Lineage

“Mom? Ben’s acting weird.”

Laurie started guiltily out of her doze, sending the paperback in her lap tumbling into the sand. She shielded her eyes from the noonday glare and followed where Jessica was pointing. Her only son stood a little ways away with his back to her, swaying in that unsteady way toddlers have but otherwise unmoving. Ben was well away from the water line, but something about the sight sent a chill down Laurie’s back regardless.

“You were supposed to be watching him!” Laurie snapped as she stood up, fear shifting to irritation. She brushed the sand from her legs and glared down at her eldest daughter, who spread her hands in surrender.

“I was!” Jessica said. “He was building sandcastles until *literally* just now. Then he just got up, turned around, and walked to that spot. It’s not like I would let him get anywhere near the water, mom, relax.”

“Nice, Jess,” Laurie said, but the irritation was already evaporating, leaving behind a film of guilt for falling asleep in the first place. She didn’t ask why Jess hadn’t simply gone and checked on Ben herself. Ben was often got in moods where only Laurie could console him.

Today he’d been especially fussy. She’d been forced to swap with Jess and sit in the backseat with him to quiet him down on the drive from Philadelphia, and even then he’d been so unruly Matt had joked about leaving him to be raised by coyotes in the Pine Barrens. Laurie suspected taking the twins mini-golfing was his way of recovering. He never said it, but she knew Ben’s insistence on her and only her bothered him sometimes.

“Hey, punkin,” Laurie said, standing over Ben with her legs on either side of him. Normally it made him giggle and swing around her legs like tree trunks, but he didn’t so much as look up. “Whatcha doin’?”

Ben didn’t answer.

“Are you OK, sweetie?” Laurie tousled his hair. Still no response. Ben was staring straight ahead, eyes focused, lips moving without sound, little hands clenching and unclenching. She sat down beside him. “What do you see?”

“Mama,” Ben said. Laurie frowned. That wasn’t his name for her. She was always Mommy.

“Mommy’s right here, honey.” She reached down and took one of his hands.

At last he looked at her, eyes bright and happy, smiling shyly like he was sharing a secret. He pointed a pudgy finger. “Mama in the water.”

Laurie looked at the waves, but they were empty, as far as she could see. She forced a cheer she didn’t quite feel into her voice. “Well, you say goodbye to her, buddy, because it’s time for lunch. Past time. Let’s go get sandwiches, OK?”

Ben nodded and took her hand. “Bye, Mama,” he said, waving at the sea.

That night Laurie lay awake for hours, telling herself that the dark shape she saw when Ben said goodbye had been a trick of the sunlight on the ocean. That there was nothing in the ocean so impossibly enormous, much less so close to the shoreline, right beneath the surface.

Nothing at all.

Introduction

”I remember a time or two way out on the prairie … I’d get the feelin’ somethin’ was behind me. Sometin’ waitin’ for me to become it.

—Garth Ennis, Preacher: Alamo

You don’t suffer nightmares.

You cause them.

You were normal, once. At least more than you are now. You got up and went about your daily routine like anyone else — work, school, family, friends — with the same petty complaints and ambitions as anyone else you knew. Except you never quite fit in. It always felt like you stood apart from the rest of the herd, and no matter how much you tried to be good, no one could argue that you had a cruel streak that ran bone deep.

Then came the day when you came face to face with the monster inside you, and suddenly it all made sense. You didn’t fit in with other people, for the same reason a fox doesn’t fit in with a room full of poodles. It wasn’t cruelty in your nature, it was Hunger, and now you knew just how to feed it. Maybe it’s not pretty, sating these drives, but you don’t have a choice. It’s not your fault you’re what you are, and since you can’t go back, you might as well make the best of it.

Besides, if you’re honest with yourself, you wouldn’t go back if you could.

You still walk among the flock, but you certainly aren’t one of them anymore. You satisfy your Hunger as you will and leave nightmares in your wake, keeping the world properly afraid of the terrors that lurk just out of sight. You slide in and out of supernatural societies as easily as you blend in with the human one. You have your hunting grounds and your Lair, and defend them fiercely against hostile Beasts, supernatural creatures, or the seemingly endless mortal Heroes that arise to challenge you.

It’s not easy, being the monster everyone was raised to hate and destroy. Maybe you do your best to minimize the harm, target the worst evil-doers to sate your Hunger, or maybe you embrace your monstrous nature and become the villain of a thousand legends before you. No matter what, though, this is one monster story that doesn’t end with the monster’s death. Heroes be damned — you intend to be the one who has the last word.

Overview

In **Beast: The Primordial**, you play one of the Children, a human being with the Soul of one of the great monsters of legend: dragons, gryphons, giants, kraken, and worse. All your life you’ve had the same nightmare, one of the classics so common to human nature. Hunted by a relentless predator. Dragged into the murky depths. Dropped from great heights. Held under the thumb of something huge and powerful. Or simply the knowledge that some nameless, shapeless *thing* out there in the dark was stalking you. Nothing human beings haven’t suffered since the dawn of civilization, except you weren’t content to remain the victim, and so one night you didn’t run.

You embraced the nightmare, and became the monster. And in doing so, you realized: the Beast is what you have always been.

Discovering one's true Family can be traumatic, but for many of the Begotten, it's a profound relief, because they finally understand the reason for the Hunger that's been driving them for their whole lives. A drive so strong they would do most anything to satisfy it, even if it costs friends, family, fame, or fortune in the process. That insatiable need to dominate, to possess, to devour, to punish, to destroy. It all makes sense now.

A Beast's existence is not defined simply by her Hunger. Young Beasts often gather in broods of their own kind, forming communal Lairs to fight off threats and competition alike. In the absence of other Beasts (or other compatible Beasts), it's not uncommon for one of the Children to fall in with other supernatural beings, drawing on their common ancestry to join their culture and run with them like one of their own.

Regardless of the company they keep, Beasts must work to keep their Souls sated, which means spreading nightmares and ensuring that they indulge their Hunger as needed. At the same time, Beasts must tread carefully — feeding too much or too little encourages the rise of Heroes, mortals driven to destroy the Beast at all costs. Not to mention the toll that sowing nightmares can take what remains of a Beast's human side.

This is the life of the Children: Preying on humanity while living within it, walking the mortal world and the worlds beyond as they fulfill the needs of their Soul, tending their Lair as they guard their territory, moving freely between mortal society and supernatural cultures as legends in both. Humans might think they know how a monster's story ends, but Beasts refuse to accept the role they're given. They write their own stories, and let no human — or Hero — dictate how it ends.

The Beast with A Thousand Faces

Every culture tells stories of monsters, and many of the stories are incompatible. Factor in the other supernatural creatures of the World of Darkness and their own legnds, and the truth can get complicated indeed. In order to understand a bit more about the characters in **Beast: The Primordial**, here are some common beliefs and how they align with the Begotten:

- **Beasts aren't human:** True. Beasts are born like humans and seem human until their Homecoming, when they discover a spiritual link to a nightmare monster — their Soul. That is when they truly become Beasts, but even before that they are not really human.

- **Beasts are a literal bloodline:** False. While Beasts often refer to themselves as being descended from the Dark Mother, and divide themselves into Families, the connection is a supernatural one, not an actual bloodline. Any human being can potentially become a Beast — there is no particular ancestry or genetic marker for it.

- **Beasts have legendary weaknesses:** Partially true. Beasts have no natural vulnerability to the traditional banes found in legends and songs, but Heroes possess the disturbing power to make these weaknesses real, at least for a time.

- **Beasts physically transform into monsters:** Mostly false. Beasts do not normally shapeshift in the traditional sense, though they can use powers called Atavisms to temporarily gain certain advantages related to their Soul's true shape.

- **Beasts are inherently evil:** False. While Heroes like to think of the Children as absolutely evil, the truth is that a Beast is only as evil as her actions.

• **Beasts are feral monsters:** False. Every Beast has a Hunger that drives him, a primal need that he must fulfill to appease his Soul. However, the Beast can use all of his human ingenuity to satisfy this need — it is no mindless animal drive.

• **Beasts are solitary creatures:** False. Many Beasts join a brood when they first come into their true nature, while some run with a group of other supernatural creatures. Family is important to Beasts, and most of them only feel comfortable with some kind of cohort. Even a group of humans is better than nothing. Older Beasts sometimes retreat to a private Lair, but true loners are rare among the Children.

• **Beasts must fight Heroes to survive:** True. All Beasts eventually attract Heroes, and these meetings are rarely peaceful. The more powerful a Beast becomes, or the more it hunts, the more numerous and determined the Heroes become, creating a vicious cycle of violence.

• **Beasts are immortal:** False. While a Beast with a well-established Lair can live for a very long time, they eventually perish of old age. That assumes no Hero or other hazard gets them first.

The Dark Mother

At the heart of the riddle that is the existence of Beasts is the figure known as the Dark Mother, the progenitor of their kind. While trading rumors of her sightings is a popular pastime when a number of Beasts gather, she has not been reliably sighted in centuries, possibly millennia. Nevertheless, the Begotten know on an instinctive level that she is still alive out there, somewhere. They know because the fear of her never quite goes away, for if she does return, she is far more likely to devour her children than embrace them.

Who Is the Dark Mother? In the beginning, She was there. The first monster, the mother of nightmares. Lilith, Tiamat, Hekate, the Queen Mother of the West — she's been called a hundred different names in tongues still living and long dead alike, described in a thousand ways across ten thousand years, but these days her Children usually call her the Dark Mother. Some say she was the first being to travel the Primordial Dream and absorb its secrets, then brought them back to this world and formed them into her children. Others claim that she *is* the Primordial Dream given form, and that when she walks once more the world will know fear like it hasn't since the dawn of time.

Regardless of the truth, all Beasts recognize her as the first of their kind; not only that, but the first of *all* monsters. As far as the Begotten are concerned, vampires, werewolves, changelings, and other stranger things are simply younger siblings, branches of the family tree that have diverged but still share common roots. While other beings may scoff, Beasts have powers and abilities that seem to back their claim.

What do her children do? If Beasts can be said to have something close to a single purpose, it is to *feast*. Linked as they are to the Primordial Dream, the place where all nightmares are spawned, Beasts remind humanity and even other supernatural creatures that everyone has something to fear. A Beast does this by feeding her Hunger, which sates the primal part of her Soul, the great monster that dwells in the nightmare realm. If she does not indulge her Hunger, the Soul begins to wreak havoc in the minds of mortals around her, starting with her closest friends and relatives, and quickly attracting the attention of Heroes bent on the Beast's destruction.

Sowing nightmares is not their only purpose, however. Beasts also consider themselves the keepers of the Primordial Pathways, and possess a great natural affinity for the worlds beyond. Even in the strangest spirit realm, the Children blend in as easily as they do among mortal populations and supernatural societies, scarcely provoking comment unless they call attention to themselves. Quite a few Beasts become devoted to traveling between worlds, bringing the fear of the Soul to the spirit realms just as their siblings do to the mundane world.

The Soul

While humanity confidently declares that no monsters hide in the shadows, deep down it knows better. The dragons, the giants, the kraken, the gorgons, all the great monsters of legend and nightmare — they may not walk the world openly, but people know what they see in their dreams. Humanity searched for them in deep caves and dark forests, when they should have looked within, where the true monsters dwell.

The great creatures of myth and legend are still very much with us. From their lairs deep within the Primordial Dream, the old nightmares merge with chosen humans every generation, as they have since before history was written. This synthesis allows them to walk the mortal world, sowing dread and harvesting ruin to feed their boundless appetites. Beasts are expressions of these dread creatures in the flesh.

It is important to understand that the Soul is not a flesh and blood monster. The Soul is much more iconic than that, existing primarily as a dread spirit entity in the darkest depths of the Primordial Dream. Some Souls are storied monsters of legend, while others saw their cultures die around them and their tales forgotten, and still others are new horrors born of more modern fears and fantasies.

Whatever its form, whatever its origins, the Soul chooses the Beast for reasons known only in its terrible heart. It stalks her, and ultimately claims her, creating something no longer human but not fully of the Soul.

A Beast.

Homecoming

Anyone can become a Beast. The potential to slide back into the first darkness, to join the ranks of humanity's nightmares made flesh, dwells within every human heart. Still, the process of actually becoming one with the Soul, of becoming a true Beast, begins early, sometimes even in early childhood. The nascent Beast has terrible recurring nightmares, glimpses of the Lair that awaits her in the Primordial Dream, nightmares made all the worse because she is more often than the predator than the prey, especially as the time draws close. She feels a terrible, consuming need that is never sated, and which she will fulfill unflinchingly, even if afterward she is wracked with guilt by her actions. And sometimes she feels as though some unknowable thing is casting a vast, terrible shadow over her life…but she takes comfort in that in shadow.

When the moment finally comes, when the Soul claims the mortal and the Beast is born, the horror of the monstrous is almost always accompanied by a sense of relief. *At last*, the Beast tells herself. *At last it makes sense.* The nightmares, the need, the thrill of seeing fear in someone's eyes — it's all part of something so much bigger.

Of course, with relief comes horror, as the Beast realizes her terrible Hunger must be fed to keep the Soul appeased. Everything a Beast has learned since she was a child tells her the monster is

evil. The monster is, at best, a vicious animal to be slain by a victorious Hero, and in most cases, the monster is an analog for Satan, lust, greed, or whatever other quality or being society wishes to demonize. The monster is vile, she is *wrong*; every story the Beast knows ends with the monster's destruction. The Beast has to come to terms with knowing that she *is* the monster, and in most stories, she's the villain.

The conclusion that Beasts quickly reach, of course, is that they need to define their own stories.

The Lair

As part of their connection with her Soul, every Beast has access to a small pocket of the Primordial Dream, referred to as her *Lair*. A Lair reflects the nature of the Soul as well as the personality of the Beast herself, becoming a mixture of the two. The basic composition of the Lair is related to the nature of the Soul — an aquatic Soul favors an underwater Lair, for instance — but from there the Beast's personality and experiences shape it into something entirely personal and unique. All manner of fascinating and horrifying locations can be found in the *Chambers* of a Lair, and understanding exactly why a Lair takes the shape it does offers a great deal of insight into the Beast's nature.

Aside from serving as a private sanctum, the Lair is also an expression of the Beast's power, and how closely tied she has become to her Soul. As the Begotten indulges her Hunger and explores the supernatural world around her, the Lair expands as well, becoming larger and more complex, as well as offering new advantages of its own to the Beast. At first a simple space of recovery and reflection, the Lair of a seasoned Beast is more like stepping into a small world, and presents dire dangers for those foolish enough to chase the Begotten into her den.

Should a Beast join a brood, their Lairs form connections as well, the fluid laws and nightmare logic of the Primordial Dream allowing impossible combinations of features and environments as their spaces link together. The result is a series of connected Lairs that is stronger and more dangerous than any of the brood might possess individually, a valuable level of protection with Heroes constantly on the hunt and other dangers abroad.

Of course, a shared Lair is not without risks of its own. Other Beasts linked to a Lair means others with access to a character's most personal and private space, and even the potential to invite outsiders into that space. A Hero that manages to breach the Lair of one Beast in the brood can use it access any others connected to it, not to mention that a private sanctuary is an excellent place to stab someone in the back. Of course, a Beast is always more powerful in her Lair.

Hunger

All Beasts have a primal drive called *Hunger*, which they must indulge in order to sate the appetite of the Soul. Hunger can be a very simple, direct thing, such as a drive to stalk and kill prey, or it can be more abstract, such as a need to punish others for their transgressions. Though the primal drives are the same, how Beasts interpret them can vary — instead of literally hunting prey to consume them, for example, a Beast might more metaphorically stalk a target and "consume" their trust.

However it is interpreted, though, Hunger must always feed the Soul's appetite. Put another way, as older Beasts sometimes tell younger ones, "if someone eats, something gets eaten." A Beast may console herself by thinking that she only hurts "bad people" to sate her Hunger, for example, but deep down she knows really anyone would do — and one day they just might. It is

rare for a Beast's Hunger to change, though it can happen in certain extreme circumstances, and always signals a profound struggle to reconcile with the Soul.

Heroes

Where monsters hunt, Heroes follow. As a Beast grows in power, she inevitably attracts hunters, who follow the nightmares she leaves in her wake like tracks left in the dust. Literature idealizes these figures as square-jawed champions heroically putting themselves between depraved monsters and their innocent victims, but the Children know the truth is more complicated. Once the mythic link takes hold of a person, they are at best a ruthless stalker willing to commit any act in the name of "heroism." At worst, these Heroes are gibbering, gore-spattered maniacs, whose obsessive quest to destroy the Beast that haunts them twists their minds and makes them dangerous to everyone around them.

Having been raised with the same stories as everyone else, it can be very difficult for Beasts to process this reaction, to feel as though the whole world hates them and wants them dead. On the one hand, even the noblest Beast is still indisputably a monster of the darkest sort of nightmares, one who inevitably preys on human beings to satiate her Hunger. On the other hand, the Beast wasn't exactly offered a choice in the matter, and often is simply doing their best to survive like any other creature. Coupled with the fact that many of these self-styled Heroes are capable of atrocities in the name of the greater good — after all, what *isn't* justified to stop a dragon preying on your town? — it can become very hard to tell who's the villain in the situation.

Ultimately, Beasts recognize that the Hero cycle is as much a part of their nature as their Lair and their Soul. Humanity fears Beasts — that's the intrinsic truth of what they are — and what humanity fears it invariably attempts to destroy. Beasts quickly learn that they can't become angry at people for having that reaction.

But at the same time, the Children know that they have a right to exist. The world is a terrifying place, and the monsters in the dark are there for a reason. The dominant narrative may be "Hero arises, kills the monster," but the Begotten see past that, and know that it doesn't have to be thus. Heroes, for their part, never question their own heroism — and that is why Beasts hate them.

Nightmares

While it may seem that Beasts would be feared most in a physical sense, in actuality a great deal of their power stems from their ability to create Nightmares, moments where the Children call upon primal fears to injure and terrorize their targets. Nightmares play upon fears and sensations buried deep in the mind, and no matter how much a target may try to convince themselves that "this can't be happening," their bodies register it as all too real. At their most powerful, Nightmares can actually become real for a time, warping reality itself to show a horrifying glimpse into the Primordial Dream.

Atavisms

If Nightmares are an expression of the Beast's connection to the Primordial Dream and the nature of fear itself, then Atavisms are the expression of the Soul. They allow the Beast to change herself or her immediate surroundings, at least momentarily, in order to grant her a measure of the Soul's iconic capabilities. Giant's strength. Hydra's regeneration. Dragon's fire. Roc's precision. Though at the most potent level some Atavisms physically transform the Beast, most of the time they simply assert the Soul's true nature for a moment, using the Begotten as a conduit of sorts for their primordial power. The end result is possibly even more disconcerting,

as a Beast's perfectly ordinary looking hands might leave devastating claw marks, or her flesh knits back together without so much of a single scale of the hydra showing through. Atavisms may not be subtle, but what they lack in subtlety they make up in raw power.

Kinship

Though other monsters might deny it (or simply not understand it), as far as Beasts are concerned, their family ties to other supernatural creatures are obvious. Beasts can recognize monsters and even supernaturally gifted humans on sight, and they can extend the blessing of the Dark Mother to energize another creature's powers. They can even make use of otherworldly gateways created by their younger siblings, either to access their intended destination or to force a doorway to the Primordial Dream.

Broods

Though some of their younger siblings participate in vast shadow societies, the Children have no such global organization, or even more than a regional one in most areas. The Soul is naturally jealous of the territory where it keeps its Lair, but at the same time solitary life is exceedingly dangerous for a young and untested Beast. Some use their Kinship affinity to find community and protection with other supernatural beings, but many of the Children instead build close ties with other local Beasts, forming a group known as a brood.

Members of a brood weave their Lairs together to forge a stronger shared realm, which in turn allows them a greater degree of security against outside threats such as Heroes. Sating one's Hunger is also easier with a brood, as the group can collectively derive sustenance when one member feeds.

Inheritance

Every Beast reacts to their nature differently, and so it is no surprise that they should pursue different ultimate goals as well. The more experienced of the Begotten speak of something called the Inheritance, a condition where the Beast reaches a reckoning between her human nature and her Soul, and in the process becomes something different. Some undergo the Merger, where the Soul merges physically with the Beast, transforming into a violent creature that lurks in the dark places of the world. Such beings succumb to the Hero's narrative, having lost enough of their own agency to be nothing more than a challenge for "champions." Others Retreat instead, fleeing the physical world in favor of becoming nightmare spirits that haunt the Primordial Dream forever. The Retreat can also occur involuntarily, if the Beast's human body dies while her Soul remains intact.

A rare few fully embrace both their Souls and their human natures become one of the Incarnate, incredibly powerful and dangerous beings whose synthesis of their dual nature is unparalleled. The Incarnate are the legends among legends, the true monsters of the World of Darkness.

> Family Gatherings: Beast Crossovers
>
> **Beast: The Primordial** is expressly designed to be crossover friendly, meaning that while it is a full standalone game, it is also intended to run easily in conjunction with other **World of Darkness** games. As a result, you might see references to other **World of Darkness** books along with relevant page numbers. If you have those books, the referenced sections and rules will be useful for crossover games; if not, don't worry, they are never essential to playing **Beast**.

Crossover within **Beast** is discussed thoroughly in Chapter Five.

Inspirational Material

Modern entertainment is full of stories about sympathetic monsters of various kinds, but not too many of them capture the full scale of what it means to be a Beast. Nevertheless, players can still find excellent material to help inspire them.

Fiction

Although they tend to be heavily slanted in favor of the Heroes, it is still worthwhile to check out some of the classic myths and legends such as *Beowulf, Gilgamesh, The Odyssey*, the Norse Eddas, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, etc., if only to see the great monsters in action … and just how unfair the whole business seems from the Beast's perspective.

John Gardner's novel *Grendel* is perhaps the quintessential **Beast** story, a retelling of *Beowulf* from the titular monster's point of view. While an unapologetic antihero, Grendel nonetheless grapples with the meaning of what it is to be a monster, the slippery definitions of good and evil, even the nature of myth itself. A superlative, if dark, take on what it is to be a Beast.

Alan Moore's run on the *Swamp Thing* comic series is a classic example of a heroic character who appears monstrous and as a result is often targeted by self-righteous "do-gooders," leading to events ranging from darkly comic to downright tragic. As man who had no choice in becoming a monstrous being, but has since chosen to become a hero, Swamp Thing serves as a good model for a nobler sort of Beast.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* might not seem to be much of a Beast story at first, but it is a classic tale of what happens when a monstrous being is brought into the world, as well as who is truly to blame for the creature's actions once so created. Unlike his film portrayals, the monster is quite intelligent and articulate, and frustrated by a world that vilifies and alienates him for a life he had no say in living. One could even see the book as the Beast's version, and the classic film portrayal as the distorted perspective of a Hero.

Bill Willingham's *Fables* comic series is more fairytale oriented, but many of the concepts behind **Beast** are still there: magical Lairs, journeys between fantastic worlds, monsters in human forms, the mythic cycle as a very real factor in day-to-day life, and a whole lot of inverted stories going in unexpected directions. In particular, Bigby Wolf would make an excellent Beast, a great wolf that walks like a man and whose Soul is the North Wind itself, as well as a reformed "villain" who must suppress his Hunger to hunt in order to fit in with the world around him.

Non-Fiction

Stephen Asma's *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* is an insightful, often slyly amusing investigation into the origins of monster stories, their evolution around the globe, and what they have to say about all of us. At once approachable enough for casual reading yet scholarly enough for real revelation, this book heavily informed and inspired the one in your hands now, and is a stellar resource for groups preparing to run **Beast: The Primordial** games.

Film & Television

While a more lighthearted take on the whole, Disney's classic animated version of *Beauty & The Beast* (1997, dir. Gary Trousdale & Kirk Wise) still deals with some of the game's key themes, particularly misunderstood creatures, bloodthirsty Heroes, and the inversion of the traditional

monster story. For a more adult take, the live-action French version released in 2014 (dir. Christiophe Gans) offers much of the same material, along with an interesting view of the Beast's magical Lair as well as other fantastic Family members.

The X-Files episode "Hungry" as well as the *Supernatural* episodes "Heart" and "Metamorphosis" all deal with ordinary people becoming monsters against their will, not to mention coping with serious unnatural Hungers. As a bonus, "Metamorphosis" also features a remorseless hunter who makes an excellent model for a well-intentioned but ruthless Hero.

While it technically concerns younger siblings of the Children — a vampire, a werewolf, and a ghost — the television series *Being Human* is an entertaining depiction of how a brood might look during play. Their shared Lair may be nothing more than a rundown flat, but they still help each other with their Hungers, navigate several dangerous supernatural cultures, wrestle with their humanity, and occasionally indulge in spreading a healthy dose of fear to mortals. Both the original BBC version and the American remake are worth a look, as the American take starts similarly but quickly veers off into a lot of its own original territory.

Lexicon

Given that they have little in the way of community or organization, it is perhaps unsurprising that Beasts tend to keep it simple with regard to the specialized vocabulary of their kind. While some archaic terms and titles have been passed down through generations or even directly by the Soul itself, left on their own Beasts prefer simple, direct language, especially as compared to the more flowery and esoteric terms employed by many of their younger siblings.

Anathema: Weaknesses of Beasts. Some are vulnerable to particular metals, herbs, rituals, or methods of attack. No Beast naturally has an Anathema. *Heroes* can place Anathema on Beasts by striking them when they are "soft" (when *Satiety* is low enough that the Beast is still hungry, but high enough that the Soul isn't roused).

Atavisms: Supernatural powers available to a Beast based on the character's *Soul* and *Lair*. As Lair becomes bigger and more powerful, Atavisms become for useful. Atavisms are also more dramatic when the Beast's location resonates in some way with her Lair.

Beast: A human being born with an ancestral connection to the *Dark Mother*, expressed by the *Soul*.

brood: A group of Beasts that have banded together and formed a shared *Lair*. They can fulfill each other's *Hungers* to some degree.

Burrow: A passageway connecting *Chambers* within a *Lair*. A Burrow may also connect Chambers belonging to two or more separate Lairs of brood members.

Chamber: A distinct location within the *Lair*, reflecting an important place to the Beast, her *Soul*, or both. A powerful Beast may have several such locations in her Lair.

Dark Mother: The ancestor of all Beasts, also called Echidna, Gaea, Tiamat, Hekate, and many other names. Beasts are firmly convinced, on a deep, instinctive level, that she is still alive and watches over them.

Family: One of the five lines descended from the *Dark Mother*. They are: *Anakim*, *Eshmaki*, *Makara*, *Namtaru*, and *Ugallu*.

Hero: A human being who has undergone the *hunter response* in reaction to a Beast's *Soul*. These Heroes see themselves as the only ones capable of bringing an end to a Beast's "evil." This is entirely an evolutionary reaction, however — a Hero isn't a chosen savior, just a brave and possibly arrogant person.

hunter response: The reaction to the supernatural that some humans experience; the hunter response leads people who experience to investigate, expose, and even exterminate the supernatural. Not all people who experience the hunter response become *Heroes*, but those who experience it in response to a Beast's *Soul* do.

Hunger: One of the five driving urges that spurs a Beast to go out into the world and hunt. They are: *Prey*, *Hoard*, *Power*, *Punishment*, and *Ruin*. Fulfilling a Hunger increases *Satiety*.

Incarnate Inheritance: One of the three "end" conditions for a Beast, this involves the character and the soul becoming full realized. The character is permanently connected to her *Lair*, and becomes one of the most dangerous forces in the World of Darkness.

Inheritance: A state that any Beast can reach under certain conditions, in which she becomes something other than what she was. The three Inheritance states are *Incarnate*, *Lurker*, and *Unleashed*.

Kinship: The familial relationship that Beasts share with each other and other supernatural beings, including vampires, werewolves, mages, changelings, Prometheans, mummies, demons, Sin-Eaters, ghosts, spirits, and most of the rest of the weirdness in the World of Darkness. Beasts can use Kinship to accentuate and augment the powers of other creatures, and can use interactions with these creatures to bolster their *Nightmares*.

Lair: The pocket of the *Primordial Dream* that a Beast's *Soul* inhabits. When a group of Beasts form a *brood*, they may connect their Lairs via *Burrows* to allow free passage between them

Lurker Inheritance: The Inheritance gains when the Beast undergoes *Retreat*. The Beast embarks on an astral journey and dies while in the *Primordial Dream*. The Beast's soul becomes a free-floating nightmare, a quasi-spirit haunting the dreamscape forever.

Merger: The process by which the Beast joins with her *Soul*, creating a near-mindless monster unable to access the *Primordial Dream*, achieving the *Unleashed Inheritance*.

Nightmares: Supernatural powers of Beasts, based on activating Primordial fear in other beings. Nightmares are tied to *Kinship*; as Beasts expand their Kinship, they can learn (or create) new Nightmares.

Primordial Dream: A layer of the collective soul of the world, perhaps "below" the Temenos, in which the fears of humanity are given life. The *Lairs* of the Primordial Selves of all Beasts are here. Beasts can grant access to this Dream to other supernatural beings through *Kinship*.

Primordial Pathways: The paths used to access the *Primordial Dream*. Beasts can do it fairly easily, and can open them for other beings with *Kinship*.

Retreat: The process by which the Beast's human body becomes severed from her *Soul*, creating a vicious spirit monster unable to leave the *Primordial Dream*, achieving the *Lurker Inheritance*.

Satiety: Pronounced "SAY-shi-tee." A measure of how fulfilled a Beast's *Hunger* is at any given time.

Soul: The monstrous, iconic form of the Beast. It's separate from her physical body and living in the *Primordial Dream*.

Unleashed Inheritance: The Inheritance gained when a Beast undergoes *Merger.* This one can occur when a Beast's *Lair* is destroyed, or if the Beast wills it to happen. The Beast's soul merges bodily with the Beast's human form and becomes an animalistic monster, lurking in some dark corner of the world until a *Hero* arrives to kill it.

Homecoming

The nightmare began the same way it always did: with a slight tug.

Ben had suffered the same nightmare as far back as he could remember, and yet when it began, it always managed to surprise him. This night was no different from any other in that respect. He was swimming with his sisters down at the shore, maybe a little farther away from the beach than they should, laughing and splashing, when there was a tug on his foot. As if something large grabbed hold for a moment.

It wasn't much, just enough to get his attention. One of his therapists had said the tug symbolized his fear of being dragged down by life pressures, which was in his opinion a bit over the top for a six year-old; when he was ten, a different therapist said it was his feeling of being left behind by his more academically successful siblings.

Six years and three more therapists later, and still none of them believed him when he said it was a monster.

Right on schedule, another tug followed, pulling him under. Ben fought to surface, spitting out cold salt water, only to find himself alone, the sun hidden behind clouds, the beach deserted. That was the way it worked, each pull drawing him under longer, returning to a surface ever more bleak and inhospitable until it was almost indistinguishable from the blackness of the deep itself.

Ben would go under a final time, something cold and rubbery gripping his leg dragging him down until he opened his mouth to scream and nothing but cold water flowed in, salt burning his lungs as he went numb. He'd wake up soaked in sweat, the salt scent of it nearly making him gag reflexively as he remembered the sea. It was an old routine, the horror nearly blunted by familiarity.

Except this time, he didn't struggle to the surface.

This time, when the cold tendril wrapped around him, Ben ducked under the water and grabbed hold of it. It was cold and rubbery and tough to hold on to, but he held fast when it released his leg, even as it dragged him down into the dark. Water pressure pounded in his ears and his chest burned as his air ran out, but still he held on, panic shifting to a giddy sense of defiance.

It might drown him, but at least he'd see what had a hold on him.

Ben's eyes strained against the dark, seeing nothing in the blackness … until he realized it wasn't blackness at all. He wasn't blind, he was simply looking at something so vast and dark it might as well have been the abyss. In that moment, still clutching one of its countless tentacles, he forgot about drowning, and would never again remember it.

A single baleful eye opened, as large as a house, and it was the same strange blue-gray shade as his own. In the light of its dim glow Ben looked on the shape of his Soul as it flowed around him, enveloping him, embracing him, and tears of joy mixed with the salt of the deep. He finally understood. It wasn't drowning him.

It was calling him home.

Chapter One: After the Homecoming

Quote

—source

When a Beast finally stops resisting the nightmare, and chooses instead to embrace it and become the monster in the dark, she realizes what she really is. That moment of Homecoming might be horrifying or revolting, but for the most part, it is a relief — the Beast finally *understands*. She knows that she belongs to a long and glorious heritage, stretching back to the Dark Mother. She knows the nature of the Hunger that drives her and how she can sated it. After a lifetime of uncertainty and discomfort, she finds herself.

From there, she sets out to meet her long-lost cousins. Let the rest of the world beware.

Families

The five Families of Beasts all stem from an iconic, primordial fear. Humanity's nightmares are varied in their details, but boil them down and they usually reflect one of a few simple anxieties. In the prehistoric mire of humanity's birth, early people looked at the sky and saw a vast, endless, expanse of *nothing*, from which death could descend at any moment. The ocean — indeed, any body of water — was an abyss, concealing lurking, hungry creatures. The firelight only extended so far, and past its warming boundaries, fanged death awaited. These fears and images are reinterpreted and reimagined with every passing generation, but on some level, they haven't changed in thousands of years. The ocean might be a literal ocean or the "sea" of humanity, but the kraken remains. A person might feel "small" before an actual giant or a group of people who sit in judgment, but the fear of powerlessness is the same.

Anakim

Nightmares of Hopelessness

His instinct is to get out of the way as the fist comes down. With the adrenalin rush, he sees it practically in slow motion. But it's too big *to dodge. It fills his vision as it collides with his face, a widescreen impact that sends him reeling across the room and wondering if his neck is broken. No, not broken, he can still feel. Feel his heart pounding against his rib cage. And feel those ribs crunch inwards with the next blow. And then feeling is gone, and sight is gone, and it's all sound. One sound. The monster's rumbling laughter.*

The little people won't hold you back anymore. They have their petty concerns. Their debts, their hates, their loves. You tower above those petty concerns, a pillar of strength and unstoppable force. All your life you knew you were different, greater. You just didn't realize how literal that was.

You might say that your enemies are like toys in your hands. But that would mean you could even count anyone as an enemy. They're not, not really. They're mice standing up to cats. When they even bother to stand.

As one of the Anakim, you are power incarnate. Size is secondary; the Giants are raw strength

and bottomless Hunger. To hunt as one of the Anakim is to overwhelm your prey by the force of your own, magnificent body. No one stands up to you. Who could, when you stand so tall?

Some Beasts see you as a simple brute. They laugh at your straightforward solutions to problems. Yet for the Anakim, straightforward is rarely stupid. While others stick to shadows and watery deeps, you push forward into the world, confident in your strength and stature. Like the Titans who raised mountains and cut rivers in the Earth, you're tough enough to explore beyond your expected boundaries and tenacious enough not to let anyone stop you. You might even bring your fellow Beasts along. After all, they need somebody's shoulders to stand on.

On the hunt, you're faster, deadlier, and more brutal than your prey. You are the fear that chases, the fear that crushes, the fear that tears limb from limb. Maybe someone called you unsubtle. Maybe that someone still has all their ribs. Maybe.

Once, so some of your peers say, the Anakim were the firstborn of the Dark Mother, whom you know as the First Woman. When she freed the terrors of the world from their secret hiding place and held back hope from the world, she made sport with the strongest of them, giving birth to giants in the Earth. Others say that she made love to the very sons of God, and that her children married the sons of humanity and left the terror of hopelessness in the blood of the mortal race.

Lives

His victims cower and beg for his mercy. He towers over them, the unquestioned voice of power. He is the judge, who weighs the hearts of the guilty and the innocent like Maat with her feather. Those who come before his court don't fear their bones breaking at his hands, but they know that he is strong, he is brutal, and he knows every avenue of law through which they might try to escape.

He cracks safes. It's who he is. His apartment is littered with the refuse of a hundred jobs, a thousand pieces of inanimate victims who fell before his deft fingers and years of experience. But the truth is, he's not perfect. Sometimes, he just can't do it, just can't get through some particularly fiendish piece of machinery. And in the small hours, when he's had just about enough and can't stand the thought that he might *lose*, the Giant comes out, and simply tears the safe open. Few of his clients have ever seen him do it, and fewer would care. All they want is what's inside, and all he wants are the locks and scrap metal.

He thinks of himself as the hammer of God. He does not sit in judgment. He waits for the call from the divinity that sired his kind. And when he hears that call, he takes to the streets, or the clubs, or the back rooms. And he acts as the hammer, smashing the wicked to pulp and fragments.

In another age, they might have called her the great white hunter. She doesn't care for the label; she doesn't look at the world as her colonial playground. But she does love her trophies, the antlers and ivory and even skulls she's torn from their flesh by her own two hands. She doesn't like weapons. She lives for the hunt and the kill, the contest of predator against the closest thing to a monster that isn't her kin. Maybe one day she'll snap, and take another Beast's head for her wall.

He doesn't stop. He gets knocked down, he gets bruised, he even gets bloody, but he always gets

back up. He doesn't start fights, but by sheer strength and endurance, he's the one who finishes them. At his local watering hole, fighting him has practically become a sport, like bear-baiting. But he doesn't mind. The beatings make him feel alive, remind him that however much he may look like a more battered version of any of the ugly mugs at the bar, he's something else. Something apart. And someday he'll be ready to tear them *all* apart.

Stories

Many Anakim believe the Basajaun to be a tribe of Giants that dwelt in Basque country in the time before recorded history. As the tales come down, these stocky, hairy Anakim had a prodigious Hunger, but sated it entirely on their massive flocks of livestock. They taught mortal newcomers and the non-Beasts of their own tribe useful skills, and built hundreds of monuments to their own strange gods that still stand today. American Giants often like to speculate that the Basajaun still haunt the remote regions of Basque country, but it's been centuries since any native Beast has claimed to see one.

Paiute oral history records the story of a tribe of beautiful Giants that lived in what is now the Sierra Nevada. These Giants were prosperous until an ugly child was born to them. When they shunned the child, they were punished by having their land blasted into desert. Anakim more familiar with the mythologies of other monsters wonder if the beautiful ones might have been right to shun the child, even with the consequences it carries. For changelings tell tales of fairy beings being left in the place of mortal children, and bringing ill-luck.

Anakim identifying casually with Greek mythology often pick the Gigantes, a race of Giants with the bravery to challenge the gods for dominion over the Earth. Even with their great strength, this was an underdog battle, and one the gods only won by cheating and the recruitment of the hated Hero Heracles. But other Giants go further in reexamining mythology. They point out that the graves of the so-called "heroes" of the Greeks, when discovered, always contained skeletons of unusual size. Was Greece protected in its early days not by Heroes but by the very Beasts those Heroes sought to destroy?

The Norse believed in a panoply of Giants, and the Anakim of today often retell the tales. While the accounts that have come down to us through mortal sources say that the Giants were usually opposed to the gods, they also credit them with wonders such as building the wall around Valhalla. The union of a god and a giant also produced Fenris… and though that monstrous wolf is said to wait to play its role in the end of the world, would any of the Anakim do less after being kept prisoner for eternity?

The Ispolini were Giants who inhabited the Earth before the rise of humanity and the breeding of Beast with mortal. They disappointed the Dark Mother, for they warred with her other spawn, the dragons, whom many modern Anakim associate with the Namtaru. Anakim today say that the Mother destroyed the Ispolini for killing their kin, leaving only their burials behind in parts of Bulgaria.

The Soul

When a dreamer sees a Giant, it's not always in the form of a cyclopean monstrosity. Rather, the Anakim manifests as someone bigger or more powerful than the dreamer. A dreamer might find

himself back in school, called to the principal's office. When he gets there, the principal towers over him, physically terrifying. Sometimes there's no physical violence, just the sense of hopelessness in the face of a superior physical force.

The dream could, of course, involve other authority figures. A parent might wield terrifying disappointment. A boss might bodily hurl the dreamer from his workplace.

Another dream depicts the Giant in more traditional form. The dreamer finds herself pursued by a figure of gargantuan proportions or simply obvious strength. She tries to run inside, or to put barriers between herself and the Anakim, but the Giant tears them apart. The pattern is always the same. The dreamer finds a moment of respite, but just as she imagines the Giant tearing through, it does.

The scariest thing about an Anakim's physical assault in a dream is that it never kills. It throws the dreamer into objects, covering him in bruises. It breaks his leg, and then makes him try to run. The dreamer is left with no doubt that might makes right, and that the Giant has all the right in the world.

Lair

• **Echoing:** The cyclopean walls of the Giant's Lair turn any sound into an endless series of echoes, making it impossible to tell where any individual noise is coming from. Even great, heavy footsteps.

• **Jagged:** Great weight has shattered the ground, leaving sharp and broken ground.

• **Sealed Exits:** There is no escape from the power and judgment of the Anakim.

• **Toxic:** Poisonous liquids pool and bubble in little ponds formed from massive footprints.

• **Unstable:** The ground shudders and cracks, as if shattering under the Giant's weighty steps.

Birthright

For all that they can express dominance by other means, the Anakim are creatures of force, and its use and abuse come naturally to them. Once per scene, they can break through any physical obstacle in a single turn. A physical obstacle enhanced by magic or supernatural power requires the player to expend a point of Satiety.

Nickname: Giants

Atavisms: Cyclopean Strength, Looming Presence, Mimir's Wisdom, Titanic Blow

Stereotypes

Vampire: Control isn't love. Trust me.

Werewolf: You can call that big. I guess.

Mage: Pure discipline, wasted on sacks of meat.

Promethean: You're strong. You're indestructible. There ain't room for the both of us.

Changeling: Why strike bargains with the people you tower over?

Sin-Eater: People shouldn't get back up after I've torn them down. Stop that!

Mummy: No one judges me.

Demon: What would happen if I tore off your masks? Would anything remain?

Eshmaki

Nightmares of Destruction

She knows it by its eyes. She hasn't seen its face, hasn't heard its footsteps… come to think of it, she hasn't even really seen *the eyes, either. She's just seen them reflected, shining in the darkened shop window or the rear view of a car she passes. Just once or twice, she thinks she feels its breath on her neck. It's there. It's after her. Should she run? Scream? If she did, would the fantasy of the lurker burst like a soap bubble and leave her free? But she does none of those things, and this time, instead of its breath on her neck, she feels its claws.*

Everyone fears being alone. Not just being deserted by lovers, not just being an outcast from society, but being literally alone. Being the only one in a room, listening to the house settle or the pipes creak. Thinking they see the shadows move, even when nothing in the room did.

You understand being alone, being the watcher from the outside. You've been shunned, in your time. You've seen mortals take your rightful place in their laughing crowds and fancy parties. But you're also their fear of being alone, the thing that lurks so close that they can almost feel your breath on their neck.

When they're afraid, most of them worry about the surprise, about the moment that their fear of not being alone will be suddenly confirmed. But you know better. You know that the moment you step into the light, the moment you breathe hard enough that they can really hear it, that you're about to unleash ungodly hell on the poor bastard who crossed you. Or might have crossed you, had he known you existed.

When the Dark Mother gave birth to your kind as She Who Lives in Her Shadow, she did so in the dark. Some other Children think it was out of shame, but you know better. You know she was giving you life in your natural element, birthing and leaving your ancestors in their natural element, so that they might understand loneliness, but never fear being alone.

Lives

They say children can see monsters. They're wrong, at least about him. He's only seen in his day job, as the administrator of a juvenile justice facility. His facility's got one of the cleanest records in the state. After lights out, he stalks the corridors of the building, seeing what no one else can see, guarding against the dangers the children bring inside with them, or foment when given too much time to themselves. He says he'd never hurt any of "his kids"… but cross enough lines, and you're not his kid anymore.

She only wants what belongs to her. She was disinherited, everything taken and distributed to relatives who couldn't give a damn about her childhood memories, much less her material needs. So she's taking things back. One by one. She snatches her heirlooms, and leaves things in their place. Deadly things. Poison syringes, pipe bombs. Victim by victim, those wicked relatives are

dying off. And one day, maybe even soon, she'll be the only kin left standing.

Like every one of his kind, he knows what it's like to be on the outside. But he likes it there, very much. He gets to watch people. Happy people. Sad people. Loving people. He sets up camp every night across the street from the only bar in town, and watches the little people go about their lives, blissfully unaware that they share their town with a monster. He's very strict with his Hunger. He only lets it out every few years, but oh, what a glorious feast. To take one of those happy people and break their neck before they can even stop smiling, and then to feast on the flesh.

Every day, the elite get away with things. People with power, with money, with the resources to crush lives without even thinking about it. Those people are her prey, but it's not so much the injustice she worries about. It's that they think they're better. That they think it's more than an accident of birth or fortune that let them use and discard people like tissue. She knows about accidents of fortune. That's how she became what she is, not just the Beast, but also a very rich woman. So she mixes with them, learns their secrets and their sins, and then, when the acquaintance is over and there's nothing to connect her to her prey, she strikes. She's not ironic, but she is subtle. Venom in the wine. A fall from a penthouse balcony. A lover goaded into a jealous rage. She may not be just, but she is thorough.

It's been years since he spoke to anyone. And that was in Jersey, because they don't let you pump your own gas there and there wasn't a way to avoid talking to the attendant. Mostly, he does what he needs for himself. Fixes his truck, lives off the land, and cruises the highway at night, lights off and eyes shining. His only thrill anymore is running people off the road. Sometimes he finishes them fast. Sometimes he gives them a sporting chance. And sometimes he gets a bonus, a good Samaritan who comes to help. Sometimes he thinks he should say a few words over the bodies. But he never does.

Stories

The Lurkers are known around the world, but none showed their Hunger as keenly as the Baku. This Japanese spirit longed for a hoard, but rather than gold, it hoarded nightmares. In the night, the Baku seemed fearsome, but in truth it was a coward who hid from the light. For it fed upon the nightmares of destruction, and had no appetite for the real thing.

The Hero's admirers would have you believe that Grendel came from the wilderness to butcher the men of Heorot. But, so the Lurkers say, the Hero entered the story late. The Danish lord, Hrothgar, drove Grendel's tribe from the land, marking them for extermination. And he built his great mead-hall atop the grave of Grendel's father. Grendel even accepted that his tribe had been bested in a fair fight. Rather than revenge, he killed the men of Heorot that his father might have fit servants in the life beyond.

The Edomites left few records, but a few Eshmaki have preserved oral traditions from even ancient times. Around the 10th century BCE, the Edomites were prolific miners in their own region. Or rather, their slaves were. Forced to work in cramped, dark conditions, the miners encountered the creature they called only "It." As long as a light was lit, It could not approach. But should the light sputter out, should it fail for even a moment, one of the miners would vanish. Little did they know that they had trespassed in the caverns where the Beast had retreated

from the increasingly populated and hostile human world. And little could they have known how hungry it would become.

No one knows the name of the Hag, and Eshmaki debate whether she was really one of them at all. Certainly, she lurked in the dark, and certainly, she brought destruction in her wake. But wherefore her habit of sitting on the chests of her victims at night? Was it her way of targeting an individual to unleash her primordial self? Was she some kind of half-breed vampire sucking the life from her victims? Or, perhaps the most controversial theory: she is the modern and degenerate form of the Dark Mother herself, evaluating potential paramours by examining the quality of their nightmares.

Even as the Eshmaki try to reclaim a history distorted by Heroes, they remain wary of Mala Cosa. The name comes from the account of a Spanish explorer lost in Texas in the 16th century, but the story has been told by Beasts in the region since the times when the region's only inhabitants were natives. Mala Cosa was a tiny, bearded man who traveled from house to house in the night. He carried a flaming brand, and would peek in the windows looking for his prey. Hard as it might be to sleep after such a visit, eventually the victim would, and Mala Cosa would enter the house. He would use a flint to cut the flesh of the victim, dislocating bones and removing bits of entrails. And he would eat the entrails, and close the wounds, and disappear once more into the night. Among those listening to the rumors that travel among Beasts and their kin, similar events occur in northern Texas to this very night.

The Soul

Everyone's dreamt of being chased by something they couldn't see. That unknown horror could well be one of the Eshmaki. When a Lurker's Soul is unleashed, it finds the dark places in people's dreams, and hides in them, waiting to strike.

Sometimes, it infects dreams of solitude. A person will be walking in the woods, only to sense that he's no longer alone… and realize that daylight is no longer with him. He might be walking alone on a beach, only to turn and see two sets of footprints behind him. At other times, the Eshmaki lures someone away from a group of dreamed friends with strange noises and baleful sounds, only to draw him into a maze from which he cannot escape. In every case, the dream starts innocent, even peaceful, before turning into a terror of running and imminent death.

Often only a single feature of the Lurker is visible in the dream; shining eyes, an animal stench, the scratch of claws on a bare leg. The Eshmaki is a nightmare's nightmare, a thing that avoids form except when it leaps out for the kill… which is of course when the prey wakes up.

The damage wrought by the Eshmaki's Soul is immense. It leaves in its wake trembling victims unsure of what they fear, or what they should fear. It leaves prey jumping at shadows, even after they awake in their sweat-soaked sheets.

Lair

• **Cramped:** What creature can crawl through these claustrophobia-inducing tunnels… and can it move faster than you?

• **Darkness:** In the Lair of the shadow Beast, you can see nothing at all.

• **Extreme Cold:** In the absence of light, an absence of heat. You are chilled to your bones as you make your way through the Lair.

• **Mirages:** In the dark, your mind cannot be trusted.

• **Stench:** The rotting flesh of previous victims assaults your nose with every breath.

Birthright

Eshmaki lurk in the shadows until they unleash their terrifying destructive power. When making a successful Brawl or Weaponry attack on an unsuspecting victim, they can inflict a Tilt as if they had made a roll against a specified target (p. XX), such as an arm or a leg. Alternatively, they can choose to successfully initiate a grapple while still dealing the damage from the Brawl or Weaponry attack.

Nickname: Lurkers

Atavisms: Dragonfire, From the Shadows, Limb from Limb, Relentless Hunter

Stereotypes

Vampire: Just like a wine drunk. No sense of variety, and you lose your shit at every party.

Werewolf: You watch boundaries. I violate them. Let's be friends.

Mage: Met one once. His dreams smelled of old knowledge, ancient and true. So I ate him.

Promethean: I get being on the outside. Thing is, I like it here.

Changeling: You're worried about being taken? I could watch you. Just to make sure.

Sin-Eater: You're never quite alone now, are you? Doesn't that get stifling?

Mummy: Of course I can kill it.

Demon: I like my prey to be multiple choice!

Makara

Nightmares of the Depths

It's strange, because he's almost forgotten he's going to drown. He's still holding his breath, but the rush of the water by his ears is so steady, it's almost hypnotic, the drag of the hand on his foot so unyielding, it's almost gentle. There's a sense of leaving the world behind, the surface, the cares, all that breathable air. What did he need it for, anyway? Still he holds his breath, and still he sinks deeper, and as he hears the siren call like whalesong, he's faintly aware that his lungs are about to burst. And then… black. Nothing but the deeps and the end of time.

When you were young, you were quiet. People said still waters ran deep. You wouldn't know. For you, the waters have never been still, even in their darkest depths. You were always set apart. Maybe you lived near the water, maybe not. It didn't matter. The rush of the tides was always in your veins. And now that you've come into your own, you're both the force of the waves and the thing they hide, the shadow from the deep that claims wary and unwary alike.

Some other Beasts see you and shiver at the thought of drowning on dry land. But you're more

than that. You're not just the choking power of the depths, not just the pounding waves and the crushing pressure, you're the knowledge, too. You're a link to the drowned history of humanity, to the knowledge that the oceans have reclaimed. To the sunken temples and lost continents, to the ugly wreckage and watery graves.

People like to forget that the oceans dominate the planet, that the blood in their veins is just nature's way of letting them carry a little of it around so that they can survive in an unnatural environment. You know better.

On the hunt, you are the elements turned traitor, the environment that humanity relies on made its bitterest foe. You lash out with the tentacles of the Leviathan and fill the lungs of your enemies with salt water. You bring your prey back where they belong, to Mother Ocean, to the depths that gave us all birth and now bring death.

For you and your family, the Dark Mother was the Queen of the Deeps. She spawned you somewhere in the dark fathoms. It was only after millennia that you joined humanity on the surface, and that you learned to keep the ocean within and the dry husk around it. Your Family is the oldest. Sea monsters predate everything — humanity, mammals, dinosaurs, even trees.

Lives

It's her freshman year in high school, and some of her friends feel like they're drowning. There's more homework, more people, more of everything that makes life hard. She only *wishes* she was drowning. The water's where she feels alive. Swim team would help, maybe. But who's got time? And she can't help feeling there's supposed to be something more than this, like there's someplace she's supposed to be that's not closed in by lockers and painted cinderblock walls. She can't help lashing out from time to time, letting her real self rise to the surface. She's afraid someone will notice. But sometimes she wants them to. Sometimes she wants people to know that she's different and that they should be afraid.

The swimming hole is his. Sure, in the summer, the kids can play there. He allows that. He allows the adults to come by and throw coins in, making a wish on a whim. But it belongs to him. Only he knows how deep it really goes. Only he has touched the mind of the thing that slumbers there. The thing that grants those wishes when it wants to, the thing that makes everyone regret wanting. It's the thing that tells him the secrets. Who wants what. Who wants *whom*. And those secrets are very lucrative indeed.

She likes to think of herself as a classic. She finds remote beaches, swims out far enough, and lures someone into the water. Sometimes she pretends to drown. Other times, she just looks alluring. But either way, she lures her prey and shows them the wonders of the deep… for as long as their lungs will hold. And then she takes whatever they leave on shore. Waste not, want not.

They call him a terrorist, even if they're not quite sure who he is. He'd rather be thought of as the ocean's one true insurgent, a one-man warrior against those who exploit and despoil. He specializes in safely destroying oil rigs, but he can do a lot more when he wants to. After all, before he realized he was a Beast, he was one of Norway's top marine engineers. He can sabotage rigs, whaling boats, even the occasional cruise ship, if need be. All without doing more damage to the ocean than the machines he's destroying. He's beginning to wonder, though, if it's

really enough. Maybe he needs to take the fight to the land, to the place where the decisions and the money come from.

She realized very young what she was. Her parents never paid her much attention, so constant visits to the sea, and long swims in the deeps never attracted any worry. But she always came back for her friend, the girl with the wine-dark hair. When they were children, she hoped her friend would become like her, would be able to share the wonders of the ocean. But as they aged, and as friendship turned to love, she realized that was impossible. She feels the call to her Lair, a place of safety and blissful quiet. But still she comes back, hoping she'll one day find a way to bring her love along.

Stories

Some South American Makara trace their lineage not to an ancient mother of monsters, but to a being still apparently with us today — the yacu-mama. According to these Children, the yacu-mama is a snake-like Beast over a hundred feet long. She is the mother of all of the creatures of the water. These Makara include other Beasts among these creatures; for surely, life arose first in the water. Some Beasts of other Families dismiss this as fantasy, while many Makara wonder if the Dark Mother might still be alive in the Amazon.

Makara differ in opinion on the sirens of Greek mythology. No one believes that they're extant today, and some doubt that they were close kin at all — mightn't they just as easily have been changelings, or even vampires? But the archetype has a powerful hold on the Makara imagination. Many Leviathans are alluring, and many more would like to be. As to whether they'd like to dash sailors on the rocks… opinions vary.

The sea is the ultimate source of life, and Makara are quick to look for primordial figures there, whether the Dark Mother or some of her other children. The goddess Ceto rouses particular debate because she's often cited as the mother of the Gorgons… and if that's true, that might be a link between the Makara and the Namtaru that goes beyond their shared human heritage. Ceto was also a mother of monsters in her own right. Was, she, perhaps, a mother of intermediate generations of Beasts, responsible for some of the diversity seen today?

To the Makara who care to discuss them, the Maori Taniwha are particularly contentious. Like many Beasts lost to the mists of mythology, they've been portrayed as both benevolent and evil, as both guardians and kidnappers. Alleged to have the forms of whales or sharks, they've been accused of kidnapping women to keep as brides under the sea. Earlier generations of Makara were inclined to gloss over this supernatural human trafficking, while more recent ones question whether such marriages might be consensual, or whether the Beasts of the past were substantially grislier than one might have wished.

The Japanese Umibozu may or may not have been a Beast at all. Certainly, its form is exceedingly monstrous, suggesting an evolution of the Beast beyond what Makara today are familiar with. If the Umibozu was, as is sometimes suggested, a ghost, what is the ghost of a Beast?

The Soul

When the Makara is unleashed in the dreamscape, it usually brings dreams of drowning and

suffocation. A dream might start innocently enough… a cruise on a little boat, for example. But swiftly, the shore disappears, and the depths below the boat become frighteningly apparent. There's water all around, but instead of openness, it creates the feeling of claustrophobia. The sea is dark and opaque, yet the dreamer *knows* there are things below. The abyss seems endless, and the creatures within of unfathomable size.

The Beast might appear itself, but never in its almost-human guise. Instead, it earns the name Leviathan, a creature of impossible dimensions and improbably anatomy, of tentacles miles long and the jaws of some imagined prehistoric horror.

And yet, some dreams of the Makara are almost pleasant. The dreamer finds herself near a river, where a handsome youth sits combing his hair. The dreamer tries to greet the youth, only for him to pull away, just slightly into the water. She follows, and he pulls away again, leading her with each step into the river. With every step, the water grows deeper, but the youth's smile more beguiling. Soon, the dreamer finds she can't keep her head above water, that she is gulping it down instead of lungfuls of air… and that she no longer cares.

Sometimes, she realizes her mistake, and the tentacles rise to embrace her. But more often, she simply dreams to the edge of drowning, only to recognize the horror when she awakes.

Lair

• **Crushing Pressure:** You feel as if you've dived very far, too far.

• **Currents:** The force of the water, as well as the shape of the tunnels, forces you inexorably where the Leviathan wants you to go.

• **Downpour:** Even when you can get your head above water, the rain is drenching and freezing.

• **Flooded:** Is there any air at all?

• **Undergrowth:** Seaweed that looks uncannily like human fingers reaches up to grasp and restrain you.

Birthright

The Leviathans are practically born to the water, and need not fear it. They can breathe underwater as easily as in air. They also suffer no ill effects from deep water pressure or rapid surfacing.

Nickname: Leviathans

Atavisms: Alien Allure, Embrace of the Deep, Heart of the Ocean, Siren's Treacherous Song

Stereotypes

Vampire: You don't drown. I don't have much use for that.

Werewolf: We both go places no one else can.

Mage: Abyss? You're looking at her.

Promethean: You're drowning in an ocean of sorrow. Let me drown you someplace nicer.

Changeling: You crossed hedge and thorn to get here? Call me back when you've faced the sharks.

Sin-Eater: We're both drawn to deep places, perhaps the nightmares we find there are not so different.

Mummy: You've forgotten something out there, buried deep in the desert. Something you fear. I can wash away the sands.

Demon: They've mistaken depth with dressing in layers.

Namtaru

Nightmares of Revulsion

He reminds himself that he didn't follow her out here for her pretty face. It wasn't that kind of lure. No, she promised him what he needed, the only thing that makes his heart still beat like it was in love. But as he turns the corner, behind the dumpster, he sees that her face has melted away, that he's looking at something from an older and more terrifying world. He screams, but her hand is on his face, scratching lightly, and the poison burns to work in his veins. Not the poison he was after, but it will have to do.

No one ever tells you that you're pretty. At least, not if they know what's good for them. Beauty's in the eye of the beholder, and you don't respect the beholders one bit. You know what you are — a monster. And you're glad that everyone can see it, at least a little.

Maybe it wasn't always this way. Maybe once you wanted to be one of the beautiful people. Maybe you even *were*, before you claimed your Birthright and became the holy monster. You wanted to be the one everyone noticed. Well, now you are, and you're happier it happened this way. Because now you know that stopping someone's gaze isn't about catching them with your handsome eyes. It's about making them *feel* something. And you're perfectly all right if what they feel is fear.

Those who call you ugly miss the point. "Ugly" is just another one of those things in the eye of the beholder. No, you're *hideous*, terrifying to normal people on a level as atavistic as the heritage that made you a Beast. That hideousness links you back to the earliest monsters, the ones who didn't wear human shapes because they didn't care.

On the hunt, you're different from the rest of your brood. To them, the chase is a necessity, a simple fact that if you must hunt, you must pursue. But not for you. You enjoy the fear. You enjoy knowing that the prey is running because of *you*, because you've captured its imagination with terror and instinctive hatred.

People tell uncharitable stories about you and the Dark Mother. They call you her shunned progeny. They say she cursed you for some ancient slight. But once again, they're ever so wrong. The Mother of Monsters gifted you with a face to match your function, a unique "beauty" that goes far more than skin deep.

Lives

She sculpts statues of famous people. Even other Beasts think it's an affectation, a callback to the

Medusa myth so well-known and well-beloved by the Namtaru. Even so, it's hard not to notice that the ones she keeps in her studio, rather than sells to the public, are twisted in expressions of fear and agony. Truth is, she's working up her courage with every hammer of the chisel. It's not a collection, it's a hit list.

He takes on the cases no one else will. Stalking. Domestic violence. Every kind of abuse. When people tell you the system can't help you, he comes in. He's not a vigilante, not in the sense of lurking in alleys and breaking the kneecaps of evil men. He's a lawyer, and he knows how to channel every last bit of the fear he conjures into protecting his clients. He is the monster that monsters fear, even as they hide behind the flimsy protection of the law.

She's the last thing you'll ever see. Not a murderess, not an angel of death, but the night shift nurse. They keep her on nights because she has a habit of upsetting visitors. She's plain-speaking, rough-voiced. She offers no comfort where it would be illusory, no word of kindness where it would be forced. But put her on at night… and, well, some of the problems seem to go away. Whatever it is that lives in the basement, that sucks the life out of patients when they're nearing the end… it's afraid of her. And so, when your time comes naturally, the last thing you'll see is a smiling, if rough-hewn, face.

He works in a clinic. The kind where they give free needles to junkies, to try and curb the spread of disease just a little bit even if they can't do anything about the spread of addiction. He takes no shit, not from the addicts, not from his supervisor. But he's damned efficient, and he doesn't let anybody push his customers around, either. And he works for peanuts. Well, peanuts, and that collection of dirty syringes he can't help but secret away.

She's an inspiration, that's what they say. She's got such depth to her music, she's transcended poor roots and rough relationships. An inspiration… but only from afar, because no one can really stand to talk to her. She's too tall, too scary, too raspy when she's not singing. She takes on protégés, and by repetition and fear teaches them their art. When they're ready, she unleashes them on the world, to go the places she never really could, to navigate the industry politics she's too gruff for. She inspires the greats she can never be.

Stories

The Namtaru hold a special place of reverence for the original Gorgons. Medusa was raped by Poseidon in the temple of Athena. It was an ugly crime. When Medusa's sister Stheno cried out for justice, Athena gave the family an ugly blessing: Medusa and her sisters became the chosen of the Goddess of War, given the power to bring vengeance against the wicked. The gaze of one of these original Gorgons could freeze a man's blood in his veins, even turn him to stone. For centuries, Medusa and her sisters traveled the ancient world, destroying evils no one else could touch. But Medusa had always been too kind-hearted for her own good; when the Hero Perseus made her face the blood on her hands, she died of grief.

When King Minos of Crete married the sorceress Pasiphae, so the Namtaru say, the god Poseidon was jealous of their good fortune, and caused the Beast to rise in the blood of their firstborn, creating the Minotaur. This Beast was the product of neither bestiality nor infidelity, as later slanderers would claim, but he was fearsome in mien, and the dreams of all upon the island of Crete were tormented by his presence. According to the Gorgons, Minos had the greatest

architect of his day create an impregnable fortress to protect his son. When the nightmares continued and the Heroes arose, Minos threw them into the fortress, for his child to slay and grow fat upon. But the Minotaur was lonely, and developed the dangerous habit of toying with his prey, even engaging them in conversation. It was in one such conversation that the murderer Theseus tricked the Minotaur into revealing his location, and slew him.

The Namtaru are known for their fearsome appearances. More insidious by some standards was the Kishi, who shared the hideousness of the Family but kept it concealed. The Kishi had the handsome face of a man and the silver tongue of a devil. He would approach young women in the sunset, charming them with his pretty face and charming words, only to reveal his second face — that of a hyena, with jaws that clamped and devoured. Many Namtaru can identify with hiding behind a false face, but the purely predatory nature of the Kishi troubles them. But perhaps his actions were more from desperation than cruelty, for times can be very lean for hyenas in the desert.

While some Namtaru wear faces of fear, the Arabic ghul wears any face it pleases. A shapeshifter most comfortable as a monstrous hyena, it is revolting not for its face or voice but for its eating habits — for it prefers human flesh, a diet few Namtaru tolerate in the present day. Some Namtaru say the ghul hunts primarily in the dreamscape, using its Primordial Self as a deception to lure sleepwalkers away from their camps and homes.

The Futakuchi-onna is another monster you might not want to invite to dinner. She's a woman with a second, fanged maw in the back of her head, a mouth which mumbles obscenities and horrific advice. Folklore says that this is a curse that falls on people not given enough to eat. Beasts, however, recognize this as the awakening of an atavistic heritage, one which might not be so different from their own.

The Soul

When the Namtaru is unleashed in the dreams of mortals, it naturally takes the form of revulsion. A hand put in a desk drawer comes out covered in biting maggots. A thing with a melted face stalks the dreamer through the streets of her neighborhood, which have somehow twisted so that they never lead home.

A dreamer might "wake" to find herself paralyzed, while the Gorgon hovers over her and performs obscene operations on her body, the creature itself a presence her eyes won't quite focus on. Nightmares like this can seem to last for hours, and leave the dreamer with a lingering sense that her body is no longer quite right when she awakes. Sometimes, the paralysis and terror even extends into true waking, leaving the once-dreamer temporarily a captive in her own body.

Yet these are not the only nightmares of revulsion. More insidiously, the Namtaru might cast the dreamer in its own role, the hideous and hated. The power the Gorgon finds in hideousness isn't present here — instead, the dreamer finds herself shunned and hated by her family, lovers, and most intimate friends. Sometimes, this is because of a physical mark, but more often the dreamer has committed some unknown slight, some crime so horrible that it cannot be forgiven, but which can never truly be known.

Lair

• **Echoing:** When you call out, you hear your own voice shouted back at you. You don't always like what it's saying.

• **Gluey:** Whatever the walls are made of, sometimes they don't want to let you go.

• **Noxious Gasses:** Some chambers are filled with choking fumes.

• **Poor Light:** It's hard to see, and easy to imagine the Gorgon's fearsome visage around every corner.

• **Swarms:** Hordes of pets infest parts of the Lair, crawling over you and taking tiny pieces of flesh away in their pincers.

Birthright

Namtaru are nothing if not revolting. Once per scene, a Gorgon can automatically inflict a Condition. Shaken (p. XX) is a common example, but part of the reason Namtaru are revolting is that they show people the ugly side of themselves. Medusa, after all, was slain by seeing her own monstrosity. Therefore, the Namtaru might also inflict the Guilty Condition.

Nickname: Gorgons

Atavisms: Basilisk's Touch, Infestation, Shadowed Soul, Unbreakable

Stereotypes

Vampire: Those night terrors you leave them with, sweat soaked and crying for mother... is that how you dream of me? Let's find out.

Werewolf: You want them to fear you. I like that. But I prefer my prey more… substantial.

Mage: Mysteries, you say? The uglier and more horrifying the better? My place or yours?

Promethean: These people who reject you. You need to learn to kill more of them.

Changeling: You hide your face, too.

Sin-Eater: Your dead companion is ugly enough for the both of you.

Mummy: We both keep Lairs. I'll thank you to stay in yours.

Demon: You're a virus. You infect everyone you touch with your fears and paranoia. I can't decide if I should thank you or end you.

Ugallu

Nightmares of the Skies

Stay with the car. That's what they always tell you, stay with car. Don't set out across the desert by your lonesome. Don't risk the scorching days and the freezing nights and the endless thirst tromping somewhere you might never be found. But she didn't listen. She didn't even remember. She just had to get as far away from that wreck as she could, because she couldn't bear to see who she'd just lost to it. She's been aware of the shape overhead for hours now. It's been watching her. It's not a natural thing, not part of the experience of a college student driving south for spring break. But it's there, and she knows it's waiting. Finally, as the sun dips below

the horizon, she lies down and lets it take her.

You ever notice how in the city, people keep their eyes on the ground? More fool them. The sky only looks empty. It belongs to you and your kind, a hunting ground that you share with no other sapient predator. At a moment's notice, you could plummet from above and snatch any one of those poor bastards off the street. They really *should* look up.

You see an entirely different landscape from other Beasts, much less from other people. For you, the terrain is rooftops, clotheslines, penthouse windows. People don't close the windows because they assume that so high up, no one's watching. They don't know about you.

You're not a kidnapper, not usually. You snatch people so they can see the wonder you see, the beauty of sunsets over the tops of buildings, the faint glimmer of stars under the halo of city lights. You take them across the living, breathing world of the city's uppermost levels. Pity most of them are too busy pissing their pants to appreciate it.

On the hunt, you once again see the world differently from everyone else. Other Beasts try to corner their prey, chasing them down blind alleys or following them relentlessly until they can run no more. But you, you're death from the skies. It doesn't matter to you what the terrain looks like from the ground, all that matters is that there's a path between up and down. Unless your mark runs inside (and why would he? wouldn't he be cornered?) he's vulnerable.

Whoever else her children may have been, you know the Dark Mother as Mama Crow. She was a creature of the skies, like you, in the hot, sticky nights of the first cities. Her paramours were other Beasts of the air. Some of your friends say they were angels. But any angel whose blood runs in your veins had good reason to say "be not afraid."

Lives

He has an apartment on the third floor, but you'll never find him there. Instead, he's always up on the roof, with his birds. He has friends — human friends — who raise pigeons. It's an eccentric hobby that reaches across lines of race and class, but even among this select few, he's a little strange. For he raises crows, not pigeons… yet they're docile and come home to him at night. In his community, they call him Father Crow. He accepts that, in tribute to the Dark Mother.

To him, what glitters is gold. Or diamonds. Rubies even. He doesn't care. What matters is that the objects are precious, not so much to him as to the people he takes them from. He's a second-story man, or perhaps 22nd-story man, using his natural gifts to steal from those who would keep treasure for themselves. He watches his prey carefully, for he only steals what cannot be replaced.

He rolls his eyes when they talk about chemtrails. He's a crop-sprayer by trade, and he doesn't like the anti-science bullshit spouted by fringe elements. He particularly doesn't like the black marks it puts on small aviators, the ones who make modern agriculture possible. He's never been able to master flying under his own power, so he needs that little plane to get up where he belongs. And he needs money to keep flying. So when those tick-tock men come with their mysterious "fertilizer" and cryptic instructions, he takes the payload and he takes the cash. But still, he rolls his eyes.

She thinks of herself as dead. She almost was, fading out in a hospital, before she found her heritage. She calls it her “second wind.” To her, her flights above the city are as a ghost, a non-person, an entity always apart from the crowds and the forced intimacy of humanity. But she gets lonely. So sometimes she’ll take someone. A child, an old woman, a pretty man, and keep them in her aerie for a while, just long enough for them to start to come around to keeping her company. And then she returns them to their lives, right where they left off, because it’s not for ghosts to hang on forever.

He’s a buzzard, plain and simple. He lives by himself in the desert, subsisting most of the time on MREs and canned goods of dubious provenance, but always on the lookout for something to scavenge. Sometimes it’s gas for his little generator or parts for the car he’s perpetually in the process of repairing, but sometimes it’s a traveler, exhausted and about to expire, good meat about to go to the birds. Those are his best days, and he feasts well before going back to the generator and the TV that only seems to work in the night.

Stories

When the goddess Inanna killed her lover Tammuz and her handmaiden Lilith in a jealous rage, they vanished away into the underworld. There, Lilith drank the blood of predators and became one of the screech-owls, the guardians of the boundaries between life and death. Inanna, in her guilt, bargained with the Owls to release Lilith into the land of the living, but in so doing, bound her to the night, never to see the day again. According to some Ugallu, by the blood of the Owls, Lilith and her children are kin to the Beasts.

The Cherokee once told tales of the Raven Mockers. These shapeshifters took the form of elderly men and women, and hunted their victims to exhaustion on wings of fire. They let out cries like ravens, but always with an uncanny timbre that struck terror into the heart of their prey. When the victim finally dropped to the ground in exhaustion, the Mocker would descend and open the victim’s chest to consume his heart. With the heart eaten, the Mocker would gain a year of life for every year the prey would have lived. Ugallu say that unknown to humanity, there were only ever two Raven Mockers, a man and a woman. Exiled for their atavistic traits, and unable to have children together, choosing the slain was the only way for them to preserve their heritage.

The Simurgh has a special place in Ugallu thought as one of the few Beasts of legend known for its mercy. The young prince Zal was revealed as a Beast as a child and left to die in the wilderness. The Simurgh took him in, and taught him the ways of magic. Returning to the world of humanity, Zal was greeted as a savior, performing great works of medicine and even saving his wife’s life during childbirth. The son, however, became a Hero, and while he spared his father, his own child was not so lucky.

Beasts have called St. George the “wickedest martyr in history,” and his legend “the most pernicious story ever told.” While it’s become fashionable to doubt the historicity of the legend of the saint and the dragon, many Beasts, particularly Ugallu, see it as one of the most infectious monster-slaying stories humanity has ever told. The story of the dragon has been translated into nearly every language, and is part of nationalist mythology from England to Russia. If ever there were a tale that the Other must be destroyed, it’s this one. Modern Ugallu make a point of spreading the historical story of St. George: that he was a pious soldier martyred by an evil emperor, whose grace in dying led others to convert to his faith… with nary a dragon in sight.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, many of the Ugallu like to claim the Phoenix as one of their own. It's an almost universally positive icon, being long-lived and beautiful, and even possessing a dubious sort of immortality. (It's arguable how immortal you are when you have destroy your previous identity first — but then again, that's something some Beasts can relate to on a metaphorical level.) But the more cynical Ugallu like to raise a point of order. For all the positivity of the myth of the Phoenix, no one's ever quite recorded what it *ate*.

The Soul

The nightmares of the Ugallu are nightmares of exposure. The Raptors place the dreamer in a nightmare world without clothes or food. The dreamer can't even find shelter — especially not shelter from the skies. To be in the nightmare of an Ugallu is to be completely vulnerable, while something terrible and unnatural circles overhead, never glimpsed directly, seen only by its horrible shadow on the ground. At any moment, the creature could swoop down and carry the dreamer away, into some yet more terrifying place. It is not a mercy that this place is never seen, for the fear of it stalks the prey's every dreaming moment.

There are other kinds of exposure. Everyone's dreamed about finding themselves at school or work without clothing, or unprepared for a test. But in those dreams, the dreamer is often the only one aware of their exposure. Not so in the nightmares of the Ugallu. In a Raptor's dream, everyone is watching. There are eyes everywhere, even when the dreamer attempts to retreat or cover themselves. Nothing hides from the gaze of the predator, and no matter where the dreamer flees, they'll always find someone to catch them at their most vulnerable. Or some*thing*, like a murder of crows or a wall of eyes.

Lair

• **Crosswinds:** The screaming wind chills you to the bone.

• **Exposed:** Though you can't see clearly, you instinctively know that the Raptor knows exactly where you are.

• **Fog:** A haze fills the air, as if you're walking among clouds. Might be pleasant, if it weren't concealing something you dread.

• **Thin Air:** You're up high, and it's hard to breathe.

• **Thunderous:** Every so often a storm sweeps through, and the thunder leaves you unable to hear.

Birthright

The ground can't hold the Ugallu. An Ugallu can leap the same distance she can run in a turn with no roll. She may leap this distance horizontally or vertically.

Nickname: Raptors

Atavisms: Feral Cry, Needs Must, No Escape, Storm-Lashed

Stereotypes

Vampire: You take the ground, I'll take the sky. By morning, it's all ours.

Werewolf: It's only polite to eat what you kill.

Mage: The tighter you grasp, the faster you slip.

Promethean: If it's any comfort, from up there you look the same as any of them.

Changeling: I wish I could just carry you away. But that would bring flashbacks, wouldn't it?

Sin-Eater: You think you can see everything, the present and the past, but there's a whole other world you're missing just above your head.

Mummy: Everything about you is a tapestry. I can't wait to unravel it.

Demon: Didn't fall far enough, apparently.

Hungers

Every Beast has a Hunger. More properly, the Soul experiences the Hunger, a primal, iconic need. The specifics of the need vary — one Beast consumes flesh and blood, another consumes trust or innocence, but both share the Hunger for Prey. As a Beast's Satiety falls, the Soul grows ravenous and less choosy about what it eats. As it feasts, it becomes sated and its tastes become rarefied. Some Beasts prefer to stay well-fed, so that they can act like gourmands, choosing their meals and eating when they will. Some Beasts stay lean and hungry, eating only when necessary, relishing the feeling of power from their hungry Soul. And some Beasts *try* to stay fed, but never seem to manage.

A Beast can sate its Hunger in a number of ways, and a brood can often find a way to hunt that allows all of its members to increase Satiety. Of course, that's a little like a whole group coming to consensus on pizza toppings — it usually means no one gets what they *really* want, and sometimes, they need to go out and feast on their own.

Hunger for Power

The Tyrants

"It's too late. I've won. I own you now, and you are going to do exactly what I say."

Some monsters live to make mighty warriors feel like mere infants, alone and scared in the dark, trying desperately to stand against something stronger and more cunning than they. In ancient times such Beasts were worshiped as gods, as child and champion alike fell to their knees in awe at the mere sight of such a magnificent, terrible creature. Not every Beast would thrive under such attention, but for the Tyrants the best part about being on top is looking down at all the people they crushed to get there.

Tyrants are Beasts who crave power, feeding off the act of besting someone and proving their own superiority. They bask in the fear, respect, and trembling worship of those beneath them, whether the Beast is standing at the top of the pyramid or controlling things from the shadows while their subjects tremble at the thought of their unseen king. A Beast is always more than merely human, and a Tyrant thrills in reminding those below him just how powerless tiny mortals really are against the stuff of nightmares. Should a Tyrant fail to find proper subjects

during his waking hours, his Soul stalks through the dreamscape and bring them subjugation while they slumber.

On the Hunt

A Tyrant hunts in as many ways as there are people to master. A literal hunt provides the quickest route towards satisfying the Hunger for Power on short notice. Finding some drunken thug in a bar and pinning him against a brick wall in the back alley while forcing him to beg for his life is usually enough to satisfy a Tyrant's immediate cravings, but many consider this a rather inelegant approach to feeding. If they do seek out satiety in combat, Tyrants find it easiest to satisfy herself when fighting alone, or single out one opponent in a larger combat to best personally. Power is not a dish that is easily shared. Tyrants can take a particular pleasure in fighting the same opponent over and over again, letting him crawl away with his life only to return and be thoroughly beaten again.

Not all of those who hunger for Power are so straightforward. If a Tyrant considers himself above such brutish displays, he'll find other sources for what he needs A corporate Tyrant might feed by orchestrating his own promotion over that of a hated colleague, delighting as he forces his former equal to polish the nameplate on the door of the Beast's new corner office. A Tyrant lawyer could find herself working in criminal law, feeding from those moments where the opposing attorney realizes he's lost the case against her superior skill regardless of whether the accused is guilty or innocent. If his talents don't lend themselves towards climbing the ladder of power within an institution, a Tyrant will seek out opponents to best through competition. Competitive sports work nearly as well as physical violence, as long as the opponent is invested enough in the outcome to feel the sting and shame of defeat. A more cunning Tyrant may propose matching wits with his victims through puzzles or games of skill instead, engineering situations where he can prove his superior intelligence.

Whatever the conflict, victory is not enough to satisfy a Tyrant. They do not hunger for a sense of self-satisfaction and a feeling of personal accomplishment, they hunger for power over others. The loser has to know that he has been well and thoroughly beaten by the Beast, as the moment of satisfaction in a Hunt comes in looking down at your opponent and getting a chance to say "I win. You lose." The Tyrant's Soul yearns to hold the fate of his subjects between his claws, though whether he proves to be a cruel dictator or a benevolent monarch is left to the whims of his more human self, and has no effect on his feeding.

The Soul

The Souls of Tyrants stalk the Primordial Dream in search of subjects. When they escape to roam amongst the nightmares of humankind, they love to pick favorites to feed from again and again. A man plagued by a Tyrant Soul might experience the same nightmare of drowning every single night with only one minor variation: some new and different hope for escape always arises. A ship seen in the distance, a piece of driftwood floating just out of reach, a weapon on the victim's belt that he struggles to unsheathe. The victim grasps at threads while the Tyrant toys with him, but night after night he is dragged down to the endless depths just before waking up in a cold sweat. No matter how hard he struggles, the Tyrant will always win.

Heroes who rise in response to a Tyrant Soul are equipped with the ability to fight even after getting kicked down and humiliated time and time again. They often develop particularly

grandiose delusions about themselves as a defense mechanism, and usually come to believe that the Tyrant's position on top is rightfully theirs. A Tyrant's Hero might come to think of himself as a literal long lost king, or simply decide he deserves to be put in charge for his obviously superior leadership qualities. A Tyrant often finds himself facing a Hero with an angry mob or a small army of thugs behind him, as their Heroes' fanaticism spreads to the people around them.

The Families

Anakim are well suited to the Hunger for Power, since they make people feel inferior by nature. They often like to get up close and personal with their victims, holding someone down and watching from mere inches away as the fight leaves his eyes once he knows he's been beaten. A Giant Tyrant's Soul often takes the form of a literal monstrous tyrant: a hulking cyclops wearing a crown crafted from human bones and sinew, or an ogre queen who turns the swords of her victims into twisted knots left strewn about her Lair.

Jo doesn't tower over her prey — she's short, but she's all muscle. She enjoys letting other people, especially men, challenge her. The challenge isn't always or even usually physical. Sometimes they try to test her knowledge on topics they think she shouldn't understand, or try to explain things to her that it's obvious she knows. She destroys them; she knows what they know and she pokes holes in their beliefs and their facts, showing them sides of the topic they never considered. Secretly, though, she relishes the rare times when a man gets so mad he tries to touch her, because then she can beat him in a way that leaves no room for argument.

Eshmaki Tyrants enjoy the process of the hunt nearly as much as they enjoy its spoils. They can be playful with their victims, affecting concepts like "fair play" and "sporting chance." This makes them no less brutal while feeding; they take power from their victims just as surely as any other Tyrant, but the Nightmares of Destruction do seem to an enjoy a labyrinthine hunt. An Eshmaki Tyrant's Soul hunts from the shadows, its form never fully seen, but the glimpses that his victims catch reveal something very nearly human… but not quite.

Reynold is a health inspector for the city. When his Soul hungers, he dons rubber gloves and tests *everything*. He quizzes employees, he looks for the slightest bit of mold or dirt, and he happily provides miles of appeals forms to the owner. He refuses bribes, and dutifully reports any attempt. He isn't after money, after all. He's after the frustration and defeat in their eyes.

Makara Tyrants enforce their rule with the very Lairs in which they dwell: as masters of the depths they have an entire sea of nightmares at their back when they hunt. The victim of such a Tyrant may not even recognize an intelligent force behind his misery when the world starts to work against him, only to find out at the last minute that a keen and malevolent mind has plotted to take him out of his element and into hers. The Makara Tyrant's Soul rules her nightmarish oceans with the same subtle menace, forcefully reminding her victims of how powerless they are in the Beast's waters.

Ari drives a cab, and he goes to the parts of the city that the other cabbies won't. He knows every bit of the city — the poor neighborhoods where everyone looks out for each other and the rich neighborhoods where everyone's a stranger. When he feels his Hunger, he picks someone up and drops them in a place they've never seen before, a place where just walking down the street will get them arrested or jumped. He never lets anyone die, though. He just wants each little fish to

know how far from its home pond it has strayed.

Many Namtaru Tyrant Souls resemble insects: a queen bee with mandibles that drip venom or a cloud of vermin surrounding the unseen master of their swarm. They may be vile, but they are also impossible to ignore. The Namtaru are among the least naturally suited to the Hunger for Power, it's difficult for them to reconcile the feelings of disgust their nightmarish selves generate with the feelings of respect and awe they crave. Nonetheless, such Beasts exist, and a Namtaru Tyrant must take extra care when choosing her victims to find people who will still fall down in worship when bested by some hideous crawling thing.

No one wants to get sent to the principal's office, but *especially* not with Ms. Blaise there. Ms. Blaise is the assistant principal, but the real principal is just as scared of her as the kids. She has a pet scorpion in a tank on her desk, and she always feeds it when she's talking to a kid in trouble. Sometimes kids cry, sometimes they mumble apologies, but no one gets sent to Ms. Blaise twice. That's actually a problem for Ms. Blaise — she needs kids to misbehave. She's hungry, and so is her scorpion.

The Ugallu already embody the nightmare of being watched, and their nature combines with the Hunger for Power to create a particularly effective sort of Tyrant. Ugallu Tyrants becomes adept at mastering the panopticon effect, convincing victims that their master always has a hundred sleepless eyes watching their every move. Such Beasts are content to feed on their victim's powerlessness from afar, knowing they could swoop down at any moment and make their superiority completely clear. An Ugallu Tyrant's Soul often appears impressive in his own right, a fearsome golden dragon or a giant eagle crowned in flames, but it's the creature's perch atop their tall and impenetrable Lair that truly makes them worthy of reverence and fear.

Dave worked his way up. He started out delivering packages, but then he got promoted to supervisor, went to school, got his MBA, and now he's got a corner office. But he's got his sights set higher — he wants top floor. He wants to look down at the whole city. He's patient, though. He figures there are about six more positions between his and the big boss, and he wants to have them all. It's not *having* the top floor that will make him happy. It's *taking* it.

Hunger for the Hoard

The Collectors

"I wanted it more than he did. That makes it mine."

The image of the dragon perched upon her hoard of precious gems and gold has been written into stories for thousands of years. Kingdoms have fallen trying to appease such Beasts with an endless train of gifts, only to have her sights turn to their grand castles and priceless crown jewels once everything else is gone. Nothing is ever enough, and every Hero fallen to her claws only adds to her collection. Even hundreds of years after all survivors have fled her domain, the stories of legendary riches and their fearsome guardian spread far and wide on desperate, greedy whispers, keeping such a Collector well fed for centuries to come.

More than any other Beast, Collectors find their entire lives getting subsumed by their Hunger. Other Beasts enjoy the thrill of the chase, the pleasure of satiety, and then they return to the rest of their lives until their Hunger rises anew. A Collector, on the other hand, is constantly

surrounded by the trophies of her previous meals. Perhaps she's filled every inch of storage space in her tiny apartment with rare antiquities, filling cheap bookshelves with priceless vases and sculptures to satisfy her craving. Perhaps she's had to rent a storage locker just outside city limits, and finds herself making the two-hour drive there and back once a day just to see her precious objects and calm down. The hoard that she creates is a meticulously curated collection, a legend in its own right that she makes grander every time she feeds.

Whether a Collector gathers diamonds or gold or priceless antiques, all of these are mere vessels for something far more important: the worth that humans place upon things is what the Collector really feeds upon. Her greed is a reflection of the greed of humankind, craving only those things that are already jealously guarded by others. Nothing is quite so satisfying to a Collector as having something that someone else wants, and watching as he scrapes and crawls and fails to take it back. Heroes kill and die to gain access to a Collector's hoard, and their suffering is her reminder of how precious her collection is.

On the Hunt

Though every Collector hungers for physical things, hoards vary drastically from Beast to Beast. The important thing they all share is that a Collector's hoard always holds great worth to someone other than herself, enough that someone would be willing to risk life and limb to claim it. Gold and precious gems are common, of course, but plenty of Collectors have found other objects of worth. An academic Collector might prize rare books above all else, neatly putting them away in his personal library where no one else can reach the precious knowledge found within. Another Collector works as the principal of a high school, confiscating little things that may mean nothing to anyone else, but the entire world to a student that's broken one of her rules.

Beyond money and treasures, legends from all around the world warn of terrible monsters who steal away people to be trapped in their lairs as living parts of their hoards. The truth behind such stories is complicated. Some Beasts do need to satiate their Hunger by adding people to their collection, which can make feeding far more complicated. Their Souls see humans as precious objects to acquire, but the part of such Beasts that is still human is still capable of understanding the difference between people and things. Some Collectors do become kidnappers, hoarding away any human who might catch their fancy, but many seek to expand their hoards through less objectionable means. Such monsters often seek out people who are already being treated as possessions, then make them an offer: a secure new home with a powerful guardian who'll never let their previous abusers touch them again, in exchange for living with a Beast. A Collector of precious humans might be found guarding a comfortable group home filled with victims of domestic violence, or owning a house that gives free room and board to queer children whose parents have left them homeless. When a Hero comes to rescue his fragile princess or obedient child from the monster, he'll often find them taking up arms to protect the very monster that's supposedly been keeping them under lock and key. Such relationships can get complicated, however, as the Collector struggles to balance her Soul's desire to hoard people away forever with her human understanding of when they need to move on. No Beast can strike exactly the right balance every time, and even a loving Collector who wants her hoard to be happy still possesses a Soul who things of people as treasures to be owned.

Whatever the nature of their hoard, Collectors can satisfy their Hunger through either of two

channels. The first is by acquiring new objects for their hoard, but even for a very rich Collector this is never as simple as going out to a store and buying a new diamond necklace. That's not acquiring something new, it's merely trading one thing of value for another. Many Collectors become thieves, planning elaborate heists to satisfy their Hunger. Others work themselves into positions of power where they can steal from their subordinates without giving them a chance to fight back. Still others prefer to seek out wealth that has been lost for centuries, delving into ancient and forgotten places to claim old treasures as their own.

A Collector needs to acquire new objects, but she also needs to re-assert her dominance over what she already owns. The other way a Collector can satiate her Hunger is through defending her hoard. To feed through the act of defending her property, a Collector must stop someone who seeks to steal from her, and take steps to ensure that he can never make the attempt again. Physical violence is the most straightforward approach, but many Collectors devise elaborate traps and plans to protect their collections from intruders. A well-protected hoard might remain inaccessible for hundreds of years even after its owner passes away, locked behind clever security measures that no one but its original curator ever knew how to bypass safely.

Any Collector tempted to defy her nature by giving away what she's hoarded, or whose collection is successfully stolen, becomes very uncomfortable without her possessions. A Collector who'd taken to napping on her pile of gold bullion might suddenly find it impossible to sleep after her treasures are stolen, tossing and turning for hours on a mattress that just doesn't feel right. A Collector of antiques who gives away a priceless amulet to a broodmate might find himself getting up every few minutes to check on it in the usual place, always shocked for a moment to find it gone before remembering where it went. These little inconveniences can last for months or even years if the item is not returned, but Collectors have found one simple means of getting over a loss immediately: acquire something even better.

The Soul

A Collector's Soul has a hoard of her own, pieces snatched from the nightmares of her victims as she roams the dreamscape of mankind. While most Souls have to search for an appropriate meal, when a Collector's Soul escapes to feed her victims line up without her even having to lift a claw. A Collector brings dreams of riches beyond her victim's wildest fantasies, stirring up greed and gluttony until the victim is compelled to take them for his own. That's when the dream becomes a nightmare, as she descends to tear the intruder limb from limb and add his treasures to her collection. He's left waking up with distant memories of everything that might have been his, were it not for the monster that got in his way.

Heroes triggered by a Collector succumb to greed unfettered by any sense of morality. A Collector's Hero might start with some understandable claim to her treasure, or at least a part of it, but he quickly loses any sort of distinction between what belongs to him and what does not. Everything is rightfully his property, especially the hoard, and the Beast is nothing but a monster who stands between him and his rightful prize. While every Hero is prone to doing terrible things while on the hunt for a Beast, those triggered by Collectors are known for being particularly underhanded in their tactics. Unfortunately, their Heroic nature also grants them ability to find and enter a Beast's Lair, leaving Collectors to deal with increasingly wily opponents who can sneak up on them at any time, and steal their treasures and their heads as trophies.

The Families

An Anakim Collector hoards objects that stand testament to his own strength: perhaps the weapons and armor worn by those who have failed to defeat him, or personal mementos of great sentimental value pried away from fallen foes. While his Lair is likely covered with odd scraps of such riches, his most valuable pieces are worn directly on the monstrous body of the Collector's Soul, forcing any who would dare take them to face the Giant head on.

Zmei is a burglar…of a sort. He doesn't creep in quietly or slip through windows. He walks in, takes what he wants (he's partial to silver), and leaves. If the homeowner wants to try and stop them, they're free to do so. If they *can* stop him, Zmei feels, they deserve to keep their belongings.

Eshmaki who Hunger for the Hoard often seek out raw materials of great worth: bars of gold and platinum, or crates full of uncut diamonds and other precious gems. An Eshmaki's hoard is usually spread out over a large space in a seemingly haphazard way. These piles of wealth become the Eshmaki's home, and her most effective hunting ground. Thieves become so distracted by the environment that they miss her creeping up from the shadows behind them, until they catch the gleam of her eyes in the reflection off a silver mirror and realize that it's far too late to run. The Eshmaki's Soul brings nightmares of the same: vast halls and caverns filled with gold that seem free for the taking until the victim catches sight of something long and scaled flitting between the mountains of riches.

Rose collects teeth. She'll take them from a victim's skull, if she needs to, but that's messy and difficult. She'd rather take them from people — a lot of parents keep their children's baby teeth, at least for a while. She's taken them from the dead, too, and sometimes she breaks into dentists' offices. She's fascinated by the shape of human teeth. Hers, after all, feel so sharp. She wonders if a vampire's teeth might feel more like hers, but she likes most of the vampires she's met too much to rip their fangs out.

Makara Collectors have a knack for locating long-lost things of value, from ancient relics to knowledge that's been forgotten through the centuries. They are invaluable assets to a brood that has decided to try and learn the secrets of their world, being both capable and highly motivated to find the things they're seeking. Things get more complicated when the brood successfully finds something of great worth; caught between his bonds of Kinship and his desire to hoard away every valuable scrap, such a Makara faces a dilemma with every victory.

Yin found a little hollow just off the coast, and she swims out there once a day with a plastic bag. She always has something heavy in the bag, and she always comes back to the beach without it. Once, someone from her neighborhood decided to grab the bag and peek in, but no one's sure what happened after that because a storm blew up out of nowhere. Next time anyone saw Yin, she was walking into the water with two bags.

The hoard of a Namtaru Collector is exquisitely terrifying. On the surface it is filled with beautiful things: masterful paintings, finely wrought jewelry, and elegant robes made from only the most luxurious materials. Look closer, though, and it becomes impossible to miss the signs of the Nightmare of Revulsion who owns them: the stench in the air, the mud on the ground, the creeping trails of insects crawling over and around every glittering masterpiece. The Soul of a

Namtaru Collector is often beautiful at first glance, until a second look reveals that perfectly handsome human head is perched on the shoulders of a clawed spider creature, or that breathtaking bird of paradise is made from a swarm of iridescent beetles.

Tim drives a truck for the county, picking up roadkill. He scrapes the dead animals off the sidewalk, drives them out to his house, and tosses them into a ravine. Sometimes he trudges down into the ravine and marvels at the process of decay, how the flesh gets soft and falls off and how the worms and flies do their work. He loves finding new and different species on the road — sure, he gets a lot of possums and squirrels and skunks, but finding a pet dog with the collar still on? *That* is a rare treat. Even rarer, and better, are those misty mornings when he finds a person on the road. Tim doesn't hunt purely through chance, of course. He drives a truck. He can make roadkill just fine.

Some of the most iconic Collectors in legend have been Ugallu, vast winged dragons who perch in high places and look down upon the world from their glittering hoards. They have also been amongst the most successful, littering the ground beneath their lairs with the corpses of would-be thieves who have fallen to their deaths. Ugallu Collectors have a tendency to gravitate towards objects with sentimental value. A pocket-watch passed down through the family or an old wedding dress can be worth more than all the gold and diamonds in the world to the one person who values it, and the Ugallu know just where to look to find such treasures. They tend to be even more obsessive than other Collectors in checking on the state of their hoards, often installing complex surveillance equipment that will let them track their possessions even when they can't be nearby.

Anya owns an orchard. She grows apples, and each trees has a ribbon tied around the top. Some of them are red, some are yellow, some are green, and most people who visit the orchard and buy her apples assume the ribbons correspond to the specific type of apple the tree bears. But that isn't it. Anya goes out into the orchard at night and checks the ribbons, reminiscing about the day each tree was planted. The ribbons don't match the apples. They remind Anya what she buried when she planted the tree. Red for something stained with blood, yellow for something stolen, green for something never touched or tasted. Anya only buries things that will nourish her trees, though.

Hunger for Prey

The Predators

"Oh, you precious little thing. Why, I could just eat you up."

Humans think that they're on top of the food chain, preying on animals that are bigger and stronger than they are. But some part of them remembers a time before they were the ultimate hunters, and knows more fearsome creatures see them nothing more than their next meal. Predators remind the world's self-declared alpha predators that when you catch one of them alone at night, they're nothing more than helpless, hairless monkeys. Some Predators are subtle, lurking and waiting in the shadows until their victims get close, while others prefer to chase their prey openly at a dead run until their victims collapse. Others still use their beauty and charm to lure victims away from the herd, all sweet songs and handsome smiles until it's too late for their prey to escape. Regardless of technique, every predatory Soul is capable of tearing a grown man

limb from limb without a second thought.

Predators have the most primal and basic of Hungers: the desire to hunt. The Hunger for Prey differs from the Hungers for Power or the Hoard in that the victim must lose something intrinsic and personal. The Beast sates its Hunger in the taking, not the keeping. To a Collector, a human's finger is a prize to be cherished and preserved, or at least caressed and savored. To a Predator, it's just food.

On the Hunt

Of all the Hungers, the Hunger for Prey is perhaps the simplest. Predators do not need complex emotional states from their victims, they don't feed through nuanced tricks or metaphors. A Predator hunts her prey by whatever means necessary, and feeds on the results of her predation.

Some Predators are lucky, their Souls can be satisfied with a sort of catch-and-release. The prey doesn't need to die, so long as the Beast can take some sign or trophy to show that she has completed her purpose as a hunter of humankind. A Predator might take a lock of her victim's hair after sneaking into his apartment while he sleeps, or simply feed off the utter terror in her victim's eyes when the Beast has him pinned to the ground with a knife to his throat. The Beast doesn't necessarily need to kill the victim, but he needs to have been able to. The victim needs to be at the Beast's mercy, but unlike the Hunger for Power, the victim doesn't need to know it.

Predators can also feed on people in more symbolic ways. A confidence artist preys on trust, stringing a victim along and taking away his money or valuables. It is even possible for a "victim" to be complicit in his own predation; a Predator does not have to take by force or guile. The Beast can take what is freely offered, though admittedly such acts don't satisfying the Soul unless some fear is present.

Every Beast's Soul is a sort of monster, but some monsters are satisfied with nothing less than fresh human blood running down their throats, or the marrow of their victim's bones ground between their teeth. The death of a victim may not be a requirement for feeding, but if a Predator's Soul can be sustained by nothing less than the first bite of a still-beating heart it becomes an unavoidable side effect of each meal. The act of hunting is still necessary, as any attempts to scavenge from someone who is already dead do nothing to feed a Predator: the Beast will be satisfied with nothing less than human prey. Such Beasts are left only with the choice of how often they satisfy their Soul, and how often they go without. The former may cost lives, but the latter creates Heroes, risking further loss and damage amongst those they hold dear.

The Soul

The Souls of Predators live up to their name, often resembling gigantic and monstrous versions of the most terrifying predatory animals. When they are freed to hunt among the nightmares of humankind, the dreams they bring always end the same way: the victim dead on the ground, the Predator feeding on the corpse. The victim might spend hours trying to run from the thing that's chasing him through the forest or he might spend the dream taking a relaxing swim until the last moments, when something from the depths reaches up and latches onto his leg mid-kick before dragging him down to her waiting maw. However it began and regardless of its length, the victim lives out his final moments of the hunt in vivid detail, feeling the piercing pain of every fang and talon that digs into his flesh. Such experiences may be nothing more than dreams, but stories

circulate among Beasts of victims with pre-existing medical conditions dying from the shock of their nightmares.

Heroes who are triggered by Predators need courage to the point of recklessness. They usually think of themselves as great and powerful hunters, tracking down Predators who are nothing more than rabid animals. A Predator's Heroes gain the strength and skill in battle to face down a Beast head-on in battle, and usually the reckless temperament to match. Their tendency to solve problems by hitting them make them among the most deadly when they decide that something or someone is getting between them and their hunt, and clever Predator might get the chance to outwit her Heroes, directing them elsewhere is almost certain to cause unwanted and unpredictable collateral damage.

The Families

Anakim Predators are towering monsters who make even the bravest humans feel puny. They are the most inclined to hunt in the open, rampaging through the world with little thought to who sees them or what damage they do while they run down their prey. An Anakim Predator's Soul might be a hulking reptilian monster like something from another age, or a towering giant who grinds the bones of men to make his bread. Such impossibly huge carnivores should find humans too small to be worthy of their attention, but eat them anyway.

Darius took his name and his hunting style from a werewolf he met once. He chases down his prey and breaks a bone — arm, leg, neck, doesn't matter, as long as he can hear the crackle. He inflicts pain and fear in his prey, and leaves behind a crippled, terrified person…or sometimes just a corpse, depending on how loudly his Soul howls.

Rare is the Eshmaki Predator who can be satisfied with anything less than the flesh and blood of her victims. Eshmaki are nightmares of stalking, killing creatures, and their Souls demand nourishment appropriate to such a visceral nature. Even among Beasts, someone who must kill so regularly just to stay alive elicits either fear or admiration. Eshmaki Predators are often fairly subtle about the hunt itself, keeping hidden until the last possible moment and then taking care to hide all possible traces of the deadly struggle at its end. This habit helps them to remain effective and alive when they themselves become hunted.

Father Landon was a priest before the Homecoming, and while he doesn't really believe anymore, the perks of being clergy were too great to pass up. He talks with other men of the cloth, tempting them to break their vows and sin, and then watching as they run to other priests to give confession. At times, he exposes their crimes, and watches as the church either protects its own or makes examples. Father Landon doesn't really care about the punishment (though his broodmate sometimes takes an interest).

Makara Predators plan out elaborate tricks and traps to make their prey come to them. This may mean physical obstacles, but just as many use more pleasant bait to get their victims out into the water. Beautiful Makara have been luring sailors to their watery graves for thousands of years with a perch on a tiny island and an alluring song, and modern Beasts know that the classic tricks are classic for a reason. If a Makara Predator's human body cannot match the true aquatic terror of her bestial form, she'll find supernatural or technological means of enhancing her abilities for the hunt. The Souls of Makara Predators often resemble aquatic creatures made monstrous: deep

sea hunters from another age brought back with extra fangs and tendrils to tear apart their drowning prey.

Brianna came to her Homecoming early. Now in middle school, she spends summers with her brood, traveling the coastlines. She visits beaches, swims out too far, and waits for some poor soul to come and try to save her. Some Predators feel on flesh and blood. Brianna feeds on altruism. She doesn't drown her would-be saviors, of course, she just dives deep and swims away, letting them either keep looking for her or swim back to land, thinking that she drowned.

Hunting with a Namtaru Predator can be rather disconcerting. They work with a strange and alien efficiency when set into a group and given a task, which only grows more unnerving when the task is a violent one. A Namtaru Predator's Hunger might require her to taste the blood from a thousand separate tiny cuts from her victims, or burrow her tongue into every internal organ one by one. Seeing such a Namtaru stalking down her prey makes it all but impossible not to see her nature as a Nightmare of Revulsion lurking underneath her outward appearance, but those who stick around after seeing such a display might find a surprisingly loyal companion underneath her inhuman behaviors.

Vanessa likes blood. Her forearms cause deep gouges, as though they had serrated blades, and anyone caught in her embrace will bleed. Vanessa doesn't necessarily drink the blood — she's been known to, but just feeling it running down her body is enough. Her favorite "bleeders" are the disinterested, the people who are aloof and disdainful of their fellow humans. In her embrace, she knows they *feel*. Everyone wins.

Ugallu Predators are patient, or as patient as a hungry Beast can ever be. They are long-term planners when they hunt, likely to have their next meal picked out long before they actually feel the urge to feed again. Once an Ugallu Predator has found a target, he can plan out a safe and efficient hunt that will be easy to implement whenever it becomes required. Their Souls are often slower, slinking creatures that perch in wait for days on end, watching and waiting until their Hunger strikes them. When they do descend on silent wings, the results of their predation are swift, brutal, and efficient.

John Dawson owns the big, big house in the south end of town. The house has many rooms, and a high, slanted roof. John steals people, takes them away to his house, and keeps them there long enough for their families to grow desperate. He waits until someone accuses someone else, until the dirty laundry comes out and the grief and fear breaks someone…and then he releases his prisoner, hungry but unharmed. Most families repair themselves, and John prides himself on being the one to help them clear the air.

Hunger for Punishment

The Nemeses

"I know what you've done, and now it's time for you to pay."

Every culture has its boogeymen. Make one mistake, and the monsters will come to get you. Children understand this law instinctively, hiding under the blankets to keep themselves safe. Adults forget their instincts as they grow older, assuming they can get away with infractions so long as no one is watching, but one glimpse of the monsters in the dark soon makes them wish

they had remembered to hide. Nemeses feed by punishing the guilty, or those they perceive to be guilty. They might tear someone to pieces right after the act, or they might wait for years before finally revealing what they know and making their victim pay. The Nemeses keep the guilty conscious of humankind on edge, and keep the transgressors looking over their shoulders even when they should know, rationally, that they'll never get caught.

Some Nemeses might call themselves forces of justice, but the real drive behind their Hunger is far darker than that. A Nemesis does not seek to balance the scales of right and wrong. Her Hunger is for Punishment alone: hunting down the guilty and making them suffer pain and anguish far beyond measure for their crimes.

On the Hunt

To satisfy her Hunger, a Nemesis must first pick a suitable target: someone who has broken the particular rule or rules set out by her Soul's demanding nature. The required infractions vary wildly from Beast to Beast: one Nemeses might hunt down only those who have willfully murdered a member of their own family, while another might be content to feed from anyone who has ever spoken a lie. Whatever her rules are, the Nemesis must be reasonably convinced that her target has broken them, though exactly how much evidence this requires is entirely up to the Beast herself.

Once a victim has been chosen, the Beast's Hunger is satisfied once she punishes him for the infraction. Like the rules themselves, exactly how this happens can vary from Beast to Beast, and even from feeding to feeding. It is, however, always violent, cruel, and painful to the victim. Most Nemeses aim for some form of physical torture, cornering a target and beating them unconscious is one of the quickest ways for a Nemesis to feed. Others choose to capture their victims and lock them away in solitary confinement, checking back weeks or months later to satisfy their Hunger when they know the victim has been thoroughly punished by the imprisonment. A particularly thoughtful Nemesis might plan out an elaborate form of psychological torture, working away at his victim day after day until the target snaps and breaks down. Whatever the exact method used, the victim must be made aware of exactly what rule he broke, and know that his infraction is why such awful things are happening to him. Punishment simply isn't satisfying to a Nemesis if the victim isn't aware that they have earned their pain.

A Nemesis is not required to hunt down everyone whom she knows has broken her rules, but letting someone go when it's clear that he has committed an infraction against her Soul's laws is an incredibly uncomfortable experience. Nemeses describe it as an itch they can't scratch in the deepest parts of their brain, or nails running down a chalkboard every time they glance in their could-be victim's direction. Even if the part of her that is nearly human can understand that her Hunger isn't always fair or practical, her Soul craves vengeance against all transgressors. Balancing the need to feed with the need to suppress such urges can be a challenge for even the calmest Nemesis, especially when the people violating her laws are her friends. Nemeses do not apply their laws directly to fellow Beasts and other supernatural creatures, as monsters get far more leeway when transgressing against rules made for humankind, but that doesn't stop them from feeling a certain irritation when an ally or broodmate does just the sort of thing the Nemesis hates most.

The Soul

Many Nemeses Souls have animal-like bodies with human heads, or human bodies with strange and monstrous limbs or faces. Something about the Hunger for Punishment seems to lend itself to monsters who look like twisted mirrors of their human victims. When such Souls escape to hunt through the dreamscape, they become monstrous bogeymen who seek to terrify and punish rule-breakers in their sleep. A Nemesis' Soul doesn't need to seek out proof: she reads the guilt and terror deep in the minds of her victims and uses what she sees as evidence of their wrongdoing.

Fighting a Nemesis can be difficult if the would-be warrior is still struggling with his own guilt, so Heroes who are created by Nemeses become convinced that they can do no wrong. Such Heroes begin to think of themselves as saints or other holy figures, set apart from the rest of humanity by their complete purity. Heroes triggered by Nemeses are the most adept at painting Beasts in their most negative light, able to place Anathema even before a conflict begins through the power of their voices alone.

The Families

Anakim Nemeses are particularly blunt when satisfying their Hunger. They punish acts of violence with more violence, targeting murderers or physical abusers with their fists and claws. The laws they punish are simple and straightforward — easy to identify, easy to break. Their Souls are often highly exaggerated human-like creatures, literal giants that can best even the strongest and fiercest transgressors.

Ogre got his nickname wrestling in high school. The funny thing is that he's met real ogres since then, creatures who were forced to be brutes and workhorses in the far-off Faerie realms. He's made friends with several such changelings — and he's the one they call in when some breaks an oath. Ogre can't stand betrayal. If you want to fight, kill, maim, that's fine, he thinks, but don't *say* you have someone's back and the stab it. And then Ogre cracks his knuckles and everyone steps back, because they know he's about to hit something.

Eshmaki Nemeses are known for drawing out their acts of punishment, reveling in their target's terror as he realizes with dawning horror just exactly what's happening. They love to find long-forgotten transgressions, springing dark secrets from a victim's past upon him just when he thinks his crimes have been completely forgotten by the world. The victim may never actually see the monster that's come to get him, and the state of perpetual terror at not knowing what's out there is just one part of the Eshmaki's punishment. Their Souls are also rarely seen, noticed only as a whisper from the shadows that knows exactly what you did.

Jess' brood doesn't know much about zir. They don't know zir real name or zir assigned gender, and Jess isn't interested in sharing. Jess also doesn't participate in group hunts — it's not personal, Jess just takes hunting seriously and prefers to do it alone. Ze finds the people who have committed crimes that went unreported — date rape, domestic violence, child abuse, the really unpleasant stuff. Those are the people Jess punishes, and ze doesn't linger over the act.

Though their forms vary, the rules of a Makara Nemesis' Soul are often centered around the protection of a particular place or type of environment. They are the Beasts who punish sailors for killing an albatross at sea, or for daring to transgress upon a particular hidden cove. This sort of requirement makes it nearly impossible for such a Beast to feed if she doesn't have access to

the environment her Soul needs to protect, making things difficult for a Makara Nemesis who wishes to travel far away from her charge. Such Beasts usually seek out the companionship of broodmates who can help them satiate their Hunger in other ways.

Patrick and Ahmed are a Makara Collector and a Makara Nemesis, respectively, who fell in love. Patrick placed his treasures at the bottom of Ahmed's lake, and Ahmed resolved to punish all those who would dare to steal his lover's hoard. People come to the lake to almost every week, looking to dive down and take the "abandoned treasure." Of course, Patrick makes sure to spread the rumors about the treasure. That way people come looking, and that way his lover gets to punish them.

The Namtaru find themselves particularly suited to the Hunger for Punishment, being themselves the objects of some of humanity's most cruel hatred. They tend to find themselves upholding laws with some deep personal importance to the Beast: a Namtaru Nemesis once bullied for her looks strikes out against people who ridicule others, a Namtaru who lost a loved one to violence punishes people who'd do the same to others.

Angela went to law school to represent the people who wouldn't otherwise have representation. She represents the victims of bullies, the victims of the beautiful, the rich, the popular, the charming, the privileged. She doesn't always win, of course — she has a small practice, and she's just as overworked as any other attorney. But she's got a superlative method of negotiation, and it involves putting the fear of God (or at least a billion little spiders) into opposing counsel.

Ugallu Nemeses are well suited to punishing the most secret and hidden of crimes. Other Beasts might not be able to punish infractions against rules that are difficult to prove broken: acting hypocritically, willfully deceiving a romantic partner, falsely professing belief in a religion, or other such crimes of thought rather than action. Ugallu thrive on such laws, finding ways to track down victims who think themselves safe from all recourse. They often enjoy leaving hints for days or weeks before they finally strike to let their victims know that they know, especially since the reaction to such an accusation often provides suitable evidence all on its own. Their Souls are best known for their piercing looks as they stand guard from on high, silently judging all who pass below them as unworthy.

Benjamin knows that Father Landon lures clergy into breaking their vows, but he sees no entrapment. If they promise something, they must keep their promises, forever. If they wish to break the vows, they must renounce the church. Benjamin punishes the offenders, taking them high up to the bell tower and offering them a choice — confess, renounce, or try to fly to Heaven. He's seen priests take all three options, but it's all the same to Benjamin.

Hunger for Ruin

The Ravagers

"You ever seen a hurricane, all up close and personal? Well, you're about to."

Some monsters are remembered not as creatures, but as natural disasters. A Beast emerges out of nothing to topple whole mountains and destroy grand palaces with one sweep of its billowing wings, only to disappear as quickly as it emerged and leave nothing but rubble where a great kingdom stood mere hours before. Those few who survive find themselves new homes in the

cities nearby, but they lie awake for years to come when thinking of that horrible night. The monster was never killed, after all, and they have no way of knowing when it might choose to strike again.

Beasts face a lifetime of being hunted and loathed as the stuff of nightmares, sometimes it can feel like the whole world is out to get them. The Ravagers hunger for revenge against their surroundings, feeding off destruction itself and the fear it causes in all who view their rampage. They are random acts of violence made flesh, as unpredictable and deadly as any earthquake or hurricane. The Hunger for Ruin is the hunger for destroying the fragile illusion of stability that humanity builds for itself, leaving only hopelessness and fear in the wake of their rampage.

On the Hunt

A Ravager must destroy to feed, and he must destroy something that others value. It's not exactly the act of violence that he feeds from, it's the change it causes in the humans that notice. When someone witnesses the destruction caused by a Ravager, or its results, they are suddenly aware of how fragile they are and start to wonder just exactly what will be destroyed next. That state of uncertainty and fear is what satiates a Ravager, leaving those in the wake of his rampage wondering what could have caused so much damage and when it might be back.

Ravagers can unleash their fury in any number of directions, and most Souls who Hunger for Ruin aren't particularly picky about their meals. A Ravager might burn down a state-of-the-art nightclub one day and take a sledgehammer to the priceless antiques at an auction house the next without his Soul becoming upset by the disruption. Many actually prefer the chaos caused by such wildly varied hunts, and plan their meals such that no one will ever know where they'll strike next. The easiest way for a Ravager to ensure his desired reaction is to target some symbol of security. Destroying a home almost invariably leave its inhabitants shaken and lost, but leaving gashes in the brick walls outside of a police station might have the same effect over a whole community of people. The Ravager needn't target a structure, either. Smashing a woman's laptop might leave her feeling just as exposed as destroying her house, and setting fires in public areas quickly creates the necessary state of panic and confusion.

Ravagers rarely target people; Beasts who kill to feed normally Hunger for Prey, not Ruin. A Ravager who kills a person doesn't gain any sustenance from the murder itself, but from the effect it has on the surrounding community. As such, the death of a mayor or politician might cause sufficient Ruin, as might the death of a community organizer or the patriarch of a large family.

Whatever the target, the Ravager does not need to be seen on his rampage, or even credited for the act, so long as the required effect is achieved. Some targets may mistake the acts of a monster for the acts of nature or random chance, at least until it starts happening over and over again. Even a subtle Ravager usually finds it difficult to hide in one place for any length of time, as it's hard to commit the necessary large-scale destruction without someone eventually noticing and trying to track down the perpetrator. Many find they need to move on long before that, however, as communities develop a certain tolerance to their acts over time. A human can only live through so many disasters before the sheer terror renders her numb and unable to process further horrors without some massive escalation of scale. Such jaded prey are of little use to the Ravagers until they recover enough to be terrified anew.

The Soul

The Souls of Ravagers are larger than life, the better to cut a path of destruction across the landscape of the Primordial Dream. When unleashed, a Ravager's Soul rampages into the nightmares of his victim's sleeping mind, destroying everything he can find and watching as his victim runs in abject terror. Such Souls are anything but subtle, even if their human selves are capable of some degree of restraint in their feeding. The Lair of a Ravager is usually a barren wasteland, devoid of anything the monster is strong enough to take to pieces.

Heroes who are triggered by Ravagers need to be equipped to lose everything they once valued without flinching. They become hardened and heartless, unable or unwilling to attribute any worth to anything but their quest for revenge. Sometimes the Heroes triggered by Ravagers express some understanding that their own acts of "heroism" are themselves quite monstrous, as the Hero loses even the ability to value even his own worth. That does not make such Heroes any less dedicated to their mission, as they still invariably believe the Beasts they hunt are much, much worse. Those Heroes who believe themselves to be beyond salvation are often the most dangerous to bystanders, as such Heroes are the most likely to draw out their Bestial prey by targeting their allies or loved ones first with violence or torture. Unfortunately, Ravager Heroes are also unusually difficult to kill.

The Families

Even among other Ravagers, who don't tend towards being discrete, Anakim Ravagers are the sort who smash first and ask questions later. Their rampages don't lend themselves well to blending in with a mortal community, so most become wanderers who travel from town to town, leaving a wake of destruction in their path. Such Souls tend to be as subtle as their fists, screaming danger with every horn and claw and fang. Whether they bring the world to ruin with gouts of flame, scything mandibles, or an array of over-sized blunt weaponry, an Anakim Ravager's victims know exactly how he intends to tear them apart.

Grace watches with amusement as people take care of their cars with a tenderness they never show to people. Few things provide so much sustenance with so little work as damaging an expensive car. When Grace really feels the need to treat herself, she turns a car upside down, and watches as the owner goes crazy trying to figure out how it happened.

Eshmaki Ravagers pass unseen into the most guarded of places, then leave the signs of their intrusion to be found long after they have vanished again. They are among the most precise of Ravagers, being very particular about the nature and extent of the ruin they cause. Eshmaki Ravagers are particularly adept at hunting down humans, wounding one member of the herd to panic the rest.

Lester loves the sound of glass breaking. Human beings forget how flimsy windows are — they are enough to keep out the rain, yes, but not enough to keep out bricks, branches, or a determined intruder. Lester smashes the windows in the homes of the rich in the dead of night, and watches the security come running. Sometimes he writes his message on a wall or a mirror: YOU ARE NOT SAFE.

The aftermath of a Makara Ravager's feeding is often mistaken for damage done by the destructive power of nature, as they are most inclined to use it to their advantage in the hunt for

sustenance. This might involve the use of her own supernatural powers, or a Makara might simply take advantage of how delicate humankind's defenses against natural disasters can be, using just a little effort to ensure the worst happens at just the right time. A Makara Ravager's Soul might be mistaken for a natural disaster at first glance, a living whirlpool that can cling to ships or a typhoon that twists and forms into some slithering creature.

Naia tries to keep herself under control. She really does. She breaks things when she's hungry, calling up enough of a storm to do some damage, and watching people feel helpless in the face of nature. But when her Soul truly hungers, she relinquishes all control and lets her Lair pour into the world, blowing down walls and flooding buildings. And then she floats on her back, and happily watches the debris drift by.

Namtaru Ravagers do not so much destroy as they pollute. Their Souls are pestilent monsters that poison the air and cover everything they pass in vile sludge, or swarms of insects and other vermin. Their human selves create the same sort of ruin, infecting the world around them and feeding as people discover that something once clean and safe has become dangerous to even approach. Their ruin is insidious, because it can resurface long after people think they've repaired what was lost. Namtaru Ravagers don't merely destroy whole forests or fields, they turn them to salt that poisons the earth for decades to come.

Amon finds fungus fascinating. He knows that certain types of fungus turn insects into zombie slaves, and other types can drive people from their houses in fear of their health. The fungus that grows in his Lair, and that festers in the eyes and mouth of his Soul, could overtake and reclaim a city in days if he ever let it out. He wouldn't — he has friends who run as wolves, and they have to live here, too. But he has a deal with them. If their enemies ever attempt to take territory, they'll establish a spiritual quarantine zone, and Amon will let his fungus spread.

Ugallu Ravagers drop from the skies like smart bombs, flattening structures and destroying their targets. Their Ruin is precise, their aim true. They destroy only what they need to in order to feed. Of course, when a more widespread approach is necessary, they are capable of flying through a city like the Angel of Death, laying waste to whatever is unfortunate enough to be in their path.

Diana is an assassin. She chooses her targets based on two factors. One is how much someone will pay to see the target die — Diana is a woman of expensive tastes, and her lifestyle requires money. The other is how many people will mourn (or celebrate!) her target's death. A sufficiently high-profile target, or an appropriately large deposit to her Cayman Islands account, earns a single shot from her rifle. Unless, of course, she feels like a more hands-on approach that night.

Nightmares

“The fuck are you looking at, dipshit?” Kyle snarled, standing up and walking up with his hands out in a macho pose he’d probably seen in a dozen tough guy movies.

Ben stopped up short, hands hooked around his backpack straps, trying to hide the smile on his face, maybe even put on a little fear. That’s what they’d want to see, after all, and that just made what was coming even sweeter. There were three of them, Kyle and two of his admirers, kids you could usually catch smoking at the edge of the parking lot before school. He’d heard they liked to come out here and sneak some booze, maybe blaze a little bit, but the thin boy with frightened eyes behind them told a different story.

Good. He’d been hoping for something worse than a little weed.

“Hey guys, I just wanted to let you know — you know what? Fuck it.” Ben normally drew out a feeding, savoring the indulgence, but the monster was growling loudly and he couldn’t be bothered. Instead he drew on the cold depths within, and looked at the two boys behind Kyle with eyes that had seen what lived in the lightless dark. “Get the fuck out of here.”

All the color drained from the boys faces as they scrambled away from Ben, tripping over bags and nearly pitching headfirst off the loading dock in their haste to get away. Kyle looked around, disbelieving, as his muscle slammed the door shut behind them with such force the plexiglass in the panel rattled. “What the fuck—”

Ben grabbed hold of Kyle’s arm and the older boy threw a wild haymaker with his free hand. It bounced off Ben’s temple without so much as moving his head and he had a moment to savor Kyle’s confusion turning to panic before he squeezed the older boy’s wrist. Bone groaned under the pressure and Kyle shrieked, falling to his knees.

“This is what being an asshole gets you,” Ben said casually, still squeezing. His Soul savored the punishment, drinking it in, and for the first time in days Ben’s head cleared. He enjoyed it so much he forgot Kyle was still there until the boy began to blubber. Ben let go of his wrist like he was tossing a piece of garbage. “Now fuck off.”

Kyle yelped and scurried backward, clutching his wrist, where a bright crop of unusual bruises were already blooming. He looked at his bag and back at Ben, thought better of it and left it behind, hurrying after his friends.

“Holy shit,” the younger boy said when they were alone. He looked Ben over, eyes still frightened. “How did you do that?”

Ben shrugged. “People don’t fuck with you if you don’t let them.”

“Well, thanks.” The boy smiled weakly. “They were gonna fuck me up. Fourth time this month.” He pulled down the collar of his shirt to reveal yellowing traces of old bruises. “And all I did was scratch the big guy’s car by accident.”

“Oh really?” Ben felt his Soul stir. Maybe he could another meal of Kyle sooner than he thought. He put his arm across the other boy’s shoulders, barely registering the flinch. “Tell me about it. Maybe there’s something I can do.”

Chapter Two: Waking Nightmares

“There is not a monster dreamt that hasn't walked once within the soul of a man.”

—C. Robert Cargill, Dreams and Shadows

In the light of reason, humans think they killed the monsters. The real ones, that is. The wolf needs their help just to survive. The only lions and tigers are in zoos. Dinosaur bones are strung up like trophies in natural history museums.

Secure in his fortress, Man tells himself he has nothing to fear.

At night, though, people sweat through the old familiar nightmares. The modern man is plunged back into the primordial dark and hounded by a predator from which he cannot escape. *It* is back, *it* is hungry, and civilization avails him nothing. He scurries through abandoned streets and primeval forests like a rat fleeing a cat.

When they meet, the fiend has a human face. A friend, a coworker, a family member, but with no humanity in his eyes, and tension in his muscles like a predator coiled to strike.

Once in a while, it looks like *him*. He has been running from his true self.

Flesh & Blood

They say children are cruel. So is everyone else.

Charlotte sits in the back of class, hunched over a desk two sizes too small. The teacher explained she has a genetic disorder. She is taller than everyone, boys included, wearing ill-fitting clothes over limbs that seem grotesquely elongated.

The teacher’s words are hollow. People snigger behind her back

Things are worse at home. Every afternoon, she returns to a ramshackle house with a father who belittles her. She cringes while he rants and raves and throws bottles at her. It doesn’t sting as much as it used to, but the words — the words still hurt.

“It’s your mother’s goddamn fault!” he screams, and she is not sure if he means her being a freak or being alive. To her, there’s no difference.

Every night she goes to bed bruised and brimming with hate. She has nothing to look forward to but doing it all again.

A Beast is an atavistic throwback, a human being with the soul of a mythic monster, itself a manifestation of a fundamental fear: of the unclean and unknown, of the predator lurking in the shadows, and of forces beyond human reckoning.

Beasts are born, not made, and reared in a world that instinctively fears them. It does not matter if she is rich or poor, hideous or lovely, gay or straight or somewhere in between. People look askance at what they know is *not human* even though, objectively speaking, they have no reason to fear. Not at first.

Even as children, Beasts feel like outsiders. A Makara dreams of the deep ocean where she sleeps in solitude, far from the demands of her needling peers. An Ugallu’s eyes stray to a sky forever out of reach. At night, an Eshmaki runs on all fours through a darkened forest, only to wake up once again in a stifling human world.

Even a Beast's body betrays her. She knows this lump of flesh is *not* her. She is a prisoner of her own skin and blood.

No one wants to be a freak. No one wants to be alone. Humans are wired to be social animals. Being shut out of people's lives — let alone hated — cuts like a physical wound and leaves scars that last a lifetime.

Growing up estranged or even bullied, the Beast has every reason to hate her tormentors, but does that make the human race her enemy? The Hero is, but then the Hero is trying to kill her. What about her family? That one teacher who spoke up for her? The boy next door who had a crush on her even though she was "weird?"

A Beast is born human and holds onto that against all odds. She lives on the knife-edge between Hunger and humanity, trying to protect her loved ones and herself — from herself. The alternative is to be consumed by Hunger, to become the mindless monster the Hero believes her to be, and that way lies devolution and death.

Homecoming

It is the same dream, always and forever, but it feels different this time.

The city is in ruins. Its destroyers stride among the flames, casting weird, leaping shadows upon the rubble. Charlotte is the last one. No one else is left.

In a way, that is a relief.

She scurries in search of hiding places. Instinct tells her, go deeper. Always deeper where they cannot follow.

One of her tormentors stands by an unfinished building, which she recognizes as the construction site where her father works. It stands between her and the safety of darkness. Steeling herself, she creeps up behind it and picks up rebar.

The Thing turns — too late. The whistle and crack remind her of baseball. The Thing falls screaming but not yet dead. Fear becomes exultation as she caves in its skull. Its brains spread on the ground like oatmeal, and her nostrils flare at the coppery stench of blood.

She realizes she likes *it.*

She lifts her head, blinking at the sunshine, and sees people frozen and staring at her aghast. Her father lies dead at her feet.

Defiance, horror, and remorse war within her. One of them must win if she is going to stay sane.

Slowly, she smiles and stands up straight for the first time.

No blood or DNA test can tell the difference between a Beast and her human kin. She *looks* like them, but a living nightmare fills the gap where her humanity should be. At night, she wanders through the periphery of that nightmare, catching glimpses of her primordial Soul. Her *true* self.

A Beast is the first victim of her own nightmare. She is marked — defined even — by the dream that haunted her entire life. Therein is the key to her true nature.

• Charlotte flees mechanized colossi, who bellow and pursue her through the city center, moving faster than she can believe. Where is safe when they can reach inside of buildings — or tear them down?

• Alina wakes to screams and the smell of smoke. Cut off from her family, she tumbles out of the window and sees the forest engulfed in fire. The image that sticks with her is of deer fleeing through the streets ahead of the blaze.

• A beautiful woman beguiles Alain into the water. Leathery coils tighten around him and barbed hooks tear his flesh as she pulls him beneath the surface, and the dream implodes in a foam of blood and aborted screams.

• Jude is in a ruined, life-sized dollhouse with a forbidden room at the top. Just looking inside means death, but he goes anyway. A little girl with a distended abdomen and a spider's body nests over an old cradle. Her jaws unhinge as she descends to greet him.

• Rick is climbing, his favorite hobby, when the wingspan of something huge blots out the sun. Torn from the mountain by enormous talons, he flails helplessly through the air with the wind roaring in his ears. It chose this for him. It wonders if this little man can fly.

The Beast resists for years, but the shape of her Soul comes ever closer until the nightmare bleeds into the waking world. She is never *not* in that place where the air reeks of charnel scent and the floor is scattered with human bones.

Her waning hours of humanity are consumed by the same terror she will soon inflict on others. Impelled by the first pangs of Hunger, she presses through horror that is by now almost commonplace to reach the monster's Lair.

The moment she and her animalistic Soul come face to face is a baptism of sorts. To the Soul, her human self is just another victim; one it has already tormented for years. It rears up and bellows a challenge, shuddering the walls of its Lair. But it is time to stop running. It is time to come home.

Only when she is no longer afraid can she be whole. Thrown into the monster's jaws one last time, the Beast triumphs over her fear by *becoming* it. She steps into the monster's role and takes control for the first time.

This epiphany is her Homecoming, a word rich with bittersweet connotations. For the first time, the Beast knows what she is and where she came from. She is not a defective human being. She is not insane. She is a creature of legend.

The Beast's eyes snap open. She and the nightmare are one.

The Mythic Self

A Beast's Soul is a nightmare cloaked in legend, a horror in the form of a mythological monster. Mankind has projected its fears onto these forms for generations.

Most Souls are ancient. Their roots lie in the earliest epoch of human history, when these hairless, defenseless apes lived in terror of predators, uncaring elements, and plagues for which they had no names. Over time they become encrusted in myth and legend; the natural human response to a recurring nightmare in their midst.

Rarely, a Beast inherits a strong Soul with a name and sense of history, and she awakens with a mythic identity overlaid upon her human self. She is not just Ugallu. She is Ashalla, the Idiptu wind-fiend who unleashed hell on ancient Babylon, and she feels compelled to walk among its ruins even though she is also Ashya Dochev from Kazan, Russia.

Not every Beast has a mythic antecedent. Old fears evolve and new ones are born, from SARS outbreaks to plague cannibals to a devastated greenhouse world. Ironically, people feel just as helpless against these modern self-inflicted horrors. They fester in the collective unconscious, becoming fodder for new iterations of the Families. Beasts are born of humanity, and humanity has no end of reasons to fear.

The Beast looks at the world through her Soul's eyes. To others, an Eshmaki is just a sleek young woman with sun-darkened skin and the kind of lean muscle that does not come from a gym. Her true self may be a serpentine dragon, but she is confined by the physical reality of her human self, at least in the waking world.

Aspects of her Lair bleed into the environment as she concentrates. Heat shimmer fills the air. The sky grows sullen with the glow of distant fires and ash blows on the wind like snow. Shifting her perceptions only takes a modicum of effort, but seeing truly is harder when Hunger gnaws at her.

The Beast can draw upon her Soul and aspects of her Lair — its heat, its darkness — to perform supernatural feats in the waking world known as Atavisms. These become more potent in locations that echo it in some way. So, too, can she unleash Nightmares on those around her, consciously infecting them with her fear.

The Beast and her Soul are one, two aspects of the same being, but their existence is fraught with tension. If her conscious self is the Ego then her Soul is undoubtedly the Id. Its urges are blunt and instinctual: Hunt. Kill. Feed. Survive.

Like the Id, the Soul cannot be reasoned or bargained with, only sated, and she *must* do so if she hopes to keep peace between them.

Unfortunately, what the Soul demands may be abhorrent. Morality is irrelevant to its single-minded pursuit of its defining Hunger. The Predator must hunt. The Collector must take. The Tyrant must rule. These are not cravings. They are categorical imperatives.

Embracing her Hunger outright means surrendering her humanity and hence the only thing keeping her Soul in check. Shutting herself away or turning her back on people ends the same way, undoing the achievement of her Homecoming. The Soul seizes her and drags her screaming back into the nightmare.

A Beast must be true to both sides of herself. Human and monster, Life and Legend. Her life's course is determined by how she answers this riddle.

Family

The date isn't going well. It's going fine, which is the opposite of how Rick wanted it to go. Alessandro is completely Rick's type — strong arms, blue eyes, thick hair — but he seems tentative. Rick can't quite stop seeing him as…well, prey. They haven't really found anything to talk about.

"What do you dream about?" Alessandro's question is weird, but the what the hell.

"Flying," says Rick. "Mostly."

"Like a bird?" Alessandro's blue eyes are fixed on Rick, and Rick notices he isn't blinking.

"Like a hawk." Rick licks his lips.

“And you dive.”

“Yeah.”

“And then you catch—“

“Whatever I’m diving at. Yeah.”

They stare at each other for a minute longer. “I have that dream, too,” whispers Alessandro.

Every Beast claims descent from the mythological Mother of Monsters, the ur-Beast who discovered the Primordial Pathways connecting humanity to the soul of the world. She walked among the inchoate nightmares she found there and opened the floodgates, unleashing her Children upon an unsuspecting world.

Each Family embodies an iconic fear from the collective unconscious, with individual Beasts as variations on the theme. The first born squabbled as they struggled to feed insatiable Hungers. Spreading their nightmares far and wide, they gave rise to legends about great monsters: dragons, megalodons, giants, and many more without names.

The relationship between myth and monster is symbiotic. Humans believe naming something gives them power over it — control — but ancient Beasts seized upon the names that were given to them in order to tighten their grip on the mortal psyche. In exchange, they adopted the forms bestowed on them.

A Beast is born into his Family just like any other. It is essential to his identity from the moment he embraces his Soul and feels the gnawing of his Hunger. He feels the pull of his kin. He hears the echo of their nightmares and is compelled to seek them out. They are not just familiar. They are of the same flesh, the same indelible essence.

Family is more than just lineage. It is a shared experience. Even before the Homecoming, a Beast’s Soul colors his perceptions and bleeds over into the world at large, influencing people’s attitudes toward him. Nightmares are another common denominator. Swapping stories, Beasts’ eyes light up when they realize they had the same dreams growing up. The particulars differ but the essence is always the same.

Of course, Family relations are not always cozy. Familiarity breeds contempt as much as intimacy, and interactions between sibling Beasts are fraught with rivalry. Still, when the enemy is at the gates, who else can you trust but Family?

Anakim

Giants once ruled the world, from the Greek Titans to the gargantuan Ymir of Norse mythology. Time and time again, they were overthrown, slaughtered, and cast into the pit. They always survive. Smiling grimly to themselves, they gnaw on old bones and wait in the darkness for the age when they shall rise again.

People still dread the coming of Giants, as well they should. Not only are they bigger and stronger but relentless as well. They are the nightmare of hopeless struggle against unstoppable forces and unbeatable foes. They remind people how feeble they really are: small and fragile, their bones snapping like twigs as they are trampled underfoot.

Anakim are born of rage and deprivation. Petty people — *little* people — held them back their entire lives. They endured poverty while the rich cavorted on TV. Bullies beat them down,

emotionally if not physically. Gluttons for punishment, Giants always defied their abusers by rising again.

The Anakim vows he will never be powerless again. He flexes his muscles and forces the world to make sense on *his* terms. Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a "gentle giant." People get hurt around him constantly. Always accidentally, he tells himself; so why does his family cringe every time he raises his voice?

Eshmaki

Humans are prey and the weakest members of the animal kingdom. People pride themselves on their technology, thinking it gives them the edge, but a million years of evolution have produced creatures that shatter vertebrae with their jaws as effortlessly as opening a soda can. What are humans against that?

For thousands of years, people lived in scattered tribes of nomadic hunter-gatherers, and they were in constant fear of being eaten by predators. Safety was fleeting. Death and destruction were the natural order of things.

Is the modern world so different? Death still comes suddenly and violently, at the hands of strangers now instead of animals, and people shut themselves away from the predators in their midst. To a Hunter, the city is just another stalking ground, and he thrives as either a lone predator or part of a pack.

The Eshmaki is a wolf in sheep's clothing. He sees the people around him as victims in waiting; a cud-chewing herd waiting for someone to save them — or for their comeuppance. Tearing down the world is the only way to make it better. Either way, his is an often solitary existence. People instinctively shun those who walk arm-in-arm with death and destruction.

Makara

Earth is an ocean world. Humans scrape by on but a fraction of its surface while lost continents and alien wonders lurk below, and every ancient culture recognized the primacy of water as the bringer and sustained of life. Technology has recently permitted access, of a limited sort, to the lightless, inhospitable ocean depths, but we still prefer to send machines in our place. Everybody knows: there be monsters.

Every seafaring culture has recorded encounters with monsters, from mammoth sharks to ichthyosaurs to even stranger creatures, and the ocean's hostile and mysterious nature gives these legends staying power. Until the Space Age, the sea was the most dangerous place humans could go. The Leviathans are the lords of the deep and nightmares of the unknown, and people *will* die if they trespass in their domain.

Black eyes and a shark smile are the Makara's hallmarks. No one knows her well, and her heart is packed with secrets. Occasionally, she lures someone into her embrace, crushing and wresting from them what she craves, whether it is secrets, sex, or simple flesh and blood. She glides silently through the world of men the rest of the time, ever restless, ever searching, and leaving disquiet tinged with fascination in her wake.

Mystically minded, the Leviathan feels a deeper connection than most with the Mother of Monsters and strives to learn her secrets. She is patient, though. Water is relentless. It erodes mountains, carves canyons, and washes away cities. The ceaseless work of civilization is holding it at bay, but in the end, water *always* wins.

Namtaru

Navajo legend tells of the Eye Killers, twins abandoned to die in the wilderness by their mother. They grew into beasts with owl heads, serpentine bodies, and rending bear-like claws. They were so terrifying they could kill with a glance. Shamans tried and failed to exorcize them, but the Eye Killers slew them en masse. Finally, a man named Monster Slayer blinded them long enough to bludgeon them to death with his club.

Medusa's visage was equally deadly in Greek mythology, but she was a beautiful maiden before Poseidon raped her and Athena "blessed" her with a form so hideous it would not happen again. But people forgot. She became just another monster and Athena's fickle affection a curse. Eventually, Perseus snuck into her sanctuary and murdered her in her sleep, all so he could use her for his own selfish ends.

Gorgons take the cruel lesson of these stories to heart. If you are different, unclean, or unwanted, you will be cast out. You will be reviled, feared, and treated as subhuman. They know because they, too, have been untouchables, forced to live apart or in hiding: outsiders, freaks, and nonconformists.

Normal doesn't exist, though, and beauty itself is a lie. The Namtaru knows that now. People scrub themselves raw, paint their faces, and douse themselves in perfume to hide from the knowledge that everyone dies and everything rots. Now the Gorgon revels in the grotesque. If only others could see it, too. She will open their eyes, and if that means bringing the pretty people down to her level, so be it.

Ugallu

The sky is a jungle all its own. Raptors are shrewd predators. They watch and wait until the prey is vulnerable and then snatch them from above. Some kill quickly, breaking the creature's neck or piercing the heart with their talons. Others, like the golden eagle, carry the victim aloft and let it fall, dashing them on the rocks below. Either way, their prey lives in constant fear of an invisible enemy who can strike at any time.

Killing is simple, though, and Raptors are nothing if not calculating predators —— and easily bored. A person can fall in many ways, from betrayal to destitution to loss of faith, and Ugallu enjoy acquainting their victims with each and every one of them. The loftier the victim, the more they have to lose, and the longer the game can go on. Oftentimes, the Raptor insinuates himself into their lives so he can enjoy it up close and personal.

Ugallu were often "big picture" types whose vision rarely exceeded the needs of the moment. As drifters and charmers, with their heads in the clouds, they were likable even though no one could get close to them. Some struck gold in the business world where tactical acumen and a reptilian lack of empathy were assets, not liabilities.

An Ugallu is always ambitious. The world is his canvas, and outside a chosen few, other people are just distractions, playthings, and means to an end; insignificant in the grand scheme of things. Direct confrontation is not his style, though. If someone gets in his way, he whittles them away from afar and savors their ultimate downfall.

Extended Family

The dead girl is a good listener. She scribbles in her book, swiping absentmindedly at her hair, and lets Rick spill his guts. She never touches her coffee.

She looks up when he finishes. His knuckles are white on the table. He forces himself to relax, his talons digging into the Formica surface. He takes his own coffee with what looks like a human hand.

"You don't believe me, do you?"

"I believe everything." Alice gives him a crooked smile, showing the edges of sharp teeth. She covers it as the waitress passes. "I want to help you. Believe me, I know the importance of family. But you have to do something for me first."

"What?"

"More." She taps her pen on the paper. "I need more. I need everything."

Kinship extends beyond the Families to their cousins, the other supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness. An Eshmaki in search of kin sometimes turns up a pack of werewolves or a coterie of Gangrel vampires instead, and he has a lot of explaining to do.

Beasts believe some of the Mother's Children turned their backs on their brethren and went their separate ways in ancient times, whether because they were driven off by in-fighting or seeking dominions of their own.

Father Wolf was one of these; he ventured across the Gauntlet and into the Shadow Realm, where he sired a line of half-spirit werewolves. Others, like the first inhuman vampires, followed humans to the places of the dead and endeavored to make others like themselves. The monstrous precursors of the Gentry probed even more exotic realms; some can still be found, inbred and degenerate, in the Hedge today.

Centuries if not millennia have passed, but Kinship cannot be denied. Beasts have many ways to aid their cousins and bring them back into the fold: helping feed their Hungers, alien though they may be, augmenting their supernatural abilities, and even teaching them how to walk the Primordial Pathways again. If their bond is strong enough, Beasts can even bring them into their Lairs.

Beasts put their cousins in perspective as Family members or entire lost lineages, but this understanding does not cut both ways. Ironically, other supernatural beings are likely to believe every Beast is unique. One werewolf is much like another. Not so Ugallu. What do a roc, a wyvern, and a storm-demon have in common, from a vampire's perspective?

That said, supernatural beings are used to sharing the world with other monsters, some of whom even Beasts do not understand. Allies — or pawns — are invaluable against their common enemy, human hunters, and other adversaries, and temporary alliances sometimes grow into sprawling, extended families of mixed monsters.

Vampires

Few Kindred look their bestial nature in the eyes. Even Gangrel get agitated when Beasts mention the Mother of Monsters, whom they call Echidna, but both sides know Hunger and the lengths they must go to sate it. Relationships are always fraught with tension, though, especially if Beasts compete with vampires for prey and influence. Moreover, vampires have an all too human capacity for treachery, and their controlling nature makes them problematic as allies.

Werewolves

The wolf must hunt. Bound by this law, Uratha virtually embody the Hunger for the Prey, and they are blood brothers to Beasts with similar appetites, right down to competition over who is the better predator. Their sense of pack loyalty more than makes up for any conflict, though, if they can be won as friends. Moreover, Uratha have a natural affinity for the Primordial Pathways, which are not too different from navigating the Shadow.

Mages

Beasts and mages treat each other with wary curiosity. It is mainly a matter of pride. Mages regard the Astral Realms as their domain, and Beasts are a "rogue" element they do not yet understand. Despite estrangement, Beasts have leapt to mages' defense on several occasions. After all, Banishers look a lot like Heroes: violently ignorant, obsessed with destroying magic and mages, and uncannily skilled at tracking down their prey.

Prometheans

The Created are a puzzle. Their Disquiet causes nightmares like a hungry Beast and their Refinements are draped in mythic symbolism. However, their Lineages were created by human demiurges, and a Promethean's ultimate goal is humanity, making them the opposite of Beasts in many respects. Unfortunately, while Beasts are welcome to accompany them on their Pilgrimage, the Created are rare and disappear without a trace when their time is over, making it difficult to learn more about them.

Changelings

The fae *are* Beasts as far as the Children are concerned. They, too, are dream-walkers steeped in legend, and Seemings and Families share some similarities. However, changelings are *made*, not born, out of Durance from the True Fae, whose behavior exemplifies the obsessive nature of Hungers. That is a secret the Children would dearly love to possess. Of course, fae take poorly to Beasts invading the dreams of those they have pledged to protect, not that Beasts can help it.

Sin-Eaters

Death is, in many ways, the root of all fears. No one goes untouched, and it has unmatched potency in the human psyche. The Primordial Pathways touch on the Underworld just like any other realm, and Beasts suspect the geists of Sin-Eaters are Souls of a different kind; perhaps the remnants of a long dead Family clawing its way back to life. Perhaps the Dark Mother herself lairs in the Underworld, sustained by endless fear.

Mummies

Their memories in tatters, the Arisen defy death with a combination of contempt and weariness, and their existence is as mysterious as their Nameless Empire. Given the similarity between the Sickness they cause and the nightmares of a rampant Soul, Beasts wonder if mummies are not subjugated Children who have been bound in their deathless state by human sorcery. Like them, the Arisen are compelled by instinctual urges, but theirs are imposed from outside, particularly by the enigmatic Judges of Duat.

Demons

The Unchained are extraordinarily secretive and seem to hold the Children in contempt. Encounters frequently terminate in violence and vicious rivalry, especially if the Beast sees through the demon's human façade. What stories of the God-Machine Beasts have pieced

together lead them to believe demons are something new: industrial age monsters masquerading as divinity. Whatever they are, they are *not* kin.

Outcast Nation

The human need for companionship never goes away. If anything, a Beast feels its loss more keenly. Homecoming is triumphant because it is such a relief. It opens the door to a Family the Beast never even knew he had. They accept him for what he is, no questions asked, and stand by him when the Hero comes to shed his blood.

Beasts sense each other in a general way. They instinctively *know* someone is in their city and eventually cross paths in the Primordial Dream. The call of Family is stronger, especially the cry of a hungry, newly awakened Beast. The newcomer is found wandering, trying to find his kin and make sense of what he is now.

Beasts band together for the same reasons humans do: camaraderie, convenience, and mutual protection. They lack the world-spanning secret societies of mages and vampires, but the bonds they share are far more intimate.

Indeed, the brood *is* Beast society as far as its members are concerned. Each is a surrogate family with its own territory defined by their collective influence on the Primordial Dream and how many people they affect. It can host any combination, not just Family members. Even other creatures like vampires and werewolves are welcome to join.

Beasts are a clannish lot, though. They help their kin when possible — and convenient — but nothing compares to the bond between broodmates. They cling to each other and jealously guard their territory against outsiders. Different broods may exchange information and cooperate against a common threat but they do well to keep their distance otherwise.

The bond between broodmates is more than mere friendship. They have a common soul and sense of identity. Their Lairs stitch themselves together over time, creating an expansive shared hunting ground in the Primordial Dream. White cliffs descend from an Ugallu's mountain roost and drop into the frothing ocean where a Makara makes its Lair, and a Namtaru broods within an adjoining underwater cavern.

Using their shared Lair, broodmates can communicate in their dreams regardless of real world distance; though traveling far apart feels wrong under any circumstances. Furthermore, the individual Beast is no longer limited to aspects of his own Lair. He can draw strength from places resonant with his broodmates' Lairs as well. He can even learn to use their Nightmares and Atavisms as they grow more and more alike.

That bond comes with risks, the greatest being a Beast whose Soul is starved and running rampant. The entire brood is endangered when the Hero hunts him down, a confrontation that can only end in their shared Lair. Hunger is no longer an individual concern.

Food & Drink

Everyone's been hungry.

Beasts are hungrier.

Hoard, Power, Prey, Punishment, Ruin. Such simple words for such monstrous needs. *Hunger* is a word that suggests eating, but the Hunger of a Beast isn't so base as appetite. Hunger is the

stuff of legends. It inspires epics of the wars fought against it, of the empires it breaks, and of the people who die at its feet. When a Beast hungers, humanity does not sit idle.

Mother's Milk

The Dark Mother hungered, too. Hunger was her greatest gift to her Children, a mythic drive to explore her world and carve out a piece of it. She left no true record of what her Hunger was, of course, but she left many legends:

> **[MIKE: IT'D BE COOL TO SEE THIS AS AN IN-WORLD DOCUMENT, WRITTEN ON NOTEBOOK PAPER OR SOMETHING]**

"Tiamat spawned the universe, the waters of chaos and night. Marduk, jealous sun, loathed her divine disorder, and warred on her with an army of treacherous gods. Tiamat birthed many monsters to fight them, but cowardly Marduk blinded her with his light. The usurper king rent Tiamat with cursed weapons, and cast her to the North Wind. Reveling in his stolen glory, he did not see his mistake. Tiamat's children gathered her remains and sealed them in sacred vessels, scattering them to the far corners of the earth to await the time of awakening. For Tiamat was not truly slain, but sleeps, and dreams the Primordial Dream. Her restless nightmares guide us to her embrace, and we revenge on Marduk's ordered world in her name.

"In those days, humanity was savage, little more than apes. Humans had no needs but those derived from instinct. They did not dream. The Dark Mother was a woman, a huntress of her tribe, and though she could kill with little more than a flick of her blade, she hungered to be greater than she was. That hunger consumed her, even in the depths of sleep. In this way, she became the first dreamer. The first Beast. She tamed the wilds of the Primordial Dream, home of all conception, and took it as her lover, filling herself with its endless possibilities. She cracked the world open with her labor pains. No more would humans suffice on instinct, for we were her gifts: greed, tyranny, murder, injustice, and hate. The fires of civilization.

"A dragon and a hero. A serpent and a god. You know this story. Indra kills Vritra, Krishna slays Kaliya. A progenitor of monsters is destroyed by some upstart warrior. It's called Chaoskampf*, and it's a narrative common to just about every religion on earth. That's because it's true. Not literally, no, but we don't give our ancestors enough credit. They understood how the universe works, that it's one big wheel of order and chaos. Heroes like to think that lends them credibility, that life triumphs over death in our most primal tales. They're mistaken. Chaos wins in the end. That's entropy. That's* science*. There's no Dark Mother, just the heat death of the universe. That's the nature of Hunger, and we're here to hurry it along."*

Feast

The audience is unwilling, but the choice is out of their hands. Five-foot-two, bespectacled, and groomed within an inch of his life, Sin-you is a clashing color on the palette of the 24-hour greasy spoon. His eyes are posing questions no one wants answered.

What does he know?

Did he see me do it?

A trucker lumbers out of his booth and settles up. Sin-you knows what comes next. He smelled it in the man's dimestore deodorant, and he sees it in the exact change he counts out over the cash

register. Not a nickel over the bill. The hostess forces a smile as she drops a receipt like a piece of garbage.

Sin-you's smile stretches like a stab wound.

Miles away, the trucker's mind is wandering up the interstate. The waitress he pinched. The waiter he called a faggot. The call girl with the bloody lip. They're crawling over the walls of his cabin, tearing out soft pieces of his body and screaming obscenities he can't hear but understands in the pit of his belly. He pulls his rig onto a side road before it slams into a concrete barrier.

"Guilty," says Sin-you. Most obvious thing in the world. An ivory spike, notched like a horn, rips through the trucker's heart, and Sin-you gorges on judgment. It'll be his seventh this month, but no one ever sees the pattern of his justice. Not between Juneau and Houston.

Hunger is pleasure. Anticipation is primal, an emotion that was branded into brains before brains learned to make thoughts. It's the flood of endorphins as the fork passes the lips. It's the relish of grilling *filet mignon* so rare it bleeds blue. It's the thrill of stalking a wounded deer and its stuttering trail through the woods.

Whatever call the Dark Mother heeded, Beasts hear the echo. Hidden deep in every instinct, she whispers, chiding her Children to grow up just like her. That whisper is the reason a Beast gets up in the morning, or carries on when her brood is slain and an ax-happy Hero prepares his *coup de grâce*. Only a Beast gets to decide when she's cut off. For every hurt, for every disappointment, for every loved one who walks away, she remembers her Hunger. That which fed her when the world was fallow.

Living with Hunger is dangerous, yes, but a dragon's gold is never a burden. The Hero might call it profane, but in his heart of hearts, he envies its glory. He'd be lucky to have such a light to guide his way. Instead, he's left with the solipsism of vendetta. For Hunger is a lodestar, not an addiction as the Heroes claim. As if a Beast could detox off instinct. Grendel wars on Heorot because killing Danes is the only way he keeps his sanity stapled together. He savors the blood spattering on his skin, and the bones crumbling in his fists, but that's all empty calories. Hunger drowns out doubt. If it didn't, he'd throw himself on their spears.

Abundance

When a Beast is nearly full to bursting, her Nightmares flow. As the Soul grows content and slothful, the Beast wrests away a scrap of its strength. With that borrowed power, she commands fear with the precision of a general.

A sated Beast knows how to break out her prey's best terrors. She knows how her victim obsesses over his looks, and his nagging suspicion that if they fade, he will too. She knows all about his dreams of limbs melting like wax, and of a fast, anonymous decay into old age. She knows how to make fear fact. Now, whenever a chill hits the air, his bones ache and his hands tremble, and whenever he looks in his mirror, he sees what he'll become.

A sated Beast can tear away mental blocks. Drugs, therapy, and money went into repressing his hit and run, but the Beast makes sure her victim still dreams of the homeless woman he killed, dying as her blood leaks memories into shattered glass. The slurs of pedestrians. The agonies of withdrawal. He sees her in every beggar downtown, and in his own shadow as he turns the lights out.

A sated Beast takes the pain that threw her victim's life into a spiral of self-hatred and sorrow and says *I can do better.* She tortures the world until it feeds her again.

But as the Soul gluts on the Beast's victims, its appetites grow more exacting. It won't take just any gold or murder; it takes Fort Knox bullion and ritualized serial killing. The Soul has no use for temperance when gluttony is a virtue.

Then again, that can become too much of a good thing. As the stomach swells, the muscles wither, and if a Beast gorges herself to capacity, her Soul falls into a food coma, slumbering in the Heart of her Lair. That leaves the Beast as weak as any human, and if her enemies find her dazed atop her hoard, with her belly for the world to see, the Soul won't stir from sleep to save her hide.

Famine

A man snores beneath the cracked lights of a bus shelter. Through winter rain, the ticking of his Rolex synchs with Ana's heart. She needs that watch more than anything she's ever needed. Just like all her needs.

She thought she could get by on scraps. The cops are watching all her haunts: the subway, the tourist traps, even the fucking library. She hasn't had a real meal in weeks, and the night her neighbors woke up screaming about deep, dark oceans, she knew cold turkey wouldn't work.

Watch-guy's not going to be sleeping on that bench tomorrow. He's not going to be there in five minutes. That's the message Ana's Soul is thrashing into her on typhoons of stomach acid. Her bones chill as if it's dragging her back to the sea, but really, it's just dragging her to him.

She finds her hand on his wrist before she can think the desire to put it there. Her goose bumps brush against his as she hesitates.

He wakes.

Not just from sleep, but from the polite fiction that Ana is anything but a monster. He grabs a handful of hair and slams her into the bench. She slides off her blood and screams. The rain twists around him, robbing him of balance. He tries to club her head with his briefcase, but she swings her leg further than a human knee allows, smashing him through the shelter's cheap glass.

Her goose bumps grip like suckers as she crushes his chest and rips the watch from his arm.

Somewhere in the space between the rain, the ticking, and Ana's heart, her Soul roars.

Hunger is pain. Nausea climbs the stomach and spreads through the body. The head throbs as limbs move like broken machinery, gasping for a final drop of fuel. The skin itches with the nagging fear that the last meal really was the *last* one, and every distraction blurs except the irrepressible urge to gorge.

Hunger is another word for starvation.

Satiety waxes and wanes with the demands of the hunt. Arson, murder, and theft aren't easily hidden, and neither are social vampirism or power mongering. Block associations sic SWAT teams on teenagers with spray paint, let alone a Beast dining out. Her meal ticket is always in danger of running out, whether from Heroes, human attention, or short supply. Deprivation is inevitable.

But nothing hunts like a hungry tiger.

Scarcity

Starvation is fire. Skin blisters as the Beast forges weapons from her own body, with the hammer of the Soul's mania shaping her designs. In exchange for pain, the unsated Beast gains focus and guile, and as her Hunger pangs grow, so do her Atavisms. Her irises warp into daggers, and venom drips from her claws. She can smell threats that others can't, and sees the labels of *friend* or *foe* in every stranger. She becomes the pinnacle of survival, at least until the next meal.

The masses see her more clearly, of course. That's the risk that comes with reward. If a Beast expends her reserves, or goes without a meal too long, her Soul goes feral. It has no logic to understand poor feeding prospects, nor the motives that might put its Beast on a diet. It has needs that outweigh consequence. It shatters the confines of the Lair, and hunts through human nightmares, leaving night terrors in its wake.

People drown in that wake. Some come up Heroes.

But should those Heroes make it back to her Lair, they'll never know their disadvantage. All they have is the memory of a nightmare, and the childish anger that comes with not understanding one's dreams. They've never *needed*.

Gossamer's Hunger is a brilliant spectrum. She only collects the best — paintings, antiques, first editions — anything the beautiful people covet. One day, though, it all dries up. Her glittering inroads to high culture erode, and her shadier connections won't even humor her with forgeries. Is this the work of a Hero, or has Gossamer's double-dealing finally caught up with her? And would she rather go hungry, or learn to be a thief?

The people love him. For decades, Vikram's fellow citizens have been his loyal — not subjects. No. *Constituents*. Loyal *constituents*. Who could argue with those numbers? That's why he wasn't prepared for a real election. This dark horse candidate has some serious machinery backing her. She's uncovering scandals even Vikram can't remember, and that predatory gleam in her eyes at debates isn't the cameras flashing. Now he doesn't have enough clout to get out of a parking ticket. As he slips in the polls, he'll need to resort to more than just character assassination.

Luka's a Predator, the kind who uses every part, from skin to sinew. Zie thinks other carnivores are the best prey, and being hunted in return gives hir a special sort of thrill. Normally zie'd describe hirself as a conservationist, but sometimes the bleeding hearts go too far. The new laws mean a lot more rangers snooping around the woods looking for poachers, and if they catch hir with a bloody bowie knife and a bear carcass, zie'll have to answer uncomfortable questions. Luka's Soul is hunting on its own now, and it's acquiring brand new tastes. Ugly ones.

They say internal affairs is for slimeballs, and that describes Hollis well. He's always had a strong sense of right and wrong, and how to exploit that quality for his own edification. Woe to the cop who comes across his desk, because whether or not she's right, she'll always be wrong. But playing that game can be delicate, and now he's faltered. He's been suspended for all kinds of violations (if only they knew), and the review board's going to throw the book at him. Starving outside his red tape empire, it's time for Hollis to make good on his rolodex of spite. Time to show these cops what justice really is.

He’s always needed to burn. As a kid, Levin played with matches and brought fiery doom on ant hills, so when the salamander in his dreams turned out to be him, everything *clicked*. Now the local news calls him the Eastside Pyro, and despite the disappointing nickname, his Legend grows in the warmth of the media’s attention. Or, it did. The concrete walls of the county jail make poor kindling. Now his Soul’s torching every dream it can, and rumor has it that his fellow inmates plan on snuffing out his light for good.

If You Are Lukewarm

The Beast who walks the middle path walks a tightrope. Middle Satiety gives her a clear head and a hardy body, neither softened by the sloth of fullness, nor gripped by the anxiety of starvation. But that’s the opportunity the Hero’s waiting for. Half-full Beasts are out of communion with their Souls. The primordial self doesn’t care what side the Beast chooses, but it can’t abide the middle. It wants rage or contentment. It wants *anything* but boredom.

Beasts in the middle are open to Anathemas, the banes Heroes exploit to strike at the hearts of their foes. Anathemas take many forms, from holy spears to words of power, but what the Hero believes is a fissure in the Beast’s armor is really something he forces on her. Anathemas are the ultimate expression of the Hero’s egomania: the belief that a Beast could have a weakness. When a Beast is soft from the Soul’s dissatisfaction, the Hero can wrench the narrative back in his favor.

Delving in Darkness

Not all hungers are Hungers. The world is riddled with veins of occult lore, and Beasts believe their Mother had a hand filling them all. Unearthing those secrets grants her Children the guidance they so sorely need in her absence.

Where lesser beings lose their minds, creeping truths drive a Beast to follow her bliss. Knowing what hides in the dark teaches her what she has to compete with — what she has to aspire to. Young Beasts find exploration comforting. It eases them into their Legends, and helps them understand the Mother’s world. Older Beasts just like to stay on top of the food chain. They know the world’s scaffolding is built on survival, and whatever sharpens their claws best is worth pursuing.

Home

Dark delving isn’t always about eating up arcane morsels, though. That’s just what Collectors do. Dark delving is about being the biggest monster with the biggest cave.

Beasts explore the world to expand their domains. The Primordial Dream is raw possibility, but it requires refinement; Nightmares have no purpose when they lack meaning. Beasts search out places that resonate with the metaphysics of their Lairs, and pull impressions of those places out of the material world to expand them. Failing that, they force the issue, pushing victims to the brink of sanity to draw out the raw building blocks of nightmares.

Every place and broken person is another candle burning off fog in the Primordial Dream.

The Collector poaches devil birds, whose calls portend death in those unfortunate enough to hear them. She keeps her pets in a special habitat, and offers admission for a small fee. With each new nest in her collection, and every new guest, her hunting grounds grow outward in a storm of shrieking.

The Nemesis has a riddle. She offers it to whoever she meets, but never the same way twice. Never the same tense, never the same words, never even the same punctuation. And never adding up to anything. Her unsolvable puzzle plagues countless sages and philosophers, and for each life it envelops, she finds new ways to twist her Lair into a labyrinth of dead ends.

The Predator explores the back alleys of skid row, patronizing godforsaken drug dens, or any other places where time slows and the world falls away. Her Lair is a sea of illusions set against an endless city, drawing prey in with the promise of fantasy and vice. She stalks them, hiding behind fever dream walls, and strikes them down with fears wrought large.

Pompeii, Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima. These are the Ravager's fantasy getaways: anywhere the restless dead are anchored by disaster. The Ravager's not interested in helping them, though. He wants to revel in mass destruction, to make his Lair an instrument of entropy. No better way to learn of death than from those who can't escape it.

The cult worships the Queen of Eyes. Every action is surveyed and analyzed, and through the crucible of their monarch's Panopticon, they gain strength. The Tyrant is a devoted member. Aided by the paranoia that the Queen instills, the Tyrant knits the fabric of her Lair into a prison of claustrophobic cells and finely tuned torture devices.

Hearth

When delving in darkness, it's best to bear many lights. The brood is the vanguard of mystic exploration, and Beasts are ill advised to take on the world alone. Every brood is different, with their own special methods, but some fall into common patterns, merging and splitting in the shifting face of the occult.

• **The Corporation:** When a secret is unearthed, it becomes a commodity, and Beasts often form cartels to capitalize on their pools of lore. The Predators in one brood study the bizarre agendas of shadow owls, trading insider information with paranoid vampires. Ravagers in another group study the effects of hauntings on dreams, and trade their results to Sin-Eaters in exchange for their unique services.

• **The Detective Agency:** Occult mysteries attract Beasts like moths to flames, but these broods take that pull and give it structure. Each member brings a special skill: occult forensics, parapsychological profiling, or just plain blood spatter analysis. Investigatory broods often run into cabals of mages with similar agendas. At best, the two group share resources and collaborate. At worst, it's akin to a loner P.I. running afoul of city hall.

• **The Institution:** Sometimes broods settle down. They find a mystery to their liking, and milk it for all its worth. Perhaps rooms at the old asylum randomly open into the Primordial Dream, or a cabin out in the woods saps the essences of supernatural creatures. These mysterious places can be sources of power for years, and the broods who guard them will do so with their lives.

• **The Mystery Religion:** The Begotten are scions of a primal goddess, and that divine heritage can bloom into full-fledged religion. Or at least cults. These broods task their adherents with sacred quests, either to help them better understand the Dark Mother's world, or to see if religious fervor can better regulate the needs of Hunger.

Family Secrets

Fellow Beasts aren't the only resources the Begotten have, though. Other monsters are the foundations of the World of Darkness, and their secrets are terrifyingly potent. Vampires have

spent millennia building a society predicated on one big secret, and mages are addicted to solving mysteries in a reality they think to be a lie. It's only natural that Beasts would want in on the action.

Through Kinship, a Beast can expand her Lair further, or even learn new Nightmares modeled on the aptitudes of other monsters. With a little care, she can even feed her Hunger.

The vampire spreads madness. Shunned by mortals and Kindred alike, she's going to fall to a deep slumber if she keeps going hungry. Asklepian wants to help, and offers her shelter for service. The little starving vampire can crack sanity with her bite the way he crushes ribcages with his coils, and every brain she breaks for him becomes a ward in the madhouse of his Lair.

The werewolves of Ythan honor the Black Dog of the Moors. The land belongs to him, and only by his goodwill may the pack remain. On the night of the full moon, they make a special hunt. Any spirit who walks the moors without permission is fair game. The Black Dog does not participate. He doesn't need to. He watches from the shadows, feeding on trespasses repaid.

The mages offer Zaratan a deal: "Let us study your Soul. Let us come to know it with our own. Our gods can show you depths you could never reach. They can show you a place that would give your Dark Mother uneasy dreams."

Tupilaq travels back roads with a strange throng of Prometheans, and discovers that the strain they put on the land lights a pale fire in the Primordial Dream. It wards humans away with painful, alienating emotions. Tupilaq learns to harvest that fire into an element of her Lair, and creates a safe haven for her constructed friends.

Changelings live and breathe fate, just as the Norn does. In exchange for her help in hiding from their mad gods, they re-craft her Hero's destiny. With his Legend untwined from hers, the fae show her new and subtle ways to flip narratives in her favor.

Ubume plants seeds from a Sin-Eater's garden. The blooms tell her who is close to death, and who is not close enough. With the roots, she prepares a tea that keeps sickness from the weak and invites it in the strong.

When the mummy wakes, Selket is waiting. "I like that trick you do. The one where fear spreads like a plague. Show me how it works, and I'll give back that jar you love so much. Don't worry, no one can find it. Not in my dreams."

Mr. Void steals the Hero's soul. Wendigo doesn't mind, though. He likes to watch skins change hands. He can learn so much as the demon's mask crumbles with his new, despicable obligations, and even more when tungsten angels come to drag him back to hell.

Myth & Legend

Mystics have long known of a spiritual plane called the Astral Realms that connects humanity to the soul of the world. It is envisioned as three nested spheres, symbolizing the soul's journey from egotism to greater consciousness. Most people barely scratch the surface, being confined to their own dreams, but a few can access its deeper reaches via lucid dreaming, ceremonial magic, or intense meditation.

• *The Oneiros* is the realm of the individual soul, a dreamscape composed of that person's thoughts, memories, and imaginings. He goes there when he dreams, wandering through environments of his own creation.

• *The Temenos* is the collective unconscious of mankind, a place of race memories and archetypal symbols common to the human experience such as Mother, Father, Hero, or Trickster. Individual Oneiri drift within the Temenos like corks bobbing on the surface of a roiling ocean.

• *The Anima Mundi* is the soul of the universe, a chaotic landscape containing the essences of the natural world and mankind's effects on it. It is a realm of cosmic symbols such as Earth, Sky, and Water. The outermost edge of this cosmic ocean laps against the inchoate darkness of the unknown.

The Astral is a conceptual space. Islands float within the dream-stream, worlds unto themselves, such as the idea of a pristine earth or the hellish memory of trench warfare playing out over and over again. Most of it is flotsam: half-forgotten memories, vagrant ideas, and orphaned cultural images. Nothing is ever truly forgotten, though, just pushed to the margins where it becomes a symbol instead of a specific memory.

A symbol can be far more potent. Symbols are universal and timeless; they wear whatever form the culture bestows on them.

How many people have heard of Jack the Ripper? Millions? Compare that to the scope of his crimes. Only five women's deaths have been conclusively laid at his feet. Horrific as they were, they pale compared to the number of people who died from coal smoke and disease in Victorian London. Jack the Ripper is a nobody, just another maladjusted murderer, and yet he has become synonymous with evil.

For millennia, lepers were reviled as harbingers of plague and corruption, both moral as well as physical. Homosexuals became the lepers of the AIDS generation and were victimized by the same moralist hysteria. So, too, have immigrants, Muslims, and transgender people been vilified in the modern era, turned into scapegoats by bigoted "crusaders" with narrow minds and selfish agendas. The next pandemic or culture shift will produce its own outcasts and they, too, will be blamed for their plight.

Humans are myth makers. Symbols provide the seeds for stories; the grain around which forms the pearl. Some serve as warnings; others make sense of the inexplicable. Introduce an unknown or shocking element — a mystery, a nightmare, or a monster — and people instinctively build a legend around it.

Legend cuts both ways in the Astral Realms. An ordinary madman like Jack the Ripper can be elevated to a mythic monster, taking his place in the Temenos and casting a long shadow over human history, but a Beast can become the stuff of legends just by growing in power and holding sway over a greater part of the collective unconscious.

Here Be Monsters

She is born in blood again and again. The dream used to scare her; now she looks forward to it. The waking world is unreal. Only this forest matters.

The autumn chill whips over black fur. The wine-scent of rotting vegetation fills the air as she hurtles through the night after her prey. There, at last! It is her. Still a child trying to flee the monster, her feet slip-sliding on a ground cloaked in leaves.

She feels nothing for her younger self, neither rage nor pity. She feels nothing whatsoever until she pounces — effortlessly — and bears the child to the ground. Little bones snap like twigs. Flesh is rent to bone. She kills, she dies, and is reborn.

She wants this to continue forever.

Beasts know another aspect of the Astral Realms, the *Primordial Dream*, lurks in the twilight between the Temenos and the Anima Mundi. If the Temenos is the collective unconscious then the Primordial Dream is home to mankind's collective fears. This is where Beasts make their Lairs. It is where their Souls are born.

A Beast's Lair is similar to a human's Oneiros, with the Soul as its guardian. Its dreamscape reflects her history, personality, and evolving nature. It is small at first, little more than a forbidding hole in which to hide. The Heart of the Lair rests at the center and contains the Beast's primal essence, without which she cannot survive. As she grows more powerful, her Lair expands, adding new trappings and environments. Among these are new Chambers that echo meaningful locations in the physical realm.

The size and complexity of the Lair corresponds to the extent of the Beast's influence on the collective unconscious; how much she has imprinted himself on the human psyche. Size is subjective in the Astral Realms, but the larger the Lair the more people fall under her shadow and are swept up into her nightmares. That is why the Hero must ultimately pursue the Beast to her Lair. Where else can you kill fear itself?

A mighty Beast has a commensurately greater hold on the human mind, becoming a potent symbol for fear. Her image echoes through the popular consciousness, emerging in fables, monster movies, and wherever a fertile and feverish imagination offers it a hold. She need not cultivate a legend. One naturally grows up around her.

The Dark Mother has the greatest legend of all, echoing worldwide and in every era. Some Beasts think the Mother *is* the Primordial Dream and it is all her Lair, enfolding those of her Children in a womblike embrace.

Beasts access their Lairs via Primordial Pathways. Doing so requires a location in the material world that resonates with one of her Lair's Traits; preferably a site reflected in one of its Chambers. She can bring others, if she wishes, and teach them how to use the web of Primordial Pathways connecting the world to other realms.

Primordial Pathways grant physical access to the Lair but its environment is far from mundane and adheres to its own surreal dream logic. Tunnels loop back on themselves. Water drips incessantly and without source. Primeval forests stretch on forever.

The Lairs of broodmates join together over time, forging a kind of shared soul that lets them communicate with each other in dreams, regardless of the intervening distance in the real world. A member can access his Lair and then cross into his brood's Lairs as easily as walking into the next room.

The Lair can even be destroyed, forcing the Soul to merge physically with the Beast. The Soul's pain and rage obliterate her humanity, and it is only a matter of time before a Hero hunts down the wretched creature and destroys it. Hence, Beasts go to great lengths to protect their Lairs, filling them with traps and obstacles, and broods congregate for mutual protection as much as to hold a greater portion of the Primordial Dream.

Nightmares & Dreamscapes

By her very nature, a Beast casts a shadow across the Astral Realms, influencing its landscape in proportion to the strength of her legend. That includes the Oneiros of anyone unlucky enough to be nearby when the starving Soul runs rampant.

Inevitably, the Beast's loved ones suffer first from sheer proximity, but hundreds or even thousands of people may be swept up into her nightmare depending on how strong she is. As the Soul runs amok, it casts a pall over the Temenos, drawing in as many people as possible and dipping into individual Oneiri to hunt.

People who are awake experience a sudden frisson of terror. Their hackles go up at the Beast's approach, and they catch hallucinatory glimpses of the monster — the shadow of wings or writhing tentacles — out of the corner of their eyes.

Human instinct is a blunted thing but it serves them well enough in this case. Where people shied away before, now they feel the urge to run. Where they were disdainful, they show open hatred. They instinctively recognize the Beast as the Id, the Other, the Thing on the edge of the firelight seeking to devour whom it may.

Those sleeping suffer even more. The maddened Soul rips them from tame, comfortable dreams and relentlessly pursues them through their Oneiros, its environs distorted by the Beast's overriding Hunger.

They are subjected to the same nightmare the Beast overcame as part of her Homecoming; only they are defenseless against it. The Soul toys with them like a cat with a mouse, casually mauling them and then moving on in search of fresh prey, leaving victims psychically scarred.

Encountering the Beast while awake is to be plunged into the nightmare again, destroying any sense of safety offered by the familiar, sunlit world. People *know* she is the monster from their dreams. The impossibility of the idea makes it all the more horrific. They feel certain they have gone insane *and she is the cause*.

Their reaction is one of immediate and overpowering fear. Some retreat while seeking the means to fight back, if necessary, and keep a wary eye on the Beast the entire time. Others stumble over themselves trying to escape. No amount of cajoling can make them go near the Beast. Not even friends and family can tolerate her presence.

Moreover, a Beast's nightmare has far-reaching effects. People remember and shudder years after the fact, even if they never meet her or experience it again. They swap stories about their shared nightmare and wonder at its deeper meaning. Artists are inspired, stories are told, and the Beast's image worms its way into the popular imagination.

Hunters & Heroes

Exposed to the supernatural, some people experience more than fear. Something *clicks* in their head, like a key turning in a terrible lock. They, too, see the creature — whether a Beast, a vampire, or something else — as a monster in their midst, but where others cower, they stand their ground and regard it coldly. Hands tighten around weapons or close into fists.

Some people do not run. Some are compelled to fight back.

That is the essence of the hunter response. Such people are unusually strong-willed and may have encountered the supernatural in some small way before. Any supernatural being can trigger

the hunter response, including Beasts, but only a Beast can provoke the terrible transformation that turns a normal person into her antithesis: a Hero.

Predicting when and where a Hero will arise is impossible. When a Beast's nightmare passes over the city, it disrupts thousands of lives, but only a grocery clerk and a homeless man take up arms against her. The hunter response *threatens* the creation of a Hero, but not everyone who experiences it becomes one. In fact, very few of them do.

The Hero's view of the world as a sane and orderly place is irrevocably shattered, and the only thing that makes it make sense anymore is the Beast's destruction. It is not that he is unafraid. On the contrary, he is as terrified as everyone else but, being unable to conquer that fear, he flies to the opposite extreme.

Delusions of grandeur insulate him from his fear. He sees himself as destined by fate or a higher power to rid the world of the Beast, and he envisions himself in the mold of paternalistic hunter-warriors who beat back the darkness, made a safe place, and claimed the spoils for he and his tribe. He is Beowulf to her Grendel, David to her Goliath.

Such a madman is a Hero only in his own mind.

Ironically, the Hero is just a different kind of atavism. He is consumed by the same irrational fear that causes lynch mobs to gather with pitchforks and torches, and his methods are just as brutal. If the Beast is at home, he burns the house. He guns her down in front of her kids if need be.

Dangerous though he is, the Hero is a pitiful figure. His life contracts around a singular purpose. Friends, family, and career are all subordinated to his mission and discarded along the way.

And the worst part? The Beast *made* him this way.

That fact is easily forgotten, locked in their deadly dance, but the Hero's existence is an *accident*. The Beast created him by mistake, and whatever he gains in the measure comes from her. He is an afterthought to her story, a parasite on her legend, and she is part of him no matter how much he despises her.

Deep down, he knows it, too, and it infuriates him.

Beloved Enemies

He's smashing the door with a crowbar. Chunks of plywood burst like flak, and a piece of doorframe shoots through his swinging arm. He grits through the pain as the next swing squeezes the splinter deep into his shoulder, lodging it between bones.

Mara watches from her bedroom window, waiting for him to realize that a tank couldn't knock that door down.

Eventually, he sniffs out the basement window, and thinks himself clever for it. He loses a few inches of skin to broken glass as he shoves his body through the opening, and tracks bloody, trampled daises as he limps up the stairs. His moment is coming.

Mara wants him to have it. She wants to see triumph in his face before she strips it of dignity and flesh. They both have their roles in this game, and playing that out won't sour her victory. Not when she demolishes his self-worth with that crowbar.

You Brought This on Yourself

Take a high school bully, mate him with a rabid dog, and a Hero is born. The saying goes that fanatics redouble their efforts when they lose sight of their aims, and if so, Heroes are an exceptional breed of fanatic. Their efforts leave no room to be redoubled, and their aims are barely coherent to begin with.

Strip down the layers of a Hero's ego, and all one finds is murder. Murder is his only end, regardless of bystanders. He'll bloviate about the little girls and puppies he saves, but at the best of times, protecting the innocent is incidental. He pursues the Beast because she dares to live and breathe and occupy the same world he does, not because some fool needs rescuing. It's an imperative a serial killer might understand.

The man at the butcher shop remembers when his neighborhood was safe to walk at night. It's the coddled kids, he mutters. Whelps raised up without the belt, like the punk who comes in and mouths off about the quality of his cuts. She's the problem. All the little shits like her. He sees that clearly in his nightmares, in the eyes of the spider wrapping its webs over town. He'll spread his own webs soon, made from cotton twine and clear, sterile plastic.

She's the richest woman in town, a woman whose generosity knows no bounds. The local activists know a crook when they see one. They know her philanthropy is a front for...something. The specifics aren't important. The further they dig, the more her secrets consume their lives. Most of them haven't been to their real jobs in weeks, and the walls of their offices are plastered with tax forms and stationary stained with garbage water. Beneath soiled pizza boxes, a blueprint of her house is marked up, and a bomb diagram is pasted over a barrel of gasoline.

Her boyfriend's got a musk that only she can smell, like his core is rotten with worms. Like it's leaking discharge through his skin. She could scrub down to bone and never get that stench out. It's all she can talk about. That's why nobody likes her anymore. She can't stop droning on and on and *on* about how he's weighing her down. He's the reason she wasn't promoted! He's the reason her best friend dumped her! He's the reason she's a failure. One night, she wakes up and understands what the smell really is. The gun in the dresser could cleanse him, she thinks.

Not So Different, You and I

[BEGIN HANDWRITTEN DOCUMENT]

Beloved,

I treasure our last time. If I were prone to romance, I would commission a mural. I would expend the whole of my wealth in payment for the sort of grand artists it would require.

I have never broken a thing in the way I crushed your knee. All that lovely bone escaping, pouring over the ground. So clean and white, as if I were spreading lilies. Do you know what Fabergé eggs are? They shatter brilliantly. Destroying your knee was akin to breaking art. If I could have snapped it off, my joy would have been complete. I would have prized it as the jewel of my

collection, regardless of whether it matched the set or not.

But I am not prone to romance. And I could not have you forgetting the lesson.

In a strange way (silly, mercurial me) I wish I could have spared you. I did not see it then, but you were right! *Your* knives belonged in my heart, and if I had known how I would ache for them now, I might have let you finish your "quest." Your successors are petty juveniles pretending at a fraction of your strength. They do not even taste like you.

I almost knocked on your door the last time I came into the country! Why do you live so far away? Is the air refreshing? Regenerative? Forgive me for not inviting myself in. Too difficult to see you as you are now. Reminds me of old times. Battles unwaged.

I hope the girls sleep well. They must be so beautiful, all grown up. I hope they take after their mother.

I would so love to see them again.

Lovingly,

Your dragon

[END HANDWRITTEN DOCUMENT]

To a degree, the Begotten understand the Heroic drive. Whether it's for piles of gold or slaughtered prey, Beasts are equally slaves to instinct. But the difference between a Beast's lust and a Hero's obsession is self-awareness. A Beast *knows* she's crazy. She learns to live with it, or she suffers. Justifications miss the point of having a Hunger in the first place, but a Hero will twist his brain to rationalize his hatred. It's the same defense abusers cling to: blame the victim. Understanding that pathology makes the difference between a Beast with a Legend, and a Beast with an encyclopedia entry.

The Collector promises the Hero a fight for the ages, but he has to play her game first. Otherwise, she'll go to ground and never come back up. She sends him a list of objects, a fetch quest with an endpoint in her Lair. The items are both junky and occult, from literal trash to rare spices available only through import. He gathers them, and expends every resource he has. On completion, the Collector makes good. He finds her stooped over an effigy, fashioned from refuse and smelling of magic. Before he can run, she lights it with her breath, and his skin bubbles off.

The Nemesis lives up to her name. She finds the Hero's phone number and records long, rambling messages listing every infraction he's guilty of over the course of a single day. Then she hacks his email and distributes screeds he's written about his bosses. Then she calls his wife

and claims to be his mistress. Then she calls his mistress and claims to be his wife. When he seeks revenge, no one will care if he lives or dies.

The Predator burns for the hunt. His mind is overwhelmed with designs for weapons and traps. He's been sick for prey that fights back, and he doesn't want to disappoint his self-appointed enemy. He rents a cabin off the grid so they'll have a little privacy, so the Hero will know that he's poured his heart into this. That she's a special kind of prey. Not that he's going to fight fair. Fair fights are for humans.

The Ravager goes to war. Wrecked the Hero's car? Check. Burnt his house down? Check. Frozen his accounts? Trickier, but check. She'll shred the Hero's life until all that's left is his fight with her.

Resource management isn't a knack, it's the Tyrant's ideology. When the Hero and his gang invade her compound, they're outflanked by her legions. While snipers slaughter his men, the Hero manages to dash inside. He only loses a finger to the Rottweilers, but the mercenaries are more generous with the pieces they cut off. When they drag him before her throne, she barely needs to finish him off.

But she will.

Inherit the Earth

At the end of the Hero's quest comes return. He rejoins the masses and bestows enlightenment on the world. He lives free of the fear of death, and justly rules over his people with his princess, forever and ever and happily ever after and all those other pretty lies.

The Beast knows the truth. No one goes back to the world that was. Not the Hero, and certainly not her. The masses fear her, and the princess is aiming to chop her head off. The Beast's truth is being apart.

Not all Begotten are content to live that way. The scales of Life and Legend too often tip into contradiction, and for many Beasts, holding a balance is futile. But the Dark Mother foresaw this identity crisis — she wouldn't be much of a parent if she didn't leave a bread crumb trail back to her embrace.

Beasts call it Inheritance, and it's different for every one of the Mother's Children.

Sometimes, Inheritance is physical. The Beast casts off her human guise and becomes a true monster of myth, standing as a challenge to future Heroes.

Sometimes, Inheritance is metaphysical. Body and Soul part ways, and a nightmare wanders the dreamtime ever after.

And sometimes? Inheritance is both.

Unleashed

Imani stands before a cave. Nothing here is beautiful, but even the rot infecting the rocks — the fungus and the beetles and the corpses — even the rot is saying, "Welcome home, Imani." But the trees that frame the entrance are begging Imani to STAY OUT because they know she'll never leave, she'll never come out again, because the oaks look like mom and dad and they love Imani, but she goes in anyway because it's the only thing she's ever needed in her life and she doesn't need mom and dad or a LIFE when the walls collapse and the moss tries to touch her and choke

her and STOP HER but she pulls back she chokes the moss she chokes the cave and SMASHES the rocks into dust because she knows that this is how she WINS this is how the world ends not with a bang but with HER and she can hear a voice it's calling out it says her name again and again and AGAIN and she is in a room.

She stands before a giant. Imani's flesh is its food, and her blood is its drink. There's nothing to hide that now.

The giant crawls from the ruins of the cave. She smashes the trees and whittles them into clubs.

This is the monster who lives under your bed.

It's the ache that rises in your gut when you hear the word *beast*. The hulking thing of muscle, fur, and fangs that mauls cattle and carries peasants off to their dooms.

The Unleashed Beast takes stock of her Life and discards it. Living in the world of people is the nightmare she needs to wake from, not the inviting darkness of her Soul.

Mythology tells us that becoming a monster is the ultimate depravity. Sloughing off arms for wings, spitting out teeth for mandibles? It's ghastly just to think of. One who transforms into a monster is surely cursed.

But then, that's what mythology says, and mythology was written by Heroes.

Why live with humanity if it doesn't want to live with you? Between murderous Heroes and repressive, *human* ideas of morality, a Beast with no place in the mortal world takes up the mantle of living nightmare. She would put her Legend to good use, rather than let it waste in the body of a brittle thing that fears its own dreams. All she has to do is destroy her Lair. Without that, she has no barrier to keep the Soul from taking her body.

In the wreckage of their broken home, they undergo a merger, and eject from the wilds of the Primordial Dream. This new creature has only one emotion: hunger.

Lurker

Helena breathes in salt air. She leaves paw prints in wet, cerulean sand, and little black crabs made of onyx dart through the shadow of her wings, into other shadows many miles away. Her mane is tangling on the wind, but the water has no waves. It's a mirror for the sun and moon to dance on.

The men are running. More a dash, Helena thinks. Nothing as dignified as running. They've been hurtling at her since they were dots on the crooked horizon, kicking up blue sand with the frantic lope of dogs.

She doesn't fight when they shoot her. She doesn't try to dodge or take cover. She doesn't bite when they run out of bullets and beat her with their guns.

Helena lies down in the sand. Golden blood tangles her mane, matting it in glittering chains of life. One of the men collects her life in a bucket so he can sell it. When she's hollowed out, they throw her in the water, and her brass bones drag her to the bottom.

But then, she floats. She's not a Beast anymore, just a woman with curling red hair and a dead smile.

A griffin swims. It leaves Helena without a thought because Helena is gone, a half-remembered fragment of a dream. She doesn't matter. Only revenge.

This is the monster who lives in your head.

It's an anxiety dream taken form. A gliding shadow stalking through jungles grown in dream logic, feeding on your deepest self-loathing. All without fear of Heroes or nagging self-control.

When a Beast dies in the Primordial Dream, sometimes her Soul goes free. Usually, it's an accident: the Beast underestimates the Hero, or trusts a sibling she shouldn't have (too often it's those we love who hurt us most). But other times, it's a retreat. Not all Children want the Dark Mother's gifts. The constant craving of Hunger can be all consuming, especially when it stands at odds with the Beast's moral compass.

A few Begotten journey through tormented Legends and seek conclusions. This isn't as easy as suicide. Even the most self-loathing Beast doesn't want to see the Hero win, or anyone else who shunned her for what she was. She wants the Legend to live on, even if she's incapable of carrying it through herself. To be true to herself, she walks one last journey through the Primordial Dream, perhaps with a favored enemy. At the finale, she offers her throat.

The Soul goes free. It conquers new domains, never one to suffer ennui in the face of a Hero's sword. That sword will never harm it again.

Incarnate

In a life long past, this castle was mine. It's in my blood. Echoes flood my soul with memories. Specters of servants, feasts, and battles. I allow them to fill my body with regret because I'm strong. Because the sorrow can't stop me.

I fight the vines and thorns that lash my eyes and try to steal my sight. I break the walls that break my bones and sap my will. I ascend the tower though each step is fire. But it's my fire. I ascend because it's the only way.

I behold my enemy. For years we've danced our dance, but now we come to blows. She knows her fate. She knows I'll slake my sword with her blood, and that her skin shall cleave before my —

Oh.

Oh fuck.

My chest...it's eating it? Oh…oh GOD! It's fucking eating my—!

"This is why you came. For me," the Beast says between mouthfuls of his heart. With each bite, she's more than a woman. Or a dragon.

Or a Beast.

This is the monster who rewrote the tale.

He's the Beast other Beasts fear. He and his Soul see eye to eye and tooth to tooth. They become one body without the cost of the Beast's Life, a being with no need for solid flesh, who walks as mortal or monster at the whim of dreams. He transcends the bounds of his Legend without feeding, yet fears no Heroes. He needs no spool of thread to navigate his Lair. He is his Lair.

The Incarnate Beast is one who opts out of destiny, a Beast so steeped in the narrative of his Legend that he knows all the twists before they come up. No plot points go unforeseen, not when his brood betrays him for his hoard, nor even when his own sister takes up the mantle of Hero.

Through this self-awareness, he sees the tapestry of his fate laid out in full, dyed with the blood of his Family: the monster, the warrior, the confrontation. The slaying.

He gazes at the loom of inevitability and rips out the threads.

But Beasts kill Heroes all the time, and gain little but worm food. A Beast who lusts for transcendence doesn't waste time on nickel and dime Heroes. His enemy is a worthy foe, and he makes a mockery of that. He betrays Gilgamesh. He devours Saint George. He burns every piece of Osiris until only ash and Isis's tears remain.

Monomyths

This isn't how it was supposed to go down.

The judge is sitting like some goddamn magistrate, lording over the court as if he's important. As if any part of this show trial matters.

"...misogyny..."

"...hate crime..."

"...psychopath..."

Oh, these newspeak platitudes. This isn't how a man's treated.

She's sitting all solemn, little crocodile tears blotting out mascara. If I look hard enough, though, if I look past the skin suit, I see it hiding. I see its coils sucking the life out of the room. You don't fool me, bitch. I got your friends. I burned them all.

It doesn't take long.

"...the jury, find the defendant..."

She smiles. A smile for me. Mistake.

"Die, bitch!" I rip my cuffs off and jump the table. The bailiff unloads a round into me, but I don't care about pain anymore. The only thing I care about is choking her with the chains she put me in.

She smiles.

I scream in her face. I scream at these stupid fuckers to see what she really is!

She smiles.

I choke harder.

She. Keeps. Smiling! Smiling even when her eyes bulge and her face turns blue. The bailiff hesitates because he can't get a shot in without it going through her. Do us both a favor, pal.

Then, I feel my heart explode.

The coils are wrapped around me. In me.

She smiles as I drop.

"This is exactly *how it was supposed to go down."*

The Hero of the story is an earthly paragon. He's the light that holds the dark at bay. He takes up the call to adventure, he learns wisdom and sacrifice, he dies and resurrects. He's Dionysus, Jesus, and Rama.

The villain of the story is a Beast. She's a raw element, razing villages and befouling crops, with no inner life beyond sin. An obstacle for the Hero to overcome. That's all she's meant for in this model, though perhaps she can rise to the lofty heights of moral of the story (*Don't become a monster, children.*). But that's the best she gets.

It's not always so literal, but the monomyth — what Joseph Campbell called the Hero's Journey — is so basic that it's difficult to find stories that don't follow it. It's the founding narrative of Western literature, religion, and art, from Shakespeare to the Bible to *Die Hard*.

Beasts know this song and dance well. They see it every time some psycho loner shows up with a machete and a death wish. But that doesn't mean they play along. Beasts call out narratives. They undermine them.

They break them over Heroes.

Subversion

"This doesn't end here."

We're standing in the middle of LaGuardia, just a girl and her stalker. My hero. *He doesn't have a weapon, though. I guess he's not crazy enough to bring one to an airport, but I bet it killed him not to.*

"I've got a flight to catch, Frank. I'm not coming back," I say.

"You need to listen—"

"I've heard everything. Every bullet," I say, hoping no one else can hear this. I can't afford a fight, especially not with Homeland Security.

"I'll find you, Elisabeth," he says, like saying my name will give him control. But his heart's pounding right along with mine, and the flop sweat's starting to crawl up his shirt. For anyone else, I'd feel sorry.

"You don't have money for the bus, let alone a plane," I say, trying to shove past him.

"Because you ruined my life!" he shouts, pulling the gaze of sleepy commuters. The edge in his voice isn't violent, though. He's a child who didn't get his favorite blanket.

I snap. "If you want this, you do it here. The big kill, in front of everyone. Go ahead. They'll chain you up and toss you in a dungeon, where all you'll have is the satisfaction of knowing the world thinks you're another broken vet who slipped through the cracks and went postal."

A tinny voice warbles. My flight. I wait for him to make a move. Gods know he's desperate enough to—

"Why didn't you kill me?"

Because if I killed a hateful, sad old man, I'd be everything he thinks I am.

"I'm better than you," I lie.

I grab my carry-on. He steps into the crowd, and out of my life.

The Hero has expectations. Forget his delusions and his ego, and even forget the monster that made him a zealot in the first place. It's not the Beast who taught him how the tale is told. He goes to the movies, he reads books, he plays video games. His culture's rammed the plot into him since he could understand words. The story belongs to him.

Sometimes, the Hero's not perfect, but it's always about *him*, no matter how dynamic the villain may be. The Hero could be summed up in totality by his chiseled jaw and his big gun, but the camera always owes allegiance to his shallow perspective. That structure manipulates us into believing what the Hero believes: that deviation is abnormal, immoral, and subversive. These narratives build him into the worst kind of Hollywood mogul, the director-writer-producer-star, wrapped up in a crusader's moral compass.

Beasts set out with the same cultural cues as their nemeses, but they learn to see through the self-aggrandizing of Heroic media. The Beast knows the Hero doesn't earn his title without *her*. The story isn't told if the monster doesn't burn the countryside. This is the truth Heroes can never hide: the Beast is the actor. The Hero reacts, defined by what he opposes, doomed to wait out his miserable life hoping some troll will carry off a goat.

Deconstruction

I've seen them at my shows a few times, watching me with the same foregone conclusion they always have drilled into their dumb eyes. They're the kind of guys who haven't met a collar they haven't popped. Ur-douchebag bros to my ultra-hipster.

They follow me after my gig, and I walk them into the crappy park downtown that city council never bothered naming. They're carrying — I shit you not — golf clubs. One of them is packing a Glock! My kind of night.

"Jesus, boys. Is this, like, a rumble?"

They don't bother verbalizing their battle cry into English, just grunts and slurs they imagine scare me. I let their leader take a few swings with his nine iron, to get my blood pumping. I call him a piece of shit, and that's when the night starts to sizzle.

Glock-bro draws his piece, but he's not pointing it at me.

The boy I called out starts convulsing, and they know exactly what he is. The half-crazed, mean motherfucker they all are on the inside. Covered in boils, seeping pus and hate. And maggots. Lots and lots *of maggots. The Hero ascendant.*

That's what he looks like to them, at least.

"You've got the wrong monster, men!" I shout at the others, bending them to my cause. Without a thought, Glock-bro shoots him in the stomach. He screams; they swarm. He begs; they break his legs. His skull cracks on pavement as I walk over to join in.

Heroes are more than the instruments of death they fashion themselves to be. They're the world's antibodies, a nagging reminder that the Begotten don't belong. The Hero's best weapon is alienation, and if he can learn how to wield it, he's already won.

Yet Heroes are hardly social animals. It's called *mono*myth for a reason. They have no use for friends, no matter how fanatical their followers may be. Did Theseus care that Ariadne slept on Naxos as he sailed away? His Legend speaks of his weeping and his rending of garments, but actions speak louder than tears. Ariadne betrayed her father and her people; her spool of thread

helped slay the Minotaur, her own half-brother. For all that love and devotion, Theseus raised anchor. Disregard for those we love is the definition of otherness.

That said, loved ones may be excess baggage to Heroes, but at least they're still loved. It's fellow Heroes that Heroes save their spite for. Wars are more congenial than the alliances Beast slayers make. Their egos might be able to handle short partnerships in the name of a greater good, but a smart Hero always keeps a spare knife ready, in case his allies decide that honor is for chumps. No Hero really wants to share in the glory of the kill. They'd rather have fawning lackeys than an equal to share in victory.

But Beasts? Alien, *outsider* Beasts? They're family. A family that fights at times — as all families do — but a family nonetheless. At times, broods are truer families than blood relations. Humans don't Hunger, no matter how much they may care about their Begotten relatives. No parent could possibly understand why their daughter would burn down the neighbor's house and claim that it prevents random strangers from gaining the all-consuming urge to murder her. Hunger is immune to logic, and sometimes, a parent's love.

But the brood accepts all sins. It fights for the Beast's right to sin again.

There's a halo forming around the vision in Raul's left eye. The baseball bat almost detached his retina, but that's the least of his worries. This guy means business. Concussion grenades business. Scooping out guts and dancing in entrails business. Raul hadn't foreseen his Legend ending in an alley behind a boarded up Blockbuster, but here he is.

"What the fuck are you doing to him?"

The halo's turned into haze, but Raul can see two shadows enter the alley.

"This doesn't concern you," the Hero snarls.

"Get off him. Or I'll kill you," says a man.

"And I'll eat you," says a woman.

"I told you this doesn't—"

The woman disappears. The man howls. Then, he gets bigger.

The Hero doesn't hesitate to run — smart guy — but he's already dead. The woman reappears with a knife through his spine, and as she tears out viscera, her companion turns his ribcage inside out. It only takes thirty seconds.

"Raul?" says the woman.

"Thanks...for being...so prompt."

"Don't be an asshole," says the man, once more the size of one.

One of the werewolves swings Raul over a shoulder as the other calls an ambulance. Raul passes out thinking that friendship is a strange thing.

Brood

Ben had never followed anyone before, but then, he'd never met anyone like him before either. That she was young, blonde, and pretty didn't hurt, but in truth that barely registered. He'd spotted her in the mall on his break, of all places, coming out of an upscale tea shop. A single look and he knew, just knew she was like him.

"You know, if you want to be more obvious, maybe you should just start yelling 'I'M FOLLOWING YOU'," said the blonde, stopping without turning around. A nearby sports car lock chirped off. The parking lot was

"You're like me," Ben said, hating how dumb he sounded. He'd been working on what to say since he spotted but none of it wanted to come out.

"Except I know the value of subtlety," the blonde said, turning to face him. Though shorter than he was, she loomed larger in his sight, and as he looked closer he saw her Soul, something huge and predatory shaped like the nightmare of a tiger. "You're too loud, kid."

"Kid?" Ben stiffened. "You're not much older than me."

"You're sweet to think so," she said, smiling a little. "Seriously, though. You're drawing too much attention. That's why we wanted to chat, before you bring Heroes down on us all."

"We?" Ben asked, looking around. As he watched, the shape of a man detached itself from a nearby light post, rapidly resolving into an older man in a sharp suit. Behind him, his Soul coiled in sinuous lengths beneath a vast head of dripping fangs. His mouth was set in a severe line and his eyes were narrowed suspiciously. The feeling of power coming off him struck Ben like the heat of a fire, and he instinctively stepped back.

"This isn't just your territory, you know," the blonde continued, as if nothing was wrong. "We've spent a lot of time building up our Lair, putting down roots, making sure things run smoothly around here."

"Then you come along," the older man said, each word as deliberate as a rock dropped in a pond, "and start lighting fires all over town. That, by the way, stops now."

"Lairs?" Ben thought of the dark water and rolling surf he'd learned to visit, the place where his Soul roiled beneath the waves when it wasn't out feeding. "You guys have places like that too?" Another thought caught hold of him. "And heroes? What do you mean, heroes?"

The blonde looked to the older man and something passed between them, though Ben couldn't quite catch it. "Not heroes, Heroes," she said after a moment, the capitalization clear in her inflection. "And yes, people like us all have our own places. Way you're going, you have to learn how to defend it, too." She put out her hand. "Hi. I'm Robin."

"Ben," he said, taking it.

"I'm James," the older man said, pointedly not offering his hand, though his look softened a fraction. "And it's about time you learned some things about the Family."

Chapter Three: Title

> *"Sometimes I think there's a beast that lives inside me, in the cavern that's where my heart should be, and every now and then it fills every last inch of my skin, so that I can't help but do something inappropriate. Its breath is full of lies; it smells of spite."*
>
> — *Jodi Picoult, Handle With Care*

The Begotten straddle the physical world and the world of human fears that lurk just beneath the subconscious. For all of their ties to the earliest, most primal and predatory concepts of life, they are complex creatures with motivations beyond their core drives. They may not be human, but they're still people.

With this system, we turn a raw idea for a character into a full-fledged Beast, defining her traits according to the game's rules. In the end, we'll know who she is and what she can do. The character sheet in the back of this book is your map to exploring your **Beast** character. We'll go through the basic steps from initial concept to final details necessary for play. Even then, many of these steps paint the character in broad strokes. It's up to you as a player to fill in the finer details as they arise over the course of play.

Step One: Character Concept

To begin, come up with a rough idea of who you want to play. Who was she before she discovered her connection to the Dark Mother? What did she do? While the Begotten are never really human to begin with, she did lead at least part of her life within the confines of human society, which shapes who she is now just as much as her birthright. Condense the core, driving aspects of your character into a short, succinct statement no longer than a sentence or two; ideally, a short phrase. Examples include "devoted stay-at-home parent," "disillusioned war veteran," "IT manager by day, drag king by night," and even simply "rock star." You can then draw inspiration from some of the tropes associated with these concepts, either playing the stereotype to the hilt or turning it on its head.

If you have trouble prioritizing certain aspects of character creation, go back to your concept and take the path that fits closest to the concept. For example, if you have a hard time deciding which Skills or Skill Specialties to select, ask yourself what a stay-at-home parent would need to know to take good care of his children, or what the war veteran learned in basic training or during her tours of duty.

During this phase, choose three Aspirations. Aspirations are goals, whether short-term or long-term, that you want your character to pursue during play. When choosing your character's Aspirations, choose one or two that reflect her Begotten existence. Does she want to become a

leader in her city? Does he want to find a find a new family after his birth family disowned him? Does she want earn her Incarnate Inheritance? In addition, choose at least one Aspiration pertaining to his associations with the mortal world. Does she want to keep her children safe? Does he want to finish his master's degree in astrophysics? Aspirations are one of the most important ways you can earn Beats and Experiences to advance your character. In addition, Aspirations clearly tell your Storyteller about the types of things you want your character to experience in the story she crafts. It's important the Storyteller takes note of all the troupe's Aspirations. This way, she can add hooks in the chronicle to touch on something for everyone.

Starting Aspirations can also help establish relationships in the members of a brood. For example, let's examine two characters in a starting brood. One has a Hunger for Punishment and another has a Hunger for Ruin. The Nemesis can have the starting short-term Aspiration "Destroy the drug dealer who killed my wife" while the Ravager has the long-term Aspiration "Destroy the illegal drug trade in the city." While the Aspirations of brood members don't have to dovetail perfectly, they can establish brood dynamics and jumpstart the chronicle.

Lastly, easy short-term Aspirations work well for story hooks, especially in the first session or two of play when everyone at the table is trying to feel out characters and story flow. Get the other players' characters involved in accomplishing your character's goals to help establish good group rapport both in and out of character.

If you're struggling with Aspirations, you can revisit this step later and use the selections you've made to come up with appropriate Aspirations for your character.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Now, we step into the most basic traits that define the character's capabilities. Attributes tell us how strong, how smart, how charismatic she is, either through raw, natural talent or cultivation through years of experience. Look at the three Attribute categories: Mental, Physical, and Social. Choose the category you think is most important for your character. That category gets five dots to distribute among the three Attributes associated with it. Then, choose which of the two remaining categories is more important than the other. The more important category gets four dots to distribute, while the final remaining category gets three.

As you'll see on your character sheet, your character gets one free dot in each Attribute. A single dot represents a deficient Attribute, where a character struggles with basic tasks associated with that Attribute. Having two dots in an Attribute represents average human ability. Three dots represents above average capability, with some additional training or just natural talent. Four dots is a remarkable specimen, a rarity among humankind even with training. Five dots is the pinnacle of human capability.

When selecting Attributes, consider how your character's distant birthright tries to shine through, or which of the three categories takes precedence with the day-to-day activities that go with your concept. Where is he exceptional? Where can he afford to be merely average? Is it appropriate to the concept to be deficient in a specific Attribute, and if so, where? Don't be afraid to give your

character room to grow as she advances through Beats and Experiences, even in the areas where she is most competent.

Step Three: Select Skills

Next, you'll select your character's Skills. These have the same categories: Mental, Physical, and Social. Similarly, you'll prioritize these three categories. Skills do not receive free dots. Your primary category gets eleven dots, the secondary category gets seven dots, and the tertiary category gets four dots. You can prioritize these three categories any way you wish, regardless of how you prioritized Attributes.

Think about your character's background as you're choosing Skills. Why does your character have the Skills she does? Use your concept to inform your selections for the Skills you have at higher levels, but also think about what happened in your character's past that contributed to their proficiencies. It stands to reason that the IT manager has at least a couple of dots in the Computers Skill, but what if he isn't as proficient as his resume leads others to believe and just aced the interview? He may be covering for himself with a few dots of Subterfuge.

One dot represents some basic skill and training. At two dots, you could conceivably make a living with that Skill. Having three dots represents extensive training and near-daily use. Four dots means you're a well-established expert and others seek you out for instruction or refinement of their own training. A character with five dots in a Skill demonstrates world-class ability; she's among the best of the best in her chosen field.

Step Four: Skill Specialties

Skill Specialties allow you to refine where your character truly shines in the Skills she possesses. Choose three Skill Specialties which give a narrower focus to the broader training or experience she has in a given Skill. Skill Specialties also Storytellers should take note where the player characters' Skill Specialties lie, since they will likely try to solve problems using those Specialties. A character with the Knives Specialty in the Weaponry Skill will fight differently than a character with the Polearms Specialty, and only one of those is particularly useful in a small, confined space. In addition, a character with the Mystery Cults Specialty in the Occult Skill will come by methods to summon the Dark Mother differently than a character with the Rituals Specialty. Whether such an endeavor is a wise idea, regardless of Specialties, is up for debate.

Step Five: Add Begotten Template

Family

A Beast's Family is the lineage from the Dark Mother from which she descends. This cannot change once play starts. Your choice of Family affects which Atavisms you will have an affinity with later. Look over the five Families: Anakim, Eshmaki, Makara, Namtaru, and Ugallu. Choose the one that calls to you instinctively for the character and the story you want to explore

with her. While playing into stereotypes works well, challenging established norms can also be very fulfilling. While the Anakim seems like a natural fit for a businesswoman dominating the corporate ranks, a Namtaru could provide a unique challenge to the same goal, rising through rough, indelicate efficiency more than outright subjugating those beneath her.

Hunger

Hunger is the way a Beast keeps her primal soul satisfied. While these Hungers don't automatically translate into a separate social group, Begotten with common Hungers tend to congregate with each other out of instinctual understanding. Look over the five Hungers: Hunger for Prey, Hunger for the Hoard, Hunger for Power, Hunger for Punishment, and Hunger for Ruin. As with Family, choose the one that calls to you instinctively for the character and the story you want to explore with her.

Legend and Life

A Beast's Legend describes the behavior her Soul urges her to pursue. It's the trait that illustrates her methods in fulfilling her Hunger and sets the expectation for what she will be known for in the future.

A Beast's Life is who she is behind closed doors, when dealing with private matters. It's the small part of her that ties her to the humanity. It's what her Soul can easily make her forget when her Hunger has not been satisfied.

For each of these traits, choose an adjective that best suits the character. We've provided a sample list you can choose from, or you may craft your own. If the Beast acts in accordance with her Legend and Life in certain ways, she can gain a Beat.

You can find more information on Legend and Life on p. XX.

[TABLE]

Legend and Life Examples

Legend

Relentless

Seductive

Unexpected

Vicious

Watchful

Life

Cautious

Honest

Loyal

Parental

Shy

[END TABLE

Kinship

Every Beast possesses Kinship. At the moment of their Homecoming, they all immediately gain access to a number of innate abilities that allow them to resist the effects of mundane diseases, traverse the Primordial Pathways (either alone or with another), recognize their kin in other supernatural creatures (no matter how distant the relation maybe), confer some of the Dark Mother's power to the monsters among them, and even gain power from another's hunt. All Beasts have these powers immediately, and as the Children grow stronger, so do the effects of their Kinship with other monsters. You can read more about the specific abilities Kinship confers on p. XX.

Soul

Your character's Soul is how he appears in the safety of his Lair. When characters see his aura, they see this manifestation of who he is inside, past the meat and bone of his human body. Describe your character's Soul in broad, evocative strokes; avoid creating an extensive catalogue of every scale, claw, or pustule. Give his skin texture. Point out key distinctive features, like fists as big as truck tires or painfully smooth facial symmetry.

Nightmares

Nightmares are the extensions of the Beast's Soul, reaching out into the world to terrify the mortal flock. Beasts may learn these Nightmares from other Children or adapt the abilities of other monsters to suit their needs.

Choose two starting Nightmares. If you start play with Kinship established with another supernatural creature, you may take a Kinship Nightmare based on that creature's type (such as vampire, werewolf, and the like) as one of your starting Nightmares.

Atavisms

Atavisms are the extensions of the Beast's Soul that the Eldest can manifest in the physical world. As the strength of her Lair increases, these manifestations grow more potent. Each Family has a high affinity for certain Atavisms. Choose two starting Atavisms. At least one of your starting Atavisms must be aligned with your Family. You can find more on Atavisms on p. XX.

Lair

Lair is a Beast's home in the Primordial Dream. She draws power from this place, and the potency of her Lair or the strength of her connection to her Lair determines how much of her Soul can hold sway in the physical world.

All Begotten start play with a free dot of Lair. You may use your Merit points to purchase one or two additional dots in Lair. Additional dots in Lair cost five Merit points each.

You automatically start with the Heart of your Lair, one additional Chamber, and a Burrow to connect the two. Choose two Lair Traits to describe your Lair, which you can use to impose environmental Tilts in the physical world. You have the option of not taking an additional Chamber in your Lair and gaining two Experiences to use elsewhere.

You can find more information on Lair on p. XX.

Step Six: Merits

Merits are additional advantages your character enjoys, such as a steady income, allies, contacts, unusual size, and the like. Choose ten dots' worth of Merits. The full list of Merits available is on pp. XX-XX.

Step Seven: Determine Advantages

Use the following rules to generate Advantages.

Willpower

Willpower is essential to a Beast. It keeps her Soul in control and fuels certain advantages. A Beast's Willpower score is equal to her Resolve + Composure dots.

Satiety

A Beast's Satiety score represents his ability to understand humankind, and reconcile his existence with it. All Beasts start play with at minimum Satiety of 2, but may have a maximum Satiety of 7.

Starting Satiety

These five questions will help you determine the starting Satiety score for your Beast character. In addition, they provide additional insight into how the character behaves on a daily basis. Beasts don't have breaking points in the same way mortals do; after all, human morality means remarkably little to the Children at large, even if an individual Beast still tries to cling to it. That said, a Beast still cares about many things, and seeking to protect what is important to him may lead him to do things outside his comfort zone.

Question 1: Who is your kin?

No matter who they might be, a Beast frequently has someone she can call family, whether it's her human family, fellow Children, or another supernatural creature with whom she shares Kinship. These individuals understand her on a deeper level, and she trusts them as confidantes,

even if they don't reciprocate that same trust in her. Those she considers family are worth fighting (and possibly killing) for, and an easy way to catch her off-guard is to threaten her family.

If your character considers another supernatural creature kin, take a point of Satiety, as they provide an additional source of Satiety beyond the normal hunt.

Question 2: Does your belly fill easily?

A Beast can sate his Hunger in many ways, either keeping it in check for long periods of time before devoting himself fully to one sitting with drastic results, or seeking multiple outlets at any given time. While preying on multiple individuals provides more opportunities for risk of the hunter response, larger, less frequent feasts that leave the Beast full to bursting significantly increases the chances of a survivor becoming a Hero or having a body to hide later on.

If you strive to sate your Hunger with small bites, as it were, take a point of Satiety, since you strive to consistently keep your Satiety at a steady level.

Question 3: Are you a social predator?

Every Beast hunts differently. Some prefer solitary pursuit of their prey, if only because their methods work best with only one predator involved. Others require the kind of silence that only one of the Children can provide. Still, hunting with a partner or a Brood makes a feast more likely and provides more opportunities to find the fears they crave. This works especially well for Beasts whose Hungers complement each other.

If you sate your Hunger in the company of other Children, take a point of Satiety. A full hunting party frequently has a higher success rate than hunting alone, and safety in numbers mitigates trouble later on, especially if a Hero takes notice.

Question 4: How frequently do you show your true self?

Sometimes, the Children find that showing bits and pieces of their true selves makes accomplishing their goals that much easier. After all, if one has an advantage, why not use it? Of course, this advantage does not come for free. Beasts who frequently activate Nightmares and Atavisms find themselves depleted more regularly, and thus have to hunt more frequently to maintain high Satiety.

If you save the manifestations of your true nature for rare occasions when you have little other choice, take a point of Satiety, as this behavior helps you conserve what you do have.

Question 5: How drawn to your Lair are you?

The longer a Beast lingers in the world, the more power she gains. Once she has her Homecoming, she cannot deny that part of herself that draws her to her Lair, no matter what she does. If her Homecoming was recent, she still feels a draw to her human self, and might be less inclined or even reluctant to let her inner self out.

If you start with a Lair of 1, take a point of Satiety, as the Children tend to become more active as they grow more powerful.

Others

A Beast's Defense score is equal to the lower of her Wits or Dexterity Attributes, plus her Athletics Skill. The default Size of a Beast is 5, though Merits may alter this. A Beast's Health is equal to her Size + Stamina, and her Speed is Strength + Dexterity +5. A Beast's base Initiative modifier is equal to her Dexterity + Composure.

Beast Creation Quick Reference

Here are the very basics for creating a Beast character.

Step One: Concept

Choose a concept. Come up with three Aspirations.

Step Two: Attributes

Prioritize categories. They receive 5/4/3 dots, distributed in any combination.

Step Three: Skills

Prioritize categories. They receive 11/7/4 dots, distributed however you wish.

Step Four: Skill Specialties

Choose three Skill Specialties.

Step Five: Add Begotten Traits

Choose Family, Hunger, Legend, Life, Kinship, Nightmares, Atavisms, and Lair.

Step Six: Add Merits

Select ten dots of Merits.

Step Seven: Advantages

Willpower is equal to Resolve + Composure. Humanity is 7. Size is 5. Health is Size + Stamina + Resilience.

Speed is Strength + Dexterity + 5. Defense is the lower of Dexterity and Wits, plus Athletics. Base Initiative modifier is Dexterity + Composure. Satiety is 2 + the results of the five questions on p. XX (maximum 7).

Experienced Beasts

Storytellers may choose to allow players to make more experienced characters to start play. These bonus Experiences allow characters to start beyond that level.

[I AM A TABLE]

Rank Bonus Experiences

Around the block 5

Terror of the Town 10

County Folklore 15

Urban Legend 25

Mover and Shaker 35

Ancient Legend 50

Eldest of the Eldest 100

[I AM NO LONGER A TABLE]

Begotten Template

Family

Anakim: Creatures of brutal dominance, the Giants feed on the hopelessness of encountering a vastly superior foe.

Eshmaki: Stealthy hunters, the Lurkers bring swift, concealed destruction that mankind cannot hope to protect against.

Makara: Born from the cradle of life that is the ocean, the Leviathans revel in drowning, pulling their prey down into a crushing embrace.

Namtaru: Creatures of terrible hideousness, the Gorgons embody the terror that can only come from revulsion.

Ugallu: Creatures of the air, the Raptors are the terrors in the sky, flying just out of reach until it's too late.

Hunger

Hunger for Prey: Predators increase their Satiety by pursuing and hunting down their chosen targets like hounds after foxes.

Hunger for the Hoard: Collectors increase their Satiety by amassing great quantities of a specific object, whatever the cost.

Hunger for Power: Tyrants increase their Satiety by exerting control over those around them so that even thinking of opposing them fills their lessers with dread.

Hunger for Punishment: Nemeses increase their Satiety by punishing others for their darkest, most profound misdeeds.

Hunger for Ruin: Ravagers increase their Satiety by driving others to their downfall, either directly or indirectly.

Lair

Lair starts at 1 dot. Additional dots may be purchased with five Merit points each. A maximum of two dots may be purchased in this way.

Nightmares

Common Nightmares: All Your Teeth Are Falling Out, Behold My True Form, Bugs Everywhere, Everything You Do Is Worthless, Fear Is Contagious, Flying and Falling, Run Away, They Are All Around You, You Are Alone, You Are Meat, You Are Not Alone, You Can't Wake Up, You Cannot Run, You Deserve This, You Must Obey, You Cannot Rest

Kinship Nightmares: You Are Infected, We Know All Your Secrets, Your Rage Consumes You, Your Tools Betray You, You Are Better Than Them, The Void Is Waiting, Everyone Hates You, You Cannot Kill It, You Are Lost, You Are an Impostor, Death Is a Prison, Tabula Rasa, Cursed Object, or create your own (see p. XX)

Atavisms

Anakim: Cyclopean Strength, Looming Presence, Mimir's Wisdom, Titanic Blow
Eshmaki: Dragonfire, From the Shadows, Limb From Limb, Relentless Hunter
Makara: Alien Allure, Embrace of the Deep, Heart of the Ocean, Siren's Treacherous Song
Namtaru: Basilisk's Touch, Infestation, Shadowed Soul, Unbreakable
Ugallu: Feral Cry, Needs Must, No Escape, Storm-Lashed

Experience Costs

Attribute: 4 Experiences per dot

Merit: 1 Experience per dot

Skill Specialty: 1 Experience

Skill: 2 Experiences per dot

Nightmares: 3 Experiences

In-Family Atavisms: 3 Experiences

Out-of-Family Atavisms: 4 Experiences

Lair: 5 Experiences per dot

Experience

A player earns Beats for his character in many ways (listed below). When your character earns five Beats, those Beats convert to one Experience, which can be used to improve your character's capabilities.

When spending Experiences, think of what your character has done in the course of play and what you would like your character to achieve in the course of play. Ideally, these things dovetail well together, with the Storyteller working in concert with the players to interweave the story with the characters' goals. If the story leads you to want to spend Experiences on something you or your character would not pursue independently, do it without hesitation. Use the opportunity to learn new things as a jumping-off point for your character to grow and gain new Aspirations as old ones get fulfilled or become obsolete.

Beats

Gaining Beats can happen as frequently or as rarely as the characters and the story allows. Here's a list of ways that characters can gain Beats in the course of play.

[I'VE GOT A LITTLE LIST]

If your character fulfills an Aspiration, take a Beat. At the end of the game session, replace the Aspiration you fulfilled with a new one.

Each Condition has criteria for resolution. Take a Beat when you resolve a Condition.

Some Conditions provide Beats for actions other than resolution. When you perform those actions, take a Beat.

Any time you fail a roll, you may opt to make it a dramatic failure and take a Beat.

If your character takes damage in one of her rightmost Health boxes, take a Beat.

At the end of any game session, take a Beat.

When acting in accordance with your Legend or Life (see below), take a Beat.

When your character reaches the Low Satiety Threshold, take a Beat.

[SEE? JUST A LITTLE LIST. IT'S DONE NOW.]

Example of Character Creation

Magda is making a character for her friend Orson's **Beast** game. Orson has told the other players in advance that he wants to explore the concept of family and what that means. He's set up a chronicle based in what looks like a normal suburb, complete with white picket fences and PTA meetings. It's a perfect hiding place for a brood of Children (the players' characters) to set up, inciting and feeding on the mundane fears and terrors of its residents. When Orson first hears

Magda's idea, he likes it, but seems a little unconvinced about how it'll mesh with the rest of the group. Still, he allows it anyway to see what Magda does with it.

Step One: Concept and Aspirations

Magda lays out her concept: "Mrs. Winters, the whole neighborhood's grandmother." She watches over some of the neighborhood kids after school to help supplement that social security check that only stretches so far every month. She's likely been in the neighborhood the longest out of all of the Children, but came into her Homecoming late in life after her own children were grown.

Magda has at least one Aspiration ready to go for her character: learn more about her Begotten nature and figure out why (and how) she managed to hold it back for so long. Other Aspirations don't come to her quite as easily, though, so she opts to go back to it later on in the creation process if something strikes her.

Step Two: Attributes

Magda takes a look at the three categories of Attributes and chooses them backwards. She knows Mrs. Winters probably won't have significant physical power, so she assigns three dots to her Physical Attributes, assigning two dots to Dexterity and one dot to Stamina. Mrs. Winters can knit like the wind and get about without tiring herself out to easily, but her bones aren't what they used to be.

Magda then reviews her Social and Mental Attributes. Magda opts to prioritize Social Attributes over Mental, assigning them five dots and four dots respectively. She assigns two dots to her character's Presence, one dot to Manipulation, and two dots to Composure. Mrs. Winters is a charming old lady who keeps her cool, but doesn't have much need to get by on lying or misleading people (yet).

Finally, Magda comes to her character's Mental Attributes. She allocates one dot in Intelligence, two dots in Wits, and one dot in Resolve. Mrs. Winters was never a genius, but she can think fast when something goes wrong. Still, she won't say no to sampling a cookie or two before the bake sale starts.

When Magda finishes allocating her Attribute dots, Mrs. Winters has Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 1, Dexterity 3, and Stamina 2.

Step Three: Skills

Magda immediately assigns top priority to Mental Skills, followed by Social Skills, then Physical Skills.

For Mental Skills, Magda puts three dots in Crafts, two dots in Medicine, two dots in Investigation (for sussing out the neighborhood gossip), two dots in Politics from visiting all those open city council meetings, one dot into Computers so she can use that fancy laptop her

son gave her, and a dot of Occult to represent what she has learned so far about her nature as one of the Children.

For Social Skills, Magda allocates two dots to Socialize, two dots to Empathy, one dot to Expression (best used for reading stories out loud at the library), one dot to Persuasion, and one dot to Subterfuge for all the little white lies she has to tell ("Of course there's a Santa Claus. Don't be silly.").

For Physical Skills, Magda puts one dot in Drive, one dot in Athletics, and one dot in Brawl to represent the t'ai chi class Mrs. Winters takes to keep herself fit (quite valid if she does the moves at full speed). Magda puts the final dot in Weaponry because knitting needles make a fine weapon in a pinch. Orson shifts uncomfortably when Magda says that.

The dots in Politics make Magda go back to the Aspirations she has for Mrs. Winters, to which she adds, "Prevent the city council from rezoning and demolishing the neighborhood." Orson grins widely and takes some notes.

When Magda finishes allocating her Skill dots, Mrs. Winters has Crafts 3, Computers 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics 2, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 1, and Weaponry 1.

Step Four: Skill Specialties

Magda picks the Knitting specialty for Crafts, because it came up twice already. She also takes the Local specialty for Politics, because it dovetails well with her recently-chosen Aspiration. For her third specialty, Magda chooses Sympathetic Ear as an Empathy specialty, representing that Mrs. Winters makes a wonderful confidante for her neighbors, who share their opinions on the other neighbors and their deepest fears for the future.

Step Five: Add Begotten Template

Right now, Mrs. Winters looks like a sweet, benign old lady who just wants to protect her neighborhood. At this stage, Magda adds the details that make her not so benign.

Magda chooses the Eshmaki as Mrs. Winters' Family. The more Magda has thought about the character, the more she sees Mrs. Winters claiming her Birthright when her husband died and her children left the nest. The echoing darkness of the empty house haunted her dreams, especially the impossibly quick scrabbling of claws on the hardwood floors. Finally, she listened very hard, cutting through the echoes to follow the sounds. This led to her Lair, where she realized the scrabbling sound was her own long, curled toenails along the floor, and she claimed her Birthright as one of the Lurkers.

Magda chooses the Hunger for Punishment for Mrs. Winters, letting her seep into the dreams of those who confide in her, berating them for their failings and filling them with the terror of their secrets being discovered. While Mrs. Winters won't outwardly judge those who confide in her, in the Primordial Dream, she stalks them, never letting them rest comfortably while they try to hide

their illicit affairs, abuses, and other guilty pleasures. She feasts on the rotting underneath the surface of her pristine neighborhood, and her victims can't hide from her. Ever. Orson points out that she could also use it to sate herself on the children who misbehave under her watch, if she so chooses. The rest of the players at the table shift uncomfortably in their seats, which inspires Mrs. Winters' third Aspiration: protect the children in the neighborhood at all costs, even from themselves.

Magda gives Mrs. Winters the Judgmental Legend, while taking the Maternal Life. They make far too much sense with traits in Mrs. Winters' character that Magda has already established. Magda then starts to describe Mrs. Winters' Soul. Long, ragged fingernails and toenails immediately come to mind to start with, and Magda draws the rest from traits she notices in elderly people and turns them up to the extreme. With her small frame, Magda pictures Mrs. Winters as a hunched-over sack of skin and bones with little to no fat stores, scant-looking musculature, pale, clammy, paper-thin skin, and filmy, cataractous eyes. After all, with such a dark Lair, who needs to see? Magda makes a note to herself that this might manifest in Mrs. Winters' physical body as deteriorating eyesight. Orson warns her that he might give Mrs. Winters the Blind Condition later on in game as a result, which Magda accepts.

Mrs. Winters only gets a single dot of Lair, since she only recently claimed her Birthright. She takes both the Heart and an additional Chamber in her Lair, just to have the additional security if a Hero wanders in. Magda chooses Echoing and Darkness as her Lair Traits, emulating the empty house that awakened her Soul. She also tries not to notice Orson scratching out a few lines in his plot notes as a result.

Nightmares and Atavisms are almost too easy for Magda to choose. She takes two common Nightmares: You Deserve This and You Are Not Alone. For Mrs. Winters' Atavisms, Magda selects Camouflage and Dash. This makes her revisit her Skill selections, and she removes the dot she put in Athletics and allocates it to Stealth in order to better take advantage of her Atavisms.

Step Six: Merits

The additional details Magda established previously makes Merit selection easy. Magda takes two dots of Resources (from her social security check and her side business of watching the neighborhood kids), Small-Framed (which costs two dots), Common Sense (which costs three dots), one dots of Allies for her connections on the city council, one dot of Contacts for her neighbors, and one dot of Contacts for the city offices to collect information.

Step Seven: Advantages

Magda does a bit of quick math to determine the rest. Mrs. Winters' Speed is 4 (Size) + 1 (Strength) + 3 (Dexterity), which equals 8. Defense is the lower of Dexterity and Wits (both are 3), plus Athletics, which is at 0 because Magda swapped out Athletics for Stealth, so her Defense is 3. Base Initiative modifier is 3 (Dexterity) + 3 (Composure), which equals 6.

Magda then digs into the five questions to determine her starting Satiety.

Question 1: Who is your kin?

Mrs. Winters has no Kinship to start with. Magda wracks her brain to think of a way to pre-establish Kinship, but nothing seems to fit well for her, even when Orson offers to make one of her neighbors a mage. Magda opts not to try to shoe-horn getting an extra point of Satiety from that question.

Question 2: Does your belly fill easily?

Mrs. Winters' position as the neighborhood grandmother figure provides ample opportunities to find potential meals. Since she knows where all of her victims live and they're all relatively close to her, she can easily linger in the dreams of multiple offenders in a single day, taking only a little from each one. After all, they're only children. Magda easily takes a point of starting Satiety when answering this question.

Question 3: Are you a social predator?

Magda decides that Mrs. Winters is disinclined to hunt with other Begotten, especially since her primary target is children. She would rather not deal with the judgmental attitudes that might. The snickering from the other players at the hypocrisy in Mrs. Winters' stance is reward enough for Magda to not take the point of Satiety for the third question.

Question 4: How frequently do you show your true self?

Mrs. Winters probably shows her true nature a little more than she should, especially using her Nightmares to keep unruly children in line. By Magda's logic, if she "scares them straight" early on, she can spend less time actually having to watch the children and more time knitting.

Question 5: How drawn to your Lair are you?

This one is a no-brainer. With Mrs. Winters' Lair at 1, Magda takes an additional point of Satiety, though she admits that with her answer to the fourth question, Mrs. Winters is settling quite nicely into her true self as one of the Children and will be drawn much more deeply to her Lair in the future.

Answering the questions sets Mrs. Winters' starting Satiety at 4. She's about middling, but she could stand to feed soon. With herself, the Storyteller, and the rest of the players well and truly spooked, Magda now has a fully developed player character for **Beast**.

Legend/Life

Each Beast has two core aspects of herself that govern the balance she strikes between her horrific nature as an offspring of the Mother of Monsters and what endears humanity to her (or endears her to humanity). These core aspects are called Legend and Life.

Legend

Legend represents the expectation of a given Beast's behavior as one of the Begotten. This single adjective illustrates the style in which a Beast sates her Hunger. If someone who encountered one of the Begotten in dreams had to describe the most terrifying aspect of the Beast's personality in a single word, that word would correspond to her Legend. This behavior defines the Beast in question to a fault; such a trait is so ingrained in her nature that she will behave accordingly, even to her detriment. Canny Heroes can even use this tendency against their quarry, predicting her next move or luring her into a trap by encouraging or enabling that behavior.

Your character regains a point of Willpower when she reveals her primordial nature to another to scare, impress, convince him to assist her. Successfully activating a Nightmare or acting in accordance with her Legend without supernatural aid could both qualify for regaining the point of Willpower, depending on the context of the scene. However, unfurling one's claws to scare a complete stranger just to regain a point of Willpower could have unforeseen circumstances.

Your character regains all her Willpower when she acts according to her Legend even if she knows it will endanger herself or alienate her loved ones. The expectation that monsters in folklore can dependably act in a certain way comes from this tendency. While the Children can play up their Legend intentionally, they find it remarkably easy to do so. To them, it's their first instinct; it's just what they would do, regardless of the consequences. If the bar patron mentioned above is the Begotten's abusive and creepy supervisor at her day job and she unfurls her claws with the express purpose of scaring him straight, she risks her job and her livelihood in human society, but she still plays to her nature.

> Beasts Behaving Badly
>
> Players may see using their characters' Legend as a quick and easy way to regain Willpower that requires little effort and gives them a chance to revel in their characters' otherness. For some games where Willpower fluctuates just as much as Satiety and the players want to explore that as an ongoing theme, that works just fine. That said, acting downright beastly for a quick hit of Willpower can (and should) have consequences that reach out further than the scene. Indeed, those consequences could even become more costly than the situation that triggered the action in the first place. Keep this in mind when looking for ways to regain Willpower via your Legend, or when Storytelling for players looking to regain Willpower this way.

The examples below provide situations where a Beast might regain Willpower by acting in accordance with her Legend. These are guidelines, and the other players around the table, especially the Storyteller, have final say on what behavior or acts constitute appropriate triggers for regaining Willpower.

Examples for Legend

Judgmental: Regain one point of Willpower if your character openly passes judgment on another that fills the target with shame for what they've done, regardless of whether or not it was

the right thing to do. Regain all points of Willpower if that passing of judgment drives a rift between yourself and another character in the scene.

Relentless: Regain one point of Willpower if your character doggedly pursues a target who knows he has someone following him. Regain all points of Willpower if she knows that by pursuing him, she is running right into danger, such as a Hero's path or a police blockade.

Unexpected: Regain one point of Willpower when your character reveals her presence to someone who thinks she is nowhere near him. Regain all points of Willpower if she startles a whole room of people previously unaware of her presence.

Seductive: Regain one point of Willpower when your character lures someone closer to him and she comes to him, even against her better judgment or her own personal tastes. Regain all points of Willpower when your character lures someone closer to him who he knows has had the hunter-response before or is in the company of a known Hero.

Vicious: Regain one point of Willpower when your character goes over-the-top in hurting someone, whether physically or emotionally, such as breaking both arms of a victim when a verbal threat would get the desired response or revealing knowledge of shameful secrets. Regain all points of Willpower when doing this with witnesses who are neutral or sympathetic to the victim, or the witnesses are loved ones who know little to nothing of who the Beast in their midst really is.

Watchful: Regain one point of Willpower when your character, while not revealing himself, makes it clear to another character in the scene that she is not alone. Regain all points of Willpower if someone discovers your presence despite all efforts to remain unseen.

Life

A Beast's Life describes the aspect of her personality that maintains her ties to the human life she once led. If she completely lost herself to her primordial nature, this would be the last recognizably human trait left to her. These traits lend the Children some sympathy in the eyes of humanity. It might even give a young, inexperienced Hero pause when confronted with their first prospective kill, which serves the Children well in their own defense. A classic example of Life is Grendel's mother protecting her injured son when Beowulf comes to their lair to kill him.

Your character regains a point of Willpower if she acts in accordance with her Life in a supernatural situation. When dealing with unusual circumstances, such as encountering things that the normal consensus of reality deems impossible, a Beast's Legend seems a more natural response. Instead, when calling on her Life, the Beast, for a time, rejects the notion that she is a slave to her more primal impulses, which can make her a more sympathetic creature. It may even save her life in the long run.

Your character regains all of her Willpower if she acts according to her Life instead of being the primordial terror the world expects. In all the old stories, the hero always wins against the unequivocally evil monster. Instead, your character bucks that narrative. Selfless acts that paint

the Begotten in a better light than the enemies she faces definitely qualify for regaining all Willpower, as do actions that deny a Hero his chance to prove himself as the bastion of all that is right and good, either in word or deed.

> Good Story for Who?
>
> When acting according to his Life to regain full Willpower, the Beast rejects the notion that he should just act what humanity defines as monstrous because his nature is decidedly not human. The ethics and morality of humankind can and do still resonate with the Children. Ideally, embodying one's Life creates a compelling story that not only benefits the player taking the action, but, at the very least, does not inconvenience the other players at the table to such a degree that it makes the game no longer fun.

The examples below provide situations where a Beast might regain Willpower by acting in accordance with her Life. These are guidelines, and the other players around the table, especially the Storyteller, have final say on what behavior or acts constitute appropriate triggers for regaining Willpower.

Examples for Life

Parental: Regain one point of Willpower when you step forward to protect an innocent creature, keeping in mind that "innocent" may simply mean "having no part in the current conflict." Regain all points of Willpower when you take care of a creature, whether young or injured, that either others could use to get to you, or could herself cause you great harm when she recovers or matures.

Shy: Regain one point of Willpower when you opt not to reveal your nature when doing so could reap significant benefits, such as gaining an ally or Kinship. Regain all points of Willpower when your taciturn demeanor gives your enemies pause or makes them think they incorrectly perceived the threat you pose.

Cautious: Regain one point of Willpower when your prudent behavior helps you dodge a bullet, such as revealing your nature as one of the Children before a vampire attempts to drain you dry. Regain all points of Willpower when this caution urges you to do unto others before they do unto you, such shooting your enemy while he distracts himself with his own heroic monologue challenging you to single combat.

Loyal: Regain one point of Willpower when your refusal to betray a human loved one puts you at a small discomfort or inconvenience, such as undergoing torture when you refuse to give up the location of another Beast's Lair. Regain all points of Willpower when you refuse to fight a loved one with whom you have triggered the hunter response or selflessly put yourself in dire harm's way to protect another.

Honest: Regain one point of Willpower when you reveal an uncomfortable truth about the supernatural world, such as the existence of other supernatural creatures, your own nature and

fallibility as one of the Begotten, or a moment of failure. Regain all points of Willpower when confessing your reluctance to fight or an intimate secret to the Hero that has just cornered you.

Selfless: Regain one point of Willpower when you go out of your way to help someone in need, such as giving your last dollar until payday to a homeless stranger. Regain all points of Willpower when you risk a substantial part of yourself, even your own life, for the greater good, such as throwing yourself between peaceful protesters and a SWAT team with a propensity for excessive violence.

Kinship

Apart from the bonds of Family, the advantages of Atavisms, and the limitless potential of Nightmares, Beasts also possess a number of innate traits as a result of their ties to the Soul — and through it, to the Dark Mother herself. Collectively referred to as Kinship, the Children see these attributes as extensions of their mythic lineage, and even the most reluctant Beast must admit they offer some powerful benefits, particularly when Heroes come calling.

Kinship is also important when it comes to dealing with the younger "siblings" of the Children, namely the other supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness. By calling on their common ancestry, Beasts become incredibly good at sniffing out supernatural beings and building ties with them.

> **A Question of Lineage**
>
> A number of Kinship abilities function differently based on whether a target is considered to be descended from the Dark Mother, or is "merely" a fundamentally human being with supernatural powers.
>
> **Descended from the Dark Mother:** Vampires, werewolves, changelings, Prometheans, Sin Eaters, mummies, inhuman spirits. In general, any being that was never human, or was human but has since been totally transformed into or merged with a supernatural being, falls into this category.
>
> **Fundamentally Human:** Mages, psychics, mediums, and ghosts. As a rule, any character who can be described with "mostly human, but" falls into this category.
>
> **Kinship Does Not Apply:** Demons, as described in **Demon: The Descent**.

Thicker Than Water

Beasts have a natural affinity, not just with each other, but with all children of the Dark Mother. This doesn't guarantee peace or goodwill by any means, but it certainly does go a long way toward allaying the natural fear and suspicions that many supernatural beings have when they're approached by someone they don't know who also seems to know their big secret. Especially when that person turns out to be something they most likely have never encountered in the past ... and if anyone fits that description, it's a Beast.

Effect: Unless she acts in a hostile fashion, treats the target poorly, or abuses their relationship, your character is considered to begin with at least a good impression for the purposes of Social maneuvering when it comes to other supernatural beings, including other Beasts. Thicker Than Water applies normally to fundamentally human types such as mages and psychics, but only bestows an average impression instead of a good one.

A Beast may even attempt to use Social maneuvering against feral supernatural beings, though what she can accomplish is much more limited — asserting dominance as a pack leader or discouraging rivals by presenting as a superior predator might be possible, for instance, but enacting a sophisticated attack plan is asking too much of a feral intelligence. The Beast adds her current Satiety rating to all Social maneuvering rolls with beings of this type.

Thicker Than Water does not apply to the Unchained (as described in **Demon: The Descent**).

New Condition

Social maneuvering is also the primary path to placing the Family Ties Condition on a target, which in turn grants a number of benefits to various Kinship mechanics. Note that if more than one character in a brood wishes to establish Family Ties with the same character, they must each do so individually, but each member of the Brood that already has this Condition established with the character in question adds one die to all relevant rolls for his fellow members, cumulatively.

With regard to other player characters, the target may choose to accept the Family Ties Condition, or she may decide the Beast must use Social maneuvering. Even if the target is willing, the two still must spend considerable time together, endure common hardship, hunt together, or otherwise become close before this Condition can be applied.

Placing the Family Ties Condition is also a requirement for a Beast to create custom Nightmares based on that target's nature and supernatural powers, which offers a potent incentive for the Children to cultivate these connections.

It is worth noting that the relationship does not have to be affectionate or even friendly for this Condition to apply; all it requires is that the Beast and the target be close. Associates, rivals, or even genial enemies thus potentially qualify for this condition as well, though it will likely be significantly harder to maintain more hostile connections.

Family Ties (Persistent)

Your character has become closely bonded to a Beast, and finds great (if sometimes grudging) strength in that connection. While in his immediate presence, she may use the Beast's relevant Resistance trait value instead of her own when defending against supernatural powers. In return, both she and the Beast receive a +1 on any rolls made to directly assist each other, or as part of teamwork actions undertaken together. You may have this Condition with multiple Beasts simultaneously.

Resolution: Your character severs her association with the Beast.

Beat: Your character encounters trouble with others of her kind, or forsakes an important obligation to her supernatural culture, due to her connection with the Beast.

Family Resemblance

Though their family tree may be gnarled, twisted, and blasted, the Children still recognize their supernatural cousins, no more how distant the tie may be. A Beast instinctively senses another Beast on sight, and can intuitively sense the shape of their Soul. This recognition is automatic and requires no roll unless the other Beast is using some kind of supernatural ability to conceal their nature, in which case it becomes a Clash of Wills. If a Beast wishes to gain more information, she must spend a moment intensely studying the other Beast, at which time the player may roll this ability normally.

Detecting a vampire, werewolf, changeling, or other full-fledged supernatural being is relatively easy for a Beast, and happens reflexively if the Beast is physically in their presence. A roll is automatic unless the target is hiding their nature with supernatural means, in which case the Beast must win a Clash of Wills before using Family Resemblance. Each Beast processes this recognition sensation slightly differently — as scents, as sounds, as visual phenomena, etc. — but each creature type is always distinctive. A Beast might taste ashes in her mouth for vampires, for example, smell freshly turned earth around Sin-Eaters, and hear a single discordant chime for changelings.

Individuals who are fundamentally human but still wield supernatural power — such as mages, psychics, and mediums— are harder to detect, though it's still possible. Some Beasts claim such talents must stem from a tie to the Dark Mother somewhere in the target's ancestry, however distant, while others claim it is simply the Soul stirring in the presence of supernatural ability. Regardless of the reason behind it, a Family Resemblance roll is still automatic; however, if the individual has not used his abilities in the same scene as where the Beast encountered him, subtract his Integrity rating from the roll as well. If he does not have an Integrity score, its analogue may be substituted instead.

Family Resemblance does not detect spirits, ghosts, or other ephemeral beings unless they're using the Materialize Manifestation. Nonhuman spirits are treated as full-fledged supernatural beings, while ghosts are considered to fall in the fundamentally human category. Ghosts may add their Integrity when applicable, and do not count Materialize as a recent use of a supernatural power in terms of being detected. Use of any other Manifestation or any Numina does count, however.

It is important to note that while Family Resemblance does identify creature type with a fair degree of specificity — "vampire," "mage," "werewolf," etc. — it does not explain anything more about that creature type, their organization, their strengths or weaknesses, and so on. That is for the Beast to learn, but at least she won't be starting completely in the dark.

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Lair – target's Composure

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target is aware that he is being observed, and takes an instant dislike to the Beast. He is treated as hostile to the Beast for the purposes of Social maneuvering, and while he won't necessarily act violently, he regards the Beast with deep suspicion at least, and generally assume the worst about her intentions.

Failure: The Beast learns nothing about the target.

Success: The Beast is aware of the type of creature she is looking at, as well as his approximate power level (expressed by their Supernatural Tolerance rating). She is also roughly aware of how "well fed" the creature currently is, in terms of his current power currency reserves (Blood, Glamour, etc.). With regard to another Beast, this extra scrutiny allows her to identify her target's Family as well as a rough idea of his Satiety level.

Exceptional Success: As above, plus the Beast instinctively knows the general nature of the target's most powerful supernatural talent: "gifted at mind control," "extremely hard to injure," "transforms physical matter with ease," etc. If the target has several equally powerful talents, the one he used most recently is detected. This heightened insight into the target's nature also removes two Doors on the next Social maneuver the Beast makes against the target. If the target is another Beast, the user learns his Hunger and receives a brief vision of the appearance of his Lair, including how many Chambers it contains.

> **Rage and the Machines**
>
> The demonic entities that call themselves the Unchained present a strange case to the Begotten. They are most decidedly not descended from the Dark Mother, for one, and meetings between demons and Beasts tend to be result in swift and sometimes brutal displays of dominance. Family Resemblance still has a chance to detect them, but first the demon has a chance to "spoof" identification as a supernatural being (**Demon: The Descent,** p. 112).
>
> Even if the Beast manages to penetrate this defense, treat an exceptional success on the Family Resemblance roll as regular success. To complicate matters further, the demon is automatically aware that her nature has been revealed, and an immediate Clash of Wills ensues as the ancient bloodline of the Dark Mother clashes with the alien will of the God-Machine. This is reflected as a roll of the Beast's Lair vs. the demon's Primum (Supernatural Tolerance) rating.
>
> If the Beast's player rolls more successes, the Beast's predatory nature asserts itself and the demon gains the Shaken Condition. If the demon's player scores more successes, the Beast feels drained and gains the Leveraged Condition. In addition, he must reveal some important personal information — home address, personal number or email account, place of employment, etc. — that the demon learns from her momentary connection. If they are tied for successes, both the Beast and the Demon gain the Spooked Condition with regard to the other.

Even if they manage to get past this initial difficulty, Beasts and demons face some obstacles as allies. A Beast cannot place the Family Ties Condition on a demon, and cannot bestow the Mother's Kiss on her. For their part, demons often see little practical benefit to working with the Children — chief among the problems being that they cannot forge a pact with a Beast. Period. Any attempt to forge a pact always fails, with full costs paid but no benefit to either side.

Exactly why the Begotten and the Unchained are so viciously at odds is a matter of conjecture — demons don't seem interested in discussing it on those rare occasions they can be located without bloodshed, and if the Dark Mother knows, she hasn't shared it with her children. In the meantime, the two sides generally do their best to avoid attracting each other's notice.

Mother's Kiss

Having the blood of the Dark Mother in their veins isn't just a blessing for Beasts — they can also exploit the primal power it contains to boost the capabilities of other supernatural creatures. Beasts call this ability the "Mother's Kiss" and its potency is often enough to sway dubious supernatural allies — not to mention terrorize their common enemies.

In order to bestow the Mother's Kiss, a Beast must be in the presence of her target — the two can be separated by walls, but must be in the same immediate area. (Distance and barriers may impose penalties on the roll, however, at the Storyteller's discretion.) The Beast must shed some of her own blood as she says the target's name. Any amount of blood will do — a bitten lip, a scratched arm — but it must be shed as the name is spoken.

If Mother's Kiss is successful, the target feels a sudden rush of power. Each individual perceives it a bit differently, but whether it's an electric surge on their skin, a swirl of light, the sound of a great beast roaring, or some other sensation, the effect is always pronounced and unmistakable.

A target may only be under the effect of one use of Mother's Kiss at a time. He cannot receive another use until he has expended the dice from the current usage. Any unused benefits from this ability are lost at the end of the scene — they cannot be "banked" for later.

While still potent, the Mother's Kiss has notably less of an effect as a target grows more powerful. Explanations for this vary, but it seems as though the more "established" the target has become in their monstrous nature, the less the raw power of this ability is able to affect them.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Stamina + Satiety – target's Supernatural Tolerance. If a target of Mother's Kiss has the Family Ties Condition with the Beast, the Beast adds three dice to her pool.

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Beast not only fails to boost a target's powers, but loses 1Satiety as her Soul rebels against being ordered about in this fashion. In addition, the target suffers a dramatic failure on the next use of a supernatural power this scene (the target receives a Beat when this happens). He may not receive another use of Mother's Kiss until after this failure occurs.

Failure: The Beast fails to augment the target's powers.

Success: The target gains a pool of dice equal to the number of the Beast's successes. For the rest of the scene, he may add these dice to any roll for a supernatural power. Dice must be allocated before a roll is made; they cannot be added afterward. Once dice are used, they are removed from this pool. If a power does not require a roll, at her discretion the Storyteller may allow it to receive a narrative benefit based on the number of dice expended — the more dice spent, the greater the benefit potentially generated.

Exceptional Success: As above, plus the target immediately refreshes 1 Willpower point, plus an additional Willpower point for every success above five. This may take her over her normal Willpower maximum, though not beyond ten Willpower points total. Any excess Willpower points are lost at the end of the current scene.

Passing Resemblance

Though the Children often form bonds with their younger siblings, other members of the same supernatural community can be extremely aggressive when it comes to outsiders entering their culture. Passing Resemblance allows a Beast to defuse some of these suspicions by registering as a particular type of supernatural creature, provided she has bonded with a member of that community.

This ability can be invaluable in passing through dangerous territory or escaping immediate harm or suspicion upon meeting other supernatural beings, but it is not without its risks. The deception does not bestow any new capabilities, for one, so unless she has powers of her own that allow her to match them, a Beast mingling with werewolves is going to have trouble blending in if her contacts all shift into wolves and expect her to join them. A Beast who intends to hide out among another supernatural population is thus advised to avoid situations that call for capabilities she does not possess, and would be wise to cultivate powers that mimic those of the "natives."

On a social level, most supernatural communities are secretive by nature and do not take kindly to being "infiltrated" — the longer the Beast maintains her charade, the more harder it may be to explain to her allies why they shouldn't consider her a serious threat to their safety when her cover is finally blown. Not to mention that depending on how the truth comes to light, it may be very difficult for her allies to trust her going forward.

Effect: A Beast must have Family Ties with a supernatural creature of the type she wishes to resemble, and spend 1 Willpower point to activate Passing Resemblance for a scene. During that time, her appearance does not change, but she is detected as a supernatural creature of that type by any applicable powers or senses. This ability may be ended at any time as a reflexive action, but cannot be used again until the next scene.

Passing Resemblance automatically fools passive abilities that identify creature type, such as a vampire's instinctual recognition of another vampire. If the Beast is actively scanned with a supernatural power that could potentially reveal the deception, it becomes a Clash of Wills. Note that the power must specifically identify creature types to qualify. A werewolf sniffing the Beast with heightened senses would not necessarily have a chance to break Passing Resemblance, unless he can normally detect supernatural creatures by scent with that power.

If a Beast has a high Satiety rating (7+), this deception also includes superficial but convincing illusory elements such as turning pale and appearing not to breathe while imitating a vampire, for example, or even projecting a crude fae mien (based on the Soul) to pass among changelings. These changes are entirely illusory and convey no real benefit — the Beast may not appear to breathe, for example, but she still requires oxygen. The Storyteller has the final say on what sort of changes are allowed, but these changes will never disguise the Beast's basic appearance or project radical changes to her size and shape.

Family Dinner

One thing that Beasts understand better than any other monster alive is the nature of Hunger — while other creatures feel the need to hunt and feed, a Beast *is* her need. This fundamental connection connects the Children with all of their younger siblings, and allows them to satisfy some of the endless demands of the Soul by accompanying other supernatural creatures as they fulfill their own dark appetites. Doing so can be difficult, even dangerous work, but it allows the Beast to appease their Hunger less directly than normal, which can be a welcome relief all its own.

System: In order to use Family Dinner, a Beast must accompany a supernatural being as he hunts, feeds, or ideally both. It doesn't matter whether it's a vampire thirsting after blood, a werewolf stalking an intruder in his territory, or a changeling feeding on human emotions, so long as he is actively tracking prey and/or taking sustenance from a hunt. The Storyteller has the final say on whether or not an activity counts, but it must involve a monster's supernatural nature or appetites directly; mundane hunting or feeding does not invoke Family Dinner.

If the Beast witnesses a successful hunt — one that results in taking down the intended quarry, either literally or figuratively — she immediately regains 1 Satiety. If she observes a successful feeding, she also gains 1 Satiety. These benefits are cumulative, so a hunt that also results in a feeding nets 2 Satiety total. The actual number of creatures involved in the scene does not matter — the Satiety gained is based on the acts witnessed, not the number of participants.

Note that the Beast does not need to make her presence known to the other supernatural being in order for Family Dinner to apply — viewing the act directly is sufficient. Each successful use of Family Dinner removes one Door on an effort to place Family Ties on a target, to a maximum of the Beast's Composure rating. When it comes to getting to know someone, few methods are better than seeing how he chooses to sate his appetites, after all.

If the Beast has the Family Ties Condition with at least one monster involved in Family Dinner, she adds one Satiety to the overall total gained from the experience. A Beast may always choose to regain fewer points of Satiety from a hunt than the possible maximum, if she wishes to "stay hungry" for the scene.

As potent as this ability is, it does have certain key restrictions. Tame targets such as vampiric minions who willing allow themselves to be "hunted" do not qualify as proper targets for Family Dinner, as the hunt must be genuine. Feeding from willing victims can qualify, but not feeding from storage vessels such as refrigerated blood or mystical energy containers. In addition, remote observation or watching recordings after the fact does not carry the necessary visceral connection for this ability to function — the Beast must be physically present, even if hidden.

The Horrors Just Off the Path

As the masters of the Primordial Pathways, Beasts enjoy a nearly unmatched freedom to wander the different planes of existence, and find very few things that can keep them out if they desire entrance. Just as their Soul casts its shadow over them, so too does it cast a long shadow over the worlds beyond, a fact that the Begotten can use to their advantage to command respect among even the strangest denizens of the spirit world.

Home Sweet Home

Though many strange and terrible entities call themselves masters of different planes of existence, the children of the Dark Mother receive respect no matter where they travel. What's more, they are equally at home in the strangest dimensions, able to navigate harsh environments, alien landscapes, and even non-Euclidean realities with relatively little strain.

Effect: A Beast does not suffer detrimental effects from any "natural" environmental conditions of a particular plane of existence. In effect, he is treated as a native of whatever plane he is on — if a particular condition does not bother the natives, it does not bother the Beast either. He is also considered capable of moving at his normal rate in the natural terrain as well, in the fashion of natives if necessary: burrowing, swimming, flying, etc.

This ability does not grant any new true powers or capabilities beyond the minimum for simple survival and basic movement. A Beast that travels to a vast undersea realm would not drown, for example, nor would he suffer from normal levels of cold or pressure that natives typically encounter, but he also would not suddenly grow fins or swim any more quickly than his normal rate. Likewise, a Beast visiting a realm of endless skies might be able to "fly" at his normal movement rate, since that is how the natives get around, but he will not be particularly swift or maneuverable without suitable Atavisms or other enhancements.

Conditions harmful to the natives are potentially harmful to the Beast as well — if even the natives cannot dive too deep into the endless sea without facing hazards of cold or pressure, for example, then the Beast faces similar difficulties at those depths.

Distant Relatives

In addition to being largely immune to the natural hazards of travel in the worlds beyond, the Children typically find it quite easy to blend in with the local populations they find out there. All worlds share a common border with the Primordial Dream, after all, and the Beast can exploit that connection to fit in whenever she's traveling the pathways. If all else fails, she can offer a glimpse of her Soul to remind the natives to give her the respect she is owed.

Effect: The Begotten can communicate normally with sentient denizens of any realm she visits, including written communication. Natives perceive her as speaking in their preferred form, whether it's telepathic mind link or clicking sounds or ground vibrations, while their own language is similarly translated for the Beast. Note that while certainly impressive, this linguistic facility is temporary, and lasts only while the Begotten is visiting that realm — if she wants to retain permanent knowledge of a particular language, she must purchase such a trait normally.

If the Beast desires, she may choose to invoke Distant Relatives in a more dramatic sense, trading her relative anonymity for a surge of authority as her Soul asserts itself. This will definitely call attention to her, but the potential reward can be well worth it in the right circumstances. In order to do so, the Beast must openly display her true nature (the player spends one Willpower point). She immediately receives a pool of automatic successes equal to her Lair rating, which she may allocate to any rolls to interact with the natives for the rest of the scene. A roll must receive at least one normal success before benefitting from added automatic successes. Once an automatic success is used, it is removed from the pool.

Distant Relatives may only be activated once per scene, and does not affect feral creatures or other travelers, only sentient natives of a particular realm. This ability may not be used in the mortal world — a Beast has other tools for that.

Skeleton Key

Given their instinctive connection to the Primordial Pathways, Beasts are capable of opening otherworldly gateways they come across. Whether it's a secret door to the Hedge, an Avernian Gate to the Underworld, or a verge into the Shadow, a Beast can make use of any gateway. More than one unfortunate supernatural being has thought itself safe after crossing into another world to escape from a pursuing Beast, only to watch in horror as the Begotten pushes through right behind them.

While it does not damage the portal, use of Skeleton Key is definitely not normal to those familiar with the typical workings of a particular gateway. An almost palpable sense of overwhelming force being applied ripples through the area, as though some great presence was close to tearing the door off of its hinges right before it opened. Even if a portal resists being opened in this fashion, the frustrated rage of the Soul resonates through both worlds, leaving its mark on the Beast instead.

Note that the Beast has no innate capacity to sense the presence of a gateway, so he must locate it some other way: research, observation, even social manipulation. Once he knows where one exists, however, he may make use of this ability even if he lacks the owner's permission or any

other typical safeguards. This ability functions on either side of the gateway — the Beast may return to the mundane world just as easily from the other side, provided he can find a doorway.

Finally, the Beast can use Skeleton Key to force a supernatural gateway to open to the Primordial Dream, even if it normally connects to another realm. Such is the power of the Soul and the shadow that it casts across all realities — just like a nightmare, no matter what path a victim takes he might wind up walking into the monster's hunting ground. It is immediately evident to any beings familiar with the gateway's routine operation that it is not functioning normally.

The ability does not allow a Beast to access a demon's private "bolthole" (see **Demon: The Descent**, p. 120), and any attempts to access such a location automatically fail. However, the Beast could still use Skeleton Key to force the bolthole's entrance to act as a gateway to the Primordial Dream if he desires.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult + Lair vs. Supernatural Tolerance of the gate's creator or current owner, whichever is higher. If no such rating readily exists, the Storyteller should assign a rating based on how well-used a gateway is, with very active gates being easier to open. If the gateway has a security rating of some kind, add that to the resistance roll.

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Beast not only fails to open the gateway, but it slams shut on her, causing a psychic backlash. Roll the gateway's Supernatural Tolerance — the Beast suffers one level of bashing damage per success on this roll. In addition, the owner of the gateway, if any, is immediately alerted to the fact that someone attempted to force the crossing, and that it is not one of his kind.

Failure: The Beast fails to open the gateway.

Success: The gateway opens, allowing travel between worlds for a number of turns equal to successes rolled or until the Beast wills it closed as a reflexive action. This applies even if the gateway is normally open for a much longer or shorter period of time. A gateway can only be connected to one realm at a time — either its normal destination or the Primordial Dream. If the Beast wishes to switch the destination, she must end the current use of Skeleton Key and activate it once again.

Exceptional Success: As success, but using this particular gateway does not require a Willpower point for the rest of the story — the shadow of the Soul lingers on the portal, removing some of the difficulty in crossing between worlds for the Beast. A roll is still required as normal.

Under the Bed

Though it's easiest for a Beast to enter the Primordial Dream by way of their Lair, it is possible to establish a sort of "back door" using a mortal mind. In order to do so, the Beast must sate her

Hunger in the target's presence. The target can be an accomplice, a victim, or simply a witness to this action. The mortal does not need to know exactly what is taking place, but there must be no question that the Beast is responsible for what is going on, at least from his point of view.

After her Hunger is indulged in his presence, the Beast may spend 1 Willpower to create this connection, which lasts until she chooses to end it. A Beast cannot have more of these connections at any one time than she has dots in Lair — new connections simply replace older ones. She may attempt to establish this connection with a supernatural being, but only if the target has the Family Ties Condition with the Beast, and it is significantly more difficult to use with such subjects.

In order to use this ability, the Beast must approach the target while he's sleeping and expend a point of Satiety. She does not need to actually touch the target, but there must not be physical barriers between them. This infects the mortal with a savage nightmare, which in turn opens a brief gateway the Beast can use to access the Primordial Pathways.

Cost: 1 Satiety

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety vs. Integrity. If the Beast is a blood relative, she adds +3 to her roll. If the target is a supernatural being, the Family Ties condition is required, and the target adds his Supernatural Tolerance to his resistance roll.

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Beast is unable to enter the Primordial Pathways through the target's nightmares, and the resulting psychic turmoil sets off a hunter response. This does not necessarily mean the target becomes a Hero, though it certainly could, but someone nearby has noticed and will respond.

Failure: The target's mind shrugs off the Beast's efforts to infect them with a suitable nightmare, and no travel to the Primordial Pathways occurs.

Success: The Beast is able to step through the target's nightmares into the Primordial Pathways. She cannot bring others along — this passage is an expression of her connection to the target, and the passage itself will reflect a distorted version of the events in the target's mind as a result. The target gains the Spooked Condition regarding the Beast, and that night the target has terrifying nightmares involving the Beast and her Hunger. While the target may not wake up assuming that the Beast is actually a supernatural being, he will likely be a bit wary around her for a while, even if he can't exactly explain why.

Exceptional Success: An especially potent connection to the Primordial Dream is created; the Beast may make a number of additional trips equal to her Lair rating before rolling again, and the target does not need to be asleep for the Beast to use this ability. The Beast must still be in close proximity to her target and spend Satiety for each trip.

Unfortunately, a nightmare this powerful is very hard on the target's mind — he suffers a breaking point as a result of the intense nightmares. Even if he successfully wards off Integrity loss, the target awakens with absolute certainty of the Beast's true nature; if he was already aware of it, he sees the worst possible aspect of the Beast. He is considered hostile to the Beast for the purposes of Social maneuvering, requiring tremendous effort to repair relations, and rumors hold that this practice can provoke a hunter response or even spawn Heroes.

Hold the Door

A Beast may choose to grant an outsider one-time access to their Lair. She must be at an entrance to her Lair, and grant her express consent. If she does so, any target so named is able to enter the Lair along with the Beast. If the Lair is shared by a brood, the other members instinctively know when outsiders are given access through this ability. If the other brood members have met the invited individual before, they know exactly who has been allowed in. If the brood members have not met the new guests, they receive an image of each one, and will recognize them if they cross paths unless the guest changes her appearance.

Both mortals and supernatural beings may be granted access using Hold the Door. However, this permission does not grant special protection from what the target may find on the other side. Mortal visitors suffer a breaking point for entering the Lair, though they may receive bonuses on the roll if the Beast has prepared them for the experience or they have visited in the past.

A Beast may be bullied, bribed, or coerced into granting this consent, but outright supernatural domination cannot force it from her — it must be given of her own free will, however grudgingly. Supernatural intruders must find another way to gain access to the Lair.

Effect: The target character is able to enter the Lair, as well as depart the same way he came. He must enter at the same time the Beast does; if he does not, the permission expires. Once he leaves the Lair, no matter the reason he did so, he cannot re-enter unless the Beast once again grants him permission, or he finds another way to enter. If the Beast is part of a brood, the visitor gains access to any connected Lairs as well, assuming he can find the right Burrows to reach them.

Be My Guest

A Beast may also grant a target free access to his Lair, allowing her to enter it just as the Beast does. This is a rare and closely guarded privilege for many reasons; not only does potentially invite danger into the Beast's most closely guarded sanctum, but it also allows someone free access to a place that is an intimate expression of the Beast's true nature.

If a brood shares the Lair, the other members are instinctively aware of this permission being granted, and have the same chance of recognizing the guests as described in Hold the Door, above. Needless to say, giving someone this level of free access to the Lair without consulting other brood members first is considered a serious faux pas among the Children.

Effect: The Beast must grant the target his express consent to come and go from the Lair as she pleases, and seal the invitation by spending 1 Willpower. As with Hold the Door, this consent

must come of the Beast's own will — he may be coerced by mundane means, but outright supernatural domination cannot compel him to grant access to a Lair in this fashion.

Be My Guest has another potent benefit, specifically shielding a mortal's mind from some of the innate strangeness of traveling to the alien space of the Lair. A mortal who has received this benefit does not suffer a breaking point when visiting this particular Lair, though other worlds and even other Lairs may still trigger one normally. This does not mean that the experience can't still be profoundly strange and disturbing, but the Lair recognizes the mortal as a valued guest, and so it eases off on the pressure it normally applies to outsiders.

A Beast may grant access to as many individuals as he likes using this benefit, but the offer must be made in person, and the Willpower cost paid for each individual invited. A Beast may rescind his invitation at any time as a reflexive action; if the individual is currently in the Lair when the permission is rescinded, she does not have to leave immediately, but suffers a breaking point and will be unable to return after she departs from the Lair.

As with Hold the Door, a visitor to a brood's shared domain has access to any connected Lairs as well, provided she can find the right Burrows to reach them.

New Advantage: Lair

Every dragon has her cave, every kraken his ocean. A Beast is both human being and an ancient, Primordial self: his Soul draws other souls into itself as their hosts sleep and sates its hunger in their nightmares. Beast and Soul are permanently entwined — at any time, a Beast can concentrate and see through his Soul's eyes, deep in the Primordial Dream. When the material, fleshy world is especially similar to his inner landscape, he can even step through physically, vanishing to fully inhabit his other self.

The monstrous form victims see in their dreams is only part of a Beast's Soul, however, albeit an important one. The dream-landscape the Soul hunts in is as much a part of the nightmare as the monster at its heart, and equally vital to the Beast. That landscape grows as the Beast explores his Legend, incorporating places from his physical life as it expands. It's his sanctuary within the Primordial Dream, his hunting grounds — his *Lair*.

Lair in **Beast: The Primordial** is an Advantage rated from 1 to 10 dots. It determines both the raw power of the Beast's Soul and the size and traits of the Lair it resides in. As Beasts explore their Legends, their Lairs expand.

BEGIN TAB TABLE

Lair	Max. Number of Chambers	Lair Traits (/ Scene)	Attribute/Skill Limit
1	3	2(/1)	5
2	3	3(/1)	5
3	4	3(/2)	5

4	4	4(/3)	5
5	5	4(/3)	5
6	5	5(/4)	6
7	6	5(/4)	7
8	6	6(/5)	8
9	7	6(/5)	9
10	7	7(/6)	10

END TAB TABLE

• **Maximum Number of Chambers:** As Beasts explore their Legends, they encounter locations that resonate with the Primordial Dream, and incorporate them into their Lairs. A Chamber is a defined "setting" within the Lair, and higher-dot Lairs can support more Chambers. Chambers also define where a Beast can open a Primordial Pathway, allowing others to enter her Lair. The first Chamber, the pocket of the Primordial Dream the Homecoming takes place in, is called the Heart, but even a new Beast has the potential to take on two more Chambers.

• **Traits (/Scene):** These keywords (explained starting on page XX, below) define the resonance of a Beast's Lair, and by finding situations and places in the material world that share that resonance the Beast may gain the advantages associated with those Traits. When within the Lair, any Lair Traits the Beast wishes to activate apply. When acting in the material world, Beasts have a limit on how many different Lair Traits they can call upon in a single Scene, which rises as the Lair expands.

• **Attribute/Skill Limit:** Once a Lair becomes truly expansive, the sheer power involved seeps into the Beast's very being, increasing her maximum dot rating in Attributes and Skills.

• **Supernatural Tolerance:** A Beast isn't a plaything for supernatural beings, but their kin. Add a Beast's Lair rating to contested dice pools where she is resisting a supernatural effect. This is a Supernatural Tolerance Trait. Most other monsters have an equivalent Advantage they add to their own contested rolls (see p. XX).

• **Lifespan:** Beasts with well-established Lairs can live unnaturally long lives, prolonged by the power of their souls. Every dot of Lair past the fifth adds 20 years to the Beast's life expectancy, barring accident or illness.

The Primordial Dream

No one is an island. Every human being is connected on a spiritual level, their individual lives like the fins of a great leviathan showing above the water, with the Beast that joins them moving unseen beneath the surface. Lucid dreamers, meditative pioneers, psychics and the truly inspired — or insane — chase glimpses of other lives deep within their psyche. Go deep enough into any human soul and they become one. Call it the inner world, Temenos, racial memory, or the

collective unconscious. Beasts call it the Human Dream, or the Bright Dream. It contains every concept shared between people — the sum total of all human civilization and culture, from the temples of gods to popular television.

Beasts were human until the Homecoming. They know how seductive and overpowering community can be, but they also know that it isn't all of the human spirit. Go deep enough into the collective unconscious and you find a wild, dangerous place, where shared ideas give way to the primal, animalistic fears lurking behind sapience. Where great Beasts stalk prey that runs on two legs, where nature isn't tamed, and where the dreamer has no protection against the world. This is the Primordial Dream, or Dark Dream, the kingdom of nightmares and unexpressed animal urges. To a Beast, it's home.

Chambers and Burrows

Only a very young Beast has his Soul confined to a single "location" in the Primordial Dream, and even one mere days after realizing his Primordial self has the potential for growth. As Beasts age and explore their Legends, their Lairs expand to incorporate additional *Chambers* based on locations they have encountered in the physical world. Within the Primordial Dream, the different Chambers of a Beast's Lair act like rooms, connected by dream "passageways" called Burrows. Beasts have a much easier time accessing their Lair in locations resembling one of their Chambers, and can even open Primordial Pathways to allow others access, but the more Chambers a Beast has, the further her soul ranges when starving, and the more opportunities a Hero has to break into the Lair.

Expanding the Lair

The Primordial Dream is a deep, almost animalistic layer of the human soul. It exists beneath the veneer of sapience and civilization that comforts the World of Darkness' population, and it's in this unsettling layer that Beasts make their Lairs. To expand the Lair and add an additional Chamber, a Beast must find a location in the physical world that resonates with both her Legend and the Primordial Dream.

A location qualifies for inclusion in the Primordial Dream as long as it meets the following requirements;

• The environment must contain at least one element matching a Lair Trait in the Beast's Lair.

And *either*

• The Beast must have achieved an exceptional success on a Nightmare activation roll within the scene (the opportunity to expand the Lair counts as an exceptional success benefit, replacing the normal one for the Nightmare roll.)

Or

• Another character must have lost Integrity via a breaking point within the scene.

If the scene meets these requirements and the Beast has an available Chamber slot due to her Lair rating, the player simply pays one Satiety and the new Chamber forms with one Burrow of the Beast's design connecting it to any already existing Chamber.

Even after the effort to trigger the Lair's expansion, though, the process of adding to the Primordial Dream takes time to recover from. A Beast can only add one additional Chamber to her Lair per story.

> Kin and Integrity
>
> Only humans use Integrity — the supernatural inhabitants of the World of Darkness all substitute their own traits instead. Some of these provide the opportunity for Lair expansion when they lose a dot, while others don't, depending on what exactly the trait represents.
>
> The breaking point method of Lair expansion works because in the terrible moment of self-realization that comes with Integrity loss, the character is jarred close to the Primordial Dream. The Beast's soul taps into the distress of a soul forced to confront its own flawed nature. When supernatural beings suffer the same kind of trauma from their own breaking point equivalents, Beasts can use them to add Chambers in the same way as humans.
>
> Of the published and upcoming World of Darkness games, the following traits are useable for Lair expansion:
>
> Humanity (**Vampire: The Requiem**), Wisdom (**Mage: The Awakening**), Pilgrimage (**Promethean: The Created**), Clarity (**Changeling: The Lost**), Memory (**Mummy: The Curse**)
>
> The following traits, however, are not;
>
> Cover (**Demon: The Descent**), Harmony (**Werewolf: The Forsaken**), Synergy (**Geist: The Sin-Eaters**)

Once a Chamber is added to the Lair, it is set. Beasts can "collapse" (remove) Chambers with effort, described on p. XX, and intruders can force a collapse, but unless collapsed Chambers stay in the Lair indefinitely.

The Heart

A Beast's first Chamber is called her Heart, the nest of her Soul at the center of the Lair. A Heart acts like any other Chamber except for the fact that it doesn't correspond to a location the Beast has encountered, so is less useful when opening Primordial Pathways and is more secure against unwanted intrusion. Most Beasts hide their Hearts deep in the Lair, behind as many Chambers as they can employ. If the Heart collapses, the Beast dies.

Burrows

While Chambers are distinct dream-settings matching locations marked out by horror and subsumed into a Beast's Soul, Burrows are fluid connections *between* those Chambers. They're dream-narrative bridges, like internal Primordial Pathways, that characters using them to move between Chambers experience as moving through a portal, travelling down a defined route or taking an exit inside the Chamber. A Burrow usually has cosmetic aspects of the two Chambers it links. In some Lairs, this can seem logical — for example, two Chambers resembling a hospital and a factory might manifest a Burrow as a road between them. Where the Chambers aren't so thematically similar, however, Burrows don't have to make any kind of sense. A Makara whose volcanic Chamber links to a back-alley Chamber can link them just as easily as any other connection, and the Burrow will adapt.

Every Chamber in a Beast's Lair has at least one Burrow, leading to another Chamber. Beasts may add additional Burrows by paying one Satiety each time, and may re-map any or all of their Burrows by spending a point of Willpower as long as no one is currently using the Burrows being changed. As with incorporating new Chambers, the Lair needs time to recover from being altered, however; Beasts can only redefine the connections in their Lairs once per chapter.

> Unusual Sources of Inspiration
>
> Beasts *usually* expand their Lairs and forge new Chambers from locations in the physical world; the Bright Dream of humanity contains reflections of all shared concepts, so hungry Souls can still open Primordial Pathways to the Astral based on Chambers that were originally physical. Nothing, however, stops a Beast from using a more esoteric scene as the foundation of a Chamber. The requirements a location must meet to qualify as a Chamber are the same, whether the Beast is spreading Nightmares through the Underworld, observing a mage fall from Wisdom in the Astral Realms, or victimizing a Changeling in the Hedge.

Brood Lairs

All Lairs are carved out of the Primordial Dream. All Souls are, in some ways, the same Soul, just as all human souls are joined in the Bright Dream. Beasts often connect their Lairs together, for mutual protection, companionship, or even to attack one another. The result is a brood Lair, a greater whole than the sum of its parts. Brood Lairs allow associated Beasts to use one another's Lair traits, greatly expanding the situations in which they may act at full power.

A brood Lair may result from two different scenarios.

First and most common is that by associating with another Beast for long enough, Beasts develop kinship to the other Begotten. This kinship isn't enough to create a new Chamber, but it can create Burrows. After spending a chapter in the company of another Beast (they don't need to be inseparable, just to interact meaningfully for the majority of the chapter,) a Beast wanting to connect his Lair to the other may pay a point of Satiety instead of Willpower when redefining his Burrows. He may then define one Burrow in his Lair as connecting one of his Chambers to one

of the other Beast's Chambers. Beasts not wanting their soul's privacy invaded may resist with a Clash of Wills by redefining their own Burrows, and may continue to try to pull the Lairs apart by making a Clash of Wills roll in any future redefinition.

Second and most intimate is that two Beasts can use the same location as a Chamber, either by both being present for a breaking point or both gaining an exceptional success with a Nightmare in the same scene, or by one Beast coming along after the first has already left and meeting the prerequisites for Lair expansion in an independent event. In this case, the second Beast adds a Chamber in the usual way, but pays an extra point of Satiety to superimpose her Chamber over any already existing one in a different Lair based on the same location. The Chamber is treated as existing in both Lairs simultaneously; both Beasts may define Burrows to it, and by accessing one another's Burrows move deeper into the other Lair. This kind of brood Lair is both much more stable and secure than the first, as although the two Beasts can't pull away by redefining their Burrows, either Beast may decouple the Lairs by collapsing their version of the superimposed Chamber with no way for the other to affect their decision.

> Drawing the Lair
>
> Large Lairs, especially brood Lairs with three or more Beasts connected, can become difficult to conceptualize, but when the Heroes break into your character's Lair you'll want to know exactly how the Chambers link up forming your inner defenses.
>
> The simplest method is to draw the Lair out as a diagram. On a sheet of paper (such as the back of a character sheet) list the Chambers your character has incorporated into her Lair, enclosed in "bubbles." Then draw the Burrows as lines connecting them.

Accessing the Lair

An empty Lair is just a stage devoid of action, with the Beast's Soul wandering from Chamber to Chamber. The Soul is capable of acting independently, but Beasts can see through the Soul's eyes and direct its actions at any time, or vanish from the physical world entirely and fully inhabit their Primordial self.

Soul Communion

Even when acting in the physical world, a Beast is constantly aware of her Soul's Satiety and mood. She doesn't know exactly what the Soul is doing within the Lair, but feels its emotions mingling with her own; if the Soul is attacked by intruders, her body surges with adrenaline as though she's in combat herself.

At any time, no matter where she is, a Beast can concentrate to experience the inside of her Lair from her Soul's perspective. This is a reflexive action to merely peek at the Lair, but *controlling* the Soul requires an instant action, such that she can't act independently in the material world. A Beast attacked in the material world while communing with her Soul loses her Defense.

Primordial Pathways

When acting in the Soul's stead isn't enough, when a Beast wishes to target a human soul as her prey, when her Soul is so hungry it breaks its bonds, or when a Beast exploring kinship wishes to visit the realms wandered by her supernatural cousins, she utilizes a *Primordial Pathway*. The Pathways are connections between worlds, threaded through the Primordial Dream and touching all of the realms within the World of Darkness. Beasts — and Heroes — can open the Pathways wide enough to slip through, stepping from world to world like moving between Chambers via a Burrow.

Beasts can't simply open Pathways between any realms they choose. As with many aspects of their Lair, it's the resonance, or similarity, between the Lair and somewhere else that affords access. Opening a Pathway to the exact location the Beast created a Chamber from is easiest, but desperate Beasts and cunning would-be intruders can use locations that are similar by spending a point of Willpower during the attempt, and incurring an additional dice penalty based on how well the location matches (see p. XX.)

Pathways may be opened either from outside the Lair into it, or inside it out to another world. Beasts can't, however, open Pathways without one "end" of the connection being the Lair. If a Beast doesn't know exactly where she wants to go, she can feel for and open a Pathway to somewhere random but still resonant within a specified world.

The easiest Pathways lead from the Primordial Dream to the collective Astral Realm of humanity, the *Temenos* of human souls. More difficult Pathways lead to the material world, allowing Beasts and their guests to enter the Lair.

Opening Pathways is easier if the Beast first imposes Lair traits on the external end of the Pathway-to-be.

Dice Pool: Wits + Resolve

Action: Instant

Cost: One Satiety

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The attempt goes badly wrong, and damages the Lair. The Chamber used for the Pathway loses all of its Burrows, isolating it from the rest of the Lair until the Beast can redefine them.

Failure: The Pathway does not open.

Success: The Pathway successfully opens, and lasts for the opening character's Resolve in turns.

Exceptional Success: The Pathway successfully opens and lasts for the rest of the scene.

Suggested Modifiers:

[TAB TABLE]

Modifier Situation

+1 The external end of the Pathway is under the effect of a Lair Trait. Multiple Traits (including those imposed by the Beast by using Lair resonance) apply this bonus on a cumulative basis.

+1 The external end of the Pathway is in the Primordial Dream (ie, is another Beast's Lair.)

0 The external end of the Pathway is in the Temenos

-1 The external end of the Pathway is in the Anima Mundi or Oneiros

-2 The external end of the Pathway is in the Shadow, Hedge, or Underworld

-3 The external end of the Pathway is in the material world

-3 The character has specified a world, but not a precise location

[END TAB TABLE]

Pathways aren't portals or magical doors. When opened, the Pathway causes the Chamber and the external location to "overlap." This causes Beasts to merge with their Souls, as described on pg. XX. Anyone in the external location attempting to leave while the Pathway is active instead find themselves transitioning to another Chamber through one of the Lair's Burrows. Anyone still in the Chamber when the Pathway closes ends up in the external location. Collapsing a Chamber immediately closes any Primordial Pathways open to it.

For example: A Tyrant Anakim whose Soul preys on childhood fears has incorporated an abandoned high school as a Chamber in his Lair. On the run from a group of mortal monster-hunters (though not, thankfully, Heroes,) he leads his pursuers into the school, and opens the Primordial Pathway. For a few seconds, the interior of the school becomes both in the material world and the Chamber in his Lair, and the Anakim immediately merges with his Soul. Faced by the hulking monster where there was previously their target, the hunters panic. Two turn and fight, and the third attempts to flee the school, but while the Pathway is still open she instead transitions through a Burrow into another Chamber. Killing one of the other hunters, the Anakim closes the Pathway – the school returns to normal, the Beast appears to transform back into his mortal body as he seperates from his Soul again, and the remaining hunter who stayed returns as well. The hunter who left the Chamber, however, remains behind in the Lair, easy pickings for the Anakim's Soul.

Invited and Uninvited Guests

Beasts aren't the only beings in the World of Darkness who can walk between worlds. Any supernatural being accessing the dreams or soul of someone inside the Lair, from changelings caught up when a Beast preys on a dream they're in to mages exploring the astral realms when a Primordial Pathway opens, can find themselves in the Primordial Dream. Other times, monsters deliberately break into the Lair from another world using their own powers, or use an open

Primordial Pathway. Most troubling are Heroes using the Open Gate Gift, breaking into the Lair to do battle with the Soul.

When a Beast approves of someone within the Lair and is deliberately allowing him access, including anyone drawn in by the soul in a low-Satiety rampage, he moves through the Lair with relative ease compared to intruders. Chambers are affected by any Lair Trait the Beast wishes to use, and she can choose to protect any guest from any or all Lair Trait Tilts. The Beast may allow guests through any Burrow with a reflexive action.

Intruders must cope with any Tilts in effect, and have to force their way through Burrows by spending a point of Willpower and succeeding with an Intelligence + Resolve roll contested by the Soul's Power + Resistance (see below). Forcing through a Burrow takes half the Beast's Lair (round up) in Turns, during which time the intruder is still subject to any Tilts in the Chamber he is trying to leave.

Dream Form

At any given time, some visitors to a Beast's Lair may be physically present or in a dream state, depending on exactly how they gained access. Mortals hunted by a starving soul, as well as the Soul itself, are in a dream state, while visitors or intruders using Primordial Pathways from anything other than the Primordial Dream are actually physically present. Beasts exploiting kinship with mages or changelings sometimes find themselves wandering the greater dream-realms beyond their Lairs, as well.

In the Storytelling system, a character who is projecting beyond their body in this way has a "Dream Form." While exploring realms away from their physical bodies, characters use slightly different rules for Attributes and Health.

Instead of the nine Attributes used by physical characters, characters in Dream Form use the three simplified traits of Power, Finesse, and Resistance. For human (and most supernatural) characters translating into Dream Form, these are equal to the mental traits — use Intelligence for Power, Wits for Finesse, and Resolve for Resistance.

Dream Health is not linked to Size as physical Health is, but instead to determination and the potential of the dreamer; Resolve plus the dreaming character's Attribute Maximum, which for humans is five but for supernatural beings usually increases when they reach high levels of their Supernatural Tolerance Trait. Beasts use the Attribute Maximum granted by Lair itself; for example, a Resolve 3, Lair 6 Beast has nine Dream Health. The last boxes of Dream Health impose wound penalties when filled just as physical Health does (p. XX).

When a Dream Form character is "killed," they return to their bodies with the Soul Shocked Condition.

NEW CONDITION

Soul Shocked

Your character has been killed while on a sojourn outside her physical body, resulting in a shocked sense of self. Upon gaining this Condition, roll her current Willpower points (not dots) as a dice pool. Ignore 10-again on this roll, and do not roll a chance die if she has no Willpower left. She keeps one Willpower point per success, and immediately loses the remainder. While this Condition is in effect, your character does not regain Willpower from Virtue, Vice, or equivalent traits. She still regains Willpower from rest, surrender, and any other means of regaining Willpower.

Possible Sources: Killed in the Primordial Dream.

Resolution: Regaining full Willpower.

END CONDITION

The Soul Itself

A Beast's Soul has a much larger, more potent presence within the Primordial Dream than others. The Soul uses the *highest* of the Beast's Strength, Presence, or Intelligence as Power; Dexterity, Manipulation, or Wits as Finesse; and Stamina, Composure, or Resolve as Resistance. Souls always use *all* of the Beast's Atavisms, without need to expend Satiety or to be at low Satiety. Also, the Beast counts as always being in a Lair-resonant location when acting inside the Lair.

When a Beast enters her own Lair (or a Lair connected to it as a Brood Lair) via a Primordial Pathway she immediately merges with her soul, and immediately separates if she uses a Pathway to leave. The soul itself never leaves the Lair, and no power can force it to do so, as the Lair is just as much part of the Beast's Soul as the Primordial Self within it.

The balance to the Soul's great power is its vulnerability; unlike dream-walking prey, it is *wholly* present in the Lair. If the Soul is killed, it and its Beast actually die.

Inflicting Nightmares

If the Beast goes too long without indulging her Hunger, the soul takes matters into its own hands, claws, or other appendages. The more powerful a Soul, the shorter the period of time it can go without being sated and the further it will range through the Primordial Dream in search of prey.

[begin table]

Lair	Time at Low Satiety	Time at Zero Satiety
1-3	1 week	1 day
4-6	4 days	6 hours
7-9	2 days	1 hour

10 1 day immediate

[end table]

If the time elapses without Satiety rising to Medium or higher, the starving Soul reaches out through the Primordial Dream, searching for suitable prey. Any humans (not supernatural beings) within Lair in miles who are in a deep state of consciousness can fall prey to the Soul. This does not *necessarily* mean dreaming individuals — it can, but also includes people meditating, in comas, unconscious through injury, or on certain drugs. The Soul selects a target from those available at random, and then the Soul attempts to draw the thief into the Lair.

Dice Pool: Power + Lair - Composure

Action: Instant

Roll Results:

Dramatic Failure: The targeted individual witnesses the soul's rampage, and feels something inside him called to action. He becomes a Hero.

Failure: The Soul inflicts dreams of its presence and Hunger on the targeted individual, but is not sated.

Success: The Soul inflicts dreams of its presence and Hunger on the targeted individual. He loses a point of Willpower, and the Beast gains one Satiety.

Exceptional Success: The Soul draws the targeted individual into the Lair so successfully that a Primordial Pathway opens and drags the unfortunate in. If he loses all Astral Health within the Lair, the Beast gains his Willpower dots in Satiety.

If the Soul's feeding does not raise Satiety to Medium, it will feed again after another interval. If no suitable prey are available, the Soul feeds on the first human in deep consciousness that comes into range. Some kinship powers may allow Souls to feed on supernatural creatures.

Destroying the Lair

Intruders can collapse Chambers within a Lair, reducing their owner's capabilities and eventually cornering the Soul in its Heart. Collapsing a Chamber is a long and arduous process, during which the Beast will likely go on the counterattack, but if the intruder is a Hero wielding Anathema, or the Soul has been incapacitated, it can be devastating or even deadly. Beasts wishing to close off an avenue of attack from a Hero sometimes collapse their own Chambers.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Resolve

Action: Extended. Target number of successes equal to three times the Beast's Lair rating for a Chamber, or five times the Lair rating for the Heart. If the Beast is conscious and resisting, the roll is also resisted by her Resolve. If the Beast is collapsing her own Lair, each roll gains a dice bonus equal to her Composure.

Time per Roll: The Beast's Lair rating in minutes.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Chamber is not collapsed, and the Beast rallies. The Beast regains all Willpower, and the intruder loses all progress against the target number of successes.

Failure: The intruder makes no progress on collapsing the Chamber. He may give up, or continue after taking a Condition. If the Beast was not aware of the presence of intruders within her Lair, she is now alerted.

Success: The intruder makes progress on collapsing the Chamber. If a Beast was not aware of the presence of intruders within her Lair, she is now alerted.

Exceptional Success: The intruder makes great progress on collapsing the Chamber. Choose one of the effects of exceptional success in an extended action (p. XX.)

When the target number of successes is reached, the Chamber begins to collapse. Anyone inside must access a Burrow within the Beast's Lair rating in minutes. Anyone still in the Chamber when it finally collapses is killed, or ejected if the Chamber has an open Primordial Pathway. Characters who are only present in the Chamber in Dream Form return to their bodies and suffer the Soul Shocked Condition.

A Beast attacking another Beasts' Lair may instead steal a Chamber for his own use. If he has not added a Chamber this story and has a free slot, he may pay one Satiety while the Chamber is collapsing to add it to his own Lair. If a Chamber is stolen in this way, any characters in the victim's Chamber transfer into the aggressor's Lair, unless they use a Burrow while the victim's Chamber is collapsing.

Lair Traits

Every Beast's Lair is unique, an expression of her Primordial Self honed as hunting ground and sanctuary. By exploiting the Lair within herself, a Beast can cause the material world to take on some of its properties, with effects ranging from the subtle to the explosive.

Beast characters have a number of Lair Traits determined by their Lair rating — at Lair • it's two. These Traits are Environmental Tilts describing conditions within the Lair. For example, a kraken-form Makara might have the Lair Traits "underwater" and "freezing cold."

Minor and Major Traits

Not all Lair Traits are equal — some are much more potent than others. Some evoke environments so extreme the Beast can never visit them in the material world. Lair Traits are divided into two types, Major and Minor. Every Beast must have at least one Minor Lair Trait, even in the two they receive for Lair •.

Minor Lair Traits are always possible in the physical world without the use of magic. They may provide dice penalties or bonuses to Skills, or count as Extreme Environments (see page XX) up to level 3.

Major Lair Traits may (but don't always) impose Tilts that aren't physically possible; anything from turning the skin of victims to salt to acidic rain. They may provide dice penalties or bonuses to Attributes or derived traits like Speed and Defense, or count as Extreme Environments up to level 4.

Imposing Traits

When a Beast finds himself in a situation outside the Lair where one or more of his Lair Trait Tilts is already in effect, the location is **resonant** with his Traits. While resonant, he may impose the effects of as many more of his Lair Trait Tilts as he wishes, up to the limit granted by his Lair rating within a single scene. At Lair 1, this limit is 1, so a starting **Beast** character may use the presence of either of her Tilts to cause the other.

Beasts may — and often do — create the initial Tilt through guile and manipulating the terrain, or capitalize on the powers of other supernatural beings. For example, a Makara with the Lair Trait of "downpour" may set off a sprinkler system to then use the resonance in order to impose her other Traits.

At the end of the scene, or when the Beast imposing them wishes to stop, the imposed Lair Traits vanish, though their aftereffects remain. For example, if a Namtaru whose Heart resembles the digestive tract of a gargantuan creature imposes the Corrosive and Flooded Traits to fill a room with acids, the damage to everything in the room will remain when he stops imposing the Traits, without any trace of the corrosive liquid that caused it.

Environmental Immunity

The minotaur is not confused by the labyrinth, and the ogre sees through his cave's darkness. Beasts are immune to the effects of any Environmental Tilt matching one of their Lair Traits, both those they impose and those occurring naturally.

Brood Lairs

A Beast whose Lair is part of a Brood Lair (that is, shares at least one Chamber with another Beast or has a Burrow crossing between their Lairs) may include one Trait from any other Beast in the brood when imposing Traits, either as the existing Trait used for resonance or one of those imposed. By spending a point of Willpower when imposing Lair Traits, a Beast may extend his Environmental Immunity to all other Beasts sharing a Brood Lair with him.

Chambers and Lair Traits

When backed into a place anniversary of power, a Beast is a terrifying opponent. In a location used to create one of her Chambers, a Beast may pay a point of Satiety to impose *any* of her Lair Traits up to the limit of Traits per scene without needing the initial Tilt. As with opening a Primordial Pathway, Beasts may attempt to use a Chamber in locations that are similar if not exactly the same by spending a Willpower point. To impose Traits into a substitute location like this, the Beast must succeed on a Wits + Resolve roll, with a dice penalty based on how dissimilar the location used is.

Close Enough

Beasts and other beings attempting to open a Primordial Pathway, or Beasts trying to use a Chamber's resonance to impose Lair Traits when none are present, have to find locations similar to those used to create the Chambers in their Lair. The similarity is based on the dream-like narrative logic of the Primordial Dream, not necessarily physical details.

Exact: The location is the same as that used to create the Chamber, or is a near-perfect facsimile down to its contents. Some Begotten, with the means and resources to do so, arrange for rooms or even whole buildings they've used as Chambers to be taken apart and rebuilt elsewhere. Using the exact location for a Chamber does not incur a dice penalty to opening a Primordial Pathway or imposing Lair Traits.

Spiritual similarity: The location is both physically similar to that used to create the Chamber, and shares the narrative role the Beast exploited to expand her Lair. Whichever of the prerequisites for expanding the Lair the Beast used, as described above, must apply in the new area. For example, an Eshmaki who has a Chamber formed in a pine forest when she stalked a lost hiker and shocked their soul with her Nightmares can attempt to open a Primordial Pathway in a *different* pine forest by recreating the hunt with a new victim. Spiritual similarity levies a -2 dice penalty.

Narrative similarity: As spiritual similarity, but lacking the confrontation with the Primordial Dream that allowed for the Chamber. For example, the Eshmaki is stalking a victim through the new forest, but does not gain an exceptional success on her Nightmare roll. Narrative similarity levies a -4 dice penalty.

Descriptive similarity: The Beast hasn't arranged for events to echo those she used to create the Chamber, and is attempting to access her Lair based on material resemblance alone. The Eshmaki can't find any suitable prey, but has to open the Pathway *now*, so tries to use the fact that she's in a pine forest to call to her Chamber. Descriptive similarity levies a -5 dice penalty.

Minor Lair Traits

Blazing Light

Whether it's from sunlight reflecting off snow, sand, or water at just the right angle, the harsh light of a too-large sun in a desert Lair, or even incandescent terrain, the Lair is filled with light so bright it becomes painful to see. Affected characters suffer a -3 penalty to any rolls that rely on vision, and the pain and distraction causes a -1 penalty to any other rolls. Characters closing their eyes to avoid the pain suffer the Blindness Tilt in both eyes, but keeping their eyes shut in stressful situations may require a successful Resolve + Composure roll.

Blizzard

Visibility in the Lair is reduced to nearly nothing, as clouds of particles, powder, or crystals are carrying in whirling winds. Despite the name, this Tilt does not necessarily mean snow, but represents any cloud of fine matter that impairs vision and blankets the ground in a thick blanket that impedes movement, such as volcanic ash, ocean spray, or a sandstorm. Rolls involving seeing further than an arm's length (including ranged combat actions) suffer a -1 penalty, increasing by an extra -1 for every ten yards. Every four inches of powder on the ground applies a -1 dice penalty to rolls involving movement through it, including foot chases, Melee and Brawl combat, and Athletics rolls.

> Choosing and Customizing Lair Traits
>
> Many of the Traits listed here are suitable for cosmetic "re-skinning;" a Makara's entangling seaweed is just as much "undergrowth" as an Eshmaki's long grass. Players and Storytellers should decide how a Beast's Lair Traits manifest themselves.
>
> Several Lair Traits also require mechanical customization. Is an Anakim whose lair Chambers a meat-packing factory as cold, in terms of Extreme Environment levels, as a Makara who swims beneath the arctic ice and drags victims into the water? Consult the Extreme Environment table on pg. XX when a Beast gains a new Lair Trait to decide what level her personal version of the Trait should be. Remember that in order to impose Lair Traits, at least one must be present except in a Chamber. The Anakim will have a much easier time finding matching environments than the Makara, but the Makara's Trait will likely be much more potent.

Cramped

The Lair features uncomfortably close quarters — narrow passageways, tight caves, crawlspaces or similar conditions. When taking this Lair Trait for a character, define a Size of character that can comfortably fit. All physical dice rolls are penalized by 6 minus the chosen Size dice. Maneuvering through tight spaces is also painfully slow. Speed is Strength + Dexterity only, with no species factor added.

Crosswinds

Sudden gusts of wind cut through the Lair. The wind isn't strong enough to move heavy objects (that's the Hurricane Trait,) but it can threaten characters climbing or trying to keep their balance on high surfaces. Physical dice rolls involving balance or movement (especially Athletics rolls) suffer a -3 penalty. Failure on the roll applies the Knocked Down Tilt.

Currents

Flowing liquid, air thermals, moving floors or invisible forces inexorably push characters along a route. When manifesting this Lair Trait, the player chooses the direction and strength of the currents, giving the latter a strength rating of 1 to 5. Characters may resist the current's pull with a Strength + Athletics roll penalized by the current's strength, but any who fail, cannot, or do not try to resist are carried by the flow with a Speed of the current's Strength x 5.

Downpour

Water, blood, or stranger liquids hammer down into the Lair, soaking everything and lashing at exposed characters. Although it stings, the downpour doesn't cause injury, but the force of the elements is both loud and hard to see through, especially if it gets into characters' eyes. The downpour imposes a -3 dice penalty to rolls involving vision or hearing.

Echoing

Sounds within the Lair reverberate and echo, making it virtually impossible to move silently but making it unclear exactly where anything making a noise actually is. Dice rolls relating to aural perception or attempts to be quiet suffer a -3 dice penalty.

Extreme Cold

The Lair is so cold it chills through to characters' bones, draining energy and numbing flesh. While under the effects of this Lair Trait, characters don't heal bashing damage without supernatural means, and even then only at half speed. The Lair counts as a Level 2 Extreme Environment, but exposure to the cold can be deadly. After every hour being subjected to this Lair Trait, characters suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to all actions. When this penalty reaches -5, the Lair becomes a Level 3 Extreme Environment instead, meaning the injuries suffered become lethal damage.

Extreme Heat

Whether the oppressive heat in the Lair comes from geothermal vents, a blazing desert sun, molten rock, or virulent fever, characters subject to this Lair Trait quickly begin to suffer heatstroke, dehydration, or other debilitating symptoms. While under the effects of this Lair Trait, characters don't heal bashing damage without supernatural means, and even then only at half speed. The Lair counts as a Level 2 Extreme Environment, but prolonged exposure worsens the effects. After every hour being subjected to this Lair Trait, characters suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to all actions. When this penalty reaches -5, the Lair becomes a Level 3 Extreme Environment instead, meaning the injuries suffered become lethal damage.

> Supernatural resistance to Lair Traits
>
> Imposed Lair Traits aren't themselves supernatural abilities – the heat of a Basilisk's Lair is part of the environment, with the *magic* involved being the Basilisk's ability to flood locations in physical reality with that heat. The effects of Lair Traits are one step removed from the Beast, unlike Nightmares and Atavisms. Supernatural beings who would be immune to the effects of a Trait if it

occurred naturally do not need to win a Clash of Wills or make a contested roll — their immunity carries on to imposed Lair Traits as well. For example, a vampire trapped in a room a Beast floods with water by imposing the "suffocating" Trait does not take damage. Although the flood waters arrived by decidedly unnatural means, they're still flood waters, and the vampire does not need to breath.

The reverse is also true, where nonhuman beings suffer greater or unique debilitation or injury from a Lair Trait. A vampire caught in an imposed Trait representing blinding desert sunlight will burst into flames, and creatures with keen senses may be overpowered or harmed by Traits such as blinding light, thunderous, or stench.

Flooded

Waist-high fluid or viscuous material fills the Lair, making characters trying to move through struggle for every step. Whether it's mud, gore, dead insects, effluent, or simply water, the Lair Trait affects all Physical dice pools. Waist-high floods impose a -2 penalty to actions by characters wading through it. Deeper floods force characters to swim or hold their breath (see pg. XX) to progress through completely submerged areas.

Fog

Thick mist blankets the Lair, making everything within slick with moisture and dramatically reducing visibility. All visual Perception rolls and ranged attacks are penalized by 1 die per ten feet.

Icy

Whether by ice, grease, oil or some other lubricant, the surfaces in the Lair are slick. Anyone trying to keep their footing to cross the affected area must move slowly. Halve the Speed of any character on the ice. Physical actions such as combat are also impeded by the Trait, with a -2 penalty to all rolls and Defense. Attempting to move at full speed doubles the dice penalty to -4 dice.

Jagged

Broken ground in the Lair poses both a trip hazard and potential injury to anyone falling. This Lair Trait can manifest as anything from strewn boulders, to animal warrens catching the feet of characters in the Lair, to ankle-height roots and sharp rocks. Physical dice rolls involving keeping sure footing suffer a -2 dice penalty, and apply the Knocked Down Tilt on failure. Characters falling over suffer two points of bashing damage.

Maze

The terrain twists and turns without readily available landmarks, disorienting and confusing affected characters. The Lair might be a literal labyrinth, a branching cave system, or something less overtly maze-like but still effective such as a deep forest or marsh with shifting terrain.

Characters attempting to trace their steps or find a way out of the area must succeed at an Intelligence + Composure roll with a 3 dice penalty.

Poor Light

Dim illumination, strobing, or flickering lights make it difficult to track movement and see clearly. Affected characters suffer a -2 penalty to visual-based Perception rolls, including ranged combat, rising to -3 at medium range and -4 at long range.

Sealed Exits

The Beast's victim can see freedom, but can't reach it. Doors are locked, windows won't break, alleys are gated and bridges broken. As long as the Lair Trait remains in effect, no mundane means of leaving the area works. Supernatural means of escape provoke a Clash of Wills roll.

Steam

Hot steam fills the air, scalding anyone in the area and providing the Beast with cover. Steam clouds are a level 3 Extreme Environment, and anyone affected suffers a 2-dice penalty to rolls involving sight, including combat.

Stench

The area is filled with a foul smell, making victims gag and struggle to breathe. All physical rolls involving exertion are penalized by (5 – Composure) dice. Characters may ignore the penalty for a single roll by spending a point of Willpower. Supernatural creatures that do not breathe (such as most undead) are immune to this Trait's effect. Those with supernaturally strong senses of smell, however, suffer an increased effect; the dice penalty rises to (7 – Composure) dice.

Stinging

Mild toxins in undergrowth, chemicals, dust, or ash in the air, stinging insects and the touch of some sea creatures can all irritate the skin and eyes of victims, impeding their efforts. The stinging or itching isn't enough to cause injury, but imposes a -1 dice "wound penalty" on all rolls as though the affected character were in the third-to-last box of Health. If a character's eyes are stung, the Trait imposes the Blindness Tilt for a Turn.

Swarms

Clouds of insects, swarms of vermin or a carpet of bugs fills the Lair, worming into open wounds and clogging up equipment. The swarm does no damage by itself (venomous swarms are represented by adding Stinging or Toxic) but double any wound penalties and reduce the dice bonus from complex equipment by 2.

Thin Air

The air in the affected area resembles that of a mountain top rather than sea level, making those inside gasp for breath with any exertion. All physical rolls made by breathing characters are penalized by (Size – Stamina) dice. This Trait is a level 2 Extreme Environment.

Thunderous

Painfully loud noises in the Lair stun affected characters and leave them deafened. This Trait can represent anything from the roars of monsters, the thunderclap as lightning strikes, the bellowing noise of an industrial site or any other source of harmful sound, as long as it's loud enough to injure a human (even if only temporarily.) The player of a deafened character may only roll a chance die for Perception rolls based on hearing.

Undergrowth

Dense undergrowth provides Cover for the Beast and entangles characters moving through it. When taking this Lair Trait, determine the Durability rating of the Undergrowth, which does not have to made of vegetation — many Beasts incorporate thick webs, strands of mucous, or even piled "man-made" items to get in their victim's way. Characters attempting to move through the undergrowth must succeed at a Strength + Athletics roll penalized by the undergrowth's Durability rating.

Unstable

What may seem like solid ground isn't — ice cracks, ship decks list, bridges ripple as supports bend and even bare earth shakes. Characters in the affected area must succeed at a Dexterity + Athletics roll or suffer a -3 dice penalty to all Dexterity-based rolls, including Defense. Failure at a penalized roll causes the Knocked Down Tilt, while Dramatic Failure may cause Immobilized.

Major Lair Traits

Burning

The Lair, or parts of it, is engulfed in flame, burning anything combustible within the Chamber. To serve as a Lair Trait, a fire must be at least Bonfire size (see pg.XX for fire rules) but a whole Chamber is usually an Inferno. When this Trait is bought, the Beast's player specifies the Size and Intensity of the flames, which she must then match in order to use the Trait in Trait Imposition. Her environmental immunity, however, extends to all flames *up to* her Lair Trait.

Corrosive

Whether it's a pool of acid, a corrosive atmosphere, or more overtly supernatural environments such as metal flash-rusting or organic matter slowly petrifying or turning to salt, something in the Lair eats away at flesh and degrades matter. When this Trait is bought, the Beast's player defines what the corrosion affects based on the Lair's description. Affected characters suffer one aggravated damage per turn of exposure, and objects lose one Durability per turn.

Crushing

Some Lairs crush the life out of victims, whether by cave-in, constricting cables or vines or the pressure of an ocean trench. This Trait is a level 4 Extreme Environment. Some forms of Crushing may allow Strength + Athletics rolls to break free.

Darkness

The Lair is pitch-dark beyond the capacity of human night-vision — the darkness of a cave or a sealed room, not simply night. Without a source of illumination, characters within the affected area suffer a -5 penalty to any rolls involving vision and lose all Defense.

Decayed

The material structure of the Lair is decayed and crumbling, posing a hazard to those inside. All items and structures (even the walls) within the affected area have their Durability reduced by 2 to a minimum of 0. Attacks against an item without Durability inflict all successes and weapon rating against the item's Structure, but weapons themselves are not exempt from the decaying environment. Apply all damage done using a weapon to the weapon itself as well as to the target.

Diseased

Pestilence in the Lair sickens living beings inside. When this Trait is bought, the Beast's player specifies whether the sickness is moderate or grave. A moderate sickness, like a bad flu, imposes a -1 penalty to all actions in combat, increasing by another -1 every two turns of exertion to a maximum of -5. Grave sickness such as cancer inflicts the dice penalties to actions but also 1 point of bashing damage per turn of combat.

Disruption

The Lair denies affected characters the use of human tools — some versions of this Trait affect only electrical devices, while others prevent all complex machines from functioning, and a rare few (especially in Ugallu Lairs) even snuff out fire. Affected equipment does not function as long as the Trait remains in effect.

Earthquake

The Lair shakes violently, ripping the ground apart and sending debris falling. All Dexterity-based dice pools and Defense suffer a -1 penalty cumulative penalty per turn of the earthquake, to a maximum of -5. Characters at risk of being struck by falling debris must make a reflexive Stamina + Athletics roll per turn. Success means they take two points of bashing damage or avoid harm altogether on an exceptional success. Failure inflicts two points of lethal damage instead.

Engulfing

Quicksand, thick mud, or more overtly supernatural environments such as human-sized carnivorous plants or grasping tendrils threaten to swallow and immobilize characters in the Lair. Affected characters are incapable of moving, cannot apply Defense and may not make combat-related actions, but may attempt to pull free with a Strength + Athletics roll with a dice penalty equal to their own Size.

Electrified

The Lair features electrical hazards — bio-electrical stings, live rails, electrified fences, or simply lightning. When this Trait is bought, the Beast's player defines whether the Trait represents Major, Severe, or Fatal levels of electricity as per the rules on pg. XX. To use this Trait as the initial Trait in Trait Imposition, she must match the appropriate severity. Her environmental immunity applies to sources of electricity *up to* the Trait's severity.

Exposed

Victims in this Lair find no safety in hiding from the Beast, as his attacks pass through any barrier they try to put between them. No affected character receives the benefits of Cover in combat — assume that the Cover's Durability is 0 as long as the Lair Trait remains in effect.

Heavy

Gravity in the Lair exerts a stronger than usual pull, increasing the weight of characters and their equipment. Physical exertion becomes extremely tiring — characters must succeed at a Strength + Stamina roll, penalized by one die per dot of Size above 5, or suffer a -3 penalty to all Physical dice pools. Success prevents the penalty for the character's Stamina in turns, or for the scene in an exceptional success.

Hurricane

Terrible winds rip through the Lair, tearing loose objects up and pummeling anyone exposed. The winds are a level 3 Extreme Environment, representing the injuries caused by small airborne objects, but they also impose a -3 dice penalty to aural Perception rolls and all Physical dice pools. Characters within the affected area may also be at risk from larger pieces of debris. If so, the player must make a reflexive Stamina + Athletics roll per turn without protective shelter. Success means the character suffers two points of bashing damage or avoids harm altogether on an exceptional success. Failure inflicts two points of lethal damage instead.

Mirages

Ranging from heat-shimmer to openly supernatural illusions, visual distortions and hallucinatory images distract and confuse characters within the affected area. Characters affected suffer a -3 dice penalty to visual Perception rolls including the roll to avoid Surprise in combat. Successfully telling illusion from reality and avoiding the effects of the Tilt requires a Wits + Composure roll at a -3 penalty, but removes the visual dice penalty for as many turns as successes, or for the scene on an exceptional success.

Noxious gasses

The air in the affected area is filled with dangerous gases. Some forms of this Trait combine with the Fog Trait representing visible clouds, while others are invisible. Either may also combine with Stench. Unless characters in the area have breathing equipment or a supernatural nature that means they don't have to breath (for example, a vampire), they must hold their breath as per the rules on Pg. XX or suffer one lethal wound per turn they breath the gas in.

Suffocating

Rather than a harmful atmosphere as in Noxious Gases, a Suffocating Lair simply lacks oxygen altogether. It may represent the impossible heights of a mountain, the depths of a sealed cave, or simply be underwater. No matter how the trait manifests itself, characters staying within the affected area beyond their ability to hold their breath begin suffocating or drowning as per the rules on Pg. XX.

Razored

Beyond the broken terrain in Jagged Lairs, a Razored Lair turns surfaces into deadly weapons — blades, broken glass, razorwire, barbs, thorns, or other sharp protrusions pose a hazard to characters within the affected area. Pushing through the sharp surfaces, or falling against them, inflicts three points of lethal damage. Characters attempting to safely navigate through the barbs must succeed at a Dexterity + Composure roll.

Rotting

Food spoils rapidly in the Lair, mold blooming and liquid souring. Untreated wounds quickly fester, and the atmosphere seems to sap the energy out of characters inside. Healing times are tripled while under a Rotting Lair's influence, and the first point of Willpower regained by a character within the affected area is lost.

Toxic

Something in the Lair — food, water, the bites and scratches of wildlife, even a sickly sheen to metallic surfaces — is highly poisonous and threatens characters coming into contact with its method of transmission. When this Trait is bought, the Beast's player defines a Toxicity Rating and Time Interval. Affected characters must make a reflexive Stamina + Resolve – Toxicity roll every Interval or suffer the toxin's Toxicity in lethal damage, each success on the roll reducing the damage by one. In the exertion of combat, the toxin inflicts one lethal wound per turn. Rather than reducing the damage, the resistance roll instead gives its successes in turns without suffering further damage from the poison.

Viscous

Swamp, mud, deep snow, or some kind of adhesive coats the Lair and makes movement extremely difficult. While this Trait is in effect, no character or creature adds their species factor to Speed. The player of a character struggling to move faster may make a reflexive Stamina + Strength roll and add its successes to Speed for a turn (to a maximum of the character's Speed species factor, i.e. 5 for a human.)

Examples of Lair Construction

He served on a Russian submarine before his Homecoming, and lay awake at night thinking of the terrible pressure and dark water all around his fragile world. He dreamt of tentacle *things* in the deep, wrapping themselves around the metal shell of his vessel, until he realized that the

creature in the depths was him. The Eshmaki's Soul takes the form of a sea monster attacking a submarine, rupturing its hull and feeding from the panic of the dreaming sailors as water flood the ship. His Lair contains the Flooded, Downpour, Thin Air, and Sealed Exits Traits.

She seeks out those who victimize others, catches them with her surprising strength and renders them unconscious. It's not enough to be stronger than those who use their strength against the weak — this minotaur has a sense of *justice*. Her prey wake to find themselves in pitch-darkness, her mocking voice telling them that if they can find their way out, they can go free. When they put their hands to the walls to guide themselves, stumbling in the dark, they slice their palms on the glass and nails studding the maze. The labyrinth is impossibly large, and they die of blood loss long before they see daylight. The minotaur feels their fear, desperation, and final, sad resignation as they die alone in the dark, and takes a measure of satisfaction along with sating her hunger. The Anakim's Lair contains the Maze, Razored, and Darkness Traits.

[END OF LAIR SECTION – THE FOLLOWING ARE MY STAB AT ROSE'S LISTS]

Anakim create Lairs that imprison, trap, or reduce their victims, restricting their movements and leaving them prey for the Primordial Self.

Cramped, Crosswinds, Currents, Jagged, Maze, Sealed Exits, Undergrowth, Unstable, Earthquake, Exposed

Eshmaki create Lairs that allow them to stalk their prey. Eshmaki Lair Traits rarely deal damage themselves, rather they allow the Eshmaki's soul all the advantages.

Blazing Light, Cramped, Downpour, Echoing, Fog, Poor Light, Maze, Steam, Swarms, Undergrowth, Darkness, Mirages

Makara create Lairs that trap and hurt – or even kill – victims. They are the most likely Family to have damaging Lair Traits, and often combine Traits that confuse or impede movement with harmful Traits.

Crosswinds, Currents, Extreme Cold, Extreme Heat, Flooded, Jagged, Steam, Unstable, Earthquake, Engulfing, Crushing, Suffocating

Namtaru create Lairs that prevent recovery. Low-level extreme environments (that cause Bashing injuries as fast as a human recovers them) and settings that unnerve or stress their victims are common.

Blizzard, Extreme Cold, Extreme Heat, Stench, Stinging, Undergrowth, Decayed, Diseased, Rotting, Toxic

Ugallu create lairs that remove victims' capabilities, leaving them exposed and vulnerable for the Primordial Self. Most Ugallu Lairs feature stark landscapes that deny the Beast's prey any shelter or hiding place.

Crosswinds, Icy, Stinging, Thin Air, Thunderous, Exposed, Mirages, Hurricane

Satiety

Beasts *hunger*. But their existence focuses less on the hunger, and more on quenching that hunger, engorging, consuming, and otherwise becoming full. To the Children, this isn't just becoming full, it's becoming *whole*. The Soul doesn't just want to eat; it wants to consume, to devour. Beasts consume things, creatures, concepts. They hunger for power, for violence, for wealth, for anything which a person might want.

When Satiety is high, the Soul grows complacent. When it's low, the Soul runs rampant and demands more. Satiety fluctuates wildly, and the different potential ranges each have advantages and drawbacks. The answers to five questions during character creation determines starting Satiety, but this number quickly changes in play.

Satiety is lost with time, and by spending it on certain Nightmares and Atavisms.

Raising Satiety

Quite simply, Satiety increases when the character fulfills her Hunger. Once per scene, your character may gain a single dot of Satiety by fulfilling her Hunger. Additionally, fulfilling a Hunger replenishes a spent point of Willpower.

As the Soul grows hungry, it becomes less picky, but more demanding. A sated Soul needs less, but its tastes grow refined and temperamental. When the Soul hungers, the Beast becomes obsessed with finding and devouring. When it's fully sated, it can go into hibernation, making the Beast nearly human.

Hunting can occur in nightmares as well as the physical world. To the Soul, both places are identical, since Satiety is not truly a physical hunger.

Levels of Satiety

A Beast can have five levels of Satiety, and this number will fluctuate throughout play.

• **Zero Satiety:** A Beast at zero Satiety hungers above all else, and will not stop until fed. They have the Ravenous Condition.

• **Low Satiety:** Characters with one to three dots of Satiety have the Starving Condition, and are urged to put their hunger first, as it throbs in the back of their mind.

• **Medium Satiety:** Characters with four to six dots of Satiety have the Sated Condition, and while hungry, can be picky about what they consume.

• **High Satiety:** Characters with seven to nine dots of Satiety have the Gorged Condition, and will only consume exactly what the Soul wants at that moment.

• **Maximum Satiety:** Characters with ten dots of Satiety gain the Human Condition. Their Souls slumber, and they can hardly be considered Beasts.

When the Soul consumes, the Storyteller determines the Satiety level of the person, place, thing,

or concept consumed using the following guidelines. If the Satiety level is equal to or higher than the Beast's current Satiety, the player rolls the Satiety rating of the "meal"; each success adds a dot of Satiety.

This roll always occurs at the end of a scene, not during. A Beast can consume whatever she wishes in the immediate, but its effects are not immediate. Also, only one roll is made, based on the highest Satiety value consumed, plus modifiers for excess. Alternatively, with an instant action and a Willpower point, a Beast can "force" Satiety to process, to digest early. This allows for a Satiety replenishment roll mid-scene.

Satiety Guidelines

When a character devours something, determine the Satiety level using the following guidelines. First, determine the base level depending on how rare or rarified the thing is. The examples follow, depending on the type of consumption in question. Then, apply modifiers to that amount based on quantity and preference. These are all up to Storyteller discretion; more challenging prey should trend higher, things the character can simply stumble upon trend lower. If something was disproportionately hard to come across, the Storyteller should add +1 or +2 to the Satiety level.

Under no circumstance will the Satiety level increase above ten.

Chart me

Base Satiety	Level of Consumption
1	Anything listed under Low Satiety examples.
3	Anything listed under Mid Satiety examples.
5	Anything listed under High Satiety examples.

End chart

New chart

Modifier	Circumstances
+1	Unique example
+2	Multiple instances in a scene
+3	Particularly abundant consumption in the scene
+1	Fitting with your Beast's peculiar Hunger
-1	Not fitting with your Beast's specific Hunger
+1	Fulfillment required killing
-2	Someone else procured the meal for you
+1	Hunt required an extended chase

+1 Indulging in your Lair

+1 The meal also fulfills an Aspiration

+1 Spent Satiety in the hunt

End new chart

Note that these are general guidelines. Storyteller discretion is advised, and any relevant, relative consumption should be considered for Satiety raises. Sometimes, Merit purchases can constitute Satiety increases. For example, a Tyrant may gain Satiety when purchasing the Status, Allies, or even Contacts Merits under the right circumstances. As Storyteller, always favor allowing Satiety increases over denying them.

Hoard

A *Collector* hungers for things. He wants one specific type of thing, and will hunt it to the ends of the Earth. He may hunger for wealth, art, gold, antiques, lovers, ancient texts, or whatever else he may wish to hide away in his Lair. A Collector likely maintains numerous hoards, spread out and hidden away from prying eyes. Some Collectors catalogue their findings and meticulously organize them. Some simply toss them in a room and lock the door; the hunt is the beginning and end of their care for the item.

High Satiety: At high Satiety, the Collector must hunt for rare, very specific examples of his desire. He can't settle for any blonde man as a lover; he needs a blonde virgin with a large birthmark on his ass, a soprano voice, a nine-inch cock, and a boyish stutter.

Moderate Satiety: At moderate Satiety, not any example will do. This level requires some degree of refinement. A rare book collector can't just raid the local library if moderately Sated. But he might be sated by a local author's personal proof copy of her newest novel, with editing marks and notes in the margin.

Low Satiety: At low Satiety, the Collector can seek out anything that generally fits within the scope of his desire. A Collector who hoards gold can walk into any jewelry shop with a bit of cash, or mug an upper middle class person, and walk out sated.

Power

A *Tyrant* wants for fear, she wants for respect, she wants for worship, and she wants for control. A Tyrant fulfills her hunger by establishing hierarchies, and establishing herself at the top of them. This power is often but not always established through physical force, but a Beast has an inherent advantage in that field, so it's a common tool for grasping power. Many of the Primordial join and climb the ranks of social, political, and corporate organizations for the opportunity to one-up rivals and fulfill this Hunger. For Power to apply, there must be a clear show of dominance, and a recognition of that dominance.

High Satiety: A low Satiety Tyrant must consume power in a large scale or superlative form. Becoming president of a major office could apply, as could establishing an international

information network that dominates a certain field in raw access to actionable data. One Beast might create a position of new power, while another may focus on taking power that already exists.

Moderate Satiety: Moderate level Satiety requires a reasonable but undeniable exertion of influence and shift of power dynamic to sate. A job promotion could apply, as could convincing an intern to work without pay, or even having a devoted follower take a city council position. Blackmailing an influential person would count at this level.

Low Satiety: Any show of power will apply for a low Satiety character. Namedropping to convince a police officer to give a warning instead of a traffic ticket might apply, or convincing a small press publisher to stop hiring a freelance writer due to his inflammatory political views could as well.

Prey

A *Predator* hunts living things. This can be a literal, "feasting on flesh" level hunt, or a symbolic hunt, such as a bounty hunt, a character assassination, or uncovering something long lost to history. To constitute Prey, the hunt must include some form of investigation, some sort of pursuit, and some sort of harrying and takedown. With those three elements in place, the Soul can be sated. Predation in this sense can never be a passive endeavor; it must be highly engaged, with the Beast taking a proactive role.

High Satiety: At high Satiety, a Beast must hunt challenging prey. This is prey that could kill her if she's not careful. It's also prey that has a distinct self-defense instinct, who can evade competently, and who can hide from anything short of a massive effort.

Moderate Satiety: At moderate Satiety, a Beast must hunt things which pose some challenge, but aren't necessarily deadly threats outside of fringe circumstances. Most competent humans fall into this scale.

Low Satiety: A low Satiety Beast can hunt for almost anything in her wheelhouse. If she wants flesh, any human willing to put up a fight or give chase will do. It doesn't matter if the prey poses any significant challenge or risk.

Punishment

A *Nemesis* hungers for retribution. This punishment must be for a transgression, for a crime committed, but the criteria here is typically vague or particularly sensitive. This isn't an eye for an eye; this is removing a hand for shoplifting a loaf of bread. This is hunting and torturing someone for a rude glance at a friend. The transgression punished determines the amount the punishment sates the soul; greater crimes are "more filling".

High Satiety: At high Satiety, a Beast must punish mortal transgressions, including murder, or unforgivable and large amounts of theft. For example, punishing a character for burning a classical painting could apply here.

Moderate Satiety: At moderate Satiety, a Beast must punish crimes which cause lasting harm to someone or something. Property damage, injury, theft, these all fall under the auspices of moderate Satiety.

Low Satiety: At low Satiety, a Beast can punish any transgression she finds rude or unwelcome. Gestures, expressed opinions, or even failing to follow a social norm can be grounds for immense torment.

Ruin

A *Ravager* hunts for ruin, for devastation, for nihilistic annihilation. She aims to destroy that which others value. She finds value, she finds weakness, then she eliminates. This value can be personal, perceived, or even sentimental. The millionaire who keeps a chunk of fool's gold in his safe because it was his first scam has built value into something otherwise worthless. The perceived value determines how fulfilling the destruction is. Something one person cherishes is somewhat valuable, but something recognized by a large swath of the population as irreplaceable is significantly more so. The item in question can be a person, if valued, and if destroyed.

High Satiety: At high Satiety, the item destroyed must be recognized by most people as valuable if made aware of it. A yacht might suffice, for example. Or, it can be something integral to a small group of people. A cult's venerated leader could suffice in that instance, or the founder of an influential, tight-knit company.

Moderate Satiety: At this level, the item destroyed must be extremely important to one person. So much so that it'd change their life if it were destroyed. Alternatively, it could be of modest importance to a large group of people. For example, the cornerstone of a religious sect's oldest known temple.

Low Satiety: At low Satiety, if it bleeds, it works. If someone is hurt significantly in a way they'll remember for at least a week, it's enough. Or, if it's enough to motivate a small group to immediate action, it'll suffice.

Universal

Some actions fulfill any Hunger. These are the few things that will sate all Beasts equally.

High Satiety: Destroying a Hero will always sate even the most engorged Beast's Soul.

Moderate Satiety: When the Soul hunts prey through nightmares, it fulfills a moderately Sated Soul.

Low Satiety: Letting loose a Nightmare against prey constitutes a low Satiety fulfillment.

Losing Satiety

Satiety isn't usually lost so much as spent. However, certain effects can force Satiety loss, and Satiety decreases slowly over time as well.

Satiety naturally decreases, depending on the character's current Satiety level, and whether she's

active or dormant. In this case, active is defined by half or more of her waking time spent outside her Lair, or otherwise engaging with the outside world. If half her waking time is spent holed up in her Lair, she's dormant. Well-sated characters lose their Satiety quicker than those on the verge of starvation. The hunger slows as a character starves. Well-sated characters must continue to 'snack' in order to keep their Souls pleased.

Individual Nightmares and Atavisms feature options for expending Satiety. Each is unique and has its own costs and effects. You can find these in the Nightmare and Atavism descriptions. As well, if an effect reduces Satiety, it'll be mentioned in its description.

Additionally, a dot of Satiety can be spent to guarantee success on an action. Spend the dot before making the roll. If the roll achieves fewer successes than the Beast's Lair, it instead achieves that number of successes. If it achieves more than the Beast's Lair, add a single additional success if the Beast's Lair 1-3. If it's 4-6, add two successes. If it's 7 or higher, add three.

Lastly, offering another character access to the Primordial Pathways (see p. XX) costs a point of Satiety. Once a character is so blessed, the effect remains for a number of months equal to the Beast's Lair.

Consult the Satiety chart on p. XX to determine how quickly dormant and active Beasts lose their Satiety.

Effects of Satiety

The effects of Satiety come in two forms. First, every Beast has a single Satiety Condition at a given time. She'll have Sated, Gorged, Starving, or Ravenous, depending on her current level of Satiety. This Condition provides a few persistent effects, and awards Beats for certain behaviors. Second, Satiety levels can play into certain supernatural abilities and dice pools. For example, a power might cause more harm to a hungry Beast than a sated one. These effects are noted individually.

Note that Satiety Conditions resolve only when Satiety increases or decreases into a level fitting of another Condition. These resolutions give Beats like normal Conditions. As Persistent Conditions, though, they also grant a Beat whenever their Beat criteria is fulfilled. This is to say, a Beast always has one Satiety Condition, noted on the character sheet.

Satiety also affects the effects of Anathemas. However, they're sufficiently unique so as to deserve individual attention, below.

Sated (New Persistent Condition)

Your character has a middling Satiety, which means four, five, or six dots. The Soul wants more, but doesn't *need* more. The Hunger still gnaws, but isn't overpowering. This is a state of equilibrium between the power of desire and the need for sustenance. If she loses more than one Health level at a time, reduce the damage suffered by one level. If the damage comes in more than one type, reduce the worse type first.

Your character is tempted to consume more than she would otherwise. When the character is confronted with an opportunity to raise Satiety, the player must succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll to resist the temptation or spend a Willpower point.

When your character takes an action which would replenish Satiety at high Satiety (8-10), she heals a level of lethal or two bashing damage, but still does not gain Satiety.

Resolution: Reduce Satiety to three or fewer dots, or increase it to seven or more dots.

Beat: When your character pursues further Satiety at great risk or personal harm, take a Beat. When your character frivolously spends Satiety, take a Beat. In this case, frivolously meaning to accomplish something she could otherwise accomplish with mundane actions with a reasonable, relatively safe chance of success.

Gorged (New Persistent Condition)

Your character has a high Satiety, (seven, eight, or nine dots). She is beyond sated, and her Soul becomes lethargic and complacent as result. Social actions and supernatural effects that influence her behavior achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five. On the other hand, your character is healthy, sturdy, and of great constitution. She receives two additional Health boxes. As well, she receives three extra dice on any roll to resist poison, disease, or environmental effects.

She cannot spend Willpower to bolster Nightmares or Atavisms.

Resolution: Reduce Satiety to six or fewer dots, or increase it to ten.

Beat: At any time, you may choose to automatically fail a roll because of your character's complacent, sloth-like attitude. This should only be used on rolls where your character is attempting to be proactive and engaged. It should also only be used on rolls with clear consequences. If you do so, take a Beat. Additionally, you may opt to make this failure into a dramatic failure for an additional Beat.

Human (New Persistent Condition)

Your character has fully sated her Soul (she has ten dots of Satiety). At this point, she is functionally human. She loses access to all her Atavisms, Nightmares, Beast-specific Merits, and Birthrights. She does not gain an Integrity trait, but is otherwise human. She cannot spend Satiety for any reason, and will not naturally lose Satiety without outside intervention.
Resolution: Her Soul needs a significant shock (and a loss of Satiety) to awaken from its slumber. A near-death experience can do this (filling all Health boxes with lethal damage). A significant supernatural encounter can also do this (being subject to some supernatural ability with an exceptional success). The last known method is delivering a killing blow to a Hero.
Beat: Experiencing a meaningful failure due to human limitations or weaknesses (at Storyteller discretion).

Ravenous (New Persistent Condition)

Your character has lost all Satiety dots, and is beyond starvation. Her Soul hungers beyond compare. Your character struggles to consider anything outside her own Satiety. She cannot spend Willpower, except in pursuit of Satiety. When faced with a chance to regain Satiety, she must comply. In the case of immense danger or risk, you may spend a point of Willpower and roll Resolve + Composure – 3 to resist.

Your character does not regain Willpower normally. She may only regain Willpower by taking actions that would replenish Satiety at low to moderate level (1-7). While these actions do not replenish Satiety, they do give back a point of Willpower.

When acting in direct pursuit of her Satiety, all rolls achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five. As well, add +2 to all Physical dice pools, and -1 to all Resolve and Composure-based dice pools, as the intensity builds up inside her Soul.

Every day that passes without replenishing a dot of Satiety causes her one level of lethal damage. She cannot heal lethal or aggravated damage normally while she has no dots of Satiety. However, acts which would replenish Satiety at low level (8-10) heal a level of bashing damage, actions which would replenish Satiety at moderate level (4-7) heal a level of lethal damage, and acts which would replenish Satiety at low level (1-3) heal a level of aggravated damage.

Resolution: Regain a point of Satiety.

Beat: When your character commits an action that would replenish Satiety at low Satiety (1-3), take a Beat even though she does not regain Satiety.

Starving (New Persistent Condition)

Your character has a low Satiety (one to three dots). At this point, the hunger is a consuming compulsion she cannot "just shake." It's always in the back of her mind. When tempted with a potential source of Satiety, she must pursue. If the pursuit would threaten her existence, you may spend a point of Willpower and make a Resolve + Composure roll in order to resist the temptation. However, when acting in direct pursuit of her Satiety, all rolls achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

At this level of Satiety, every time she commits an act which would replenish Satiety at high level (8-10), she may also heal a level of lethal or two levels of bashing damage. If she commits an act which would replenish Satiety at moderate Satiety (4-7), she may heal a level of aggravated damage.

Resolution: Increase Satiety to four or more dots.

Beat: If your character takes an irrational, clearly dangerous or deeply risky behavior in pursuit of Satiety, take a Beat. As well, if your character hurts a loved one, broodmate, or a character with the Family Ties Condition in pursuit of Satiety, take a Beat.

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END CHART

CH3

Merits

Merits reflect aspects of your character that are both important to the narrative, and beyond the scope of Attributes, Skills, and Skill Specialties. These are items relating to your character's background, her ties to other people and organizations in the world, and unique knacks she may possess.

A starting Beast has ten dots of Merits. Additional Merits can be purchased with Experiences, for one Experience per dot.

Some Merits exist in multiple dot ratings. This reflects greater effects, such as higher dice pool modifiers. In some cases, Merits allow for different, new actions at each dot rating. These are called Style Merits. You purchase one dot, then the next in order, each costing one Experience. So for example, if a Fighting Style Merit has five dots, and you've invested three Experiences (or three of your starting dots), you have access to the special options, abilities, and advantages in the first, second, and third dots. Another Experience will unlock the fourth, and a fifth Experience allows access to the whole tiered Merit. Unless otherwise noted, your character can use multiple abilities in a single Style Merit at the same time. Some Style Merits require your character to sacrifice Defense or another trait; you cannot sacrifice the same trait twice at the same time. So for example, two Style abilities that require you to each sacrifice your Defense can never be used in the same turn, since you can only sacrifice Defense once at a time.

Some Merits have prerequisites listed. Your character must possess the relevant trait at an unmodified level in order to purchase it. So for example, if a power increases Strength, those dots do not apply toward Merit prerequisites. If the prerequisites list "Beast," it's only available to Beast characters. A Hero could not have that Merit, for example. At Storyteller discretion, if your game includes other supernatural characters, they may purchase some of these Merits to reflect their kinship with the Primordial.

If a Merit lists being "Advanced," or "Epic", it's a supernatural extension of a mundane Merit. This requires the mundane version of the Merit to be purchased first. Most such Merits require your character to be a Beast, but that's noted in their prerequisites.

Sanctity of Merits

Merits reflect aspects of your character, but are an out of game resource. For example, your character may have friends. But you can choose to spend Experiences or Merit dots to purchase the Allies Merit. This gives those friends a direct effect in the game, and cements those points as sanctified. If something happened to the friends, the story goes on, nothing happens in terms of game mechanics. But if something happened to Allies, those points are not lost. The Allies dots disappear, but you receive Experiences equal to the dots lost. This is called the Sanctity of Merits rule.

If your character loses a Merit, you may repurchase it in the next chapter of your chronicle. You couldn't just say, "All right, my Allies died. I'm buying new Allies to call." You'd have to wait until the next chapter. Alternatively, you can spend those Experiences on other traits that are relevant to the situation. Maybe losing those Allies inspired a few trips to the firing range to let off steam, so you spend those points on a dot of Firearms.

Allies (• to •••••)

Effect: Allies help your character. They might be friends, employees, associates, or people your character has blackmailed. Each instance of this Merit represents one type of ally. This could be in an organization, a society, a clique, or an individual. You can take this Merit multiple times to represent different Allies. For example, your character may possess Allies (Police) •••, Allies (Organized Crime) ••, and Allies (Church) •.

Dots in this Merit reflect greater relationships and access. Work with the Storyteller to determine just what your character's dots mean, and what she can request from her Allies reasonably.

When requesting help from Allies, the Storyteller assigns a rating between one and five to the favor. A character can ask for favors that add up to her Allies rating without penalty in one chapter. If she extends her influence beyond that, her player must roll Manipulation + Persuasion + Allies, with a penalty equal to the favor's rating. If the roll is successful, the group does as requested. Failed or successful, the character loses a dot of Allies (but Sanctity of Merits applies).

Alternate Identity (•, ••, or •••)

Effect: Your character has established an alternate identity. The level of this Merit determines the amount of scrutiny it holds up to. At one dot, the identity is superficial and unofficial. For example, a simple but uniform costume, alias, and accent. At two dots, she's supported her identity with paperwork and identification. It's not liable to stand up to extensive research, but it'll turn away private investigators and internet hobbyists. At three dots, the identity can pass thorough inspection. The identity has been deeply entrenched in relevant databases.

As well, the Merit reflects time the character has spent honing the persona. At one or two dots, she gains a +1 to all Subterfuge rolls to defend the identity. At three dots, she gains +2.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times, each time representing an additional identity.

Area of Expertise (•)

Prerequisite: Resolve •• and one Skill Specialty

Effect: Your character is uncommonly specialized in one area. Choose a Specialty to assign to this Merit. Forgo the normal +1 bonus afforded by a Specialty, in exchange for a +2.

Barfly (••)

Prerequisite: Socialize ••

Effect: Your character is a natural in the bar environment, and can procure an open invitation wherever she wishes. Whereas most characters would require rolls to blend into social functions they don't belong in, she doesn't; she belongs. Rolls to identify her as an outsider suffer her Socialize as a penalty.

Common Sense (•••)

Effect: Your character has an exceptionally sound and rational mind. With a moment's thought, she can weigh potential courses of action and outcomes.

Once per chapter as an instant action, you may ask the Storyteller one of the following questions about a task at hand or course of action. Roll Wits + Composure. If you succeed, the Storyteller must answer to the best of her ability. If you fail, you get no answer. With an exceptional success, you can ask an additional question.

<<BULLETED LIST>>

• What is the worst choice?

• What do I stand to lose here?

• What's the safest choice?

• Am I chasing a worthless lead?

<<END BULLETS>>

Contacts (•)

Effect: Contacts provide your character with information. This Merit represents a sphere or organization with which the character can garner information. Contacts do not provide services, only information. This may be face-to-face, email, by telephone, or even by séance in some strange instances.

Garnering information via Contacts requires a Manipulation + Social Skill roll, depending on the method the character uses, and the relationship between the characters. The Storyteller should give a bonus or penalty, dependent on how relevant the information is to that particular Contact, whether accessing the information is dangerous, and if the character has maintained good relations or done favors for the Contact. These modifiers should range from -3 to +3 in most cases. If successful, the Contact provides the information.

You may purchase this Merit multiple times to reflect different sources.

Danger Sense (••)

Effect: Your character's reflexes are honed to the point where nothing's shocking. You gain a +2 modifier on reflexive Wits + Composure rolls for your character to detect an impending ambush.

Danger Sense (Advanced, ••)

Prerequisites: Beast, Danger Sense

Effect: Your character's nerves act as premonition. She sees the potential outcome of a threat the moment before it could occur. If she succeeds in detecting an ambush (including the normal +2 bonus for Danger Sense), her initiative immediately becomes that of her ambusher + 1 (or if being ambushed by a group, the highest among them). Additionally, in the first turn of combat, she gains +2 Defense and can use her full Defense against any and all attacks against her, unless an ability she uses sacrifices it.

Demolisher (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Strength ••• or Intelligence •••

Effect: Your character has an innate feel for the weak points in objects. When damaging an object, she ignores one point of the object's Durability per dot in this Merit.

Demolisher (Advanced, ••)

Prerequisite: Beast, Demolisher •••

Effect: Your character's ability to destroy is enhanced by her Primordial self. When damaging an object, she ignores its Durability completely. As well, actions to destroy inanimate objects achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

Direction Sense (•)

Effect: Your character has an innate sense of direction, and is always aware of her location in space. She always knows which direction she faces, and never suffers penalties to navigate or find her way.

Direction Sense (Advanced, ••)

Prerequisite: Beast, Direction Sense

Effect: Your character's direction sense goes beyond the mundane. If she has seen, touched, smelled, or otherwise directly sensed an person, place, or thing, she can tell in what direction it lies. She always knows where she is in relationship to her Lair.

Direction Sense (Epic ••)

Prerequisite: Direction Sense (Advanced)

Effect: Your Beast's senses tap into her identity as Primordial. She may breach the fourth dimension as she hunts. If she's sensed an object, she can hone in on when and where it last existed if destroyed. Additionally, with a turn of concentration and a point of Willpower, she can extend her current senses backwards in time. This does not change her relative location in space, but she can look backward rapidly. She must know the time she wishes to perceive, or must make a guess. This cannot be relative time; she cannot say, "When Joe was here." She can only say, "An hour ago," and hope it's when Joe was there. Her perceptions pass in real time. So if she extends them back an hour and simply waits, she sees the very moment where she extended her perceptions. Essentially, she can "stake out" a time that's already passed.

Double Jointed (••)

Prerequisite: Dexterity •••

Effect: Your character might have been a contortionist, or spent time practicing yoga. She can dislodge joints when need be. She automatically escapes from any mundane bonds without a roll. When grappled, subtract her Dexterity from the opponent's roll, as long as she's not taking any aggressive actions.

Double Jointed (Advanced, •)

Prerequisite: Double Jointed, Beast

Effect: Your character's body is far more pliable than even the most nimble contortionist. If she can fit her head into something, she can push her entire body through it with a turn. Opponents in a grapple with your character always suffer her Dexterity as a penalty, even if she's acting against them aggressively, or if your character initiated the grapple.

Dragonslaying (• to •••••, Style)

Prerequisite: Athletics •••, Occult ••, Resolve •••, Weaponry ••

This fighting style is the staple of Heroes after their first hunts. It's a style that specializes in neutralizing the threats that make Beasts such fearsome opponents. While definitely useful to Heroes, some Beasts bother to learn how to kill their own kind. These rare few, while frightening, are generally looked down upon by their kin.

Some of the abilities in this Merit reference "a superior threat". A superior threat is adjudicated by the Storyteller; a Hero against a Beast almost always constitutes superior threat. Between two Beasts, or even two Heroes, the Storyteller must apply her best judgment. The character using this Merit must be the underdog for its advantages to apply.

Trust in the Blade (•): Your character can put all his faith in his weapon, trusting its edge to carry him through. This allows him to shrug off some of a Beast's tricks. You may add your character's Weaponry dots to any Contested dice pool against a Nightmare that would make your character stop fighting against a superior threat. You may only use this advantage on a turn with which the weapon is drawn and in hand, and your character intends to attack with the weapon. If your character possesses the Quick Draw Merit, your character may respond reflexively to such a power by drawing a weapon and using this Merit.

Level the Field (••): When fighting a Beast, your character is best served by learning his Atavisms. Once she's aware of an Atavism, she may make an attack at a symbolic body part (incurring a -2 penalty or more) to deny the Beast access to that Atavism. If the attack hits, the Beast loses access to the chosen Atavism so long as the damage from this attack persists.

Strength in Purpose (•••): Often, your character's best chance is to hit hard, hit fast, and ignore the worst of the threat in hopes she can conquer quickly. When making an all-out attack (see p. XX) against a superior threat, add your character's Resolve instead of the normal +2. As well,

you may ignore the first point of damage suffered in the turn.

St. George's Strike (••••): This technique relies on knowing the intricacies of what makes Beasts tick, and leverages just a little bit of fate to go in for the killing blow. When spending Willpower to add dice to a Weaponry dice pool against a Beast, instead of adding dice to your dice pool, you may substitute the Beast's Lair dots for the damage modifier on your character's weapon. However, the weapon shatters from the stress.

Apotheosis (••••): This ability allows your character to literally devour part of a Beast, and in doing so, take some of its power. To use Apotheosis, you must spend a Willpower point when making a bite attack (see p. XX). This generally requires your character to establish a grapple first. The first point of damage caused by the successful bite causes an aggravated damage. The rest of the damage is applied normally. So long as that aggravated wound persists, your character gains access to the Beast's Birthright, and the Beast loses it.

Eidetic Memory (••)

Effect: Your character recalls events and details with pinpoint accuracy. You do not have to make rolls for your character to remember past experiences. When making Intelligence + Composure (or relevant Skill) rolls to recall minute facts from swaths of information, take a +2 bonus.

Eidetic Memory (Advanced, •)

Prerequisites: Eidetic Memory *or* Mimir's Wisdom Atavism, Beast

Effect: A Beast's memory can be downright transcendent. She can recall scenes with perfect clarity. When she makes a roll to remember, she receives exceptional success on three successes instead of five. Rolls still benefit from the +2 from Eidetic Memory. If the player rolls an exceptional success, she receives the Informed Condition (see p. XX) related to the recalled scene.

Additionally, she can take Mental and Social actions related to those recollections, even if she was not paying attention in the first place. For example, she may use a Wits + Empathy action to determine the moods and motivations of a person she had coffee with eighteen years ago.

Encyclopedic Knowledge (••)

Effect: Choose a Skill. Due to an immersion in academia, pop culture, or hobby obsession, your character has collected limitless factoids about the topic, even if she has no dots in the Skill.

You can make an Intelligence + Wits roll at any time your character is dealing with her area of interest. On a successful roll, the Storyteller must give a relevant fact or detail about the issue at hand. Your character knows this fact, but you must explain within the scope of your character's background why she knows it. For example, for Encyclopedic Knowledge: Medicine: "Do you remember that time on that show, when the doctor said it doesn't manifest before puberty?"

Epic Potential (•)

Prerequisite: Beast

Effect: A Beast with this Merit has a defining Attribute that excels beyond normal human limitations. When taking this Merit, choose an Attribute. You may raise that Attribute one dot higher than the normal trait maximum. You still have to buy the Attribute with Experiences, but it's not subject to the normal limitation.

You may only take this Attribute once. If you ever wish to change the Attribute, you must shed this Merit per the Sanctity of Merits, and purchase it anew. If you purchased an Attribute at the additional dot level, you would have to shed it as well.

Fame (• to •••)

Effect: Your character is recognized within a certain sphere, for a certain skill, or because of some past action, or stroke of luck. This can mean favors and attention, it can also mean negative attention and scrutiny. When choosing the Merit, define what your character is known for. As a rule of thumb, one dot means local recognition, or reputation within a confined subculture. Two dots means regional recognition by a wide swath of people. Three dots means worldwide recognition to anyone that might have been exposed to the source of the fame. Each dot adds a die to any Social rolls among those who are impressed by your character's celebrity.

Drawback: Any rolls to find or identify the character enjoy a +1 bonus per dot of the Merit. If the character has Alternate Identity, she can mitigate this drawback. A character with Fame cannot have the Anonymity Merit.

Fame (Advanced, • to •••)

Prerequisites: Beast, Fame (equal level or higher)

Effect: Your character not only has Fame in her current identity, but her Primordial self has a legendary notoriety that shakes humanity on a deep and fundamental level. This acts as additional Fame dots when dealing with humanity. As well, determine a reputation for your character. Briefly determine that reputation, in the way you'd determine character concept in step one of character creation. Work with the Storyteller to choose or create a Condition that suits the reputation. When acting in accordance with the reputation, your character can create that Condition in humans interacting with her. She can do this once per chapter, per dot in this Merit.

Drawback: Heroes find your character particularly easy to find. The first time a Hero comes within one half mile or kilometer of your character in a scene, the Storyteller rolls your Advanced Fame dots. If successful, the Hero knows a legendary Beast is near, and her general direction.

Fast Reflexes (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Wits ••• or Dexterity •••

Effect: +1 Initiative per dot

Your character's reflexes impress and astound; she's always fast to react.

Fast Reflexes (Advanced, •)

Prerequisites: Beast, Fast Reflexes •••

Effect: Your character reacts at preternatural rates. When rolling for initiative, roll twice. Each roll benefits from the normal +3 for Fast Reflexes. Take the higher of the two results.

Fast-Talking (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Manipulation •••, Subterfuge ••

Your character talks circles around listeners. She speaks a mile a minute and often leaves her targets reeling, but nodding in agreement.

Always Be Closing (•): With the right leading phrases, your character can direct a mark to say what she wants, when she wants. This trips the mark into vulnerable positions. When a mark contests or resists your character's Social interactions, apply a –1 to their Resolve or Composure.

Jargon (••): Your character confuses her mark using complex terminology. You may apply one relevant Specialty to any Social roll you make, even if the Specialty isn't tied to the Skill in use.

Devil's Advocacy (•••): Your character often poses arguments she doesn't agree with in order to challenge a mark's position and keep him from advancing discussion. You can reroll one failed Subterfuge roll per scene.

Salting (••••): Your character can position herself so a mark pursues a non-issue or something unimportant to her. When your character opens a Door using conversation (Persuasion, Subterfuge, Empathy, etc.) you may spend a Willpower point to immediately open another Door.

Patron's Privilege (•••••): Your character can take advantage of her mark's greed and zeal. When the mark does particularly well, it's because your character was there to set him up and to subsequently tear him down. If a target regains Willpower from his Vice while your character is present, you may immediately roll Manipulation + Subterfuge to open a Door, regardless of the interval or impression level.

Fist of Nightmares (••)

Prerequisites: Brawl ••, Occult ••

Effect: Your character may "store" the effects of a Nightmare, and release it upon touching a victim. Often, this is used in preparation for a fight, where the first strike becomes something greater entirely, coupled with the effects of the Primordial Dream.

Your character may store the effects of one Nightmare by spending a Willpower point. Make the relevant roll at that point. The first time your character touches another in that same scene, the Nightmare triggers on him. At that point, he can make any relevant resistances. The Nightmare in question must only target a single character for this Merit to work.

Fleet of Foot (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Athletics ••

Effect: Your character is remarkably quick, and runs far faster than her frame suggests. She gains

+1 Speed per dot, and anyone pursuing her suffers a -1 per dot to any foot chase rolls.

Giant (•••)

Effect: Your character is massive. She's well over six feet tall, and crowds part when she approaches. She's Size 6, and gains +1 Health.

Drawback: Buying clothing is a nightmare. Fitting in small spaces is difficult at best.

Giant (••, Advanced)

Prerequisite: Beast, Giant •••

Effect: Characters with the Giant Merit are much larger than the average person. Your character takes that a step further. While not necessarily taller or wider than any other character with Giant, your character is dense beyond reason. She remains Size 6, but she gains significant mass as she's sated. Each dot of Satiety adds 25% to her mass. Her Satiety applies as a penalty to any attempts to knock her over or lift her. As well, any object smashing into her at fast speed, such as a car, suffers her Satiety in automatic Structure damage. She may still be hurt or knocked down, but whatever hit her will end up just as bad as her or worse.

Drawback: Your character's mass is clearly inhuman, which can cause problems if she ends up in a doctor's office. As well, weak floors will break beneath her feet.

Good Time Management (•)

Prerequisite: Academics •• or Science ••

Effect: Your character has vast experience managing complex tasks, keeping schedules, and meeting deadlines. When taking an extended action, halve the time required between rolls.

Guilty Pleasure (•)

Prerequisite: Beast

Effect: Your character has one choice food, one vice, one indulgence she utterly adores to the exclusion of other tastes. When taking this Merit, choose that indulgence. It should be something that might embarrass her or put her in a vulnerable spot if revealed. Any time she devours that thing in order to replenish Satiety, she gains one additional Satiety dot, a point of Willpower, and the Guilty Condition (see p. XX). This Willpower can exceed her normal limit, but it fades at the end of the scene if not spent.

Hunger Management (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Beast, Resolve •••

Effect: Your character can manage and maintain her hunger and Satiety more carefully than other Beasts. For every dot in this Merit, you can add or subtract one die from the Satiety rating dice pool you roll when her Soul consumes something. This can ensure she gains more Satiety when starving, or she's less likely to send her Soul into hibernation when nearly sated.

It's important to note, this doesn't affect the actual Satiety value of a given consumption. It simply affects the dice pool to increase Satiety at the end of the scene.

Inspiring (•••)

Prerequisite: Presence •••

Effect: Your character's passion inspires those around her to greatness. With a few words, she can redouble a group's confidence or move them to action.

Make a Presence + Expression roll. A small clique of listeners levies a -1 penalty, a small crowd a -2, and a large crowd a -3. Listeners gain the Inspired Condition or a point of Willpower (for Storyteller-controlled characters). The character may not use this Merit on herself.

Interdisciplinary Specialty (•)

Prerequisite: Skill at ••• or higher with a Specialty

Effect: Choose a Specialty that your character possesses when you purchase this Merit. You can apply the +1 from that Specialty on any Skill with at least one dot, provided it's justifiable within the scope of the fiction. For example, a doctor with a Medicine Specialty in Anatomy may be able to use it when targeting a specific body part with Weaponry, but could not with a general strike.

Iron Skin (• to ••)

Prerequisites: Brawl ••, Stamina •••

Through rigorous conditioning or extensive scarring, your character has grown resistant to harm. She can shrug off shots that would topple bigger fighters. She knows how to take a strike and can even move into a hit from a weapon to minimize harm. She gains armor against bashing attacks; one point of armor with the one-dot version, two with the two-dot version. By spending a point of Willpower when hit, she can downgrade lethal damage equal to her dots into bashing damage.

Iron Skin (Advanced, • to ••)

Prerequisites: Beast, Stamina ••••

Your character's flesh is like a fine leather. Like with Iron Skin, this Merit grants armor equal to its dot rating. However, the armor granted works against lethal damage as well as bashing damage. With the two-dot version, you may reflexively spend a point of Willpower upon taking an aggravated attack, to downgrade a point of aggravated damage to lethal damage. These advantages do not apply to Anathemas.

Iron Skin (Epic, ••)

Prerequisites: Beast, Stamina •••••

Your character is nigh invincible, by virtue of her primordial self peeking through. Ignore the first point of damage taken from any source except an Anathema.

Iron Will (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve ••••

Effect: Your character's resolve is unwavering. When spending Willpower to contest or resist in a Social interaction, you may substitute your character's Resolve for the usual Willpower bonus. If the roll is contested, roll with 8-again.

Killer Instinct (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Composure ••••, Medicine •, Wits •••

Effect: Your character's experience with the darkness inherent in this world has left her cold and calculating, so she can see the fragile threads that hold life together. By taking a full turn assessing a living creature, human, animal, monster, or otherwise, you may activate this Merit. When taking an Athletics, Brawl, Firearms, or Weaponry attack against that target, you may divide the dots in this Merit among any of the three following effects:

• Ignore 1/1 armor on the target.

• Convert one bashing damage caused in that attack to lethal.

• Ignore 1 of the target's Defense.

The turn spent assessing a target can be combined with a turn used for aiming (see p. XX).

Killer Instinct (Advanced, • to •••)

Prerequisite: Beast, Killer Instinct •••

Effect: Your character's killer instincts draw from the primal entropy inherent in the universe. Your character is a devourer – a true destroyer. You do not have to take a turn to activate the mundane Killer Instinct Merit; it's considered always on. It also works on monstrosities, the undead, and other things on which Killer Instinct would not normally work, since your character is a true, primal destroyer. However, you may take a full turn to assess a living character. When making an Athletics, Brawl, Firearms, or Weaponry attack against that target, divide your Advanced Killer Instinct dots among the following effects:

• Convert one lethal damage caused in that attack to aggravated.

• Destroy 1/1 armor on the target, which remains until all damage from the attack heals, or the armor is replaced.

• Ignore 2 of the target's Defense and a single die penalty for making a called shot.

The turn spent assessing a target can be combined with a turn used for aiming (see p. XX).

Language (•)

Effect: Your character is skilled with an additional language, beyond her native tongue. Choose a language, each time you buy this Merit. Your character can speak, read, and write in that language.

Library (• to •••)

Effect: Your character has access to a plethora of information about a given topic. When purchasing this Merit, choose a Mental Skill. The Library covers that purview. On any extended roll involving the Skill in question, add the dots in this Merit.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times, to reflect different Skills. As well, its benefits can be shared by various characters, with permission.

Library (Advanced, • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Library •••, Safe Place or Lair (special)

Effect: Your character not only possesses a massive, credible library, but she also hoards thorough, credible information about highly secretive supernatural topics. For each dot in this Merit, choose a topic. This could be "vampires," "witchcraft," or any other actual supernatural force in the World of Darkness. When your character consults her library on one of those topics, take the Informed Condition relating to the topic. You can do this once per story, per topic.

Advanced Library has a special prerequisite; your character requires a Safe Place equal to its dot rating, or a Lair rating equal to its dot rating to support the library's size and scope securely. As with Library, your characters can share the dot cost amongst one another.

Library (Epic, • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Advanced Library •••, Safe Place or Lair •••••

Effect: Your character's library is one of legends. She may possess portions of the Library of Alexandria, John Dee's personal collection, or Solomon's archives. Her library features numerous unique artifacts and tomes thought long lost or destroyed. Each dot in this Merit reflects one such artifact or book. Each contains an effective Skill at six dots, and a virtually limitless selection of relevant Specialties. These Specialties must be relevant to the historical context of the item, but these limits can be stretched for the sake of story. For example, a treatise on the City of Brass may feature Crafts Specialties in engineering and even robotics way beyond known scientific potential in the seventh millennia BCE, or even modern understanding.

Any character with access to these objects can take extended actions with the contained Skill and Specialties. It replaces your character's Skill as well for the purpose of determining the total number of allowed dice pools. This can be combined with the effects of Library and Advanced Library. If your character has a Specialty that would be covered by the library, you can use the benefits of the Area of Expertise Merit without purchasing it.

Drawback: These items, while thought lost, draw equally legendary curiosity. Heroes are drawn to such objects. Add your rating in this Merit to any rolls made for a Hero to find your character's Lair.

Mentor (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit gives your character a teacher that provides advice and guidance. He acts on

your character's behalf, often in the background, sometimes without your character's knowledge. While Mentors can be highly competent, they almost always want something in return for their services. The dot rating determines the Mentor's capabilities, and to what extent he'll aid your character.

When establishing a Mentor, determine what the Mentor wants from your character. This should be personally important to him, and it should reflect on the dot rating chosen. A one-dot Mentor might just be an old bookworm interested in the occasional coffee chat about whatever academic topics. A five-dot Mentor would want something astronomical, such as an oath to procure an ancient, cursed artifact that may or may not exist, in order to prevent a prophesized death.

Choose three Skills the Mentor possesses. You can substitute Resources for one of these Skills. Once per session, the character may ask her Mentor for a favor. The favor must involve one of those Skills, or be within the scope of his Resources. The Mentor commits to the favor (often asking for a commensurate favor in return), and if a roll is required, the Mentor is automatically considered to have successes equal to his dot rating. Alternately, the player may as the Storyteller to have the Mentor act on her character's behalf, without her character knowing or initiating the request.

Multi-Lingual (•)

Effect: Your character has a strong affinity for language acquisition. Each time you purchase this Merit, choose two languages. Your character can speak conversationally in those languages. With an Intelligence + Academics roll, she may also read enough of the language to understand context.

If you purchase the Language Merit for either of these languages, replace the Multi-Lingual language. For example, if you have Multi-Lingual (French, Italian), and purchase Language: Italian, you may choose to take Multi-Lingual (French, Portuguese).

Parkour (• to •••••, Style)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, Athletics ••

Your character is a trained and proficient free-runner. Free-running is the art of moving fluidly through urban environments with complex leaps, bounds, running tricks, and vaulting. This is the type of sport popularized in modern action films, where characters are unhindered by fences, walls, construction equipment, cars, or anything else the city puts in their ways.

Flow (•): Your character reacts instinctively to any obstacles with leaps, jumps, and scaling techniques. When in a foot chase, subtract your Parkour from the successes needed to pursue or evade. As well, ignore environmental penalties to Athletics rolls equal to your Parkour rating.

Cat Leap (••): Your character falls with outstanding grace. When using a Dexterity + Athletics roll to mitigate damage from falling (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 179), your character gains one automatic success. Additionally, add your Parkour rating to the threshold of damage that can be removed through this roll. Parkour will not mitigate damage from a terminal

velocity fall.

Wall Run (•••): When climbing, your character can run upward for some distance before having to traditionally climb. Without rolling, your character scaled 10 feet + five feet per dot of Athletics as an instant action, rather than the normal 10 feet.

Expert Traceur (••••): Parkour has become second nature for your character. By spending a Willpower point, you may designate one Athletics roll to run, jump, or climb as a rote action (reroll all failed dice once). On any turn you use this ability, you may not apply your character's Defense to oncoming attacks.

Freeflow (•••••): Your character's Parkour is now muscle memory. She can move without thinking, in a zen-like state. The character must successfully meditate (see p. XX) in order to establish Freeflow. Once established, your character is capable of taking Athletics actions reflexively once per turn. By spending a point of Willpower on an Athletics roll in a foot chase, gain three successes instead of three dice.

Patient (•)

Effect: Your character knows how to pace herself and take the time to do the job right the first time. When taking an extended action, you may make two additional rolls, above what your Attribute + Skill would allow.

Quick Draw (•)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, a Specialty in the weapon or fighting style chosen

Effect: Choose a Specialty in Weaponry or Firearms when you purchase this Merit. Your character has trained in that weapon or style enough that pulling the weapon is her first reflex. Drawing or holstering that weapon is considered a reflexive action, and can be done any time her Defense applies.

Relentless Assault (Style, • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Strength •••, Stamina •••, Brawl ••

Effect: Your character fights with complete abandon. She throws herself at her opponents without thought or hesitation, turning herself into a ruthless killing machine. She's the first into the fight, and the last out of a fight. She may use this with Brawl or Weaponry attacks.

Drop of a Hat (•): Your character goes from zero to ballistic at the start of a fight. She always goes to strike first. In the first turn of a fight, your character gets +3 to her Initiative score so long as she intends to make an all-out attack (see p. XX). After the first turn, this bonus goes away.

Eye of the Tiger (••): Your character can hone in on a single target, to the exclusion of all others. This tunnel vision makes her fearsome against her primary target, but vulnerable to others. Choose a target. When making an all-out attack against that target, your character retains her Defense against him. She still loses it against other characters. She's still considered to have sacrificed her Defense for the purpose of using other Style maneuvers.

Dig Deep (•••): Your character doesn't strike for her enemy's skin; she strikes for a spot a few feet behind it. To her, overkill is the only acceptable kill. You can choose to remove one die from your dice pool before rolling an attack. If you do, add a point of weapon damage to your character's attacks, be they with weapons or bare hands.

Grin and Bear It (••••): Your character can simply cease caring about her own safety in order to take down her opponents, and this single-minded lethality helps her to shrug off blows that might cripple others less ferocious. Any time she takes an all-out attack (see p. XX), she gains 1/1 armor against all attacks for the turn. This combines with any other armor she may be benefiting from.

The Warpath (•••••): Your character kills, but does not stop her assault. Any time she fills a character's last health box with lethal or aggravated damage, she may immediately make an additional attack against any other character within her reach. Doing so costs a point of Willpower, which does not add to the attack roll.

Resources (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit reflects your character's disposable income. She might live in an upscale condo, but if her income is tied up in the mortgage and in child support payments, she might have little money to throw around. Characters are assumed to have basic necessities without Resources.

The dot rating determines the relative amount of disposable funding the character has available, depending on your particular chronicle's setting. The same amount of money means completely different things in a game set in Silicon Valley, compared to one set in the Detroit slums. One dot is a little spending money here and there. Two is a comfortable, middle class wage. Three is a nicer, upper middle class life. Four is moderately wealthy. Five is filthy rich.

Every item has an Availability rating. Once per chapter, your character can procure an item at her Resources level or lower, without issue. An item one Availability above her Resources reduces her effective Resources by one dot for a full month, since she has to rapidly liquidate funds. She can procure items two Availability below her Resources without limit (within reason). For example, a character with Resources •••• can procure as many Availability •• disposable cellphones as she needs.

Resources (Advanced, ••)

Prerequisites: Beast, Resources •••••

Effect: Your character has hoarded an unbelievable amount of wealth. Most mundane expenditures mean nothing to her. She's not limited to the normal restrictions for Availability ••••• expenditures. She can purchase multiple such things in a given story with no inherent limitations other than the items' actual availability. This Merit doesn't inherently provide access to purchase, nor does it create things where none exist.

Drawback: Heavy expenditures don't go unnoticed. At a certain point, everything has a paper

trail. Everything draws some sort of attention. The stranger the purchase, the stranger the eyes looking in.

Retainer (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has an assistant, sycophant, servant, or follower on whom she can rely. Establish who this companion is, and how he was acquired. It may be as simple as a paycheck. He might owe your character his life. However it happened, your character has a hold on him.

A Retainer is more reliable than a Mentor, and more loyal than an Ally. On the other hand, a Retainer is a lone person, less capable and influential than the broader Merits.

The Merit's dot rating determines the relative competency of the Retainer. A one-dot Retainer is mildly useful, mostly for reliably taking to menial tasks; sometimes you don't need to be wowed, you just need to get a thing from point A to point B. A three-dot Retainer is a professional in their field, someone capable in his line of work. A five-dot is one of the best in her class. If a Retainer needs to make a roll, if it's within her field, double the dot rating and use it as a dice pool. For anything else, use the dot rating as a dice pool.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times to represent multiple Retainers.

Sacrificial Lamb (• to •••, Style)

Prerequisites: Athletics ••, Resolve •••, Stamina •••

This strange Fighting Style is less practiced, more intuited. Those characters that spend time in cults, around Heroes, or even some majestic Beasts and other monsters of the World of Darkness can develop the ability to take blows and otherwise sacrifice themselves for their idols.

Every use of this Merit requires a "higher power" in the same scene. For example, a Hero or monster. They must be in at least some degree of danger. The subject for this Merit can be different in a given scene; the Merit is more about the character's willingness to sacrifice himself than the specific object of his worship. Once immediate threats are gone, this Merit is not useable.

Dedicated to the Cause (•): So long as the object of your character's worship still stands in danger, she will not fall. You do not have to make Stamina rolls to remain conscious when her Health track is full of bashing damage. You still have to make them for lethal damage, however.

Fallguy (••): Your character is an expert at taking the brunt of the punishment. When taking a Dodge action for your turn (see p. XX), you may opt to take an attack for the object of worship in that turn, so long as she's within yards/meters equal to your character's Speed. Do not apply her Defense to the attack, and roll your Dodge against it. If the attack would hit, it hits your character instead.

Inspiring Duty (•••): With this ability, your character falls for the cause, bolstering the object of his worship. Throughout the scene, you may spend one Willpower per turn, amounting to any number of Willpower in total. If your character is rendered unconscious or dead during this

scene, the object of worship receives all that Willpower, as your character motivates her to accomplish great things.

Safe Place (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has somewhere she can go where she can feel secure. While she may have enemies that could attack her there, she's prepared and has the upper hand. The dot rating reflects the security of the place. The actual location, the luxury, and the size are represented by equipment (see Housing, p. XX.) A one-dot Safe Place might be equipped with basic security systems or a booby trap at the windows and door. A five-dot could have a security crew, infrared scanners at every entrance, or trained dogs. Each place could be an apartment, a mansion or a hidey-hole.

Unlike most Merits, multiple characters can contribute dots to a single Safe Place, combining their points into something greater. A Safe Place gives an Initiative bonus equal to the Merit dots. This only applies to a character with dots invested in the Safe Place.

Any efforts to breach the Safe Place suffer a penalty equal to the Merit dots invested. If the character desires, the Safe Place can include traps that cause intruders lethal damage equal to a maximum of the Merit rating (player's choice as to how much damage a given trap inflicts). This requires that the character has at least a dot in Crafts. The traps may be avoided with a Dexterity + Larceny roll, penalized by the Safe Place dots.

Sleight of Hand (••)

Prerequisite: Larceny •••

Effect: Your character can pick locks and pockets without even thinking about it. She can take one Larceny-based instant action reflexively in a given turn. As well, her Larceny actions go unnoticed unless someone is trying specifically to catch her.

Small-Framed (••)

Effect: Your character is diminutive. She's not five feet, and it's easy to walk into her without noticing. She's Size 4, and thus has one fewer Health box. She gains +2 to any rolls to hide or go unnoticed, and this bonus might apply any time being smaller would be an advantage, such as crawling through smaller spaces. *Available only at character creation.*

Drawback: In addition to the lower Health, your character might be overlooked or not taken seriously by some people.

Spoor (• to •••••)

Prerequisite: Cannot have Fame

Effect: Your Beast has developed a habit for dropping false flags as to her whereabouts. When she's pursued by a Hero (see p. XX), Spoor kicks in to keep the Hero off the trail. False evidence appears in her wake. She briefly appears to be somewhere she's not. Every dot in Spoor offers one of the following advantages per story:

• If in direct pursuit, a dot of Spoor negates one turn of the Hero's pursuit rolls.

• If the Hero investigates her as part of an extended action, a dot of Spoor removes one potential roll from the action.

• If trying to escape the Hero's attack, a dot of Spoor can be used for a single automatic success on a roll to Dodge, or it can add to your character's Defense for a turn.

Multiple points can be spent at one time. For example, if a Hero has six extended action intervals to investigate your character with Spoor •••••, you may choose to spend all five to reduce his action to a single dice pool.

Status (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has standing, membership, authority, control over, or respect from a group or organization. This may reflect official standing, or informal respect. No matter the source, your character enjoys certain privileges within that structure.

Each instance of this Merit reflects standing in a different group or organization. Each affords its own unique benefits. As you increase dot ratings, your character rises in prominence in the relevant group.

Status only allows advantages within the confines of the group reflected in the Merit. Status (Organized Crime) won't help if your character wants an official concealed carry firearms permit, for example.

Status provides two major advantages:

First, your character can apply her Status to any Social roll with those over which she has authority or sway.

Second, she has access to group facilities, resources, and funding. Dependent on the group, this could be limited by red tape and requisitioning processes. It's also dependent on the resources the particular group has available.

Drawback: Status requires upkeep, and often regular duties. If these duties are not upheld, the Status may be lost. The dots will not be accessible until the character re-establishes her standing. In our Organized Crime example, your character may be expected to pay protection money, offer tribute to a higher authority, or undertake felonious activities.

Striking Looks (• or ••)

Effect: Your character is stunning, alarming, commanding, repulsing, threatening, charming, or otherwise worthy of attention. Determine how your character looks, and how people react to that. For one dot, your character gets a +1 bonus on any Social rolls that would be influenced by her looks. For two dots, the benefit increases to +2. Depending on the particulars, this might influence Expression, Intimidation, Persuasion, Subterfuge, or other rolls.

Drawback: Attention is a double-edged sword. Any rolls to spot, notice, or remember your

character gain the same dice bonus. Sometimes, your character will draw unwanted attention in social situations. This could cause further complications.

Striking Looks (Advanced, ••)

Prerequisite: Beast, Striking Looks ••

Effect: Your character's appearance is a composite of iconic imagery throughout the ages. If your character is beautiful, he's the example of beauty throughout the minds of millions. If she's frightening, she's utterly terrifying on a primordial level. When her chosen looks apply, apply the rote quality to the action in addition to the normal +2 for Striking Looks.

Taste (•)

Prerequisite: Crafts 2, and a Specialty in Crafts or Expression

Effect: Your character has refined tastes, and can identify minor details in fashion, food, architecture, and other forms of artistry and craftsmanship. Not only does this give an eye for detail, it makes her a center of attention in critical circles. She can appraise items within her area of expertise. With a Wits + Skill roll, depending on the creation in question (Expression for poetry, Crafts for architecture, for example), your character can pick out obscure details about the item that other, less discerning minds would not. For each success, ask one of the following questions, or take a +1 bonus to any Social rolls pertaining to groups interested in the art assessed for the remainder of the scene.

[[bulleted list]]

• What is the hidden meaning in this?

• What was the creator feeling during its creation?

• What's its weakest point?

• What other witness is most moved by this piece?

• How should one best appreciate this piece?

[[end bullets]]

Trained Observer (•, or •••)

Prerequisite: Wits ••• or Composure •••

Effect: Your character has spent years in the field, catching tiny details and digging for secrets. She might not have a better chance of finding things, but she has a better chance of finding *important* things. Any time you make a Perception roll (usually Wits + Composure), you benefit from the 9-again quality. With the three-dot version, you get 8-again.

True Friend (•••)

Effect: Your character has a true friend. While that friend may have specific functions covered by other Merits (Allies, Contacts, Retainer, Mentor, etc.), True Friend represents a deeper, truly

trusting relationship that cannot be breached. Unless your character does something egregious to cause it, her True Friend will not betray her. As well, the Storyteller cannot kill her True Friend as part of a plot without your express permission. Any rolls to influence a True Friend against your character suffer a five-die penalty. As well, once per story, your character can regain one spent Willpower by having a meaningful interaction with her True Friend.

Atavisms

A Beast's true self is a mythic monster armed with natural weapons and fearsome abilities, some of which bleed over into his human form as Atavisms, making him stronger, faster, or tougher than an ordinary person.

Atavisms are intrinsic. They are the Giant's strength or the Raptor's talons, and using them is as natural as breathing. Manifesting aspects of his Lair is just as instinctive. They are part of him, too, from the oppressive cold of a Makara's underwater abode to the darkness of a Namtaru's subterranean refuge. Unleashing them feels *good*. The Beast breaches the illusion of normalcy and exposes his true self to the world.

A Beast can pass for human because his Atavisms are typically subtle. They manifest in surreal ways reflecting the nightmarish nature of the Primordial Dream. A Raptor's hands look ordinary and are normally harmless but, if he chooses, can rend flesh as if they were claws.

The Beast can dig deep in times of need and force more of his Soul into the world, abnegating natural law with nightmarish consequences. The Raptor's hands still *look* normal but he can dismember victims as if he were the legendary monster in the flesh.

Unleashing the Soul is never without risk. It wants to be let loose to feed and to hell with the Beast's human concerns, and its Hunger gnaws at him a little more each time he calls upon its strength. Sooner or later — usually sooner — its urges come to the fore. Instinct overrides rational thought. His Atavisms become stronger but more unstable as the ravenous Soul pushes through his flesh, threatening to usurp control.

Even the smallest Atavism risks the hunter response as the Beast blurs the line between his ordinary self and the Primordial Soul. With his Soul near the surface, onlookers sometimes catch glimpse of the monster within him, flickering and superimposed over his human features. They react violently even though they are only aware of it on a subconscious level.

Of course, circumstance may force the Beast's hand, especially if the Hero confronts him out in the open. Survival trumps everything.

Systems

Atavisms are not magic spells. They are inherent abilities and require little to no conscious effort on the part of the Beast who possesses them. At the same time, their effects are straightforward, physical, and typically confined to the Beast herself. A dragon can breathe fire, for example, but has no control whatsoever over existing flames.

A handful of Atavisms, such as Shadowed Soul or Storm-Lashed, draw down aspects of the Beast's Lair and project them onto her environment. They create a temporary convergence between the mundane and the nightmarish landscape of the Primordial Dream, similar to imposing the Environmental Tilts of her Lair Traits, but with augmented or unusual effects and greater control over how those forces play out.

The one thing Atavisms *cannot* do is directly control someone's mind. A Beast can leverage heart-stopping beauty (Alien Allure) or prey upon their natural curiosity (Siren's Treacherous Song), but she cannot control what they think. Hence, resistance rolls — including supernatural resistance —rarely apply to Atavisms. Direct emotional and mental influence is the realm of Nightmares, not Atavisms.

Many Atavisms resemble Merits in that they have persistent effects, which need not be activated, such as modifying other actions or dice pools, or they confer abilities that are available at no cost, such as a special attack form. Dice rolls are rarely required. When they are, they are usually reflexive and folded into another action such an attack. An Atavism's dice pool always consists of an Attribute plus a Skill.

Atavisms have three levels of effect depending on the Beast's Satiety**:**

• **Normal Effect:** This is the Atavism's default effect and is available whenever the Beast's Satiety is 4 dots or higher. Normal effects never cost Willpower or other resources to use. Such an effect may be overtly supernatural, like superhuman speed or blasts of wind, but the Beast still looks human while doing so.

• **Low Satiety Effect:** The Atavism has a modified effect when the Beast's Satiety drops to 3 dots or less. This is often an enhanced version of the normal effect, such as extra damage or an increased bonus, and gives the Beast an edge when her back is up against the wall. However, it may come with risks as Hunger increasingly sways her behavior.

• **Satiety Expenditure:** The Beast unleashes a powerful effect by *spending* a dot of Satiety. Doing so is a reflexive action unless otherwise specified. These effects are often dramatic and obviously supernatural as the Primordial Dream overrides normal reality, threatening panic and the hunter response in whomever sees it.

Different levels of effect are cumulative as long as the Beast meets the requirements for each. The Beast could combine the normal and Satiety expenditure effects, for example, or the low Satiety and Satiety expenditure effects if spending the dot of Satiety would reduce his current rating to 3 or less. This is particularly true when the Satiety expenditure effect is an enhanced version of the normal effect and not a separate ability. Each Atavism's description states whether effects can be combined this way.

Lair Resonance

Atavisms are easier to use in locations that *resonate* in some way with the Beast's Lair. For example, a dragon whose Lair is a fiery volcano, with the Extreme Heat Trait, finds her Atavisms

come more naturally inside a burning building or in the middle of a desert wasteland. Canny Beasts use this to their advantage whenever possible, fighting on their own turf or in environments manipulated either by mundane means, other Atavisms, or directly imposing Trait Tilts on the area (see p. XX).

Simply put, the Beast can spend one of her Traits per scene (see p. XX) in place of a Satiety dot to activate the Satiety expenditure version of an Atavism, as long as the area around her is currently affected by one of her Trait Tilts.

Note that this only applies in the physical realm. Inside its Lair, the Soul has access to the full range of the Beast's abilities without needing to spend anything, as does the Beast when she and the Soul merge inside the Lair.

Selecting Atavisms

When choosing Atavisms, it helps to think of them as natural extensions of the Beast, and starting Atavisms should reflect her Hunger and her type of mythical monster. For example, a griffin might begin play with Needs Must or No Escape for heightened senses and incredible speed. Each Family's entry in Chapter One includes a list of suitable Atavisms.

Also, what Traits are in the Beast's Lair? Not only are they important for resonance, but they can suggest Atavisms normally associated with another Family. Shadowed Soul is common to Gorgons, for example, but works for any Beast whose Lair includes the Darkness Trait, such as a Giant who spends her time brooding in a dank subterranean cavern.

Atavisms differ from other supernatural abilities in that they require no special training or effort. Their use is instinctual. However, the Beast cannot learn new Atavisms any more than humans can learn to have a third arm.

No Atavism is strictly off limits, though. Beasts evolve as their legend grows, and nothing says an Eshmaki dragon cannot become a sea serpent by gaining the Makara-like ability to breathe underwater. In fact, the comingling of Souls that comes with the brood bond means Beasts acquire each other's Atavisms as a matter of course. Over time, they come to look like family.

Alien Allure [Makara]

Not all Beasts are monstrous — in appearance, at least. Mermaids and sirens are renowned for their terrible beauty, enchanting sailors and leading them to drown or smash their ships on the rocks. Likewise, Native American legends are replete with cannibalistic monsters with two faces, one beautiful and one hideous, who hypnotize victims with their looks. While this Atavism does not go that far, it does prey upon the instinctual urge to please those we find attractive.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast is aglow with false charm that is often at odds with her actual behavior. She may exude stimulating pheromones, speak in honeyed and dulcet tones, or adopt

mannerisms calculated to appeal to a specific someone, unconsciously gauging their reaction and adjusting to fit. She adds her Lair dots as a bonus on all social rolls in which looks or attractiveness could give her an edge, such as first impressions, seducing someone, talking her way into a VIP area, or luring someone away from the safety of a crowd. This bonus is cumulative with the Striking Looks Merit.

Furthermore, the Beast always starts with a good first impression using the Social maneuvering system (see p. XX).

Low Satiety: Beauty takes on a sinister edge as Hunger dominates the Beast's interactions. Sometimes urgency pays off. Any Social roll involving appearance counts as an exceptional success with three successes or more. Furthermore, so long as she avoids Hard Leverage, opening all Doors imposes the Charmed Condition on the target of her Social maneuvering. However, she sometimes repulses people instead as she slips into the uncanny valley. A dramatic failure changes her impression level to "hostile" with that person for the rest of the chapter.

Satiety Expenditure: Drawing the Soul into her flesh, the Beast radiates supernatural allure for the remainder of the scene. People treat her as if she has the Fame or Status Merit, as appropriate to the situation, equal to (10 – her Satiety dots, maximum 5). People fawn over her and are receptive to her wishes. They are under no compulsion to obey, however, but do feel their job, position, or social standing is at stake if they refuse. Obviously some kind of pecking order must already exist, and no amount of beauty can override direct orders from a superior.

Furthermore, the Beast ignores penalties up to her Lair dots when forcing Doors with the Social maneuvering rules, and failure to force Doors does not preclude further Social maneuvering unless the roll was a dramatic failure or the Beast employed Hard Leverage. Raw charisma can overcome faux pas but not threats or physical violence.

Basilisk's Touch [Namtaru]

Neither fire nor ferocity brought Beowulf to his knees. It was poison that sealed the king's fate, presaging an era of warfare, darkness, and death for his kingdom, guaranteeing the dragon would have the last laugh even in death.

Many Beasts have venom in their arsenal, from the wyvern's sting to the hydra's poisonous breath, but none more so than the Gorgons. Plague and poison literally run through their veins, much like the dreaded basilisk, whose mere touch was deadly and whose seeping poison scorched the earth in its wake.

Dice Pool: Stamina + Medicine

Action: Reflexive

Duration: One turn per success

Dramatic Failure: The Beast succumbs to his own toxins and suffers the moderate version of the Sick Tilt. However, if his Satiety is low, he suffers the grave version instead due to his poison's increased toxicity. Either effect lasts for a number of turns equal to his Lair dots.

Failure: The Beast fails to poison his target. Either he cannot get a good grip on his victim or he simply comes up empty, having expended his store of poison already.

Success: The Beast poisons someone with a touch of his hand. Doing so requires a roll of Dexterity + Brawl – the opponent's Defense. This ability works through clothing, but if the target is armored, the Beast must strike an unprotected area and take the appropriate penalty on the attack roll. If successful, the victim feels a sharp prick or burning sensation as the Beast touches him and may believe he is carrying a hidden syringe or similar weapon.

Unfortunately for him, the poison takes effect in the next turn. The poison's Toxicity is equal to (10 – the Beast's Satiety dots), and the victim may roll Stamina + Resolve – Toxicity to resist its effects on a turn-by-turn basis. Doing so negates any damage or penalties during that turn only. Multiple doses of poison extend the effect's duration, adding successes to the current total, but have no effect on Toxicity.

Exceptional Success: The victim suffers a -1 penalty on all actions for the rest of the scene even after the poison runs its course. He may have shaken off the poison but he is still groggy, seeing double, and trying to keep his hands from shaking.

Normal Effect: The Beast's touch applies either the Drugged Tilt or the "grave" version of the Poisoned Tilt to the victim. The player chooses which effect when this ability is used. The victim's veins burn as the venom courses through his veins, eating away at him like acid, all while his vision swims and his head sickly throbs.

Low Satiety: The Beast's venom is particularly insidious and long-lasting. Add his Lair dots to the poison's duration. Furthermore, increase the damage caused by the Poisoned Tilt or the Defense and Speed penalties from the Drugged Tilt by 1 point, in addition to the normal effect.

Satiety Expenditure: Venom drips from the Beast's fingertips and greenish-black streaks course through the veins of his arm as he reaches out with a concentrated dose of poison. His touch applies the player's choice of the Insensate or Stunned Tilts. Strength drains out of the victim, who struggles just to remain upright and functioning, leaving him vulnerable to whatever the Beast has in store for him. Vicious Gorgons prefer to render their victims helpless so they watch and better appreciate their slow death from the normal poison.

Cyclopean Strength [Anakim]

Cyclopean structures are made of huge, irregular stone blocks. Ancient peoples believed only Giants could move such massive stones, some taller than a man and weighing tons apiece. Certainly, a Beast with this Atavism can lift many times his own weight, no matter how spindly or frail his outward appearance.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast has a surfeit of adrenaline and vast reserves of strength. Weights that would faze an ordinary man are contemptuously swept aside. He can dead lift, shove, or slowly pull any object whose Size does not exceed his own Size x (Lair dots + 1). Furthermore, he adds his Lair dots as automatic successes on Strength + Stamina rolls made to perform a feat of strength, such as lifting a massive object or breaking free of handcuffs.

Low Satiety: Anything the Beast can lift, he can also throw or use as an improvised melee weapon, regardless of whether it is a boulder or a person. Improvised weapons have a weapon bonus equal to the lower of their Size or Durability. Also, an object's Size is not subtracted from the Beast's Strength + Dexterity + Athletics for determining the range he can throw it. This is in addition to the normal effect.

Satiety Expenditure: By spending a dot of Satiety, the Beast becomes a juggernaut capable of hurling cars and smashing obstacles in his path, and the urge for violence is writ large on his features. His mouth is set in a terrible thin line and his muscles look ropy, grotesquely bulging, and eager to unleash their power.

The Beast gains automatic successes equal to his Lair dots on all Strength related rolls for the remainder of the scene, not just feats of strength. Furthermore, the maximum object Size he can manhandle is doubled. This is in addition to the normal effect.

Dragonfire [Eshmaki]

Dragons are implacable foes and harbingers of destruction. Possessed of terrible grandeur, their very presence quails the heart, and their ire brings the certainty of doom as they lay waste to everything in their path. Most people are cowed — if not driven in terror — by a Beast unleashing hellfire and striding confidently through the flames. Unfortunately, those consumed by the Hunger for Ruin hardly know when to stop.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: Dragons delight in fear and destruction, both of which are always near at hand. The Beast need only open her jaws and unleash the hellfire building within her, and a curl of smoke or a dreadful gleam in her eyes is often her victim's only warning.

The Beast can blast individual targets in range (5/10/15) with gouts of fire. This counts as a ranged attack with a thrown weapon and requires a roll of Dexterity + Athletics – the opponent's Defense. Damage is lethal and adds her Lair dots as a weapon modifier. Flammable materials ignite on contact, turning the area into a raging inferno if it is not contained quickly. Then again, that may be the point.

Furthermore, fire causes no damage to the Beast, and she never suffers environmental penalties or damage caused by heat and smoke, which are like clear air to her. This is in addition to any environmental immunity from Lair Traits (see p. XX).

Low Satiety: A hungry dragon feels fire welling up uncontrollably from within. The Beast's Dragonfire is capable of autofire as well as single blasts, including short, medium, and long bursts. This represents sustained torrents of fire, similar to a flamethrower, that can immolate multiple enemies or set large areas alight.

Satiety Expenditure: Flames dance in the Beast's eyes as she spends a dot of Satiety and invokes a holocaust. For the rest of the scene, Dragonfire has double its normal range and inflicts aggravated damage. Even incombustible materials can be reduced to ash by the onslaught, as Dragonfire ignores Durability equal to the Beast's Lair dots. This is in addition to the normal and low Satiety effects.

Embrace of the Deep [Makara]

Kraken were said to be mammoth octopi in the Greenland Sea. Norse sailors reported that they lurked in the briny dark throughout the year, rarely surfacing, and then only to feed. On those occasions, the monster reared up beneath a ship, encircled it in muscular tentacles, and smashed it to kindling as if it were a child's toy. It then had its pick of men flailing in the freezing water. Few Beasts can match the awesome power of their legendary namesake but, with this Atavism, they are fearsome to contend with just the same.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast's lips twist in an unnerving smile whenever someone tries to grapple him. He feels oily to the touch, and his limbs seemingly bend in unnatural ways. His Defense against grapple is calculated from the *higher* of his Dexterity or Wits plus his Athletics Skill, and he adds his Lair dots as a weapon bonus on grapple rolls. This bonus only applies when his hands are free.

Low Satiety: The Beast's body shifts constantly beneath his attacker, who finds it nearly impossible to keep him pinned, and he is unstoppable once he gains the upper hand. He can apply his Defense even when held, including against his grappling opponent, by bucking and squirming the entire time. This is in addition to the normal effect.

Satiety Expenditure: The Beast forces the Soul into his flesh by spending a dot of Satiety. His body exudes a damp, unnatural chill, and he seems double-jointed, his limbs popping and nearly dislocating themselves as he wrests control from his opponent. In addition to the normal and/or low Satiety effects, the Beast can perform the following actions:

• The Beast can automatically perform a move if he successfully initiates a grapple. If he rolls an exceptional success, he can make two moves instead.

• The Beast can perform a move even when he fails a grappling roll. His opponent is helpless to stop this; the Beast simply has more tentacles and maneuverability than he can handle. Breaking free is the best he can hope for.

• The Beast's damaging move inflicts lethal damage, adding his Lair dots as a weapon bonus, as per the normal effect.

Feral Cry [Ugallu]

The griffin symbolized divine power in the ancient world. An intimidating blend of predators, it combined the head and wings of an eagle (the king of birds) with the body of a lion (the king of beasts) to become the undisputed lord of all creatures. Some Beasts draw upon this heritage to impose their own right of rulership, calling and demanding obeisance from animals that would otherwise be disturbed by her aberrant nature.

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken

Action: Instant

Duration: Varies

Dramatic Failure: Animals hear the Beast's cry but are just as disturbed by it as humans are. Her immediate area empties as wildlife flees from her presence, and any predator currently menacing her is spurred to attack.

Failure: The Beast's cry echoes through the landscape, but no one hears it.

Success: The Beast rears back and pitches her entire body into an inhuman shriek that attracts the attention of every animal (and probably many humans) for miles around, some of whom feel compelled to answer her summons.

Exceptional Success: Summoned animals remain loyal for one day per dot of Lair or for 24 hours if summoned for combat with the normal effect.

Normal Effect: The Beast can summon either a small swarm (insects, birds, rats) or one large animal of a specific kind (wolf, bear, horse), including a specific animal she knows of. They arrive within the hour. However, the Storyteller may rule no such animals are in range, in which case the effort is wasted. Furthermore, animals that are already subject to some form of supernatural compulsion ignore this summons.

The Beast can communicate with the animal in a basic, instinctual way, learning of predators and other objects of interest in the area. She can also direct them to carry out her wishes. If directed to attack someone, they do so for a single scene and then disperse. Otherwise, they follow a single instruction ("meet me in the woods," "hunt and bring me your kills") lasting no longer than 24 hours.

Low Satiety: Most creatures shy away from the Beast's cry, sensing the Hunger roiling within her heart. She can only summon predatory animals, which become infected by her nightmare and

eager to kill. They fight to the death against whomever she chooses, but they attack her on sight if she calls them for any other reason.

Satiety Expenditure: By spending a dot of Satiety, the Beast reaches out with her feral heart and touches every animal in earshot, demanding an audience with them all. Every animal of a kind chosen by the player comes to her aid, typically constituting a huge swarm or one large animal per success. They instinctively carry out her will, carrying out complex instructions or going into battle repeatedly for the next 24 hours.

From the Shadows [Eshmaki]

Few predators rely strictly on speed and strength. Skillful hunters stalk their prey and gauge its strength beforehand, keeping to the shadows until an opportune moment arises. The method varies from Beast to Beast. Some seem to walk in shadow wherever they go while others have skin that changes colors like a chameleon. For those who pursue human prey, a thoroughly average and drab appearance works as well as any exotic form of camouflage.

Action: Instant

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast has a natural sense of how to walk and where to stand to remain unseen, and with a conscious effort, he fades into the scenery and becomes effectively invisible. Perception rolls to notice him automatically fail as long as he either remains still or is part of a crowd of at least 10 people. Furthermore, he can hide in plain sight, even while being observed, so long as he meets these conditions. The Beast is similarly undetectable on video footage and photographs taken of the scene. However, this ability does not shield him from magical forms of detection (but see below.)

Low Satiety: Eager to hunt, the Beast rolls back conscious thought in favor of predatory instinct. He gains the rote quality on Stealth and other rolls related to stalking his prey, and he automatically wins initiative in the first turn of combat when attacking from surprise. If his victim also has an ability that lets them go first, roll initiative normally. Both go before anyone else. This is in addition to the normal effect.

Satiety Expenditure: The Beast completely fades from sight by spending a dot of Satiety and remains camouflaged for the rest of the scene. He is invisible even while moving or taking other actions thanks to a combination of heightened camouflage and instinctual movement, although attacking someone exposes him until his next turn. Magical senses are likewise clouded, unlike the normal effect, increasing the difficulty to notice the Beast by 10 – his Satiety dots.

The Beast still makes noise but gains a +3 bonus on Stealth rolls to avoid inadvertently revealing himself this way, in addition to the Low Satiety benefit, if available. However, he can still set off pressure plates, trip wires, and sensors that do not rely on vision.

Heart of the Ocean [Makara]

The true ocean is vast and inhospitable. Sunlight stops around 700 feet below the surface, around the same time scuba divers start to risk decompression sickness, nitrogen narcosis, and oxygen toxicity. Below that are freezing depths and pressures that crush modern nuclear submarines. Abyssal plains cover 50% of the Earth's surface but have scarcely been explored; they might as well be the surface of the moon as far as humans are concerned. That is where the Leviathans dwell, darkly dreaming, as lords of the deep.

Action: Reflexive or instant (Satiety expenditure)

Duration: Persistent or 24 hours (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast is amphibious. She can swim at double her normal Speed, see in the dark and through the murkiest waters, and adds her Lair dots as a bonus on all physical actions while underwater. Adapting to an aquatic environment only takes seconds as she expunges air from her lungs and takes in water.

Low Satiety: Water whispers to the hungry Beast and leads her to her next meal, like a shark following the scent of blood. While immersed, standing in the rain, or standing in or near a large body of water, she can sense the general distance and direction to every nearby person, creature, or object that falls within the scope of her Hunger.

This sense is nonspecific. For example, a Predator knows where living prey are found but not if they are human or animal. Since she is already hungry, though, she cannot afford to be picky. Furthermore, this Atavism only reveals that which could increase the Beast's Satiety, regardless of its current level, so a Collector who fetishes rare books would sense where those are kept but not a hoard of jewels hidden under the floorboards.

Furthermore, this awareness supersedes the Beast's normal senses. She can perceive creatures and objects which are invisible to the naked eye, and anyone attempting to conceal themselves or an object from her must roll more successes than (10 – her Satiety dots). Otherwise, the Beast detects their location automatically. She has no means of tracking a potential meal once it leaves the immediate area, however.

Satiety Expenditure: It is water, not time, that wears away all things. Stronger than stone and even more unyielding, it carves canyons, erases mountains, and obliterates the works of Man. By spending a dot of Satiety, the Beast can call upon her kinship with water and unleash this relentless force on her surroundings. The blight is subtle at first. The area darkens slightly and the scent of saltwater fills the air. Metal rusts and corrodes, stone crumbles, and machinery of all kinds falters and breaks down.

Once the Beast invokes this ability, it persists for 24 hours whether she is present or not, and it devastates an area the size of a large building. Large structures such as vehicles and parts of the building take one structural damage every 30 minutes. Small items like phones or weapons degrade even faster, taking one structural damage per minute. This damage ignores Durability in

both cases. Creatures are wholly unaffected but animals instinctively flee the area. The Beast can end the effect at any time if she wishes.

Infestation [Namtaru]

No Beast is ever truly alone, not even in his own head. The Soul constantly pushes him to fulfill its Hunger, and a Beast with this Atavism has it worse than most. Instead of one Soul, he has many, perhaps hundreds of insect voices. He hears them buzzing and chewing and crawling over each other at all hours of the day. He can — and must — surrender to them on occasion, dissolving his body into a cloud of angry red wasps or a carpet of writhing maggots. He is them and only them and their only united thought is to *feed*.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast need not surrender completely. He can squeeze through narrow gaps just by loosening himself a little, turning his body into a gestalt assemblage of insects that still — barely — looks like a man. His skin ripples and bulges as they move underneath, and individual insects occasionally crawl from his mouth and other openings. They are quickly swallowed or burrow under his skin again, but the effect is…unpleasant to say the least.

The Beast can safely squirm through any opening at least one foot in diameter, including many air conditioning ducts and major water pipes. He can hold his breath indefinitely while doing so, effectively being many insects instead of a single bony mammal. However, his Speed is halved and he is unable to apply his Defense against attackers in a confined space, not that anyone is *likely* to attack him while he is in a pipe.

Low Satiety: The Beast's appearance as a unified whole is just an illusion, and a fragile one at that. Being less constrained by his bulky human form, though, he can go faster while squirming, moving up this normal Speed.

Push the Beast too hard, though, and he nearly falls apart. Pieces of him get dislodged and turn into a mass of chewing insects before reforming seconds later. The Beast takes bashing, not lethal, damage from firearms and piercing weapons because they go right through him. Ordinary fists and bludgeoning weapons do full normal damage, however, crushing multiple insects at a time. This is in addition to the normal effect.

Satiety Expenditure: By spending a dot of Satiety, the Beast surrenders to the hive within, and his entire body disintegrates into a mass of insects, leaving his clothing and worldly possessions behind. In so doing, he creates — or rather becomes — the Swarm Tilt with a radius of two yards per dot of Lair. Unlike a normal swarm, however, the area is reduced proportionate to the amount of damage inflicted on him. In other words, the Swarm is reduced to half size once half of his Health boxes are filled with damage. The Beast can also condense to attack a single target, inflicting lethal damage each turn equal to his Lair dots.

In swarm form, the Beast can move at double his normal Speed. That includes through any opening, no matter how small, and in three dimensions, since the swarm can crawl or fly over virtually any surface. Furthermore, he can use other Atavisms, Nightmares, or supernatural abilities that do not require human faculties such as speech. Witnessing the swarm in action may be a breaking point for someone with a phobia of insects.

Limb From Limb [Eshmaki]

Predators are versatile monsters. Some are stealthy hunters, like larger-than-life versions of great cats. Others rely on explosive bursts of speed and strength to run down prey. At the end of every hunt, though, is a glorious frenzy of teeth and claws, blood and screams, the Hunger for which tugs incessantly at the Beast's mind. He may look like everyone else but mercy is not in his nature and he knows nothing of weakness.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: One action or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast rends flesh by touch alone. His unarmed attacks inflict lethal damage with a weapon modifier equal to his Lair dots. The resulting injuries correspond to his monstrous nature. A roc's talons tear flesh, a giant's punches land with bone-shattering force, and a kraken's suckered tentacles leave behind angry, oozing sores. The victim is left gaping in shock and horror at wounds caused by nothing more than a brush of the Beast's ordinary-looking hand.

Low Satiety: No one walks away from the hungry Beast. Not in one piece anyway. Consumed by animalistic impulse, he leaves his prey a bloody mess, causing even more gruesome wounds than normal. The Beast can apply the Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack Tilt to his opponent after any single attack inflicts more damage than their Stamina. Likewise, they are gored or decapitated if an attack kills them outright.

Furthermore, the Beast cannot be affected by the Beaten Down Tilt, regardless of his intentions in the battle. Nothing *compels* him to continue fighting but neither can be cowed, least of all by soft members of the human herd. This is in addition to the normal effect.

Satiety Expenditure: The Beast forces a partial physical merger with his Soul. His unarmed attacks inflict aggravated damage for the rest of the scene. Ordinary men are torn apart with his bare hands, which become smeared with blood and gore, and those facing him in close combat glimpse the Soul looming over him, its presence both magnificent and terrifying. This is in addition to the normal and low Satiety effects.

Looming Presence [Anakim]

Giants are not the only ones renowned for their size. Dragons, rocs, and kraken are all orders of magnitude larger and stronger than any human being, the cube-square law be damned. Beasts with this Atavism need not be especially tall, though most are significantly above average, but they are *always* intimidating, inspiring dread disproportionate to their height. People take notice of them and immediately stand aside.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast's actual height and weight are unchanged, but his *effective* Size is raised by (his Lair dots +1). This is in addition to the Giant Merit. Greater Size produces a commensurate increase in Health.

People instinctively react to the Beast's *effective* instead of actual Size. A Beast with 1 dot of Lair registers as being Size 7, the same as a grizzly bear, so people immediately notice and do a double take when he walks into a room. Demonstrating his real height only compounds the strangeness of the experience.

Low Satiety: Disquiet settles over those in the Beast's shadow, granting him the rote quality on Intimidation rolls. Furthermore, the successful application of Hard Leverage opens one more Door than usual when using the Social maneuvering system, as people rightly fear his wrath. This is in addition to the normal effect.

Satiety Expenditure: Onlookers suffer vertigo as the Beast's presence is dramatically amplified. When he stretches and stands up straight, he seems to tower over everyone even though his actual height remains unchanged. The Size and Health bonus from the normal effect is *doubled,* replacing the normal effect.

Additionally, his greater height accommodates a longer stride, increasing his Speed by *triple* the normal effect's Size bonus. Many dead Heroes made the mistake of assuming Giants are as slow as stories make them out to be, but they leverage their superior physical abilities to make terrifying *blitzkrieg* attacks. The effect lasts for the scene and potentially causes panic and confusion in whomever witnesses it.

Mimir's Wisdom [Anakim]

Giants have an unfair reputation for being ponderous and stupid. It was the Greek Cyclopes whose weapons helped the gods seize power, the titan Prometheus who gave the secret of fire to mankind, and the giant Mimir to whom the Norse god Odin sacrificed his eye for knowledge. Anakim were the first pantheon of the primeval cosmos, both brutal and cunning, and they preserve secrets from the beginning of time.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or 24 hours (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast's Soul sits at the Heart of his Lair like a spider in its web. It has an unblinking eye and faultless memory, and it pieces together patterns from his experience and knowledge ripped from those who suffer its nightmares. Occasionally, the Soul shares flashes of insight — so long as the Beast keeps it well fed. Its guidance yields several benefits:

• The Beast has the Eidetic Memory Merit for free.

• Any mundane attempt to deceive the Beast automatically fails. The truth is not necessarily revealed, but he knows when someone is lying to him or withholding information or when a crime scene has been tampered with to conceal evidence. Likewise, he knows when supernatural powers have been used to affect his thoughts or perceptions.

• Once per chapter, the Beast's player can request information from the Storyteller that sheds light on the problem at hand. This information is impersonal in that it never identifies a specific person. However, it can answer questions like, "Where is the murder weapon hidden?" or "What leverage works best on this person?"

Low Satiety: Hunger in no way dims the Beast's awareness. Far from it. It sharpens his mind to a deadly focus. He gains the rote quality on Mental Skill rolls aimed at sating his Hunger, such as Academics to research a valuable item (for a Collector) or Computer to ruin a rival by hacking his bank account (for a Tyrant). The penalty for using Mental Skills untrained is also reduced to -1, as the Beast falls back on the Soul's knowledge when his is inadequate.

This is in addition to the normal effect. However, the starving Soul is not forthright with its knowledge, and the Storyteller can opt to provide misleading (but factually correct) information if the player requests it.

Satiety Expenditure: The Beast digs deep into the Soul's store of knowledge. Some consider it a drink from Mimir's well. Others describe visions of lives other than their own. Either way, the Beast claims a treasure trove of information. He gains his Intelligence + Lair dots in temporary Mental Merit and/or Skill dots for the next 24 hours.

These dots are allocated as the player sees fit, including raising existing Skills and Merits. However, no Merit can go beyond its normal range and no Skill can be increased above 5 dots. This is in addition to the normal and low Satiety effects. However, multiple uses of this ability are not cumulative.

For example, a Tyrant in a foreign country could show off fluency with the local language via the Language Merit, know the nation's history with dots in Academics, and learn about potential opposition with extra dots in Politics.

Needs Must [Ugallu]

Most creatures have a far wider experience of the world than humans do, helping them avoid danger and making them more efficient hunters. A Beast with this Atavism shares some of their heightened senses, but she also has an esoteric "sixth sense" for finding and pursuing the object of her Hunger, whether it is priceless treasure or living prey.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent

Normal Effect: The Beast's senses are superior to any human's. She adds her Lair dots as a bonus on perception rolls, including reacting to surprise. Furthermore, she ignores distance

related penalties to perception equal to her Wits dots. She can read a sign from miles away or hear breathing in a closet at the end of the hall.

The Beast instinctively senses whenever a potential meal is nearby — that is, something that would increase her Satiety if consumed. This is particularly useful at high Satiety when the Beast's needs are exacting. A Nemesis *knows* someone has committed an unpardonable sin just by looking at them, a Tyrant senses an opportunity for advancement, and a Collector realizes a priceless jewel is hidden amongst the dross.

This "sixth sense" will not penetrate any magical disguise or obfuscation, nor does it reveal any information other than the presence of a potential meal.

Low Satiety: The Beast's senses sharpen dramatically but only for the object of her obsession. This works like the normal effect but yields specific information. Continuing the earlier example, the Nemesis realizes someone killed his brother, the Tyrant knows an executive is vulnerable to blackmail, and the Collector can spot a genuine treasure amidst many convincing fakes. This insight can be invaluable for Social maneuvering, clueing the Beast into someone's Aspirations, Vice, or the type of Leverage they are susceptible to.

Satiety Expenditure: The Beast fixates on the object of her obsession. She mentally marks a target, which must be visible and capable of raising her Satiety. She can then track it anywhere, regardless of distance, and automatically succeeds on uncontested rolls to do so. Furthermore, the Beast gains the rote quality on contested rolls to locate the mark should they actively try to hide or evade her. This is in addition to the normal and low Satiety effects.

Unlike the normal effect, this ability will penetrate any supernatural form of disguise or deception whose rank is less than (the Beast's Lair dots + 1) so long as the target is marked first. For example, a Beast with 3 dots of Lair sees right through a Nosferatu's Touch of Shadow since it is a 2 dot Discipline. In the case of "all-in-one" powers such as Embeds, the highest Supernatural Advantage trait wins instead.

If the Beast relies on theft or violence to obtain her meals, this ability can be a godsend. As long as her patience holds out, she can wait until the mark is alone or unguarded. This lets her control the circumstances of the encounter and maintain a veneer of social respectability. However, this Atavism can run counter to the Hunger for Prey, especially at higher Satiety levels where a legitimate hunt is required.

The relationship between the mark and the Hunger can be indirect, such as a potential blackmail target or an executive willing and able to promote a Tyrant directly, so long as they are still capable of increasing Satiety in some way. The Beast can only have one mark at a time but he can maintain it indefinitely, pursuing it to the ends of the earth if need be.

No Escape [Ugallu]

A Beast can sit around all day waiting for the perfect ambush. Sometimes he must make a mad dash at his prey, moving in for the killing below before they can react. Ugallu are particularly

renowned for their swiftness. Oftentimes, all their victim sees is the shadow of great wings before being borne aloft and torn asunder in midair.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast has limitless reserves of energy. Instantly, he becomes a blur to human observers, running down his prey and vaulting over petty obstacles in his path. When running or charging, the Beast's Speed is multiplied by (his Lair dots + 2). Furthermore, he adds his Lair dots (if pursuing) or subtracts them from his pursuer's dice pool (if being chased) on foot chase rolls. Adrenaline heightens the Beast's combat reflexes as well. His Defense applies against firearms attacks, and he adds his Lair dots to initiative.

Low Satiety: The world narrows to just he and his prey when this Beast is running. Sounds are muted. Colors fade. Distractions are brushed aside. He ignores movement penalties due to obstacles or difficult terrain equal to (10 – his Satiety dots). This is in addition to the normal effect and is cumulative with the Parkour Merit.

Satiety Expenditure: Sometimes speed is everything and hunger can wait. By spending a dot of Satiety, the Beast forces a subtle transformation, reconfiguring bone, muscle, and tendon for maximum efficiency. For the rest of the scene, he can use one of the following abilities each turn, in addition to the normal and low Satiety effects:

• *Blur***:** The Beast instinctively ducks and weaves as he moves across the battlefield. His Defense is not degraded because of multiple attackers and applies even while charging. If Dodging, he adds his Lair dots to Defense before doubling.

• *Burst of Speed***:** The Beast squeezes out a little more speed, gritting his teeth and firing up his muscles to do the impossible. He gains the rote quality on a foot chase roll.

• *Flying Leap***:** The Beast can leap anywhere within his Speed x (Lair dots + 1) in yards as a reflexive action as long as he has a running start. He can leap from building to building or from the street to the rooftops without breaking a sweat.

• *Lightning Reflexes***:** Sometimes reaction time is more important than muscle power. The Beast instinctively reacts to threats as soon as he registers motion. He cannot be attacked from surprise, and he acts on the same initiative as his attacker in the first turn of combat.

Relentless Hunter [Eshmaki]

It won't die. The Hero ducks around a corner. He has wounded the Beast over and over again but nothing slows it down for long. It just heals. Now he is exhausted and out of ammo. The Beast knows it, too, and is taking its sweet time before it finishes him off. The Hero pulls the knife because it is all he has left; a souvenir from a tour of duty that seems so long ago now. This is not the way it was supposed to be.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast has incredible stamina and pushes on through injuries without complaint, knowing it is only a matter of time before he is at full strength again. Flesh knits together, burns pinken and smooth, and bruises shrink to nothing as people watch. Lost Health returns at the following rate**:**

• One point of bashing damage per turn.

• One point of lethal damage every half hour.

• One point of aggravated damage every three days.

The Beast also adds his Lair dots on Stamina + Resolve rolls made to resist poisons and toxins, and he can remain wide awake and active for a number of days equal to (10 – his Satiety dots) before succumbing to fatigue.

Low Satiety: The Beast downgrades damage equal to his Lair dots at the end of any scene in which he is hurt. Aggravated becomes lethal, lethal becomes bashing, and bashing damage is fully healed. Furthermore, he relentlessly pursues his Hunger. He need not eat, drink, or rest as long as he is *actively* pursuing a Satiety increase, such as a Predator who tracks his prey day and night without fail.

Satiety Expenditure: As a last resort, the Beast draws his Soul into his broken flesh, filling in the gaps and borrowing the strength to fight. All bashing and lethal damage is immediately healed *or* aggravated damage is healed equal to his Lair dots. Furthermore, the Beast cannot be stunned or incapacitated for the remainder of the scene, though he can still die from aggravated damage in his rightmost Health box.

Shadowed Soul [Namtaru]

Medusa dwelled in darkness. Not by choice, no, but to hide from her own hideousness. No mirror was allowed within her Lair, and no friendly soul came to visit her. Even the darkness betrayed her in time. It permeated her flesh and filled her eyes, opening itself to her, until there was no more refuge in the dark. Gnashing her teeth, she shut her eyes and lay in wait, listening to the silence of her Lair. She belonged to the darkness and it to her.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: Darkness is not only the Beast's natural state, it is her ally and does not impede her in any way. She can "see" in total darkness, including that created by supernatural powers, as if it were broad daylight. Furthermore, she is immune to the Blinded Tilt regardless of its cause. Even if her eyes are torn out, she can perceive shapes and movement in her environment using alien senses, though color is naturally lost on her. This is in addition to any environmental immunity granted by her Lair Traits.

Furthermore, the Beast can merge with any shadow large enough to contain her, temporarily dissolving her body into shadow substance. She is invisible, intangible, and impervious to physical harm in this state, but she can still speak and use her senses normally. She cannot move, however, except to leave the shadow, whereupon she regains physical form. Exposure to bright light or taking damage (such as from a magical attack) will also eject her. Otherwise, the Beast can remain in this state indefinitely.

Low Satiety: The Beast can extend her senses through any area of contiguous darkness while in shadow form. That means she can look around corners, read papers from across the room, or listen in on conversations down the hall as long as even tenuous shadows connect her location and theirs, and she has unfettered awareness in a completely dark environment! The Beast can only focus on one location at a time, but changing focus is a reflexive action. This ability is in addition to the normal effect.

Satiety Expenditure: By spending a dot of Satiety, the Beast deepens her communion with the darkness, which can transport her wherever it touches. For the rest of the scene, she can step into a shadow and "teleport" to another shadow anywhere in sight, assuming it is large enough to hold her. She can use this ability either while physical or in shadow form. Depending on the circumstances, the Beast can cross huge distances in a matter of minutes, all without being seen. This ability is in addition to the normal and low Satiety effects.

Siren's Treacherous Song [Makara]

Makara encompass all manner of creatures, each strange and wondrous in its own right. Some are cold-blooded behemoths floating in murk and staring with huge, lidless eyes. Some are saw-toothed horrors, forever swimming, their senses enlivened with the promise of blood in the water. A few are beautiful, even enchanting, by human standards — and that is just another lure for obtaining meat and sweet blood.

Action: Reflexive or instant (Satiety expenditure)

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: Deceit is the siren's greatest weapon. At its simplest, she can alter her pitch, timbre, and other vocal qualities to resemble any sound she can imagine, from another person's voice to a weeping child to haunting and ethereal music. Her voices carries unnaturally well, too, especially over the water or through fog.

The Beast can slip this ability into everyday speech and performances by subtly modulating her voice, adding her Lair dots as a bonus on all Social rolls involving speech or song. Furthermore, she speaks to the darkness within each person and always counts as tempting their Vice when using the Social maneuvering rules.

Low Satiety: The hungry Beast cannot keep need from her voice, but others are fascinated instead of repulsed by her dissonant song, as long as it is not overtly threatening. People feel compelled to follow or investigate the source of the sound unless they roll more successes than

(10 – her Satiety dots) on Resolve + Composure. Anyone who resists is immune to this aspect of the Beast's song for the rest of the chapter.

Once fascinated, the Beast's victim suffers her Lair dots as a penalty on perception rolls made to detect and avoid danger, including being surprised. Traditionally, sirens used this ability to lure in sailors and make them run aground. They would then drag the sailors ashore and devour them, regardless of whether they were dead or alive. However, this ability is also useful as a distraction or as a precursor to certain Nightmares.

Satiety Expenditure: The unwary discount sirens as a threat because of their beauty, but the Beast's voice is a greater weapon than they realize, and she can switch from an alluring song to a cutting shriek at a moment's notice. After spending a dot of Satiety, the Beast can unleash destructive blasts of sound for the rest of the scene. Each scream requires an instant action and shatters glass around her.

The Beast rolls Presence + Expression – Defense as an attack against everyone in earshot except she and her broodmates. This attack ignores armor and many forms of supernatural protection. A successful attack inflicts one lethal damage per success, plus the Beast's Lair dots as a weapon modifier. Those who avoid damage cover their ears or find cover to muffle the sound at the last second. However, anyone who takes damage from the siren's scream suffers the Deafened Condition in both ears until the wounds are healed.

Storm-Lashed [Ugallu]

As sky hunters, Raptors have a natural affinity for wind and weather, and tempests are often a prominent part of their legends. For example, the Native American Thunderbird spread storms as it flew, gathering clouds beneath its wings and carrying lightning in its talons in the form of writhing serpents. It was mighty and wrathful and people knew to stay the hell out of its way. Of course, Ugallu are not the only ones who call storms, and any Beast whose Lair is lashed by wind and rain can make use of this Atavism.

Action: Instant

Duration: One action or Lair dots in hours (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: During his Homecoming, the Beast was challenged by his Lair's storms and emerged the victor. As such, weather no longer concerns him. He suffers no adverse effects from wind and weather of any kind, including Environmental Tilts, although flooding still impedes his movement on the ground. He can comfortably walk through a blizzard, stare into a sandstorm without blinking, and hear over the din of a hurricane. Similarly, he is unharmed by natural or magically created bolts of lightning.

Furthermore, the Beast can create a powerful blast of wind by beating his wings or unleashing a portion of the storm roiling within his Lair. The wind gust has an effective range of 5 yards per dot of Lair and has several potential applications, including the following:

• *Disperse*: The Beast can disperse smoke, tear gas, and other noxious fumes, creating a temporary area of safety or a clear path out of the cloud. Similarly, he can direct smoke or gas in any direction, though enveloping a particular target with it requires a successful roll of Dexterity + Athletics – the target's Defense.

• *Knock Back*: The Beast can knock someone off their feet with a powerful gust of wind. Doing so requires a roll of Dexterity + Athletics – the target's Defense. If successful, the target suffers the Knocked Down Tilt and is pushed to the wind's maximum range for the duration — or off the side of a building, as the case may be.

• *Sand in the Eyes*: The wind gust kicks up any sand, dust, or fine debris around the Beast and hurls it in his enemy's faces. He rolls Dexterity + Athletics – Defense against every target in front of him. This ability causes no damage, but a successful attack applies the Blinded Tilt to that target for one turn per dot of the Beast's Lair. Anyone wearing eye and face protection is immune to this attack.

• *Whirlwind*: The Beast creates a short-lived wall of wind that completely blocks thrown weapons, arrows, and other lightweight projectiles until the end of his next turn. This can be used to shelter allies as well as himself. However, it is useless against bullets, not to mention heavy objects such as hurled boulders.

Low Satiety: Dark skies threaten and the wind seethes with barely restrained malevolence in the hungry Beast's presence. Storms are likely if he stays in one place long. Furthermore, given a natural or magically created storm, he can call down bolts of lightning and direct them to strike any target he can see. This requires an attack roll of Wits + Occult – the target's Defense. Those struck by lightning suffer lethal damage equal to successes, adding his Lair dots as a weapon modifier. This is in addition to the normal effect.

Satiety Expenditure: Drawing down his Lair, the Beast unleashes a supernaturally violent storm upon an unsuspecting world. It could be a wind or sandstorm, tornadic thunderstorm, snowstorm, or anything else the player imagines, notwithstanding any Lair Traits he may have. The storm overrides natural weather patterns for one hour per dot of his Lair.

The storm counts as an Extreme Environment of a level up to (10 – his Satiety dots, maximum 5), causing property damage and injuries in an area several miles across. The player decides on the storm's severity when it is summoned but can adjust it up or down as desired. The Beast is always at the heart of the storm when it first forms, but he can direct it to move (slowly) in any direction he wishes. Otherwise, it follows his movements.

Titanic Blow [Anakim]

Walking thunder is the sound of a Giant's approach. Like jungle drums, like a heartbeat, like an oncoming freight train, it grows steadily louder until the ground shakes, the walls rattle, and dust sifts from the rafters. It is outside. It has your scent. The door shudders from its pounding fist and plaster cracks around the doorframe. Getting in is only a matter of time.

Action: Instant

Duration: One action

Normal Effect: Drawing on her might, the Beast lands a pulverizing blow that shatters wood and deforms steel. A Strength + Brawl roll is required to hit a vehicle or other object in motion, and her attack ignores an amount of object Durability equal to her Stamina + Lair dots, making quick work of doors and barricades.

Low Satiety: The Beast is eager for destruction and infused with supernatural strength. She ignores *all* object Durability when using this Atavism's normal effect, smashing through walls and heavy doors as if they were tissue paper.

Furthermore, causing any damage negates whatever momentum a moving vehicle or object may have, so long as its Size does not exceed twice her own, including any increase from Looming Presence. She can stop a speeding car dead in its tracks just by slamming it with her first. Of course, just because the car stops does not mean its driver and passengers do, too. They retain *their* momentum — potentially going straight through the windshield.

Satiety Expenditure: Rearing back, the Beast smashes the ground with her fist, causing a thunderclap that roils the earth, shatters glass, and blows people off of their feet. Standing structures within 10 yards per dot of the Beast's Lair suffer her Strength + Lair in damage directly to their Structure. Low quality or poorly maintained buildings may be irreparably damaged or even collapse outright, but the earth shock explodes windows, blasts open doors, and damages supports even in buildings designed to withstand earthquakes.

Anyone within the area of effect who does not equal the Beast's Lair in successes a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll suffers the Knocked Down Tilt. The Storyteller may penalize this roll if people are standing on ledges or precarious structures when the Beast strikes. Anyone in the air is obviously unaffected, but feels the shockwave pass over them. Those who are knocked down suffer one point of bashing damage in addition to any damage that may result from flying glass or falling debris.

Unbreakable [Namtaru]

Many monsters are surpassingly difficult to kill. They have thick, scaly hides, chitinous carapaces, or stone-like skin in addition to their great size, speed, and strength. Special weapons or circumstances are often required to harm to them at all. A Beast with this Atavism stands apart from normal humans, especially under close investigation. He has walked away from car crashes without a scratch and has never broken a bone in his life.

Action: Persistent or reflexive (Satiety expenditure)

Duration: Persistent or one scene (Satiety expenditure)

Normal Effect: The Beast has a 3/2 general armor rating at all times. The effect is not obvious; he looks normal but knives skitter off of his skin and punches never faze him the way they would an ordinary man. As part of him, this armor provides full body protection.

Furthermore, the Beast's bones cannot be broken, rendering him immune to the Arm and Leg Wrack Tilts. His ability to lift and hold onto things is not affected, but his limbs can withstand incredible punishment without being dislocated or severed. He could effectively bar a door with his own arm, for example.

Low Satiety: It is a subtle change but the Beast's skin seems more leathery or weathered than usual, often with scaly patches, discolorations, or the white ghosts of old scars in ugly crisscrossing patterns. His armor rating increases to 4/3. Furthermore, he does not take bashing damage if his armor reduces a lethal attack to zero damage. The Beast simply shakes it off and keeps moving.

Satiety Expenditure: The Beast's skin dramatically toughens as he draws the Soul into his flesh, steeling himself against petty human weaponry. Attacks from firearms and melee weapons inflict bashing damage to him for the rest of the scene. Unarmed attacks and other sources of bashing damage are negated entirely. This is in addition to his armor from the normal and low Satiety effects. Environmental effects, supernatural abilities, and aggravated damage attacks harm him normally. Otherwise, he just keeps coming.

Nightmares

All human endeavor is predicated on lies. "We are more than animals." "Monsters aren't real." "The dark is nothing to be afraid of." "You can do anything you put your mind to." Through their connection to the Primordial Dream, Beasts peel away those layers of platitude and deception, reminding their victims of the cold, ineluctable truth: that they are nothing but prey, huddled naked and afraid against the dark.

Nightmares draw from the same deep well of Primordial Dream as the Families do. Unlike Atavisms, which are instinctual manifestations of a Beast's Soul, Nightmares must be learned, whether at the knee of some other monster or by ferreting them out from the deep places of the Primordial Dream. Certain Families are drawn instinctively toward specific Nightmares, but the fears called up by these powers are deep and fundamental enough that any Beast can manifest any Nightmare with equal facility. Familial differences are more apparent in the hallucinations and sense-images the victims suffer: The victim of an Anakim's "You Cannot Run" might see the Giant's vast tread easily keeping pace with his most desperate flight, while the victim of a Namtaru's is rooted to the spot by sheer, revulsive horror.

Moreover, as a Beast builds Kinship with the other monsters of the World of Darkness, she can draw upon their reflections of the Dark Mother to create *new* Nightmares based on the fears they embody. These "Kinship Nightmares" can vary dramatically depending upon the Beast and the monster in question. By claiming Kinship with a Nosferatu vampire, for example, a Beast can

call forth the fears embodied by vampires in general, or by *Nosferatu* vampires in particular, or by *Saul* the Nosferatu vampire in very great particular.

Nightmares are expressions of deep-buried fears that go deeper even than the subconscious mind, straight to the collective soul of humanity. They can be debilitating — but in their own way, they can also be exhilarating. Someone in the depths of terror can run faster, fight harder, and react quicker as his body's survival instincts kick into overdrive. Canny beasts use this to set their enemies upon each other or even to give their servants and allies an edge as often as they break their victims' minds with horror.

While Nightmares are "all in your head" in the sense that only the victim experiences the effects and sees the hallucinations, that's not the same thing as Nightmares being "illusionary" or somehow "not real." The effects of Nightmares are very real and are quite capable of inflicting somatic injury or even death. Just because no one else can see the bugs crawling all over you doesn't mean they aren't there.

> Ten Million Terrors
>
> The Nightmares presented here, though they come with some suggested descriptive text, are meant to be customized in accordance with your Beast's Soul, Hunger, and Family. Every Beast is unique, and the terrible visions they inflict should reflect that.
>
> Take, for example, the Bugs Everywhere! Nightmare. While its name and default description is perfectly suited to an insectoid Namtaru, it could just as easily be described as visions of a world made of rotting meat and putrescent organs brought on by a ravening Eshmaki, or one in which birds swoop endlessly from the sky to peck and scratch if the Nightmare's owner is an Ugallu. For an extreme example, a Makara might rename the Nightmare "You Are Drowning" and describe its effects as a vision of slowly sinking into the depths. The progressively increasing penalty of the Sick Tilt now becomes the crushing pressure making movement and concentration difficult, with the ongoing damage of the Poisoned Tilt representing the victim hallucinating his own death by drowning. The Makara's player might even rename the Tilts "Under Pressure" and "Drowning," respectively. Victims slain by this Nightmare might be found with seawater in their lungs, even hundreds of miles from the ocean.
>
> Feel free to customize your character's Nightmares to reflect your vision of her Soul.

Systems

Calling forth a Nightmare is a simple endeavor: the Beast simply meets her victim's gaze and speaks a few words to trigger the ancient, buried fear that lurks in his soul. The victim doesn't have to understand, or even hear the words, and in fact the words are largely irrelevant. Some

Beasts say something indicative of the Nightmare they invoke (e.g. “You’re going to die up there,” or “You’re eating maggots, Michael.”) Others speak a word of command, perhaps in an ancient language that resonates with their Soul. As long as the words are somehow tied to the Nightmare being invoked, they can even be worked into an otherwise innocuous-seeming conversation.

Nightmares are a product of the Beast’s Satiety and connection to the physical world; a well-fed Beast is closer to the human world, and thus better able to tap into the more cerebral side of the Primordial Dream. Every Nightmare therefore has three potential effects:

Normal: This effect occurs if the Beast’s Satiety is 6 or less when the Nightmare is invoked.

High Satiety: If the Beast’s Satiety is 7 or higher when the Nightmare is invoked, this effect happens.

Satiety Expenditure: Regardless of the Beast’s Satiety rating, the player may spend 1 Satiety to invoke this effect. For purposes of the availability of the High Satiety effect and the determination of dice pools, spending Satiety happens after the roll is made.

Example: Lilit invokes You Are Not Alone against a security guard and elects to expend Satiety. She has Satiety 7 and Manipulation 3, resisted by the guard’s Composure of 2. Even though Satiety Expenditure reduces her Satiety to 6, she can still invoke the High Satiety effect, and her dice pool is 8 (7 + 3 – 2 = 8).

Unless otherwise noted, all effects are cumulative if the Beast wants them to be: a Beast with a Satiety of 9 who invokes a Nightmare and elects to spend Satiety gets the benefits of all three effects. A Beast can choose which eligible effects she applies with her Nightmares.

Nightmare effects normally last one scene.

> Eye Contact
>
> Nightmares require a Beast to make eye contact with her victims in order to invoke their effects. That contact is one-way — the victim needs to see the Beast’s eyes, but not vice versa. This contact is possible through simple barriers like sunglasses (even mirrored) or tinted windows, but does not work when looking at a video feed rather than the Beast herself.

Invoking Nightmares

Dice Pool: Varies, see individual Nightmare descriptions.

Action: Instant and Resisted, unless otherwise specified.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Nightmare fails to take effect, *and* the Beast loses a dot of Satiety.

Failure: The Nightmare fails to take effect.

Success: The Nightmare takes effect, either immediately *or* when the victim next sleeps, as the Beast desires. If the victim is subject to multiple "dormant" Nightmares, he suffers one Nightmare each time he sleeps, in order of when the Nightmares were applied.

An individual can only be subject to one active Nightmare at a time. If the Beast invokes a second Nightmare on the same target, the new Nightmare supersedes the old one. If a different Beast does so, the attempt triggers a Clash of Wills (see p. XX).

Exceptional Success: The Nightmare takes effect, and the Beast may either regain a Willpower point *or* invoke the exceptional success clause of the specific Nightmare she invoked.

> Nightmares and Social Maneuvering
>
> Just about any Nightmare can serve as Hard Leverage in a Social maneuvering action. Even if the victim has no idea the Beast is the source of the Nightmare's effects (for example, if the Nightmare was set to trigger when the victim next slept), subliminal cues within the Nightmarish hallucinations push the victim toward the Beast's desires.
>
> A Normal effect removes a single Door, while a High Satiety effect removes two. Satiety Expenditure removes one additional Door.

Common Nightmares

These Nightmares are available to all the Children, and draw upon the primal archetypes of the Dark Mother.

All Your Teeth Are Falling Out

Your body is a ruin of wasted flesh and ragged skin. Age, disease, or infirmity have robbed you of your vitality, left you helpless and weak as the predators close in.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Satiety – Stamina

Normal: The victim suffers a –2 penalty to all Physical traits, and temporarily loses access to Striking Looks or any similar Trait dependent on physical beauty. This penalty also applies to derived Traits (e.g. Health, Speed, Defense, etc.)

High Satiety: On Physical actions where the number of successes matter (such as in combat or during an extended action), any normal success generates only a single success, no matter how many were rolled. An exceptional success yields two.

Satiety Expenditure: The player may spend multiple Satiety on this effect. For every Satiety spent, the Beast may reflexively cause the victim to fail a single Physical action.

Exceptional Success: The victim also applies a –2 penalty to his Defense.

Behold, My True Form!

Oh God, how can that be its face? *Just looking at it hurts, like you're gouging out your eyes with shards of broken mirror. The memory of it crushes your heart, liquefies your brain. You'll do anything to not see that again.*

Unlike most Nightmares, Behold, My True Form! is a single attack action and does not have a scene-long effect.

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety – Stamina

Normal: The attack inflicts one point of lethal damage per success. Victims slain by the attack often show signs of supernatural cause of death: their hair might turn stark white, or their entire body might be turned to stone, salt, or some other material.

High Satiety: The attack roll gains the 8-again rule.

Satiety Expenditure: For every point of Satiety spent, a successful attack inflicts +1 weapon damage.

Exceptional Success: Apply one of the following Tilts in addition to the damage: Arm Wrack, Blinded, Deafened, Insane, Leg Wrack, or Stunned.

Bugs Everywhere!

Oh, God, they're everywhere. They're on the walls, on the ceiling, in your food*, on your* skin. *You never used to be afraid of bugs, but the sheer, squirming mass of them shoots straight past your rational mind and renders you catatonic with fear.*

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety – Stamina

Normal: Overcome with revulsion, the victim gains the Sick Tilt.

High Satiety: The bugs don't just crawl and writhe across the victim's skin, they bite and sting. On top of the Sick Tilt, the victim suffers the Poisoned Tilt with a moderate poison. While the damage inflicted is very real, medical examinations reveal no trace of venom in the character's system; the only cure is to let the duration of the Nightmare expire.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim is so distracted by the horror of his visions that they fill the entirety of his mind. Apply the victim's current penalty from the Sick Tilt as a *bonus* to resist or contest any other form of mental influence, control, or mind-reading (e.g. if the victim is currently sitting at –2 from the Sick Tilt, he gains a +2 bonus to resistance Traits when resisting mental influence, and adds two dice to any contested rolls against psychic powers).

Exceptional Success: The penalty from the Sick Tilt starts at –2 instead of –1. Alternately, if the High Satiety effect occurs, the poison inflicted by the Poisoned Tilt is grave.

Everything You Do Is Worthless

You're an imposter, and everyone can tell. You aren't prepared for this. The only reason you're even here is because of blind luck and happenstance. It's only a matter of time before something comes along and you can't fake it.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The Beast chooses a type of action. This can be a Trait category (Mental, Physical, Social), a particular field (combat, infiltration, research, etc), or any other reasonably broad category. Within that category of action, the victim's threshold for exceptional success is raised from five successes to seven.

High Satiety: The results of all of the victim's actions in the chosen category are listless, barely adequate, and uninspired. When the number of successes on a roll matters (for example, in combat or in an extended action), any successful roll is treated as though it scored only a single success. A rolled exceptional success counts as two successes. The victim may reflexively spend 1 Willpower to negate this effect for a single action.

Satiety Expenditure: As long as the Nightmare is active, the Beast may spend one Satiety to reduce the victim to a chance die on a single roll.

Exceptional Success: In addition, the victim's threshold for exceptional success on all other actions increases to six.

Fear is Contagious

You see him panic, and it sets your teeth on edge. What could make someone react like that? Oh God, it must be really bad. Your heart starts to race, the world narrows to adrenaline-bright pinpricks. You recognize that look of fear. It's on your face, too.

Dice Pool: None, see below

Action: Reflexive

Normal: The Beast takes a –2 penalty on her roll to invoke another Nightmare, and in return she can affect two victims. Both victims must be valid targets as described at the beginning of this section. The Beast's activation roll is penalized by the *highest* relevant Resistance Attribute among both targets.

High Satiety: As Normal, but the Beast may affect a number of targets equal to her Satiety.

Satiety Expenditure: The Beast may expend more than one Satiety on this effect. Whenever a victim of the affected Nightmare has a meaningful interaction with another person, that character's player rolls Resolve + Composure – (Satiety spent). If the roll fails, that character becomes a victim of the Nightmare as well. "Meaningful interaction" here means anything more than seeing the victim: trying to speak with, restrain, or attacking the victim, for example, or being attacked or grabbed.

Exceptional Success: All victims are subject to the exceptional success result of the affected Nightmare.

Flying and Falling

Elation. Freedom. Pure, unrestrained joy. Suddenly, darkness. Loss. You're not flying, you're plummeting, racing headlong toward the broken ground below.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety

Normal: Every time the victim rolls an exceptional success, he loses 1 Willpower. If he has no more Willpower remaining, the roll counts as only a normal success.

High Satiety: When the victim loses Willpower due to this Nightmare, it counts as the Beast fulfilling her Hunger. See Satiety, p. XX, for more information on fulfilling Hunger. See Satiety, p. XX, for more information on fulfilling Hunger.

Satiety Expenditure: While the Nightmare is active, the victim's threshold for an exceptional success is reduced to three successes.

Exceptional Success: The victim loses 1 Willpower immediately.

Run Away

How could you ever think you could face it? You're like an ant trying to stand up to a tiger. It could snuff your life out as easily as breathing, lay open your soul with a glance and show you the things you thought were buried. There's only one sane thing to do: run.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Composure

Normal: The victim makes a heedless, headlong dash to get *away*. If the Beast invoked this Nightmare immediately, he tries to get away from her specifically; if the Beast set the Nightmare to trigger when the victim next slept, he just runs as though the Devil itself were after him, but with no particular direction or goal in mind. Either way, he keeps running until exhaustion forces him to stop.

If the victim was in the middle of a fight, his intent immediately changes to "get the hell away." Likewise, if anyone tries to stop him, he fights to escape and keep running.

High Satiety: The Beast can implant a subconscious hint for *where* the victim should try to flee, or specify another target rather than herself the victim must escape. Reaching that place of safety then becomes the victim's intent. If the implanted location is obviously hazardous (e.g. "Jump out the 50th-story window," "Go run into the interstate") the victim gains a +2 bonus to his Composure for purposes of resisting.

Alternately, the Beast can implant the suggestion that a particular individual is the sole source of safety for the victim; in that case, the victim's intent becomes "get to that person and stay with them." Any action on that person's part that even suggests an attempt to leave the victim behind will prompt the victim to do anything in his power to keep their source of safety from leaving.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim's panic is so complete that he doesn't pause or hesitate, even in the face of hazardous terrain. Any time the victim fails an Athletics action (for example, in a foot chase), he suffers one point of lethal damage due to nasty falls, cutting himself on fences, etc. On

a dramatic failure, he instead suffers four lethal damage *and* a Tilt of the Storyteller's choice. This represents running into traffic, falling off a roof, etc.

Despite the danger, the victim gains +3 Speed as blind terror supercharges his flight response.

Exceptional Success: The victim never suffers the Beaten Down Tilt against people trying to restrain or stop him; in effect, he treats attempts to stop him as though their intent was to kill him.

They Are All Around You

They could be anyone. Anywhere. Everyone you know could have been replaced or suborned and you'd never be able to tell. Not until it was far too late, anyways.

Normal: The victim gains the Paranoid Condition, which cannot be resolved until the end of the scene. The Beast chooses the signifier of the supposed conspiracy.

High Satiety: As long as the victim has the Paranoid Condition, he must succeed at a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll to avoid flying into a violent rage upon seeing the sign of the "conspiracy."

Satiety Expenditure: As long as the victim has the Paranoid Condition, he suffers a –2 penalty on breaking point rolls related to the "conspiracy." However, his threshold for exceptional success when acting against his perceived persecutors is reduced to three successes.

Exceptional Success: The victim also gains the Obsessed Condition with regards to unearthing the conspiracy against him.

> Paranoid
>
> Your character is certain that no one can be trusted, that vast conspiracies are moving against her and that random coincidences are the signs of a greater plan. She removes one die from all Composure-based dice pools. In addition, when the Condition is applied, choose one thing the character fixates on as a sign of the forces moving against her (a common turn of phrase, a color, a particular corporation/government entity, etc.) Anyone she associates with that sign is regarded as a threat.
>
> (If a conspiracy actually *is* out to get her, choose something that actually represents that conspiracy.)
>
> **Resolution:** The character is confronted with conclusive proof that no one is out to get her, or she exposes the conspiracy.

You Are Alone

In a sea of humanity, you are an uncharted island. No one even notices that you're there, and no one will notice when you're gone. You are doomed, not to die, but never to matter at all.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: Any attempt the victim makes to interact with other people costs 1 Willpower. Even then, dice pools for any action meant to connect with others suffer a –2 penalty. Prolonged use of this Nightmare (roughly once a day per dot of the target's Composure) may provoke breaking points or adverse Conditions like Shaken or Spooked.

High Satiety: As long as the Nightmare lasts, basic human interaction (even as simple as meeting the victim's gaze and asking how he's doing) counts as soft leverage in Social Maneuvering actions.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim cannot benefit from or participate in teamwork actions. However, being accustomed to relying on himself alone, the victim does not reduce his Defense after being attacked until the third time he's attacked in a turn.

Exceptional Success: Any failed Social roll on the part of the victim is treated as a dramatic failure.

You Are Meat

Everything you tell yourself is a lie. You aren't special, you aren't elevated above the rest of the herd, and you don't deserve anything. All you are is meat, and you can't keep the hunter at bay anymore.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Satiety

Normal: The victim gains the Soulless Condition (p. XX). This Nightmare doesn't remove the victim's soul, strictly speaking, but it suppresses it to the point that it might as well be gone. Some Beasts theorize that the soul is flung inward and lost in the depths of the Primordial Dream. If the victim's Integrity reaches 1, he gains the Enervated Condition as normal. Likewise, if his Willpower reaches 0, the Condition upgrades to Thrall.

These Conditions are removed automatically when the Nightmare ends, and the victim's Integrity and Willpower return to their original values at a rate of one dot per day.

High Satiety: The victim skips the Soulless Condition altogether and goes straight to Enervated. His Integrity is considered to be 1 as long as he has the Enervated Condition.

Satiety Expenditure: The soul "loss" is permanent. Only a journey into the Primordial Dream can recover it. The exact nature of such a journey is left to the Storyteller, but if it needs to be modeled mechanically, it should be at least an extended action with a time interval of a day. Recovering from Soulless requires a number of successes equal to the victim's original Integrity. Recovering from Enervated requires a number of successes equal to the victim's original Integrity *plus* Willpower. Recovering from Thrall required a further 10 successes on top of that.

Exceptional Success: The victim immediately loses 1 Integrity (Normal effect) *or* 1 Willpower dot (High Satiety effect).

Many of the things that haunt the shadows of the World of Darkness have additional rules that come into play when they lose their souls. Others have souls wholly unlike ordinary humans, or perhaps have no soul at all. You Are Meat affects all these creatures, and moreover they're treated as having lost their souls while under the thrall of this Nightmare, with all that that entails. For example, mages gradually lose their ability to work magic, while demonic soul pacts with the victim cannot be called in.

You Are Not Alone

Shh! Did you hear that? There's something out there. It's watching our every move, listening to every word we say. Don't look! It doesn't want to be seen.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The victim fixates on the idea that someone — or something — is watching him, and that a terrible fate will befall him if he sees it in return. He might squeeze his eyes shut, steadfastly refuse to look in a certain direction, or the like. The victim suffers a –2 penalty on all Perception rolls.

High Satiety: The Beast gives specific form to the victim's inchoate fears, naming someone or something as the thing the victim is compelled to ignore. Even if the that thing stands directly in front of him unobscured, he will look away, refusing to acknowledge its presence, and won't remember anything about the encounter once the scene ends.

Satiety Expenditure: In order to avoid seeing what should not be seen, the victim gains monomaniacal focus on a task before him. The victim treats all Perception actions as Instant, rather than Reflexive; he must consciously steel himself to maintain any kind of situational awareness. (If the victim chooses not to use his action on a Perception check, he automatically fails.) However, he also lowers the exceptional success threshold for a single extended action (chosen by the Beast) to three.

Exceptional Success: All of the victim's failed perception rolls are treated as dramatic failures

You Can't Wake Up

It's over. It was just a dream. You're safe now. Wait — what's that noise?

Dice Pool: None, see below

Action: Reflexive

Normal: The Beast takes a –2 penalty on her roll to invoke another Nightmare, and in return she can trigger that Nightmare again on the same victim, any time within 24 hours after the Nightmare's duration expires. The victim does *not* have to meet the Beast's gaze, or even be anywhere in the same vicinity as the Beast, when the Nightmare recurs.

High Satiety: The Beast takes a –2 penalty on her roll to invoke another Nightmare, and in return the victim is trapped in an unending cycle of nightmare. The Nightmare's duration increases from one scene to one full day.

Satiety Expenditure: The invocation roll for the other Nightmare suffers no penalty, and earns an exceptional success with three successes rather than five.

Exceptional Success: None; an exceptional success triggers the exceptional success result of the affected Nightmare.

You Cannot Run

Don't move. Whatever you do, don't move. Don't breathe, don't even blink. It *will see you if you do. Just stay still, stay very, very still, and maybe it will go away.*

Dice Pool: Wits + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The victim's Speed is halved, and he suffers a –2 penalty on any action not related to hiding or avoiding notice.

High Satiety: The victim freezes up completely: eyes wide, jaw clenched, muscles locked, not daring to move an inch. Any action the victim takes that isn't related to hiding, avoiding notice, or otherwise not drawing attention to himself requires a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll. If this roll fails, the victim can't do anything but remain as still as possible. In combat, the victim loses his Defense for the turn in which he fails the roll.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim gains the Fugue Condition (p. XX) with the triggering event of "being acknowledged by another person."

Exceptional Success: If questioned later, the victim is unable to remember anything about the time he spent under the effects of this Nightmare, beyond the all-consuming need to stay hidden.

You Deserve This

Look around you. Everyone knows what you did. Did you really think you could get away with it? Everything that's happening right now is karma, payback for your many, many sins. You brought this on yourself, and nothing you can do will make it right. All you can do is suffer.

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety – Composure

Normal: The victim gains the Guilty Condition (p. XX), and cannot resolve it during the scene, no matter how much he confesses or tries to make restitution. After the scene ends, the Condition may be resolved normally.

High Satiety: As long as the victim has the Guilty Condition, he begins every fight with the Beaten Down Tilt. Even creatures which normally do not suffer the Beaten Down Tilt are affected.

Satiety Expenditure: As long as the victim has the Guilty Condition, he does not apply his Defense to incoming attacks. He may spend 1 Willpower reflexively on his turn to apply his

Defense normally until the start of his next turn. However, his wound penalties become wound *bonuses* (i.e. with an injury marked in his third-to-last Health box, the victim has a +1 bonus to all actions instead of a –1 penalty), and he doesn't fall unconscious when his last Health box is filled with bashing damage.

Exceptional Success: The penalty inflicted by the Guilty Condition is −4 instead of −2.

You Must Obey

You're not in the driver's seat any more. You're looking out of your own eyes while something you can't begin to fathom steers you around like a puppet. Even thinking about resisting makes you feel sick inside.

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: For the duration of the scene, the victim is compelled to obey the Beast. Any attempt to ignore or countermand the Beast's instructions provokes a breaking point. Orders that would obviously harm the victim receive a +2 bonus to the breaking point roll. Orders must be simple, single instructions, and cannot be "queued." The Beast could order her victim to shoot his friend standing next to him, but if the Beast wanted his victim to drive across town, break into his friend's house, and then shoot him, the Beast would have to accompany the victim and give each order as the previous task was completed.

High Satiety: The Beast can issue complex commands, or multiple commands in sequence. She can give a number of orders equal to her Satiety rating at the time the Nightmare was invoked.

Satiety Expenditure: When acting to fulfill the Beast's commands, the victim either lowers the threshold for exceptional success to three successes *or* regains a point of Willpower. The victim chooses which before rolling.

You Will Never Rest

Moments stretch into hours. Days. You can't remember the last time you slept. Fatigue weighs at you, dragging you down, urging you to close your eyes and rest.

Dice Pool: Wits + Satiety – Stamina

Normal: The victim gains the Fatigued Condition as though he'd been awake for 24 hours. If the victim has already been awake for 24 hours or more, add the time he's been awake to the results of this Nightmare.

High Satiety: Every success on the activation roll counts as 24 hours without sleep. Moreover, if the victim falls asleep as a result of this Nightmare, it's less a restful sleep and more a tormented coma: any attempt to wake the victim is reduced to a chance die, and the victim regains no Willpower from the sleep.

Satiety Expenditure: Rather than fall asleep, the victim passes into a highly suggestible state in which the Beast can mold his deepest fears. The victim gains the Frightened Condition. The

Beast may then define a number of additional circumstances equal to her Wits that will trigger the Frightened Condition in the victim as long as the Nightmare lasts.

Exceptional Success: The victim suffers a -2 penalty on all Stamina + Resolve rolls to remain conscious.

New Condition: Fatigued

You've never been so tired in all your life. Your eyelids are like millstones, your brain a cobwebbed mass of exhaustion. You've reached that point where fatigue becomes a physical thing, and all you can think to do is close your eyes and rest, just for a moment. Every six hours, you must make a reflexive Resolve + Stamina roll to remain awake. If you fail, you pass out. Even if you succeed, you suffer a cumulative –1 penalty to *all* dice pools (including your rolls to stay awake). Long periods of strenuous activity, like cross-country hiking, fighting, or heavy labor increase the penalty to –2 or – 3. Even then, a normal person can only go a number of days without sleep equal to the lower of his Resolve or Stamina, at which point he passes out. Once a Fatigued character passes out, he remains asleep for 8 hours, plus one additional hour for every six hour period he stayed awake. Attempts to rouse him during this period suffer a penalty equal to the highest penalty the Fatigued character suffered before passing out.

Possible Sources: Staying awake for 24 hours, being dosed with a sedative or anesthetic.

Resolution: Sleeping, as described above.

Beat: n/a

New Condition: Frightened

Something's scared you to the point where you lose rational thought. Maybe you've just looked down at a hundred-story drop, or seen a tarantula the size of your fist crawling up your leg. Whatever the case, you need to leave right now. Your only priority is getting the fuck away from the thing that's frightened you — the hell with your stuff, your friends, and your allies. If someone tries to stop you from escaping, you'll fight your way past them. You can't approach the source of your fear or act against it — and if the only way out involves going near the source of your fear, you'll collapse on the ground in terror. Supernatural creatures prone to loss of control, including vampires, must roll to avoid frenzy. This Condition lasts until the end of the scene; suppressing its effects for a turn costs a point of Willpower.

Possible Sources: The You Will Never Rest Nightmare, coming face to face with a phobia.

Resolution: The character escapes from the source of his fear.

Beat: n/a

NOTE: FROM BLOOD & SMOKE

Kinship Nightmares

By claiming Kinship with the other monstrous denizens of the World of Darkness, the Children may spin new nightmares with which to terrorize their prey. In order to learn these Nightmares, a Beast must have given the Family Ties Condition to a monster of an appropriate type. The Kinship Nightmares presented here include suggestions of what monsters' Family Ties might grant them, but if you feel like, say, Your Rage Consumes You relates to your Kinship with a berserker Gangrel vampire rather than a werewolf, feel free to ignore our suggestions.

The following Nightmares are broad examples of the sorts of fear Kinship Nightmares might play upon.

You Are Infected (Vampire)

The poison is in the blood. You can feel it burning in your veins, calling out to you across empty miles. Run as far as you like, you can't escape the blood.

Dice Pool: None, see below

Action: Reflexive

Normal Effect: The Beast takes a –2 penalty on her roll to invoke another Nightmare, and in return she can target anyone who has tasted her blood within the last 24 hours, no matter where in the world they are. Even a tiny drop of blood is enough to trigger this Nightmare.

High Satiety: The Beast takes a –4 penalty on her roll to invoke another Nightmare, but does not subtract any Resistance Attribute from the roll. In return she can infuse a quantity of her blood with that Nightmare. Anyone who comes in contact with it (touching or tasting it) is immediately the victim of the infused Nightmare.

(Note: This Nightmare's High Satiety effect has a higher-than-normal penalty to compensate for the lack of a specified target's Resistance Attribute.)

Satiety Expenditure: The invocation roll for the other Nightmare suffers no penalty, and earns an exceptional success with three successes rather than five.

Exceptional Success: As per the invoked Nightmare.

We Know All Your Secrets (Mekhet Vampire)

Our eyes are everywhere. We know every dirty, cruel, shameful thing you've ever done. You are as mysterious to us as an open book — and not a very complicated one at that.

Dice Pool: Wits + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The victim becomes convinced that some important secret (the address where his family lives, the bribes he took as a police officer, etc.; whatever the character deems significant

and wants to keep hidden) has been exposed. The victim gains the Obsessed Condition related to making sure his secret is protected. (Naturally, if the Beast tails him long enough, she's likely to figure out what it is he's trying to hide.)

High Satiety: The victim's hallucinations implant the subtle but insidious suggestion that only the Beast can help the victim keep his secrets. As the victim lowers his guard and confides in the Beast, he suffers a –2 penalty on all Social rolls against her. If the Beast engages in Social maneuvering with the victim, she must open one fewer Door.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim suffers from a complete inability to keep secrets for the duration of the Nightmare. If anyone else is present, he compulsively blurts out anything that crosses his mind, no matter how much he might wish to keep it private.

Exceptional Success: Learning the secret the victim sought to conceal counts as fulfilling the Beast's Hunger. See Satiety, p. XX, for more information on fulfilling Hunger.

Your Rage Consumes You (Werewolf)

Blood roars in your ears. Your vision narrows to red-tinged points as the bile rises in your throat. How dare they? What gives them the right? You'll make them regret pushing you.

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety – Composure

Normal: The victim lashes out physically at whoever happens to be closest to him (if there's no one nearby he can perceive, he instead directs his rage at objects in the environment around him). He doesn't necessarily try to kill the focus of his rage, but he does attack until the target is at least unconscious or successfully escapes the area. Once the initial focus of the rage is down or gone, the victim "snaps out of it." Likewise, if the victim acquires the Beaten Down Tilt or the scene comes to an end, the Nightmare's effects end.

High Satiety: Once the victim takes down the first target of his rage, the Nightmare doesn't expire. Instead, the victim redirects his rage to the next closest target. Only when the victim acquires the Beaten Down Tilt, the scene ends, or there's no one left to attack does the Nightmare end.

Satiety Expenditure: For the duration of the Nightmare, the victim never suffers from the Beaten Down Tilt and gains a +2 bonus on all combat actions.

Exceptional Success: Instead of attacking the closest individual, the victim goes after a target dictated by the Beast.

Your Tools Betray You (Iron Master Werewolf)

Every day you abuse the tools that make your life possible. You shake your phone when it drops a call, throw the controller when you lose a game, scream at your car when it won't quite start. Did you think there would be no consequence?

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety – Composure

Normal: The victim suffers from delusions that his equipment is both aware and malevolent. On any action that requires the use of tools or equipment (for example, hacking a computer or fixing a car), he suffers a –2 penalty.

High Satiety: In addition to the penalty, the victim does not receive an equipment bonus from any item he employs. This includes the damage bonus from weapons, but Armor derived from equipment is not negated. Other benefits of equipment, such as the 8- or 9-again rule, are similarly unaffected by this nightmare.

Satiety Expenditure: On a dramatic failure on any action that involves the use of tools or equipment, the victim suffers 2 lethal damage.

Exceptional Success: The victim suffers a –3 penalty instead.

You Are Better Than Them (Mage)

They're insects. Beneath you. They can barely even see the world for what it is. If the one-eyed man is king of the land of the blind, you are its God-Emperor. Who can dare gainsay you?

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The effects of the victim's Virtue and Vice are swapped for the duration of the Nightmare: He may regain one Willpower point per scene by fulfilling his Virtue without having to risk himself, and regains full Willpower once per chapter by fulfilling his Vice in a way that poses a threat to himself.

High Satiety: For the duration of the Nightmare, the victim does not (and cannot) suffer from breaking points due to his own actions. Things that would normally prompt breaking points (such as murder, theft, or assault, or even nonviolent acts that are nevertheless fundamentally opposed to the character's self image) seem as reasonable and appropriate as having a polite discussion. In addition to making the victim potentially act wildly out of character, this Nightmare negates any penalties to Social maneuvers or similar actions that might arise due to breaking points. It's as easy to convince the victim to murder his boss as it is to convince him to loan you his car.

Once the Nightmare's duration ends, the victim must immediately roll for any and all actions undertaken during the Nightmare that would call for breaking points.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim sees his own desires as paramount, and anyone who would gainsay him as an enemy who must be crushed. As long as his actions are directed toward the fulfilment of his Aspirations, the victim earns an exceptional success on any roll that yields three or more successes. If, however, anyone stands between him and his Aspiration (whether deliberately or not), the victim gains "Destroy that person" as an Aspiration as long as the Nightmare lasts. "Destroy" doesn't have to mean "kill:" depending on the victim's Virtue, Vice, and Integrity he might try to ruin the character socially or financially, get her fired, or the like.

Exceptional Success: Each time the victim suffers (or would suffer, for the High Satiety effect) a breaking point in the Beast's presence, it counts as fulfilling the Beast's hunger.

The Void Is Waiting (Low-Wisdom Mage)

> **NOT SURE THIS ONE WORKS FOR ANY PARTICULAR PATH, BUT IF YOU WANT PLAYABLE CHARACTERS ONLY HOW ABOUT A CHANGE UP FROM "SPLAT-SPECIFIC" LIKE THIS?**

A book that is a universe. A set of mathematical formulae that graph nonexistence. A million chittering, hungry things desperate to be. *They're all out there. And they're all waiting for you.*

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The victim's mind is plunged into a vision of the Abyss, the toxic anti-reality that lurks between the World of Darkness as Beasts know it and the pure realm of abstract symbolism from which mages draw their power. This vision calls to the tiny sliver of the Abyss that lurks in every human soul, drawing that realm's attention.

The Abyss seeks to draw magic into itself in order to fuel its own existence; any time a supernatural power is used in the victim's vicinity (including by the victim himself if he has such abilities) provokes a Clash of Wills. The victim rolls Resolve + Composure if human, or Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance if not. Success for the victim means the power targets the victim rather than its intended target.

High Satiety: When the victim succeeds on a Clash of Wills triggered by this Nightmare, the user of the supernatural power takes lethal damage equal to the number of successes rolled.

Satiety Expenditure: The player may spend multiple Satiety on this effect. For every Satiety spent, the Beast may cause one attempt at activating a supernatural power in the victim's presence to automatically fail.

Exceptional Success: Each time the victim absorbs a supernatural effect in the Beast's presence, it counts as fulfilling the Beast's Hunger. See Satiety, p. XX, for more information on fulfilling Hunger.

Everyone Hates You (Promethean)

You've suspected it all along. Behind their smiles, they're sneering at you, mocking you, laughing at your many inadequacies. It's only a matter of time before they turn on you completely.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Composure

Normal: The victim is so thoroughly convinced that everyone around him despises him that he grows defensive and snappish. He suffers a –2 penalty on all Social rolls.

High Satiety: The victim becomes edgy around other people, certain that they're only moments away from attacking him. He gains the Agoraphobic Condition.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim is so certain that his friends and allies despise him that he refuses to rely on them. The Beast may spend multiple Satiety on this effect. For every Satiety spent, the victim loses access to aSocial Merit that relies on his relationship to other people, including Status, Allies, Contacts, or Staff.

Exceptional Success: The victim treats any failed Social action as a dramatic failure.

> Agoraphobic
>
> Your character is deeply disturbed by open spaces and large crowds. In any situation when more people are present than the character's Resolve + Composure, you suffer a –2 penalty to Initiative, perception rolls, and any action requiring careful focus or attention. In addition, any time your character encounters an extremely large crowd (e.g. a riot or at a major sporting event), you must roll Resolve + Composure. If you fail the roll, your character seeks to avoid the crowd and get away from the area. Any action not related to finding a safe, close, private space suffers a –3 penalty until the end of the scene.
>
> **Resolution:** Regain a dot of Integrity, lose a dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point roll.

You Cannot Kill It (Tammuz Promethean)

How can it still be standing? That shot should have dropped an elephant, but that thing just keeps coming. What chance do you stand against… that?

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Composure

Normal: No matter how hard the victim strikes or struggles, he just cannot seem to wound the Beast. Even if he does land a solid blow, he cannot see the effects of his attacks. Not only does this rob him of any ability to gauge how injured the Beast might be, the sense of futility robs his blows of strength. All attacks the victim makes against the Beast inflict only bashing damage, regardless of the damage type they normally inflict. Attacks that target one of the Beast's Anathema (p. XX) are not affected.

High Satiety: The victim's attacks against the Beast reduce their weapon damage rating by two. (Negative damage ratings subtract damage from the number of successes rolled.) If a negative damage modifier reduces damage on a successful attack to zero or less, the Beast takes one bashing damage instead.

Satiety Expenditure: The Beast may spend multiple Satiety on this effect. For every Satiety spent, the Beast reduces damage from one attack by the victim to one bashing damage.

Exceptional Success: Any time the victim fails an attack roll against the Beast, the victim loses a point of Willpower.

You Are Lost (Changeling)

It was just here. Wasn't it? Were you supposed to turn left back there? None of this looks familiar, and night is closing in fast.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The victim gains the Lost Condition (p. XX). A successful navigation roll does not resolve the Condition until the Nightmare's duration expires; instead, a successful navigation roll lets the victim make a single roll in an extended action to reach his goal.

High Satiety: Every time the victim fails a navigation roll while he has the Lost Condition, he suffers a dramatic failure.

Satiety Expenditure: The Beast may spend 1 Satiety when the victim fails a navigation roll. The victim's hallucinations guide him into one of the many alternate realities that abut the World of Darkness: the Shadow, the Underworld, or the Hedge, for example.

Exceptional Success: The Beast can apply the Lost Condition relative to some abstract goal rather than literally "finding your way." She might, for example, render the victim hopelessly lost on how to proceed in writing a book or closing a business deal. Adapt the skill used for navigation rolls as necessary (in the examples of writing a book or making a deal, navigation rolls might be Wits + Academics or Manipulation + Persuasion, respectively).

You Are an Impostor (Mannikin Changeling)

You thought your life was your own. You thought you were a real live boy. You thought you had earned your triumphs and owned your tragedies. You were wrong.

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety – Composure

Normal: The victim becomes convinced that he is a simulacrum, a hollow, soulless replica of the Beast. Seeking his own identity, for the duration of the Nightmare he is compelled to adopt a contrarian stance: denying the Beast's statements, deliberately acting against the Beast's advice, etc.

High Satiety: For the duration of the Nightmare, if the victim sees the Beast take damage or suffer an adverse Condition, he suffers the same damage or Condition.

Satiety Expenditure: The unreal cannot feel pain, nor sorrow, nor joy. The victim suffers no wound penalties and doesn't fall unconscious when his Health track is filled with bashing damage, but he cannot regain Willpower from fulfilling his Virtue or Vice, and all his failures on Social actions are treated as dramatic failures.

Exceptional Success: The certainty that he is a barely real fragment of nothingness robs him of a certain spark of inspiration; the victim loses the 10-again effect on all actions.

Death Is a Prison (Geist)

The blackness is waiting for you at the end of the road. Your every step takes you closer, your heartbeat drumming out a steady march to the grave. After this world, no heaven waits to reward you. No hell waits to punish you. At the end there is only silence and darkness.

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The victim feels death stalking close behind, numbing his limbs and sapping his strength. Every hurt he suffers seems to drag him closer to the Great Below, and to the endless gray waiting of that realm. Rather than taking wound penalties when his last three Health boxes are filled with damage, the victim suffers a cumulative –1 penalty for every Health box filled with damage. This penalty cannot exceed –5.

High Satiety: The victim's incipient death drives him to excess as he seeks to eke what little pleasure he can out of his remaining life. The victim gains the Wanton Condition.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim becomes convinced that he is, in fact, a ghost. He must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll to leave the vicinity of his "anchors" and any events that remind him of his "death" trigger a fugue state as per the Fugue Condition.

Exceptional Success: Like a ghost, the victim reverses the effects of his Virtue and Vice. He may regain one Willpower point per scene by fulfilling his Virtue without having to risk himself, and regains full Willpower once per chapter by fulfilling his Vice in a way that poses a threat to himself.

> Wanton
>
> Your character wants, for the sake of wanting. He's distracted with temptations of excess and indulgence. Any Composure or Resolve rolls to resist temptation suffer a –2 die penalty. As well, the character that brought forth this Condition achieves exceptional success on three successes instead of five when making any rolls to tempt your character.
>
> **Resolution:** Indulge in something that constitutes a breaking point.

You Can't Take it With You (Geist)

> **MATT—FYI, IF, AS I'M PRETTY SURE I WILL, I END UP DEVELOPING GEIST 2E, I PLAN TO DITCH THE OLD SPLATS AND REDO THEM ALTOGETHER. SO I'M NOT SURE WHAT I WANT TO DO HERE. I DON'T WANT TO PREEMPTIVELY TEASE A NEW SET OF SPLATS THAT MIGHT CHANGE BEFORE GEIST 2E COMES OUT, BUT I DON'T WANT TO USE A 1E SPLAT THAT MIGHT BECOME OBSOLETE. SO FOR NOW GEIST GETS TWO GENERIC NIGHTMARES, BUT I GUESS YOU COULD MAKE THIS ONE A BONEPICKER NIGHTMARE IF YOU WANT.**

All your pretty treasures are just a fetter, a trap set to hold you down. Your wealth, your status, even your loved ones: at best they'll come to naught but a line on your headstone.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The victim loses access to a number of Social Merit dots equal to the Beast's activation successes. The Beast's player may allocate these lost dots as she sees fit, but she cannot partially shut down a Merit with a flat cost. For example, if the victim has the three dot Merit "Inspiring," it cannot be reduced to a single dot. A scaled Merit like Resources, however, can be partially reduced. The "lost" Merits don't actually go away, rather, the victim can't seem to muster the energy to use them. It all just seems pointless.

High Satiety: Even as he recognizes the fleeting futility of all his possessions, the victim becomes obsessed with one single object or relationship in his life (chosen by the Beast) as emblematic of his legacy. He won't willingly leave the object or the subject of the relationship without a successful Resolve + Composure action, and if he is separate from it, he gains the Deprived Condition (see p. XX). However, as long as he's in the presence of his legacy, he gains the Inspired Condition.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim realizes with absolute clarity that his Social Merits are chains that he will never be free of — not unless he gets rid of them. The Beast may spend multiple Satiety on this effect, up to the number of successes on the activation roll. For each Satiety spent, the victim *permanently* loses one Social Merit dot the Beast blocked. He might give away his money and possessions, burn his bridges with friends and contacts, or forswear the vanity of physical beauty, for example. As with the temporary suppression of Merits described above, Merits with a flat cost cannot be partially destroyed. Finally, if this Nightmare is used on another player's character, the Sanctity of Merits rule (p. XX) applies.

Exceptional Success: No effect beyond blocking a very large number of Merit dots

Tabula Rasa (Mummy)

Where are you? How did you get here? Who brought you here? For that matter, who are you?

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The victim gains the Amnesia Condition (p. XX) for the duration of the Nightmare. The Beast chooses a contiguous piece of the victim's life to erase — this can be as broad as "your early childhood" or as narrow as "from 6:15 to 6:25 pm last Thursday." The erased time must occupy a single block: the Beast cannot, for example, erase "every time we've ever met," nor can she erase a period longer than a quarter of the victim's life.

The victim's memory returns when the Nightmare's duration expires.

High Satiety: The Beast can erase the victim's entire memory, if she so desires. Moreover, she can selectively return any erased memory by touching the victim.

Satiety Expenditure: The Amnesia Condition remains even after the duration expires. The victim can regain it only through long-term therapy or supernatural effects. The Beast can remove the Condition with a touch as well.

Exceptional Success: As long as the erased memories are thematically contiguous, the Beast can take memories from any time across the victim's life, or she may erase facts or images from the victim's mind. She might, for instance, erase "every time you've visited New York" or "your mother's face."

Cursed Object (Maa-Kep Mummy)

All your troubles can be traced back to that thing. As soon as it came into your house, things started to go wrong. It's not your fault, of course, it's the curse—but how do you get rid of it?

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Rsolve

Normal: The victim becomes convinced that an object in his possession (of the Beast's choosing) is in fact cursed and will bring him nothing but misfortune. As long as the object remains in his possession ("possession" here can mean "ownership;" if the victim is convinced he owns a cursed car, the "curse" still affects him if it's parked in his driveway), he gains the Cursed Condition. In addition, actively refusing an opportunity to be rid of the object requires a successful Resolve + Caomposure roll.

High Satiety: The victim's delusions also point him toward the Beast as the sole person capable of helping him get rid of the curse. "Disposing of the cursed item" counts as soft leverage for any Social maneuvering against the victim.

Satiety Expenditure: If the victim passes the "cursed" object to another individual, that character becomes the victim of this Nightmare.

Exceptional Success: Acquiring the "cursed" object counts as fulfilling the Beast's hunger. See Satiety, p. XX, for more information on fulfilling Hunger.

> Cursed
>
> Your character is (or believes he is) suffering from a supernatural curse that brings him ill fortune. Choose a particular area in which the curse manifests (the victim's love life, perhaps, or his safety on the job); any failure in that field becomes a dramatic failure. The victim may spend 1 Willpower to negate this effect for one action.
>
> **Resolution:** Remove the source of the curse (if it's a real supernatural effect) or undergo therapy to break the delusion (if it's psychosomatic).

Creating Kinship Nightmares

By claiming Kinship with the other monstrous denizens of the World of Darkness, the Children may spin new nightmares with which to terrorize their prey. While a full accounting of the possibilities of Kinship Nightmares is beyond the scope of this book, this section provides guidelines for how to create your own Nightmares, as well as a few examples to get you started.

Step One: The Nature of Fear

Kinship Nightmares aren't an excuse for the Children to simply mimic the powers of their little sisters and brothers. No Kinship bond allows a Beast to learn a vampire's Protean Discipline or a changeling's Contracts of Darkness. Rather, by establishing Family Ties with another monster, the Beast may reach deep into the Primordial Dream to draw forth a nugget of the fear that monster represents and make it manifest in the mind of her victim.

Exactly what that means depends as much on the themes of the chronicle as on the nature of the subject, and there's no one "right" answer. Likewise, the Beast creating the Nightmare can focus as widely or as narrowly on her Kin as she desires.

Take for example Bram Stoker's *Dracula:* In the novel, vampirism in general represents the fear of infectious disease: invisible, insidious, and seemingly impervious to modern science. Dracula's get, particularly in the form of Lucy and the Brides of Dracula, represent the terribly Victorian fear of the corruptive power of female sexuality. The Count himself represents the xenophobic fear of the mysterious and powerful foreigner who comes to corrupt right-thinking folk and take over the countryside. A Beast claiming Kinship with Dracula might create Kinship Nightmares based on any of those fears.

Before you start thinking about mechanics and effects, take a moment to think about what fear you're trying to elucidate. Here's where literary analysis can be your friend: all the good monster stories have the monsters representing something about the human condition, and it's that universality that Beasts tap into. Werewolves, for instance, often represent the fear that any of us could lose control of ourselves and do something horrifying, but they can also tap into fears about our bodies changing without our understanding or consent. In the World of Darkness, werewolves might also represent the fear that something alien and unknowable might decide that you need to suffer for reasons you cannot possibly understand.

> "It's Scary Because It Can Kill Me"
>
> While the fear of bodily harm or death *is* one that just about any monster can invoke, it's also a very surface-level fear that doesn't lend itself well to Kinship Nightmare themes. If you want people to be terrified of you because you can rip them limb from limb, consider the Common Nightmares You Deserve This, You Must Obey, or You Are Meat.

Step Two: Effects

Just like Common Nightmares, Kinship Nightmares have three levels of effect: Normal, High Satiety, and Satiety Expenditure, plus an optional Exceptional Success effect. The simplest Nightmares have all three levels providing the same basic effect, just with increasing power: a progressively larger penalty to the victim's actions or more potent damage inflicted, for example. Others work off of a common theme, but provide increasingly broad or useful effects. Many Nightmares include a benefit to the target, usually at the Satiety Expenditure level, that can give the Beast's allies an edge born of mortal terror or sow chaos among her enemies.

Nightmares are internal, mental attacks against the victim. They can allow the Beast to put things *into* the victim's head, but can't take things out. As the name implies, all Nightmares build off of the emotions of fear, terror, dread, and horror. A Nightmare can't, for example, make the Beast invisible to the victim, but it can make the victim so afraid of seeing the Beast that he refuses to look.

Remember that even if the Nightmare's effects grant different benefits, you're still designing a single Nightmare built around the common theme you settled on in the previous step, not a grab-bag of wholly disparate powers. Work with your Storyteller to ensure that all the effects come together into a coherent whole.

Use the effects described in the Common Nightmares, along with the following lists, as a starting point for developing your own Kinship Nightmares. Feel free to come up with your own unique effects; these are just benchmarks to keep you on the right track.

TABLE TIME!

Normal Effects

• −2 penalty on a certain type of action

• Inflict a Condition

• Require 1 Willpower to undertake a certain type of action

• Require a reflexive roll to undertake (or avoid) a particular course of action

• Modify the threshold for an exceptional success (raising it to seven successes for the victim or reducing it to three successes for those acting against him)

• Inflict lethal damage

• Alter the basic properties of another Nightmare (e.g. duration, targets, means of invoking, etc.) at the cost of a –2 penalty to that Nightmare's activation roll.

High Satiety Effects

• Grant 8-again on rolls against the victim.

• Inflict a second condition

• Drain resources (Willpower certainly, but potentially more esoteric resources like Vitae or Mana)

• Influence Social maneuvering rules (adding or removing Doors, changing reaction levels, or bringing leverage into play)

• Increase the potency of the Normal effect (increasing penalties to –4, allowing more complex or powerful phenomena, etc.)

• Treat a successful roll as though it only earned a single success, or an exceptional success as though it only earned two.

Satiety Expenditure

• Dramatically expand the breadth of the Normal effect (Note: Satiety Expenditure shouldn't affect the High Satiety effect, since that would limit when Satiety Expenditure can be used. It's okay to give an option that increases the High Satiety effect, though.)

• Create a powerful, permanent effect

• Spend multiple Satiety to reduce a broad category of actions to a chance die (or cause a specific category of action to fail outright) on a one for one basis

• Compel a certain type of behavior

• Possibly grant the victim a bonus related to a supercharged fight-or-flight response

Step Three: Dice Pool

A Nightmare's dice pool always consists of the Beast's Satiety plus an Attribute, resisted by one of the victim's Attributes. Since Nightmares are mental effects, most of the time they rely on the Beast's Mental or Social Attributes.

• **Presence**-based Nightmares are all about overwhelming the victim with primal, animal fear. They might make the target flee screaming or curl into a ball and whimper, but either way they're essentially psychic sledgehammers.

• **Manipulation**-based Nightmares inflict a subtle, insidious fear: more nagging dread than horror. They're more likely to make the victim do something foolish, like run into traffic, turn on his friends, or go check out those weird sounds in the basement.

• **Intelligence** inflicts cerebral Nightmares, the kind of thing that keep philosophers up into the small hours of the morning. They tend to distract the victim, getting him lost inside his own head as he contemplates his insignificance in the grand scheme of things.

• **Wits**-based Nightmares expose the victim's own weaknesses, laying bare his deeply buried demons or crippling him with self-doubt. These Nightmares often trick the victim into leaving himself vulnerable to the Beast in some way — walking into an ambush or ignoring an obvious threat, for example.

When choosing a Resistance Attribute for the victim, consider the nature of the fear being invoked.

• Resist with **Composure** if the Nightmare seems like the kind of thing that would provoke hasty reaction. Composure resists effects that make the victim run screaming or lash out blindly, or effects that would incapacitate the target socially.

• Resist with **Resolve** when the Nightmare erodes self-confidence or long-term goals. Resolve protects against Nightmares that make the victim feel powerless or make him question his worth.

• Although Nightmares are constructs of mind and soul, those that target fears of the body, like health, attractiveness, or injury, are resisted with **Stamina**. Any Nightmare involving psychic pain is a good candidate for Stamina as a Resistance Attribute.

Step Four: Comparison Check

This step is more art than science, but the final step to creating a Kinship Nightmare is to compare it to other published Nightmares (and, if this isn't the first Kinship Nightmare your group has created, to other custom Nightmares as well). Look for any places where your Nightmare's effects are straight up better or more versatile than other Nightmares, and conversely places where maybe you've been a little conservative in your design, and tweak accordingly.

Example: Say you've designed a Nightmare based on your Kinship with a space-warping wizard, a Nightmare that throws the victim into a twisted perceptual maze. Your first thought is that Satiety Expenditure could allow the Beast to make the target automatically fail any action on a one for one basis, but that's more powerful than the Satiety Expenditure effect of Nightmares like All Your Teeth Are Falling Out, which limits the same effect to Physical actions. You might consider changing the Nightmare to work on any action that relies on knowing where something is.

Finally, don't forget that your own custom Nightmares aren't set in stone. If, after a Nightmare has seen a few chapters of play, you decide that it's too strong (or not quite strong enough) or just isn't quite doing what you hoped it would, it's okay to work with your Storyteller to change it.

Kinship

Vampire. I'm hanging out with a vampire. Ben shook his head, still not quite able to believe it. The Halloween street fair moved around the two of them, a sea of fake monsters surrounding the real ones on the bright paths around the lake, a terrible live band thumping out a tune somewhere on the far shore.

Someone waved and it took Ben a moment to realize it was the kid he'd saved from Kyle a few weeks back. Ryan, he'd said his name was Ryan. Ben waved back but was glad when Ryan kept walking. His heart was racing, just a little bit faster because he knew Noelle could hear it. He caught her eye and they grinned at each other, teeth very bright in the dark.

"You really want to do this?" Noelle nodded her head toward the alley. If everything was going right, her "date" would be waiting already. She was so much more confident as a woman. Ben doubted Noel would have even asked him out. "It's OK if you don't want to."

"I do," Ben said, squeezing her hand. She was cold, but would be warmer soon. And his own Hunger was insistent, especially after tangling with those hunters of hers just days ago. Noelle kissed his cheek on tiptoe and headed into the alley, the fringe of her flapper outfit swaying seductively as she went. It was dark, but darkness didn't bother him like it used to. He could make out the shape out the man at the end of the alley clear as day. Alone, too, which was good. It made everything easier.

"Hello, lover," Noelle crooned. At a little gesture, the shadows behind the man stretched and stiffened, forming a tenebrous wall to cut off his escape. The guy was so intent on Noelle that he didn't even notice it, just went to embrace her with a smile on his face. When he saw Ben coming up behind her, though, his face fell.

"Who's this?" he asked, irritation plain in his tone. Noelle's time wasn't cheap. "If this is some kind of shakedown—"

"Change of plans, love," Noelle purred, sliding into his arms and twining herself around him. Ben could practically see the lust warring with the annoyance on the man's face. "We're doing dinner instead."

"Private reservation," Ben agreed. He locked eyes with the man and found the fear he needed. "Just us, alone in the dark." He waved a hand and a shadowy wall rose up behind him to hide them from the mouth of the alley, one almost identical to Noelle's. Ben saw her eyes widen even as the man's expression changed to one of confused disbelief; he'd told her he'd been practicing after watching her in action, but hearing and seeing were two different things.

The man looked like he was about to speak when Noelle sank her fangs into his throat. For a few minutes the world was slow and red as she drank her fill and Ben's Soul fed on the thrill of the hunt itself, until they both near drunk on it.

When it was over and Noelle had told her date his bedtime story and put him to sleep, she took Ben's hand with her warm one and drew him close for a kiss. "Aren't you just full of surprises," she said, licking the last of the blood from her teeth.

"We make a good team," Ben agreed, dismissing the wall of shadows with a wave of his hand. Together they walked out of the alley and back into the Halloween fair, just two more monsters holding hands in the night.

Chapter Four Rules of the Night

quote

—source

This section contains the basic rules for playing **Vampire: The Requiem**. More information, system variants, and examples can be found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and the **God-Machine Chronicle**.

Traits

In addition to the supernatural traits of the Kindred, World of Darkness characters have mundane traits common to mortals and monsters alike. Attributes are raw potential, Skills are trained abilities, and Skill Specialties are specific areas of training in which a character excels. Willpower is the extra effort a character can bring to bear in a stressful or dangerous situation, when success is crucial or hangs by a thread. Willpower is also used by some supernatural powers.

Finally, a mortal (but not a vampire) possesses a personal Virtue and Vice from which he can draw strength and refill his Willpower, much the same way a vampire derives Willpower from her Mask, Dirge, and Touchstones.

Attributes

Attributes represent essential traits that every character possesses by default. These serve as the foundation to most rolls in **Vampire: The Requiem**. The nine Attributes are split into three categories; Mental, Physical, and Social. If a game rule refers to a "Social roll," or a "Mental action," that means an action that uses the appropriate Attribute category.

All Attributes receive one free dot. This reflects a below-average capacity. Two dots are about human average. Three and four reflect a high level of competency, while five reflects the height of human potential in that field. When creating your character, prioritize each category. The primary category receives five dots, the secondary four, and the tertiary three. Kindred characters also receive a bonus dot depending on their clan.

Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes reflect your character's acuity, intellect, and strength of mind.

Intelligence

Intelligence is your character's raw knowledge, memory, and capacity for solving difficult problems. This may be book smarts, or a wealth of trivia.

Attribute Tasks: Memorizing (Intelligence + Composure, instant action)

Wits

Wits represents your character's ability to think quickly and improvise solutions. It reflects your character's perception, and ability to pick up on details.

Attribute Tasks: Perception (Wits + Composure, reflexive action)

Resolve

Resolve is your character's determination, patience, and sense of commitment. It allows your character to concentrate in the face of distraction and danger, or continue doing something in spite of insurmountable odds.

Attribute Tasks: Resisting coercion (Resolve + Stamina, reflexive action)

Physical Attributes

Physical Attributes reflect your character's bodily fitness and acumen.

Strength

Strength is your character's muscular definition and capacity to deliver force. It affects many physical tasks, including most actions in a fight.

Attribute Tasks: Breaking a barrier (Strength + Stamina, instant action), Lifting objects (Strength + Stamina, instant action)

Dexterity

Dexterity is your character's speed, agility, and coordination. It provides balance, reactions, and aim.

Attribute Tasks: Keeping balance (Dexterity + Composure, reflexive action)

Stamina

Stamina is your character's general health and sturdiness. It determines how much punishment your character's body can handle before it gives up.

Attribute Tasks: Staying awake (Stamina + Resolve, instant action)

Social Attributes

Social Attributes reflect your character's ability to deal with others.

Presence

Presence is your character's assertiveness, gravitas, and raw appeal. It gives your character a strong bearing that changes moods and minds.

Attribute Tasks: Good first impressions (Presence + Composure, instant action)

Manipulation

Manipulation is your character's ability to make others cooperate. It's how smoothly she speaks, and how much people can read into her intentions.

Attribute Tasks: Poker face (Manipulation + Composure)

Composure

Composure is your character's poise and grace under fire. It's his dignity, and ability to remain unfazed when harrowed.

Attribute Tasks: Meditation (Resolve + Composure, extended action)

Skills

Whereas Attributes represent innate ability, Skills reflect behaviors learned and honed over a lifetime. These are things that could be practiced or learned from a book. Similarly to Attributes, Skills are divided into Mental, Physical, and Social categories.

Skills do not receive free dots at character creation. Skills without dots are deficient or barely capable. Skills with a single dot reflect a cursory training. Two dots is sufficient for professional use. Three is a high level of competency. Four is outstanding, and five is absolute mastery of the discipline. When creating your character, prioritize categories. The primary category receives eleven dots, the secondary receives seven, the tertiary four.

We've listed sample actions for each Skill; these lists are just common actions, and should not be taken as comprehensive guides to where Skills can apply. We also suggest dice pools, but it's important to look at the context of the scene, and apply the best Attribute + Skill combination for the events at hand. Also remember that equipment and environmental modifiers can shift a dice pool. We've listed some sample equipment and factors that could enhance Skill usage. You can find deeper rules for equipment in **The God-Machine Chronicle**, p. XX.

Using a Skill with no dots incurs a penalty. For Physical and Social Skills, it levies a −1 die penalty to the roll. For a Mental Skill, it's a −3 die penalty.

Mental Skills

Mental Skills are largely learned, as opposed to practiced. They reflect knowledge and procedure, lore and understanding.

Academics

Academics is a broad Skill representing your character's higher education and knowledge of the arts and humanities. It covers language, history, law, economics, and related fields. For many Kindred, Academics is a key Skill, since they've experienced history first hand, or need to understand rivals who come from the dim past. Occasionally, a mortal researcher stumbles upon Kindred when looking for experts in archaic fields.

Sample actions: Recall trivia (Intelligence + Academics, instant action), Research (Intelligence + Academics, extended action), Translation (Intelligence + Academics, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Internet access (+1), Library (+1 to +3), Professional consultant (+2)

Specialties: Anthropology, Art History, English, History, Law, Literature, Religion, Research, Theban Sorcery, Translation

Computer

Computer is your character's advanced ability with computing. While most characters in the World of Darkness are expected to know the basics, the Computer Skill allows your character to program computers, to crack into systems, to diagnose major problems, and to investigate data. This Skill reflects advanced techniques and tricks; almost everyone in the modern nights can operate a computer for email and basic Internet searches. A few ancient vampires resist the change of technology, but enterprising Kindred of all ages embrace it as a means to connect with the future.

Sample actions: Hacking a system (Intelligence + Computer, extended action, contested if against a security administrator or other hacker), Internet search (Wits + Computer, instant action), Programming (Intelligence + Computer, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Computer system (+0 to +3, by performance), Custom software (+2), Passwords (+2)

Specialties: Data Retrieval, Graphics, Hacking, Internet, Programming, Security, Social Media

Crafts

Crafts reflects your character's knack with creating and repairing things. From creating works of art, to fixing an automobile, Crafts is the Skill to use. Since art evolves with culture, knowledge of Crafts is common amongst Kindred who aim to remain close to humanity. Many Daeva focus on the arts as a way to channel their passions into something less destructive than the hunt.

Sample actions: Appraisal (Wits + Crafts, instant action), Counterfeit item (Intelligence + Crafts, extended action), Create art (Intelligence + Crafts, extended action), Repair item (Wits + Crafts, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Point of reference (+1), Quality materials (+2), Tools (+1 to +3, depending on utility and specialty), Well-equipped workplace (+2)

Specialties: Automotive, Cosmetics, Fashion, Forging, Graffiti, Jury-Rigging, Painting, Perfumery, Repair, Sculpting

Investigation

Investigation is your character's skill with solving mysteries and putting together puzzles. It reflects the ability to draw conclusions, to find meaning out of confusion, and using lateral thinking to find information where others could not. Kindred with the Auspex Discipline often develop Investigation, as mundane methods complement their second sight.

Sample actions: Examining a crime scene (Wits + Investigation, extended action), Solving riddles (Intelligence + Investigation, instant or extended action)

Suggested equipment: Forensic kit (+1), Unrestricted access (+2), Reference library (+2)

Specialties: Artifacts, Auspex, Autopsy, Body Language, Crime Scenes, Cryptography, Dreams, Lab Work, Riddles

Medicine

Medicine reflects your character's knowledge of the human body, and of how to bring it to and keep it in working order. Characters with Medicine can make efforts to stem life-threatening wounds and illnesses. While Medicine offers little utility on Kindred, some vampires learn about the human body after years of watching those around them fall to every malady imaginable.

Sample actions: Diagnosis (Wits + Medicine, instant action), Treating wounds (Intelligence + Medicine, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Medical tools (+1 to +3), Trained assistance (+1), Well-stocked facilities (+2)

Specialties: First Aid, Kindred Physiology, Pathology, Pharmaceuticals, Physical Therapy, Surgery

Occult

The Occult Skill is your character's knowledge of things hidden in the dark, legends, and lore. While the supernatural is unpredictable and often unique, the Occult Skill allows your character

to pick out facts from rumor. This is a common Skill for Kindred interested in their roots and their very natures; being able to pick out the sliver of truth in ancient stories can give insight into the Requiem.

Sample actions: Identify the sliver of truth (Wits + Occult, instant action), Relate two similar myths (Intelligence + Occult, instant or extended action)

Suggested equipment: Well-Stocked Library (+−2)

Specialties: Casting Lots, Coils of the Dragon, Crúac, Draugr, Ghouls, Ghosts, Phrenology, Revenants, Sorcery, Superstition, Vitae, Witchcraft

Politics

Politics reflects a general knowledge of political structures and methodologies, but more practically shows your character's ability to navigate those systems and make them work the way she intends. With Politics, she knows the right person to ask to get something done. Few Kindred survive long without developing at least some Politics, as Kindred society is rife with tradition, Status, and complex patterns of authority.

Sample actions: Cut red tape (Manipulation + Politics, extended action), Identify authority (Wits + Politics, instant action), Sully reputations (Manipulation + Politics, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Official position (+1 to +5, by Status)

Specialties: Bureaucracy, Carthian Movement, Church, Democratic, Invictus, Local, Ordo Dracul, Organized Crime, Scandals

Science

Science is your character's knowledge and understanding of the physical and natural sciences, such as biology, chemistry, geology, meteorology, and physics. While older Kindred don't always value modern sciences, many vampires hold strong to sciences that were prominent when they were younger.

Sample actions: Assess variables (Intelligence + Science, instant or extended action), Formulate solution (Intelligence + Science, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Reference library (+1 to +3), Well-stocked laboratory (+2)

Specialties: Physics, Neuroscience, Virology, Alchemy, Genetics, Hematology

Physical Skills

Physical Skills are those practiced, trained, and learned through action.

Athletics

Athletics reflects a broad category of physical training and ability. It covers sports, and basic physical tasks such as running, jumping, dodging threats, and climbing. It also determines a character's ability with thrown weapons. Over time, most Kindred will develop at least the rudiments of Athletics; when hunts go wrong, sometimes chases are the only answer.

Sample actions: Acrobatics (Dexterity + Athletics, instant action), Climbing (Strength + Athletics, extended action), Foot chase (Stamina + Athletics, contested action), Jumping (Strength + Athletics, instant action, one foot vertically per success)

Suggested equipment: Athletic Shoes (+1), Rope (+1)

Specialties: Acrobatics, Archery, Climbing, Jumping, Parkour, Swimming, Throwing

Brawl

Brawl reflects your character's ability to tussle and fight without weapons. This includes old-fashioned bar brawls as well as complex martial arts (**The God-Machine Chronicle** offers numerous Merits to complement unarmed fighters). Many Kindred develop at least some facility with the Brawl Skill since it helps to defend oneself when otherwise unprepared. It is also particularly useful with Vigor. Gangrel often focus on Brawl, since it allows them to utilize the natural weaponry of the Protean Discipline.

Sample actions: Breaking boards (Strength + Brawl, instant action), Hand-to-hand combat (covered in the combat section, p. XX)

Suggested equipment: Brass Knuckles (+1)

Specialties: Biting, Boxing, Claws, Dirty Fighting, Grappling, Martial Arts, Threats, Throws

Drive

Drive is the skill to control and maneuver automobiles, motorcycles, boats, and even airplanes. A character can drive a car without Drive dots; the Skill relates to moments of high stress, such as a high-speed chase or trying to elude a tail. It's assumed that most modern characters have a basic ability to drive. As well, Drive can reflect your character's skill with horseback riding, if appropriate to her history. In the cities, many Kindred rely on public transportation, but for some, the car is a way of life. Outside of cities, nomadic Kindred almost have to be capable drivers.

Sample actions: Impressive maneuvering (Dexterity + Drive, instant action), Pursuit (Dexterity + Drive, contested action), Tailing (Wits + Drive, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Performance vehicle (+1 to +3)

Specialties: Defensive Driving, Evasion, Off-Road Driving, Motorcycles, Pursuit, Stunts

Firearms

Firearms reflects your character's ability to identify, maintain, and otherwise use guns. This Skill covers everything from small pistols, to shotguns, to assault rifles, and anything else related. (You can find numerous Merits and further rules for firearms combat in **The God-Machine Chronicle**, p. XX.) While guns aren't highly effective against dead flesh, Kindred sometimes rely on guns as a method of Masquerade defense: Wielding a sword in public draws significant attention; and if you shoot a vampire, they'd best stay down if they don't want to raise questions. Not to mention that guns are very deadly to the living.

Sample actions: Firearms combat (see p. XX for more on how firearms combat works)

Suggested equipment: See p. XX for a full list of firearms

Specialties: Handguns, Rifles, Shotguns, Trick Shots

Larceny

Larceny covers intrusion, lockpicking, theft, pickpocketing, and other (generally considered) criminal activities. This Skill is typically learned on the streets, outside of formal methods.

However, stage magicians and other entertainers learn these skills as part of their repertoire. Many Mekhet and Nosferatu learn this Skill to complement their use of the Obfuscate Discipline.

Sample actions: Bypass security systems (Dexterity + Larceny, extended action), Lockpicking (Dexterity + Larceny, extended action), Pickpocketing (Dexterity + Larceny, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Crowbar (+1), Crowded area (+2), Lockpicks (+2), Partner in crime (+1)

Specialties: Breaking and Entering, Concealment, Lockpicking, Pickpocketing, Safecracking, Security Systems, Sleight of Hand

Stealth

The Stealth Skill reflects your character's ability to move unnoticed and unheard, or to blend into a crowd. Every character approaches Stealth differently; some use distraction, some disguise, some are just hard to keep an eye on. While any Kindred can find the value in a solid escape, Mekhet and Nosferatu tend to learn Stealth early on as they develop the Obfuscate Discipline.

Sample actions: Losing a tail (Wits + Stealth, contested action), Shadowing (Dexterity + Stealth, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Binoculars (+1), Dark Clothing (+1), Smokescreen (+2), Spotters (+1)

Specialties: Camouflage, Crowds, In Plain Sight, Obfuscate, Rural, Shadowing, Stakeout, Staying Motionless

Survival

Survival represents your character's ability to "live off the land." This means finding shelter, finding food, and otherwise procuring the necessities for existence. This could be in a rural or urban environment. Note that most Kindred won't directly benefit from being able to find food in unknown environs. However, many Kindred, Nosferatu in particular, use the Survival Skill "in reverse," to find inhospitable, unsafe environs where they can thrive but no human would dare tread. This skill also covers the ability to hunt for animals. Humane Kindred often rely on animal blood for subsistence.

Sample actions: Foraging (Wits + Survival, extended action), Hunting (for animals, Wits + Survival, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Survival Guide (+1), Survival Knife (+1)

Specialties: Foraging, Hunting, Navigation, Shelter, Weather

Weaponry

Weaponry is the ability to fight with hand-to-hand weapons: from swords, to knives, to baseball bats, to chainsaws. If the intent is to strike another and harm him, Weaponry is the Skill. (You can find numerous Merits for Weaponry-based fighting in **The God-Machine Chronicle**.) Many Kindred boast impressive Weaponry Skills, on account of coming from less civilized times. For this reason, numerous covenant traditions call for Weaponry-based duels that favor archaic knowledge over modern firearms.

Sample actions: Attacking another (see p. XX for more on Weaponry combat)

Suggested equipment: See p. XX for a full list of weapons

Specialties: Chains, Clubs, Improvised Weapons, Spears, Swords

Social Skills

Animal Ken

Animal Ken reflects your character's ability to train and understand animals. With Animal Ken, your character can cow beasts or rile them to violence under the right circumstances. Many Ventrue and Gangrel develop Animal Ken, due to its inherent compatibility with Animalism.

Sample actions: Animal training (Manipulation + Animal Ken, extended action), Cowing an animal (Presence + Animal Ken, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Treats (+1), Whip (+1)

Specialties: Animalism, Canines, Felines, Reptiles, Threatening, Training

Empathy

Empathy represents your character's ability to read and understand others' feelings and motivations. This helps discern moods, or read deceptive behavior in discussion. It is not inherently sympathetic; one can understand another's positions without agreeing with them. Many social Kindred develop Empathy as a hunting tool; there's nothing better for the hunt than saying exactly what the mark wants to hear.

Sample actions: Finding someone's pain (Wits + Empathy, contested action), Sense deception (Wits + Empathy, contested action), Soothing nerves (Manipulation + Empathy, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Muted clothing (+1), Relaxing environment (+2)

Specialties: Calming, Emotion, Lies, Motives, Personalities

Expression

The Expression Skill reflects your character's ability to communicate. This Skill covers written and spoken forms of communication, journalism, acting, music, and dance. In addition to being a powerful political tool, Kindred find Expression useful in hunting. An emotional connection breaks down barriers, and leaves a mark longing.

Sample actions: Composing (Intelligence + Expression, extended action), Performance (Presence + Expression, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Quality instrument (+1 to +3)

Specialties: Dance, Drama, Journalism, Musical Instrument, Performance Art, Singing, Speeches

Intimidation

Intimidation reflects your character's ability to influence others' behavior through threats and fear. It could mean direct physical threats, interrogation, or veiled implications of things to come. While Nosferatu are known for their mastery of Intimidation as part of the Nightmare Discipline, older Ventrue develop it for its utility in Dominate. Any vampire can benefit from a bit of Intimidation, though, since it can shut down a conflict before it escalates.

Sample actions: Interrogation (Wits + Intimidation, contested action), Staredown (Presence + Intimidation, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Fearsome tools (+2), Gang colors (+2), Isolated room (+1)

Specialties: Direct Threats, Interrogation, Stare Down, Torture, Veiled Threats

Persuasion

Persuasion is your character's ability to change minds and influence behaviors through logic, fast-talking, or appealing to desire. It relies on the force of your character's personality to sway the listener. Daeva are known for their ability with Persuasion; a common aphorism is that a mortal who can talk a vampire into going back to the vampire's place is a good candidate for the clan. Persuasion is perhaps the safest way to convince a potential meal to meet in private.

Sample actions: Fast Talk (Manipulation + Persuasion, extended action), Firebranding (Presence + Persuasion, instant action), Seduction (Manipulation + Persuasion, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Designer Clothing (+1 to +3), Reputation (+2)

Specialties: Confidence Scam, Fast Talking, Inspiring, Majesty, Sales Pitch, Seduction, Sermon

Socialize

Socialize reflects your character's ability to present herself well and interact with groups of people (alive or dead). It reflects proper (and setting-appropriate) etiquette, customs, sensitivity, and warmth. A character with a high Socialize is the life of the party. Socialize is a survival tool in the halls of Elysium, where rudeness could mean Final Death.

Sample actions: Carousing (Manipulation + Socialize, instant action), Fitting in (Wits + Socialize, instant action), Getting attention (Presence + Socialize, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Drugs (+1), Knowing People (+1), Money (+1 to +5)

Specialties: Bar Hopping, Church Lock-in, Dress Balls, Formal Events, Frat Parties, Political Fundraisers, The Club

Streetwise

The Streetwise Skill is your character's knowledge of life on the streets. It tells her how to navigate the city, how to get information from unlikely sources, and where she'll be (relatively) safe. If she wants to get something on the black market, Streetwise is how. Kindred who specialize in Streetwise typically do so in order to operate beneath the law, and beneath media scrutiny. When wealthy people disappear, it draws attention. When the poor vanish, it's just a statistic.

Sample actions: Finding a shortcut (Wits + Streetwise, instant action), Working the black market (Manipulation + Streetwise, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Burner phone (+1), Known nickname (+2), Valuable Contraband (+1 to +3)

Specialties: Black Market, Gangs, Navigation, Rumors, Undercover

Subterfuge

Subterfuge is the ability to deceive. With Subterfuge, your character can lie convincingly, project hidden messages in what she says, hide motivations, and notice deception in others. The Masquerade is a grand lie that all Kindred must tell. Subterfuge is integral to every bit of Kindred existence. A vampire who cannot effectively lie cannot deal with humanity, and thus finds herself slipping rapidly into monstrosity.

Sample actions: Disguise (Wits + Subterfuge, instant action), Lying (Manipulation + Subterfuge, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Costume Supplies (+2), Fake ID (+1),

Specialties: Detecting Lies, Doublespeak, Hiding Emotion, Little White Lies, Misdirection

Skill Specialties

In addition to Skills, your character possesses Skill Specialties. These are refinements of the broader Skills. These should be narrower than the main Skill, and help to define your character's particular expertise. For example, your character might have three dots in Firearms, but a Specialty in Rifles. He's capable with all guns, but particularly good with rifles. If you look to the Skill descriptions, you'll see example Specialties. The Storyteller is the ultimate arbiter of what constitutes a Specialty and what doesn't; Specialties that are too broad or too narrow can hurt the story or never come into play.

If a Specialty applies to your roll, add a die. Multiple Specialties may apply to a single roll, within reason. If you find yourself going to great lengths to justify a Specialty, it probably shouldn't apply.

Skill Specialties let you flesh out your character and offer a mechanical benefit. When creating your character, let Specialty choice guide his development. For example, there's a huge difference between a character with Brawl 4 (Bar Fights) and Brawl 4 (Aikido).

Virtues and Vices

Virtue and Vice are traits human characters possess instead of Masks and Dirges. Virtue is a point of strength and integrity in the character's life, Vice is a place of weakness. This is just a brief touch on the topic; for more, look to **The God-Machine Chronicle**. When choosing Virtues and Vices, use the following guidelines:

- Both should be adjectives that describe dominant personality traits. Don't use physical descriptions.

- Traits that describe existing Advantages, Attributes, or Skills similarly do not apply. For example, "Strong," and "Composed," would not work as Virtues.

- Virtue should be a point of self-confidence and self-actualization, but something easy and tempting to ignore. It's a higher calling, if she chooses to walk the talk.

- Vice should contrast Virtue as a short-term, quick source of distraction from the world. It should be a hiding place when you're weak.

- Virtue and Vice must be different. The same adjective could work as both a Virtue and Vice in some cases, but a character must have two different ones.

Whenever a mortal character acts in accordance with her Vice, she regains one spent Willpower. When she takes meaningful actions in accordance to her Virtue, she regains all spent Willpower. She can only recover Willpower from her Vice once per scene, and her Virtue twice per Chapter.

Speed

Your character's Speed is the number of yards or meters she can travel in a single turn. This trait is a combination of her Strength, Dexterity, and a species factor that reflects her age, physical configuration, Size and other considerations.

Other species, such as horses and cheetahs, have physical configurations that lend themselves to high travel rates.

[CHART]

Factor	Species
1	Turtle
3	Human toddler
5	Human adult
8	Wolf
10	Caribou
12	Horse
15	Cheetah

[END CHART]

Rolling Dice

When your character is trying to accomplish something and the outcome is in doubt, you roll a pool of ten-sided dice based on his relevant traits and read the results to determine success. Most of the time, you roll a number of dice equal to an Attribute plus a Skill. For example, to get the cop off your back you use your character's Manipulation Attribute of 4 and Subterfuge Skill of 3, so you roll seven dice. If you have a Specialty (p. XX) that's relevant to the roll, add an extra die to your pool.

Each die that shows an 8, 9, or 10 is a success. Normally, you only need one success to achieve your goal. It's always better to get more successes — especially if you want to hurt someone, since your successes add to your damage in combat.

Every die that comes up 10 is a success. You also roll the die again, potentially scoring another success. If this second roll comes up as another 10, count the success and roll it again, on until you roll a number other than 10.

Many rolls have modifiers, either from equipment, circumstance, or someone working against your character . Most modifiers are within the range of +3 to −3, though they can range as low as −5 or as high as +5. Apply the modifiers to your dice pool before you roll. Add all the bonuses first, then apply penalties.

If your pool drops below one die, you instead roll a single chance die. The chance die only counts as a success if you roll a 10. Any other result is a failure. If you roll a 1 on the chance die, your character suffers a dramatic failure.

Roll Results

Your roll can succeed and fail in a few different ways:

Success: Your character's action goes off as planned. Achieved by having at least one success (a die showing 8, 9, or 10; or a chance die showing 10).

Failure: Your character's action fails. This doesn't mean "nothing happens," just that she doesn't get what she wants and complications are headed her way. Occurs when you roll no successes.

Exceptional Success: Your character's action succeeds beyond her expectations. Achieved by rolling five or more successes. Your character gains a beneficial Condition. (See "Conditions," p. XX.) Usually, the Inspired Condition is most appropriate. You can instead give this Condition to another character when it's appropriate to the story.

Dramatic Failure: Your character fails badly, and things are about to get a whole lot worse. Suffered when you roll a 1 on a chance die. Alternately, you can take a Beat in exchange for turning a normal failure into a dramatic failure.

When to Roll Dice

You don't need to roll dice for many actions. If your character isn't in a stressful situation — nobody's actively trying to tear his throat open, nor is the building being demolished as he works — you don't need to roll. When the dice hit the table, the Storyteller should have some idea of what will happen if the roll fails as well as if it succeeds. Sometimes, that's coded in the rules. If you fail on an attack roll, you don't deal any damage. Other times, it's up to the Storyteller. If you fail a roll to jump between buildings with the prince's hit-squad on your tail, do you make it but fall on the other side, grab the next building by your fingertips, or plummet to the alley below?

Circumstance and Equipment

Sometimes, fortune favors your character. Other times she gives it a helping hand by packing the right tools for the job. The Storyteller should weight how the circumstances affect a character's chance of success. A slight advantage — picking an old and damaged lock — might be worth a bonus die, while a stressful situation — trying to pick a lock while people are shooting at you — might subtract three dice from your pool. Most of the time, the modifier from circumstances will be between +3 and −3, though in very rare cases — picking a lock while your character is *on fire* — it can range from +5 to −5.

Bringing the right equipment for a task also gives you extra dice to roll. A sharp suit might give bonus dice when trying to convince the CEO that your character knows the best plan, while a good pair of running shoes will help her escape from the things lurking in the shadows. Most equipment offers a +1 to +3 die bonus. A top-of-the-line or custom item might give a +4 or +5 die bonus, but such items often cost more than just money. When a task is impossible without some kind of equipment — hacking a computer, or driving a car — equipment bonuses indicate how far your tools are above the baseline. A beat-up old station wagon might not add any dice to a Drive roll, but a top-of-the-line sports car may add +4 or even +5 dice.

Willpower

A character's Willpower represents her determination and her ability to go above and beyond what should be possible to achieve her goals. Spending a point of Willpower adds a +3 die bonus to most dice pools, or +2 to a Resistance trait. You can only spend one point of Willpower per action.

Attribute Tasks

Some actions require no special expertise to perform. Mostly, these come in the form of Wits + Composure rolls to notice something that doesn't seem right, or using Strength + Stamina rolls to lift something. In these rolls, you add two different Attributes together to make your dice pool. If an action doesn't seem to involve any particular Skill, it can be handled by an Attribute Task.

Muddling Through

If your character has no dots in an applicable Skill, the Storyteller may allow you to roll your Attribute as a dice pool. Your character's dice pool suffers a penalty for being untrained: if the roll would involve a Mental Skill, you take a −3 die penalty, while a Physical or Social Skill applies a −1 die penalty.

Actions

The majority of actions in the game are *instant* actions. They represent acts that only take a couple of seconds. In combat, an instant action takes up your turn.

A *reflexive* action is the sort of thing you don't even need to think about doing. Most rolls to resist supernatural powers are reflexive. You can take a reflexive action at any time, and it doesn't take your turn in combat.

When two people fight over a specific goal, they engage in a *contested* action. You roll your dice pool and the Storyteller (or other player) rolls the dice pool for the other party. Whoever rolls the most successes is the victor. Note that you count the total number of successes rolled when working out if you scored an exceptional success — don't subtract the other party's successes from yours. A contested action takes up the action of the person initiating the action; resisting it is a reflexive action.

Extended Actions

An *extended* action is an attempt to complete a complex task. You roll your dice pool multiple times. Each roll takes a certain amount of time, and represents a step in the process — your character either makes significant progress or faces a setback. You determine your dice pool for the action as normal — Attribute + Skill + Modifiers. Make a note of your Attribute + Skill + Specialty (if any); that's the maximum number of times you can roll before the action fails.

When you take an extended action, the Storyteller determines how many successes you require. Most actions require between five and twenty successes. Five reflects a reasonable action that competent characters can achieve with the right tools and knowledge. Ten represents a difficult action that's still realistic for a professional in a field. Twenty represents a very difficult action that even a particularly skilled character will have trouble pulling off.

The Storyteller also determines the interval between rolls. If an action would take weeks to complete, she might consider one roll per week. If it's likely to take a day's work, one roll per hour makes for a solid timeframe.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: In addition to the effects of a failure, the first roll on a further attempt suffers a −2 die penalty.

Failure: You face a setback. The Storyteller will offer you a choice: take a Condition of her choice or abandon the action. You can offer a different Condition if you think it makes sense. If you refuse or cannot agree on a Condition, you lose all accumulated successes (see "Conditions," p. XX).

Success: Add the successes scored on the roll to your running total. Work with the Storyteller to determine what steps your character has taken towards his goal.

Exceptional Success: Choose one of: Reduce the number of successes required by your character's Skill dots, reduce the time on each following roll by a quarter, or apply the exceptional success result of the action when you complete your goal.

Resistance

Sometimes, an action is resisted. You roll your Attribute + Skill, but apply a modifier of one of your opponent's Resistance Attributes (Resolve, Stamina, or Composure), or your opponent's Defense. This resistance is over and above any other modifiers applied to the dice pool.

If you're not sure whether to use resistance or a contested action, use this guideline: Resistance applies in situations where the number of successes on the roll is an important factor. If what matters is just whether the roll succeeds or not, use a contested action. For example, combat applies Defense as a resistance because the number of successes on the roll determines how badly the attacker messes up his victim. A supernatural power that puts a victim in your thrall uses a contested action, because the number of successes that you roll doesn't matter to the power.

When uncanny powers are involved, supernatural creatures can sometimes add an additional trait, called Supernatural Tolerance. The Supernatural Tolerance trait for Kindred is Blood Potency.

Common Actions

Here are some sample ways you can apply your Skills. Remember, you can invent your own at any time.

> **[PRODUCTION -- BEGIN A LITTLE GRID FOR EACH OF THESE, SORTA LIKE SCENE CARDS]**

Argument (Intelligence + Expression − victim's Resolve)

You try to sway someone with a rational argument. (If arguing with a crowd, use the highest Resolve in the crowd.) (See also Social Maneuvering, p. XX.)

• **Dramatic Failure:** You convince them of quite the opposite.

• **Failure:** They listen, but are ultimately unaffected.

• **Success:** They accept the truth (or apparent truth) of your words.

• **Exceptional Success:** They're convinced, and become a recruit to your point of view. Though they might change their minds if they find themselves at risk.

Carousing (Presence + Socialize or Streetwise)

You mix with a group, bringing high spirits with you and using them to loosen tongues.

• **Dramatic Failure:** A faux pas reveals that you don't belong…and maybe even hints at your supernatural nature.

• **Failure:** You end up a wallflower, with a drink in your hand that you don't even want.

• **Success:** You make a single-serving friend, who might be willing to pass secrets or go with you somewhere private.

• **Exceptional Success:** You make a friend you can contact again.

Fast-Talk (Manipulation + Subterfuge − victim's Composure)

You may not be able to win the argument with facts, but you can try to get out of trouble with a little judicious spin.

• **Dramatic Failure:** The other party has a good idea what the truth is.

• **Failure:** The other party doesn't believe you.

• **Success:** The other party swallows your story.

• **Exceptional Success:** The other party believes you so thoroughly that they're even willing to offer a little aid…though they won't put themselves at any kind of risk.

Interrogation (Manipulation + Empathy or Intimidation − victim's Resolve)

You try to dig secrets out of a reluctant informant. (See also Social Maneuvering, p. XX.)

• **Dramatic Failure:** The informant is so alienated or injured that he will no longer reveal information.

• **Failure:** The informant blabs a mix of truth and falsehood — even he may not know the difference.

• **Success:** You get the information you were looking for.

• **Exceptional Success:** You get the information you were looking for, and the informant is willing to continue cooperating.

Intimidation (Strength or Manipulation + Intimidation − victim's Composure)

You try to get someone to do what you want by making them afraid of you.

• **Dramatic Failure:** They don't take you seriously, even if you knock them around a bit. They won't be doing what you want.

• **Failure:** They're unimpressed with your threats.

• **Success:** They're coerced into helping you.

• **Exceptional Success:** They develop a lasting fear of you, which could make them easier to coerce in the future.

Investigating a Scene (Intelligence + Investigation)

You look for clues to what's happened in the recent past…or tidy up so that no one else can find them.

• **Dramatic Failure:** You find clues, but you contaminate them, or you leave evidence of your presence.

• **Failure:** You find evidence, but it's damaged and hard to interpret. Or you miss a spot in your cleanup that you won't find out about until later.

• **Success:** You find a clue of exactly the sort you need, or manage to significantly confuse future investigators.

• **Exceptional Success:** You find a clue, and know exactly how it fits in, or you leave the scene immaculate and impossible to decipher.

Jumping

To get past an obstacle or get out of danger, you leap into the air.

• **Dramatic Failure:** The task not only fails but your character loses her balance.

• **Failure:** Your character doesn't achieve any significant distance at all — she jumps too early, has a false start, or loses her nerve.

• **Success:** Your character leaps a number of feet equal to the successes rolled, or a number of meters equal to the successes rolled divided by three.

• **Exceptional Success:** Your character leaps an impressive distance. If successes gained exceed the amount required to make the jump, your character may attempt another instant action in the air (say, firing a shot) or upon landing (maybe running up to her Speed), at the Storyteller's discretion.

Repair (Intelligence + Crafts)

You try to fix something that's broken down.

• **Dramatic Failure:** The broken object's a lost cause. It'll never work again.

• **Failure:** You're stymied by the problem, but could come back to it in another scene.

• **Success:** You get the thing working…for now.

• **Exceptional Success:** The object works better than before. It won't break again anytime soon.

Research (Intelligence + Academics or Occult)

Using your existing knowledge, you look for information on a current mystery.

• **Dramatic Failure:** You learn something, but it doesn't help. In fact, it sets you back. If using Occult, it might also give you nightmares.

• **Failure:** You turn up a lot of promising leads, but they're all dead ends.

• **Success:** You find the basic facts you were looking for.

• **Exceptional Success:** You find what you were looking for, and leads towards a much bigger score of information.

Shadowing a Mark (Wits + Stealth or Drive vs. Wits + Composure)

You follow someone, perhaps in the hopes of ambushing them, or of finding out their destination.

• **Dramatic Failure:** You're caught, either by the mark or some observer that's become suspicious of you.

• **Failure:** The mark senses he's being followed, and manages to lose you.

• **Success:** You follow the mark to his destination.

• **Exceptional Success:** You find some means by which you can continue following the mark, such as an unlocked entrance into the building he arrived at.

Sneaking (Dexterity + Stealth vs. Wits + Composure)

You're trying to avoid notice by someone…or multiple someones. Maybe you want to get into a place undetected. Maybe you're trying to break out.

• **Dramatic Failure:** You attract a lot of attention…enough that now it's going to be hard to get out.

• **Failure:** You're noticed, but still have the chance to slip away.

• **Success:** You avoid notice and get closer to your goal.

• **Exceptional Success:** You avoid notice and get away before anyone has another chance to catch you.

[END QUICK REFERENCE]

Permutations

The Storytelling System has a few variations in how dice rolls work. This section lists the ones used most commonly in **Vampire: The Requiem**; for a more complete list see the **World of Darkness Rulebook** p. 134-135.

• **9-Again:** You re-roll dice that show 9 or 10, as opposed to just 10. Keep rolling until you get a result that isn't a 9 or 10.

• **8-Again:** You re-roll dice that show 8, 9, or 10 — any successful die — and keep rolling as long as your dice show successes.

• **Extra Successes:** Assuming your roll succeeds, you get a number of extra successes added to your total. This permutation mostly applies to weapons, which add their damage bonus as extra successes on your attack roll.

• **Rote Actions:** When you've got plenty of training and the steps you need to follow are laid out in front of you, you've got a significant chance of success. When you make a roll, you can re-roll any dice that do not show an 8, 9, or 10. If you're reduced to a chance die on a rote action, don't re-roll a dramatic failure. You may only re-roll each die once.

• **Successive Attempts:** When you fail a roll, you may be able to try again. If time is not an issue and your character is under no pressure to perform, you may make successive attempts with your full dice pool. In the far more likely situation that time is short and the situation is tense, each subsequent attempt has a cumulative −1 die penalty — so the third time a character tries to break down the door that's keeping her inside a burning building, her roll has a −2 die penalty. Successive attempts do not apply to extended actions.

• **Teamwork:** When two or more people work together, one person takes the lead. He's the primary actor, and his player assembles his dice pool as normal. Anyone assisting rolls the same pool before the primary actor. Each success gives the primary actor a bonus die. If one of the secondary actors rolls a dramatic failure, the primary actor gets a −4 die penalty.

Time

When you're playing **Vampire: The Requiem**, time in the story can speed past or slow to a crawl compared to time in the real world. Weeks or months might pass in the space of few words, while a tense negotiation plays out in real-time — or takes even longer.

In addition to years, nights, and hours, **Vampire** also uses six units of dramatic time. These build upon one another, from shortest to longest.

• Turn — The smallest increment of time, a turn lasts for about three seconds. A character can perform a single instant action in a turn. Turns normally only matter in combat or other dramatic and stressful situations.

• Scene — Much like a scene in a play, a scene in a roleplaying game is the time spent dealing with a single, specific event. The Storyteller frames the scene, describing what's going on, and it's up to the players to resolve the event or conflict. A scene might be played out in turns, progress in real-time, or skip forward depending on dramatic necessity.

• Chapter — A chapter is the collection of scenes that happen during one game session. From the moment you sit down and start playing to the point where you pack up your dice, you're playing out a chapter of your story.

• Story — A story tells an entire tale, following the dramatic arc of a related series of events. It might comprise several chapters or be completed in just one. It has an introduction, rising tension, a number of twists, and a climax that brings things to a conclusion.

• Chronicle — The big picture, a chronicle is the collection of interlinked stories that involve your characters. They might be linked by a common theme or overarching plotline, or they may only share characters and locations. As your story progresses, the players and Storyteller work together to create an ongoing chronicle.

Social Maneuvering

People often won't do what you want just because you ask them to. You need to persuade them, make your offer or request as enticing as possible. You don't have to use positive enticements — "Your wife won't find out about your affair," is often more effective than "Here's fifty bucks for your trouble." You just need to find out what the other person wants.

Under a strict reading of these rules, one character could use Social maneuvering to get another to do whatever she wants. That's not quite fair, since it's the persuader's player making the rolls. His victim doesn't get any option to say "no." As such, this system should only be used by player-controlled characters on Storyteller characters. Leave the manipulation of other player's characters to roleplaying, and let the players determine their characters' responses. Suggestions for using Social maneuvering on other player-controlled characters can be found in the **God-Machine Chronicle**.

Goals & Doors

To begin a Social maneuver, you need to declare your character's intended goal: What you want the victim to do, and how your character is going to make that happen. At this point, you only need to announce the initial stages. The Storyteller will determine if the goal is reasonable — while a vampire could convince a rich victim to hand over a large sum of money, he probably can't convince her to abandon all her wealth, at least not without supernatural powers.

Each victim has a number of Doors, which reflect her resistance to coercion, her skepticism, and her mistrust of other people. A character has a base number of Doors equal to the lower of her Resolve or Composure. If the announced goal would be a breaking point for the victim, add two Doors. If the goal would prevent the victim from resolving an Aspiration, add a Door. Acting against a victim's Virtue (or Mask, in the case of Kindred) also adds a Door.

The number of Doors can change as the situation alters. If the goal seems mundane at first but ends up being reprehensible, it will probably increase the number of Doors required. If your character changes his goal, any Doors that he's opened remain open, but assess Aspirations, Virtues, and breaking points in case of a potential increase.

A character has to open Doors one by one. Every successful roll opens one Door — not one per success. As Doors represent a victim's unwillingness to do what your character asks, they're strictly a one-way relationship.

First Impressions

The Storyteller determines the first impression based on past history between the characters, the circumstances when the persuader first asks, the nature of the favor being asked (assuming the persuading character is up front with what he wants) and other relevant factors.

Absent any other factors, two characters start off with average impressions of each other. If the persuading character influences the interaction — wearing appealing clothes, playing appropriate music, or meeting in a pleasant environment — that moves up to a good impression. If they really get off on the wrong foot, they may start with hostile impressions of one another, in which case the persuader must attempt to increase the victim's impression at another meeting, or force the Doors (see below).

When the characters meet, the persuading character can make an appropriate roll to increase his victim's impression of him — Wits + Socialize to create the perfect guest list, or Manipulation + Persuasion to get the best table in a restaurant. A successful roll moves the impression one step up the chart.

If your character knows his victim's Vice or Dirge, he can use that to his advantage. He can make an offer that tempts his victim, enough that agreeing to it would replenish a Willpower point. If the victim accepts, move the impression one step up the chart.

If all else fails, apply leverage in the form of gifts or bribes. Offer something, and if the recipient agrees, move the impression one step up the chart. What you can offer is limited by your Merits; an accepted offer gives the recipient the use of the Merit for a designated amount of time.

[[CHART, STOLEN SHAMELESSLY FROM GMC]]

Impression	Time per Roll
Perfect	1 Turn
Excellent	1 Hour
Good	1 Day
Average	1 Week
Hostile	Cannot roll

[[END CHART]]

Opening Doors

At each interval, the persuading character meets his victim and moves closer to his goal. He makes a roll based on the situation and how he's persuading his victim in order to open a Door. This roll need not be Social. Fixing a mark's car with Intelligence + Crafts could open a Door just as easily as writing her a song or poem with Presence + Expression. The Storyteller should present situations that demonstrate the range of possible options, mixing up the dice pools involved. In some cases, she might make the roll into a contested action — having the victim roll Wits to detect a lie.

A successful roll opens one Door. An exceptional success on this roll opens two Doors. Failure imposes a cumulative −1 on all further rolls with the same victim; the Storyteller can also worsen the impression level by one (if she does the player takes a Beat). If failure lowers the impression level to "hostile," the persuading character had better find some way to improve his chances.

If your character knows one of his victim's Aspirations he can use that to his advantage. He has to present a clear path to her Aspiration, and the steps he'll take to help her achieve it. Doing so opens one Door. If the stated opportunity presents itself and the persuading character doesn't help, two Doors close.

Failure

Social maneuvering fails when the victim no longer trusts the persuading character. This can happen when the player rolls a dramatic failure on an attempt to open a Door, though the player takes a beat as usual. Otherwise, the victim has to realize that she's been lied to and manipulated — not just that the persuading character was trying to talk her into something, but that he's only ever used her for that goal and doesn't care about anything else. Finally, the attempt fails if the impression level reaches "hostile" and remains there for a week.

Forcing Doors

Sometimes, subtlety just won't cut it. A character needs something right now, and will do anything to persuade his victim to do what he wants. He can attempt to force his victim's Doors, but it's a high-risk method. Forcing Doors is a sure-fire way for a character to burn bridges and leave lies and mistrust in his wake.

To force a victim's Doors, state your goal and your approach. Make a roll for your approach as you would to open a Door normally, but apply the current number of closed Doors as a penalty to the roll. If you succeed, you open all your victim's Doors. If you fail, your victim won't ever trust you again; you can't use Social maneuvering against her again.

To make things easier for the persuading character, he can apply hard leverage — a catch-all euphemism for threats, intimidation, drugging, blackmail, and other heavy-handed forms of coercion. If the persuader uses a form of hard leverage, it's a breaking point for him. The Storyteller decides the level of the breaking point. If the difference between that level and the character's Humanity score is 2 or less, hard leverage removes one Door. If the difference is 3 or more, it removes two Doors. Hard leverage can only be used in conjunction with forcing Doors; remove the Doors before rolling for the character's approach.

Resolution

Once her final Door is open, the victim has to do something. Storyteller characters abide by the declared goal and do what the persuading character wants.

If a character tries to use Social maneuvering on the same victim again, that affects how many Doors she throws up in his path. If the attempt succeeded by opening Doors, subsequent influence attempts begin with one fewer Door. If the attempt failed, or the persuader used hard leverage, successive influence attempts begin with two more Doors. A victim always starts an influence attempt with at least one Door.

Combat

Vampires put on airs and graces, pretending to be civil to one another and nice to their prey. That's a genteel lie, masking a far simpler truth: Vampires are inherently violent creatures. They need blood; and when that need burns hot enough, they don't care who they have to hurt or kill to get it.

Combat is a catch-all term for what happens when two perfectly reasonable people find that they cannot reach agreement like rational individuals and instead beat the living shit out of one another until one of them gets what she wants.

Everybody wants something out of a fight. The very first thing you need to do — before worrying about who attacks first or anything like that — is to determine what each character wants to get out of the fight. Boil it down into a simple sentence that starts with the words "I want:" "I want to kill Johnny," "I want the book that Frances is holding," or "I want what's in Larry's wallet."

A character's intent has to be something she could achieve through an act of violence in the current scene — even a gunman on the White House lawn couldn't get away with "I want to be President of the United States."

By stating her character's intent, a player is setting out how much her character is willing to hurt — even kill — someone else in order to get. If your intent has nothing to do with hurting people and you end up killing someone, you lose a point of Willpower.

Optional Rule: Beaten Down & Surrender

Any character that takes more than his Stamina in bashing damage or any amount of lethal damage is Beaten Down: He's had the fight knocked out of him. He must spend a point of Willpower every time he wants to take a violent action until the end of the fight. He can still apply Defense against incoming attacks, can Dodge, and can run like hell, but it takes a point of Willpower to swing or shoot back.

Before that happens, he can surrender, giving his attacker what she wants according to her declared intent. If you give in, you gain a point of Willpower and take a Beat, but you take no more part in the fight. If the other side wants to attack you, they've got to spend a point of Willpower to do so, and probably suffer a breaking point. If everyone on one side has surrendered, the fight's over and the other side gets what they want.

If one side's intent involves violence, the other side can't surrender — not without being killed. If that's the case, their intended victims don't get Beaten Down, and gain no benefit from surrendering. When someone wants to kill you, the only thing you can do is to try to stop her, whether you run like hell or unload a shotgun at her.

These rules only apply to people (or vampires) who would incur a breaking point for committing (or attempting) "murder." Creatures that don't have a problem killing people in general can ignore surrender without penalty and don't have the fight beaten out of them like normal folks.

Down and Dirty Combat

The Storyteller might decide that your character can get what she wants without focusing on the details of the fight. Maybe she's picking on people weaker than her. Maybe she's internalized the mechanics of violence. Or maybe the fight's not the important thing going on with regards to the character's intent. If that's the case, the Storyteller can opt to use a Down and Dirty Combat. This system resolves the entire fight in a single roll. Storyteller characters might deal some damage, but they're never able to initiate a Down and Dirty Combat.

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Dice Pool: Combat pool (Dexterity + Firearms, Strength + Brawl, or Strength + Weaponry) versus either the opponent's combat pool (as above) *or* an attempt to escape (Strength or Dexterity + Athletics). Ignore Defense on this roll.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's opponent gets the upper hand. This usually includes the opposite of the character's intent — if she wanted to disable the guards so she could escape, she is stunned instead.

Failure: The opponent wins the contest. If the opponent used a combat pool, deal damage equal to the difference in successes plus weapon modifier. Also, the opponent escapes unless he wants to press the combat.

Success: The character wins the contest. She deals damage equal to the difference in successes plus her weapon modifier and achieves her intent — if her intent includes killing her opponents, then she does so.

Exceptional Success: As a success, and the character also gains a point of Willpower from the rush of inflicting violence on an inferior opponent.

Initiative

When a fight's inevitable, it helps to know who acts first. Time in combat is always tracked in turns. At the start of combat, determine your character's Initiative by rolling one die and adding her Initiative Modifier.

When your character is using a weapon, apply its Initiative penalty for as long as she's got the weapon ready. The only way to avoid this modifier is to sling it or drop it. Dropping a weapon is a reflexive action, but picking it back up takes an instant action. A character wielding two weapons subtracts the largest Initiative penalty from her score, and then reduces it by a further one. Wielding a baton (Initiative penalty −2) and a riot shield (Initiative penalty −4) thus applies a −5 die penalty.

Surprise

Characters who don't realize that they're about to be on the receiving end of bloody violence have a chance to notice the ambush by rolling Wits + Composure, contested by the attacker's

Dexterity + Stealth. Any character who fails the roll cannot take an action in the first turn of combat, and can't apply Defense for that turn. Determine Initiative in the second turn as normal.

Attack

On your turn, your character can attack using one of the following dice pools:

• **Unarmed Combat:** Strength + Brawl − Defense

• **Melee Combat:** Strength + Weaponry − Defense

• **Ranged Combat:** Dexterity + Firearms

• **Thrown Weapons:** Dexterity + Athletics − Defense

Resolve the attack roll like any other action. Determine damage by adding the successes rolled to any weapon bonus. See "Injury and Healing," below.

Defense

Subtract your character's Defense from any unarmed, melee, or thrown attacks that the character is aware of. Every time your character applies his Defense against an attack, reduce his Defense by one until the start of the next turn. Spending a point of Willpower increases her Defense by two, but only against one attacker.

You can choose not to apply your character's Defense against some attacks. If two unarmed gangbangers attack before a chainsaw-wielding lunatic, you might want to let the gangbangers get their blows in, and apply your full Defense against the maniac swinging a chainsaw at your head.

You cannot apply your character's Defense against firearms attacks.

Dodge

At any point before your action, your character can choose to Dodge. Doing so gives up her normal action. When Dodging, double your character's Defense but do not subtract it from attack rolls. Instead, roll Defense as a dice pool, and subtract each success from the attacker's successes. If this reduces the attacker's successes to 0, the attack does no damage. Apply successes from Dodging before adding any weapon bonus.

Against multiple opponents, reduce Defense by one for each opponent *before* doubling it to determine your dice pool. If your Defense is reduced to 0, you roll a chance die. A dramatic failure when Dodging leaves your character off-balance;, reduce her Defense by one for her next turn.

Unarmed Combat

These rules present special cases that come up when fighting without weapons.

Bite

A human's teeth do −1 bashing damage. Other creatures treat their teeth like weapons, dealing lethal damage to mortals (see "Weapons," below). A vampire's fangs used in anger deal +0 lethal damage (see "The Assault, The Kiss," p. XX). Animals have a weapon bonus depending on the kind of creature: a wolf applies +1, while a great white shark gets +4.

Humans and vampires can only bite as part of a grapple, using the Damage move.

Grapple

To grab your opponent, roll Strength + Brawl – Defense. On a success, both of you are grappling. If you roll an exceptional success, pick a move from the list below.

Each turn, both grappling characters make a contested Strength + Brawl versus Strength + Brawl action on the higher of the two characters' Initiatives. The winner picks a move from the list below, or two moves on an exceptional success.

• **Break Free** from the grapple. You throw off your opponent; you're both no longer grappling. Succeeding at this move is a reflexive action, you can take another action immediately afterwards.

• **Control Weapon**, either by drawing a weapon that you have holstered or turning your opponent's weapon against him. You keep control until your opponent makes a Control Weapon move.

• **Damage** your opponent by dealing bashing damage equal to your rolled successes. If you previously succeeded at a Control Weapon action, add the weapon bonus to your successes.

• **Disarm** your opponent, removing a weapon from the grapple entirely. You must first have succeeded at a Control Weapon move.

• **Drop Prone**, throwing both of you to the ground (see "Going Prone," below). You must Break Free before rising.

• **Hold** your opponent in place. Neither of you can apply Defense against incoming attacks.

• **Restrain** your opponent with duct tape, zip ties, or a painful joint lock. Your opponent is immobilized. You can only use this move if you've already succeeded in a Hold move. If you use equipment to Restrain your opponent, you can leave the grapple.

• **Take Cover** using your opponent's body. Any ranged attacks made until the end of the turn automatically hit him (see "Human Shields," below).

Touching an Opponent

Sometimes, a combatant doesn't want to do damage. Maybe she wants to plant a bug, or deliver some supernatural power. Roll Dexterity + Brawl, or Dexterity + Weaponry to tap an opponent with a weapon. A successful roll deals no damage.

Ranged Combat

These rules present special cases that come up when shooting at people.

Autofire

Automatic weapons can fire a short, medium, or long burst in place of a single shot.

• **Short Burst**: Three bullets fired at the same target. Add a +1 die bonus to the shooter's dice pool.

• **Medium Burst:** Ten bullets, which can hit one to three targets standing close together. Add a +2 die bonus to the shooter's dice pool. If firing at more than one target, subtract the total number of targets from the shooter's pool, then make one attack roll per target.

• **Long Burst:** Twenty bullets at as many targets as the shooter wants. Increase the shooter's dice pool by +3. If firing at more than one target, subtract the total number of targets from the shooter's pool, then make one attack roll per target.

Range

The firearms chart (below) lists the short, medium, and long ranges of some sample firearms. Shooting a target at medium range imposes a −1 die penalty, while shooting a target at long range increases that to −2. Shooting at targets beyond long range reduces the attack dice pool to a chance die.

Thrown weapons have a short range of (Strength + Dexterity + Athletics – object's Size), doubled for medium range, and doubled again for long range. Aerodynamic objects double each range — so an aerodynamic object's long range is {(Strength + Dexterity + Athletics) * 8}. Characters can only throw objects with a Size less than their Strength.

Cover and Concealment

Hiding behind something is a good way to not get shot. How effective it is depends how much the cover hides. Concealment penalties apply to a shooter's dice pool.

• **Barely Concealed:** −1 (hiding behind an office chair)

• **Partially Concealed:** −2 (hiding behind the hood of a car, with upper body exposed)

• **Substantially Concealed:** −3 (crouching behind a car).

A character who is concealed and wants to fire at someone else takes a penalty to his Firearms attack that's one less than the penalty afforded by the character's protection — so if he's substantially concealed, he can fire back with a −2 die penalty.

If a target's entirely hidden by something substantial, he's in cover. If the cover's Durability is greater than the weapon modifier, the bullets can't penetrate the cover. Otherwise, subtract the cover's Durability from the attacker's damage roll. If the cover is transparent (bulletproof glass, for example), subtract *half* the cover's Durability, rounding down. Both the object and the target take any remaining damage.

Human Shields

Sometimes, the only available cover is another person — be they a terrified member of the public or a life-long friend. Characters who use human shields treat them as cover, with Durability equal to the victim's Stamina + any armor. Unlike normal cover, the victim takes all of the damage from the attack.

Using a human shield is almost certainly a breaking point. For a mortal, this means a pretty severe modifier (–3 or more) if the victim dies; Kindred may risk a breaking point if they have Humanity 2 or more.

Reloading

Reloading a firearm is an instant action. If you need to load bullets separately, you cannot apply your Defense on the same turn. If you have a magazine or speed-loader, you don't lose your Defense.

General Combat Factors

Some conditions apply to all kinds of fights.

Movement

A character can move his Speed in a single turn and still take an instant action. He can forsake his action to move at double his normal pace.

Going Prone

When a character can't find cover, the next best thing when bullets are flying is to drop flat to the ground. Ranged attacks against him suffer a −2 die penalty. A standing attacker using Brawl or Weaponry to attack instead gains a +2 die bonus.

A character can drop prone at any point before his action. Dropping to the ground costs his action for the turn. Getting up from being prone also takes your character's action.

Specified Targets

Attacking specific body parts has its benefits. In addition to ignoring armor (see "Armor," p. XX), strikes to limbs and the head can have added effects, noted in brief here. The **God-Machine Chronicle** includes these effects in a system of Tilts — a comprehensive set of Conditions that specifically affect combat.

• Arm (–2): A damaging hit can Arm Wrack the victim if it deals more damage than the target's Stamina

• Leg (–2): A damaging hit can Leg Wrack the victim if it deals more damage than the target's Stamina

• Head (–3): A damaging attack can Stun the victim if it deals at least as much damage as the target's Size

• Heart (–3): If the attacker does at least five points of damage, the weapon pierces the opponent's heart.

• Hand (–4): On a damaging hit, the victim suffers Arm Wrack

• Eye (–5): On a damaging hit, the victim is Blinded

Arm Wrack forces you to drop whatever you're holding in the affected arm, and gives you a −2 die penalty to rolls requiring manual dexterity if you're using your off-hand. Having both arms affected reduces rolls relying on manual dexterity to a chance die, and gives a −3 die penalty to all other Physical actions. The effects go away when the character heals from her wounds, or receives medical attention.

Blinded gives the victim a −3 die penalty on any rolls relying on vision — including attack rolls — and halves his Defense if one eye is blinded. The penalty increases to −5 and the loss of all Defense if both eyes are blinded. A single attack against the eyes blinds one eye, or both on an exceptional success. The effects go away when the character heals from her wounds, or receives medical attention.

Leg Wrack halves the victim's Speed and applies a −2 modifier to Defense and Physical rolls that require movement. If both legs are affected, you drop prone (see above) and can't get up. Your Speed is reduced to 1, and you have to give up your action to move. Physical rolls requiring movement are reduced to a chance die. The effects go away when the character heals from her wounds, or receives medical attention.

Stun causes the character to miss her next action. Her Defense is halved until she next takes an action.

Killing Blow

When performing a killing blow, you deal damage equal to your full dice pool plus your weapon modifier. You've time enough to line up your attack so it avoids your victim's armor.

While people who kill in combat can justify their actions based on the heat of the moment, performing a killing blow is a premeditated attempt to end a sentient life without the target having a chance to do anything about it. Going through with a killing blow is breaking point whether the victim survives or not.

Weapons and Armor

Weapons are one of the fastest ways to turn a fight into a murder. Sometimes, that's what you want: Pulling a gun shows you're serious about killing people.

A weapon's damage rating adds bonus successes to a successful attack roll. When a weapon might help out in other ways — using a chain to grapple someone, or a gun to intimidate her, add the weapon's damage rating as an equipment modifier.

Every weapon deals lethal damage to mortals. A baseball bat, club, or mace does just as much serious trauma to the human body as an edged weapon or a bullet. Kindred do not have such frailties, and take bashing damage from all mundane weapons, including knives and guns.

The full traits of a range of weapons are presented in the Ranged and Melee Weapons Charts.

[[PRODUCTION: FULL-PAGE TABLES, LIKE PP. 201-202 OF GMC. TABLE INSIDE A BOX TYPE THING. START BOX HERE]]

Ranged Weapons Chart

[START TABLE]

Type	Damage Example	Ranges	Clip	Initiative	Strength		Size	Availability
Revolver, lt	1	20/40/80	6	0	2	1	••	SW M640 (.38 Special)
Revolver, hvy	2	35/70/140	6	−2	3	1	••	SW M29 (.44 Magnum)
Pistol, lt	1	20/40/80	17+1	0	2	1	•••	Glock 17 (9mm)
Pistol, hvy	2	30/60/120	7+1	−2	3	1	•••	Colt M1911A1 (.45 ACP)
SMG, small*	1	25/50/100	30+1	−2	2	1	•••	Ingram Mac-10 (9mm)
SMG, large*	2	50/100/200	30+1	−3	3	2	•••	HK MP-5 (9mm)
Rifle	4	200/400/800	5+1	−5	2	3	••	Remington M-700 (30.06)
Assault Rifle*	3	150/300/600	42+1	−3	3	3	•••	Stery-Aug (5.56mm)

Shotgun**	3	20/40/80	5+1	−4	3	2	••	Remington M870 (12-gauge)
Crossbow***	2	40/80/160	1	−5	3	3	•••	

[END TABLE]

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack to determine the amount of lethal damage dealt.

Ranges: The listed numbers a short/medium/long ranges in yards/meters. Attacks at medium range suffer a −1 die penalty. Attacks at long range suffer a −2 die penalty.

Clip: The number of rounds a gun can hold. A "+1" indicates that a bullet can be held in the chamber, ready to fire.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the gun.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a −1 penalty on attack rolls.

Size: 1 = Can be fired one-handed; 2 = Must be fired two-handed and can be hidden in a coat; 3 = Can be fired two-handed but not hidden on one's person

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

* The weapon is capable of autofire, including short bursts, medium bursts, and long bursts.

** Attack rolls gain the 9-again quality

*** Crossbows take three turns to reload between shots. A crossbow can be used to deliver a stake through the heart (–3 die penalty to attack rolls; must deal at least 5 damage in one attack)

[END BOX]

[PROD: ANOTHER FULL-PAGE BOX]

Melee Weapons Chart

[START TABLE]

Type	Damage		Initiative		Strength		Size	Availability	Special
Sap	0	−1	1	1	•	Stun			
Brass Knuckles			0	0	1	1	•	Uses Brawl to attack	
Baton	1	−1	2	2	n/a				
Crowbar	2	−2	2	2	•				
Tire Iron	1	−3	2	2	••	+1 Defense			
Chain	1	−3	2	2	•	Grapple			
Shield (small)	0	−2	2	2	••	Concealed			
Shield (large)	2	−4	3	3	••	Concealed			
Knife	0	−1	1	1	•				

Rapier 1	−2	1	2	••	Armor piercing 1	
Machete	2	−2	2	2	••	
Hatchet	1	−2	1	1	•	
Fire Ax	3	−4	3	3	••	9-again, two-handed
Chainsaw	5	−6	4	3	•••	9-again, two-handed
Stake* 0	−4	1	1	n/a		
Spear**	2	−2	2	4	•	+1 Defense, two-handed

[END TABLE]

Type: A weapon's type is a general classification that can apply to anything your character picks up. A metal club might be an antique mace, a metal baseball bat, or a hammer, while a hatchet might be a meat cleaver or an antique hand-ax.

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack to determine the amount of lethal damage dealt.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase by 1.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a −1 die penalty on attack rolls.

Size: 1 = Can be hidden in a hand; 2 = Can be hidden in a coat; 3+ = Cannot be hidden.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

Concealed: A character who wields a shield but doesn't use it to attack can add its Size to his Defense, and uses its Size as a concealment modifier against ranged attacks.

Grapple: Add the chain's damage rating to your dice pool when grappling.

Stun: Halve the victim's Size when aiming for the head with intent to stun (p. XX)

Two-handed: This weapon requires two hands. It can be used one-handed, but doing so increases the Strength requirement by 1.

* A stake must target the heart (–3 die penalty to attack rolls) and must deal at least 5 damage in one attack.

** The reach of a spear gives a +1 Defense bonus against opponents who are unarmed or wield weapons of Size 1.

[PROD: BREAK THE BOX HERE PLEASE]

Armor Chart

[PROD: START TABLE]

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability	Coverage
Modern						
Reinforced clothing*	1/0	1	0	0	•	Torso, arms, legs

Kevlar vest*	1/3	1	0	0	•	Torso
Flak Jacket	2/4	1	−1	0	••	Torso, arms
Full Riot Gear	3/5	2	−2	−1	•••	Torso, arms, legs
Archaic						
Leather (hard)	2/0	2	−1	0	•	Torso, arms
Chainmail	3/1	3	−2	−2	••	Torso, arms
Plate	4/2	3	−2	−3	••••	Torso, arms, legs

[PROD: END TABLE]

Rating: Armor provides protection against normal attacks and Firearms attacks. The number before the slash is for general armor, while the number after the slash is for ballistic armor.

Strength: If your character's Strength is lower than that required for her armor, reduce her Brawl and Weaponry dice pools by −1.

Defense: The penalty imposed on your character's Defense when wearing the armor.

Speed: The penalty to your character's Speed when wearing the armor.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the armor.

Coverage: The areas of a character protected by the armor. Wearing a helmet increases the armor's coverage to include a character's head.

* This armor is concealed, either as normal clothing (e.g. biker leathers) or being worn under a jacket or baggy shirt.

[PRODUCTION: END BOXES HERE]

Improvised Weapons

The weapons charts can only go so far. Characters who grab improvised weapons still stand a chance of doing serious damage.

If your improvised weapon is close enough to one of the weapons above, use the associated weapon profile. Otherwise, an improvised weapon does (Durability − 1) damage, with an initiative penalty and Strength requirement equal to the weapon's Size.

Using an improvised weapon reduces your attack pool by one die. On a successful attack, the weapon takes the same amount of damage as it inflicts; Durability reduces this damage as normal. Once the weapon's Structure is reduced to 0, the object is wrecked.

Armor

Armor provides protection against attacks, including bullets and knives. Though it's rare to find Kindred wearing armor, police officers and other law enforcement agencies rely on it.

• Ballistic armor applies to incoming firearms attacks. Each point of ballistic armor downgrades one point of damage from lethal to bashing.

• General armor applies to all attacks. Each point of general armor reduces the total damage taken by one point, starting with the most severe type of damage.

If armor has both ballistic and general ratings, apply the ballistic armor first.

When applying armor to an attack dealing lethal damage, you always take at least one point of bashing damage from the shock of the blow.

Armor-Piercing

Some weapons have an armor piercing quality, usually between 1 and 3. When attacking someone wearing armor, subtract the piercing quality from the target's armor. Subtract from ballistic armor first, then general armor. Armor-piercing attacks in close combat subtract from general armor only.

When shooting at an object — or a person in cover — subtract the piercing quality from the object's Durability.

Injury and Healing

Characters can suffer three types of damage. Fists and feet, along with other kinds of low-impact trauma, deal *bashing* damage. Brass knuckles, knives, and speeding trucks deal *lethal* damage. Kindred take bashing damage from all mundane weapons, because they're less fazed by pain and don't depend on their internal organs.

Some horrifying powers — along with the great banes of the Kindred — deal *aggravated* damage. When something deals aggravated damage directly, it's quite obvious. Flesh bubbles and sloughs away. Foaming pustules taint the victim's flesh. Blackened veins streak out from the site of the injury.

If a mortal's health track is filled with bashing damage, his player must make a reflexive Stamina roll each turn for him to remain conscious. If it fills with lethal damage, then each minute thereafter in which the mortal receives no medical attention — mundane or supernatural — he suffers one more injury. One health box currently marked with an X is upgraded to an asterisk for aggravated damage, from left to right on the character's Health chart. Once all boxes are filled with asterisks, he's dead.

If a vampire's health track is filled with bashing damage, she remains conscious. If it fills with lethal damage, she falls into torpor. If it fills with aggravated damage, she suffers Final Death, and her body rots as though she had died on the date of her Embrace.

Marking Damage

When a character suffers bashing damage, mark it with a slash (/) in the leftmost empty box of his health track.

When a character suffers lethal damage, mark it with a cross (X) in the leftmost box of his health track that doesn't contain lethal or aggravated damage. If you mark over a point of bashing damage, it moves one box to the right.

When a character suffers aggravated damage, mark it with a large asterisk (*) in the leftmost box that doesn't already contain aggravated damage. If you mark over a point of bashing or lethal damage, it all moves one box to the right.

Always mark the most severe injuries at the left of a character's health track, and push any less severe injuries to the right. Characters heal their rightmost health boxes first and progress left.

Example: Persephone has seven dots of Health. She's just taken two points of bashing damage. Her Health boxes look like this:

[PRODUCTION: SEVEN HEALTH BOXES, FIRST TWO CONTAINING A SLASH]

If she's later stabbed and takes a point of lethal damage, her Health track would be:

[PRODUCTION: SEVEN HEALTH BOXES, FIRST ONE CONTAINS AN X, SECOND AND THIRD CONTAIN A SLASH]

If Persephone next suffered a point of aggravated damage, her Health boxes would look like this:

[PRODUCTION: SEVEN HEALTH BOXES. FIRST HAS AN ASTERISK, SECOND HAS AN X, THE THIRD AND FOURTH CONTAIN SLASHES]

Wound Penalties

As your character takes damage, it impairs her ability to act. When one of her three rightmost Health boxes has damage marked, she suffers a penalty accordingly. Subtract this penalty from every action she performs, including rolling for Initiative, but not including Stamina rolls to stay conscious.

[CHART]

Health Boxes Marked Penalty

Third-to-last −1

Second-to-last −2

Last −3

[END CHART]

Upgrading Damage

If your character's Health track is already full of bashing damage, any further bashing or lethal damage upgrades the leftmost point of bashing damage to lethal — turn one of the slashes into a cross.

If your character's health track is full of lethal damage, any further damage upgrades an existing point of lethal damage to aggravated. Turn the leftmost X into an asterisk.

When a mortal's rightmost Health box has bashing damage marked in it, she has to make a Stamina roll each turn or fall unconscious. If it has lethal damage, she takes another point of damage each minute (upgrading existing lethal damage to aggravated) until she receives medical attention.

Healing

Characters need time to heal once they've been beaten to a pulp. Kindred use their Vitae to return their bodies to the state of their Embrace, but mortals rely on time and medical care to set broken bones and heal bullet wounds. This is a double-edged sword: Kindred can use stolen blood to heal their wounds, but can't be helped by time or medicine.

Mortal characters heal their rightmost health box at the following rate. The healing time is enough for the wound to fully recover — lethal damage doesn't "downgrade" into bashing.

Normally, a character can heal without medical attention, though use of the Medicine Skill will doubtless help him recover. The only exception is if a mortal character has all her Health boxes full of lethal damage — she's bleeding out. She can't recover from that without urgent medical attention and emergency surgery.

Wounds recover at the following rates.

Bashing: One point per 15 minutes.

Lethal: One point per two days.

Aggravated: One point per week.

Example: After a scuffle with an off-duty cop, Persephone's out of harm's way for now. She isn't looking for another fight. Her health track is the same as it was at the end of the fight.

[PRODUCTION: SEVEN HEALTH BOXES. FIRST HAS AN ASTERISK, SECOND HAS AN X, THE THIRD AND FOURTH CONTAIN SLASHES]

Her rightmost wounds heal first. Each point of bashing damage takes 15 minutes to heal. Her lethal damage then heals over the course of the next two days. Finally, her aggravated wound heals over the course of the next week. In all, it's taken a little over a week and two days for her to recover from her injuries.

Objects

Objects, such as lead pipes, walls, or cars, in the Storytelling System have three traits: Durability, Size, and Structure. Mostly, these relate to how easy the object is to destroy.

Durability: How hard the object is to damage. Subtract Durability from any damage dealt to the object. Durability has no effect against attacks that deal aggravated damage.

[BEGIN TABLE, SEE WOD RULEBOOK P. 135]

Durability	Material
1	Wood, hard plastic, thick glass
2	Stone, aluminum
3	Steel, iron
+1	per reinforced layer

[END TABLE]

Size: How large the object is. Objects smaller than Size 1 can fit entirely in a person's palm.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Size	Object
1	Pistol
2	Crowbar, sawn-off shotgun
3	Assault rifle
5	Door

10 Sports car

15 SUV

[END TABLE]

Structure: An object's Structure is equivalent to its Health and equals its Durability + Size. Each point of damage removes a point of Structure. Once it's taken more damage than it has Durability, anyone using the object suffers a −1 die penalty. When its Structure hits 0, the object is destroyed. Objects do not differentiate between bashing and lethal damage, and can be repaired with an appropriate Craft roll.

Disease

Outside of combat, a character who suffers from a disease suffers damage over a period of time. Resisting the damage inflicted by a disease requires a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. This roll is not contested but it is modified by the severity of the disease. Only one success is necessary to avoid damage each time.

Some diseases are the kind that people don't heal from. A character's cancer could go into remission, or he can hold his HIV back with medication, but time alone won't cure them. The Storyteller should set a benchmark of how many rolls the character has to succeed at in a row for the disease to go into remission. Medical treatment can offset any penalties to the Stamina + Resolve roll applied by the disease — but might inflict penalties on other rolls, as sometimes the cure is almost as bad as the disease.

Drugs

A character who has taken drugs, willingly or not, must fight off the effects of the drug. Resisting the effects requires a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. This roll is not contested but it is modified by the potency of the drug ingested. Only one success is necessary for a character to regain her senses. In the case of some drugs, this roll must be made once per hour, once per scene — or even once per turn, in the case of strong hallucinogens or narcotics.

Overdose

Characters who overdose on drugs treat the drug like a poison, with a Toxicity somewhere between 3 and 7. The overdose deals damage once per hour until the drug has run its course — if a character's spent 8 hours drinking, then the poison takes another 8 hours to fade, with Toxicity between 3 (beer or wine) to 5 (rubbing alcohol). A character who injects stronger heroin than expected takes damage for (8 – Stamina) hours, with Toxicity 7.

Extreme Environments

The human body is not conditioned to withstand extreme heat, cold, air pressure, and other weather. These harsh conditions hinder and endanger unprepared characters. When exposed to a harsh environment, the Storyteller assigns a level to the environment, using the chart below as a guideline. Survival gear can reduce the effective environment level.

While characters are exposed to these conditions, they suffer the level of the environment as a penalty to all actions. After a number of hours equal to the character's Stamina, he takes bashing damage equal to the environment's level once per hour. In the case of a Level 3 exposure, the

damage is lethal instead of bashing. Fourth level environments cause lethal damage each *turn* after a number of turns equal to the character's Stamina.

Any damage caused by levels 2-4 exposure leaves lasting marks, scars, and tissue damage. Damage caused by extreme environments cannot be healed until the character is back in a safe environment.

[[CHART]]

Environment Levels

Level	Example Environs
0	Safe environment
1	Light snow, heavy storms; too cold to sleep safely; air pressure causes shortness of breath; sweltering sun can cause first-degree burns
2	Heavy snow; cold causes physical pain and potential hypothermia; sun quickly causes first degree burns, can cause second degree burns with time; minor radiation poisoning
3	Desert exposure; heat rapidly causing second-degree burns; moderate radiation exposure
4	Desert sandstorm, severe hurricane, tornado, tsunami

[[END CHART]]

Poison

Outside of combat, a character who is the victim of a poison or toxin suffers lethal damage over a period of time equal to the poison's Toxicity. Some substances deal this damage only once. Others deal this damage once per turn or once per hour until purged — or until the poison has run its course. To resist the damage, make a reflexive Stamina + Resolve − Toxicity roll. Each success reduces the damage taken by 1. This roll must be made every time the poison deals damage unless the character stops fighting and gives in.

Equipment

Here are some examples of the equipment you can buy with Resources.

Equipment, tools, and technology help to solve problems. Having the right tool for the job can mean the difference between life and death — or in the World of Darkness, the difference between life and a fate worse than death. This list is not all-inclusive, but features many of the tools characters in the World of Darkness might have at their disposal.

Equipment is divided up by the Skills they typically assist with. Mental Equipment typically assists with Mental Skills, for example. As well, Supernatural Equipment deals with the paranormal, and may not be suitable for every chronicle. Lastly, Bygones are items that characters cannot procure easily or recreate. They're unique items that deal with the otherworldly.

Availability and Procurement

The dot cost of a piece of equipment reflects directly on the Resources cost if your character wishes to purchase it (or the components, for some things). It also reflects the level of Allies or

other Social Merit required in order to find the item and the Skill level required to procure it with a single dice roll. For example, if a Party Invitation has Cost •••, a character with Larceny •• should not be able to find and steal the item without a roll, but a character with Politics •••• might be able to get one by virtue of saying the right words to the right organization. If your character wishes to obtain higher Availability items with their Skills, it requires a deeper effort.

Size, Durability, and Structure

These are guidelines that represent common, standard examples of the items in question. For most items, characters could procure better examples at a higher Availability rating.

Dice Bonuses

Most equipment offers a bonus to dice rolls pertaining to its use. Multiple items can influence a given roll, but a roll should not receive more than a +5 bonus.

Game Effect

A character with the item can use these Effects. Any restrictions, costs, or parameters are listed individually.

[[SIDEBAR OR BREAKOUT PAGE]]

Services

In addition to the fully-fleshed equipment in this chapter, characters may look for services from other characters. Below is a list of some things characters may pursue. Each has an Availability rating that works identically to other equipment. This can act as a foundation for what certain levels of Allies, Status, and other Social Merits might accomplish. Most are sorted by Skills to reflect their general uses. Most include a die bonus as well. Assume most services take a week to procure at the listed Availability levels. Raise Availability by one to make that a day instead.

Note that some services listed could be highly illegal and should be limited in access to appropriate Merits. In many cases, illegal services only offer negligible die bonuses. Their real advantage comes from a layer of separation from legal authorities.

[[this stuff should be charted]]

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
Academics		
Historical specialist consulting	•••	+3
Research assistance from grad students	••	+2
Translation of a dead language	•••	+2
Computer		
Custom phone application	•••	+2
Digital image enhancement	••	+3
Graphic design/forgery	••	+2
Crafts		

Antiquities restoration••• +2

Auto repair •• +3

Custom equipment modifications ••• +2

Investigation

Consultation on evidence ••• +3

Investigative photography ••• +2

Private investigation/background check •• +2

Medicine

Black market surgeon •••• +3

Expert medical witness •••• +2

Rush plastic surgery •••• +2

Occult

Esoteric consultant/sage •••• +3

Exorcist ••• +2

Protective amulets or wards •••• +1

Politics

Campaign assistant ••• +3

Cutting red tape (read: bribe) ••• +2

Spin doctor ••• +2

Science

Fact-checking •• +3

Falsifying research/coverup ••• +2

Lab access •• +2

Athletics

Meditative assistance ••• +2

Personal trainer ••• +3

Throwing an athletic competition •••• +4

Brawl

Arrange underground boxing ring ••• +2

Bodyguard service ••• +3

Self-defense classes • +1

Drive

Chauffer •• +2

Stunt performance/mock crash	•••	+3
Tour bus rental	••••	+2
Firearms		
Antique gun repair	•••	+2
Cover fire from gangs	•••	+3
Procuring smuggled military arms	••••	+2
Larceny		
Breaking and entering	•••	+2
Security consulting	•••	+2
Stealing a protected relic	••••	+3
Stealth		
Strategic distraction	•••	+3
Tailing a suspect	•••	+2
Targeted vandalism	••	+2
Survival		
Field dress and preserve an animal	•••	+1
Trail guide	••	+3
Weatherproof a shelter	••	+2
Weaponry		
Properly forged sword	•••	+2
Identify wound from obscure weapon	•••	+2
Training in archaic warfare	•••	+2
Animal Ken		
Buy a trained animal	•••	+2
Identify animal droppings	••	+1
Rule out natural causes of death	•••	+2
Empathy		
“Good cop” interrogator	•••	+2
Neutral arbitrator	•••	+2
Therapy session	••	+1
Expression		
Document forgery	•••	+3
Ghostwriting	••	+2

Motivational speech	•••	+1
Intimidation		
Anti-interrogation training	••••	+3
"Bad cop" interrogator	•••	+2
Deprogramming therapy	•••	+2
Persuasion		
Defense attorney	•••	+3
Hostage negotiator	••••	+3
Pickup artist	•••	+2
Socialize		
Catering	••• or ••••	+1 or +2
Elocution consulting	•••	+1
Escort	•••	+2
Streetwise		
Arrange a rave or block party	•••	+2
Black market access	••	+2
Find crash space	••	+1
Smuggling contraband	•••	+1
Subterfuge		
Amateur Actor/Actress	••	+2
Con artistry	•••	+2
Gambling ringer	•••	+2

[[end sidebar or breakout, and the chart within]]

Mental Equipment

Mental equipment is all but essential for many character types. Mental Skills without the proper tools are almost useless in most cases. A doctor without medicine is hardly capable of healing, and an auto mechanic without a toolbox couldn't change some minor belts on a car.

Automotive Tools

Basic (Kit): Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability •

Advanced (Garage): Die Bonus +2, Availability •

Effect: Automotive tools are a necessity for all but the simplest automobile repairs. Even then, a fully stocked garage with heavy equipment is required for more involved tasks such as engine or transmission replacement. If time is not a factor, any trained character with a Crafts Automotive Specialty can repair a vehicle's mundane issues without rolls. Complex modifications and

enhancements or massive damage always requires a greater effort (an extended Intelligence + Crafts roll) to work out.

Cache

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 2, Size 1–5, Structure 5, Availability • to •••

Effect: A cache is a hidden and defensible place for items, usually weapons. It keeps important items from prying eyes. A cache can never be more than half the Size of its parent object. For example, a Size 6 car can support no larger than a Size 3 cache. A given cache can hold two items of its Size and any reasonable number of smaller-sized items. Its Availability determines its die bonus, which both adds to concealment rolls and subtracts from rolls to find the items within.

Communications Headset

Die Bonus +2, Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability ••

Effect: Communications headsets keep characters in constant contact. Different varieties works over different distances, but most commercial models works over about 200 feet. A common alternative is a conference call between cellular phones and Bluetooth headsets. If the users have practiced using their headsets together, they gain the die bonus on any coordinated efforts. In the case of a teamwork action, the die bonus only applies to the final roll. If the users are unpracticed, the bonus falls to +1 and actors must make reflexive Wits + Composure rolls to participate successfully.

Any heavy objects can obstruct a headset's signal. Anything obstructing with Durability higher than 3 requires listeners to make a Wits + Composure roll to understand shared messages. Levy a –1 penalty for each point of Durability over 4.

Crime Scene Kit

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A crime scene (or CSI) kit is a toolbox full of investigative aids such as magnifiers, fingerprinting dust, cameras, tape, testing chemicals, and sample bags. While the kits offer a die bonus to Investigation rolls, the more important benefit of the CSI kit is that it allows evidence to be moved and digested elsewhere. Properly applied, it allows investigators to do the bulk of their work off-site and at their own pace.

Code Kit

Die Bonus +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: A code kit is a series of tools created for the purpose of making and interpreting a code for a specific audience. A common example is a book code, where a page, paragraph, and word from a certain book are used as the foundation for a cypher. This keeps any uninformed eyes off the intended message. In the case of a book code, a book is often chosen that all message recipients can access easily. This guarantees that the code never has to travel with the code key.

A successfully designed cypher is difficult to break. The die bonus acts as a penalty to any rolls to crack the code without the necessary reference key.

Cracking Software

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A, Availability •••

Effect: Crappy software's a dime a dozen. Good, reliable cracking software is hard to come by. With solid software, a hacker can force passwords, breach firewalls, and otherwise make a nuisance of herself in computer systems. Beyond the dice pool modification, the benefit such software offers is a sort of buffer between the hacker and security. Any efforts to track the hacker takes two steps; one to identify the software, then one to trace it back to the source. Functionally this means two rolls on behalf of the security personnel, with an opportunity for the hacker to withdraw before detection.

Digital Recorder

Die Bonus +1 or +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability • or ••

Effect: In the last decade, digital audio recorders have gotten smaller, more effective, and more affordable. Now, any student can carry a coin-sized device that would have put intelligence agencies of the 1980s to shame. The cheaper model of recorder gives its +1 bonus to any rolls to catch words or sounds. The bonus also applies to concealment rolls. The more expensive model gives +2. With an Intelligence + Computer (with die bonus), a character can contest any rolls to obscure discussion or mask noises.

Duct Tape

Die Bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Duct tape has as many uses as one can think of, and just as many you never would. It can reinforce barricades, stabilize weapon handles, bind prisoners, repair broken pipes, and so much more. In most cases, duct tape can offer a +1 bonus to Crafts-related rolls. Alternatively, it can add a point of Durability to almost anything. If used as a restraint, rolls to break free suffer a –3 penalty, and must overcome the duct tape's Structure.

First Aid Kit

Die Bonus 0 or +1, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability • or ••

Effect: A first aid kit contains all the necessary supplies to stabilize an injury and stop wounds from getting worse until the victim can find proper treatment. The one-dot version of the first aid kit does not offer a die bonus, it simply allows for treatment. The two-dot version offers a +1 to treatment rolls due to superior supplies.

Flashlight

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3, Availability •

Effect: In a world of darkness, a flashlight can be a person's best friend. It generally does what it's supposed to; it helps cut a path through the unknown. Its die bonus subtracts from any penalties due to darkness, and adds to any rolls to search in the dark. A good flashlight can serve as a club in a pinch. As well, it can blind an unfortunate subject. A Dexterity + Athletics roll, subtracting an informed opponent's Defense, will put the beam where it needs to be. The victim's player may make a contested Stamina roll. If your character scores more successes than the subject, they're blinded for one turn. Victims with especially acute senses are blinded for two turns.

Glowstick

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Glowsticks use a chemical mixture to summon forth enough light to see in a small area. Most commercial glowsticks last a couple of hours; police and other professional varieties can last twelve. Because they're small, airtight containers, they serve the added benefit of being useful underwater or in the rain. Functionally, they work the same as a flashlight. However, they cannot be used to blind a target, since their soft glow is far less obtrusive than a flashlight's beam. They're also very conveniently worn, which can serve strategic purposes for a group operating in low-light conditions. A member will not go missing without being noticed so long as they have a glowing neon bar on their belt.

GPS Tracker

Die Bonus +3, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: With the advent of the modern cellular phone, most modern people have a GPS-enabled device on their person at any given time. With a bit of know-how, and access to someone's phone, your character can track their every move (provided those moves are not in caves, tunnels, or sewer systems). Some characters will trade GPS data in case one of the group becomes lost or if they have to follow someone without notice. Planting a phone on an unwitting subject can serve as a highly effective tracking device.

Keylogging Software

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A, Availability ••

Effect: Keylogging software does exactly one thing: It logs keystrokes on a computer. This is usually done to record incriminating data or passwords. Usually, keylogging software is coupled with software to transmit the data once captured. The challenge for the would-be intruder is installing the software. Email scams are an unreliable way to get onto a specific computer, but could fool one member of a large organization. A thumb drive is very effective, but requires direct, physical access to the recipient computer. The software's die bonus offers an advantage to breach a network or to find important data.

Luminol

Die Bonus +2, Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Luminol is a chemical that reacts to certain metals in human blood and other bodily fluids. The reaction causes a faint neon glow for about thirty seconds, visible in the dark. It comes in an aerosol can and will seek out faint traces, even after a thorough cleaning. In addition to showing the exact locations of violent crimes, luminol can assist in tracking wounded people and animals. Luminol's die bonus applies to any roll to track by the fluid traces, or to piece together the details of a crime scene.

Multi-Tool

Die Bonus +1, Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: Sometimes, the need for mobility doesn't allow for your character to carry around a full tool kit. In these cases, a multi-tool can be a lifesaver. From sawing to stripping wires, to opening bottles, to filing off serial numbers, a multi-tool can do the job in a pinch. The multi-tool offers a negligible die bonus on numerous Crafts and other assorted tasks, and most importantly, allows for rolls when sometimes they couldn't be made for lack of proper equipment. While not made for use as a weapon, it can serve as one causing 0 lethal, but suffering a –1 penalty to hit.

Personal Computer

Die Bonus +1 to +4, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability • to ••••

Effect: In the developed world, almost every household has access to a personal computer. They vary in size, functionality, and price, from decade-old models that can barely surf the web to high-end machines that can process gigabytes of data per second. In today's world, many lives revolve around computers. For some people, their entire careers and personal lives exist within digital space. The Availability of the computer determines its die bonus.

Smartphones

Die Bonus +1 to +2, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability • to •••

Effect: By themselves, smartphones can make calls, send text messages and emails, take pictures, maintain an agenda, and search the web. With a bit of software, the Smartphone becomes the multi-tool of the electronic age. While it cannot accomplish the raw computing power of a full-sized personal computer, higher-end smartphones can manage almost all the same tasks with ease.

Most major gadgets have been successfully replicated with smartphone applications. GPS scanning and tracking are staples of the amateur investigator. Facial recognition software finds a face in a crowd with relative accuracy. They can photograph and transcribe text, then translate ancient tomes. They can store a library's worth of text and allow for automated searches. They offer directions with photographic assistance. The value of a mindless video game on a stakeout is often underestimated.

Special Effects

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 5, Structure 3, Availability •••

Effect: Special effects is a catch-all term for the tricks and chicanery used by amusement parks and stage magicians to fool witnesses. A character may use these as a distraction or a defense. For example, the Pepper's Ghost illusion is relatively easy to set up with the right tools. It uses a large mirror and a sheet of glass, along with a model and a light source. It projects an illusion of the model's reflection, and makes witnesses see a "ghost."

In addition to the die bonus, special effects generally fool their audience at first. A witness will fall for the trick, unless given good reason to be suspicious. This can waste valuable time or lead the witness into a trap.

Surveillance Equipment

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability •••

Effect: Standard surveillance equipment usually consists of motion detectors, cameras, and monitors. High-end versions may include infrared heat sensors, barometric scanners, or even more complex gear. Either way, the point of surveillance equipment is to survey, detect, and otherwise track who enters or leaves a location. Often, this also means locking down breached zones. Unless someone knows surveillance equipment exists and actively avoids it, his presence is noticed and recorded. If he tries to avoid it, contest his Dexterity + Stealth against the installing technician's Intelligence + Computer or Intelligence + Crafts (for digital and analog systems, respectively). The technician may add the equipment's die bonus. If the intruder scores more successes, he remains unnoticed. Otherwise, he goes on record.

Survival Gear

Die Bonus +1 or +2, Durability 2, Size 2 or 3, Structure 3, Availability • or •••

Effect: Survival gear is the catch-all term for the various kits of equipment needed to survive in harsh environments. This could encompass tents, canned foodstuff, raingear, sleeping bags, sterile water, or any of the various things a person can use to survive the world outside their cushy homes. They come in two levels: a basic level and an advanced level. The basic level offers +1 and subtracts one from the effective level of environment, (see Extreme Environments, p. XX), while the advanced offers +2 and subtracts two from the effective environment level. This does not help with a level 4 environment. A resourceful character can jury rig or scavenge the necessary supplies for a basic survival gear, but an advanced set of gear requires very specialized equipment. Basic survival gear can assist with most any environment, but advanced survival gear must be catered to one particular type of environment.

Talcum Powder

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size 1, Structure N/A, Availability •

Effect: Talcum powder can keep a baby's bottom from getting diaper rash, but it can also show the presence of the unseen, and show evidence of intrusion if placed at a portal of entry. If dusted with talcum powder, a character must achieve five successes on a Dexterity + Stealth roll to enter without a trace. Fewer successes will only obscure the specifics of their feet and hands. Some paranormal investigators use talcum powder as a way to give ghosts and other invisible entities a method for communication.

Ultraviolet Ink

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Ultraviolet Ink, or invisible ink as it's commonly called, is an outstanding way to relay messages in plain sight. Since the naked eye cannot perceive the ink without an ultraviolet light, a character can scrawl messages for other recipients in-the-know. It also allows for secretive information to be passed around through mundane channels. If someone's being surveyed by nefarious forces, an ultraviolet message scribbled on a throwaway magazine is much easier to get into their home unmolested than, say, a suspicious letter slid through their doorframe. If you need to mark a path to a secret hiding place, what better way to conceal the guiding marks?

Physical Equipment

Physical equipment enhances the use of Physical Skills. This often means the use of simple and complex machines to make things easier, or simple tricks to heighten the effectiveness of a character's inherent talents.

Battering Ram

Die Bonus +4, Durability 3, Size 4, Structure 8, Availability ••

Effect: The purpose of the battering ram is to bring down doors and other barricades with direct, focused force. A battering ram uses a Teamwork action (see the World of Darkness Rulebook, p. 134), allowing up to four participants. The primary actor adds the ram's die bonus to her roll. A ram ignores two points of Durability.

Bear Trap

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5, Availability ••

Effect: A bear trap is a large metal contraption that looks something like a set of deadly jaws. For this reason, they're also commonly called jaw traps. When a human or large animal steps into the bear trap, it snaps shut on their leg. Due to the serrated edges on the trap, this can cause massive bleeding or even broken bones.

The jaw trap causes 3L damage and ignores two points of armor or Durability. A character trapped in the jaws can attempt to escape as an instant action. Doing so requires a Strength + Stamina roll, with the trap's die bonus as a penalty due to the distracting pain and the strength of the jaws. Failure on this roll causes another point of lethal damage as the jaw digs in further. Creatures without opposable thumbs cannot escape this way and must rip themselves free.

Any rolls to hide a bear trap suffer its die bonus as a penalty. They're difficult to hide due to their awkward shape and weight.

Caltrops

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: Caltrops are small, pointed pieces of metal, arranged in such a way that one point is always facing upward. This makes walking (or driving) through a patch of caltrops inconvenient and painful. These traits assume enough caltrops to fill a doorway or other narrow corridor.

Moving through caltrops causes one point of lethal damage. Caltrops ignore a point of armor or Durability. To move through safely, a Dexterity + Athletics roll is required with the caltrops' die bonus applied as a penalty to the roll. A character may only move half Speed (rounded down) while moving safely through caltrops.

A character may hide caltrops, although it is difficult. A Wits + Larceny –3 roll is required, the caltrops' die bonus does not apply to this roll.

Camouflage Clothing

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: Camouflage clothing allows its wearer to blend in with her surroundings enough for the untrained eye to pass over. Effective camouflage must be catered to the environment; greens and browns in the woodlands, shades of grey in an urban area. Proper camouflage adds its bonus to rolls to remain unnoticed.

Climbing Gear

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: Climbing gear includes ropes, pulleys, handles, carabiners, hooks, and other assorted tools for scaling things. They serve a twofold purpose. First, they add their die bonus to the normal Strength + Athletics rolls for climbing. Second, if properly applied (with a Wits + Athletics roll), they prevent a character from falling more than ten feet at a time.

Crowbar

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: A crowbar is a curved piece of steel used to pry open shipping pallets, jammed doors, and other things a normal person would be incapable of doing by hand. It adds to any dice rolls used

to establish leverage. When prying things open, it also allows your character to ignore two points of Durability on the lock or barricade. Additionally, a crowbar can be used as a weapon (see p. XX).

Firearm Suppressor

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A firearm suppressor is popularly and misleadingly referred to as a silencer in cinema and other media. It's a cylinder placed on the end of a gun barrel that changes and lightens the sound of a shot. A suppressor delivers many minor benefits, but two noteworthy advantages: short-range accuracy and concealment.

Increased Accuracy: A suppressed firearm travels through a longer barrel and the muzzle crown evens the expulsion of hot gasses that can slightly affect trajectory. In game terms, reduce a suppressed gun's damage rating by 1 due to the bullet's subsonic flight, but increase the attack dice pool by 2 when firing at short range.

Position Concealer: The sound changes dramatically, to the point where many people do not recognize the sound as that of a gunshot and are often unable to place where the lower tone came from. The muzzle flash is also reduced dramatically with a suppressor, helping to conceal a shooter's position. A character trying to identify a suppressed shot must roll Wits + Firearms – 2. Any character searching for the shooter using the gun's tells suffers a –2 penalty.

Gas Mask

Die Bonus +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: A gas mask is a filtration device placed over the face that defends against noxious chemicals in the air. With a working gas mask, a character can stand minor toxins for as long as he needs, whereas other characters might take damage over time or require rolls to remain conscious. Powerful toxins may still require rolls. A gas mask adds five dice to these rolls.

Handcuffs

Die Bonus +2, Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: A solid pair of steel handcuffs is made to restrain even a remarkably strong person. Applying handcuffs to an unwilling combatant is an additional option in a grapple. Roll Strength + Brawl – the opponent's Strength. Success means the handcuffs are where they need to be.

Breaking out of successfully applied handcuffs requires a Strength + Stamina – 4 roll. Each success on the roll reduces the Structure of the cuffs by 1. Cuffs reduced to 0 Structure snap open. Each attempt to escape causes 1 point of bashing damage.

A character may also try to finagle their hands out of the cuffs. This requires a Dexterity + Athletics – 4 roll. Success allows for an escape, and causes one point of bashing damage. Failure on this roll causes one point of lethal damage, as the thumb jerks out of socket.

Attempting to do anything requiring manual dexterity while cuffed incurs a –4 penalty, or –2 if the hands are cuffed in front. Witnesses are unlikely to behave favorably around a cuffed character, Social rolls against strangers incur a –3 penalty.

Many police forces and security companies now prefer heavy duty plastic zip ties in place of handcuffs. While they're slightly less durable (Durability 3), they incur a –5 penalty from behind or –3 from the front, because they can be far tighter on the wrists. They can also be cut free.

Lockpicking Kit

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A lockpicking kit consists of picks, tools, and rods for manipulating tumblers and opening locks. A good kit contains a wide array of tools to all but guarantee intrusion of an analog lock. With such a kit and at least a dot of Larceny, a character can pick a lock without a roll if time is not an issue. If time is an issue, the die bonus applies to the Dexterity + Larceny rolls. At Availability •, a character may procure a portable lockpick. It has Size 1, Structure 1, and is far more concealable. However, it only offers a +1 bonus and doesn't allow for picking without rolls since the kit realistically may not have the right tools for a given job.

A lockpicking kit only works on mechanical locks. Digital locks require more specific hacking and code prediction. A character may procure a digital lockpick at Availability •••, but typically only works on one type of lock, such as the keycard locks used in hotels. Digital lockpicks can be Size 2, or Size 1 if crafted as an extension of a laptop computer or smartphone.

Mace (Pepper Spray)

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Pepper spray, or "mace" as it's commonly called, is a blend of chemicals (mostly capsaicin, the "hot" part of a chili) in a small spray can, designed to debilitate threats. Civilians use these devices in self-defense; police use them to subdue unruly criminals. Use of pepper spray requires a Dexterity + Athletics, or Dexterity + Firearms roll. Each yard is a range category, so one yard is short range, two yards is medium, three yards is long range. An opponent's Defense applies, but in normal wind conditions, the die bonus applies to the roll.

Upon the first attack, the victim suffers the Stun Tilt (see p. XX). An opponent struck suffers a –5 penalty to all actions. This penalty can be reduced by one for every turn spent rinsing the eyes with water. Commercial chemicals designed to clean the eyes will fully remove the penalty after a turn.

Rope

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Rope is one of the oldest tools known to humankind. It's never left prominent use because of its simple and efficient utility. A good rope adds its die bonus to relevant Crafts rolls and anywhere else it would assist. As a binding agent, it resists breaking with a Durability (or effective Strength) equal to its user's Crafts score, due to the multiplicative effect of solid knots. An applicable Specialty adds one to the user's Crafts score for this purpose. Some interrogators, shibari fetishists, and boy scouts alike specialize in remarkable knot-tying, potentially rendering subjects completely and hopelessly immobile.

Stun Gun

Die Bonus 0, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •, ••, or •••

Effect: A stun gun is designed to deliver an overwhelming amount of electricity to an assailant in order to shut down her muscles and send her to the ground. As a defensive item, this gives the

would-be victim time to run or get help. As an offensive item, it leaves the victim ready for restraint or worse.

These devices come in two varieties (hand-held and ranged) and three intensities (1–3, corresponding to their Availabilities). The hand-held model has live leads on the edge of a handle and can be used as many as fifty times on one battery charge. The ranged model fires small wired darts up to fifteen feet away. While the ranged model has similar battery life, it uses a compressed air cartridge that requires replacement after each shot.

Use of a handheld stun gun requires a Dexterity + Weaponry roll, penalized by the victim's Defense. The ranged model uses Dexterity + Firearms, also penalized by the victim's Defense. On a successful hit with either, the victim takes one point of lethal damage. The successes subtract from the victim's next dice pool. With the ranged version, the darts remain in the victim's body, adding three successes automatically each turn. They can be removed with a Strength + Stamina roll, with the initial successes penalizing the action. With the hand-held version, the attacker can attempt to maintain the shock, which takes a Strength + Weaponry, penalized by the greater of the opponent's Strength or Defense. Once the accumulated successes exceed the victim's Size, the victim collapses in neuro-muscular incapacitation. Once the shock ends, this lasts for (10 – victim's Stamina) in turns.

Social Equipment

Social actions deal with people. Social Equipment offers tools for leverage, influence, and manipulation.

Cash

Die Bonus +1 to +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability • to •••••

Effect: This represents a wad of cash, a briefcase of money, an offshore bank account number, or some other lump sum. It can't be reflected in the Resources Merit since it's not a regular income. However, it can be expended to offer a bonus equivalent to its Availability on any social roll where a bribe could benefit. As well, it can be expended to purchase one item of equal Availability. For more complex uses, consider it a single month's allotment of the same Resources.

Disguise

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 1, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability • to •••

Effect: A good disguise goes a long way to help fit in with a strange group or go unnoticed in a crowd where one doesn't belong. Properly costumed for a situation, no rolls are required to blend into the crowd. Any rolls to actively detect the outsider suffer a penalty equal to the die bonus of the disguise; the disguised character also gains the bonus to remain hidden.

With a disguise, a character can emulate the first dot of a single Social Merit that would make sense within the scope of the scene. For example, it doesn't make money appear from thin air, but it would allow a character to get their drinks on a nonexistent tab, reflecting Resources •. This requires a Composure + Subterfuge to maintain in the face of anyone in the know, contested by the witness's Wits + Subterfuge. The die bonus of the disguise applies to the liar, but does not affect the witness.

Fashion

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability • to •••••

Effect: Never underestimate the value of high fashion. Like a disguise, fashionable clothing allows a character to fit in. However, the point of fashion is to draw attention, not to fade into the crowd. As opposed to anonymity, fashion means being noticed. Note that the clothing chosen must be appropriate to the setting. Punk chic will not work at a Senator's fundraiser, for example. When improperly dressed, the die bonus applies as a penalty to all Social Skill rolls.

The die bonus for Fashion is equal to half the Availability, rounded up.

Conditions

Conditions represent ways in which the story has affected your character, and what she can do to move past those events. Players don't buy Conditions, events in the game apply them and they remain until certain *resolution* criteria are met. A character can't have more than one copy of the same condition unless each applies to a distinctly different thing — for example you may be Delusional about both spiders crawling under your skin and your friends plotting to kill you. You'd have to resolve each independently.

Characters can gain Conditions as a result of various factors. Disciplines inflict a number of Conditions, most of them bad for the victim. A player can also choose to take a Condition relevant to the situation as a result of an exceptional success, and breaking points can cause Conditions as your character deals with them. Sometimes, the Storyteller will inflict Conditions based on the circumstances of the story.

The listed resolutions for each Condition are the most common ways to end its effects; other actions may also resolve it if they would reasonably cause the Condition's effects to end. Work with the Storyteller to determine Condition resolution. When your character resolves a Condition, take a Beat. If a Condition has a natural time limit and then fades away, don't take a Beat — just waiting the Condition out isn't enough to count as resolving it.

Some Conditions are marked as Persistent. These Conditions typically last for a long time, and can only be resolved permanently with a specific and impressive effort. Once per game session, a character can gain a Beat when a Persistent Condition impacts her life.

Improvised Conditions

Storytellers shouldn't feel limited by the list of Conditions in the Appendix (p. XX). As a rough guideline, a Condition typically consists of a modifier between +2 and −2 dice to a certain type of action, or to any action taken with a certain motivation. A Condition is removed when the character's done something significant to act on it, or when she addresses the original source. The sample Conditions later in this book have examples of how to resolve them, but you can also resolve them after other events if it makes sense in the story.

If play would bog down as you search for the right Condition, just improvise one and keep things going.

Lingering Conditions

Conditions are designed as reminders that events that happened earlier in the story have repercussions later. Usually, Chekhov's rifle applies — if you put the Condition on stage, it should fire by the end. But storytelling games are slippery things, and sometimes a story thread represented by a Condition is better to drop for the sake of the ongoing narrative.

For example, an emotional state like Wanton might no longer be relevant to events in the game because a long time has passed, or it might have been the result of a conflict with a character you don't care about anymore. In those cases, it's perfectly fine to just cross off the Condition. We recommend awarding a Beat as if resolving it, but that's at the Storyteller's discretion.

We recommend doing this sparingly, but bottom line: If a Condition doesn't feel relevant to the story anymore, just let it go.

Lair

“This is such bullshit!” Ben said, slamming his hand against a nearby tree and taking off a chunk of it. Not that it mattered; in Robin’s Lair, there were always more trees. Rows and rows stretching off into a misty distance, in fact, the scent of rotting leaves and fallen branches thick in the air. Right now, it was also as close to neutral ground as the brood could manage. “You’re the one who told me to talk to Noelle in the first place!”

“That was when it was just Noelle,” Robin replied evenly. “Then she made another of her kind. That’s a problem.” She took a deep breath, and Ben could hear the effort it was taking to control her voice. “A big problem.”

“How?” Ben spat. “Just fucking tell me already.”

“One vampire, nobody gives a damn. Not her kind, not ours. So long as she’s careful,” Robin gave Ben a pointed look, “the worst she’ll have is a hunter or two every once in a while. But more than one vampire, in a town this size? Their kind start to pay attention. Which is bad for her, and worse for us.”

“Especially since you invited her in,” James hissed. “What the fuck were you thinking, letting her in here? And without asking us?” Ben bristled and Robin stepped between them, hands out in a warning for both of them.

“Enough,” Robin snarled, and from somewhere deep in the trees an echoing growl rumbled back at them. “Ben did as we asked getting to know her, and you didn’t complain when they were just hunting bullies and johns, so shut it.” James opened his mouth, thought better of it, but his glare didn’t waver.

“But Ben,” Robin continued, “why did you bring her here? I mean, you had to know we would want to be consulted on something like that. I know you’re close, but her seeing this place … it’s not good. Not without warning.”

“I love her, OK?” Ben said, dropping his eyes as his cheeks flushed. If James had said so much as a single unkind thing Ben would have gone for his throat without hesitation, but whether he managed on his own or Robin kept in check, he stayed silent. “I love her. I’m sorry. OK? I’m sorry.”

For a long moment, the only sound was the wind in the trees.

“Look,” Robin began, but Ben cut her off with a wave. “I know what you’re going to ask, alright?”

“Do you.” James said, quietly. It wasn’t quite a question.

“I’m not stupid. I know what happens if we draw too much attention.” Ben exhaled. “She’s gotta get rid of the new fucker, or they both gotta leave town.” He left the other option unsaid, but in the stillness of the forest he might as well have shouted it. “I’ll make it happen. I promise.”

“You’re strong,” Robin said, patting his arm. “I know you can do it.”

“Family first, right?” Ben said. He was already imagining how Noelle would react, and hoping he was wrong.

Chapter Five: Title

He struck such a savage blow/that the sharp blade slashed through her neck,/smashed the vertebrae; it severed her head/from the fated body; she fell at his feet./ The sword was bloodstained; Beowulf rejoiced.

— Beowulf

When you see a monster in a story, chances are it's a story about someone who's trying to kill them. Beasts don't need to make enemies; the second she has her Homecoming a Beast has become a target, whether she likes it or not. The world is full of people who'd like to make her just another note in some old epic, another monster slayed to make the world a safer place.

Even amongst family, a Beast is not always safe. Her brothers and sisters who have undergone Inheritance may lack a Hero's all-consuming need to see her dead, but a Soul doesn't always distinguish between friend and foe. Even without their Inheritance, a Beast can't count on a friendly greeting from their monstrous siblings any more than she can rely on her human family to always treat her with kindness and compassion.

No Beast wants to become the trophy head mounted on some monster-slayer's wall, so fighting for their lives is something they simply can't avoid.

Heroes and Legends

The stories of heroes slaying monsters have peppered humanity’s legends since the very beginning of recorded history. Common themes repeat themselves through various cultures, and the modern-day Heroes seeking out modern-day Beasts frequently study the old legends for ways to subdue and destroy their prey. Nearly all Heroes, whether working as solitary hunters or in a group, find themselves drawn to these myths, taking them as their own birthright and incontrovertible proof that their cause is just. While many of the victorious heroes are portrayed as deities, some Heroes theorize that these stories came from watching Heroes slay some of the earliest Beasts in antiquity.

Marduk

Marduk was the patron deity of the city of Babylon, associated with water, vegetation, judgment, and magic. In the Enuma Elish, Marduk takes his place as chief among the gods by slaying Tiamat, the primordial ocean goddess associated with unbridled creation and chaos. He arms himself with a net, a bow and arrows, a club, a spear, and the winds themselves to do it. The stories even claim that Marduk invented new kinds of wind to destroy Tiamat. Accounts of Tiamat’s death are frequently brutal, describing Marduk bashing in the creature’s head or splitting open her belly, and city festivals frequently featured reenactments of the myth.

Those Heroes who have at least a little knowledge of the limited culture of the Begotten theorize that Tiamat is but one name of the revered Mother of All Monsters. The story of the sky god slaying a serpent-like chaos creature repeats itself through other cultures as well, such as Ra slaying Apep every night to ensure the sun rises every morning. Most Heroes today take that as a sign that their cause brings order to the world, and every Beast they slay brings them one step closer to curing the world’s ills. The Children do their best not to laugh when they face Heroes who declare such order as their true intent.

Sauska

Sauska was a Hittite goddess, purportedly the daughter of Tarhun the god of the hunt. When the daughter of the sea birthed the sea monster Hedammu, the creature's mere existence threatened the whole world, and even Tarhun shed a tear in fear of the beast. Sauska took it upon herself to defeat the creature, girding herself for battle and using a love potion to beguile Hedammu. The legends are unclear as to whether or not Sauska actually killed Hedammu, but the tales at least imply that Hedammu was no longer a threat.

Heroes familiar with this tale are of two minds on the subject. Some insist that if Sauska was one of them, then surely she killed Hedammu. To them, death is the only viable outcome of a final confrontation with a Beast and a Hero. Others with softer hearts, often younger Heroes still growing accustomed to their newfound gifts, look to the tale and wonder if death truly is the only option to subdue the Children.

Heracles

Heracles is a hero’s hero, with superhuman strength and several kills and captures under his belt. The Nemean Lion, the Lernaean Hydra, the Stymphalian birds, and a host of other creatures fell to Heracles’ might, not to mention kings, robbers, and other men who merely met with his displeasure. The only thing about his life that rivals his kill count is the number of children sired from his heterosexual marriages and affairs. Several Roman emperors identified with his strength, even claiming him as an ancestor, though they called him Hercules instead.

In relation to Hercules’ twelve labors, many Heroes tack “Hercules” onto their name after achieving twelve kills, and those who claim the name are expected to show trophies for all twelve of those kills. Heroes with thirteen kills or more are expected to stop bragging.

Atalanta

Atalanta stands out as one of the few women in Greek mythology to take part in the hunt of a great Beast directly. She pursued the Calydonian Boar with a group of other hunters, a creature that Artemis set loose as punishment for insufficient worship. Atalanta struck first blood on the creature and assisted Meleager, the leader of the hunting party, with the killing blows. While Meleager's lust for Atalanta got her on the hunting party, she did not rely on that solely to get her through the hunt. In fact, she refused to marry unless her future husband beat her in a foot race, and the man who finally did beat her in the foot race had to rely on divine assistance and trickery.

Several Heroes of a feminist bent look to Atalanta as an example of not relying solely on men to fight the monsters of the world.

Theseus

Theseus is a classic, straightforward example from mythology. His ordeal with the Minotaur stands as a shining example of what a Hero stands for. A prince of Athens, he went to Crete to slay the creature to free his kingdom from sending sacrifices to sate its hunger. With the assistance of the Cretan princess Ariadne, he navigated the Labyrinth to its lair and safely escaped.

While he initially took Ariadne with him when he fled Crete, Theseus abandoned Ariadne on the island of Naxos, even though he could not have succeeded without her. Some Heroes interpret this to justify leaving their loved ones behind in their quest to slay the Children. Whether the

abandonment is out of love or shedding dead weight depends on the individual Hero.

Durga

Durga was a Hindu goddess of the victory of good over evil. She took form from the rage and power of several gods for being exiled from heaven by the demon Mahishasura. According to the stories, she was armed with every divine weapon the gods could provide and slew every demon Mahishasura threw between them. Finally, he had to fight her himself, changing shape into several different creatures during their battle. Every time, she found a solution to ensnare or stymy him. Finally, he took the form of a buffalo. Durga took a sip of wine before decapitating her foe with a trident. Many young Heroes aspire to that level of nonchalant power. More cautious veterans know that getting too cocky can cost lives and save the drinking for right before or just after the hunt.

While Durga's main foe was a demon, many Heroes take inspiration from Durga, and those young Heroes who still cultivate religious leanings see her as a patron goddess. Shrines to her frequently appear in safehouses of Heroes living in India.

Beowulf

Beowulf came to the court of King Hrothgar after hearing tales of Grendel, the horrible creature who plagued the aging king’s meadhall. At first, Beowulf tried using weapons out of fear that Grendel might kill him. However, when none pierced the creature's hide, Beowulf cast the weapons aside and tore Grendel's arm off with his bare hands. Grendel escaped, fleeing to the marshes while trying not to drop from his own wounds. Later, Beowulf followed Grendel to his lair to kill him once and for all. He also killed Grendel’s mother, who viciously protected her son.

Fifty years later, as king of his own people, Beowulf took up arms once again to fight a dragon plaguing his lands. At first, he insisted on fighting the beast alone, but when the struggle proved too much for the aging king, his friend Wiglaf joined the fray. Beowulf and Wiglaf defeated the dragon, but Beowulf suffered a mortal wound in the fight. He received a full hero's sendoff. The classic tale serves as a reminder that asking for help is the difference between life and death.

St. George

St. George was a soldier who fought under Diocletian, enjoying promotions and prestige due to his friendship with the Emperor. George martyred himself when he loudly refused to make sacrifices to the Roman gods. He was purportedly resurrected three times in the course of his torture and finally died when his jailers decapitated him.

The most popular story of St. George surfaced during the Crusades nearly a millennium after his death, leading to the most common depiction of him slaying a dragon. Most versions of the story feature the dragon terrorizing a small kingdom, preventing them from accessing water. The only way the village could get the water they needed was to provide daily tribute of a sheep, or a maiden chosen through drawn lots if no sheep were available. When the princess of the city became the unlucky victim, St. George crossed himself, slew the dragon with newfound strength from the Almighty, saved the princess, and converted the entire town to Christianity.

Many Christian scholars claim that the story is a metaphor and the dragon symbolizes Satan, but modern day Heroes know how real such a dragon can be.

Child of the Water

Child of the Water is a figure from Apache legend regarded as the divine ancestor of the Apache people. Long ago, four monsters plagued mankind, stealing food from the hunt. Life-Giver came to White-painted Woman, declaring that she would have a child that would kill the monsters, but that she must keep the child safe from Owl-man Giant until he is ready to fight them.

While still very much a young boy, Child of the Water declared himself ready to defeat the monsters and challenged Owl-man Giant to a duel of shooting arrows at each other. With the aid of a protective piece of turquoise, none of Owl-man Giant's shots even touched Child of the Water. Child of the Water chipped away Owl-man Giant's flint armor with each shot, with the last piercing the monster's heart. Child of the Water then went on to slay the other three monsters with little in the way of further commentary. With these four monsters dispatched, humanity could freely exist without fear for their own existence.

Heroes who hear this tale fondly remember their first kill. While future victories may only garner vague recollections once they have past, a Hero never forgets his first.

The Quest Begins

Before their first contact with the Children, a Hero could be any given human walking down the street on any given day. They have lives, jobs, families, hopes, dreams, and fears just like anyone else. What sets them apart is the hunter response, an instinctive rejection of the presence of a Beast in their lives, and what follows is an unrelenting drive to destroy the creature that opened their eyes to the horrors the world hides.

> But How Are They Not Hunters?
>
> The origin of a Hero sounds very much like how a hunter comes to be. However, the hero-response is specific only to Beasts, namely that only a Beast can awaken a Hero. While hunters can become Heroes and vice versa, a Hero's primary (and often exclusive) quarry is the Begotten. For more on how Heroes and hunters interact, see p. XX.

First Contact

A Hero's dreams, much like any human's, are a ripe, fertile ground for the fear Beasts instill, providing rich soil for the Children to cultivate the fears that sate them. At first blush, the dreams of the Hero-to-be are no different from the dreams of other humans or Beasts who have yet to come Home. The real difference comes when the Beast comes to collect.

Heroes can also encounter Beasts manifesting themselves in the real world. Some simply find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, while a Beast is reaping the fears of another in a more direct manner. Other times, they find themselves at the wrong end of the Beast's barbs.

In either case, instead of cowering, the Hero fights back. The Hero refuses to succumb to the visceral terror the Beast inspires and lashes out instead. In dreams, he conjures up a weapon or a shield for protection; in the waking world, he reaches out with fists and fury. Cunning or young Beasts retreat quickly through the Primordial Pathways, either through unfamiliarity or too-keen familiarity with this reaction. Frequently, the Begotten escapes this first encounter and the Hero is left with one driving goal: to find the creature again and destroy it.

The obsession can start slow, a simple tickle of the back of the mind that nags at the Hero as he tries to go back to his normal, everyday life. With each passing day, he looks over his shoulder more frequently and even starts carrying some sort of weapon with him regularly. However, he does not do it out of fear, but out of determination to be prepared for a fight if he comes across that Beast again.

Armed with this new knowledge, he gains a level of paranoia those around him consider unhealthy. The newly minted Hero dismisses their concerns; how could these people possibly know what he has gone through to protect them? They just don't understand, and never will. The Hero could show people the danger, but that risks exposing the people he wishes to protect to the very thing he wishes to protect them from. Every time the Hero tells a loved one the truth, he risks endangering both himself and the trusted loved one, or worse, inspiring heroism that could get a normal human (who is soft and pink in comparison) killed. This inevitably distances the Hero from the rest of humanity, entrusting his doubts and fears only to himself, or at best, other Heroes he encounters on his journey.

Heroes who first encounter Beasts in their dreams have an arguably easier experience with the hunter response. Those who encounter the Children and awaken their own heroism in the physical world often bear scars on their bodies as well as their minds. Dreamers who become Heroes generally survive the experience physically intact. That said, some Heroes have reported finding scars on their bodies after encountering and confronting the Children in dreams.

Sometimes, the nascent Hero is potent enough to follow and kill the Beast outright on the first encounter. Still, the story ends the same: the urge to continue hunting down the horrors of the world becomes too strong and she ultimately devotes her life to it.

Tools and Weapons

In order to prove a formidable adversary, Heroes are not simply the rank and file of humanity. They cannot hope to stand against the monsters of the world with mere mortal ability.

In the stories of old, Heroes always possess extraordinary ability, whether it comes from brute strength or remarkable cunning. Real Heroes are no different. Their stories of how they gained this ability vary from Hero to Hero. Some Heroes claim to have received a gift from God or some other deity, while others gleaned it from esoteric magic or extensive training.

The real commonality between them all is the hero-response. Until their first encounter with one of the Begotten, Heroes can be downright unremarkable in the stew of humanity. However, whether it comes from the surge of adrenaline from the encounter, the stroke of destiny, or something completely different, changes occur in the nascent Hero's body as well as her mind.

Heroes don't suffer the brutal attacks of their foes as easily as others. After all, what kind of Hero falls to the first swipe of his adversary's claws? (Quite a few, really, but veteran Heroes see that as culling the weak and unworthy.) This increased hardiness protects a Hero from the mundane troubles of disease and minor injuries, and even major injuries heal quickly on their own. Many a Hero discovers that they simply never catch that cold that's been making the rounds or walk away from a lethal explosion, only sustaining a few scratches and a limp that goes away in a day or two.

In addition, a Hero's heightened awareness of the existence of the Children keeps her alert for their presence, especially the Begotten who awakened her. From time to time, her high levels of

paranoia cloud her senses. Many a Hero has caused herself a great deal of trouble by singling out an individual as her quarry when that individual was, in fact, mostly harmless.

Beyond that, a Hero's new abilities are as many and varied as the Heroes themselves. Some prevail through sheer physical prowess. Some have a special weapon they carry that gives them an advantage in battle. Others rend open the escape routes the Children use and continue in relentless pursuit once they have an advantage. Others call on safety in numbers, summoning entire crowds of people to fight the monster in their midst. Still others recall infinitesimal details about the creatures they fight, using that knowledge to defeat other monsters or aid other Heroes. Some can even attack the Children indirectly, using those creatures the Begotten call kin as bargaining chips or hostages.

First Blood

Very few Heroes emerge from their first encounter with a Beast fully prepared and equipped to take their adversaries head-on. Those who do usually received such preparation before one of the Children ever darkened their doorstep. However, no amount of physical or mental training can fully prepare the new Hero for the horrors he will face.

Wise Children try to vanquish Heroes in the space between the hunter response and the Hero’s first kill, when they have no real power to call upon and must rely on their own brute force and strength of will in order to survive. This stage is where Heroes are at their most vulnerable. They know little about what they can do or who they can trust, and most don’t know how to properly fight back.

Some Children get lucky. They find the Hero their presence created and kill him before he has a chance to realize exactly what happened to him. Sometimes, the Hero follows the Beast back to her Lair, having no idea what awaits him when he encounters the Begotten on her home turf. If some time has passed since the hunter response was triggered, a Beast other than the one who triggered the hunter response has the best chance of defeating the Hero before he has the chance to properly prepare himself.

That said, the Children don’t always need to strike the killing blow on a Hero to defeat him. Sometimes, his erratic, violent behavior gets him picked up by the cops, where outstanding warrants put him in prison. Sometimes, she lashes out at an innocent person, thinking her victim was an eldritch creature beyond mortal ken. Sometimes, his strange stories get him committed to a mental hospital, where his own insistence on his sound mind dooms him to remain there permanently. Or maybe, just maybe, a Hero just can’t handle the mental strain of the trauma, so she downs a bottle of Jack, sits in her bathtub, and slits her wrists.

Sometimes, a Hero gets lucky. He somehow manages the wherewithal to follow the Begotten he encountered back to her Lair and defeat her through sheer will, cunning, and brute force. Sometimes he runs, living to fight another day and seeking shelter and time to process exactly what happened to him until a weaker Beast crosses his path that he can easily subdue and vanquish. With that kill, he learns something new about the creature and himself that he can then use in future quests against other Children. Sometimes, a band of veteran Heroes finds her first, training her and granting her right of the kill when they all go after a powerful Beast together.

With every kill, Heroes grow stronger, learning more and more tricks to defeat their adversaries. While Heroes have attempted to teach what they know to other Heroes they encounter, the trick of it never really catches on until the Hero strikes another killing blow, and even then, the Hero

frequently must seek out and slay a particular Beast to fully understand what she has learned.

The Chink in the Armor (move to section about Gifts)

Every legendary monster has some sort of weakness. The weakness could be metaphysical in nature, a logical progression based on inherent traits, cultural taboos, or simply a matter of preference that can do the creature in. No sword could cut Grendel, so Beowulf tore the creature's arm off with his bare hands. The giant Antaeus was unstoppable while he touched the ground; Hercules had to lift him off the ground to defeat him. Even the lesser monsters of the world have weaknesses: vampires go up like tinder in fire and sunlight, and silver makes werewolves howl in pain.

The best weapon a Hero has in her arsenal is exploiting a Beast's weaknesses to defeat him. Sometimes, these weaknesses existed all along. Other times, the Begotten demonstrates no vulnerability to a named weakness until the Hero points it out. Whatever the case, the weakness a Hero chooses to exploit, known as an Anathema, provides crucial leverage to a Hero in a fight.

An Anathema could represent any potential weakness a Hero might imagine her quarry to have. If the Begotten shows aquatic tendencies, the Hero might come to the conclusion that the Beast has trouble functioning appropriately when not near a body of water. If the Beast manifests wings in front of the Hero, he might think that if the Beast is pinned to the ground, she won't be as light on her feet and thus easier to hit. That said, veteran Heroes who have followed a Beast to her Lair knows that relying on environmental weaknesses is risky at best, as they fall by the wayside when the Begotten flees to her own turf. Therefore, they look for other potential failures to exploit.

Commonly, Heroes go into battle with preconceived notions about the creature they are about to fight based on research, initial reconnaissance, and their own experiences with other Children. They look for weaknesses based on this knowledge, and few, if any, realize that the strength of their will imposes those weaknesses on their adversaries. Many a Beast winds up confused and terrified when he finds himself compelled to pursue an obsession he never had before because the Hero he fights think he has it. Worse still is when his demeanor shifts drastically just because the Hero he fights thinks all monsters are angry, hateful, feral creatures.

Veteran Heroes with several kills observe that a strong will can provide supernatural force to tested strategies that might not have worked the first time around. A tactic one Hero attempted on a given quarry may provide no advantage when she tries it, but another Hero who doggedly believes the previously failed tactic will work may have better luck. However, the successful Hero will insist that the tactic worked all along, and the other Hero who tried it simply failed to apply it correctly. This contradiction has led to more than a few bruised egos and, subsequently, bruised ribs.

However, once a Hero discovers a Beast's Anathema, whether he wills it into existence himself or stumbles upon it later, he will milk it for all it's worth and the Beast who suffers the condition finds it hard to shake. That said, if an appreciable amount of time passes between encounters, the Hero may find that the tried-and-true weak spot may no longer be effective.

The Quest in Progress

The word "quest" bears several meanings in the realm of the Hero. It can mean the pursuit and destruction of an individual Beast, the string of kills between a Hero's inception and her revenge

against the Beast who awakened the hero-response in her, or even the Hero's whole career of slaying Begotten after Begotten until he falls in battle, retires, or just burns out. A quest lasts as long as it needs to, from a single fight to decades. All Heroes have a quest, and when their quest is fulfilled, another awaits as long as the Begotten roam the earth.

Who the Story Is Really About

When a Beast triggers the hunter response in his prey as opposed to just feasting as usual, his Hunger infuses the Hero, making her the type of adversary best suited to defeat him, even if it takes years to do so. Each of the five Hungers Beasts exhibit affect new Heroes differently, making them nobly insufferable in distinct ways. These changes consume the core of the Hero's personality; while some vestiges of the person she once was still remain, her hopes, dreams, ethics, and beliefs twist to fit her role in the story to come. If given the opportunity and what she thinks it should be.

Tyrant's Hero

Before the hunter response, Heroes who first encounter a Beast with a Hunger for Power frequently know their given place in the hierarchy of their own lives, and that awareness fills them with dread. The hierarchy in question could be social, economic or professional, from the boardroom to the high school hallways and down the dirtiest slums the world has to offer. Those already in positions of power fret constantly over subordinates trying to undermine them, a more powerful outsider coming in to take away everything they worked so hard to earn, or simply being unfit to wield the power they possess. Those who start at the bottom of the totem pole feel the crushing weight of everyone above them, but can't (or won't) push themselves further up or out of the hierarchy entirely, leaving them feeling utterly powerless. Those who maintain a position somewhere in the middle get it both ways: the pressure of their superiors and the clamoring, hungry scrabbling of their inferiors to catch up leaves those between these two strata trapped, even as they have to keep moving.

Regardless of the position of these Heroes-to-be, Tyrants find their fear delicious. When confronted with the Tyrant, though, instead of staying in their place (which is always under the Tyrant's thumb, if you ask him), they push back. The nascent Hero is sick of the world's shit, and from now on, he'll be making the rules, fuck you very much.

After the hunter response, the Tyrant's Hero receives an enormous boost in confidence, self-esteem, and egotism. Those who already possessed these traits before turn megalomaniacal to an almost comic degree. And yet, people around them notice the boost in confidence, and it makes the Hero compelling. More people just seem to listen to the Hero and agree with her, even if her ideas sound impractical or downright dangerous to reasonable souls. Those Heroes who were once peons find themselves soaring through the ranks, even if they only manage it by sheer chutzpah. Those Heroes in the middle of the ranks gain more respect from their superiors, and more doors just seem to open for them now. Those Heroes who already started out at the top find their position reaffirmed and further supported, and now the only thing that could even hope to threaten her is the creature who tried to make her submit. That creature must not be allowed to live, or not only will he subjugate the Hero, but everyone else as well.

A Tyrant's Heroes frequently styles herself as a revolutionary or leader exiled from her rightful place, calling upon those around her to aid her in setting things right, whatever that may be. Her charisma and passion captures the imaginations of those around her, inspiring loyalty to a fault in

those who follow her.

Unfortunately for the Hero, her confidence does not always come with competence. However, a Tyrant's Hero knows that any failure that occurs under her watch is not her burden to bear; her subordinates make mistakes, not him, and those subordinates need to be better next time, or else. Still, no matter how many times others may knock down the Tyrant's, she will get back up again. Her steadfast determination, self-assurance, and the angry mob behind her that she just whipped into a frenzy will see to that.

Collector's Hero

Before the hunter response, those destined to become Collector's Heroes usually have some close association to or strong opinion of the kind of object the Collector hoards. They may interact with those kinds of objects as part of their profession or have their own collection out of academic or personal interest. Their opinion of the object type in question need not be positive; in fact, the Hero-to-be might find the objects in question worthless or downright repulsive. On the other hand, the Hero-to-be could value those objects almost as much as the Beast with the Hunger for the Hoard does, amassing a well-loved collection for herself.

Eventually, the Collectors come calling to claim the possession they prize from the Hero-to-be, or punish her for her shallow, short-sighted opinion of the thing they love so very, very much. When they do come, they inevitably take something from her, whether it's the treasures themselves or the luxury of not having to care about those stupid things or the creatures she never knew existed until now. She has been robbed, regardless, and she will take back what is rightfully hers and so much more.

After the hunter response, the Hero's fixation for material objects increases. Even if he was previously a generous sort with little concern for worldly goods, suddenly he cares a great deal more about his possessions and the possessions of others. His home becomes a cluttered mess, piled high with trophies, trinkets, and baubles, some of which he may have simply taken because he wanted them. The concept of personal property is not lost on him; he simply stops recognizing other people's right to have personal property. The words "you can't have that" simply do not compute; if he wants something, he'll get it by whatever means necessary, even putting himself or others at great risk in the process. Begging, bartering, and stealing are all viable options, and the price is negotiable. Collector's Heroes are open to committing acts of questionable morality and legality if it means it will clear away the obstacles between them and the objects of their desire. That said, such a Hero isn't completely stupid; if he doesn't have the skill to properly beg, barter, or steal, he'll do whatever he needs to do in order to get that too. He's willing to play the long game if that's what it takes, but damn if it doesn't make him antsy in the meantime.

When they encounter one of the Children, Collector's Heroes invariably find something they want from the Beast, whether it's an object on her person, her head as a trophy, or the sweet rush of power that only killing the Children can provide. These Heroes will stop at nothing to get what they want, when they want it. Even a Beast's retreat to her Lair is only an inconvenience to the persistent Collector's Hero willing to open a gate into the Primordial Dream to follow. After all, her Lair is where she keeps her hoard, and everyone knows that monsters keep glorious hoards of treasure. It doesn't matter if she collects gold or used food wrappers; those things, like everything else, are the possessions of the Collector's Hero. He just hasn't claimed them yet.

Predator's Hero

Before the hunter response, those who are touched by Beasts with the Hunger for Prey associate with groups where the best method of communication is violence. This could range from abusive relationships, gangs, hunting clubs, or even active duty military in a war zone. The Hero-to-be can be the one giving the beatings or the one receiving them, and he doesn't necessarily need to accept the culture of violence; he could be striving for an end to the violence.

Still, the Predator smells blood, and when she pursues the Hero-to-be, she can reinforce his place as the victim, warn him away from meddling with those she preys on, or remind him that he is not the biggest, baddest bravo on the block when he threatens her own game. When the hero-response takes hold, former victims finally refuse to take any more abuse and fight back with all their strength, which the hero-response amplifies. Alternatively, those who already possess violent inclinations double down, turning what would normally be a simple roughing-up into life-or-death territory.

After the hunter response, the Predator's Hero takes more of an interest in her own body, honing it into the perfect weapon, based on her natural inclinations. Even if the Hero was a pacifist before she encountered the Predator, those days are gone; her life is now soaked in blood, and she'll do what it takes to make sure that blood belongs to a monster. If she's built for strength, she plays that to the hilt so she can accomplish traditionally heroic feats such as breaking swords. If she's more built for speed or stamina, she relies more on her newly acquired natural ability and trains to be the fastest on the battlefield or take enough hits to even give a Ravager's Hero pause. While many Predator's Heroes look like they spend hours a day at the gym, not all have an ideally athletic physique; they strive for effectiveness in the hunt, not aesthetics. They could easily hide a body of iron underneath what society deems as flab, or conceal the strength of steel ropes in a thin, fragile-looking frame.

However, the force of arms they now possess does not always equate to tactical prowess. The surge of power and adrenaline from jumping right into single combat sustains them. Rarely do they go into a fight without charging full tilt, guns blazing, and utterly devoid of any sort of exit strategy or caution. When they do show a modicum of restraint, they likely inherit it from another Hero or companion as opposed to manifesting it on their own. While their brash maneuvers can contribute to the element of surprise, any Beast they fight, especially Predators, can misdirect the raging juggernaut, allowing himself an avenue of escape or leading the enthusiastic Hero to her downfall by way of property damage and injured innocents. Those Children who do encounter a Predator's Hero can reliably shake her inconvenient presence by directing her frenzy onto an unsuspecting public. This strategy does not sit well with Beasts who still maintain traditional human ethics, but they cannot doubt its effectiveness when their own lives are on the line.

Nemesis' Hero

Before encountering a Beast with the Hunger for Punishment, Nemesis' Heroes frequently have unresolved guilt for some wrong they feel they have committed or some perceived shortcoming that has caused them misfortune. Some may beat themselves up already over it, sometimes even literally. Many Nemeses find the scent of blood drawn in self-flagellation intensely intoxicating.

The Nemesis in question may not actually care if the guilt the Hero-to-be feels is justified; what matters is that it is felt, even if unwarranted, which allows the Nemesis to feed. However, when faced with the monster breathing down his neck (possibly quite literally), instead of collapsing under the weight of her guilt, the Hero-to-be has an epiphany. Maybe he re-evaluates the

situation and realizes the course of action he took was, in fact, just. Maybe he realizes the absurdity of the guilt he felt and comes to terms with the fact that he was never at fault to begin with. Maybe he does realize their actions were problematic, but finally achieves sufficient atonement to forgive himself for it. Whatever happens, he feels his soul is washed clean, and despises the Nemesis for perpetuating that cycle of guilt, or even blames the Nemesis for leading him astray in the first place.

After the hunter response, the Nemesis' Hero lives her life in as pure a fashion as she can imagine, striving to be faultless in all things. She looks down at those around her for their failings, truly believing that if these people could only try to be better, they could attain serenity now, just as she has. This leads her to isolate herself from the throng, not only because they could not possibly understand her mission, but because their mere presence around her sullies her newfound purity. Worse still, she has a hard time keeping her opinions to herself regarding the failings of those around her. These two factors drives a rift between her and the rest of humanity.

It is this incisive ability to find fault that makes her deadly around the Children. While the Tyrant's Heroes have their mobs and the Predator's Heroes have their might, she does not even need to lift a finger to cripple the Beasts she hunts. She only has to speak his faults aloud, and those around her take advantage of it in a dogpile effect. The Begotten, once the one holding the whip, becomes the whipping boy. That said, what the Nemesis' Hero considers a fault and what the Beast considers a fault vary wildly, and the Hero rationalizes away her own violations of the code she so rigidly upholds as right and just. The real power lies when the fault she calls out does put the Beast at a disadvantage, even when he thinks her observation is not actually a fault at all. It's enough to sprout a seed of self-doubt in the Beast's Soul, sending him back to his Lair, perhaps for good.

Ravager’s Hero

Before the hunter response, most Ravager's Heroes are building their lives or already have a firmly established life in which they are content. Family men, career women, retirees, students, artists, and the like are all popular marks for the Beast with the Hunger for Ruin. These people have worked hard to create their own world as they see fit, and while it may not be perfect or the picture of traditional stability, it suits them quite nicely. These Heroes-to-be have something reliable to fall back on when the world outside of themselves starts to go sideways, or they at least believe that their personal infrastructure will remain sound in the face of actual adversity.

While surrounding themselves with such lovely construction, they also make themselves a tempting target for Ravagers. These Beasts gleefully destroy the illusion of stability and smile as the Hero-to-be can only stare at the smoking crater that is her life once the Ravager is done with it. And yet, the Hero-to-be still survives. She can still go on, even without faith or hope in anything. She quickly realizes that no support network is truly sustainable, and that she can only rely on herself, for what little that is worth. Still, the experience didn't kill her, so it must have made her stronger.

After the hunter response, a Ravager's Hero looks askance at every friendly hand, keeping those around her at arm's length. The reasons for maintaining that distance could come from lack of trust in those around her, or a genuine concern (or unwillingness masquerading as concern) to take responsibility for their well-being if they get too close to her. This makes reaching out for help during a dire situation a problematic proposition at best. Therefore, the Ravager's Hero must make herself as sturdy as she can to undergo the onslaughts of the Begotten. By the same token,

the resources she would normally divert to care for others around her now stay with her, which makes her that much hardier.

To the Ravager's Hero, everything and everyone is disposable, a thought which horrifies Collector's Heroes clinging to their own treasures. By that logic, if the Children try to take anything from her again, she'll have nothing of value to them and they'll look the other way. When they look the other way, she can stab them in the back. With her callous approach the world, the Ravager's Hero thinks nothing of playing on the attachments her quarry might have, such as friends or loved ones. After all, a Beast took everything away from her. Why not return the favor with all the Begotten she encounters from here on out? Ravager's Heroes have no trouble forcing their quarry into crowded, public spaces to put them at a disadvantage, or take innocents hostage to force the Beast's hand. While the Hero may understand that the world might view such a thing as wrong, what worth does that have to someone who believes in nothing?

The Rest of the Cast

Frequently, a Hero sees himself standing alone against the hordes of unnatural creatures feeding on the fears of mankind. They frequently find themselves surprised at first blush when they encounter others like themselves. Once that initial shock wears off, however, most Heroes cannot imagine a world where they alone are the only defenders of humankind. When they can put aside their pride, a band of veteran Heroes can give even the most powerful broods pause. However, with each Hero consumed with her own individual quest, such a feat comes to pass only in the face of the direst threats.

Worthy Companions

Heroes frequently encounter one another in the pursuit of their quarry. If two Heroes go after the same Beast, they may find themselves working at cross purposes, or one’s efforts to stymie and isolate the target dovetails nicely with the other’s stalking efforts. The two Heroes may not even meet face-to-face until they both independently track the Beast to her Lair.

A group of Heroes after the same Beast or brood is called a *band*. When the quarry is vanquished, the band frequently dissolves, with each Hero continuing on her own personal quest. However, a handful of bands stick together long after the deed is done, especially in places where Children congregate. Still, a town frequently becomes too small to host a large population of Heroes for long as they slaughter the local Children, and new Children steer clear out of self-preservation.

When a band forms, the first challenge the Heroes within it face is dealing with each other. Tempers flare regularly, and frequent squabbling occurs over strategy, reputation or even whether or not a Beast in question is the one the band should really fight. Attempts at cohesion turn into a battle of dominance, where only one is allowed to come out on top. If a single Hero calls on his fellows for assistance, she should be prepared to lay down the law quickly and keep everyone on task, or at least have a plan already in place that plays to each individual Hero’s strengths.

Another quick, dirty method to get a band of Heroes all on the same page is an attack on their mutual interests. Wise Children who hear of a band of Heroes forming rarely attack the band before they seek out their quarry unless they know they can utterly crush the band. These Children know full well that a failed attack can galvanize a band of Heroes faster than letting them become cohesive on their own. Still, cunning Heroes can provoke weaker, less wary Beasts to attack their band with the express purpose of getting the whole band to work together.

When a band of Heroes does reach the level of cohesion and cooperation necessary to address the task of killing the Begotten, their efficiency and ruthlessness are legendary. Each individual Hero has a role to play, which they play to the hilt. A particular plan to subdue a single Beast or brood could take as little as an hour or as long as a year, but one thing remains certain: the band forces an irrevocably final confrontation where they have the upper hand.

When a band of Heroes manages to work together to take down a single Beast, the question of who claims the kill causes the most contention. After all, only the Hero who strikes the killing blow benefits from the kill. This argument frequently breaks up the band on the spot, and if the Begotten can still move, she can easily escape while they fight over the privilege. Particularly magnanimous bands allow the least experienced Hero of the group reap the reward, but accepting such a gift carries the stigma of being unable to handle a fight by oneself. Still, the kill counts, even if other Heroes may disagree on its validity.

When Heroes gather without the sole purpose of vanquishing a single quarry, the event can become a rollicking good time filled with great stories of individual kills. It can also easily devolve into a contest of egos, with each Hero trying to one-up the rest and brawls breaking out between Heroes who just rub each other the wrong way. Fortunately, such gatherings are rare, as each Hero is so focused on his or her quest that such a meeting would need to have some tangible benefit to said quest for a Hero to even show up.

That said, this does not mean that Heroes do not communicate with each other when not actively working together on pursuing a single quarry. Heroes seek each other out for specialized knowledge and training that no mundane dojo or library can provide. Some offer their expertise to their fellows for free, while others exact daunting costs, such as an exchange of information or skills, a favor involving access to places or people the individual Hero cannot reach herself. Still others demand more esoteric prices, such as a sprig of a rare plant that neutralizes a Namtaru poison or the head of an Eshmaki with black eyes.

The internet makes contacting other Heroes infinitely easier. Younger Heroes with few or no kills use social networking, email, or even heavily encoded phone conversations to convey information about. Even a few veteran Heroes have adopted the secret chat rooms and social networks, if only to tap into the information network themselves. Not everyone has jumped on this bandwagon, however; several Heroes see it as a waste of time, or even dangerous exposure.

> Hero Slang
>
> *"Dude, you popped your cherry with your soulmate? Sweet!"*
>
> Younger Heroes have developed an argot all their own surrounding their lifestyles. This slang, while not particularly discreet, makes talking about hunting the Children a little less conspicuous to unsuspecting bystanders.
>
> **Anonymous:** A group of humans a Hero enlists as his or her personal army to help kill a Beast.
>
> **Aquaman:** A Hero who specializes in killing Makara. Applies to any gender of Hero.
>
> **Ballroom Blitz:** A fatal confrontation between a brood of Beasts and a band of Heroes.
>
> **Captain America:** A Nemesis' Hero.

Cherry: The Beast who becomes the Hero’s first kill. Frequently used in the phrase “pop one’s cherry,” as in gaining one’s first kill.

Creeper: A Namtaru.

Crusader Rabbit: A male Hero who exclusively hunts Beasts targeting women.

David: A Hero who specializes in killing Anakim. Originates from the story of David and Goliath.

Ding/level up/notch the bedpost: To kill a Beast and gain a Gift.

Dude/girl in a cape: *(derogatory)* A Hero who espouses and frequently waxes poetic about an idealist code of ethics.

Do: *(verb)* To kill a Beast. Example: “Dude, Sherry did that Swamp Thing last week, man. She’s smelled like bong water ever since.”

Family Guy: *(derogatory)* A Hero who still lives with or maintains contact with his or her family. Applies to any gender of Hero.

Flyboy/Flygirl: A Hero who specializes in killing Ugallu.

Hercules: A Hero with twelve confirmed kills. Originates from the twelve labors of the mythical demigod.

Leroy: A Predator's Hero, especially ones who charge into battle without thinking.

Master Splinter/Obi-Wan: A veteran Hero who teaches younger, inexperienced Heroes.

Musashi: A Hero with several kills originating from single combat.

Ninja: An Eshmaki.

Packrat: A Collector's Hero.

Pirate: A Hero who specializes in killing Eshmaki.

Plague Doctor: A Hero who specializes in killing Namtaru.

Quest: An individual Hero’s journey, either short-term or long-term.

Recruiter: A Tyrant's Hero.

Ronin: A Ravager's Hero.

Sauron: An Anakim.

Spoon-Fed: A Hero who gained one or more kills with help from other Heroes who let him or her have the kill.

Soulmate: The Beast who provoked the hunter response for a given Hero. Veteran Heroes particularly dislike this one.

Swamp Thing: A Makara.

Sidekicks and Useful Mammals

Heroes and hunters frequently cross paths, and rightly so. Both hunters and Heroes pursue the creatures that threaten mankind, even if their targets and tactics vary. It stands to reason that when one becomes aware of the other’s existence, they would work together, and they do. However, it’s never an easy alliance.

Heroes see hunters as useful tools at best, primarily as effective shock troops against the

creatures they view as a Beast's mere minions. If hunters are available, Heroes need not waste their time on lesser targets such as vampires or werewolves. Let the second-string benchwarmers fight among themselves. Heroes belong in the real fight against the real threat. Still, these organizations have their uses, such as providing income and key equipment crucial to the Hero's quest.

Hunters share the same opinion of Heroes as Heroes have of hunters. The strong Kinship that Beasts share with other supernatural creatures makes them a lightning rod to the prey that hunters seek. Hunters value a Hero's ability to sense Beasts in the vicinity, since where a Beast dwells, other creatures will certainly follow.

Some compacts and conspiracies even welcome Heroes into their ranks. Ashwood Abbey in particular seeks Heroes out to find quarries for their legendary hunting parties, treating them like the proverbial hound after the fox. Members of the Union frequently end up in Hero-inspired mobs. Conversely, mortals find their way to the Union or other compacts and conspiracies as a hunter after a Hero leads their normal, everyday life into the deep, dark places they never knew existed before.

That said, a Hero's single-minded focus on their pursuit of the Children gives even the most fanatical hunters pause, to the point that Task Force Valkyrie has a standing order to observe, but not to engage with, any independent Heroes they encounter. Heroes pose too great a risk to equipment and personnel just by jumping into a fight they have no way of winning (that the hunters see). Most hunters have an imperfect understanding of all of the advantages a Hero brings to a fight, and Heroes are not about to advertise.

Still, if a Hero joins with a hunter group, she makes a point to distance herself from them. While hunters understand the threats they face, they are still only human. They cannot grasp the depth and gravity of the Hero's quest. They easily lose focus on the truly important matters. Also, unfortunately, they cannot hope to stand up against the primordial horror that the Children represent.

Side Quests

While Heroes primarily pursue Beasts as their quarry, wise Heroes do keep tabs on the other supernatural denizens of the world. One never knows when one's quarry might have a tie to one of these seemingly lesser creatures. However, unless a Hero specializes in attacking a Beast through those who share Kinship with him, she finds herself lacking the advantages she normally enjoys. However, that may not stop her from pursuing other supernatural creatures as target practice, and that what advantages the Hero does enjoy certainly do not stop other supernatural creatures from punishing her for her foolishness in attacking them.

Vampires

Heroes have few interactions with Kindred without good reason. Not only do vampires heavily police themselves, but most Heroes cannot tell a vampire apart from the normal populace unless the vampire in question goes out of her way to reveal herself as decidedly not human. Those Kindred who do know of Beasts and have had the opportunity to taste the blood of both Beast and Hero report a distinct similarity in the flavor and effects of their blood, but none would dare reveal this to either party. In some Kindred circles revolving around exotic blood, it's something of an inside joke.

Werewolves

The Uratha's mission to defending their territory from the malicious creatures of the spirit realms is markedly similar (if smaller in scale) to a Hero's quest to destroy Beasts. Ironically, due to the primal connection shared between Father Wolf and the Dark Mother, those Forsaken who know of the existence of the Children consider the Children as part of the People for the purposes of interpreting the Oath of the Moon, and thus hate Heroes. Still, they have better things to do than chase down every Hero that crosses their path; their own duties take precedence. In addition, knowledge of the existence of the Children is so rare that if Heroes do cross the path of a pack of werewolves, the Hero still registers as human, and thus enjoys the protections of the Oath of the Moon. Many a misguided Hero has fallen to the claws of an angry Uratha, with the Hero mistaking the werewolf for one of the Begotten and attacking unprovoked.

Mages

Heroes and mages butt heads frequently when they come together. Both possess remarkably strong wills, and neither are willing to back down if they come to cross purposes. Still, the pursuits and interests of the Awakened vary so wildly that only direct relationships with the Children, such as through Kinship, make Heroes and mages cross paths. If a Hero can convince a mage that a particular Beast is dangerous, the mage can prove to be a remarkably powerful ally. If the Hero can acquire a magically enhanced weapon from the mage before they go their separate ways, even better. That said, a mage is perfectly willing to protect the Begotten he is studying against a Hero's attacks, if only to preserve his research. While a Hero has Gifts to call upon to defend himself, an angry mage can easily overcome him.

Changelings

The Lost pose a quandary to the Heroes who know of their existence and capabilities. Their tendency to meddle with human dreams makes them a potential ally if the Hero can convince the changeling she encounters that the Children are a bigger threat than she is. Indeed, the Hero who can gain a changeling skilled in dream combat as an ally becomes remarkably more formidable. If the changeling refuses, though, he could very well side with the Begotten, and Heroes simply cannot have that. Any appeal to the Lost for aid is a carefully calculated risk.

Prometheans

The Created cross paths with Heroes so infrequently that any encounter between the two at all is noteworthy. Their quest to become human endears Prometheans to more sentimental Heroes, while other Heroes fail to grasp why being simply human is a worthy goal. Still, the Disquiet caused by the presence of the Promethean either draws Heroes in only to push them right back out, or pushes them away sufficiently that they deem it not worth investigating unless absolutely necessary. This leads to an organic mutual avoidance.

Sin-Eaters

Heroes have little to no reason to interact with the Sin-Eaters in any real, in-depth. The only time they really do cross paths is if the Beast the Hero is pursuing has Kinship with one of the Bound, or the Beast and the Sin-Eater have direct enmity and the Begotten is pursuing the Sin-Eater as the Hero is pursuing the Begotten. A Hero in dogged pursuit of one of the Children may find herself passing through an Avernian Gate. With the Hero already mad in her obsession with hunting the Begotten, what new insanity would going into the Underworld inflict?

Mummies

The Arisen care little for the pursuits of Heroes killing monsters, and Heroes feel much the same way; after all, mummies are still human, after a fashion. Both can easily pass their lives with no knowledge of the other. Bull-Headed understand the Hero's drive all too well, and if both work in concert, they will not rest until their goal is achieved. Heroes who know of the Arisen are fascinated by their ability to return from the dead, and would give anything to possess that for themselves. The Arisen who know of Heroes know that if the secrets of their magic got out, Heroes would be the last people they would want to possess it, especially the Rite of Return.

Demons

Heroes encountering demons is a one-in-a-million occurrence. More often than not, the only time Heroes actually realize they've encountered a demon is if the individual Unchained in question has gone loud. Still, if a Hero manages to witness a Beast and a demon attempting to interact, she may notice that the Beast's normal tricks don't seem to have the same effect on the demon. This could lead her to attempt to garner the demon as an ally. However, the Hero may find herself having the same problem with the Unchained as the Begotten do. Angels, however, have no problem with using a Hero's obsession to the God-Machine's ends.

Heroic Traits

As much as they like to believe otherwise, Heroes are not the protagonists of their stories. They are tied to the legends of the Beasts that make them, and the same instinctive response that has caused them to rise up against the supernatural monsters of the world traps them in a narrative that they cannot escape. A human who becomes a Hero is forged into a weapon, and while he loses much of who he was he also gains new gifts specifically designed to fight and kill the Beast that made him. Most Heroes don't make it past the first Beast they fight, but those who emerge victorious gain new strength, going on to inspire stories of their great deeds and the monsters they've slain.

Heroes resemble the Beasts that spawned them in most ways, but several concepts that are integral to Beasts do not apply to their Heroic opponents:

Aspirations: Heroes do not track Beats or experience points, their lives simply don't revolve around personal growth. Though having some understanding of his life goals outside of monster hunting can be useful for determining how a Hero will react in more mundane situations, he is first and foremost an antagonist in the stories of the Beasts around him. Heroes do not track Aspirations, or receive any benefit from Beats.

Satiety: Since Heroes do not experience Hunger, they do not have a Satiety score.

Lair: A Hero does not have a Lair, or a Lair rating

Nightmares and Atavisms: Heroes cannot gain or use Nightmares or Atavisms. While they lack the same supernatural powers as Beasts, Heroes do gain access to more-than-human abilities and gifts of their own, detailed below.

Hard to Kill

Heroes are sturdy; they have to be to have any chance against a Beast. Perhaps more importantly they're persistent. The legend they've come to embody means more to them than any amount of pain they endure to get there. Heroes never suffer from the Beaten Down Tilt, and will never

Surrender to a Beast unless they feel that doing so will give them a better chance to kill that Beast later.

Beasts who mercifully allow a defeated Hero to live soon pay for their good deed, as Heroes can't be kept down for long. A Hero is immune to mundane illnesses and never requires medical attention for injuries, even when they are particularly severe. When injured, a Hero recovers wounds at the following rates:

Bashing: One point every 10 minutes

Lethal: One point every day

Aggravated: One point every three days

Legend and Life

Like Beasts, Heroes are tied to the stories that they help create. But while Beasts hang precariously between the legends of their monstrous selves and the human lives they grew up with, Heroes are far more thoroughly tethered to the fairy tale roles they have been called to fulfill.

A Hero's Life represents his human nature, the part of him that is still the same mortal that he was before his heroic calling. In this regard, Heroes are not so different from the Beasts they fight, subject to all the same small quirks and traits that represent their last hold on humanity. In their Legends, however, Heroes are quite different. A Hero's Legend is his heroic nature as a slayer of monsters. While each Hero embodies his nature differently, every Hero's Legend drives him into direct and violent conflict with the Beasts he encounters and motivates him to seek out more to face. Heroic Legends tend to be far less varied than those of the Beasts they face, but even two Heroes with the Legend of "Warrior" might fulfill it in different ways. While Beasts can draw a strength of will from either their Legend or their Life, Heroes are far more restrained by their legendary selves.

A Hero's Life regains him one Willpower when he puts himself or his mission at significant risk to break with the narrative of the Hero and act in accordance with his more human self, but it can never allow him to regain more than one Willpower per scene. A Maternal Hero regains one Willpower when she stops to comfort one of her foe's victims rather than advancing on the Beast, a Cautious Hero regains one Willpower when he backs out of a dangerous situation rather than pursuing his foe into a dramatic conflict. A Hero cannot regain Willpower from minor or low-risk acts that align with his Life.

A Hero's Legend regains him one Willpower per scene where he takes action to fulfill his nature as a Hero. A Hunter Hero regains one Willpower when he follows a new lead to track down a local Beast, a Champion Hero regains one Willpower when she sends a Beast a challenge to one-on-one combat. A Hero's Legend completely refills his Willpower track whenever he puts himself at great risk to follow his story further. If the Hunter's lead requires him to break into a bank after hours, or the Champion enters a fight on unfamiliar terrain even knowing she's outmatched, the Hero fully refreshes his Willpower.

A Hero cannot avoid his Legend for long, even if he is somehow motivated to escape it. A Hero who has not recovered Willpower through his Legend during a day cannot recover Willpower through sleep that night: monsters chase him through his dreams, taunting and terrorizing him in echoes of the nightmares that first awoke his nature as a Hero. These dreams only get worse the

longer the Hero tries to avoid his story. A Hero who has not recovered Willpower through his Legend for a full week loses the ability to recover Willpower from any other source, and loses one Willpower per night until he once again acts in accordance with his Legend.

Heroic Tracking

A Hero without a monster to fight is nothing, but he is rarely without an opponent for long. Integral to every Hero is the ability to track monsters with superhuman precision, even when they hide their monstrous nature behind a deceptively harmless human forms.

Once per scene, at the cost of one Willpower, the Storyteller may roll a Hero's Wits + Investigation or Wits + Composure to determine if he can sense a Beast nearby, or if a Beast has activated a Nightmare or Atavism nearby within the last day. This ability does not manifest as a second sight or some other supernatural sense, instead the Hero simply gains an unshakable conviction in the truth revealed to him. Some might see this as a revelation from God or some other mystical source, others justify their new understanding as the result of their keen observational skills or the perfect subconscious application of inductive reasoning. Regardless of their beliefs, the resulting knowledge is the same from Hero to Hero:

Dramatic Failure: The Hero is convinced a Beast is present, but has no idea who or what it might be. This occurs whether or not a Beast is actually nearby.

Failure: The Hero gains no information about Beast activity in the area

Success: The Hero knows whether or not a Beast is currently present nearby, and whether a Beast has used a supernatural ability nearby within 24 hours. If he has sensed a particular Beast before, he can recognize their presence or the signs of their passing as identical to that which he has previously encountered.

Exceptional Success: The Hero also learns exactly how many Beasts are currently present, and can identify them as such on sight. This does not grant any particular ability to see through disguises, or to find Beasts who are otherwise hidden.

A Hero is always able to track the Beast who awakened him as if he had rolled an exceptional success, though he may still roll to find information on any other Beasts who may be present.

Heroic Tracking Bonuses and Penalties
All bonuses and penalties to this roll may be stacked

+1 for every Beast currently or recently present

+1 if the Hero has sensed any target Beast previously

+2 if any target Beast is at Satiety 3 or less

-1 if all target Beasts are at Satiety 7 or higher

Anathema

In myths and legends, the Hero often triumphs by finding the monster’s secret weakness, or by tricking it into making some fatal mistake that ends in its demise. In these stories, every Beast is irreparably flawed in some way, just waiting for the Hero to discover how. When the Hero uses a

monster's raging temper or vulnerable belly against it, he's only fulfilling the death-wish inherent to its very nature. This is the story that Heroes tell, and it gives them both courage and comfort in their fight.

The truth is that Beasts do not come with a built-in death wish just waiting for someone to find it and put them out of their misery. They are whole creatures, with a will to life as strong as any other. Heroes, however, have a way of changing that.

Anathema are the bane of monsters, the secret weaknesses and inhuman urges that can allow even a weak mortal to bring low a great Beast. Rather than being an intrinsic part of who she is, however, an Anathema is a thorn in the side of a Beast the Hero has placed there. Anathema draw monsters into the story that the Heroes want: a story about a monster's inevitable death, and a Hero's inevitable triumph. Once placed, an Anathema burrows itself into a Beast's nature and try to turn her into the monster that the Hero sees her as, whether she likes it or not.

Placing Anathema

Every Hero is capable of placing Anathema onto a Beast, though he is never exactly conscious of that power. To the Hero, placing an Anathema is discovering something that's always been there, with the revelation only further proving that he's destined to succeed in his fight.

To a Beast, Anathema are Tilts or Conditions that the Hero places in combat. While Heroes are always looking to draw Beasts towards their deaths, Beasts can usually defend themselves against Anathema without even having to think about it. When a Beast's Soul is content and restful, the Beast is too human for an Anathema to stick. If the Beast's Soul is active and starving, it can fend off Anathema without much conscious effort. A Beast whose is under the Ravenous, Starving, Gorged, or Human Conditions cannot be targeted with Anathema.

Between starvation and satiety, however, lies a middle ground where a Beast has neither her most human nor her most monstrous self to keep her safe. When a Hero makes an attack against a Beast who is under the Sated Condition, he may choose to enhance the attack with an attempt to weaken his foe. The decision to enhance the attack is made before the Hero rolls, and costs the Hero one Willpower. If the attack deals any damage to the Beast, she also falls under the effects of an Anathema, and the Hero may not recover that point of Willpower until that Anathema is gone or the Beast is dead.

The Hero who placed the Anathema becomes immediately aware of its exact nature and limitations, experiencing the knowledge as a sudden revelation about his opponent's true nature. Other Heroes may roll Wits + Empathy at any time while in the presence of a Beast in order to assess any Anathema under which she currently suffers. Success grants them the same knowledge as the original Hero, allowing them to take advantage of the monster's fatal flaw themselves.

Once an Anathema is placed, the targeted Beast also becomes immediately aware of it. To her, it feels like a sharp spike being driven between the scales of her Soul, or like a thick iron chain being draped around her neck and locked in place. The Anathema is a foreign, clinging thing, a constant presence that remains just uncomfortable enough to be impossible to forget. She knows exactly what the Anathema is and how it works, though this knowledge can do nothing to stop it from altering how she thinks and acts. A Beast has little difficulty in separating the things her Anathema makes her feel from her own thoughts and desires, but explaining to your Broodmates that an Anathema made you do it can be another matter entirely. An Anathema leaves no physical

or astral signs of its presence, and is undetectable via any mundane means once placed.

> Doublethink
>
> Sometimes a Hero's previous experience with the Beast might seem to contradict the new "facts" he learns when placing an Anathema. A Hero who has previously fought a monster inside a burning building, only to later "discover" the creature's intense fear of fire, might take a moment to wonder why the Beast didn't panic during their previous encounter. Fortunately for Heroes, their nature protects against such contradictions in thought, and their minds will always twist memories and facts around to find some convenient explanation for how their story remains true despite any evidence to the contrary.
>
> Convincing a Hero that he's wrong about how Anathema work, or about any other facet of a Beast's nature for that matter, would be a difficult task indeed. While not impossible, a Hero's nature fights relentlessly against any attempts to sway him from his unwavering certainty in all matters related to his quest. Add three Doors to any attempted Social maneuvering aimed at convincing a Hero to think well of a Beast, or to otherwise break with his nature. Furthermore, the Hero's nature will always try to reassert itself, making any successful changes inevitably temporary.

The Nature of Anathema

An Anathema is a special type of Tilt or Condition that can only be placed onto Beasts, which creates in them a fatal flaw that Heroes, and anyone else who learns of its existence, can exploit. The Anathema adapts to the Beast to whom it is attached, twisting some element of her nature or personality into an appropriate weakness. A hulking giant of a Beast might develop a secret weak spot in some inconvenient location, a sleek predator that stalks in the night might find himself pinned with an intense fear of crowing roosters, or a hoarding monster might suddenly find herself unable to control her desire for gold.

Exactly how much this weakness affects a Beast depends upon her current Satiety. A Beast who is Ravenous or Starving is protected by her monstrous nature: while her Soul remains active and alert, it can readily defend her against the foreign influence of the Anathema. Increasing Satiety lowers that guard, making the Condition's ill effects far harder to avoid. While being Gorged can prevent a Beast from being targeted by an Anathema in the first place, once one has its hooks into a Beast her sleeping Soul can do nothing to fight back against its effects. A well-fed Beast is at her most vulnerable to the Condition, until she manages to remove it. The exception to this is Beasts who have fed til their Souls fall completely asleep. Beasts who are under the Human Condition are temporarily immune to their Anathema's ill effects, though most would not consider this perk to be worth the problems associated with temporary humanity.

High Satiety effects occur when the Beast is Ravenous or Starving

Middle Satiety effects occur when the Beast is Sated

Low Satiety effects occur when the Beast is Gorged

All Anathema are Persistent Conditions: once a Beast is marked it's never easy to escape. As a Beast grows and changes, her potential weaknesses change as well. No Beast may suffer under more than a single Anathema at one time, but if she manages to remove one before being hit by

another, the second Anathema may be completely different from the first.

Example Anathema

Bane

Some Beasts theorize that vampires are only weak to fire and sunlight because some Hero managed to pin their predecessor with this Anathema in ancient times. A Beast suffering from a Bane is weak to a specific element or material that can be used as a weapon against him. The exact nature of the Bane varies, but it's never so common that acquiring an effective weapon to suit it poses some a challenge: generally, acquiring a Bane-weapon adds one to the Availability of a weapon. Wood, silver, and cold-forged iron are all common banes. As with all Anathema, Bane adapts itself to the nature of the Beast it targets, so a Beast whose Soul makes his home in a volcano is not likely to be stuck with a Bane of fire, nor would a dragon who hoards gems and precious metals be likely to develop a Bane for gold.

High Satiety: The Beast is exceptionally vulnerable to her Bane. Any attacks made against her using her Bane deal aggravated damage and are treated as armor piercing. If such attacks were already aggravated or armor piercing, they instead deal 2 more points of damage on a successful hit. If the Beast takes damage from her Bane, she suffers from the Stunned Tilt for one turn.

Middle Satiety: The Beast remains vulnerable, but can recover far more quickly from dangerous blows. She no longer suffers from the Stunned condition if hit by her Bane, but all other High Satiety effects still apply.

Low Satiety: The Beast's Bane becomes only a minor inconvenience when faced with her awakened Soul's immense power. The Bane no longer deals aggravated damage, though any bashing damage dealt with the bane is upgraded to lethal. All such attacks are still treated as armor piercing, or add two points to the weapon's damage rating if they were already armor piercing.

Beat: The Beast has her Bane used against her in combat.

Resolution: The Beast reduces her Satiety to 0 and holds it there for one full session.

Entrancement

Heroes see Beasts as having monstrous and incomprehensible desires that only go to prove how strange and corrupt their minds are. Entrancement creates an unnatural longing in a Beast for some particular type of person or object. A Beast might be made to lose all reason in face of solid gold, or find herself unable to resist the allures of a virgin maiden. Collectors targeted by Entrancement often find themselves more attached than ever to the contents of their Hoard, their innate Hunger twisted by the Anathema into an obsession that clouds their minds and robs them of their will. When her obsession is present, a Beast's attention becomes fixated and she finds herself unable to tear herself away from the object of her anathemic lust. The Beast feels no need to do anything in particular with the thing she craves, merely to be in its presence for as long as possible and to ensure that it comes to no harm.

High Satiety: The Beast is completely in the throes of her Entrancement. When the object of her obsession is present, the Beast receives a 3-die penalty to all rolls that do not involve examining

the object, protecting it, or trying to acquire it. She may take no actions to harm the object, and if it shows any signs of leaving or being taken away she must take immediate action to try and stop it. If the Beast is securely in possession of the object of her Entrancement, either by having it in her hands or by having it safely secured in a way that prevents any other party present from taking it, this penalty is reduced to 2 dice.

Middle Satiety: The Beast regains some of her self-control, reducing the penalty when the object of her Entrancement is present to 2 dice, and the penalty when it's safely secured to 1 die. She may still not directly harm the object without provocation, unless it's something capable of choosing to attack the Beast (such as a human or an animal) and it takes aggressive action first. In such cases, the Beast may fight back, but must aim to incapacitate the object as quickly and painlessly as possible. The Beast must still do everything in her power to prevent the object from leaving her presence.

Low Satiety: The Beast's Soul is able to temper her obsession even further, reducing the penalty when the object is present to 1 die. When she has safely secured the object, her rolls no longer receive a penalty. She still cannot attack the object unprovoked, but may suppress this instinct for a cost of 1 Willpower per turn. While her obsession is suppressed, the Beast may act as normal and takes no penalties, and if the object is removed from the area (or hidden sufficiently well that she believes it has been removed) then it ceases to entrance her until it is once more in her presence.

Beat: Acquiring or protecting object of her obsession causes the Beast significant harm.

Resolution: The Beast reduces her Satiety to 0 and holds it there for one full chapter.

Phobia

This Anathema pins a Beast with an intense panic reaction to some particular and specific trigger. This is never something so common as to be completely unavoidable in day-to-day life, but neither is it so specific and difficult to acquire that most Heroes can't get their hands on it with a little work. A Namtaru might develop an intense fear of her own reflection, or a Beast with a spiritual bent might develop a Phobia of a particular religious text. The exact nature of the Phobia depends on the Beast targeted, and is never something that would obviously cripple her human life or her bestial nature: a Predator Beast would not develop a Phobia of blood, and a Beast employed as a farmhand would not develop a Phobia for any of the animals she saw on a day-to-day basis.

High Satiety: When in the presence of her Phobia, the Beast is all but incapacitated by her terror. She takes a -3 modifier to all rolls that do not involve trying to escape from the Phobia, and her total initiative is always treated as 0, as she freezes up in fear. These penalties persist for three turns after the Phobia is no longer present, as the Beast takes time to compose herself after the Anathema-induced panic.

Middle Satiety: As the Beast's Soul reemerges, she regains some measure of control of herself in the presence of her Phobia. The roll penalties are reduced to -2, and she takes a -2 penalty to her total initiative. These penalties persist for one round after the Phobia is no longer present.

Low Satiety: Though still terrified, the Beast's Soul helps her turn her fear into rage. When in the presence of her Phobia, she takes a -2 modifier to all rolls that do not involve either trying to

escape from it or trying to destroy it. Her Initiative is no longer penalized, and all penalties disappear as soon as the Phobia is no longer present.

Beat: The Beast is exposed to her Phobia.

Resolution: The Beast reduces her Satiety to 0 and holds it there for one full chapter.

Rage

Heroes think of Beasts as nothing more than violent monsters, just waiting to be put down. This Anathema drags a Beast into that story, filling her mind with uncontrollable anger at the world around her. While a Beast suffers under Rage, her mind is clouded by vicious thoughts, hindering her ability to be anything other than the rabid animal from the Hero's story. Though she may still attempt to live her normal life, any conflict may bring all her anger welling back up to the surface.

High Satiety: The Beast sees nothing but red. She fails all Social rolls save for Intimidation rolls automatically. In combat, she must attack every turn unless she is incapable of reaching a valid target, in which case she must move to attempt to reach her next victim as quickly as she is able. In combat, the player may spend a point of Willpower to ignore the effects of Rage for one turn and allow the character to act freely, burying her rage temporarily when the need is great.

Middle Satiety: Though her anger is still strong, the Beast's Soul tempers it with cunning and guile. Her Social rolls, save for Intimidation rolls, receive a -3 modifier. In combat, if she spends a turn to take an action that is not an attack, all her rolls during that turn also receive a three-dice penalty. In combat, the player may spend one Willpower at any time for the character to ignore the effects of Rage until she is next dealt damage, at which point her anger re-asserts its self.

Low Satiety: The Soul is able to keep some of her Rage mostly in check. All the Beast's rolls, including Intimidation, receive a -1 modifier, as the Beast is neither quite able to be diplomatic nor safely able to be intimidating without unleashing all her pent-up anger. The combat penalties of the previous level are reduced to 1 die. The player may still spend a point of Willpower to ignore the effects of Rage until her character is next damaged. She may also spend a point of Willpower to ignore the effects of Rage for one scene in a social situation, though at the ST's discretion a clear insult or provocation might cause her character's anger to resurface.

Beat: The Beast's anger causes her to lash out in a social situation, or attack an obviously superior opponent, against her better judgment.

Resolution: The Beast increases her Satiety to 10 and holds it there for one full chapter.

Weak Spot

The Hero has discovered some small part of the Beast's body that is more susceptible to damage. The Beast suffering under this Anathema has a spot on her body that is particularly easy to harm. Regardless of all measures she might have in place to protect herself from attack, the Anathema does its best to keep her Weak Spot open and vulnerable.

High Satiety: The Beast's Weak Spot is a constant presence in her life. Any attacker who knows about it may choose to target it specifically, and does not take the usual penalties associated with

making a Specified Target attack (see p. XX). If the attacker hits a Beast's Weak Spot, the damage of his attack becomes aggravated. The Beast cannot cover up her Weak Spot, no matter how hard she tries it's somehow always accessible. Any armor bonuses the Beast is receiving do not apply to attacks which target her Weak Spot.

Middle Satiety: The Beast is able to keep her Weak Spot better protected, though it still provides a serious flaw in her defenses. An attacker must specifically aim to target the Weak Spot, and takes a -3 to his roll for the Specified Target attack regardless of where the Weak Spot is on the Beast's body. If he hits successfully, he still converts damage to aggravated and negates the Beast's armor from affecting that attack.

Low Satiety: The Beast's Weak Spot still causes her aggravated damage when hit, but she's able to defend it as thoroughly as she might any other part of her body. An attacker still takes the -3 for making the Specified Target attack, but the Beast may benefit from armor as normal when hit.

Beat: The Beast has her Weak Spot hit in combat, or it otherwise complicates her life.

Resolution: The Beast increases her Satiety to 10 and holds it there for one full chapter.

Weaponbound

While most Anathema drive a thorn of weakness into a Beast's hide, Weaponbound externalizes that weakness into a single weapon, empowered to kill the Beast to whom it is tied. Often this weapon is the Chosen Blade of the Hero who places this Anathema, but sometimes it's some other weapon of great fame or importance to the Beast. A famous sword kept in a nearby museum might suddenly become capable of living up to its legend, or a prototype gun being tested nearby might be bound to slay a Beast who's been protesting to stop the tests. Heroes who create or discover this Anathema, as well as the Beast upon whom it is placed, gain an instinctive awareness of where the empowered weapon is. The Beast gains a 3-die bonus when tracking her Weaponbound weapon, and she can recognize it on sight. Some Beasts find it useful to know where a Hero is at all times when he has their Anathema in hand, but the dangers inherent to such a situation far outweigh the benefits. The wielder of a Weaponbound weapon also gains a +3 bonus to his heroic tracking rolls against it's Beast if he is already a Hero, or the ability to make heroic tracking rolls as a Hero if he is not.

Though this Anathema is external to the Beast, it is still tied to her Soul and self. As normal, another Anathema may not be placed on a Beast suffering from Weaponbound.

High Satiety: Meeting her Weaponbound weapon in combat spells almost certain doom for a Beast whose Soul cannot help to defend her. Attacks made against the Beast with her Weaponbound weapon do not require a roll, all dice are converted into successes. Successful attacks also deal an additional two points of aggravated damage.

Middle Satiety: As her Soul awakens, the Beast is better able to defend against her Anathema's power. Attacks made against the Beast with her Weaponbound weapon gain the 8-again quality, and deal an extra two levels of lethal damage.

Low Satiety: While still dangerous, a Beast whose Soul is active can face her Weaponbound weapon with far less fear. Attacks made against the Beast with her Weaponbound weapon gain the 9-again quality, though they do no additional damage.

Beat: Someone attacks the Beast with her Weaponbound weapon.

Resolution: The Weaponbound weapon is destroyed.

> Make Your Own Anathema
>
> The example Anathema here are intended to model a wide variety of weaknesses, and Storytellers should feel free to modify the flavor of each example to suit the exact needs of their story and characters. However, some Beasts might manifest Anathema that work very differently. Storytellers should feel free to experiment with making their own Anathema, using the same guidelines as creating a custom Condition with the added step of creating High, Middle, and Low Satiety penalties.
>
> Anathema are used by Heroes to make Beasts feel weak and powerless against the story that the Heroes want. When designing your own Anathema, take care that you don't make your *players* feel the same way. Anathema are very powerful and long-lasting effects that can drastically change how a character acts, and if an Anathema removes a Beast's ability to use certain powers, her player loses some of his ability to affect the story being told. While this sort of struggle can make for a great game, and ultimately make the moment the Beast breaks free of the Anathema and reclaims her full self into a moment of real triumph, always consider whether or not playing under the Anathema's influence will still be entertaining. When in doubt, err on the side of giving the players more control, or better yet ask them before the game begins how much a mind-influencing Anathema will affect their fun.
>
> Since Anathema are Persistent Conditions, their resolutions should always be difficult to meet. Most of the Anathema listed here have a resolution condition of Satiety reaching either 0 or 10 and remaining there for an entire chapter. This isn't a requirement for all Anathema, but it's something every Beast can do that will complicate their lives in an interesting fashion. If you'd like to create your own resolution for an Anathema, make sure it follows similar principles.

Gifts

Though Heroes are all after one thing, they have many different ways of trying to achieve it. Some rely on brute strength, others use traps and tricks against their opponents, while still others learn to manipulate Anathema in new and dangerous ways. Perhaps the most insidious Heroes are those who learn to get inside the heads of ordinary mortals, spreading their hatred to those that have not been called to fight the Beasts. Heroic gifts are the defense mechanisms that Heroes develop to stand against the monsters of the world: the differences amongst Heroes are a direct result of the variety amongst Beasts, as different abilities are required to combat different threats.

Heroes cannot be grouped into Families or Hungers of their own, but because their powers are tied to the Beasts who create them certain patterns arise amongst Heroes created by particular types of Beasts. A Hero awakens with the gift associated with the Hunger of the Beast who made him, and one other gift appropriate to the nature of that particular Beast.

Champion's Endurance

Association: Ravager

When faced with monsters who can burn armies to the ground with a single breath, mere mortals cannot hope to get close enough to slay them. Some brave Heroes are able to survive even against these impossible odds, holding on through hardiness or sheer strength of will.

Heroes with Champion's Endurance act as if they are wearing [armor: 1] at all times when fighting a Beast. This bonus stacks with any other armor bonuses they have acquired.

Champion's Endurance may be purchased a second time. It then grants the Hero [armor: 2] instead.

Chosen Blade

Association: None

Slaying a mighty monster takes an equally mighty weapon, and the stories told of some blades rival even those of the Heroes who wield them. The truth behind those tales is that the Hero makes the weapon, imbuing it with a piece of her own legend to forge it into the perfect tool for her quest.

This gift enhances any one weapon that a Hero owns, whether it's an ancient broadsword passed down through generations or an AK-47 she bought off the internet last week. The weapon it affects is the one being wielded by the Hero at the time she acquires this gift, or the first weapon she acquires if she awakens as a Hero with this gift already purchased. To the Hero, it becomes immediately obvious that this particular weapon is special. Some Heroes come to believe that their Chosen Blade is a weapon from myths and legends, which can lead to some uncomfortable confrontations when multiple Heroes wielding the great Excalibur are forced to fight together. Other Heroes justify the extraordinary nature of their Blades through other stories, such as the power of the Beasts it's killed infusing it with incredible strength.

Whatever the story, the weapon gains +1 damage and removes 1 from its Initiative penalty. A Ranged weapon gains 10 feet to each of its ranges, while a Melee weapon reduces its Strength requirement by 1.

A Hero whose Chosen Blade is lost or destroyed loses this gift, and must slay another Beast to re-acquire it and earn a new heroic weapon.

Kinslayer

Association: None

Though Heroes are created by Beasts alone, some find themselves called to hunt down any and every creature that might call themselves kin to such monsters. Most such Heroes believe other supernatural creatures to be the vile minions who serve under Beast overlords, though an encounter with an ancient vampire or raging werewolf might go a long way to altering a Hero's perceptions of that hierarchy.

A Hero with Kinslayer may treat any supernatural creature who has the Family Ties Condition as a Beast for the purposes of Heroic Tracking and gifts. The Hero does not need to be aware of this

connection for Kinslayer to take effect, he may target any creature present and his gifts and tracking will function if they are under the appropriate Condition.

A Hero cannot place Anathema on a monster who is not a Beast, nor benefit from the monster's death by gaining a new gift.

Legendary Hunter

Association: None

While all Heroes can sense the presence of nearby monsters, some of them have honed this ability even further, allowing them to pinpoint a Beast in almost any circumstance.

Heroes with Legendary Hunter receive a three-die bonus to all Heroic Tracking rolls, and are able to achieve an exceptional success with only three successes. Such Hero also gains a 3-die bonus to any rolls used to find a Beast who is attempting to hide or disguise herself, through mundane or supernatural means.

Loremaster

Association: None

Though Heroes are usually men and women of action, some find strength against the darkness amids dusty books and hidden legends. Stories are told of cunning Heroes who consult ancient literature in order to discover the secret weaknesses of the monsters that they could not otherwise defeat. Armed with the knowledge of that which is Anathema to their foes, the Heroes return to deal the fatal blow.

Once a Hero with Loremaster has encountered a particular Beast, he gains the ability to place an Anathema on that Beast from a distance. A heroic doctor might learn how a Beast's secretly monstrous biology might be exploited, while a more supernaturally-minded Hero might pour over musty old tombs in search of stories about how other such monsters were defeated in ages past. Of course, this "research" does not actually turn up information on a Beast's innate weaknesses, since Anathema are not innate, but rather the Hero creates an Anathema through what his findings tell him to be true.

The Hero may begin to place an Anathema through Loremaster at any time, but if the Beast he's targeting is neither vulnerable to Anathema nor currently under an Anathema the Hero knows immediately that his current efforts will be fruitless. If the Beast is currently vulnerable to Anathema, the seed of an Anathema is placed, and once the Hero completes the Extended Action the Anathema will be placed regardless of the Beast's then-current Satiety. The Hero must then spend one day in the pursuit per dot of Lair his chosen target possesses.

Unfortunately for the Hero, once he begins creating an Anathema his victim becomes aware of the attempt. The Beast gains no particular ability to track the Hero, but does learn that there's an attempt to place an Anathema on her from a distance that is not yet complete. Exactly how she uses this knowledge is up to her, but if the Hero is killed before he completes his endeavor the Anathema seed vanishes completely.

An unfinished Anathema does not protect the Beast from having another Anathema placed on

her. If the target Beast falls under a different Anathema in the middle of the Hero's attempt to research one, the Loremaster Hero learns the nature of the Beast's current Anathema at the end of his Action instead of placing a new one of his own.

If the target Beast is already under an Anathema when the Hero begins his action, his attempt takes only one scene per dot of the Beast's Lair. Success means the Hero learns the nature of the Beast's current Anathema. The Beast is not made aware of this use of Loremaster.

Open Gate

Association: Collector

After a great battle, when a Beast has retreated back to her home to nurse her wounds, some Heroes find a way to follow her back to her Lair and finish what they started. A Hero with Open Gate is capable of opening a doorway directly into the Lair of a Beast.

The Hero may attempt to open a Primordial Pathway into a Beast's Lair from one of two sorts of places: the location where a Beast formed one of her Chambers, or any location that such a Beast has previously used to form a Pathway to one of her Chambers within the past week. The Hero treats these two types of locations as the same; it's the echo of the Beast's own Pathways that allows him to form his own, not the resonance between worlds that the Beast herself uses. Open Gate does not give the Hero any particular ability to sense where these connections exist, that information must be tracked down by other means, and any attempts to use Open Gate in an invalid location fail automatically.

Dice Pool: Wits + Resolve + Occult vs the Beast's Lair rating (if entering a shared Chamber, use the highest Lair rating)

Action: Instant

Cost: One Willpower

Roll Results:

Dramatic Failure: The Pathway does not open, and the Hero has damaged its potential connection to the Lair. The Hero may not attempt to open a Pathway from this location until a Beast has once again used it to connect to a the Primordial Dream.

Failure: The Pathway does not open

Success: The Pathway successfully opens, and lasts for the Hero's Resolve in turns.

Exceptional Success: The Pathway successfully opens, and lasts for the rest of the scene.

While open, the Pathway acts identically to one opened by a Beast, merging the external world and the Lair temporarily into one space [see page XX]. A Hero with Open Gate must force his way through Burrows as usual, but if he succeeds he may take along any mortal followers under the Swayed condition without them having to make the roll themselves.

A Hero may not use Open Gate to create Pathways between anywhere but the physical world and the Lair of a Beast, even if a Beast has recently opened a Pathway to another location. While inside the Lair, the Beast may attempt to leave by using Open Gate again. Successfully opening a Pathway from within a Chamber will always create a connection between it and the location from which a Beast last accessed it from the physical world, or to the location where it was

created if no Beast has yet accessed it from elsewhere.

Saint's Whisper

Association: Nemesis

Even the bravest Hero understands that outright combat isn't always practical. When a Hero encounters a Beast in the middle of a crowded mall, or while surrounded by hapless children, he might not be able to strike even if the Beast seems weak. But a particularly righteous Hero can engage a Beast without the need for blade or bow, chiding the creature with his words and drawing out the monster's secret weaknesses while her guard is down.

Heroes with Saint's Whisper gain the ability to place Anathema on vulnerable Beasts through conversing with them. To do so, a Hero must engage in a scene of meaningful social interaction with his opponent, which must include the Hero denouncing the Beast as evil or monstrous in some way. As the Hero does so, the Beast feels the Anathema creeping into her Soul, and faces two options: physically attack the Hero immediately and end the Hero's attempt, or be placed under the Anathema. A clever Hero will try to use Saint's Whisper in situations where the Beast cannot leave the conversation or lash out, such as approaching her at her workplace or in a public space with plenty of witnesses. Even if the Beast avoids the Anathema through violence, the consequences of her "outburst" may be problem enough on their own.

As normal, the Hero learns exactly how the Anathema he has placed works, often justifying his new understanding of the Beast's secret weakness as something she's let slip during their conversation. Anathema placed in this way are identical to standard Anathema, and a Beast may still only suffer under one Anathema at once.

True King

Association: Tyrant

When he finds himself outnumbered or outmatched, a Hero can raise up an army to aid him in his quest. Whether they are trained warriors or merely an angry mob, a Hero's words can charm all sorts of people into action even against the most terrifying of Beasts.

True King allows a Hero to invest his words with the power of the story he embodies, drawing ordinary people into his quest. Once per day, at the cost of one Willpower, the Hero may attempt to explain his purpose to those around him and convince them to his cause. A Hero might explain to a group of concerned citizens that the mayor is a monster who needs to be killed before they can be safe, or claim that there's a huge treasure hidden deep in the woods that he'll share if they help him defeat the horrible creature that guards it.

If he can make people to pay attention for a few minutes so he can make his argument, all mortal audience members believe what the Hero has told them and gain the Swayed condition. The duration of this condition depends on how powerful the Hero has become, but he may reassert his control over his followers while they are still Swayed by paying an additional Willpower in their presence, resetting the condition's duration.

This gift may be purchased a second time. Once repurchased, the Hero no longer needs to spend several minutes explaining himself before he can convince an audience. This allows the Hero an

attempt to convert mortals to his cause in more dangerous circumstances, such as swaying a police officer while in the midst of being arrested, or swaying a Beast's mortal friend before the Beast can convince her to just walk away. Someone who is turned using this quicker method remains under the condition for only for one hour per Success, rather than one day.

> New Condition: Swayed
>
> The character is under the influence of the Hero's story, convinced that he should follow the Hero loyally and help in his quest. The Swayed character will attempt to help the Hero who placed this Condition however possible, and cannot take aggressive action towards said Hero.
>
> This Condition can only be applied to mortal humans with no supernatural gifts or abilities, it can never affect a Hero, a Beast, or any other supernatural creature. Should a human under its effects become a supernatural creature, Swayed is Resolved immediately.
>
> **Resolution:** One day passes for each gift the Hero possesses.
>
> **Beat:** N/A

Vanquisher's Strength

Association: Predator

Some Beasts tower over those around them, with limbs like tree trunks and hides like granite. Such monsters are so tough that no weak mortal could ever hope to harm them, or wrestle with them in combat. Heroes overcome such enemies by being stronger still, wielding the might of ten men with their every blow.

The Hero gains a permanent +1 modifier to any one of Brawl, Firearms, or Weaponry. When in conflict against a Beast, the Hero may also treat his Strength score as two higher. This gift may be purchased a second time to stack this bonus.

Warrior's Speed

Association: None

Even the largest Beasts are often exceptionally nimble, able to move with supernatural speeds across the battlefield or dart out of sight in the blink of an eye. Heroes face such deft opponents with great speed and cunning of their own, matching pace with their monstrous opponents.

When in conflict with a Beast, a Hero with Warrior's Speed treats his speed as 10 higher, and may use the higher of his Dexterity or Wits to determine his Defense. At the beginning of a conflict, he may choose to forgo his own Initiative roll and instead treat his Initiative total as equal to that of the Beast with the highest Initiative total, after all supernatural bonuses and penalties are applied. Break the tie between the Hero and the Beast for first action as if the two had used identical Initiative enhancement powers and rolled identical Initiative enhancement results.

This gift may be purchased a second time. Once repurchased, the Hero may add an additional +5 to his speed while in conflict with a Beast, and treat his Dexterity or Wits as 2 higher for all combat purposes when in conflict with a Beast, including for purposes of breaking Initiative ties.

Advancement

When a Hero is created as a recurring antagonist in a campaign, or is being built face down a group of experienced Beasts, the Storyteller should hand him appropriate Attributes, Skills, and other assets as necessary to challenge the player characters. Heroes learn new skills and attributes through practice and training, but as Storyteller-controlled characters they do not track Beats or gain experience.

Heroic gifts are never learned through practice. Instead, every time a Hero successfully kills a Beast, he immediately acquires a new gift. This new ability is usually related to the conflict won or the Beast slain, either strengthening the Hero against similar threats or reflecting an increase in the skills he demonstrated in battle. Gifts can only be purchased once, unless they include an option for being repurchased.

A Storyteller creating a Hero should assign him any gifts that she feels are appropriate for the challenge the Hero is intended to create, and then work out the history that led to him acquiring those gifts. There's no need to go into great detail, but a Hero with several gifts has always killed quite a few Beasts to get there, and has probably left some stories about how he hunts that a motivated group of player characters might uncover. If a Beast is killed by a Hero during play, the Hero should be given a new gift that feels appropriate to the Beast killed.

When a group of Heroes work together to take down a Beast, only the Hero who strikes the killing blow earns a new Gift. No other member of the group gains any benefit, regardless of how much they assisted in the conflict. Inexperienced Heroes might not understand this connection, but it doesn't take very long before they start to connect the glory of the kill with an increase in strength and skill. Heroes who have formed groups will sometimes grant the right of the kill to the newest, and thus weakest, member of their group.

Heroes who already possess at least a dozen gifts sometimes fail to acquire a new one after a kill. Instead, their natural lifespan increases, sometimes by centuries at a time. It's very uncommon to encounter a Hero who has survived for more than a few years at best, but those who do manage victory after victory can become nearly immortal. There are stories amongst Beasts about legendary Heroes from ancient tales still roaming the earth, killing every monster they meet. Some Beasts even suggest that these Heroes possess unusual gifts of great power, gifts gained from slaying impossibly powerful monsters or by studying the flow of history itself. Whether there's any truth to these stories is difficult to uncover, as any Beast who encounters such a Hero would be unlikely to escape with her life.

Example Heroes

Thaddeus Pearson

"Never fear, milady. I've come to kill this foul Beast!"

Background: Thaddeus has spent his entire life blaming his problems on other people. Coming from a middle class suburban home, he was told all through his childhood that he was special. Whenever the real world failed to reinforce this, he retreated into whatever fiction he could find that would remind him that bookish kids like him would eventually inherit the earth, because they deserved it. Thaddeus graduated from a good college with excellent grades and very few friends, and went right to work behind a desk at a mid-sized corporation's programming

department.

Once it became clear to Thaddeus that he was destined to work a mediocre job for the rest of his life, the resentment started. He'd been promised so much more than this: vast riches, adoring fans, a beautiful wife who would fawn over his genius mind. Instead he was living as the model of mediocrity. Everything that went wrong was a personal slight against him: the pub was out of fries because the waiter had it out for him, his car wouldn't start because the mechanic who fixed it was clearly an idiot who'd resented Thaddeus's obviously superior intellect. Shortly after one of his coworkers got promoted to management (probably because she'd slept with the boss, the bitch) he began to have nightmares about being chased down by a horrible horned monster. They went on for weeks until one day he woke up with a revelation: they weren't just dreams. There was a real monster out there, and it was his destiny to destroy it.

He killed his former coworker two weeks later. It was pure luck, catching her unaware at the end of a long day before she had any idea he was a Hero. Her death filled him with a rush of power, and left him more certain than ever of his calling. This was the life he'd been promised, full of action and certainly with great rewards at the end. All he had to do was kill every monster he could get his hands on, and everything would be exactly as he'd always imagined.

Description: Thaddeus is a tall, skinny man in his mid thirties, clean-shaven with pale skin and neatly cut hair. During office hours Thaddeus wears business casual polo shirts and slacks, the sort of person you'd completely overlook in a crowd. While out hunting monsters, he wears a poorly fitted trenchcoat and a black trilby hat. Thaddeus considers himself a modern gentleman, and speaks with an unnecessarily verbose vocabulary dotted with "chivalric" language he's mostly picked up from fantasy movies.

Storytelling Notes: Thaddeus can't accept that he's capable of making mistakes, or that anything wrong with his life might be his fault. If he gives them no other credit, he's at least never one to underestimate the intellect of a Beast he's facing: surely a man of his great skill and mind would never be called to exterminate anything but the most challenging and clever of monsters. He believes that all Beasts are out to get him personally, and that any action from them is part of a cunning and evil scheme. Thaddeus always attributes to malice what others might attribute to stupidity, personal interest, or just sheer coincidence.

Thaddeus has seen and read a great number of fantasy movies and books, and is inclined towards quoting them when he thinks it will sound suitably dramatic. He identifies strongly with the protagonists of these films, and believes that his life will eventually work out the same way. All he needs to do is save the day and he'll be rewarded with adoring women and riches beyond compare. He craves the public recognition and adoration he feels he deserves for his heroic deeds, but has enough sense to know that admitting to what he's done will get him reported to the police by any normal person. His Life is *Professional*: despite everything that's happened to him, Thaddeus worries about losing his job or looking bad at work if anyone finds out what's going on. Still, if someone expresses interest in the sort of heroic archetype he feels he embodies, Thaddeus is inclined towards bragging.

Thaddeus's Legend is *Warrior*, he approaches problems with a sword in hand and little concern for anything but the black and white morality he sees in. Anyone who assumes him to be comically inept thanks to his delusions has made a dangerous mistake: Thaddeus is a murderer who believes he's doing the right thing, and he won't hesitate to use violence and torture to get what he wants. His Legend encourages him to seek out confrontation through direct combat

rather than attempting to be subtle, and he has been practicing with a variety of weapons to make this approach easier. His first kill wasn't nearly glorious enough for Thaddeus's tastes, and he intends to rectify this with his second.

Life: Professional

Legend: Warrior

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (5 vs Beasts), Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer (Programming) 3, Investigation 3, Occult 3, Science 1

Physical Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny (Security Systems) 2, Weaponry (Swords) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Defensive Combat (Weaponry) 1, Encyclopedic Knowledge 2, Eye for the Strange 2, Fleet of Foot 1, Iron Skin 2, Resources 2

Gifts: Vanquisher's Strength, Loremaster

Health: 7

Willpower: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Defense: 6

Initiative: 4

Armor: 1 (Bashing only)

Notes: Thaddeus uses Intelligence + Academics for Loremaster, researching monsters in fiction for lessons he can apply to the real thing.

Marian Jones

"It's filth like this that lets the devil in. Clean up your act or I'll clean it for you."

Background: Marian used to be a very nice woman. She came from a good family, got herself a good education, married young, and settled into a quiet suburban home to raise two kids. As a stay-at-home parent, she busied herself volunteering for her church in between managing her household and making sure her kids got to every practice and recital on time, just to keep herself busy. She had a large circle of friends, and if she was a little vain about her appearance and a little frivolous with her husband's money, it never got in the way of her good works or got them into any serious debt. Life was a bit repetitive, but Marian was content with her happy, helpful little life.

Everything changed when her youngest child turned seventeen. He started acting distant and withdrawn, staying out late and keeping secrets from his parents. Marian tried every method in every parenting book she could get her hands on, but nothing seemed to help her get through to

him again and find out what was wrong. Marian started having nightmares nearly every night, nightmares about a slick, creeping monster made of insects and cold bile.

Finally, one night she woke up in a cold sweat with a terrible revelation: her son wasn't her son anymore. Someone, or something, had replaced him with the monster from her dreams. Underneath his black t-shirts and pale flesh were a hundred crawling centipedes with stinging mandibles and acidic flesh, just waiting to destroy her home and everything she held dear.

He had to die.

Marian's first attempt was rash and clumsy, she didn't think he'd put up so much of a fight. The Beast escaped out the window, and she was left with a broken arm and a lot of explaining to do. She burned her bridges by telling her husband the truth of what happened, then managed to withdraw their shared life's savings in cash before her could get her into therapy. Marian saw her Heroic duty through the lens of her faith: she had been sent on a mission from God to destroy the monsters of the world, nothing else in her life mattered next to His purpose for her.

That all happened twenty years ago. Marian has been roaming the world ever since, tracking down every monster she can lay her hands on as she passes. She's still looking for her son, even after twenty years he's escaped her grasp. She feels in her gut that he must still be alive. Her hate for the thing he's become has only grown over the years, and she will do whatever it takes to see him dead.

Description: Marian is in her early sixties, but well preserved for her age. Her blond hair is pale enough to disguise her grays, and she cuts it regularly to keep it out of the way. She shuns any form of makeup or jewelry, believing that such frivolities lead to temptation and corruption. When necessary, she's very good at mimicking the mannerisms of the sheltered housewife she used to be, all smiles and polite conversation. Dressed in a floral top and wide-brimmed hat, she looks like a grandmother out for a walk. When commanding other Heroes or hunting down a Beast herself, she dons an impressive array of military grade body armor and barely legal self-defense weapons. Her Chosen Blade is a vintage military-grade assault rifle, still stained with the blood of the first Beast it killed, but its size and conspicuous appearance force her to carry a more conventional pistol instead whenever civilian attention would hurt the mission at hand.

Storytelling Notes: As an experienced Hero with multiple kills under her belt, Marian is a challenging opponent for a young group of Beasts. She's likely to have other, newer Heroes working under her in a sort of apprentice arrangement, though such alliances rarely last long in the face of Heroic egos. Despite her physical prowess, Marian has stayed alive for as long as she has by avoiding direct combat whenever possible. She prefers to approach her targets when they're alone and already weakened, and often tips off other Heroes about a nearby Beast if she thinks it's too risky to face it herself. She always considers the bigger picture, and will let one Beast go if she thinks he'll lead her to an entire brood.

Marian's Legend is Zealot: she is a Holy warrior and refuses to waiver in her beliefs even in the face of overwhelming evidence. She considers all supernatural creatures to be roughly the same. Vampires, mages, changelings, if it's magic then it's pure evil and deserves to be killed. Even mundane humans who spend too much time around monsters make her list if she's in a bad mood. Marian makes a direct connection between monsters and sinfulness, and views promiscuity, sexual deviancy, drug use, and just about any other activity that rubs her the wrong way as a first step towards becoming a tool of evil. Her Life is Peacemaker: despite her actions

some part of her is still the community-minded volunteer from her younger days who wants to see everyone cooperate and work together. It's this shred of team spirit that's helped Marian become so successful at organizing and directing other Heroes, and which makes her zealotry so dangerous.

When it comes to her son, some people assume that she's a grieving mother at heart who'll break down at the sight of her child's face and lose some measure of her conviction. They're quite wrong. Marian believes that the Beast her son became is the root of all evil, and is convinced that killing him will somehow turn the tide of her fight against the monsters once and for all. There's nothing Marian won't do to see him dead, including manipulating younger Beasts as bait or as tracking animals rather than killing them outright.

Life: Peacemaker

Legend: Zealot

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Occult 2 (Beasts)

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Firearms 4 (Rifles), Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2 (Lies), Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Anonymity 3, Contacts (Heroes) 1, Dragonslaying 2, Resources 2, Small Unit Tactics 2

Gifts: Champion's Endurance, Chosen Blade, Legendary Hunter, Saint's Whisper, True King, Warrior's Speed

Health: 8

Willpower: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 11 (21 versus Beasts)

Defense: 6 (7 versus Beasts)

Initiative: 7

Armor: 1/3 (2/4 versus Beasts)

Chosen Blade: Damage: 5 Range: 210/410/810 Clip: 5+1 Initiative: 2, Size: 3

Notes: Marian usually has a small cadre of Swayed mortal followers with combat experience under her command at any given time, assume each has Weaponry, Brawl, or Firearms at 3 or higher and carry one or more weapons appropriate to their skills. When fighting with allies, she prefers to hang back and coordinate, moving forwards only when a kill against a Beast seems imminent.

Sample Heroes

The following Heroes should serve as examples of what your brood should expect to come up

against. Feel free to use them as is to challenge starting players or draw inspiration from them to create powerful, compelling Heroes for more experienced Beasts.

Sleeping Beauty

Background: Heroes on the hunt have seen glimpses of a young warrior queen in their dreams, pointing the way to the Lair of their quarry. When they get to the creature's Lair, she's there, fighting beside them to vanquish the creature. She says she is sleeping somewhere in the real world and beseeches the Heroes she allies with to find her. To date, none of the Children or the Heroes who have encountered her can track her down.

If they did, they would be surprised at what they see: a sickly teenage girl named Melanie, trapped in a coma for the past two years. Doctors and nurses regularly check her bedside, as do worried family members. Her mother spends the entire window of visiting hours sitting with her daughter, either knitting or working on crosswords to pass the time. Her father drops in when he can. They have no idea what caused their presumably healthy daughter to befall such a fate, and the doctors are equally stumped.

Melanie fell into the coma after an enterprising Collector sought her out to take God-knows-what from her in order to feed his own hoard. He never got what he wanted; instead of cowering, she gave chase, following him right back to his Lair where she killed him. When she tried to make it back to the real world, however, something went horribly wrong. Her body made it back, but her soul remains in the Primordial Dream, just out of reach. Still, she learns a great deal from the other Heroes she encounters, though she has yet to chase a Beast back out of the Primordial Dream into the mortal world. Through their guidance and a heavily-assisted kill, Melanie does not even need a physical presence to strike out at her enemies.

With each victory, Melanie grows stronger, and in her hospital bed, she twitches in her sleep, her hands clenching into fists and unclenching. Her body shows remarkably few signs of atrophying despite the coma, and it gives her parents and doctors hope that one day they may see Melanie darling daughter walk and smile again.

They have no idea what keeps Melanie preserved through her coma. When Melanie awakens, she will take everything away from the creatures who took away years of her life.

Description: In the physical world, Melanie is a gaunt, delicate slip of a girl with pale, dull, lifeless hair and glazed-over eyes. She rests in a hospital bed, wearing a thin hospital gown that does very little to protect against the elements. Then again, she doesn't need to worry about that.

In the Primordial Dream, her hair is a lustrous blonde mane and her eyes are a clear ice blue. Her armor gleams with light reflected from some unknown source.

Storytelling Notes: Melanie does not fully understand what has happened to her, or how to free herself. She knows that her body is asleep somewhere, but doesn't know if she can get back to it, or how. She is young and scared, and likely not aware of how long she has been separated from her body. Still, she's smart and determined, even if she assumes that any Hero she meets will help her get back to her body.

Melanie's Life is *Comatose*; since she is stuck in a coma, she can't do much else in the physical world. She's trapped between worlds, and can't reach her body to fulfill her destiny as a Hero. If anyone who wishes to do her bodily harm finds her body, she has little to no recourse to defend herself.

Her Legend as a *Dreamer* stems from the way she *can* manifest her full potential and fight what she sees as the good fight. Dreams are where anyone can be who they want to be. In her mind, Beasts do the most damage in dreams; humanity's inner demons trouble dreams enough without the Begotten cultivating and preying on those fears. With her powers as a Hero, she can follow the Children from dreams back to their Lair, the place where they can be who they truly are, and show them how it feels to be the victim.

Life: Comatose

Legend: Dreamer

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 3 (Primordial Dream)

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3 (Finding Insecurities), Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1 (Putting On A Brave Face)

Merits: Danger Sense, Indomitable, Meditative Mind, Sympathetic

Gifts: Open Gate, Saint's Whisper

Health: 6

Willpower: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 3

Initiative: 5

Armor: n/a

World of Darkness

The Children of the Dark Mother are not alone in the World of Darkness. Theirs is a strange and twisted family tree, with branches that stretch through realms both visible and invisible. The Dark Mother is more than the mother of Beasts, she is the mother of the first monsters to plague humanity from the shadows. Those "first monsters" include Father Wolf, the first inhuman vampires, the monstrous precursors to the Gentry, and all of the other pre-human abominations that have, slowly, taken recognizable forms. Or so the Beasts believe.

It's a bold claim, and one that many scholars of the occult dispute. Certainly, on the surface a half-spirit wolfman and an immortal mummy seem to have little in common. In answer, Beasts point to the fact that human beings have an instinctive response to the supernatural. Sometimes it's very overt and supernatural, as with the Quiescence Curse that Supernal magic invokes, werewolves' Lunacy, or the aura of Disquiet that follows Prometheans. Other times it's more

subtle: the so-called ‘hunter response,” the fact that most people can’t see the gears of the God-Machine, even the general “live and let live” attitude that people subconsciously develop. Either way, Beasts believe that points to common ancestry.

The Crossover Chronicle

Because they see the monstrous denizens of the World of Darkness as “little siblings,” Beasts are ideally suited for use in a crossover chronicle. Whether that’s bringing a Beast into your **Vampire: The Requiem** chronicle or an Uratha into your **Beast** chronicle, whether you’re looking for new allies or new antagonists, this section gives you the guidelines you’ll need to use **Beast: The Primordial** with the other games in the **World of Darkness** line.

> Supernatural Tolerance
>
> Throughout this section, you’ll see references to “Supernatural Tolerance.” This is a catchall term for the various Traits, analogous to Lair, that measure raw supernatural power:

CHART ME SIDEBARDEUS

Creature Type	Supernatural Tolerance
Vampire	Blood Potency
Werewolf	Primal Urge
Mage	Gnosis
Promethean	Azoth
Changeling	Wyrd
Sin-Eater	Psyche
Mummy	Sekhem
Demon	Primum

DONE CHARTING

Mixed Troupe or Odd One Out

When approaching the crossover chronicle, the first decision you have to make as a Storyteller is whether the game will feature a mixed troupe (e.g. a vampire, two mages, and three Beasts), or whether the troupe will predominantly belong to one game line with a single exception (e.g. a brood of Beasts with a single vampire member or a Promethean throng with a Beast ally). Either approach has its advantages and its drawbacks: the mixed troupe allows players to create exactly the character they want, but it can be difficult to pull thematic coherence out of the conflicting drives and motivations of different character types. Odd man out chronicles benefit from a stronger thematic focus and the ability to use the “off” character as a “proud nail;” an element that, by standing in contrast to the rest of the story, highlights or underscores its themes. Along with that, you have to take care that you don’t use your odd one out’s themes only in the service of the rest of the troupe’s characters — that robs the character of agency and makes for a less fun game.

Clash of Wills

Sometimes, two supernatural powers clearly oppose one another. If the normal systems for the

powers fail to resolve this, such as when two vampires attempt to Dominate the same person or a werewolf's heightened senses try to pierce a changeling's Contract of Smoke, use a Clash of Wills.

All characters using conflicting powers enter a contested action. The dice pool for the Clash of Wills varies slightly from creature type to creature type, but always includes the character's Supernatural Tolerance Trait. Characters whose supernatural powers are rated by dot level (e.g. vampiric Disciplines, mage Arcana, changeling Contracts) add their rating in the highest-rated power used in the activation pool. Characters whose powers are based on a secondary Trait (e.g. werewolves' Renown or mummies' Pillars) add the power's relevant secondary Trait.

Beasts, lacking both dot-ranked powers and secondary Traits driving their powers, roll Lair + their highest Resistance Attribute.

Ties reroll until one player has accrued more success than all others. The effect invoked by that player's character wins out and resolves as usual, while all others fail. Victory of one power in a clash does not mean the immediate cancellation of the others, save in cases where only one power can possibly endure (such as competing mental control).

Characters may spend Willpower to bolster the contested roll, but only if they are physically present and aware that powers are clashing. Certain powers, such as those with exceptionally long durations, are more enduring in a clash. Day-long (or night-long) effects add one die to the clash roll, weeklong effects add two, month-long three; and effects that would last a year or longer add four.

Example: A werewolf, Kyle, and a Beast, Anika, have come into conflict. Kyle is attempting to use Feet of Mist (the Gift of Cunning Evasion) to escape Anika. However, Anika has the Predatory Awareness Atavism, which hones her senses to preternatural levels and allows her to track damn near anything, thus the two characters enter a Clash of Wills. Kyle has three dots of Cunning Renown and a Primal Urge of four, so his player will roll seven dice. Anika has five dots of Lair, and her highest Resistance Attribute is her Composure of four dots, for a total of nine dice. Since Anika has expended Satiety to invoke the most powerful effect of her Atavism, which comes with a 24 hour duration, her player adds one additional die to her pool, for a total of ten dice. Neither character can spend Willpower on the roll because Kyle isn't on the scene, and Anika has no way of knowing Kyle has masked his trail with spirit magic. Both players roll; Kyle's player gets three successes, while Anika's rolls an impressive five. Anika's Predatory Awareness thus wins out over Kyle's Feet of Mist, and Anika can track Kyle normally. To all other characters, Kyle's trail remains imperceptible.

Second Edition

As of the publication of **Beast: The Primordial**, four of the **World of Darkness** game lines have been updated to the Second Edition rules **Beast** uses: **Vampire: The Requiem**, **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, **Mage: The Awakening** and **Promethean: The Created**. In addition, **Demon: The Descent** is written with the second edition rules in mind, and **Hunter: The Vigil** features an abbreviated rules update in the sourcebook **Mortal Remains**. This section provides quick and dirty guidelines for running the first edition **World of Darkness** games with Second Edition rules. Consider any rules presented here superseded by the rules in a full Second Edition core rulebook.

Character Creation and Advancement

Purchasing the fifth dot of an Attribute, Skill, or Merit does not cost two points at character creation. All characters should likewise have two short-term and one long-term Aspirations, as described on p. XX.

In the second edition rules, Virtue and Vice are freeform, rather than chosen from a list. Moreover, just as they replace Integrity with a unique Trait, most supernatural beings have alternate Traits for Virtue and Vice. It's the Storyteller's call whether to come up with their own custom Virtue and Vice analogues for mummies, Sin-Eaters and the like or stick with the basic Traits. Remember also that the Virtuous and Vice-Ridden Merits (see p. XX) are available.

Most Merits can be used as-is, but if a particular Merit has been updated to Second Edition rules, you should use that version instead. You can find common Merits in Chapter Four, or in the **World of Darkness Second Edition Rules Update**, available for free from http://rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product/114078/World-of-Darkness-GodMachine-Rules-Update.

LINKIFY THE URL ABOVE IN THE PDF EDITION, PLEASE

Merits from the **World of Darkness Rulebook, First Edition** that are *not* included in either of those sources should not be chosen, as they are obsolete or subsumed into other Merits.

Finally, any Merit that grants multiple attacks per turn in combat needs to be changed. Replace any reference to multiple attacks with the following:

As long as your character has her Defense available to her and is not Dodging, any character coming into arm's reach takes 1B damage. This damage continues once per turn as long as the enemy stays within range and occurs on the enemy's turn. If you spend a point of Willpower, this damage becomes 2B until your next turn.

Breaking Points and Integrity Analogues

In the first edition rules, losing Morality (or its equivalent Trait, such as Humanity, Harmony, or Clarity) was a two-step process: first a degeneration roll, followed by a second roll to see if the character suffered a "derangement." Second Edition replaces this with a single breaking point roll. Use the "hierarchy of sins" from your First Edition rulebook, but replace the degeneration rules with the following:

When a character experiences a breaking point, the player rolls Resolve + Composure with a modifier based on the character's Integrity analog rating:

CHART ME!

Integrity Analog	Modifier
8–10	+2
7–6	+1
5–4	0
3–2	–1
1	–2

STOP CHARTING ME!

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's world view has been damaged, perhaps beyond repair. The character suffers from traumatic stress. Lose a dot of Integrity analog and choose from the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Broken, Fugue, or Madness. Also, take a Beat.

Failure: The character's world view has been shaken and he probably questions his sense of self, his ability to relate to people, his own moral worth, or his sanity. Lose a dot of Integrity analog and choose one of the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked.

Success: The character has come through the breaking point intact. He might feel guilty or upset about what happened, but he can cope. Choose one of the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked.

Exceptional Success: The character somehow manages not only to survive the breaking point, but to find meaning in it, to reaffirm his own self-worth, or to pass through fire and become tempered by it. The character takes a Beat and regains a point of Willpower.

Derangements vs. Conditions

The Conditions imposed by breaking point rolls are ideally suited to Integrity analogs that represent some intrinsic sense of self. Some game lines feature Integrity analogues that represent a more metaphysical balance and include specialized derangements to inflict on characters. If that's the case, feel free to turn those derangements into Conditions and use them instead.

The Generic Condition

Need a Condition for a first edition game's conversion, but none of the ones in this book quite fit? If you have access to them, the other **World of Darkness Second Edition** core rulebooks offer plenty of options you can easily cannibalize. You might want to change the descriptions or the names of the Conditions to suit your needs, but you should be able to find a mechanical effect that does what you want.

If you can't find an existing Condition that fits, or if you don't have the other rulebooks, follow this simple template to create your own Conditions:

First choose from one of the following effects:

- Add +2 to certain types of rolls, or subtract -2 from certain types of rolls.
- Add 9-again to certain types of rolls.
- Remove 10-again from certain types of rolls.
- Add or remove one Door in a Social Maneuvering action.
- Automatically fail a certain kind of action to resolve the Condition.

Then decide what the sufferer can do to resolve the Condition. Does it require a particular action, or for the character to improve a certain Trait? Does it require outside help, or is it a random turn of the dice? Finally, is it Persistent? If the Condition models something that will stick around for a long time, decide on a circumstance in which the Condition can be activated to give the affected character a Beat in addition to a circumstance in which it can be permanently

resolved.

Congratulations — you now have a Condition.

Action Types and New Systems

Powers and rules that use extended actions still work as-is, but remember that the dice pool of the extended action dictates the maximum number of dice rolls allowed before the action fails, and that a failure on any given extended action roll imposes a Condition. See p. XX for the full extended action rules.

Many supernatural powers influence their victims' minds, making them more pliable or more inclined to trust. Such powers can interact with the Social maneuvering rules (p. XX): as a rule of thumb, a successful use of a mind- or mood-altering power can either improve the target's reaction level by one step *or* remove one Door, whichever seems most fitting. Powers that make the victim attracted or receptive to their user improve reaction level, while those that make the victim more suggestible or reduce inhibitions typically remove Doors.

Combat

Combat follows the rules described in Chapter Four. Powers or equipment that grant armor or damage bonuses require a small tweak: reduce attack modifiers from First Edition sources by one and treat the new value as a weapon rating. Remember that all weapons inflict lethal damage in second edition combat. Ballistic armor ratings should likewise be reduced by one, but in compensation they reduce firearms damage from lethal to bashing.

Beasts in the World of Darkness

Beast: The Primordial is a first for the **World of Darkness**, in that it's specifically designed for crossover play. All of the game lines are designed with crossover *compatibility* in mind, but with its simplicity of systems, Kinship mechanics, and thematic links with the other game lines, **Beast** actively encourages it. Here, then, is advice on how to bring the Children of the Dark Mother out of their own private shadows and into the larger **World of Darkness**.

In any crossover game, a Beast's primary role should be to subvert, challenge, and otherwise change the narrative. That's not to say that Beasts should be hogging the spotlight or dragging the story off the rails to follow their own whims; rather, just as a straight **Beast** chronicle challenges the classic "hero slays the monster" narrative, the introduction of the Children into other chronicles should look at the themes and expectations of, for example, "a vampire story" and cast new light on them. Just as the best monsters of fable tell us something about ourselves, the best crossovers tell us something about our other monsters.

Vampire: The Requiem

With its themes of hunger, monstrosity, and the slow descent from human into something else, **Vampire** is perhaps the most natural fit for a crossover game with **Beast**. In each other, Kindred and Children behold a twisted mirror of themselves. But where vampires struggle to hold onto their Humanity in the face of their unquenchable thirst, Beasts can only hope to embrace their place in the Primordial Dream.

Bring Beasts into your **Vampire** chronicle when you want to show what it looks like when a monster gives into its nature and truly recognizes its place in the world. Vampires sometimes

speak of a semi-mythical state called Golconda, in which the vampire achieves transcendent balance between his human soul and his monstrous nature. A vampire seeking Golconda might see a Beast as a potential guru, whether the Beast is interested in serving as a bodhisattva or not. Whether the Children actually know anything about Golconda or how a vampire might achieve it is entirely up to the Storyteller, but the guidance of a Beast (especially one on the path of Merger or Apotheosis) might be one step along the journey.

On the other hand, Beasts can serve as a cautionary tale: a monster at peace with itself is still a monster. Kindred struggling to keep their Humanity intact see in the Children an image of what they stand to become, and what they stand to lose.

A Beast might also serve as a way to draw a **Vampire** chronicle into the larger mysteries of the World of Darkness. Kindred society is perhaps the most closely tied to the physical, mundane world and the least connected to the esoteric metaphysics of game lines like **Mage** or **Werewolf**. The Children of the Dark Mother present an enticing mystery: close enough to the Kindred that they can move in similar circles, but strange enough to suggest a wider world. The Circle of the Crone and the Lancea et Sanctum, in particular, find Beasts intriguing: The Circle for their connection to the Dark Mother, in whom many see a reflection of the Crone, and the Sanctified for their embodiment of the fear of mankind.

As antagonists, Beasts are less likely to cross the path of the All-Night Society as rival predators than as unholy terrors who upset the Kindred applecart without even realizing it. Hungers are the primary motivator here: in particular, the Hunger for the Hoard and the Hunger for Power can drive a Beast into conflict with Kindred over mortal power bases and assets. A Beast as an antagonist comes in at right angles to Kindred thinking, pursuing her Hunger not to secure her position against rivals or to guarantee her own survival, but as an end unto itself. That sort of thinking can be difficult for the stagnant, paranoid mind of an elder vampire to understand, even if they do understand Hunger in other forms.

One possible pitfall of bringing Beasts into a **Vampire** chronicle is portraying the Children as "über-vampires." They share many thematic elements while simultaneously having few of the Kindred's weaknesses, which can lead to a feeling that Beasts are simply better. A certain sense of inferiority is good when the Beast is in an antagonistic role, but if the Beast is meant to be an ambiguous figure, or especially a player character, that attitude can kill a chronicle. Be aware of this, and be prepared to introduce plotlines that challenge the Beast where she is weak just as often as you play to the weaknesses of her vampire kin.

Werewolf: The Forsaken

Creatures born of instinct, children of two worlds driven by an instinctual need to hunt, werewolves understand the Bestial mindset all too well. At the same time, they're largely ill-equipped to understand Beasts themselves: perhaps driven by the concept of Harmony, the Uratha tend to see the world in terms of the dichotomy between "flesh" and "spirit." While Beasts have a spiritual component to their existence, it's not the same spirituality as the Shadow. A werewolf pack first encountering a Beast might well mistake her for one of the Claimed — a human overwhelmed and transformed by a spirit from the Shadow — and react accordingly. It's an easy mistake to make, especially if the Beast is suffering from Hero-imposed weaknesses, which are easy to mistake for spirit bans or banes at first.

Family, in the form of the pack, is a strong theme running through **Werewolf: The Forsaken**,

and one it shares with **Beast**. In an Uratha pack, a Beast finds the closest expression of Kinship outside their own kind, and while it lacks the purity of purpose of the family she knows, a lone Uratha might find solace in a brood. Individual characters in a crossover chronicle can build powerful stories about surrogate families and finding a place of acceptance.

Though they aren't connected to the Shadow in the same way werewolves are, Beasts cannot help but warp the world on the other side of the Gauntlet by their mere presence. In sating their Hungers, Beasts spawn innumerable spirits: things of greed and destruction, dominance and submission, and fear. Always fear. Just by existing, Beasts create ripples in the Shadow, and as their Souls run wild through the Primordial Dream, the nightmares they leave in their wake seem to follow no vector the Uratha understand. A pack's first encounter with a Beast is likely to be fraught with misunderstanding and violence: just as a Beast's Lair resembles some strange incursion from the Shadow, a pack's assault is easy to mistake for the arrival of a band of Heroes —at least until the fur and the claws come out.

Separated by the Gauntlet, Beasts and spirits have little direct interaction, but no discussion of a **Werewolf** crossover would be complete without addressing the denizens of the Shadow. Much as with other kinds of supernatural beings, Beasts see spirits—even the mighty Firstborn — as little siblings and cousins. Their true peers are the mighty and possibly long-vanished gods of the Shadow: Father Wolf, the Plague King and Spinner-Hag, and Luna herself. Still, spirits hunger much as Beasts do, and they do find their way across the Gauntlet from time to time. It's rare, but not unheard of, for a Beast to take a spirit into her brood via Kinship bonds. The resulting relationship is less akin to the one between a pack and its totem than one between symbiotic species: the Beast feeds her Hungers, generating Essence that feeds the spirit, who uses its Numina and Influences to help the Beast feed her Hungers.

Forming a Kinship bond with a spirit or an Uratha sometimes creates a portal within the Beast's Lair that opens into the Shadow, though this is rare and usually happens only with spirits of high Rank or werewolves of high Primal Urge and low Harmony. The Shadow isn't as psychoactive as the Hedge (see below), but nevertheless it responds to the presence of the Children of the Dark Mother. While in the Shadow, Beasts have the Resonant Condition, relevant to both their Hunger and the Nightmare their Family represents. Spirits instinctively sense this potential source of Essence as described in **Werewolf: The Forsaken Second Edition**, and those with a similar nature are likely to seek the Beast out. Spirits *can* gorge on the Essence a Beast generates without harming her, but most spirits are of an "eat first and ask questions later" mindset. Assuming the spirit in question isn't trying to eat her, a Beast can resist attempts to feed on the Essence she creates with a Clash of Wills (see p. XX).

Mage: The Awakening

With its theme of magical detectives obsessively chasing the Mysteries of the World of Darkness, **Mage: The Awakening** can pose difficulties in pitching a crossover with other games. It's in mages' natures to seek answers to questions the other supernatural creatures wouldn't think of asking, and if the troupe isn't careful **Mage** can end up dominating the crossover by weight of exposition, reducing the other games until they fit into its large, complicated cosmology. Within the World of Darkness as a setting, other supernatural creatures' reactions to mages are overshadowed by their prying nature, too — mages are annoyances at best and existential terrors at worst.

From a Beast's perspective, mages are the one child in a family who went to college; she comes

to family gatherings with her mind on experiences she can't share and vocabulary her kin can't understand. Her family feels threatened, and she feels alienated by their reaction. A Beast who takes the time to explore his Kinship with the Awakened finds they have more in common than they think — a shared fascination with primal symbolism, the human soul, and a burning ever-present hunger. A mage's addiction to Mystery is just as potent as a Beast's own Hunger, and both Beast and mage grow more powerful by experiencing the strange and uncanny — the Beast incorporating it into his Lair and the mage adding it to the symbolic knowledge making up her Gnosis.

Alone out of the beings Beasts claim kinship with, mages have a natural ability to enter the Primordial Pathways. To a mage's perspective, Beasts' Lairs appear as Astral Realms, appearing as part of the Anima Mundi when the soul is sated, as a Temenos realm when the soul is prowling the dreams of humanity, and in the Oneiros of Heroes called by the Beast. Once a mage in astral form stumbles across part of a Lair, she can follow the burrows like any other connection between Astral Realms, and by paying one Satiety the Beast can follow her out into the greater Astral world.

Mages have an innate sense for the supernatural, and can be attracted to any stage in a Beast's activities from Homecoming (which mages might even mistake for a Thyrsus Awakening at first) to Inheritance, which puts many mages in mind of Ascension. Despite the name "Beast" and the symbolism of great monsters being shared by the Supernal entities linked to the Thyrsus Path, iconic symbol-creatures of Life and Spirit, it's Mastigos mages who have the closest affinity for the Begotten. Mastigos Awaken to a nightmarish "Pandemonium," in which the inner fears and limitations of the soul are reflected, and they often have an interest in primal terrors. They're also the mages most often found exploring the Astral and getting caught up in Mysteries of the mind (such as the wave of nightmares caused by a rampaging soul) so are the most likely to come looking for a Beast. However, because of their affinity with fear, Mastigos mages are often resistant to a Beast's Nightmares.

Peaceful contact between Beast and mage often hinges on how far the Beast goes in sating its hunger, and how the mage takes the story of the Dark Mother and an explanation of the Lair and soul. Friendly Mages use baffling terms like "Pandemonic Emanation Realm," tell the Children stories of the great primal "Aeons" in the far reaches of Astral Space — some of whom match certain descriptions of the Dark Mother — and make theories about the Dragon-like beings who supposedly helped the first mages to Awaken. Mastigos and Thyrsus can even use the presence of a Beast with a kinship bond as a symbol or "Yantra" in their spells. Hostile mages decide that Beasts are a reflection of the World's Fallen state, or claim that the Dark Mother is the Raptor, the Supernal personification or "Exarch" of humanity's fear of nature. They become terrible enemies, able to slip into the Lair and wreak havoc with their magic, like Heroes without the self-delusion or reliance on the Beast's own power. Worst of all are mages who steal the souls of victims for use in experiments or fuel for strange powers; a Beast's soul is a difficult but prestigious prize for so-called "Reapers." Due to Beast's connection to their Lair mages can't steal the soul of a Begotten just by casting a spell in the physical world. It requires as much ability with the Arcana as taking the soul of a mage, and can only be cast inside the Lair. Despite the risks, some Reapers who learn the existence of Beasts go on twisted safaris into the Primordial Pathways, convinced that they can reduce the Children of the Dark Mother to big game.

Promethean: The Created

If kinship describes a family relationship between monsters, then Prometheans are adopted children of the Dark Mother, rather than sharing her direct bloodline. Originally the result of obsessive and inspired human attempts to create life, now most of the Created create their own "offspring" in turn, as part of the Pilgrimage these half-made monsters make, learning about humanity and refining their alchemical souls until at last they become fully human. From Beasts' perspective, Prometheans are struggling to join the herd that Beasts themselves left when they realized their true nature.

In a crossover game, **Promethean: The Created** showcases a side to Family that Beasts don't always consider — what "family" means to an orphan, and how an artificial being can hope to fit into the great family of humanity. Even the two beings' names for themselves, "Begotten" and "Created," show the contrast between the two. Prometheans are constantly exploring and refining their lives, learning from their experiences in a similar thematic fashion to Beasts expanding their Lairs, and form close bonds with fellow Created as part of that. One step on the Pilgrimage no Promethean can avoid is to Create, and loose another of their kind on the world. Beasts and Prometheans can learn a lot from one another about the nature and value of kinship; what it means to have offspring, and how a character's companions reflect on her. Over the course of the Pilgrimage, most Prometheans follow several "Refinements," or approaches to becoming human. One of these, the Refinement of Silver, studies supernatural beings and how they differ from humanity in order to understand humanity itself, making them perfect counterparts to Beasts exploring their own Kinship to the Created. In the Primordial Dream, foundation of human nightmares, Prometheans can learn what makes their aspirational species afraid, and examine how those fears drive them.

The curse of the Created, however, is in humanity's reaction to them. Prometheans who stay in one place for too long and use their alchemical powers too much engender "Disquiet," which to Beasts all-to-closely resembles the hunter response. Humans suffering from Disquiet treat the Promethean causing it with disgust or even attack him, driving him out of their communities. Just because Beasts hold themselves as predators of humanity, outside of it preying upon it, doesn't mean they don't take pity on Prometheans for desperately wanting in and being rejected for their otherness. Their own experiences with Heroes make many Beasts who develop Kinship with Prometheans act aggressively protective toward their new friends, helped by the fact that the Begotten are immune to Disquiet's effects. For Beasts willing to exploit the Created, the disgust humans feel for Prometheans when under the influence of Disquiet can make an excellent source of inspiration for nightmares.

The shared constant threat of being seen as a monster, however, can also cause Prometheans and Beasts to turn on one another. In an antagonistic crossover, Prometheans might take Beasts' hunting as victimizing the people the Prometheans wish to become. Beasts in turn might react poorly to an especially monstrous Promethean, even without Disquiet amplifying the reaction, and regard them as cuckoos trying to force their way into the Dark Mother's nest. These Beasts make good antagonists for a **Promethean** chronicle, predators "gatekeeping" to prevent unwanted strays joining their prey.

The rare Prometheans called Centimani, or "Hundred Handed," are much more clearly monsters. Rejecting the Pilgrimage, these Created are focused on becoming the "best" or most evolved monsters they can be, spawning and controlling dozens of the misshapen "Pandoran" creatures that arise from failed attempts by humanity-seeking Prometheans to create more of their own kind. A Centimanus' rejection of humanity and attempt to embrace their inhuman nature finds

resonance with Beasts' acknowledging their Souls and realizing that deep down they were never human.

Changeling: The Lost

Changelings are all too familiar with monster stories. Having spent their durance in a realm fueled entirely by narrative dream-logic, they know the roles as surely as a thirty-year veteran of the stage knows Hamlet. In Arcadia, the hero always slays the monster. If the monster wins, well, obviously that was never the hero in the first place. They're not entirely sure how to react when a Beast refuses to follow the script.

From the Beasts' perspective, changelings are snatches of the oldest stories, sometimes rearranged or in a different key, but essentially unchanging. In every Ogre is the theme of the Anakim, in every Darkling a refrain of the Eshmaki. Many Beasts feel a closer Kinship with the Gentry than their partially-human servants: vast beings of infinite potential hemmed in by the roles their forced to play, limited in their expression within the bounds of the world and only free to express their full nature within their own realm.

The Gentry, for their part, see Beasts as curiosities: they're born of stories and their lives follow familiar mythic patterns, but they exist outside the Arcadian precepts of fate and time that bound the True Fae's existence. Theirs is a wary respect, the sort you might extend to a strange animal that might take your hand off at any moment. Some of the oldest parts of the Primordial Dream allegedly hide secret paths that lead to the courts of the Kindly Ones, and Fae hunters sometimes invite the Children of the Dark Mother to join them on their wild hunts.

In their rise to power and eventual Inheritance, Beasts highlight a common fear among changelings: that of becoming the very thing they hate and fear. Unlike a vampire's Golconda or a mage's Ascension, most changelings look on the prospect of apotheosis — of harnessing their Wyrd to become essentially True Fae themselves — as a fate worse than death. The fact that Beasts seem sanguine about becoming creatures of nightmarish predation makes them creatures to be feared. On the other hand, Beasts are some of the few beings the Gentry interact with on something like equal terms, and it's better to have a dragon inside the tent pissing out than outside pissing in. Freeholds in or near the territory of known, powerful Beasts sometimes propitiate the Beast with offerings to satisfy her Hunger, in the hopes that she will intercede on their behalf when the Gentry come calling.

Being creatures of the Primordial Dream, Beasts can warp the psychoactive landscape of the Hedge by their very presence, much as the Gentry or high-Wyrd changelings can. The Thorns around the Beast take on aspects reminiscent of her Family and Hunger: Around the Anakim distance and perspective are magnified and warped, as though in a funhouse mirror — others find themselves feeling like ants in a vast lawn, while the Anakim's silhouette is constantly visible as a vast, towering shadow. Around the Makara, the Hedge becomes a sucking mire, replete with hidden depths and sinkholes that can swallow the unwary traveler whole. Use the rules found in **Changeling: The Lost Second Edition**, substituting the Beast's Lair for a changeling's Wyrd where appropriate. High-Lair Beasts may also find their Atavisms leaking through into physical reality in the Hedge, even without Satiety expenditure. This is a purely cosmetic effect that doesn't impact the nature of her powers; the Soul calls and the dream answers.

Hunter: The Vigil

“If it bleeds, we can kill it” describes the typical hunter’s view of Beasts. It’s a simplistic, reductive attitude, one designed to insulate them from the idea that they might be killing a thinking, feeling being. In itself, that’s not terribly unusual: and hunter who’s gone after a vampire or a witch has faced the conundrum. The difference is that Beasts know the script: their arguments are less “perhaps it is *you* who is truly the monster” than “what gives you the right to kill monsters?” For hunters used to self-justification and equivocation from their prey, that sort of reversal can prompt some soul-searching.

If confronting a Beast brings a hunter a moment of doubt, meeting a Hero is like looking into a mirror and realizing you don’t much care for the person gazing out at you. While many hunters took up the Vigil in response to witnessing the depredations of some monster, and not a few become obsessed with their crusade, Heroes are something else. Even the most obsessive hunter is capable of (if not likely to) stepping back and examining her choices, of asking questions like “am I any better than the things I hunt?” and “at what point does victory come with too high a price?” Heroes aren’t. A Hero is as much a monster as a flesh-eating Beast in her own way, but she’s also as much a victim as that Beast’s prey. Once a Hero has been “triggered,” her life collapses to a singularity: the Beast must die, and it must die *because* it’s a Beast.

It’s not at all uncommon for hunters to thus mistake the Hero for some sort of Slasher, albeit one who exclusively target the living embodiments of primordial nightmares. Hunters who have seen too many TV series about antiheroes and righteous serial killers sometimes see Heroes as potential allies, or at least useful tools. After all, Heroes possess abilities most hunters only dream of: rapid healing, an instinctive ability to track the enemy, and remarkable gifts of power and persuasion; why not steer them toward other prey? Life, however, is not a premium-cable drama, and such alliances invariably end in one of two ways: either the hunters turn on the Hero, aghast at her methods, or the entire cell becomes cancerous (a term many hunters use to describe a group of hunters that’s become no better than the things it hunts) and has to be put down.

Hunters rarely make the jump from hunter to Hero, even when their Vigil crosses the path of a Beast. Few enough hunters are even aware of the so-called “hunter response” to hypothesize why that is, but those who have studied the matter have some theories. The most prevalent, albeit unpleasant, is that the hunter response is a genetic trait meant to ensure the long-term survival of the species: essentially, this theory (championed by Null Mysteriis) posits that certain people are genetically predisposed to risk their own lives to protect others to varying degrees. Hunters and Heroes, then, aren’t so much two sides of the same coin as two points on a spectrum. Hunters don’t become Heroes because they’ve already had this response triggered. Others say it’s absolutely possible, but only hunters whose Integrity has been long eroded by the Vigil are capable of taking that final, precipitous step. Either interpretation makes Heroes an ideal choice for an antagonist that highlights the razor edge that hunters often walk.

Of course, it’s not all homicidal obsessions and shotguns in the dark. While it doesn’t happen often, hunters do sometimes find common cause with the Dark Mother’s Children. Whether it’s out of recognition of a greater threat or for some other reason, sometimes the twain *do* meet. But where vampires and witches and their ilk share a common descent from the Dark Mother, hunters are by and large pure human. Even hunters with surgical augmentation like the Cheiron Group’s Thaumatechnology or induced psychic phenomena like VASCU’s telepathic agents aren’t inherently monstrous enough to count as anything but human. That largely bars them from forming Kinship bonds and fully joining a Brood — at least without drastic actions. Beasts tell stories of dream-quests and sacred hunts deep into the Primordial Dream that awaken just

enough of a human's Bestial aspect to become Kin to Beasts. Hunters with Endowments stemming from their bloodline, like the Lucifuge, can form Kinship bonds without the ordeal — and more disturbingly, so can Slashers, even if they were born as bog-standard normal humans.

Geist: The Sin-Eaters

When you get right down to it, at the root of all humanity's primal fears is one constant: death. The Dark Mother, then, can be seen as a primeval psychopomp figure — less a guide to the Underworld and more the terrifying apparition that snatches loved ones away without reason or warning. The Bound already mythologize the iconography of death, in the form of Horsemen, Deathlords, and the gods who populate their krewe mythos. In their typically syncretic way, the Bound find it easy to incorporate the Dark Mother into their cosmology. For people who have passed beyond the veil of death and returned, the fear of death loses its teeth.

Geist: The Sin-Eaters is about second chances, actions and consequences, and transitions. The Bound make excellent antagonists for a **Beast** chronicle when you want to showcase the Beast's deeds catching up to her, but throwing another Hero from her past at her doesn't quite fit. The Bound are intercessors for the dead, and even when a Beast's Hungers aren't directly fatal to humanity, they tend to leave collateral damage behind. A Sin-Eater showing up with a bevy of ghosts looking for payback makes for a formidable enemy.

Beasts are used to being objects of fear. Even when their Souls are sated and their Nightmares remain furled, the Children are an ominous presence, a subconscious warning that "death is here." To meet someone for whom death no longer holds terror can be variously intriguing, invigorating, or infuriating. The Bound often see their second chance at life as an opportunity to partake of the pleasures of the living world while they can. It's not a Hunger, necessarily, more an attitude of *carpe diem* borne of the knowledge of what lies beyond the veil, but that urge to indulge is something the Children can relate to.

While they have very different origins, the Bound and the Children find common ground in the unique dual nature of their souls. Both must struggle to reconcile their living, human identity with the monstrous Other, be it powerful ghost or primal Soul. In the Beast, a Sin-Eater sees the chance of reconciliation and union with her geist, a state beyond Synergy wherein life and death are in perfect balance. In the Bound, the Beast sees the representation of a kindred spirit: not an archetype of fear, but an archetype of death. And fear and death, after all, are two ticks of the same clock.

When one of the Bound forms a Kinship bond with a Child of the Dark Mother, her little corner of the Beast's Lair takes on an aspect of death reflecting her geist. Death is normally not present in the Primordial Dream. The *fear* of it is, and the grief that comes after, but true to the old clichés, the moment of death in the Dream is the moment you wake up, sweat-soaked and gasping. The presence of one of the Bound brings a new concept into the Lair, one interacts strangely with astral space. Sometimes it creates an Avernian Gate, a doorway to the Underworld direct from the Dream. Sometimes that doorway allows shades from the deep, forgotten realms of the Great Below to crawl up into the Primordial Dream, where they infuse themselves with the essence of human nightmares.

Mummy: The Curse

The Arisen mummies of the World of Darkness hold themselves aloof from its other supernatural residents, resting in a death state until called back to life by their mortal servants, a threat to their

person or property, or an alignment of the stars. Mummies believe themselves inherently superior to other beings, regard magical artifacts as their birthright (taking them from others by force if necessary) and to Beasts' eyes maintain a willful ignorance about the Dark Mothers' other Children. The Arisen simply don't care about other beings, only the all-powerful sense of purpose they feel whenever they return to life. Their own identities are lost beneath millennia of amnesia and servitude.

Beasts understand compulsions imposed on a human mind by external powers all too well. Those who feel the Hunger of Hoarding feel especial kinship to the Arisen when the mummies are on one of their frequent hunts for magical artifacts, which they feed to their masters in an unseen netherworld called Duat. Beasts who get to know unusually humane Arisen, forging kinship with the Deathless, find that they have more in common than that first obvious link. The Arisen are preoccupied by the human soul with its many parts and diverse properties, manifest animal-headed forms when their powers flare causing terror in mortal onlookers, and serve secretive masters called the Shan'iatu who are said to have had magical powers and the ability to take in the forms of great beasts.

The most potent kinship between the Arisen and Begotten, however, is in their similar but opposed effects on the human psyche. When Arisen first return from death, the energies within their desiccated bodies "leak" in a form mummies call Sybaris. While Sybaris puts many Beasts in mind of their own souls rampaging through the Primordial Dream, it has an unusual result when combined with a Beast soul's influence. Sybaris renders human beings under its shadow listless and despairing, ignoring the short-term and clinging to anything that might last beyond their lifetime. Beast Souls find it difficult to hunt in a Sybaris-wracked population, as their victims simply surrender rather than feel terror.

From the Arisen point of view, Beasts are potential allies as long as the mummy can get past some initial misgivings. The artifacts mummies hoard and pay in tribute to their masters often have properties that warp the emotions of mortals, and just as Sybaris prevents Beast Souls from hunting, the fear spread by the Begotten can have unintentionally disastrous effects on what Arisen call "the lifeweb" of geomantically aligned emotional influences. Many Beasts put the Arisen in mind of certain enemies, as well — the chimerical animal-forms of Amhkata, the all-consuming Shuankhsen, and shadowed legends of Ammut the Devourer, a Beast-like monster from the religion of the Arisen's living days. Despite that, as long as a Beast poses no threat to their purpose, Arisen are happier dealing with the Begotten than many other supernatural beings. The Children of the Dark Mother have no use for the mummies' toys, and hunger for more primal sustenance.

Demon: The Descent

The Unchained stand as a proud nail in the face of the Children of the Dark Mother. Beasts are fond of claiming kinship with all the things that lurk in the shadows of the World of Darkness, but no Mother ever birthed such things of metal and bone. Even the concept of the God-Machine — cold, alien, universal — sits at odds with the raw, base fear and hunger that is the core of the Dark Mother. Beasts don't *hate* the God-Machine, per se (or rather, they are no more likely to hate a vast, uncaring machine intelligence that grinds humanity into a bloody paste than anyone else), but they don't understand it, and they don't understand its servants. Depending on the Beast, their reaction to the God-Machine's presence might be to investigate it, try to destroy it, or just leave it the hell alone. Beasts have enough problems, after all.

Use **Demon: The Descent** in your **Beast** chronicles when you want to shake up the status quo and remind the Children that they don't have all the answers, and throw something at them that can hit them on their home turf. The God-Machine is *everywhere*, after all, and that means its gears occasionally invade the Primordial Dream, infesting humanity's nightmares with images of gears and wheels and protocols that would make Kafka take pause. Demons themselves can serve as cautious allies or sources of information, but remember that demons rarely do anything that isn't at least partially in their own interests.

From the demons' perspective, Beasts are a potentially invaluable resource. With no connection to the God-Machine and no motive to help it, they're slightly more trustworthy than other demons (potential turncoats, all of them), humans (too easily bribed, coerced, or brainwashed), and the like. Still, the two beings are so fundamentally at odds that most alliances will never be more than tenuous.

Hero

The first hit came out of nowhere. Ben had barely entered his living room when something slammed into him from behind the door, sending him sprawling over the sofa. He landed hard, off-balance and hurting. Nothing had really so much as scratched him since his Homecoming, and yet he could feel blood running down one side of his face and his side felt like it was on fire.

"About fucking time," said a familiar voice. Ben rolled on his side and blinked up at the shape above him, but even when his eyes focused his shock didn't go away. Ryan. The skinny kid was holding something hooked and almost as tall as he was, raised above his head to strike. "I've been waiting for this for weeks!"

"Ryan, you need to run the fuck away right now," Ben caught Ryan's wide, manic eyes and tried to send the nightmare to him, but the skinny kid just laughed in his face and slammed the hook down, ripping into Ben's shoulder. He screamed and grabbed at the metal but it burned his hands just to touch it.

"Metal from a sunken ship's anchor," Ryan said with a look of great satisfaction, digging the hook in deeper. He looked down at Ben with pride and fished a necklace out from under his shirt, held it up for him to see. "Same deal here. I know how your kind work! I saw your tricks up close, remember?"

"Fuck you!" Nightmares might be off the table, but that wasn't all he had to offer. Ben pushed back the pain and grabbed Ryan's ankle, managing to snag it with one hand at the cost of digging the hook in even more. One hand was all he needed, though, and Ben felt his Soul's strength surge through him, snapping Ryan's ankle with a sharp cracking sound. Ryan fell backwards onto the couch, pulling the hook free in the process, and Ben dragged himself to his feet.

"Back!" Ryan shouted, holding up the necklace. Ben staggered backward as if he'd been punched, still not quite believing what was happening. James had warned him not to take Heroes lightly, but this was just unreal.

"Ben!" Noel burst through the doorway, sizing the scene up and heading straight for Ryan. "Bad call, fucker." Noel growled, hands hooking into claws as he advanced.

"Back!" Ryan shouted again, shoving at the advancing vampire.

"Oh, honey," Noel said, almost apologetic, and tore out the boy's throat out with a casual swipe of his hand. Ryan's mouth fell open as the front of his shirt went dark with blood, and whatever words he had were lost in a gurgle as his blood streamed down his chest, turning his shirt black in the dim light. Noel hardly broke stride as he went to his boyfriend. "What happened? Baby, you're hurt!"

"I'll be fine," Ben managed, gritting his teeth. He put his arm around Noel and the vampire took his weight effortlessly. "We have to get out of here. Now."

"Yeah, but we should probably clean up—"

"No," Ben said, and his tone made Noel meet his gaze. "*We* need to *leave*. The three of us. Right now." He was starting to feel faint, but fortunately Noel caught his meaning, and

carried him out of the house without another word, leaving Ryan behind, entombed in the mausoleum of Ben's old life.

Chapter Six: Beasts of the World

> *"I saw the world I had walked since my birth and I understood how fragile it was, that the reality I knew was a thin layer of icing on a great dark birthday cake writhing with grubs and nightmares and hunger."*
>
> —Neil Gaiman, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*

Beasts aren't born in vacuums. They grow up in human homes, hunt in human cities, and feed on human nightmares. Those nightmares are the weight of countless cultures, just as much as the monsters who haunt them. Every nation has its legends, after all, just as every small town has its campfire tales. Gather 'round.

The Darkness in the Trees

The New Jersey Pine Barrens

The full moon rises over an endless expanse of pines. We've spent the last three days going around in circles through this forest without running into any signs of civilization. The cell phones are dead, not that they had any signal before they died. The only breaks from the monotony of our journey have been the occasional glimpses we've had of a shadow dogging our steps, growing closer with each passing day. We'd stop for the night if we weren't afraid it would catch us in the darkness.

God damn, I hate New Jersey.

Although the popular conception of New Jersey consists largely of urban sprawl, the immense wilderness of the Pine Barrens stretches across nearly a quarter of the state. True, the edges have been nibbled away by strip centers and suburbs, and almost half a million people live here (a tiny fraction of New Jersey's population), but vast areas of largely untouched forest remain, protected by federal law, an ocean of trees less than two hours drive from the asphalt and steel heart of Manhattan.

Innumerable pitch pines rise up out of sandy soil too poor to support most crops, which is what kept the area largely unsettled for centuries. Large swampy areas make the pine forests seem downright visitor-friendly by comparison. Forest fires, both natural and man-made are frequent, a cycle of destruction and renewal. Along with the carnivorous plants and the blueberries, a unique breed of people has managed to carve out a life here, the Pineys. These are the people who have managed to eke a living for centuries out of a region deemed unfit for settlement by most, descendants of hunters, bandits, moonshiners, but most of all survivors.

History

During the 18th and 19th centuries the Pine Barrens were a major center of American iron production, bog iron deposited by waters bubbling up from the depths of the earth. The industry, if not the iron-rich waters, dried up, leaving abandoned foundries and villages in its wake. This pattern was repeated with a number of industries, littering the region with failed settlements. In 1978 the federal government created the 1.1 million acre New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve in order to protect the Pine Barrens and its vast aquifer from development.

Beasts have lurkedin the Pines for centuries, from Collectors and Predators among bandits such as the 18th century Pine Robbers to Tyrants and Ravagers accelerating the boom and bust cycles of the various ghost towns. At present, however, the area offers little to tempt most Hungers, the unregulated small towns at the heart of the east coast calmed significantly by the modern era. The pines, though, remain.

And then there's the Devil.

The most famous denizen of the Pines, the Jersey Devil is firmly entrenched in popular culture, even appearing as the mascot of New Jersey's professional hockey team. The most common legend about the Devil purports that it is the son of Mother Leeds, an eighteenth century Pine Barrens resident who cursed the child to be a devil after finding herself pregnant for the thirteenth time. Locals describe it with varying features, commonly wings, hooves, and a horse's head. In any case, whatever the Devil's true nature and origin, Beasts in the Pines ought to keep their eyes out for any shadows in the pines. It wouldn't do to miss meeting such a famous cousin.

Story Hooks

A short drive from a number of major cities, the Pine Barrens could well draw any number of Beasts to poke around its isolate areas. They might come to investigate the reports of the willow-the-wisp-like apparitions known as the Pine Lights and whether they are ghosts, spirits, omens of the area's frequent fires, or simply swamp gas. So too might they be drawn by the persistent rumors that somewhere deep in Pines lies a ghost town not visited by the tourists or marked on any maps. Some Pineys tell tales of finding it crumbling and covered in huge, strangely colored sundews. Of course, given its extreme notoriety, the obvious target of inquiry for most is the Jersey Devil. Having evaded capture or explanation for generations, it must be inhumanly crafty, dangerous, or something far stranger than a mere horse headed flying humanoid. In any event, Beasts wandering around the Pine Barrens are much more likely to run into Edna the Strangler than the Devil.

Edna is an Eshmaki who retreated to the isolation of the Pine Barrens decades ago after undergoing Merger. Once the youngest daughter of a wealthy Delaware family, her Hunger for Punishment led her to destroy everyone close to her. Systematically murdering all of her friends and family drove her to the bestial state of Merger and the only slightly less bestial state of New Jersey. So, in the manner of her famous predecessor in the wilds around Thebes, she stalks the Pines searching for victims unable to answer her questions. A skeletal figure creeping through the Pines, she is likely the source of many purported Devil sightings, as anyone who gets a good enough look to tell the difference is soon unlikely to be in a state to report it (or anything else).

Beasts searching for the Devil may well find that they've been tracking Edna instead. Beasts may also seek out Edna for knowledge. She knows more about the Pine Barrens than any living creature, the final resting place of a significant proportion of those who have gone missing in the Pines, and lord knows what other tidbits picked up during a decades of riddling and strangling in the World of Darkness. Whether she greets Beasts as long lost kin or with a riddle once they find her depends largely on whim. She gets so few visitors, after all. She may have to do something about that. Setting herself up on a road and cutting a town off from the rest of the world would be perfectly in keeping with the tradition and the Pine Barrens has so many appropriately lonely roads.

Blood on the Border

Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

A city of industry, with 1.5 million residents and hundreds of maquiladoras pumping out goods for the vast market of the United States just across the Rio Bravo (called Rio Grande by the gringos). A city of dark mystery, with thousands disappeared and killed by unknown assailants. A city of smuggling, with unbelievable quantities of narcotics flowing north toward that same vast market. A city of violence, temporarily quiescent as the government abandons its war on the cartels and the victors lick their wounds. A city that ebbs and flows with the twin tides of hope and despair.

Juárez holds both promise and danger for Beasts as well. On the one hand, it seems to offer a vast smorgasbord of opportunities to satisfy their Hungers with little chance of being caught. The city is rife with property crime, providing many opportunities for Collectors and the other Hungers find ample victims among the workers in the maquiladoras and migrants heading north. But powerful predators, from drug cartels to vampire cabals, have already staked claims to this hunting ground and a pair of Hero twins are turning the tables on Beasts lured to the city.

How It Happened

Although the area around Ciudad Juárez has been inhabited for thousands of years, by bands of hunter-gatherers and later by corn growing agriculturalists, the history of the city itself began in 1659 when Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe was established by the Franciscan order to proselytize to the local native population. From this mission, which still stands in the city, a small community grew on the trade route from Santa Fe to Chihuahua. Aside from a few ambiguous petroglyphs, the first evidence of Beasts in Paso del Norte, as Juárez was then known, dates from this era. A written account of a Spanish brood headed toward Santa Fe to investigate reports of vampires among the Pueblo peoples mentions passing through the town in 1678. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 sent colonial and pro-Spanish Indian refugees flooding into the outpost.

Paso del Norte passed through the Mexican War of Independence of the early 19th century relatively unscathed, but shifts in the river had a lasting impact, putting several local communities on the north side of the Rio Bravo's new course. The Texas Revolution too had little effect on Juárez, despite the new Republic's claim of the Rio Bravo as its southern border. It was not until the Mexican-American War that Paso del Norte was separated from the outlying communities on the north bank of the river that would eventually birth its American twin, El Paso.

In 1888 the city was renamed in honor of President Benito Juárez whose army had passed through the city during his campaign against the Mexican Empire under French-born Emperor Maximillian (a complicated subject, Mexican history). The city played host to a summit between Mexican President Pofirio Diaz and American President William Howard Taft in 1909. A would-be assassin with a concealed pistol was arrested within a few feet of the presidents. Reports that the assassin was connected with one of the broods contesting control of the Chazimal are probably spurious.

Further shifts in the river over the course of decades had left hundreds of acres known as the Chamizal under uncertain national jurisdiction. In the absence of clear national authority the

area became a haven for criminal activity. In addition to mundane criminal gangs, several broods battled for control over the area until the international dispute was finally settled in 1963.

The second half of the 20th century saw the emergence of both the maquiladoras and drug cartels, fueled by America's twin thirsts for consumer goods and narcotics. The two combined horribly in the 1990s and 2000s when thousands, many workers in the maquiladoras, died and disappeared as cartel violence escalated and lawlessness reigned supreme. The Juárez and Sinaloa Cartels battled for control over the lucrative path north for their drugs and the military battled both. For a time, Juárez had the highest official murder rate in the world.

This very public conflict masked a much stranger war. For decades most of Ciudad Juárez was the territory of a group of werewolves known as Los Señores de Frontera, the Lords of the Border. They grew rich and fat like ticks on the city's relative prosperity. With the rise of narcotics trafficking, Las Sombras, a group of werewolf packs skilled in moving people and contraband across the border, began to accumulate wealth and influence. Los Señores were unwilling to release their hold on the city and the newcomers were unwilling to limit their expansion in deference to the existing packs. Exacerbating the feud, Los Señores were “Pure” and Las Sombras were “Forsaken”, two sides of a larger lycanthrope feud largely opaque to outsiders. Thus began a conflict every bit as bitter as a more mundane cartel war. It raged first in the shadows, then increasingly in the open. Finally, a few years ago, the smugglers seized the upper hand with a series of car-bombings that destroyed the leadership of the Lords. With their rivals effectively decapitated, Las Sombras power spread checked only by the need to escape the notice of mundane cartels and law enforcement. In the last year, however, the remnants of Los Señores have regrouped. War is returning to Juárez.

A development of particular interests to Beasts has arisen only in the last few years: the appearance of Los Gemelos, the Twins. Reputedly a pair of identical twins, their existence was first rumored after a half dozen beasts from various broods were killed over the course of a year. The murders, seemingly unrelated, had the hallmarks of typical cartel killings. They were at first thought to simply be part of the rising tide of violence affecting the city as a whole, but, after witnesses reported a pair of men leaving the last two body dumps, Juarense Beasts began to suspect a pair of Heroes. Although no more Beasts have been found executed, Los Gemelos have obtained an almost mythic status, blamed for any Beast who drops out of sight in the city or even more minor instances of bad luck.

Places

Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

The seed from which the grand, grubby flower of Ciudad Juárez has sprouted, the Mission has stood at the heart of the city for over three and a half centuries. Although overshadowed by the mid 1950s cathedral that stands next to it, it still holds a great deal importance to the city and its people. So much so that it is rumored among the stranger residents of the city that the Mission serves as a sort of taproot for Juárez, giving it life, anchoring it in the dusty earth of North Mexico. No one is quite sure what that would mean if something bad were to happen to it, but no one particularly wishes to find out first hand.

Bridge of the Americas

The only free crossing from Juárez into El Paso, four separate bridges straddle the sluggish, muddy Rio Bravo. Tens of thousands of cars, trucks, and pedestrians pass each way every day.

People cross for shopping, for work, for school, for fun, and for darker reasons. It is a liminal space, neither quite America nor quite Mexico, despite the signs saying otherwise. People crossing from each side should expect the possibility of a stop for a thorough search. It is an inconvenience at the best of times and quite possibly a deadly delay when, say, attempting to outrun a Hero across the bridges at 3 AM.

Arroyo Lobo

A long, low, rut in the earth, hardly worthy of the term arroyo (creek), Arroyo Lobo lays in a barren stretch of land outside of Juárez. The occasional rainstorm might send a small torrent of brown water rushing down its course toward larger creeks and eventually the Rio Bravo, but most of the year it is barely recognizable as a ditch. Its only remarkable feature is the regular sightings of the endangered red wolf in the area, though local wisdom tends to hold this to be overblown reports of coyotes. Those who have the the slightest knowledge of the werewolf packs of Juárez, however, know better. For whatever reason, the arroyo seems to be a center of their activity at certain points in the lunar cycle. Given their preoccupation with territory and rather fierce disposition even in matters not touching upon their peculiar tribal beliefs, most people with even the slightest hint of what goes on there stay well away from this desolate little ditch. Of course, Beasts aren't particularly known for keeping their noses out of places they're not welcome.

Cantina Amarilla

A small bar located in one of the city's colonias (read as slums or shanty towns), Cantina Amarilla is a small cinder block building between an abandoned storefront and a discount nail salon, painted what can only be charitably called yellow, faded by the sun and obscured by dust. The beer is only barely cool, the snacks are inedible, but this hole in the wall serves, for Beasts, as a meeting ground. Claimed by none of the local broods, or anything else for that matter, the couple of filthy booths at the back of the bar have seen information traded and territorial disputes discussed for at least a decade.

Brothers & Sisters

Julio the Coyote

He's not a literal coyote of course, just one player among the booming people-smuggling industry across the US-Mexico border. True, the young coyote is paler and more feral looking than most, but most migrants don't pick their guides based on personal appearance. And yes, moving parties only at night is a bit unusual, but makes a great deal of sense when evading the Border Patrol. The fact that many of his charges arrive at their destinations weak, pale, or not at all is only to be expected in such a difficult journey. Unaffiliated with any larger smuggling concern, Julio is concerned mainly with filling his pockets with money and his belly with blood. Though Beasts are unlikely to need to avail themselves of his services, Julio has contacts throughout the city for whom he has moved people and stranger things across the border.

In **Requiem** terms, Julio is an unaligned Gangrel.

Isabella Rodriguez

Plenty of people collect cars. Isabella the Giant just happens to collect cars owned by other people, and doesn't like to pay for them. One of a large number of carjackers in Juárez, Isabella distinguishes herself from her peers by targeting cars based not on the price they will fetch in the

city's chop shops, but instead on aesthetic appeal. It's also fairly unusual for a middle aged mother of three to be pulling strangers out of cars to steal them. Nonetheless, she has rows of pilfered vehicles parked on an empty stretch of dirt surrounded by cheap fencing somewhere off of an isolate road outside of the city nonetheless.

Las Sombras

Literally translated as "The Shadows," this group of loosely affiliated werewolf packs patrols territory across Ciudad Juárez. This is not to say, however, that those areas are under exclusive werewolf control. Even wolfmen don't want to piss off the cartels. Instead they operate on a much lower level, using their ability to step sideways into the Shadow (and occasionally more mundane methods) to smuggle drugs into the United States and guns back into Juárez. The cartels tend to ask few questions as long as their deliveries are made on time, an arrangement which suits the wolves just fine. Explaining that one routinely takes packets of drugs through a twisted conceptual otherworld is not an explanation that would fill the narcotrafficantes with confidence.

Generally, the packs operate as something halfway between smugglers and street gangs, making their money moving product and controlling a physical territory in the city. While there are certainly occasional scraps between the packs over business, territory, and things only comprehensible to werewolves, they will coordinate a response against outside threats. Me against my brother, me and my brother against my cousin, me and my cousin against the three-headed man-eating chupacabra killing people on the edge of town.

In **Forsaken** terms, Las Sombras are a loose confederation of packs, composed mainly of Iron Masters and Bone Shadows.

Threats

Los Gemelos

The biggest threat to any Beasts in Ciudad Juárez, the Twins are a particularly crafty pair of Heroes named Hector and Ulysse Garcia. Brutal mid-level cartel players, they are experienced with violence and wield a great deal of influence, but this is not what makes them particularly dangerous to the Beasts of Juárez. No, what makes Hector and Ulysse so dangerous is that they've figured out how to game the narrative. They've learned since the first Beast they slew took Ulysse's eye in the struggle. They no longer try to confront Beasts in their Lairs, but instead attack Beasts in locations that they can control. They hold stakes in a number of night clubs and other businesses around the city where the employees are well trained to spot prey for their bosses, acting as passive traps, often luring in Beasts even from El Paso. If the twins find evidence of a Beast outside of these controlled environments, they will cautiously investigate and learn as much about a Beast and her Hunger before using that information to lure her to a prepared kill site. Los Gemelos are an existential threat to the Beasts of Juárez and anyone else who crosses them. CHECK WITH CHAP 5

Los Señores de Frontera

The Lords of the Border sounds rather grandiose for a handful of werewolves, the mid and low level survivors of their disastrous war with the wolves, but they are sticklers for tradition. Yet for all their pretensions to feudal nobility, they are now little more than a street gang with fangs. Los Señores have only a small fraction of their previous numbers, the barest shadow of their previous influence in civic affairs, and a few poor scraps of their previous territories, and yet like the cut-

off arm of a starfish, they continue on, trying to regrow. They hold on to what they have left with all the fierceness of a cornered rat, lashing out at anyone that threatens their remaining territory, and are making preparations to renew their conflict with Las Sombras.

In **Forsaken** terms Los Señores are an Ivory Claw pack, formed from the remnants of several previous packs.

El Buitre

No one quite knows who or what is leaving freshly de-fleshed skeletons in the desert outside of Juárez, but theories about. Most agree on a name, El Buitre, after the way the corpses are picked clean, as if by a carrion bird. Some say that it's a deranged anatomist, conducting human (and possibly inhuman) vivisections and leaving the remains of his or her work so that the public too may decode its secrets. Others believe that a disease is spreading throughout the city, driving some of its sufferers into the desert where they bloom into gray flowers of flesh before liquifying. Then the rumors fly that clouds of carrion beetles stalk the desert at night looking for prey. Finally, and perhaps strangest of all, people in the colonias whisper that the skeletons are the leavings of ancient Aztec witches, surviving as flayed skin and flesh, flensing their victims, burning the flesh as an offering to their gods and taking the new skeletons for themselves so they might walk the streets of Juárez.

Hooks

A Friend in Need

A Beast, friendly with the player's brood, has gone missing. In a striking deviation from their usual modus operandi (but an occurrence not at all unusual for Juárez), Los Gemelos have contacted the brood, claiming to have kidnapped the missing Beast and demanding a ransom in cash. The ransom is significantly more than the brood has on hand and they are given only 48 hours to come up with the money and exchange it for their friend. Will they try to track down the Twins and rescue their friend? Will they go along with the exchange? If so, how will they put together the ransom? Is it a trap and are they willing to try anyway? Are these kidnappers even the Twins?

Development

Mission Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe is in peril. A developer had decided that it would make the perfect site for his next project and has managed to grease all the right palms to get ahold of the property and the permits necessary to demolish the mission. Given the rumors about the connection between the mission and the city this is naturally concerning to the player's brood as a catastrophe befalling the city is unlikely to spell good things for them. Do they stop the development by subtle bureaucratic intrigue, a naked show of force, or something more convoluted. Once the development is stopped was it the property market driving this scheme, or something more sinister (like a grand revenge plot by the Lords of the Border to pull the city down around the ears of their enemies)?

Border Crossing

A player's character needs to smuggle someone north across the river without disclosing their nature. This person may be a desperate mundane friend or relative without the time or ability to procure a so-called “laser visa” or a client willing to pay for the trip north with information, artifacts, or cold hard cash. The brood could, of course, simply stuff the person in the trunk of

their car and drive across one of the bridges, but every year the Border Patrol gets better at picking out those that try. They could hire a mundane coyote for the trip, but they are notoriously unreliable. They could try to make a wilderness crossing themselves, but that again requires playing cat and mouse with the Border Patrol and in a much less comfortable environment. Finally, they might hire Las Sombras or Julio to take them across, but that risks more exposure to the strange and they're likely to want more than simple cash in payment.

Dia de los Muertos

As it does every year, the Day of the Dead has come to Ciudad Juárez and it isn't just a time for sugar skulls, ofrendas, and festive caleveras. The dead walk freely for the next two days and Beasts are more likely than most to attract ghosts. Who comes to the players' characters and what do they do? Do old dead friends come and beg for help finishing the tasks they have left undone? Do vanquished enemies return from beyond the grave and seek revenge upon the Beasts and those they love? Do the Beasts strike a bargain with the strange ghost/spirit/human Sin Eaters to assist them with wrangling whatever unquiet dead trouble the brood? Do dead family and loved ones return simply to celebrate the holiday? Whatever the ghosts and the player's brood are doing, they'd better do it before dawn on November 3rd when the holiday ends, or else wait an entire year.

Songs of a Dying Sea

Bombay Beach and the Salton Sea

Out past the salt flats the water of the Salton Sea laps gently against the shore. The sun beats down on decades-old abandoned trailers and machinery corroding under a coating of salt and mud. Dead fish, the victims of lethal algae blooms, float to the surface of the water and rot. A tiny desert community clings to life amid the ghosts of past vacations. When night falls and the only sound is the lapping of the water, something stalks its dreams.

Bombay Beach doesn't have much to it, just a handful of homes on the west side of the Salton Sea, a large salt lake in southwest California. It isn't even an incorporated city, just a name on the sign of the now closed local restaurant and less than 300 souls huddled on the shore of the lake in the lowest community in the country. As the Sea feeds on agricultural runoff and Mexican sewer outflow it slowly increases in salinity, killing all but the hardiest species of fish. The current government scheme to rescue the Sea will create a horseshoe lake, leaving the center dry.

History

The history of the Salton Sea, and by extension Bombay Beach, begins long before the arrival of man in the Americas. A vast, shallow sea covered the region, depositing the salt that is its namesake. Millions of years later, a lake in the Salton Sink followed a seemingly endless cycle of death and rebirth, filling and drying with changing rainfall. In time, men and women came to what would be the Imperial Valley, first the Native Americans from the north, then the Spanish from the south, and finally American settlers, pouring in from the East. The basin was dead and dry by the time the settlers arrived, but they built a town called Salton and mined the area for salt.

In 1905, flood waters from the Colorado River ran down one an irrigation canal and through a dyke and ultimately into the Salton Sink. For two years the Colorado River poured into the basin, creating the lake now known as the Salton Sea and burying the town of Salton beneath its waters. Farmers across the Imperial Valley Stories still tell stories about the great flood and the 80 foot high waterfall. More rarely they tell a tale that places the blame for the flooding squarely on the shoulders of the California Development Company engineers, claiming that the headgates of the canal were sabotaged to drown something found at the bottom of a salt mine.

Intermittent flooding in the area continued until the construction of one of the great engineering wonders of the modern age, the Hoover Dam, tamed the mighty Colorado River. Gone were the great wild rushes of flood waters, replaced by the controlled flow of man-made drainage. In the 1950s there were efforts to develop the Salton Sea as a resort destination, and towns sprung around the lake, including Bombay Beach.

Story Hooks

Beneath the picturesque ruins and smooth water lies something much less pleasant than the congenial exercise in entropy that the occasional tourist photographs for their desktop background. Something stirs ever so softly beneath the increasingly salty Salton Sea. That something calls to the residents of the small community of Bombay Beach in their dreams. Visitors too, those few who stop off at the seaside campsite to sleep, may have these dreams. It might even fill the dreams of the of the strange men in black suits or black eyed children who show up occasionally when lights streak across the sky. Whoever dreams of it finds their sleep filled with impressions of great dark shapes floating and a sense of impending doom and some of them have decided to act on their dreams.

Perhaps it's whatever lies at the bottom of the salt mine from the old tales, stirring as it senses the possibility of freedom from its prison. Under the current plan, large areas of the lake could be gone by 2035. If the mine lays underneath one of those areas, an ancient evil could be freed by the best of intentions and sweep straight into the arms of its disciples prepared by decades of dreams. Aquatically inclined Beasts might try to dive down to the mine and confront the evil while it's still relatively powerless; landlubbers will have to be more creative.

Perhaps it's the ghost of the ancient shallow sea, living one of a long series of half lives, brought on by thousands of years of the lake disappearing and reappearing on the ancient sea's bed. A vast and mighty entity now bottled up in a mere endorrheic lake. Maybe it can sense the end of a cycle, the plans to shrink the Salton Sea to a horseshoe, leaving it with an even more constrained existence. Like a fox cornered by hounds it seeks any means of escape, anything to prevent it from returning to the dry basin as it has so many times before. The small fleshy creatures living on its shores, touching upon its dreams might provide just such an escape. Of course there's a good chance that these creatures will not do well with an ocean distributed throughout their minds, but the desperate, half-sleeping ghost of an ancient sea is willing to take that risk.

These problems, of course, lie sometime in the future. The more immediate issue is the worrying reaction of the residents of Bombay Beach to the otherworldly entity brushing up against their unconscious minds. Though most of the residents little stock in their strange dreams as the rest of us do, a few have begun interpreting them as signs and visions. They have come together, discussed them, and have come to the conclusion that something below the Salton Sea is powerful, trapped, and needs their assistance. They hope that if they help it, they will be repaid in kind. So far their assistance has largely been limited to driving boats out into the center of the

lake and doing some chanting in bathrobes. Last week they spilt the blood of a goat into the Sea at the height of their ceremony. It had no effect, so perhaps a larger sacrifice is needed.

The Slate Wiped Clean

Adelaide, Australia

A thriving city rises up from the swamps and salt and sand dunes of South Australia. Teeming masses go about their daily business without fear of predators lurking in the shadows, at least aside from the venomous snakes. No unnatural tentacles snake in and out of the city's institutions, crushing any attempt at improvement; the only corruption in the city, though certainly not absent, is entirely human. By the standards of the World of Darkness it's damn near a utopia, a city without monsters. For the Children it's damn near a nightmare, a post-apocalyptic landscape wiped clean by an unknown force. Even Beasts fear bigger monsters.

Adelaide, the capital of the state of South Australia is a city of 1.3 million people situated on the south coast of Australia. The city runs in a broad strip from north to south with the Gulf of St. Vincent to the West and the Adelaide Hills to the east. The city, as is typical for one of its size, is thoroughly surrounded by suburbs. Nearly a third of the population are immigrants, comprising robust ethnic communities in the city and suburbs. All in all, it presents the image of a pleasant coastal regional capital.

History

Adelaide was founded in 1836 and laid out the next year as a capital for the new province of South Australia in an area known to the Aboriginal Kauma people as Male Red Kangaroo Rock. Unusually for Australia its early residents were not convicts from Britain, but instead immigrants attracted to the new community.

The letters of a Melbourne brood based in the 1850s, now found in the collection of Arthur's Sons, a brood of the same city, show one side of a correspondence between the brood and an associate named Jim Dalton who moved to Adelaide. The letters note the complete absence of any supernatural creatures among the population of the city and the minutiae of the life of a Beast in 19th century Australia before stopping abruptly. Further letters from a pair of brood members dispatched to investigate his disappearance show the search proved to be fruitless.

Ted Derby, a Namtaru passing through Adelaide on his way to fight in Gallipoli during the Great War recorded his impressions of the city in his diary. He wrote of a nest of vampires entrenched in the city, preying primarily on sailors and soldiers passing through the port. When he returned three years later via the same city, sans his left foot, he found neither hide nor hair of the vampires. After spending a couple weeks searching the city, during which he was only able to determine that they had all vanished at about the same time, Derby gave up his inquiry and returned home.

Finally in the 1980s a brood out of Perth flew in to investigate the continuing rumors that Adelaide was fundamentally inimical to supernatural existence. They kept in regular touch with friends in Perth by phone. They managed to track down a single cousin in the area, a werewolf trucker who occasionally passed through the area. He told them that he had known a pack in the city that had disappeared only a few months before. Investigation of the residence of one of the disappeared found the house abandoned and in disarray. A single word was gouged, as if by a

large claw, into the drywall of its bathroom: BUNYIP. The calls from Adelaide stopped soon after.

Story Hooks

An entire city lies apparently empty of supernatural residents. This anomaly alone would provide a tempting mystery to a brood of curious beasts. They might hear of it from the rumors that have spread across the country and beyond. They may have a friend who traveled to the city and went silent. They might even arrive ignorant of the state of affairs and have to recognize the city's emptiness and find the reason for it before they too end up cleansed.

The key to the nature of the threat can be found in the last message of the pack in the 80s, Bunyip. It seems a bit strange at first, a mythical outback water beast haunting Adelaide and periodically removing any trespassers within its territory. The true situation is much stranger. The legends of the Bunyip put it at billabongs, rivers, and swamps across Australia, but it's not the water that the Bunyips emerge from, it's the reflections. Naturally the most common reflective surfaces in pre-contact Australia were bodies of water.

The legends also provide some insight into the form of the Bunyip. Reports give the creatures varying features. This is because no two of the creatures are precisely alike, pulling together their malformed bodies on the fly as they enter our world. They stare out from our mirrors and windows, surveying their territory and watching for interlopers until particular astronomical alignments allow them to swarm out and pull the interlopers back into their realm.

The notes of previous investigators may provide guidance. The brood from the 80s kept detailed audio recordings of their interviews and discussions. They still lie in the not-so-safe-room the brood left behind, hidden in a warehouse, including the tape left running as the mirror shimmered and death emerged. In the early nineties a cabal of mages posted detailed calculations that could predict the dates of Bunyip sightings based on a number of astronomical factors to an obscure BBS. What does the Brood do with all this information? Do they contrive to be out of town on the appropriate dates and do circumstances force them to stay? Do they attempt to take the fight to the Bunyip, pushing back through the temporarily permeable membranes of reflections, even knowing the danger of confronting a creature in its lair? Do they simply decide to leave the city and its unpleasant inhabitants behind?

A City at the Edge of the World

Cape Town, South Africa

Cape Town is teeming multicultural metropolis on the African coast,a vacation destination for thousands from across the globe, and city twenty years free of South Africa's brutal Apartheid regime. Yet that promise is not delivered to all. Vast slums exist on the edges of town. Crime runs rampant across the city. Political corruption is met not with outrage, but with apathy. The city may have shed its racist past, but new problems pile upon the old. Nearly 4 million people live here, perched on the shore of the South Atlantic and the future.

Cultures have been mixing in Cape Town for over three centuries, as have their secrets and mythologies. The result is one of the more unusual supernatural landscapes in the world. The nightmares of Holland, Africa, and England all clash together in a tempest the city's Beasts stalk

through, secret societies of enlightenment-era Europe fuse with tribal mystical traditions, and the multicultural millions lie waiting to sate the Hungers of Beasts.

How it Happened

Evidence speaks of a human presence on the Cape Peninsula going back millennia, but Cape Town's history begins in 1652 when the Dutch East India Company, or VOC, sent employees to set up a way station for ships passing between Europe and the company's holdings in the East Indies. Several years later, the colony began construction on Castle of Good Hope, now the oldest surviving building in South Africa.

During this time period a number of European Beasts and cousins passed through Cape Town on their way to points east and west and recorded brief descriptions of the outpost, and, although no such records from their counterparts among the native Khoisan peoples, we know that the two groups eventually melded into the hybrid cultures we see today. Eventually the VOC went bankrupt under the weight of pervasive corruption. Soon after the British captured Cape Town from the Dutch, cementing their hold in 1806. Sometime around this upheaval, the Cape Town Consilium, the body presiding over most Cape Town mages to this day, coalesced from European and African mages living in the area.

Starting in 1836 ten thousand Afrikaaner farming families, known as Boers, headed northeast from the Cape Colony in a journey known as the Great Trek. British conflicts with them and their descendants known as the Boer Wars broke out in 1880 and 1899. After their defeat in the second war, the Boers were annexed into the British Cape Colony. Tensions in Cape Town during the build up to the Second Boer War ran so deep that a brood of Afrikaaner Beasts tore a British Esmaki limb from limb in broad daylight in an incident still whispered of from brood to brood to this day.

Shortly after the turn of the century, a radical modernist movement began to spread among the younger mages of the Cape. Since its inception seats on the Cape Town Consilium had been filled by unanimous agreement of the current members. Given that the Consilium acted as a ruling body, this did not sit well with many mages with experience with more democratic systems of government. Although it never boiled over into outright civil war, the low grade conflict between the reformers and those in power smoldered for decades.

Conversely, in wider South Africa the current ran against a more democratic society in 1948 with the election of the National Party. It was they who instituted the policy of apartheid which split all of South Africa into white, coloured (the term coloured refers to the predominant ethnic group in Cape Town and the rest of the Western Cape, a largely Afrikaans speaking people of European and African ancestry), black, and Indian components and segregated almost all aspects of everyday life, displacing millions. Within two decades coloured South Africans were completely stripped of the right to vote (blacks and Indians had never been able to). These measures met with widespread resistance from non-whites and the white minority government responded with even more repressive measures, spurring violent resistance. This climate of distrust, violence and fear was a double edged sword for Beasts of the time. Although it created more easy victims for their Hungers, it also created a climate in which they were more likely to lash back, not to mention making the everyday course of life much more difficult for non-white beasts.

The apartheid regime fell through negotiations and cooperation, Nelson Mandela, a man who was once imprisoned on Robben Island in Cape Town's own Table Bay, was now the father of a

new, multicultural tolerant nation. It was too good to last for long. Lifting South Africans out of repression didn't lift all of them out of poverty. The HIV infection rate skyrocketed, creating a healthcare crisis of proportions unseen in modern history.

Crime also blossomed in the new Cape Town, standing in stark contrast to the booming development of the tourist trade. Gang violence, especially in the poor townships remaining as a lasting legacy of apartheid, helped make the city one of the most dangerous on the entire continent. In response,groups like People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) formed to protest the killings. Unfortunately, PAGAD slid into vigilantism and murder itself, and finally transformed into something resembling a terrorist group with ties to radical Islam, associated with the bombings of targets representative of western influence, like Planet Hollywood. Several vampires took advantage of the chaos to lay deaths at the feet of the gangs or vigilantes, though at least one burned alive in her haven, after PAGAD set fire to the house of a gangster next door.

A light did flare briefly at the turn of the millennium, though few were in a position to see it. After decades of agitation for change, the Cape Town Consilium finally relented and mages joined their sleeping brothers and sisters in having at least an approximation of a democratic government. Several reformers won seats on the Consilium in the first elections.

The crises of the past few decades have calmed somewhat. The revolutionaries both strange and mundane have held onto their positions, and, though the new found power has corrupted some of them, at least they're somewhat stable. The broods across the city and townships that arose during the brutal repression of apartheid and the heady days of freedom that followed its end have begun to age. No one knows quite where the city or country is headed in the next few decades, but change is inevitable and that means opportunities for Beasts who can think on their feet.

Places

Cape Flats

As apartheid entered its most oppressive stage the South African government began to push coloured residents out of the central and western areas of Cape Town and into this flat, sandy area to the Southeast. Some were placed in hastily put up housing units in the townships here, others had to build their own after it became illegal to reside in their former homes. Black South Africans, illegally outside of their “Bantu Homelands” also built their shanty towns here on this rather desolate sheet of sand. Although the racist policies of the former government are gone, the Flats, as they are known locally, remain. Cape Town simply does not have enough housing for all of its citizens, and so, twenty years after the African National Congress pledged to provide homes for all of those in need, the shanties of the Flats remain. The poor and dispossessed present prime pickings for Hungers, but some of the townships already have already been claimed by Beasts.

Devil's Peak

A name like Devil's Peak (or Duiwelspiek in the original Afrikaans) would seem to make a place a bit too obvious for anything really strange to be going on, but sometimes obvious is good advertising. Those demented, desperate, or drunk enough to want to try their hand at a Faustian bargain still flock to this mountain backdrop of the city, seeking to do as well as the Capetonian who beat the Devil at pipe smoking here. Where the marks congregate, the Unchained follow, seeking suckers to sign their souls and everything else away in pacts. Given the bad blood

between Beasts and the Unchained, they would do well to keep away from the mountain unless they're looking for trouble.

The Port of Cape Town

Catering to ocean-going vessels was Cape Town's raison d'etre from its foundation and though it has certainly sprouted and diversified in the intervening centuries its port still sees a huge volume of traffic. From fresh fruit to fresh-caught fish, from tankers to tourists, nearly everything moves through Cape Town's bustling seaport. Cape Town Beasts know this is Ed Hendricks' territory and if they want something from docks, it's probably best to ask Ed, both for his expertise and common courtesy.

The Cape Town Consilium Chamber

Located in a basement in the Central Business District much older than the block of office flats that lies above it, the precise whereabouts of the chamber is a closely guarded secret. In this chamber hearings are held, bargains struck, and edicts handed down. This is the smoke-filled back room to end all smoke-filled back rooms. To be given access to it, Beasts would have to be dealing with the mages of Cape Town at the very highest level. For anyone to break in would mean tracking down its location, tearing through the toughest mystical protections, and dealing with a number of extremely pissed off senior mages.

Brothers & Sisters

Cape Town Consilium

Nearly a century of struggle to get a seat at the table and it's only taken a decade for the new mages on the Cape Town Consilium to become everything they were fighting against: ossified, scheming, and power hungry. The current Consilium still meets in the same chambers as the previous Consilium, runs its meetings according to the same rules, even has a significant proportion of the same members. Already new young turks are clamoring for greater access to arcane libraries, mystical laboratories, and new avenues of research while the old revolutionaries want to be able to enjoy the fruits of their struggle. In essence the Consilium remains what it has always been, a hidebound group of senior mages largely unwilling to acede to popular desires.

Rupert Mlilo

Rupert is twice a refugee, once from his homeland of Zimbabwe and again from the clutches of a terrifying creature beyond a maze of thorns who twisted and warped him into a small bent shell of his former self. Both times he has lost himself in the Cape Flats, scratching out a living repairing items picked out of trash piles and dumpsters. Beasts are likely to find him tinkering in the shack of reclaimed refuse that serves as his storefront, keeping a way eye on the passersby. If they can get him talking, they may find him a surprisingly good source of information on all sorts of things going on in his little corner of Cape Town. Crippling fear is an excellent motivation for keeping an eye out for anything the least bit unusual.

In **Changeling: the Lost** terms, Rupert is an Autumn Court Wizened.

Ed Hendricks

Ed Hendricks has roots in the sea. His people have been working at the Port of Cape Town for as long as anyone can remember. The natives in his family tree were probably gathering shellfish in Table Bay a thousand years before his Dutch ancestors caught sight of the Cape of Good Hope.

And that's why no one is better than this Makara to help get anything in or out of Cape Town via boat. From guns to artifacts to coffin shaped crates which absolutely must not be opened during the day, he's done it all. True, the occasional choice item goes missing in transit, but that's the risk of dealing with a hungry Beast. The rate is still lower than his competitors.

Jane Randall

Jane is a British-descended insurance analyst working on the 28th floor of the MetLife Building. From the window of her office she can see the City Bowl and its residents splayed out below her like a giant ant colony, which suits the Ugallu Predator quite well. She can watch her future prey from her perch like a hawk from a telephone pole and see it go about its daily business. Then, when night comes, the access to the roof she's finagled from maintenance allows her to take flight from one of the highest points in the city.

Threats

The Muti Men

Less an organization than a group of loosely affiliated individuals in the same line of work, these hunters, witches, crooks, and con men are a danger to anyone that they believe they can work into their medicines. If albino bone sells for exorbitant prices, just think what genuine powdered Griffin will go for. The actual efficacy of a particular practitioner's muti medicine makes very little difference to the poor fellow who's been partitioned and parceled off to some desperate soul looking for an HIV cure or jerk buying a virility charm. Wise Beasts should watch their backs; the Muti Men could be anyone from an old granny living in a tin shack in an outlying township to those creepy suits from that pharmaceutical multinational operating out of that skyscraper downtown.

Theo Vanderberg

Many vampires have seen their societies changed unrecognizably over the years, but that change usually takes centuries. Theo Vanderberg has seen that change occur much more rapidly. A police officer dying in 1980 in a white minority-ruled, apartheid South Africa, he rapidly found himself thrust into the new, multicultural South Africa and the experience has been far from pleasant. Robbed of the privileges he felt due to him by the color of his skin, his carefully developed network of influence thrown into disarray by the fundamental societal changes, Vanderberg became a fossil not two decades after his death. His losses has made him bitter,violent, and have crystallized his racism in a way rare among the dead. Openly hostile to non-Whites, even other vampires, any Beasts who do not share his views are likely to make an instant enemy upon crossing his path.

In **Requiem** terms, Vanderberg is an Unaligned Venture.

Fate's Bastards

An end result of the apartheid government's use of the Cape Flats as a dumping ground for inconvenient non-white communities, the Bastards consist of Beasts formerly of a half dozen different neighborhoods in central and west Cape Town. Thrust together by vast, impersonal forces they formed the largest brood in the Cape Town area rather than fighting among themselves. Their territory covers a significant number of the townships in the Flats, but they are aging. On the one hand, this further roots them in their community as respected elders, making

them harder for any scrappy young band of misfits to dislodge socially. On the other hand, they aren't as spry in a fight as they used to be.

Hooks

Where is My Mummy?

One of Ed Hendricks' special shipments has gone horribly wrong and he needs the players' brood's help. A crane dropped the shipping container in which he'd stowed an ancient sarcophagus bound for Chile. The occupant of the sarcophagus took offense at the rough handling and now Ed has 3 dead stevedores and mummy loose somewhere on the docks. He needs the brood to help him track down the mummy, subdue or reason with it, and send it on its way to the New World. If they can manage that, they have the Cape's foremost smuggler at their beck and call.

At Sixes and Sevens

The Sixth Municipal District of Cape Town stood for nearly a century before the apartheid government declared that the predominantly coloured area was a dangerous slum that led to interracial mixing, designated it a whites-only area, bulldozed most of the buildings, and relocated its residents to the Cape Flats. After the land grab, facilities for the current Cape Peninsula University of Technology were built on some of the land. This is a problem, as when a small fragment of the murdered neighborhood decided to return an isolated corner of the campus disappeared. It's a university holiday, so only a terrified pair of janitors have noticed that a trio of houses, complete with residents, now occupy two thirds of the campus maintenance plant. What are the houses? Why are they back? And District Six's former residents were all relocated, who or what is living in those houses?

Vigilance

A local Hero is coming after the brood. Being a bit brighter than the average nut job with a sharpened hoe, she has decided that the best way to go about this is to tar the brood with false (or perhaps true) accusations of crimes and let Cape Town's history of vigilante justice do her work for her. Can the brood prove their innocence to a pitchfork and torch wielding mob before it puts burning tires around their necks? Even if they can, what will they do about the lasting rumors of everything from murder and child abuse to petty theft?

Bad Medicine

A player's Beast comes across a disturbing find at a local market, a tanned and dried severed hand meant for use as muti. The still visible tattoo on the back marks it as belonging to a friend gone missing a few weeks ago. If the players' brood wants vengeance, they'll have to work their way back up a supply chain leading through the darkest underbelly of Cape Town all the way to one of the infamous Muti Men. On the other hand, the brood may be considerable less bloody-minded if they realize their friend sold his own hand to pay off a gambling debt.

Fractured Philly

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Once the heart of the nation, now only the heart of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia endures. Gentrification continues to add yet another layer to the strata of the city, atop the declining rust belt metropolis, the thriving industrial city, and the colonial hub. Different cities coexist, not just

vertically, but also side by side, as neighborhoods new and old grow and shrink, abide and reinvent themselves. A million and a half residents tread the asphalt and concrete of this section of the East Cost urban sprawl, some more aware of the history underneath and around them than others.

If the mundane inhabitants of Philadelphia live in a city divided into neighborhoods, its supernatural citizens live and die by their territories. Beasts, wolfmen, bloodsuckers, and even stranger things all contest the choicest bits of real estate and influence. No grasp is so firm that a group can reckon its position unassailable and no territory is so bountiful that its holder can put all thoughts of expansion, all fantasies of owning that greener grass next door completely out of mind. It's the city of brotherly love, not neighborly love. It's not just the neighbors that a Beast has to worry about in Philly, but also the damn hunters. They, or those like them, have been a part of the city's fabric for centuries. Some hold and contest territories, others just stick their noses into someone else's business at the most inopportune moments, but most are a major inconvenience one way or another.

How it Happened

The land for the colony of Pennsylvania was given to William Penn to settle a debt the English crown owed to his father. Despite this relatively seedy origin, Penn conceived of the colony as the home of a religiously tolerant society. A fairly popular notion, this helped spur the growth of Penn's capital, Philadelphia, founded in 1682, attracting Catholics, Jews, Quakers, and even odder folks, including the city's first Beasts. Although not quite the utopia that Penn envisioned, it quickly grew to be one of the cultural and economic centers of the colonies.

Philadelphia had become so prominent during the latter half of the 17th century that it was the site of the first two Continental Congresses and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Of course this, as well as its inherent strategic value, led the British to capture and briefly occupy Philadelphia during the American Revolutionary War. Several factions of the city's supernatural denizens saw the chaos as an opportunity to expand their influence, but, in a pattern that would be repeated several times in the city's history, Philly's hunter population pushed back enough to keep any of the factions from gaining preeminence.

After the Treaty of Paris in 1783 the city was the capital of the new United States until construction on the District of Columbia was sufficiently advanced to hold the workings of government in 1800. The federal government, relatively circumscribed though it was until the Constitution came into force in 1789, attracted even greater numbers of people to the city, including a fair number of not-exactly-people drawn like moths to the mechanisms of power. The presence of the United States Mint alone attracts the presence of several hopeful Collectors.

Although no longer the national capital, Philadelphia retained its status as a major city and the industrial revolution led to a booming manufacturing industry. The factories and foundries drew large numbers to work in them, concentrating population in the city like never before. Packing such a large number of people into a relatively small area meant physically smaller territories and greater friction. In the 1870s this briefly erupted into street violence between three small broods, each claiming only a single factory. Further violence was forestalled when all three factories experienced unexplained and devastating fires within a fortnight.

The Great Depression hit Philadelphia as hard as any other city in the nation, upturning established orders and creating new opportunity for advancement among the city's shadow

population. The large numbers of poor and unemployed made perfect prey for Philly's vampires. One particularly crafty bloodsucker was able to leverage the easy feeding and connections with several of the city's more aggressive Beast broods to expand his power over nearly all of the vampires in the city. Again, local hunters united in the face of this rising centralized power and spoiled his bid for control, this time through judicious use of arson. Much of his power base destroyed, the broods proved fair weather friends and deserted him. Rumors persist to this day that one of the other vampire factions, staked the would-be Prince and entombed him in a Works Progress Administration project.

The events of the 1930s also set the stage for one of the bloodiest chapters of Philadelphia's secret history when hunters began exterminating the city's werewolves. The bloodshed reached a peak in the 1970s when hunter cells swept through the last major wolfman stronghold, Fairmount Park, and slaughtered those within. Since that time, the city has been in a state of relative equilibrium. Individual cells, Broods, coteries, and packs all rise and fall, but none has gained preeminence in the city of brotherly love.

Places

Fairmount Park

The jewel of the Philadelphia park system, Fairmount Park occupies nearly six and a half square miles in West Philadelphia. It was also once the core territory of the werewolves of Philadelphia until it was the site of their slaughter in the 1970s. Today the park remains in the grasp of the successors of the various hunter cells who perpetrated the Fairmount Slaughter, but on nights when the moon is full and bloody, one may still be able to hear the howls of the massacred werewolves. Or maybe those are just the desperate cries of a modern trespasser being hunted for sport.

Laurel Hill Cemetery

The dead have lain in Laurel Hill for nearly two centuries, but some of them are a bit more active than others. The Wyrms, a scholarly band of vampires, have chosen Laurel Hill as their resting place, sealing themselves in tombs daily with what's rumored to be huge collections of occult artifacts and texts. Any sane Beast would only enter the cemetery uninvited during the day, when the tombs are guarded by the vampires' minions instead of the undead themselves. Robbing one of the tombs is nearly unthinkable, but a Beast mad, bad, or clever to pull it off might come back with a treasure trove to put Howard Carter to shame.

The Mütter Museum

Run by the Philadelphia College of Surgeons, the Mütter displays an absolutely enormous number of exhibits showing the ways in which the human body can go horribly wrong. A museum of the monstrous is sure to be a draw to Beasts poking around for long lost kin. Unfortunately the very best bits are kept off of public display by hunters on the museum's staff. Beasts will have to do something extraordinary or extraordinarily violent to gain access to this well guarded trove of artifacts.

The Map Room

In the back of a certain pawn shop in South Philadelphia lies a table sized map of the city and its environs divided by colored lines and annotated in a small, precise hand. This map reflects the current control of the city by various supernatural and human forces as accurately as its creator

can determine. It is the work of a mage known as the Surveyor whose survey crew of apprentices roams the city constantly gathering data on its current division. Open to all who know of its existence, the Surveyor rigidly enforces a policy of nonviolence within the Map Room. As such, it occasionally sees a wide variety of visitors looking to ascertain the current state of the city and devise strategies to maintain or expand their holdings. Often it also serves as convenient neutral ground for diverse parties to meet and many a truce has been brokered and plot has been hatched above the map table.

Brothers & Sisters

Therese Ross

Therese Ross is one tough old bitch of a werewolf. She's seen a lot of change in her lifetime, though only half as much since she lost her left eye. She's about as much of an authority figure as Philly's Uratha have, having survived the great purge at the hands of hunters and the loss of Fairmount Park. She shepherds a number of younger packs and may seek Beasts' aid on their behalf or in service of her long term plans. She's a canny adviser, a cool head urging caution upon often short tempered werewolf packs, but always with an eye on her long lost Fairmount.

Michael Franklin

One of the scholarly clique of vampires who make their homes in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Michael Franklin sits about midway down the city's byzantine hierarchy of the undead. He is of particular interest to Beasts as his occult studies have touched upon the doings of many different supernatural groups. This positions him well as a source of information for an inquisitive brood, provided they bring equally interesting tidbits to share in return for his help. Though he seems quite like an eccentric professor, Beasts would do well not to underestimate him. He is a predator who has survived over a century in conflict-ridden Philly.

In **Requiem** terms Franklin is a Mekhet of the Ordo Dracul.

Jerome Fitzgerald

Many of the territories in Philadelphia stretch for blocks, but Jerome Fitzgerald's is a single large apartment building where he works as a building superintendent. Situated at the edge of werewolf and Union turf, this Gorgon Tyrant has managed to hold onto his tiny kingdom against all challengers for the last twenty years. A prickly enough obstacle to a small enough morsel, Jerome has developed polite if not friendly relationships with his neighbors. He might be willing to make introductions for Beasts, especially if they come with sufficient humility. It is so nice when family acknowledges one's accomplishments.

Network Zero

Not everyone interested in hunting a Beast down wants to kill her. These fellas just want to get her on film doing something weird. Mind you, that can be as damaging to a Beast as a shotgun blast to the head, but it doesn't necessarily have to be. What's more, these guys have access to everything from extremely blurry vampire snuff films to third generation copies of 8 millimeter footage of some sort of green glowing ooze slowly enveloping a subway train, something that can be invaluable to a Beast investigating a shadier branch of the monster family tree. Still, a Beast has to be careful with this loosely affiliated group of internet video enthusiasts since one of the best ways to shoot kickass monster footage is to hang out with the jerks hunting said monsters.

Threats

Martinez and Sons Plumbing

The modern American city is filled with nondescript white panel vans painted with the name and logo of local tradesmen. From the outside, the three Martinez and Sons Plumbing vans look no different, but there is no Martinez or any sons, and the hunters inside know nothing about snaking a toilet. What they do have a firm grasp of is how to stake out a target, wait until the moment is right, and then strike. Then the vans pull double duty as getaway vehicle and mobile vivisection chamber as the cell plumbs the mysteries of supernatural anatomy. Eventually, though, someone will catch onto the scheme and the vans will have to be abandoned. A slight variation on the model is planned and the cell has already begun quietly buying up a small fleet of minivans with dark tinted windows for Jiffy Taxi Cab Company.

In **Vigil** terms, Martinez and Sons Plumbing is a Null Mysteriis cell.

The Bank Bunch

This brood of Anakim and Ugallu Tyrants and Collectors are based out of a corner of Central City, working for the financial services industry. They are all quite well positioned in their field which helps them satisfy their Hungers. That they are so well established drives them to vigilantly protect their domain from interlopers, such as the players' brood. If the intruders think they're in for an easy fight because they're going up against MBAs and accountants, they're in for a rude surprise, as the Bank Bunch is as formidable in a back alley as in a boardroom.

The Sewer Monster

Everyone knows the stories about crocodiles or mole people or rats the size of dobermans in the sewers. What fewer have noticed is the slight bump in missing persons on the cold winters nights when the homeless are clustered around sewer grates or the occasional finger or foot found by sanitation workers. There's something dangerous down there, whether it's one of the Children, a pack of feral werewolves with a taste for human flesh, or even just the big brothers of the alligator found near a sewer grate a couple of years ago.

The Colony

Feral cats blend so seamlessly into the fabric of a city that many people don't realize just how many of them there are, stalking the alleys, sunning themselves on rooftops. A colony in West Philadelphia is about to stand out from the crowd. Possessed by a spirit of vicious hunger, the colony moves as one, hunting to sate that bottomless hunger. It started with smaller game like the ubiquitous pigeon, but with every night it adds more cats to its number and needs larger and larger meals. An individual cat poses no threat, but dozens descending upon a victim all at once soon leave nothing more than red, wet bones.

Hooks

Wolves on the Border

Therese Ross approaches the player's brood asking a favor. She wants them to arbitrate a boundary dispute between one of the werewolf packs she's taken under her wing and a neighboring coterie of vampires, as the Beasts are somewhat terrifying relatives of both sides. That no one's ended up torn into bloody chunks or affixed to a wall with silver nails so far is a small miracle, given the distrust the two groups have for each other, so the brood has its work cut

out for them. However, the brood has both an abstract interest in keeping different branches of the family from coming to blows and a concrete interest in a tough, canny werewolf owing them a favor.

Plague Capsule

In Philadelphia, the past is always only a few feet beneath your feet, as proved this week when a construction crew unearthed a sealed lead box while excavating the foundation for a new supermarket. Marked 1793, historians supposed it was a time capsule and proceeded to open it. While they found only disappointingly mundane dirt inside, it now appears something escaped when the box was opened. People scattered across the city are falling ill with symptoms similar to the 1793 yellow fever epidemic and Philadelphia's supernatural denizens are not immune. Can the player's brood find what lies behind this outbreak and put a stop to it before they too fall ill?

The Maltese Tome

A rare 16th century chronicle allegedly penned by one of the Knights of Malta was recently put up for sale at a specialty auction house in Philadelphia. Given the rumors that it detailed the secret mystic rites of a early subset of the order as well as number of other supernatural occurrences, bidding by agents of both an elder vampire and the Aegis Kai Doru was fierce, but a private collector managed to outbid both in the end. Unfortunately for the collector, the book was stolen before from the auction house before the transaction could be completed. Both the vampires and the hunters blame the others for the theft and have offered money, information, favors, nearly anything if someone will find the book and turn it over to them. Can the brood track down the Collector who actually stole the book and wrest it from her control? Once they do can they hold onto it long enough to reap their reward? And what happens if they unknowingly turn over a fake?

Marking Territory

Something's happened to the map in the Map Room. All of the intricate borders and handwritten labels are gone. The only notation on the map is a single symbol, a knotted mass of brown-red lines that gives a view headaches if he looks at it too long. The Surveyor is nowhere to be found and people are starting to get nervous. Has the Surveyor just closed up shop? Is this the end game of a years long magical working that involved precisely tracking the status of the city? Or does the map accurately reflect reality, correctly showing all of Philly under the control of a single unknown entity?

Men at Work

An entire crew of five construction workers resurfacing a city street overnight has been found torn to pieces. Rumor has it that remarkably little blood was found at the scene except for that smeared on a nearby wall in a bit of graffiti not seen since the 1930s, since the days of the vampire prince. Has a vengeful relic truly returned to Philly, and, if so, who has the most to fear: the hunters who foiled him, the Beasts who betrayed him, or the Kindred who entombed him?

A Serpent’s Tooth

Vancouver, Canada

Even in summer, when downtown air is sticky with saltwater and cannabis, the rain is unrelenting. It soaks every block, washing out the usual urban divisions till high-rise-steels and slum-brick-reds are all the same gray blur. At Main and Hastings, pale working girls and spray-tanned weekend warriors kibitz between downpours. On Davie Street, vagrants hawk umbrellas in front of LGBT bookstores and Japanese hotdog stands. Across the inlet, the Lions scowl over the Pacific Ocean through subtropical storm fronts. Vancouver's identity hasn't so much split as sprung a leak.

For the Beasts, a leak became a flood. The Children have suffered a deluge in their Primordial Dream, a great river linking each and every one of their Lairs. A brood of Makara claims these waters as a symbol and an instrument of their right to rule the other Families. The flood has given these Leviathans absolute power over their cousins and siblings for over sixty years.

How it Happened

This is a legend the First Nations tell:

When the gold rush came to Squamish lands — what would one day be Vancouver — the greed it inspired took hold of one of my people, a man named Shak-shak. Under the gold's influence, Shak-shak came to love wealth more than his own life. He spurned the potlatch, and as his neighbors starved in harsh winters, he reveled in his hoard. His avarice grew so vast that even the Great Spirit came to loathe him. It called down from heaven and transformed him into a two-headed serpent, so long its body threaded the entirety of our waters. He had become the Salt-Chuck Oluk, a thing made only to be despised. The Great Spirit promised that if a hero would pierce the serpent's heart, greed would be banished from the land.

As it always is, that call was answered. The story ends with Shak-shak's heart cut out and cast into the Capilano River, and the people rejoicing over the tremors of his death throes.

We Begotten had no pity.

—From the journals of George Wolf

Decades after the serpent's story had warped into its modern form, his hubris echoed, breeding Heroes like cockroaches. When the Great Vancouver Fire razed most of the new town, and settlers turned to drunken rioting, a mob of Heroes set upon the Beasts. They boarded up the hideouts of the city's broods, and doused them with stolen whiskey, chanting the Salt-Chuck's name. Few survived.

In the aftermath, Family rivalries became vendettas. The Makara and Ugallu had always been at odds — such is the nature of a land where sea and mountain meet — and the Raptors blamed the Leviathans for Salt-Chuck Oluk's bloody legacy. Though the serpent was dead, his relations would pay for his sins. The Raptors began secretly opening Pathways for Heroes into Makara Lairs, hoping they would wipe each other out.

It didn't work. In 1911, "The Legend of the Salt-Chuck Oluk" was published in a series of articles on Squamish folklore. The stories became popular across the country, and Heroes seemed to wake en masse in the aftermath.

Vancouver's vampires began to take notice. Always vigilant over their precious Masquerade, the vampires grew uneasy at the violence and attention being drawn to the supernatural world. The Raptors saw another opportunity. Masters of exploiting the fear of exposure, the Ugallu

convinced the Kindred that the Leviathans were to blame, and that it was in their best interest to call a blood hunt, to stem the tide of Heroes.

This time, it worked. Over the next forty years, the Nightmares of the Depths were nearly wiped out from Vancouver at the fangs of vampires and the swords of Heroes.

In 1951, the government began constructing North Vancouver's Cleveland Dam. No one gave it a second thought, let alone any Beasts, but that changed the day workers began digging up the site.

When I looked inside my Lair, it was flooded. As water and debris flew past my Soul, I tried to return to my body. I couldn't. Giant birds aren't natural swimmers, but the animal part of my brain tried to glide with the current. My wings tore apart like wet paper, and I blacked out from the pain. I thought my Soul would drown, which is a terrible prospect to an 8-year-old.

Instead, I woke up in my bed with three broken ribs and a pint of puked up water. I don't think my mother ever cried so hard in her life. She never understood what happened. For a long time, I didn't either.

—From the journals of George Wolf

A rift had torn between the river and the Primordial Dream, as if some plug in reality had dislodged. Searching for the hole proved futile. Worse, it benefited the despised Makara. The river formed paths between Lairs, floodways only accessible to Leviathans. Rumors spread that the workers had dislodged the remains of the Salt-Chuck's heart from the river, and the pogrom reached a fever pitch. The Raptors pointed their vampire allies at the last brood of Leviathans, hiding near the dam construction site and hoping to find the source of the water.

The leeches easily overwhelmed them. But as the brood's Tyrant leader succumbed to fear of death for the first time since her Homecoming, she experienced a vision. In her mind's eye, a wave burst from the dam, washing over her and her tormenters. From its depths, a thundering voice cried out: *These are not your kin.*

In desperation, the Tyrant reached out with her Kinship, and found a thread she'd never felt before. She pulled, and she was enlightened. As the waves in her mind's eye receded, the powers of every vampire in her presence failed.

Makara still celebrate the massacre that followed.

The Tyrant gathered every sibling she had left, and together they immolated the leaders of the Kindred court. They gave the remaining bloodsuckers a choice: servitude or death. All chose servitude. With their new minions, the brood turned on their estranged siblings. Travelling through floodways, they stole into the Lairs of their Raptor enemies. The choice was given again. Most Ugallu, too proud to see their sins repaid, chose a third option: exile.

In memory of their martyred sibling, the Disciples of Salt-Chuck Oluk have dominated the supernatural denizens of Vancouver ever since.

Places

The Downtown Eastside

Ruin runs in veins as surely as drugs, and if punishment's your taste, the Vancouver PD are eager to share their restraining techniques. Welcome to the Downtown Eastside. Canada's poorest

postal code is teeming with prey for the worst kind of predators. Beasts, vampires, and humans alike gorge on its miseries, slumming among locals for the chance of a unique dining experience. The nightlife's not bad either. Thrashers, "the best dive bar in town," is popular with Beasts, and Begotten from all over Metro Vancouver blow off steam here, playing with Nightmares under the cover of dim lights and hard punk.

The Hotel Vancouver

With its Italianate architecture and iconic copper roof, one couldn't ask for a more striking residence. But the Hotel Vancouver is leaking, and that's what really makes it the perfect headquarters. The entire building is inexplicably resonant with the flood waters, and Primordial Pathways are trivial for Makara Beasts to form. The Disciples have declared the Hotel their capitol, renting several suites and holding monthly meetings with their enforcers in the hotel restaurant.

> Water Works
>
> Vancouver's floodways are equivalent to Burrows (p. XX), but they exist between just about every Lair in the city. Only Makara can enter or grant access to them. Leviathans can form floodways between Lairs by spending a point of Satiety, without properly bonding with the other Beast. Other Begotten may resist this intrusion with a Clash of Wills.

Cleveland Dam

The waters of Cleveland Dam are forbidden. The lake feeding into the dam devours any Beast who sets foot in its waters. Leviathans are no exception, in spite of their Birthright. Even in shallow areas, victims are sucked in, though witnesses have never confirmed whether the pull is a force, or an occupant of the river. Accordingly, the Disciples have banned all Children from the area. Except, of course, themselves.

Stanley Park

Stanley Park ate the changelings. On the bluffs of Brockton Point, the King of Summer yielded his throne to the Queen of Fall, and at the ceremony's end, every one of their subjects had disappeared. No one knows how it happened. No one remembers their names. No one even remembers when it happened. It might have been a year ago, but it just as easily could've been ten. Only the King and Queen survived, and they're not talking.

Brothers & Sisters

During World War II, Vancouverites of Japanese ancestry were interned. That internment made **Andre Yamamoto** bitter, and in turn, that bitterness gave him dreams of *oni*. His wife's death of dysentery twisted him into one. As a police detective on the DTES, the Namtaru sated his bitterness, pulling apart the fragile lives of the poor in pursuit of Ruin. When the Disciples emerged, he was instrumental in smoking out resistant vampires, and later keeping tabs on other Beasts with a network of Mekhet spies. Until his retirement, he was the group's most feared servant. Now, at over 100, he's the oldest Beast in Vancouver. He doesn't do much legwork anymore, but his network keeps him well informed, and with a few phone calls, well fed.

Among academics, **George Wolf** is a folklorist, acclaimed for translations and commentaries on Squamish legends. Among Beasts, he's the city's resident occultist. His Soul is a thunderbird

with wings of lightening, and he's known to strike down Heroes with hurricanes. He's possibly the only Ugallu left who witnessed the flood first hand, and his numerous journals chronicle a half-century of supernatural life in Vancouver. For that, the Disciples are hesitant to twist the screws too hard. For now. His library — his Hoard — keeps him safe, but hidden within piles of ledgers he's found a secret that could end him and his Family. At all times, he carries a doctored passport, and several thousand dollars in American cash.

Jeff Hasted preaches the bad news. In his eyes, the flood was the Lord's wrath, and now he and his fellow Disciples ensure God's judgment is carried out on the other Families. Every Sunday, Jeff claims a corner near St. James Anglican Church and preaches the end times. Through his constant presence, Jeff is the most public face of the Disciples, but he's also their only black sheep. The others don't care for his preaching: power is the point of Power, not dogma. Nor are they keen on his growing fascination with a particular vampire religion. As Jeff awaits the eschaton, he'll use every ounce of strength in his tentacles to prove the others live in sin. If they fail to repent? So much the better.

If you hear the music, it's already over. She's 90 pounds soaking wet, but on the streets **Kayley Levesque** is an apex predator. With Doc Martin stomping boots and a *joual* accent, she's ready for damage. With eight legs and razor sharp mandibles, she's ready to dine out. Part of Vancouver's growing population of street kids, this Eshmaki's gang-cum-thrash-band is a medley of runaways and castoffs, kept in line with threats of graphic ass-kickings. That's usually enough to keep her Hunger in check. Usually. Lately, Kayley needs to take it further. She needs to break bones and suck marrow, to squeeze iron rich juices from livers. She's not sure she wants to. She's not sure she can't.

> **[KEPT THIS GUY IN THE ORDO, BUT MADE IT CLEARER WHY HE IS IN HIS PLOT HOOK BELOW]**

Unlife is good to **Luke Van Buren**. A dishonorably discharged veteran of Afghanistan, with more street smarts than book learning, Luke was sired by the token Prince of Vancouver to kidnap live specimens for her experiments. Luke had a fundamental disagreement with that assignment, so he drank her soul. His claim to her irrelevant throne went undisputed, partly due to his knack for cleaving vampire skulls with his ax. Despite his title, "Prince" Van Buren swears loyalty to the Disciples, and any other Beast who needs the muscle. All he asks is that his order be allowed to practice their pseudo-sciences undisturbed.

In **Requiem** terms, Luke is a Nosferatu of the Ordo Dracul.

Threats

The Disciples

The Disciples of Salt-Chuck Oluk are anything but stable. Take a gang of Tyrants commanding undead hordes, give them an ideology that begins and ends with an eye for an eye, and the results are predictable. Backbiting is second nature to Vancouver's most powerful brood, but the iron grip they choke their siblings with is still their proprietary knowledge, and that's enough to hold them together. While the regime is more feudal anarchism than top-down dictatorship, they fall in lockstep over danger. Every threat is an existential threat. Every enemy is a mortal enemy.

Bad Blood

The Disciples practice their anti-Kinship through a powerful Nightmare. Only Leviathans who've swum through the floodways can learn it, and only the Disciples know how to teach it. Unlike other Nightmares, this power benefits from teamwork actions (p. XX), though not all actors need to know it. This power doesn't work on Beasts, Heroes, or mages. Outside Vancouver, it doesn't work at all.

Your Strength Is Your Weakness

You're a fraud! You've never built anything of worth without some magical cheat. Now you'll see what you really are, without your cheap tricks.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety – Resolve

Normal: The victim gains the Abruption Condition.

High Satiety: The Beast gains the 8-again quality when using Social Maneuvering against her victim, or the rote quality when using hard leverage.

Satiety Expenditure: As long as he suffers the Abruption Condition, the victim takes lethal damage equal to the Beast's successes each time he tries to use a power.

Exceptional Success: The victim also gains the Shaken Condition (p. XX).

New Condition: Abruption

Your character's supernatural gifts are hobbled. Each time he attempts to use a power, whether inherent or learned, he loses a number of *successes* equal to the inflicting Beast's Lair, plus one. If the power isn't rolled, it simply fails. If multiple Beasts caused this Condition, the penalty is equal to their combined Lairs. This Condition fades at the end of the scene.

Resolution: Your character accepts her inferiority and takes the Beaten Down Tilt (p. XX) or an appropriate Condition.

Heroes

Vancouver's Heroes have long memories. While most of them buy into the usual, individualist narratives Beast slayers are prone to, a growing number believe they're bound by a common cause. They've been waking from the same nightmare for a hundred and fifty years, and they're starting to understand why. They call themselves the Little Kings, after the Squamish Hero who slew the serpent. Their war cry is the Salt-Chuck's name, a whisper they dimly remember carried down the river of their dreams. It's an Anathema they can force on any Beast within the city limits, regardless of her Satiety.

Werewolves

When the Raptors began their crusade, few werewolves joined the bloodshed, but fewer offered the Leviathans any aid. In the eyes of the Disciples, that apathy was damning. The wolves were given the same choice as everyone else. Most who survived or escaped the purge fled to the province's interior, and for six decades, not a single pack has held territory in Vancouver. To say the spirit world went berserk in their absence would be an understatement. The natural hierarchy of the realm has collapsed. Verges between worlds are worryingly common, and among the handful of werewolves remaining, there are rumors that the flood is leaking through the Shadow.

Mages

For the most part, Vancouver's mages aren't concerned with Beasts. The Disciples can't affect Awakened magic, and they won't poke a hornet's nest when their power is so circumstantial. Some militant members of the Consilium have called for action, but their hierarch, Sagalie Tyee, judges that the time isn't right. In visions of the past and future, she awaits a sign.

Hooks

• A video circulates. In it, an Anakim Collector claims she's unlocked the secret of the Disciples' technique, and that any Family can learn it. A gory demonstration with a vampire follows. The Giant is willing to sell her secret to the highest bidder, and puts the offer up in an online auction. The Disciples tear the city apart for her, but to no avail. Is her claim true, or is it just a control freak's shakedown?

• He's not as stupid as he looks. Once a month, Luke Van Buren sneaks into train yards and loads huge crates onto a flatbed. Once a week, he sequesters himself in a hidden library beneath Simon Fraser University, and studies till morning. He reports his results to exiled Raptors and werewolves up the highway in Mission, passing on folders bearing his Covenant's alchemical equations. In a year, he'll crack his Mystery wide open.

• One of George Wolf's journals is stolen. He offers the brood a chance to pick his brain (and a lot on money) if they'll track it down for him, but as they investigate, they meet a remarkable amount of resistance. Witnesses won't talk, leads go cold, and soon the brood's Lair is vandalized with strange, disjointed graffiti. George tells them it's Squamish, but no other Beast in the city knows the language except him. His translation is rough, but he's sure he's caught the gist of it: *A cog is broken.*

• One of the Disciples is murdered in her home. All clues point to her vampire servants, but they deny everything, claiming they heard a scream as she slept, and found no assailant when they broke into her room. Besides, they couldn't hurt her if they wanted to. Before they're put to death, the rest of the Disciples want to know exactly what happened. Any trick the Kindred can use to work around their chain needs to be uncovered.

• Storms rage over the flood. On the sunken horizon of Vancouver's Primordial Dream, a mountain rises. It's getting taller by the day, but even the swiftest Leviathan can't reach it. And lately, every new Beast in the city is Ugallu. The peak resembles one of the North Shore Mountains, so if an answer exists, it's hidden there. But whoever scales the mountain will have to work fast: the flood is receding.

The Third Religion

Kathmandu, Nepal

Faith isn't required. Faith rests on a pedestal carved in fact. Step through a curtain into the embrace of kusum and cardamom, and bless your eyes in the shrine's candle light. You gaze upon the Dark Mother.

She's...a severed hand behind an inch of glass.

You've travelled too far for sideshow attractions, but the priest yawns at your scoffing, like a scholar fielding questions from school children.

Then, you drop. Knees jellied; motor control rebelling. Panic would take your body, but you can't feel your body anymore. Not in the Dream. Something's dragging you by the throat, and it's not just a hand.

Kathmandu is a city of travelers. Pilgrims from all over Asia pay homage to Shiva in Pashupatinath Temple, and tourists from around the world marvel at the splendor of Nepal's ancient crossroads. And the rapidity those crossroads have modernized. Back alleys of terracotta statuary give way to blocks built wall-to-wall with high-end restaurants and chain hotels.

The capital of Nepal rests in the shadow of the Kathmandu Valley, a massive bowl formed by four mountains. In myth, the valley enclosed a lake of snakes, with a great lotus blossoming at its center. When the bodhisattva of wisdom saw the flower, he took up his sword, carving the Chobar Gorge so the lake would drain and humans could settle the fertile land.

Settle they did. The valley is a mandala of cultures and religions, home to nearly two million people. Hinduism and Buddhism are the lifeblood of the city, but invaders and missionaries have preached endless competing, syncretizing faiths over the centuries. Religion is inescapable. Holy festivals are a part of daily life, from simple Islamic services to full reenactments of the *Ramayana*.

Today, Nepal transitions. Monarchy has given way to shaky democracy, and the capital is sometimes still a target for violence. The massive tourist industry has taken a blow, and many fear the city's "third religion" may fall into decline.

History

The Shrine of Mother's Hand isn't very impressive. The façade is falling apart, and remnants of a Soviet truck form the reliquary. But what it lacks in style, it makes up for in substance. That's what the priests claim, and they have the followers to prove it.

When they first came from China in 1951, their fellow Children mocked them. They claimed to bear a true relic of the Dark Mother. Not just a belonging: a *part* of her. It wasn't difficult to be doubtful. The thing appears for all the world like an old woman's balled up fist, freshly severed and still bleeding. The priests refused (and refuse) to reveal how they acquired it, only maintaining that they staked their faiths in the Mother on it.

But soon came converts. While the object wasn't much, spontaneous entry into the Primordial Dream was. Supplicants are dragged into the realm, and undertake a nightmarish vision quest hosted by what the priests say is an avatar of the Mother herself. No Family sees it the same. Eshmaki envision great predators, Bengal tigers and snow leopards the size of elephants. Namtaru see Rakshasas, with rotten skin peeling from their bones. However it appears, it doesn't speak. It simply fills supplicants with the same rapturous fear they instill in their own victims.

> Mother's Love
>
> Meeting the purported avatar of the Dark Mother bestows visitors with a sense of awe. All supplicants take the Inspired Condition (p. XX).

The priests gained a flock, and it's never stopped growing. Broods of pilgrims clamor to witness the Dark Mother's miracle, and the priests never worry about drops in tourism. They have their own industry.

Story Hooks

The relic, whatever its truth, has been a flashpoint for conflict since the day it arrived. Nemesis skeptics call it a con or trick. Tyrant traditionalists call it iconography, or heresy. And then there's the brood of Collectors who want it for themselves.

Violence is inevitable, and it's only a question of who shoots first. But is it real? The rumor mill is always churning:

"The Begotten it belongs to can't feed off human nightmares anymore, but it can feed off its kin. Only its kin. And what better way to scare us than with our Mother? The hand's storing our fears like a battery, and one day, it'll get a full charge. The priests are going to return it to the owner. They're going to wake it up."

"Fast acting hallucinogens, maybe custom Nightmare. Easy. More pertinent question is the why. Whilst the mark's tripping out, they bleed the hand through a special Pathway. You know how their followers tend to make a lot of return visits? The blood's addictive. They pipe it directly into the victim's Lair. May as well be his brain. So? I'll put it this way: it's someone's mother, but it's not ours."

"I don't know what the hell it is, but I swear it didn't have a wrist last year."

Brothers & Sisters

Feng Zhou has been the abbess since the Shrine came to Kathmandu, and that's how it's going to stay until someone pries the job from all five of her cold, dead hands. Zhou is a gourmand of petty arguments, a Nemesis even to other Beasts. She logs their little misdeeds and dusts them off for slow days, setting her priests into spirals of bickering. Her records are written on a long scroll, wrapped within a prayer wheel. The other priests tolerate her because they know she could bring the whole thing down with one word.

The Children don't remember who the **himamānava** was before he took his Inheritance, but today the legend of this yeti lives large on the world stage, tacked on the coattails of Sherpa folklore. Every yak he mauls and every Hero he drops from a precipice is another blog post for the crypto-zoologists watching Nepal. Despite his brutal drives, Beasts brave enough to seek him out are privy to an unlikely fount of wisdom, but only if they'll fight him first.

Flayed Souls

Orkney, Scotland

He came with the Vikings, a warrior whose Life and Legend were the same thirst for death. That's one theory. Maybe he abandoned the Roman legions to conquer his own worlds, found our little archipelago and took a liking. Or maybe he was out killing Neanderthal Beasts while Cro-Magnon was still raping its way into Europe.

There's a hunter among us, and we Begotten are his game. Have been for centuries. What is he? Hero? Beast? Doesn't matter. He's the world's most successful serial killer, and he wants to rip the Soul from your flesh.

The sun never sets in summer. Under twilight colored midnights, the Standing Stones pick out stars. Pictish carvings cast shadows over the countryside, defaced with runic graffiti telling of

Norse conquests, and a code of law still practiced today. Magic flows through the land as easily as the ruins. These islands were hunting grounds for Cernunnos, and battlefields for Valkyries.

This is a Scotland where the people never wore tartans. They killed men in tartans. Orkney was a Viking oasis, a foothold in the British Isles meant to serve as a base for piracy. If not for a king reneging on a dowry, it might still be part of Norway.

Farms take up most of the land, as they have since the Neolithic, and bards still tell tales of dragons and trows. Though some of the oral folklore of the islands was lost with the death of the Norn language, a steady resurgence in native Orcadian culture — and archeological interest its many ruins — has preserved Orkney's magic into the modern day.

History

When the Norse came to Orkney, so did their Beasts. Though the Picts failed to prevent the Viking conquest, Family proved stronger than tribal allegiance, and native Beasts were protected by their Norse counterparts. Too many Viking epics boasted of Heroes slaughtering Beasts.

The culture of these Beasts melded. Norse dragons and Pictish serpents saw more in each other than in their human compatriots, and ever since, Beasts bearing visages from Pictish legend have hunted nightmares as equals to those of the Norse. For a thousand years, the Beasts enjoyed relative harmony.

Then, in the 1970s, Ben Stinchcomb was slain in his Lair. His body was flayed — flesh stripped to muscle — and his Soul had disappeared. Despite the gruesome scene, there wasn't much to go on. His killer was never found. The Children mourned and moved on, thinking his Soul had gone on to better dreams. His death was tragic, but no more than any other Beast lost to a Hero.

It might've been forgotten if Meaghan Hopkinson hadn't been found flayed, twenty four years later. Then, Danny Haskell, twelve years later. The, Jana Skorstengård, six years later.

The Children backtracked through their history, searching for the killer in their midst. In the 19th late century, they found his trail. He'd flayed before, though Beasts of the time had dismissed both deaths as a rogue Hero. If the sequence holds, halving as it does at each interval, the Flayer will strike within a year.

The Beasts of Orkney are at a crossroads. Each death means the destruction of a visible fraction of their unique culture, and the killer will strike with alarming frequency after the next flaying. If it can't be stopped, every Beast will be slain before the decade is up. And yet, the Orcadians say they have no fear of death.

They fear for their Souls.

Brothers & Sisters

Over forums, social media, and the Primordial Dream, the Children of Orkney have searched for allies. Several Beasts from mainland Scotland and the rest of Europe have arrived at the behest of their Orcadian siblings. Most come as hired guns, but a few can't resist the call of an occult murder mystery.

A cabal of **Moros** mages have also come in support of the Beasts, at least nominally. The Awakened keep to themselves, studying ruins and performing obscure rituals. Despite their aloofness, they claim to be just as invested in stopping the Flayer as the Begotten are. For months they've scried the island's aura, searching for some subtle tremble.

Mike Holland has been tracking the Flayer for years, but he's starting to lose the thread. This Anakim was the first to discover that the murders went back a century, and he's been obsessed with finding other examples, sometimes to the point of neglecting his Hunger all the way into starvation. Unfortunately, most Beasts from the times he's researching spoke Norn, and Begotten records in that language are virtually non-existent. Mike's planning a trip to the University of Glasgow, though, where a collection of Orcadian legends are held in archives. Not having any academic credentials, he's going to need someone to help him break in.

Orkney could never support more than a handful of vampires. Not with **Ærinndís** around. The elder Gangrel warrior arrived with the Norse, slaughtering Pictish vampires who couldn't flee her talons. For almost as long as Scandinavia held Orkney, Ærinndís fed off its people. Fortunately, no one alive or dead has seen her since the 1600s, and it's thought she fell to a lengthy torpor. Should her tomb be found, she may know something of the Flayer. Problem is, the Kindred have it in their best interests to never see her again.

The Hero Bay

Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo centers on the Tokyo Bay, formerly the Edo Bay. It sprawls outward for many miles of dense urban landscape in every direction except the Pacific Ocean. Tokyo is a respected world economic power, the most populous metropolitan area in the world, and an international hub.

For its human inhabitance, Tokyo is possibly the single safest major city in the world in which to reside. Its crime rate stands significantly lower than most developed cities. Your chance of being murdered stands statistically similar to your chance of being struck by lightning. This is, of course, referencing recorded deaths. A Beast's death rarely ends up in the crime statistics.

For the supernatural, the Tokyo Bay has a nickname, Shujinko-Wan, roughly "Hero Bay." Tokyo draws a wildly disproportionate number of Heroes, compared to other cities. Even considering its massive size, Tokyo has numerous times the number of Heroes per capita. The Beasts of the region trade many stories and rumors as to why this is, but no matter what the reason, Tokyo is a hotbed for those who have taken on the mantle of questing savior.

Why do they stay? For thousands of supernatural creatures, Tokyo is home. For many, it was home before they became monsters. Some know nothing outside Tokyo. Many have no idea the number of Heroes that stalk the streets. Some leave still, but with its massive population and other advantages, many monsters feel Tokyo is worth the risk.

How it Happened

Tokyo has always been a hotbed of Heroes, at least as long as it's been Tokyo. Rare is the Beast that keeps written records, and the verbal history marries the Dawn of Heroes to the formation of the City of Tokyo, in 1889. It's probably not true, but enough accountings put the influx of Heroes close to that time, that the local Beasts accept this romanticized assumption as "true enough."

The Dawn of Heroes

When Tokyo was still Edo, monsters enjoyed great prosperity in the massive city. One great Beast, called Owatatsumi Kami (basically "Great Water God Deity"), ruled openly over all the various breeds of monsters in Edo. It kept a council of vampires, shapeshifters, sorcerers, and

other, stranger things, and managed an empire of monsters for many years. It featured many great beings the Beasts of Tokyo sing of to this day. A sorceress named Nakatomi represented the magical community. An ancient vampire named Inoue represented the creatures of the night, which numbered more than in any city on Earth.

Nobody knows what exactly Owatatsumi Kami did to cause the Dawn of Heroes, or even if it caused the Dawn at all. Stories never tell it as a coincidence, but the sheer variety of stories suggest it could very well have been. Some stories tell that Owatatsumi used its great voice to call the greatest otherworldly souls from all across Japan in order to create its council; this voice was so very loud that it woke the Souls of Heroes all across the island of Honshu. Another story tells that it felt its legacy would never truly be remembered unless it faced down a questing hero. So in this tale, it crafted a sword which would turn its holder into a Hero, tasked with ending all monsters in Edo. This tale also ends with Owatatsumi's death from such great hubris. In fact, every tale ends in Owatatsumi's death, or at very least its going into hiding. Some say Owatatsumi will return at some promised time or another.

From the point when the Dawn happened onward, Heroes sprung up rapidly and constantly. Everything a Beast could do to risk creating a Hero created a Hero. Unfortunately, most of these Heroes were sufficiently discreet and distanced from their sources that the Beasts had no idea they were creating their enemies, or that they could curb that creation easily. They still don't see the link between their actions, and the glut of Heroes.

Around the time Edo became Tokyo City, Owatatsumi's empire ended, and the monsters of Tokyo became fractured. Some of the Beasts found cliques within other monsters' circles. Some formed their own tenuous factions. Mostly, Tokyo's Beasts struggled to survive. Shortly after Owatatsumi's disappearance, the Heroes overwhelmed the supernatural population of Tokyo. For the Beasts, this meant a dark age, a number of decades in seclusion, in flight, in hiding. The Heroes banded into "guilds," where they colluded to root out and eradicate all the monsters of Tokyo, and the Kanto region at large.

The Great Kanto Earthquake

This dark age ended in 1923, during and immediately after the Great Kanto Earthquake. The Hero guilds took the earthquake as an omen, as an opportunity from the heavens to eradicate monsters. Due to their massive population and relative decadence, the Heroes focused heavily on the vampire population, nearly eradicating them wholesale with daytime raids, targeted fires, and siege tactics.

The Beasts took this as an opportunity in kind. As the Heroes rose to the occasion and slew countless vampires, the Beasts rose up to devour the weary Heroes. In the weeks following the earthquake, over one hundred Heroes disappeared, or otherwise added to the estimated 100,000 dead from the tragedy. While it was an unprecedented victory, the price paid was more Heroes still, as the eradication effort required the Beasts take drastic measures, which created a whole new, bigger generation of Heroes. Their organizations, their guilds, though, were eradicated.

The following decades were a wild time, with many Heroes, and little coordination. Battles were more frequent, but rarely featured groups on either side of the fence. Lack of tactical experience meant more dead Heroes, and more escaping Beasts. This stood as a deep contrast to mortal Tokyo, which took the time after the earthquake to restructure, reorganize, and otherwise build itself into a world power.

This all remained the case until World War II, when the deep and rapid changes in organization and population in Tokyo and Japan as a whole gave Heroes the opportunity to reorganize and rebuild their guilds. This time around, they built defensively, centered upon a few of the survivors from the Kanto Earthquake purge. They kept their raids to a minimum, only focusing on low risk, high opportunity assaults. They even policed their own, keeping obvious offenders from ruining the hunt for everyone else. As the saying goes, the nail that stands up gets hammered down.

Now, the guilds exist, and are quite powerful. But mostly, they stand to find new Heroes, and keep them from causing problems, and those problems from causing ripples. The Beasts don't have free reign due to the raw population of Heroes, but they aren't dragged out in the streets for the slaughter.

> Forging a Hero
>
> Mechanically, Tokyo is far more likely to create Heroes than other areas. Any time a Beast commits an action that could result in a Hero's creation, it happens. On one hand, this gives the Beast a Beat. On the other, it brings into existence an agent of the Beast's potential destruction.
>
> However, Heroes created by this strange phenomenon aren't tied to their creators. They're listless, wanton Heroes that tilt at whatever windmills they can find. In many cases, they never even learn of their creating Beasts. However, this preponderance of Heroes means that other supernatural creatures in Tokyo have to deal with these misguided hunters. Fortunately, a Hero's abilities are generally keyed to hunting Beasts, so this means they're not quite so deadly when hunting outside their ideal targets.

Places

Tokyo is the world's largest city, and thus has a great many places of interest. Here are some current hotspots that most of the city's Beasts know of.

Dragon Shrines

Tokyo's Beasts defend a handful of dragon shrines across the region. These Shinto shrines celebrate dragons as water deities, which help the farmers and fishermen with their bounties. Beasts have a whole different use for them. When a Beast is close by a dragon shrine, Heroes are unable to pursue them with their supernatural gifts. They can investigate them manually, but their powers fail to work. However, most are defended viciously by werewolf packs as holy sites.

The range at which this effect persists depends on the shrine. Some of the minor shrines only defend a small area, a few meters in any given direction. Some of the greater shrines can create "dead zones" of entire city blocks. Players with **Werewolf: The Forsaken** should note that these shrines stand as loci, and their ratings determine the range of effect.

The Mikan Cafe

This Akihabara cafe caters to businesspeople and obsessive manga fans, offering a chance to be served by obedient, gracious "maids." Unlike most maid cafes, this one was built on the site of an ancient temple. Its guardian, an elder vampire, still considers the cafe to be her temple, where she cares for a new generation of "priestess." This vampire, called Seio, is well-known to Tokyo's Beasts. She has a vendetta against Heroes, and has drawn many into her temple for the

slaughter. For a significant price, she'll hunt and destroy Heroes.

To readers with **Vampire: The Requiem**, she's a Daeva of the Ume House.

The All 7 Karaoke Club

The All 7 is a vocaloid night club in the Harajuku neighborhood. It celebrates "Nana Natsu," a digital creation, a singer that doesn't exist in the real world. At least, not yet. To those Beasts nearby, they feel a strong sense of affinity to Natsu, as if she were somehow kin. Many Beasts vie for control of the club (and the surrounding block), hoping to hoard it as part of a Lair.

To readers with **Promethean: The Created**, Natsu is on the verge of becoming an Extempore. As she gains popularity, the life around her may spark her with the Divine Fire.

The Night Train

Tokyo's massive subway system hosts more people than any other in the world. You can get anywhere in the metro area for a small fee and a short wait, at most any time. Those attuned to the otherworldly know of a specific "schedule" of trains that have a barely-understood effect: they can transport a rider anywhere in the city — at least to any other station — instantaneously. However, each station has an exact moment, one exact train, where this can be done.

To do so, the rider must buy one specific bowl of ramen at a vending machine at the station, and sit in one specific seat on the train. The ramen is overpriced and unpopular, and the seat tends to remain empty even during peak hours, for reasons unknown. But with the right purchase and the right seat, the rider instantaneously vanishes from the train (none of the passengers any the wiser) and appears on a train at the station of choice. The "schedule" is a convoluted, eldritch thing. No Beast knows it well. However, a mass of disgusting, monstrous creatures, rumored to be Philipino Mandurugo, vampires, kyonshi youkai, or other things, living in the subway tunnels knows the schedule, and will give it for a small bribe, or to those who have done favors for their family. They do not advertise what they are. But they're horrendous and frightening, even to the most hardened Beast.

Odaiba Island

Odaiba is currently a shopping center set on an artificial island built during Japan's diplomatic contact with the Americas. For humans, this means massive tourism and commerce. However, to the supernatural denizens of Tokyo, Odaiba is a dangerous place. It's home to many terrifying spirits, strange crab-like monsters which possess humans and nest along the shore. They're easily avoided; simply stay away from Odaiba. However, many newcomers make the mistake of visiting the island. Sometimes, this isn't a mistake, as elder Beasts will send their lesser to the island for menial errands which often end in violence.

Brothers & Sisters

With its massive population, Tokyo likewise boasts an enormous number of kin. If it exists in the World of Darkness, it's probably represented in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area.

Vampires

Tokyo's vampire population mostly distances itself from the Beasts. This isn't a forced separation; they just have their own affairs to deal with. However, one Dana Merchant, an American vampire, fancies herself a diplomat to creatures different than the bloodsuckers. She's gone out of her way to make ties and arrangements with various monsters. She's had more luck

than one might expect from an outsider and a fervent member of a vampiric Christian church, but still fights an uphill battle due to the disorganised Beast population in the metropolis.

Vampires have a strong hand in the Hototogisu. The corporation involves itself heavily in vampiric politics, so the Beasts remain cautious and defensive dealing with the undead. Any given vampire could be a plant, a potential kidnapper for the corporation.

Shapeshifters

The shapeshifters of Kanto live in scattered packs, usually centered on shrines, on their own holy places. Unless a Beast stumbles across one of these places, she should have limited interaction with those of changing flesh. Some Beasts run afoul of strange, vaguely bird-shaped shadow spirits the shapeshifters call Tengu. These are not the Tengu of classic Japanese mythology; these beings inhabit corpses, sometimes vampires, and hunt the undead relentlessly. Some Beasts with vampires in their families become these Tengu's targets.

Some Beasts make ties with werewolf packs, for temporary access to their protected dragon shrines. These agreements generally afford brief trips to the shrines in order to elude enemies, but at least two Beasts have integrated into werewolf packs to take advantage of the shrines.

The Rampant

The Rampant are not proper humans, but also not proper monsters. They are born with certain strange gifts, gifts they claim come from demonic blood. These gifts are sometimes sufficiently obvious that they cannot be explained away as coincidences; some can create dark, terrifying magical fires in their hands.

The Rampant are largely cordial with Beasts. They believe their role is one of redemption and punishment, that they're tasked with using their demonic blood to right the wrongs of other demons. Usually, this means destroying creatures such as vampires and greater demons. Most perceive Beasts not as demons and evil spirits, but as benevolent spirits, godlike beings to revere. This hasn't stopped some of them from destroying particularly malicious Children.

Some Heroes have taken particular interest in the Rampant of late, and at least one guild of Heroes has dedicated itself specifically to destroying "children of oni blood." Some Beasts have banded with the Rampant, due to the common threat.

For those players with **Hunter: The Vigil**, the Rampant are a Japanese-specific subdivision of the Lucifuge.

Yosei

In Tokyo, many creatures from beyond, youkai, spirits, or perhaps other alien monstrosities, abduct humans. Those few who escape are forever bound to the spiritual realms of their captivity. These survivors, these Yosei, have formed an alliance that spans across the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. The Yosei Court is modeled after the ancient Taketori Monogatari, Tale of the Bamboo Cutter. They follow the leadership of a "Moon Princess" who changes each year, who rules from a seat of Mount Fuji, some 100 kilometers away. She maintains delegates to each of the other creatures of Tokyo; twelve at any given time. Her current delegate to the Children is Akira Hayashi, a former museum archivist who now looks every bit a skeleton with a thin patina of paper flesh. Hayashi mostly appears interested in dealing in artifacts and remnants of Japan's lost history.

Threats

With so many monsters in Tokyo, the threats to said monsters stand as commensurate. Corporate institutions stand in opposition to Tokyo's Beast population, as well as smaller forces.

The Hototogisu

The Hototogisu is a multinational corporation that maintains strong ties to some of the various kin throughout Tokyo (and rumors suggest abroad as well). They stand as a threat because their agenda in dealing with the paranormal involves voraciously seeking it out, stealing or abducting it, and often stealing its power.

Their power base is sufficient that they've not been thoroughly infiltrated by any of their target groups, but those who have made headway claim their "vault" contains over one hundred "specimens." They have a small handful of Beasts in their employ, and who knows how many in captivity. Unlike Heroes, their goal is not eradication, but to harness their victims' power to political and financial ends.

The Guilds

Tokyo's Heroes organize into guilds, which end up both boon and bane to the local Beasts. On one hand, it means a hunted Beast is in for a much greater threat. On the other, it means she's less likely to find herself followed by a nobody on the scene.

Each Guild consists of between four and a dozen Heroes, with two of the largest guilds pushing twenty members at times. These groups exist as social clubs as much as monster hunting organizations. To guild members, their guilds are everything. They're all-consuming hobbies, which take up every moment outside their "day jobs." Some of these Heroes eschew normal life entirely, and devote themselves wholly to the guild's service.

Guilds teach their members military tactics, and share valuable lessons about the hunt. Each carries a theme of sort, often modeling themselves after other styles of organizations or clubs. Most look the part of sports clubs or literal hunting lodges. Some take stranger inspiration, hiding as "inventor clubs" or as model replica clubs. These craft-heavy groups tend to focus their energies on creating effective weapons and traps against their monstrous prey.

Demon Hunters

Tokyo's also host to a number of self-proclaimed "demon hunters," otherwise mundane humans who have taken on the mantle of monster slayers. They're far from the level of organization seen in the long-standing Hero guilds, but they have support and mentorship networks. Some of these networks have existed for centuries. Unlike the Heroes, the demon hunters act mostly as vigilantes, rooting out specific problems and eradicating them as isolated incidents. One demon hunter group which calls itself the Pacific Ocean Swifts has caused quite a bit of trouble for the city's assorted monsters. It's rooted in a nationalist movement which fights against mostly Korean immigrants, and has made waves in the city's political spheres.

Hooks

• Some say Owatatsumi Kami never died, but instead found some great truth and grew more and more powerful with each passing year. These stories say it will come back soon, and devour the Souls of all Tokyo's Beasts. This purge, it's told, is Owatatsumi's attempt to bring about the "Dusk of Heroes," ending the scourge for all time. While most Beasts see this as a myth, some

prepare to stop Owatatsumi from rising. Others look forward to rushing its return.

• The Hototogisu seeks to subjugate all forms of supernatural life in Tokyo. Unfortunately, the various factions are far too disparate to affect any sort of change. However, Beasts share kinship in such a centralized faction that some of the eldest look to act as unifying forces to end Hototogisu influence. For every unifier, the Hototogisu keeps at least one sympathetic Beast ready to undermine his kin's influence in the supernatural world.

Inheritance

“Ben? Are you here?” Robin looked at the dark water, not really hopeful but determined not to give up yet. “It’s me, Robin. I just want to talk.”

The media firestorm had burned bright but briefly — one kid dead in a bloody, “ritualistic” crime scene and another missing made for a few sensational lead stories, but didn’t have the legs of a pretty girl gone missing. Robin had seen the aftermath of Heroes before, and knew how to wait out the coverage and the inevitable trickle of hunters and occultists that accompanied them.

At first she’d assumed Ben had just gone to ground, was trying to process the attack, but then the Burrows connecting his Lair to the rest of the brood collapsed. His Soul was still nearby, both she and James could feel it, but as days turned to weeks, a different sort of suspicion crept into her mind.

As if on cue, the first rumors showed up in local online chatter not long after.

Local kids were talking about strange things down at the lake. A pale, slim boy — or sometimes a girl of similar description — was walking alone by the water late at night. Except if you got close enough, they weren’t alone at all, and you’d realize what you thought was a shadow on the water was really a shape right under the surface. Supposedly they’d beckon you to join them, the pale kid and the thing in the water, but all the rumors agreed that would be the worst and final mistake of your teenage life.

“I’m not here to hurt you, or Noelle, or anyone else.” Robin continued, still scanning the water. “I just want you to know if you’re alright.”

“He’s fine.” Robin turned and saw a pale young woman detach herself from the shadow of a nearby tree, followed by another pale teenager a moment later. Robin tasted ashes immediately, not as if she needed confirmation of their vampiric nature. “You’re one of his kind, aren’t you?”

“Yes.” There was no point in lying.

“I knew you’d come looking sooner or later.” Noelle’s tone was flat, indifferent. “He said so.”

“Is Ben here?” Robin asked. The closer she looked at Noelle, the more ragged the vampire appeared. Her clothes were ripped and stained, as if she was sleeping out here in the trees. Not at all the very modern camouflage predator Ben had approached only a year ago.

“You should go.” Noelle said. Behind her, the other equally ragged vampire nodded. “He’s fine.”

“Can I ask him?” Robin said.

Noelle cocked her head. “Go on, honey. Show her.”

Robin heard something break the surface not far behind her, but when she turned and saw the thing that had been Ben, her heart fell. It rose on itself like a coiled serpent, and while she could see no malice in its large black eyes, she didn’t see anything like

recognition either. As she watched, its mouth opened, venom dripping like rain on the lake, and if its tentacles seemed to reach out pleadingly for a moment, it was almost certainly her imagination. It slipped back under the surface and all Robin felt was relief, mixed with a profound sadness.

"See? We're very happy here." Noelle faded back into the shadows, leaving only her voice after her in the midnight air. "We're home."

"Home."

Chapter Seven: Storytelling

"You get trapped by stories. Though I've got this reputation for being out of control, it's not true, it just happens to be a more interesting story than the truth."

—Terry Gilliam

Storytelling **Beast: The Primordial** is an integral role that's often challenging, sometimes frustrating, and never truly controlled. It's part art, part craft, and part pretending you know what you're doing. It requires both adherence to rules, and rigorous improvisation.

How do you do all these things at once?

Part of this comes from experience. Jump in. Find out what works, what doesn't. Develop a style. Learn your patterns and tropes. Have fun. Fail. Succeed.

The Basics

Everyone develops their own style of Storytelling. However, you'll start off with a good foundation if you keep a few basic concepts in mind.

Knobs, Dials, and Switches

Beast: The Primordial is a big book. It's the result of many years' experience, countless design discussions, and over a dozen authors across hundreds of pages. You don't need to fit the contents of every single page into every story. In fact, it's probably for the best that you don't. That's where knobs, dials, and switches come in.

If you like a concept, feel free to emphasize it. If you like Heroes, make them the heart of your story. If you like Lairs, tell stories about them. Even if the idea you want to emphasize only gets a paragraph of attention across the entire book, you can bring it to the forefront, and ask questions about it. Explore that thing. Define it. Own it. Change it. If you care about something enough to bring it to the forefront of your game, look at why you're interested in it, and sell that to the players.

On the other hand, if something doesn't work for you, leave it by the wayside. The World of Darkness's Storytelling System is designed to be modular; you can remove bits and pieces with minimal fuss. You might have to adjust a trait or two, but usually you can take out an element of a game without causing immense ripples throughout all the game systems. This is doubly true for setting elements, since each is its own separate idea.

You don’t even have to figure these things out on the front end. You can scrap things, add them, and modify them as you go. Just communicate with your players, and be consistent.

> Take Five
>
> Take a break every now and again. If things are a little too intense, or you’re not sure where to go, take a quick break. Look at it like the commercial break in a television show; it’s a time to collect your thoughts and pay attention to what’s been happening. Use this opportunity to come up with consequences for the characters’ successes and failures. In this break, your world shifts and moves, and you can come back with fresh perspective. Get a drink. Take a notebook. Feel out what you want to see occur in the next segment of play.

Communicate With Your Players

This is not only important, but essential. Your goal is fun for the whole group. You need to constantly feel out what’s working and what isn’t. You have to ask players what they want, and ask them what they’ve enjoyed. Don’t be coy.

Parts of the games let you do this discreetly. For example, part of character creation means coming up with Aspirations. These are a way for your players to communicate what they want from the game, and for their characters. Write these Aspirations down. Engage them. When Aspirations are fulfilled, players need to come up with replacements. Keep on top of these. You’ll find that as the chronicle progresses, new Aspirations will key to your story’s elements. If you pay attention, they’ll tell you your players’ perceptions of those elements.

You don’t have to shy away from “spoilers.” You can look to your players’ goals. Nothing stops you from working consciously toward those goals. In fact, if you’re open about the direction your table wants for the story, your players will open up to things that would otherwise only come from dice rolls. The player might say, “I think it’s about time Joey’s informant died in a Hero attack.” This is a good thing. If you know it’s a desired outcome, you can spend planning time coming up with interesting ways to make that happen, and it takes weight of improvisation off your shoulders. You can focus instead on making the scene the best it can be.

Be Consistent

It’s your job to change the rules. You have to adapt and make the rules fit your story needs. This is important because while **Beast**’s rules are designed to cover most circumstances well, there are always ways to handle specific circumstances which could fit the moment better than a more general rule. There’s no realistic way to list every potential scenario and variable in a book like this, and even if there was, it’d be unnecessary and pedantic. Instead, the rules are mutable enough that as Storyteller, you’re empowered to twist and tweak them to fit your needs.

However, you must be consistent.

Your players must understand the general “physics” of the game world. We encourage you to change rules to suit genre and theme, but your players have to understand these changes, and why they work, so they can make the most appropriate decisions. The

default World of Darkness setting and Storytelling System rules assume a general level of horror, action, and drama. If you want to move those dials, you just need to be clear about how you're doing so, and communicate with your players about what works and doesn't.

For example, the default rules assume that falling is relatively dangerous to deadly. Without some severe tweaks, humans cannot survive a terminal velocity fall, and even jumping off a small building can be a game changer with the level of damage it causes a character. If your game pushes toward high-flying action, you might halve or even remove falling damage. That's fine; it means your characters might be climbing buildings and jumping across rooftops. It's an excellent way to tell a story, if that's what you go in wanting to do. But if you don't communicate this to your players, how are they supposed to know? When they threaten a Hero by holding his ally out a third story window, do they understand they're not really risking killing that character? And importantly, do they understand that they need not hesitate when their character's choice involves risking a major fall?

Remember that character choices are all important parts of genres and moods. Have you ever read a book or see a television show where a character seemed to be making choices that would work well in a completely different kind of story, but fell flat in the one she was in? In a Storytelling game, this phenomenon occurs when the player is playing her character in accordance with a misunderstanding of the setting and rules conventions. So be consistent, so she can make the right choices.

> Let Randomness Happen
>
> Sometimes, people die, and it isn't because of a protagonist, antagonist, or other major player in the story. The world happens. People lose their jobs to outsourcing. People win show tickets on talk radio. This doesn't have to mean anything, but it can. Between game sessions, or when you Take Five, come up with some things that can happen in the world, separate the players' characters' direct influence.

Use Creative Storytelling Techniques

You can run the game straight out of the book. You can come up with the seeds for a story, then let your players walk through that story. When their characters act, you simply dictate the relevant rules, and interpret the results directly. But Storytelling should involve your talent as a storyteller (lower case, not capital).

Many of the techniques used in fiction and in film can be used at the table with a little adaptation even though they're not directly addressed in the game rules. For example, foreshadowing can be a powerful storytelling tool. Symbolism, cutaways, dream sequences, flashbacks, these are all valid pieces of the art you can deliver to your table. Use some note cards. Think about scenes you expect to happen (but not necessarily their results, since your players will walk all over any laid plans), and the tools you could use to better deliver those experiences.

For example, if you know your players are likely to meet the Hero in his corporate boardroom, and that'll be a major event in your session this week, plan to use some techniques in advance. Some options you might use:

• Look to the description of the board room. Liken it to something else. Is it functionally his "throne room?" Give it all the neo-gothic decorations you'd like. Pull up a medieval tapestry, and jot down a flowery description of it. Is it his hiding spot, where he's cornered? Tell us about the faux rock walls and how the shadows can conceal him from any angle.

• Think about his "grand speech." Don't write it out and read it; that's boring. But come up with a few key bullet points and even some quotes that support your themes. Is he a conniver? Start with Shakespeare. Is he a user? Look to *Trainspotting*. Short but pointed references can give the players a frame of context that'll immediately help them to fill in any blanks you left in your descriptions.

• Look at his body language. Come up with tells and gestures that betray his motivations and secrets in the scene, and pepper them throughout the description. Is he lying about taking hostages? Perhaps he scratches the back of his neck when asked about them. Does he have a backup plan? Show his confidence even in the face of certain doom.

These are just some basic examples. You can even couch them in game mechanics. The room description could be part of an action to assess the tactical aspects of the scene. The quotes could be backed up with rolls to catch popular culture references the players missed. The body language could be given or interpreted as part of an Empathy action.

Eschew Common Structures

In Western film, books, and other media, particularly genre fiction like **World of Darkness** and **Beast: The Primordial** draw inspiration from, you find certain trends and tropes. The "monomyth," popularized by Joseph Campbell's "The Hero With A Thousand Faces" is one of the most common structures in modern fiction. It largely entered the pop culture parlance through George Lucas's *Star Wars*. However, it doesn't really work for **Beast**. You can make it work, but that structure is not **Beast**'s default state.

Why?

In such a structure, the Beast has to die. The Hero must conquer "the dragon," subsuming the Beast's power and moving on, like the monster was simply a hurdle on his quest. This clearly doesn't work, for a couple of reasons. First, it would mean every game would end in the characters' deaths. Second, the Beasts would only play a menial role in the story. In this game, the Beasts are the stars of the show.

Still, you can't just reverse the story, and shift roles. In the Hero/Beast dynamic, Beasts are not assumed to be proactively against Heroes. Heroes are still the active force in the relationship; they pursue Beasts, not the other way around. The Beast was simply the catalyst in the relationship. The Beast doesn't achieve a great milestone in her life for destroying the Hero. In fact, if the Beast achieves a great personal milestone for destroying the Hero, that belittles the relationship. Part of the compelling aspect of Heroes is that the Beast doesn't usually have a direct tie to her assailant. The Hero comes out from left field. The Beast has her own life to deal with. Usually, the Beast's only knowledge of the Hero is his motivation, and that if she doesn't fight, he'll destroy her.

Instead, look to stories about outsiders, about disenfranchised people, and about communities that exist on the outskirts of the mainstream. Beasts aren't the heroes, but

the Heroes aren't really the heroes, either. Nobody needs to be the hero of these stories. These are stories about people (albeit monstrous people) and the unique challenges they face. They're not only stories about overcoming adversity, but about how people react to dramatically strange circumstances. Consider Grendel, an archetypal Beast story. Grendel isn't a story about whether or not Grendel can conquer his foes and overcome obstacles; it's a story about Grendel coming to realize what he is, and coming to terms with that. We don't care if he can win in a fight against a given opponent, we simply care about what the fights mean.

Four Act Style

Consider looking at other models. One good example of an alternate story frame is the Japanese Kishōtenketsu, which is popular in some Japanese animation, and has been co-opted in some western television shows when they film a "Rashomon-style" episode. It's a four-act structure that works in a relatively tight pattern of introduction, development, twist, wrap-up. For Western audiences, many of the renowned films of Akira Kurosawa have popularized the idea (even if it's not something formally recognized and widely discussed). Stories such as Rashomon embody the idea of a "conflict-free story". This isn't to say the story has no conflict, but the story isn't about the conflict, it's about understanding the path and the intricacies in interweaving tales.

In the example of Rashomon, most of the "conflict" is already resolved by the time the story begins. It features a murder and rape in the backdrop of the tale, and three people each tell their own version of the story. The resolution is finding how the characters respond, grow, and achieve understanding. It's worth noting, Rashomon is only an example of the style. The important feature of the Kishōtenketsu is that the story is about revealing the truths and the unifying threads, not about asking whether or not the protagonists can overcome a challenge.

In **Beast**, a Kishōtenketsu story can be a unique challenge. After all, Beasts are a mighty lot. They face challenges, and they overcome. Sometimes they fail, but the deck is stacked in their favor. If you're using a four-act as inspiration, whether or not they can overcome challenges is tangential to the real point. The story becomes about growth and exploration. No Nightmare, no Atavism will help a character grow and achieve realization. In fact, most of a Beast's major tools force more questions, and bring a character further from the answers.

The Storytelling System mechanics are all about building and resolving conflicts, so you'll have to look at them in a slightly different light here. First, we touch on the general Storytelling System mechanics. Then, how these concepts could apply to **Beast: The Primordial** specifically.

This model assumes a single game session covers the four acts of the story. However, if you are planning ahead for a larger chronicle, each act could be a full game session, and you can play it in a more relaxed, soft-handed fashion. But a four-act story requires some attention to pacing, to keep things moving ahead. All games require mind to pacing, but in a more traditional game, break points are more obvious. As the characters uncover and resolve challenges, the story moves forward. Conflict drives the plot. With a Kishōtenketsu style story, it's important to move forward as soon as possible, and to not

let threads linger too long. Listless characters, and by extension listless players, will tend to seek out conflict resolution if they feel there's no direction.

Act One: Introduction — This is all about introducing the characters and story elements which will come into play throughout the story. It's usually a relatively quick phase of the chronicle. If you're only playing a single session, keep it to less than a half an hour at most. If you're playing an extended chronicle, this could be a full prelude session, or even a couple of sessions showcasing characters individually. This can look a lot like a standard game of **Beast: The Primordial**, especially in a longer chronicle.

In fact, if you have the time, and want to make the most out of this opportunity, use Act One to create your characters. Walk in with concepts, and just note on your character sheets how many dots you get, then fill them in as things become relevant. If it happens that your character needs to be able to paint, add dots to Crafts and Intelligence. If lockpicking becomes a concern, fill in some Dexterity and Larceny. This will mean that every event in the first few sessions will be a sort of "spotlight event", showcasing one competent character.

In Beast specifically, this should be where you showcase some of what makes the characters truly monsters. Give spotlight to Nightmares and Atavisms. Give longer, more elaborate descriptions than you might otherwise. Focus heavily on the direct and indirect ramifications of these monstrous features. Don't be afraid to give a quick cutaway, just a brief description of some of the ripples happening off-camera. If a Nightmare breaks a person's will, show them at their family dinner table that Sunday. Show the family asking him what's wrong, and gossiping about him when he goes to the restroom. Show us his fiancé, cupping an engagement ring, and opting to second guess himself and put it away when his lover's behavior becomes erratic and disjointed. Show us his custody hearing where his defensive attitude costs him visitation rights with his children. This should happen quickly, but clearly.

It's important to note that this is not supposed to be a punishment for your players; this is reward, in narrative form. The players portray awful monsters, and this is your chance to show them that their decisions truly matter. This isn't to say they need to revel in monstrosity; if that's what they're into, great. But more to the point, you're rewarding them by making them truly relevant and resonant in the game setting. They are not tourists, they shake the world around them. They're proverbial dragons, they need to matter.

> Name Names
>
> One of the most important techniques you can use as a Storyteller is to name everyone. That's not "the gas station attendant", that's "Donna, the single mom working overnight at the gas station to save up for her kid's college tuition". Even if the players' characters don't know these facts, the players will appreciate the blush of life in your chronicle. Populate your World of Darkness with individuals first and foremost. If you feel like relying on stereotypes and generalities, name them and give them little sparks of uniqueness to make your world your own.

> If you have time before your game, sit down for a few minutes and jot down some names and basic descriptions for the random people who populate your world. You don't need to give them professions or roles, simply identities. Then, as you need to fill a role in your chronicle, plug one in.
>
> This not only makes your World feel alive and real, it gives you the opportunity to invest in scope and emotional resonance, without going overboard. Ten people might die at the gas station, but your players will almost certainly care more if Donna dies. In a game like **Beast**, where the characters live in a semi-secret state, with their monstrosity hidden from the public, huge statistical impacts quickly become hard to believe. Naming your Storyteller characters means you don't need to lean on extremes.

Act Two: Development — Here is the bulk of the chronicle establishment. Here, you build. You create. You generate. As Storyteller, you add conflict, you pile on plot. It's important you don't allow for any superlative resolutions at this point; your goal is to add plot, not let it go away. The players need to be made aware of this in order to keep with the structure. Normally, players will work toward resolution as rapidly as possible. With this style of play, they have to understand that they can't get that until a certain amount of time has passed.

This phase of the story should be about half the total game time. It ends once you have a strong collection of plot events to build from. If it feels like the tension is getting too great, and there's too much to handle, that's about time to move on. You need at least a few random additions from failures, so if those aren't coming fast enough, introduce them yourself.

During this act, any player may take a Beat once per game session in order to spin a side narrative, a short, descriptive scene using some of the random elements generated by failed rolls (see below).

In **Beast**, this usually means showing us how far the ripples go. It means catching the attention of Heroes. It means drawing back the curtains and showing the other denizens of the **World of Darkness**. It means showing how if you go far back enough in time, everything looks like a pattern.

> Peek Off-Screen
>
> Don't focus too heavy on if/then relationships. If/then relationships can typically be resolved with at least a relatively simple approach. Instead, chain together a consequence, and its consequences, and its consequences. The more you distance the effect from its ultimate cause, the more complicated your story becomes.
>
> To use this technique in play, any time a player achieves an exceptional success or dramatic failure, take note. Ask yourself a potential consequence of that action, and note it. Then, ask yourself a consequence of that occurrence. Do this three or four times, to build a chain of causality. Then, peel back the curtain.

To peel back the curtain, you can literally cut away to show something happening in your world, a few steps removed from the players' characters. Or, you can introduce it directly to the characters. No matter how you peel back the curtain, peel, don't pull. Don't explain the relationships of causality. If anything, hint at it. The players and their characters don't have to make these connections every time. But when they make them once, they'll be grateful and impressed.

Act Three: Twist — Now, you set the main characters aside for a short while, and tell a parallel story. This builds from the people, places, things, and events you've established in the past scenes with the alternative failure rule, and through your own additions. Again, this should have little to nothing to do with the main narrative. But you need to build a short story with these elements. In this stage, players can grab characters and "take ownership." They can also add others. If you need to roll dice for actions, use the sidebar for creating these side characters.

Side Characters

When creating characters for the four-act variant, you don't want to take the time to fill out entire character sheets in play. Instead, use these simplified character sheets.

Characters have three Attributes, "Power, Finesse, and Resistance". Power covers Strength, Intelligence, and Presence actions. Finesse is Dexterity, Manipulation, and Wits. Resistance is Stamina, Resolve, and Composure. All characters have one free dot in each, and you have four dots to distribute amongst them however you see fit.

Characters also have Skills, but only the ones they need. By default, this means two Skills at three dots, four at two dots, and six at one dot. You can fill them in as you see fit. Additionally, you can take three Specialties as they come up in play.

These characters don't normally have Merits, but can earn them quickly in play. Any Beats you earn while playing that character can be exchanged for additional game traits. One Beat can become a Merit dot. Two can become a Skill, five can become an Attribute. Two Beats earn a Skill. Five (or an Experience) earn an Attribute. Merits earned in play should be relevant to the immediate context.

Derived traits work as normal, except as follows:

Defense = Finesse + Athletics

Initiative = Finesse x 2

Health = 5 + Resistance

Willpower = Power + Resistance

ART NOTE: NEED A SIMPLE CHARACTER SHEET. IT SHOULD HAVE HEALTH, WILLPOWER, AND DERIVED TRAITS LIKE A NORMAL GMC CHARACTER. ATTRIBUTES ARE ONLY POWER, FINESSE, RESISTANCE. LEAVE ABOUT EIGHT EMPTY LINES WITH EMPTY

DOTS AFTER THEM FOR SKILLS. LEAVE ABOUT FIVE SPACES WITH DOTS FOR MERITS.

In **Beast**, you can use this opportunity to truly twist the play. Particularly if you're running an extended chronicle, where you can devote a session or two to this act, you can take the game in a completely different direction. For example, what if the players portrayed Heroes in your setting? Or, what if you suddenly break and ask your players to participate in a seemingly unrelated session of **Vampire: The Requiem** this week? If your players are amenable to suggestion, you don't need to explain what you're doing. Just tell them you want to try something different tonight, and run with it. Let Act Four tie these threads together.

If you go this route, it's important to keep things as separate from the primary narrative as possible, but to offer hanging threads the players can tie together. Beast is particularly good at this part of the tale, because it offers such sweeping diversity tied to its core paradigms. You can use any of the other **World of Darkness** games to tell this part of the tale, and it will remain workable within a context that's both easy to justify, and easy to present as something mysterious and separate from the main story.

You could run Act Three in a different place, or even a different time. What do the werewolves of Ancient Egypt have to do with your Beast chronicle? That's a good question; it's one you'll answer in Act Four. Why does a story about Jack the Ripper matter to our tale set in modern Tokyo? That's another great question. But for help answering, use symbols, references, quotes, and callbacks to other chronicle events. You don't have to explain them, and should just move on if players try to draw conclusions now. But if the leader of a majestic Gaelic Freehold of changelings uses the same line as the Hero in your New York **Beast** chronicle, your players will notice it.

Act Four: Wrap-Up — Lastly, we bring it all together. Here, we discover how the divergent stories are actually one story. Every element on the table is eligible for "resolution," which means a player can take it, and within the scope of their character's story, explain how they are related. Doing this grants a Beat. Cross out the element, or otherwise note that it's handled, and it's married to the story entirely. This can be done once per player per scene. During Act Four, the players can't add new elements for failed rolls.

This act should be all about revelation and understanding. The players should use these relationships between elements and their characters in order to finalize the story and make sense of the events.

> Rules Shard: Choice Instead of Failure
>
> This model requires you shift out failure as a default occurrence. In this style of play, if a player rolls no success on an action, she has a choice. She can take a failure (or upgrade it to dramatic failure for a Beat), or she can take a single success. If she takes the success option, she must also introduce a person, place, thing, or event to the story. What's important is, she must bring this up, but it cannot relate directly to the story at hand. It can relate to other failure-generated things, but it cannot relate to the story

about the protagonist characters. The Storyteller can veto these elements, but should err on the side of permission.

The Storyteller has a slight variant; her characters fail on failed rolls, and she must introduce unrelated things. Essentially, she takes both options simultaneously with every failed roll.

These random elements must remain unrelated to the main narrative until the fourth act. During the second act, once per game session, a player may take any of those random elements, and tie them together in a short, parallel scene described to the table. If he does this, he takes a Beat. It'd be wise to jot these elements down so the players can all see what they're working with.

That's the Kishōtenketsu. You can find numerous examples of the style for inspiration, some more obvious than others. Miyazaki Hayao's "My Neighbor Totoro" is a wonderful example of such a story, not focused on conflict, but on exploring and understanding. While lighter than a **Beast** story, it's not hard to look beneath the surface for common, useable threads. But pay close attention to the moments that would be rife with tension in a Western film. Many are simply glossed over, because they're not the tale's focus. Many Japanese horror films (and Western horror films, if you look hard enough) follow similar rules, but in reverse. There's no hope in overcoming the conflict, so instead we come along for the ride and see what happens and how the characters grow and change as result.

Crossover

Beast: The Primordial is just one game of the many game lines in the World of Darkness. Other lines include but are not limited to **Vampire: The Requiem**, **Changeling: The Lost**, and **Demon: The Descent**. They all use the same (but slightly custom-fitted forms) Storytelling System. **Beast** boasts a unique position in these game lines, in that it's the first to be designed specifically with crossover play in mind. By crossover, we mean featuring characters from multiple game lines simultaneously. Beasts see all the other denizens of the World of Darkness as kin, so they're likely to fall in with others. So you may have a game featuring a coterie of vampire characters that happens to feature a Beast character, or even a cosmopolitan game featuring characters from numerous game lines at once. While **Beast** was written with this intention in mind, it requires some special consideration, even for experienced Storytellers.

Anchor On Theme

Since the various game lines each have their own themes and moods, crossover play is prone to muddying the waters. As Storyteller, your best bet is to pick a single theme, and run with it. Anchor your chronicle on that theme, and don't worry too much about the others.

If you have a game with a vampire character, a Beast character, and a changeling character, you have three competing core themes, and multitudes of others. You could tell a story of personal horror, of gothic romance, of strange fairy tales, or any number of other stories. But it's important to pick one, and it's okay to let the other potential themes

fall by the wayside. Stronger stories say one thing eloquently, rather than stumbling over numerous things.

This isn't to say you should ignore characters and their contexts. In our previous example, if you choose to run a story of dark fairy tales, your vampire player may still wish to indulge a bit in her character's descent into inhumanity. She may wish to explore her newfound situation and curse. That's okay! Support that. In fact, that's a perfect place for her to express her character's Aspirations. Just be clear on the front end what style of stories you're telling, and what type of game you want to run.

Game Balance?

Did you know that demons are the strongest things in the World of Darkness, objectively? Did you know that in a hypothetical space, a plain room with no other factors, a changeling can hand a vampire his ass? It doesn't matter. Every one of the World of Darkness games is designed with different goals in mind, and absolutely none of those goals are "objectively equal power levels with every other game line." You have to disavow yourself of this way of thinking early on, or you're in for a lot of frustration.

Some of the game lines have characters who are better in specific fields. Vampires, for example, have numerous social tools that can manipulate, fool, and persuade characters. Werewolf packs, on the other hand, are apex hunters, and can find, chase, and kill damned near anything. While exceptions exist, you don't expect werewolves to outperform vampires in a social arena, and you can't hope for vampires to hunt with the ferocity of werewolves.

What isn't okay, however, is making one player not have fun. You don't win the game through tactical dominance, you win the game by telling cool stories and having fun. If someone isn't having fun, you all lose. It's important to address possible conflicts up front, and be clear about them. If you have a player with a vampire character who wants to be a social maven, it might cause conflicts if the werewolf player decides to focus entirely on werewolf social powers, outshining the vampire in her expected area of expertise. These are certainly problems any group can come across, but they're especially pronounced in crossover groups. You can cut these problems off at the pass by making your characters together, and discussing what everyone wants their characters to be good at, bad at, and otherwise.

Be Careful With Social Groups

Every World of Darkness game line has its own social groups. Vampires have covenants, werewolves have tribes; most of the game lines have their own respective social groups. If you feature multiple game lines in your chronicle, you can quickly run the risk of bogging down your stories in minutiae if you try to showcase each of the relevant social groups. This isn't to say that you should plainly ignore them (you can if you want, certainly), but digging too far into their details will leave a lot of players and characters dry. For example, if you have a vampire character in your chronicle, it might be tempting to talk about the politics and mystical sciences of the Ordo Dracul, and make that a focus of your game. But there's a good chance your changeling player won't find that very interesting. Conversely, you can find interesting bedfellows by exploring these ties. While the changeling player might not have much interest, a Promethean character could

have a lot of overlap with the Ordo Dracul. And if these terms mean nothing to you, that tells you how a player might feel if you delve too deeply into another game's specific game-specific content, to the exclusion of the game you're actually playing.

Find Universal Motivators

Don't think about what might motivate specific monster types, and try to overlap. Instead, think of the very general conflicts that motivate most people. Think of love, revenge, existential threats, sacrifice, and all the other timeless things that bring people together in stories. Don't focus on differences, find points of commonality. In fact, you can front-load this. If you come up with a motivator for your chronicle, just flat-out ask your players to make characters that would care about that event, and do something about it. Motivating a diverse group is one of the most challenging parts of Storytelling a crossover game. Put some of that burden onto your players.

If you want to be daring, talk with them during character creation, and have them come up with their common motivator. Also discuss with them at least the seeds for alliance. Bringing random groups together can lead to unwanted strife and unbelievable relationships that feel forced.

Heroes

Heroes are wrong. They're full of themselves, and dead convinced they're not only in the right, but that they're an important part of righting some terrible wrong. To the Begotten, this makes them clear, obvious antagonists. Heroes hunt and destroy Beasts. How do you make them interesting and multi-faceted, without removing that degree of obvious antagonism?

Heroes never exist in a vacuum. Heroes don't just happen.

Heroes always have a catalyst, but that catalyst generally looks utterly wrong to the Beasts causing it. In only the rarest cases will a Beast be able to look at her own actions, and believe the Hero is justified.

The players are going to love and hate your Hero, if done right. They should never just hate him, and never just love him. If they do, he's not a Hero.

There's a trick to making this work within the scope of your stories: Internet arguments.

Internet Arguments

Look at the fervor with which people will argue about whatever topic on the internet, from comic book movies, to gender, to space cowboys, to vaccines, to ethics in video game journalism, whatever. Even if the person doesn't have a leg to stand on logically, they hold their perspective, and if you listen to their reasons, it at least makes sense why they believe what they do, regardless of whether or not they reasonably should. It's about identity. If you identify with something, an opposing viewpoint isn't attacking your argument, you feel like it's attacking you.

Heroes should be these people. They need rationales that make sense within their contexts, and those rationales need to be sufficiently strong, reactionary, and ingrained in their very identities that they're unwilling to see other alternatives. Heroes believe that

whatever a Beast does is a slight against humanity. Since Heroes are part of humanity, they see everything a Beast does as a personal attack, and an affront to their very identity.

The counterpoint is true, inherently. Because the Hero wants to destroy the Beast, the Hero is (by definition) attacking the Beast's identity. They literally want to kill the Beast. Unfortunately, both sides think their stances have equal footing.

The Beast wants to be left alone, but the Hero cannot see the Beast as anything but an existential threat. He's internalized whatever the Beast has done, and identified with it so closely that he cannot separate himself from that action.

For this reason, the Hero's world perspective is the single most important thing you can devote attention to when designing him. He needs to have a stance that's overwhelmingly zealous, but founded in at least some perception of reality. This thing must be so very important to him, that he is unwilling to look at alternatives or even compromises. Nothing worth a Hero's belief should be simple. You need to fabricate webbed conspiracy theories.

> Heroes Are Proactive
>
> This may seem somewhat dissonant in a game where the "Heroes" aren't the protagonists. After all, the players' characters are monsters, and we spend a lot of game time focusing on the thing they're doing. However, in a literary sense, being proactive is what separates a Hero from an ordinary person. In **Beast**, that's no different. However, in Beast, that means acting proactive as an antagonist.
>
> We touch on some techniques that'll help make this feasible without overwhelming the players. Showing ripples can help. Peeling back the curtain is invaluable. Naming everyone can make even minor actions seem important. But ultimately, your best bet is to define Heroes by their actions. If Joey is a hacker, he hacks. It's your job to bring that into play. He should dox the Beast's friends and family. He should uncover lost data that can tie disparate threads together. Take Five if you need to when bringing a Hero into the scene. Come up with something he was doing off-screen, something with ripples of its own. However, since the Hero isn't a protagonist, show those ripples in all their glory. Don't hesitate to explore how an effect came from a cause, and let the players' characters stumble upon that information.
>
> It's important to remember that a Hero defines his life by his relationship to the Beast. This life happens for 24 hours, probably featuring far less sleep than a healthy person should have. If the Hero seems to only exist when on-camera, he'll feel shallow and boring.

Conspiracy Theories

A simple, single belief is easy to discredit. If the Hero is wrong about that one single-minded topic, he can be shut down wholly in an instant, and the entire fabric of his identity falls apart instantly. That leads to violent rages and Heroes that would give up their cause. What you need, as a Storyteller, is a conspiracy theory.

Crafting a good conspiracy theory is about the complexity and depth, not about its potential validity. Look to the most popular conspiracy theories in the real world; not a single one holds up to even a moderate scientific inquiry. But they're sufficiently complex that a given believer can grasp onto a few threads they truly identify with (and again, Heroism is all about identity) and hold to the exclusion of all other concerns.

Find a number of important elements in your chronicle. This can be people, places, things, organizations, or events. If you want to do it well, jot each down on a sticky note, and place them on a whiteboard. Start drawing red lines between things. On every line, come up with points of connection the Hero could come up with. These connections do not have to be realistic. Keep doing this until everything is tied to at least two other things. You need definite, complex lines of collusion here, so if any single one of them falls apart, the theory at large remains in tact.

Note that your Hero doesn't need to inherently know or believe any of these things when he becomes a Hero; but they need to be things he can spontaneously come up with when confronted with evidence that might hurt his convictions.

As a rule, your Hero should come up with two threads for everyone one that's challenged. Why? Because challenges to his convictions should never, ever erode his resolve. Challenges should only ever reinforce it.

The more complex aspect of conspiracy theory requires the theorist to be at the center of the theory. For most theorists, it's one thing to say NASA never landed on the Moon. But it takes a whole different level of theorist to speak with any sort of "authority." That theorist is your Hero. He stands at the center of his grand theory. After all, he was slighted. Remember, this whole thing is a challenge to the Hero's identity.

The Hero must never consider himself culpable for any of the various strings on this web. No matter what he does, he has to be able to rationalize, justify, or ignore the influence of his actions. This means he needs an excuse for why everything goes bad around him.

The Blame Game

The bad Heroes, the absolute worst, don't even blame the Beast. They draw in their friends, their families, and everyone around them to blame for what goes wrong. If the Beast's Hunger has her seduce the Hero's wife, the abhorrent Hero finds a reason to blame his wife, or his children, or his boss, or anybody but himself or the most likely target for his ire. He must always weave conspiracy, because even if he kills the Beast, the job isn't done. Monsters will always be here, he tells himself. So he keeps a dossier on all potential monsters.

His manifesto, be it in blogs, in online videos, in a book kept under his bed, or scrawled on the walls in the blood of his targets, should be convoluted, sickening, and patently false. But it should circle around to support his original premise, that world perspective that started him down the rabbit hole. It's never his fault. The job is never done. He is the Hero. Everyone that disagrees is a potential monster to be slain.

The Sidelines

The worst part is, the Hero has sympathizers. The Hero has enablers. The Hero can build a cult of personality, and find groups of people who will be in his corner no matter how

wrong he is. To those people, he's truly a hero, and everything he does is for the betterment of humanity. Even if they don't love him, they love his actions, and refuse to believe he's anything but just.

These people will act as his shield, and vehemently believe that's not what's happening. He uses them, weaponizes them manipulates them. They internalize his wrongs, and either project guilt elsewhere for him, or take it upon themselves. "Clearly, he only had to shoot that innocent person because I wasn't there to negotiate for him." "He doesn't hate you because of who you are. He doesn't hate anyone. He hates your actions. I'm a vampire. If he truly hated people for who they were, he'd hate me." These are the kinds of things a Hero's enabler will say to deflect criticism.

Family Union

One of Beast's most basic conceits is that the eldest have a strong sense of family, and draw close to kin. Their families work; they stick together and weather the storms as a unit. This is never easy, since families are hard enough to hold together, without factoring in that the members are literal monsters, and their ties aren't so clean and clear as direct siblings and offspring.

With a few techniques, you can shed some of the complexity and challenge inherent in bringing a family together.

Getting Them Together: A Web

You can play out an "origin story." You can draw your characters together in the first couple of sessions. It can also fall flat or add undue burden before getting to the meat of the story. This model assumes you get all that out of the way before the game starts, during character creation.

This works a lot like building a Hero's conspiracy (above). When you make your characters, write all their names along the largest piece of paper you can find. Jot them down in a rough circle. Early on in character creation, connect every character somehow. Draw lines between the characters, and establish relationships. Note the relationships along those lines. Keep them simple and readable, no more than a short sentence. This is for establishment, for building things later. It only matters that every character has some tie, some thread. These threads can be somewhat superficial. Don't leave anything blank. Even if the connection is, "doesn't know him, doesn't trust him," that's a connection. It speaks to the relationship.

You can present these relationships as two-way streets. "We were friends in school" is fine, for example. But they can also be one-way, or even two one-way connections. "I have a crush on him" going one way, while "I'm trying to find reasons to fire him" is fine. You should keep directly "negative" relationships to a minimum; don't avoid them altogether, but you need a group that isn't going to immediately devolve into infighting and betrayal. This isn't necessarily a bad place for a story to go, but it's probably not wise to start there.

Then, as you develop Merits and other characters affiliated with your characters' stories, add them to the chart. They don't need quite as many connections; they'll be directly tied with one character (the one whose sheet represents them with a Merit dot), but they need

at least one other. These can be even more indirect than the ones for the primary characters. “I watch him and keep wanting to ask him out when I see him at the coffee shop, even though I don’t know his name” is the level you should shoot for (or higher) here. Be sure to also give every secondary character on the chart a connection to another secondary in the same fashion. This way everyone walks into play with certain understandings, and tools they can use to foster improvisation.

Note that this simple model will result in some soap-opera style interactions sometimes. This isn’t a problem, but it’s part and parcel when everyone has to be connected to others within the story. At times it might feel a little forced, but you can work that out in play. Massage the relationships, make them feel more organic. In this case, you’re not building a statue from nothingness; you’re approaching the project with a huge lump of clay, and you have to cut off parts you don’t need, and polish the ones you like.

If you want to take it to a more proactive level, have every player ask the others questions to establish these relationships. Instead of Bob telling Sally “my character served in the army with yours,” Sally says, “when did we risk our lives together?” This lets every player set expectations for her character’s relationships.

Sometimes, you might also run into situations where the proposed relationships are unwanted. If one player says, “Our characters were in the military together” and the other says his character is a pacifist that would never serve in the military, there’s an impasse. Encourage your players to compromise, and try to find explanations, rather than excuses. Instead of saying no, try to find how it might work. With our military example, maybe his character was a poor kid trying to get into med school, so he signed up as a medic to help pay for university. The idea is, if you make compromises, and let other players have a little investment and influence on who your character is, they’ll care about that character a little more, and identify with him. This will lead to a stronger sense of familial cohesion in play.

Conflate Commonalities

Most families share close blood ties and common culture. Even if a member has moved far away, she can come back to reunions and talk about grandma’s pie, and the way Cathy always forgets to take off her shoes when she visits. You can see how Erica, Mike, and Shauna all have that same little round nose.

Beast Families don’t have this level of commonality. They’re rarely directly related, and they tend to come from all walks of life. As Storyteller, you have to help the players find threads of commonality, and you have to help to emphasise them. If they can’t find any, propose them. This might be difficult, but the trick is to keep pitching possibilities. Even if they seem trivial, creative players can run with them and make them significant. If the players need to send an important document, talk about collectible stamps at the post office window, in hopes a couple of players might say their characters are interested. In the summer fields while the characters pass by, talk about a historical reenactment going on, or a renaissance festival they may be associated with. Just drop as many potential hobbies and interests as you can, in order to give the players an opportunity to grab and pull together.

Likewise, present points of opposition. Don't just rely on existential threats like Heroes. Present political landscapes that are hostile to certain ideas and identities. Present social issues that affect the people in their lives. The world around the characters is a tapestry, and the more details you give, the more elements the players can work with. Remember, a lot of people in the world are both assholes, and not really deserving of a direct, deadly response. Find points of antagonism that multiple characters can identify with. Enemies of my enemy, and all that. But enemy of my enemy only lasts as long as the mutual enemy.

When using antagonism to bring the characters together, you have to give them time to bond and discuss. You can use urgency as an occasional tool to push the story forward. But ultimately, if an antagonist's existence is all that holds the characters together, once that antagonist is gone, that fabric will quickly unravel. But if the characters establish emotional or philosophical reasons for opposing that antagonist, those reasons will outlive the threat.

Kissing Cousins

Sometimes, camaraderie isn't the only thing that keeps a group together. Sometimes a little drama, a little internal conflict keeps momentum and keeps people poking at sores. It's difficult to drive a story with just weirdness and negativity, but that can be the difference between a purely positive but boring relationship, and a story with real teeth.

To take advantage of this idea, you'll need the players to collude and agree to come up with some destructive relationships and run with them. This is important, because the players have to work together to not reject these pitches out of hand. If a player says, "All right, so, you come in. How about Layli's character and mine are in the broom closet together, and you hear a little moaning, and a little banging?" Layli can say no of course; she doesn't have to give her character's consent up here at all, and shouldn't feel pressured to do so. On the other hand, she should at least consider the possibility, since that's the nature of this style of chronicle, and it could cause ripples that drive family action for numerous chapters to come.

This style of play requires a lot of trust. It requires players always play a bit vulnerable. If one player says, "My character punches yours," that can't be a call for a fight to the death. In fact, it's good to set boundaries in advance of playing with this style. Ask one another what each of you is okay with, and pitch some potential dramatic actions your character might take. Consider "Move On" on p. XX as an optional rule.

> Move On (Sidebar)
>
> **Beast** can contain some touchy subjects. The World of Darkness is, by definition, a dark place. However, the ultimate goal of a World of Darkness game is to enjoy yourselves while telling interesting stories. Some people don't want to broach some topics around a game table, and that's okay. It doesn't make them "weak," it doesn't dilute the game. It just means those things ruin the player's fun, so they need to not happen.
>
> When using sensitive topics, or playing in a game like the style described in "Kissing Cousins," establish a Move On rule. Quite simply, it's a gesture or sign that says, "We need to move past this. I don't want to

engage this, it's not cool with me, and I don't want to explain why or defend my position." It should also be something both obvious enough to not be mistaken, yet subtle enough to not demand a ton of attention. For example, you might determine that tapping the table three times firmly means "Move On." Or, you could put a little X on a card. You show the card when you want to Move On.

Using this rule, it has to be understood that players aren't allowed challenging these assertions. You have to move forward, you can't ask questions, you can't push the issue. You just move on. Anything else upsets the social contract at the table, and can make a player uncomfortable with using Move On in the future. You can always talk about it between game sessions, so as to not repeat whatever the harmful content was. But just keep in mind that it's important to respect those choices, not to challenge them.

Lairs

Every Beast has a Lair. Its labyrinthine Burrows and Chambers conceal the Lair's – indeed the Beast's – Heart. In earlier chapters, we've touched on what a Lair means in game mechanics, how a Hero can destroy the Heart and how to build the Chambers. But here, we touch on Lairs as a story construct, and how to use the Lair as a dramatic device, by focusing on a few key points about Lairs.

The Paradox of Safety and Weakness

A Beast's Lair is her sanctuary, her safe place, her true home. Also, a Beast's Lair is her bane, her weakness, her most vulnerable spot. These two ideas seem mutually exclusive, but aren't in practice. While a Beast can die if the Heart of her Lair collapses, her Lair stands deeply defended and challenging for even a trained assailant to attack. Think of it like a turtle's body. If you can get to the turtle's heart, it's very easy to kill. But that ignores how challenging getting to that heart is; at the point where you get to the soft heart, it looks less like a weakness, more of a tribulation.

When Storytelling the Lair, it should always impress and awe. Take the bits and pieces given by the players when designing Chambers and Burrows, and run with them. Focus in on minor details, and make them elaborate and layered. Expound. Foster. Add to what they've given you. In an extended chronicle, use time between game sessions to look into the weird, abandoned, overgrown, haunted, and otherwise curious places in the world. Take note of the details which stand out and evoke strong responses, and carry those into your Lair descriptions. Ideally, you want to bring in new ideas that both surprise players, and make sense for the respective Beasts' Souls.

Conversely, playing up the Lair's vulnerability is essential to convey its role in a Beast's existence. One method for doing this is to anthropomorphize the Lair wherever possible. Reference organs, tissues, and limbs in your descriptions. Liken Chambers to the heart's chambers. Burrows become arteries. If the Lair sounds alive, it sounds like it can die. Whenever a character takes action against the Lair, or someone does something risky within the Lair, use the opportunity to describe the Lair as aware and concerned, as fragile and mortal.

Engage the Players

This treatment of Lair puts a lot on a Storyteller's shoulders, within the context of Lairs. However, as a Storyteller, you're welcome and encouraged to put some of the responsibility in the hands of the players.

When choosing Lair Traits, and creating the Lair, have your players go a step further than their character sheets. Come up with a common theme. For example, photos of real world residences, or musical compositions. Have your players dig, and find strong, evocative examples, and assign the examples to their Chambers, Burrows, and Heart. These can (and probably must) be symbolic, less direct.

As your players decide on Traits, let those initial artistic and symbolic choices inform the mechanical decisions.

Alternatively, you can have your players build Lairs with some standard character traits, like Aspirations, a Virtue, and a Vice. Within the scope of the Lair and its interest, the players' characters can fulfill and engage these traits as if they had those traits themselves.

Dissociate For Effect

While Chambers can correspond to the physical world, they're ultimately not. Presenting this can be a challenge, since it's easy to fall back on the Lair just being another location where scenes can occur. Experiment with using dissociative descriptions to get that point across.

Say things that feel right, but don't necessarily make sense when held up to scrutiny. "The wall smells slimy." That statement certainly says something, and evokes some ideas of what the wall smells like, even though "slimy" doesn't describe an actual smell. Each player might think of something different when piecing together that description in her mind. That's fine! So long as those different ideas don't cause direct problems in the game (and minor sensory details generally won't), it'll only help to build an air of otherness in Lairs.

Constant Threats Are Boring

Lairs are weak points which every Beast possesses. However, that isn't a carte blanche to bombard the players with plots against Lairs. Efforts against Lairs should be result of extended culmination and escalation. Even if a Hero has reason to suspect the entrance to a Lair, it should never be the first option. Consider the theatrical value of a Western where the protagonist starts off by shooting the main antagonist. It's anti-climactic, and denies the film a chance to make us care about both parties.