a Difficult Willpower Test every Turn she is being ridden by the deity. On a failure, the god is in control and the caster becomes another mindless mount. Using this Invocation in a way that goes against the deity's interests is a sure way to make a formidable Adversary.

Create Mount

The houngan must spend 10 Essence Points and win a Resisted Task -- the Focus Task of the magician versus a Simple Willpower Test by the victim. Gifted and supernatural beings can replace the Willpower Test with any powers or Gifts that resist mental domination, possession, or other similar mental and spiritual attacks; the Shielding Invocation -- in any form -- automatically causes this Invocation to fail.

If the houngan wins, the victim is possessed by the deity for 1 minute per Success Level in the Focus Task. During that time, the god is in full control of the victim. Most Voodoo deities spend that time cavorting and enjoying the pleasures of the flesh, be it dancing, eating and drinking in prodigious amounts, or engaging in other pursuits. If an inimical entity is nearby (Seraphim of both inclinations, the Mad Gods, the servants or Avatars or most European Old Gods, among others), the possessed victim attacks. The possessed victim has +3 to Strength and double her normal Life Points. She may exhibit other powers if the gods find it necessary; this is up to the gods (the Chronicler) and the circumstances. Treat those special abilities like Spirit Patron Boons (see below).

While possessed, the mount has no control of her body, and may have little or no recollection of events that transpired during this experience.

Zombie Mastery

Prerequisite: Spirit Mastery (Ghost) or Necromancy/Death Lordship 3

This Invocation is generally used only by the followers of the Red Path (see p. 61), although some of the more ruthless followers of Legba and many independents also know it. This is the power to imprison the spirit of a dead person and force it back into her body, creating an undead servant. Not all Zombies are created in this way; some are the victims of mundane drugs and cruelty, while others are simple spirits bound by a ruthless necromancer. The Zombies created and controlled with this Invocation are the true Undead Zombie, physically powerful, nearly indestructible and able to pass as a normal human for short periods of time.

Create Zombie

To create the Zombie, the magician must have a bound spirit and access to the spirit's former body (usually, this entails a bout of grave-robbing, although in some rituals the victim is killed in a secure location first). Twenty Essence Points are spent in the ritual that binds the spirit back into the body, and the spirit resists with a Simple Willpower Test versus the caster's Invocation and Willpower Task. If the magician wins, the spirit is returned to the flesh, and rises in three hours as an Undead Zombie (see pp. 148-149). The Undead is bound to the caster for 1 day per Success Level in the Focus Task. At the end of that time, a new ritual is required, or the Zombie's soul is released or -- more rarely -- the Zombie becomes independent of its creator.

On a failure, the Essence of the Invocation must be Dismissed, or the caster suffers the effects of an 18-Essence Lesser Curse (see *Witchcraft*, p. 218), or, at the Chronicler's discretion, the visitation of an angry Ghost or Phantasm (see *Mystery Codex*, Chapter Three: Inhumans), who uses the un-Dismissed Essence against the caster.

Symbols and Items of Power

Practitioners of Voodoo often use the following Symbols and Items of Powers.

Animal Sacrifice: Some Voodoo magicians use animal sacrifices in their rituals -- they see nothing wrong or barbaric about this, much like a non-vegetarian sees nothing wrong or barbaric in enjoying a juicy steak. Small animals (fowl, goats and the like) are the usual sacrifices. They are usually killed swiftly as a ritual step. A ritually-killed animal provides D10(5) Essence Points for an Invocation. Those practicing in the U.S. should note that the authorities take a dim view of such practices, and will arrest, fine or imprison those caught conducting ritual sacrifices.

Asson: This mystical rattle is made of a gourd and filled with snake bones. Building one from scratch requires the necessary components, and two days of ritual preparations. At that time, 2 Success Levels in an Intelligence and Craft (Woodworking) Task, 3 Success Levels in an Intelligence and Rituals (Voodoo) Task, and the expenditure of 10 Essence

points are necessary. Once it is created, the Asson provides 2 Essence Points to any Invocation or Necromancy Task, provided it is used for at least 1 Turn (this involves chanting and rhythmically shaking the Asson). The Asson is completely ineffective with those magicks that require a personal Essence Pool expenditure.

Dance: Voodoo practitioners (and members of other magical schools) perform ritual dances. These elaborate movements can be used to gather Essence in rituals, although their benefit is slight to characters with Essence Channeling. Such a dance must take no less than five minutes. At the end of that time, the character can attempt a Dexterity and Fine Arts (Appropriate Dancing Type) Task. For every level of success, the character gains 1 ambient Essence Point that can be used in a ritual or Invocation. Characters without Essence Channeling also raise 1 point of their own personal Essence for similar use. This can be repeated; every additional 5 minutes allows for an additional Task. Every 5 minutes, however, the character loses D6(3) Endurance Points, which cannot be regained until the character stops and rests -- if the character collapses from exhaustion before performing a ritual, all the gathered Essence is lost.

Vevers: A Vever is a Voodoo ritual aid. It consists of an elaborate drawing or painting made with powders, paints and oils. Ingredients range from flour to gunpowder, and the drawings are very elaborate symbols of the gods and forces of Voodoo. Vevers can be drawn on the floor or on walls. They can be used to "fix" magic on a location, or even an individual; sometimes Vevers are drawn over a person's body during a healing (or sacrificial) ritual, for example.

In game terms, a Vever requires the Fine Arts (Drawing) and the Occult Knowledge (Voodoo) skills. It provides 3 Essence Points for any normal Invocation, and 10 points for a summoning or banishment Invocation. Many Vevers include a Circle in their design -- those Vevers gain an additional 5 or 10 Essence Points (see *WitchCraft*, p. 204).

Spirit Patrons

One of the basic principles of magic is the forging of a relationship between the magician (or shaman, or witch doctor) and a spiritual entity. These entities include such beings as Guardian Angels, the Genius of Roman religion, nature spirits, the deities of the pagan pantheons and, in the case of Black Magic, demons or the Mad Gods. The relationship varies widely, depending on the goals of the magician and the entity, and the "terms" of the exchange. Some entities grant power in return for services, or for an oath of servitude at a later date. Others are content with the worship of the character, or aid the supplicant because she is pursuing an agenda that serves the spirit's purposes. The motives of these patrons are as varied and muddled as those who forged the bond.

Dealings with spirits can be treacherous and dangerous. Some entities cheerfully betray humans at a moment's notice. Many Covenants, the Rosicrucians among them, always prefer to deal from a position of strength, controlling and binding spirits rather than "making deals" with them. Among the worst of the lot are the Fallen Seraphim, who always seek to corrupt and enslave those who summon them. Still, elementals, spirits of the dead and the Old Gods also sometimes take advantage of such dealings in unexpected ways. The Mad Gods always exact a terrible price for any boons they confer, and payment is usually due sooner rather than later. Patrons can offer great power, however, and many Gifted accept the risks and consequences inherent in such deals.

The relationship between a character and a Spirit Patron is defined by the Boons conferred by the Patron and the Obligations due in return. Boons are special powers: additional Essence, superhuman physical abilities, and even magical abilities. Obligations range from simple demonstrations of respect to binding oaths of service or sacrifice.

Gaining a Patron

Forging a relationship with a being of power is not an easy undertaking. First, a means of contacting the patron is necessary. Magicians with the proper Spirit Mastery Invocation have the easiest time making contact, but magical abilities are not the only path. Necromancers can easily contact the dead. Seers may try to make contact telepathically, and so on. In theory, anybody with the Gift may be able to contact spirit beings. In practice, contacting some spirits requires specialized knowledge. The name of the spirit is often needed; knowing the True Name of certain entities can confer enormous power over them, but since those names are rarely known, the common or given name of the entity is used. Also, most Patrons only forge a bond with people who will help advance the entity's agenda in some way. Contacting the spirit is not enough; most entities exact some price from the recipient, often a price that is higher than most people are willing to pay.

Sometimes, it is the Patron who approaches a worthy candidate. This person might have even been a mundane, normal human until some experience brought her into contact with the supernatural. Near-death experiences, a supernatural event (or even witnessing such an event), or an act of devotion are situations that might attract a prospective Patron's attention.

In game terms, a Spirit Patron is a Supernatural Quality, acquired by the expenditure of Quality or Metaphysics Points. To find the value of the Spirit Patron, total up the value of the Boons (special powers given by the Patron) and Obligations (the tasks or gifts required to appease the Patron). Obligations reduce the value, while Boons add to the value. No matter how many Obligations are taken, however, the Boons' cost cannot be reduced below one half their original cumulative value.



Spirit Patrons, Miracles and the Creator

The most powerful Spirit Patrons available are the Seraphim and the Old Gods. The Creator cannot be a Spirit Patron. In fact, the Inspired rarely take Spirit Patrons, and when they do, they are restricted only to the Seraphim and Ethereal. Even then, for some reason, any patron-bestowed powers do not work when an ongoing Inspired Miracle (like Divine Sight or Strength of Ten) is active. Also, no Obligations that control the Inspired character's behavior can be taken; the Inspired must always have free will.

Combining Patrons

It is possible to have more than one Patron, but the risks increase radically. Unless the two Patrons share very similar or identical goals, they will resent the divided loyalties of the bonded. Even two gods of the same pantheon are unlikely to accept such arrangements. For the most part, Boons granted by one Patron do not work while Boons from another Patron are active, but all Obligations remain in effect. If the two Patrons have a conflict of interest at any time, the character risks losing one or even both of them.

Spirit Patrons in Your Game

Spirit Patrons can be abused if the Chronicler does not keep a firm rein on the roleplaying aspects of this mystical relationship. The players should always remember that Patrons are not simply a source of powers, but represent serious responsibilities as well. Spirit Patrons are usually not generous, gullible, or even strictly fair. A slight or offense, real or perceived, may cause them to withdraw their favor or even to punish the vassal. Gods and spirits can be petty, unreasonable and vindictive. They are always on the look out for their interests -- many Patrons adopt a "what have you done for me lately" attitude. Characters should often have to choose between serving their best interests and following the dictates of their Patrons.

Evil or malicious Patrons are not recommended for Cast Members, as their goal will be to inflict misery on the character and those around her. They work best for Adversaries or Supporting Cast, unless a tragic storyline is being developed. Demons and the Mad Gods eventually destroy and consume those who traffic with them; make it clear to the players that this will be their characters' ultimate fate if they follow that path.

Spirit Patrons and Supernatural Creatures

Spirit Patrons are not restricted to Gifted humans, although most supernatural beings are somewhat restricted as to the types of Patrons they may have. Outlined below are some of the guidelines for the supernatural races of WitchCraft and Armageddon.

Bast: The feline shapeshifters can have any Spirit Patron a human can. They are favored by the Egyptian pantheon, especially so by the feline goddess after whom they are named.

Vampyres: The night stalkers can forge bonds with several spirits. Nature spirits tend to avoid the undead, however. Demons often deal with them, in an attempt to lead them into final damnation. Some Vampyres, due to their connection with the afterlife, can become the servants of a number of Death Deities. Ghosts or Phantasms, on the other hand, rarely accept the Undead as clients, either out of jealousy of their incarnate state, or out of fear of the Vampyres' connection to the spirit realms.

Relentless Dead: Almost no entity accepts Relentless Dead as vassals, with the exception of a few deities of war and vengeance and the odd animal spirit. The Chronicler should only allow such bonds to be forged if the player can come up with a very good reason.

Ferals: These shapeshifters can and often acquire Spirit Patrons, anything from nature spirits (especially of their Animal Totem) to a number of Old Gods. For example, members of the Nomad Covenant (see p. 68) enjoy the protection of the Moon Gods. A number of Ferals are able to perform Invocations thanks to this bond.

True Immortals: The reincarnated Atlanteans described in this book are unable to forge bonds with spirit entities. Their transformation into supernatural beings has somehow cut them off from the spirit realms.

Armageddon: Avatars and Inheritors can have Spirit Patrons. They are usually limited to their original pantheon, although not necessarily the same god. Seraphim and Kherubim, and their Fallen counterparts cannot have Spirit Patrons of any kind. Neither can the Nephelim.

Boons

These are benefits that Spirit Patrons can provide. Boons cost character points, which count towards the point total of the Spirit Patron Quality. The list below mentions some of the most common Boons granted by Patrons. Unlike normal Gifted powers, Boons come from an outside source, and they can be rescinded, limited or lost much more easily.

Immortality

This misnamed Boon confers near eternal youth, and may also grant supernatural resistance to injury and incredible recovery powers. It does not shield the character from all harm. The cost of the Boon varies with the number abilities attached to it, as listed below. So, a boon of Longevity (2 points), Fast Regeneration (6 points) and 2 levels of Hard to Kill would be worth a total of 10 points.

Longevity: The character's life span is greatly increased. Aging progresses at one tenth the normal rate. Cost: 2 points.

Forever Young: The character's aging process stops altogether. Cost: 4 points.

Regeneration: The character regains 1 Life Point per Constitution level every minute. Cost: 2 points. Alternatively, the same amount of Life Points are regenerated every Turn. Cost: 6 points.

Hard to Kill: This Boon works just like the Quality of the same name (see Witchcraft, p. 78). Boon levels are cumulative with any normal Quality levels of Hard to Kill the character has, to a maximum of 8 levels total. Cost: 1 point per level to a maximum level of 5.

Life Touch

This healing touch allows the character to cure injuries and diseases in herself or others. This Boon heals 2 Life Points for every Essence point spent (the maximum amount of Essence that can be spent in 1 Turn is equal to the character's Willpower, unless the character has Essence Channeling at a higher level). Cost: 3 points.

Magicks

The Spirit Patron grants the character the ability to perform Invocations. In this case, the character does not learn the spells or rituals involved, but the knowledge is magically granted by her Spirit Patron. This is a powerful Boon, which allows even beings who cannot learn magic normally (like Ferals) to use Invocations. In game terms, the value of the Magicks is equal to the cost, at character generation, of the Invocation and Essence Channeling levels granted by the Patron. For example, if Insight 2, Soulfire 4 and Essence Channeling 3 were gained, the cost would be 4, 8 and 6 respectively, for a total of 18 points.

Necromancy

This Boon gives the character the ability to contact and control the dead. This gift is usually granted by the Death Gods. The cost of this Boon is equal to the cost, at character generation, of the levels of the Necromancy Skill and the Necromancy Powers granted. So, if Necromancy 4 and Death Vessel 2 were bequeathed, the cost would be 8 and 6 respectively, for a total of 14 points.

Other Gifted Powers

Most other Gifted abilities are never given out as Boons. Powers like Tao-Chi, the Disciplines of the Flesh, Divine Inspiration, the Keys of Solomon and all Seer Powers are intrinsically human abilities that are not within the power of outside beings to give or take away. The only exception is Taint. The Mad Gods often "reward" their followers with Taint powers; no other entity will have anything to do with Taint, of course.

Power

One of the most common Boons, Power gives the character extra Essence that can be used as if it were part of the character's Essence Pool. The amount of Essence given is available for a day, and does not renew itself until midnight or noon each day (one or the other); unused Essence is lost. Whether the renewal occurs during the day or night is usually determined by whether the entity is night/moon-oriented or day/sun-aligned, although there are exceptions. Use common sense: spirits of the dead and the nature spirits of nocturnal animals are night-oriented, while most plant spirits are day-oriented unless otherwise specified.

The cost of this Boon depends on the amount of Essence granted. Each 15 Essence Points given by the Spirit Patron costs 1 point.

Prophecy

The character can glimpse the future, or receive illuminating visions about the present. These visions or flashes of insight strike without warning, leave the character stunned for several seconds and drain her of D10(5) Essence Points. Most prophetic visions deal with grave dangers that threaten the character (or her Patron's interests), approaching momentous events (good or evil), and similar significant situations. Cost: 3 points.

Qualities

Some Spirit Patrons bless their charges with Qualities, usually physical or supernatural in origin. A common example of this is beauty (Appearance and Charisma bonuses). Some spirits may also grant social qualities, especially Resources. These Qualities are listed under the Special Boon entry in the entity's description. The cost is equal to the point costs of the Qualities at character generation.

Spirit Speech

Through this Boon the Spirit Patron can (and often does) communicate directly with the bonded. It is commonly given by minor and middling Patrons, but is very rarely granted by the more powerful ones (like most gods, who have better things to do than have chats with mere mortals). Remember, even good advice can be given in mysterious or ambiguous terms if the spirit is hostile or malevolent. Also, the spirit provides information to the best of his knowledge -- it may be flat wrong in some circumstances.

If the Spirit Patron can say whatever it pleases, and only helps the character when it desires, this Boon costs 1 point. If the Patron usually gives good advice, this Boon costs 2 points. If the Patron is obligated to give advice that serves the character's best interests, this Boon costs 3 points.

How often the communication is available also adds to the cost. Of course, the patron may decide to speak more often than the limits given below, in the Chronicler's discretion. If communication occurs once per week, no points are added. If communication can happen as often as once a day, the Boon costs an additional 1 point. If the character may contact the Patron as often as once every hour, it costs an additional 3 points.

Vigor

This is a temporary increase in the character's physical Attributes. The maximum bonuses available are +6 to Strength, +3 to Dexterity and +5 to Constitution. These bonuses affect Life Points, Endurance Points and Speed, but not Essence Points. Once activated, the Boon lasts for 1 minute or the duration of a fight -- whichever is less. Activating this Boon requires a Simple Willpower Test. If the Boon is requested more than once per day, each additional request is at a cumulative -1 penalty (i.e., the second petition is at -1, the third at -2, and so on). Cost: 1 point per +1 bonus (so, +1 to Strength would cost 1 point, while +2 to Strength, +2 to Dexterity and +2 to Constitution would cost a total of 6 points).

Obligations

Outlined below are some of the Obligations commonly demanded by Spirit Patrons. These are the demands Spirit Patrons make in return for their Boons. They have a negative point value, just like Drawbacks, but they don't count towards the Drawback limit. The extra points can only be used to "pay off" the point cost of the Boons granted by that Patron. Even if the Obligations are worth more than the Boons, the character gains no extra points; furthermore, Obligations, no matter how extensive, cannot reduce the Boon cost below half their value. So, a Spirit Patron that offered 10 points in Boons and -10 points in Obligations would still cost 5 points.

Many Spirit Patrons demand no specific Obligation, but withhold or even remove any Boons granted if the character behaves in ways the entities consider offensive or inimical.

Beholden

At the lesser level, the Beholden character can be used by the Spirit Patron as a source of information. The deity or entity can see through the character's eyes or use any of her other senses to perceive what is going on around her. The Beholden can detect this intrusion by passing a Difficult Perception Test. If successful, she knows the entity is using her senses. Trying to stop the entity requires a Difficult Willpower Test at -2. If successful, the contact is severed for 1 hour per Success Level. Note that attempting this, whether successful or not, may offend the Patron and cause the character to lose any Boons granted. Cost: -3 points.

At the greater level, not only can the Spirit Patron use the character's senses, it can also seize control over the character! The Beholden can try to resist by passing a Difficult Willpower Test at -1. If successful, she retains control for 1 hour per Success Level. If she loses, the entity seizes control, and the character's actions are in the hands of the Chronicler. During that time, the Beholden is aware of what her body is doing, but she has no control over it. These intrusions are generally brief (no more than an hour), but there are always exceptions. Cost: -5 points.

Conditional Boons

These Obligations apply directly to all Boons granted by the Patron, restricting their use to situations where the Patron considers them appropriate.

Limited Portion of the Day: The Boon works only at night, or during the day, for example. Cost: -2 points. Something more limiting (1 hour a day, one day a week, during the Full Moon, and so on) is worth -4 points.

Only Works Against Enemies of the Patron: The Boon can only be used against people, entities or institutions that the Patron hates. Cost: -1 point.

Only Works in the Service of the Patron: The Boons can only be used to further the ends of the Patron. The Chronicler is the final judge as to whether a given course of action is deemed acceptable. Cost: -2 points.

Gifts of Kin

This is a euphemism for the sacrifice of living beings, animals or humans. The actual creatures and rituals involved vary greatly from Patron to Patron. Typically, domesticated animals (chickens are a common victim) are demanded. Human sacrifice is the domain of evil entities, including demons and the Mad Gods. Cost: -1 point if animals must be sacrificed at least once a month -- the actual animals involved, and the frequency of the sacrificial ritual is determined by the Chronicler. Cost: -2 points if human sacrifice is demanded.

Gifts of Kind

This is a material gift of some sort. Food, money, precious metals, even drugs, alcohol and tobacco can be used as gifts. The gifts must be sacrificed (destroyed) in an offering to the entity. Apparently, some beings (like Ghosts) can actually make use of gifts sacrificed to them in this manner. If a week goes by without the proper offerings being made, the character loses her Boons unless the Patron is somehow convinced to give the character some time to make amends. Cost: -1 point for every \$100 or so that must be offered to the entity every week.

Gift of the Soul

This is the classic "Soul Sale" -- the character pays for her powers with her immortal soul. It may seem like a good bargain when the Boons acquired include Immortality, but the few deities evil enough to demand such payments have been known to arrange things so they can collect a lot sooner than expected. If the character dies (i.e., a failed Survival Test, before any attempt of resuscitation is made), the soul is immediately seized and transported to the Realm of the entity in question -- in the case of the Fallen Seraphim, a certain hot and uncomfortable place in the Death Realms. There, the character is tormented, enslaved or even totally devoured, depending on the predilections of the Patron. Cost: -4 points.



Oath of Duty

The Spirit Patron demands that the character work in furtherance of the spirit's goals. The entity's enemies become the character's enemies, and they must pursue the same goals. A deity dedicated to Justice will require that the beneficiary punish the guilty and protect the innocent. A demon, on the other hand, will demand that the character works towards the corruption of the innocent and the destruction of all ideals and hope. Note that even if this Obligation is not acquired, the character is always expected to act in ways favorable to his Spirit Patron. Cost: -1 point (for a duty that takes at least ten hours a week for perform) to -4 points (a highly dangerous duty that consumes most of the character's time).

Oath of Servitude

Similar to the Oath of Duty, this Obligation implies that the character will be given orders that must be obeyed without question. The communication may come directly (if the character has the Spirit Speech Boon) or indirectly (in the form of dreams, visions, getting tomorrow's paper delivered every morning, talking animals, and so on). If the character does not obey the orders, she loses her Boons, and is further punished in some way. The frequency of those orders determines the price. Cost: -1 point (once a month), -2 points (once a week), or -4 points (once a day).

Qualities and Drawbacks

In some cases, Patrons demand certain behaviors from their followers, or only bestow their gifts to characters with the appropriate personality traits. These traits can be acquired as normal Qualities and Drawbacks (for example, a trickster god might only accept characters with the Clown Drawback, while a deity of love might only bestow gifts upon characters with a high Attractiveness level). Cost: as per normal character generation costs. More than an Obligation, they are prerequisites, and use the normal Quality and Drawback point pools.

Spirit Patron Descriptions

A comprehensive list of possible Spirit Patrons would easily fill a entire book or two. Outlined below are several Spirit Patrons with a list of possible and restricted Boons and Obligations, and one fully developed Spirit Patron to serve as a template for the development of others. Some Spirit Patrons have their own unique Boons and Obligations. They are noted in individual entries.

Nature Spirits

Nature spirits usually demand respect and reverence, and those who are blessed by them must try to protect Nature from the depredations of mankind. Animal spirits tend to favor characters whose behavior or traits reflect those of the spirit -- a Bear spirit is more likely to forge a bond with a large, hulking character, while a Rat spirit will be more receptive to the entreaties of a city-wise, cunning person.

Common Boons: Power, Vigor and Spirit Speech. Invocations: Cleansing, Communion, Lesser Healing

Special Boons: Summon Animal Spirits (as the Feral power, see p. 38).

Common Obligations: Conditional Boon (Any), Oath of Duty (defend nature, 1-2 points). Often no actual Obligation is demanded, so long as the character is appropriately reverent.

Elementals

Elementals are most often found as Familiars or bound servants, but the more powerful of their kind can be acquired as Patrons. These beings are very strict about their dealings with humankind, and they expect that all promises and agreements be kept to the letter.

Common Boons: Invocations (the appropriate Elemental Invocation), Power.

Special Boons: The character takes half damage from attacks from the appropriate element. This is worth 3 points for Fire and Earth (which applies to all metals and minerals), and 2 points for air (all gases) and water (liquid poisons and acids).

Common Obligations: Gifts of Kind -- lighting fires (fire), releasing aromatic substances (air), offering precious rocks (earth) and performing a libation (ritual pouring on the ground) of expensive drinks and liquid substances (water), Gifts of Kin (sacrifice of small animals using the element). Often, the elemental demands no specific Obligation.

Old Gods

In the world of WitchCraft, the pagan gods of old are entities similar to the Seraphim, who tried to set themselves up as the rulers of humankind in ages past. Some are benevolent, if paternalistic, while others are profoundly selfish or outright evil. Each god has its own agenda, Aspect, sphere of influence and power. Described below are a number of Voodoo gods, and the two Lunar Deities that the Nomad Covenant follows. For the sake of Armageddon players, the Aspects of those deities are also given here.

The Voodoo Pantheon

Ayida-Wedo

Ayida-Wedo is the serpent goddess of wisdom, and the consort of Damballah (see p. 112). Those who worship her can gain help in the practice of magic, and her advice is not to be despised. She manifests herself as a glowing serpent, or a beautiful woman.

Aspects: Wisdom and Magic.

Common Boons: Spirit Speech (2 or 3), Power, Prophecy, Invocations (Any).

Common Obligations: Beholden, Gift of Kin (small animals), Oath of Duty.



Baron Samedi

The good Baron is one of the Voodoo Death Gods, often depicted wearing a top hat and white make-up, and given to shouting obscenities and laughing insanely. A jester as well as a god of the afterlife, the Baron is loved by few and feared by most.

Aspects: Death and Trickster.

Common Boons: Power, Spirit Speech, Vigor, Necromancy (all powers).

Common Obligations: Conditional Boon (only at nighttime), Gift of Kin, Oath of Servitude.

Special Obligations: Devotees to the Baron must have a morbid and biting sense of humor; characters with the Humorless Drawback never gain his favor. Common Drawbacks for his followers include Cruel and Clown.

Damballah

The male serpent god of Voodoo, Damballah embodies wisdom, love and luck. He is represented as a glowing serpent, a living river, or a wise man with a serpentine tongue.

Aspects: Fertility, Luck and Wisdom.

Common Boons: Spirit Speech, Life Touch, Power, Invocations (Any).

Special Boons: Good Luck, Charisma.

Common Obligations: Beholden, Gift of Kin (animals), Oath of Duty.

Special Obligations: Damballah does not accept dullards or characters with bad luck. Characters with an Intelligence below 3, or the Bad Luck or Cursed Drawbacks need not apply.

Erzuli

Erzuli is a multifaceted deity, representing womankind in its most sensual and brutal aspects. She is a deity of love, and the goddess of scorned women seeking revenge. Passion, both carnal and spiritual, is her domain. She often manifests as a beautiful mulatto woman, appearing either in a state of lust, or anger and madness.

Aspects: Fertility and Vengeance.

Common Boons: Vigor, Life Touch, Invocations (Affect the Psyche, Lesser Curse, Lesser Healing, Death Curse).

Special Boons: Attractiveness, Charisma.

Common Obligations: Oath of Servitude.

Special Obligations: Erzuli favors those who have been wronged by lovers, people obsessed with revenge, and other passionate (and unstable) people.

Legba

Also known as Elegua, this god of crossroads, magic and justice is one of the leading deities of the Voodoo pantheon, and the patron deity of the Covenant of the same name (see p. 60). Legba appears as an aging man with surprising strength. As the god of gates and passageways, he also monitors the spirit world, and to have his favor is to be able to travel through the Sephiroth of reality.

Aspects: Wisdom, Magic, Justice and Crossroads.

Common Boons: Power, Prophecy, Spirit Speech, Vigor, Invocations (Any, but especially Spirit Mastery, Gateway, and Walkgate)

Special Boons: Good Luck.

Common Obligations: Beholden, Conditional Boon (Only against Enemies of Justice), Oath of Duty (Fight Injustice and Supernatural Predators, usually worth 2-3 points).

Special Obligations: Legba does not bless anybody who is not Honorable, or anybody who behaves in an unlawful and criminal manner.

Oggun

This god of war and strength is quick to anger, rash and impulsive. He is often depicted as a bloodied warrior, armed with a sword, machete or other cutting implement -- bladed weapons of all kinds are considered sacred to this deity.

Aspects: Might and War.

Common Boons: Immortality (mainly Regeneration and Hard to Kill), Vigor.

Special Boons: Any combat-oriented quality (Fast Reaction Time, Hard to Kill, Situational Awareness).

Common Obligations: Beholden, Gift of Kin (animals).

Special Obligations: Oggun does not accept weaklings or pacifists in his ranks. His proteges must have a minimum Strength of 3 (before any bonuses), and at least two weapon skills (including one hand-to-hand weapon) at level 2 or higher. Impulsive characters are also more likely to gain favor with this god.

Shango

Shango is the Voodoo god of fire, and also the patron deity of fire and firearms. This fiery god is quick to anger and violence, and often revels in wanton destruction. He often appears as an axe-wielding warrior, surrounded by a flaming aura.

Aspects: Fire and War.

Common Boons: Power, Vigor, Invocations (Elemental Fire).

Special Boons: Any combat-oriented quality (see Oggun, above).

Common Obligations: Beholden, Gift of Kin (animals), Oath of Duty (Never avoid a fight, 2-3 points).

Special Obligations: Devotees of Shango should have at least one combat skill at 2 or above, especially something dealing with fire or explosions, from Guns to Demolitions.

The Lunar Gods

Nannar and Ningal are the male and female Sumerian gods of the Moon. They are the beacon of light that guides humankind through periods of darkness, and they stand watch against the monsters that hunt in the night. They were a source of wisdom, as well as deities of fertility whose influence dates back to the discovery of agriculture. The consort gods and their agenda are described in Chapter Four: Associations (see p. 68).

Aspects: Fertility and Wisdom.

Common Boons: Life Touch, Power, Invocations (Any). They provide a +2 bonus to Ferals wishing to resist their bestial side.

Special Boons: Charisma and Good Luck.

Common Obligations: Oath of Duty (Fight supernatural predators, 2-3 points).

Special Obligations: None.

Spirits of the Dead

Some of the most powerful Ghosts and Phantasms can become Spirit Patrons; these beings are much more powerful than the typical spirit of the dead, however. The Ghost and Phantasm character types in Mystery Codex are mere shadows of those beings. Ghostly Patrons have refined their powers over millennia, until they can challenge the gods themselves. Most of them are major players in the Death Realms, who use their patronage to extend their influence in the world of the living. People who take such patrons risk incurring the wrath of the Grim Reapers and other beings from the Sephiroth of Geburah (see Mystery Codex, p. 181).

Common Boons: Power, Spirit Speech, Vigor.

Special Boons: None.

Common Obligations: Beholden, Gift of Kin, Oath of Duty, Oath of Servitude.

Special Obligations: None, but characters are likely to gain powerful Adversaries.

Seraphim

The Seraphim occasionally recruit worthy mortals for service in their secret war against the machinations of the Fallen. It appears that the Seraphim are usually unable or unwilling to do the "dirty work" themselves, leaving it to lesser versions of themselves (the Kherubim and Ethereals), or, preferably, devoted (or fanatical) human agents. These agents must be very religious, monotheistic -- Seraphim show a strong preference towards Catholics and Sunni Muslims, but Protestants, Jews and Shi'ites are also recruited -- and, interestingly enough, must not be Divinely Inspired. Servants of the Seraphim work in small groups, each with different agendas and goals. Some of these are large enough to count as Covenants, and will be described in future WitchCraft sourcebooks.

Common Boons: Immortality (except Forever Young), Life Touch, Prophecy and Vigor.

Special Boons: Any Physical Quality. Resources, Status and Influence are also granted on occasion, to provide tools in the battle against agents of corruption.

Common Obligations: Oath of Duty (Foil the plans of demons and their cohorts), Oath of Servitude.

Special Obligations: Most servants of the Seraphim are Zealots.

Demons

The Fallen Seraphim, contrary to popular opinion, rarely traffic in human souls. The sad, fairly obvious fact is that anybody who tries to sell his soul to the Devil is pretty much damned anyway, so there is no sense in buying what has been given away for free. The few truly Damned people who gain any powers from the Infernal Legion are those who are willing and able to ensure the corruption of others, especially in great numbers. Their bargain is not for their soul (which is forfeit in any case), but for the souls of oth-

ers. Their job is to deceive and morally destroy as much of humankind as they can. Their task is often depressingly easy, although they sometimes have to contend with Gifted warriors and avengers, and the minions of their hated rivals, the Seraphim.

Common Boons: Immortality, Life Touch, Power, Vigor, Invocations (Any).

Special Boons: Any Physical Quality, and Social Qualities like Influence, Resources, Status and Contacts. The Damned can be enormously wealthy and powerful.

Common Obligations: Oath of Duty (to damn as many humans as possible), Oath of Servitude.

Special Obligations: Only the most depraved, sadistic and jaded humans play the game of Damnation, or destroying the souls of others. By the time they have gained most of their power, the Damned realize they lost the game before they started, and their only concern is to forestall the inevitable as long as possible.

The Mad Gods

The Mad Gods are less of a Patron than an infection, a contagious cancer that eats away at its victim's flesh and sanity and replaces it with a something in its own image.

Becoming the servant of a Mad God means the eventual loss of anything that makes one human.

Common Boons: Immortality, Vigor, Invocations (any, but using Taint instead of Essence).

Special Boons: Taint Powers (see below).

Common Obligations: Beholden.

Special Obligations: Characters under the influence of the Mad Gods are no longer in control of their actions. The only imperative that truly matters is bringing those beings to this world, and the character's entire life and efforts are devoted to that end.



Madness: Taint Powers

The physical and metaphysical worlds of WitchCraft are primarily creations of Essence, much like the physical universe is primarily composed of matter (as opposed to anti-matter). Angels or demons, good witches or bad witches, predatory Vampyres or indifferent elementals -- they all have one thing in common: they all are creatures of Essence.

Taint is something else altogether.

As a force, it is the polar opposite of Essence. Essence creates or transforms. Taint ultimately destroys, or creates things that cannot survive long in this universe. Taint seems to come from beyond Creation. Some of the more monotheistic students of the occult scoff at this, believing that if Taint exists, it must have been made by the Creator, and set apart from our universe for some ineffable reason. To others, this proves that this universe (both material and spiritual) is but a piece of a larger puzzle, perhaps part of something no one, god or mortal, can ever really comprehend. A third school of thought believes that at the moment of Creation -- as all matter emerged out of potentiality during the Big Bang -- there was a struggle between Taint and Essence. Essence won, and Taint was removed beyond its borders, appearing only as short-lived intrusions that, like cancers, kill their hosts and die with them.

Whatever its source, the Mad Gods are entities of pure Taint. Their powers are phenomenal, but under normal circumstances, they are barred from crossing over to our reality. Their lesser creatures make more frequent forays, but they too are not equipped to survive here for long. Then there are the unfortunate humans who have been corrupted with Taint. Being creatures of Taint and Essence, these transformed men and women are more durable and reliable tools of the Mad Gods.

The powers listed in this section have a twofold purpose: they can be used by Chroniclers to develop Tainted Adversaries for her games, or they can be used to create Tainted Cast Members. Only one major Covenant (the Mockers) has Tainted members in any numbers. Most Covenants view Taint as a disease to be eradicated. For the most part, they are right. Only the Mockers and a handful others have developed a way to retain some of their sanity and self-volition intact.

Effects of Taint

Taint is more than "bad" Essence. It is inimical to all reality, twisting both its wielder and the world around her. A Tainted person's perceptions are altered; food may become nauseatingly repulsive, and normally pleasant smells might feel unbearably vile -- or vice versa. For most of the afflicted, this goes further, perverting basic instincts and emotions. Hate and suffering become pleasurable, while love and pleasure turn disgusting or painful. The worst part is that this is not a direct inversion of senses and feelings -- such a complete reversal would have its own internal logic, and would be easier to handle. Instead, the effects are random. Eating chocolate could be a repulsive experience one time, a source of overwhelming sexual pleasure the next, and pure torment the one after that.

The Chronicler should visit those sudden attacks of surreality with some regularity. Often, but not always, Taint also changes the person's body. The more Taint the character has, the more likely it is the character's body will show outward signs of corruption. Some of the most powerful Taint wielders are no longer even remotely human, having become living avatars of their masters. They must live in hiding, attended by groups of fanatical but less deformed followers.



Taint Effects

The list below provides some examples of the surreal consequences of having Taint in one's body. Again, at the Chronicler's discretion, this may vary. Above all else, Taint effects should be unpredictable and disturbing. Most of these effects are temporary, lasting from a few minutes to a number of days.

Aural Resonance: The character starts emitting a low, unpleasant buzzing sound. It is really not at the right pitch to be heard by humans, but animals (dogs especially) feel pain from it. People instead feel the resonance through their bodies, which disturbs and annoys them, but they do not fully understand why.

Minor Temporal Distortion: Time warps in slight ways around the character. This effect covers the character and an area of one yard (meter) around him. If the roll is even, time runs faster within the "bubble;" on an odd roll, it moves slower. The distortion is minor, a 20% variation, but enough to be noticeable.

Visual Inversion: The character sees everything in black and white, like a photograph's negatives. Any Task requiring color perception is unlikely to succeed, and the character has a -1 penalty to visual Perception Tasks or Tests.

Death Aura: Small animals and plants (insects, potted flowers, and the like) die if they come within one foot (0.3 meter) of the character.

Marks of Taint

These marks are likely to occur on characters with more than 30 Taint Points in their Pool (note that some Tainted humans can reach 100+ Taint Points while still appearing wholly human). Cast Members can acquire them as Draubacks (their value counts toward the character's Drauback limit). Also, whenever the character gains more Taint (and she already had 30 or more Taint points in her Pool), the Chronicler may require a Simple Willpower Test. On a failure, the character gains a Taint Mark.

Taint Marks: These dark signs start appearing on the character's skin. To the mundane, they look like colorful tattoos, although looking at them makes the viewer nervous and uncomfortable. To those with sharper senses, the marks seem to glow with Taint, clearly identifying the character as someone with a connection to the Mad Gods. Cost: -1 for a single mark that can be concealed under clothing; -2 for a mark that is harder to conceal (on the head or face of the sufferer, or covering an extensive area of his body); -3 for marks that are impossible to conceal (total body tattooing).

Hideousness: The character's face and body starts looking less and less human, becoming unattractive at first, and then reaching grotesquely inhuman levels. This is treated as negative Attractiveness levels, which can go as low as -10.

Tainted Skin: The skin of the Tainted character starts acquiring inhuman traits. Scales, rough textures, cold, corpse-like complexions -- all this and more is possible. Cost: -1 for features that are disturbing but not wholly inhuman -- people may think the character has a skin condition, was burned severely, or owes her condition to some natural event; -3 for something wholly inhuman that can only be partially hidden by heavy clothing and bad light.

Growths: Unnatural protuberances -- horns, boils, or lumps start appearing on the character. Some Tainted are completely covered by these deformities. Cost: -1 for small, easy to disguise marks; -2 for things that require bulky clothing or hats to hide, -4 for deformities that prevent the character from showing herself in public.

Tainted Limbs: Tentacles, insectoid legs and other inhuman limbs appear on the character's body. Usually, these appendages are useless; they either hang limply or twitch uncontrollably. Cost: -1 for tiny limbs that appear in one or two clusters on the character's body and can be hidden under heavy clothing; -2 for larger limbs that can only be covered under a trench coat or a cloak; -3 for clearly visible limb clusters (on the character's face, or so large they are unmistakable).

Decay: The character's flesh starts to rot under the Taint's influence, and she reveals leprosy-like symptoms. Unlike true leprosy, however, the character retains all her physical abilities. In time, her appearance eventually becomes utterly monstrous.

Cost: -1 for an unhealthy pallor, noticeable but not wholly inhuman; -3 if the character's flesh starts to rot -- noses and ears may fall off; -5 if the character is hideously disfigured; much of her flesh has sloughed off her bones, and only her Taint keeps her alive.

Anchors

Most people exposed to Taint die, go completely, inescapably insane, or are corrupted beyond redemption. The Mockers are among the few that somehow managed to retain a shred of humanity; there are a few others, but not many. The difference is a powerful desire, obsession or emotion -- an Anchor -- that allowed them to resist sinking into insanity. Some possible Anchors are anger, fanaticism, friendship, love, and revenge. As long as that emotion or desire persists, the character has a chance to resist the tidal urges of Taint.

In game terms, an Anchor is purchased as like a Special Skill, and is used with Willpower to resist the negative influences of Taint. The player must decide what passion or obsession acts as her character's Anchor. Generally, the characteristic involves a Mental Drawback worth at least -2 points; possible examples include Delusions, Obsessions, and Zealot. In most cases, an Anchor and Willpower Task is required when the character uses Taint powers extensively (more than three uses in the space of a few minutes, for example), or whenever indicated under a specific Taint Power (see below). On a failure, the character accumulates at least 1 Madness Point.

Madness Pool

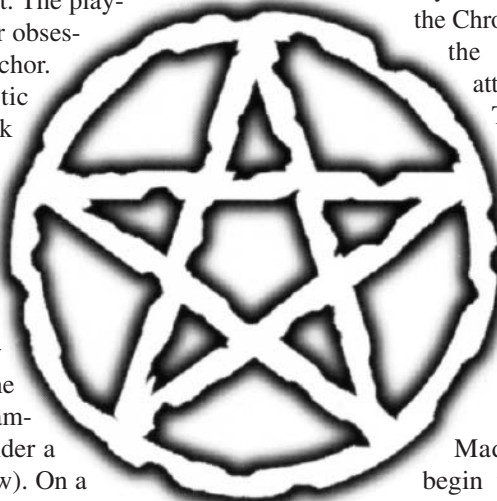
Tainted characters are always courting insanity. In game terms, they have a Madness Pool, a measure of the mental effect of their exposure to the Otherworldly corruption of the Mad Gods. Characters start with a Madness Pool equal to 1/20th of their Taint Pool, rounded down. Additional Madness Points are gained in the course of the game, mainly as the result of failed Anchor and Willpower Tasks. Other situations, like close encounters with Mad Gods and their minions, may cause further gains in Madness, typically in the 1-4 point range.

This pool can be diminished in some cases. Neither psychotherapy nor conventional psychiatric drug treatments work, but the character may be rid of some of their burden by undergoing what the Mockers call Catharsis, a time during which the character gives free rein to her darker side, temporarily exhausting it. Catharsis is risky proposition, for both the Tainted character and those around them. The Mockers handle this by restraining the character, and using a combination of drugs and mental techniques to temporarily break the character's self-control. At that point, the Tainted one goes berserk, indulging (or attempting to indulge) any and all lusts and urges she normally keeps repressed. She may easily harm others while the berserk state lasts, usually D4(2) hours. If this happens,

she may lose one level of her Anchor skill, at the Chronicler's discretion. At the end of the Catharsis, the character can attempt a Willpower and Anchor Task. If successful, she loses D4(2) points of Madness, plus one for every Success Level in the Task. The Madness Pool can never be reduced below 1/20th of the character's Taint Pool, however.

Effects of Madness

As the character gains in Madness, her mental faculties begin to suffer. When the Madness Pool is higher than double the character's Willpower, she gains a 1-point Mental Drawback, often a Delusion or Obsession, or an enhanced version of an existing Mental Drawback. Every time the Madness level rises to another multiple of Willpower (Willpower x 3, Willpower x 4, and so on), the character gains another point worth of Mental Drawbacks. Finally, when the character's Madness is greater than Willpower x 20, the character is overcome by Taint -- she ceases to be a Cast Member, and becomes a slave of the Mad Gods, under the Chronicler's control. The character does not gain any Drawback points from these mental problems.



Taint Qualities

To gain any of the Taint Powers listed below, the character must have the 5-point Taint Quality and at least one level of Taint Pool and Taint Channeling. The Tainted automatically gain a number of basic powers -- Tainted Healing, Tainted Shield, and the Unveiling -- and can acquire additional powers.

Taint

5-point Metaphysical Quality; Prerequisite: Gift

The character's soul bears the dark marks of the Mad Gods. She is no longer completely human -- or even completely from this reality. To the Gifted, her aura has an unusual, somewhat disquieting glow. Those who see deeper may react with hostility. Furthermore, attacks that normally drain Essence (like Soulfire) inflict Life Point damage, as the Essence in the attack reacts explosively with the character's Taint.

Characters with this power automatically gain one level of Taint Channeling and a Taint Pool with 5 points. Additional levels can be purchased as described below.

Characters with Taint cannot use Essence for any supernatural ability. They may practice Magic and other metaphysical arts, but must fuel them with Taint Points instead. As a result, many doors are closed. Summoning Invocations only work on creatures of Taint, for example -- normal spirits and elementals never answer to calls from a Tainted one. It goes without saying that any Inspired Powers are lost at the first sign of Taint.

Taint Channeling

Varied Metaphysical Quality; Prerequisite: Taint

This is exactly like Essence Channeling, except it uses the exact opposite of Essence. The first level of Taint Channeling is free, gained automatically with the Taint Quality. Additional levels cost 2 points per level until level 5, and 5 points per level thereafter. Taint Channeling can be used to power Invocations, as long as Taint is used as the fuel. Such Tainted Invocations leave a strong (and, to most living beings noxious) psychic signature.

Increased Taint Pool

1/5-point Metaphysical Quality; Prerequisite: Taint

This is the amount of anti-Creation the character can hold. Tainted characters automatically start with 5 Taint Points; each additional 5 points cost 1 character point during character creation. After character creation, 2 Taint Points cost 1 character point.



Taint Powers

These powers cost 5 character points each during character creation, or 10 points in the course of a game. Most of these powers require no Tasks or Tests; all the character needs to do is spend the requisite Taint (limited by their Taint Channeling level), and the effect takes place.

Devolution

The most dangerous power of the Tainted is Devolution, the ability to temporarily transform oneself into the likeness of the Mad Gods or their servitors. The character's flesh and bone are turned into outer-dimensional matter, unnaturally strong and resilient. If wounded, the character does not bleed. Instead, a black, corrosive ichor oozes from any injuries. The Tainted one's perceptions are altered, with the world looking strange and surreal, an alien and hostile place.

All of Nature is arrayed against a Devolved one: animals try to flee or, if cornered, attack recklessly; people automatically feel fear and loathing towards her, for no apparent reason. Eventually, Reality itself rejects the Tainted one, causing her to implode violently into nothingness.

Using this power costs 15 Taint Points and automatically raises the character's Madness Pool by one point. The character can safely remain in Devolved form for up to one minute (12 Turns). Each Turn after that, a successful Anchor and Willpower Task is required, with a cumulative -1 for every Turn spent in that form. Failure results in the character gaining another Madness Point. After more than 2 minutes, the character must pass a Survival Test every other minute, or she is obliterated in an Essence backlash!

While Devolved, the character gains the following bonuses: +4 to Strength, +2 to Dexterity and +4 to Constitution (this also increases the character's Life Points by 32). All physical attacks inflict only half damage (this includes slashing weapons, bullets and other attacks that normally do double damage; use the basic damage roll, then halve it). Finally, the char-

acter gains a special attack (which may consist of claws, a striking extra limb, oversized mouth or other monstrous characteristic of the player's choice) that inflicts D6(3) x Strength points of slashing damage. Other than this characteristic, the character remains nominally human, but people and animals feel instinctively revolted and fearful around her.

Infection

With but a glance, some Tainted can infect others. This has a number of painful mental and physical effects. This power requires a Resisted Simple Willpower Test, or Willpower and the Infection Skill (see sidebar). If the Tainted wins, the victim suddenly has as much Taint as was spent in the attack.

Infection Skill

The Infection Power typically requires a Simple Willpower Test to overwhelm the victim's resistance. Some Tainted become practiced with it, and eventually develop a skill at using the power. In game terms, this is a normal skill (acquired and developed at normal point costs), which does not replace the Simple Willpower Test until the skill level is higher than the character's Willpower. The cost of the skill is above and beyond the cost of the power.

Being infected with Taint is a hideous experience. The victim feels pain, nausea and a generalized feeling of misery comparable to a nasty attack of the flu (or flying coach on a modern airliner). In game terms, the target has a -1 penalty for every 5 Taint Points (rounded up) in her system. This penalty applies to any mental Task or Test the victim attempts, including using Magic or other Gifted powers. Furthermore, the victim cannot regain Essence until the Taint has been purged from her system.

Getting rid of Taint takes some time, but is not difficult. Humans eliminate Taint at the same rate they regain Essence. For example, a character with 4 levels of Essence Channeling would “metabolize” the Taint at the rate of 4 points per minute, while a Mundane with a Willpower of 4 would shed Taint at the rate of 4 points per hour.

Negaphysics

This power allows the Tainted to violate or invert some laws of physics for brief periods of time, mainly gravity and kinetic energy. If successful, the character can force people to “fall” upwards by reversing gravity, to stop a bullet in mid-flight or even to have it reverse course, and perform incredible feats of strength. This power costs 5 Taint Points to use. Duration is usually brief (1 Turn). Some effects are detailed below.

Reverse Fall: The victim falls upwards for 1 yard (meter) per Success Level. If an obstacle is in the way, she takes normal falling damage on impact. The Tainted can also reduce damage from falls by 1 point level per Success Level.

Negate Impact: Physical attacks can be slowed down or stopped. Each Multiplier level in any such attack (a punch, a bullet, a speeding car) is reduced by 1 level per Success Level in a Simple Willpower Test. Once the Multiplier is reduced to 1, damage is reduced by a number of points equal to the remaining Success Levels. The Tainted character must be aware of the attack to use this ability.

Reorient Gravity: The character can decide which way is “up” for her. In this manner, the power can be used to walk on walls and ceilings as if they were the floor. Alternatively, the character can “fall upwards,” as per the Reverse Fall power, but in a more controlled way.

Deadlift: By removing inertia and gravity, the character can lift enormous weights temporarily. For 1 Turn, the character can move any object weighting up to 1,000 pounds (400 kg) times her Strength level with tremendous ease. Once the power’s influence is over, the object once again becomes subject to gravi-

ty and the laws of momentum. Used as weapons, the “lightened” objects are not very effective, however. They do a mere D10(5) points of damage per 1,000 pounds (400 kg) of weight. If they can be maneuvered to drop on someone, they inflict damage equivalent to Falling Damage (see WitchCraft, p. 143), but add +1 to the D6 roll for every 250 pounds (100 kg) of weight. So, a 1,000 pound (400 kg) object dropped from a 5-yard height would inflict $(D6 + 4) \times 5(35)$ points of damage.

Negalighting

This power is related to Negaphysics, but applies to electromagnetic forces. The Tainted can negate, reverse or twist the flow of electromagnetic currents, for a number of bizarre effects, the most common being the disruption or even destruction of electronic devices. Note that this is not actual electricity control, but the twisting or negation of the natural forces of electricity. This power costs 5 Taint points per use; effects usually last 1 Turn.

Lights Out: The character can cause any electronic device to cease working for a few seconds (1 Turn). This affects an area of 1 yard (meter) per Willpower level of the character, or a specific object up to 10 yards (meters) $\times$ Willpower away from the Tainted. The objects are not damaged, and resume working as soon as the effect passes. Any unsaved information in a computer is lost, however.

Magnetic Surge: A powerful magnetic field surges around a selected target, causing nearby metal to either be repelled or attracted with great power. If repulsion is chosen, any small metal object in the target (from guns and ammo to keys and coins) is flung away at great speed, ripping through pockets and pouches on their way out. The victim can try to hold on to an object in her hand by passing a Difficult Strength Test with a -12 penalty. If the target is near a large metal object (a car, or a bank vault), she is flung away instead. Treat this as Resisted Simple Strength Test, with the magnetic force having an effective Strength of 5.

If the target attracts metal, any small (under 1 lb/0.5 kg) metal object within 10 yards (meters) flies towards the target at near-bullet speed. The availability of metal objects is up to the Chronicler. This power is particularly devastating in hardware stores, construction sites, and the like, and fairly useless in the middle of a virgin forest. Damage ranges from D6(3) points (a few keys and loose change) to D6 x 5(15) slashing (a bucket of nails). Creative players may devise other uses for these powers; treat the magnetic force as having an effective Strength of 5 and an effect radius of 10 yards (meters).

Burn: The character can destroy one electronic device with a destructive surge that melts any circuits or transistors. Any one item within 10 yards (meters) of the character can be affected. The Taint causes the item to overheat, and the object may melt or even start electrical fires around it. People nearby suffer D6(3) to D10(5) points of electrical or fire damage. Some military or high-tech items have a chance to survive the effect. At the Chronicler's discretion, those objects resist destruction unless the Tainted character passes a Simple Willpower Test with penalties of -1 to -5, depending on the level of protection or hardening in the system.

Shield: The Tainted character can twist electromagnetic forces around her, providing her with some protection against metal and electrical attacks. This works like a force field with an AV equal to the character's Willpower x 10 against metal and electrical attacks. The shield works for only 1 Turn.

Tainted Touch

This power allows the character to heal D6(3) Life Points for every Taint Point spent. The character can heal herself or other Tainted people or creatures. Attempting to heal a normal person with this touch not only does not work, it inflicts 1 Life Point of damage for every Taint Point spent. In both cases, the character must touch the subject -- unwilling victims must be held down (a Resisted Simple Strength Test, with the victim gaining a +2 bonus) or restrained in some other manner.

Unveil

The Tainted can reveal their true nature at will, radiating their Taint so that its effects touch even those who lack supernatural senses, terrifying them. This unmasking also acts as a psychic shield, protecting the character from any power that affects the senses or the mind. The Unveiling costs 1 Taint Point and lasts 1 minute. While the character is Unveiled, she gains +3 bonus to resist any power that affects, attacks or probes her mind, from Mindsight to the Affect the Psyche Invocation. Each time the power is used, the Tainted must make an Anchor and Willpower Task to prevent gaining 1 Madness Point.

This power is anything but unobtrusive. People who see the character's face while Unveiled are confronted with fearsome images from their own minds, using whatever scares them most. This is their mind's reaction to seeing something they cannot fully comprehend. The victims must pass a Fear Test with a -1 penalty for every 10 points of Taint in the character's Taint Pool (use the total size of the Pool, not the current number of Taint Points).

Warpbolt

This is a blast of dark energy that can injure both body and soul. The blast does D6(3) points of damage for every level of the character's Willpower, at the cost of 1 Taint Point. If more Taint is spent, damage is increased at the rate of 1 Multiplier level per 2 Taint Points spent. The range of the Warpbolt is equal to 10 yards (meters) plus 5 yards (meters) per Willpower level. The attack Task uses Dexterity and the character's Magic Bolt Skill (see p. 25). Every time this power is used, an Anchor and Willpower Task must be passed at the end of the fight, or 1 Madness Point is gained.

Atlantean Arcana

The past life memories that many True Immortals share reveal a place where magic, psychic powers and technology became a bizarre whole. A few Immortals have the memories to recreate some of the super-science and alchemy of Athas, and are called Makers. The scholars of the Lodge of the Undying have come to refer to the processes as the Atlantean Arcana.

THIS SECTION TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER
THE ATLANTEAN ARCANAS RULES FOUND IN
THE FIRST EDITION OF ARMAGEDDON.

The Arcana use Essence to combine chemicals in ways unknown in conventional chemistry. The process appears to transform matter at the atomic level, allowing for impossible alloys to exist or to combine unstable or poisonous compounds into miraculous medicines. Apparently, the process only works for True Immortals, or involves a psychic process no one else has been able to imitate. A normal human who followed the steps of an Atlantean formula to the letter would end up with nothing more than a noxious mess.

Described below are a few artifacts that may be created using Atlantean Arcana. Whatever sciences and arts the Atlanteans had did not include mass-production techniques. Each artifact is a labor of individual craft, and takes tremendous amounts of time and effort, not to mention very expensive materials. Makers cannot produce these items casually or in great quantities. With the number of Immortals on the rise, the knowledge for producing such items is becoming more common, but that has not served to decrease their cost or value.

The cost on the main entry represents the number of character points that must be spent for the Maker to “remember” the formula (this includes the psychic process that makes it effective). Listed at the end of the entry are a number of artifacts that can be made with that formula, and the cost for an Immortal to own one of them. For a Maker to know how to make an item, and also own such an item, both costs must be paid. For example, knowing how to make Adamant weapons would cost 4 points; owning an Adamant sword costs 3 points; having both knowledge and weapon would cost 7 points. After character creation, the experience point cost to “remember” Arcana is equal to twice the normal cost.

At the Chronicler’s discretion, non-Maker characters with a good reason for owning one of these artifacts can acquire them, at double the normal point cost. Immortals belonging to the Undying Lodge are the most likely candidates. A character with a 3-point or more Immortal Contact (a friend or ally of hers, usually) would be another. Finding such an object during the course of a game would cost no points, but its previous owner is sure to object.

Atlantean artifacts are flashy and powerful items; they may not fit many WitchCraft games, and may be more appropriate for the Armageddon setting. They are still a part of the WitchCraft background, however, and for that reason they are included in these pages. Players and Chroniclers should remember that these artifacts, especially the larger and more obvious ones, are very rare and likely to cause trouble for their owners. The Combine is a lot more likely to flex its muscles in response to a rash of UFO sightings caused by the Cast Members, with often lethal consequences.

Adamant

Knowledge Cost: 4 points

This legendary metal is extremely hard and resilient, making it perfect for weapons and body armor. Adamant is almost indestructible -- its tensile strength is almost ten times that of the best industrial steels, and yet is supple and flexible, rather than brittle. That does not mean Adamantine armor makes its wearer invulnerable -- even if the armor survives unscathed, a large enough amount of energy (kinetic or otherwise) transmits itself through to the body behind it.

Adamant is made of a combination of iron, silver, copper and lead (the ratio is 3, 1, 2 and 4, respectively), mixed in a vat hot enough to melt the lead, and then cast into molds. A total of 15 Essence must also be spent for every pound (0.5 kg) of Adamant created. A total of 10 pounds (5 kg) of ingredients must be used to produce one pound (0.5 kg) of Adamant. By the time the mixture acquires the quicksilver-like sheen of the alloy, nine-tenths of the materials have mysteriously disappeared. What happens to the rest of the metal -- sublimated, transposed to another dimension, recombined at the sub-atomic level, or turned into energy for the recombination -- is a mystery to everyone, including the Makers themselves.

Adamant cannot be forged or worked to any great degree. Instead, it must be molded while still in a liquid or semi-solid state. Edges are naturally razor sharp, which is fortunate, since only an Adamant file works on such edges, and then with great difficulty. Armor must be made into plates or scales; chain mail or other complex types simply do not work. On the other hand, an Adamant plate added to a bullet-proof vest stops all but the heaviest bullets.

Making a mold for a simple blade, or a solid plate or sheet, requires a Simple Intelligence test (Makers with this ability retain some basic knowledge of the craft skills of her previous life). A Craft Skill (the appropriate Weaponsmith or Armorer type) allows the Maker to devise more elaborate weapons and armor. Any Adamant cutting weapon, from a sword or ax to an arrowhead, increases the damage multi-

plier by 3 levels, and halves the Armor Value or Barrier Value of any target -- except a suit of Adamantine armor. So, a character with a Strength of 3 wielding a knife (with a normal damage of $D4 \times$ Strength) would inflict $D4 \times 6(12)$ points of damage. If she struck somebody wearing a suit of Class I Armor (Armor Value of $D6 + 7(10)$), that armor would protect with only half its value (roll and halve the result, or just use 5).

Adamantine armor has its Armor Value increased by 1 Multiplier level, plus a flat 5-point bonus. Only armor with metal plates works (a suit of plate or plate mail, or Class III or IV armor). So, a Class III vest -- normal Armor Value of $(D8 \times 3) + 18(30)$ -- with the addition of Adamant plates has an AV of $(D8 \times 4) + 23(39)$. Armor-piercing attacks do not work against Adamantine armor (do not divide the Armor Value versus those attacks). Furthermore, the armor protects against supernatural attacks that bypass normal armor (like Soulfire).

Artifacts: Owning a small weapon (switchblade, or arrow- or spearhead) costs 1 point. A medium-sized weapon (large knife, short sword, or axe-head) costs 2 points. A large weapon (broadsword or Katana) costs 3 points. A huge weapon (greatsword, halberd and the like) costs 4 points.

A suit of armor costs 2 points for every 10 points of average Armor Value (not counting the Adamantine bonuses), rounded down. So, a breast plate (average Armor Value of 20) would cost 4 points, while a suit of Class IV armor (average Armor Value of 40) would cost 8 points.

Ambrosia

Knowledge Cost: 2 points

This Atlantean substance has passed down through mythology as the "food of the gods," said to make those who ate it immortal. While the claims are not exactly true, Ambrosia has tremendous curative properties, and when eaten by normal humans it revitalizes and rejuvenates them.

Ambrosia is made by combining the juice of any fruit (lemon and oranges are favored, but pineapples,

cranberries and grapefruits will do, and some Makers make "Ambrosia cocktails") with silver, gold and a quantity of Atlantean blood (2 Life Points' worth is enough for a quart, along with 1 ounce each of the precious materials). The components are boiled together while spending Essence (10 Essence for a quart) for a period of 4 hours (the Essence spent in this manner cannot be regained until the process is over). The mixture inexplicably reaches a boil at around the same temperature as water, and the gold and silver melt and blend in the mixture. At the end of the process, a pasty substance remains -- it is edible and delicious.

A bar or cake of Ambrosia has tremendous healing properties. Eating it restores D10(5) Life Points or Endurance Points. Furthermore, after eating it, normal Life, Endurance or Essence Point recoveries are doubled for a period of 1 hour (or, in the case of mundane Life Point recovery, one full day). A more interesting effect, for the mere mortal, is Ambrosia's rejuvenation effect. Eating one bar or cake stops the aging process, or the advance of any degenerative disease or condition (like cancer or AIDS) for a full D6 + 3(6) months. Unfortunately, after a few decades (10 years per Constitution level of the subject), the effect starts wearing off. Each dose starts working for D4(2) months for another (10 x Constitution) years, declining to one dose working for D4(2) weeks, D4(2) days, and finally, D4(2) hours! This final situation occurs after (Constitution x 50) years -- a very long lifetime. Stopping any doses for a period of ten years restores Ambrosia's effect, which, if done judiciously, can extend the subject's life span even further. A Maker could keep a normal human being alive for a very long time by feeding her Ambrosia -- a couple of Immortals have kept loved ones alive for centuries in this manner -- which often makes their eventual decline and death all the more painful.

Artifacts: Five pre-prepared dose of Ambrosia costs 1 character point. Ambrosia's healing effects work on humans and non-Undead or ghostly supernatural creatures. The life-enhancing effects work on any living human being (or a semi-human like a Feral), and even on Gifted characters whose aging process is already slower than normal (see Witchcraft, p. 208).

Atlantean Thought Ship

Knowledge Cost: 20 points; Prerequisites: Adamant, Energy Crystals

The ancestors of the Immortals had "flaming chariots" which they used for transportation or as weapons of war. Each Thought Ship was a unique work of art, and only a few hundred existed even at the height of their civilization. These glowing vessels disappeared thousands of years ago, but in more recent times a handful of Makers have discovered their secrets.

Making a Thought Ship requires the knowledge to create Adamant and Orikalk. For a true Thought Ship, powered by harnessing the Essence fields of the Earth itself, Essence Crystals are also needed. The secret of the ship is its interface system, however -- a connection that links the pilot's mind to the ship, which thus becomes an extension of her, as much under her control as one of her limbs.

The "traditional" Thought Ship has the shape of a delta wing, with a golden skin. When activated, ripples of Essence energy run through it, giving it a glowing aura that can be visible even by normal humans. It is believed that some UFO incidents were caused by these vessels. Other Makers use more traditional vehicles and aircraft, and replace their controls with their Thought Steering apparatus -- with them, they can fly vessels even if they do not have the normal skills to do so.

A Maker with this knowledge can build any of the basic vessel types described below, or the control system that can be added to any mundane vehicle. Keep in mind, however, that these ships require years of work, and are tremendously expensive. Even the smallest one requires hundreds of pounds of Adamant and Orikalk, which, by their nature, require thousands of pounds of silver, gold and other precious, expensive and often toxic materials.

A full Thought Ship has no windows (although some Makers put them in) and its only controls are two bars of Orikalk placed on the sides of the pilot seat. When holding on to the sticks, the pilot (who must be an Immortal) is in complete control of the ship, which is completely responsive to her

thoughts. The pilot detects other aircraft at up to 150 miles in any direction. Thought Ships can fly at speeds of up to Mach 2, and can execute tight turns (up to 90 degrees) while flying at speeds below Mach 1, without any ill effect on its passengers. While the vessel is in operation, the pilot is drained of Essence at the rate of 1 point every 5 minutes (or 12 points per hour); this Essence cannot be regained until the pilot lands the aircraft and rests.

For an additional 2 Essence per 5 minutes of operation (24 per hour), the ship becomes transparent to all but the most powerful radars, and even then the radar profile is diffuse and hard to pin down. The ship is still visible to the naked eye, however. For an additional 2 Essence every five minutes (total of 4 points per 5 minutes), the ship becomes invisible, although this effect is less certain. About 5% of any group of humans can spot the craft, and by drawing attention to it may allow others to see it.

Artifacts: A Thought Steering System requires 50 pounds (25 kg) of Orikalk, and the appropriate Mechanic Skill to mate it with a vehicle (a car or an aircraft, for instance). The steering system of the vehicle is replaced by two bars just like the ones in the Thought Ship. A normal vehicle equipped with this system is able to perform far beyond its normal limits. Even if the character does not know how to operate the vehicle, using the Thought Steering gives her an automatic skill of 3 (if she already knew how to use it, she gains a +3 bonus to all her related Driving or Piloting Tasks). Using this system drains the pilot's Essence at the rate of 1 point every 10 minutes (or 6 points per hour). As when piloting a full Thought Ship, this Essence cannot be regained while the vehicle is operating. Cost: 3 points.

A Small Thought Ship is a single-seat aircraft, slightly bigger than a car. It has an Armor Value of $D10 \times 5 + 25(50)$ and 150 Damage Capacity. To build it requires 300 pounds (150 kg) of Adamant, 500 pounds (250 kg) of Orikalk, and 20 Energy Crystals. Building the ship takes 2,000 man-hours, and when it is finished 300 Essence Points must be invested in it. Cost: 15 points.

A Medium Thought Ship is a larger vessel, about twice the size of the smaller ship, and capable of holding a pilot and a passenger or copilot. A second set of steering handlebars can be put on the second seat, allowing the copilot to fire any weapons in the vessel, or to contribute Essence for its operation. The ship has an Armor Value of $(D10 \times 6) + 30(60)$ and 250 Damage Capacity. To build it requires 600 pounds (300 kg) of Adamant, 1,000 pounds (500 kg) of Orikalk, and 40 Energy Crystals. Building the ship takes 4,000 man-hours, and when it is finished 600 Essence Points must be invested in it. Cost: 20 points.

A Large Thought Ship is the biggest ship ever built by a known Immortal Maker (only two of them have been made in all the history of the Lodge of the Undying). This vessel is about the same size as a private jet aircraft. The ship can seat a pilot, copilot, up to three more passengers and about 2,000 pounds of cargo. Any passenger can contribute her Essence towards the energy costs of the ship. The ship has an Armor Value of $D10 \times 7 + 35(70)$ and 500 Damage Capacity. To build it requires 1,500 pounds (750 kg) of Adamant, one ton (1000 kg) of Orikalk, and 100 Energy Crystals. Building the ship takes 8,000 man-hours, and when it is finished 1,500 Essence Points must be invested in it. Cost: 25 points.

The basic Thought Ships have no weapons systems. Their advantages lie in their speed and stealth. Some Makers install conventional weapons on their vessels, when they can get them. Others build weapons using Immortal technology, powered with Energy Crystals (see below). An energy projector inflicts $D6 \times 20(60)$ points of damage, with a range of 20 miles (30 km). It requires 10 Energy Crystals, 10 pounds (5 kg) of Orikalk and the expenditure of 50 Essence Points. Adding one of these weapons raises the point cost of the ship by 10 points.

Crystal Skull

Knowledge Cost: 5 points; Prerequisite: Energy Crystals

Immortals who know of these devices have mixed feelings about them. Are they communication devices, torture implements, psychic enhancement tools, weapons, or something else altogether? Makers with the ability to construct them have used the Crystal Skulls for all those purposes. Some have come to bad ends, and the more paranoid Immortals suspect the Skulls had something to do with that.

The Crystal Skull is exactly what its name indicates. Some time ago, some mundane occultists came into contact with one, and eventually fashioned their own copies, largely useless and powerless, but interesting enough to gain them a place in the pantheon of paranormal items. The true Skulls, fashioned out of Energy Crystals and Orikalk, have powerful telepathic properties. Any Immortal who holds one in her hands can project her thoughts over amazing distances. The skull can also be used to extract information from an unwilling subject -- an Immortal can probe nearby people and tear secrets from their minds, often inflicting severe physical and spiritual damage. Whether this is the intended use of the Skulls or not remains unknown. Some Immortals claim that using the Skull as a torture or interrogation tool is akin to using an electrical appliance to kill someone in a bathtub -- it works, but that's not what the designer had in mind for it.

In any case, those who use a Crystal Skull often start experiencing disquieting phenomena. They hear voices that seem to have no connection with what they are doing. Some Makers claim that the Skulls are alive, inhabited by some spirit or soul that tries to take over its creator. Other rumors suggest that the Skulls are used by the Secret Masters (see p. 87) to observe and dominate their reborn brethren. A couple of Immortals have turned this paranoia into a personal crusade, traveling the world in search for Crystal Skulls to destroy.

Artifacts: Making a Crystal Skull requires 10 Energy Crystals. The Maker puts them in a box and spends no less than two hours visualizing the Skull. After 30 Essence Points have been spent, a Crystal Skull -- roughly the size of a human head -- appears in the box.

An Immortal character wielding a Skull can project her thoughts telepathically, and hold telepathic conversations, at distances of up to 100 miles (150 km) per level of Willpower. The owner can also launch telepathic probes (the range for this is a more modest 3 yards/meters per level of Willpower) on an unwilling victim. The wielder must win a Resisted Simple Willpower Test, but the Skull adds a +4 bonus to this Test. If the victim loses, she is wracked by agony, and suffers pinprick hemorrhages in her eyes and face, inflicting D6(3) points of damage, and draining the victim of D8(4) Essence Points. Prolonged exposure to this experience may inflict permanent brain damage and Essence loss. An unmodified Survival Test is required for every hour of interrogation under the Skull's power. On a failure, the victim's Intelligence is reduced by 1 level, and she permanently loses 2 Essence Points. Some Invocations and powers may restore these losses, but mundane science will not.

Using a Crystal Skull is not without risks. At the Chronicler's discretion, continual use may attract the attention of spirit entities who try to use the link between the Skull and the wielder to cause mischief. It is also possible that the mysterious Secret Masters can tap into the Skulls and use them to probe, scan or even control their wielders (this works like the Beholden Obligation, see p. 109). Owning a Crystal Skull costs 4 points.

Energy Crystals

Knowledge Cost: 4 points; Prerequisite: Orikalk

Many students of the occult know that crystals of any kind (from diamonds to table salt) are "attractive" to Essence. The Immortals' civilization took this knowledge even further, and used specially-treated crystals as power sources. With them, they could levitate huge buildings, propel their ships and aircraft, and bring light to their golden cities. Makers who remember these techniques can use these crystals as weapons or to supplement or replace the power systems in vehicles or machines. The crystals have two main shortcomings against conventional energy supply systems, however. For one, they take a great deal of time and effort to make. More importantly, they need to be supplied with Essence on a periodic basis, and this Essence must come from an Immortal -- the Essence of normal humans, Gifted or not, will not work, and neither will that of supernatural beings.

Making the Crystal requires common quartz and roughly 6 ounces (170 grams) of Orikalk that has not yet been set into shape. The Orikalk is melted and the quartz is added, as 15 Essence Points are spent. After one hour, the Orikalk is absorbed into the quartz. The stone can then be cut and polished into any desired shape or form.

Most Essence Crystals are used to power weapons like the Energy Wand, or the few Thought Ships that remain in existence. Makers with the appropriate Science or Mechanic Skill (at level 3 or higher) can hook Crystals to an engine and use it to provide power. This requires building a framework of Orikalk (1 lb/0.5 kg per Crystal used) and the expenditure of 15 Essence for every Crystal used to provide power. Electrical, steam and internal combustion engines can use Crystals instead of their regular systems. One Crystal powers any of half dozen conventional appliances. A small vehicle (a motorcycle) needs 3 Crystals; a car require 5-7 Crystals depending on the size. Large, powerful vehicles (trucks, small aircraft) require no less than 10-15 Crystals.

Most Makers lack the skills or the frame of mind to perform such works of science; many of them were born before the rise of technology, or lack the needed skills. Only in the past fifty years or so have Makers started to build these hybrid. Only a few dozen Crystal "gadgets" are in circulation worldwide.

Artifacts: Essence Crystals vary in size and shape, but they tend to look like a children's marble. Owning an Essence Crystal costs 2 points.

An Energy Wand is a short wand (about 6 inches long) that channels Essence and can fire blasts of energy. This energy is usually invisible (those who can see Essence view it as a display of brilliant colors), but it can blast holes in things, people, or beings of Essence. Some Makers create the wands and then replace the barrels of normal pistols with them, thus making their own "ray guns." The wands require an Energy Crystal, and one pound (0.5 kg) of Orikalk. The wand is cast, and the Crystal attached to one end. During the process, the Maker must spend 15 Essence Points to effect the change. The result is a wand that naturally stores and fires Essence. The wand can hold up to 20 Essence Points. This Essence must be replenished by an Immortal, or recharged by touching the wand with a charged Energy Crystal -- the Essence in it flows into the weapon, replenishing it. Each blast from the wand costs 1 Essence Point, and it inflicts 1D6 x 6(18) points of damage, to either Life Points, Vital Energy Essence or Damage Capacity. Mundane armor does not protect against this weapon, although suits of Adamant or Orikalk will. The blasts have the range of a sub-machine gun (see *WitchCraft*, p. 146). Owning an Energy Wand costs 4 points.

Orikalk

Knowledge Cost: 4 points

This mystical metal is a mixture of mercury, gold, copper and silver, heated and melted together. Its creation requires the expenditure of 15 Essence Points per pound (half kilogram). The materials need to be mixed in the same proportion (one unit each), and, unlike Adamant, no material is lost in the process (1 pound/0.5 kilogram of each of these four materials produces 4 pounds/2 kilograms of Orikalk).

The resulting substance has a reddish gold color and is fairly soft and easy to work with. It can be hammered and worked or made into wires or links. Some Makers have woven chain mail out of it, for example. When the final shape is created, another 20 Essence Points per pound (0.5 kg) must be spent to "fix" it; afterwards the material becomes very solid, at least as hard and resilient as good steel.

Orikalk's hardness is not its principal quality, however. The metal has a special affinity to Essence. It can block or repel hostile Essence attacks, and it can block the path of Essence creatures. Ghosts and spirits cannot cross an area encircled by Orikalk wire; Orikalk swords cut both physical and spiritual beings; the weapons can be made to "bleed" Essence off living beings. Up to half the damage inflicted by such a weapon can become Essence drain instead.

Orikalk can also be used to make bullets. These bullets have all the aforementioned effects, including the ability to drain Essence as well as inflict damage.

Used against supernatural beings (Undead, True Immortals, Seraphim and Ferals, for example), any damage that gets through is subtracted from both the Life and Essence Pools of the target.

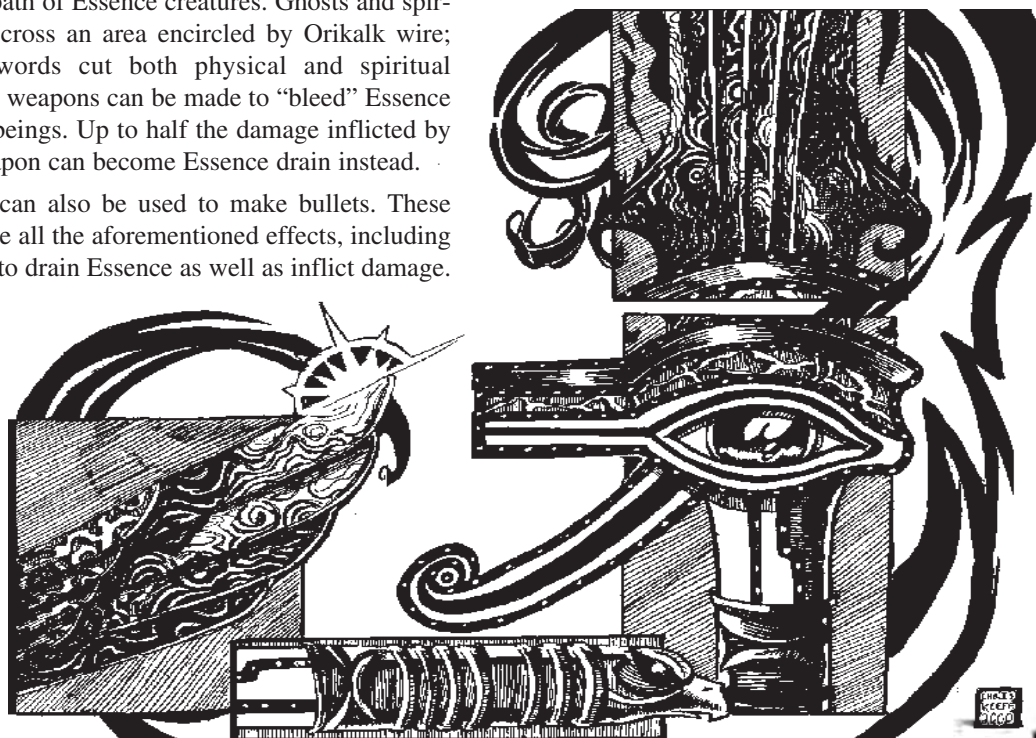
Orikalk is somewhat responsive to the desires of the wielder. Bullets arc their flight paths to compensate for poor aiming, although they cannot shoot around corners. Swords shift their balance to allow for faster hits and parries. All Orikalk weapons have an inherent +2 bonus to all attack and defense rolls. They do not have any special damage bonuses.

Orikalk armor has the same Armor Value as regular metal armor of the same type. Further, it protects against Essence attacks, and gives its wearer a +2 bonus to resist any supernatural power that can be resisted normally.

Artifacts: An Orikalk hand weapon (sword, knife and so on) costs 3 points, regardless of the size.

Orikalk bullets or arrowheads cost 1 point for every 10 missiles.

Orikalk armor costs 1 point for every 10 points of average Armor Value, rounded up.



Chapter Six: Supernatural



Matt Tyner never knew what hit him.

It was the smell that made him go in. Sickly sweet and sharp, like chewing pennies. It stung the back of his throat as he passed the house on Federal Street. Damn John Kronk and his smart-ass mouth. If it weren't for him, Tyner never would have pulled Community Police duty. Rolling drunks and crackheads wasn't exactly what Matt joined the force for. Trash of both kinds, walking and not, littered the streets of west Detroit deep enough to wade through and foot beats always left Tyner tighter than when he started. So it was with some resignation that he climbed the steps to the house and nosed the door open with the muzzle of his gun.

Jesus H, he thought. Another drunk crawled in an' died.

Officer Tyner thumbed the switch on his radio. "Forty-two Foot to Dispatch."

"Dispatch. What's your code forty-two?"

Tyner scanned the hall just inside the doorway, grimacing at the smell. "I got a nine-two-nine. I'll need a meat wagon at 1110 Federal."

"Copy forty-two. Patrol thirty-nine responding."

Matt Tyner's shoes squelched on the floor as he made his way in the door and down the hall. Feces and filthy syringes mingled in the corners with old newspaper and beer bottles. A room passed, empty but for heaps of detritus; another holding a rotten mattress and little else. Soot blackened one wall and grew thicker as he came to the last door and looked in. The shadows of appliances remained on the walls, but the actual equipment was long missing. Some junky or drunk starving for heat had peeled away half the wall and burned it right there, leaving the linoleum scorched and blackened. And there, across the kitchen, at the back of the house — a stairway leading down.

Tyner scanned the room, his breath coming in shallow gasps as the reek of dead flesh threatened to overwhelm him. The cabinet doors had been stripped — fuel for the fire — most likely. Indecipherable streaks colored the walls in a revolting variety of brown shades. Tyner shook his head, *How low can people sink?*

It wasn't until he'd started down the steps that he saw the blood.

Three distinct streaks, just right for fingers, painted the doorframe in crumbling rust-red. The muzzle of the gun rose as Tyner thumbed his radio again. "Forty-two Foot to Dispatch."

"Dispatch. Go ahead forty-two."

"This might be an eight one seven, Dispatch. What's thirty-nine's ETA?"

"Three minutes, forty-two. Stand-by."

A moan rose up the stair, a sickening, rattle of breath following close after it. Officer Tyner swallowed hard, pushing his dinner of coney dogs and coke back down where it came from.

"Dispatch, victim may be alive. Get that backup here now."

"Copy forty-two. EM7 on its way."

Tyner ground his teeth and muttered into the darkness. "You better be Christ come down from the Cross." Both hands on the butt of his gun, he led with the barrel and edged down the stairs. Ice poured itself down his spine as he nudged his belt light and saw the rust colored stains painting unplastered wallboards. The steps protested his descent, creaking ominously as he made his way down. The gore thickened as he reached the bottom, spreading over the floor below in a thin, sticky film. The belt light, trembling in time with the tremors shaking the barrel of his gun, cast a lurid beam around the room. Tyner's belly heaved and the nose of the gun dipped as he took in the scene.



Bones filled the room in absurdly meticulous stacks. Bits of meat clung to the bones he could see and blood covered the floor in a thin skin of scarlet. Across the room, a shape lay huddled against the wall in the dark. Tyner's foot moved out over the floor, but hesitated inches away from the bloody concrete. Skin, mottled in the light of the belt lamp, hung loosely over the figure's almost fleshless bones.

Duty overrode disgust. Matt Tyner took the last step off the stairway and skated across the floor, rubber-soled shoes sliding precariously through the blood. He slid to a stop half a yard from the body. As he spoke, his voice was a croak. "P-police. You -- you all right?"

The body never moved, but a voice came out of the darkness at Tyner's right shoulder. "He's feelin' no pain . . ." The rasp sent Officer Tyner reeling, trying desperately to get his gun up between himself and whomever had spoken, but the blood slicked floor betrayed him. His legs shot out, sending jolts of pain through his hips and groin. A wet slap sent the gun spinning into the darkness as a face thrust into the light of the belt lamp.

White teeth were a bright crescent in a face flayed raw and bleeding. A hand clamped tight on Matt's throat, sticky wet heat shutting off the officer's air. The thing smiled at him, its skinless face leaning close, its reeking breath damp on Tyner's skin. Its voice was a grate of old bones as it spoke to him.

"Just in time. Old Jones was getting' powerful hungry."

Matt Tyner lost all control as the thing's tongue slipped past its teeth and brushed his skin. The hand gripping his throat tightened, and he heard distinctly the thin, wet pop as vertebrae gave way to the thing's crushing strength. The last thing Officer Matt Tyner heard as darkness swam in to smother his sight was the wet tearing of his own flesh over the voice of his killer laughing at its own joke.

"I love the other white meat . . ."

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the world of spirits and on the abominations that belong neither to the spirit nor the material worlds. A variety of spirits are described: elementals, nature spirits, and the manifestations of the Voodoo deities, or Loas. A new form of Undead, the Zombie, is also depicted. They are followed by Ethereals and Fiends, spirits of the higher and lower realms of reality, respectively. Finally, some of the creatures and cults of Taint and the Mad Gods are explored.

Elementals

Sentient manifestations of natural forces, elementals have long been the allies, playthings and banes of magicians. Occultists are not in agreement about their nature and origins. The Rosicrucians (and some Wicce) believe that the ancestors of these beings were created along with the Universe. They were god-like entities who embodied a specific aspect of reality. While some of these beings eventually incarnated themselves into physical forms, like the Fey races or the dragons of myth, others remained in purer forms, representing the three states of matter (solid, gaseous and liquid) and diverse states of energy (fire, electricity, and light). A competing theory views elementals as a manifestation of humanity's collective unconscious, a reflection of our own minds.

Classical Western occult thought only recognized four major classes of elementals: earth, air, fire and water. Over time, several Covenants have discovered others, and learned to summon and control them. The Rosicrucians are the most accomplished Elementalists among the larger Covenants, although the Wicce also deal with those entities.

The desires and goals of elementals are relatively basic. These entities feed on Essence, and those who manage to eat more than they need to survive slowly evolve into greater and more powerful forms. They cannot feed on each other, or even other types of elementals, but they often fight and kill one another while competing for the same source of power. Their realms have their own sources of Essence, and most of an elementals' existence is spent in the gathering of power. The most powerful of their kind appear to be god-like beings with more complex purposes, but humans only know of their existence through inference and rumor. Elementals generally dislike Earth

and most spirit realms, but they will obey a summoner if the payment (in Essence) is high enough.

When summoned, elementals often adopt the features and personality (or some aspects therein) of the magician who called them to the world. This might be a deliberate act, or confirmation that elementals are not truly "real" beings but creations given "life" by the magician's thoughts and will. Some elementals have their own individuality, however, and behave much like any other independent being, so the matter remains open for debate.

The Elemental Realms

The mythical Elemental Realms are said to exist in the Sephiroth of Binah, which also houses the abode of the Seraphim and other greater beings. Existence in those worlds is both alien and human-like; elementals apparently engage in their own form of politics, intrigues and power plays, and in competition over limited or scarce resources. There are no direct Gateways linking Earth to those realms, and it is fortunate that this is so, for any human who accidentally stumbled into one of those dimensions would not survive the experience.



The few Gifted who have beheld these realms have done so while traveling in spirit form, and they speak of awesome sights -- endless seas, palaces made of ice, fiery towers and rolling waves of flame, and a living, planet-sized storm system. It has been theorized that a human visitor's perception of those realms is not exactly accurate, because his mind is simply unable to fully process the input, and thus it manufactures its own picture of what he is seeing. In any case, the Realms are not good places to visit; elementals feed on Essence, and a human soul is a tempting target.

Elementals live mostly in their Realms, and rarely venture beyond them of their own free will. The most common travelers are summoned by magicians; they perform whatever tasks are assigned, and usually return to their homeworld as soon as they are able. A few entities do not depart immediately, however, but instead try to have some fun in the physical world. Once in a while, malicious elementals manage to travel to other Realms or Sephiroths on their own, including Earth, and cause a great deal of trouble before being expelled or destroyed.

Other Elemental Beings

Besides the "essential" elementals, there are many nature spirits with elemental characteristics. Unlike elementals, however, these entities dwell on Earth, and usually lack self-consciousness and volition, unless contacted by a shaman or other Gifted human. Also, some Fiends and Ethereals have elemental traits. Some Sephiroth scholars (a small but highly opinionated group) think all elemental-like beings (including so-called "gods" with Elemental Aspects) are members of the same "species," others believe they are a different order of being, with their own strengths and weaknesses.

What does it all mean, and why should anyone -- say, the Cast Members, example -- care about the differences? The main reason to care is that some elemental-like creatures may not have the same vulnerabilities or limitations as "classical" elementals. They may be harder to bind or summon; specialized Invocations (like Spirit Mastery) may not work on them, or work at a reduced level. In the occult world, there are precious few certainties.

Powers Common to Elementals

The following are characteristics of all elemental beings, regardless of type.

Spirit Entities: Elementals have all the basic traits of spirit entities (see *Witchcraft*, p. 258-259). They are immaterial, can move at great speeds through most obstacles, use Spiritus, are invulnerable to physical harm, and are largely unable to affect the physical world. This changes, of course, whenever they materialize physically (see below). As with all spirits, destroying the physical form of a manifested elemental does a great deal of damage (D10(5) Vital Essence Points are permanently lost).

Physical Manifestation: Summoned elementals are spirit entities with no tangible bodies; in this state they can affect other spirits (such as ghosts or other elementals), but not physical objects or things. To affect this reality, they must manifest themselves physically, a process that costs Essence. Elementals can manifest more easily than most spirits: materializing costs the spirit (or the magician who summoned it) 1 Essence Point for every 5 points of their Vital Essence, instead of the customary cost of 1 Essence for every point of Vital Essence (see *Witchcraft*, p. 259). This Essence is not regained until the spirit returns to its natural state or returns to its plane of existence. Furthermore, elementals who materialize in front of crowds risk being quickly drained of power. The Crowd Effect also applies to manifested elementals, unless they can either fool the audience into believing them to be natural phenomena, or by quickly terrifying them into submission (see *Witchcraft*, p. 200). Like other spirits, a manifested elemental has the equivalent of 1 Life Point per Vital and Energy Essence Point in its Pools.

Resistant to Damage: Manifested elementals are highly resistant to some forms of damage, while remaining seriously vulnerable to others. These are noted in their individual entries. Also, damage modifiers from weapon attacks (e.g., the doubling effect of slashing weapons or bullets) never apply to elementals. Essence attacks (like the Soulfire Invocation) inflict Life Point damage to manifested elementals. In spirit form, none of the special powers and vulnerabilities apply, and elementals take damage from

attacks in the same manner as any spirit (unless the elemental travels to a dimensional realm where all spirits assume a solid form, in which case they are treated as manifested beings).

Spiritual Attacks: Even while immaterial, an elemental can attack a person or other living being, slowly draining the victim's soul. The process takes time, but it eventually kills humans, causes trees to dry up and decay, and so on. A spiritual attack costs 2 Essence Points, and inflicts 1 point of Essence damage for every 3 Strength levels of the elemental (rounded up).

Humans brought below 0 Essence Points start suffering negative consequences, and they risk death if reduced to -30 Essence Points (see *Witchcraft*, p. 154). Mundanes and normal humans feel a sudden stinging sensation (like a burn or insect bite) on the first attack; subsequent attacks bring about headaches, sweating, and even fever-like symptoms. The symptoms vary depending on the elemental involved: they may include fever (fire or light), weakness (earth), dehydration (fire or water), labored breathing (air) and uncontrolled tremors (electricity).

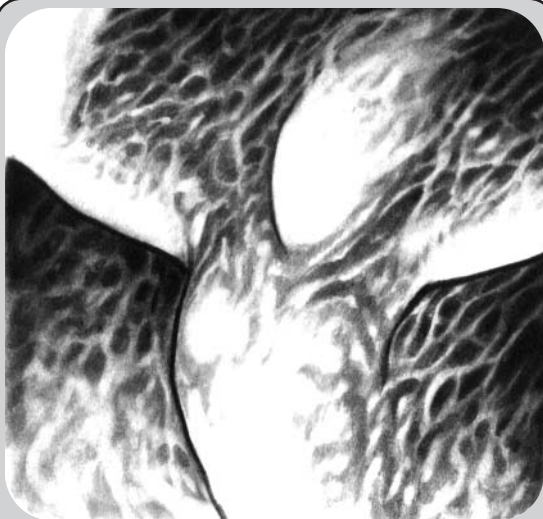
Gifted characters sense the elemental's presence, and realize they are under attack. If the victim is Gifted, he can "see" the elemental by passing a Difficult Perception Test. Other Gifted need the right power (Insight, Mindheal and Divine Sight, for example) to detect the spirit, although they automatically sense that the victim's problem is metaphysical in nature. Once seen, the spirit can be attacked or exorcised normally.

Common and Special Abilities: All elementals of a certain type share a number of common powers. Further, individuals of each type can exhibit certain special abilities. All common powers, and a sampling of special powers is given under each entry.

Powers that cost Essence draw from the elemental's Energy Essence pool -- they can, in an emergency, draw on their Vital Essence, but for obvious reasons they only do so in the most extreme circumstances.

Some Elemental Powers are basically identical to Invocations, although they represent innate control over its own nature rather than a learned ability. Elementals do not have to worry about Dismissing failed Invocations. In all other respects, however, those powers can be treated as Invocations for game rule purposes.





Fire Elementals (Pyros)

These entities are living manifestations of fire and heat, and are sometimes referred to as Pyros or Salamanders. When they materialize, they usually appear as a flaming humanoid figure, ranging in size from a foot (0.3 m) to several feet high, depending on their power (a rough approximation is one foot of height for every level of Strength). They tend to be willful and destructive; those that assume the features of the human who summoned them focus on the caster's angry and hateful side. Their natural habitat is fire, and they are happiest when they can move around in a large bonfire or other source of flame. Air is tolerable, but they never go willingly into water, or allow themselves to be taken underground. Their main vulnerabilities are the same as for any open flame -- they can be extinguished in many different ways.

Strength: 1-7+

Dexterity: 2-5+

Constitution: 2-10+

Vital Essence: 15-50+

Energy Essence: 10-100+

Life Points (when manifested): 25-150+

Speed: 10-20+

Spiritus: 3-6+

Intelligence: 2-5+

Perception: 2-5+

Willpower: 3-6+

Powers Common to Pyros

Elemental Magic: All Fire Elementals can perform the Elemental Fire Invocation (WitchCraft, p. 215) with an effective Channeling level equal to their Willpower, and a Skill equal to their Spiritus level.

Fiery Nature: When manifested physically, Fire Elementals burn anything they come into contact with, inflicting 1 point of flame damage for every Strength level. Flammable objects are ignited.

Resistant to Damage: Normal physical attacks (bullets, thrown objects, fists) inflict minimal damage -- equivalent to rolling a 1 on the damage die. For example, a bullet inflicting D6 x 4 damage points normally does 4 damage points against the elemental.

Vulnerabilities: Fire Elementals can be damaged by water or other smothering materials. A bucketful of water inflicts D4 x 4(8) points of damage; a fire hose does D10 x 5(25) points of damage every Turn; a fire extinguisher causes D6 x 10(30) with each "shot." Also, an elemental trapped in an airtight room or container is destroyed if it uses up all the oxygen; this takes no more than a minute, modified by the size of the container and the elemental. Most Pyros faced with this possibility return to spirit form.

Powers Special to Pyros

Elemental Bolt: Some physically-manifested elementals can hurl themselves at a target, exploding on contact and inflicting a great deal of damage. A summoned creature only perform this task once, as the explosion drains the elemental of all its Energy Essence. The attack is resolved normally (the elemental's Dexterity doubled against the victim's Dexterity and Dodge), but, if dodged, the elemental does not explode. Generally, it keeps trying until it hits the designated target or is destroyed. The damage of this attack is great -- D10 x the Strength of the elemental. These "bolts" have a range of 100 yards (meters), and they require a "payment" of no less than 20 Essence Points on the part of the summoner to convince the elemental to deplete its Energy Essence in so violent a manner. This summoner's Essence is immediately used by the spirit for Evolution purposes (see Witchcraft, p. 258), and is not regained normally -- the regeneration rate is 1 point per Essence

Channeling per week, or 1 point per week for magicians without Channeling.

Fiery Attack: This ability is more frequent among larger elementals. They can produce a weapon (usually a sword-like protrusion) that they use to attack spiritual or physical targets, depending on their current shape. The attack inflicts $D8(4) \times$ the Strength of the elemental. In spirit form, this is Essence damage; in physical form, it is fire damage.

Flight: All Fire Elementals hover over the ground, but usually never more than a few inches or centimeters. Some can actually fly, with a speed of 20 mph (30 kph) or more. Flying elementals often have fiery wings or serpentine shapes.

Powers Common to Sylphs

Elemental Magic: All Sylphs can perform the Elemental Air Invocation (WitchCraft, p. 213), with a Skill equal to their Spiritus level and a Channeling level equal to their Willpower.

Flight: All Air Elementals can fly at their Speed level, or faster if they can catch a good tailwind. They have a Dodge skill equal to Spiritus +1, and can easily avoid bullets, but only if they are not charging straight at their attacker. Outlined against the sky, they are difficult to discern (requiring a Perception and Notice Task, with modifiers of -4, or -7 at night).

Resistant to Damage: While materialized, Air Elementals take almost no damage from physical attacks -- divide the damage of any such attack by 4, rounding down (so, a bullet that inflicted 32 points of damage would only do 8 points to the Elemental). Fire attacks inflict double damage, however.

Wind Attack: The elemental can turn itself into a violent gust of wind, or, for the larger ones (Str 5+), a mini-tornado. These winds can pick up debris and damage victims, inflicting $D4(2)$ to $D6(3) \times$ Strength, depending on the available materials (loose soil does minimum damage, but a Sylph let loose near a barrel of carpentry nails or in a knife store can be extremely deadly). If no materials are available, or if the elemental just seeks to push or knock down victims, the attack does no damage and is resolved as a Resisted Simple Strength Test.



Air Elementals (Sylphs)

These elementals, also called Sylphs, are airy creatures, often manifesting themselves as either vaguely humanoid cloud creatures, or as small swirling winds. They are similar in size to Fire Elementals (see p. 136), and they hover and fly around constantly, rarely staying put for more than a few seconds. As a group, Sylphs are impulsive and emotional beings, and when they imitate their summoner, they focus on those traits. Like all stereotypes, there are plenty of exceptions. Some Air Elementals are angry and destructive, living embodiments of hurricanes and tornadoes.

Strength: 1-6+

Dexterity: 3-6+

Constitution: 2-10+

Vital Essence: 10-50+

Energy Essence: 10-100+

Life Points (when manifested): 20-150+

Speed: 20-30+

Spiritus: 3-6+

Intelligence: 2-4+

Perception: 3-6+

Willpower: 3-6+



Earth Elementals (Gnomes)

The Gnomes of Medieval occult theory, these elementals appear as brown humanoids made of living soil. They tend to be squat but massive, ranging in size from 2 to 10 feet (1 to 3 meters), and weighing between 100 pounds and over a ton (50-1000 kilograms). Inhumanly strong and resilient, they can be fearsome enemies, although they tend to be slow and ponderous. Their personalities are somewhat cold and calculating, and they never rush to do anything.

Strength: 3-12+	Intelligence: 2-5+
Dexterity: 2-3+	Perception: 2-4+
Constitution: 4-12+	Willpower: 3-6+
Vital Essence: 10-50+	
Energy Essence: 10-100+	
Life Points (when manifested): 20-150+	
Speed: 5-10+	
Spiritus: 3-6+	

Powers Special to Sylphs

Lightning Bolt: Some Air Elementals, especially those who are oriented towards storms and hurricanes, can ionize the air and produce electrical discharges. Damage is D8(4) times the elemental's Strength, with a range of up to 100 yards (meters). To attack, the Elemental uses its Dexterity and Spiritus Skill; victims may Dodge, but with a -1 penalty, as the lightning bolt arcs towards them. Armor protects against this damage with half its value at best: metal armor does not protect at all!

Storm Makers: Some powerful elementals (combined Primary Attributes of 30 or higher) can climb the skies and disturb or alter weather patterns. The maximum area a Sylph can affect is its Success Level in a Spiritus and Willpower Task, in miles (x 1.5 kilometers). A small modification (precipitate a light drizzle in a cloudy day) is done at no penalty; a noticeable change (heavy rain in a lightly overcast day) incurs a -1 penalty, a major change (a storm out of a clear day) suffers a -3, and a huge change (tornadoes or hurricanes) is at -6 or worse. These changes cost 10 Essence Points for every "step" (i.e., 10 for a small change, 20 for a noticeable change, and so on). This Essence must come from the elemental.

Powers Common to Gnomes

Elemental Magic: All Gnomes can perform the Elemental Earth Invocation (WitchCraft, p. 214), with a Skill equal to their Spiritus level and a Channeling level equal to their Willpower.

Pummeling: When attacking, Gnomes use hammer-like fists that inflict D8 x Strength points of damage. They use Dexterity doubled for those attacks.

Resistant to Damage: Earth Elementals have an Armor Value of 4 points per level of Constitution. This armor protects against everything except direct Essence attacks. Soaking an Earth Elemental in water "softens" it, however; reduce Armor Value by 3 points for every 10 points of water "damage" inflicted on the elemental (use the damage examples under Fire Elemental, p. 136, but instead of doing actual damage, the Gnome's natural armor is reduced). This weakening lasts for about a minute, depending on the

weather (half that time in a desert, double it in a damp area). In the rain, Earth Elementals lose their armor at the rate of 1 point per Turn under a steady rain (or 2 points per Turn in a monsoon or torrential rain).

Powers Special to Gnomes

Earth Movement: Some elementals can travel through Earth with the same ease as a fish swimming through water. Even stone can be traversed, but more slowly. The elemental can move through normal soil or earth at its normal Speed, and through stone (or brick or concrete) at 1/3 its normal Speed. This movement costs 1 Essence Point per minute.

Stone Shards: A few particularly nasty Gnomes can hurl razor-sharp pieces of flint or obsidian at their foes. These missiles inflict D6(3) x (Strength-2) points of slashing damage, and can be flung up to 75 yards (meters) away, using a Dexterity and Spiritus Task. The missiles can be dodged normally.

Powers Common to Undines

Elemental Magic: All Undines can perform the Elemental Water Invocation (WitchCraft, p. 216), with a Skill equal to their Spiritus level and a Channeling level equal to their Willpower.

Engulfing: The Undine may forgo some of its form's solidity and turn into a moving blob of water that, if large enough, can surround a victim. A person engulfed by the elemental must hold his breath to avoid drowning -- which will lead to suffocation (rules for drowning and suffocation can be found in WitchCraft, p. 143). The victim can try to break free -- however briefly -- and manage to draw a breath, by winning a Resisted Test: the victim's Strength and Dexterity against the elemental's Strength doubled. This Test can be attempted every Turn, but requires so much thrashing and running around that the victim loses D8(4) Endurance Points every Turn. If the victim passes out from exhaustion, the elemental kills him in 30 seconds (6 Turns) by forcing water into his lungs. Engulfing costs the elemental 1 Energy Essence Point per Turn.



Water Elementals (Undines)

Also known as Undines or Nymphs, Water Elementals appear as humanoids made out of swirling water. They tend to be voluble and emotional, taking their summoners' emotions and magnifying them to ludicrous levels. Some Undines are colder and less maudlin, however. The ones who embody the destructive aspects of water, in the form of floods and tidal waves, can be downright scary.

Strength: 2-6+

Dexterity: 2-4+

Constitution: 3-10+

Intelligence: 2-5+

Perception: 2-4+

Willpower: 3-6+

Vital Essence: 10-50+

Energy Essence: 10-100+

Life Points (when manifested): 20-150+

Speed: 10-15+

Spiritus: 3-6+

Resistance to Damage: Water Elementals are highly resistant, but not invulnerable, to physical attacks. Any kinetic-energy attack (bullets, punches, hand weapons) does half damage to the creature. Fire and energy attacks inflict double damage, however.

Water Movement: Elementals move at double their normal Speed underwater.

Powers Special to Undines

Drowning: Some Water Elementals can try to force themselves into a victim's lungs, drowning him. This is resolved as a Resisted Test (Strength doubled for the elemental, and Constitution doubled for the victim). If the elemental wins, it enters the windpipe and lungs of the victim, inflicting D4(2) Life Points and D10(5) Endurance Points of damage every Turn. A similar Resisted Test ensues every Turn, to see if the victim can cough or spit out the elemental. Drowning attacks cost the elemental 2 Essence Points per Turn.

Water Ram: The elemental flings itself at the target with the speed and power of the most powerful water hoses. This attack inflicts D10(5) x Strength points of damage, which is evenly divided between Life and Endurance Points. The elemental attacks with its Dexterity doubled; this attack can be dodged like any missile attack. Furthermore, the victim has to win a Resisted Simple Strength Test to remain on his feet. After it attacks, the Undine needs to pull itself together again, which takes a few seconds (a game Turn). This attack costs 3 Essence Points.

Powers Common to Arcs

Electrical Jumps: An Arc can travel through conducting materials (wires or lengths of metal) in the blink of an eye. When traveling through electrical wires, it can emerge from an outlet or other connection. The elemental's presence in a power system causes spikes and fluctuations, and may even burn out circuits or fuses -- if that happens while the Arc is still in the system, it will be trapped for no less than an hour or until the power is restored. Finding one's way through a maze of circuitry can also be a challenging chore -- the elemental must pass a Difficult Intelligence test to jump to an unfamiliar location.



Electricity Elementals (Arcs)

Before modern times, these beings were referred to as Lightning Elementals, and were rarely considered by occultists and magicians. The creatures were not commonly summoned by magicians until well after the Modern Era. Today, they are often known as Arcs.

When manifested, Electricity Elementals appear as humanoids made of crackling energy. Until recently, they remained alien and aloof, and rarely imitated humans, perhaps because they have had contact with them for only a relatively short time. In the last two decades, however, Arcs have become much more human-like, apparently as a result of the computer age -- many Electricity Elementals now manifest themselves as pictures on a television screen or computer monitor, and their appearance is as varied as the elemental wishes it to be.

Strength: 1-6+ **Intelligence:** 2-5+

Dexterity: 3-6+

Perception: 3-6+

Constitution: 2-10+

Willpower: 3-6+

Vital Essence: 10-50+

Energy Essence: 10-100+

Life Points (when manifested): 20-150+

Speed: 20-30+

Spiritus: 3-6+

Empower: The elemental may use its Essence to provide power for an electrical motor. This costs 2 Essence Points per minute (which cannot be regained until the Arc stops to rest), and the size of the appliance or motor is determined by the Strength of the elemental. Any small household appliance (up to a hair drier) can be empowered by a elemental with Strength 2 or greater; larger appliances (refrigerators, television sets and microwaves) require a Strength of 4 or greater; and anything smaller than an industrial machine can be powered up by elementals with a Strength of 6.

Lightning Bolt: This power is essentially the same as the special Air Elemental ability of the same name. Damage is D8(4) times the elemental's Strength, with a range of up to 100 yards (meters). To attack, the elemental uses its Dexterity and Spiritus Skill; victims may Dodge, but with a -1 penalty, as the lightning bolt arcs towards them. Armor protects with half value, or not at all in the case of metal armor.

Resistant to Damage: Elementals take only minimum damage from physical attacks, equivalent to rolling a 1 on the damage die. For example, a bullet inflicting D6 x 4 points of damage normally does only 4 points of damage against the elemental.

Powers Special to Arcs

Electro-magnetic Pulse: Only the most powerful Electricity Elementals (minimum Strength 6) can perform this feat. By releasing a powerful EMP pulse, they can disrupt most electrical devices in an area of Strength x 5 feet (0.3 meters). Protected and Tempest-hardened systems may survive on a roll of 5 or higher on a D10.

Lightning Storm: Powerful elementals can unleash true lightning bolts that link the earth with a cloud formation. Hitting a specific target requires a Dexterity and Spiritus Task, and a target who is aware of the attack can Dodge normally. If the lightning bolt hits, it inflicts a variable damage number D10(5) x D10(5) (an average of 25 points, but ranging from 1 to 100 points). This attack costs 5 Essence Points.

Magnetic Field: Some Arcs can use their electrical nature to create a powerful magnetic field. This effect allows the elemental to repulse or attract metal objects with its natural Strength, at a maximum distance of 10 yards (meters) times its Willpower level. The magnetic field can also protect against bullets or other metallic weapons, offering an Armor Value of 2 x Spiritus level over a 2-yard (meter) radius.

Both this power and Electro-magnetic Pulse (see above), can damage and destroy most forms of electronic data, such as computer disks and disk drives.





Nature Spirits

Animists in the world of WitchCraft know a fundamental truth -- all things have spirits associated with them, and people with the right abilities can communicate, deal with, and to some degree control those spirits. Nature spirits are powerful but rarely take an active part in day to day affairs. When "awakened" by a Gifted character, however, they can and will take action, and the forces they control can behave in strange and "unnatural" ways if they decide to exert themselves.

Most nature spirits are associated with living beings -- spirits of rocks, rivers and storms exist, but they are somewhat more aloof and removed, and share more things in common with the "classical" elementals (so much so that in game terms they are nearly indistinguishable). Animal spirits also tend to be more self-aware and active than plant spirits, who are either too flighty (in the case of short-lived plants) or slow and ponderous (as with most trees).

Powers Common to Nature Spirits

Spirit Entities: Nature spirits have all the powers and limitations common to all spirit beings (see Witchcraft, pp. 258-259).

Localized: Generally, the nature spirits are only found near the creatures or forces they represent. Trying to summon them far away from their "native" environment is very difficult (such attempts are resisted with a +5 bonus). The best place to contact a Tree Spirit is near a tree, and so on. The Gifted doesn't have to be right on top of the correct animal, plant, or feature, but the spirit worker should at least be in the same rough habitat - a large forest, for example. While in a city, the only spirits likely to answer a summons will be those of city dwellers -- roaches, rats and dogs.

Animate: Some nature spirits seldom materialize. Instead, they take over the animal or plant they represent, and use them to deliver messages, attack enemies, and similar tasks. Large creatures (trees and large animals) are usually animated singly or in small groups, but small creatures (like insects or rats) are often controlled in huge swarms. An angry Insect Spirit can unleash a veritable plague of vermin upon an offending human.

Curses: Occasionally (very seldom in recent times, although that is changing with the approach of the Reckoning), nature spirits use their powers to punish a particularly noxious or harmful person. The Feral Curse (see pp. 29-30) is one example; other curses include bad luck, strange diseases, and worse.

Animal Swarms

A possessed or spirit-driven swarm (or flock, or horde) of animals is too numerous, and its members too small, to be treated as individuals. In game terms, a swarm of creatures is considered to be a gigantic creature with diffuse but lethal attacks. It is very hard to disperse through conventional means. Possessed swarms behave and attack very differently from a normal group of these animals, even in the case of creatures (like bees) that, on occasion, attack people under normal circumstances. Controlled swarms attack with relentless and suicidal drive, totally uncaring of casualties.

Only after the swarm has taken over 80% casualties does it give up, as the controlling spirit is unable to control the survivors any longer.

Birds: Typical small birds swarm in groups of 20 or more, and can attack 1 person for every 10 birds in the swarm (assuming there are enough people available). The flock has an effective speed of 30 mph (45 kph), and can cover a wide area, some 3 square yards (meters) per 10 birds in it. Each victim suffers D4(2) points of slashing damage per Turn. Furthermore, victims being swarmed by the birds are at -4 to all actions, since they have to protect their face and eyes from attacks. Body armor protects only if it fully covers the wearer (like a full suit of plate armor, riot armor and SWAT gear). Even when fully protected, however, the target will be blinded and hindered by the flocking birds. Doors keep birds out, but they can smash windows in a Turn or two, as members dive recklessly into them. Cars thus offer only temporary protection. A large enough swarm (60 or more birds) can also take down aircraft by crashing through windows or clogging a jet's turbines.

Attacking the swarm is possible, especially from a distance: consider it to have 40 Life Points per 20 birds. Hand weapons and fists do no more than 2 points per attack; most firearms inflict the same. Shotguns firing scattershot (duck and bird shot) inflict full damage. Flamethrowers and the like also do full damage. So, a 200-bird swarm can attack as many as 20 people at the same time, and it can stand up to 400 points of damage before being dispersed.

Rats: Rats have roughly the same attributes as birds, above, except for their speed (15 mph/24 kph), which is limited to the ground. They can climb over any wall and find entrances into most buildings with relative ease.

Bees/Wasps: Stinging, flying insects come in groups of 100 or more, and can attack 1 person for every 50 insects. They fly with an effective speed of 25 mph (40 kph). Victims suffer D4(2) to D10(5) points of damage per Turn, depending on the strength of their venom (normal bees or wasps are at the low end of the scale). While being overwhelmed, victims are at -5 to all actions. The swarm can sustain 10 points of damage per 100 insects in it. Most attacks only inflict 1 point; shotguns do 2 points; flamethrowers do full damage; a can of insecticide does D10(5) points per spray; a professional exterminator's sprayer causes a full D10 x 3(15) per "shot."

Only fully sealed clothing or armor protects against the insects.

Keeping insects out requires airtight seals.

Spiders/Ants: Treat them as bees/wasps, but they only travel with a speed of 20 mph (30 kph) on the ground, although the critters will climb up walls and onto ceilings with no problems.

Cockroach Spirits

Cockroaches are the ultimate survivors, capable of living in almost any environment. Their spirits are eternally hungry and driven by instinct. Speaking with these beings is very difficult; they speak very rapidly and care little for human concerns. Some urban magicians develop a working relationship with these entities, but this requires some extremely disgusting habits, like keeping a good stock of garbage in one's home. On the other hand, they can be formidable allies -- they are unmatched as spies, and a swarm of possessed roaches can be lethal. Their primitive drives, on the other hand, make them ideal candidates for Taint (see p. 115).

Strength: 2-8+ **Intelligence:** 2-5+
Dexterity: 3-7+ **Perception:** 3-5+
Constitution: 4-10+ **Willpower:** 3-5+
Vital Essence: 15-70+
Energy Essence: 10-100+
Life Points (when manifested): 25-170+
Speed: 10-20+
Spiritus: 3-6+

Powers Special to Cockroach Spirits

Animate: The spirit can animate 10 roaches for every point of Essence it spends. While controlled, the bugs can eavesdrop on conversations, scare customers from restaurants, and, in enough numbers, attack as swarms (see the sidebar on p. 143 for full rules on swarm attacks).

Gift of Survival: The ultimate survivors, Roach Spirits may grant this gift to a person if persuaded or cajoled to do so. The gift costs 15 Essence Points, and the recipient gains 5 levels of Hard to Kill (see WitchCraft, p. 78), cumulative with any existing levels of that Quality. The gift lasts for 5 minutes.

For 50 Essence points, the spirit allows a person who has recently died (less than an hour) to make a new Survival Test, with a +3 bonus; all other modifiers (such as damage, Hard to Kill bonuses and the like) also apply. If the Cockroach is taken as a Spirit Patron, this Boon costs 5 points (see p. 107).

Pestilence: When angered, a Cockroach Spirit can infect victims with a nasty disease. The spirit uses Willpower and Spiritus, resisted by the victim's Constitution (a Difficult Test for Mundane victims, a Simple one for Gifted or supernatural beings). Inflicting the curse costs 5 Essence Points per day, which is not regained until the curse is lifted or broken. On a failure, the victim is afflicted with a debilitating disease: symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea and fever. The sufferer loses D6 x 3(6) Life Points every day, and will be at -4 to all actions. The disease's damage cannot be healed normally; mundane medical treatment cannot help, and supernatural healing and regeneration is only 1/5 as effective as normal (so, a Lesser Healing that normally restored 10 points of damage would only heal 2 points of disease damage). The curse can be broken by a Cleansing Invocation, Exorcism miracle, and similar powers.

Eagle Spirits

Proud and powerful, Eagle Spirits have befriended magicians and medicine men in many cultures. They are embodiments of nobility, bravery and freedom, soaring over the toils and troubles of the mundane world. They are also hunters, scavengers and thieves, so both warriors and rogues seek their company. Eagle Spirits respect strength and courage; those seeking to summon them must be willing to take risks -- among other things, a Spirit bestowing the Gift of the Eagle (see below) may require the recipient to climb to some great height (a skyscraper or mountaintop preferably) and make a literal leap of faith.

Strength: 1-10+ **Intelligence:** 2-7+
Dexterity: 3-7+ **Perception:** 5-7+
Constitution: 2-10+ **Willpower:** 3-8+
Vital Essence: 20-80+
Energy Essence: 20-100+
Life Points (when manifested): 40-180+
Speed: 30-90+
Spiritus: 4-6+

Powers Special to Eagle Spirits

Gift of the Eagle: The more powerful Eagle Spirits can bless a human by transforming him into an eagle for a brief period of time. The transformed character is in full control of his new body, and can fly with an effective skill of 4. Strength is halved (rounded up), and Life Points are modified accordingly (although the transformed character is still tougher than a normal Eagle of the same size). Flying speed is equal to the character's normal Speed + 20. The Gift of the Eagle costs the spirit or the recipient 10 Essence Points (which are not regained until the recipient returns to normal; the cost can be shared in any proportion by both the spirit and the recipient), and lasts for 1 hour, at which point more Essence must be spent. If an Eagle Spirit is taken as a Spirit Patron, this Boon costs 4 points.

Materialize: Eagle Spirits do not possess living creatures -- they are unwilling to risk any member of their species. Instead, they may manifest themselves as a large or even gigantic bird of prey. In that shape, the spirit can fly at great speeds and attack, inflicting D4 x Strength slashing damage or D8 x Strength on a dive attack. Each dive attack requires that the spirit spend two Turns on a flying "climb" to achieve the needed height.

Powers Special to Tree Spirits

Animate: Under extreme circumstances, the spirit may awaken its tree and make it move, striking out with branches, or, more rarely, even making it walk for a few steps. This latter action is very damaging to the tree; making it uproot itself almost invariably kills it, an act few Tree Spirits will contemplate except under the most dire circumstances. The animated tree is a fearsome opponent. Its limbs inflict D8(4) to D10(5) x Strength points of damage. It can create "mouths" that bite for D6(3) to D8(4) x Strength points of slashing damage.

Healing: The spirit can perform the Lesser Healing Invocation (see WitchCraft, p. 219) on anyone who is placed near the tree it is connected to. Tree Spirits cannot be coerced into performing this service, but must be convinced or bribed.

Tree Spirits

Living symbols of wisdom and strength, the tree is venerated by many cultures. It often represents the universe -- the World Tree of Norse mythology, and the Tree of Life of the Quabbala are but two such instances. Dealing with Tree Spirits requires a great deal of patience; to these long-lived beings, days tick by like hours do for humans. Tree Spirits are slow to action or anger, but once they get moving, they are very difficult to stop. These spirits are almost always bound to an individual tree. When that tree dies, the spirit is greatly weakened (permanently losing one half of its Vital and Energy Essence) and soon seeks to link itself to another tree, usually a young sapling. The Gifted can temporarily awaken them and communicate and even control these spirits, although cooperation is best sought voluntarily. Enslaving a Tree Spirit is dangerous, as its brethren will seek revenge, and will never forget or forgive.

Strength: 5-15+

Intelligence: 2-6+

Dexterity: 3-5+

Perception: 2-5+

Constitution: 5-10+

Willpower: 3-7+

Vital Essence: 20-150+

Energy Essence: 20-100+

Life Points (when manifested): 40-300+

Speed: 5-10+

Spiritus: 4-6+

Tree Curse: This powerful curse happens rarely, when someone commits such atrocities against trees that he inadvertently awakens one of these typically slumbering entities. The Curse costs 75 Essence Points, which are not regained until the curse is broken or lifted -- in many cases, this takes decades or even centuries. The Spirit uses Willpower and Spiritus, and is resisted by the victim's Willpower doubled. If the Spirit wins, the victim feels an irresistible urge to head for the nearest wooded area and stand in a clearing. There, he turns into a tree. Often, the "rooting" place is in the area that is due for clear cutting, in which case the victim dies.



Wolf Spirits

Hunter, pack animal, creature of the night, wolves have a strange relationship with humankind. Sometime in the distant past, certain wolves and humans formed a partnership. Formerly, they were competing hunters who joined forces; now, the wolves' descendants are pets and playthings. The wolves who remained wild and free were hunted down and forced out, and soon came to fear the humans and their fire and weapons. Wolf Spirits have ambivalent feelings towards humanity. They feel some degree of kinship with humans, but many still hate them for their crimes. Dealing with these spirits requires skill and self-confidence. Like real wolves, these entities see things in terms of ranks and dominance, and a Wolf Spirit either sees itself as a superior or subordinate.

Strength: 1-8+

Dexterity: 4-6+

Constitution: 2-8+

Intelligence: 2-5+

Perception: 3-6+

Willpower: 3-6+

Vital Essence: 10-75+

Energy Essence: 10-100+

Life Points (when manifested): 20-175+

Speed: 20-30+

Spiritus: 3-6+

Powers Special to Wolf Spirits

Feral Curse: Wolves Spirits sometimes inflict the Feral Curse on humans. These curses are detailed on pp. 29-30.

Materialize and Animate: Wolf Spirits occasionally materialize physically. Sometimes, one of them seizes control over a real wolf or even an entire pack. The former case uses normal Manifestation rules (see *WitchCraft* p. 259); taking possession of one or more wolves costs 10 Energy Essence Points per animal. The possessed animals are completely controlled by the spirit, but they are rarely put in a suicidal situation -- attacking a small group of armed humans is acceptable; leaping into the path of an on-rushing truck is not. The more powerful spirits both materialize physically and seize control of a pack, leading them on the hunt.

Zombies

Shambling horrors, walking dead, denizens of the graveyards, zombies are part of human myth and legend. They are also a dangerous part of the WitchCraft world. Though their origins and natures vary, zombies in all forms are a mockery of life.

Powers Common to Astral Zombies

Astral Zombies have all the common ghost abilities of Witchcraft (pp. 266-277) and Mystery Codex (pp. 68-70).

Powers Special to Astral Zombies

Enslaved: The Astral Zombie is under the complete control of its master. Horribly, the tormented soul is fully aware and conscious, but cannot disobey any commands. Only while the "owner" sleeps (or is knocked unconscious) can the zombie attempt to break free: this requires a Difficult Willpower Test resisted by the magician's own Willpower and Necromancy Task. The Astral Zombie's master will be aware of the attempted escape as soon as he awakens. Given that the chance of failure is so great, and the fear of reprisal so strong, most Astral Zombies rarely attempt the feat.

Spell-Catching: The "owner" of an Astral Zombie can send the spirit forth as a shield to deflect or absorb an incoming magical attack. This is a very painful experience for the zombie, who takes 1 point of Essence damage (affecting Energy Essence first, then Vital Essence) for every Essence point in the hostile Invocation. To "catch" a spell, the magician has to succeed at a Resisted Task, pitting his Willpower and Necromancy Task against the attacker's Willpower and Invocation Task. If the zombie owner wins or ties, he interposes the Astral Zombie, who absorbs the Invocation with no ill effects for the intended target.



Astral Zombies

An Astral Zombie is created when a sorcerer captures and enslaves a deceased person's soul. The process uses magic or a combination of magic and necromancy. Although many cultures have developed similar ways to enslave the dead, Voodoo practitioners are the largest such surviving group. Astral Zombies no longer have a physical body, but make ideal spies, guards and spiritual agents.

Astral Zombies are ghosts. Making an Astral Zombie requires either the Necromancy Power Death Lordship 3 (WitchCraft, p. 240) or the Spirit Mastery Invocation (WitchCraft, p. 222). Control Tasks after the spirit is bound use the Necromancy Skill, so the former power is the most commonly used one.

Strength: 1-6+

Intelligence: 1-6+

Dexterity: 1-6+

Perception: 1-6+

Constitution: 1-6+

Willpower: 1-6+

Vital Essence: 12-40+

Energy Essence: 12-40+

Life Points (when manifested): 24-80+

Speed: 20-30+

Spiritus: 2-5+

Living Zombies

These unfortunates are neither Undead nor Ghosts, but people victimized by drugs and torture. Voodoo societies sometimes do not rely on magical powers (the concentration of Gifted in Haiti is greater than normal, but it still is not huge). Many practitioners, especially those who follow the Red Path, also have an extensive body of knowledge dealing with drugs and potions.

The most powerful zombie drug, made with the secretions of an exotic puffer fish and other ingredients, paralyzes a victim to the degree that even trained doctors pronounce him dead. The poison has a Strength of 6, and it can be ingested, inhaled or injected. If the victim manages to resist, he suffers partial paralysis: reduce Dexterity, Strength and Speed by one half (rounded down) for D4(2) days. If the poison overcomes its target, the victim collapses, and his metabolism slows to the point that a heartbeat can only be spotted on a Perception and Medicine Task with a -8 penalty. The victim is totally self-aware and conscious, and quite capable of feeling pain. As long as neither an autopsy or embalming is performed, the victim is alive and well when buried. Dark Voodoo cults often kidnap the victim or steal the body before either procedure is carried out, and perform the burial themselves. The ordeal is devastating. Although the poison slows down the target's metabolism, the interment deprives him of oxygen long enough to inflict damage. If the victim is a Voodoo believer, he often becomes convinced that he is now undead, and bound to his "creator."

Living Zombies have no special powers. Their Intelligence and Willpower are permanently reduced by 2 levels, unless regained magically through the Greater Healing Invocation (Mystery Codex, p. 154) or other potent Gifted powers. If the Voodoo cultists who "created" the victim have high levels of Intimidation or Smooth Talking, they are usually able to control the victim. These near-mindless wretches do almost anything their "masters" demand of them, although some particularly vile tasks may be resisted with a Simple Willpower Test.

Living Zombies

Strength: 1-5+

Dexterity: 1-4+

Constitution: 1-4+

Life Points: 18-46

Endurance Points: 11-38

Essence: 4-21

Speed: 4-16

Intelligence: 0-2+

Perception: 1-4+

Willpower: 0-2+

Undead Zombies

True Undead Zombies are created through the Zombie Mastery Invocation (see p. 102). They are almost invariably enslaved by their creator, and if such control is broken, they nearly always abandon their rotting corpse and pass on to the normal Cycle of Life and Death. On a few occasions, a zombie will become independent -- an Undead being forced to prey on others for Essence.

Strong, hardy and difficult to kill, these beings make ideal servants and bodyguards. Of course, only the most brutal and heartless Voodoo societies -- and similar Dark Covenants from other cultures -- make use of such servants.

Undead Zombies

Strength: 4-7+

Dexterity: 1-5+

Constitution: 4-7+

Life Points: 42-66+

Endurance Points: Not Applicable

Essence Points: 9-31+

Speed: 8-14

Intelligence: 0-4+

Perception: 0-4+

Willpower: 0-4+

Powers Common to Undead Zombies

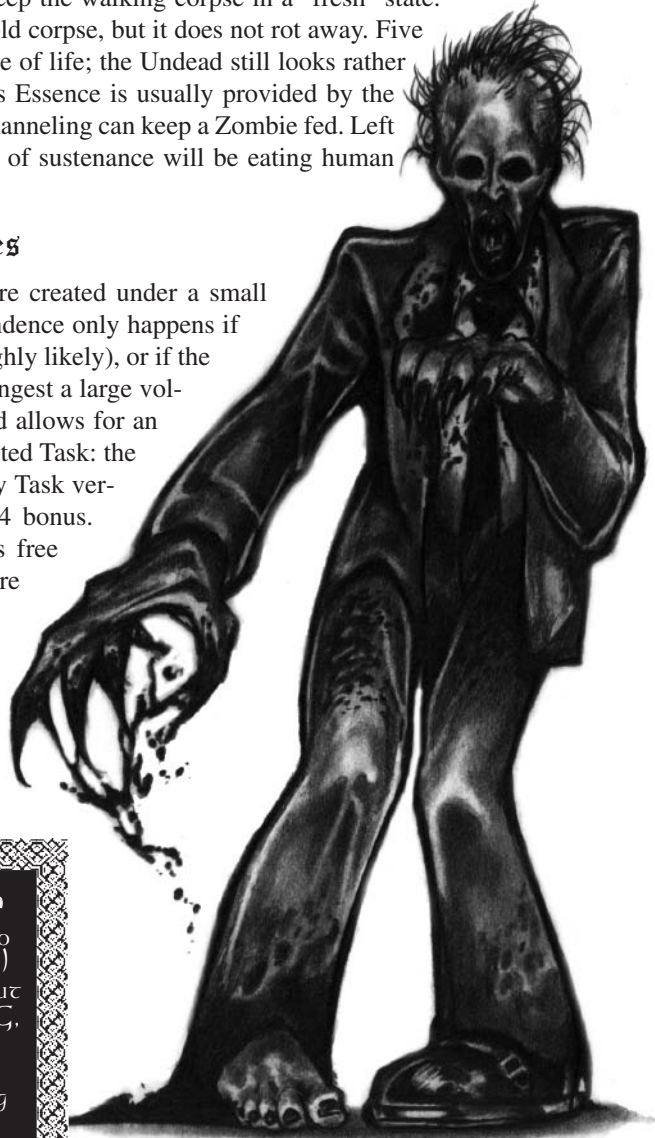
Attributes: Zombies have the Attributes they had at life, modified as follows: +2 to Strength and Constitution, -1 to all Mental Attributes. Speed is figured by adding the Zombie's Dexterity and Constitution, not doubled.

Regeneration: Zombies regain damage at the rate of 1 Life Point per Constitution level every hour. Severed limbs must be reattached, however; they cannot grow new ones.

Decomposition: Keeping the zombies from rotting away requires a great deal of Essence; a minimum of 2 Essence Points per day must be consumed to keep the walking corpse in a "fresh" state. The body still looks -- and smells -- like a day-old corpse, but it does not rot away. Five Essence Points a day gives a near-full semblance of life; the Undead still looks rather pale and unhealthy, but not unnaturally so. This Essence is usually provided by the zombie's creator. Any character with Essence Channeling can keep a Zombie fed. Left to their own devices, the Zombie's only source of sustenance will be eating human flesh (see Independent Zombies, below).

Powers Special to Undead Zombies

Independent Zombie: These rare Undead are created under a small and restricted set of circumstances. The independence only happens if the creator willingly releases the zombie (not highly likely), or if the creator dies. Further, if the zombie manages to ingest a large volume of salt, this disrupts its Essence pattern and allows for an attempt to break free. This is resolved as a Resisted Task: the zombie maker's Willpower and Zombie Mastery Task versus the zombie's Willpower doubled with a +4 bonus. When this happens, the zombie usually breaks free and leaves its body, but sometimes the creature decides to linger on. Independent zombies need to get their own Essence to survive; they can take it from living beings only by eating recently killed or still living flesh. One pound (half kilogram) of fresh human flesh replenishes 2 Essence Points.



Zombies and All Flesh Must Be Eaten

Chroniclers and players wishing to further flesh out (no pun intended) this type of Undead might check out the *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* RPG, also published by Eden Studios. AFMBE uses the Unisystem and details dozens of different walking dead from mythology, movies and comic books.

Fiends

Fiends are malicious spirit entities -- magicians who summon them can only use them for evil purposes. These twisted creatures are sometimes found in the service of the Fallen Seraphim, who use them as slaves and servants, but they appear to have their own hellish realm, a place of chaos, hatred and strife somewhere in the Sephiroth of Chesed. Like elementals, they may be reflections of humankind's own thoughts and feelings, or they may be beings from a different level of reality. While not as alien or dangerous as the Mad Gods and their minions, Fiends are mortal enemies of humanity and all living beings.

Fiends are defined by three things: power, hatred, and hunger. They resent those more powerful than they, even as they despise those who are weaker and compete fiercely with their peers. Their only true emotions are hatred and fear. They live to destroy, and the only thing that keeps them in check is the fear of those greater than themselves. They also hunger for the Essence of living beings, especially when flavored by pain and suffering.

The more mindless of their kind are killing and eating machines that, in their natural state, attack at the first opportunity. The greatest of their kind are more self-controlled and are capable of foresight and planning, but even they lack the skills and subtlety of a true demon. While the Fallen Seraphim seek to corrupt, Fiends only want a chance to feast on the life force of a living being -- humans or other sentient beings if possible, but any animal, plant or spirit (including other Fiends) will do in a pinch.

For that reason, Fiends can be summoned by magicians with relative ease, provided the right Invocations are known and the right incentive is offered. Lesser Fiends are fairly mindless and violent, but once they encounter overwhelming force, they turn craven and servile. Those who bring them to this world must never lower their guard, however, for Fiends will turn against their "masters" at the very first opportunity.

Note that to many occultists, the distinction between Fiend and demon is academic at best.

Powers Common to Fiends

Animal Possession: Animals may be controlled. Some Fiends favor pets; others try to take over large animals. Trying to possess an animal often puts the Fiend in conflict with the appropriate nature spirit, but Fiends appear to win such encounters with ease. Possessing an animal costs 15 Essence Points.

While possessed, the victim's Strength is unnaturally high. In game terms, the possessed animal gains a bonus equal to 1/3 the Fiend's natural Strength, rounded up. The victim can withstand a large amount of damage, gaining a Life Point bonus equal to one half the Fiend's Vital Essence Pool, rounded up. When the Fiend relinquishes control, however, any damage incurred remains. If greater than the animal's normal Life Points, this often results in death.

Human Possession: Fiends love to take over some helpless human, using him as an agent of chaos and destruction. Possession costs the Fiend 20 Essence Points (which cannot be regained until it releases its victim) and requires a successful Willpower and Spiritus Task, resisted by the victim's Simple Willpower Test. If the Fiend wins, it is in control of the victim. Attempts to resist are possible every ten minutes or so, although if the victim fails in four or more attempts in a row, the Fiend is in control for as long as a day before further resistance is possible.

Fiend-possessed humans gain the same bonuses as animal victims (see above).

Machine Possession: In recent times, Fiends have started taking over machines -- vehicles, industrial equipment, toys, computers, and so on. The creature is somewhat limited by the structural limitations of the equipment, but can sometimes transcend them. The Fiend uses Essence to warp and manipulate the machine, allowing it to perform incredible feats. Possessing a machine costs 20 Essence Points.

Plain, brand-new machines cannot be possessed; the target must have some residual Essence, perhaps as the result of a death, strong emotions, and the like. A toy that belonged to an abused child, or a car involved in a hit and run fatality are two examples of

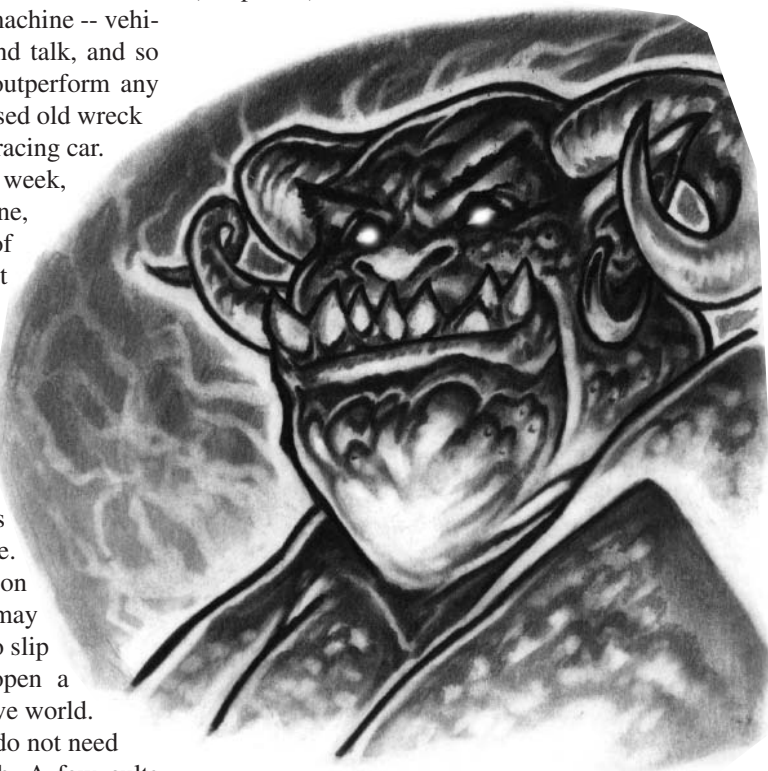
targets ripe for possession. The Fiend can drain the pain-tinged Essence in the object, inhabit it and use it to wreak destruction. The degree of control over the machine increases with time. During the first day of possession, the creature can do very little with the machine -- not full control, but, with a little creativity, even a minor malfunction can produce nasty results for those around the device. After two or three days, the Fiend is able to operate the machine -- vehicles run by themselves, dolls walk and talk, and so on. After four days, the device can outperform any normal machine of its kind -- a possessed old wreck runs faster and better than a mundane racing car. If the possession continues for over a week, the Fiend is able to repair the machine, regenerating any damage at the rate of 5 damage points per Essence Point spent.

Destroying the possessed machine affects the creature in the same manner as destroying a physical manifestation (see *WitchCraft*, p. 259).

Physical Manifestation: Fiends can materialize physically, as long as they have an outside source of Essence. This usually requires magic, although on occasion a large release of Essence may allow one or more of these creatures to slip through. Another possibility is to open a Gateway leading to the creatures' native world. Fiends who cross through a Gateway do not need to spend Essence to remain on Earth. A few cults would love to open huge gateways to allow hordes of these creatures to pour through; fortunately, such links between worlds are extremely rare.

Spirit Powers: Fiends have all normal spirit powers. They cannot stay on Earth in spirit form for very long, however. If they are unable to find some form or anchor (by either materializing physically or through possession), they start losing Essence (first Energy, then Vital Essence) at the rate of 5 points per hour. This drain cannot be stopped until the spirit becomes material, takes possession of a living being, or returns to its plane.

Swarm Possession: Some Fiends have the ability to infect a large number of creatures with their ferocious appetite and relentless hatred. Typically, the victims of this possession power are small animals (birds, rats, insects) who then roam around in swarms, attacking humans wherever they go. This works much like the Animate power of nature spirits (see p. 142).



Fiends

Strength: 2-10+

Dexterity: 3-7+

Constitution: 2-10+

Vital Essence: 20-100+

Energy Essence: 20-100+

Life Points (when manifested): 40-200+

Speed: 10-34+

Spiritus: 3-6+

Intelligence: 2-7+

Perception: 3-7+

Willpower: 3-7+

Ethereals

Ethereals are a varied and odd lot. They are single-minded servants of a greater supernatural being. A Grim Reaper (see *Mystery Codex*, p. 193) is a form of Death Ethereal, for example. Other Ethereals serve the Seraphim, the Old Gods, and other powers of the universe. A few Ethereals are dedicated to a single concept or idea, like Justice or Vengeance.

Powers Common to Ethereals

Iron-Willed: An Ethereal cannot be compelled to act against its nature. It can be destroyed or imprisoned, but it cannot be forced to obey a third party. Spirit Mastery only works when the orders or compacts attempted somehow serve the principles the Ethereal espouses.

Physical Manifestation: Like elementals, Ethereals can materialize more easily than normal spirits. To appear physically, the Ethereal must spend 1 Essence Point for every 5 points of its Vital Essence. This Essence is not regained until the spirit returns to its natural state or to its plane of existence. Furthermore, Ethereals who materialize in front of crowds risk being quickly drained of power. The Crowd Effect also applies to manifested Ethereals, unless they can either fool the audience into believing them to be natural phenomena, or by quickly terrifying them into submission (see *Witchcraft*, p. 200).

Spirit Entities: Ethereals share all basic spirit abilities, with some modifications noted below.

Ethereals

Strength: 2-8+

Dexterity: 4-6+

Constitution: 2-8+

Vital Essence: 20-100+

Energy Essence: 20-100+

Life Points (when manifested): 40-200+

Speed: 20-30+

Spiritus: 3-6+

Intelligence: 3-6+

Perception: 3-7+

Willpower: 3-6+



Vengeance Ethereals

Injustice, betrayal, murder: in the world of WitchCraft, these acts sometimes have supernatural repercussions. Victims may come back from the dead as Relentless Dead or restless spirits, or their dying emotions sometimes imbue a locality with negative energies. And, sometimes, they attract the attention of angry spirits of vengeance.

Vengeance Ethereals come in many shapes, from animals to spectral avenging angels. Their goal is to punish the guilty, if possible in the most appropriate and "poetic" way imaginable. If the victim of an outrage is still alive, they communicate with him through dreams and visions, trying to make him the instrument of that vengeance. Vengeance Ethereals sometimes forge a link with a Relentless Dead or a ghost, giving it aid in settling scores. Some sorcerers also invoke these Ethereals and send them forth to punish criminals and sinners.

When operating on their own, Vengeance Ethereals rarely attack their targets directly. They prefer to torment them for some time, building up to a final violent climax. Usually, they start with minor curses, annoying at first, then becoming worrisome and frightening. Each strange episode is punctuated with flashes and visions of the crimes the target is being punished for. Sometimes, the spirit briefly assumes the shape of the victim to give the perpetrator a glimpse of the reason why things are happening to him. Some of these entities care little for right and wrong, and may extend their activities to the target's loved ones, who are often innocent of any wrongdoing. Their goal is to make the perpetrator feel as much pain as he inflicted, and many of these spirits do not hesitate to do anything that will achieve their purpose.

Sometimes, if the target is powerful enough, the Ethereal manifests physically in this world and delivers the final blow in person. Generally, however, the Ethereal prefers to manipulate circumstances so the criminal becomes the tool of his own destruction.

When working with the actual victim of the crime (living or dead), the spirit may either work behind the scenes, secretly giving the vengeance-seeker a little help here and there, or it may act as an overt guide, ally or teacher. When this happens, the victim often becomes consumed by rage, since the spirit frequently tries to inflame the victim until no scruples or fears restrain him from seeking revenge. This may result in the victim's life being utterly destroyed, as his quest sets aside all other considerations, including survival.

These spirits are likely to "befriend" Ghosts, Phantasms, Relentless Dead, Pariahs (see Mystery Codex), and other former victims. As mentioned above, however, a spirit of vengeance can often do more harm than good. In any case, these spirits may be used as Familiars and Spirit Patrons by appropriately motivated characters.

Special Vengeance Ethereal Powers

Curses: The spirit can cause the Lesser Curse Invocation (see Witchcraft, p. 218) at normal Essence cost, with a skill equal to its Spiritus level and a Channeling level equal to its Willpower.

Flashbacks: The spirit can make people relive a moment in their lives. Given their dark purpose, these images are unlikely to be pleasant -- or, if they are, they are calculated to bring about pain or anger, like reminding somebody of a now-dead loved one. Triggering the flashback costs 1 Essence Point and requires a Willpower and Spiritus Task. Usually, its onset cannot be resisted, but the target may try to "snap out of it" by passing a Difficult Willpower Test.

Possession: The spirit may try to possess somebody and imbue him with some of its strength. This only works on willing targets, however, and the person is largely in control of his actions. The usual subject is a living victim of some crime, just as he is confronting his tormentors -- this power does not work on Spirits or the Undead. While possessed, the subject gains a +2 bonus to both Strength and Constitution, and the equivalent of Hard to Kill 5 (+15 Life Points). The subject also finds it very difficult to restrain himself from attacking and killing those who victimized him. Attempts to resist this urge are made with a -3 penalty.

Possession costs 10 Essence Points; an additional 5 Essence Points must be spent every minute it remains in possession of the victim.

Strength: 5

Dexterity: 5

Constitution: 5

Intelligence: 5+

Perception: 5

Willpower: 5

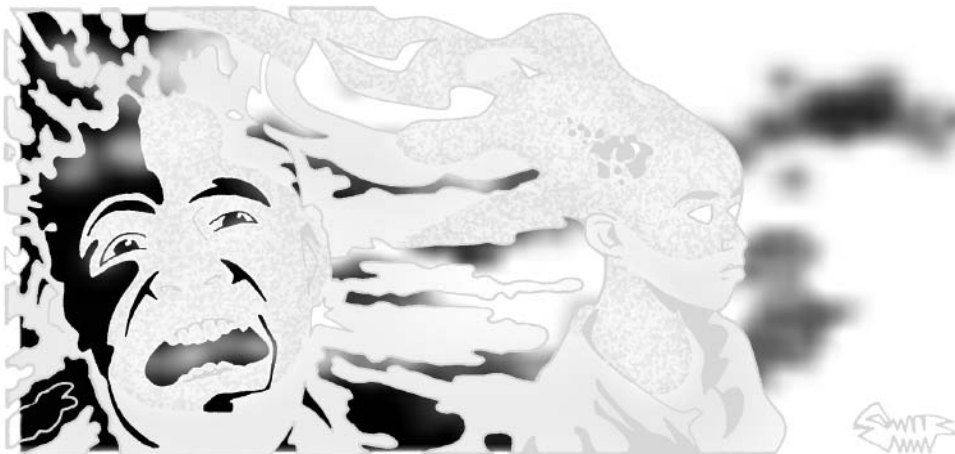
Vital Essence: 80

Energy Essence: 100

Life Points (when manifested): 180

Speed: 25

Spiritus: 5



Call Ethereal Miracle

Some among the Inspired can call forth heavenly creatures to fight at their side. These beings are not true Seraphim, but Angelic Ethereals. They only come to the aid of the Inspired if he is battling supernatural foes and if the odds are clearly against him. A group of monster-hunters who have cornered a young vampire is not sufficient -- a lone Inspired facing a family of Vampyres or a powerful Fiend is.

The summoning costs 10 Essence Points and takes a few seconds (two Turns). Once it appears, the Ethereal battles against all supernatural monsters in the area (the entity may attack supernatural allies of the summoner as well, if they are not "pure" enough). When the fight is over (assuming the Ethereal was not destroyed), it heals the Inspired and any allies who were injured before departing.

The Inspired can only summon one Ethereal at a time.

Angelic Ethereals

The Seraphim have their own spirit servants, which they use as messengers, observers and, on rare occasion, warriors. To most people (both Gifted and Mundane), there is no visible distinction between the two orders of being -- the Ethereals usually appear as glowing, beautiful humanoids (wings are optional) who radiate feelings of goodness and well-being. Many people are moved to tears by the mere appearance of these creatures (Gifted and strong-willed Mundanes are less likely to lose their composure), while sinners feel fear and shame. Most Christians and Muslims automatically identify these apparitions as angels; other religions ascribe them a similar beneficial identity.

Angelic Ethereals appear very rarely, but some magicians summon them to provide healing or comfort. Some Inspired also have the power to call one or more of these beings to fight at their side (see the Call Ethereal Miracle sidebar).

Special Angelic Ethereal Powers

Angelic Aura: If the spirit manifests itself physically, all non-Gifted people with a Willpower below 3 are struck by a feeling of awe and emotion. Most people feel a wave of love and acceptance that may bring back happy memories of their childhood. People with a guilty conscience are wracked by shame. Gifted characters, supernatural beings and Mundanes with a Willpower of 3 or higher are not fully affected, but they feel some of these emotions nonetheless. Those who are affected are at a -2 penalty to refuse or hinder the spirit in any way. Common criminals and the like probably flee at the first opportunity, or cower in fear otherwise. Attacking the spirit requires a Difficult Willpower Test.

Healing: The spirit can cast the Lesser Healing Invocation (WitchCraft, p. 219) with a skill level equal to its Spiritus level and an effective Channeling level equal to its Willpower.

Holy Sword: When manifested (or confronting other entities in the spirit world), the spirit can create a blade of holy fire by spending 5 Essence Points. This weapon inflicts D8(4) x Strength points of slashing damage, which harms both physical and spiritual beings.

Strength: 5

Dexterity: 5

Constitution: 5

Intelligence: 5+

Perception: 5

Willpower: 5

Vital Essence: 50

Energy Essence: 70

Life Points (when manifested): 120

Speed: 25

Spiritus: 5

Creatures of Taint

Taint, or anti-Essence, is believed to be a primordial force from beyond our reality. Its effects are akin to the ravages of cancer on an organism -- Taint twists, deforms and eventually destroys all things it touches. All beings of Essence, from the most sadistic Dark Covenant member to the most saintly Seraphim, consider Taint to be anathema, for to be infected by it almost always leads to the loss of one's identity and existence. Only the most depraved and insane individuals willingly surrender themselves to this force.

Tainted Spirits

Sometimes, a spirit comes into contact with a Tainted being. These encounters are usually fatal for one or both parties involved, but on occasion a spirit survives the ordeal, only to find itself infected with Taint. Two possible results ensue if the spirit cannot somehow rid itself of the Taint: the spirit sickens and dies, poisoned by the Taint in its system, or gradually transforms into a full-fledged creature of Taint. The

second outcome is extremely rare, but when it occurs it releases a dangerous abomination, a creature with the full powers of a normal spirit, enhanced with the destructive forces of the Mad Gods. Fortunately, the life span of a Tainted creature can be measured in days or weeks. Unfortunately, the destruction these beings can inflict during that time is considerable.

Tainted spirits are likely nature spirits, elementals and Fiends. Ethereals always perish if infected.

Powers Common to Tainted Spirits

All Tainted spirits have the normal powers of their kind. Additionally, they have a number of vulnerabilities. First, their Vital and Energy Essence are replaced by Vital and Energy Taint on a one-to-one basis. They may also acquire some Tainted Powers (see p. 120). Finally, they continually suffer from their contact with Essence, losing 2 points of Vital Taint every day until they are destroyed. Another being of Taint may be able to heal this damage; otherwise, this drain cannot be regained, effectively condemning the spirit to a relatively quick death.



Tainted Fire Elemental

This is a fair-sized elemental who has been consumed by Taint. It now seeks to burn and destroy everything around it, even as it feels the world burning and destroying its own body.

Special Tainted Pryos Powers

Tainted Burns: Any burn damage inflicted by the elemental becomes infected and does not heal normally. If no supernatural healing is available, half of the damage suffered by the burns never heals -- the victim remains horribly scarred, and his Life Points are permanently reduced by that amount. Supernatural healing and regeneration work, but much more slowly, restoring the wounds with 1/10 the normal rate (rounded down) -- so, the only way to heal 1 Tainted Burn point with the Lesser Healing Invocation is to spend 10 Essence Points.

Strength: 4

Dexterity: 5

Constitution: 4

Vital Taint: 30

Life Points (when manifested): 80

Speed: 20

Intelligence: 2

Perception: 4

Willpower: 6

Energy Taint: 50

Spiritus: 4

The Wendigo

Tainted Feral

This monster appears when a Tainted animal spirit comes upon a human in desperate straits. Stranded and isolated people are the preferred targets, especially those who resort to cannibalism or other loathsome practices to survive in the wilderness. If the victim gives up its soul for the chance to survive, it becomes Wendigo -- a Feral-like monster who feeds on human flesh.

These monsters are thankfully very rare. Their name is a Native American term (that has also been applied to normal Ferals), and Wendigos have been known to appear in the wilderness of North America. Still, they are just as likely to appear in the jungles of Southeast Asia, the Amazonian Rain Forest, or the plains of Africa. Whenever someone is tempted to eat human flesh and has given up all hope, driven only by the will to survive at any cost, this transformation is possible. Only a handful of these beings exist at any given time, however, and they rarely survive more than a few years before their Taint consumes them or someone destroys them.

Special Wendigo Powers

Cannibalism: If a Wendigo does not eat at least 10 pounds (5 kilograms) of freshly killed human flesh every month, it loses 2 Taint Points. This loss cannot be regained until the creature feeds again.

Feral Powers: Wendigos have all the powers of Ferals (see p. 33), except they use Taint, and can never be Inborn (see p. 31). Furthermore, Wendigos retain half of their attribute bonuses (rounded down) even while in human form. In fact, some Wendigos rarely change into their bestial shape, preferring to stalk and kill victims in their "normal" form.

Taint Powers: Some Wendigos have other Taint Powers (see p. 20).

Strength: 4-7+

Dexterity: 2-6+

Constitution: 4-6+

Intelligence: 1+

Perception: 2-6+

Willpower:

2+

Life Points: Varies by shape

Speed: Varies by shape

Taint: 20-50+



Lle'Khor, the Rending Shadow

Also known in some forbidden texts as the Devouring Darkness, the Undying Night, and the Sun-Eater, this Mad God has never manifested fully on this world for more than a few hours. According to one account, the last such appearance was centuries ago, in a Mayan temple compound, summoned by an insane priest. During that brief appearance, Lle'Khor consumed the entire temple and the surrounding villages, and the general malaise that followed may have been partially responsible for the decadence and fall of Mayan civilization. A small cult survived this appearance, hiding from the persecution of both Mayans, Aztecs and later Christians; it continues trying to bring back its lord (see 160).

When manifested, Lle'Khor appears as a swirling solid darkness, able to flow like a liquid with tremendous speed. It tends to have a tall and wide center -- a rough sphere some 10 yards (meters) in diameter -- and it reaches out with pseudopods of pure darkness. Those touched by the shadow matter are both burned and bit by it, often losing entire limbs in the process, depending on how close they are to the central mass. The Mad God devours everything organic in its path, leaving only rock and metal behind. Fortunately, it cannot remain in this reality for very long, at least not unless some special circumstances apply. Sunlight is particularly damaging to the entity, so it rarely lingers for more than a night.

Special Lle'Khor Powers

Fear Test: Anyone who sees Lle'Khor must pass a Fear Test with a -5 penalty.

Flowing: The Rending Shadow has almost no solid substance. Only air-tight barriers keep it from flowing inside, and even then it can use its inhuman strength to break through them.

Pseudopods: The Mad God can extend liquid limbs that stretch as far as 30 yards (meters) from its core. As many as 14 limbs can make aimed attacks at any one time, and up to 4 can aim for an individual target. The further away the limbs are, the less damage they inflict; this ranges from D6 x 3(9) at 30 yards (meters) to d6 x 5(15) at 20 yards (meters) to D6 x 15(45) within 5 yards (meters). Divide the AV of any armor by 5, as the liquid darkness burns and flows through it to get to the flesh beneath. Spirits hit by the darkness take damage directly to their Vital Essence. Damage from this attack heals at 1/5 the normal rate.

The limbs can be used to trap a victim and drag him into the creature's core. Limbs have an effective Strength of 4, with a +2 bonus for every additional limb that joins in.

Resistant to Damage: Only explosives, fire, energy and supernatural or Essence attacks affect the Rending Shadow. Physical attacks like bullets or hand weapons merely pass through its body with no ill effect. Furthermore, the creature can heal D10(5) points of damage by spending 1 Taint Point, and it can spend as many Taint Points as it needs every Turn.

Summon Shadowlings: Lle'Khor can call 5 Shadowlings for every point of Taint it spends.

Vulnerable to Light: Sunlight inflicts D10 x 10(50) points of damage to the Mad God per Turn. At night or during a solar eclipse, this damage is reduced to 10 points per hour.

Strength: 25	Dexterity: 5	Constitution: 25
Intelligence: 7	Perception: 8	Willpower: 15
Life Points: 500	Endurance: n/a	
Speed: 15	Taint: 700	

Shadowlings

Minions of the Rending Shadow

These living pockets of darkness are occasionally summoned by the Cult of the Rending Shadow and used exclusively to commit murder. Shadowlings are almost mindless, and crave living flesh to survive. They can be controlled only through the use of appropriate rituals, and even then they can only be directed to attack a specific target, to flee, or to crawl in a containment box (see below). Losing control (failing 2 Willpower and Spirit Mastery (Shadowling) Tasks in a row is usually fatal: the Shadowling will attack its summoner on sight.

Shadowlings cannot survive in the open for more than a few hours at a time, and then only at night. Exposure to sunlight is almost immediately fatal: the creature suffers D6 x 10(30) points of damage every Turn it is standing in the open during a sunny day. Being indoors or outside on a cloudy day reduces the damage to D10(5) points. At night, the Life Point loss is a mere 5 points per hour. Only if the creature is kept in a metal box (made of some heavy element, like lead or gold) can it endure its existence on Earth without suffering damage.

When released, however, Shadowlings are brutally lethal opponents. They scurry at amazing speed (Speed 25), are immune to most damage and cause horrific wounds with the merest touch.

Special Shadowlings Powers

Killing Touch: All the creature needs to do is touch its enemies to harm them. The monster attacks by a Simple Dexterity Test with a +3 bonus; this attack can only be dodged. Any living being touched by the Shadowling suffers D4(2) x Strength points of damage. The wounds inflicted by a Shadowling exhibit the characteristics of both bites and chemical burns, and the hideous slashes do not heal normally. Damage is recovered at 1/5th the normal rate (rounded down); this applies to both natural and supernatural healing -- a Lesser Healing Invocation that normally healed 6 points of damage would only undo 1 point of the damage inflicted by the Shadowling.

Life Points: Shadowling Life Points are calculated using the following formula: (Con + Str) x 5.

Resistance to Damage: The Shadowlings shadow substance renders it almost immune to conventional weapons -- bullets, punches, and any physical weapon only inflict 1/10th the damage rolled on a Shadowling. Only magical attacks, fire, or other non-kinetic energy attacks (electrocution, or lasers, for example) damage the creatures normally.

Strength: 2-5

Dexterity: 3

Constitution: 2-5

Intelligence: 1

Perception: 3-4

Willpower: 3-4

Life Points: 20-50

Speed: 25

Taint: 10-15

Cult of the Rending Shadow

This small cult has had many incarnations in ages past. It has often been completely stamped out, its members hunted down to the last man. Still, all it takes is one wretch who, driven by despair or madness, makes contact with the realms beyond to start it anew. The current cult is perhaps one of the longest-lived such societies, with a lineage that reaches back over the best part of the last millennium.

History

The cult in its current form appeared in the Mayan city-states. It was persecuted by the political and religious authorities of the time, since not even the bloodthirsty Mayan pantheon would accept the worship of a Mad God. A successful summoning resulted in the deaths of thousands and helped bring about the downfall of Mayan civilization. The cult went deep underground, numbering only a handful of members, and for centuries it achieved little. After the Spanish conquest of Central America, however, the horrors of war and plague (which may have killed as many as nine-tenths of the population) drove many unfortunates into the arms of the cult. Now the society has over a hundred members worldwide, concentrated mainly in Mexico and the U.S.

Beliefs

As far as the cult is concerned, the Rending Shadow is the only true god. This god must be appeased through human sacrifice, and each of the cult's gatherings will try to find a suitable offering at least once a year.

Organization

The group is led by a circle of thirteen priests, each in control of 5-10 acolytes. Four of the thirteen are in Mexico, another four are in other Central American countries (including 2 in Guatemala and 1 in Nicaragua), and three are in the U.S. Most members are Native Americans of Mayan descent, but in recent years a sizable minority, including two of the U.S. priests, belong to other ethnic groups. Many among the rank and file are recruited from the street gangs of large cities.

Allies and Enemies

The cult has been persecuted in times past by the Spanish Inquisition in Mexico and by the Sentinels in the modern day. The Mockers have also clashed with it on a number of occasions, especially in the United States.

Special Cult Powers

High priests (the thirteen leaders) know the Invocation Spirit Mastery (Shadowling), and a special Invocation designed to summon the Rending Shadow itself. Both invocations require Taint rather than Essence to work. The latter Invocation can only be performed during a solar eclipse, and requires the sacrifice, through ritual flaying, of one hundred victims. It has not been attempted since the destruction of the Mayan city that acted as the Mad God's center of worship.

Using the Rending Shadow Cult

The cult can make a good recurring enemy, especially for games in cities with a large Hispanic population. Having a particularly enterprising High Priest attempt to summon the Lle'Kohr would be a major scenario, as dozens of victims are kidnapped and gathered for the climatic ceremony. The more likely scenario involves the yearly sacrifice, which may eventually lead to the priests and their followers.

Cultist Characters

The typical Cultist is a basically average human (13 points in Attributes, 5 for Qualities, up to 10 in Drawbacks, and 15 points in skills). Many are of Mexican (or, more accurately, Mayan) descent. Their favored weapon (wielded with a skill of 3-4) is an obsidian blade (D4(2) x Strength slashing damage, shatters if it hits any solid armor or an object with an Armor Value of 4 or higher).



Jason DeClerk

Rending Shadow High Priest

One of the Thirteen, Jason DeClerk is a powerful Tainted magician, a dangerous opponent even for an experienced group of Gifted. He is the son of a Nazi officer who emigrated to Guatemala toward the end of the war. Jason accidentally stumbled onto a cult meeting during his early teens, when he strayed from his ranch house into the jungle. The cultists would have murdered him, but the High Priest was given a vision, and welcomed DeClerk into the cult. The child appeared to have tremendous mystical potential and a lack of morality that fit perfectly with the role of High Priest. He ascended to that position by age 23. Shortly afterwards, he migrated to the U.S., where he has been spreading the worship of the cult for some time.

DeClerk is totally insane, but is quite adept at hiding his true nature. He has been instrumental in inducting non-Mayans into the cult, which has increased its influence outside Central America. His father's fortune has served him well, and he now is a major player in Wall Street. His investments have made him very wealthy and he uses that money, and the influence it can buy, to hide his crimes.

Strength: 2	Dexterity: 3	Constitution: 2
Intelligence: 4	Perception: 4	Willpower: 3
Life Points: 38	Endurance Points: 26	Speed: 10
Essence: 18	Taint: 100	

Qualities and Drawbacks: The Gift, Taint, Adversary (Mockers, 3 points), Charisma +2, Cruel (3 points), Delusion ("I am the Messiah of the True God"), Hard to Kill (4 levels), Resources +5, Status +2, Influence +1.

Skills: Acting 4, Bureaucracy 4, Brawling 4, Driving 3, Finance 4, Hand Weapon (Knife) 5, Occult Knowledge (Tainted Beings) 4, Smooth Talking 3, Streetwise 1.

Powers: Tainted Powers: Tainted Touch, Devolution, Warpbolt.

Invocations (all use Taint instead of Essence): Insight 4, Shielding 4, Spirit Mastery (Shadowling) 5, Spirit Mastery (Rending Shadow) 4, Warding 4.