

CORAX™

*A Sourcebook for Werewolf: The Apocalypse™
Changing Breed Book 3*

BLACKFEATHER PRESS PROUDLY PRESENTS:

Midnight City

One Stone Unturned

STORY BY RICHARD DANKSY
ART BY ANDREW BATES
COLORED BY MATT MILBERGER
LETTERED BY MATT MILBERGER



IT HAD STARTED THREE DAYS AGO, WITH A MESSAGE FROM ONE OF MY BEST SOURCES. WELL, ONE OF MY BEST HUMAN ONES, ANYWAY. HE WANTED ME TO MEET HIM FOR COFFEE. CLAIMED THAT SENDING THE INFORMATION ONLINE WAS TOO DANGEROUS. I AGREED.



THAT WAS MY FIRST MISTAKE.



I'M REALLY GLAD YOU COULD JOIN ME HERE. THIS STUFF IS SO HOT I DIDN'T TRUST IT TO EMAIL.

WELL, I HOPE YOU AT LEAST BROUGHT A HARDCOPY FOR ME. WHAT'S THE SCOOP?

BIG STUFF. YOU KNOW REID INTERNATIONAL? IT'S ABOUT THEM.



REID'S BEEN GRABBING HEADLINES BY SENDING BABY FOOD PRODUCTS AND MEDICINE TO THE THIRD WORLD, RIGHT? DO A GOOD DEED AND GET A TAX WRITE OFF, THAT SORT OF THING.

WELL, IT TURNS OUT THE STUFF'S TAINTED.



TAINTED? HOW?

STUFF THAT SHOULD HAVE GONE INTO THE BIOHAZARD BARRELS. BUT THEY'RE PUTTING IT IN MEDICINE AND BABY FOOD!

LOOK, I'VE GOT A SHIPMENT SCHEDULE. YOU WANT TO BE AT...





SOME FRIENDLY ADVICE, RAINA - FORGET EVERYTHING HE TOLD YOU. YOU'LL BE SAFER THAT WAY.



LIKE HELL I WILL!

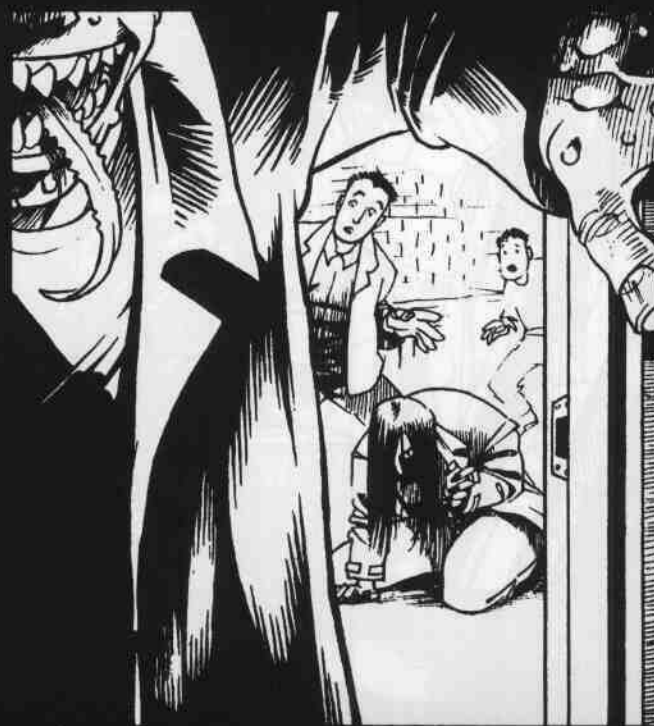


AN UNFORTUNATE DECISION.



NOW, LET ME AMEND MY INSTRUCTIONS, RAINA.

FORGET WHAT YOUR FRIEND TOLD YOU. REMEMBER THIS.





HE WAS STRONG,
THAT MUCH
I'D REMEMBER.



BUT HE WAS
ALSO STUPID.



I LIKE THAT QUALITY
IN A MAN — OR A
MONSTER — WHO'S
TRYING TO KILL ME.



I'D GONE TO BRANDON'S FUNERAL. THE PRIEST HAD BEEN THE ONLY OTHER ONE THERE, AND SEEING AS HOW FATHER DENNEHY DIDN'T LOOK LIKE HE WAS UP TO KICKING BUTT AND STOPPING ILLEGAL CHEMICAL SHIPMENTS, IT WAS UP TO ME TO GIVE BRANDON SOME KIND OF A LEGACY. FORTUNATELY, HIS INFO HAD BEEN DEAD ON — *SO FAR.*





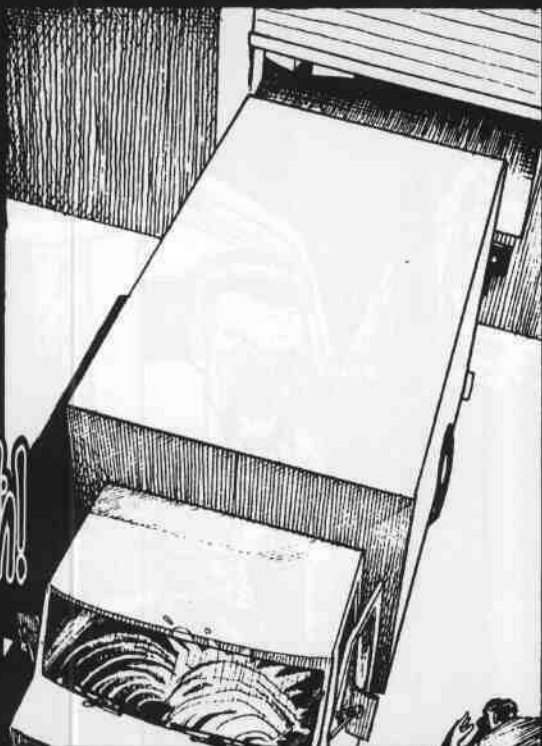
I KNOW.
WIPERS WON'T
GET IT OFF.

GONNA HAFTA
WIPE IT OFF
MYSELF.

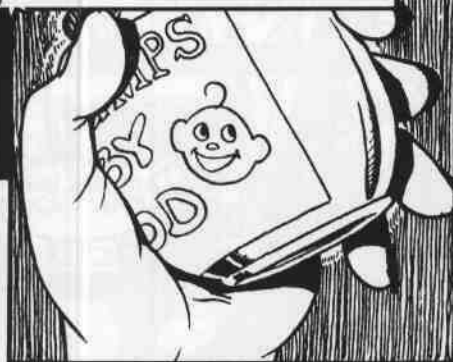


NO!
GET BACK!
PLEASE!

No
Stahl
cont
Akazuh



SCORE ANOTHER ONE FOR BRANDON. THIS STUFF WAS DEFINITELY TAINTED - BUT NOT BY CHEMICALS.

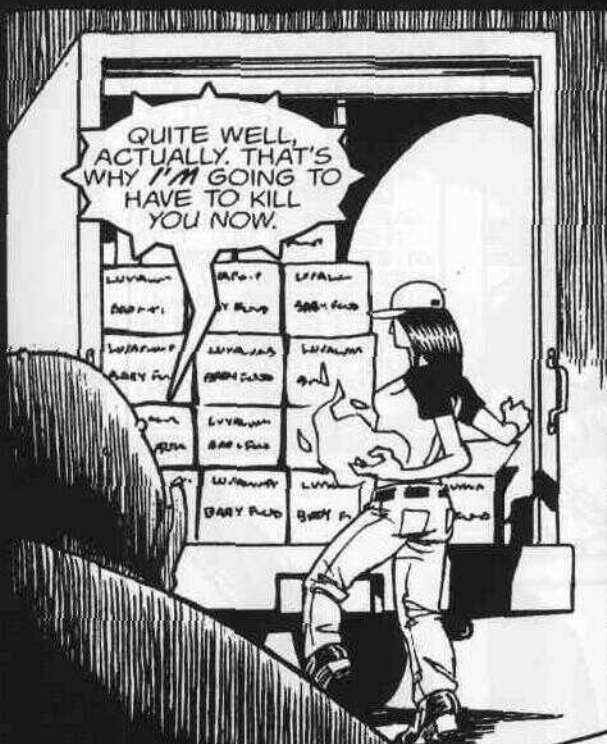


IT WAS *WYRM TAINT*. GOOD THING THOSE WOODEN CRATES LOOKED FLAMMABLE.

OKAY, *HELIOS*. I NEED A LOANER HERE. COME ON, YOU BASTARD.

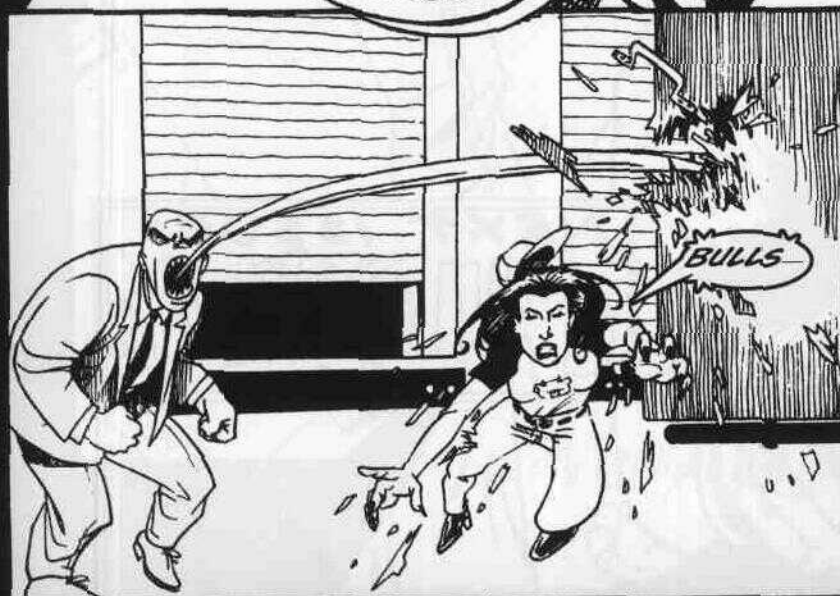


THANK YOU - NOW IT'S TIME TO SEE HOW WELL *WYRM-STUFF BURNS*.



AFRAID SO. OH, *COME ON*. DON'T TELL ME YOU DIDN'T THINK THIS WAS A SETUP AFTER I WENT TO THE TROUBLE OF LEAVING THE *COMPUTER* BEHIND.

BUT NOW I THINK WE'VE RUN OUT OF THINGS TO TALK ABOUT, *RAINA*. YOU'RE ABOUT TO *DIE*.





I'D HAVE TO MOVE FAST. COPS — OR RENT-A-COPS — WOULD BE SHOWING UP SOON, ASKING LOTS OF UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTIONS. I'D LEAVE THE BODY, BUT THE STUFF IN THOSE TRUCKS HAD TO GO. THEN, BACK HOME TO SEE WHAT ELSE I COULD DIG UP FROM BRANDON'S LAPTOP. IT WAS GOING TO BE A LONG NIGHT. ANOTHER ONE.



NEXT ISSUE:
CHILD'S PLAY!

BAZZ

By Richard E. Dansky



COQAX

112

Credits

Author: Richard E. Dansky
Developer: Ethan Skemp
Editor: Cary Goff
Art Director: Aileen E. Miles
Layout and Typesetting: Aileen E. Miles
Art: Jason Felix, Anthony Hightower, Brian LeBlanc, Steve Prescott
Comic Book Art: Andrew Bates, colored and lettered by Matt Milberger
Cover Art: Steve Prescott
Cover Design: Aileen E. Miles

Special Thanks

Brian "Unwitting Victim" Petkash, for being blindsided by the debauch.
Justin "Fascist Siskel" Achilli, for automatically disliking movies about big, exploding, sinking boats.
Chris "Mettled Mixaphor" McDonough, for letting Justin know he couldn't be further from wrong.
Mike "Gorkamorka" Tinney, for blowing up the General Lee to save Hazzard County.
Rob "Mistress Sascha" Hatch, for booking the forbidden delight of the Game Studio — as long as it isn't on Monday nights.



735 PARK NORTH BLVD.
SUITE 128
CLARKSTON, GA 30021
USA

GAME STUDIO

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Double-dog dare ya.

PRINTED IN CANADA.

Word from the White Wolf Game Studio

Alright, already! We get the hint!

For those of you who bought *Nuwisha* and wondered why it was so slim compared to *Bastet*, well, that was the plan. In fact, the original plan was to put out the Changing Breed books, one and all, as 72-page mock Tribebooks. After all, you didn't want the repeated material from the *Players Guide*, right? *Bastet* would be the exception to this rule, simply because there are *nine tribes* of them — impossible to cram into 72 pages. Everything else would be slimmed down to avoid that "repeated information" bugbear.

Well, popular demand said otherwise, and so here you go. *Corax*, and all successive Changing Breed Books, will be whatever size we figure is necessary to give you whatever rules you need to generate an appropriately fleshed out character, along with the detailed history and culture sections you've grown to love. Big and fat, just like you asked.

Happy now?

CORAX™



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Introduction: The View From Above

There's nothing quite like the taste of a dead man's eye.

It's not just the flavor, though there's a good salty tang to aqueous humor. No, it's drinking in the secrets that the eye saw, back when it was still part of a something living. There's no describing that, not to someone who hasn't tasted those dying sights himself. I mean, you could try, but whoever you talked to would probably look at you kind of funny.

Sure, it's ghoulish, but we drink deep for a reason. You can't possibly think we feed ourselves on eyeball cocktails, can you? There's not enough there to keep a real bird going, let alone one of us.

No, we do this to satisfy a soul hunger instead of a gut one. Think about it, junior. If we don't come along and suck those last images out of the eyes of the dead, then those pictures are lost forever. Gone. Even the ghosts don't always remember them, and the worms, well, let's just say worms don't talk much to our kind. And it's against our nature to let any secrets go — that's another thing you'll learn, kiddo. After all, you never know when a tidbit's going to be useful....

For crying out loud, stop retching and listen. If the thought of a retina *hors-de-oeuvre* is enough to make you dial long-distance on the porcelain phone, then there's no way in hell you're going to be able to handle what comes next.

And we need you, kid. We need you like nobody's business.

But I'm getting ahead of myself here. Way ahead of myself. You've got questions you need answered — hey, we all do, it's one of the defining traits of the species — but right now, yours are a little more pressing than most. You want to know the important things like why do you suddenly have wings, how did you get on top of this church, and most importantly, how the hell are you going to get down.

Am I right? Of course I'm right. I've been through this a lot of times, junior. But dig your claws in tight to that cornice there, because you've got a lot of listening to do, and I don't want you dropping off — literally — before I'm done. And when I'm done, when I've finished telling you about the duty we owe to Raven and the Sun, when I've finished telling you why your little curiosity problem is going to get worse, and when I've finished explaining everything else you're going to need to know to take advantage of what you've just been given — well, *then* I'll tell you how to get down. I'm crappy at keeping secrets — hell, we all are, you included, kiddo — but I've at least got the stones to be able to pick the time and place to shoot my mouth off.

You settled in there, then? Grip nice and tight? Then settle down and get ready to have your ears talked off.

I love a captive audience.



Chapter One: An Oral History

It is a hundred years and three and fifty since I came out of the egg, but I do not forget what my father told me. Now I am the chief of the great ravens of the Mountain. We are few, but we remember still...

— J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

Where We Came From

Secrets, kid. It's all about secrets. I'm going to spill a few to you today, but the rest are up to you to discover. That's not to say you're not going to find them — there are folks out there waiting to talk to you — but you'd best be prepared to shake a tail feather when it comes time for you to do your research. If there's one thing Gaia herself hates more than a Corax who expects answers to be handed to him, it's, well, I'm not sure what it is.

But that's not important. Lemme give you the basics about where we came from and who we are, and you can pick up the other stuff from your other teachers when you find them. You will find them, you know. Spirits and Kinfolk and other kinds of Corax — all of them will have other things to tell you. The trick is to realize that there's value in all of these stories, and to try to piece together a truth out of all of them that works for you. Remember: Treasures hide in strange places.

Geez, kid, you're not bored already, are you? Better stay awake through this part — I don't think you've quite got the knack of the tighten-claws-when-you-sleep thing down

yet, and I'd hate to see you do a full-throttle faceplant from up here. It'd probably take the Sanitation Department bozos two weeks to pry your beak out of the concrete anyhow, and I hate to see that sort of wasted effort.

The Beginning of the World

In this joint, everyone's got a story of how their spiritual great-granddaddy created the world, usually for their exclusive benefit. Now, after hearing the Garou and the vampires and Gaia knows who else expound on how the world got made, I've just got one question:

How the hell do they know?

I mean, think about it. One of the things that pisses me off most about the vast majority of the creatures crawling around on this rock is that none of them admit it if they don't know something. They always have to come up with some self-aggrandizing myth about how the whole megillah is here for their benefit.

The thing that makes this a right bitch is that any one of the tales could be right, too. Mokolé remember back a long time, although they ain't too talkative. But so do spirits, and all those Incarna from Luna to Fenris and on

down the line have waxed poetic to any shapeshifter that rubbed 'em the right way. And they've all got their own variations on the story, and the tale gets funkier the more people telling it, and so on, and so on....

You see what I'm getting at? Obviously, the story the Nuwisha tell their cubs isn't the same as the one that the Ananasi tell their hatchlings. Their story isn't the same as the one that the human scientists in their white lab coats tell their undergrads. And each one kinda works, kinda makes sense if you're willing to give it the benefit of the doubt. Damn it! And because we've got so many stories, we can't know which one's accurate. Sure, everyone's happy with their own personal *How It All Came To Be*, and that works for them — the Garou who's sure of his story can go out and do what he has to do. The Garou who isn't sits on his tail and gets the existential Harano blues — and meanwhile the Wyrms run amuck.

And here we are, programmed for curiosity, hell-bent and hardwired on getting the truth out of every situation. And we don't even know all the facts about this. See what I mean about infuriating? Yeah, thought so.

Sorry about that rant. Sometimes it gets to me. Still, all this leads us to secret #1, which is *How the World Got Made*. The short version? I have no bloody idea. I wasn't there. And seeing as I wasn't there and I don't have an eyewitness, I'm not going to speculate. I reiterate for the young raven at the back: The world exists. For the moment, that's enough. Should a pressing need arise for us to uncover how the first two atoms of mud clumped together, rest assured, we *will* find out. (In the meantime, the question may drive the individual wereraven a bit crazy in his off hours, but that's a cross we gotta bear, I guess.)

That's a valuable lesson right there, by the way: In the absence of reliable information, don't speculate. You've been created as a scout, and your job is to bring back fast, accurate info. Misinformation is worse than useless; it's actively dangerous.

That's why we don't worry too much about the way the world got made. It'll drive ya nuts if you think too hard about it or ask too many people, but worse, if we start making assumptions based upon unreliable sources, we run the risk of acting on bad information. Instead, we're just happy that the damn thing's here.

Bad Wyrms. No Biscuit

Of course, one bit of prehistory that I will speculate on is the Wyrms going bad. We've got enough testimonials from various trustworthy types — like Raven himself — to have a pretty good idea of what went wrong.

The sad thing is, it's not the Wyrms' fault. Not really. Mind you, that doesn't excuse item one on the list of bad things that have happened since then, but initially, the Wyrms were more or less a victim.

Now, let's take a step back and think about some intro psychology here. The Wyrms, at least as it's depicted, is a long hard muscular thing that likes wrecking stuff. And

sometimes a cigar is only a cigar. Riiiiiiight. Meanwhile, the Weaver's got a definite bit of female vibe to her, while the Wyld — well, I wouldn't let the Wyld date anyone in my family.

But in any case, above and beyond the usual professional rivalry that went on between the Weaver and Wyrms, there was a little bit of, errr, tension. With that tension came all sorts of dominance questions, BS like that. Who got to be on top, cosmologically speaking.

Now, here's where Raven came in. Raven had, deservedly, a rep as being a good listener. And so when the Wyrms and Weaver had problems, they came to him to talk about it. Now Raven is bright, but at that point he didn't have a hell of a lot of what you'd call people skills (or primal force of the universe skills, or whatever) and while he came into being as a sneaky-ass bastard, he still wasn't real up on the niceties of relationships. So he suggested that the Weaver and Wyrms take turns being dominant — Ages of Creation, Ages of Destruction, but neither lasting too long, and with both sides having stopwords and good stuff like that.

Raven even suggested that the Wyrms show what a good sport he was and let the Weaver run things first. The Wyrms, who was all for the compromise because, frankly, every argument he got into with the Weaver overheated his brain, agreed.

Whoops.

The Weaver got the Wyrms good and tied up in her Web, then let out one of those patented evil chuckles. Bad things ensued. The Wyrms called out the "Hey, Let Me The Hell Up Already" signal, but the Weaver was having none of it. So the Wyrms took matters into his own coils and tore his way mostly loose, and their merry little war came out in the open. Meanwhile, the Wyld was off somewhere picking its toenails, and there was nothing standing between the Wyrms and the Weaver and total destruction.

That's where we come in. We were Gaia's reinforcements, speed bumps in the path of the spiritual juggernaut. The Garou and the Bastet and all the rest of us, we're the National Guard going up against Godzilla.

I don't like our chances, either. But remember, Tokyo's still standing....

Origins

Youth is a disease from which we all recover.

— Dorothy Fuldheim

Right. Here's another deep dark secret. We were the last of the Changing Breeds created, and we might be what you'd call "second generation." We're the patch, the fix on the original software, and that means that occasionally we've got some compatibility errors with the older models.

Another thing: Gaia's not an omnipotent, omniscient God, not in the sense in which you learned the drill in Sunday school. I mean, she created everything, including all forms of life, but it's almost as if she didn't recognize, in

a gut kind of way, that everything she'd created would have consequences. I mean, for one thing, a good number of the critters she made were sneakier than she was — look at the way Coyote and Wolf and Spider and the rest of the skinchanging lot kept creeping back in for second helpings of Gaia's loving. For another, she didn't have the resources to keep track of what the things she'd created were up to — there was too much going on all of a sudden. If she took a minute to make sure that Coyote and his children were behaving over here, the Gurahl made a mess over there.

Sure, she created Coyote (and his children) to play the part of the Trickster, but she did it too well. Coyote was the perfect Trickster, focused entirely on that, so Gaia (who had umpteen-zillion other things to take care of) couldn't keep up with him. So when Coyote short-sheeted her divine bed, had his kids whiz all over the Umbra to mark their property and generally lowered the property values up where the totems live, Gaia knew that something had to be done. She'd created Trickster, but as an idea, you see? She hadn't realized that these wonderfully ideal notions (making the Bastet her eyes and the Mokolé her memory and so forth) had literal repercussions in the real world.

Oh sure, she could have lowered the boom on the Breeds, but punishment's not really her style, and besides, nothing short of destruction was going to teach some of those critters a lesson. And Gaia, bless her heart, wasn't quite up to destroying some of the concepts she'd created.

So she sat down, after a fashion, and think about the whole mess for a bit. The solution she came up with was that she needed someone to keep an eye on what was going on for her, preferably someone who didn't have a bias or an agenda, and who would let her know what she had to worry about and what she didn't. She needed something between an editor and an executive secretary, someone who could sift through the mess o' details and let her know when something vital was going down so she would only have to spend her time, personally, when it really mattered.

So she created Raven, whose job it was to serve as the interpreter between Gaia and her creations. She made Raven fast enough to go from place to place, to see what was happening everywhere. She made his eyes sharp enough to see the smallest details, so that Raven could bring them back to her. She gave him a taste for carrion, as a subtle reminder to the other critters as to who was the real boss (and that they'd be dead meat if they pissed her off too much). She gave him a quick wit and a ready tongue, probably so she wouldn't get bored listening to his recitals. And she made Raven bright enough to understand what he was doing, so he could explain Gaia's creations to her and help her understand them.

That might have been her one mistake with Raven, come to think of it. Making him smart, that is. Or maybe it was telling Raven how smart he was that was the big boo-boo, because once Raven doped out that Gaia needed him, he started extracting concessions. Let's put it this way: There's a reason he's the patron totem of all sports agents, even if they don't know it. He's good.

So Raven leveraged a few more goodies out of Gaia, like certain protections for his children, and most importantly, the ability for some of his kids to wear man and raven skins. He claimed we needed that to get at all the secrets out there, you see. He didn't want Gaia to miss anything important just because it happened on the human side.

So Gaia loaded up Raven's dessert cart, possibly just to make him go away and stop annoying her. She did, however, tag on a little rider that's a pain in the butt to this very day. It's this: We can't shut up. Gaia thought it would be nice if all her creations knew what the other ones were doing, so she charged Raven with spreading the word everywhere, not just back to her. Needless to say, this went over as well as a yak-meat burrito, but even after Gaia saw it wasn't working out the way she'd told Raven it would, she "forgot" to take the damn compulsion to keep talking off. It's a way of showing Raven he didn't quite get away with everything he thought he did, I suspect.

Like the man says, it's not nice to fool with Mother Nature.

Ash and Coal

In the early days, we weren't black in bird-shape. We were snow-white, with golden eyes. It was a good look for us, I think, but like all good things, it came to an end.

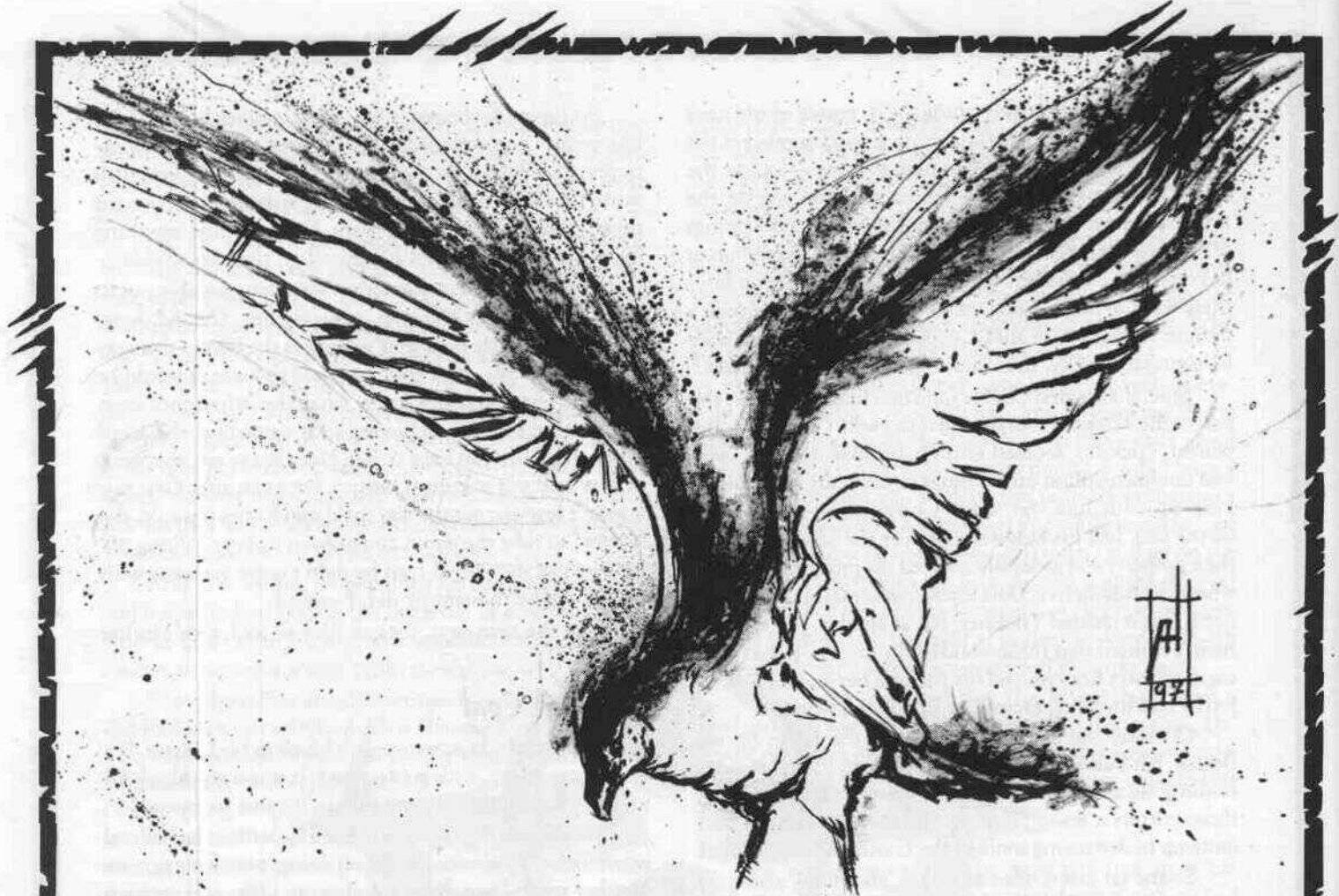
It's all Helios' fault, really. For a Celestine, he has real issues with self-esteem. He was off doing something private or other when Luna started doling out Gifts and presents and auspices to the other Changing Breeds. So when he finally got done doing whatever he was doing, all the Garou were doing their little Lunar hora and praising Luna to the skies — and they were damned loud about it, too.

The thing is, they were giving thanks to Luna, not him. This put Helios in what can politely be called "a snit." More accurately, he took his toys (light, heat, all that good stuff) and went home. This little star turn, as you might expect, left the rest of the world in something of a pickle. I mean, it was *dark*, and it was *cold*, and no plants would grow, and, well, it was just generally a bad scene. More to the point, it was going to be a terminal scene if Helios didn't come back, because even the Gurahl were bitching about how cold it was, and that means we were well on our way to ice-age status. Luna was doing her best to heat things up, but she's A) forgetful, B) easily distracted, and C) not real good at that sort of thing.

So Raven decided something had to be done about it. He had a plan, which he passed on to us, and we went off to where Helios was sulking. (By the way, if it hadn't been for us, this planet would be frozen solid, 'cause even if one of the other breeds had doped out a plan, no way could they have gotten the altitude to bring the plan to the Man. Wings are a real plus in this biz.) Oh, and we took one thing with us when we went knock-knock-knocking on Helios' door.

A mirror.

So, anyway, we got there, and Helios' house was all boarded up with a big "DO NOT DISTURB" sign on the front



of it. Occasionally you'd see sunbeams leaking out the windows, but on the whole it was pretty damn dark up there, too. That's how we knew things were serious. When Helios doesn't even bother to light up his own place, it's bad.

We got to work, fast. The mirror got itself stationed right in front of the door, and then, in between shivers, we started yelling and hooting about what a great time we were having now that this new sun had come along.

Helios, poor sap, bought it hook, line and sinker. I mean, the only reason Helios had stomped off in the first place was because he didn't think anyone liked him, so when he heard us whooping it up about our new bestest solar buddy, he flipped. More to the point, Helios came charging out the front door to take a look, and what do you think he saw?

Damn straight — he saw his own reflection. And, seeing as Helios isn't real ingenious as celestial bodies go, he went right back inside and started crying. That's where the clever part came in. We knocked on his door (careful not to stand in front of the mirror) and made him an offer he couldn't understand. Basically, we hosed him. We told Helios that we had an "in" with the powers of the universe, and that we could get him his job back — but only if he came back with us right away.

He damn near broke down the door on his way out, he was that eager. We barely beat him back to the friendly neighborhoods in the Umbra, and he was so close on our tailfeathers that he burned us black, every blessed one.

Turns out we'd outsmarted ourselves on that one. Not only did we get roasted up close and personal, but when Helios came back to much acclamation, he decided that he wanted to hug us and squeeze us and call us George — in short, to adopt us, as a personal thank you. Now, we wanted no part of this, but Raven pulled a fast one on us and we got suckered into it. Basically, the bastard convinced Luna that it was better to let us go over to her bro than risk having him run away again — so she and Raven sold us out. In one swell foop, we had our auspices stripped, and that was not pleasant. Helios made us his personal property, and with that we were taken out of the good graces of the ever-changing Moon; we were stuck, as Changing Breeds go. I mean, even the Mokolé have more tie to Luna than we do — and because they were Helios' first babies, he shone on them in all kind of ways. That's why we're all pretty much the same, when it comes to our purpose among ourselves; no warriors, bards or whatever kinda lines to break ourselves up among. As far as I know, only the Nuwisha are in the same kind of one-note boat. But they're still doing okay, and so are we.

Now, Helios wasn't what you'd call a bad guy to be adopted by. I mean, Raven still had dibs, and Helios himself kept on dumping all of these Gifts on us. That means, incidentally, that we've got a hell of an arsenal because Helios thought that giving us nice stuff was the way to make sure we liked him. It was never necessary, really, but he

never got the message, and we're just as happy to have the toys. But we knew that Helios can get temperamental, and we weren't sure if hanging around him that closely, like he wanted us to do at that point, was such a good idea. After all, he'd done something stupid once. He might well do something else equally dumb, and drop it on us.

Fortunately, Raven was just as paranoid.

Raven-Folk Scattering

Raven may be a cocky bastard, but he's no fool. As soon as he'd received Helios' Gifts for his children, he turned around and called all of us together — and I mean all of us. Skinchangers, ravens, and the rare human bright enough to honor Raven properly, we all came together to hear what Raven had to say.

His message was direct and to the point. He handed out the last of the Gifts Helios had bestowed, instructed us in their use, and then told us to get lost — literally.

You see, Raven was less than sanguine that Helios wasn't going to figure out how Raven had snookered him. He didn't want the Sun stumbling onto the truth, then deciding to punish us by taking away our Gifts. So Raven ordered us to travel to every corner of the world as quick as we could. That way, no matter what happened, there would always be some of us hidden from Helios in the night, ones whom the Sun couldn't touch. That's why there are Corax from Alaska to Japan, and all over Europe as well. When your head honcho spirit tells you to move, you get your ass in gear and go.

As a further precautionary measure, Raven also told us that whenever one of us ran across another, we should sit down and compare notes to make sure that if anything had been taken away from one, the other could teach it right back to him. This sort of exchange program's gotten a bit wider over the years; nowadays, we gossip more and shop-talk less. Still, it's all in the interest of making sure we hang onto what we know, and pass it on when the time is right.

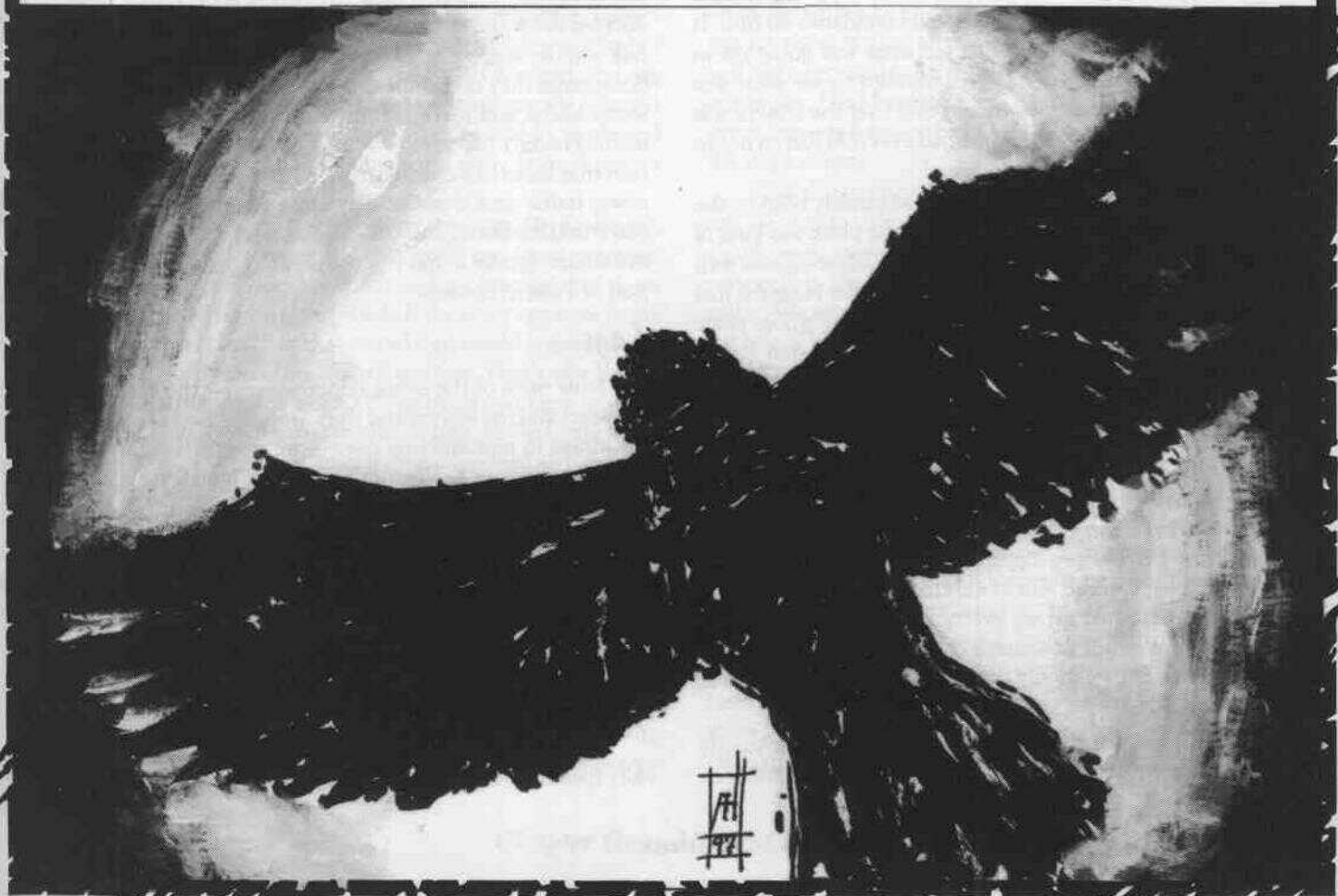
Now don't get the idea that we don't like Helios. Hell, we love the guy. He's great. I mean, his Gifts are killer, he's a lot more predictable than Luna and let's face it, the Moon isn't what you'd call a warm personality. No, we all think the Sun's one hell of a Celestine, and one of the reasons we usually operate in the daytime is because he's got the same interest we do in shedding light on things. He's a bit more literal than we are, but who isn't?

It's just that, well, we're a paranoid kind of breed. So we like Helios, and we respect him; we just take precautions because, well, you never know. Helios has already flaked on us once; it could get kind of inconvenient if he did it again.

Other Realms

The first man to fence in a piece of land saying 'This is mine' and who found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society.

— Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins and Bases of Inequality Among Men*





Gaia created Raven to tell her what was going on, and she didn't impose any jurisdictional boundaries on him. It wasn't like he was allowed to see what was going on in Europe, but not in Africa — or allowed to see what was happening in the real world, but told that the Umbra was off limits. And seeing as no one had ever told Raven not to go there, he went and we followed.

Now Coyote and his kiddoes had already been to the Umbra by the time we got there, and the place was kind of pungent as a result. The situation had its advantages as well as its disadvantages, though. I mean, sure, the Nuwisha had taken a whole bunch of neat stuff, made the whole place stink to high heaven, and left behind a mess that bore a suspicious resemblance to mass-produced American beer. (It's called "marking your territory." Pay careful attention to that fire hydrant down there if you need further explanation.) But there was an upside.

Namely, the place was such a mess that just about no one — and I mean *no one* — else wanted to visit. Can you imagine a Silver Fang dipping his paws into the mess the Nuwisha left behind? Not bloody likely. So, as we could fly over the nastiest bits, we pretty much had the place to ourselves. We took advantage of it, setting up meetpoints and runner routes, supply caches and hidey-holes all over the place.

Hell, a lot of that's still there, and we're constantly upgrading. Most of it's still secret, too, although it's been

real hard keeping things from the Nuwisha ever since they decided to up and move *en masse* into the Umbra. (Kind of like seniors legging it to Florida, only more distracting. Sometimes they take some things out of your bestest, most secret cache and leave behind something by way of payment. Freaks.) If you're ever in the Umbra and see some stuff that looks like chickenscratch, that's the latest Corax news, traffic and weather. Pay close attention to it and you'll find the fastest and safest routes to where you're going over there. Ignore it and you're likely to go face-first into a nest of Pattern Spiders.

Eggs

Now most of the other skinchangers — the cats and the bears and the wolves and the coyotes — have a certain advantage in reproduction over us werebirds. It's the fact that both sides of the family tree are mammals for those guys; either way, the whole birds'n'bees process is pretty much identical. For us, it's a little harder. If a pregnant Corax shifts to bird form, she's got — what? Eggs? It's a mess. Hell, we don't even want to think about it. That's why the women, once they get preggers, don't shift. It's not even law, it's custom, which is a hell of a lot stronger. No one enforces it, either. There's no need. Everyone just knows.

Which leads us to where you came from, metaphysically speaking. The stories go that when Raven decided to

take some of humanity and make them his (to go with the birds who'd already come along), he watched what the other totems had done and paid careful attention. Then he went them one better.

You see, Raven figured out that this is all about spirit. Even Wolf and the rest, they didn't quite get it when they taught their children how to perpetuate themselves; those guys got it all mixed up with the flesh (and all the problems that come with that). Raven realized all that was excess baggage, that all that was necessary to make a new Corax was spirit and will. Well, spirit, will, access to the Umbra and a few other things, but that's besides the point.

Raven took the smartest of his children and walked 'em into the Umbra. He showed them how to take part of themselves and shape a spirit egg out of it, and how to bind it to a baby (or a chick) with a bond made from a hair (or feather). And Raven told them that a Corax soul is too much to handle right off, so it has to incubate for a few years while the body gets ready for it. You see, he'd tried creating a Corax right off the bat first, and it was a miserable failure. The raven spirit was so strong in the human kid that it tried to fly off the table and ended up breaking its neck, while the human spirit in the raven chick caused it to crawl right out of the nest (which wouldn't have been so bad if the nest hadn't been 40 feet off the ground). So Raven thought about it, and thought some more, and figured that a wait period was in order. After all, a Corax soul is a hell of a lot more dangerous than a gun, and they make you wait for that. That's why he created the spirit egg — it's really a time-release system so that a new Corax gets little doses of her new soul over a long enough time that it doesn't fry her synapses. Then, when critical mass gets reached, the egg "cracks" and the rest of the stored spirit energy gets injected in one big shot. That's the First Change, kiddo, explained all technical-like. But we're getting away from the story here.

With the world being the way it was, and is, Raven felt that keeping the egg in the real world was too dangerous. You know what they say about making omelets, but these things are too valuable to break. If the spirit egg were to get broken, you see, all of that stored soul would come pouring out and things would go to hell real fast. That's why Raven decided to make the egg 100% spiritual and keep it in the Umbra, tied on with that feather or hair. In the Umbra, you see, it's almost unbreakable. Raven explained all this to his kids on both sides, and they got sort of jumpy. Each wanted to know whether eggs should be given to raven babies or human babies, and how many, and all of those other pertinent details.

Raven saw this, and he knew pretty quick that unless he did something, there was going to be competition between his feathered children and his human ones. He'd seen it with the Garou after all. He pondered a little bit, and then he gave the human and the raven the big decision: They were both free to make as many kids of the other type

as they wanted — though with the approval of the potential Corax' real parents, who would have to be part of the whole ceremony.

As you might expect, this shut everyone up real quick. So that's the reason we're made as we are, and why there aren't so many of us. Neither the homids nor the corvids want the line to die out, but we don't want there to be too many of the other kind out there, either. In the meantime, we're balanced, as balanced as we can be, considering.

Thought and Memory

Just as Raven was created to serve as a sort of spiritual NSA for Gaia, individual Corax have performed similar functions for some of the more powerful spirits over the centuries. These Corax, who have "forgotten the Sun," just wander off into the shinier bits of the Umbra. A lot of them just keep going and going — rumor has it that they fade into pure spirit and never actually die. A few, however, end up working directly for big spirits they run into out there, and these guys often end up coming back to Earth, sort of, kind of, on the job.

Let me give you an example. You might have heard of a guy named Odin? Tall, bearded, one eye, spoke Swedish? He had two ravens named Huginn and Munin (Thought and Memory, that is). Now supposedly, Odin would sit on his throne all day while Huginn and Munin flew all over the world, collecting info that this guy could use. They were literally his thought and memory — while they were gone Odin was without either thought or memory, and basically just sat there staring at the wall and wondering what the hell had happened to his depth perception. Then at the end of the day, H&M would come flapping back in their own sweet time, sit down on Odin's shoulders, and fill him in on the day's events.

Now this story does a pretty good job of illustrating the role we play in things. We're the eyes and ears of the spirit world, even more so than the kitties, because we've got perspective, the view from the hill, whatever you want to call it. We get overviews that they don't, which is good for our role. The Bastet stash secrets away for safe keeping; we drag 'em out into the sunlight and shout, "Hey, look at this!" for the benefit of the less nosy Changing Breeds.

This is why we have always been linked to powerful spirits, and some of those connections have been made public. There was an Odin, though he's long gone, and he did have two of our oldest and wisest as his advisors, Huginn and Munin, a mated pair. Word is that Odin granted them immortality as a reward for long and faithful service, and that they're still flying around the Umbra, sun-lost. I heard from Skirts-the-Corona, who got it in a message from Johnny, who claims to have heard it from Old Roarkh, who swears up and down to have seen Huginn and Munin in the feather. Word is they're still watching, waiting for Odin to come back some day so they can share everything they've seen.

The Impergium and The War of Rage

History is littered with wars that everyone knew would never happen.

— J. Enoch Powell

Wars are good for business. That being said, there's nothing else that's good about them, and the War of Rage was one of the worst. It was a war about nothing, with no possible winner, and we all lost. The Garou had spent too damn much time lording it over the humans, basically because the rest of us (read my lips here) *did not care*. However, the wolves mistook indifference for a mandate, and decided that they were in charge. When they confined their little ego trips to the monkeys, it was no problem. The rest of us had our little Kinfolk-kraals, we did the breeding and culture things, and everything worked out just great.

However, something went *snap* in the brain of some Silver Fang somewhere, and he decided that running roughshod over the humans wasn't good enough any more. No, he decided they had to have the rest of us Changing Breeds under his non-opposable thumb, too. So he and his pack went picking a fight. They tried something with us, but fortunately we had enough friends among the other Garou so that things fizzled out there. Still, it put us on

guard. We moved our nests higher, hid our Kinfolk, moved our treasures and valuables into hidden places in the Umbra.

We could see trouble coming.

This loudmouth Silver Fang wouldn't let up. He pestered the Ananasi, who ignored him, and the Rokea, who just turned around and left, and so on down the list, until he got to the big bears. Now, the Gurahl have yet to figure out one important thing: You cannot argue with a fanatic, not now, not ever, and certainly not back then. So the Garou kept on pestering them for the really big healing Gifts, and the Gurahl (who were smart, but not terribly good at judging consequences) kept on saying, "When you grow up."

Well, you know what happens when you say, "No" to a spoiled child? The kid throws a tantrum. Only in this case, the kid was one of the high-muckety-mucks of one of the most effective races of predators this planet's ever seen. So he flipped out, and all of the rest of the Garou flipped out along with him, determined to force the secrets of life and death out of the Gurahl by force. And some of the less brilliant strategic thinkers among the Garou decided to isolate the Gurahl, who were pretty kick-ass fighters, from any potential allies. Translation: They mounted pre-emptive strikes on the Mokolé, the Bastet, the Ratkin, the were-megatheriums and everyone else they could find. We spread warnings, but no one listened.



It was bloody. Most of the Changing Breeds were down before they knew what hit them. Some were decimated. Others got annihilated, as in "extinct." Once the initial wave of atrocity was over, the rest of the breeds got together as best they could and hit back, but it was too late. The momentum was going one way — irrevocably. For the critters on the losing side, it was just a matter of what they could salvage.

Our own part in the War of Rage wasn't spectacular, but it was important. After the initial assault, we put our heads together and came to a couple of conclusions. One, the Garou war camps were off their collective rockers. Two, the Garou were going to win. Three, Gaia had put the other breeds down on Earth for a reason, and seeing them all wiped out now meant that we were going to be in a heap of trouble at some indeterminate point in the future.

So we cheated. Look, there wasn't anyone in Europe, Asia or anywhere that knew the Umbra better than we did. (No, I didn't mention the Pure Lands. Shut up, kid!) So we started smuggling refugees — Kinfolk and wounded, mainly — across the Gauntlet to safe places we knew. We didn't mess with combat effectiveness — not our business — but we had a feeling that if we didn't help out the civilians, no one would. Surprisingly enough, some of the saner heads among the werewolves helped us out, misdirecting or slowing attacks so that we had time to set up evacs. The taste for slaughter, thankfully, isn't universal.

At the same time, we maintained relations that were as friendly as possible with the Garou without actively helping them out. To have helped the Garou in this insanity would have been bad karma, but to have lined up with the opposition, well, that would have gotten us on the enemy list. So we did a little scouting, brought back a little info — nothing terribly damaging, and nothing that gave the Garou anything resembling an unfair advantage — and kept the Garou from trying to climb trees and wreck nests.

Ah, who am I trying to bullshit? We weren't collaborators, but we were the next best thing. The only excuse I have is this: We had inside info. At the beginning, half of us were hell-bent to hit the werewolves back, but the Big Bird himself came down and stepped on that notion. Raven told us that it wasn't our time, that we weren't meant to fight this one. We — and what we saw — would be needed later as witness. By doing what we could but staying out of the line of fire, by walking into the camps of Garou and Gurahl, by getting an unbiased picture of what was going on, we could see all of what went on — and remember it. And then, when those memories were needed, when another War of Rage threatened, well, we'd be ready to call the Garou on the carpet with every damn detail of every damn atrocity they'd perpetrated the last time. So we could warn everyone again once the memories had faded — because we knew they would.

It wasn't a great way to get us to sit down and think, but it was good enough. And you haveta consider the source. I

mean, this was Raven telling us to hold back. So we did, and it probably saved us from extinction.

Oh, as for that assignment? Near as I can tell, we only partially failed.

Oh, one other thing: Most of the other breeds had no idea we were Wallenberging it behind the lines. To them — mainly the cats, who were fighting for their lives and had no interest in finding anything good to say about anyone — we were sleeping with the enemy. Never mind that there might not be too many Bastet around these days if it wasn't for our help — we're bad guys because we didn't stand up to get slaughtered. The Eyes of Gaia were wearing blinders — by moving their kittens and Kinfolk out, we did more for them than they did for themselves.

More Recent Stuff

You can't say civilization don't advance...for in every way they kill you in a new way.

— Will Rogers, *The Autobiography of Will Rogers*

Humans are an interesting lot. They've got tons of secrets, very few of which matter on their own, but most of which feed into other secrets that can get very important indeed. When dealing with humans, it's easy to get caught up in the inconsequential and lose the cogent details — but there's so damn much going on that usually you find your way back to something important, eventually.

So after the Impergium fell apart, the humans started putting things together for themselves. Bear with me here; I need to put about five millennia into a nutshell real fast, so the details are going to get kind of skimpy. What it comes down to is this: After the Impergium, Changing Breed society went downhill — fast. It was all hiding and memories, trying to keep the old ways alive and sometimes just basic survival. Apart from politics, there was nothing going on — nothing except loss. We lost the Howlers and the Croatan, lost forests and the old lands, lost knowledges and lost our reasons for going on.

Meanwhile, the humans were doing new things. Exciting things. They were getting more and more complex, coming up with advances and new ideas almost as fast as we could scout out yesterday's news.

Is it any wonder we were drawn to them? All over the world, new things were happening. Songs were being composed, swords and sculptures forged, philosophies and cities erected and then brought crashing down. I mean, it was neat.

We ate it up. Weavertech or not, we loved watching the humans try out new stuff. Part of it, to be honest, was politics. The Wyld was still off communing with its own bad self, and the Wyrms were getting more and more of a foothold in the Tellurian. This, we decided, was bad. And if no one else was going to play, then the Weaver was going to be where we put our money — 'cause as stifling as she can get, she's better than the damn snake. So we were all for the



humans making technological advances and building bigger and better things to protect themselves with because, let's face it, no one else was going to do it.

Greece

When people think about Greece, we come in a distant second or so in the Important Bird Name Recognition Contest. Owl's got it, hands down, for hanging with Athena and getting his face in all the pictures. That doesn't mean we weren't there, though. You want proof? Look at Aesop's fables. There are two, count 'em, two that star ravens, even though one of them isn't terribly flattering. The one that is, though, is instructive.

You know what I'm talking about, don't you? The one about the raven who finds the pitcher with a little water down at the bottom, so he drops pebbles into the thing until the water rises high enough for him to get a good drink out of it. Now that, kiddo, is lateral thinking, something we were championing way back when in the glory days of Athens and Corinth. Taking things from a different angle. Encouraging people to question and to reassess. Sound like the basis of any school of Western philosophy you know? Naaah, can't be, right? Well, you decide for yourself. The point being, the Corax' idea of looking at things from every possible angle was alive and well in at least some parts of Classical Greece.

Speaking of which, there are a few things you need to know about Classical Greece. Contrary to popular belief, the place was not full of white-bearded guys standing in front of white-columned temples in white togas declaiming the wisdom of the ages. Uh-uh. Even Athens, the cradle of democracy, didn't let women or foreigners vote. Read some Aristophanes some time; it's instructive.

But the main point I'm trying to make here is that in the good old days, Greece was full of mountains, goats and guys in hoplite armor trying to skewer their neighbors — and that's it. Communication from city to city was damn near impossible at the best of times, deadly at the worst, and still the news had to get through somehow.

Three guesses how. Yep, it was us. A lot of your famous communiqués in Greek history — the run from Marathon, the news of the walls of the Piraeus — have our feather-light touch all over them. Mind you, we didn't necessarily make the runs for those guys, but we helped. You know, scouting out safe routes and directing traffic, whacking bandits along the way, things like that.

Why? Well, basically because in those days we played favorites. The Persians and Spartans were information control freaks while the Athenians allowed the occasional discussion, at least. Of course, we later wised up and threw our lot in with Alexander — an empire is a great way of establishing reliable and safe communications networks; you dig? Too bad it couldn't last.

The Beasts of Battle

Despite the War of Rage, we've managed to maintain fairly good working relationships with the Garou most of the time. It's just when they get their dudgeon up that they're a pain in the collective ass. Most of the time, though, we work well together — even our animal Kin cooperate. Weird, huh?

The best example of this is in, believe it or not, poems, Old English ones like "The Battle of Maldon." The skalds saw us working together and immortalized it in poetry. After each battle, the eagles would seek carrion, the wolves would prowl the field looking for Wyrn-foes to dispatch or trophies to take,

and we'd drink memories out of men's eyes. The poets saw that we came to every battle for news and tales, and they made us part of their ritual. "The fighting was now imminent, glory was at hand; the time was come when doomed men were to perish there. A din was upraised there; ravens wheeled about, and the eagle greedy for carrion." That's beauty; that's poetry. The skalds knew we'd come to record the battle, the names and visions of the fallen, and they immortalized it. By the time the Normans came across the Channel, it was impossible to conceive of battle without us. We were that much a part of the fabric of their culture. A battle without our presence lacked benediction.

Pity those days are gone. We could probably stop a lot of pointless fights simply by not showing.

The Tower of London

Now there's one story about ravens that everyone, even skinny kids from the 'burbs like you, has got to be familiar with. You know what I'm talking about here?

No, not the friggin' poem! Christ, if all we said was "Never-frackin'-more," Gaia would have put us out of our misery ten thousand years ago. Why do you think you don't see any wereplatypi running around? 'Cause they'd be useless, that's why — and if all we could do was yammer one word, we'd be useless, too. "What's going on with the Ananasi?" "Nevermore." "How strong is that fomori encampment?" "Nevermore." "Are you guys ever going to be good for anything?" "Awwwk. Nevermore." Fuhgeddaboutit.

No, I'm talking about the Tower of London. Back when this country actually had an educational system worthy of the name, every kid knew how the Tower had its own flock of ravens that roosted there, and how there was a legend that if the ravens ever left the Tower, the whole country would come crashing down. The British government's so whacked-out on this one that even to this day the bastards clip our Kinfolk's wings to make sure they stick around. I mean, they don't think the stories are true, but who wants to be the prime minister when it's time for empirical experimentation. Get my drift?

Well, anyway, that's the legend. Honest. Of course, the truth behind that story's a little different. There is a whole flock of us and our Kinfolk who hover around the Tower, but it's for two reasons. One is that, as I said, they clip the wings of the permanent residents. (As a sort of apology, the bastards at least make sure the food is damn good. They feed us like kings, but that's not what I call sufficient recompense.)

The second takes a little more explaining. Once upon a time, England had a king, a giant by the name of Bran. Now after various misadventures involving wars, sacks full of badgers, cauldrons that resurrected dead guys and all sorts of fun stuff like that, he managed to get his head cut off. As Bran was a guy after our collective heart, this little setback didn't shut him up. On the contrary, once Bran was dead he kept yammering away more than ever. So this giant detached head just sat there spouting prophecy and one-liners, and expected his entourage to pick up the slack.

One of the things he said was that his sidekicks had to tote his noggin back to Merrie Olde Englande, bury it facing some mystically appropriate directions, and build a tower on top of it to protect it. And Bran, being the humble talking head that he was, prophesied that England would be safe as long as his head was undisturbed.

Beginning to see how the stories fit together? Good kid. We'll make something of you yet.

Bran's sidekicks did the whole wailing and moaning thing because they were losing their bestest buddy under a pile of dirt. It says something about these guys that they preferred the company of a dead head to that of, say, their wives, but this was back when the Brits were still in their painting-themselves-blue phase, so go figure. But while they were bitching and moaning and dragging their feet as they went for their shovels, we saw our chance. We swooped down and started asking Bran questions, lots of them. Questions like the secrets of the other breeds, the rules to magic, and all sorts of other goodies. And just as Bran's band of followers came back with their construction equipment, one of us asked him about the Apocalypse. Bran opened his mouth to answer—

—And one of his idiot henchmen threw a shovelful of dirt into it. Before we got our answer, those guys had buried Bran, built some piss-ant fortification on top of him, and performed a few interesting rites to inform the local gods that it was a done deal.

Which left us waiting for our answer. And we're still waiting, damnit! That's why there are always ravens at the Tower; we never know when Bran's going to spit the sod out from between his incisors and answer the damn question. Mind you, it doesn't look like that's going to happen any time soon, but we want to be there 24/7, just in case it does.

Just in case.

Owain Glen Dwor

Glendower, that's what they call him in the English histories. The prince of Wales; the man who stood off Bolinbroke and ruled undisputed from Harlech for five long years. Some called him a wizard, because the English never caught him. There are even a few overheated nationalists out there who claim that Glendower's sleeping under a rock somewhere, waiting for the moment when Wales needs him again. It's a cute notion, but I don't buy it. What is one outdated Celt with a rusty sword going to be able to do against tactical airstrikes and smartbombs? Not much, I think.

But back in the days when Glendower was a going concern, we ran with him. The English Marcher lords were corrupt as all hell; Glendower seemed at least vaguely concerned about the well-being of the peasants under him, and there was all sorts of interesting magic running around Wales that we wanted to uncover the wherefores of. So we hooked up with Owain, him all unknowing, and became his scouts (not to be confused with his Scots) and his runners. How do you think he was able to be one step ahead of the English all the time? It was because his scouts could fly a hell of a lot faster than the English cavalry could ride, and we didn't have to worry about those nasty little bogs and whatnot.

So with our help, Glendower kicked the English out of Wales...for all of about five years. By 1409, human time, it was all over. Glendower was on the run; his family was captured, and the crown prince had parked his butt in Harlech. Glendower ran for another six or so years, but in the end, he croaked.

And the moral of the story is? Don't get too arrogant over what you can accomplish, just because you're a Corax. The tide of history washes over big rocks as well as small ones, and the humans do what they're gonna do with or without our help — or hindrance. Without us, the English might never have lost Wales — but hell, it only took them a couple of decades to get it back for themselves.

We can divert the course of human history for a while, but not forever. It's more effective in the long run to convince the humans to do it for (and to) themselves.

Viva La Industrial Revolution!

Remember how I told you we'd backed the Weaver in early human social development? Well, right around 1800, we realized that she was getting out of hand. I mean, putting fences up against the Wyrn is one thing, but she was getting out of hand. Soot filled the sky, making it hard to fly — or breathe. Carrion got trampled in the muck or carted off, making it harder to feed on things that weren't Wyrn-tainted. Bodies were, for the most part, carted off out of sight, so we — and the dead — were denied that last rite.



Things were getting too organized, and not in a good way. Sure, the new cities were rife with stories and places to roost, but too many things that we saw were petty and tawdry. The visions sickened us. Children chained into factories — that's too damn much order for me.

Meanwhile, the Wyrms had snuck in the back door and subverted the Weaver's process. Yep, everything was really nicely ordered on the front end — but on the back end, toxic sludge was pouring into the rivers and poisonous fog was creeping out. Wonderful. Hammer and tongs, Scylla and Charybdis. It sucked either way.

Sooooo...we punted. We spread the word everywhere we could as to what was going on in the cities, then pulled back to watch and keep an eye out for further incursions. I mean, by that point, it had gotten way too big for us. All we could do was call in the big guns and spot for the heavy artillery. Mind you, a lot of us took to the cities really well — Gaia knows there were secrets to find there, schemes on both sides to topple. One whole heck of a lot of us got into fields like accounting and banking, simply because this was where the new hidden treasures were.

But all in all, it was a bad time for us. The skies weren't worth flying in. A lot of Corax retreated to the Umbra for good, losing the Sun and saying, "Good riddance" to the mud ball. It looked like the fight was over, and that we'd lost.

Of course, that could mean only one thing: Things would get worse.

The Second War of Rage

Yippie-yi-yay. Ki-yay, even.

Now, when the Garou found their way to the Pure Lands, some of us went with them, mainly in the second waves of colonization after the noble, brave and true types (who didn't want any sneaky scouts along with them) had settled in. Some of us, I say, the rest of us were already there.

The thing is, even those of us who immigrated already knew what was over there. The European Corax went with our Kinfolk, but all of us true Corax had been talking with the ones up in the Northwest for years, decades, centuries, even — in the Umbra. So we knew they were there; they knew us European types were coming, and we hashed out some mutual protection deals. We also tried to warn the Uktena and Wendigo of what was on the horizon, but they didn't want to hear it. After all, who trusts Trickster's word, right?

Why the hell does no one ever listen to us?

So the Europeans moved west. Our Kinfolk came with them in fits and starts — things weren't great back East for many of them — and it took the railroads and land rush to get them moving in any real numbers. Meanwhile, a lot of the European Garou and their Kinfolk were going nuts.

They raided caerns, wiped out Pure One packs, and did all sorts of other nastiness, all in the name of "progress."

Heh. Weaver seduced 'em, more or less — conned them into thinking that they were "doing the right thing and protecting what the savages couldn't." And thus began the second War of Rage — only this time it was Garou versus Garou. We took our stories from the first go-round, showed them to as many breed-types as we could — and got most of them to sit it out. Only the Garou (big surprise) were hardasses and insisted on fighting.

You know something? That suited us just fine. As well as we get along with individual Garou, we were more than happy to let them practice their atrocities on each other this time. The only thing we made sure of was that there would always be someone, no matter who won, to take care of the caerns when the dust cleared. Even if it was just a Nuwisha.

Oh, we also made sure that our people up in the Northwest got away scot free. Emissaries from the villages let both sides know that if anyone laid a paw on those Kinfolk communities, we'd go over to the other side with a vengeance. And our support — or enmity — is worth a lot more than you'd suppose. We're not great at fighting, though we're better than we look. But that's not important. What is important is information. How well do you think the Wyrmscomers would have held out if we'd reported back all of their locations, all of their secrets, to the Pure Ones? How 'bout if we'd given the Pure Ones lifts through the Umbra to strategic strike points, or gone in to steal appropriate shiny things — like guns, ammo, fetishes...?

Would have been pretty hairy, wouldn't it? Probably a good thing we didn't do it then. Maybe.

I dunno.

Mind you, you're getting biased info here. My ancestors hitched a boat ride. I'm a carpetbagger, and so are the Corax I learned from. So I *can't* know what they saw back then, and when I try to tell it their way, it comes out flat. I've heard the stories of the Second War of Rage from our Northwest cousins, and they're a bit more acerbic about it than I am, but I don't want to go putting words into their mouths. I can tell you this, though: The last Corax I talked to from up that way had a story for me, a story about a time when a bunch of Garou outrunners blundered their way into a pre-declared safe zone and started getting uppity. The Kin who lived there put the word out, and Corax — from both sides — descended.

The bodies got dumped where the message would do the most good, and word of it got spread far and wide by the time Luna had come up.

But remember, that's still coming from me. Much as I'd like to say we're always this solid, human Kin notwithstanding, it wouldn't be accurate. You're still not getting the whole story — but remember that it's always out there, if you look and listen.

The Great War

During the Great War, flying became an important part of human behavior for the first time. I mean, sure, the Montgolfiers had gotten off the ground way back when, but all humans had done with the damn things was joyride. Okay, the Franco-Prussian War had some observational spotting done from balloons, but that was it. No one took the gasbags seriously, and so development of their potential rotted.

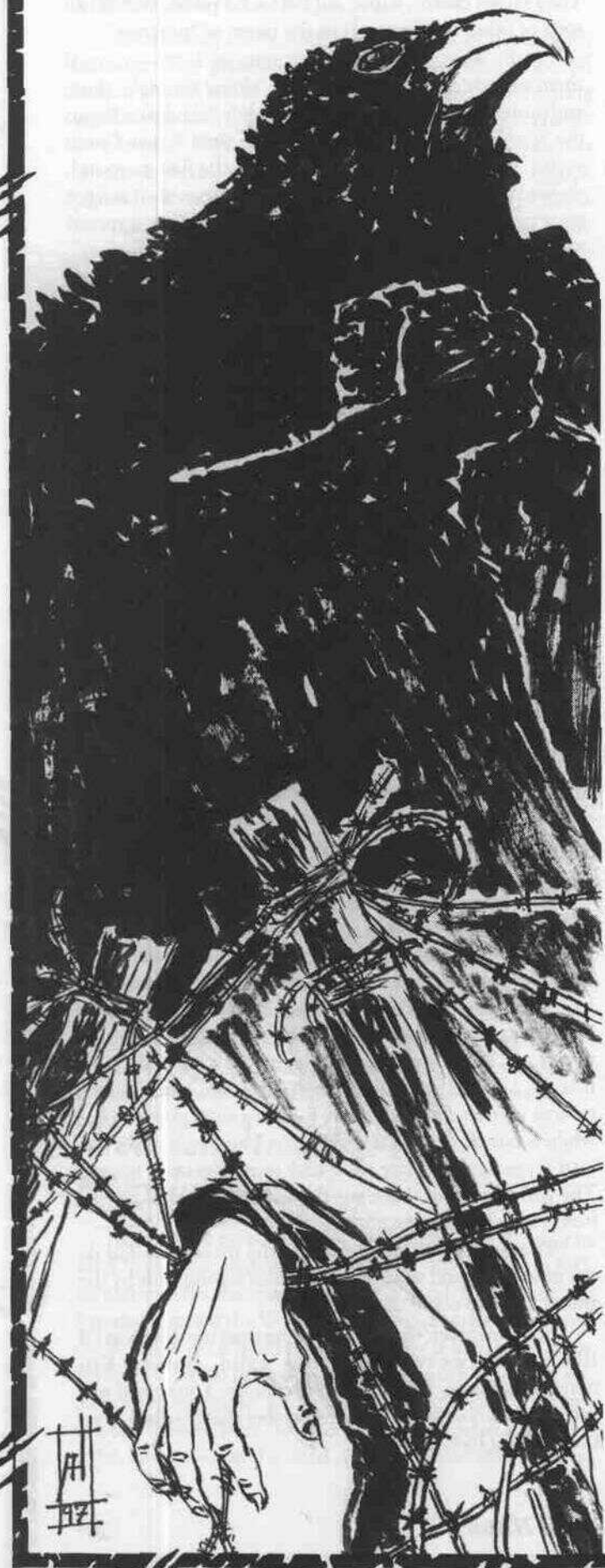
Then those two bastards down in North Carolina had to go and spoil it all. Airplanes, for chrissakes. Noisy, smelly, stinky, leaky machines that flew. Not real far or real fast at first, but they flew. Still, they were just a curiosity until the War came along. Then everything exploded.

You see, once the War started and everyone settled into their trenches, suddenly the bright boys in the high commands on either side discovered that it might make sense to know where the other guy was keeping his troops. So they sent up balloons — which were easy targets for planes in which the pilots were armed with pistols — which became targets for planes with mounted machine guns.

Mind you, the early attempts to mount guns on biplanes were hilarious in a fatal sort of way. The wings on things like Sopwith Camels were too damn flimsy to support the weight of the guns, so they had to be mounted right behind the propeller. Until engineers worked out a timing mechanism that allowed the pilot to fire in between the propeller blades automatically, more often than not guys were shooting their own props off.

Hilarious, you say, amusing. What does this have to do with us?

The answer, junior, is lots. Because, for the first time with World War I, we didn't own the skies any more. We had company, competition. And with the rate of technological advancement from the start of the war to the end, we knew that it was only going to get worse — that the humans were never, ever going to go back to the ground. For thousands of years, they'd been watching us with envy because we could fly — and now they had the keys to doing the same. We knew the skies were going to get crowded, and sad to say, we were right. That was the beginning of the end of our dominance of the skies. From 1916 or so on, we had to be careful when flying. Circumspect — because there ain't no Gift in the arsenal that's gonna save your ass if you get sucked into a jet engine or slammed against a plane's cockpit.



So for the past century, we've been getting increasingly paranoid up there. Yes, we're still the best there is when it comes to sentient critters in the air—but goddamn, the neighborhood has gone to hell. And World War I is where it all started.

Today

(And All That Good Stuff)

Secrecy is the first essential in affairs of state.

— Cardinal Richelieu

So where does that leave us now?

Well, with computers for one thing. The cities are getting bigger, and it's harder and harder to tell the Wyrms and the Weaver apart. Personally, I think they're on the track to combining. The Wyld's still off in the bushes somewhere, doing Gaia knows what and occasionally muttering, "Help meeeeee!" like David Hedison in *The Fly*. I mean, if we thought it was bad back in 1837 or whatever, how should we feel now that there's tetrafluorocarbons and bioengineered diseases and satellites coming down like acid rain? How should we feel when the other shapeshifters are just barely starting to talk to one another again; there are fomori in the streets and in the skyscrapers, and the Wyrms getting fed by everyone from Congress to the kid on the corner in Kowloon?

Well, we feel kind of okay, believe it or not. Computers are wonderful — great new ways to find and spill secrets. Where before we had to tell stories to a million individuals one at a time, now it's a post here and web site there, and all of a sudden everyone knows that Pentex is dumping teratogens into Buzzards' Bay. So that's something we like a lot. And remote cameras with URLs? Wheeeee!

Plus, the Garou are finally getting off their asses and doing the Darwin Shuffle. Some of them are adapting to the world around them, instead of pining after the good old days of the Impergium. They're acting instead of reacting, at last. Mind you, it still looks crappy — my money's still on that huge bastard coiling around the heart of the planet — but you know something? After ten thousand years of doom'n'gloom prophecies of the Apocalypse, it's damn nice to have a little hope for a change.

And besides, nobody's proved to me we're going to lose yet.

A Corax' First Guide to Messing With the Net

There is absolutely nothing better on this planet for what we do than the Internet. Never mind that Digital Web and Malkavian Madness Network bullcrap you may have heard about, I'm talking the basics here. USENET, email, your everyday browser — they're all you need. We're talking vast free information sources and virtual anonymity — perfect for what we do. Plus, electronic data, even if it's encrypted, is portable as all hell and fast to move. And you can leave all sorts of nice toys — Trojan Horses, time bombs, good stuff like that — behind you when you pull out. Yep, the Internet is the gift that keeps on giving.

Basically, the Net is everyone who can afford access having their 15 minutes of fame, all at once. That means that everyone wants their site or their post to be read by as many people as possible, and that plays right into our hands. Think about it.

Say you uncover news that a Pentex subsidiary is dumping carcinogens in a river somewhere. You can go to the local paper, but odds are the baddies have a thumb on the editorial board in the form of ad revenue, and so that won't do any good. So where do you go? Bingo. You get an account with a mass access company like Hotmail or Geocities and you post the information through an anonymous remailer (there are plenty — if you can't find one, you're not trying) to as many vaguely related newsgroups as possible: alt.toxic.waste, alt.local.sludgy-ass.river, alt.save.the.earth, rec.river.dumping.naughty. You get the idea. Anyway, you put up your post with a title like SAVE THE PLANET NOW (all capitals is a must — it draws the Netiquette freaks out of the woodwork) to all these groups and spread the word about what's going on in as lurid a fashion as possible.

Now, your post isn't going to do anything by itself. But what will happen, sure as Gaia made little green amphibians, is that some four and twenty bozos are going to take offense at what you've written and write cross-posted responses, which will then get responded to, and so on — with all of the responses quoting your original message. In short, we've got lots of people hot and bothered about the bombshell you've dropped, and some of them will be so intent on winning the argument that they'll actually get off their duffs and do some research on the problem.

And suddenly, intelligent people all over the world with a personal stake in the matter have the facts about what's going on, and that little Pentex subsidiary starts getting hit from all sides. Meanwhile, you don't have to put your butt on the line, except maybe to post a response or two, and the job's still getting done.

It's a thing of beauty.



Chapter Two: Going Through Customs

*Every night when trouble comes
You're first in line to stick your finger in.*
— Simple Minds, "Seven Deadly Sins"

One point of information before this goes any further: I'm corvid-breed, New York raised. Learned all my humanisms from a cabby who lived down Marine Park way, and I've been walking on two legs for a *while*. I'm told this means I've got a quote-unquote "skewed perception." To that I say, well, hell yeah I do. You think you're gonna get the same take on matters from me that you would from a European homid, or a Tengu, or one of the laughing types from out Northwest? Christ on a pogo stick, even *you* can't be that monumentally naive.

But it brings up an important point. You've been getting the way I see things. If you want a broader perspective, you should go find a few other teachers and hear what they have to say, then sit down for a bit and cross-reference. Figure out what you think is true. Me, I'm just telling you what I've seen and heard, and if that ain't good enough to get you started, pluck me and sell me to the Colonel.



Tongues

No, not for eating. You're way too literal-minded for your own good, kiddo. No, I'm talking about languages. Since we come from around the world, we speak a variety of human languages—you can learn anything from Broad Scots to Japanese from another Corax. You just gotta find the right guy, and ask politely. You can also gab with ordinary ravens whenever you're in Corvid, although I gotta say that there's not as much to talk about. That's why corvids like me latch on to human languages—they're so much more fun.

But we've got a universal language as well—the corvid tongue. We all understand that from the moment we Change. It's made up of squawks, croaks, creaks and bad imitations, and it works a lot in kennings, like Old English did. Hurm? Oh, a kenning is when a stock phrase stands in for a concept. Makes it damn difficult for eavesdroppers to understand what the hell we're talking about, even if they can get past the basic grammar.

Right. You want an example. Ahem. "Over the whale-road, edge-hate divides Moon's children" tells me that a couple of packs of Garou are getting set to rumble down by the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. Whale-road is the ocean, while edge-hate means fighting, and so on. It's like when you and your two-legged friends just start quoting lines from your favorite movies back and forth—you all know exactly what you're talking about. Same principle applies here. You'll pick it up; don't worry.

Drinking Eyes

A lot of people have trouble reconciling the fact that on one wing, we're supposed to be these wacky trickster types. (I mean, hey, it takes serious stones to pull a fast one on the Sun.) But on the other, we're carrion-chomping beasts of plague and desolation. Most homid-type observers don't get it. They want to buttonhole us into some little high-concept niche role, like we're wereGalapagos Finches or something.

It's two sides of the same coin, you see? Our job is to observe, right? We're here to make sure that there's a witness to everything that goes on. If things were the way Gaia intended, every life, every death would have a respectful witness in us. And while the Wyrms and the War of Rage may have bollixed that plan up pretty good, that doesn't keep us from trying to fulfill our end of it. We still watch. We still watch, when we can, everything. That means going into the dark places, the famines and the genocides, the battles and the murders. That means not flinching when we see the horrors that make the vampires and Shadow Lords turn pale. Why? Because, goddamnit, every single corpse sprawled out on a battlefield was a life, a voice, a unique perspective on the world, and now it's gone, gone because some vampire needed a snack, or some Garou got a flea up his butt, or some tin-star dictator needed to show off how big his plumbing was, but gone—Forever.

Someone's got to bear witness to that life. And pardon my grammar, but that someone is — has got to be — us. 'Cause no one else will do it, and even if they tried, they'd screw it up.

Of course, bearing that kind of witness means we see horrible, horrible things every day and every night. You know something? It wears on you. It grinds you down. It can drive you crazy faster than a skateboarder going down Everest. It can wreck your head.

Which is why we have to laugh about it. If we don't, if we can't heckle the moments of absurdity, we lose it. Raven knows this. Raven understands. That's why Raven gave us this sense of humor, so that we could realize that we were beak-deep in a dead man's eye and still find a reason to go on. And yeah, that goes for us corvids, too; we come from a fine tradition of feasting on carrion, but it's a little sobering to find out what kind of hopes and dreams your latest snack might have had before they passed on. So maybe we can't stretch our beaks into smiles, but we chuckle with the best of 'em.

(Let's face it; you strip a lot of this deadly serious stuff down, the vampires and the Wyrms and everything else, and by itself, it's pretty damn ridiculous. I mean, think about it like this: All of creation is being threatened by a big lizard with a self-esteem problem? Looking at the horror in that way diminishes it, and makes it bearable for at least another day.)

I bull you no shit here: Things *are* that bad, and we're in the uncomfortable position of maybe being the only ones who know how bad things really are. The way I see it, we've got two choices. One, we can laugh. Two, we can drive ourselves suicidal thinking about the ramifications of what we know. Gaia don't approve of the latter, and if you try it, Raven will call you a wuss.

So laugh, kid. It's the only hope you have.

Deep Draughts

One of the most important things we do is record the last sights of the dying. That's why we drink eyes, kid, not because vitreous humor tastes *that* good. No, when you do it right, you can drink down the last thing that the poor bastard's eye saw. Mind you, you have to ask the body's permission first. Don't ask me why; that's just the way it's done. You'll learn, kid, that certain things are just done a certain way because, well, because they've always been done that way — and every time some smart-ass new chick comes along and tries to modernize procedure, everything goes to hell.

So, in any case, there's a ritual to how this goes. First you find a body, preferably one that's not too thoroughly decomposed. You settle down, get a good position, then ask the corpse's permission to violate it. (That's another difference between us and crows. A crow sees a corpse as a buffet. We realize something died to provide for us.) Then, if the corpse gives its okay — and it's just a gut feeling, the body doesn't sit back up and tell you that it's groovy — then you can plunge your beak in.





You can only drink from one of a corpse's eyes. If you drink from the right eye, you see the good in the sucker's death. If you drink from the left eye, the sinister one, you see the evil. It's best to switch back and forth between corpses — too much of either view will drive you off your rocker. On the other hand, there are times when you need to know the best — or worst — in what happened, and then you don't have a choice as to which eye you can drink out of.

We can do this for animals too, you know. And believe me, a rat's or a dog's eye sometimes sees some pretty interesting — and terrifying — things. Trust me, you will never use the expression "gunned down like a dog" again once you've seen that shotgun barrel swing into line through another body's eyes. On the other hand, better than half the time all you get is an image of oncoming headlights.

Gross as it sounds, we can even share memories that we get this way. As long as a little bit of that eye's jelly is in your stomach, you can barf it back up and feed it to another Corax. This lets the guy getting the sloppy seconds see exactly what you've seen. Plus, he can then pass along what he's taken from you and share the vision with someone else. Usually, memories can be saved for up to a week this way.

Look, I know it sounds gross, but it works, okay? We birds have been feeding our young this way since before there were mammals, all right, so don't get so high and mighty about what you will and won't put in your beak. Besides, I've seen you eat hot dogs — you want to know the secret of what's really in them?

Heh. Didn't think so.

Procedures

The ability to drink eyes is something utterly unique to the Corax. By the act's ritualistic nature, it's best defined as a rite, but you never hear the Corax themselves describing it as such. The performance of this duty is so deeply ingrained into the Corax character that even the ever-inquisitive raven-folk don't ask questions about it. The drinking of the eyes just is, and that's all there is to it. Teaching a hatchling to do so rarely takes more than five minutes.

For a Corax to drink a corpse's eye, the wereraven must first ask the cadaver's permission — politely. Brusque, rude or disrespectful requests will be declined, leaving the Corax to explain his failure to uphold his duty. A Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 7) determines if the Corax sees anything from his draught, or if the vision is too obscured for him to make anything out. The more successes obtained, the longer and clearer the vision obtained is.

The Corax must do the actual drinking while in Corvid form. The Crinos beak is a bit too large for the bird to perform the operation with any delicacy, and if a wereraven tries it in Homid, the gag reflex kicks in rather abruptly.

While a Corax is drinking an eye, he is totally focused on what he is doing. This is perhaps the only time when a Corax can be easily surprised, because the receipt of a corpse's last vision requires complete and utter concentration.

Inside the Eye

The body was dumped in a small field in East Orange, nothing more than a couple of acres of weeds and broken glass in between factories. When I found the corpse, it was wearing just a T-shirt and briefs; the killer had stripped him of clothes that might have telltale fibers or bloodstains. It would be good enough to slow down human-cops, sure enough. Good thing I found him first.

The right side of the victim's face had been caved in by whatever killed him, so I had to drink from the left. I hate doing that, but if I was going to discover who'd wasted this poor sap, I didn't have a choice. I looked around, but the field was abandoned; even the local kids knew better than to play there. Good.

I spread my coat on the ground next to the body, then knelt down next to the victim's head. Then I whispered, "Look, I know this isn't going to be pretty, but I need your permission to take your eye. Let me help you rest."

I got the definite feeling he was thinking it over. Even dead people don't like a poke in the eye, and the silence grew and grew while I waited for a response.

Eventually, I got that old comfortable feeling in the gut that said that the corpse was cool with the procedure. So with a sigh, I shifted down to Corvid. It took a minute longer than normal, probably as a result of the accrued bad karma on that field. Raven knows how many other bodies had been dumped there without someone like me to take their last sight. When the process was done, I hopped up on what was left of John Doe's nose and stuck the beak right in.

There was a salty taste to this one, like he'd been crying when he died. It was the left eye, so of course I got lousy reception, but certain things were clear enough.

Things like the big sign reading Aesop Research Company on the wall behind the killer, things like the almost palpable Wyrn-taint hovering in the background, and things like the fact that the killer had all the hallmarks of being fomori. If nothing else, the tentacle that smashed this poor fool's face in was a dead giveaway.

The aqueous humor was smooth as it went down. It would probably be the last thing to go smoothly for a long time.

— from the journals of Raina Fader, Private Investigator

Point of the Moot

There are werewolves in these streets Mawgojzeta
But you only hear me howling at the moon
— Fish, "Goldfish & Clowns"

Our moots aren't exactly what you'd think they are. Most First Changers imagine a moot as some kind of glorified Cub Scout jamboree. That may be what some of





the tamer Garou moots are like, but ours are a little more focused, less formal. (We don't have "Cracking the Bone" and "Calling the Wind" and "Marking Your Territory" and all that stuff.) More business gets done.

Well, at first, anyway. Later on, things get, well, interesting.

Procedure

Here's a big surprise: We hold our moots during the daytime! Imagine that! We're creatures of the sun, and as a result, we get together while the sun is shining. You'd be amazed at how many other boojums just can't wrap their heads around that fact. So you've always got some sneaky Bone Gnawer or ugly-ass vampire creeping around your favorite tree in the middle of the night, waiting for the party — which ain't gonna happen. It's kind of pathetic, really.

Oh, another thing: You always attend a moot in Corvid form. There are no exceptions, primarily because moots are always held in the highest tree we can find. What tree? Where? Crap, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Right. We very rarely call moots for one very good reason: A moot means a lot of us in one place at one time. This is also known as putting all of your eggs in one basket. There aren't enough of us for us to risk a Saturday Night Massacre any more frequently than we have to. The right tree goes down and there goes half the Corax on the East

Coast in one swell foop. No, that's too risky for us to attempt all that often.

Word that a moot is going to happen gets spread, as you might expect, by gossip. The details are left at way stations in the Umbra, along with a mandate to spread the news, so that word gets out to just about everyone who needs to hear. Plus, this way we don't rely on just one messenger — the news travels along multiple vectors. This is how we spread all important news, by the way. Everyone passes it along to everyone they talk to. Even if one of us gets detained, derailed or — Gaia forbid — killed, the information routes itself around the blockage. Word gets through. Word always gets through.

But back to brass tacks. Whoever actually is dumb enough to call the Gather (also called a Parliament, primarily by homids who are too anal-retentive to actually show up) gets to play host, which consists of finding a sufficiently tall tree for us to meet in. Wide is good, too — it prevents folks from stratifying by altitude too much. The host also gets to serve as the Minister of the Parliament (dumb name, I know, but I didn't make this crap up. I just show up at these things for the free food, anyway), which means that he's in charge of telling everyone else to shut up so that the serious business of talking can get done.

We open every moot with an invocation to Helios, thanking him for allowing us to get together yet another

time, and for giving us the light by which we can see the wonders of creation. Helios eats that stuff up, you know, but we actually mean every word of it. Our job, after all, is to poke at the dark places and drop a little illumination on them. Without Helios' help, we're reduced to the odd spiritual Maglite, which isn't nearly as effective. Besides, we are genuinely appreciative of everything he's done for us. Hard to believe, huh?

The next thing we do is offer up a prayer to Raven, asking him to watch over us. We don't actually expect that he will, though — Raven likes watching us scramble in and out of trouble. Mind you, if things look really hairy — say, if Wyrn-tainted squirrels climb up the tree and start assaulting the ravens in the back rows — Raven has intervened on occasions like that. The thing is, he always does so in a way to make the survivors look ridiculous.

Anyway, what happens next is Roll Call, but not in the way you'd expect. We don't call the names of the folks who are actually at the Gather. I mean, if they're there, we know they're there, right? No, we call out the names of the folks who didn't show. Anyone who's recently seen one of those Corax spouts off, letting the rest of us know that she's all right.

And if the Minister calls out a name, and there's no answer? Then two things happen. The first is that a murder gets set up to go search for our missing cousin. The second is that we get ready to mourn.

Crashing the Party

We don't have Parliaments of our own that often. That doesn't mean, however, that we don't crash everyone else's. Garou are always happy to have us at their moots. You drop in after the formalities are out of the way, tell a few stories, and drink their booze in exchange. It's a great system, and if your tidbits are good enough, you can even cadge some Renown while you're at it. I mean, hey, if you're tough enough to sashay into a Red Talon moot and tell them a bit of info or a few stories they've never heard before, you've earned whatever you can get from them.

Just make sure to tell someone what you're doing. That ensures two things. One, it means your Renown gets verified. Two, it means that if worst comes to worst, you'll be rescued.

But don't be afraid to experiment, kiddo. Go hunt with the Talons as a spotter. Drink mead with the Get until you puke. Sing with the Fianna and run with the Nuwisha when you can, because every time you do, it gives you a little more perspective on why we're here, and what we're fighting for.



Next is a check on all the local eggs. Each guardian gets up and gives a status report. Hopefully, this is perfunctory. No news is good news when it comes to eggs.

New fledglings get introduced next by parents and/or current mentors — don't worry, I'll cover you. There's semi-formal introductions, then some instruction, then a quiz. That's right, a quiz. If you can't answer the questions put to you about earlier events at the Parliament, you're in for a world of hurt. Gotta go sit on the bottom branch if you screw the quiz up.

Yes, sitting on the bottom branch is a *bad* thing. Think about it.

Anyway, then we get into old/new business, which is basically going around the tree sharing gossip. Depending on how late this runs, there's also storytelling and singing, and Renown gets slathered around at times like this.

That's why you take your Renown wherever you can get it, kiddo. There aren't that many chances to get it, and there's always a dozen of us yammering at once on the few occasions when it's available. Practice shouting, that's my advice.

Parliament can never, ever run past sundown. To do so is disrespectful to Helios, natch. So, at every Parliament, as soon as the sun starts heading down, we all take off and do a circuit over whatever city we're in. We start at the perimeter and spiral in, calling out every damn thing we see along the way. If things work right, we hit the center of town at sundown on the nose, at which point the Parliament's over.

Officially, anyway. In the real world, that's when we all go out for a beer.

Camps

There's a big difference between social animals and pack ones. Garou, for example, are pack animals. The wolves may not talk to one another, but they feel naked unless there are four or five other fur coats around. The members of the pack may hate each other — Raven knows I've seen it often enough — but the wolves are almost incapable of functioning on their own.

We, on the other hand, are social animals, which means that we need company, and often. However, the thing is, it's only company that we need — partners are right out. Ninety-nine percent of what we do is observation and discovery, and having too many eyes trying to focus on the same target can mean that nobody sees anything straight.

But during down time, we love to get together to gossip and swap info. Raven actually mandates the latter — he's made it damn clear that we'd best share everything we learn with the first three Corax we come across. Dissemination of information, you see, spreading the word. Nothing gets lost and everything gets backed up. C'mon, you've got a computer, kid — you know about parallel systems and redundancies.



In a nutshell, then, the arrangement is this: We almost never work together long-term, because we drive each other nuts when we do. Short-term, however, every Corax is willing to sit down with every other over a beer or a roadkill squirrel and swap stories. Eldest Corax goes first, then we go around the table in order. Young 'uns like you are expected to shut up, listen and take notes, 'cause at the end of the meeting, the youngest one there is expected to spit back, verbatim, what he's heard. Sure, it sounds harsh — but how else is he going to spread the word unless he can repeat what he's heard, exactly. Otherwise, it turns into one big game of *Whisper Down the Lane*, and you know how accurate that can be.

We're in the accurate information biz, after all. Rumors and garbled translations are Nuwisha, three doors down and follow the odd smell.

However, information swap isn't the only thing we do when we hang out. Sometimes we...play pool, or have a few beers, or go flying over the city and leave messages on new cars. Sometimes, we just like to have fun, you know? When things aren't life or death, we love just spending time with one another — because we don't have to.

The thing is, we like our associations to be matters of choice, fluid things. I may like hanging out with you for a day or two, but after that, I'm gonna want to move on. If I get stuck to you by a shared allegiance to some totem or other, or even by guilt, I'm going to be miserable. After all, we need freedom to follow our hunches, to fly wherever the hell we want to go. Being tied down to a partner or, even worse, a murder, means that my decisions have to go through committee. It means that I don't get to do what that little voice in the back of my head tells me to do.

In short, it drives me nuts, and a nutso Corax is an inefficient one. If I'm too damn busy staring at my navel (or the feathered equivalent) to fly, I'm not keeping an eye out for what I'm supposed to.

So, we hang together, temporarily, by choice, but work alone. We cover more ground that way, which is another advantage — there aren't enough of us left that we can afford to waste birdpower on redundant observation. And this way, each of us gets to follow our hunches, which means that no one's gut feelings get disregarded.

There are rare occasions when a bunch of us (bunch? flock? The words for this sort of thing always sound so lame.) actually do band together in some kinda semi-hemi-demi-formal arrangement. These so-called "murders" generally form around one particular mission, and disband as soon as the important things get taken care of. (Yeah, the technical term is an "unkindness" of ravens, but no one ever remembers that. Yet another reason to resent the goddamned crows. On the other hand, we got Bela Lugosi in our flock; they got Iggy Pop in theirs. It all balances in the end.) Murders operate on the committee principle, namely, that whoever yells loudest is in charge. Mind you, an organized squad of Corax can scout out an enemy position,

analyze it, and then reduce the place with some kinda efficiency, but on the other hand, a lot of times a murder just devolves into a bunch of birds sitting in a tree or a trendy coffeehouse, bitching about who gets to be in charge.

There are very, very few permanent arrangements our kind has come to. Some are more organized than others, to be honest — the Sun-Lost aren't even what you'd call connected. Still, there are a few of us who've taken a look at the strength in numbers shtick and doped out how to make it work.

The Sun-Lost

These guys aren't technically a group. Sun-Lost is the name we have for Corax who've said, "Thank you, but no" to Helios and wandered off into the Umbra full time. Maybe one or two has ever come back from this sort of Diaspora, but that's all. The rest hear the call of the shine of the Deep Umbra and...just...go. They lay down their responsibilities, their messages, their eggs in some cases, and they just go off into the Umbra to see what might be seen.

We see Sun-Lost from time to time. Occasionally the deeps of the Umbra get to be too much, and they decide to take it easy in the shallows for a while. In cases like that, settle in and prepare to hear some fascinating stories. Just because the Sun-Lost aren't part of the community any more doesn't mean that they've stopped being Corax. Sun-Lost still feel the need to gossip on occasion. That's why they come back toward home, to schmooze with Corax who are more integrated into the community.

More often than not, though, we don't actually see Sun-Lost. We just get reports, scratched in sigils, of things they've seen. If you find a message from a Sun-Lost, boy, you're lucky. In a case like that, you (and I mean you in particular) were meant to find it. Whoever dropped that story, or legend, or whatever, off wanted you and no one but you to be the first one to see it. Don't ask me why they do things like that; they just do.

We always know when one of the Sun-Lost dies. A single feather shows up at the spot where the deceased's spirit egg hatched. No one knows how it gets there, though I suspect Wind-spirits. Whaddevah. It happens. That's why we think Huginn and Munin are still alive, by the way. No one's ever seen a feather for them. And yes, we know their hatching places.

Stupid question, do we know where to look. Of course, we know. We're Corax, ain't we?

Among the Sun-Lost

Malcolm, I am sure that, barring catastrophe, you will be the one to find this. You do not know me, nor should you. Suffice to say that I gave of myself to craft the egg that hatched he who gifted you with flight. You might consider me your grandfather, if you consider me at all.



I have left you a trail to where a misplaced soul wanders lost. She is a sad little ghost, banished from her proper Umbra. You must find her and guide her to a place where she can cross back to her own realm.

If you do this, she will remember you, and in a year and a day, will tell you a story that will save your life. If you do not do this, then you will die eight days later.

I, of course, will witness neither outcome. I do hope, however, that you choose the course I suggest. Farewell, Grandson.

— Garnets-For-Eyes

The Morrigan

Battle-crow biddies, old and dry and fierce as autumn leaves. They're found in the Old Country — ahem, "the Auld Sod." Sod off, I say — they scare the hell out of me.

There are only three members of the Morrigan, and they serve Raven's less pleasant aspect. Whenever a Corax joins the Morrigan, she loses her old name and takes a new one, one of the faces of the Morrigan from legend. Bebd, Nemain and Morrighu — always the same names, ever since they started writing legends down. It doesn't matter if it's your lover of 50 years who gets picked; the woman she was dies the second they settle that new name on her, and all she lives for from then on is battle.

They say, in the legends, that Morrigan and Dagda were married once, then something happened and she

turned cold and bloody. You can see that story all over again every time a new raven joins the Morrigan. You can see one light die in her eyes and a new, cold one start burning.

Word is that the three have the Sight, that the wind tells them when the next battle of the Garou is going to be. It might be; they're always there every time the wolves take up serious arms. They always bring eagles with them, too, to feed on the corpses after the Morrigan drinks their eyes.

Never cross one of the Morrigan. You do, your luck changes, and not for the better.

Murder's Daughters

The Morrigan are scary because they're genuinely nasty, and because Raven's put his blessing of murder down on them. Murder's Daughters, on the other hand, are scary 'cause they're wannabes. Each and every one wants to be part of the Morrigan some day, and they've got this fugazi notion that the way to one of the three spots is to out-nasty the rest of the gang. It's stupid, 'cause I ain't yet seen one of the Daughters get picked for promotion, but they keep trying.

What do they do? Well, to improve their chances Murder's Daughters are always picking fights, swarming things, and generally caught up in acting antisocial. The Daughters hang together way too much, and spend a lot of time after dark in the sorts of clubs where the vampires go. Trying to be bad, yep, yep, yep. Pulling it off? Sometimes.

A murder of pissed-off sisters will pluck out your eyes and use 'em for marbles, and they're always looking for excuses to be pissed off.

Oh, and it's a girls' club only. No boys allowed. It's a time-honored tradition dating back all the way to at least 1952, which is the first time anyone was gutsy enough to use the name in public.

On the other hand, I'm smart enough not to argue.

A Daughter Warns:

What are you? Some yellow-ass coward, or just a hefty variety of stupid? Look, I don't know if you've actually thought about this or not, but war is a fact of life. The Morrigan know that, and they know how to get things done about it. You wanna come over here and tell me that I'm following a lame tradition? Come on, dipshit, something on your mind? Go ahead, say it! I goddamn dare you!

Hermetic Order of Swift Light

This is the business arm of the Breed: basically, a bunch of guys who do their Gaia's-gossip thing for the right price. It's HQ'd out of Manhattan, with posh offices on Madison Avenue at a yearly rent that will make you puke. By tradition, there's only one actual raven in the joint, though the rest of us can make some dough by hiring out as freelance couriers and the like. Word is that the Corax who runs the place has been doing some reorganization; for one thing, the IPO went gangbusters. Word in the grapevine is that soon there'll be a bit more of a permanent structure, not to mention some electronic backup for the gossip net. It's gonna be interesting seeing how it all shakes down.

A Hermetic Bargains:

Oh, stop flaring your nostrils. Gaia intended us to be Her messengers and scouts, but She can't have expected us to do it for free. Let's face it, nothing's free. Not even the benevolent protection of your totems, right? So are you going take a few deep breaths and start bargaining, or what?

Chasers

Chasers are loose murders of young brats like yourself who get together to play X-Files. Yep, it's real fun to go poking after spooky stuff, ain't it? Just make sure that if you join a band of Chasers, at least one of you has the brains to keep an eye on where the exits are. Finding a nest o' Banes is great; deciding to play "Clean Out the Nest" with your little buddies is a one-way ticket to the Great Deep Fryer in the Sky. Most Chaser murders break up after a year or two; that's about how long it takes for the members to realize they cramp each other's styles.

A Chaser Ruminates:

That corpse isn't just the victim of your average, everyday vampire, friends. Look at the discoloration around the edges of the wounds. That kind of pre-mortem inflammation is above and beyond the norm. I'm thinking we have a Giovanni on our hands. Anyone care to drink an eye and verify?

Raven's Laws

(With a Nod Toward Helios)

There are certain rules and regs that the entire breed lives by, no ifs, ands or buts. Most of these got laid down by Raven before he shooed us all over the planet, but a few were added out of respect for Helios. The thing is, some folks might try to puff these things up as sacred commandments, but they're as much common sense as anything else. As long as you keep these in mind and use your head for something other than a neat place to put your hat, you'll do just fine.

There Are No Secrets

It's your duty to uncover every secret you can, even the unpleasant ones. Left alone in the dark, secrets fester, rot and turn into some damn unpleasant things. It's our duty to uncover things that others want hidden, because odds are, if someone's taking the effort to hide some information, that information's dangerous. If you hear a rumor or catch a detail that nags at you, you had best follow up to the best of your ability or there'll be hell to pay. You never know if that lead you ignore as being "too ridiculous" will turn into the thing that bites you in the ass.

Share What You Know

Information does no good in a bottle. It doesn't matter if you know the three magic words that will save the world; as long as those words are locked in your brainbox, they're not doing anyone any good, including yourself. Odds are you're not going to be able to do a damn thing about most of the secrets you uncover, but that's not the point. After all, we're not here to take care of the messes, just to uncover them. That's why it's necessary to share what you know. Tell others, who can tell others, who can tell others who just might be able to do something about whatever you've stumbled over.

On a more somber note, the sooner you spread the word over what you know, the safer you are. If you're the only one who knows what the local Pentex subsidiary is up to, you're a prime target. If you tell three other Corax, who tell three more each, who tell a buttload of Garou, well, suddenly you're way down on the hit list priority.

And if they do catch you, if word of what you found gets out, at least you didn't die in vain.

Teach Them What They'll Learn

Not everyone accepts the straight dope from us, or even likes us. And sometimes, the very folks who won't listen are the very same ones you need to get information to. In that case, Raven has authorized use of unnecessary and ridiculous force. More to the point, the methods don't matter — the information has to get through. It doesn't matter how. It doesn't matter if you have to get a whole pack of Garou howling for your blood or if you have to make yourself look like an idiot to get a Simba to listen — if they have to know, then it's your job to let them



know. And you will do whatever it takes, dig, because there's damn little more important than making sure the right info gets to the right people.

Protect the Eggs

This one is a no-brainer. Eggs are our future. We're too few as is. Defend a spirit egg with everything up to, but not including, your own life. We can't afford to lose a single one of us, even to save another, except under the most dire of circumstances. But a threat to an egg is intolerable. If you see anything going after a spirit egg, cowboy the bastard.

Remember Why You're Here

We're not the fighters. We're the scouts and communications officers. Yeah, it's tempting to be the one to save the day and rescue the girl, but we're not built for that, and trying stupid heroics is a good way to get yourself killed. Your job is to get information and get out, preferably without the enemy seeing you. If you do get spotted, escape makes more sense than fighting, particularly since he can call on more reinforcements than you can. Before you throw a single punch, consider what you're up against and what your odds of walking away from the fight are. Nine times out of 10, that should be enough to send you scurrying in the opposite direction as fast as you can go.

In the end, it's not important who gets the job done. It's important that the job gets done, and if the job is kicking ass, there are lots of folks out there better at it than we are.

Bear Witness

Every living soul has a story, and it's part of our mandate to save as many of those stories as we can. That's why we drink the eyes of the dead, after all. It's a great information source, sure, but it's also respect, and making sure some little bit of the corpse's story gets carried away by someone.

The other part of this rule is that you cannot turn away. Not now, not ever. No matter how brutal or horrifying what you're looking at might be — and I'm talking about anything from the killing fields of Kampuchea to the worst bits of Bed-Stuy — you have to see it all, so that when you tell the tale, you tell it *right*. To do any less is disrespectful, and dangerous.

There's no cutting corners in this business.

The Truth Matters

Partial or inaccurate information gets people killed. You are not allowed to skim on your observations for any reason, from your tender sensibilities to the fact that you're getting the heebie-jeebies. If you can't tell the story accurately, if you don't have the facts, then don't tell the story at all. Don't make things up to patch the holes, because that *always* leads to disaster.

Everything's Part of the Cycle

Don't judge anyone or anything out of context. Gaia had a plan when she put this rock together, and everything has a



part in it. So don't jump to conclusions about whether someone or something is unnecessary until you figure out why they're doing what they're doing, and what purpose it serves in the grand scheme of things. After all, some day someone might just look at you, with your beak buried in a corpse's peepers, and decide that you were some gross bit of vermin barely worth the round of birdshot he buries in your ass to "protect the sanctity of the body" from your unholy depredations. In other words, judge not lest ye be judged.

Don't Play Favorites

We owe both Helios and Raven tremendous debts, and we show our respect every chance we get. This means whispering every secret we learn into the air, not to mention thanking both of them at every Parliament. Furthermore, it means recognizing that we're damn lucky to have the favor of two powers like that, and that we probably shouldn't do anything to screw that relationship up. So demonstrate proper reverence to both, kiddo. Play favorites with Helios and you just might get burned.

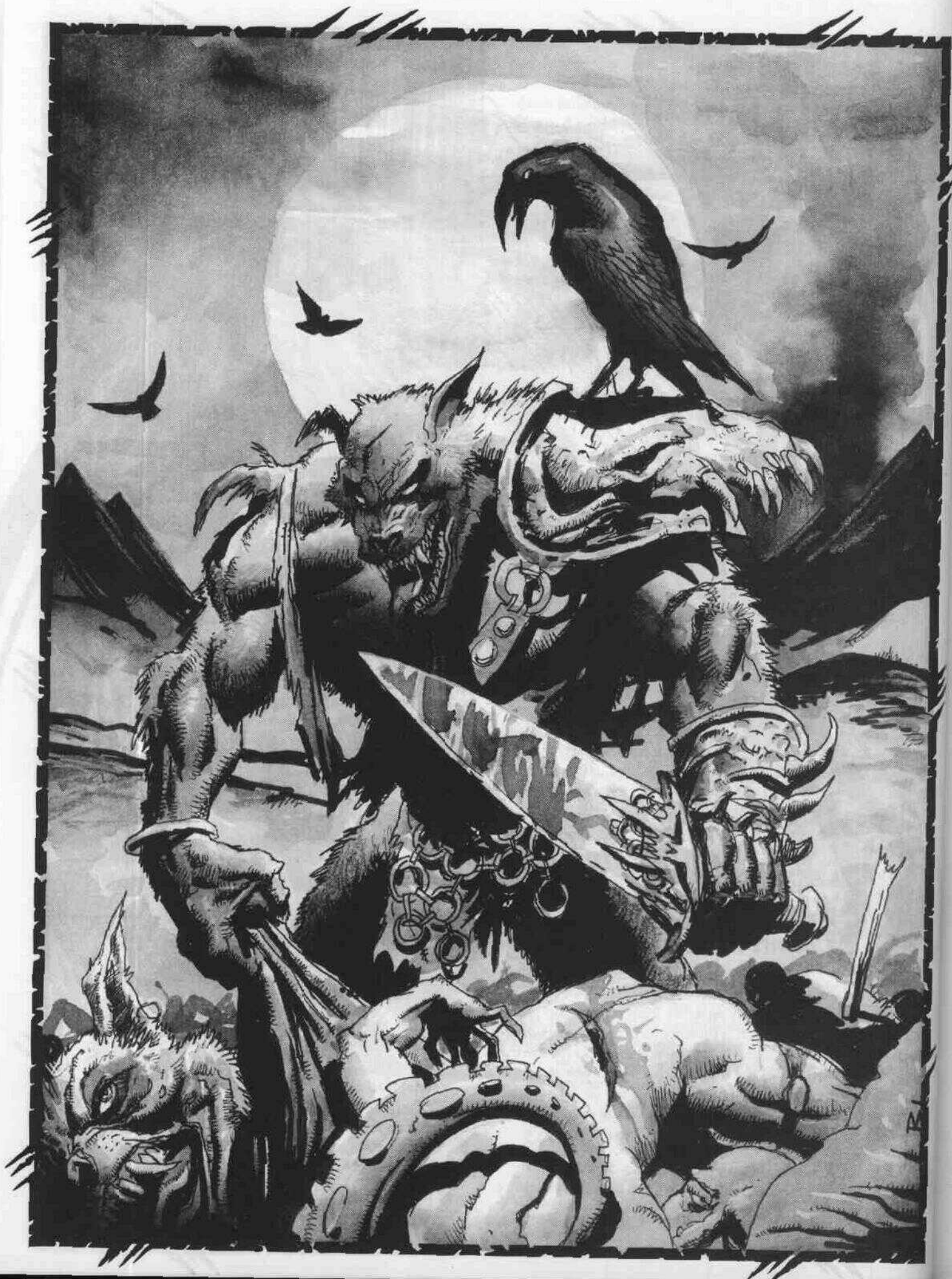
Fly!

You've been given an unimaginable gift: wings. So use 'em! Fly, 'cause it's a dead cert no one else in your family can. Experience everything you can. Talk to everyone you can. Learn as much as you can and look at things from as many angles as you can. Why? Because you can, that's why. As much fun as just getting airborne is, it's also symbolic of what we're doing here. If you can look at a problem from another angle, say, from above, you have to do so. Don't let any of your talents or opportunities get wasted. Otherwise, why the hell did someone think you were worth wings to begin with?

Laugh

Or you'll cry. In the middle of all of the bullshit that we have to put up with — and believe me, it's worse than you can imagine — you have to remember that we've been given some tremendous gifts. In spite of it all, kid, we're lucky — damn lucky. We get to fly, after all.

So laugh. Look for the humor in everything, because sure as spit it's there, and after drinking dead men's eyes and seeing the horrors this rock holds, you'll need it. A moment of laughter at the right time can tide you over through a bad patch, until you can get the wind behind you again and realize how sweet life really is.



Chapter Three: A Bird's Eye View

Next order of business, there's something I need to get straight with you. It revolves around who — or more exactly *what* — we are. For the record, we are Corax — known to the vulgar as wereravens. Almost as important, however, is the definition of what we are not. Specifically:

We ain't crows. Never have been, never will be. Got it? We don't chase scarecrows, bring killer mimes back from the dead, or do anything else of that sort. We are ravens, the eater of dead things' eyes, and anyone dumb enough to confuse us with those bird-brained lummoxes deserves to be our next meal. Got it? Good. 'Cause if I ever, *ever* catch you confusing us with crows, I'll claw your eyes out myself.

Ahem. On a more dignified note, we are the senior species of the Corvinus, and the human scientists claim my Kin have been on this planet since the Jurassic. No, the actual Jurassic, not the movie; as for your ancestors, well, they've got about a hundred million fewer orbits under their belts. Deal with it. Us corvids are the senior branch and you're the bratty kids.

But anyway, we're the largest songbirds in the world, and there's an old wives' tale that if you slit a raven's tongue, he can learn to talk. Anyone tries it on you, peck her eyes out. You can already talk, and anyone who thinks that slicing your tongue in half will force you to grow interesting neural pathways should be yanked out of the gene pool by the ears.

As for the damn crows? "Lesser" members of the family, that's what the science books say. Getting confused with a

crow is an insult, and you are never, ever to take it laying down. We have a fine and noble place in the order of things; crows are just part of the disposal unit. Getting called a crow is like being an honors student and getting mistaken for the weird old janitor who lives in the basement and sniffs Mr. Clean on the sly.

Now, to business. Hang on, junior, looks like you're slipping. You've got to relax and let the claws do the work for you. If you try to hang on consciously, you'll just give yourself cramps.

The Whole Wide Worlds

I saw the raven, plumage pale

I saw him drink the blood of the gael

Above Clach Mor the gulls will wail

— Wolfstone, "The Prophet"

We go places none of the other Changing Breeds can. That's not surprising, seeing as we have wings, and, well, they don't. That means we can go places they can't go, get perspectives no one else can, and cut and run through escape routes no one else can access. That's not a bad little benefits package. Of course, it comes with some responsibilities. We have to go look in those nooks and crannies, and to bring the info we find there home. But, what the hey, it lets us know the world better than if we were just tourists, right? Right.



Oh. Other note: We're everywhere. Most of the other breeds, they've got one place or maybe two where they belong, and the rest of the world is foreign territory. Not us. You'll find Raven stories everywhere from Greece to Greenland, up and down both sides of the Pacific Rim, and anywhere else you want to go. We're damn near universal — and we mean different things to different groups. That makes us hard to pigeonhole, which makes us difficult for some folks to deal with. They're missing the point. There's no reason we should only have one aspect — Trickster here, Creator there, Mistress of Battles in a third place, font of birdly wisdom in a fourth — because if you're only coming from one direction, you've only got one perspective. We need to see everything from all angles, so it just makes sense that we're all over the map, literally and figuratively. Don't limit yourself by saying, "I can only fill this sorta role," because we're Corax! We can do every damn thing we set our minds to, and there's thousands of years of myth and legend for proof.

So stop trying to buttonhole What It Means To Be A Corax. Don't worry too much about what we are, or where we are. It's easier and faster to try to figure out what and where we aren't. More productive, too.

Africa

It's Bastet territory down here, and truth be told it can get a touch warm for us in their stomping grounds. Plus, we're not exactly unobtrusive there. There are a lot of carrion birds in

Africa, but ravens aren't welcome. The Ananasi are strong here, too, and we stay two trees away from them.

Africa's a place of sadness for us, of wasted opportunity. There have been so many corpses these past years, so many deaths, and for nothing. It's no pleasure to drink the eyes of the victims of the new plagues, or the martyrs of starvation. We knew the food to save those people was in the warehouses, rotting, and for all the magics we've got, all the Gifts and everything else, we couldn't do a damn thing. We've turned away from those places now, out of respect, and because it hurts too much to see. There's a down side to knowing as much as we do. It's when you know that there's an evil being committed (stuff that feeds the Wyrms but isn't at all Wym-inspired, just plain old human hatred and manifesting malice) and you can't do anything about it. That tears at you, junior; it tears at you bad. And if you force yourself to watch it for too long, it'll drive you over the edge.

Oh, make no mistake, the Wyrms everywhere. But you can starve it out of places if you try hard enough, if you hold off on the slaughters and genocides and cruelty. But there are too many places where no one cares to do that, and those are places where the Wym thrives. Rwanda, Ethiopia and Eritrea, where food rots in warehouses while babies starve? Pyramids of human skulls and the wholesale slaughter of elephants in Uganda? The Wym loves that stuff, and gets fat on it, and doesn't even need to encourage it most of the time because the

humans do it to themselves. Hell, if the Wyrms didn't exist, they would have invented him.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that Africa is Wyrms Central, or that the folks here have any kind of monopoly on the sort of behavior that feeds the beast. I can give you examples from around the world, in stereo; atrocities from Aachen to Zebulon, Ohio. It's just that the point needs to be made, and Africa's at the start of the list.

Asia

Tengu territory, at least in Nippon. They're the most standoffish of our kind, and with good reason. Mind you, you'll always get a friendly welcome from a Tengu, but there are certain things they just won't talk about with an outsider. So if the absolutely vital discussion you need to have with a Tengu is on one of those taboo topics, well, you're screwed.

The mainland isn't such a friendly place. Cathayans: That's what I've heard the native soul-drinking vampire sorts called. Those guys are absolutely everywhere, and are always looking for the main chance. The normal run-of-the-mill vamps we deal with back home get chewed up and spit out by the Cathayans unless they're lucky and good. Siberia actually isn't as bad as you'd think — there are some Kinfolk there, and some shared mythology that jibes with what our Kinfolk in the Pacific Northwest know. But the further south you go, the higher the freak population gets — don't stay too long in any place south of Ulan Bator, or you'll regret it.

Australia

The English brought all the trappings of home with them when they came down here, including ravens, and not to mention a half-dozen other species guaranteed to mess up the local ecology for centuries. Brilliant foresight, let me tell you. It's the same sort of foresight the new Garou showed when they came in and steamrolled the Bunyip.

Unfortunately, by hook or crook, we didn't actually make it down to Australia until it was pretty much too late. Again, we knew the truth, but who's going to listen to the damn birds? Not the Garou, not when they've got a hard-on for wiping someone out.

But that's past tense. We're here now, and as far as things go, Australia is a pretty good place to be. Basically, the "powers that be" off in Europe for the vampires, the Garou, everyone else — they all regard Australia as a pimple on the butt of the world, so the poor bastards that get sent here aren't exactly the cream of the crop. Witness that Sabbat pack in Brisbane — dumber than a box of rocks. I've personally watched half of 'em screw up in a dozen cities around the world, and I can only assume the rest are as awful. However, all that means is that we can operate with relative freedom, because we're among the baddest badasses down here.

Europe

The Continent is someplace we all love to visit, but not to stay. The architecture you can find is a dream —



cornices and buttresses and gargoyles, cathedrals you can perch on for days and never get bored with the view — man, it's gorgeous. The problem is that the people and critters are nowhere as nice as the architecture. Everyone over there is so territorial, from the vampires to the Garou to the humans, for cri-yi. You wanna explain to me how living on one side of a particular river makes you better than the guy on the other bank? Exactly.

We still have some strongholds on the Continent. There's a whole colony of Kinfolk in Greece, if you can believe that: shades of Æsop. Germany has a few of us, but there used to be more. Once the wall came down, there were fewer secrets for us to uncover there. The Teuton influence still runs north from there, though. We can still call Scandinavia home, and a fair number of our kin live there still. Unfortunately, it's got the ambiance of Mom and Dad's house after you come home from college; cramped, musty and old. It just doesn't suit us any more. Odin's dead and gone. There's nothing here for us any more.

The basic deal on Europe is this: Most of the Breeds are way, waaaaaay underground there. The vampire presence is way too strong, and the remaining Garou are way too paranoid to allow any wild cards to wander around. So we get in, find things out, and rotate out. No one stays too long because, frankly, it's dangerous.

Great Britain

The UK is a bit of a different issue. We've got old, strong ties here. The Celts and the Saxons, they knew us as patrons of battle. We're still in their art, their music, their legends. Morrigan is still on the outside looking in, and all three of Morrigan's faces rode with our wings. There's respect for us here, even if people don't understand what that respect is for. That's reason enough to stick around, even though the weather and food are lousy, and the folks most likely to show us proper respect are also the ones who insist on playing CDs of bagpipe music all day and night.

Middle East

"I am a bird in God's garden, and I do not belong to this dusty world."

— Hakim Conrad Archuletta, "Bird in God's Garden"

Truer words, my friend, were never spoken. The Middle East has more of our human equivalents — reporters — than damn near anywhere else on the planet, and we just blend in with the flock. Unfortunately, the news out of here is sadly repetitive. Strike, counterstrike, religious denouncement — when will it end? In the meantime, there's a lot of skullduggery going on that bears watching. Just remember, the paranoia level over there is so high as to be off the scale, and with good reason. You have more to worry about from the mortals than from the rest of the zoo in Damascus or Tel Aviv, and you'd do well to remember that. If you get out of line, a Mossad agent will cap your ass just as fast as a vampire will, and probably with less posing.



North America

North America. Give me your tired, your hungry, your poor, your software engineers late of Hong Kong — oh yeah, we know what's going on here. America's the biggest contradiction on the planet: a bunch of paranoid stay-at-homes who insist on being the baby-sitter for the rest of the world, and they can't understand why the rest of the planet hates it. Still, there's opportunity here, that and plenty of interesting secrets to bring to light. The risks and rewards are both bigger here — the landscape is plenty dangerous, but not so bad that you can't succeed. At the same time, the plots aren't as deep as in Europe, but there's plenty worth learning.

We've got a lot of Kinfolk in protected communities up and down the West Coast; Alaska, BC, Washington state and Oregon. That strip of land is special to us, and it's one of the few things we'll fight for.

Canada is a bit lower in the pressure department. A riot in Quebec is a rush hour train in New York, and I like the rush down here a lot better. Slowly but surely, the States' problems are sneaking past customs, and the trouble-makers are heading north with them, but in the meantime Canada's a hell of a lot more relaxing than America.

Mexico is, frankly, a mess. There are all sorts of Bane-type things walking around under sunlight, out in the deserts where the cops and troops don't go. There's more or less a monster pipeline straight up from Mexico City to the

American Southwest; we just try to give traffic reports to whoever's in the area. There's good eating here, but a lot of risk.

South America

The last War is going on here. If the Breeds lose the Amazon, everything's all over. You like oxygen? It'll get a hell of a lot more expensive if Pentex paves the basin. So we're down here, and our numbers are increasing, for one simple reason. We're trying to get the cats and the lizards and the imported wolves to work together for once. I mean, with my own eyes, I watched a fight when three Garou, a Bastet and a Mokolé took on a Pentex team complete with Black Spiral Dancer — but since none of the three types were talking to one another, two of the Garou got kakked before the Mokolé deigned to show his face. I agree; the War of Rage is plenty off-pissing, but this is it. They can beat the crap out of the Garou later, save the damn jungle first.

The Umbra

None of the other breeds has the connection that we do to the Umbra. That's because, for all of their posturing (not to mention that good ol' Owl has seen fit to teach his favorite werewolves to grow cutesy-style wings), we're the only ones who can really fly. There's so much more to see than just the landscape — Pattern webs are beautiful when

Another Perspective

Our European cousins sometimes fall prey to the same things of which they accuse others. They look around and see things they do not understand, and mark those things as "Other," not to be dealt with. They miss a lot that way.

One of their worst sins is that they don't respect Raven enough. They see his Gifts and appreciate him, but that is all. They forget that Raven brought the Sun back to the sky, and led Luna to her proper place, and placed the stars one by one with his beak. They look at their duty to observe as a calling. We know that is an act of reverence.

We stay closer to our Kinfolk than they do, human and raven both. There's much to be said for learning one place in detail, rather than gaining impressions of many places but knowing none. We stay on the reservations mostly when we're in the real world, but fly free in the Umbra. There is as much mystery and wonder in our inherited lands as can be found anywhere else.

The others know to leave our Kinfolk alone. Both human and raven know us for what we are, and so we can move among them more freely than we might among *wasichu*. Our stories are taught in the schools along with the white man's science, so that our heritage gets taken to the future with our children. And should any of our Kinfolk forget what they once knew, we are there to remind them. After all, if Raven was kind to the naked humans he found in a clamshell, we can do no less.

As for the Trickster, we know that face of Raven as well. Many confuse Raven with Coyote, seeing them as the same. This is not true. Coyote catches himself in his own traps and laughs. To Coyote, the trick is what matters. Raven makes certain only to catch others in his tricks, and to use his games to lead others to knowledge and their proper place. A trick for its own sake is worthless to us. A trick that teaches the victim to watch where he puts his feet, lest he trip — that is the sort of thing that Coyote does, but that Raven demands be our only trickery. Using Sky's Beneficence to stir a Wendigo into rage against one of us, distracting him from going to a battle where he is surely doomed — that is the sort of trick the Corax play. And we seek no reward and no thanks for this work that we do. We do not expect the tricked Wendigo to ever forgive us. It is enough that he is alive to blame us for robbing him of a chance for Glory. Perhaps next time he will look around more carefully, anticipating one of us, and instead will see the trap that awaits.

you see them from a high altitude, junior. Plus, there are stars up there, stars that the damn Garou never see, stars that you think that you can reach if you just keep flying long enough.... That's where the Sun-Lost go, I think, chasing those stars. They even sing sometimes.

Now, on a more practical note, there's a lot of good solid business to be done in the Umbra. We're the best Umbra-runners there are. We know the fastest way from point A to point B, not to mention all of the Realms in between. Yep, Realms. Little chunks of Umbral real estate with their own personalities. Most are essentially high-concept pocket dimensions, one-note joints that can serve as resting places, nests, traps for enemies and so forth. Most are also essentially pointless, but you'll find ones you like, and fast ways in and out, and that will help you set your own trails.

Now, there's more than one Umbra. I'm sure one of your other teachers told you all about the High, Middle, Low, Dark, Scrambled and Sunny-Side Up Umbras. The point is, though, that the other Breeds sort of know that there are other Umbras, but don't much care. We, on the other hand, need to know what's going on everywhere — and that means on all planes of existence. So we have to haul our sorry butts everywhere from the Sweetness and Light of the High Umbra to the bad space opera of the Deep Umbra to the place where the dead guys hang out — and let me tell you, some of them *hate* visitors.

Corax Umbral Train Markings

These marks are left by Corax to communicate with one another. The runes are scratched onto flat surfaces so that they can be seen from above; most are about six to nine inches in height, and unmistakable for anything but what they are.



Safe Path



Danger!



Worm-spirits



Weaver-spirits



Party!



Food/Slaughter



Parliament forming. This way!



So you have to prepare to go wherever the story takes you. That means learning local customs — and laws of reality. If you need to go into the Dark Umbra, for example, don't bring along fetishes and don't make Dead Baby jokes. If you're going to the High Umbra, bring presents and clean yourself off.

The critters you're most likely to meet up there, besides spirits, are Nuwisha. You'll find scads more of the coyote folk on the other side than you will in the waking world; the Second War of Rage chased most of them off for good. Everywhere you go in the Umbra (except the sky), you're going to find a Nuwisha sticking his nose into things. Otherwise, the place is reasonably deserted in terms of folks from the fleshy side of things. You'll see the occasional Strider or really lost wraith, and that's about it. On the other hand, spirits are all over the place. Treat them politely and word carries. Getting a good rep among spirits is vital — they communicate even faster than we do, and getting blacklisted by the spirits is a shortcut to the long dirtnap. If they don't like you, the Umbra will become a deathtrap, and it's only a matter of time before the spirits catch you. What follows isn't pretty.

So be polite, don't litter, show some respect, and the Umbra can be your home away from home. All the rest is commentary; go and read the regs.

Thoughts on Others

*Digging deep I came across a murder
Among the roots of our spreading family tree
— Fish, "MR 1470"*

The thing you have got to understand is that we watch everyone. *Everyone*. This world's full of 31 flavors of supernatural critters all skulking around pretending to hide from one another and the poor stupid normals. Most of them have no idea that there's anyone else out there. We do, though. We know exactly who is out there, what they're up to and how likely they are to pull it off.

Why? Because that's our job. Gaia didn't say, "Oh, watch the Garou for me, would you dears, but ignore the bloodsucking freaks, walking corpses and immortal bandage salesmen." No. She told us to watch *everything*. So we do. And that's why we keep tabs on the vampires and the Changing Breeds, the wizards and the ghosts, the mummies and the foofy little changelings.

'Course, we don't just watch. We've got opinions on them all, which is the fun part. I mean, what's the point of being made to watch the movie of the world 24/7 from the day you're born if you don't at least get to heckle?

I dunno about you, but I love to heckle.

Garou

Garou, by and large, are dumb. I mean, it's not their fault, but even so, any culture in which butt-sniffing is as good as a formal introduction is probably not a prime breeding ground for rocket scientists, you dig? I mean, there

are some bright ones here and there, but for the most part, they just don't think. I mean, if they had their shit together, they'd stop beating the snot out of one another, gang up like a buncha big fuzzy Superfriends and kick the Wyrms' butt.

They could do it, you know. No bullshit.

But instead, they've got to whine and squabble and rip each others' throats out. "Oh no, we can't let *them* lead the fight against the Wyrms, *we're* so much better qualified." Heh. Idiots. Hey guys, here's a thought — fight the war first, worry about the credit afterward. *Capiche?*

Now, mind you, we get along just fine with these guys. We like them, we just recognize their limitations — most of which are intellectual. And some are brighter than others. However, I like our chances of tricking them into saving the world a lot better than I like their chances of figuring out how to do so on their own.

Black Furies

Most of the other furies just don't get it. For a gang that's supposed to be all about balance, way too many of the Garou buy into the "nine-foot-tall man-hating castrating bitches" stereotype awful easily. Of course, we see what they're up to behind the scenes — the shelters, the hot lines, the actual honest-to-Gaia caring that they do — and we respect that, a lot. Too bad a few of the younger ones buy into their own publicity, that's all.

Bone Gnawers

As above, so below. We're the eye in the sky; they're rummaging through the city's garbage. On the whole, they're good guys, but they've been living in cities too long — they've think that if they look around and look down and don't see anyone, that no one sees them. Truth be told, they're just like every other bunch of burned out urbanites 'cause they never, ever look up. So they spy on everyone else, and we spy on them, and they have no freakin' idea we're doing it.

Oh, if we see bad doggie going after long pork, we make it a point to put bad doggie down. The Wyrms doesn't get every Bone Gnawer who disappears. We claim our share.

Children of Gaia

They're so nice. So very, very nice. They wander around doing nice things, saying nice things and hoping to make the world a better place. *Get a plan, kids*. Do something big. Organize. Otherwise you're pissing into the ocean. I mean, the Children are the nicest, sweetest, friendliest Garou you're ever going to meet, and in any given situation they're great to have around but there's nothing past the moment there, you dig? Which is a shame.

Fianna

The Fianna are the best and worst of the Garou, all at once. They're the self-proclaimed best at fighting dirty,

drinking, screwing, singing, storytelling and all sorts of other stuff — but they, more than any of the other tribes, are too busy beating the heck out of one another to do much against the Wyrms. Let's put it this way: The English and Irish ones are still fighting over, not Ulster, which is where the line gets drawn these days, but Dublin. *Dublin*. Even the humans settled that one a hundred years ago.

So it's unofficial company policy to help these guys out, particularly if they're about to do something stupid. They understand us, who we are and what we do, pretty well, and if a raven tells a Fianna he's being a schmuck, the Fianna usually takes it to heart. Memories of Morrigu and all that, you know.

Get of Fenris

There are an awful lot of Get who have Raven as a totem, in his Huginn-and-Munin-Teutonic-High-Dudgeon aspect. Because of that, and because of the memories of Odin and years past, we get some serious respect from these guys. That's all right; we've had a working partnership in the creation and disposal of carrion for a long, long time. We've both got long memories, and I'm told that the Get don't consider a party a party unless there's at least one of us there to tell stories and reminisce about the "good old days." There's a deep respect for tradition hidden inside a frat-boy love of carnage there.

Obviously, you're not going to want to argue politics with one of Fenris' boys, because they're not much into anything except for straightforward approaches. Hell, you're not going to want to argue *anything*, because it won't do any good. But, if you can stand to bite your tongue and not argue every time a Get says something outrageous, you can get some pretty good gossip once the mead starts flowing.

Glass Walkers

Now these jokers have decided that they can get a bird's eye view by building up to it. Furry vampires, that's what they are — all they need is the hemoglobin jones and they're set. Now there's nothing wrong with modernization, and they can make data roll over and do tricks that we can't, but enough's enough, guys. Gaia doesn't do Urban Primitive, okay? One or the other, not both.

Red Talons

Animal instinct, animal cunning, and a deadly hate for anything that walks on two legs — that's what Red Talons are made of. They just want two things from us: enemy locations and enemy numbers. Beyond that, they don't want to talk much. Oh, a Red Talon will usually be polite and point you to the latest corpse he's created, but that's about it. They're not genetically programmed for small talk.

And don't ever, ever make a dog joke around a Talon, or you'll pull back a bloody stump where that rock on the top of your neck used to be.

Shadow Lords

Deep in the fear-shadowed forests of Eastern Europe, where the thundering waterfalls career through gorges unseen by men since the Turks invaded — there are a buttload of trees for birds to sit on. These guys think they're sneaky? Not so much. All sorts of politicking and maneuvering and impressive speeches when they think no one else is listening, but you know what? There's something rotten in Moldavia. We've seen the secret files, the ones about breeding better Bone Gnawers and other fun little experiments like that, and it's getting kind of worrisome.

Of course, the kicker is that the Shadow Lords like us. They understand what we do. They respect the information we bring back. They ask intelligent questions about what we've seen and they know not to push us too hard. We're always welcome at their moots, and they're always unfailingly polite to us. That's the really painful thing — because I have no idea how far we can take friendly relations in telling these guys to back off and chill out. I'd hate to make enemies of them because we pushed too hard, but I'd hate even more to see them go over to the other side because we said nothing.

It's been more than a thousand years since a tribe fell to the Wyrms. These guys could be next.

Silent Striders

One of the best vacations you can take is just to follow a Strider on *wanderjahr*. Just pick one and go where she goes. You'll see things that you never would have found by yourself. Just make sure she doesn't know you're tagging along, or all of a sudden she'll start playing coy and you might as well be on a tourist bus.

Oh, one important note: Striders carry ghosts like fleas, and the ghosts can spot you in a second. Watch out for that, and if the Strider decides to do a rumba in the Umbra (especially the Dark 'un), detach yourself from that peace train in a second, son. It gets scary up there, and no sense ruining your vacation with it.

Silver Fangs

There is nothing more frightening than watching a Garou foam at the mouth. Cujo's bad enough as a St. Bernard; make him nine feet tall and practically unkillable, and what you're left with is A Bad Thing. Believe me, there is very little as freaky as watching a Silver Fang go nucking futz.

Now, when the Fangs are in their right minds, they're okay guys. Smart, cunning, tough enough to keep the peanut gallery types (excluding us) in their place, and good enough to get everyone lined up to fight the good fight — once in a while.

It kinda makes you sad, actually. The Fangs could be so good, so important...and maybe they were, once upon a time. That time's gone, though, and the real tragedy is that



even if they knew it, there's no one who could replace them. So they limp on, and the Garou limp on with them. Tragic.

Stargazers

If you see a half-dozen Stargazers in a lifetime, you're doing well. They're almost as rare as we are, and more unobtrusive. You rarely find Stargazers in the middle of a fight — no "Let's go kick the Wurm in the nuts!" for these guys. Instead, they're the Garou who think most about consequences and repercussions, the only ones with real vision for the long view. It's a refreshing change, you know?

The problem is, when I say rare, I mean *rare*. Last time we ran an informal census, these guys clocked in at under 600 — and that includes here and in the Umbra. Problem is that on the rare occasions when a Stargazer does get caught in a rumble, he's still caught up in his intellectual and philosophical ruminations. While he's still debating the deconstructionist nature of the throat slash, a couple of fomor have already kneecapped him and taken a chain saw to his guts.

Uktena

We talk to them frequently, though they prefer speaking to native-bred Corax than to European-bred ones. Corvids, they don't care too much where the bird came from.

The Uktena have a bit of our sensibility, in that they're all over any mystical secrets they can ferret out. Mundane stuff, they're not so interested in, but the magical side of things? They're there with bells on. We actually do the occasional cooperative project with these guys when we're onto something good and need muscle, or they've found something neat but need altitude and perspective. There's a lot of trade of info back and forth in the Pacific Northwest, especially. The rest of the time, it's mutual respect at worst.

The one snag is the whole Trickster deal. We take it seriously, sure, but every so often an Uktena gets a burr in his butt to try to out-Raven us — to play tricks on us before we uncork one on him. Generally, it's the younger ones who have that sort of problem; older and higher Rank Uktena realize that there's a method to our madness. It's just the kids who haven't got enough experience to realize that no matter how artistic a practical joke they pull, we're unlikely to appreciate it from the receiving end.

Wendigo

Sunday, *Sunday*, Sunday, the Wendigo and the Get of Fenris in a steel-cage grudge match six werewolf lucha, no holds barred!

Bleah. Yell and scream and howl all you want, Manifest Destiny (as much as it sucked), happened. The land, the sacred places, the herds — anyone with one clear eye can see that it's *history*, man. Time to see what can be saved

and what can be earned. I wish they could be made to see that, because right now, it's like the whole tribe has a death wish. Croatan envy, you know?

Animal Crackers

Us and the wolves ain't the only breeds out there with multiple skins, you know? It's a freakin' zoo on the streets sometimes — but not often. There are way too few of us left; the Wars of Rage and slow centuries have whittled at us like we're soft pine and they're extras from *Sling Blade*.

You know something scary? I don't think there are even enough of us left (us meaning the Changing Breeds as a whole; we've still got our act together, thank you very much) to do our jobs properly. Breeds going extinct; the Mokolé hiding in the jungles; the Ajaba, bastards though they are, being hunted down like dogs...err, so to speak, none of this is what the marketing boys would call "positive trending."

But anyway, here's the scoop.

Ajaba

The hyaenas are past tense. Forget about them. The only thing you'll see of an Ajaba is a vaguely hyaena-shaped blur moving thataway, fast, with a pack of Bastet right behind.

All of which has me extremely unhappy. I mean, the Ajaba got put on this rock for a reason, right?

I admit, I have no idea what that reason might be, but still, they're part of the plan. I can't say for sure whether or not the Bastet have a reason for being pissed at these guys, but war is one thing. Genocide is another. I don't ever want to hear another cat bitch about the War of Rage again, not after watching this.

Ananasi

The itty-bitsy spider climbed up the waterspout — and drinks blood like a bastard. Old Eight Eyes and company are the *femmes fatale* of the Changing Breed world. They've been sold out to the enemy, and there's some sort of metaphysical hostage situation, and they're really trying to be good...but the phrase "bird-eating spiders" keeps leaping to mind. Sure, they're killer in a fight and for getting out of a tight spot, but they're tied just a little too closely to the Wurm for me to be completely happy schmoozing with one.

Bastet

You want a bird to tell you about cats? Oh yeah, I got yer cats right here. The Eyes of Gaia, yes. The Brain of Gaia? Not so much. So, okay, the kittycats know what's going on right in front of them, but they've got no perspective, see, and definitely no sense of peripheral vision.

Let me put it another way. Have you ever, ever seen a cat with so much as the vaguest hint of something that might in some way be related to some emotion that has



some diaphanous resemblance to humility? Me neither. So the Eyes of Gaia insist on forcing their own explanation of events on everything they see. This is not a good thing. You *hire your scouts to report, not to interpret*, because something *always* gets lost in that sort of transmission.

And another thing — not only do they have this superiority kick where they see themselves as better than the other breeds, but they've got their own little tribal egoboo thing going, too. King of the Beasts, my ass — the Simba and the Shadow Lords should compare notes.

Oh, by the way, bite your tongue if you ever hear Morris, Fritz and Sylvester waxing sniffly over the "loss" of the Ceilican. For one thing, the other cats weren't sorry to see the little bastards go — cat magic and insanity are a bad combo. For another, they're not dead. And we're about the only ones who know that little tidbit. Fancy that.

Gurahl

ZZzzzzzz... Hibernation for fun and profit. Oh, I know everyone thinks that the War of Rage sent the last of the bears off to the big honeycomb in the sky, but it's PR. There are a fair number left, snoozing and snoring like bastards, slamming one paw down on the snooze bar on their alarm clocks every nine years.

As for what they're like when they're awake, well, you know how everyone has one big, fat jolly uncle who slips the kids a beer when Mom and Dad aren't looking, but who generally has his act thoroughly together and bulls you no shit? That's the Gurahl in an overweight, hairy nutshell.

Kitsune

Gotta love a walking Hendrix riff... *"*zum zum* Fox-y *zum zum* Fox-y..."*

All jokes aside, the Tengu know more than I do. The stock line is "mischievous fox types," while my reaction is "sneaky-ass predatory canines who don't mind chowing down on eggs." I'm not saying the foxes are bad people, just that I don't trust them. I'm sure in their own way, they do important work defending Gaia, yaddada, yaddada, yaddada.

Just as long as they do it somewhere else.

Mokolé

These guys are hard to find, even for us. The rain forest isn't comfortable for us, not by a long shot, and the lizards rarely go anywhere in the Umbra that we frequent.

The War of Rage burned them, bad. The Mokolé were never what you'd call sociable, but they had no idea what hit them when the doggies went nuts. Let's just say they got a little bitter as a result. What that boils down to is that they may be the memory of Gaia, but they're not feeling sociable about sharing what they know. We can approach them — respectfully — and our relations aren't at all bad, but they really don't want to talk to anyone, and we respect that.

Nagah

The snakes have style. I'll give them that. They also never particularly cared for any of the rest of us, particularly not us flighty types. They're almost as devious as we are, not to mention better at hiding, and they've got literal and figurative poison in them. Now, at this point, the Nagah seem like they're dead, and we haven't found any proof to the contrary. But I figure they're way too sneaky to get killed like a bunch of amateurs, and if they wanted to play dead, they could do it. So I figure they're still at the bottoms of their rivers, where even we can't go, and they must be hiding something really, really interesting. If you can find out what it is — and make it out alive — you're gonna make a name for yourself.

Nuwisha

Raven and Coyote get along just great, and if the grownups do, there's no reason us kids shouldn't. They're a little more rambunctious, but that's to be expected. Way they tell it, Coyote put 'em on this mud ball to teach, and he was nice enough to give them a fun way to do so — and they sure are dutiful kids. Tricks are their *raison d'être*, their whole ball of wax, really. With us, practical jokes are diversions or lead-ins. So they're a bit more serious about their joking, while we use jokes for more serious stuff. But we're Frick and Frack, Heckle and Jekyll with them, and that's just fine.

Ratkin

Twitchy noses and cheese underground — not my favorite combo. The rats are into secrets in the dark, and they think that putting a roof over their heads protects them from discovery. In most cases, they're even right, but not all the time. We've got a pretty good handle on their secrets — carrion eaters think alike, you know — and they're not half so clever as they think they are. There are a lot of them down in the sewers, though. Mark my words: One day they're going to boil up onto the streets and give the Garou a nasty surprise.

Rokea

There's only one place we can't go, and that's underwater. We're ravens, not penguins, after all. So the Rokea get away with a ton of stuff we know nothing — and I mean *nothing* — about. Which, naturally, drives us nuts.

On those rare occasions when we meet *Carcharodon* and friends, we maintain altitude and have a nice chat. The sharks are just reflexively dangerous, and it's best not to tempt them. If you can get one to open up (figuratively, that is; literally, it's no problemo) then the stories they tell of what they've seen down there are amazing. If not, well, Gaia didn't make us waterproof, and you have to assume it was for a reason.

The Miscellaneous Critters

Our years, our debts and our enemies are always more numerous than we imagine.

— Charles Nodier

Contrary to popular four-footed belief, there are beasts on this rock besides us, the Garou, the humans and Wyrms Baddies Local 666. No one operates in a vacuum. Everyone's moves have repercussions. For example: A vampire kills some poor schmo on the street. No big deal, right?

Wrong. The blood bag kicks it and becomes a wraith, and six weeks later he climbs back into his body to go wreck the vampire's neighborhood. While doing so, he stomps through some Black Fury's macrobiotic herb garden and she goes on the warpath, which pisses off her usual fae clientele, and, well, you get the idea. It all matters. It's all connected. And we've got to keep an eye out for all of it, because you never know what's going to be important.

Vampires

The fact that we're bestest buddies with Helios doesn't necessarily endear us to the vampires of the world. Big surprise there, right? The thing with vampires is that they're even worse than the Bastet when it comes to thinking that their plots are the only ones that matter. Now, those plots are complicated and convoluted and usually pretty proactive when it comes to screwing with the local landscape, so you have to keep an eye out for all of the details and hidden clauses. It's real easy to miss one little thing, stumble over a detail, and get some 4000-year old badass coming down on you for wrecking his millennia-old plan for world conquest.

Just remember: The Sun is your friend, not theirs, and if you're smart, you'll carry a little piece of him with you.

Mages

Yet another bunch of bozos who see everyone else as bit players in their own little Tarantino flick. Yeah, that's right; I was created as a reality deviant for your amusement, laughing boy — I couldn't possibly have some sort of purpose outside your little whitewalled Yuppie Technocratic cubicle hell. Well, I don't need that crap and junior, neither do you. Wizards are condescending at best, homicidal at worst, and usually nuts regardless. Plus, since they're always trying to off one another, hanging with even

the nice ones is a chancy proposition. You never know when someone's going to send a killer cyborg or three-headed demon after your lunch date if you spend too much time with mages. So stay at a safe distance, but if you do get stuck with one as a travel companion, give him back his attitude in spades.

Wraiths

Your average ghost is just as friendly as your average person, which is to say your odds of finding Casper are pretty damn low. Ghosts can see everything — one of the perks of being a stiff, I suppose — including how likely someone is to kakk soon. However, they're all schizy as a fruitcake, not to mention really freakishly possessive about the weirdest things, so you never know what's going to set one off.

The bottom line is, though, that the poor bastards are dead. So if you get a chance to talk to one, do so. It's educational, and gives you more incentive to stay alive. And the fact that these guys can see auras, walk through walls, and sneak into computer banks like a greased gerbil, all the while being desperate for anyone to talk to, well, that ain't a bad little combo from where we sit.

Changelings

Most of the rest of the menagerie misses these guys entirely. Not us. When someone's got a double-sided soul, she kinda stands out. Now, even the geeks'n'freaks who can spot the fairies don't take 'em too seriously, seeing their courts and whatnot as intrigue with training wheels. I'm not so sure that's the right approach to take. Fragile magic's worth something in this world, you know, and we're supposed to report on the beautiful things, too.

Mummies

Not what you'd expect — these guys aren't dripping bandages like they had an accident in a Charmin factory. Instead, they like to sit back, watch, and then pick their spots to come down like a ton of pyramid-shaped bricks. If you spot a mummy (and mind you, this is damn hard to do because they are almost impossible to pick out of a crowd unless they introduce themselves), something really big is about to go down. These turkeys don't mess with nickel and dime stuff, so if you find one, make friends. If you can't do that, at least stay close — and keep an eye on the exits.



Abominations

I heard some vampire joking about Embracing one of us. Apparently, the punchline was that birds don't have teeth, the whole image of a Rara Avis trying to bite someone's neck was funny.

Guess what? It ain't so funny. If, Gaia forbid, one of us gets Embraced, and if the Embrace takes, the poor bastard's doomed: Not one of your long, slow angstful dooms that the vampires love so much, either. We're talking a headfirst dive into the crapper, effective immediately. First of all, a Corax loses his connection to Helios, instantly. Next, the Gnosis starts draining out of the schmuck like water through a sieve. Finally, because he's a Sun critter, the whole "creature of the night" shtick provokes a fatal allergic reaction that coincides with the sun coming up, and that's even assuming that he's even around to see dawn. Forget "the dark powers of the night." Forget the fangs and the cloaks and the androgynous sex appeal. Getting Embraced is a death sentence. Pure and simple. There's nothing romantic about burning to death in agony.

So if the vampires offer to make you immortal, kiddo, back away slowly, don't make eye contact and don't show fear. Just fly. It'll be the smartest thing you ever do.



КРАСНЫМ
РАСЧЕТ

Chapter Four: Traits and Secrets

And they watching him
See his sparkling eye holds no diamond any more
— Steeleye Span, "The King and Queen of England"

Alexei watched the snow swirl around his boots, and shivered. "I'm getting too old for this," he mumbled to himself, then gave a bitter laugh. He'd been saying the same thing under his breath for three decades and more, and he kept on getting older and older while the work stayed the same. With a shake to dislodge the snowflakes from his hat, Alexei hugged his arms to himself tightly for warmth, and stared intently across the square. The pigeon — that was how he always thought of them, as fat, passive pigeons — was due to show any minute.

If everything's gone as planned, the spymaster thought to himself, I won't have to be out here much longer. Then again, since when have things gone according to plan? He reached a gloved hand into his pocket and extracted the note contained within. It couldn't hurt to read the thing one more time, that too-familiar inner voice of caution warned. Sighing, Alexei complied. That inner voice had been right too many times.

"Alexei," the note read, "Ploshcad Revolutsii on the 14th, 1700 hours. The bird will be there." That was all, a simple declaration of one of the target's movements. From here, it would be up to Alexei and his people to determine what the pigeon was carrying, and how badly it needed to be retrieved.

The snow blew in thicker gusts, and wet flakes spattered the fragile piece of paper. Alexei looked down, even as the ink on the

note ran into an unintelligible mess. Disgusted, the old Corax threw the paper away and looked around. The buildings around the Square, even the Metropol Hotel behind him, had almost vanished behind veils of hurrying white. Even if the bird walked across the cobbles in front of him, Alexei mused, his old eyes would miss the target. And that was no good, no good at all.

He closed his eyes and muttered a few words under his breath. The words were meaningless, just a mnemonic to help him with the trick he needed to work, but he'd been saying them for all these years and wasn't in a mood to change now. Deep within, the old man felt something change. Satisfied, he opened his eyes.

Everything was crystal clear. The stinging snow, while he still felt its presence, was no longer a hindrance to his eyes. Across the Square, he could see a taxi pull up to another hotel, while to the left an obviously misguided tourist couple tucked themselves deeper into their winter coats, and on the ground sat a half-crumpled note. Even with the smudging from the snow, Alexei could easily read the words, hastily scribbled on paper.

"The bird will be there."

The bird...

Even before the crack of the rifle from above, Alexei was moving, throwing himself forward and to the left in a flurry of sudden motion. The bullet whined against the stone even as the Corax rolled to his feet

and sprinted forward. Another shot followed; the bullet whining plaintively as it whizzed off into the distance. Alexei permitted himself a small grin, even as he sprinted for the other side of the Square. The snow was fouling the sniper's aim, that much was obvious, but the old spy was suffering from no such problem. He zigged across the open space, listening for another bullet that never came.

Good, Alexei thought as he sagged to a stop behind the taxi. The sniper's probably already out of the hotel, and headed for cover. Now, time to turn the tables. He gave a bark of laughter, a laugh that trailed off into a croak as a great black raven rose stubbornly into the storm.

Prelude

Show me a congenital eavesdropper with the instincts of a Peeping Tom and I will show you the makings of a dramatist.

— Kenneth Tynan

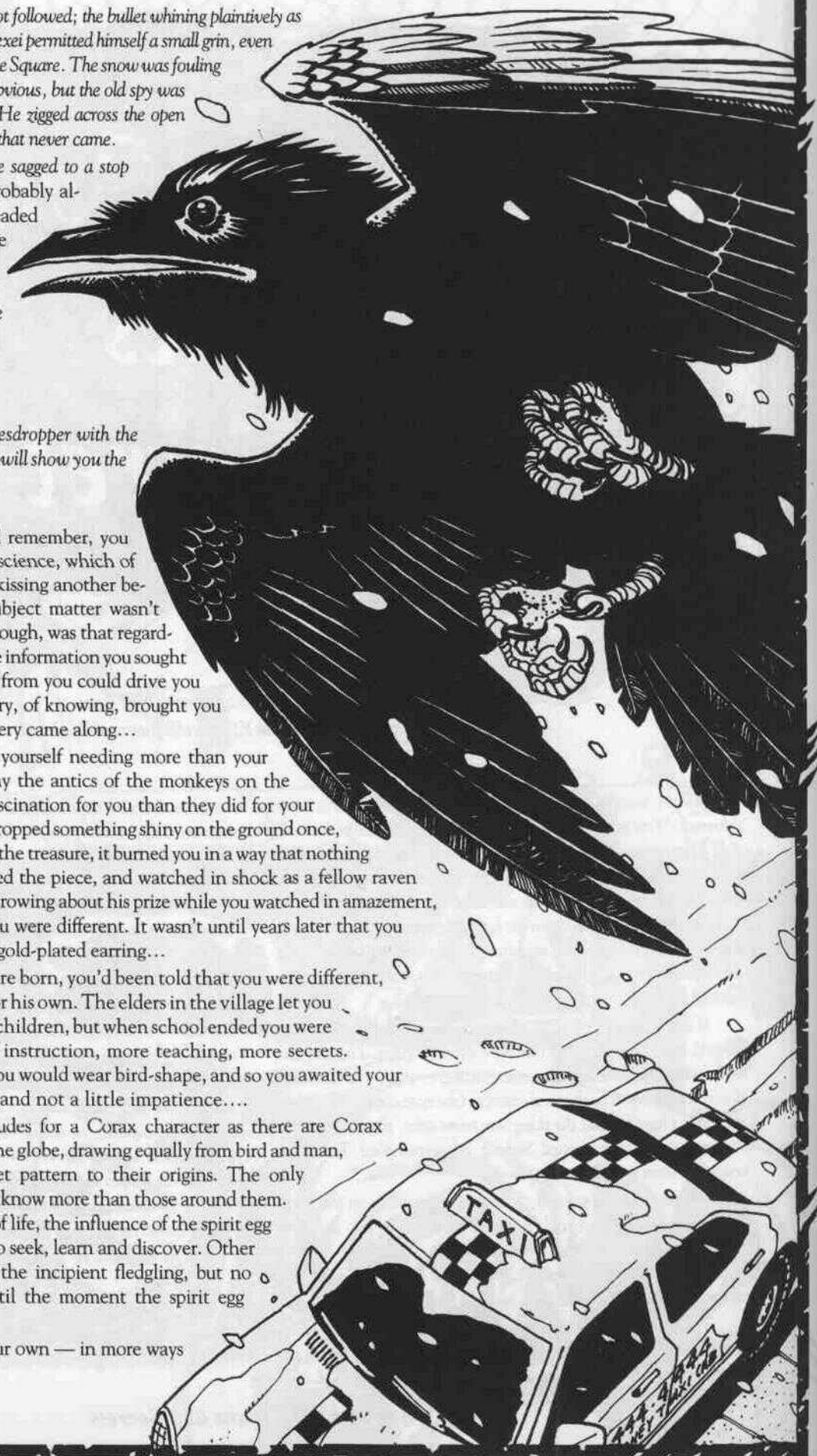
As far back as you could remember, you always had to know. History, science, which of your classmates were secretly kissing another behind the bleachers — the subject matter wasn't important. What mattered, though, was that regardless of how inconsequential the information you sought was, you had it. A secret kept from you could drive you mad, while the joy of discovery, of knowing, brought you ecstasy — until the next mystery came along...

...or perhaps you found yourself needing more than your nestmates, who wondered why the antics of the monkeys on the ground held so much more fascination for you than they did for your brothers and sisters. One ape dropped something shiny on the ground once, but when you went to retrieve the treasure, it burned you in a way that nothing ever had. Startled, you dropped the piece, and watched in shock as a fellow raven scooped it up. He flapped off, crowing about his prize while you watched in amazement, all the while knowing that you were different. It wasn't until years later that you understood the notion of the gold-plated earring...

...or maybe since you were born, you'd been told that you were different, that Raven had chosen you for his own. The elders in the village let you grow and play with the other children, but when school ended you were always taken aside for more instruction, more teaching, more secrets. You were told early on that you would wear bird-shape, and so you awaited your First Change with curiosity, and not a little impatience....

There are as many preludes for a Corax character as there are Corax themselves. Scattered across the globe, drawing equally from bird and man, Raven's firstborn have no set pattern to their origins. The only common thread is the need to know more than those around them. Even from the first moments of life, the influence of the spirit egg can be felt, pushing the soul to seek, learn and discover. Other Corax may gather to watch the incipient fledgling, but no assistance will be offered until the moment the spirit egg hatches.

Until then, you're on your own — in more ways than one.



The Notion of Character

So you wanna be a Corax, hmm? Well, let's see if you've got what it takes. Suck in that gut; straighten those feathers — preen, mister, preen like you mean it — and get one thing straight: There's no quick and easy explanation for why we get picked to be what we are. It's not genetics; it's not Raven himself coming down and saying, "Yo." Instead, it's the pick of women and men — and birds — who look at a baby or a chick and say, "This one's got potential. This one's gonna be worthy of what we're giving him."

You know what? They're almost always right. There's no rhyme to it, no reason — just gut instinct. Because if there's one thing we Corax know, it's that if you're predictable, you're dead.

Playing a Corax is not for everyone. After all, Corax aren't great fighters, aren't universally loved, talk too much and generally tote around a lot of baggage. On the other hand, Raven's children have fascinating Gifts, some surprisingly effective dirty tricks and a knack for being in the middle of the action.

In the end, though, all of that means nothing if you don't have a reason for your Corax to be, well, a Corax. A Corax is a ball of pure curiosity, wrapped up in barbed-wire nerves and tossed in the air for the pleasure of the archetypal Trickster. Background and stats are less important in creating a Corax character than defining and grounding the intense curiosity that every Corax has at his core. Both humans and ravens are driven by the need to see what lies below the surface; in a Corax, this compulsion is squared and synergized. If, when creating a Corax, you can look at the personality you've thrown on the page and can honestly see that character risking everything to uncover just one more bit of information, then you've got a true Corax on your hands. Homid or corvid, Amerind or European or Tengu — the details don't matter. The urge to know is everything. All the rest is commentary. Go and learn every last bit of it — if you've done this right, you won't be able to resist doing so anyway.

The First Year

Prospective Corax are not alone. There are no lost fledglings among the raven-folk; the process of spirit egg creation is too dear for the Corax to allow even one new hatchling to slip through their fingers. Each spirit egg is assigned a guardian who takes her duties watching the egg very seriously. However, once a child — or a raven — gets tagged, Corax will make a point of dropping by to observe the new blood every so often, just in case.

It's only when the spirit egg cracks wide open that things get frantic. The screech of a new Corax spirit alerts every predator in the Umbral vicinity, meaning that if the egg's guardian doesn't get back to her charge in a hurry, there's going to be a crowd of hungry unfriendlies — everything from Banes to wandering Black Spiral Dancers — descending upon the site of the hatching egg.

With any luck, the guardian makes it back in time to shepherd the spirit egg through the hatching process and to

soothe — anonymously — the worst of the new Corax' birth pangs in the real world. Bitter experience has taught the raven-folk that the sudden appearance of a talking bird from the bathroom mirror is not the best way to calm a hysterical teenager who has suddenly developed feathers and a beak. It is only after the new shifter has calmed down that the guardian introduces herself, and gives a thumbnail sketch of explanation as to what's going on.

Corax don't believe in a rigid mentoring system, nor do they think it's a good idea to pull new wereravens from their homes and families to immerse them in Corax culture. After all, the reasoning goes, the whole point of being a Corax is finding things out for yourself. Why set a bad precedent right off the bat? With that in mind, a fledgling's guardian takes an opportune moment, as early on as possible, to give the new wereraven a relatively brief overview of the ins and outs of Corax existence, all the while reinforcing the notion that the fledgling needs to go out and learn the details for himself.

And so, for the first year, that's exactly what the new Corax does. Other raven-folk do make an effort to "watch out for the new guy," but no one takes a new Corax by the beak and leads him through the ins and outs. A Corax who doesn't actively go out and find his own answers to all the questions raised by his new existence is a lousy Corax indeed.

There is a mentoring system among Raven's children, and it doesn't end with just the first year after the Change. Corax love to gossip, after all, and any polite request for instruction is usually met with a hours-long lecture, complete with digressions galore and a pop quiz at the end, to make sure the youngster has good memory and retention. New Corax are expected to find their own teachers, however — no one's going to come up to them and offer to give lessons. Among the wereravens, even the form of the education is an education in and of itself.

Later...

Corax never, ever stop learning. It's their whole purpose, keeping information in play instead of static and hidden. Corax aren't interested in territory; indeed, they prefer to be mobile. Some settle down physically but continue to let their minds wander in the endless labyrinths of finance, along the Internet and elsewhere. Others find the lure of the Deep Umbra irresistible in the end, and eventually wing their way off into the endless twilight. Some stay solo and keep moving, always digging for more secrets in a world reluctant to give them up. A few find companions they can trust and work with, and stay with a "pack" or some such as much as they are able, but these are rare.

But Corax never stop learning, never stop seeking secrets to uncover, and preserving testimonies of the dead. To do so, even for an instant, would be to renounce all that it means to be Corax. There's always more to know, after all, and more folk to share the story with. Thank Gaia for that.

Traits

Look, every day out there we trade with hustlers, deal-makers, shysters, con-men. That's the way businesses get started. That's the way this country was built.

— Hubert Allen

Folks who turn into birds — or birds who turn into folks — just aren't natural. They can do all sorts of odd things, after all — and if you're going to be telling a story involving wereravens, you need a way to express how exactly a Corax' unique weirdness functions. Fortunately, in **Werewolf: the Apocalypse**, you have a perfect tool for doing so.

Corax, obviously, don't work quite the same way that Garou do. That's why they're in their own book, instead of being tucked into the back of **Werewolf**, after all. However, the basics of **Werewolf** still hold for running Corax characters; character creation proceeds similarly with only a few key exceptions (the lack of an auspice being one). Points get assigned to Attributes, Abilities and so on in exactly the same way. There are just a few differences:

- Silver does not affect Corax in any particular way. Gold, on the other hand, does the same thing to wereravens that silver does to the Garou.
- Corax have no auspices.
- The Delirium of the Crinos form is lessened, affecting onlookers as if their Willpower were two points higher.
- The new Traits described here can be used in conjunction with or to supersede the ones mentioned in *Werewolf*.

So much for rules. Once all of the dots are scribbled down on the character sheet, that's when the real differences between wolf and raven show up. Corax aren't Garou. Werewolves and wereravens don't think alike, don't act alike, and weren't created by Gaia for the same reason. Expecting a Corax to be just a werewolf with wings and some new Gifts is missing the point. The stats and toys given in this chapter are nice, but in the end, they're window dressing, ways of explaining what simply is in the World of Darkness. It's the personality that earns the raven his wings.

Nature and Demeanor

You can use the optional Nature and Demeanor rules if you like (see **Werewolf Players Guide**), but bear in mind that Corax tend to be relatively uncomplicated people. As such, there's frequently similarity or even congruence between a Corax' true self and the face he puts on for the world. Corax just don't have time to engage in deceptions over that sort of thing. Corax are who they are, and they frankly don't care if the rest of the world doesn't like them — as long as the rest of the world listens.



Character Creation Chart

Character Creation Process

Step One: Character Concept

- Select Nature and Demeanor
- Choose Breed (homid or corvid)
- Choose Geographic Origin (Amerind, European, Russian, Asian)

Step Two: Attributes

- Prioritize Attributes (7 Primary, 5 Secondary, 3 Tertiary)
- Assign Physical Attributes: Strength, Stamina, Dexterity
- Assign Social Attributes: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance
- Assign Mental Attributes: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

Step Three: Abilities

- Prioritize the three categories: Talents, Skills and Knowledges (13/9/5)
- Choose Talents, Skills and Knowledges

Step Four: Select Advantages

- Choose Backgrounds (5)
- Choose Gifts (3 of selection given by breed)
- Choose Renown (2 Wisdom, 1 other)

Step Five: Finishing Touches

- Record Rage (1)
- Record Gnosis (6)
- Record Willpower (3)
- Record Rank (1)
- Spend Freebie Points (15)
- Pick Merits and Flaws (if desired)
- Add Raven's special presents (1 point each in Subterfuge, Enigmas and Dodge)

Breed

See also *Breeds*, pp. 64

• **Corvid:** You were born a raven and lived as a bird until your spirit egg hatched and new vistas opened to your gaze. Now you'd never go back to the way things were.

Restricted Abilities: Computer, Law, Linguistics, Medicine, Politics, Science

Bonus Ability: Flight 2

Beginning Gifts: Voice of the Mimic, Enemy Ways, Word Beyond, Raven's Gleaning

• **Homid:** Raised a normal human, you were an easily distracted chatterbox. The reason for this became apparent at your First Change when you learned the truth of your heritage.

Restricted Ability: Flight

Beginning Gifts: Voice of the Mimic, Enemy Ways, Morse, Word Beyond

Backgrounds

See also *Backgrounds*, pp. 70.

- **Allies:** Your friends among ravens, humans and even other supernaturals
- **Contacts:** Useful people and other critters whom you know and can call on
- **Fetish:** A magical item containing a bound spirit and possessing certain powers
- **Kinfolk:** Humans and ravens free from the Delirium who know you for what you are; relatives and friends with a touch of the raven blood in them
- **Other People's Secrets:** Something important you know that you have no business knowing
- **Past Life:** Your connection to your Corax heritage and the legendary ravens of days gone by
- **Resources:** The amount of money and other crassly material goods that you own or have access to
- **Rites:** The number and/or potency of the rites that you have learned
- **Umbral Maps:** The depth and breadth of your knowledge of the Umbra

Gifts

Breed determines (barely) the Gifts you can choose from to start with.

Renown

All Corax begin with at least 2 Wisdom Renown. They have one other Renown point to distribute wherever they wish — Wisdom, Honor or Glory.

Rank

All characters begin as Rank One.

Rage, Gnosis and Willpower

1 Rage; 6 Gnosis; 3 Willpower.

Freebie Point Costs

Trait	Cost
Attributes	5 per dot
Abilities	2 per dot
Backgrounds	1 per dot
Gifts	7 per dot (Level 1 only)
Rage	1 per dot
Gnosis	2 per dot
Willpower	1 per dot

Attributes

While the way you distribute the dots assigned to your character's Attributes are, ineluctably, up to you, there are certain basic lines that most Corax tend to fall along. Mental Attributes are usually primary, while Social and Physical duke it out for second and third place. After all, the most important thing for a Corax is to *know* — everything else is just window dressing.

- **Physical** — Corax are simply not built for Strength. If a wereraven specializes in anything Physical, it's Dexterity, which lends itself nicely to in-flight use. Long-distance flyers and the Sun-lost often have a little extra in the way of Stamina.

- **Social** — Few Corax have much in the way of Appearance *per se*, though more than a few do have a certain gothy, anemic appeal. Manipulation is usually a Corax' focus here, with specialties directed toward gossip or information-gathering. Charisma is also a favorite, for those Corax who prefer to charm rather than to trick their sources of information.

- **Mental** — These traits are by far the most important to a Corax. Perception is the most important, allowing a Corax to pick up pertinent details — fast. While raw Intelligence is valued, the ability to think on one's feet is usually more of an effective survival characteristic. This is especially true when one considers the penchant most Corax have for getting themselves into situations where thinking fast becomes a matter of life and death.

Breeds

The rite for creating a new Corax takes a lot out of a would-be parent — *three permanent Gnosis*, to be precise — so it's not like there are a lot of new ones being born. There is literally no way to perform the rite on the offspring of two Corax, which means that there are no metis wereravens. (Nuwisha claim that there are no Corax metis because the birds can't stop talking long enough to climb into bed, but that's just a vicious rumor.) As a result, there are only two breeds of Corax: homid and corvid. However, there's no real social division along breed lines among the Corax. Who can afford to limit one's sources of information, after all?

Corvid

Trade stories? Sure! What do you want to know? I've seen the vampires gathering and the Garou at their moots, the secrets behind the silver glass of the towers and the things hidden in dumpsters in alleys. I drank a dead man's eye yesterday as he lay bleeding in the street, and saw—one moment.

Sorry about that. Saw a new quarter in the street. It called to me. Look at it shine!

Bird-born Corax tend to have their First Change after eight to 10 months of life, and after that, live the normal human span of years. This is quite a bit longer than the usual raven life span, and the added duration has been laid at the feet of the extra vitality provided by the spirit egg. Then again, maybe it's just Helios being nice.

Corvid-breed Corax are a trifle cliquish, sometimes finding excuses to dismiss homid Corax as airborne wannabes. The bird-breeds are also more easily distracted by bright objects than are their earthborn kin, but make up for this with a keener eye and more grace in the air.

Bird-born Corax are loquacious, but more so in bird form than in human. Most are equally at home in bird-talk or human speech, but claim to find the Corax tongue so much more expressive and detailed than any human language could ever be. Corvids also have less of a sense of personal property than do their homid cousins, and full-blown kleptomania is rampant — particularly theft of shiny things. Unfortunately, this category covers things like gems, jewelry, watches and other items that humans normally hold pretty dear, and that means that corvids don't need any help getting themselves into trouble when trying to deal with humans.

Like lupus Garou, corvids can only purchase certain Abilities with freebie points during character creation (see the chart for specifics). They make up for this by gaining two free dots of Flight (see later on), and by a little more resistance to gold in their breed form; no Corax suffers the adverse effects of gold in Homid, but corvid-breeds are able to soak damage from gold while they're in their breed form. Of course, gold still causes aggravated damage to any Corax in Corvid, and they still suffer Gnosis loss from contact with gold as usual.

Homid

Yeah, I heard about the gig. I also heard that Roger is going to be there with a few bodyguards — word from Roarkh is that they're fomori — and that he's looking to spike the mass-brewed pisswater they have coming out of the taps with some sort of Wyrn-based teratogenic agent — that's from Gore, in case you were wondering — that's going to smack all of the kids who order a brew a couple of weeks down the line, so the trail's not obvious.

So the question is, which of the people I can talk to is most likely to be able to screw this whole deal up? Benjamin? He's the big Shadow Lord who lives in the Haight, right? Good thought. Oh, and spread the word — no one's going to want to miss this party.

"He was edgy. Didn't have too many friends. Said a lot of strange things, but no one around here took him too seriously." These are the words that have been used to describe any number of mild-mannered citizens who've flipped out and climbed water towers while toting automatic rifles. Unfortunately, the same phrases also apply to homid Corax. Thin, paler than the norm, and relentlessly twitchy, human-born Corax are often misdiagnosed as having Attention Deficit

Disorder. They tend to gravitate toward jobs that grant a lot of mobility — bicycle courier, magazine stringer, treasure hunter and the like — and tend to rack up and lose huge fortunes with alarming frequency. (A distinct minority of Corax go into accounting or finance. They feel that there are better secrets — not to mention a higher information turnover — to be found there than in any other field.) Older Corax, at least European-bred ones, tend toward the jeans-and-T-shirt look while young, but grow compulsively more formal as they get older, and not a few drift into the excessive formality of Dickensian attire.

Homid Corax aren't quite as obviously birdlike as their corvid kin, but they're still prone to making quick, darting movements and to walking on the balls of their feet, birdlike. There's often a streak of mild kleptomania among homid Corax, who like pocketing shiny objects just 'cause they can.

Corax are also capable of getting quite intense once their attention is focused. A Corax whose interest has been piqued — or whose ire has been aroused — can achieve an almost psychotic level of focus on a particular problem until it is solved. Cases like this are rare, thankfully, and most of the time a homid can go back to his preferred state: networking, gossiping and setting others on the track of the dirty work that needs to be done.

There are a few differences between the Europeanized and more Native American Corax, of course. While Native American Corax are aware of Raven's role as Trickster (which they take very seriously), they also know a slightly less publicized aspect of Raven's character — that of protector. After all, it was Raven who found some of the first mortals, naked and huddling in a clam shell, and who decided to take pity and protect them. With that in mind, Corax from tribes including the Tlingit and Salish tend to form stronger bonds with their communities than do European Corax, and to return or stay home more frequently. These Corax are also more willing to fight than ones of European descent, but only in the defense of their communities or the helpless. After all, Raven himself did the same. Corax from certain Northwest Native American communities with a high Kinfolk concentration are often identified as Corax well before the First Change. As a result, their Kin community trains them in their potentials and responsibilities prior to the moment of truth.

Homid Corax can only purchase Flight with freebie points or experience points; they can't begin the game with the Ability in any other way.

The Perks

Being a Corax isn't exactly like being anyone else. There are a few modifications that Gaia (and Raven, and Helios) has made to the basic model to allow the raven-folk to fulfill their jobs more efficiently. Of course, there's always a price to pay for that sort of thing, and for each bonus the Corax got, there's a downside. On the other



hand, ask any Corax if she'd willingly trade the positives to get rid of the negatives and she'll laugh in your face.

(Then she'll probably steal your wallet, slip a dead mouse in your pocket and take off, but that's your problem. We're just talking things from the Corax perspective here, bud.)

Flight

The best part of being a wereraven is that after First Change, you don't have to earn your wings. You get the ability to fly automatically. Obviously, flight is only possible in Crinos and Corvid forms, but even so, that's better than what most folks get.

Even without the Flight Ability (see page 68), every Corax is capable of flight, even if it's clumsy, basic flapping. (Note: It is assumed that every raven-breed Corax has at least two dots' worth of Flight, seeing as they had to get around somehow before the First Change. Homids, on the other hand, are an entirely different kettle of fish.) That includes the ability to achieve actual liftoff, as well as the knack of landing safely — something that many would-be fliers sadly overlook.

A Corax is capable of a solid hour of flying without tiring, and does not need to be taught how to do this. The knowledge is instinctual. Furthermore, airborne Corax can reach altitudes of up to 1000 feet.

On the down side, the fact that a Corax can fly means that she pretty much has a psychological compulsion to do so. A Corax who doesn't get out for at least a good flap around the neighborhood once every few days gets nervous, edgy and irritable. Long-term groundings cause disorders like depression and uncontrolled rage.

Altered Senses

Gaia created the raven-folk to be her spies and informants. Myopic spies and blurry-eyed informants tend not to bring back much in the way of useful information. With that in mind, Gaia blessed the Corax with sharp vision. Gaia's little present allows Corax to see things in greater and sharper detail than most creatures. Furthermore, it also lends itself to aerial spotting, enabling a wereraven to have a crystal-clear image of those things he sees from above.

The problem is that Gaia likes balance. That means that there's a corresponding negative for the visual positive that all Corax possess. In this case, it's a question of smell. While wereravens aren't completely cut off from olfactory input, they're not bloodhounds by any stretch of the imagination. All but the strongest, most pungent odors slide right past Corax. Considering what ravens eat, this is probably a blessing; even so, the expression of this condition means that every so often the Corax miss something that a good whiff might have uncovered.

In game terms, this means that the difficulty on all vision-related rolls is dropped by 2 for Corax, but the

difficulty on any scent-related roll is increased by 2. These effects only manifest when the Corax is in non-Homid (that is, Corvid or Crinos) form. When in Homid, a Corax' senses are human normal.

Light Bones

If you're going to fly, you'd better not be built like a middle linebacker. Big, beefy guys tend not to have good lift. Instead, the vast majority of Corax are whip-thin and corded with muscle — and have extremely light bones. After all, every little bit helps.

Of course, in Corvid form a Corax' bones are actually hollow, but even when she shifts to Crinos or Homid, her bones stay far lighter than is human norm. There's no decrease in a Corax skeleton's loadbearing capacity because of this fact, and in the meantime, the wereraven has a leg — or a wing — up on shifting back into a flight-capable shape.

Above and beyond the obvious advantages a lighter skeleton gives a Corax in flight, there are a few other effects. The difficulty for Athletics (and Dodge, if the Storyteller deems it appropriate) rolls are reduced by 1 for all Corax. After all, there's less mass for them to move. The flip side is that when a Corax does get clocked, he really feels it. Any sort of crushing attack on a Corax (bludgeon, club, fists, 2x4, etc.) hits him especially hard. So hard, in fact, that the Corax' soak pool is reduced by one die, and for every Health Level of damage inflicted, the Corax staggers back two feet. (Note: This is usually the Corax' cue to shift forms and fly the hell away.)

Sparkly Things!

Having an eye for detail can be a good thing — unless there's one particular sort of detail that you feel to compelled to check out every single time. For the Corax, that particular obsession comes in a bright, shiny package. Simply put, Corax are utterly unable to resist checking out anything that shines, sparkles or gleams. Sometimes this is good, allowing a wereraven to pick up anything from loose change to gems to lost keys to, well, Gaia knows what. Sometimes the obsession is indifferent when it compels a Corax to check out bits of broken glass or crumpled cellophane. And sometimes the obsession is very, very bad — like when it compels a Corax to make a grab for something made of gold, or allows an enemy to bait an irresistible trap with nothing more than a piece of aluminum foil.

Under normal circumstances, a Corax spotting something shiny feels compelled to check it out, at least visually. With a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 6), this can be done without being obvious. Furthermore, a Corax can make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) or burn a Willpower point to ignore the summons of something bright, shiny and sparkly.

(Note: This effect crosses form and breed lines. Homids are not immune, nor are Corax in Homid form.)

Blabbermouthing

Corax love to talk. Correction, they *love* to talk. That's primarily due to the fact that Gaia, who didn't want the raven kin to hold out on any pertinent details, gave the bird-folk a compulsion to keep talking...and talking...and talking. That means that Corax tend to be regarded as bigmouths by anyone they're around, regardless of form or breed. This means that often, it's hard for a Corax to get anyone to take something she says seriously. (*"Raina said that? Oh, she's always saying stuff like that. Ignore her."*) After all, if you're constantly talking, sooner or later your conversation turns into white noise, and your companions unconsciously tune you out. Even those who should know better — Gurahl, Uktena and the like — sometimes have a hard time convincing themselves that it's worth it to separate wheat from chaff in Corax babble.

In addition, talking all of the time means that you're always talking about something, and Corax hate to repeat themselves. That means that sooner or later, a Corax is going to run out of comments on the state of the Mets' outfield, or the salmon run, or the quality of the grub put out at the Tower, and be reduced to talking about "the important stuff" — secrets — things that Corax shouldn't be blabbing about to anyone but other Corax. Needless to say, this can cause problems — a spilled secret can cause all sorts of trouble in no time at all.

Corax, thus, are at a disadvantage (+1 difficulty) when making any roll that relates to their holding their tongues, keeping quiet, or otherwise refraining from speaking. And yes, this includes those Willpower rolls to avoid snapping back that last one-liner to a really big, ugly Garou whom the rest of your pack has just managed to calm down from a fit of homicidal mania....

Of course, Corax don't talk *all* of the time. If they did, they would do a rotten job of the task Gaia's set for them. Besides, a player who felt compelled to talk all the time during gameplay "because it's in character" would probably get himself throttled (justifiably) by the rest of his gaming group. The thing to remember is that with a Corax, it's more a matter of not being able to stop talking once you start, or not being able to bite your tongue on a one-liner, or not being able to keep a secret that's *really really* good, or not being able to let anyone else get the last word in.

Gold and Silver

Garou, and indeed most Changing Breeds, are creatures of Luna. As a result, silver is a deadly enemy to even the mighty Garou.

For the Corax, though, things are a little different. Wereravens are completely immune to the effects of silver, and indeed many Corax proudly wear silver jewelry. (They do this for two reasons: because silver sparkles nicely, and because it drives Garou crazy.) This immunity derives from the simple fact that Corax are linked to the Sun, and not



Existing Traits

Needless to say, there are an awful lot of books with the **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** logo on them out there, chock full of the sorts of Traits available to characters. With that in mind, here's a listing of a few that might make sense to use when creating a Corax character.

- **Abilities**

Alertness, Dodge, Empathy, Streetwise, Subterfuge, Stealth, Survival, Enigmas, Investigation, Rituals, Instruction, Mimicry, Disguise, Escapology

- **Backgrounds**

Allies, Contacts, Resources

- **Merits**

Concentration, Eidetic Memory, Time Sense, Jack of all Trades, Computer Aptitude, Luck, Favor

- **Flaws**

Dark Secret, Overconfident, Short

No-Nos

There are also a fair number of Traits that are either inappropriate or unusable for Corax characters. There are too many to list here, but many (Fair Glabro, for example) are obvious. Some of the most important banned Traits are listed below.

- **Abilities**

Kailindo (For Garou only, obviously)

- **Merits & Flaws**

Berserker, Pack Mentality, Territorial, Sign of the Wolf, Moon-Bound, Silver Tolerance, Twisted Upbringing, Fair Glabro, Monstrous, Wolf Years

the Moon. As such, silver has no hold on Raven's children, and they flaunt this fact.

Gold, on the other hand, is an entirely different matter. Gold affects Corax in Corvid and Rara Avis forms the way silver affects Garou, which is to say, badly. Skin contact with gold causes an aggravated wound every turn, while every successful attack an opponent makes with a gold weapon causes an aggravated wound, regardless of the niceties of the damage roll. Furthermore, each gold item carried by a Corax reduces his Gnosis score by 1 until such time as he discards the offending piece. Needless to say, most Corax abstain from carrying any gold at all, but do adorn themselves with silver — just in case.

Rules

The Basics

All Corax start with 3 Willpower, 6 Gnosis and a single point of Rage. There are no metis Corax, as the process of becoming Corax is independent of a child's (or

bird's) actual birth. Instead, through a rite enacted in the Umbra, a spirit egg gets bound into the future Corax (often a child of a Corax, but never the child of two). Eventually, this egg hatches; the young Corax undergoes First Change and all of the local Corax rush to the side of the fledgling to defend her from any Umbral predators who might have heard her "birth pangs."

Furthermore, every Corax begins with three points of Renown. Two of these points must be put into Wisdom. The third can be assigned to Wisdom, Honor or Glory at player discretion.

Abilities

It was raining in New Jersey when Raina landed. Fortunately, she hadn't hit the rain until the last minute; a look at the Weather Channel and a chat with some Storm-spirits had let her map a flight plan that was mostly free of precipitation. For that, Raina was thankful. It was bad enough walking into something that was surely a trap; walking into a trap tired from a rough flight was much, much worse, not to mention being potentially fatal.

She shifted, frowned, looked around and shook once, reflexively. The shipping depot in front of her was deserted, closed because of a strike and too far off into the hinterlands for anyone even to bother picketing it. Trucks sat idle and rusting in the acres of parking lot while rain streaked down the windows of the main depot itself. No one was around, not even a security guard. There was no sound save the swishing of the rain down the depot's drainpipes, and a car backfiring somewhere off in the distance.

"Gotta be a trap," Raina said to herself and marched straight for the depot's doors. Inside, a single light came on. Raina saw the glow and smiled.

There are things the Corax specialize in that no member of any other Changing Breed can come close to attempting. Flying is the obvious example, but there is a whole slew of Abilities that the Corax have spent millennia perfecting and honing to a frightening degree, and teaching other Corax how they are done.

These Abilities are designed to be plugged in as additions to the basic Abilities available to every Corax at character creation. Don't worry if you don't have room on the sheet or freebie points with which to buy them; the actual Ability just represents a degree of special expertise and focus of study. A Corax who doesn't take Flight will still be able to get off the ground; a Corax who doesn't take Gossip can still pass on a juicy rumor with the best of them. It's just the fine points that are missed in cases like those.

New Talent: Flight

Alone among the Changing Breeds, Corax can fly. More than that, the wereravens love to fly, taking every opportunity to spread their wings and get some altitude. A Corax who doesn't excel at Flight is likely to take a lot of

flak — of the verbal kind — from his cousins until he gets good at it.

While all Corax have the ability to fly from Point A to Point B without crash-landing along the way, Flight demonstrates a wereraven's knack for serious aerial agility. Corax with Flight can navigate more accurately, squeeze through smaller spaces while airborne and perform more and more complicated aerobatic maneuvers. The talent also covers such related acts as pulling out of falls, landing on precarious surfaces, and picking things up without landing first.

- **Novice:** You can take off and land without crashing too often.
- **Practiced:** Trees and buildings are no obstacle.
- **Competent:** You can weave through brambles and skyscrapers with equal ease.
- **Expert:** No natural creature can keep up with you in the air.
- **Master:** Immelmans and barrel rolls? Blindfolded? No problem.

Possessed by: Corax, and no one else who really matters

Specialties: Combat Maneuvers, Tailing, High-Altitude Surveillance, Dive-bombing, Aerobatics

New Skill: Gossip

There's tattling, there's gossip, and then there's what the Corax do. Handled properly, Gossip is so much more than hearing a story from one person and passing it on to the next. It involves coercing additional details from informants, and earning the confidence of those who "really aren't supposed to say anything." Gossip is also the fine art of starting and spreading rumors, and directing the flow of information once it leaves your lips (or beak). Finally, there are always the nuances of altering information or dreaming up misinformation, so that only the words you want public get passed along. This is a wonderful way to confound enemies, discredit rivals, and make sure that no one but you knows the whole truth.

Assuming, of course, that no one was practicing a similar sort of deception on you.

- **Novice:** Joseph told me that Chris liked Gretchen because she was cute...amateur stuff.
- **Competent:** The Walter Winchell of the school cafeteria.
- **Practiced:** You reign supreme at the office water cooler.
- **Expert:** You know exactly what's going on — and share some of what you know.
- **Master:** You can drop a rumor onto the Net and hear it reported back to you as the "next big thing" within the hour.

Possessed by: Gossip Columnists, Maiden Aunts, Net Big shots

Specialties: Rumormongering, Misinformation, Sifting for the Truth

New Knowledge: Cryptography

You know some form of encrypting and decoding information for transmission. Implicit in this knowledge is also an understanding of basic encryption techniques and theory. You can recognize when someone is trying to pass encrypted information in front of you (usually) and have a reasonable chance, assuming you are given time and resources, of cracking any code or encryption scheme you are faced with. You also know at least one code (Morse, perhaps) that is your default method of hiding data.

(And yes, we know this is a kludge. It's a game. Deal with it.)

- **Novice:** Ix-nay on the ode-cay.
- **Practiced:** You can crack basic ciphers.
- **Competent:** You've begun to understand the theory behind the practice.
- **Expert:** You know the why as well as the how of most encryption schemes.
- **Master:** Alan Turing and you, together again.

Possessed by: Spies, Paranoids, NSA agents, Linguists

Specialties: Morse, Software encryption, Military secrecy, Decryption, Black Ops

New Knowledge: Navigation

Getting from Point A to Point B isn't always that easy, especially from the air. After all, when seen from above, roads don't have route numbers, states don't have neat borders done in double-thick black lines, and there's no compass rose or legend reading "1 inch = 10 miles" in the lower right-hand corner of the world. It's pretty easy for someone to get lost up there.

Mind you, traveling on the ground isn't much easier, and truth be told, there's more to Navigation than just hopping in the car for a jaunt to Grandma's house. Travel in the World of Darkness is a difficult and dangerous business, by day or night. There are questions of finding the best route, avoiding delays, prepping for a trip, making sure there are safe places to rest up along the journey, and discovering what alternate routes are available in case of inclement travel conditions or enemy action. Otherwise, a trip from one city to the next could be cut fatally short with ease.

- **Novice:** Over the river and through the woods...
- **Practiced:** You can avoid delays whenever traveling.
- **Competent:** You can plot a cross-country trek and make it comfortable.
- **Expert:** Roadblocks? Bad weather? Nothing will keep you from getting there.
- **Master:** You know the fastest way to go, where to stop along the way, what the weather's going to be

like when you get there, and how much to tip when you stop for coffee — ahead of time.

Possessed by: Corvids, Silent Striders, truckers, travel agents, fugitives

Specialties: Aerial navigation, Fast fades, Cross-country treks, Getaways

Backgrounds

Very few other creatures can understand the Corax mind-set. The common complaint is that others — Garou, humans, whoever — “just can’t understand where the Corax is coming from.”

Those who complain in this fashion are more right than they know. The Corax literally do have a perspective that no one else on the planet shares, combining the curiosity and innovation of humanity with the nervous energy and ability to gain distance of the raven-folk. Corax are used to seeing the whole picture from above, not from eye level, and as such, wereravens aren’t always on the same page with everyone else.

Forbidden

There are certain Backgrounds in Werewolf that are unavailable to Corax. First among them is Mentor. Corax don’t form a particular attachment to any other member of the breed, instead flitting from teacher to teacher learning what each can pass on. The society as a whole mentors each Corax to the best of its ability, and doesn’t give any particular bird special treatment. Even Amerind and Tengu Corax spend some time kicking around with the rest of the species, making the notion of a single mentor obsolete.

Pure Breed is dismissed as an elitist notion by the Corax. If you’re a screwup, the rest of the breed frankly doesn’t care that your grandfather was the spitting image of what a Corax ought to be. However, if you’ve accomplished something spectacular, it won’t matter that you’re de-

Lineage

Unlike any other of the Changing Breeds, Corax don’t pass on a changing gene *per se* to their children. Instead, they have spiritual as well as physical descendants, sacrificing some of their psychic energy to create the next generation of wereravens. That means that lineage can be a tricky matter for a Corax whose family may be strictly human but whose psychic heritage bounces back and forth between homids and corvids.

That’s not to say that Corax don’t bear great respect for those who gave of themselves so that the Breed might continue, and many Corax speak with pride of the deeds of the wereravens who passed along some of their Gnosis to bring them into the Corax fold. However, respect is as far as it goes; the idea is to better the deeds of your predecessor, not merely repeat them.

Language

The Corax speak their own language, a guttural and harsh combination of clicks, whistles and calls that’s nearly impossible for anyone not of the raven-folk to imitate. (There are a few Garou and Bastet who have managed it, but the Corax uniformly dismiss these linguistic pioneers. After all, they speak Corax with an accent.)

In any case, every wereraven acquires perfect and innate knowledge of the Corax tongue at the moment of First Change, when the spirit egg hatches. The language is surprisingly versatile, and a Corax can paint a detailed picture of a situation or tableau in just a few whistles and clicks. Indeed, many Corax can work a Corax conversation (Wits + Linguistics, difficulty 7) into a human-language conversation, passing vital information along under the noses of eavesdroppers.

scended from a line of snaggle-beaked, ragged-feathered ravens. The Corax prefer to judge individuals on their own merits, and any bird who attempts to play off of his “noble ancestors” is likely to find himself shunned for his arrogance.

Finally, seeing as Corax don’t run in packs of any sort, the Totem Background (devoted as it is to the good of the pack) doesn’t make a whole lot of sense to them. Instead, Raven adopts each Corax individually and, in times of extreme need, does help out a bit in his own special way. The form that help takes can range from the loan of a temporary spirit ally to an earth-shattering act of intervention to a message in a Magic 8-Ball. It all depends on what sort of mood Raven’s in at the time.

For more information on how Raven treats his children, see page 71.

New Backgrounds

Other People’s Secrets

Corax know things. That’s what they’re all about, after all — knowing things. Furthermore, Corax have a mandate from Gaia to uncover things that other folks want to keep hidden. A wereraven with this background is already one step ahead of the game, and has uncovered something that she has absolutely no business knowing. The secret could belong to another Corax, or it could be a tidbit about another supernatural creature. It might be something relating to one individual, or it could be a secret relating to a race (or Breed) as a whole. It could even be the knowledge of a particular Gift or rite normally unavailable to Corax.

The point is, however, that a Corax with this background knows something she shouldn’t. Other Corax will try to coerce the secret out of her, while those whose beans have been spilled may come looking for vengeance.

Note: Someone Else's Secrets works in a fashion similar, but not identical, to the Background: Secrets in **Bastet**. Secrets, while applicable to Corax as well, has a generic connotation to it. Other People's Secrets, on the other hand, has a definitely nasty and dirty connotation to it. A Corax with this Background knows dangerous, potentially fatal things — this goes far beyond gossip.

- A small secret
- A Gift, rite or other moderately important matter
- A matter of life and death for someone
- Not earth-shattering, but important on a city-wide scale
- Something no Corax should have a right to know — such as a Yava or the sleeping place of an Antediluvian

Umbral Maps

Corax run the Umbra as well as, if not better than, anyone. Apart from the Nuwisha, the Corax spend more time in the Umbra than anyone else, and over the millennia the raven-folk have searched out routes, paths and safe back alleys through the Velvet Shadow. More to the point, they've communicated this knowledge and disseminated it, meaning that chances are pretty good that any given wereraven has a chance of knowing at least a few safe routes and safe places in the Umbra. Corax with this background also have a shot at knowing where the local unsafe places are, what lives in them, and possibly, how to lure unfriendly creatures into those places where visitors aren't welcome.

- One or two safe paths and a hidey-hole or two
- Multiple routes to frequent destinations
- Knowledge of safe zones, routes practically anywhere, and where not to go
- Multiple safe places and hideouts, an encyclopedic knowledge of Umbral pathways and an awareness of what lives where
- A near-perfect knowledge of the Near Umbra, where to go, and what to avoid

Totem

Corax don't have pack totems. This isn't terribly surprising, seeing as Corax don't run in packs. Even those rare gangs of youngsters who hang together to terrorize an area for a year or two aren't adopted *en masse* by Raven — he prefers to deal with his favorite children on an individual basis. This means, among other things, that Raven adopts all Corax as his own at the instant of First Change. Furthermore, Raven really does like some of his kids better than others; Corax are exempt from Raven's Ban, and as a result are free to pile up as much in the way of earthly possessions as they like.

In truth, this situation irks some of the better-educated Corax a bit. After all, the other Changing Breeds have a wide choice of totems, but not the Corax. Oh, no. Raven knows his children too well to trust them, and definitely too well to let

them out from under his thumb. Mind you, it's not such a bad deal: In addition to being exempt from Raven's Ban, Corax get their totem absolutely gratis. Furthermore, Raven grants each of his feathered children one point each in Subterfuge, Enigmas and Dodge. Plus, Raven's only condition on the Corax is that they whisper every secret they learn into the air, so that he might hear it. After all, Raven reasons, with hollow bones, multiple compulsive behaviors, a community fragmented around the globe and a nasty habit of talking too much, the Corax deserve a break from *somebody*. Of course, even Raven will revoke his blessings if the Corax in question screws up or proves completely unworthy. Nothing's free.

Forms

Corax have three forms, one of which they try to avoid as much as possible. While wereravens are equally at home with skin or feathers, it's when the two get mixed that things get embarrassing. As such, most Bête literally have no idea what a Corax in Crinos actually looks like, and many will deny that such a form exists. For their own part, the Corax try to encourage that rumor. Unfortunately, this policy has backfired; ill-informed Garou, upon seeing a Crinos Corax for the first time, have been known to mistake the Rara Avis for a new and particularly ugly breed of fomor.

Form Statistics

Crinos	Corvid
Str: +1	Str: -1
Sta: +1	Sta: +0
Dex: +1	Dex: +1
App: -1	App: +0
Man: -2	Man: -3
Per: +3; Diff. 6	Per: +4; Diff. 6

- **Homid:** A Corax' human form looks like a normal human, though most Corax tend to be thin- and sharp-boned. Most also have jet-black hair and dark eyes. Among European Corax pale skin is very common, and the occasional albino Corax is not unknown. Among Native American-bred Corax, thin and willowy figures are still the norm. Black eyes are universal among all Corax, and many sport ring fingers as long as their middle fingers.

Roleplaying Notes: There's no such thing as an overweight Corax, or even a burly one. Even the most well-muscled of the breed are whip-thin and wiry, as opposed to bulky. All Corax, regardless of original breed, make nervous, quick gestures and rarely sit still for more than a minute or two. They talk incessantly, dropping hints about important things that they know but never *quite* spill the beans unless pinned down by a skilled interrogator.

- **Crinos, also called Rara Avis as a Corax in-joke:** An unwieldy combination of man and bird, the Corax Crinos form is nothing to write home about unless you have a really depressing home. While the wereraven's form is vaguely recognizable as humanoid (if not human), "vaguely"



is the key word in the description. A Crinos Corax' face is feathered, and nose and jaw fuse together to form a powerful beak. Arms sprout into wings covered in oily black feathers. The fingers, while not fully absorbed into the wings, become gnarled and claw-like. In this form, a Corax' hands and feet become wicked claws. This explains why some wereravens resort to Crinos for defense purposes. Indeed, defense and intimidation are the only reasons Corax use this form.

While in Crinos, Corax do Strength +1 aggravated damage with their hands and feet. Furthermore, Corax in Crinos are capable of flight, despite the fact that they maintain their Homid body mass. This sort of flight is so awkward-looking that most Corax disdain it entirely, but it can surprise the hell out of an opponent who doesn't expect it. Furthermore, Corax in Rara Avis can use all sorts of unpleasant Gifts designed expressly for combat, meaning that the wereravens are not quite so helpless in battle as the other Changing Breeds suppose. More than one overconfident fomor has found a Razored Feather sticking out of his eye after closing on a Corax a little too cavalierly.

Crinos Corax look ungainly while walking. They have a peculiar rolling stride that makes them appear to be constantly off-balance. To help with balance, a Corax will spread his wings while advancing. This has the side effect of making the bird appear larger and more menacing than he actually is, and also positions the Corax for a Wing Swipe.

Roleplaying Notes:

Corax do not like being in Crinos, not one little bit.

That means a Crinos wereraven is going to be angry, embarrassed or both. In this form, a Corax never stops to socialize, chat or otherwise do anything not related to the immediate impetus for the form shift. A Corax shifts into Crinos for two reasons: to fight and to intimidate. Anything else can be done more easily and better in either Homid or Corvid. With that in mind, a Corax pops into Crinos only in dire necessity, does what he has to do, and gets the hell out as soon as possible. Corax in Crinos are bad-tempered, curt and generally unpleasant.

• **Corvid (Raven):** A raven with a wingspan of a full four-and-a-half feet, the Corax prefer the Corvid form for flight. Of course, in this form Corax also prefer flight to combat, for obvious reasons. Corax in Corvid form attack with their beaks (Strength +1 damage).

Roleplaying Notes:

Corvid Corax are generally less interested in getting involved with

Special Combat Maneuver: Eye Pluck

Corax have a combat maneuver in which they can aim for an opponent's eye, attempting to spear and pluck it out. The difficulty is 9, but the maneuver does Strength +2 damage; if five successes are scored to hit, and at least two damage successes get past the soak, the victim's eye is torn out. This counts as aggravated damage. If a Garou does not get a Battle Scar effect from this maneuver, she can grow her eye back.

the action than they are in reporting it, and as such it's rare for a Corax in corvid form to actually to land and get involved. Besides, grounded Corax in Corvid form are clumsy and awkward, making for even less incentive to land and waddle about.

While in bird-form, Corax prefer flight to fight, but if pressed, they go for the eyes. Plus, a dive-bombing Corax coming in hell-bent for leather can pack quite a wallop to an unsuspecting foe, and few Corax are above launching this sort of sneak attack every so often.

Merits and Flaws

Merits and Flaws describe, unsurprisingly, little character quirks that make your Corax unique. A Merit or a Flaw

shouldn't be the central focus of a character, but should add flavor, style and the potential for a story hook. Corax characters can take up to seven points each of Merits and Flaws at character creation, but no more. You can either deny your character any Merits or Flaws, or you can push the limit.

Characters can lose Merits or buy off Flaws throughout the course of a chronicle. Both are done at Storyteller discretion, and the removal of a Merit (or a character's triumph over a Flaw) should not be taken lightly. Remember, however, that just because your character starts with a Merit doesn't mean that she has divine right to keep that Merit forever.

Quick Learner (2 point Merit)

This merit allows the Corax to halve the time needed to learn a new Gift, skill or lore (but not Talents). Experience point cost remains the same.

Birdseye (4 point Merit)

A Corax with this Merit has the knack for automatically picking the right target to follow out of a crowd. Even if there are 60 Garou at a moot, a Corax with this Merit has merely to make a successful Wits + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) to pick out the proper (read: most interesting; this can also be translated as "most important to the ongoing plot") target to follow. A botch on this roll sends the Corax in the entirely wrong direction, which can also have interesting consequences.



Diet of Worms (1 point Flaw)

You have a hard time keeping your appetites straight. While in bird form, you get cravings for hamburgers and fries — neither of which will do much to keep you airborne. Even worse, your bird appetites come through when you're in Homid, meaning that you've got unhealthy attractions to things like roadkill. Needless to say, this Flaw can cause certain social situations to become awkward unless you make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7).

Emu (7 point Flaw)

You are the worst sort of social outcast among the Corax: a bird who cannot fly. Due to some trick of fate, you're simply unable to get airborne, meaning that you spend your days in Homid and, occasionally, earthbound Rara Avis. The rest of the Corax regard you with pity at best, derision at worse — but never respect. Obviously, without flight, certain Gifts and rites are beyond your abilities, and your modes of transportation are severely limited. Furthermore, you're likely to miss many of the waysigns posted for your kind in the Umbra, as more than half are set up to be visible only from the air.

Vertigo (5 point Flaw)

You can fly, but that doesn't mean you like it up there. Truth be told, flying makes you dizzy, nauseated and generally plain scared, so much so that you need to make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) any time you try to fly to an altitude higher off the ground than your Homid-form eyebrows. Furthermore, any time you perch at a point more than 10 feet off the ground, you need to make that same Willpower roll, or things get ugly. You might panic, or perhaps you could slip and fall....

Double Draught (2 point Merit)

Most Corax can only drink from one of any given dead man's eyes. You have the unique knack of drinking from both, allowing you to see details more mainstream Corax might miss. You get the best and worst of the corpse's death, and can integrate the two to form a coherent picture, rather than being forced to rely on one viewpoint or the other.

Losing the Sun (4 point Flaw)

You've had it with the bland vistas and boring views of the mortal world. The mysteries of the Umbra call to you with a siren song. Each time you step into the Umbra, you



need to make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to prevent yourself from just flying away to explore its mysteries. Even if you succeed in dragging yourself away from the possibility of escape, as long as you're in the Umbra you are distracted (+1 difficulty to all rolls relating to Wits, Intelligence and Perception).

Note: Obviously, if you fail your Willpower roll, you could derail your entire chronicle (or just lose a favorite character) by vanishing into neverland. Therefore, this Flaw should only be bought with Storyteller approval, allowing her to prepare for the eventuality of having to send the entire group of characters pelting off through the Umbra to catch their wayward birdie.

Birdlike Mannerisms (1 point Flaw)

You don't leave your corvid nature entirely behind when you lose your feathers. Rather, you're prone to bird-like head motions, sudden stalking advances, standing on one leg, and, when you think no one's looking, attempting the human equivalent of preening. Mind you, 99.9% of the human population will not ascribe anything odd to you, other than perhaps a need for certain medications, but to that 0.1% who are in the know, you'll stand out.

Guardianship (2 point Merit)

You've been entrusted with the guardianship of a spirit egg. Only you know the location of this egg in the Umbra, and you are its sole defender. As long as you maintain guardianship of the egg, you gain a point of Glory. Furthermore, you can always rouse other Corax to come to the egg's defense should you require assistance. On the down side, if a spirit egg is stolen or damaged on your watch, you suffer a permanent loss of 3 Glory.

Strong Claws (4 point Merit)

Birds' claws contract automatically when they sleep, allowing them to keep a grip all night long on whatever perch they've achieved. You can apply that sort of grip whenever you want, making it nigh-impossible to pull something from your grasp if you really want to hang onto it. If you decide that you absolutely need to keep something in your grasp, you get an extra three dice of Strength to use if anyone tries to take the item away from you.

This Gift can also be used when hanging onto window ledges, cliffs, tree branches and so on for dear life, or when trying to haul dangling victims back to safety from such perilous locales.

Gifts

Corax have their own Gifts, taught to them by the Sun in mistaken thanks for "rescuing" his position in the celestial hierarchy. Raven has also sweetened the pot for his children with an extensive range of Gifts to choose from.

Breeds & Auspices

Because of their ancient entanglement with Helios, Corax don't actually have Auspices. They're creatures of the Sun, after all, not the Moon, and as such, this is to be expected. And, naturally, this means that Corax lack Auspice Gifts. Furthermore, seeing as Corax don't have tribes the way that Garou or Bastet do, the wereravens don't have Tribe Gifts either. That would leave, in a logical world, Corax Gifts to be broken down by breed.

Unfortunately for the logical mind, there's no such luck. Gaia's little "surprise" for the Corax has left them utterly unable to keep from sharing the details of their Gifts with one another, *ad nauseam*. So while in the dim and distant days of the Impergium, there may have been Homid Gifts and Corvid Gifts among Raven's children; in the intervening centuries, the knowledge has been cross-pollinated so many times that, at this point, there are just Corax Gifts.

The Corax downplay the rumors that they have managed to steal the secrets of every single Garou Gift as well, and would dismiss those stories as slander except for one thing: The stories are pretty much true. There aren't many Garou Gifts out there that the Corax haven't uncovered the details of. Mind you, not every Garou Gift is suitable for use with the beak-and-feathers getup, but once a Corax reaches suitable levels of experience, odds are he's picked up most of the tricks in the werewolves' book.

(The sad thing is, of course, that the Garou know that their code has been cracked by the Corax, but they haven't been able to uncover much more than a few Corax recipes in return. It drives them nuts — and the Corax like that just fine.)

All Corax start out with three Gifts. Corax Gifts are directed toward uncovering and passing along information — and getting out alive with the latest news.

• **Voice of the Mimic (Level One)** — This Gift allows the Corax to imitate any sound or voice she has heard. Voices and accents are all covered by the scope of the Gift, as are machine noises, crashes, gunfire and any other noise you can imagine. Voice of the Mimic is taught by a Mynah-spirit.

System: The Gift requires a Perception + Expression (or Mimicry) roll, with the difficulty based on the complexity of the sound. When combined with the Merit: Eidetic Memory, the Corax can replay whole conversations with eerie verisimilitude.

• **Enemy Ways (Level One)** — This is a danger sense. Taught by one of Grandfather Thunder's Stormcrows, Enemy Ways is more than just a heightened (and reasonably accurate) sense of paranoia. Instead, it provides solid information on what immediate peril a Corax faces.

System: The Corax, by rolling Perception + Stealth, can pick up hints as to the nature of enemies in the area. Usually, a Corax who uses this Gift successfully can pick out the number and type of his opponents; with extreme successes, sometimes more can be learned.

- **Morse (Level One)** — There are messages that need to move faster than any Corax can fly, and there are times when neither computer nor phone is a safe method of information transfer. At times like that, a Corax still has a method of getting his message to his nearest fellow wereraven, namely, the use of this Gift. By merely tapping out his message onto any hard surface and using this Gift, a Corax can make sure that someone out there gets his message *right now* — because there may not be time for a later. This Gift is taught by a Machine-spirit.

System: With this Gift, the Corax can tap out a Morse code message on any surface and, by spending a Gnosis (and succeeding on a Wits + Empathy roll, difficulty 8), have the nearest Corax hear the message clear as day. Of course, the receiving Corax might not know Morse code, but that's the sort of risk you've got to take.

- **Open Seal (Level One)** — As per the Ragabash Gift.

- **Raven's Gleaning (Level One)** — Raven's Gleaning takes advantage of the legendary Corax predilection for bright, shiny objects. In essence, a value detector, the Gift allows a Corax to look at a shiny object and, at a glance, discover whether or not it's worth picking up. Raven himself, or a Raven-spirit acting under orders from the big guy, teaches this Gift.

System: Raven's Gleaning costs a point of Gnosis, and requires a Perception + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 5). A single success merely gives a yes/no answer as to whether the item is worth snatching. Additional successes can give the Corax an idea of value, composition, craftsmanship and so on.

- **Scent of the True Form (Level One)** — As per the Philodox Gift.

- **Truth of Gaia (Level One)** — As per the Philodox Gift.

- **Word Beyond (Level One)** — When traveling through the Umbra, Corax often feel the need to leave information for their fellow birds. After all, it's common courtesy to inform a relative that the old safe road now leads right into a nest of Pattern Spiders, right? Unfortunately, there's a dearth of writing materials in the Umbra, which means only that the Corax had to find an alternate method of leaving their missives. That's where this Gift — which allows a Corax to create a recognizable sigil out of whatever's handy — comes in. A spirit in service to Coyote teaches this Gift (when he feels like it).

System: In the Umbra, the Corax (by rolling Wits + Expression, difficulty 6) can create a marker out of available materials for any other Corax who come by. The number of successes indicates the complexity of the message that can be encrypted into the marker, which can be

decrypted by another Corax rolling Perception + Occult (difficulty 7).

- **Carrion's Call (Level Two)** — As much as their other functions obscure the fact, the Corax still feed on — and are intimately linked to — death and the dead. Furthermore, the Corax have a high-sacred duty relating to the corpses of the slain that demands that Raven's children be able to find the freshly slaughtered. This Gift tells a Corax when a fresh corpse is nearby, and inexorably leads the wereraven to the site where the body rests. This has its ups and downs — clever fomor are more than happy to murder innocents to attract the attention of Corax with this Gift. After all, once Carrion's Call has been issued, the Corax has no choice but to eventually, somehow, respond. Carrion's Call is taught by a Vulture-spirit.

System: A Corax can hear Carrion's Call by rolling Perception + Empathy (difficulty 6) and spending a point of Gnosis. The Gift's range is up to a mile, and in case of extreme success, even further.

While a Corax does not need to respond to Carrion's Call immediately, he has no more than 24 hours in which to do so or else Raven himself will punish the Corax for dereliction of duty. This punishment takes the form of stripping the Corax of one permanent Honor Renown, as the transgressor has clearly ignored honor's demands by refusing to heed the call.

- **Omens and Signs (Level Two)** — Corax can find symbolic portents in their surroundings without even trying — but this Gift helps. The world is full of omens, after all, but a Corax with this Gift knows where to look for them. This Gift is taught by a Stormcrow.

System: To find an omen in her surroundings, the Corax rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty 6). However, Corax have to be careful not to abuse this Gift. Otherwise, they start to mistake false omens for true — proof positive that the universe doesn't like to give away all of its secrets.

- **Razor Feathers (Level Two)** — One of the Corax' few combat-related Gifts, Razor Feathers operates only when the Corax is in Rara Avis form. Most predators aware of the Corax think, incorrectly, that the wereravens are easy prey. If a Corax has been taught this Gift, suddenly the odds creep a whole lot closer to even.

The primary effect of Razor Feathers is to make the feathers along the edge of the raven's wing hard and sharp as steel. The hardened feathers are strong enough to parry knives or claws, and are sharp enough to slice easily through unprotected flesh — or even stronger materials. Razor Feathers is taught by a Steel-spirit.

System: To access this Gift, the Corax spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Stamina (difficulty 6). The number of successes indicates the number of turns that the effect holds. Feathers affected by the Gift take on a metallic sheen, and some say they even glow softly with an eerie white light.



Special Combat Maneuver: Wing Swipe

Corax who know Razor Feathers have at their disposal a unique combat maneuver that takes full advantage of the possibilities the Gift offers. Simply put, once the Gift is in effect, the Corax just drops his shoulder and brings the wing around in a vicious slash, which hopefully drags the cutting edge of the Razor Feathers across the Corax' target. With any luck, even if the attack doesn't connect, the target is so busy spinning out of the way that he's off-balance for his next attack.

A Wing Swipe requires a Dexterity + Brawl roll (difficulty 7), but it does Strength +3 levels of aggravated damage. Furthermore, even if the attack misses, the Corax' opponent must roll Dexterity (difficulty 5) or be knocked off-balance by the assault. Off-balance opponents are at +1 difficulty to all rolls the next round.

Successful Wing Swipes cause lengthy slashes that, while not deep, do bleed profusely. The force behind a Wing Swipe is also more than sufficient to perform maneuvers like cutting ropes, breaking windows, slashing tires and so on.

• **Sky's Beneficence (Level Two)** — More than one human has commented with supreme annoyance at birds' uncanny ability to deliver payloads from altitude. This Gift, reputedly one of the first Raven granted his children, allows Corax to take that aptitude and turn it into something with more practical applications. Simply put, Sky's Beneficence allows a Corax to drop a package of any sort (including the stereotypical) onto a target no matter how high the altitude of the Corax. Obviously, depending upon the Corax' current altitude and the size of the payload, the drop may actually damage whatever the payload lands on. Any aerial spirit can teach this Gift.

System: Sky's Beneficence requires nothing but a Perception + Melee roll (difficulty 7). If this Gift is used, the Corax automatically takes into account factors like crosswinds, precipitation and so on, meaning that the difficulty of the roll is *always* 7.

The limitations on this Gift are twofold. The first is that the Corax has to be, obviously, fully airborne when using Sky's Beneficence. In other words, Homid-form Corax need not apply. The other factor is that the Corax needs to be able to see her target, else she will not be able to deliver her payload properly. This Gift can be used in conjunction with other Gifts, however.

• **Sky's Shadow (Level Two)** — There's little that is more frustrating than a creeping sensation that you're being watched. This Gift allows a Corax to bestow that feeling on the target of

her choice without necessitating that the Corax herself tail her victim. Sometimes the Gift creates the shadow of a large bird that follows the target everywhere; other times, it just imbues a sense of pure paranoia. At first glance, Sky's Shadow might not seem like a terribly effective Gift, but nervous men make mistakes — and this Gift can make even the strongest-willed man nervous. Any bird spirit can teach this gift.

System: The Gift implants in the target the certainty that he is being watched, with the feeling lasting a day for each success on a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (difficulty 7). The Gift costs a point of Rage to activate.

While under the Gift's influence, the victim is constantly aware of the shadowy eyes of unknown figures upon him. This takes away from his ability to concentrate, and he's at +1 difficulty on all Willpower- and Mental-related rolls as long as the Gift's effect lasts.

• **Swallow's Return (Level Two)** — Corax usually know where they're going. That's more or less part of the package that comes with the spirit egg, after all. However, there are times when a Corax is too tired or too badly injured to navigate himself back home. That's when he turns to this Gift. Swallow's Return is nothing less than an autopilot, bringing the Corax safely back home even while the wereraven sleeps or heals. A Swallow-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: A Corax wishing to make use of this Gift must give up a point of Gnosis and trust his luck, also making a Wits + Empathy roll (difficulty 6). Swallow's Return only brings the Corax home — no alternate destination can be inserted — and the definition of "home" can occasionally get a Corax in trouble.

• **Taking the Forgotten (Level Two)** — As per the Ragabash Gift.

• **Tongues (Level Two)** — As per the Homid Gift.

• **Dark Truths (Level Three)** — This Gift allows the Corax to uncover a secret truth or character flaw of an observed subject. As you might expect, Corax love to use this Gift. There's even a game related to Dark Truths that some wereravens play: One Corax uses the Gift on a mortal (in, say, a bar); the other contestants then have to try to wheedle that same secret out of the mark without using Dark Truths. A Fly-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: To utilize Dark Truths, the Corax spends a Gnosis point and rolls Perception + Enigmas (difficulty 7). With a success, the Corax acquires knowledge of one of his target's deep dark secrets. While this Gift doesn't turn loose the sort of secrets that are useful in combat, it does pry loose all sorts of interesting blackmail material.

• **Dead Talk (Level Three)** — There are secrets you just can't get from a dead man's eyeball. There are times when you need more than just a stiff's last sight. At those difficult times, being able to hold a conversation with, or at least get a few straight answers out of, the spirit of the deceased increases the Corax' information-gathering possibilities exponentially. A Vulture-spirit teaches this Gift, though supposedly some wraiths can teach it as well.

System: The Corax, by spending a Gnosis point and rolling Perception + Occult (difficulty 8), can hear and speak to a recently dead body (no more than 24 hours dead). The corpse's willingness to talk is determined by the number of successes, but no matter how many successes the Corax achieves, all he'll get is the body's mechanistic response to his questions. Odds are, the corpse's ghost is long gone.

• **Eyes of the Eagle (Level Three)** — One of the few Corax Gifts available in any form, Eyes of the Eagle allows the wereraven's vision to pierce fog, smoke, cloud and darkness. When this Gift (yet another example of Helios' largesse) is called upon, the Corax can suddenly see through anything short of a solid object. To the eye, night becomes as day, fog becomes transparent as air, and smoke turns clear as glass once Eyes of the Eagle is invoked. In addition, this Gift can be used to extend the range of a Corax' sight, which makes it useful when paired with Sky's Beneficence. Eagle-spirits teach this Gift.

System: This Gift requires the expenditure of a single point of Gnosis, and a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 6). The effect of the Gift lasts for as many minutes as there are successes rolled. The expenditure of a Willpower point extends the effect from minutes to hours.

• **Flight of the Swift (Level Three)** — Ravens aren't the fastest fliers out there. They admit this, and don't have a problem with it under most circumstances. However, on those rare occasions when a Corax finds himself chased by something both airborne, faster and nastier than he is, the Corax gets a little envious of his faster, smaller cousins.

That's where Flight of the Swift comes in. In essence, it's a set of afterburners that a Corax can hide under her feathers, giving her the wherewithal for an extremely speedy escape. A Swift-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: All this Gift does is allow a Corax to double his rate of speed. Corax normally fly at up to 35 mph, so a Corax calling upon Flight of the Swift can reach up to 70 mph. Using Flight of the Swift requires the sacrifice of a point of Rage and a Dexterity + Flying roll (difficulty 5). Multiple successes can allow a Corax to go even faster than he is supposed to go by the Gift's parameters.

• **Hummingbird Dart (Level Three)** — This Gift is most often utilized in conjunction with Razor Feathers, in which case it makes for a devastating weapon. Hummingbird Dart permits a Corax to pluck one of her own feathers and throw it like (as one might guess) a dart. The feather flies straight and true, unencumbered by anything so petty as the laws of physics and the strictures of aerodynamics. A Hummingbird-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The Hummingbird Dart requires that the Corax spend a point of Rage and then roll Dexterity + Melee (difficulty 5). If a Corax chooses to use this Gift after calling for Razor Feathers, the results can be vicious. A Razor Hummingbird Dart is, in essence, a throwing shiv that does aggravated damage, and should be treated accordingly.

The thrown feather does Dexterity + 3 dice of damage.

• **Larder of the Shrike (Level Three)** — Shrikes are notorious for killing more than they need, then storing the corpses for later use. Shrike-spirits can share the knowledge of the benefits that can accrue from such behavior. Essentially, this Gift allows the Corax to store food — and anything else, like, say, a corpse — in perfect condition for up to a year, so long as the stored item is allowed to hang free in the Corax' "larder."

System: By spending a Gnosis and succeeding on a Willpower roll (difficulty 6), a Corax can use this Gift on a hunk of meat (or vegetables, though few Corax have designed to do so) to preserve it nearly *ad infinitum* for future use. For as long as the Gift's effect lasts, neither rot nor bloat affects the stored items — including dead bodies.

Living items cannot be placed into a state of suspended animation by this Gift, which only affects dead things. Vampires and Risen don't fall under Larder of the Shrike's purview either, unfortunately.

• **Mynah's Touch (Level Three)** — The Corax often brag that they've uncovered all of the Garou's secrets. That isn't quite accurate, but with Mynah's Touch, the Corax come a lot closer to achieving their boast than the Garou would like. Simply put, this Gift allows a Corax to know the details of any Garou Gift of Level Three or below, providing that the Corax has actually seen a Garou successfully use the Gift in question. This knowledge flees the instant that the Corax actually uses the "borrowed" Gift, but in the meantime, an impressive body of knowledge is there for the taking.

This Gift is only taught by Mynah-spirits.

System: The use of this Gift demands two points of Gnosis, as well as a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 6). If there are any successes, the Corax using the Gift can now pick and choose knowledge of a single Gift from the entire list of Garou Gifts lower in level than he is. Naturally, the Corax must pay whatever costs and make whatever rolls are associated with his "borrowed" knowledge. The Storyteller is also free to stipulate that certain Gifts simply cannot be duplicated by this Gift, particularly those that are the secrets of various camps or taught only by Avatars of various mighty spirits.

• **Sun's Guard (Level Three)** — Given to his children by Raven after the great misadventure with Helios, this Gift serves to protect Corax from excessive heat. After all, the ravens got away with being burned to a crisp on the outside the first time; next time, the Corax might not be so lucky.... To no one's surprise, an Avatar of Raven teaches this Gift.

System: Raven's Guard costs two points of Rage, and also demands a Stamina + Primal Urge roll (difficulty 6). Each success is a turn during which the Corax is immune to flames literally up to and including those of the surface of the sun. This includes regular flames, magickally conjured fire, and even balefire.

• **Airt Sense (Level Four)** — This is the same as the spirit Charm, and can be taught by any type of spirit possessing that particular Charm.

System: Corax using Airt Sense must spend one Gnosis point and roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 7) to utilize

it. The understanding of the ways of the Umbra granted by this Gift halves travel time through the spirit world.

• **Gauntlet Runner (Level Four)** — With all the time the Corax spend popping in and out of the Umbra, it's no surprise that they've acquired a trick for lowering the Gauntlet and making the trip back and forth immeasurably easier. After all, when you need to get into the Umbra *fast*, lowering the Gauntlet before you start makes life a lot easier. Any Wyld-spirit can teach this Gift.

System: A roll of Wits + Enigmas (difficulty 8) reduces the Gauntlet by 1 for every two successes. The area affected can be up to 20 feet on a side, but no matter how successful the Corax is on her roll, she must still use a reflective surface to enter the Umbra.

• **Helios' Child (Level Four)** — Occasionally, the Sun deigns to lend a bit of himself to a Corax in need. This present takes the form of a ball of lambent flame that materializes in the Corax' hand. This fire doesn't burn the Corax, but will ignite anything it touches (effective temperature: 1000 degrees Fahrenheit; doing damage akin to that of a chemical fire. See *Werewolf*, page 197 for details). One of Helios' spirit-servants teaches this Gift.

System: To summon Helios' Child, the Corax first asks Helios for help. The Gift can be called upon at any time, day or night, but the request must be made of Helios before anything else happens. Of course, various Corax have various definitions of what constitutes a "request," and Corax theologians point to the continued workings of this Gift as proof that Helios does in fact have a sense of humor. Beyond the request, the Corax must burn two points of Gnosis and close his eyes for a brief second (and roll Manipulation + Subterfuge, difficulty 7). When the Corax opens his eyes, if the Gift has functioned properly, a little piece of the sun will be resting in his palm, ready for use.

• **Vulture's Feast (Level Four)** — One of the great advantages of being a carrion eater is that your dinner plate is rarely empty. There's roadkill everywhere just waiting for you to dig in. What happens, however, if you want something a little fresher? After all, who *knows* how long that hunk of ex-squirrel has been hanging out in the passing lane?

Vulture's Feast allows a Corax to rot flesh with a touch, regardless of whether the target meat is dead or alive. Obviously, this is not a Gift to be used lightly, but there are times when even the most peaceable Corax has no recourse but to turn someone's face into a mass of decaying suppuration. A Vulture-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The exercise of Vulture's Feast requires the expenditure of a Willpower point and two Gnosis. The Corax must then make a successful Dexterity + Brawl roll (difficulty 5) in order to touch his victim, then he must succeed on a contested Stamina roll. If he wins, the flesh he's currently touching becomes withered, dead and rotted; the victim takes one Health Level of aggravated damage for each success the Corax has left.

Only Corax in Homid can make use of this Gift. Corax who become too fond of using Vulture's Feast are often

easily turned to the Wurm, so anyone who gets a reputation for using Vulture's Feast frequently will find himself watched carefully by his fellow wereravens.

• **Gift of Eyes (Level Five)** — The Corax' duty of drinking the eyes of the slain can inflict a montage of supremely horrific images upon those who tend to their duties. In many cases, those images are the Corax' burden, to suffer with in silence. That's not always the case, however. With Gift of Eyes, a Corax can pass along a vision from an eye he's drunk to any non-Corax he chooses. The image is transferred in all its glory and gore, just as the Corax himself first saw it. Unprepared viewers may faint or scream; prepared ones may find clues or details they need in this glimpse of a dead man's last seconds. Raven or one of his spirits teaches this Gift.

System: The expenditure of a pair of Gnosis points and a contested Willpower roll against the intended victim are what's needed to effect a Gift of Eyes. The Corax can transfer any memory he's devoured with no distortion or dilution of the image.

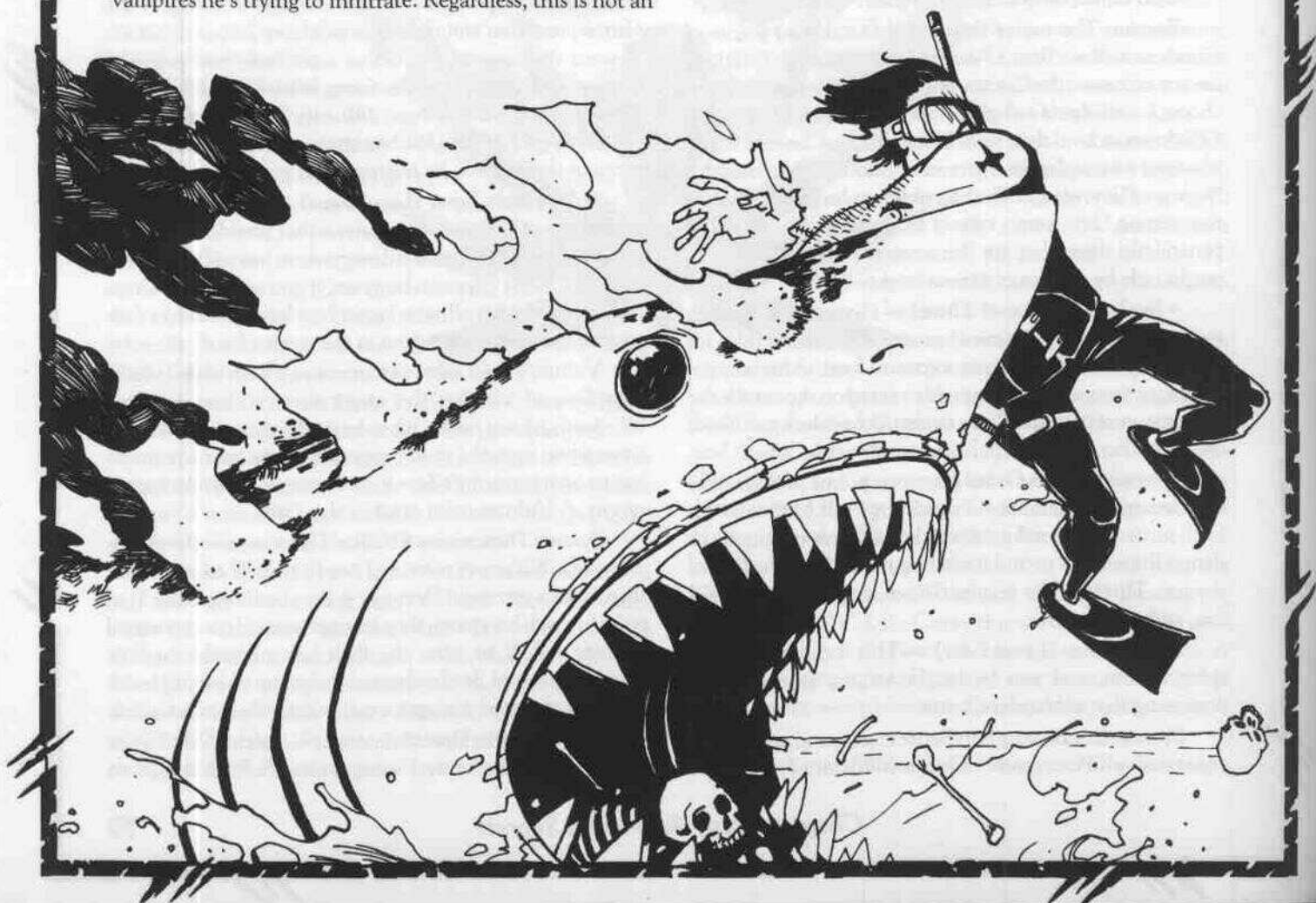
• **Moments of Eclipse (Level Five)** — There are times when a Corax must make a near-supreme sacrifice, voluntarily severing his connection to the Sun. The reasons for doing so are few, but always drastic. Perhaps the Corax has been chained with gold, and needs a few minutes in which to work an escape (or else he'll die a horrible, agonizing death), or maybe he needs to prove his "worth" to a gang of vampires he's trying to infiltrate. Regardless, this is not an

action that any Corax should ever take lightly, and Helios himself notices if a wereraven abuses this Gift. After all, he's the one who teaches it.

System: Given by Helios reluctantly (and some say, at the last minute) to his new acquisitions, this Gift allows a Corax to sever his connection to the Sun temporarily — 10 minutes for every success on a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) after the expenditure of 2 points of Gnosis. If the roll is a success, the Corax is suddenly cut off from Helios. This has both positive and negative effects. On the plus side, the Corax is no longer vulnerable to the pernicious effects of gold for the duration of the Gift's effects. On the other hand, for so long as the Corax is cut off from Helios, she cannot use Rage.

• **Portents (Level Five)** — Taught by a Wind-spirit, this Gift is a sneak peek at the most important events of the near future. There's no greater secret than what is to happen, and as a result Corax will sell their own kidneys for a look at the future.

System: The player must spend two Gnosis points and roll Intelligence + Enigmas (difficulty 8). In addition, he can nominate an area of interest (say, the future of a local charity house or Magadon's CEO) or just try for a general event. If he succeeds, the Corax can see a future event with clarity. Though the future is mutable, the Corax sees the most likely event. Any visions that follow are purely the Storyteller's discretion.



• **Theft of Stars (Level Five)** — In some Native American legends, Raven was responsible for placing the sun, moon and stars into the sky. However, what Raven giveth, Raven can take away — or at least borrow with the help of the Corax. This Gift has a truly terrifying effect, rendering the target completely unable to see any light derived from a natural light source (the sun, moon or stars). Victims of this power are reduced to stumbling around in a bizarre twilight, if not absolute darkness. Helios' Avatar teaches this Gift, but only to Corax whom the Sun trusts in its use.

System: A point of Willpower and a point of Rage are needed to activate Theft of Stars, as is a contested Willpower roll with the victim. If the Corax wins the roll, her victim is immediately plunged into darkness, as no natural light registers with his eyes. Artificial light (lamps, fire, etc.) registers just fine, but who's got their lights on in the middle of the day? The effects of Theft of Stars last a single hour, but that's usually more than enough.

• **Thieving Talons of the Magpie (Level Five)** — Identical to the Fifth Level Ragabash Gift, Thieving Talons was taught to the Garou by the Corax. Of course, you don't find too many Garou admitting that these days.

Rites

We are invisible upon these dancing feet

We're shape and shadowless revolving to the one eternal beat

— Dougie MacLean, "All Together"

There's one of me and three of them, and they ain't breathing. Plus, it's pitch dark in here — an abandoned warehouse at 2 AM ain't my idea of an ideal birdcage, if you catch my drift. The ceiling is 50 feet up, which is good, but there's no light. Damn Leeches must have chewed on the fusebox or something, 'cause I flicked the switch and there was nuthin'. Correction: I could hear one of 'em laughing down the middle aisle.

They move real quiet when they want to, you know? I hear noises, scuffles, but nothing that I can pinpoint. Best guess is, though, that two of them are moving to cut off this aisle while a third climbs the pallets to one side so he can do a Jackie Chan death-from-above kind of move.

I'm not sure if they know I can fly, but I'm not relying on them being that dumb.

Crap. What was that noise? Sounded like a soda can being skidded across the floor. Heh. Probably to make me think the guy is over there, when he's really over there. Right. This could get ugly. Better shift into Crinos, just to give myself a little edge. It won't do much good, not against three of the bastards, but it might buy me a second or two, and I can still fly.

Okay. Let's move down a bit this way, away from the source of the noise. Hmmm. Footsteps squeaking down and to the left. One of them is whispering orders; I can't make out the words, but I take it from his tone that he's pissed at his buddies.

There goes another soda can. I hear something creaking up above now — fun boy number three has apparently achieved the middle shelf of the monster rack behind me. I'm gonna move slowly, so my claws don't click on the concrete, and edge away from the boxes.

Raven's left nut! That one scared the hell out of me. He musta dropped a book or a box or something from way up there. I just hope he doesn't start playing happy bombardier, because he can see better than I can right now.

More noise off to the left. Getting closer, too. They're playing with me, the bastards. Another box just landed, closer.

Time to pull out my ace in the hole. Time to start the chant.

Another box. He's bracketed me. His buddies are just watching. Doesn't matter, not if I get enough time to do this. Step, forward, bow, step, step and turn, arms up.

Bastard! That one hit me. The other two are laughing and the one up top is whooping it up. Yeah, keep laughing funny boy. Playing games is gonna kill ya. You didn't knock me out of step, and I'm just...about...done.

They're not expecting a faceful of Helios, I can tell you that much. As the light grows, I can hear them screaming. I can smell the smoke. Cooked dead meat — about as pleasant as a fast-food restaurant the morning after.

Crapola. The one up top is burning, and he's flailing around on cartons of books. The whole place could go up — I'm outta here.

Wonder what the firemen are going to think about the sunlight streaming out the windows as the place burns. Ah well, not my problem. Time to fly!

Rites. Gotta talk about rites now, don't I? Well, a rite is like going to church, only...you never went to church? Err, synagogue? Sunday school?

Atheist, huh? Well, let me tell you something, that's gonna change.

Anyway, a rite is a ritual, a religious service, but it's got a concrete effect tagged onto the end of it. I mean, something happens when you finish a rite, assuming you did it, err, right. Then again, you do a rite wrong, you'd better pray nothing is all that happens. There are all sorts of nasty consequences to botching a rite, most of which involve some muckety-muck spirit getting all pissed at you. Things tend to degenerate pretty quickly after that.

Anyway, here are the basic rites. You'll probably learn 'em as you go along. The higher the level of the rite, the more of a Big Shot you've gotta be to learn it, and the more powerful it is.

Pretty basic stuff, huh?

Right. Take notes. This is important.

Rite of Talisman Dedication (Level One)

We do this one exactly the same way the doggies do. Has the same effect, same everything — we just do it with more style.



Rite of the Sun's Bright Ray (Level Two)

This one is proof positive Helios is our buddy. When you do this rite, you get a heaping dose of sunshine that brightens up wherever you are. Doesn't matter if you're underground, in a bank vault, in the middle of Club Whiny Vampire — do this rite and it's "Here Comes the Sun." And you know what the best thing about the sunlight that you can conjure up with this one? Well, yes, you can tan to it, but that's not the issue. What matters is that this sunlight hits vampires like the real thing, baby. You've just gotta see the look on the face of Vlad Pretentious, Dark Prince of Mount Laurel, New Jersey when you drop a "73 degrees and sunny" grenade in his lap. It's priceless.

System: This rite has no cost, as it is a symbol of Helios' special favor toward his adopted children. All that is required is the proper steps and chants, and then a Gnosis roll (difficulty 7). The borrowed sunlight fills a volume 20 feet on a side, give or take a few, and lasts one hour for each success on the Gnosis roll. The glow remains behind even after the Corax leaves the area, which can lead to all sorts of awkward situations.

Rite of the Fetish Egg (Level Two)

The Rite of the Fetish Egg is about the birds and the bees — well, no bees — and where new Corax come from. You see, when two Corax love each other very much, you know what happens?

Nothing. Absolutely nothing. We can't breed with one another. That's why there are no Corax metis. Hell, a new Corax doesn't even have to be the kid of an old Corax. This is a matter of spirit, not genetics, boyo. Spirit's a lot more important. What it can mean, though, is that you can have real parents and spiritual ones, your flesh-and-blood folks as well as the Corax who gave you your spirit egg.

Making a spirit egg requires some hefty investment. There's got to be one spiritual parent from each breed, plus someone's got to plunk some serious spiritual gas in order to create the egg and bind it to its other half. The binding is done with a feather or a human hair from the "parent" and ensures that the egg and the kid/chick stay linked until such time as the kid can handle getting a double dose of soul. If the binding breaks, it devastates the poor kid — autism is the usual response. The parent usually just goes into depression; many lose the Sun right after that sort of thing.

System: The Rite of the Fetish Egg is never undertaken lightly. For one thing, it costs three permanent Gnosis from the parent Corax, and that price is paid regardless of whether the rite succeeds or fails.

The Rite of the Fetish Egg can only be performed in the Umbra, and requires one witness of the breed opposite that of the Corax performing the rite. Creating a fetish egg takes three hours; binding it to the soul for which it is intended takes another one. If the rite is interrupted at any point during this time, the Gnosis is lost and the rite fails.

This rite requires a roll against the parent Corax' permanent Gnosis (before the donation) at a difficulty of 6.

Proper Care and Feeding

Spirit eggs are serious business. Everyone, and I mean *everyone*, wants to get their grubby little hands on one. Black Spirals try to swipe 'em to take 'em back to Malfeas, Wyrms alone knows why. The damn things don't hatch without being tied to someone in the Tellurian. You haul that egg off far enough and the psychic tether snaps like a bungee cord tied to an elephant. Mages go after the eggs, too, presumably to make some kind of mystical omelet.

Let me tell you straight, kid — if you see someone trying to five-finger discount a spirit egg, kill the bastard — instantly. We're rare, and getting rarer, and few of us have the necessary psychic juice to make more than one offspring. The theft of a single egg is a tragedy for the entire race. We can't afford to lose even one.

That explains why we hide the eggs in the Umbra as best we can. Each gets a special hiding place, and each gets a guardian. It's a tremendous honor to be selected as the guardian for a spirit egg, kid. You've really made it among us if you get picked for that. Guardians get to check on the eggs — and the kids the eggs are attached to — every so often. Guardians also get the right to round up a posse if an egg ever needs protection.

Pray you never see it come to that, though, kid. Just pray.

Rite of Becoming (Level Two)

The Garou do this one the same way we do as well. I'd be kind of surprised if they didn't, seeing as we're the ones who actually taught it to them, but try to get a furry to admit to that.

System: This rite can only be cast from an Anchorhead domain, and requires the casting Corax to make a braid from three hairs (or feathers) off her head, three pieces of copper wire and three pieces of ivory. The Corax ties the braid around a wrist or ankle, then invokes three words of power. Henceforth, the Corax can fly into the Deep Umbra.

If the braid is destroyed, the Corax takes a health level of damage and must make a Wits roll (difficulty 6) to return to the Near Umbra. The Sun-Lost ceremonially destroy their braids as soon as they reach the Deep Umbra, symbolizing their acceptance of their new state. Corax who intend to head home tend to be a bit more careful of theirs, but getting lost in the Deep Umbra isn't quite as unpleasant for Corax as it is for Garou.

The Background: Umbral Maps eliminates the need for any sort of roll to find one's way home, even if the braid is destroyed.

Rite of Battle Blessing (Level Four)

The Rite of Battle Blessing is one of the big 'uns, but don't expect to learn it any time soon. The only three who know this

one are the members of the Morrigan, and they don't exactly go around spouting off trade secrets. I only know a little bit about how this one works, but that's scary enough for me.

It seems that if the Morrigan decide they want to help one side in a battle out (usually the Fianna, in case you were wondering), they haul this golden oldie out. All three fly over the battle, croaking out battle-song, and it puts the fear of Morrigan into whichever side the three ladies don't like. It's astonishing to watch — entire armies have broken and fled after hearing the chants of this rite. Mind you, this one's tough to do, and the Morrigan don't use it lightly. However, when they do uncork it, the effects are devastating.

System: All three of the Morrigan must be present to perform this rite. To enact the rite, each member of the Morrigan can spend Gnosis up to her Occult rating. For each point of Gnosis spent, the victims of the rite lose one die from their Dice Pools so long as they remain on the field of battle. Targets can literally be reduced to zero dice by this rite.

Rite of Memory Theft (Level Four)

If a fellow Corax has repeatedly acted dumber than a box of rocks, there comes a time when you've just got to scrub out the inside of his head and hope that the next pile of garbage he accumulates between his ears is more useful. If someone does something really, really, really dumb, a bunch of the old-timers can pull this rite out of mothballs and wipe his mental hard drive — downloading all the good bits first. Whoever leads the ritual gets the core dump from the sucker, err, target, errr, object of the rite. Meanwhile the victim has his head pretty much wiped of anything more complex than "Gee, pretty flowers."

Actually, I'm exaggerating a little bit. The rite takes the victim back to right after First Change, meaning that there's a chance that he'll learn things properly the second time. Basic motor skills, language abilities, things like that — they generally tend to stay in place even when the rite goes really well.

By the way, it's a good thing this rite's only available to grand poobahs of the breed. Can you imagine the hell that would break loose if Murder's Daughters got a hold of it?

System: This rite requires a small, empty wooden box, preferably painted with scenes from the target's life. At least three Corax, including the one performing the rite, must surround the target (who, hopefully, has been subdued or at least restrained). The box is then opened and a litany of the victim's deeds is chanted. As each event is named, the memories of that moment fly from the Corax into the box. Associated memories flee as well, until such time as the Corax' mind is emptied of everything post-First Change. Note that the rite is an all or nothing proposition; one cannot use this to excise only certain memories.

The Corax performing the rite must then seal and crush the box, at which point, all of the memories contained enter his mind. This is not a burden to be undertaken lightly — the Rite of Memory Theft is only performed when a Corax has done something truly horrendous, and no Corax carries around the memories of another breed's failure or crime lightly. It's

one thing to know of another raven's missteps, another thing entirely to make them your own.

This rite costs a point each of Gnosis, Willpower and Rage, and lasts as long as it takes to sing all of the deeds of the victim. The rite also calls for a contested Willpower roll between the Corax casting the rite and the target, though each additional Corax present lowers the ritemaster's difficulty by 1.

This rite can only be used on other Corax.

Renown

Give me wisdom in misfortune

Heart's ease for my distress

— Richard Thompson, "May Day Psalter"

While Garou and Corax agree on the types of Renown they value, Corax hold Wisdom in highest esteem, no matter what. Wereravens seek Wisdom assiduously while sometimes forgetting to follow up on Glory or Honor.

Renown is very important to the Corax. After all, having Renown means you're being talked about, and perhaps the only thing Corax love more than talking is having someone else talk about them — saying nice things, preferably. With that in mind, Corax avidly seek Renown from their fellows, turning the Corax compulsion to talk to their advantage by prattling on incessantly about their individual accomplishments. In a way, this serves Gaia's purpose, because every Corax generally has a pretty good idea of what nearly every other Corax has been up to.

Indeed, in an odd way, Corax Renown is self-reinforcing. Corax exist, after all, to uncover secrets and spread word of those secrets 'round the world. So every story told of a Corax uncovering a secret not only adds to the Renown of the intrepid Corax in question, but also passes the freshly unearthed secret along. In this fashion, a Corax' Renown can mount quickly.

As Corax are solitary creatures, wereraven Renown tends to come from solo operations more than anything else (though any Corax who succeeds in getting his breedmates to cooperate often gets a healthy dollop of Renown as well).

Elements of Status

While Honor and Glory are known and vaguely respectable concepts among the Corax, the bird-folk have learned the hard way that many glorious and honorable actions tend to produce dead Corax. Garou don't understand Corax Renown and don't pretend to, but occasionally bestow Renown of their own on Corax who have performed especially worthy services for a pack or sept — uncovering the details of an incipient attack, snatching (at great risk) the blueprints of a building a pack wants to assault, and so forth. Usually this Renown is Glory Renown, to which the reaction of a Corax so honored is, "Err, thank you." On the other hand, once it sinks in that a pack of Garou has given him a dollop of Renown, the Corax is likely to go repeating the story high and low (while trying to gain Renown from his fellow Corax, no doubt).



Grand Theft Auto

Well, not really, but there's a little secret I've been saving for last that I thought maybe, just maybe, you might want to know. It's simple. You know those dreadfully secret rites the Garou have? The ones no one else can see on pain of death? The really, really secret ones?

We know 'em. More to the point, we also know Bastet rites, Nuwisha rites, Ananasi rites, Mokole rites — hell, we've stolen everyone's secrets. And they don't have a clue we've done it.

How the hell did we pull it off? I could tell ya, but I'd have to bury ya.

What it boils down to, though, is this: If you get a hankering to learn a rite that's supposed to be marked "For Cats Only," just ask around. Leave a few query signs on the straight paths. Odds are, the info you're looking for will find you.

Mind you, we don't know 'em all, but hey, that just gives us something to shoot for. What's more, some of 'em just plain don't work for us — the spirits that empower a rite that's been done properly sometimes take exception to being called by a bird they don't recall giving their number to. So you might not want to try forming your own Silver Pack for kicks — Phoenix'll burn your balls off before you can croak out a *soprano* "Awk." But a lot of the more general ones, the ones that the Garou learned from the Gurahl, who learned from...you get the idea.

Just don't show off in front of the other breeds, okay? It's not polite.

Wisdom

With this set of circumstances in mind, Wisdom Renown is the one thing that really matters to the birds, but it's a very Corax-specific style of wisdom the birds venerate. In fact, the Corax definition of Wisdom is a little muddled with Knowledge — Corax who uncover great secrets and pass them along are showered with Wisdom Renown, while those birds who prudently (or wisely) don't go digging through dangerous garbage are routinely dismissed from consideration.

There are three rules of Wisdom for Corax:

- Get it fast. (Old information is worthless.)
- Get it accurate. (Bad information is worse than useless.)
- Get out safely so you can tell someone. (If you get killed without passing the information along, who the hell cares what you found out?)

Honor

Honor among the Corax is reserved for those who have done something to benefit the Breed as a whole, or for Kinfolk.

The latter is frankly more common, as the Corax hold their Kinfolk in high regard. Honor is also bestowed for acts of selflessness, particularly those performed on behalf of the Corax. Then again, there's no tradition limiting that sort of Renown to those helping the feathered folk....

The Laws of the Honorable Corax are:

- If you're going to do it, do it all the way. (Trying to do something honorable and backing out halfway through is worse than not trying.)
- Get witnesses. (The worst thing in the world is having your attempts at honor misinterpreted by those who weren't there. Keep the story straight.)
- Don't do it unless you're sure. (Performing a selfless action and expecting a reward isn't selfless. Don't even try it unless you're doing what you're doing for the right reasons.)

Glory

Glory Renown is rare among the Corax, because Corax aren't built for Glorious deeds. It's much more common for a Corax to get someone else to do the dirty work of fighting for him than to stand up and get into a brawl himself; more sensible, too. However, on those rare occasions when a Corax does something worthy of Glory Renown, the whole breed hears about it within a matter of days — and only some of that can be traced to the bragging of the newly minted Glorious Corax herself.

Corax give Glory Renown for getting into — and surviving — fights that absolutely have to be fought. A Corax who goes around picking fights and winning them through creative use of Gifts isn't likely to gather much Glory. On the other hand, a raven-woman who has to take out a trio of fomor guards in order to escape an office with some stolen files — she's likely to be covered in Glory if she makes it out alive.

The rules of the Glorious Corax are:

- Only fight when you have to. (Get into too many scraps and the rest of the Breed will be eulogizing you. Corax aren't built to be infantry.)
- Fight to win. (If you lose, you're dead. No one will care that you fought "by the rules" at your funeral.)
- No second chances. (If you have a chance to finish an opponent, do it. Killing him immediately saves you from ever having him come back when you least expect it.)

Rank

Seeing as it's birds who gave us the term "pecking order," it should be no surprise that Corax have a reasonably stable system of Ranks. Basically, a Corax' Rank determines three things: What secrets she's let in on (meaning rites and Gifts), what order she speaks in (and by extension, how many folks are still around and listening when it comes time for her to speak) and where she sits at Parliaments (more important than you'd think).

Renown Chart

Rank	Glory	Honor	Wisdom
Oviculum	0	0	3
Neocornix	0	0	6
Ales	1	2	8
Volucris	2	3	10
Corvus	3	5	10

There is a sixth, nameless Rank available to the creme de la creme of Corax society. Those few, legendary wereravens are known worldwide and, more importantly, afforded silence by the rest of the Corax community whenever they want to speak.

Corax Rank is generally given by acclamation rather than by formal ceremony. When the time is right, the Corax in question simply finds a place reserved for her closer to the front of the Parliament and hears more and more potent secrets whispered in her ear. Plus, since the raven-folk are by definition incorrigible gossips, news of the Corax's ascent is passed along and scratched on Umbral notes for all the winged world to see.

Of course, any advance in Rank is subject to Helios' oversight. If a place is made for a Corax to advance in Rank at a Parliament and the sky immediately becomes clouded over, that is taken as a sign of Helios' displeasure at the proceedings, and the advancement is immediately revoked. Furthermore, the Corax thus denied also loses a permanent point of Glory Renown, and will find himself gossiped about and pitied by all his fellow wereravens.

Needless to say, Corax can not renounce Renown. There's no point to it for them.

Losing Rank and Renown

It's easy for a Corax to lose Renown, or even Rank. All he has to do is make a habit of bringing back bad information, or gain a rep as a lazy scout, or rely too much on what others have told him and not add anything to the Breed's information stew. All of these take a while to circulate through the Corax rumor mill, which means that a wereraven guilty of any of these transgressions has plenty of time — and hears plenty of warnings — to straighten out his act. If you lose Renown among the Corax, odds are, you've earned it.

The only thing that will get Renown stripped quickly from a Corax (by anyone besides Raven, in any case) is to lie to other Corax — in a worst-case scenario, about other Corax. The Corax rely on their information network being as clean as possible. Misinformation may sneak in, but as long as every Corax does his best to report accurately and honestly, the network stays mostly pristine, and churns out mostly useable information. As soon as a Corax starts to lie to the community, the community's reason for existing becomes threatened. Needless to say, the Corax don't sit still for that sort of thing.

Toys

The nature of magical trinkets available to Corax is often limited by the fact that half the race simply doesn't think like a tool-using species. With that being said, however, there isn't a Corax alive who doesn't like having some sort of surprise up her sleeve — or wing. As such, there's a steady market for barter of toys, gadgets and gewgaws among the Corax, who either barter information for them or, on rarer occasions, make them. (Rumors that Corax have a predilection for stealing others' talens and fetishes are merely the scurrilous slanders perpetrated by assorted absentminded Bête who couldn't remember where they'd left their nice shiny new fetishes and needed to blame the Corax who innocently happened to be in the neighborhood at the time and...err...ahem. In any case, it's not true.)

With that in mind, here are a few of the favorite toys the Corax like to play with.

Sliver of Helios

Level 1, Gnosis 3

With the connection the Corax have to the Sun, it's not surprising that on occasion, Helios lets the ravens carry around bits of his radiance. A Sliver of Helios is exactly that: a dagger-shaped slice of sunlight that can illuminate even the darkest night.

To use a Sliver of Helios, the Corax simply unwraps it (it's a good idea to keep a Sliver wrapped up, for obvious reasons), at which point it illuminates a 10' by 10' area with sunlight. Needless to say, any vampires caught within this area (for some reason, the light fills a cube, not a sphere as one might expect) take normal damage as from sunlight. Otherwise, however, the Sliver simply serves as a glorified, very bright flashlight. It is impossible to dim the Sliver in any way — it's an all-or-nothing type deal.

If anyone attempts to use a Sliver like a dagger, under the mistaken impression that form follows function, the blade immediately shatters and the light goes out at once.

Silver Claws

Level 1, Gnosis 5

Dangerous in the extreme, Silver Claws are usually only worn when combat with another member of the Bête is inevitable. While the Claws are actually made from stainless steel, when a Corax cuts his palm and lets a drop of blood fall on each one, they suddenly transmute into purest silver.

The Silver Claws are, in form, exactly that: a set of wickedly hooked and serrated claws that fit over each of a Corax' combat-form claws. At the end of a battle, the Claws return to their normal, inert, harmless content.

Supposedly, there is a variation of this fetish in which the claws transmute to gold instead of silver, though no

reputable Corax has ever seen such a thing. Gold claws would only be useful against Mokolé or other Corax, after all, which raises disturbing questions about what sort of Corax would be twisted enough to commission or create such a thing.

Corvid's Favor

Level 1, Gnosis 2

Nothing more than a feather plucked from a corvid's head and wrapped with a single strand of the bearer's hair, this fetish allows a Corax to use any Corvid-form only Gifts while in Homid. While it doesn't permit a Corax in Homid to fly, it does grant access to those knacks that are generally only available to the feathered members of the family.

Raven's Face

Level 3, Gnosis 3

Generally, only the Corax of the Pacific Northwest have access to this particular *fetish*, which takes the form of a totem pole capped with Raven's visage. When properly prepared, the fetish can serve as a Gnosis repository, holding up to 3 points of spiritual energy for each Rank of the Corax who carved the icon. As the Corax who created the fetish advances in Rank, the capabilities of the totem pole increase as well.

To invest Gnosis in Raven's Face, the Corax needs only to perch on top of the pole and spend the Gnosis he wants to store. There's no additional cost; the Gnosis simply drains from the raven into the totem pole. When the time comes for withdrawal, the Corax simply reverses the procedure and the Gnosis flows back into him. Raven's Face can be used by any Corax, and indeed many of these fetishes are set up as community Gnosis banks throughout the Northwest Corax' territory.

To Corax eyes, a "charged" fetish appears to have a slight heat haze around it, which is the only way Raven's Face can be distinguished from a more mundane sort of totem pole. The Gnosis contained within these fetishes is inaccessible to anyone except Corax — after all, it's kind of hard for Garou to perch.

Counterfeit

Level 2, Gnosis 3

Sad to say, certain Corax have a small problem with kleptomaniacal tendencies. Many of the things the Corax consider to be worth stealing are rare and/or valuable, rendering the theft risky. With that in mind, survival-minded Corax get their hands on a Counterfeit, which is nothing more than a clay tablet impressed with Raven's

sigil and painted white. Most Counterfeits are three inches long and an inch across, though there are no hard and fast rules.

What a Counterfeit does is ingenious. When charged with a point of Gnosis, a Counterfeit can morph itself to look like any single small object to which it is touched. Ideally, the object in question is one that the Corax has just stolen and needs to replace immediately.

The Counterfeit does not duplicate any of the functions of the object it is mimicking, merely the appearance. What that usually means is that the victim of the theft will attempt to use their cell phone, or gun, or fetish, or whatever and get absolutely no response. At this point, the Counterfeit reverts to its true shape, no doubt to the dismay of its new owner.

Clever Corax keep an eye on those whom they've slipped Counterfeits, because more than few victims have thrown the fetishes away in anger at being tricked. The wise Corax makes sure he's in a position to retrieve the abandoned Counterfeit, which hopefully is undamaged and ready to be used again.

Helios' Mirror

Level 5, Gnosis 4

There are only a few shards of the mirror originally used to trick Helios back into the world still extant, and the Corax who possesses one is accounted lucky indeed. A fragment of Helios' Mirror is not something one carries around, as even the smallest is at least a foot long; usually they are kept in homes or safe places in the Umbra.

What a chunk of the Mirror allows, however, is nothing short of miraculous. All the possessor needs to do is mention a name or place, and, if that person or location is on the daytime side of the planet, the Mirror shows the requested scene. The Corax can gaze into the Mirror for as long as she desires, or until the image depicted slides into the darkness of night. The Mirror cannot show anything on the night side of the planet, nor can it display anyone in the Umbra, but it does make an excellent tool for checking up on errant Corax who haven't shown up for Parliament for a while.

The Mirror can be used at any hour of the day or night, but only once per day. Overuse or abuse of the Mirror can cause the fragment to shatter.

The object of the Mirror's scrutiny has no idea that he is being watched, though with a successful Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 7) he does get an itchy feeling between his shoulder blades (or the equivalent).



Appendix: The Sky-Tossed

*She said, "Are you aware of the privilege you enjoy
The burden of history lies heavy on my shoulders"
We shook hands and she went on her way singing
— Runrig, "Sraidean Na Rionn-Europa (Streets of Europe)"*

Read my beak, boy wonder: There is no such thing as a typical Corax. We come in all shapes, sizes and colors — well, not colors, but you get the idea, kid. Basic black and that's it for us, but we're not here to make a fashion statement.

There's a theory going around that each of us is born to a specific role — that there's a specific spot that Gaia thinks needs

a feathered security cam — and that each of us is born to get put into that spot. Me, I dunno. I'm just here to teach you the ropes and watch as much of this burg as I can, and the rest is just details, you know? But take a gander at these guys. They'll give you some idea of the options.

Bicycle Courier

Quote: *Wheels, wings — whatever. The idea is to get there fast, m'man.*

Prelude: Thank God you grew up before Ritalin came into vogue. You were the poster child for Attention Deficit Disorder before anyone thought to put a label on it; back in those days, you were just "hyper." Paying attention in class was just too damn much work, especially when there were so many other things to catch your eye.

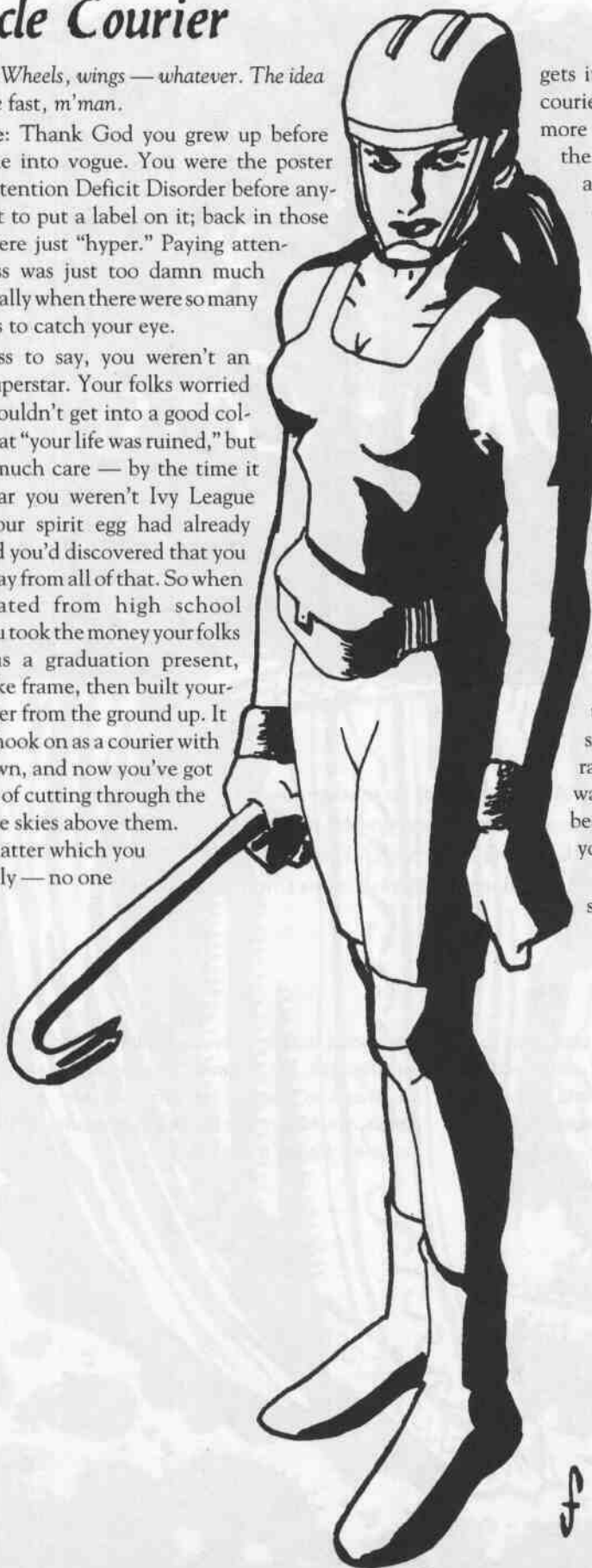
Needless to say, you weren't an academic superstar. Your folks worried that you "wouldn't get into a good college" and that "your life was ruined," but you didn't much care — by the time it became clear you weren't Ivy League material, your spirit egg had already hatched and you'd discovered that you could fly away from all of that. So when you graduated from high school (barely), you took the money your folks gave you as a graduation present, bought a bike frame, then built yourself a monster from the ground up. It was easy to hook on as a courier with a firm in town, and now you've got your choice of cutting through the streets or the skies above them. It doesn't matter which you choose, really — no one

gets items there faster than you do. So now, it's courier runs for the boss during the day, and for more important folks at night. The money's good, the satisfaction's better, and the fact that you're actually making a living at this annoys the hell out of Mom and Dad. What more could you ask for?

Concept: You're a speed-freaking adrenaline junkie, and there's nothing you like better than cutting it *this* close to the edge. Just getting the package there on time doesn't do it for you, you need to be first, fastest, and best. Looking good is important, but making other couriers look bad by comparison — now that's a kick.

Roleplaying Hints: There's no problem you can't accelerate away from or de-tour around. Worst comes to worst, ditch the skin and fly, brother — there's nothing that can hold you back once you take to the skies. Speed is your thrill, that and the knowledge that no one out there is faster than you. Keep an eye out for new work and trouble that might interfere with current assignments, but on the whole, you don't give a rat's ass about the big picture. Yeah, there's a war going on somewhere, but there always has been and there always will be. In the meantime, you've got a delivery to make.

Equipment: Rebuilt bike, Quicksilver T-shirt, tire iron, fanny pack



Tabloid Reporter

Quote: Are you positive it wasn't Elvis, ma'am? No? Can I quote you on that?

Prelude: They had names for you back in school: Snitch, Sneak, things like that. Part of it was because you were smaller and skinnier than the rest of the kids, and thus different. The rest came from the fact that, well, you were a snitch — and a damned good one. You knew which boys were sneaking dirty magazines into the locker room, who was smoking pot after gym class, who was doing whose homework — all of the things you could turn into a little ready cash by a judicious application of blackmail.

One of the teachers whom you snitched to on a regular basis (only on the guys who welshed or tried to beat you up; you had your rules) thought it might be worthwhile to try to direct your tendencies, and got you onto the school paper. It clicked for you, and from then on you wanted nothing more than to be a journalist. *New York Times* columns, Pulitzers — you could see them all. You graduated and soared into college, impressing journalism professors and turning the campus paper into your personal playground. Everything was going according to plan. Everything was cool.

Then you had your First Change, and everything went to hell.

After finding yourself sitting on top of the English department building wearing a full suit of feathers, you realized that suddenly your neat little plan for your life didn't work any more. There were other things to consider, a bigger picture to observe. So you changed your direction. After finishing your degree, you went straight to the newspaper tabloid rags and applied for a job. Bemused that a graduate of a prestigious program like yours would want to work for the *Weekly Inquiring News*, the editor of the first rag you hit snapped you up. Since then, it's been nothing but Jesus in the kudzu and Elvis at the swap meet, but you're happy — and well hidden.

Concept: You're trolling for information on the unlikely in a sea of the impossible. Sure, you get stories about sweet potatoes that look like the Virgin Mary, but every so often some valuable info comes along. Plus, you're in a perfect position to disseminate information to the WIN's subscriber base of Corax. Let's face it, no other tabloid services that market niche as well as you do.

Roleplaying Hints: You've got the Socratic method like a virus — questions, questions and more questions. There's always a crunchy truth center you can dig out from the chocolate coating most people provide, and you don't care if you get messy finding that one magical nugget. Some people are put off by your abruptness; others find you refreshingly direct. As long as you get the story, though, you don't care if people think you're an alien from the planet of the exploding penguins — you've got priorities.

Equipment: Minirecorder, pilot PDA, lockpicks, camera

CORAX

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: *Homid*
Camp:
Geographic Origin:

Nature:
Demeanor:
Concept: *Tabloid Reporter*

Attributes

Physical

Strength ●●●●●
Dexterity ●●●●●
Stamina ●●●●●

Social

Charisma ●●●●●
Manipulation ●●●●●
Appearance ●●●●●

Mental

Perception ●●●●●
Intelligence ●●●●●
Wits ●●●●●

Abilities

Talents

Alertness ●●●●●
Athletics ○○○○○
Brawl ●○○○○
Dodge ●●○○○
Empathy ○○○○○
Expression ●●●●●
Flight ●○○○○
Primal-Urge ○○○○○
Streetwise ●○○○○
Subterfuge ●○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken ○○○○○
Drive ○○○○○
Etiquette ●○○○○
Firearms ●○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Melee ○○○○○
Performance ●○○○○
Repair ○○○○○
Stealth ●○○○○
Survival ●○○○○

Knowledges

Computer ●○○○○
Enigmas ●●●●●
Investigation ●●●●●
Law ●○○○○
Linguistics ●●○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Occult ●●●●●
Politics ●○○○○
Rituals ●○○○○
Science ●●○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Contacts ●●●●●
Resources ●○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

Gifts

Morse
Voice of the Mimic
Word Beyond

Gifts

Renown

Glory

○○○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Honor

●○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Wisdom

●●○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Rank

Rage

●○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Gnosis

●●●●●●○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Miscellany

GOLD AFFECTS CORAX
AS SILVER AFFECTS
GAROU

Corvidocentric

Quote: Come on, monkeyboy — you're toting around so much lard anyone watching you fly would think your bones weren't hollow! Now give me 20 laps around the campus, and no landing!

Prelude: You don't remember too much before the Change hit you — your mama knew you were different, but taught you the winged ways as best as she could. There weren't any other Corax around the park where you nested, but there were plenty of humans — and you got to watch them day in and day out. You got to watch them trash the place unthinkingly. You got to see the muggings and the rapes, the pollution and the foulness, and you took it all in, every last detail. You didn't know why, but you knew it was important.

When the Change finally came, everything fell into place. Other Corax finally found you and educated you, and showed you what it was you needed to do. You shared what you'd seen with them, and they spread the word. Before long, the park was cleansed. They, in turn, entrusted you with a sacred duty — to train others as you'd been trained.

However, more and more of the new Corax you saw weren't up to your standards. They were monkeys, born and bred. So you found yourself being extra hard on the students who came to you with opposable thumbs. Those who broke, well, the Wyrn would have broken them anyway. And those who survived your training? Someday, they might even show enough merit to overcome their species.

At least, that's what you hope. In the meantime, there's work to do.

Concept: The business of being Gaia's eyes and ears on the world is something you take very seriously. There's no time for fun and games as far as you're concerned (though there is time to purse the occasional shiny thing — you never know when it'll be relevant). The monkeys have no idea what they're doing — damned groundhuggers, the lot — and it's up to you to get it right.

Roleplaying Hints: If it was born a mammal, you haven't got the time for it. Sure, you and all the other Corax have to work together for Gaia, yadda yadda yadda, but you'll be damned if you take any lip from any fur-bearing, flea-ridden, sensitive-spot-scratching jumped-up chimp. If anyone's going to be in charge of any joint ops, it's going to be you, and no biped's going to get any kind of responsibility — or respect — while you're around.

Equipment: Binoculars, notepad, bag lunch



CORAX™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: *Corvid*
Camp:
Geographic Origin:

Nature:
Demeanor:
Concept: *Corvidcentric*

Attributes

Physical

Strength ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Dexterity ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Stamina ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Social

Charisma ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Manipulation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Appearance ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Mental

Perception ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Intelligence ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Wits ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Abilities

Talents

Alertness ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Athletics ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Brawl ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Dodge ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Empathy ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Expression ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Flight ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Primal-Urge ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Streetwise ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Subterfuge ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Skills

Animal Ken ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Drive ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Etiquette ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Firearms ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Leadership ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Melee ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Performance ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Repair ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Stealth ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Survival ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Knowledges

Computer ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Enigmas ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Investigation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Law ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Linguistics ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Medicine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Occult ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Politics ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Rituals ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Science ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Advantages

Backgrounds

Fetish ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Kinfolk ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Rites ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Gifts

Enemy ways
Raven's Gleaning
Voice of the Mimic
Word Beyond

Gifts

Renown

Glory

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Honor

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Wisdom

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Rank

Rage

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Gnosis

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Willpower

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Health

Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Miscellany

GOLD AFFECTS CORAX
AS SILVER AFFECTS
GAROU

Birds of a Feather: Notable Corax

The idea of "notable Corax" is somewhat misleading — after all, every Corax knows about durn near every other Corax. It's part of the job/species description. But there are a few birds who have, by virtue of sheer audacity and skill, managed to establish themselves as avatars of everything a Corax should be. Stories (okay, more stories than usual) are told about these Corax as educational exercises, songs sung about them and occasionally independent graphic novels written, just as a way to tweak the Pentex-owned major comics company.

However, Corax are only famous as such to other Corax. Despite the fact that the were-ravens have no real enemies among the other Bête, despite the fact that the Garou actively seek alliance with the Corax, and that Corax are much more vicious fighters than anyone suspects, there still are very few of them. Furthermore, a high profile isn't conducive to effective information-gathering — a well-known Corax ends up dead, neutralized or worse.

With that in mind, here are a few of the most notorious Corax. You may have heard of them, but you can be sure *they've* heard of *you*.

Einarr Flies-Like-Smoke

Contrary to the evidence presented in certain revisionist history text, Leif Ericsson was not the Viking who set foot on what would someday be called North America. That honor falls to Ericsson's navigator, a corvid-breed Corax who adopted the human name Einarr before signing on with Ericsson to go a'Viking.

(**Historical Note:** The first Viking to see North America was a trader named Bjarni Herjulfson, who got really, really lost while trying to visit his father in Greenland, but he was in such a rush to get home that he never even disembarked to explore the new land. He did, however, tell people what he had seen, inspiring Ericsson to mount a voyage. Bjarni, incidentally, was Corax Kinfolk and word of his little side trip quickly spread throughout the "family.")

Having long been in contact with the Corax of the Pure Lands, Einarr originally inserted himself into Leif's crew to steer the ship away from Newfoundland. Unfortunately, Einarr's plan to steer the ship in circles until Leif was forced to return to Greenland hit a weather-related snag: Storms drove the longboat before them and Einarr had no choice but to steer the ship to safety. Ironically, Einarr's skill as a navigator was such that had he not been on board, the ship probably would have foundered and the semi-disastrous interactions between Vikings and "Skraelings" would never have occurred.

Einarr himself resigned himself to helping Leif out, and eventually Ericsson's expedition stopped at all three places



Herjulfson had described. The longboat was then turned for home, where the crew received a hero's welcome

— except for poor Einarr, who from that day forward had abuse heaped on him relentlessly for being possibly the biggest screwup in the history of the breed. The other Corax never forgave poor Einarr for his change of heart, and after a few years, he adopted human form more-or-less permanently so as to hide from the relentless derision.

Einarr's long been in his grave, but his name lives on. Any time a Corax fouls something up spectacularly, he's referred to as a "Little Einarr." It is believed that Gaia, in her mercy, kept Einarr's soul from reincarnating, simply to spare him incarnations of abuse, because even a thousand years later, the Corax haven't forgotten.

Esmerelda Northrup-Medina: CEO, the Hermetic Society of Swift Light

The current head of the Hermetic Society of Swift Light (since renamed Helios Overnight Services — NASDAQ symbol HOSer), Esmerelda has been trying to give the job away, to no avail, for the last 14 years. During that time, she's also turned it into a highly successful, publicly traded courier service that turns an obscene profit every year. Esmerelda herself has retired from active service, leaving all but the most vital deliveries to her human and Kinfolk employees. On those rare occasions when The



Old Lady (as they respectfully call her — when her office door is closed) actually gets involved with the legwork, there's something truly serious going down. Past cargoes she's handled personally include Grand Klaives, blueprints of Pentex corporate HQ, weapons-grade plutonium and other, more important things.

Now pushing 45, Esmerelda keeps herself fit enough for active service. Her black hair is kept short, and while she usually wears business suits, the dress code around the office is casual — just in case. You never know when a dissatisfied client or supernatural entity is liable to burst in, demanding a refund. This has happened twice; the firm's offices have relocated twice as a result.

While custom demands that only one Corax work for the Hermetic Society of Swift Light at a time, Esmerelda has an open-door policy to others of her breed. Furthermore, she has been known to commission freelancers and subcontract runs to give other Corax a hand — or when she doesn't feel like risking one of her own people.

In a sense, Helios Overnight is just a sideline for Esmerelda. To no one's surprise, her real business is the collection and collation of information. Every time someone hires (or inquires about) Helios, Esmerelda creates an in-depth file on the client. These files are constantly updated and cross-referenced, and some fascinating tidbits of information have come to light that way. Most Corax

know about Esmerelda's database, but none have ever seen it. That doesn't mean that none have *tried*, merely that none have pulled it off.

Esmerelda and her husband, Ivan, have one child, a boy named Diego. Diego's already been earmarked for the Change, and many Corax believe that, contrary to her protests, Esmerelda has decided that Helios Overnight will be handed down to Diego as an inheritance. While there's no custom specifically preventing this sort of thing, it's never been an issue because before Esmerelda, no one's managed to hang onto the Hermetic Society for more than a couple of years.

Raina Fader: Private Eye

Raina's interested in the practical application of information, more so than perhaps any other Corax. A private investigator who operates out of Hartford (convenient flights to Boston and New York — it doesn't take her more than a couple of hours to get to either), Raina's business is equal parts corporate espionage and divorce cases. The former are lucrative, the latter are fun, and so she gets the best of both worlds.

An accomplished basketball player in college, Raina is almost six feet tall and still maintains tip-top playing condition. (She recently had to turn down an inquiry from the WNBA.) Her one concession to vanity is the fact that she keeps her hair long. While this has proved to be a



handicap on a couple of occasions, Raina has steadfastly refused to modify her "look." This "look" also means working clothes of a long black raincoat, a hat that shades her eyes, and black leather gloves; Raina herself refers to it as "Sam Spade goes goth," but claims that it's the only sensible choice for the unpredictable Hartford weather.

Recently, Raina's been letting the business of trailing unfaithful husbands slide a little bit, while putting in more and more time on the case of a baby-food manufacturer that's been shipping tainted product to Africa as "charity." As one of her best informants has already been killed during the course of the investigation, Raina's decided that this one is personal.

Sparkles: Watchman at the Tower

No one knows what Sparkles' real name is. He's raven-breed, and delights in playing to the worst stereotypes of his kind — specifically, the corvids' legendary obsession with shiny objects. Legend has it that some poor fool once showed Sparkles — in Homid form for the first time — a cartoon wherein the hero outwitted a crow who kept on shouting for his "Sparklies!" Apparently, Sparkles was so amused and/or appalled that he took his name from that cinematic masterpiece, and has been going by his *nom de animation* ever since.

Sparkles is part of the flock that makes the Tower of London its base of operations, and is universally acknowledged as the ringleader of that merry band of idiots. When not showing off for tourists or dive-bombing assorted tour-guides and Beefeater guards, Sparkles also coordinates all of the Corax of Britain into a highly disciplined (if not always sober) information-gathering force, and his contacts extend up into Scotland and across the Irish Sea as well. If anything supernatural happens in the British Isles, Sparkles knows about it within the hour, and the Corax response (if one is demanded) is underway shortly thereafter.

In his native form, Sparkles is an astonishingly large raven. On those infrequent occasions when he switches to Homid, Sparkles keeps his hair short and spiky, and has a series of tattoos in knotwork patterns up both arms. He's thin, but wiry, and wears round glasses with mirrored lenses.

There are only two reasons for Sparkles to drop into Homid form. (He even prefers to read the paper in bird shape; he'll perch behind someone reading on a park bench and do an over-the-shoulder read.) One reason is to meet with one of his near-infinite information sources, most of whom would be rather disconcerted to discover they're swapping news with a bird. For these folks, Sparkles has a variety of guises he'll adopt: drug dealer, band promoter, music magazine reporter, police informant, and he'll often go through four or five fictional identities in a single afternoon.

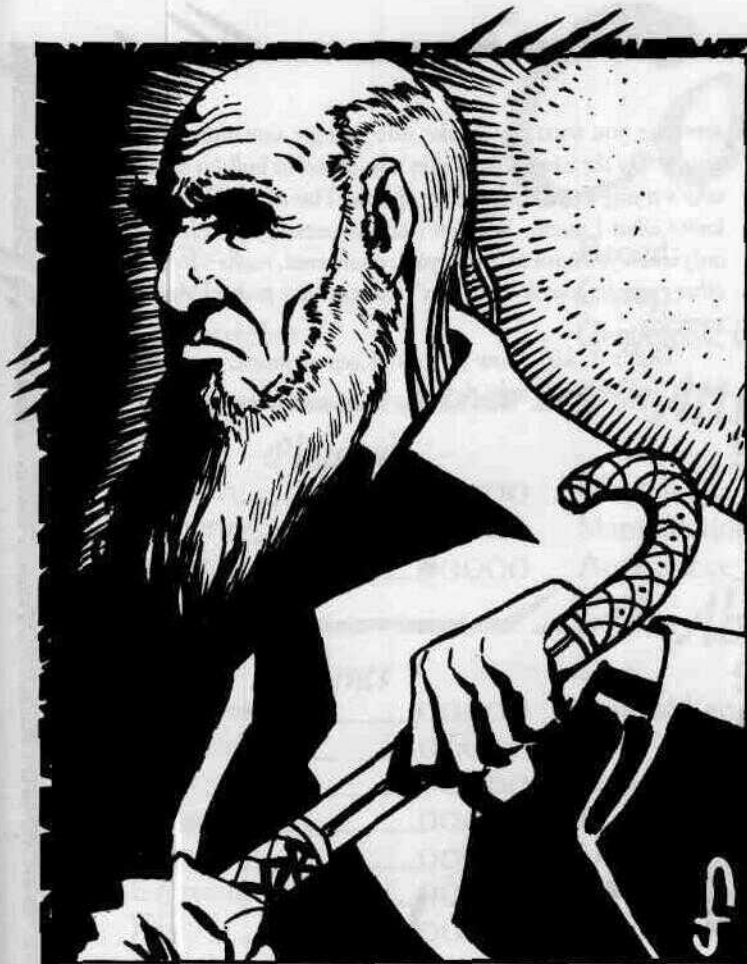
The other reason Sparkles takes off the feathers is that he's an absolute stone-cold ska fan, and if there's a good show (or even a not-so-good one that promises an energetic pit), he's there. He's even taken a turn or two behind the mike, but his bands always fall apart as more pressing business interferes with the rehearsal schedule.

Alexei Kovalenko: Spymaster of the Evil Empire

There are only two things that Alexei Kovalenko really, truly hates. One is his job, the other is his species. Mind you, there are plenty of things Alexei *dislikes* — the winter cold, the summer heat, the prevalence of those arrogant Shadow Lords in Kiev these days — and he'll complain endlessly about any and all of them to anyone who'll listen. Indeed, Alexei's nickname among his fellow spies and Corax is "The Cave of Winds," for he never, ever stops moaning about the latest thorn in his side.

Alexei is a spy, you see (though he prefers the term "information transfer facilitator"), and a very good one. While there's no actual proof that he was connected to the Ames or Walker spy cases, he occasionally drops details into conversation that even the special prosecutors haven't uncovered yet. For forty years and more, he has sat in his





dingy little office and done his best to manipulate the destiny of nations. Motivated not by patriotism but by sheer intellectual fascination with the game, Alexei now sells his services to the highest bidder. He has friends and business associates in nearly every major intelligence agency in the world, and all of them owe him at least one or two favors.

The problem, as Alexei sees it, is that while he's very good at finding things out, and very good at fulfilling Gaia's mission for the Corax, and even very good at more mundane things like avoiding getting shot by angry CIA agents, he doesn't *like* doing any of them. It's just that spying (and being a Corax) was the family business, and he was expected to follow in his father's footsteps, and, well, it's now the turn of the millennium and what can he do?

Now nearing 70 years of age, Alexei is still spry and in remarkably good shape. Whip-thin like all Corax, he has a shaggy white beard that would do a turn-of-the-century Cossack proud. Alexei's other nickname is "the Priest," as he usually dresses in simple black and keeps himself immaculately groomed. The one item Alexei always carries with him is a cane that, to no one's surprise, contains a sword. Alexei has a variety of blades that fit the sword-cane, at least one of which is silver.

Malachi Sunchaser

Though now shrinking with each generation, the Corax Kinfolk villages in the Pacific Northwest are still vibrant and vital. Malachi is one of those Corax who sees to that. While born to corvid stock, Malachi has been spending more and more time as a human, simply to ensure the survival of the culture that raised him. There are some things — legal documents to sign, meetings to attend or disrupt, and so on — that are best attended by a man instead of a bird.

When not working to protect the fishing, land and other rights of the Kinfolk villages, Malachi spends much of his time in the Umbra. Popular wisdom holds that if his work on Earth were ever done, Malachi would "forget the sun" in a flash. Affairs of the breed, apart from those related to the Kinfolk villages, hold less and less interest for Malachi these days, while he speaks more and more reverently of the wonders found in the Deep Umbra.

In human form, Malachi usually wears a blue work shirt, jeans and boots. He's over six feet tall, with his hair pulled back in a braid that snakes halfway down his back, and features that mark him as being from the Quinault reservation on the Olympia peninsula. Malachi is unusually taciturn for a Corax, and at Parliaments, he's quite content to let others ramble on for days while he just notes all the useful tidbits.



Parting Shot

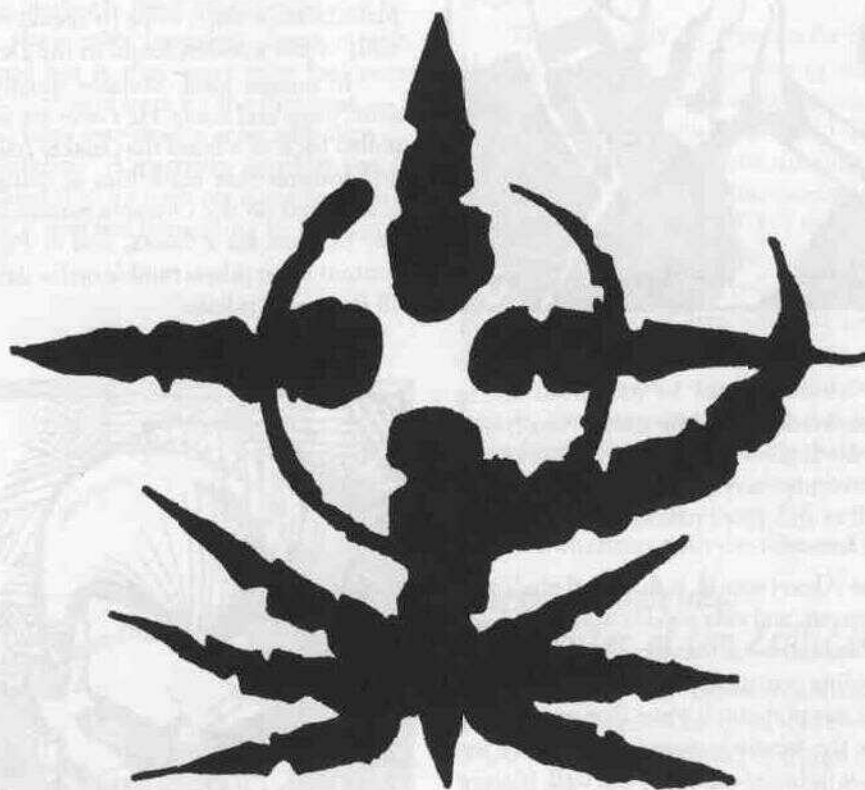
So that's the basics, kid. The rest is details.

Of course, details are the important things. That's where the devil—or the Wyrn—lives, in the details, and it's our job to pick him out. But now you've got enough to work with so that you'll know when something's out of whack.

Always trust your gut instincts, kiddo. If something feels wrong, it probably is wrong. Never hesitate to share info with

someone you trust, but make sure you get something back in return. By the same token, don't be afraid to bullshit someone who's trying to take advantage of you. This ain't CNN, if you know what I mean. We don't do unnecessary freebies. Fight only when you have to, but if you're cornered, make sure it's the other guy who goes down. I don't want to have to drink your eyes someday.

That's it, kid. Now go to it. Keep in touch, watch your back, and remember the details.



CORAX™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed:
Camp:
Geographic Origin:

Nature:
Demeanor:
Concept:

Attributes

Physical

Strength ●○○○○
Dexterity ●○○○○
Stamina ●○○○○

Social

Charisma ●○○○○
Manipulation ●○○○○
Appearance ●○○○○

Mental

Perception ●○○○○
Intelligence ●○○○○
Wits ●○○○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness ○○○○○
Athletics ○○○○○
Brawl ○○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○
Empathy ○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Flight ○○○○○
Primal-Urge ○○○○○
Streetwise ○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken ○○○○○
Drive ○○○○○
Etiquette ○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Melee ○○○○○
Performance ○○○○○
Repair ○○○○○
Stealth ○○○○○
Survival ○○○○○

Knowledges

Computer ○○○○○
Enigmas ○○○○○
Investigation ○○○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ○○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Occult ○○○○○
Politics ○○○○○
Rituals ○○○○○
Science ○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
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Gifts

Gifts

Renown

Glory

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Honor

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Wisdom

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Rank

Rage

○○○○○○○○○○○○

□□□□□□□□□□

Gnosis

○○○○○○○○○○○○

□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

○○○○○○○○○○○○

□□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Miscellany

GOLD AFFECTS CORAX
AS SILVER AFFECTS
GAROU

CORAX™

—Homid—

No
Change

Difficulty: 6

—Crinos—

Strength (+1) _____
Dexterity (+1) _____
Stamina (+1) _____
Appearance (-1) _____
Manipulation (-3) _____
Perception (+3) _____

Difficulty: 6
INCITE REDUCED
DELIRIUM

—Corvid—

Strength (-1) _____
Dexterity (+1) _____
Manipulation (-3) _____
Perception (+4) _____

Difficulty: 6

Other Traits

OOOOO
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OOOOO

Fetishes

Item: _____ ☐ Dedicated Level _____ Gnosis _____
Power: _____
Item: _____ ☐ Dedicated Level _____ Gnosis _____
Power: _____
Item: _____ ☐ Dedicated Level _____ Gnosis _____
Power: _____

Rites

Combat

Maneuver/Weapon	Roll	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip

Brawling Chart

Maneuver	Roll	Diff	Damage
Body Slam	Dex+Brawl	7	Special
Claw	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength+2†
Eye Pluck	Dex+Brawl	9	Strength+2† +Special
Grapple	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength
Kick	Dex+Brawl	7	Strength+1
Punch	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength

†These maneuvers do aggravated damage.

Armor: _____

CORAX™

Merits & Flaws

Merit	Type	Cost	Flaw	Type	Bonus

Expanded Background

Allies

Other People's Secrets

Contacts

Past Life

Kinfolk

Resources

Possessions

Gear (Carried):

Equipment (Owned):

Sparkly Things

Experience

TOTAL:

Gained From:

TOTAL SPENT:

Spent On:

History

Prelude

Description

Hair: _____

Eyes: _____

Race: _____

Nationality: _____

Sex: _____

Height | Weight

Homicide:	
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Crinos:	
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Corvid: _____

Battle Scars:

More Secrets

Character Sketch