Legends of the Garou

Ill Wind

The caern was lost.

Darius Quiet-Moon had no more hope left, even as he drew himself up against a tree. The Dancers had been too many, too quickly. He'd thought the caern would have had more time — according to one pack, the Dancers had conducted a successful raid against the pleasure-cult of magi and their hangers-on across town only last week. Darius could have sworn that the Dancers would have been at play with their new captives for longer. Now they were here.

Three of them surrounded him. The two smaller ones — a neatly groomed, bespectacled man still in Homid, and a stooped Crinos with some sort of priestly torc around its neck — flanked the third as if they were a fighter escort. And the third — Darius recognized her, even in Glabro.

"Zhyzhak."

Her mouth crooked slightly upwards, a quiet smile that belied the raging fires in her eyes.

The Homid-form Dancer spoke, in a voice without inflection, emotion or even interest. "So. Your infamy has spread even to Gaian ears. How very memorable you must be, Zhyzhak." He shifted, his body language ready but unconcerned. "Desperation is no excuse for poor planning, Darius. You make an ineffectual Caern Warder."

Darius shook his head. *How? They know too much!*

The Crinos nodded, spitting words in an obscene dialect of the Garou speech. "No-Soul speaks true. Your Kinfolk may not be here, but they are not safe. The Hive will find them soon enough." He waved a hand in a dismissive gesture. "Not our business, of course. We were just here to ensure success."

"I thought you weren't local," Darius said in a low voice. *Thank Gaia they kept talking,* he thought. *Gave me a chance to heal. If I maul one of them quickly enough, maybe I can escape....* His head snapped up, and he tensed to leap at the still-Homid Dancer.

Zhyzhak shook her head abruptly, lunged forward, snarled a rising, strangled cry and struck. Her fist crashed through Darius' sternum in a spray of bone chips and blood; his back distended as the impossibly powerful blow bent his spine outward. Darius choked, slid backwards off her forearm, and hit the ground a human corpse, eyes staring beatifically at the sky.

The night was still then. There was no breeze to stir the air; the smells of bile and blood and torn bowels hung stagnantly over the tiny valley. Only a few low grunts and tearing noises spilled across the battlefield: the surviving Dancers, finishing with the corpses of their victims. Patches of balefire flickered here and there, making the shadows writhe obscenely.

Zhyzhak, thorned whip around her neck, flanked by her two packmates, strode into the greenish light and rested her fists on her hips. Her stern glare passed over the battlefield, finally resting on a mauled Crinos carcass heaped near the human-form body of a caern defender. She moved forward again, stopping only when the three of them were standing over the corpse of their once-packmate.

No-Soul kicked the torn carcass in the side. "The Father came and rode the Ragabash at the end. It meant his death."

Nhaukh spat carefully into the pool of blood and fluids caking around the corpse's eye sockets. "And yet he never wanted to die any other way." His voice became reverent; his eyes seemed to focus on something far below where the corpse lay. "From the loins of the Defiler you sprang, child of Corruption. Though a sterile seed, you grew into poison in the throat of the World-Bitch. Be damned with you, and swift be your journey."

He raised his head, turned, and gestured toward one of the half-wolves crouched nearby. "Take Bleeding-Eyes' corpse and heap it with the fresh kills. He served the tribe well in life; let him serve it well one last time by fattening the cubs with his flesh."

A soft cough answered from behind Nhaukh as the shadowy Dancers crept forward for the body. "My pardon," offered the homid, stepping deferentially into the small circle of Zhyzhak's pack. He was a dark-haired man in neat clothing, smooth-complected and green-eyed. "Have I arrived during a sentimental moment?"

"Pirog." No-Soul's voice was as flat as ever.

The newcomer smiled, not taking his eyes from Zhyzhak. "My congratulations. You are truly as fearsome as the Galliards say." His gaze ran down her powerful, blood-spattered frame, from tangled ponytail, past bustier and miniskirt, down to her bare feet. "I am honored to have my pack at your side for this."

"A small enough raid," Nhaukh carefully replied. "Certainly you have seen more impressive caerns fall."

Pirog shrugged. "I and my pack were fortunate enough to participate in the capture of Shigalu Monastery, yes. But there were many packs of us, and fomori besides, and even a number of human footsoldiers." His smile glittered in the balefires' light. "A time of great Power, to be sure, but somehow not as personally exciting as this."

Zhyzhak spat between Pirog's feet, then turned and marched away. Pirog's eyes widened, then narrowed. "Did she just challenge me?" His voice was equal parts incredulity and confusion.

"She tired of the conversation," replied No-Soul. "You become used to her little conversational foibles after a time."

• • •

"DAMMIT!" Zhyzhak was shouting again — which, essentially, meant that she was speaking with her packmates. "WHO IN THE DRAGON'S NAME CARES IF THOSE ECSTATICS ARE GOOD BREEDING STOCK, OR EASILY BROKEN BREEDING STOCK, OR WYRM KNOWS WHAT ELSE? WHY THE FUCK ARE WE FOCUSING ON THE NEXT GENERATION OF DANCERS WHEN WE CAN WIN THE WAR NOW?"

Nhaukh sighed; No-Soul only shrugged. "I agree with you, Zhyzhak," Nhaukh offered. "The time is soon upon us. If we—"

"FUCK'S SAKE, NHAUKH! I WASN'T ASKING YOU TO KISS MY ASS!" She slammed her fist into her palm with a pop like a tiny thunderclap. On impulse, she snatched the Devilwhip from her belt and stormed from the small tunnel granted to the pack.

The caverns hosting the Spider's Bile Hive were almost unlit, and the packed earth absorbed the sound of Zhyzhak's feet as she stomped angrily down the tunnel. In fact, the quiet nature of her own footprints only angered the Ahroun further, and she began lashing the earthen walls with her whip as she continued.

She stopped suddenly and paused. A half-familiar scent had inched its way through the swirling haze of her anger.

Pirog shot from the shadows, smashing the Devilwhip from her hand with one paw, slamming her to the ground with the other. His massive head paused, drinking in the sight of her eyes burning with anger and surprise, and then his jaws closed around her neck. The message was clear — *move, even shapeshift, and I take your throat out.*

He drew up one of his rear paws, then raked across her hips, drawing blood and tearing her skirt away. Slaver ran from his mouth, running across her neck. *I make you mine, Zhyzhak,* he thought, almost as if she could hear him. *I make you mine and your pack is mine with you. The law of dominance.*

Then Pirog heard a throaty chuckle. It startled him, and his jaws unconsciously relaxed.

And then Zhyzhak tore her Homid hand free from his Crinos talon, seized the back of his skull, and *hurled him across the hall.*

Pirog had only time to half-roll to all fours, wondering how she had managed such strength, before she crashed into him again. He felt his femur snap, his ribs crumple, his ear torn free of his head by her teeth. He tried to hurl her away, to do *something*, but her palm smashed into his nose, splintering his snout and shattering his thoughts into a cloud of pain.

How can she do this? he deliriously thought. *She— in the Homid—* His hand bent backwards with a snap, and he half-realized that peculiar sensation was the Hive air on his exposed bone. Then he knew little else.

Halfway through her work, Zhyzhak went into Crinos and began shouting, half-articulate howls and oaths that echoed down the spiraling tunnels.

Finally, she stood again, melting back into Homid, blood caked across her form. The last echoes of her final shrieks lingered in the distance, then died. No-Soul and Nhaukh coalesced from the shadows, flanking her as always.

Zhyzhak spat something unrecognizable to one side, a meaty splat the only clue to its origin.

"BASTARD!"



"Of course." No-Soul regarded the corpse as one might study a peculiar insect. "He could have amounted to great things."

"A waste," agreed Nhaukh. "The Father should have gifted him with patience; his desire to dominate and lead led him to cross one more chosen than he."

"PATIENCE, MY ASS! WE DON'T NEED ANY FUCKING IDIOTS LIKE THAT BASTARD IN OUR HIVE! LET HIS DAMNED SOUL ROT IN THE ABYSS AND GET OUT OF OUR WAY!"

She snapped one hand to one side, spattering drops of Pirog's blood across the far wall. "HIS WHOLE DAMN PACK HAD BETTER DAMN WELL KISS MY ASS NOW, OR THEY'LL GO WITH HIM INTO THE DRAGON'S MOUTH!" Heedless of her near-nudity or the blood smeared across her, she stormed back down the passage toward the Hive's heart. Nhaukh spared one last glance for Pirog's shattered remnants, then followed.

No-Soul lingered. Crouching over the torn and scattered hunks of meat, he reached out with one hand, turning over this gobbet, that raw chunk. Finally, he nodded to himself and straightened, Pirog's half-crushed skull in his hand.

A thick glob of blood and hair fell from the mangled head before No-Soul spoke.

"Your kind is a failed breed, you realize." His face was expressionless, his soft voice almost a monotone. "Our Hive respected your intelligence. Your pride wasn't unwarranted. But there was just too much of it."

He turned the skull over in his hands. "We would have had a use for you. The war is going to begin soon. If you had been more like Zhyzhak and less like the wretched shocktroops of the Hives..." His voice trailed off, and he shook his head. "But then again, there is only one of her. Nhaukh says she will crush the last Gaian King under her heel in the final battles — or so the visions go."

He straightened his fingers and let the skull roll free. It struck the ground with a hideously wet, soft cracking noise. He turned and began to walk away, then paused and looked back over his shoulder.

"You should have waited. The war will come in my lifetime."

Another Dancer might have paused to smile. No-Soul simply paused.

"But, of course, not in yours."

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A Note

We confess: As foul as this book may be, it could be a lot fouler. In many cases, we've opted to leave the full extent of the Wyrm's particular depravities to your imagination. There's really two reasons.

The first is pretty simple: using your imagination to fill in the blanks creates things that are much more personal and effective than we might be able to manage. You know what scares you most, so you know what themes to emphasize for maximum horror. This book's a blueprint — not a house. You get to hang the paintings to your taste.

The second reason's fairly simple, too. Admittedly, if we wanted to be thorough, this book could easily be Black Dog, shrinkwrapped, and only sold to people 35 and older who are wearing gloves. However, it's up to the individual to determine just how much of the Wyrm's spiritual corruption should be graphically visible in the average story. You might find it appropriate to have the Black Spiral Dancers carry the captured characters back to the Hive, gang-rape them, flay them and feed them to a Thunderwyrm — and describe the whole process — but that kind of shock value can quickly turn the game into absolutely no fun at all, depending on the participants' morés. **Werewolf** is at heart a game — *entertainment* — and if your players feel that certain scenes are inappropriate and more disturbing than entertaining, that's their right. Use your discretion.

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Introduction: Shifting Scales

Man and the animals are merely a passage and channel for food, a tomb for other animals, a haven for the dead, giving life by the death of others, a coffer full of corruption.

— Leonardo da Vinci

How to Use This Book

Book of the Wyrm, Second Edition is a resource for the Storyteller to populate stories with antagonists of the vilest tradition. Storytellers are encouraged to take the material herein, play with it, modify it, and make it as horrific or loathsome as you believe your players can appreciate while still having fun. However, this is more than a simple bestiary — inside are roleplaying notes, advice on setting the mood and theme to match your creations, hints on topics to explore with each new enemy and more. If you plan on focusing on the Wyrm's plots and minions over the course of a chronicle (which you actually don't *have* to, of course — the Garou Nation has plenty of internal conflict to drive years' worth of stories), this is very likely the book for you.

Legends of the Garou: Ill Wind sets the stage by giving a glimpse into a Black Spiral pack's operation, showcasing the strongest Garou warrior in the world — and the very poor company she gladly keeps.

The **Introduction: Shifting Scales** is, well, an introduction to the book, as well as guidelines for using the Wyrm and its servitors to best effect in your stories.

Chapter One: Cosmology studies the metaphysical aspects of the Wyrm, examining how exactly it came to be and where exactly it went wrong. Furthermore, this chapter contains an overview of Malfeas, the Umbral heart of the Wyrm's power.

Chapter Two: Human Pawns is a treatment of the various mortal agents that, wittingly or unwittingly, serve the Wyrm's purposes. The better part of the chapter details the corrupt megacorporation of Pentex, but also touches on independent cults of mortals in the thrall of the Wyrm's influences — including the demented conspiracy called the Seventh Generation.

Chapter Three: *In Nomine Vermiis* looks at the fallen tribe, the Black Spiral Dancers. From the history of their

tragic fall to the polluted litanies they uphold, this chapter contains whatever you need to add the diseased Dancers to your chronicle in as much detail as you can stomach.

Chapter Four: The Wretched examines the monstrous servants of the Wyrm, including fomori, Banes, and the hideous spawn of the Defiler's imagination.

Finally, the **Appendix: Dirty Tricks** contains an arsenal of tainted powers, weapons, and other nastiness useful for the vilest antagonist.

Why a Second Edition?

Good question. The most obvious reason is that the original **Book of the Wyrm** is a first edition book, and as such, just doesn't jibe with the rules of **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**'s second, streamlined edition. Pure and simple, eh?

But there's more to it than even that. It's been several years, and the **Werewolf** universe has grown in that time. Pentex has seen volatile change in its Board of Directors no less than twice. The Black Spiral Dancers' strength grows with each waning moon, and they gather in their tunnels in ever-increasing numbers. The Apocalypse races nearer at breakneck pace, and the End Times are already here.

You have to keep pace with the Wyrm, or you'll be crushed under its coils for sure.

Using the Wyrm in a Chronicle

It's easy to peg the Wyrm as "the bad guy." Sure, the Wyrm is responsible for all manner of villainy and disaster, but what truly makes it unique are all of the factors occurring behind the scenes.

The Wyrm is not a giant, evil brotherhood of wicked individuals bent on the destruction of Gaia. It is, instead, a corrupt entity, maddened by imprisonment in the webs of the Weaver, a natural force that has acquired powers beyond its original intent. In fact, it may be argued that the Wyrm is simply doing its job — albeit alarmingly too well.

The Wyrm is critical to the spirit of **Werewolf**; it is the Storyteller's greatest tool in giving a sense of purpose to the pack. What better motivation is there to keep a disparate group of werewolves together than a common enemy? As Gaia's chosen, the Garou exist to curtail the depredations of a natural power gone awry. Without the Wyrm, there is no need for the Garou.

That may be an oversimplification, but it's true. Since the existence of the Wyrm is so integral to the game and to the characters' motivations, it makes sense to get behind the Wyrm. It is more than a simple monster-generator, belching forth legions of malformed fomori. The Wyrm is a near-divine power, and its minions are as complex, if not more so, than anyone who stands against it.

What the Wyrm Does

The Wyrm is a force of entropy and decay. As part of the cosmological Triat, it fulfills a natural role: destruction. Left unchecked, the Wyld would plunge the world into utter chaos, spawning new patterns at random. If allowed to achieve preeminence, the Weaver would have thrust the world into stasis, as nothing would ever die and nothing new would rise to take the place of the fallen. The Wyrm, then is necessary to allow the cycle to continue.

Of course, it's not that simple. (Nothing in **Werewolf** ever is, now is it?) Long ago, when the Weaver went mad, it trapped the Wyrm in its webs, imprisoning the aspect of entropy in artificial strands never intended to hold it.

In the modern day, as the world teeters on the brink of Apocalypse and the Prophecy of the Phoenix rings truer and truer, the Wyrm possesses power unrivaled by any other entity a werewolf is likely to encounter. Fortunately — as much as is possible when dealing with the Wyrm — much of its energy is wasted. It is the classic blind, idiot god, often destroying without regard for a greater scheme while at other times concocting elaborate ruses.

How the Wyrm Operates

The Garou are creatures of rage, and their passion sometimes leads them toward overly simplistic deductions. If the Wyrm is bad, who cares about understanding it when it's the werewolves' purpose to curb its excesses?

You should. That is, if you want more depth to your stories than, "Okay, this week Fangs-of-Thunder and Kills-Quietly are walking down the street when six Banes surround them...."

Subtle and Overt

Not every Wyrm minion is a rampaging Bane or a slavering fomor with flailing tentacles. In fact, among the Wyrm's rank and file are faceless, oblivious drones, workaday joes like you and me who simply do what they do because it's their job. Naturally, this is less true among the bowels of Black Spiral Dancer Hives and Pentex First Teams, but those operations on the periphery have no need for gross displays of supernatural power. Wyrm-tainted business may range from the corrupt insurance agency to the beat cop who turns a blind eye to drug dealing in his jurisdiction in return for a kickback. It is in the hearts of the minor criminals and greedy masses that the Wyrm festers most. For example, the account analyst who embezzles a tiny bit each time his company's books go to the bank is a bulwark of Wyrm taint; he has justified his theft to himself. Surely, no one is getting hurt — his company makes billions of dollars, and they'll never notice a few missing here or there. It's not like he's mugging people in alleys, right?

Even those possessed of particularly powerful "boons" granted by the Wyrm need not be rubber-suited monstrosities. Most of the Wyrm's affairs are conducted

It's the Weaver's Fault

Much discord exists among the Garou as to what exactly occurred to madden the Weaver and poison the Wyrm. It is whispered among the great elders of the shapechangers that none can ever truly know what has gone in the primordial past, that only the Triat knows for sure and the revelation would destroy any lesser consciousness. Whatever the cause of the schism, the uncertainty is one of the greatest tragedies the Garou face: In spite of all their fervor, indoctrination and righteousness, are they doing the right thing? Or is their entire existence a mistake, spawned by imbalance in the cosmic order?

The oldest myths attribute a synergy to the Triat, albeit a doomed one. From the Wyld sprang random creation, meaningless potential and pointless genesis. The Weaver imposed order, setting purpose and structure to the Wyld's ceaseless conceptions, turning the potential into the actual. The Wyrm played a vital role in overseeing catabolism. When one of the creations' roles was fulfilled, it ceased to be, having served its purpose. Harmony, order and balance were preserved.

Somewhere along the way, the Weaver acquired consciousness. In the fashion of the chicken and the egg, it is unknown as to whether the Weaver's madness stemmed from her awakening, or that she only truly awakened after going insane. Regardless, it is widely acknowledged that the Weaver exceeded her station, and the resultant ascension of mankind and rise of cities are a direct result of this hubris. To accommodate all of this growth (with a corresponding need for more entropy), the Wyrm's resources were taxed. The Wyrm grew too quickly, and once it had achieved its purpose, it was left with a power that exceeded its need. Of course, before it had gone insane, the Wyrm found it against its purpose to destroy itself — by eliminating destruction, the Weaver and Wyld would have no balance.

Some Garou factions believe that the Weaver went mad as the Wyrm did its job, killing of the aspects of her organizational efforts. Others believe that the Weaver herself lusts for power, and went mad in a bid to spin her webs over the whole of the Wyld. Still others believe that the Weaver lost sanity due to the fact that the Wyrm was the final arbiter, destroying according to its own set of guidelines rather than the laws of causality imposed by the Weaver. Some even maintain that the Weaver is not to blame at all; she is simply defending herself from a Wyrm that is itself mad, and seeking to destroy the other aspects of the Triat in its own hubris or ignorance.

Surely, the answer may never fully be known. Can the force of order truly be to blame for the rampant corruption of the Triat we know today?

under the guise of legitimate business, where an acid-spraying reptilian horror would utterly fail to achieve the desired objective. Peruse the later pages of this book; for every obvious monster the Wyrm controls, there are numerous servitors — Enticers, mentally enhanced fomori, homid-form Black Spiral Dancers — who can easily go unnoticed among the masses.

Fooling the Wyrm

The Wyrm is a misnomer — it is actually a hydra, many-headed and insidious. It can be its own worst enemy (and often is), pitting some of its resources against others.

Clever Garou exploit this to their advantage. Those werewolves with contacts among the vampires sometimes cooperate with the Leeches to oppose more overt Wyrm machinations. In the nights of impending apocalypse, stories of Glass Walkers joining forces with financially inclined vampires to thwart Pentex operations are nigh legendary, and few well-connected Bone Gnawers are without their vampire contacts on the street level. Even the Shadow Lords have been known to make arrangements with the hoary vampires of the Old Country, but to what end is unknown. The Garou know the Leeches to be unnatural misfits, but many are not above using them toward their own ends. Of course, as immortal masters of duplicity, vampires are keen manipulators, and only the most foolish, overconfident, or wily of werewolves thinks he can take more from the vampires than he provides in return. Nonetheless, one-sided deals are sometimes necessary, and Devil's Deals with the Leeches occur almost nightly, much to the chagrin of more conservative Garou.

Likewise, within the halls of power of Wyrm-dominated institutions avarice and treachery are rampant. Because the Wyrm doesn't actually *control* individuals (see "Free Will," below), even the most carefully directed agenda likely involves multiple layers of individuals looking to screw over their superiors for their own gain. Consider that the Wyrm is the "dark side" or the quick route to power — and few who are as power-hungry as those who would sell their souls to the Wyrm are satisfied with a mere taste of power. This kind of corporate (in the case of Pentex and its subsidiaries) and tribal (with regard to the Black Spiral Dancers) Darwinism ensures a steady turnover of those who have what it takes at the expense of those who don't. This sort of jockeying occurs at all levels of Wyrm servitude, from the new-recruit First-Team member to the highest levels of Pentex operations (see **Monkeywrench! Pentex** and also Chapter Two of this book).

Free Will

The Wyrm, while ubiquitous, is not omnipresent, nor is it an all-powerful taskmaster. The Wyrm cannot be everywhere at once, though its influence may appear to be. At the same time, not every greedy tax officer or even serial killer is a puppet of the Wyrm.

In fact, relegating all evil to the machinations of the Wyrm does the Triat and **Werewolf** a huge disservice. If every unwholesome act is committed under the influence of Pure Evil™, the moral ambiguity of the World of Darkness disappears. "The Devil made me do it" strips the gravity from an act of atrocity, and too much leads to an inability to take the world seriously, much less fearfully.

The Wyrm is a corrupter — it (or to be precise, its "sprit" host) preys upon the seeds of impurity in all souls and turns them toward its own malicious ends. It doesn't tell potential pawns to commit acts of evil, it guides them toward making their own decisions. Anyone can have a legion of mindless drones, but the Wyrm would rather have loyal followers — they're better producers.

Consider a comparison: a fomor versus a potential drug addict. The fomor is already in the Wyrm's thrall, and likely working for Pentex or some other Wyrm-front. What good does it do the Wyrm to keep leaning on the fomor? On the other hand, the drug user represents a myriad of greater opportunities. First, the Wyrm or one of its hands (in whatever guise) makes the junkie feel as if he *needs* the drug, encouraging the addiction for its own purposes. The druggie consumes more and more, eventually becoming psychologically, if not physically, dependent upon his drug of choice. Agents of the Wyrm can provide more of the drug — for a price, demanding services from the junkie. Thus, the junkie actually has motivation to complete his Wyrm-tasks, and will do them better than a simple footsoldier told to undertake the task "because the Wyrm said so." Finally, after years of mistreatment and abuse, when the Wyrm has stripped and abused every last utility from its junkie, it dumps him on the city streets, where either the police will arrest him and tie him up in prison or rehabilitation facilities (which divert money away from ecological repair funds, education moneys, etc.) or the junkie scrabbles his own lifestyle together, selling drugs to new potential puppets to make enough money to get him off the streets. If nothing else, the junkie simply dies — and the Wyrm certainly won't be paying pension to the junkie's family, if any remains. On to the next victim, er, subject....

The Unknowable

It's worth restating that the Wyrm is not an anthropomorphized intelligence. It isn't something that has a face, a voice, or even an intellect that humans are capable of understanding. To use the ever-familiar *Star Wars* analogy, the Wyrm isn't some kind of Emperor Palpatine, exhorting everyone around him to do his bidding. In fact, if you want to use a *Star Wars* analogy, the Wyrm is more like the Dark Side — somehow corruptive, certainly malevolent, and very likely sentient in some form or another. However, the Dark Side never has any lines. It doesn't speak — it does, or rather it *is*.

Thinking of the Wyrm in such a light can help you avoid the pitfall of attributing a humanlike personality to it. The Garou can never really understand the Wyrm's thoughts, or those of any other Triat member, or even the real desires of Gaia and Luna themselves. The difference in mindset is roughly like the difference between your thoughts and the "thoughts" of one of your white blood cells. The Wyrm is so much more immense, so much more vast than any living

On "Sense Wyrm"

Most Storytellers already know what this sidebar is about. It's that oh-so-common Level One Gift, a must-have for every pack. It makes perfect sense that the Garou would commonly rely on it — and yet it's a "spoiler" of the first rank. It becomes increasingly hard to pull any surprises on your players when this Gift is involved, particularly when they're feeling paranoid. Don't worry, though. If done properly, Sense Wyrm can actually be your friend. How? Well, here are two suggestions that can make a difference.

• **Roll the dice yourself.** If the players roll, they automatically know if they succeeded or failed. If you roll, they have no idea if an area's clear — or if the dice were just unkind. And if they don't know — they begin to worry. (This also means you can fudge rolls if absolutely necessary; hey, we won't tell.)

• **Use it to build suspense.** What's scarier late at night, total silence on the other side of your door, or a faint scratching noise somewhere around the doorknob? Sense Wyrm is a *sense*, as stirring as any other. Just as you use unfamiliar or evocative sounds and smells to increase tension, you should do the same with this Gift. Don't just say "yes, you smell Wyrm-taint" or "no, you don't smell anything" — describe the layers of smells. If the players are in a nightclub, don't tell them that the guy in the Sesame Street T-shirt over there smells of the Wyrm. Tell them "There's a faint, stale smell of rot pervading the dance floor. It's a warm, familiarly sickly-sweet smell — but wait, there's a distant whiff of something stronger, something putrid — no, wait, it's gone." Now they have to work the room, getting closer to something that they don't recognize yet, and they *know* they'll have to come within arm's reach of it to pick it out. Hey, if you do it right, the players might eventually become able to recognize certain threats by the scent's subtexts — no, wait, this isn't necessarily a bad thing, either. After all, what does it say for the pack's purity if they're so familiar with Lady Aife's scent that they recognize it instantly? Sounds like cause for worry to us....

thing that you probably shouldn't even bother with determining its "motivations" — merely its motivations as those who know it would interpret them. Not even the Wyrm's most powerful Malfean servitors can ever really understand the insane, colossal struggles that rampage through the Wyrm's "mind."

And Garou, like humans, are prone to fear that which they don't understand. Admittedly, they have an excellent excuse in this situation, but the point is that this unknown quantity is a wonderful tool for horror stories. If you haven't already read a few of H.P. Lovecraft's "Mythos" stories, we heartily recommend you do so; they're excellent inspiration for entities of such immensely alien malevolence, and when it all comes down to it, it might just be easier to show you than to tell you.

Storytelling the Wyrm

I like to surround myself with people that are storytellers as well.

— Marilyn Manson, in an MTV interview with Matt Pinfield

It's easy to let the cosmology fall by the wayside and set up the Wyrm and its servants as mindless bad guys, waiting for the players' pack to come along and kill them like extras in a bad action movie. In fact, it's fine to do that, if that's all you want, but that's neither roleplaying, nor storytelling. You may as well line up plastic soldiers and shoot rubber bands at them.

Where the Wyrm is most effective is when it is central to the plot, theme or mood of the story at hand. We'll skip all that talk about dream sequences and flashbacks — it's in the core rulebook if you need a refresher. What we're after is how to really make your players loathe the great defiler and how to use it effectively in your chronicles.

Why the Wyrm?

One important aspect of establishing the Wyrm as a believable enemy is to have its minions make sense. No one simply decides to place themselves in the thrall of a cosmological embodiment of evil — the Wyrm's servants are as wide and varied as the reasons for which they serve.

Explore the backgrounds of the characters you're establishing as major enemies. Why would they have come under the Wyrm's influence? Are they aware of the Wyrm as a greater entity or are they relatively simple, having been corrupted subtly from within? Even very clever individuals who would have no knowledge of the spirit world may find themselves carrying out schemes for which they have understanding of the greater picture. As mentioned before, not every Pentex employee (and certainly not every subsidiary employee) knows what's truly going on behind the scenes. In a relatively low-powered chronicle, the players' characters may never need to confront anything more powerful than a corrupt city official or mid-level bureaucrat for a Pentex front. Characters like these probably don't know who they're *really* working for.

More powerful or insightful enemies will certainly have at least some inkling of what's going on, however, and this is where motivation becomes tantamount. An "evil" character without motive is dramatically weak, and serves no greater purpose to a story other than a simple obstacle to be overcome. In fact, very few people consider themselves outright "evil"; it is those who truly believe in what they are doing who are the most frightening when their plans become obvious.

In this way, the Wyrm becomes truly terrifying — it doesn't simply spew forth legions of fodder (well, it does, but they're not likely to be the ones calling the shots). It cultivates individual faith, playing upon impurities in its servants souls and convincing them that what they are doing is right. To the Wyrm, footsoldiers are expendable and infinite — corrupting a potential murderer or a spirit twisted by its environment is easy, and those individuals have an alarming lack of vision. What the Wyrm truly desires, however, is cunning, cagey servants who can outwit their foes. Greedy corporate board executives who can poison the environment, decadent law officials who turn a blind eye to corruption while diverting attention to other evils, influential media members who can cover up what would alarm the public: These are the valuable lieutenants the Wyrm prizes above entire cadres of blighted fomori.

The Wyrm prizes individual thinkers for many reasons. Despite its almost godlike nature, the Wyrm cannot be everywhere at once. By bringing powerful individuals under its sway, it ensures that its influence (rather than control, as the Wyrm seldom overtly "controls" anything) may continually expand. The Wyrm also chooses self-motivated individuals because "self-motivated," with a little effort, can be twisted into selfishness, which the Wyrm is in an easy position to satisfy. By giving its potential minions a taste of power, luxury or success, it lures them into servitude with the promise of future boons as well. Even the Garou themselves are not exempt from this tactic — many cubs have heard tales of Garou who needed a bit of an edge in a fight against the Wyrm and accepted Gifts and fetishes from curious individuals who later turned out to be *agents of* the Wyrm providing corrupted items and soul-corroding favors. Finally, those who would serve the Wyrm are fallible — something deep within them rots, and the minions of the great defiler are able to sneak in and exacerbate that malignancy, like a great conversion effort that cannot fail. Every living being has that potential for corruption, as the Wyrm preys and feeds upon the very things that make us conscious. From the mightiest Garou to the lowliest insect, from man to spirit, no individual is immune to her own wants and needs.

Storytellers are encouraged to play upon these needs. How many players would turn down the chance to pick up a few more Gifts at the start of a chronicle? How many

characters would do whatever it took to gain a bit of information on a foe? Stoke the fires of the characters' greed or desire, and then put them up against other individuals who have done the same. If handled carefully, the characters will realize — too late! — that they have truly fought and been defeated by themselves, even if they manage to physically best their opponents.

The Heads of the Hydra

The Wyrm is incapable of presenting a unified front — it simply has too many appendages to keep control of them all. It places individuals in control of various aspects of its existence and entrusts them to do what is best (because by serving the Wyrm's interests, minions serve their own). Obviously, it is impossible for every one of those servants to know exactly what the other is doing, and Wyrm agents sometimes come in conflict with each other while at other times seem to be wholly divorced from the efforts of the corrupt as a whole.

That's fine — Rome wasn't built (or burnt...) in a day. As long as the world is dulled into enough apathy to prevent anyone from doing anything about the gradual degradation of Gaia, the Wyrm will succeed. You can't win a war without losing a few troops.

Storytellers, this is your license to weave labyrinthine plots and complicate those with numerous layers of intrigue. The Wyrm knows its enemy; it is aware that the Garou are creatures of passion and rage and it certainly isn't above confusing them with elaborate presentations of smoke and mirrors. In fact, the more frustrated the Garou get, the easier it is for the Wyrm to slip into those breaches of soul that the rage creates.

Storytellers may also wish to confuse characters with the overt actions of the Wyrm. Perhaps two separate Hives of Black Spiral Dancers are engaged in a rivalry that turns bloody (as it probably will), or perhaps a small pharmaceutical company recently fallen into the clutches of the Wyrm suffers a raid by a Pentex First Team. While the Garou are standing around and scratching their heads, trying to make sense of it all, sneak around behind them and whack them.

Sneaky Storytellers may even play upon this disorganization, exposing characters to seemingly unrelated elements and fostering misinterpretation — could there be a relationship between MediProx and Panacea or is that a red herring? Truly insidious Storytellers may even use these intertwining plot threads to draw the Garou into the Wyrm's lair themselves, revealing more and more of a complex intrigue as the characters fall ever more into the Wyrm's thrall. Only too late will the characters realize that their comprehension is born of an unwholesome familiarity.

Mood

Establishing the mood with which you will use the Wyrm can go a long way toward building a Storyteller's chronicle from a collection of stories into a grand epic. Face it — **Werewolf** is a game of heroes, or perhaps antiheroes, and presenting the Garou with a deserving enemy is paramount to giving the chronicle meaning. Who cares if they're just fighting columns of monsters; that's plotless hack 'n' slash. Putting them up against an insidious foe with hordes of devoted servants possessed of broad ranges of abilities who may hide anywhere (even *among* them...) — now *there's* something they'll have to use their brains *and* muscle for. And the experience will be all the richer for it.

Granted, these moods are broad, and this list is hardly exhaustive. Hereafter are simply a few notes on using the most popular moods for **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** with an emphasis on the Wyrm.

Splatter

Contrary to widespread belief, splatter can be done well, particularly with a hidden monstrosity like the Wyrm behind it. Consider movies like *Aliens* and *The Crow*: Those were primarily "bug hunt" movies with enough additional elements that the audience actually cared about the characters and why they were doing what they were doing.

Integral to this style of mood is the relationship between the protagonists. (We hesitate to use the word "hero" in this context because the characters are themselves monsters.) The pack should have strong bonds or established backstories. With the sheer volume of combat and personal risk at stake in a splatter chronicle, the Garou are likely to be pulling each other's fat out of the fire frequently and this is a great opportunity to settle — or even put aside — old rivalries as characters may save a packmate's life or finally earn their respect.

For a splatter story to be effective, there needs to be a reason behind the characters doing what they are doing. It's fine to have a Bane-infested warehouse spring up on the outside of town, but there's little in such a simple explanation to give the situation a dire personal nature. Perhaps if one of the characters' mentors entered the warehouse, there would be a personal issue on the line, or if a cache of tribal fetishes turned up in a forgotten storeroom beneath a Pentex "reprogramming" facility the characters might be motivated to reclaim those artifacts and claim a little Honor or Glory. Remember to convolute the plot a bit, or else you may find yourself inside a "kill the monsters, snatch the treasure, save the princess" situation, which may leave players unfulfilled.

Then again, if that's what the players (and you) want, run with it. Kick some ass and sever some heads. It's your game.

Splatter stories should also culminate in a combat with an extremely formidable foe, or at least a confrontation. Ideally, the characters should triumph over this major foe, but don't be afraid to send them home with their tails between their legs to better learn how to bring down their foe. This is particularly powerful over a series of stories or a long-term chronicle, in which characters can achieve a sense of accomplishment for defeating a foe who has long

foiled them. **Werewolf** abounds with potent foes who may have some sort of grudge against the characters or may resent the meddling of whelps among their carefully laid plans.

The most important element of splatter stories is, of course, the sheer thrill and gore of combat. Lay it on thick and frequently — heads should roll, blood should sluice through the air and the characters' pelts should be slathered with vile ichor. Combat can be as dramatic as any other interaction between characters, and can often be more so as lives are on the line. Remember, though, that in **Werewolf** things are not necessarily as they seem and the antagonist is often more clever than the protagonist (or at least has better resources). Add a twist here and there or a clever tactic on the part of the "faceless" enemies to let the characters know precisely whom they're dealing with. Perhaps a squad of new fomori is simply bait for more experienced First Teams to catch the pack in an enfilade, or maybe a sept of overzealous Garou don't want to share the glory of an assault with the characters' pack. The ability to take splatter in a direction other than straightforward is what separates a fair story from a good one.

Horror

Ultimately, **Werewolf** is a horror game. The characters are monsters, the world is rapidly going to Hell, the spirit world is a mysterious, alien and often hostile place and there's practically no way anything can be done about it.

Everything in the world is dangerous, and that sense of menace is the cornerstone of a horror chronicle. The Wyrm is the perfect nemesis in a chronicle like this, especially if its incarnations are handled with a sense of mystery. In fact, the words "the Wyrm" need not ever be uttered in a horror chronicle — as an antagonist, the great corrupter is hidden in the darkness, making itself visible only long enough to taint something with its damning touch and letting the corrupt construct do its dirty work.

Monsters don't spring forth from hidden alcoves or the Umbra in a horror chronicle. Rather, enemies work cleverly from the shadows, leaving only unsettling calling cards or disposable diversions to mark their passing. The most horrifying enemy is not the one we see before us, but the one of whom we get the briefest of glimpses that our imaginations build into unspeakable monstrosities.

Horror is obviously the broadest of the mood divisions, and arguably the one to which the Wyrm is best suited. The best advice in running a horror chronicle is never to go for the quick shock. Don't show the tentacled horror shredding the Garou cub to bits, simply leave a bent Crinos arm — perhaps clutching an unused talen in a death-grip — where the pack may come across it. *Never* tip your hand; familiarity breeds contempt, and if the players know they're facing monster X from page Y of supplement Z they're not going to be scared, they're going to kick its ass because they know all of its Traits. Expose the characters to alien situations (the Umbra is an *excellent* setting for horror chronicles, especially if it is used sparingly and menacingly enough to make the characters dread their time therein) and unfamiliar individuals.

Obviously, mystery and tension play huge parts in a horror chronicle — use them! Garou don't wear badges with tribes listed on them, and (apart from gross physical disfigurements) there may not be anything to distinguish a Black Spiral Dancer from a Shadow Lord or even a Child of Gaia. This sort of "enemy within" tactic works well in horror. Additionally, the *threat* of violence is often more potent than the fight itself. If a player's character leaves a combat with four Health Levels of damage, that's a lot less dreadful than the *potential* of death and not knowing precisely what an opponent's capabilities are. Any way in which the Storyteller can keep information away from the players (short of depriving them of what they need to fulfill an objective or progress the story, of course) provides menace and uncertainty, which are the foundations of true horror. If the players have a reason to fear violation, you're on the right track.

Terror

The Garou are extremely formidable killing machines. But what makes *them* scared?

Terror, speaking dramatically, is flight in hopes of escape. While it may be difficult build an entire chronicle around terror (sooner or later the pack will turn around to face its fears), populating a story or session with terrifying elements may be a welcome change of pace.

The Wyrm has plenty of servants that work well in a terror situation. Take a pack of Black Spiral Dancers more powerful than the characters and get them running. Have a Nexus Crawler poke its head into the characters' caern through the Gauntlet. Poison their water. Send skilled — perhaps almost *supernaturally* so — hunters against the pack. Make them leave their home.

Terror involves always keeping something at the characters' heels, never allowing them the comfort of catching their breath or a good night's sleep. For terror to work, the characters must truly fear what follows them — it won't do to have a teenager in a hockey mask saunter into the characters' caern (though if they don't *know* it's a teenager in a hockey mask... see Horror, above).

Terror also involves hope. The characters may one day escape their tormentor, or they may grow powerful enough to face it down. If played through to its conclusion, terror can be an extremely cathartic mood, allowing the characters final victory over a previously insurmountable foe.

Pacing is one of the best tools while building a terrifying mood. Let the caern stop for the night, catching a few desperate and trouble moments of rest — and then go after them again before they can break camp. Their surroundings streak by as they flee the hideous *thing* that follows them; they become separated, lost, disconcerted. When they finally get sick of running, what lies at their doorstep? That's your decision to make, Mister Storyteller.

Chapter One: Cosmology

This was no fruit of such worlds and suns as shine on the telescopes and photographic plates of our observatories. This was no breath from the skies whose motions and dimensions our astronomers measure or deem too vast to measure. It was just a colour out of space — a frightful messenger from unformed realms of infinity beyond all Nature as we know it; from realms whose mere existence stuns the brain and numbs us with the black extra-cosmic gulfs it throws open before our frenzied eyes.

— H. P. Lovecraft, "The Colour Out of Space"

History

The Wyrm must never be underestimated as an antagonist, as it is the source of numerous related foes and even embodies the very principle of antagonism itself. This is something that must be impressed on players encountering the minions of the Wyrm — while Banes, monsters and corrupted mortals can be defeated, destroyed or banished, their master is inextricably woven into the very fabric of reality. Corruption gnaws at the spirit of the World of Darkness itself — and even a casual glance at the day's headlines hints at the foulness spread throughout the hearts of humanity.

But why? What made the Wyrm the Corrupter it is now? The answers are not set in stone, but like all Garou legends, are as good as any scientific proof.

The story of the Triat, and how Creation came to its present state, can be guessed at from fragments of songs dating back to the Impergium, or from certain passages found in the dreaded *Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth*. Every tribe of the Garou has its own version of the tale to tell; and the interpretations vary greatly. The recounting below, although often viewed as ridiculous and counter-intuitive for positing that the Triat predated Gaia, is a particular favorite among Glass Walkers, and reflects perhaps the most detailed look at the Wyrm's history.

The history given below can be seen to be reflected in the material world and its history, but the examples provided should not be taken literally. The Wyld, the Weaver and the Wyrm will never be encountered face to face, even if one

walks every inch of every path through the Umbra or travels to the beginning and end of time. The Triat's story occurs outside of time and space, which are limiting human concepts tainted by the madness of the Weaver, and can only be understood as metaphors. Stargazers tell the story, often in several different versions, but then exhort their students to forget the words they have just spoken and try to hold the idea of the Triat in their minds without the limitations of language or reasoning thought. Mortal consciousness is too small and frail to contain the fullness of even one member of the Triat, but once the mind can be freed from its limitations, it is open to a Vision of the truth. Whenever an unprepared mind is confronted with such a Vision, it tends to buckle under the impact, unable to contain the chaotic dynamism of the Wyld's energies, to comprehend the infinite complexities of the Weaver's design, or to embrace the convoluted paradox of the Wyrm's corruption.

The Triat is what human mystics would call supernal — existing outside of time and space, but so integral to the very fact of existence that their influence can be perceived in all things at all times. Chaos, order and balance are not visible features of creation, but are principles demonstrated by it; careful examination, thought and intuition reveals all three to be present in the orbits of planets, of electrons, or of a loved one's eyes. Likewise, the story of the Triat is expressed over and over in the history of the universe, of mankind, and even in the life of an individual human being.

Balance

Before the beginning, the three supernal principles of creation existed in a state of pure interrelationship — pure in the sense that each was no more or less than what it was, and the actions of each were defined only by the reactions of the other two. With all of nothingness to play in and to fill with their play, each explored and tested all the possibilities of its power, but could only judge the results of its experiments by how the other two were affected.

The first one to reach directly out to the void was that which the Garou call the Wyld. Pure energy, motion without direction or velocity, intent without object, substance without form, it was the first to master the trick of acting and making. Spewing freed energy into the void, it watched these projections, detached pieces of itself, as they raced about in constant flux before quickly dispersing. Fascinated with these brief ephemeral lives it had spawned, the Wyld generated more, then more and more, trying to surround itself with its children. So vigorously did it propagate in this way that it kept itself in a perpetual state of agitated fluctuation. For this reason, the Garou of old often referred to the Wyld as Uncle Change.

Another of the supernal three was that which the Garou call the Weaver. Pure order, stasis without purpose or value, knowledge without object, form without substance, it was the first to master the trick of binding and keeping. Seeing the energy that the first supernal gave off,



the Weaver reached out bind the detached living energy into shape and dimension, giving it duration and a sense of relating to the space it inhabited. Thus was information created, and the first distinctions between any one thing and another were drawn. These distinctions were the first strands of the Web which would eventually give shape and form to all of creation. Fascinated with the order it had established, the Weaver began to spin its Web of form wider and farther, racing to keep up with the spew of the Wyld and freeze its formless energies. For this reason, the ancient Garou spoke of the Weaver as Aunt Spider.

The third supernal was that which the Garou call the Wyrm. Neither dynamic nor static, neither form nor substance, neither energy nor information, it mediated between the two other supernals, existing in the fractal border between order and chaos. It kept the balance, ensuring that Wyld did not overwhelm creation with its boundless formless forces, and that the Weaver did not crystallize everything into dry lifeless pattern. As to exactly how it managed to do this, some interesting agreement can be found in two very divergent strands of Garou myth:

Know that, back when the Wyrm still kept the Balance between Wyld and Weaver, it preferred acting through two main tactics: Growth and Destruction. Whenever Uncle Change spewed so much that the Web was rent apart, or when Aunt Spider bound too much Wyld energy into dry dead Pattern, the Wyrm would snap its jaws on the hindquarters of the weaker one, spurring it to spew or weave more as was needed, or else it would lash out with its tail to disperse the Wyld's excess creation or shred the Web that strangled the flow of creative forces...

— Lao Two-Tongues, Stargazer elder

In its primordial state, the Wyrm maintained the equilibrium of order and chaos through the processes of creation or obliteration. If chaos threatened to overwhelm the universe with its boundless energy, or if order had bound up too much of the free energy of the world, the Wyrm would stretch wide its maw to swallow up the excess and remove it from existence, or aim its tail at the deficiency and bestow upon the world the added mass of its own excretions.

— from "Notes Toward a Lycanthropological Reconstruction of the Garou Ur-Epic," an unpublished manuscript by W. Richard MacLish, Professor of Comparative Anthropology, University of Edinburgh (a.k.a. Writlish of the Black Spiral Dancers)

As an embodiment of the paradox by which diversity exists in unity and unity exists in diversity, the Wyrm understood that the interaction of the other two supernals should remain eternal and universal, but balanced in harmony and wholeness. If one gained too much ground over the other, this could not be. To unite the two in dynamic equilibrium, the Wyrm wrapped itself around all that the Triat had wrought, seizing its tail in its mouth and holding it fast. This primordial Wyrm, the supernal principle of Balance in eternal wholeness, is remembered even in some human traditions as the Ouroboros.

In doing this, the Wyrm had formed the first true and complete circle, the basis for all physical existence. By balancing the respective cycles of growth and destruction between chaos and order, it had created the cycle of birth, death and rebirth and initiated the progression of time (as humans understand it.) By uniting substance and form, it had created matter and the space which contains and informs matter. The pattern of the Weaver's Web was activated by the Wyld's energy and preserved by the cyclic action of the Wyrm, reflecting this great circle inward and outward. Outwardly, in the macrocosm, this reflection was expressed as the first Celestines, vast conjunctions of power and pattern whose great circles marked the larger divisions of time. Inwardly, on the microcosmic level, it was expressed as the Eternal Fire and the spiritual seedlings that would eventually grow into the Naturae, which humans are only beginning to understand as the cellular, molecular, atomic and subatomic building blocks of the universe. At the intersection where the macrocosmic and microcosmic forces were focused, the first circle was expressed as Gaia and the realms which cluster around her.

This original state of equilibrium between the aspects of the Triat can be seen in the origins of the physical universe and its creatures. Physicists describe the first split-instant of the Big Bang as a unity of this order; all forces and mass were compressed in an undifferentiated point of infinite potential, only later splitting into gravity, the nuclear and electromagnetic forces, which trapped energy into tight circular patterns to form the first matter. The earliest hominid apes from which humans were to evolve distinguished themselves but little from their fellow animals, living in an eternal now with a mind composed primarily of pure mammalian instinct only partially supplemented by a rudimentary intelligence. This 'pure mind' can be seen in newborn human infants before they have learned to make distinctions between themselves and the world around them, perhaps stemming from the developing awareness of the unborn in the womb. Remembrance of this primordial state, both ancestral and personal, usually perceived through an idyllic warmth of nostalgia, can be found in all creation myths.

Madness

With the Triat unified in the three-fold process of creation, a new phenomenon appeared which would permanently alter the face of the universe — consciousness. The Pattern Web that gave shape and direction to the world was stirred into wakefulness by the infusion of the Wyld's ever-fluctuating energy; the constant motion of boundless substance was channeled into the endless pathways of the Web that form the matrix of the world; both aspects were drawn into the changeless cycle of death and rebirth which expressed itself over and over again in an infinitude of changes. This existential paradox might have degenerated into pure



static chaos or pure chaotic stasis, had not a new aspect of creation arisen from the Triatic interrelationship — significance, or meaning.

Singly, no significance could be attached to any of the Triat's work. The Wyld's spew-creatures were so ephemeral and fleeting that nothing of value could be gained from them. The Weaver's Pattern Web, unless activated by living energy, was flat, dull and of no interest. If the Wyrm did not have the Weaver and Wyld to keep in balance, it would never have come into being in the first place, as the balance was its very reason for existing. As each began to perceive its reflection in the other two, each learned to understand itself in terms of the other two. The universe graduated to a new order of complexity, and the Triat evolved along with its creation, studying the contrasts of its collective action and counteraction, and judging the value of one part of its work against another.

For the first time, creation had become aware of itself, able to distinguish itself from the empty void, and the individual parts and aspects of itself from each other. But something was missing. Each of the supernals found meaning and fulfillment in their own functions, but together they could find no meaning in creation as a whole. Whatever one of them wrought, another would change or destroy, a process that repeated ad infinitum. Locked in an eternal conflict without any clear resolution, the Triat degenerated into insanity, a great Madness that would irrevocably alter the face of the universe. It is generally agreed that the Madness originated with the Weaver, but there are other opinions on the matter.

"Where could it have begun except with the Weaver? Meaning, and the urge to discover it, are the products of distinction and judgment, which are functions of mind, which in turn is a function of Pattern, the product of Aunt Spider's work. Having achieved awareness, she scrutinized the whole of her Pattern Web and could find nothing to validate what she had done, nothing to give it meaning. In her despair, she sought to lose herself in feverish activity, hoping perhaps to build a meaning for herself out of pure order. And that is where things went wrong. Spinning her Web far and wide, without regard to the consequences, she usurped the energy of the Wyld and bound the Wyrm up in her static order, destroying the great balance of the Triat. And that is why our tribe chose the path we have followed; it is up to us now to learn the convoluted maze of order until we ourselves can look at the entirety of the Web and give it the meaning and value that Aunt Spider could not find on her own."

— Speaks-Like-River, Glass Walker Theurge (a.k.a. Enid Bilderbeck, Ph.D.) addressing the City Farmers in 1996

"Though my howls may fall on deaf ears, yet say I to you: the Wyld has forsaken us, children. Uncle Change could not abide the order forced upon it by Aunt Spider and the so-called

Wyrm of Balance. His heart ached to see his creatures ensnared in the Web, bound in shapes which change not, and allowed to travel only along time's arrow. Balance and Pattern were never in his nature, and together they have fought him to a standstill. Now Aunt Spider has entrapped the Wyrm in her changeless net, and still she reaches out to engulf the farthest-fallen of the Triat. For I have seen Uncle's face, and the great wheel of time has ground lines of sorrow, lines of despair into it; the fight has gone out of him, and we are alone."

— Howl of Harano: A Song of Desolation by Yellowtooth Greyback, Silver Fang Galliard

"It was the failure of the Wyrm to keep the Balance that brought madness upon the Triat. As the Keeper of the Balance, only the Wyrm was able to see both sides of the conflict between pattern and flux, therefore awareness and the insanity that swiftly followed could only have originated with the Wyrm. Unable to find meaning within its own existence, it lost strength and gave up the fight, falling to the ever-spreading Web of the Weaver. Its failure has cost dearly, for all of creation is paying the price, and only the Garou understand what has happened well enough to set things aright. Too many of us have thought Aunt Spider and her Web to be our enemy, but she is not to be blamed, for the Madness that drives her was passed on to her when she swallowed up the failed Wyrm in her Pattern. It is right that we work to halt the spread of the Web across the Realm, but the rending of its mesh is not our ultimate goal. We tear through its strands to get at the source of the problem, to heal — or slay — the Wyrm that corrupts from within."

— Moonbrow-with-Full-Heart, Child of Gaia Ahroun.

Regardless of which of the above legends one prefers as the truth, the tribes commonly accept one detail: that the Wyrm was trapped in the Weaver's Pattern Web. No longer serving to keep order and chaos in equilibrium, it metamorphosed into something else. Meanwhile, this change was reflected in the physical universe; the dynamic interplay of energy and form still existed but only as a fading echo, replaced by an overwhelming tendency of free energy to disperse or refine itself into static matter. The Wyld was not out of the action yet and stirred things up whenever possible, but the steady encroach of the Web across all worlds continued its overwhelming approach. Those who identify with change and energy understand this as "entropy;" to most civilized humans who identify with order and stasis, this is considered to be "progress."

The introduction of consciousness into the supernal world, and the Madness which it engendered, is thus manifested at the most basic level of the physical world in the separation of energy and matter. In human evolution it can be seen as the development of man's mental faculties beyond the raw instinct of the animal mind, faculties which favor rational ordered thought and symbol-making as a way of dealing with the fluctuations of time and the perceived chaos of the natural world of which humans no longer consider themselves a part. On the personal level, it can be seen in the growing awareness of a child as it learns to make distinctions between itself and the world it lives in, as well as distinguishing the discreet entities of that world — people, objects, places — from each other. The formation of the ego in all sentient individuals is generally determined by the place each occupies in the Pattern Web.

Corruption

Exhausted by its task of perpetually destroying the Web that always grew back, the Wyrm was engulfed. The dynamic equilibrium it had maintained lost the element of dynamism, and a static balance, reflected in the physical world as decay and in the spiritual world as corruption, was insufficient to keep the Weaver in check. The Wyld was put forever on the defensive while the Weaver spread its Web throughout all of creation.

With the supernal Balance gone from the Triat, the Wyrm could think only of escape, though it knew this was impossible. It could no longer act as a supernal, having been subjugated to the will of another supernal; its power to encourage new growth was lost when it lost contact with the Wyld, and its power to destroy was restricted by the Web in which it was trapped. Constrained by order and stasis, the Wyrm became desperate; where once it had swallowed its own tail to bind the universe in unity and wholeness, now it swallowed itself out of a blind need to consume — a trait imposed upon it by the all-consuming Web. Its writhing struggles wound it tighter into the fabric of order and its original purpose was forgotten in the agony of strangulation.

The Wyrm did find, however, that there was still one tactic at its disposal: transformation, a power which was neither growth nor destruction, but which partook of the qualities of both. From its prison in the Pattern Web, it could subtly alter its own pattern and that of lesser creatures, acting through the spaces between individual strands of the Web. Knowing that it could not escape on its own, it began to cast extensions of itself throughout whatever realms it could reach, seeking allies to aid it in its plight.

Its first attempt at self-transformation resulted in the Triatic Wyrm, but these three extensions were too close to its original supernal state, and could only extend themselves into places where the Web was too loosely woven to block them out of the imposed order. They are the most powerful aspects of the Wyrm that can be encountered directly, but it is extremely difficult for them to manifest in any of the created realms.

The Wyrm's next attempt at transformation fared much better in terms of spreading its influence, though its new extensions did not have the overwhelming power that characterized the previous Triatic Wyrm. These are the Urge-Wyrms, formed from the desperate and frenzied thoughts of the imprisoned Wyrm and endowed with a limited degree of independence and autonomy. Whereas the three aspects of the Triatic Wyrm were severely limited as to where and how they could manifest, the Urges could roam freely through the interstices of the Web and could



insinuate themselves into the heart and mind of any creature that was receptive to their influence. Too subtle to manifest in or directly affect the physical plane, they could have a strong effect on any self-aware being that lacked the insight to recognize their presence or the self-discipline to resist their suggestions.

Collectively, these various extensions are known as the Hydra, and every creature that acts in the service of the Wyrm either chooses or is chosen by one of the heads of the Hydra. Using these extensions, the Wyrm was able to make contact with potential allies and lead them through the most primordial depths of the Web to the place of its imprisonment, which grew to become the realm of Malfeas. From here, claim some thinkers, the Wyrm plots to escape the Web, obliterate the imbalanced creation of the lopsided Triat, and begin a new universe in which the supernal Balance could be preserved while staving off the Madness of self-awareness. The main part of its strategy is to aid the Weaver by working from within the Web, using its transformative powers of decay and corruption to weaken the still-kicking Wyld so it can be incorporated into the great Pattern. Once this can be accomplished, the current process of universal creation will have been completed and the universe will cease to exist as a living active entity; the Void will then be cleared and a mature, wiser Triat can begin anew, initiating the creation of a universe in which the mistakes of the previous one can be avoided.

Nothing comes that easily, however. The Triatic Wyrm cannot know what the primordial Wyrm of Balance has realized: that the original Triat must be obliterated, destroyed, slain by its own creatures, starting with the imprisoned and corrupted Wyrm itself, so that an improved Triat can be reborn from the dead husk of a flawed creation. The Urge-Wyrms, born from the pain-maddened thoughts of the Wyrm when it was first trapped, are acting independently of the primordial Wyrm and have no cognizance of the greater plan for which they were intended. Thus the Wyrm has no way of communicating its true intention to the creatures upon which it must rely. Those who serve the Wyrm in the various realms can only mistake the part for the whole, and are incapable of grasping their ultimate purpose.

"Would you believe our Father to be so weak that he could be bound in a spider's web? Would you believe the lies passed down by those tribes that will not face the truth? Hah! The Wyrm is no insect to be snared so easily, and could not have come to his present state were it not his intention all along. The Weaver and the Wyld could never abide the balance which our Father kept between them, and went mad each in their frenzy to overcome the other. Our Father, in his wisdom, understood that only by entering into the world himself, by allowing himself to be caught up in the spreading Web of Pattern, could meaning be brought to creation and grasped by its creatures. And that is why we are here, to carry out the will of our Father who has sacrificed his exalted station that he might live closer to his children."

— White-Eye-ikthya, formerly of the Uktena Wyld Children

This current state of creation is best reflected in the history of the Impergium and its aftermath, the growth of civilization. The Garou, by attempting to curb the spread of humanity across the Gaian realm, caused mankind to become far more fearful of the wilderness and the power of the Wyld than was ever really necessary, giving it the impetus it needed to learn how to impose its own order upon nature (for the most part, anyway), thus opening the human heart more fully to the influence of the corrupted Wyrm's extensions. This can also be seen in the psychology of most adult humans, where the maturity of full personal development is often prevented by the psyche having been arrested in an earlier stage of development, either due to childhood trauma inflicted by other undeveloped humans, or due to improper cultivation of other aspects of personal growth.

Although many of the Changing Breeds even today feel some sympathy toward the original Balance Wyrm, the entity that the Wyrm was before its ensnarement in the Pattern Web and subsequent madness, almost none see any resemblance between the Balance Wyrm and the Corrupter Wyrm of today. The one is no longer the other, and to treat the Wyrm as if it were still a force of balance is an act of opening one's heart to corruption. In fact, some Silent Strider Theurges who venerate Phoenix theorize that if the Garou actually manage to slay the Wyrm itself in the final battle, then a new Balance Wyrm can emerge from the carcass of the Corrupter and, with assistance, pull the Weaver and Wyld into balance once more. But then again, such ravings are all too easily dismissed as simple-minded grasping at any hope, however illusory, that presents itself....

The Triatic Wyrm

"Near the center, at the oldest part of the Web, a huge tangled knot writhed and kicked, as though some thing which was not of the Web was trapped inside. Drawing near, I beheld that it was a great Beast, but not the Beast which we know and of which our nature partakes, for its jaws could open wide enough to swallow worlds and its coiled body was as long as eternity itself. Even as I watched, the thing seemed to be tearing itself apart in its struggles against the strands that bound it. Pushing its great head through the mesh of the Web, it succeeded only in slicing its head into three parts, and each part could only stretch a short way beyond its prison."

— Walks-Between-Stars, Stargazer visionary and Ouroboran, describing the dream he had to Burns-Cleanly, Judge of Doom

The term "Triatic Wyrm" refers to the three most powerful aspects of the Hydra, the first transformation that the Wyrm put itself through in the madness that followed its imprisonment. It derives from the Wyrm's internal reflection of the primordial Triat, acting out a psychodrama in which the Wyrm tries to figure out what went wrong with creation. Unfortunately (for the primordial Wyrm), these manifestations are unaware of their original purpose and



have taken on lives of their own. They may be considered the dominant personae of the Wyrm's "multiple personality disorder." Fortunately for the rest of the universe, each of the three Triatic Wyrms has its own motivations, purposes and plots; if they ever unified their efforts, their combined power might rival that of Gaia Herself.

It is possible for one of the Triatic Wyrms to manifest in a realm other than Malfeas, but this is a massive undertaking which requires an enormous expenditure of spiritual energy. Once manifested, it is a creature of nigh-unimaginable power and can only be driven from the realm by an equal or greater discharge of spiritual energy. This was demonstrated by the sacrifice of the Croatan tribe, which drove the Triatic Wyrm called Eater-of-Souls from Gaia, perhaps permanently. As far as anyone knows, this is the only time a Triatic Wyrm has fully manifested on Gaia.

More commonly (but still thankfully seldom), a Triatic Wyrm is encountered in dreams and visions, or may be discovered on a journey to the more easily corruptible of the Deep Umbral realms, or in Malfeas itself. Generally, Storytellers should only introduce a Triatic Wyrm into their chronicle with the same feeling of overwhelming mind-boggling awe that they would reserve for the appearance of a Celestine. Direct confrontation is not recommended, unless it occurs at the climax of an entire chronicle and requires all the player characters to make the supreme sacrifice together.

The *Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth* divides human history into three eras, each marked by the influence of one of the Triatic Wyrms. Since each Wyrm seems to have remained equally active throughout the periods described (the manifestation of Eater-of-Souls notwithstanding), this schema may be dismissed as the ravings of a disordered intellect.

Beast-of-War: The Calamity Wyrm

"One head was thick and bony, surmounted by massive ramming horns which it could use to smash its way into those portions of the Web where the Pattern was thin and weak. But this availed it nothing, for the Web was repaired by Aunt Spider's children as quickly as it was destroyed."

— Walks-Between-Stars

Beast-of-War reflects the unrestrained force of the Wyld, released as a destructive power rather than as a creative life-force. Whereas the Wyld's destructive aspect worked to clear away fixed forms to make room for the emergence of new forms, this aspect of the Wyrm leaves in its wake only ruin without the hope of renewed growth. Beast-of-War is the primal expression of the Wyrm's rage against its confinement, wrath incarnate; it is the unbridled appetite for violence, devoid of the predator's purposeful focus, the cathartic release of the retaliator, or the peacekeeper's remorse at the necessity of lethal force.

The Calamity Wyrm has little need to manifest directly, as its influence within the Gaian realms has always been close at hand. In humans it is reflected as the degeneration of healthy competition into bitter conflict, and as the bloodlust which makes no distinction between friend and foe in the heat of battle. To vampires, it is the Beast that tears away at the few tenuous threads of humanity connecting the Damned to their origins. Among the Garou it is reflected as their Rage which, if not kept in check, can hinder the awakening of their spiritual Gnosis and lead them astray from their noble purpose. The Get of Fenris know it as Jormungandr, the Midgard Serpent. The Maeljin Incarna known as the Hellbringer, also associated with the Urge Wyrm Ba'ashkai, acts in the Calamity Wyrm's name, spreading strife and turmoil throughout the world.

Eater-of-Souls: The Consuming Wyrm

"One head was composed of huge jaws which could open as wide as a python's to bite and chew at those portions of the Web too loosely woven to resist it. But this availed it nothing, for the strands of the Web provided no sustenance, regardless of how much this devouring head consumed."

— Walks-Between-Stars

Eater-of-Souls reflects the Weaver's drive to incorporate everything into its Web in its frenzied search for meaning. But while the Weaver is driven to impose its own order upon creation, according to its intrinsic nature, Eater-of-Souls mindlessly devours all in a vain effort to regain the control over the universe which it has lost. Loss of the primordial Balance has left a void in the original Wyrm, a void which, in its madness, it believes it can fill by engulfing all that passes within its reach. It is expressed in the individual soul as greed, desire and obsessive preoccupation, often marked by the need to acquire material things, knowledge or societal status which the victim mistakenly thinks can fulfill much deeper spiritual needs. Its power manifests physically as the wasting away of the body through disease, draining off the victim's life-force to feed this Consuming aspect of itself.

The Maeljin Thurifuge (associated with the Urge Wyrm Lethargg, below) serves the Eater-of-Souls, especially in trying to find a way for it to manifest once more in the Gaian realms.

The Defiler Wyrm

"One head was narrow and pointed, and threaded its way through the warp and weft of Pattern like an embroiderer's needle. Of all the heads, this one was the most successful, for it exercised its power not upon the Web itself, but upon the spaces between the strands of the Web."

— Walks-Between-Stars

The Defiler is the Wyrm's own twisted reflection of itself, tainted with self-loathing at having failed in its true purpose. The supernal Balance it once preserved has now been reduced to stagnation and entropy, and is expressed on the spiritual plane as the corruption of the soul, leading the Defiled victim to dangerous extremes and eliminating the



capacity for personal choice. Having corrupted itself in this way, the Wyrm has turned its own self-loathing outward and now seeks to corrupt everything, bringing the world back under its control.

This is the most powerful of the Wyrm's aspects, an insidious force that affects its targets silently from within, whispering subtle suggestions that prompt the victims to willingly deliver themselves into the Wyrm's coils. As tempter and seducer, it is remembered in human mythology as the serpent in the garden of Eden, among others. The fact that the serpent is also identified with the fallen angel Lucifer hints of the greater cosmic tragedy of the primordial Wyrm. As the most intelligent and self-aware of the Triatic Wyrms, the Defiler has no need of a Maeljin Incarna to act in its service.

The Urge Wyrms

"I beheld the great Beast turn upon itself, as though it wanted to consume itself to end its agony. But this could not be, for the Beast is eternal, beyond even its own awesome powers of destruction to destroy. Though the Beast was too great to slip through the strands of the web, its thoughts were not. Sprouting from the spine of the curled beast, they stretched away in all directions, threading their way through the Web in search of other minds, minds that could understand and accept the message they bore."

— Walks-Between-Stars

The shame of failure and the agony of imprisonment have driven the Wyrm to such an extreme of madness that it cannot contain its tortured feelings within itself. Mortal creatures can escape this kind of pain by losing consciousness or ending their lives, but an immortal, indestructible creature that encompasses the whole of creation (or did at one time) has no way out of itself and cannot take those paths. Trapped in the Web, unable to act, the Wyrm could only yearn for release, and these thoughts of yearning fed on the energy of its panic until they grew into separate entities of their own: the Urge Wyrms.

The Urges are similar to natural survival traits and tactics that have outlived their original purpose. The emotions that they embody are perfectly normal reactions to situations like failure or confinement, but thanks to their genesis in the mind of a supernal entity they have taken on autonomous existence and outlived their psychological purpose. Whereas in normal humans such emotions eventually fade without continuous reinforcement, those touched by an Urge continue to harbor and feed that emotion long after the stimulus that originally prompted it has been removed. As the emotion grows and overshadows all other facets of the psyche, the Urge gains a greater foothold in the soul of its victim and, if not checked, may ultimately possess the victim entirely. The Maeljin Incarna are believed by some to be the result of such total possession.

The Urges are the most prevalent and persistent of the Hydra's heads. Their influence extends to all realms inhabited by feeling creatures (i.e., nearly every realm imaginable, with the possible exception of some Epiphs). As beings of raw emotional power, they are impossible to understand in any rational way, and since they do not manifest as distinct entities — even on the spiritual plane — they can only be confronted directly within the private confines of one's own heart. And even then, their presence is usually too subtle to be recognized as the alien intrusion that it is. Though not as powerful as the Triatic Wyrms, the Urges can be just as deadly, by virtue of their invisibility and ubiquity.

The Black Spiral Dancers gave names to the Urges long ago, names that are believed to be corruptions of old Pictish designations. No evidence exists that the Urge Wyrms recognize or respond to these names. The *Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth* claims that each Urge is allied to, or emanates from, one of the heads of the Triatic Wyrm. The visions of some Black Spiral Dancers corroborate this, while some others do not; Storytellers should bear in mind that the *Chronicle* is ultimately the attempt of some Dancer Kinfolk to understand the unfathomable (to humans, at any rate) ways of their shapeshifting relations.

The Maeljin Incarna

As subtle entities of pure feeling, the Urges never manifest physically. As pure expressions of the Wyrm's intent, they can motivate actions but (with a few exceptions) cannot formulate or express them without a sentient mind to act through. While the mortal victims of the Urges are usually sufficient for this purpose, sometimes a more powerful and devoted receptacle is required. That is where the Maeljin Incarna, also known as the Dark Lords, come in. The Maeljin are strong and intelligent spirits, each serving a head of the Hydra, who collectively form the reigning nobility of the Bane hordes that serve the Wyrm.

The Maeljin were once mortals that became so thoroughly possessed by an Urge Wyrm that they were transformed into spirits that embodied that Urge. Each Dark Lord serves until it either fails its patron Wyrm in some way or a more powerful candidate is chosen from among that Wyrm's possessed minions. For the most part, the Maeljin function as intercessors for the Urge Wyrms, acting as their eyes, hands and voices whenever direct action is needed in one of the realms. Mortals who know of the Wyrm's existence and wish to pledge themselves to its service must petition a Dark Lord to speak to the Wyrm on their behalf.

Black Spiral Dancers, however, tend to disdain trafficking with these Incarna, whom they perceive as being more concerned with their own internecine politics than with unswerving loyalty to the Wyrm itself; the Dancers are more likely to interact with a head of the Hydra through their Bane totems. The senior members of the Pentex Board of Directors, the most corrupt mortals on Gaia, have such a close relationship with the Urges and Triatic Wyrms (known as "the Benefactors") that they have no use for such intermediaries. The Maeljin Incarna, in their turn, view the directors of Pentex as threats to their own positions, and often try to discredit them in the eyes of the Wyrm.

Two of the Maeljin listed below are also associated with Triatic Wyrms. This could signify a much closer relationship between Triatic and Urge Wyrms than is generally believed, or may be a matter of divided loyalty (or even outright lying about inflated self-importance) on the part of the Maeljin. Storytellers faced with such discrepancies are advised to adopt (or create) whatever interpretation best fits their own game.

Foebok, the Urge of Fear

Fear, "the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind" according to Lovecraft, is likewise believed by most of the Wyrm's minions to be the oldest of the Urges, the first thought to achieve autonomy and escape into the void when the Wyrm realized it was trapped. Pure fear is the most fundamental instinctive reaction to a perceived threat and can drive any creature to the utmost extremes of fight or flight. This is perfectly natural. Foebok, however, instills that irrational fear that feeds on itself, the type Roosevelt warned against in WWII. A deep-seated fear that is always present at some level of consciousness can gnaw away at the more positive facets of the psyche, creating gaps and abscesses in the soul through which other Urges can enter. Victims of this Urge are motivated by fear even when no threat is present, and those fully possessed by Foebok must instill fear in others so that it can feed.

The *Chronicle* associates Foebok with the Calamity Wyrm, and some dark visionaries claim to have seen it sprouting from the head of Beast-of-War. Others note its self-devouring nature and relate it to Eater-of-Souls. No Maeljin serves this Urge, because fear works on a subconscious, pre-verbal level, needing no mind to formulate or express it. Black Spiral Dancers call upon the totem Hakaken, "The Heart of Fear," when they wish to approach Foebok.

Vorus, the Urge of Greed

Vorus grew from the imprisoned Wyrm's desperate attempt to bring creation back under its control, its blind grasping at everything that passed within its reach. While the drive to acquire whatever one needs is a normal part of every living thing, this Urge inflames that drive to unnatural heights, compelling the victims to hoard more resources than they will ever have any use for in their lifetimes. Extreme cases of possession measure their success by how much more they have than others, and often take special pleasure in depriving others of the very least they require. Oddly enough, no Maeljin acts for this Urge; presumably Vorus finds some difficulty sharing consciousness with most forms of active intelligence, or is unwilling to give up even a small amount of its essence to empower a Maeljin. Black Spiral Dancers invoke Relshab, "The Faceless Eater," to intercede for them with this Wyrm.



Needless to say, Vorus has had spectacular success in times and places where humanity has a surplus of goods and wealth, with 20th century America being the most obvious example. Intertwined with the closely related Urge of Desire, it has made a commonly accepted virtue of materialism and conspicuous consumption, instilling useless and unnecessary wants in the majority of the populace. A society driven by such ephemeral ideals and insubstantial values can do more real and lasting damage to itself, its environment and all systems it comes in contact with than could a concerted assault by all the Banes in the Tellurian.

Mahsstrac, the Urge of Power

Thought to be the youngest, and also the most highly evolved, of the Urge Wyrms, Mahsstrac grew from the Wyrm's realization that it could do nothing while imprisoned except manipulate other lesser entities into doing its bidding. Operating within natural hierarchies of authority and leadership, the Urge of Power cultivates in its victims the idea that dominance and control are ends in themselves, rather than means to an end. Those touched by Mahsstrac become so involved in the process of directing the behavior of others that they quickly lose sight of whatever goal that behavior was originally intended to achieve. One who has been fully possessed by this Urge becomes a stereotypical tyrant or dictator, reacting with violence both overt and covert to any real or imagined challenge to their authority, and exacting punishment upon anyone who questions their commands.

The Urge of Power has no need of any Maeljin servant, as it can function equally well on any level of consciousness. Every Wyrm creature, by its very nature, tends to act on Mahsstrac's behalf anyway. Black Spiral Dancers make supplications to this head of the Hydra through the intercession of the totem Incarna known as the Green Dragon, "Destroyer of Life and Crusher of Enemies."

Karnala, the Urge of Desire

The Urge of Desire evolved out of the entrapped Wyrm's yearning for release, for freedom, for that which it wanted more than anything else. When this emotion gained autonomy, however, the object of that desire was lost, for the Urge had attained the freedom which was denied the Wyrm. Thus Karnala represents the state of desiring, which can focus upon and attach itself to any object.

Like Foebok, this Urge feeds upon its own yearning, and must therefore prevent itself from ever fulfilling the goal for which it strives, either by constantly searching out new things to want or by focusing upon something which it knows to be unattainable. Natural desire, born of Gaia, can form the basis for complex and evolving relationships, but those influenced by this Urge have trouble thinking beyond their own gratification. As Karnala grows within its victim's heart, the distinction between actual fulfillment and the mere possession of the object of desire is



blurred. To concern oneself with simple ownership of what one desires often blinds one to the possibility of true fulfillment, leaving a void in the heart which Karnala uses to fuel further obsession.

The Countess Desire, Empress Aliara

When it comes to choosing between two evils, I always prefer the one I haven't tried yet.

— Mae West

The Maeljin Incarna who serves the Urge of Desire is Empress Aliara, whom some believe was, in her mortal incarnation, a highly sought-after courtesan during the more decadent period of Caliph Haroun al-Raschid's reign. She understands the workings of the human heart better than any psychologist, and possesses an uncanny knowledge of everyone's most secret lusts, indulgences and weaknesses. Armed with such insights, she can incite overwhelming passion with her false seductive promises, spurring her victims to reckless obsessive abandon by hinting at ecstatic gratification.

The Countess Desire, commonly referred to as female, in fact looks very androgynous. However, with subtle changes in expression, posture and gesture she can appear to anyone who beholds her as the type of person they most strongly desire in life — a sexual partner of surpassing beauty or charm, a more nurturing mother figure, a stronger father figure, a more needy or devoted child — whomever they most desire, whether they realize it or not.

Abhorra, the Urge of Hatred

Abhorra grew from the Wyrm's mounting resentment against the Pattern that bound it, the Weaver who drew it into her madness, the Wyld that was incapable of preventing the tragedy, the creation in which it could no longer participate, and itself for its own failure. Once this resentment had begun to feed upon its own compressed energies like the other Urges, the Urge of Hatred broke free and became the root emotion of malevolence, the inversion of innate self-loathing so that it turns outwards expressed as abhorrence of external stimuli. Mortals touched by Abhorra become profoundly repelled by a person, a group of people, certain situations and even inanimate things that remind them of aspects of themselves that they have never come to terms with. With the growing influence of this Urge, they begin to perceive these targets as being actively antagonistic toward them, and react by becoming more aggressive themselves, going to great lengths to provoke those they detest into open conflict. By its very nature, this behavior can instill hatred toward the possessed victim in those they provoke, easily extending this Urge's influence over the general populace. With complete possession, the victim's

hatred swells to encompass the entire world, cutting them off from their society, family, friends and even their own natural pleasures that connect them to the world.

The Duke of Hate, Lord Steel

Men love in haste, but they detest at leisure.

— Lord Byron

Ancient gossip claims that Lord Steel was one of the conquistadors that sacked the native civilizations of Central and South America. His brutal hatred not only for the natives he found there, but also for his own greedy soldiers, was apparently quite attractive to Abhorra. Lord Steel has grown quite strong over the centuries by devouring the hate of racists, misogynists, even ordinary people who "just don't like the look" of their new neighbors. His devotees invoke him in the hopes of gaining vengeance against their rivals, and offer him sacrifices of burnt flesh.

Lord Steel cares little for the machinations of his fellow Maeljin. He squats on his Malfean throne and forever broods on his hatred, preferring only to rouse himself in times of war. His vestments are armor of gunmetal; his symbol the hate-twisted mask of black steel that forever guards his face. His huge, serrated blade flickers with balefires and his cloak is a cloud of Banes. He has himself forged his metal, iron-winged steed in mockery of his eternal foe Pegasus, and when he rides forth to vent his hatred, few can stand before him.

Angu, the Urge of Cruelty

One of the more complex and abstract of the Urge Wyrms, Angu seems to have come into being later than the other Urges and is believed by many to be derived from Abhorra, above. When the Wyrm first attempted to explain its state of imprisonment and anguish to potential allies, it found that it could not make the newly born creatures of the universe understand its torture unless it gave them a small taste of the pain it was experiencing. It took more pain to convince some than others, and eventually the process of inflicting pain took on its own life as the Urge of Cruelty, the naked drive to hurt all indiscriminately. Subtle and insidious, Angu can work subconsciously through the ignorance of those it touches, exploiting the victim's often natural lapses in sympathy and understanding to hurt others with the nearly invisible petty cruelties of insensitivity, disrespect and neglect. The same sort of feedback that spreads the Urge of Hatred's power occurs in these cases as well, with those who are harmed lashing back at Angu's victim and reinforcing a state of mutual malice that gives this Urge power over both sides. As Angu grows to fill out its victim's psyche, the possessed one learns to act with concerted and direct maliciousness, deliberately causing pain through widely inventive varieties of mental abuse, emotional attack and physical torture. Some take the very existence of Angu as a sign that the Wyrm has lost all hope of redemption, and can only be granted release.

The Caliph of Pain, Lady Aife

I can sympathize with people's pains but not with their pleasure. There is something curiously boring about somebody else's happiness.

— Aldous Huxley

The Caliph of Pain is terrifying not because she is a sadist, but because she never lets her personal desires interfere with her task of causing as much suffering as is possible for a victim to receive. Besides proficiency in inflicting physical pain, Lady Aife frequently consults with the Countess Desire to learn what psychological buttons she can push on her victims by attacking the people or things they care most about. Her face is always lit with the smile of someone who knows a secret, but none dare to ask her what it may be.

There are those who whisper that, when she breathed, Lady Aife was one of the most enthusiastic torturers in the Spanish Inquisition. She has adapted extremely well to her Incarna status, and takes the form of a wan, beautiful woman who sends shards of glass flying every time she tosses her flaming red hair. Her steed is an automaton of dull, rusted steel struts; her weapons a pair of glass whips that splinter and shred.

Ba'ashkai, the Urge of Violence

One of the most basic, rudimentary and mindless of the Urges, Ba'ashkai was born in the Wyrm's maddening struggle against the constricting strands of the Pattern Web. The Urge of Violence grows from an ingrained compulsion to continue a conflict long after the goal of the struggle has been attained or the futility has become apparent. Anyone who has ever had to fight for anything, be it survival, self-protection or even simple respect, has felt the seductive influence of this Urge, which clouds one's judgment concerning the necessity of battle and blinds one to the consequences of extreme actions. Fortunately, Ba'ashkai has little power to possess a target who consciously rejects its impulses; unfortunately, the presence and activity of other Urges, whether in oneself or in others, can easily provoke the strife required for this Urge Wyrm to make its entrance.

Chieftain of Rage, General of the Armies of the Wyrm and Patron of Abuse, Hellbringer

Crying?! I'll give you something to cry about!

— countless parents

The Hellbringer is an engine of brutality. Abuse and assault; riots and rape; bloodshed and brawling — all these are his meat and drink. He is the servant of Beast-of-War and Ba'ashkai alike, and appears to have divided himself into two personae to better further the cause of strife: that of the Hellbringer, and that of Malik Harjaq, Master of Mayhem. Although he claims that the two are separate individuals, others note that the sacred number of 13 Maeljin Incarna would be violated if two of the current Incarna were not secretly one. This is hardly a reassuring thought, mind; both the Hellbringer and Malik Harjaq have the full influence of an Incarna each rather than the divided powers of one Maeljin. When either rides, carnage is soon to follow.



Some say the Hellbringer is currently inhabited by the black soul of Gilles de Rais, the debauched and murderous sex criminal of the late medieval period whose memory is revered by the Nephandi mages. He wears thorny, antlered armor and rides in a cavalry of fell beasts and Banes; his weapon of choice is a crossbow whose quarrels drive targets into a bloodthirsty frenzy. Malik Harjaq appears as a Viking berserker with many arms, each one holding a different blood-soaked weapon. Both are highly aggressive warriors, and have never been defeated in combat.

Khaaloobh, the Urge of Consumption

Only vaguely understood, its actual existence doubted even by many of the Wyrm's minions, Khaaloobh has been designated at various times as the Urge of Consumption, of Indulgence and of Decay. Created when the Wyrm writhed and twisted with strong enough convulsions to warp and distort the area of the Web immediately around it, this Urge signifies a breakdown of order; while the Web itself may not be broken completely, the Pattern which it defines may be deformed and degraded beyond recognition. No distinctive pattern can be detected in victims possessed by Khaaloobh: its subtle influence operates on any level of consciousness and can manifest as a breakdown in the intellect, the emotions, the will and even the body. Even the Wyrm's own minions are adversely affected by this Urge, leading some to suspect that it may be an emanation form the primordial Wyrm of Balance. Black Spiral Dancers revere the Dark Fungus as a messenger of Khaaloobh.

Knight Entropy, the Wyrm's Spawn

The first time I ever heard of entropy, this idea that everything eventually runs down and breaks up into its component parts, I said to myself, "What a good thing!"

— George Carlin

Guided neither by sadism nor bloodlust, the Knight Entropy exists only to destroy. Its very gaze brings rot; its hand smites object and person alike to dust. It is a herald of chaos, but a chaos of destruction rather than change. It does not parley with its fellow Maeljin and can never be controlled — merely attracted from one place to another.

Legend holds that Knight Entropy was once a Crusader marching to the Holy Land, who spilled rivers of blood in the name of simple indulgence. Its Incarna form is that of a bestial, feral humanoid with blood-streaked hair. Its shield device is that of the Black Dragon encircling and constricting the world; its steed is a night-black horse with long, bloody fangs. It rarely speaks, and those who hear its voice can never fully recall it afterwards.

Pseulak, the Urge of Lies

Pseulak was born, fully formed and with a life all its own, in the instant that the Wyrm first tried to deny the fact

of its failure and entrapment to itself. The impulse to deceive, to hide behind illusion and falsehood, easily navigated the maze of enigmas and paradox woven by the mad Weaver to roam at large in the Pattern Web; many speculate that this Urge could not exist without the complicated vision of order which the Web imposes on creation. This may explain why, unlike most other Urge Wyrms, the Urge of Lies initially affects its victims on the most superficial levels of immediate waking consciousness, only later burrowing its way into the core of the persona.

Deception can be a natural survival tactic, enabling prey to elude predators and predators to lure prey near; intelligent sentients like humans can even communicate truth through contrived falsehoods like myths, fables, teaching stories and entertaining fictions. For those touched by Pseulak, however, deception becomes an almost automatic behavior as they find it both easy and convenient to lie whenever the hint of a need arises. Successful liars become secure in their pattern of hypocrisy, while those whose lies are uncovered feel compelled to tell more lies to explain their previous falsehoods. As this Urge reaches deeper into the soul, its victims learn to deceive themselves, a process completed when they come to consciously believe the lies they tell. When the Dancers want to call on Pseulak, they appeal to it through Kirijama, "the Hidden Foe."

Corruption's Advocate, the Chamberlain of Lies, the Honorable Maine duBois, Esquire

"The aim of the liar is simply to charm, to delight, to give pleasure. He is the very basis of civilized society."

— Oscar Wilde

Perhaps the most peculiar of the Maeljin Incarna, the office of Maine duBois has apparently held its twentieth-century motif and name for as long as others can remember. As the only one who might know *why* is the Chamberlain of Lies himself, the truth will likely never be known. What is known is that Maine duBois is the most accomplished liar the Tellurian has ever seen; it's widely accepted that he could convince the Garou that Gaia had abandoned them, if there were only some way of completely disguising his own nature. He rarely involves himself personally in the Wyrm's affairs (as his reputation unfortunately makes him rather less effective), preferring to operate through catspaws. Mortal politics is certainly his pastime of choice.

Although nobody will admit it openly, it is common knowledge that this Maeljin was, in his human days, an unscrupulous statesman whose influence extended over much of ancient China at the time of Confucius. Now he dresses in a slime-drenched, tattered suit of time gone by, and is accompanied by a fluttering storm of paper and papyrus. His grin stretches from one ear to the other, and his tongue is forked like a serpent's.

Sykora, the Urge of Paranoia

The Urge of paranoia was formed when the Wyrm first sensed that it was losing its connection with the rest of creation, and began to distrust the world it felt had turned against it. Sykora lurks in the cognitive dissonance created when one's inner sense of how things should be cannot be reconciled with how things actually are. Within this gap it builds elaborately irrational mental constructs which cannot be penetrated by reason or shaken by actual experience, separating the victim from her own thoughts, feelings and senses. Most who are touched by this Urge tend to retreat within themselves, having as little meaningful contact with other people as possible; they are unable to reconcile their various wandering irrelevant thoughts. The dangerous ones are those who reject the internal aspect of the struggle and project their conflict outward, deeming any who do not agree with their every notion as an enemy. Black Spiral Dancers call on Sykora through the mournful cries of Whippoorwill, their totem.

The Archbishop of Madness, Doge Klypse

A paranoid is a man who knows a little of what's going on.

— William S. Burroughs

The Doge Klypse likes to appear when and where he is least expected; in the unlikeliest places, during an extremely tense moment, when your back is turned. The Doge is short and pudgy, with a round hairless head and sunken eyes that mirror the insanity he embodies. Clad in black robes through which purple threads wind in hypnotic patterns, Klypse forces all he encounters to kneel and kiss his ring. The Doge's ring is a slimy violet tumorous growth, shot with blue veins that throb continuously, and anyone who kisses it suffers from insanity.

Klypse incarnates the Wyrm's sense of betrayal at the hands of creation, and expresses this by defacing and deforming every aspect of the world that he can, especially its living creatures. His favorite methods are the torture, mutilation and maiming of random victims, plucked from the streets of Malfeas, met during Umbral travels or captured and brought to his duchy by his twisted slave Banes. His most fortunate victims die shortly in excruciating pain; those that do not are kept as servants and playthings, forced to act out the Doge's deranged ravings and to tend to him when he lapses into his frequent catatonic fugue states. It's said that the current Doge Klypse was once the leader of a mystical cult of fanatics during the rise of the Islamic Empire; few tales exist of his behavior at the time, but they cannot be pleasant.

Gree, the Urge of Despair

The Urge of Despair is thought to be one of the youngest Urges, forming when the Wyrm had exhausted itself struggling against the Web and lost its hope of gaining freedom. Aided by, and aiding, the corruption, decay, degradation and widespread loss wrought by the other heads of the Hydra, Gree eats away at the very will of its victims, gradually destroying their drive to act, to succeed, to accept the consequences of past mistakes and learn from them, to get on with life. Those whom Gree has touched



tend to give up easily after their initial attempts to achieve something fail; over time this leaves them with only a history of failure and nothing left to strive for. Feeding on this sense of loss the Urge spreads to eclipse more of the persona, the victim becomes a counterproductive doomsayer, affecting others with sullen cynicism and fatalistic predictions of failure. In the final stages of possession, this self-inflicted negativity eventually obliterates the very will to live, at which point the victim will either take their own life or die slowly from self-neglect. Though this would seem to be self-destructive on the part of the Urge, in truth it serves to spread Gree's influence to the friends and family of the victim, using their feelings of loss to infiltrate the void left in their hearts. The Black Spiral Dancers name the Bat as the totem of Despair.

The Nameless Angel of Despair

Death was the best thing for him. His therapy was going nowhere.

— Dr. Hannibal Lecter

This Incarna is the patron of suicides, often invisibly attending the hopelessly despondent and encouraging them to take the final step. Although it seems to have no real skills of subtlety or learning, it displays an uncanny (even for an Incarna) intuition, and can apparently manifest itself in more than one place at once. The Nameless Angel is outside much of the Maeljin politics, and no other Maeljin bother to court its favor.

None can say who the current officeholder of Despair was in life, although the probability is very good that it committed suicide before ascending. Its form offers no clue, for it is always clad in gray vestments and surrounded by a cold, dark cloud. The Nameless Angel never even speaks, instead communicating through waves of emotion — usually overwhelmingly negative. Malfean rumor has it that no one entity can bear to be the Nameless Angel of Despair for long, and that Gree must select replacements on an all-too-regular basis.

Lethargg, the Urge of Apathy

Considered by many to a "child" of Gree, a kind of sub-Urge emanating from the Urge of Despair, Lethargg represents a parallel path for the despairing heart. Rather than consuming themselves with mounting sensations of loss, grief and impotent failure, those affected by the Urge of Apathy cease to care about anything enough to feel even their own loss, cutting themselves off from their feelings and becoming uninvolved in their own lives, unsympathetic to the troubles of others and neglectful of their role in the great play of life. Full possession, rather than culminating in a final suicidal act of despair, ultimately results in dissociation from reality so complete that the victims lose interest even in their own physical being, a condition that can manifest as autism, catatonia and even coma. Although it may seem the

weakest of its siblings at first, some caution that the greatest evils become even greater when nobody can be bothered to do anything about them.

The Master of Stagnation, Lord of Disease, Thurifuge

The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.

— Robert Maynard Hutchins, *Great Books*

Werner Herzog, one of the first filmmakers to bring his film crews into Kuwait after the Gulf War, is rumored to have destroyed a reel of film containing footage of the Master of Stagnation and his Bane retinue frolicking just off the Gulf coast. Thurifuge is a creature devoted to plagues and water pollution, and enjoys moderately good relations with Lady Yul. He is pledged both to Lethargg and to the Eater-of-Souls itself, and has worked hard to maintain the Eater-of-Souls' agenda since its passing from Gaia.

The current incarnation of Thurifuge is said to have been, in mortal life, a chief surgeon in the Nazi death camps who continued his ghastly work in South America after World War II. His hideous war crimes were motivated not by loyalty, not by cruelty, not by hate — but simply by a lack of spirit. Now the Lord of Disease has much with which to busy himself, and he pursues his agendas of desensitization, isolation and procrastination with ironically good (if morbid) cheer. His spirit form is that of a tall, lean man with the striated skin of a corpse and an oily grin. He invariably appears from a fetid pool of slime that mysteriously seeps into the area before his arrival.

The Elemental Wyrms

The natural elements that form the world have their counterparts in Wyrmish metaphysics, believed to be formed from the excretions of the primordial Wyrm, squeezed out across the universe when the Web constricted its body. These vile substances manifest physically in the material world, but are also somehow related to the components of the conscious mind. These Wyrms have no intention or volition like the Triatic and Urge Wyrms; they exist instead primarily as resources to be exploited by the other Wyrms' servitors. Indeed, the elemental Maeljin cannot be traced, even in rumor, to mortal lives — leaving some to wonder from whence their ranks are filled or replenished.

Hoga, the Essence of Smog

Hoga is the corrupted version of the element of air, composed of the gaseous parts of the Wyrm's body and representing its reason, intellect and thinking processes. Its noxious fumes are unbreathable by most creatures, and can manifest on Gaia through poisonous exhaust fumes from cars, factories and the burning of toxic refuse. Those who survive limited contact with these fumes are prone to breathing disorders and tend to lose their train of thought frequently, falling into muddled confusion.



The Master of Smog, Lord Choke

Lord Choke is a creature of oppression, and enjoys smothering his victims' freedom as he deprives them of fresh air. He directs his servants to further clog the air with smog and smoke, delighting in rush hour traffic and fuel fires alike. His sickly sweet smoke can delude and befuddle victims, inuring them to his will. It precedes him wherever he travels, and gathers about his bluish, bulbous form like a living coat. He prizes offerings of lungs and brains, and prefers to target such organs when working his cancerous corruption on mortals.

Furmas, the Essence of Balefire

Furmas is the perversion of natural fire, formed from the blood of the Wyrm and representing its intuition and force of will. Its flames do not consume or destroy, but twist and warp whatever they touch, and are found deep within the earth where pockets of geothermal energy were corrupted by the Wyrm eons ago. Anyone touched by balefire will be afflicted with diseases of the blood and heart, and their minds will be plagued with feverish and delirious thoughts preventing them from concentrating their will on anything for any length of time.

The Master of Hellfire, Lord Kerne

Kerne is a creature of radiation and balefire, a mighty spirit that has danced in the heart of every atomic explosion since the dawn of the atom bomb. If he had his way, every reactor would go the way of Chernobyl, washing the land in a diseased wave of fallout. Although his spirit form seems cadaverous and frail, his flesh is boiling lava and his breath atomic fire. When traveling for pleasure or on affairs of state, he rides a blazing chariot of hellfire that gouts a trail of sulfurous black smoke wherever it passes.

H'rugg, the Essence of Sludge

H'rugg is the twisted counterpart to the element of earth, composed of the Wyrm's fecal waste and the solid parts of its body, representing its perceptions and physical sensations. Manifesting in toxic dump sites, Sludge is corrosive and anything it touches decomposes into more Sludge. Those who come into contact with its diluted form become stubborn and intractable to the point of denying what they see and hear around them, their bodies racked with painful, embarrassing and untimely digestive ailments.

The Master of Sludge, Lord Collum

Collum is foulness incarnate, a Maeljin of raw sewage. His influence extends throughout the sewers of all cities, and his noisome fingers have lightly brushed the hearts of all who live there (such as the Nosferatu vampires and the Ratkin). He is often the consort of Lady Yul, fertilizing her putrid eggs and adopting some of her viler children. Collum takes particular delight in seeding drinking water with his foul element, especially when a particularly nasty disease is the result. His form is as nauseating as his



personality — a roughly humanoid sculpture of wet, pure sewage. His stench is almost without equal in either Umbra or material world, and his voice is a liquid, congested gurgle.

Wakshaa, the Essence of Toxin

Wakshaa is the poisonous mockery of the element of water, created when the liquid parts of the Wyrm's were sprayed out through the binding Web; it is mystically associated with the Wyrm's emotions. It manifests on earth as the toxic byproducts of corrupt human science which permeate the environment as a whole and often find their way into human society in the form dangerous street drugs that imbalance and damage the body's natural chemistry. People whose own bodily fluids have been tainted by these toxins tend to be disagreeable and antagonistic toward everyone they interact with, and act as carriers of virulent infections.

The Mistress of Toxins, Lady Yul

Yul is the Maeljin of toxins of all forms, from addictive drugs to painfully lethal acids and poisons. She has masterful knowledge of genetics and biochemistry, and can provide designer "creatures" for certain tasks. Given time and opportunity, she can dramatically alter the body of any living thing, such as converting a creature's breathing system from oxygen to carbon monoxide. She is perpetually pregnant with venomous get, which she births and releases only to begin with another litter. Aliara and Thurifuge are her closest allies among the non-elemental Maeljin.

The Wyrm in the Umbra

Trapped by the Weaver, bound in the Web that defines everything, the Wyrm can no longer manifest directly in any realm. This doesn't mean it is powerless outside of its own lair, though. Its lesser minions follow its errands with mindless determination to the farthest ends of the Tellurian, and its greater servants are among the most powerful, influential and mobile entities in all the realms. Through them it extends its power throughout the Umbra, conducting an ongoing campaign to touch and corrupt as many realms as it can.

The prize of its campaign, the central realm of Gaia, has proven too vast, complex and well-guarded to corrupt completely, but the minions of corruption understand that what cannot be immediately overtaken by main force can be won over a longer time by subtle stratagems. While Banes roam the Near Umbra seeking any entrance into Gaia they can find, more powerful spirits concentrate on taking over lesser realms close to Gaia. As on earth, they poison the lands and incite the negative passions of the inhabitants, sowing disharmony and decay until that world either is too weak with self-loathing to defend itself or has become so twisted and corrupt that it willingly allies itself with the Wyrm.

Blights

Blights are formed when the spiritual contact between a people and their land is absent or dispelled. Most commonly this tends to happen in areas where the populace is forced to live in abject and dehumanizing conditions — slums, housing projects, labor camps and prisons. The appearance of a Blight in the Umbra reflects the spiritual desolation of its inhabitants: the ground is a parched arid plain devoid of nourishment or life; the few shrubs and trees to be found are Blight Children, warped into malevolent forms by the Wyrm's influence; the few buildings that appear are ruined and burnt, with the shrieks of tortured spirits echoing through their splintered doors and jagged windows.

Buildings which contained violent or malign psychic energies may have their Umbral counterparts, even after the actual physical building has been demolished. Crack houses, shooting galleries, brothels and the sites of grisly murders or rapes act as receptacles for certain dark spiritual forces, and Banes like Kaluses and Psychomachiae frequently nest, breed and feed at such places. Thanks to the Weaver, which is partially responsible for the formation of a Blight, other structures may appear in the Umbra as well, including those built as a magical or spiritual act (active churches, temples, freemasonic lodges or mage chantries), or those created by collective imagination, such as when a powerful group meets often in an open-air setting.

Hellholes

Hellholes are formed when the physical substance of a land is polluted to the point that its spiritual counterpart is affected and corrupted. The locations most likely to become Hellholes are landfills, waste dumps, nuclear testing ranges and "industrial accident sites." Though rare in the past, Hellholes have multiplied at a staggering rate in the past two centuries as pollution in the physical realm has mounted. In the Umbra, these places appear as scorched deserts with broken rocky ground where harsh toxins boil up from subterranean pits. The bones of animals and the diseased stumps of dead trees litter the ground; in some, burning gases cause the sky to glow with sickly balefire, while in others, thick poisonous clouds shroud the sky in blackness.

Native Naturae in places that become Hellholes either die or are twisted and corrupted by the Wyrm's influence, transforming them into vicious mockeries of their original forms. Animal spirits which have only recently been caught in a Hellhole may still be saved, however, if they manage to resist all corrupting forces until rescue. Banes swarm around Hellholes in large numbers, vying for the best spot to bask in the toxic putrescence of the place, and even more fearsome Wyrm creatures like Scrags and Nexus Crawlers pass through Hellholes on their way to and from Gaia. The Banes that live in the area evolve into a wide variety of forms. In regions of heavy air pollution they may be clouds of poisonous fumes which descend to choke their victims from above. Around



contaminated water they may appear as viscous sheets of oozing oil that cling to the legs of any who wander too near, dragging them to the ground and enveloping them. In other types of Hellholes, Banes may take on the composite features of the local vermin, developing elongated snake-like bodies with legs, claws, wings, antennae and pincers sprouting at odd intervals.

Calumns: Wyrm Domains

Calumns are formed when powerful negative thoughts or emotions accumulate into a permanent region of influence. Unlike Blights and Hellholes, Calumns are things of the Near Umbra, and do not correspond to physical locations. Each Calumn reflects a single evil idea or feeling; among the largest are those of Anger, Angst, Betrayal, Confusion, Cunning and Murder. Every spirit encountered and every activity observed in a Calumn will express the idea around which the Calumn is formed; even the inanimate features of the landscape are tinged with the underlying mood of the domain. Characters who spend more than a few scenes within a Calumn may find their thoughts and emotions tainted by the dark energies of the place for days afterward. Those who remain in a Calumn for several days or longer are likely to suffer a permanent derangement.

The appearance of varies from one to the next, but for the most part they are sullen dreary places where the usual muted hues of the Umbral world are smeared into grays and muddy browns. The skies are overcast with ominous low-hanging clouds that sometimes release a greasy drizzle which makes the skin involuntarily recoil on contact. Hollow moaning winds bring wafts of nauseating odors and drive wisps of oily fumes through dying forests, barren fields, silent lonely streets or winding claustrophobic corridors.

Calumns are usually ruled by a powerful Bane, Nexus Crawler, or some other vile creature too dreadful to describe. Lesser Banes and other Wyrmspawn are drawn to the spiritual toxicity of these domains, often building nests in which they can Slumber and replenish their maleficent energies.

Far Calumns: Anchorheads to Malfeas

Far Calumns are formed from thoroughly corrupted places near the Deep Umbra where the Wyrm's influence has spread unchecked, creating a portal to Malfeas itself. The appearance of a Far Calumn generally mirrors the Malfean duchy (or duchies) into which it opens, the energies of the places being very finely attuned to each other. The malevolent spirits and creatures that gather in Far Calumns reflect this, and most owe their allegiance to the

Maeljin or other ruler of the region of Malfeas to which the domain is connected.

Because a Far Calumn is situated near the Membrane that separates the Near Umbra from the Deep Umbra, it takes a week or more of Umbral travel to reach it from earth's Penumbra. Banes and other evil minions pass through these tainted Anchorheads frequently, and the rulers of Malfeas use Far Calumns to dump the spiritual remains of captives who have outlasted their usefulness or capacity to amuse their torturers.

Anchorheads are rare — those that lead to Malfeas, thankfully, are even rarer. Those which are best known and most frequently used by the Wyrm's brood are listed below. Other Anchorheads include the Battleground in the Atrocity Realm, which borders the battlefields of Duchy Hell (below), and the hills surrounding the Black Spiral Dancer Tribal Homeland, which abut the wilderness areas of some Malfean duchies.

• **The Abyss**

The enigmatic Umbral realm known as the Abyss has long been linked to the Wyrm in Garou lore; many (including the Black Spiral Dancers) regard it as the actual maw of the Consuming Wyrm. There is some evidence to support this connection. A vast convoluted network of caves opens up through fissures found about a quarter-mile down from the edge of the Abyss. Hideous Wyrmspawned creatures dwell in these caves, the sides of which are decorated with Pictish runes and Black Spiral Dancer glyphs. A character with a Wyrm Lore of 3 or more (and a trusty source of light) may read directions for traveling through the caves in these ominous carvings. Following the directions leads one deeper into the labyrinthine caves, past the lairs of the oldest and strongest gibbering monstrosities (which may not attack if they sense the taint of corruption among the travelers passing by), eventually leading to an opening in what appears to be a narrower version of the Abyss. This is, in fact, the bottomless pit that lies under the dungeons of Castle Cthonus (below).

• **The Aetherial Realms: The Wyrm Reaches**

High above the densely overcast sky of Malfeas hangs a corrupted, decayed aspect of the Aetherial Realm called the Wyrm Reaches. This region is contiguous with the Aetherial Realms surrounding Gaia, so the Membrane separating the Deep from the Near Umbra also separates Malfeas from its own visible planets and constellations. Many Far Calumns exist in the Wyrm Reaches, however, and the queer alien Banes that inhabit the realm's dead planets and pitted asteroids will open a Moon Bridge to Malfeas — for a steep price, of course. The balefire elementals that swarm in the empty spaces between the dying stars will offer to guide unwary travelers through the thick clouds of interstellar dust that obscure much of this vast region; those who accept their services are never seen again. Most of the traffic to and from Malfeas passes through this domain.



• **Atrocity Realm**

Unsurprisingly, the horrible deeds of humanity that feed the Atrocity Realm feed Malfeas as well. A few portals dot the landscape, most near the Bane Pits where the most promising larvae are periodically culled from the pits and taken back to Malfeas. One Far Calumn situated in a stand of blasted, dead trees leads directly to the Duchy of the Hellbringer, and this site is perpetually patrolled by huge Bane-hounds thirsty to drink the souls of trespassers.

• **Scar**

The Realm where Weaver and Wyrm are fused is also inextricably linked to Malfeas. Those trapped in the industrial hell of Scar have very few options for exit; however, there is one particular means for leaving Scar for someplace far worse. The local spirits fear and avoid this Far Calumn, called the Last Junction. From this rusted, sooty parody of a train station, the Black Train runs from Scar to Malfeas and back again. It always arrives in Scar empty, and always leaves full — loaded down with fetishes, refined building materials and new slaves. The Black Train is far from defenseless, and boasts powerful Bane guards that usually manifest as black-cloaked, chain-and-sickle-wielding porters, each one more than capable of besting a careless Garou.

Wyrm Caerns

Unsurprisingly, the defiled caerns sacred to the Wyrm act much like Garou caerns. They are rated from one to five in the same manner, and affect the local Gauntlet in the usual ways. However, the only spirits one can contact while in a Wyrm caern are Banes, and stepping sideways usually brings one face-to-face with the caern's Bane-totem.

There are a few Wyrm caerns that exist only in the Umbra, with no physical counterpart. The greatest physical caerns are almost as inaccessible, for they lie far beneath the earth's surface. Far from the light of Helios or Luna, instead lit by the radioactive balefires, these caerns host the profane moots of the Black Spiral Dancers and attract the attention of things best left unnamed.

Malfeas, the Lair of the Wyrm

Malfeas is the realm formed from the knot in the primordial Pattern Web which the Wyrm twisted around itself in its futile struggles to escape. The regions of Malfeas are built from the shreds and tatters of Pattern, each having its own consistent time and space, but the threads holding the entire realm together are tenuous at best. Drawing a map of Malfeas would be meaningless according to human notions of space, and navigating the realm with certainty is impossible unless one can extrapolate from the hyperdimensional coilings of the entrapped primordial Wyrm itself.

Everything and everybody one encounters in Malfeas seems determined to degrade the body, corrupt the mind and defile the spirit with near-mindless persistence. The overlords of the realm, who count among the most powerful servitors of the Wyrm, rule their lands with iron claws, and no traveler can pass through without being noticed and manipulated into their mad internecine plots. Important prisoners of the Wyrm's minions usually end their lives in Malfeas as tormented playthings of the realm's rulers; some go so mad with torture that they willingly betray their true allegiances and join with the Wyrm just to end their agony.

Malfeas is a surrealist's nightmare, a twisted combination of a continent-sized insane asylum, toxic landfills, deteriorated factories and the European Dark Ages. It is a twisted maze of tunnels, hidden chambers, stone cells and iron bars, so many that even the lords of the realm do not know them all. Some say there are portals that have been forgotten, and that some of these portals go to entire realms that the Wyrm has forgotten in its madness; the truth of such stories will never be known. Screams and maniacal laughter echo off the spiked battlements and jagged, naked girders of the Realm, and skip across the stagnant ponds of slime and toxin. Here the population is Banes, fomori, the occasional Black Spiral Dancer, and a disquieting number of mortal slaves who fell to the Wyrm in life and were carried off to Malfeas before their deaths.

And for all this Malfeas is constantly in a state of slow change. New areas manifest as new realms are corrupted, and other areas atrophy, disappear or become hidden in the Realm's layers. Sadly enough, the change is always growth, never shrinkage — such is the state of the World of Darkness that Malfeas has never gone hungry.

Central Duchy

The majority of Moon Bridges leading to Malfeas open onto the courtyard of the Central Duchy. New arrivals cannot tell if they are in an open area within a massive architectural construct, or are outside, surrounded by separate constructs looming nearly a mile overhead. A circular stone dais rises from the ground in the middle of the courtyard, the spiral carving on its face obscured by grisly stains caked on for centuries. Overlooking one end of the yard is a massive cathedral facade with an enormous stained-glass window depicting tentacled monstrosities erupting from beneath the earth. Beneath the window a wide balcony commands a full view of the courtyard.

The constructs that form the Central Duchy are built at impossible Escher-angles, with corners reversing themselves, forced perspectives creating dizzying vistas and phantom spaces opening where there should be only blank wall. The constructs combine the features of gothic cathedrals and castles with the hulking pipes, tanks and valves of an enormous oil refinery or chemical plant. Banes, twisted spirits and other servitors march wretched prisoners along girdered catwalks and buttressed stairwells, prodding and

lashing them toward the dungeons, the slave pits, the torture chambers and the vivisection theatres. Prisoners whisper of a gigantic kiln in the bowels of the Duchy which is fed living souls by the spadeful. Heavy industrial pumping, grinding, cranking, wheezing and squealing noises pervade the air, and the shrieks of lost souls can be heard at close intervals.

If one climbs to the highest peaks of the Duchy's constructs and peers through the low-hanging oily sky that represents the "outside" of the Central Duchy, a bleak tower surmounted by barbed crenellations can be seen squatting on the outermost reaches of the jumbled city-sized complex of industrial steel and medieval stonework. This tower is Castle Cthonus, the residence of the ruler of Malfeas (Number Two, below). Rumor has it that in the dungeons of Castle Cthonus there is a pit which is the very maw of the Consuming Wyrm. Slave-legends tell of many heroes who sought to penetrate the Castle and slay the Wyrm from within, but do not tell of any who returned from such a quest.

The Maeljin Duchies

The domains of the Maeljin Incarna all touch the Central Duchy at some point, where they are usually separated by a massive stone wall topped with razor-sharp iron spikes. A massive gateway, elaborately sculpted to reflect the character of the region and heavily policed by guards on both sides, marks the places where those duchies connect. Some duchies, however, seem to occupy some alternate realm that connects to the interiors of otherwise disconnected regions. Number Two's minions have managed to find and seal off most of these entrances in the Central Duchy, but he fears that more have yet to be discovered.

• **Duchy Aliara:** A broad avenue lined with beautiful (if wildly decadent) sculptures and tropical plants leads to the Pleasure Dome of Empress Aliara, a sprawling palace with intricately ornamented spires suggestive of Russian, Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian architecture. Inside, sweet cloying incense fills the air, thick carpets cover the floors, laughter and moans of delight echo from every direction, and sumptuous tapestries part to reveal chambers where guests lounge on silken cushions enjoying lavish feasts. Here every imaginable delight to the senses can be found as sycophantic slaves leap to fulfill every visitor's slightest whim. Few who enter this realm ever decide to leave — until the rot underneath becomes visible, and then they no longer have any choice but to stay and entertain their Lady.

• **Duchy Steel:** Lord Steel's domain is a vast range of cold, desolate, inhospitable mountains, inhabited only by incessantly warring tribes of cutthroats and murderers. Guides may be hired at the gate to lead one through the mountain passes, but they will turn on their employers as soon as the opportunity arises. Atop the isolated peak of the tallest mount squats the massive, heavily fortified keep of this duchy's Dark Lord. Inside, only bare walls, cold stone floors, tiny lightless windows and uncomfortable spartan furnishings greet the visitors. Lord Steel seldom receives guests and is not known as a gracious host.

• **Duchy DuBois:** A party entering the DuBois gate from the Central Duchy will find themselves strolling along Maine Street, an all-too-immaculate urban street lined with modern office buildings, heading toward the Hall of Justice and Truth, an enormous black marble courthouse built in the neo-classical Greco-Roman style. Here the Honorable Maine DuBois, Esq. provides free consultation to all visitors, on whose behalf he employs the finest sharpest minds and most diligent workers in Malfeas to investigate, research and document every detail of the truth, no matter how small, and leave it buried in the tons of paperwork that this duchy generates. Complaints may be directed to the small, out-of-the-way office reserved for that purpose, which will in turn direct the plaintiff to another, more obscure and hard-to-find office, and so forth, ad nauseam. Straying too far from the courthouse will leave the party lost in an endless stretch of squalid decaying inner urban tenement blocks.

• **Duchy Aife:** If one descends into the basement levels of the more populous duchies or into the caves of the wilder regions, one may find oneself wandering through the Torture Chambers of Duchy Aife, where the Caliph of Pain keeps at least one dungeon cell set aside for every different type of agony she can think to inflict. Heartrending howls fill the smoky air and hulking twisted fomori jailers lumber awkwardly through the narrow passageways. Lady Aife presides in her main chamber which is crowded with hanging manacles, racks, iron maidens, impaling spikes, hanging cages, vats of boiling oil, red hot branding irons stuck in the coals of burning braziers, heated bronze needles, fingernail pliers, thumbscrews and other objects best left to the imagination.

• **Duchy Klypse:** A wrong turn taken anywhere in Malfeas could leave a party in an endless labyrinth of cockeyed corridors, skewed perspectives, stairs leading nowhere, windows opening onto brick walls and doors that never open into the same room twice. Here, silent shadows race furtively along starkly lit cobbled streets and through blind narrow alleys. Distant screams can be heard from any given direction every few seconds, and any section of wall can open to reveal a secret panel, passage or room. Once inside this duchy, it is impossible to find one's way out unless one secures the personal permission of the Doge.

• **Duchy Thurifuge:** At the center of a vast urban sprawl that shares borders with most of the other duchies stands a towering structure resembling a cross between a high-rise hospital, a tall narrow factory and an oil refinery. This houses the laboratory complex where Thurifuge, as Lord of Disease, conducts obscene and inhuman experiments on prisoners, slaves and deranged willing subjects.

• **Duchy Hell:** The gateway to the domain of the Hellbringer has been sealed off by Number Two, and the

Chieftain of Rage occasionally turns the Armies of the Wyrm against the Central Duchy itself out of spite. The war-torn cityscapes, blasted wastes and thunderous battlefields of this realm share many borders with the other duchies and even connects with the Atrocity Realm itself.

• **The Elemental Duchies:** The fiefs of the elemental Maeljin define the "cardinal directions" of Malfeas. In the north, Collum broods upon mountains of frost-rimed debris and fjords carved by glaciers of frozen sewage. The eastern sky is perpetually stained by the rolling bluish-gray billows of Duchy Choke. In the south, Kerne holds court in the heart of an active balefire volcano that feeds the sulfurous lava rivers crossing his domain. Beyond the poison seas of the west stretches a chain of "fertile" tropical isles aswarm with the deformed brood of Lady Yul. The populace of these realms spend most of their time taunting, tormenting and trying to corrupt enslaved elemental spirits captured from other realms.

• **The "Border Duchies:"** There are two types of terrain which separate the regions of Malfeas that do not connect directly to each other. Long considered to be only empty uninhabited wastelands, they have recently come to be recognized as the domains of two Maeljin Incarna who do not actively participate in the venal courtly politics of Malfeas.

Dividing the Central and adjacent duchies from the distant outer elemental realms are interminable rolling stretches of barren empty desert, parched by the ultraviolet rays of an enormous black sun. The weakest members of any party that tries to cross this wasteland are not likely to survive the oppressive sweltering heat or freezing nights. Sandstorms abound, and when viewed from a distance the colossal silhouette of the Nameless Angel of Despair can be seen riding a wave of whirlwinds. Lore relates that each grain of sand in this desert was once a living soul that died by losing the will to live.

Patches of swampland mark the empty quarters between the Central and adjacent duchies; in recent centuries these regions have been spreading, increasing the distance between all the domains by swallowing lengths of shared borders. Deep in the swamp dwell small inbred colonies of pathetic useless fomori and lazy slow-witted Banes. Even deeper in the swamp, some whisper, stands the crumbling gothic abbey where Knight Entropy, called Spawn of the Wyrm, stables its fanged black steed.

The Temple Obscura, Home of the Labyrinth

Standing within sight of Castle Cthonus is a massive black temple of dark, green-veined marble. Although not as large as some of its surrounding buildings, the Temple Obscura is nonetheless highly memorable. Eastern and Western architectural design clash in a disquieting mix that makes the building not quite a cathedral, not quite a mosque — neither Greco-Roman nor Indian. Uninvited trespassers invariably suffer the most uncomfortable deaths possible, for this place is the heart of the Black Spiral Dancers' faith — the blasphemous soul of the fallen tribe.

Inside, the air is heavy with the incense of sulfur and monoxides, and the only light is an unclean green glow from stained glass windows, far above. A rank mist hides the ceiling from those who walk the floor, but visitors are often far more interested in the impossibly intricate, madly interweaving spiral inlaid into the black marble floor.

This is the most sacred site of the Black Spiral Dancers; it is the very Black Spiral from which they draw not only their name, but all of their strength and madness. To walk the Labyrinth is a sacred, ritual journey into the very heart of the Wyrm. It is only attempted by Garou, as experience has proven that all others who try die horribly.

The Earth Pit

A gargantuan crevasse by the center court defines one of the Realm's cruelest jests. The pit smells of pollution and rot, descending level by level like a strip mine. Each level is decorated with the stumps of huge trees and the twisted bodies of poisoned animals. Moon Bridges from Blights and Hellholes usually open into this area, although not always. This miserable location is the reflection of Earth itself, or Earth as it would be with the spirit of Malfeas. Like the Glades it parodies, it is full of the twisted reflections of Glade Spirits and Naturae.

The pit itself mocks the physical world and many areas therein. Some levels reflect clear-cut forests or nuclear testing ranges. At the lowest level, under a foul lake of irradiated, oily water, lies a filth-encrusted spar representing the Great Barrier Reef of Australia. There are even a few miserable slums filled with corrupted Gafflings, who fight one another over the tiniest scraps of Gnosis. Any Gaian shapechanger who made it this far into Malfeas might be undone upon viewing the Earth Pit, for the sight is repulsive enough to stir a frenzy in even the gentlest Gurahl soul.

The Gardens of Nightmare

One of the many gates leading out of the central court opens into what appears to be a formal garden. The plants, although they smell of decaying meat and possess an unhealthy sheen, are neatly ordered and carefully cultivated. Crucified, flayed, and otherwise mutilated and tortured victims are on display at each turn and joining of the paths, and the area constantly burbles with the sound of the many fountains and streams running red with blood or black with steaming poison.

Once through the gate, the garden seems to extend more or less unchanged in every direction. The further that one moves, however, the less orderly the garden becomes. Even if a visitor tries to turn and make for the entry gate, he will find himself lost in the increasingly wild garden.

There are no spirits or Banes here to offer directions. What's more, the garden has an uncanny knack for separating members of a group; any time two visiting companions lose sight of one another, they become unable to find one another again. No amount of searching or shouting will help; all the visitors remain in the garden, but apart from one another as if they were in separate dreams.

As one travels, the state of the garden worsens. The paths are not as well tended, and weeds begin to appear among the orderly flowerbeds. More and more trees appear, at first decoratively placed in the center of beds of skulls, or in small clearings, hung with victims who dangle just in the reach of the fires underneath them. The further one travels, the more trees there are, until the paths are winding through light woods. At this point, even groups who have kept track of one another become gradually separated until each traveler is alone. The underbrush thickens; the paths fade to mere traces, difficult to follow through a dense forest — then the paths disappear altogether.

Essentially, this sub-area is a gateway into the Realm of Nightmare, a corrupted "suburb" of the Dream Zone. The Storyteller should begin playing on the personal fears of each character, tailoring the nightmare to the individual. A skilled Theurge or other accomplished Umbral navigator might be able to eventually find her friends and lead them to safety, although this is never easy. Sadly enough, the Gardens of Nightmare are perhaps one of the safest ways out of Malfeas.

The Wyld Founts

High up in the girder framework stretching above the central court is a large crystalline sphere that randomly emits light of various colors. The sphere is around 60 yards in diameter, and appears to be made of crystal or glass. A large spiral staircase winds from the ground level, past the sphere, and further on upwards. Although from a distance the sphere seems to be a solid milky white, close up it appears to be full of rapidly swirling bits of color.

Bound inside this sphere, which is heavily enchanted, is a Wyldling Vortex. This ancient and potent spirit has been in Malfeas since Malfeas was first created. At the point where the staircase passes by the sphere, there is a landing, with an airlock-style doorway into the sphere. This doorway serves as a "disposal chute" for certain victims, although if some method could be found to open both doors of the airlock at once, then Malfeas could be horribly damaged by the Vortex's escape and rampage.

Nearby is a great river of foul liquid that runs through much of Malfeas. The wellspring of this stream is a shallow pool about 100 yards in diameter. The dark liquid bursts upwards from the center, hundreds of feet into the air, before crashing back into the pool. Where the falling liquid hits the pool, Banes and other creatures slowly form out of the mist, drifting towards the edge of the pool



where minions pull them from the liquid. The flow of liquid runs out of the pool through a narrow trough, where a great deal of it is siphoned off into the vast machinery of Malfeas.

This is the Fount of Dark Possibilities, one of the sources of Malfeas' power. It is a portal to a morass of Wyld energies that has been tapped and then forced through the dark machinery of Malfeas until the only potentials that emerge from it are evil and corrupt.

This Fount and others like it are the closest that the Wyrm can ever come to the act of creation. Through use of this fount, the Wyrm can "create" Banes and even other, more powerful minions. The Wyld is the source of the actual creative energy, but here, all that is created is turned to the Wyrm's control and power.

Epiphs

Epiphs are domains of ideas, spiritual representations of the ideas they embody. Some few have reflections in Malfeas; these represent not that an entire ideal has been corrupted, but that corrupt interpretations of that ideal exist. For instance, the Black Spiral Dancers have carried home a statue from the original Epiph of Courage, and a strange alcove now exists in Malfeas where this statue — forever altering its appearance to reflect the viewer's idea of what symbolizes courage — now resides. It is a rallying point for Black Spiral Dancers, although lower-caste inhabitants of Malfeas are not permitted near the Epiph.

The Storyteller is encouraged to be creative when detailing the few twisted Epiphs that are hidden throughout Malfeas. Such areas can obviously have strange effects on visitors; for examples, visitors to an Epiph of twisted Logic might have to make Intelligence + Science rolls merely to navigate the Moebian labyrinth, or those in the Courage Epiph might be able to spend a Gnosis point to recover three Willpower. The only limit should be your imagination — as imagination is the only limit Epiphs know.

The Cages

Beside the open girders at one side of the Central Duchy hangs a network of heavy iron cages, wherein captives are manacled, teased, and tortured for the pleasure of the Malfean rulers. A clotted swarm of Banes continually swarms around this place of despair, although they make no sound — it is forbidden to interfere with the acoustics of a tormented prisoner's screams, howls or gurgles.

Rulers of Malfeas

Only the most loyal and powerful servants of the Wyrm can rise to become the nobility of Malfeas. Drunk with their power to twist and corrupt the lives of others, they war with one another just as viciously as with the Wyrm's foes. Though ostensibly united in the purpose of planning and leading a full assault on Gaia, their various feuds have so far prevented this from becoming a reality. Some closely related Maeljin work together frequently, but the unbalanced nature of the Urge Wyrms that drive them keeps them from ever unifying their efforts completely.



Furthermore, they all jealously covet the throne of the Central Duchy, which has been held as long as any can remember by a mysterious and secretive Black Spiral Dancer known only as "Number Two" and his retinue of depraved cronies, the Committee.

Number Two

Nobody knows how old the ruler of Malfeas truly is, as his original name has been forgotten, some say even by himself. It is known that he (or possibly even she) was born a Black Spiral Dancer, and that he served the Wyrm with such fervor and diligence that he was eventually raised to Incarna status. An implacable tyrant, he only deals with others from a position of power and strength. His bodyguards, a pack of huge brutish Black Spirals and fomori, have been magically bound to him so that they suffer from any injury he may take. He rules Malfeas through terror and brute strength, often conducting purges in which any who have displeased him are tortured, maimed and killed. He has as little to do with the Maeljin Incarna as possible, but claims intimate knowledge of each of the Urges. Sykora, the Urge of Paranoia, is especially strong within him, for he realizes how much the others covet his position.

Capable of appearing in many forms, Number Two usually manifests in a rank-smelling Glabro form with attenuated arms, with blood caked under his claws and running from the corners of his mouth. Other known forms include that of a Scrag and a wildly vicious Psychomachia sporting scythe-blades for forearms and a round lamprey-like mouth from which extends a tongue tipped with rotating blades.

Number Two is particularly fearful that somebody may discover the secret of his past, which can be used against him. All his mortal associates died of old age long ago, and he has since tracked down and destroyed any other being once connected with him. Some speculate that his secret is hidden within the *Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth*, for he makes a special effort to track down any copy of that book he learns of, keeping them locked in a vault deep within Castle Cthonus. (Storytellers who own the **Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth** supplement and wish to use this information in their own Chronicle are directed to footnotes 4 and 7 of Chapter Four. Player characters who do not have access to the *Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth*, or who will not touch the thing out of justifiable fear for their sanity, may trick or torture the relevant information from the Black Spiral Dancer Writlish, a.k.a. W. Richard MacLish, Professor of Comparative Anthropology, University of Edinburgh — assuming they know where to look for him and what questions to ask.)

The Committee

"A man is never so tall as when he stoops to poke fun at a midget. Another helpful hint for living from The Committee..."

Number Two's entourage and inner circle, the Committee, are hand-picked from among the Wyrm's most pious minions by Number Two, and report directly to him. Each member commands a wide variety of forces, including Black Spiral Dancers, Banes, fomori and corrupted slaves. Membership can change suddenly as members die in the course of duty, are killed in infighting, or are purged by Number Two. The most powerful members, those who have managed to hold their positions for a long time, are listed below.

Flaggas, Overseer of the Realm

Previously a high-ranking intelligence operative for a major world power during the early years of the Cold War, Flaggas was led into the service of the Wyrm by a corrupted mage of the New World Order. The Defiler Wyrm found his unswervingly suspicious nature and talent for covert personal manipulation both useful and pleasing, and rewarded him by transporting him to Malfeas. Because of the position he held on earth, Flaggas was able to witness first-hand the extremes of tyranny and despotism of which humans are capable, but this could not prepare him for the torments that a place like Malfeas inflicts upon both the bodies and souls of its inhabitants.

As Overseer of the Realm, Flaggas is responsible for observing everything that happens in Malfeas and reporting any upset in the status quo or any activity that might be interpreted as a betrayal of Number Two. Number Two has made great use of Flaggas' abilities, but could not stand to think that the agent might one day turn his investigative powers upon Number Two himself. To prevent this, Number Two removed Flaggas' soul and bound it into a pathetic wooden marionette which Number Two keeps in his pocket. Whenever he thinks that Flaggas may be plotting some treachery, he pulls out the puppet and shakes it violently, causing Flaggas to dance with uncontrollable spasms.

"General" Torthur, Minister of Outer Affairs

Torthur is the Black Spiral Dancer Ahroun in charge of coordinating the Malfean forces dedicated to polluting and corrupting other realms and domains. Most of the foul legions of Malfeas, those who owe no particular loyalty to other rulers, are his to command, and he demands that everyone call him General. He harbors a special hatred for the Gaian Garou, who slew his original pack and marked him with many deep battle-scars, and never misses an opportunity to do them harm. His loyalty to Number Two and to the Wyrm has never been questioned.

In recent years Torthur's dreams have been haunted by disturbing visions of the primordial Wyrm of Balance. He has come to believe that Beast-of-War (whom he serves) and the other Triatic Wyrms are but empty masks hiding the Wyrm's original nature, and that he has been



played for a pawn. The mighty General now secretly fears that his sympathy for the "wrong side" will be discovered.

Morgan, Warlord of the Realm

Formerly the criminal despot of a poverty-stricken Third World nation, Morgan was transformed into a fomor by the gifts of Beast-of-War. Barely appearing human anymore, he is covered by a thick armored carapace, with tentacles branching from his back and barbs bristling from his limbs. Number Two has charged him with the duty of policing Malfeas, a role he attacks with relish and gusto, unleashing packs of fomori, Black Spiral Dancers and Banes against unruly minions, disobedient slaves, escaped prisoners, intruders to the realm and anyone who looks at him the wrong way. He also acts as the realm's gaoler, ensuring that all the prisoners are in their cages and all slaves are securely chained when not in use.

Weoena, Chief Torturer

Weoena was apparently once a sadomasochistic serial killer, one whose twisted approach to sexuality drove "her" to mutilate her victims so horribly that law enforcement agencies prevented the local press from releasing a single detail about the murders. She was never caught; Black Spiral Dancers stole her away into the Umbra, where she was given the metallic form she now wears and the very *finest* facilities.

Weoena's infamy has spread throughout Malfeas, and rightly so. Even the most masochistic Bane feels a tingle of dread when her name is mentioned. Prisoners given over to her have little hope of even death's release; she is hellishly talented at wringing information from her charges, and even convincing victims that the agonies they experience were all they ever craved. Certain Malfean residents are more than a little worried at the not-so-distant resemblance Weoena shares with Lady Aife — to say nothing of the fact that despite their common interests, the Chief Torturer and the Caliph of Pain have never been seen in one another's company....

Jiy-Uid, Grand Vizier

None can say who — or what — Jiy-Uid was in life before rising to his current station. Many suspect him to be one of the Unknown, denizens of the Beyond that lies far on the other side of the Deep Umbra. Other rumors have it that he is an alien Incarna, possibly even the totem of the mysterious Vhujunka (certainly his passing resemblance to those subterranean creatures fuels such gossip). If anyone knows for certain, it must be Number Two.

Jiy-Uid is an advisor to the Committee, a master analyst and logician whose talent for extrapolation borders on — or is powered by — precognition. His logic is as inextricably twisted as the coils of the Hydra itself, and his talent for enigmas and other metaphysical areas makes him invaluable to Number Two. He is such a skilled manipulator that few can say what his true ambitions are; for now, the Grand Vizier seems content to serve, abide, and advise.

Storytelling Malfeas

Needless to say, Malfeas isn't a name to invoke lightly. It's the very heart of spiritual power for the Wyrm's servitors, and only the greatest of the Corrupter's minions are allowed into the Realm. Garou should visit Malfeas about as often as the heroes of Greek mythology visited the underworld — in other words, rarely, and often more to their detriment than to their gain. Only the greatest of Gaia's champions stands a chance of escaping the Wyrm's heart; and only the most senior of the Wyrm's servitors can retain his strength and intelligence when confronted with the power of the Realm.

Malfeas should enter most games only as background color, a whispered curse or threat to the characters. It is a place of legend, and a pack would have to be mad to travel there themselves. However, if your pack has accumulated plenty of Rank and power over the years, you might want to top off their careers as warriors with a life-or-death trip to Malfeas. The survivors will certainly remember the story, and even those who perish needn't be embarrassed — it's no shame for a Garou to fall in someplace as hazardous as the Wyrm's own palace.

Enter At Your Own Risk

If necessity drives a Gaian pack into Malfeas, there's only one reliable way of getting there — traveling to a Far Calumn and there opening a Moon Bridge via Gift or Lune. If the Garou have other ways of entering the Deep Umbra, they can certainly use such methods as well, although the trip is much more dangerous. The pack may have to bind a Bane to their service in order to guide them to Malfeas — a tricky proposition at best.

Even if the Garou find the gates, they still have to enter without being spotted. Without the touch of Wyrm-taint on them, visiting servants of Gaia stand out like beacons among the throngs of Banes and other denizens. Baneskins or similar fetishes are thus a must-have for would-be infiltrators.

Story Hooks

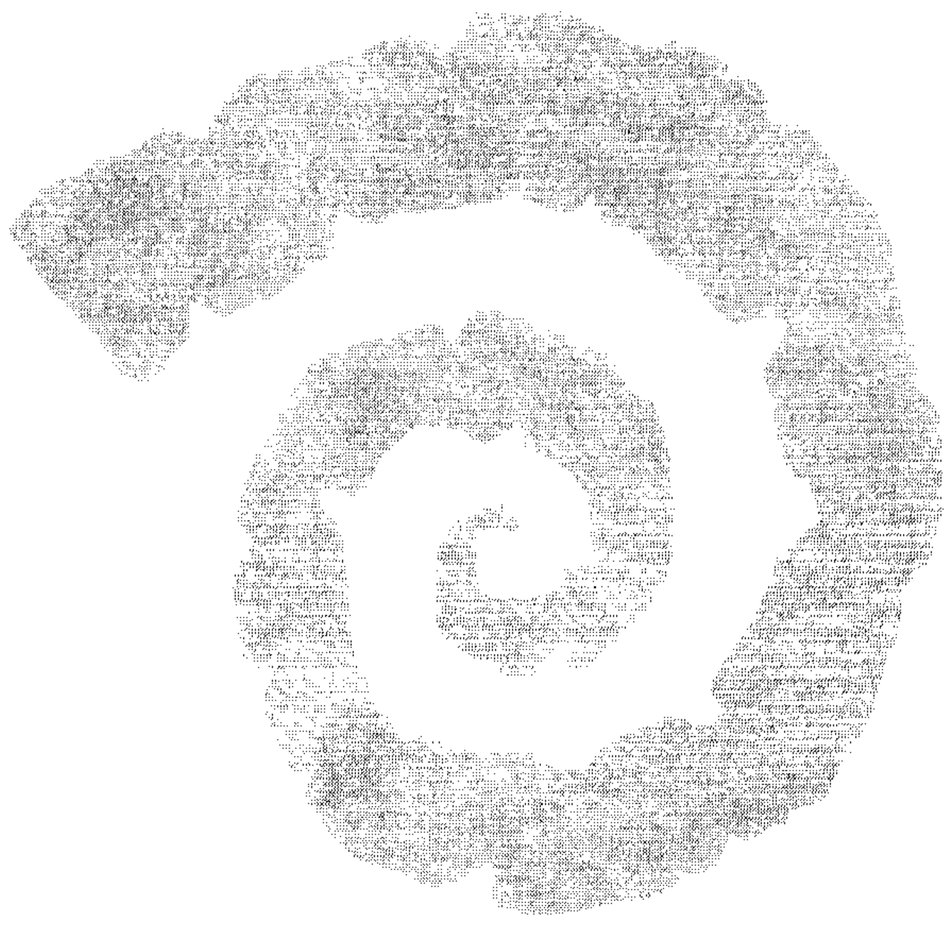
Again, since casual use of Malfeas breeds contempt, you should definitely make certain that the characters have a very compelling reason for risking all in the mouth of the Wyrm. The following are a few ideas for stories of truly epic scale in the very domain of the Wyrm.

• **Mission of Mercy:** When the Dancers take truly important captives, sometimes they take them to the Cages of Malfeas for a truly lingering punishment, or to the mercies of Weoena in hopes of learning information. If a packmate has been carried here, then it is her pack's duty to make a rescue attempt — or to try to grant her release.

• **Power Once Lost:** The pack might have to journey to Malfeas to recover a preternaturally powerful fetish, possibly the weapon of a great hero who died in the foul Realm. If the fetish still exists, it is either very well hidden or very carefully guarded.

• **Interception:** If an old enemy manages to achieve a great victory over his Gaian rivals, he may be summoned to Malfeas in order to receive a promotion. If the pack doesn't prevent him from gaining audience with the Committee, they may have to deal with their foe in a new, vastly more powerful form.

• **Knights of the Realms:** The Wyrm's servitors often rally in Malfeas and then embark from there on missions of conquest. What if the pack learns of a host planning to invade Pangaea, or Wolfhome, or even a Tribal Homeland? Perhaps the only way to stop this invasion is to catch the army before it goes on the march....



Chapter Two: Human Pawns

It was eloquent, vibrating with eloquence, but too high strung, I think. Seventeen pages of close writing he had found time for! But this must have been before his — let us say — nerves, went wrong, and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites....

— Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Pentex

How do we begin to covet? We begin by coveting what we see every day.

— Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs*

Orientation

David opened the slick black binder, unable to hold back a grin of delight. He'd made it! All the hard work, living on a shoestring budget and working night shift had paid off. He ran his fingers over the heavy, embossed cover sheet with the Pentex logo and thought about the orientation session he just attended. Until he'd gotten the e-mail, praising his online resumé, David had never even heard of Pentex. But there was an office less than 20 miles away in Charlotte. Three interviews later, the job was his — Technology Coordinator III. He handled employee training sessions and made sure all the systems stayed up to speed. This was a dream come true. Pentex had excellent insurance, stock options and paid vacations. Now Ann could quit her job at the grocery store, go back to school and put Jordan in a quality daycare center instead of with the high school dropout next door. No more living in a dead end neighborhood. David pictured a new house, a decent car, maybe even a nice dog. The good life was finally theirs for the taking.

Mortals aren't stupid, but they can be duped. Pentex represents the Wyrm's tendrils in the mortal world, and the company is a whiz at misleading the average person off the street. Pentex hides its true intentions behind veils of lies, all the while feeding humanity's greed. Convenience food, cellular communication, cheap fossil fuels — anything that gives quick gratification, satisfying the baser need to covet — that's Pentex. So what if a few million trees get hacked down? It's all in the name of progress! The greater price, of course, is corruption of the human spirit.

While most of the top executives and special agents at Pentex are indeed servants of the Wyrm, devoted to minions such as the Eater-of-Souls, most lower and middle management haven't a clue. But these corporate climbers are worse in a way; they sell their souls to company policy. They destroy the individuality and self-respect of those beneath them, all the while pretending to practice '90s style total quality management. This suits the Wyrm just fine.

Few people outside the megacorporation know just how widespread and powerful it is. Think of Pentex like a cancer: the victim may seem fine on the outside, but inside, foul growths swell and spread, destroying anything in their path. Pentex is the metastasized tumor that seeds itself through healthy flesh, in this case, mortals, the earth and Gaia. Eventually, nothing is left but decay.

Public Perceptions

Pentex isn't just one company; it's thousands of corporations, large and small. Pentex and its executives maintain controlling interests in a variety of businesses and industries around the world, most often through aliases or false holding companies. How does this work? Take Chase Lamont, newest Pentex executive, for example. He might want to purchase controlling interest in Consolidex Worldwide, an up and coming member of the Top 21 companies of Pentex. Lamont doesn't call his broker and purchase 51% of Consolidex stocks; he constructs an alias, possibly using the name of someone who died as a child, who owns a fictitious holding company. This persona buys the stock, and Lamont is never connected with the affair. No one ever finds out that Steve Nelson's Swiss bank account codes really get the money to Chase Lamont.

The upshot is that few people know just how much Pentex controls. The corporation doesn't appear on any stock indices, like Dow Jones or Standard and Poor. To be sure, bona fide Pentex office buildings exist in many cities worldwide, but they're nothing out of the ordinary, just typical looking corporate centers like so many thousands of others. Most passersby wouldn't give these places a second glance. If you asked people what they thought of Pentex, they'd probably reply, "Who?" And that's exactly how the company wants it.

Employee Perceptions

For most new employees, Pentex seems to be a decent place to work. Everyone gets a box of chocolates during the holidays and a card on birthdays. Copies of the mission statement are in the breakrooms for all to see. There's a generous healthcare policy and several paid holidays. Lower and middle management seem to want honest feedback and consensus building from support staff; a suggestion box sits on every supervisor's desk. Yes, everything conforms to the '90s style of empowering, total quality management at Pentex.

Welcome New Employee!

We want to give you a warm welcome to the Pentex family. Our hope is that you'll come to regard the company as a home away from home, a place where team spirit really counts.

Please take a moment to review our mission statement and strategic action plans for Pentex 2100. P stands for Partnership; we're working together for company goals. E stands for Energy, symbolizing Pentex's desire to maintain employee vitality to keep us strong. N stands for Novelty and T for Technology; we want to be on the cutting edge of innovation in the 21st century. Enthusiasm, also for E, goes hand in hand with developing a strong corporation. Finally, think of X for Excellence in everything you do. All of us are extremely excited about future growth and continuous quality improvement.

While my position as Subdivision Director of Human Resources Development keeps me busy, I'm always ready to hear from you. Feel free to send me e-mail or arrange an appointment if I happen to be in your district.

Once again, welcome!

Kathryn Mollett

Human Resources Development

Except — sometimes folks get transferred out of state, never to be heard from again. No retirees ever come back to visit. At staff meetings, long-term employees promise to deliver comments and concerns when they get a chance, but anybody who cared to check would see those "constructive criticisms" never get written. People who've been around a while know not to talk too much. Little by little, newbies learn that the big happy family bit they hear about in orientation is a sham. But by that time, most are too fearful of losing their jobs — or worse — to ever say anything. Better to lay low, not raise a fuss and pray none of the higher-ups pay much attention. Who can afford to quit, even if things aren't perfect?

Does the rank and file secretary know about the secret projects, vile experiments or Wyrm infestations? Hardly! But after a while, anyone can notice that with few exceptions, Pentex is basically an old boys club; men are bosses and women are secretaries. Likewise, there's little ethnic diversity. Moreover, supervisors subtly arrange the offices' physical spaces to discourage friendships. Each worker has a

cubicle with padded walls, and to keep the office "neat and professional," managers discourage the display of photographs or cartoons. The same sort of rules apply to playing radios, eating at desks and keeping plants. It goes without saying that office equipment, including the telephone, is not for personal use. Employees with families find no sympathy in this company; the job has to come first.

To Pentex management, employees are like ants; *en masse*, they're workers who must get the job done, and a few get squashed along the way. They're necessary, but insignificant. Unspoken threats and a few thin scraps here and there keep them motivated. But if someone's lost, it's not a problem. So many others are ready and waiting to take his place.

Loyalty

David thought the training session on office networks had gone really well. Everyone paid close attention, and the questions were direct. But Heather Newton, one of the administrative assistants, seemed a little distracted. Once, she'd left the room; David thought maybe she was sick. But as she packed up to leave, he noticed her cheeks were wet. He walked over.

"Hey Heather, is everything okay?"

She hesitated. "Yes, Mr. Gillis, sorry, just feeling a little tired this morning."

David recalled that Heather had two kids she was raising alone. "How're your boys doing?"

"They're, well... Matt got into some trouble at school yesterday. I really need to talk to his teacher, but she can only meet at 3:30, and..." She left the sentence hanging.

"Well, you can take some time, right?"

Heather shook her head. "No, but it's okay. Really. Thanks for your concern, Mr. Gillis." She quickly walked out. David shrugged and turned off all the machines in the training center as his supervisor Christopher Kay came in.

"How'd the session go?" he asked.

"Really well," replied David. "Except I'm a little worried about Heather Newton."

"Oh?" said Christopher coolly. "She making a scene over her kids again?"

"Well, not a scene," David stammered. "She works for our department, right? Maybe she just needs an afternoon off."

Christopher shook his head. "Hey, she chose to have the kids, so she has to be responsible for them. It's not our job to cater to the whims of bratty teenagers, or their parents. I'll speak to her." He paused. "By the way, you know the whole system on the sixth floor is going to be overhauled this weekend. You will be here to help, right?"

David thought about the picnic he'd planned with Ann. Well, she'd understand. Work had to come first now; he had to play by the rules since he was a newbie. "Sure, I'll be here."

"I'd expect nothing less," replied Christopher as he walked out.



At the Top: Need to Know

When potential employees or the occasional person off the street first learn about Pentex, they'll hear that it's a multinational conglomerate like countless others, pure and simple. Global markets and megacorporations are now so common, few people make further inquiries. The company has a secret history, of course. A man named Jeremiah Lassater founded the parent company, Premium Oil, in 1865. He was a ruthless bastard, imitating contemporaries such as Rockefeller, Morgan and Reynolds. While personally inspecting a drilling site where several accidents had occurred, Lassater became trapped in an excavated tunnel. Years before, the Uktena had imprisoned a tremendous Bane there; now, the thing engaged Lassater in a psychic battle of wills. While the Wyrm-creature couldn't dominate Lassater, it was capable of killing him. Lassater bargained for his life, promising that the Wyrm minion could work through him to influence the development of Premium Oil. The creature agreed, and the company began its long, dark descent.

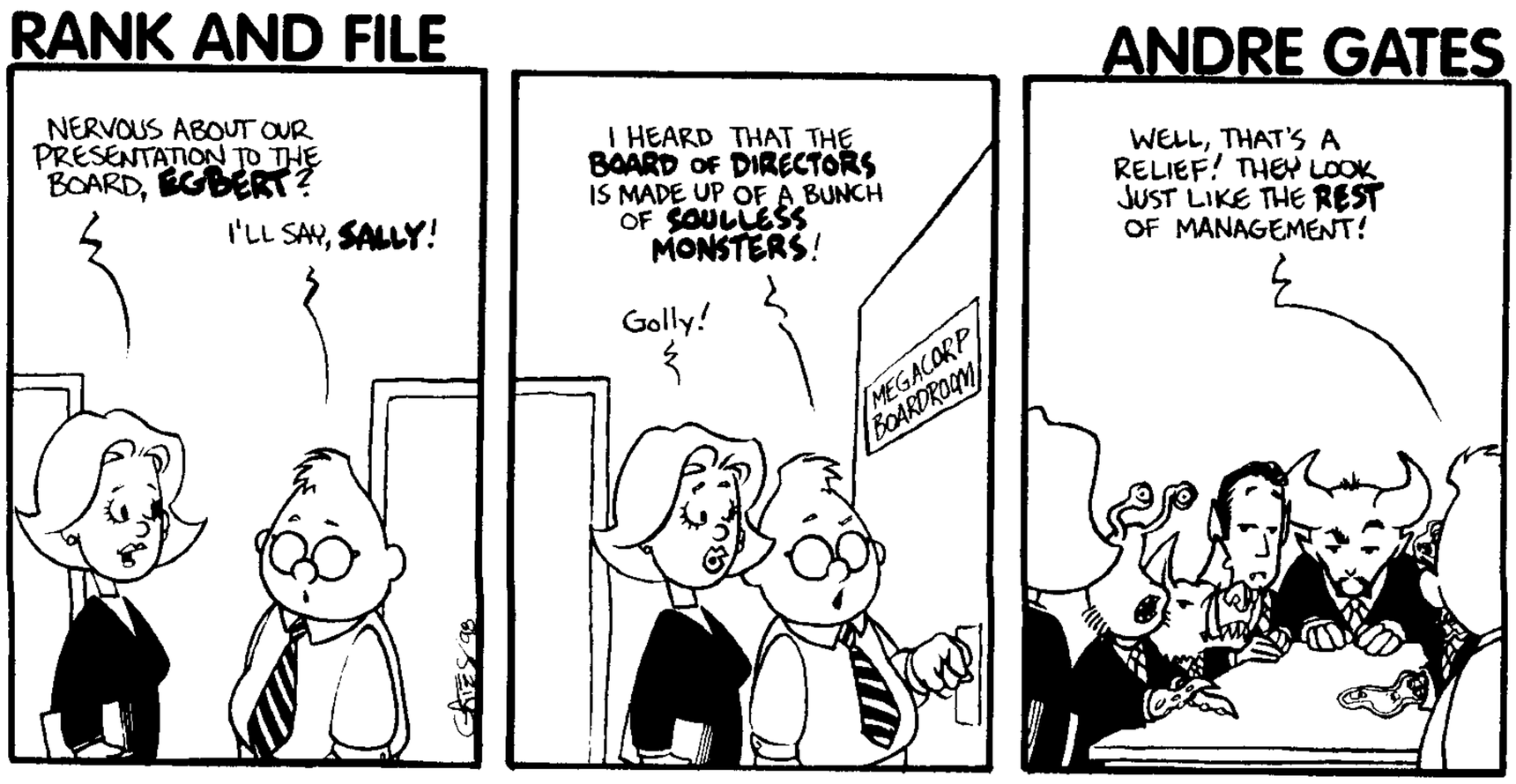
Under the Wyrm's sway, Lassater shaped Premium into a powerful and wealthy corporation, capable of giving even Rockefeller's monolithic Standard Oil competition. But the old man couldn't maintain control over the giant he'd spawned. Gradually, Lassater cut himself off from the company, and after contracting syphilis, committed suicide. He left the reins of command to his son Jacob, an incompetent playboy. Apparently, the forces above weren't pleased; Jacob died in a yachting accident soon after. Colin Jenner, a major shareholder, followed Jacob as company president in 1913. Unlike Jacob Lassater, Jenner was an excellent businessman. He convinced other top shareholders to form a board of five directors to oversee the company. Jenner was himself influenced by the same Wyrm creature that had corrupted Lassater; he was mildly surprised to discover that several of the other board members also had dealings with the Wyrm. In 1915, Jenner and the board rid themselves of Lassater's last influences and changed the company's name to Pentex Incorporated, based on the number of board members. They actively began a campaign of greed and corruption centered around worldwide political, economic and environmental dominance.

Jenner only lasted until 1917 when he died in a tragic, fiery automobile accident. Board member Fulton Clark replaced him; soon after, a pack of Black Spiral Dancers approached Clark about an alliance, explaining that he was Kinfolk and should help them out. Clark was no fool; he saw the advantage of such allies and gladly let several of the Spirals take over key positions. A similar partnership ensued with the Sabbat in 1947, again at the behest of Clark, an act that put Harold Zettler on the board of directors. This was Clark's last action; he died in an oil fire while touring drilling sites in the Mediterranean. Peter Culliford was elected the new chairman, a position he still holds today.

Overall, the merger between Pentex executives and the Wyrm has profited all parties. The Wyrm provides the raw supernatural energies, thirst for corruption and instincts for hatred. The perverse individuals at the top of Pentex supply the business acumen, greed and cunning. It's a marriage made in hell.

Strategic Action Plans

In the mid-1990s, Pentex underwent a major restructuring at the behest of Peter Culliford, then chair of the board of directors. He was shrewd enough to see that a clearer hierarchy of power was needed to maintain low-key public perceptions and better control over internal politics. In January 1994, less than a year after the fateful meeting that brought the deaths of Elliot Meiche, Robert Allred and Frederick Kromrich (see **Monkeywrench: Pentex** in **Werewolf Chronicles, Volume 2**), Culliford proposed a new plan for the company. He wanted all aspects of running Pentex divided among the board members in a highly structured, hierarchical management scheme. Culliford would become the executive director; other board members would become division or subdivision directors and maintain relative autonomy over their own sections. Culliford



expected a struggle; after all, why would his chief rival Benjamin Rushing agree to become a division director rather than vie for the top executive position? The board promised to take the idea under consideration, with a vote to be held at the March meeting. They had another matter to ponder in January: the disappearance of Donald Gauntley. An investigation followed, but no trace of him was found. Mollett and Culliford suspect that Rushing was behind the disappearance, but they have no proof.

At the March 1994 meeting, Rushing suggested a temporary replacement for Gauntley: his eager young protégé, Chase Lamont. In his next breath, Rushing also gave praise to the restructuring plan. The meaning was clear to Culliford; if he appointed Lamont to a subdivision director's position, Rushing wouldn't raise a fuss about the new plan. Culliford agreed to the appointment. After all, Lamont was a young puppy, easily controlled. What harm could he be? The vote on restructuring passed, with Newberry abstaining. The new plan called for Culliford to serve as executive director with division directors Rushing (Project Coordination Division), Stern (Acquisitions Division), Newberry (Operations Division) and Zettler (Special Projects Division). Subdivision directors under Rushing would include Kiker (Public Relations) and Giovanni (Finance). Mollett would serve as subdivision director of Human Resources Development under Newberry, who would also coordinate efforts of worldwide regional directors. Francesco and Yamazaki would direct Project Iliad and Project Odyssey respectively under Zettler. This only left Lamont; Rushing was quick to suggest him for the subdivision directorship of Information Collection Systems under Stern. Culliford reluctantly agreed, planning to put his own spies in the ICS as soon as possible. The directors then got down to business mapping out their goals for the first century of the new millennium. These include continuation of ecological disasters, economic hegemony and assorted top secret projects.

One of the more manipulative strategic action plans they developed was Pentex 2100. In the eyes of lower employees, this is some kind of strategy meant to reinvigorate the company through a series of "employee empowerment" projects. Mollett spearheaded the pitch to rank and file managers and employees by constructing an acronym for Pentex (Partnership, Energy, Novelty, Technology, Enthusiasm and Excellence). She had the regional directors shift employees into various and sundry planning committees associated with each of the Pentex 2100 slogan words. Their goal was to come up with projects and tasks that would exemplify Excellence, Novelty or whatever word they were assigned. Of course, Mollett's real intent is to make sure every single secretary, programmer or janitor is up to her ears in meaningless bureaucratic busywork. If employees don't have time to waste, they won't meddle.

The most recent and unsettling event at Pentex was the death of Enzo Giovanni, head of Finance. His unsolved murder left Mollett particularly unsettled and made other members of the board even more paranoid. Newberry suggested a replacement, making Franklin Rubin the newest member of the Pentex upper echelon.



What's Really Going On

Pentex is at war with the human spirit. It isn't an obvious war by any means; in fact, most employees, even in areas like Project Iliad and other decidedly supernatural areas of research, don't have any clue as to what the "big picture" is. If Pentex's environmental standards are decidedly more lax, most presume it's simply because the megacorp is more interested in results than "green" politics. The "scientists" in Iliad and Odyssey realize they're creating malformed supersoldiers, but generally presume they're doing so to make the company lots of money — and get a healthy raise in the process. Even the employees aware of a spiritual presence of corruption (and these make up about 10% of all the staff, although most of them are found in high-ranking positions) tend to act in two ways — they follow orders out of piety and power lust, or they follow orders in the semi-atheistic presumption that it's all a bunch of superstitious bunk. Either way, you've got to make quota.

Nonetheless, Pentex pursues a well-concealed but unrelenting plan of subjugating humanity — not through direct conquest, but by more insidious methods. The Board wants to desensitize humanity, reducing compassion and hope. They want to immunize people to urban sprawl and swelling populations, the better to reduce hope. They want the public caught up in materialism, apathy and short-sightedness — all the better to suit their ultimate purposes of domination.

Pentex Hierarchies

This bickering is pointless.
— Grand Moff Tarkin, *Star Wars*

Divisions

While the 1994 restructuring of Pentex created some new positions and shifted certain responsibilities, day to day activities changed little. The division directors and subdivision directors still refer to themselves as the board of directors and continue to hold board meetings monthly. The biggest adjustment was eliminating the position of Chief Executive Officer, held by Adrian Newberry. The CEO had formerly overseen the Acquisitions Division (AQD); now, a division director, Danforth Stern, has taken over that function while division director Newberry heads the Operations Division (OPD) and supervises all the regional directors. Technically, this change is a promotion for Newberry and a chance to exert direct control over offices around the world. Stern's growing ineptitude, however, has opened the way for Lamont to spread his influence deep into the AQD. This concerns Newberry, Mollett and Culliford especially.

Most of the divisions cooperate extensively with one another. The Information Collection Systems (ICS) subdivision, for example, provides the AQD with data for corporate takeovers and the SPD with intelligence on recruits. All the divisions and subdivisions rely heavily on the FIN as well.

Pentex Jargon

Partly from Kathryn Mollett's influence, Pentex is up to its ears in management jargonese and acronyms; it's part of the whole employee dehumanizing process. This handy guide can help the Storyteller keep things straight, although she should have some fun confusing the players with all the alphabet soup.

AQD: Acquisitions Division, one of the four main divisions of Pentex under the EXD

ARD: Areas of rapid development; refers to growth in overseas subsidiaries

DD: Division Director; refers to heads of the AQD, OPD, PCD and SPD

EXD: Executive Director; oversees the four main divisions of Pentex; controls a highly secret spy and assassin cadre called Team Prime (PRI)

FIN: Finance; a subdivision under the PCD

HRD: Human Resource Development; a subdivision under the OPD

ICS: Information Collection Systems; a subdivision under the AQD

IL: Project Iliad; a subdivision under the SPD

OD: Project Odyssey; a subdivision under the SPD

OPD: Operations Division, one of the four main divisions of Pentex under the EXD

QCE: Quality Compliance Experts, the watchdogs of the AQD

PCD: Project Coordination Division, one of the four main divisions of Pentex under the EXD

PENTEX 2100: Acronym for Partnership, Energy, Novelty, Technology, Enthusiasm and Excellence; a group of meaningless employee-managed projects designed to eliminate free time

PR: Public Relations; a subdivision under the PCD

PRI: Team Prime, the spy and assassin cadre controlled by the EXD; top secret

RD: Regional Directors; administrators of Pentex subsidiaries around the world under the OPD

SAP: Strategic Action Plan; a list of goals, objectives and actions for corporate policy

SDD: Subdivision Directors; refers to the heads of PR, FIN, ICS, HRD, IL and OD, all of which operate under the four main divisions of Pentex (AQD, OPD, PCD and SPD)

SPD: Special Projects Division; one of the four main divisions of Pentex under the EXD

TQM: Total Quality Management; Pentex uses TQM to build a facade of employee empowerment and influence



Executive Director (EXD)

The Executive Director's office oversees the four divisions of Pentex. It's the exec's job to make sure the division directors stay on task and accomplish the goals set forth during board meetings. The EXD technically has veto rights on all proposed policy, but this is a prerogative Culliford has seldom used since the 1994 restructuring. After all, in a Machiavellian sense, openly exhibiting power is a sign of weakness.

What none of the other directors know is that the EXD has a powerful group of lapdogs, Team Prime. These men and women are the cream of the crop, often secretly recruited from Project Iliad, Project Odyssey or Pentex First Teams. Culliford usually arranges the potential recruit's "death," and brings them on to Team Prime. These agents are then given a makeover and more specialized training. Team Prime never has more than a dozen members at any time; they're usually a mix of commandos, psychics, technogeeks and agent provocateurs. Moreover, the members are fanatically loyal to each other and the EXD. There's nothing they wouldn't do for him, including stealing, murder and human sacrifice; Culliford uses PRI primarily to gather intelligence and eliminate his personal enemies.

Whatever Happened to Mr. Giovanni?

Enzo Giovanni's death left a considerable power vacuum in the Pentex upper echelon that Franklin Rubin seems unable or unwilling to fill. So what *really* happened to Giovanni, anyway? One Millicent Hargroves, Enzo's secretary, could tell ICS a great deal about her former boss if forced to talk. Hargroves was Giovanni's confidante and knows a lot about the skeletons in his closet. Moreover, she's shrewd and enjoys dealing with big power players; Giovanni was an excellent teacher. Hargroves lacks experience, but she knows how to take care of herself. No doubt this will come in handy because spies from PRI, ICS and OPD are watching her carefully. Culliford and Rushing suspect Hargroves may have had something to do with Giovanni's death. They've taken no action as yet; either they don't have sufficient proof, or they want to keep the secretary's role in the murder quiet for their own reasons. With her wealth of secrets, Millicent Hargroves might just be the new white knight Mollett or Lamont are seeking. The side she ultimately takes depends on who can protect her and offer the best reward — or most persuasive "coercion."

ILIAD

LABORATORY IV



Project Coordination Division (PCD)

The PCD is the largest division of Pentex; its job is to organize all the destructive activities of Pentex, whether in the rainforest or on Wall Street. Moreover, the division makes sure there's no useless duplication of projects (save busywork for lesser employees) or accidental market clashes between Pentex companies. The PCD keeps a finger on the pulse of Pentex, especially through its control of the FIN subdivision and use of QCE, Quality Compliance Experts. These teams, proficient in ergonomics and organizational management, serve as division director Benjamin Rushing's eyes and ears throughout the company. The other three divisions work closely with the PCD, not only for access to funds but also because Rushing has almost as much power as Culliford. It wouldn't be wise to get on his bad side.

- **Public Relations (PR)**

Public Relations is a misnomer; what this subdivision really seeks to do is limit public awareness of Pentex. The PR controls internal and external leaks, keeps Pentex out of the public eye and monitors media knowledge of the corporation. This subdivision has operatives in certain government lobbies as well as ownership of several political action committees (PACs). James Kiker is the PR subdivision director, and in the past, his acumen for using media has served the company well. Now, however, PR is struggling to keep up in terms of technology.

- **Finance (FIN)**

The Finance subdivision has a relatively straightforward task: coordinating and administrating all the expenditures of Pentex. The company has operated in the black since the late 1800s and usually there's no shortage of funds for any projects or operations that promise profit or new intelligence. The subdivision director gives de facto approval to all spending, which is generally rubber stamped by the PCD division director and the EXD. Franklin Rubin is the FIN subdivision director at present, having just recently replaced the late Enzo Giovanni.

Acquisitions Division (AQD)

The AQD acts as the watchdog for Pentex holding companies and subsidiaries. It uses research from its ICS subdivision to target new companies for purchase, many of which already contribute to Pentex goals. Often these takeovers aren't friendly, in which case the AQD isn't above blackmail, extortion or assassination; shady deals are a hallmark of Acquisitions. The division maintains contact with the Sabbat and Black Spiral Dancers, some of whom serve in the infamous Pentex First Teams. Things could be worse, except the current division director, Danforth Stern, is lapsing more into paranoid delusions and has less interest in his job. Chase Lamont, Rushing's golden boy in ICS, has been taking advantage of Stern's lapses to insinuate himself into the AQD's business.

- **Information Collection Systems (ICS)**

Whether by computer, satellites or special agents, the ICS gets as much dirt as possible on anyone and everyone. The subdivision then shares this

information with other Pentex divisions, especially the AQD and SPD. The ICS also scrutinizes employee loyalty, which contributes to the friction between ICS subdivision head Chase Lamont and Kathryn Mollett of HRD. Occasionally, trained agents from Projects Iliad and Odyssey are recruited into the ICS; their tasks include everything from mind-reaming to kidnapping, theft and terrorism. All data is stored in the ICS computer banks, which manifests as an enormous state of the art mainframe in the material world. In the Umbra, things are a bit different; there, several Black Spiral Theurges help maintain the sprawling system. This computer monstrosity appears to be an endless tangle of giant, glowing spider webs, larger than a city block. Bound spirits scuttle from strand to strand, relaying, classifying and categorizing information. While a virtual suicide mission, striking a real blow to this computer would put Pentex into tailspin, at least temporarily.

• *Operations (OPD)*

The Operations Division oversees the day-to-day running of Pentex, from processing purchase requests to making sure mail gets delivered. The time consuming tasks, like arranging for copier repair and memos, fall under Operations. The jobs in this division are usually repetitive and mind-numbing but are extremely necessary to making Pentex run smoothly. Fortunately, Newberry, the division director, is an organizational genius and puts efficiency and precision above anything else, including safe practices. Pentex has an abysmal safety record, but various occupational hazard boards have left the company untouched. Under the 1994 restructuring, the division director's position also requires supervision of the Pentex regional directors in major cities around the world. This requires a lot of travel and time, but also puts the division director in a powerful position with regards to international control.

• Human Resources Development (HRD)

The subdivision of Human Resources Development oversees the hiring and firing of Pentex employees, from regional directors to the lowest paid paper pusher. The subdivision director of HRD works closely with the OPD director in these matters and nominally with the other division directors as well. HRD is also responsible for employee training and indoctrination; the current director of this subdivision, organizational psychologist Kathryn Mollett, is especially talented in this area. She's been successful at pushing employee orientation and micromanagement seminars that gives an illusion of individual power, all the while finding more and more busywork to keep everyone crushed under mounds of paper.

Special Projects Division (SPD)

The SPD supervises the more specialized research projects of Pentex, including biotechnology, human and animal experimentation, psychological testing, fomori, psychic phenomena, taints and infestations. While smallest in terms of personnel, the SPD commands enormous resources; needless to say, this division is probably the least normal place to work in Pentex. To be sure, the SPD has secretaries and maintenance workers, but they are frequently recycled. Employees don't see much, as SPD's director Harold Zettler maintains high security — but everyone knows better than to talk about whatever they *do* see.

• Project Iliad (IL)

Project Iliad's sole purpose is to create and train fomori (see **Freak Legion** for more gruesome details). The subdivision conducts numerous experiments, trying to produce the most powerful and normal-looking fomori possible; failures outnumber successes about eight to one. On the other hand, the fomori that do survive seem to have fewer psychological hangups and can usually pass for regular humans. Their training is superior, making these fomori ideal recruits for First Teams or the ICS. Most Project Iliad fomori live in barracks and lose any semblance of a normal life. Old age is not something most of these creatures have to worry about anyway. Francesco, a Black Spiral Dancer, has surprised everyone by his skillful management of Project Iliad.

• Project Odyssey (OD)

Project Odyssey specializes in the development of psychic abilities, such as telepathy, telekinesis and mind control. Project coordinators approach potential psychics in a straightforward manner, inviting them to sign contracts and work with Pentex as special consultants. If the psychics refuse, they are kidnapped, blackmailed or murdered, depending on their talents. OD in some ways is worse than its counterpart: while Project Iliad makes no pledges of providing a normal lifestyle, Project Odyssey soothes its agents' fears by promising the possibility of family and home. It's a big, fat lie, of course. As psychic talents become stronger, many recruits suffer paranoia, intense personality dysfunction and delusions. Some of these defects are merely annoying, but they make life with the spouse, kids and dog nearly impossible. Since his appointment as subdivision director, Kiro Yamazaki has been adding meditative techniques to the Project Odyssey training, hoping to alleviate some of the psychic powers' side effects. (For some additional ideas on psychic powers, check out **Project Twilight**.)

• Project Aeneid

Not really large enough to be a subdivision in its own right, Project Aeneid (too small to have an acronym) is a minor but promising project that combines the best of both Odyssey and Iliad. Project Aeneid specializes in binding a specific type of Bane, called a Mind Feeder, into a psychic host. The result is a powerfully gifted psychic fomor with an addiction to consuming human brains.

Although the potential results of Project Aeneid are promising, the project may or may not be doomed. Francesco



and Yamazaki are playing a dangerous game with one another, as both want to claim the credit if Aeneid succeeds — and blame the other if it fails. What's more, Odyssey's psychics are too precious to risk in any number, so the project's advances are relatively slow going. Aeneid may yet prove to be a great success, but right now each and every employee involved is very worried about their immediate future.

Forgotten

Ann looked at the ruined dinner. Crêpes didn't reheat too well; they turned into rubber hockey pucks. She didn't give a damn about the food, though. What bothered Ann was that David seemed totally oblivious to her frustration.

"How many times have you been home before nine during the last month? Maybe twice? I'm getting really tired of this, David!"

"You're not too upset with the fact that you can go to school, leave Jordan with a sitter and have a nice house with a maid, are you?" he shot back. "Lay off, Ann! My work is important to me; I like it. It makes me who I am."

She shook her head. "Sometimes lately, I've wondered about that. It used to be that Jordan and I were the important things in your life. We were what gave you some meaning. Now it's your job. Doesn't that tell you something?"

"What the hell is that supposed to imply?" David snarled. "Your pop psychology won't work this time. Women just don't understand how much a great job contributes to a man's self-esteem. Take you, for instance. It didn't bother you to work in a grocery store, but that would've driven me crazy. You're a woman, and you didn't mind."

Ann turned pale and her voice shook. "I don't believe I'm hearing this. David, you know good and well I hated working there, the bad hours, the crappy wages, all of it! Just listen to yourself! You sound like a real asshole!" Tears fell then, and she fled the room. The baby started howling.

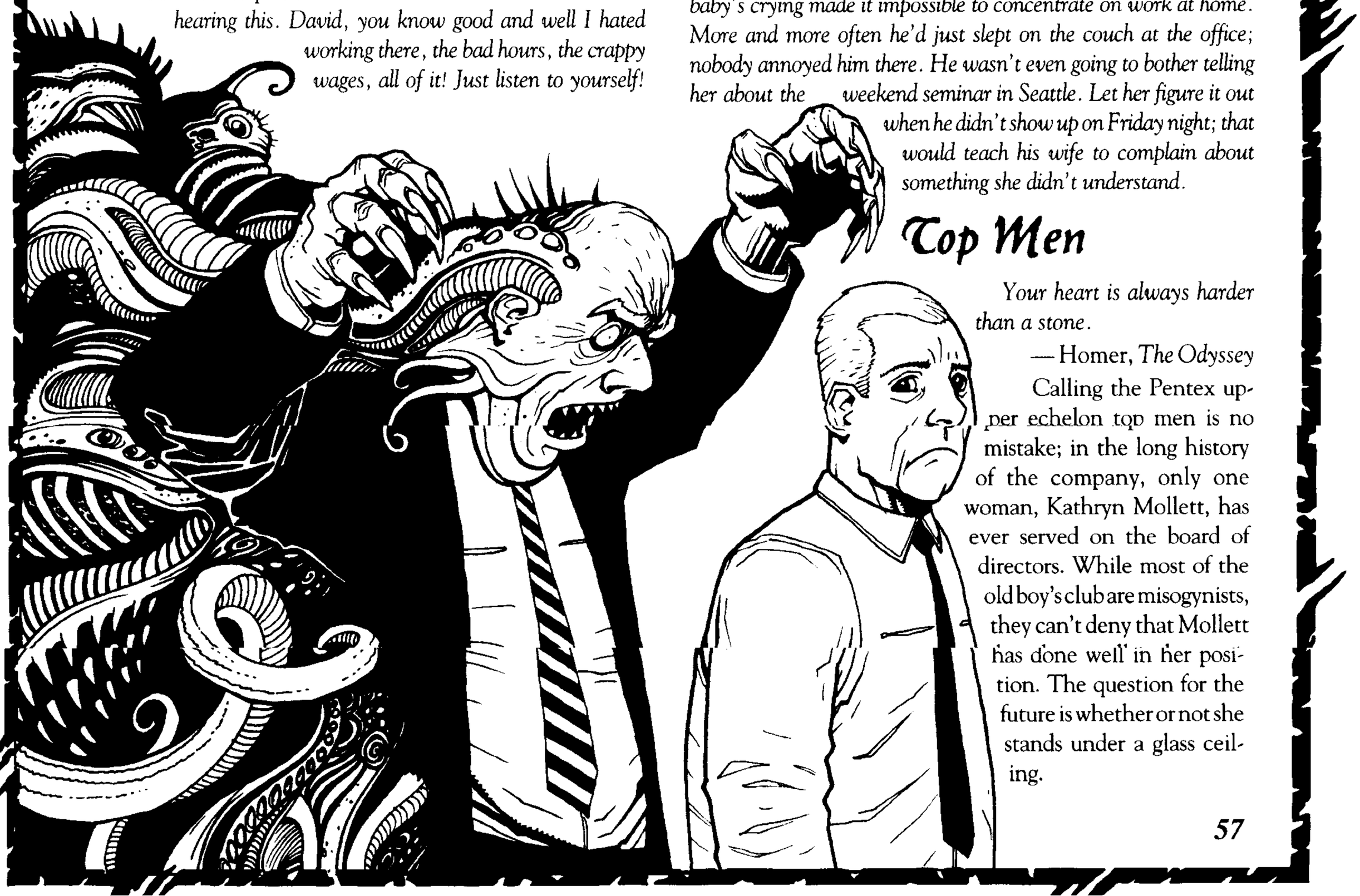
David shrugged. Ann got on his nerves a lot lately, and the baby's crying made it impossible to concentrate on work at home. More and more often he'd just slept on the couch at the office; nobody annoyed him there. He wasn't even going to bother telling her about the weekend seminar in Seattle. Let her figure it out when he didn't show up on Friday night; that would teach his wife to complain about something she didn't understand.

No Drooling in Public

How do Pentex's top executives appear to mortal eyes? Do they babble and drool? Are they visibly sick and twisted? Do they run around shouting how all the Earth will perish at the hands of the almighty Wyrm?

The answer is no. While most of the division directors and subdivision directors serve specific Urge Wyrms or other Wyrm minions, they don't show up for executive staff meetings covered in blood and gore, speaking in tongues. Among the newer executives, such as Lamont and even Francesco, the idea is to present an air of respectability combined with cool disdain. The executives dress well, in finely tailored clothes. They carry expensive briefcases, cell phones and laptops. All appears perfectly normal...on the surface.

In private, the executives engage in terrible vices. Several are cold-blooded murderers, pedophiles or cannibals. Zettler in particular enjoys torturing innocents and performing cruel medical experiments. The Storyteller should feel free to come up with nasty hobbies for the Pentex elite when they're away from the office.



Top Men

Your heart is always harder than a stone.

— Homer, *The Odyssey*

Calling the Pentex upper echelon top men is no mistake; in the long history of the company, only one woman, Kathryn Mollett, has ever served on the board of directors. While most of the old boy's club are misogynists, they can't deny that Mollett has done well in her position. The question for the future is whether or not she stands under a glass ceiling.

A Taint is Just a Taint

What's the difference between a Wyrm-taint and a Wyrm-infestation? Quite simply, the taint is a type of enchantment, untraceable by normal means, that lays a spiritual rot over a product. Depending on the intent, such products can cause severe illness, personality disorders or conditioned responses. The taint doesn't degrade over time, unless the product has limited uses. Tainted frozen pizzas, for example, might be designed to cause food poisoning; a frat boy eats the pizza, ingests the taint and the product is gone, leaving behind one sick dude. Many products are created in Pentex factories with special machines called Tainters, which are difficult to make but relatively permanent devices. Taints are particularly insidious because many have time-release components. Someone who ingests a tainted product may not feel the effects until a week later; the consumer fails to make the connection and continues to buy the very product that makes her so sick.

An infestation occurs when a product or object is turned into a fetish containing a Bane. Unlike regular Wyrm fetishes, with infestation the Bane has the option of leaving if it feels the job isn't being accomplished, the fetish breaks or the fetish owner becomes useless. A Bane from the infestation lurks in the Umbra near whoever owns the fetish, taking every opportunity possible to frighten or corrupt the individual. The more fetishes the person has, the more Banes around to make merry. Banes thrive on animal cruelty and senseless violence, and they'll encourage these behaviors in their targets.

While some Pentex factories have Infestor machines, these are rare and difficult to build, requiring some sort of nuclear waster. They also run out of Banes eventually. An example of an infested object might be an artist's fine-bristled paintbrush; the painter might get more inspirations than she bargained for from the Bane guiding her hand. Infestations are much rarer than taints, due both to cost prohibitions and the desire to remain fairly subtle.

The Old Steady Guard

Culliford, Rushing, Newberry and Zettler represent the strongest players in the Pentex management power game. They're old, cruel and ruthless; they don't care too much about anything or anybody except themselves and their goals. Each man has spies scattered around the world. Each watches the other for any sign of weakness or ineptitude. Culliford and Newberry hold a modicum of respect for each other, but Rushing and Culliford have grown to be enemies. Zettler often stands slightly outside the group; after all, he's a vampire and a little on the crazy side at that.

• Peter Culliford, Executive Director

— Culliford was born over 400 years ago, though he doesn't look a day over 60. In fact, he appears to be a reserved, grandfatherly sort of man, with impeccable clothes and distinguished silver hair. Someone — or something — has been keeping Culliford alive and out of harm's way for a long time, though the price must be a heavy one. Culliford is really a cold customer; he learned diplomacy, politics and the art of lying while in service to the medieval church. Now he runs Pentex the same way, ruthlessly and efficiently. Culliford's goal is to completely defile the earth and her inhabitants, paving the way for a new world controlled by Pentex. While he has no clear-cut allies other than



Team Prime, everyone is a bit afraid of him, including his enemies Rushing and Lamont. No one, even Rushing, is prepared to cross him too much. All the executives know he'd cut their hearts out as soon as he'd say hello, if it suited his purposes. Peter Culliford is irredeemably caught up in the Wyrm's desires for a new age of hopelessness and despair.

• **Benjamin Rushing, Division Director, PCD**

— Like Culliford, Rushing also appears to be in his 60s, though he adds a trim beard to his dapper appearance. A former don at a major British university, Rushing likes cultivating the scholarly look, with bow ties and tweed jackets. While highly organized and competent, he seems more approachable, likable and charismatic than the somber executive director. All in all, Rushing is popular and respected by his peers and subordinates. What they don't realize is that every facet of this man is a lie, from his identity to his demeanor. Rushing's family has worked with the Wyrm for many generations, wallowing in deceit and corruption. Benjamin Rushing is an ambitious man, but the future isn't clear to him. Is being executive director in name something he still wants to pursue? Or can he rule Pentex *de facto* from his position in the PCD? He hasn't yet made up his mind.

• **Adrian Newberry, Division Director, OPD**

— Adrian Newberry remains a mystery. A Harvard graduate, he's served Pentex for a number of years; he appears to be a completely ordinary man in his late 40s. In board meetings, he only states what's necessary. Even though his position requires extensive travel and interaction with regional directors and middle management, Newberry is not a socializer. He handles business precisely and firmly, but with no waste of time or small talk. The man is an exceptional administrator and always puts Pentex first, but away from his work, Newberry has the personality of a frost-covered rock. Culliford values Newberry's business acumen, but secretly wonders if the man is some kind of spy; he's almost too good to be true. Newberry's only vulnerable spot seems to be concern about aging. He's managed to make enough deals with Zettler and the SPD to ward off getting older... for the time being.

• **Harold Zettler, Division Director, SPD**

— Cruel, depraved and zealous, Harold Zettler was a monster before he ever dealt with the Wyrm or joined the ranks of the undead. He's a fifth generation Malkavian *antitribu* of the Sabbat, Embraced in the 17th century. Zettler derives great pleasure out of watching creatures in pain; this sadistic streak adds credence to rumors that he was a Nazi death doctor, a Hessian mercenary and a witch hunter. His good standing with Sabbat allies, though, makes him valuable to Pentex. Zettler also gets along well with Francesco. His major concerns include maintaining the success of Projects Iliad and Odyssey and keeping in the political loop. Zettler well knows that other executives find him unsettling and volatile; at present, he wants to work on improving his image, without sacrificing his hobbies and experiments, of course. Zettler appears to be a thin man in his 40s, with close-cropped hair and a wild look in his eyes.

The Old Sinking Guard

Stern, Kiker and Yamazaki were once undisputed masters of their own spheres of influence. Now, that power is slipping for various reasons. Stern's sanity has deteriorated, Kiker has lapsed in his understanding of modern technology and Yamazaki hasn't been successful eliminating the flaws in his Project Odyssey recruits. These



three had better watch out; the young sharks are ever circling the troubled waters.

• **Danforth Stern, Division Director, AQD**

— Once a strong and respected force in the company, Danforth Stern is almost pitiable. Other than a nervous clenching of his hands, Stern looks like an ordinary, slightly heavyset black man in his late 40s. He's become utterly convinced that the world will soon face an invasion from outer space; his job and that of Pentex is to reshape the planet for this great arrival. The humans will live a blessed existence as the aliens' servants, and first among those cherished slaves will be Stern and others who paved the way. This poor sap is so caught up in this madness that he misses board meetings, deadlines and even AQD planning sessions. Stern's lack of attention is opening up the door for Lamont to step in, much to the satisfaction of Rushing. Sooner than later, Culliford is going to have to make a decision regarding Stern and the future of the AQD.

• **James Kiker, Subdivision Director, PR**

— A successful South African businessman, James Kiker was a pioneer in subliminal advertising. His skillful use of television and commercials captivated millions of people, subtly influencing their urges to consume and waste as many resources as possible. The problem is that the strategy is growing old and dated. What Kiker has failed to do well is capitalize on the enormous growth in online technology, including interactive games, the Internet and Web TV. His idea of clever new media is the compact disc. Because of his past achievements, Culliford and Rushing still support him. However, the younger powers at Pentex think Kiker is a dinosaur who can't keep up with the future. Kiker has two options for remaining in power: work fast and furious to catch up on technological innovations or make an alliance with Yamazaki, who's in a similar bind. Kiker thinks of Yamazaki as inferior, not realizing there's safety in numbers. This outlook may well cause his tumble from power. Kiker is bald and seems about 70 years old.

• **Kiro Yamazaki, Subdivision Director, OD**

— Japanese business tycoon Kiro Yamazaki isn't so much a victim of his own failures as he is the victim of simple bad luck. Drops in Asian markets and the migration of cutting edge technology away from the Pacific Rim has weakened his position. Yamazaki is poised for a comeback with Project Odyssey; he's made some genuine progress with his meditation training and still has numerous contacts among Japanese Yakuza and Chinese tongs. He's also thinking about expanding his sphere of influence into Thailand and Vietnam. However, OD has had problems for a while, and these will take time to repair. Yamazaki would like to pursue an alliance with Kiker and strengthen his ties with the *Kuei-jin*, the Asian vampires. He sits in a precarious position, with a bright future on one side and a dark fall on the other. Yamazaki, despite being over 60, is in excellent physical condition.

Up and Coming

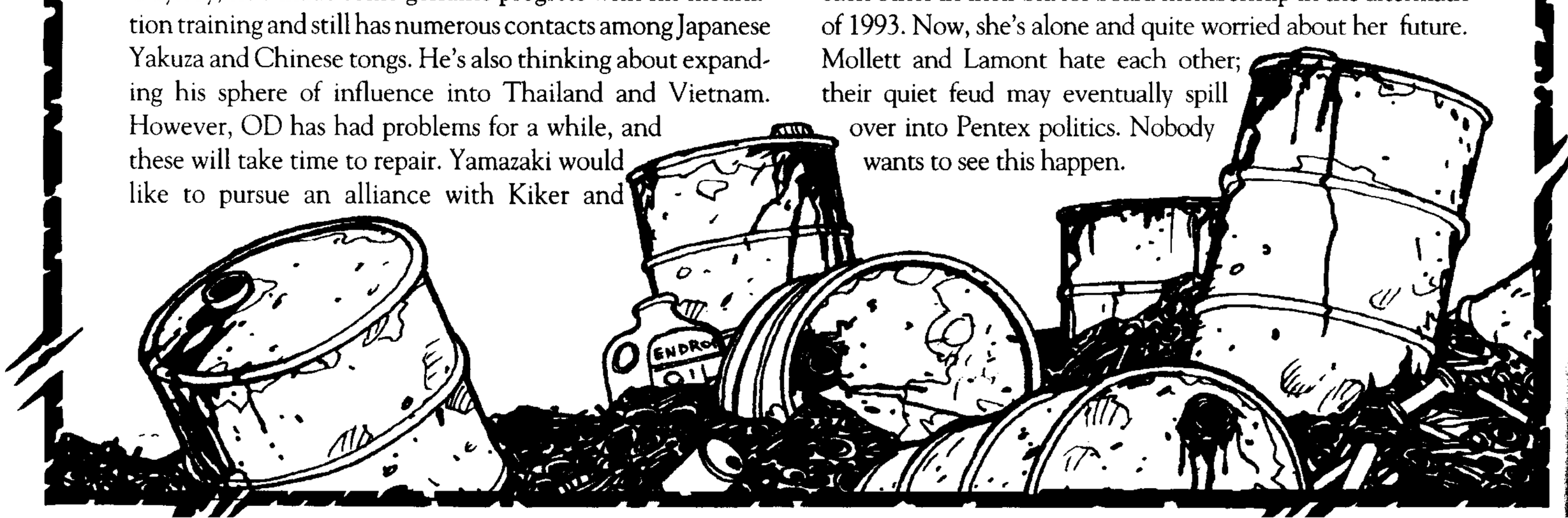
Lamont, Mollett, Francesco and Rubin represent the up and coming breed of Pentex executives. They're suave, cool and debonair, and what's more, they keep their nasty habits out of the office. These four are people you could pass on the street and not even notice, which makes them all the more dangerous.

• **Chase Lamont, Subdivision Director, ICS**

— Chase Lamont is the envy of every nasty James Spader character. Handsome, charming and impeccably groomed, he can crawl away from any compromising position and emerge without a single hair misplaced. Lamont is the ultimate slick, wily slimeball. He gets great pleasure from building a person's trust to get what he wants, then betraying that poor fool utterly. This is particularly true for women, for whom Lamont has a real fondness. He tells them what they want to hear, uses them and then dumps them. If they protest too much, he sees to it they suffer by arranging bad credit reports, pet deaths and even disfigurement. Lamont's best skill is gathering intelligence, and he doesn't care how it's done, just so long as he gets the information. He knows how to cultivate and maintain contacts as well as apply pressure with blackmail and violence. Culliford doesn't like Lamont personally, but he acknowledges that ICS has become more effective under its new director. Rushing wants Lamont to eventually take over AQD. Mollett despises Lamont and would give a lot to see him fall flat on his pretty face.

• **Kathryn Mollett, Subdivision Director, HRD**

— The last several years working for Pentex have aged Kathryn Mollett. She's still attractive, but dyes her hair brown to cover the gray and uses lots of makeup to disguise the dark circles under her blue eyes. Mollett is a genius at organizational psychology; she knows how to motivate people and make them feel like they're part of a team, even as she's piling on more and more work. Manipulation and control of lower and middle management is largely her bailiwick. Mollett does this by being level, straightforward and open, and she makes some Pentex executives a bit uncomfortable with her honesty. One of Mollett's staunchest allies was Giovanni; the two supported each other in their bid for board membership in the aftermath of 1993. Now, she's alone and quite worried about her future. Mollett and Lamont hate each other; their quiet feud may eventually spill over into Pentex politics. Nobody wants to see this happen.



• **Francesco, Subdivision Director, IL**

— Sometimes this lupus Black Spiral Dancer Philodox even amazes himself. Who would have thought that a werewolf who danced with the Wyrm could be so successful as a human businessman? Francesco took to the lifestyle of a Pentex executive quite easily; he's a natural at bribery, blackmail and murder. Largely due to Zettler's influence, the young man joined the company's board of directors in the aftermath of 1993. All the other executives were highly skeptical about the werewolf's ability to maintain self-control and play the part; most are willing to admit their first impressions were dead wrong. Francesco has done well for himself, especially in the creation and training of fomori with Project Iliad. One of his nastier tricks has been kidnapping and using Kinfolk in his experiments; he's been extremely cautious about overdoing this, though. Francesco has his own hive of Black Spirals; they pander to his needs for fresh prey to kill on a regular basis. Culliford agrees with Zettler that Francesco has benefited the company, but the executive director still thinks there might be a catch involved.

• **Franklin Rubin, Subdivision Director, FIN**

— Rubin is virtually unknown, having just replaced the late Enzo Giovanni. He's what corporations dream of in an accountant: a stern-lipped, stiff-haired tightwad. Rubin looks like he was stamped from an accounting mold; he has no distinguishing features that set him apart from any other paperpusher. He's in his 30s, wears well-tailored but plain pinstripe suits and eats a simple bag lunch at his desk every day, making no attempt to socialize whatsoever. Because he's a Harvard MBA, many people assume Rubin got his job thanks to Newberry's influence. Both Mollett and Lamont hope to convert him to their camps, but that seems unlikely since Rubin never talks to anyone, save to give his monthly reports at board meetings. For now, this newest member of the board is a mystery to everyone.

Pentex Corporations

I counted two and seventy stenches,
All well defined, and several stinks.
— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Cologne*

Global Networks

Pentex thrives not only because of secrecy, but also because of its presence worldwide. Many industrialized and former colonial nations are home to Pentex branch offices and subsidiary companies. Local residents usually assume the offices are some sort of international computer networking or financial firms, and that the industrial complexes are producing countertops or airplane seats. Normalcy is what they expect and see; the locals don't pay much attention, since nothing seems out of the ordinary. Unfortunately for them, the effects of Pentex encroachment are subtle and insidious. Crime, pollution and illness often increase around Pentex factories and businesses; domestic violence and suicide are on the rise. Children have lower test scores and higher rates of absences. Overall, the residents' attitudes seem to be more apathetic or volatile. The Public Relations Division, of course, keeps these facts very quiet.

• **North America**

— Pentex is strongest in the United States and Canada; these two nations contain over 70 Pentex offices and hundreds of subsidiary companies. The western branch home office is in Seattle, and the eastern branch home office is in New York City. Cheap labor is plentiful, and the people are exceptionally easy to dupe, especially via the media. Other major field offices are located in large cities such as Atlanta, Charlotte, New Orleans, Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago and Salt Lake City.

• **Central America and the Caribbean**

— The widespread poverty and potential for ecological ruin make Mexico and the rest of Central America a haven for Pentex. Moreover, the Sabbat controls much of the region, inadvertently protecting Pentex from the Garou and other supernatural enemies. While the home office is in Mexico City, other field offices are located in Acapulco, Port-au-Prince and San Salvador; the region houses about 20 offices total.

• **South America**

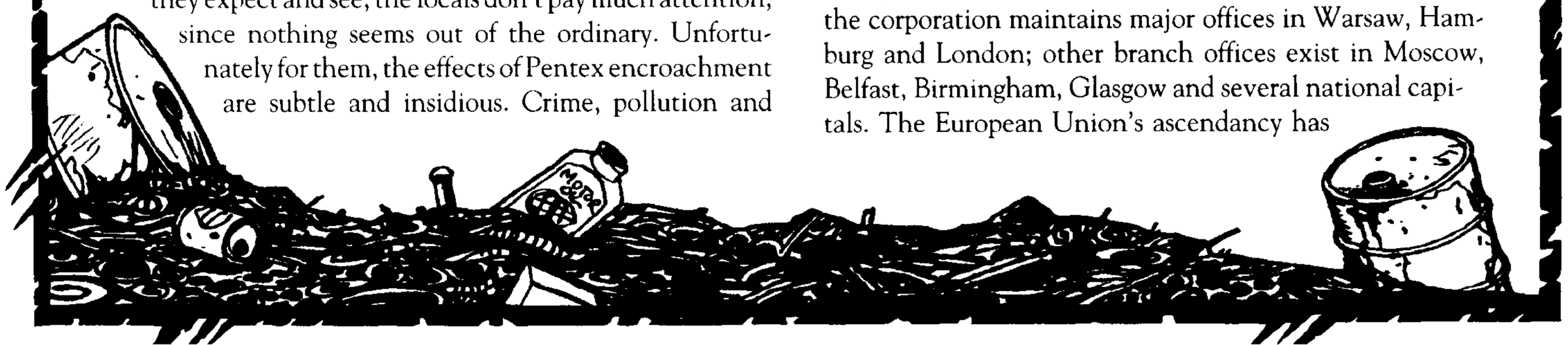
— Pentex's South American activities include mass destruction of the rain forests and forced extinction of numerous plant and animal species. They've been tremendously successful in this part of the world, and expansion continues daily. However, costs keep increasing, due to the organized and often successful Garou efforts in thwarting the Pentex First Teams. The company's main South American office is in Rio de Janeiro. About 20 other offices stain the continent, with key operations in Lima and Bogota.

• **Africa and the Middle East**

— From mining and poaching alone, Africa could be a prize jewel, except for the damn shapeshifters. They've been lucky in keeping Pentex out of Africa, recently destroying the Casablanca branch office. The company currently has a southern branch home office in Johannesburg, a central office in Nairobi and a northern office in Cairo, which coordinates efforts in the Middle East. Other offices in the Middle East include Riyadh and Istanbul. Plans exist for expansion into the west of Africa, but they've been put on hold indefinitely. Something must be done about the Changing Breeds first.

• **Europe**

— Pentex encroachment in Europe has been slow and steady. Interested in the financial resources of the region, the corporation maintains major offices in Warsaw, Hamburg and London; other branch offices exist in Moscow, Belfast, Birmingham, Glasgow and several national capitals. The European Union's ascendancy has



slowed things down for Pentex, though Eastern Europe promises to be an area for rapid growth and corruption.

• **Asia**

— Asia is another prime area for rapid development and cheap labor, especially in terms of natural and supernatural resources. Yamazaki, for example, hopes to find prospects for Project Odyssey here. The central home office is in Delhi, with major field offices in Calcutta and Karachi. Since Asian development is a newer step for Pentex, the regional directors rely on close contact with offices in the Pacific Rim.

• **Australia and the Pacific Rim**

— Tokyo and Sydney are home to the largest Pentex offices in this region. Smaller branches are located in Wellington, Melbourne, Bangkok, Honolulu, Manila, Seoul and Jakarta. The Pacific Rim in particular offers potential allies, such as the *Kuei-jin*, the Yakuza and various tongs. The entire region is rich in natural resources. But like Asia, Australia and the Pacific Rim remain largely unknown. Pentex may find as many enemies as it does allies here.

• **Antarctica**

— Expansion into Antarctica may be either a hare-brained scheme, or the greatest idea since fomori. As Danforth Stern pointed out, too many strange legends exist about lost cities, alien treasures and unusual apparitions in the region for there not to be some sort of investigation. Thus, a small amount of annual funds were slated for an Antarctic expeditionary force. No further progress has been made, but Francesco is thinking about making this a pet project.

The Top 21

Pentex has hundreds of subsidiaries; these are owned either through holding companies or directly by division and subdivision directors using false identities. For example, Harold Zettler holds controlling interest (the largest percentage of stocks) in Autumn Health Management Systems under the alias Zeldt Erohlar, a Swedish banker. The Top 21, though, are the star players in the Pentex lineup; these are the most profitable of all the subsidiaries, selling cheap, shoddy goods that the consumers want most. Many are among the oldest companies in Pentex as well. Most of these corporations work together for mutual gain; for example, Young and Smith Incorporated sells its Wyrm-tainted products at minimum cost to the Herrick's retail chain. All in all, the Pentex subsidiaries have a rather incestuous relationship.

• **Ardus Enterprises**

— Ardus Enterprises claims to be a waste management company. In fact, they're responsible for careless disposal of a wide assortment of toxic materials, including radioactive waste. They spend the least amount of money possible to get rid of the hazardous materials, dumping them near watersheds and suburban communities.

• **Autumn Health Management Systems**

— Autumn manages hospitals all over North America, and the company seeks expansion to Europe and Asia. Its health care facilities operate at minimum standards and are generally great places for infestation, pain and suffering. Magadon often uses these facilities to test out new products.

• **Avalon Incorporated**

— This toy manufacturer seems harmless enough at first glance, but its products range from gross to destructive. Avalon's best sellers include Pet Pal, a veterinary kit that subtly provokes cruelty to animals; Nuke 'Em, a violent board game; and Poopi Suzi, a doll that screams, craps and spits up, until a child tosses the toy against a wall. Some parents have complained about Avalon, to no avail. Their most annoying new invention is a digital pet that sings happily, but only after it dies from neglect.

• **Black Dog Games**

— Once a dinky, back porch operation, Black Dog is now the undisputed leader in roleplaying games. Favorites include **Zombie: The Putrescence**, **Lycanthrope: The Rapture**, **Warlock: The Pretension**, **Pixie: The Delusion** and **Spectre: The Annihilation**. These games extol the virtues of tragic hipness, ultra-violence and the uncoolness of mortals; players tend to wallow in their own angst, whining about the state of their dark souls through their antihero characters' voices. Black Dog hopes to work out a deal with Tellus on marketing game-related software in the near future.

• **Circinus Brands**

— A cigarette and tobacco products company, Circinus appeals to young, hip and trendy smokers. It keeps label warnings to a bare minimum and spends enormous amounts on fashionable advertising campaigns. What Circinus isn't saying is that its tainted products are highly addictive and ultimately fatal.

• **Consolidex Worldwide**

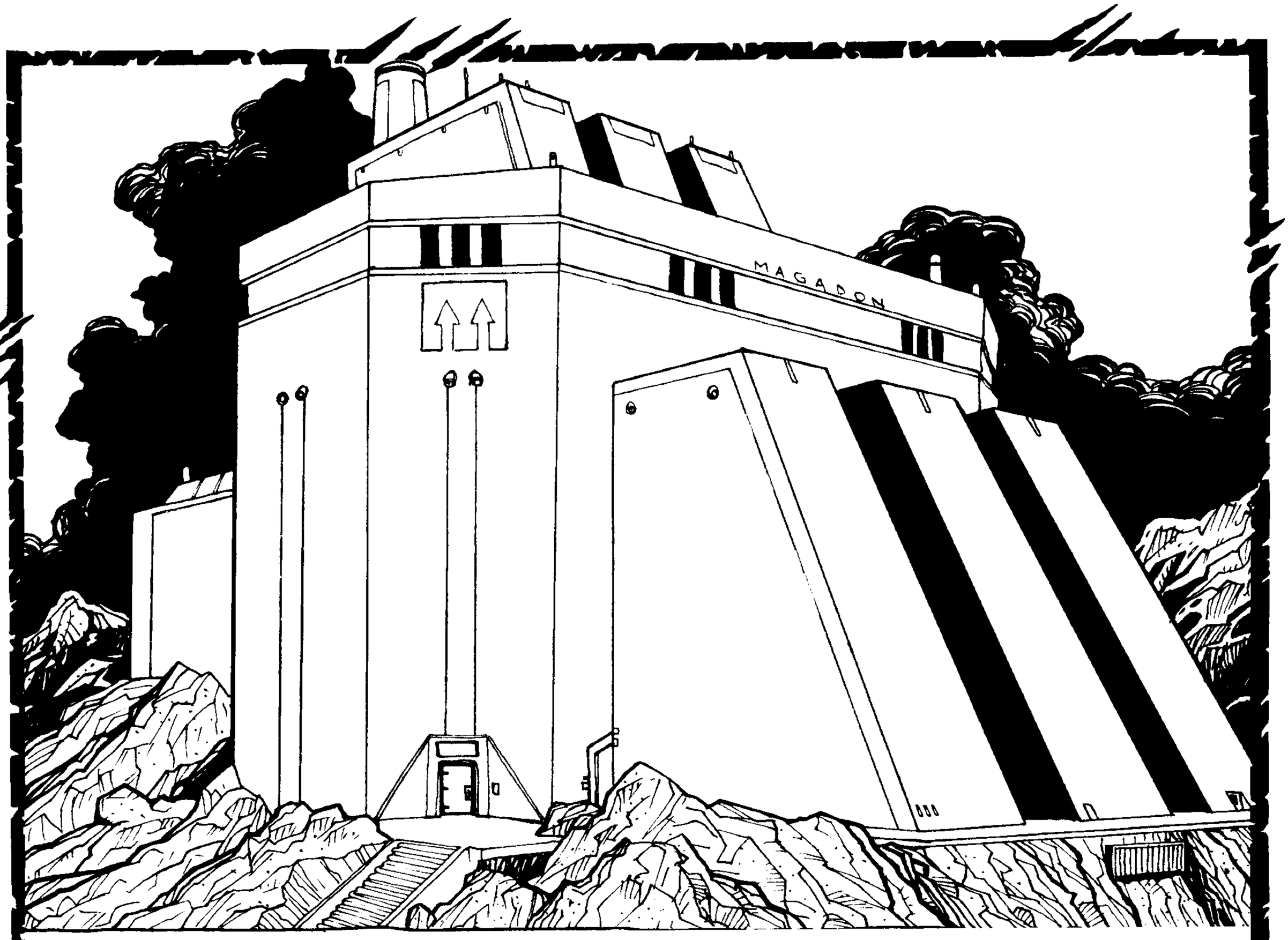
— An international investment firm, Consolidex offers a variety of no-load stock options and mutual funds with a low level of initial purchase. This appeals to the young, inexperienced investor. The company then takes the money and plunges it into other Pentex companies and projects, returning just enough growth to keep investors coming back for more.

• **Endron International**

— Endron, the oldest Pentex corporation, also became the largest after absorbing Atlas International in 1995. Endron now specializes in cheap petroleum, natural gas and nuclear energy. All their products are below minimum standards for emission and octane levels. Safety standards at the refineries and power plants are a joke; worse, the company has been responsible for a number of oil spills and contaminations. The death, disease and ecological nightmares have been well worth the price of cleanups.

• **Good House International**

— Good House manufactures paper products of all kinds, from cheap notebooks to flimsy baby wipes. They are a major source of deforestation, particularly in Canada and the Amazon. Good House is the second oldest company in Pentex and has a widespread market.



• **Hallahan Fishing Corporation**

— Hallahan floods the seafood market with its products, which come at the cost of illegal whaling and fishing. The company doesn't care that hundreds of dolphins die in its tuna nets; the products are much cheaper than albacore to produce. Hallahan has its own small restaurant chain and supplies O'Tolley's as well. Most consumers have no idea of the company's practices; a successful ad campaign, featuring jolly Cap'n Bill Hallahan, is quite misleading.

• **Harold and Harold Mining, Incorporated**

— This company mines all sorts of materials, such as coal, copper, lead, zinc and uranium. Strip mining is preferable, since it's low-cost and does a nice job of tearing up the landscape. Harold and Harold is slated for expansion into South Africa as soon as tensions in the region settle down.

• **Herculean Firearms Incorporated**

— Herculean Firearms manufactures all types of handguns and ammunition, including semiautomatic weapons. The company's real strength is in its powerful PAC and lobby; every year, they manage to convince more and more politicians to ignore the issue of gun control. Herculean's arms are cheap, too; just about any young criminal can find one to buy or steal.

• **Herrick's**

— A US grocery and retail chain, Herrick's is the perfect outlet for other Pentex corporations' products. Here, Avalon, Circinus, King, Rainbow, Vesuvius, and Young and Smith all find an easy way to make lots of money. Because of this cooperation, Herrick's is able to undersell many other retail chains, raking in enormous profits.

• **King Breweries and Distilleries**

— Much like Circinus does with tobacco, King Breweries and Distilleries is doing an admirable job of always keeping alcohol "cool and hip." Ads show only beautiful people sipping their drinks, always in trendy settings. Most products are tainted, leading to fast addiction.

• **Magadon, Incorporated**

— Second only to Endron International in sales, the pharmaceutical giant Magadon has increased revenues since purchasing Aesop Research Company. Aesop's job is cruel animal experimentation. Another top subsidiary is Panacea Pharmaceuticals, which specializes in product development and testing. Overall, Magadon has been responsible for numerous deaths. It gives the public what they want: diet pills, energy supplements and cosmetic implants. The price is that most products are tainted and cause great suffering to consumers.

• **Nastrum Enterprises**

— Nastrum produces cheap weapons of mass destruction, including missiles, explosives and stealth aircraft. They'll sell their products to anyone, a fact kept top secret from prying eyes in the US government. Nastrum is more than willing to supply terrorists; they've also sold weapons to both sides of various conflicts. The more money, the better!



• **Omni Television**

— A syndicated network, Omni produces a number of mind-rotting television shows, such as *Knights of Angst*, about chic high school girls who fight monsters of the week; MSG *Express*, a cooking program; and *Concrete Dreams*, a brutal, live action cop drama. Omni's commercials, showing a lot of fellow subsidiaries' products, are subliminal advertising.

• **O'Tolley's**

— Batter-dipped and double-fried, that's O'Tolley's, the Family Place. This is a chain of fast food restaurants specializing in the most greasy, fat-filled food imaginable. As such, it appeals to loads of consumers who want quick meals, not realizing some products are tainted. O'Tolley's ads do a good job of promoting a wholesome family atmosphere; what they don't show are the sad conditions of the cattle farms and destroyed rain forests that make way for grazing pastures. Eating at O'Tolley's is a great way to gain 20 pounds, or shred your gall bladder. Since such health hazards don't show up for days or weeks after eating at O'Tolley's, consumers don't realize the ultimate source of their sickness.

• **Rainbow Incorporated**

— This company produces a variety of plastic and rubber products, from sandwich baggies to tires. Moreover, they have a powerful lobby and media campaign that praises the value of plastics to consumers. Expansion into Africa and Asia will be vital to Rainbow's continued growth, as labor costs are rising in North America.

• **Tellus Enterprises**

— Formerly a video game producer, Tellus Enterprises' takeover of Sunburst Enterprises International, a computer company, has led to a substantially increased profit margin. Tellus hardware looks sleek, and CPUs come packed with attractive and noisy games, thanks to Sunburst. The cost is well below competitors; anybody can buy a Tellus game platform. What the ads don't say is that the computers encourage the average technogeek into a lazy addict. Sometimes kids forget to eat, they're so keyed into these machines.

• **Vesuvius Incorporated**

— Vesuvius publishes a wide range of books, comics and periodicals; advertisers, not surprisingly, include a lot of other Pentex companies. The publisher's most important function is placating the public's fears about environmental hazards and issues like gun control and the state of global economics. The comic book lines appeal to the worst instincts of teens and have been linked to violent crimes.

• **Young and Smith, Incorporated**

— Behind Endron and Magadon, Young and Smith is the third largest Pentex subsidiary. This company produces a wide variety of foods and personal care products, all of which are unsanitary and chock full of preservatives. Even the packaging, usually obtained from Good House or Rainbow, is tainted. Chances are every family has some kind of product from Young and Smith on its shelves.

Resources and Connections

Pentex is a major corporation; as such, its directors know the value of establishing and cultivating good contacts. While most of these partners in crime have their own agendas, they too realize the advantage of dealing with Pentex. The company can provide hard to find resources and serve as a bolthole in times of trouble.

Black Spiral Dancers

The Spirals are like nitroglycerin: incredibly useful but extremely volatile. Many of them (at least those that the Hives are willing to lend) suffer from severe psychoses that limit their benefits. On the other hand, they make excellent shock troops. It's easy to get them to fight werewolves, for example; just point them in the right direction. Francesco has shown the board that some Spirals can function in polite society, and generally, he's provided better opportunities for his tribe throughout the company. Some Black Spiral Dancers and their Kinfolk now occupy lower and middle management positions worldwide.

Fomori

Many fomori are kept in the dark; some don't even realize that the source of their strange powers is often Pentex itself. Like the Spirals, they work well in lower and middle management situations, for most can pass as humans. Pentex also believes that the fomori will be a good line of defense against the Spirals, should they ever go haywire. What the company ignores is that a few fomori might turn into rebels if they ever discovered the truth about what had been done to them.

Sabbat

Pentex and the Sabbat are uneasy bedfellows. The company values Sabbat information, resources and the chance for vampiric contacts; the Camarilla, for all its intrigue, just isn't ruthless enough for Pentex. The Sabbat, encouraged by the success of Zettler, mistakenly believes that Pentex will provide an edge, technological or otherwise, against the Antediluvians during Gehenna. Neither group fully trusts the other; each comes to the negotiating table with many hidden agendas.

Kuei-jin

Pentex has been wise enough in recent years to put Yamazaki in charge of most dealings with the *Kuei-jin*, the eastern Kindred. Apparently, they hold much contempt for outsiders and differ a great deal from both the Camarilla and the Sabbat in powers and philosophies. Yamazaki hopes the eastern vampires might be of use to Project Odyssey and other endeavors in the SPD. For the most part, the *Kuei-jin* find Pentex lacking in knowledge of Eastern business practices and etiquette; this gives the company a bad reputation.



Memo

From: Franklin Rubin, SDD-FIN

To: Division Directors and Subdivision Directors

Re: Spending Approved on Employee Health Items

The following items have blanket approval from the fiscal year's budget agenda. You do not have to complete a Budgetary Form AMD-FIN for these items; merely submit the request in writing, and these items will be provided by the next business day from central supply. Rush orders may be placed for First Team needs. Most pharmaceuticals may be obtained in several delivery forms; check the online purchasing catalog for specifics. Please note: these requests must come from the DD or SD level. Administrative assistants may not request these items. Thank you for your cooperation.

Delerex Lupus 7 (anti-Delirium agent)
Anagath F45.6 (human anagathic)
Psiphrenol (neural stimulant, Project Odyssey)
Estrus-orvo 7-7-7 (birth control medication)
ST 31-91B (CLASSIFIED)

Seventh Generation

A select few members among the Pentex executives have secret dealings with this group, but for the most part, the corporation doesn't want any ties with the Seventh Generation. Their bad habits serve no particular purpose or goal, and most of the Seventh Generation are petty amateurs in the minds of the Pentex board. While Pentex certainly has its share of rapists and pedophiles, it's trying to keep those practices under wraps; the company wants to keep any security risks at a minimum. Any open connections with the Seventh Generation would be harmful to the company's veneer of respectability.

First Teams

Pentex First Teams are agents who have received extensive training in combat, espionage, demolition and a host of other specialties. First Teams are divided into units of six or seven people; fomori, psychics, mercenaries, Black Spiral Dancers and Sabbat neonates make excellent team members. Pentex spares no expense in training and equipping these teams. Most often, the company uses them to destroy werewolf caerns or take out organized resistance. Leaders are chosen for their experience and success in combat and tactics. Within the individual teams, a certain amount of bonding occurs. Mollett is conducting a study on whether this type of interdependence is a boon or a threat to the company's interests.

Offer Not to Refuse

Chris handed David a cup of coffee. "Say, listen, I know it's none of my business, but I noticed you've been staying over a lot at the office. Things are bad at home, aren't they?"

"Worse than you know," replied David, taking a deep swig. He hadn't been home to sleep in days; he just popped in to check the mail and grab a change of clothes. Ann, if she was home, didn't even bother to speak to him anymore. David had already made an appointment with his lawyer.

Chris chuckled slightly. "Well, don't be so sure. Listen, I know what it's like, really. And maybe I can help you out." He gave David a business card. "Nicole Hanna; she's a friend of mine over in information services. Maybe she can help you out." David stared at the card and Chris. "Oh, no, no, no. Not any

Dear Kathy,

I know Mom and Dad think it's weird that you live in some kind of feminist Luddite commune, but you know I've never had a problem with it. You're still my sister, and I think teaching the kids there must be really fun. Which is one reason I'm writing.

Kath, I'm really worried about Jordan. He's always been so happy, never sick, always laughing. But this past year, he's managed to pick up every bug around. I thought putting him in really good daycare would help, and it's not. I think he needs a change of scene, and so do I. Can we come out to Colorado for a visit? It's not like David would miss us; he's never here anyway. I guess this sounds pretty down, but I need to talk to someone who's really alive. Lately, David's been acting more and more like a computer himself. I went to lunch with someone from his office I met a couple of months ago, but she gave me the creeps. She talked to me like I was some kind of freak for wanting my husband to spend some time at home. If this was David's effort at patching things up, it was a pretty bad one.

I've got enough money squirreled away for a ticket, I think. Please write me as soon as you can. I really can't wait to see you.

Love,
Annie

kind of sexual favors," laughed Chris. "I just thought, well, she knows a fair bit about women, that sort of thing. Might could talk with Ann, give you some advice on how not to lose your shirt. She's pretty good at finding out stuff, if you know what I mean."

David nodded. "Thanks, I appreciate that. It would be pretty crappy for Ann to take everything now, wouldn't it? I mean, I'm the one who's done all the work!"

"Yep. And while you're at it, swallow some vitamins or something." Chris tossed him a bottle. "These'll help. I take 'em every day."

David had to admit Chris always looked fit and alert. "Okay, I will. Appreciate it."

"No problem. What are friends for?" Chris smiled.

Adversaries

Our worst enemies here are not the ignorant and the simple, however cruel; our worst enemies are the intelligent and corrupt.

— Graham Greene, *The Human Factor*

The media, politicians and legal agencies pose little threat to Pentex; the company either has these factions firmly gagged or blackmailed to the hilt. The real threat comes from other supernatural creatures, like vampires, shapeshifters or mages. Despite the best efforts of the ICS, the company still can't find out as much as it would like about these dangerous enemies.

The Garou

The werewolves know Pentex is a threat to Gaia; what they don't know is the extent of the company's power and its end goals. The Garou also have a hard time planning genuinely effective attacks. Computer hacking is a good option, and so are bloody raids on Pentex factories and refineries. But while these strikes sting the company and let the werewolves burn off their anger, seldom do the assaults touch vital organs. Hack and slash isn't the answer. The werewolves need to find a way to dig deeper into Pentex flesh if they want to cause some real damage. Tribal squabbles and animosity towards other shapeshifters don't help, either. Pentex worries about the ferocity of werewolf attacks and thus uses more and more supernatural agents on First Teams. The war is escalating.

Other Shapeshifters

The other Bête have both assets and liabilities when fighting Pentex. The company knows little about the other shapeshifters, though it seeks to find out more. In parts of Africa and Asia, the Bête have been quite successful defending their homeland against outsiders. On the other hand, Pentex has savagely attacked portions of the Amazon for years, and the Bastet of that land seem to be fighting a losing battle. Another weakness of the Bête is that with the exception of certain tribes of hengeyokai, they seldom work together. More often than not, they regard Garou as enemies. Perhaps the sentiment is deserved, but Pentex is the greater threat.

Mages

Pentex has trouble gathering intelligence on mages. Are they psychics? Fomori in service to the Weaver? What's the source of their power? Some members of Pentex believe the mages could be a gold mine; others think they're a prime threat. The company doesn't really understand the Ascension War, but it does realize that there are at least two factions of mages: those who practice some kind of "folk magic" and those who use advanced technology. The company believes the latter might prove useful recruits if approached properly; some members of the Syndicate have already engaged in limited dealings with Pentex, little knowing they've emerged with the stain of the Wyrm on their hands. The company would like to extend its hands deeper into the Technocracy if possible. Pentex doesn't know that at least one group of mages, the Golden Dragons (see **The Book of Chantries** in **Mage Chronicles, Volume One**), has discovered the company's links with the supernatural and begun efforts against it.

Clan Giovanni

Relations between Pentex and the Giovanni have taken a turn for the worst. Previously, their competition in worldwide financial markets was small scale; now, it's escalating between the two rivals. While conflicts for the present are fought on stock exchanges and in bank vaults, sooner than later, open hostilities may break out. Pentex knows more about the Giovanni than the vampires would like, thanks to the late Enzo Giovanni. However, the company underestimates the solidarity of the clan against a common enemy; Pentex will never be able to band together as well as the Giovanni in a crisis.

Agendas and Secrets

But how to be recognized under this mask? That is what they call a fine career.

— Jean Anouilh, *The Waltz of the Toreadors*

Aside from the shapeshifters, a handful of mages and one greedy clan of vampires, nobody really opposes Pentex or even has a clue about what they're doing. The average person off the street doesn't know about Pentex and probably wouldn't care even if she did; the lure of convenience food and cheap products is too strong. The sad truth is that Pentex is slowly and deliberately destroying the will of the people and the well-being of the planet for reasons it's not sharing with anyone. However, as inscrutable as the Board of Directors' reasons may be, most employees eventually admit to themselves deep down that the world would be a much better place if the ignorant masses didn't have the spirit to do anything other than what they were told.

Environmental Havoc

Virtually all the Pentex subsidiaries contaminate the environment. Ardus chemical dumps contribute to acid

Toxic Soup for the Storyteller

Unfortunately for your players, you've got lots of great Pentex source material as close as the television or the nearest shopping center. Of course, *The X-Files* is a great show to watch for intrigue, espionage and twisted plots. But don't overlook some other fine creations like *Millennium*, *La Femme Nikita* (the movie and the TV show, though the story's different), *The Prisoner*, *The Firm* (the book and the movie), *Harrison Bergeron* (the short story and the movie) and *Earth: Final Conflict*. These all depict ways in which sterile, emotionless or corrupt organizations dehumanize or control their employees. But if you *really* want to dull your players' senses, head for the book and magazine section of the local chain retail store. Grab some of the popular works on business jargonese — quality management, employee power or increasing productivity. Pentex takes all these techniques which *might* work in a real company (or not) and uses them as scraps to placate their employees. The result: workers with false hopes who believe their big break will come at the next staff meeting, or the next or the next....

rain; this damages trees already marked for widespread deforestation to make Good House Paper. While they're at it, Pentex turns a blind eye to poachers who collect endangered trophies for their collections. Where lush forests once stood now lay fallow fields, to be used for raising sickly cattle that get turned into O'Tolley's hamburgers or as building sites for nuclear power plants. Pentex also tries to ensure that big, comfy, gas-guzzling cars remain in high demand; this pollutes the atmosphere, destroys the ozone and puts more money in Endron's coffers. Meanwhile, the PR division keeps politicians paid off so that governments do little to help save the environment. This kind of ruin isn't as hard as anyone expects; the average citizen is already a willing consumer and contributor.

Experimentation

Pentex, the SPD in particular, engages in hundreds of senseless and cruel biological experiments with animals; the Magadon subsidiary of course justifies this as safe measures taken to protect the consumers. What they don't describe are the efforts made to brainwash humanity, particularly through Omni TV's subliminal advertising or the propaganda of Vesuvius Publishing. All of this cruelty (though enjoyable by many employees) is in an attempt to further apathy; there's the occasional media controversy simply because the more people hear about the cruelty to animals charges, the more they become desensitized to anything other than themselves. So few people give a damn even now.

Children are an especially vulnerable target, as Herrick's sponsors fashion shows to turn innocent girls and boys into cosmetic-covered robots. A hot new fad among some Pentex companies is opening corporate owned schools; these institutions make sure the kids grow up wanting immediate satisfaction, the kind of quick fixes only Pentex can provide.

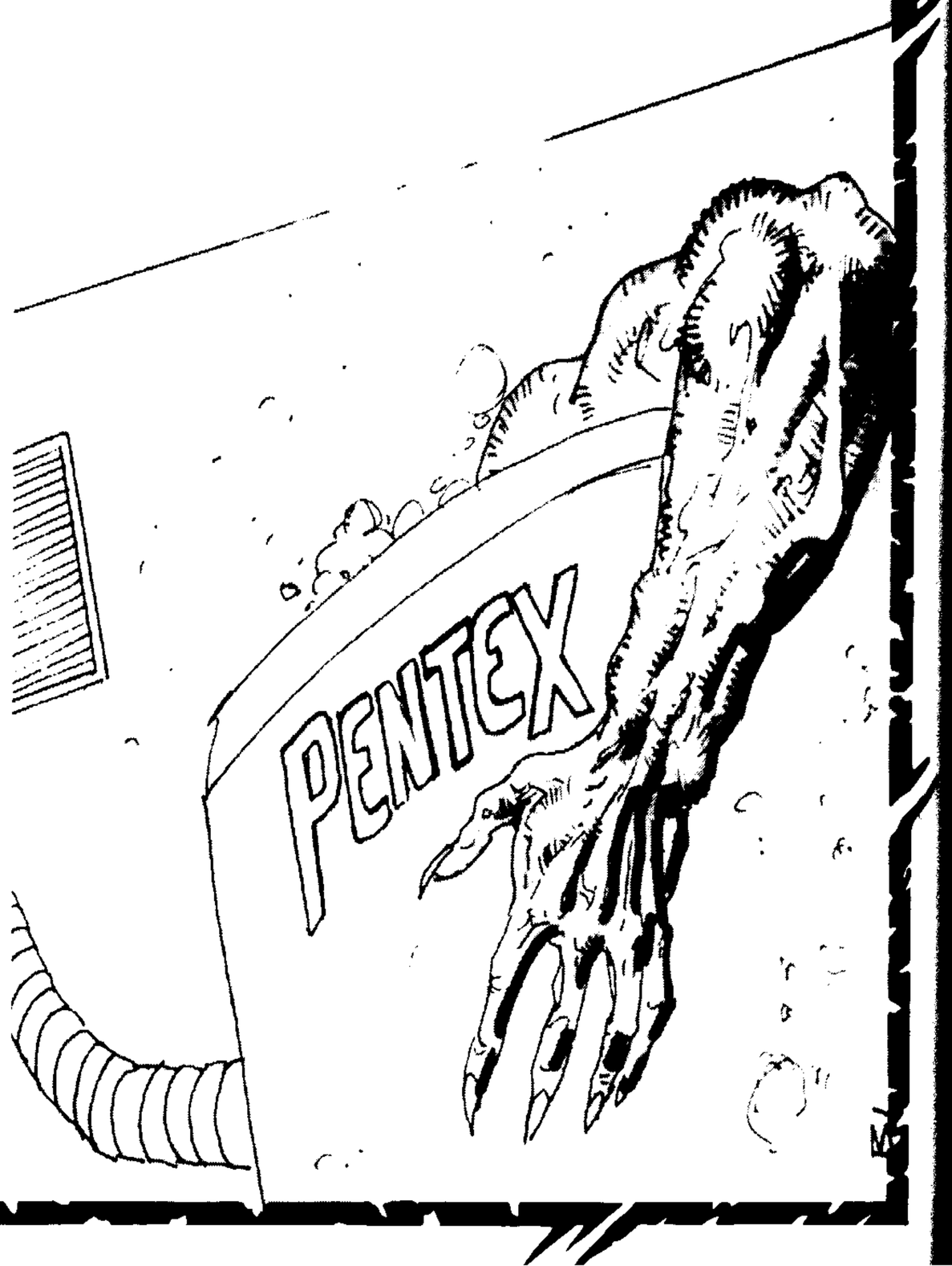
Political Action

Pentex is quite active in the political arena; through subsidiaries, it contributes enormous sums to pro-censorship interest groups and various big business lobbies. Abroad, the corporation channels funds to terrorist groups, especially those embroiled in conflicts that destroy natural resources. Because it controls so many different types of companies, Pentex is able to flood a variety of markets with its cheap products; despite some adverse economies, it makes a profit even when consumers don't have a lot of money to spend. Companies like Consolidex help Pentex subsidiaries stay afloat despite free market competition. Thanks to the efforts of the PR division, the media stays quiet about the scraps of info it has on Pentex. Even if a reporter manages to collect some significant information, ICS threatens or blackmails him into submission.

Nobody in the know is willing to risk the consequences.

Moonbase Pentex

In the late 1950s and early 60s, the SPD constructed elaborate plans for Moonbase Pentex, a lunar colony that could support hundreds of people. Only a handful of personnel outside the board of directors know about this project. It's taken a backseat to other interests in space, such as launching communication satellites, but Culliford and Newberry still think Moonbase Pentex is a viable option.



They generally ignore Stern's predictions of lost alien technology on the moon; instead, the two directors think it might serve as an excellent haven for Pentex higher-ups should they need to flee earth. The moon could also serve as the perfect place to launch a nuclear attack against Pentex enemies. Culliford plans to renew interest in the project at an upcoming board meeting, allocating funds and personnel to make the plans a reality.

The Omega Plan

This is it, the mother of all bad things Pentex has in store for the world. The Omega Plan is a three-step strategy to destroy civilization and remake it in the Pentex image. First of all, the company wants to utterly defile the earth and her people through environmental disaster and subjugation of human will. Nothing will be left but a lifeless ball of rock and a bunch of meandering savages; this is the underlying goal behind the destructive activities of all Pentex divisions and subsidiary companies. In Phase Two, Pentex will swoop in as earth's white knight, ready to remedy the planet's ills. The remaining population will worship the company's name as their savior from extinction. Finally, Phase Three will begin, the complete domination of earth. By this time, Pentex will have eradicated all resistance and seeded its people through all remaining world governments and economic powers. No one will be left to stop them from a massive takeover. Of course, only the division and subdivision directors know about the Omega Plan; it's certainly not written down anywhere. But the plan guides almost every move the corporation makes.

Obituary

Ann Brynner Gillis, 26, of Charlotte, NC, died at a Denver hospital Monday afternoon after injuries sustained in an automobile accident. She is survived by her husband, David Gillis; parents Mr. and Mrs. Wingate Brynner; and a sister, Kathryn Brynner. Ms. Gillis was a native of North Carolina and a journalism student at the time of her death.

Child Still Missing

Jordan Gillis, 16 month old son of the late Ann Gillis, is still missing after Sunday night's fatal car crash. His father, David Gillis, continues to assist in the search. State police are still investigating the site of the wreck, but no trace of the boy has been found. Ms. Gillis' sister, Kathryn Brynner, told reporters that she had faith Jordan was safe. Readers are asked to contact the police if they have any further information.

Does this sound totally ridiculous and megalomaniacal? Maybe so, but Pentex has achieved remarkable success during Phase One. Except for the shapeshifters and a few environmental fringe groups, no one is really opposing Pentex. What does *this* say for the fate of the world?

Dehumanize Yourself

David read the e-mail from his assistant, unbelieving. She'd actually gone and bought a plane ticket! The bitch was really going through with it; Ann was taking his son and leaving. Nicole had warned him that his wife was in a rebellious stage, angry and probably on the verge of something drastic. David never expected she'd do anything; Ann never had much spunk. He sat at his desk, remembering the last time Ann had spoken to him. She'd complained that the baby was sick, and David found himself thinking about work. What had Ann said? He couldn't recall. He kept hearing the voices of Chris and Nicole, the hum of computers, the chime of his telephone, the drone of the elevator, the buzz of overhead lights. They drowned out the whining of his wife. David picked up the phone and dialed.

"Hi, Nicole. Yes, my assistant forwarded your encrypted e-mail. I appreciate what you've done. And...I think the code TFAA sounds fine. I owe you for taking care of this. Yes, I'll see you at the meeting. Thanks, Nicole."

David hung up the phone. Where was he? Oh, yes, the notes for the annual report. Time was wasting.

Storytelling

If I don't play by their rules, I die.
— Nikita, *La Femme Nikita*

Mood

Pentex is an endless maze of despair, hopelessness and loss. The stench of corruption should stain everything the company touches, from the pitiable, clueless employees just trying to make a living to the bottles of tainted King Breweries beer. Pentex fosters false hope, but life always gets worse, never better. It lies and tells people what they want to hear; the company keeps them hanging on even as it consumes them utterly. The Storyteller should set the mood by making Pentex tolerable, even benevolent at first, then letting the blight seep out bit by bit until the characters are soaking in it.

Theme

The theme of Pentex is that things are not as they seem. From the outside, the company looks to be on the up and up; to all appearances, Pentex is respectable and cutting edge. Besides, a corporation couldn't be this bad! No humans could do these things to other humans; surely it's some trick of yellow journalism, or a media play by bleeding heart granola liberals. Right? Don't bet on it. With Pentex, things are always far *worse* than they seem. Never let the characters forget this.

Life with Pentex

Storytellers should have lots of options on how to use Pentex in their chronicles. Perhaps it's the unknown shadow organization that keeps tempting the player characters, sending them subtle messages or bribes. For a more martial chronicle, maybe Pentex First Teams are a major foe of the werewolf characters. An experienced troupe might enjoy crossover opportunities with mages or even Clan Giovanni; a common enemy like Pentex makes for strange allies. The truly ambitious Storyteller could even progress the chronicle into the first stage of the Omega Plan; the Apocalypse is here and Moonbase Pentex is a reality. What are the players going to do about it?

Of course, Storytellers should fit Pentex to suit their chronicles' needs. Some characters and companies might be unnecessary; Pentex may work better if it's one solitary company instead of a corporate titan. Alternatively, Storytellers could run a chronicle centered just on one subdivision of Pentex, such as Project Odyssey; players could spend their time fighting a bunch of Wyrm-tainted psychics. On the other hand, removing all supernatural elements of Pentex may be interesting; it can be just as corrupt and powerful without the Wyrm. Whatever the Storyteller decides, though, she should have fun doling out bits and pieces about Pentex and its plans. When the players discover the truth behind the company's veil of lies, this should be a major revelation in the chronicle.

A Sign of Weakness

Pentex has three weak points: internal strife, outside enemies and a monolithic bureaucracy.

The internal struggles occur because nearly every faction in Pentex has its own agenda; Zettler really works for the Sabbat, Francesco for the Black Spiral Dancers, Stern for the "mysterious aliens" and so on. Urge Wyrms that have bargained with the directors also push their own goals through their human agents. Pressing external problems include Clan Giovanni, the mages and of course the Garou and other shapeshifters. Pentex may be able to handle attacks from one or two sides, but they're slowly being surrounded. Finally, like the Titanic, Pentex is often too big and sprawling to avoid incoming trouble. It can handle small rips at its fabric quickly, but not major ones. The wheels of bureaucracy sometimes slow Pentex down to a grinding halt. Culliford's restructuring plan streamlined the company considerably, but it still has a long way to go. The foes of Pentex will need to target one of these weaknesses if they're to have any lasting success against the Wyrm's mortal coils.



Story Seeds

The following snippets should give the Storyteller some ideas for using Pentex. Use or adapt them as best fits the chronicle; feel free to expand as needed.

All the Director's Men

Somehow, PR slips up and a leak occurs; a couple of ace reporters get some dirt on Pentex and manage to avoid being silenced. Now they want to find out more about the company. Maybe the reporters are Garou contacts or Kinfolk; they come to their werewolf allies for help. What will their next step be? Will they go undercover or perhaps join in a raid? How can they find out more about Pentex without betraying their position? This game would be ideal for a mixed troupe of characters.

Raid and Twist

The werewolf pack attacks a Pentex factory; there they discover that an MIA pack member is being mind controlled to work with a First Team. Gaia's warriors kick butt, rescue their lost comrade and all's right in the world. Or is it? Maybe the prodigal werewolf is an unwitting pawn, implanted with a posthypnotic sleeper personality. The sleeper calls in a First Team strike or murders a trusting pack member, even though the core personality is still innocent. What do the werewolves do?

No Way Out

An employee discovers things about Pentex that mortals from the secretary pool weren't meant to know, including the existence of werewolves. She wants out and is willing to share her secrets in exchange for safe haven. How can she contact the Garou, and will they even believe her? Who will reach her first, the werewolves or a covert First Team assassin?

Mortal Cults

Although probably one of the least physically threatening groups of antagonists, the cult has the potential to be one of the more horrifying, memorable opponents that any pack could face. Faith is a potent force, and history — even today's headlines — is full of examples of what happens when it gets out of hand. Unsurprisingly, the Wyrm takes a definite interest in some of these religions, and the results are usually very ugly.

A Wyrm-cult, for purposes of this discussion, is a cult of believers that venerate some form of black power, but their worship and depraved rituals instead feed the Wyrm or its minions. They are a dangerous threat, particularly because they are often overlooked and underestimated. After all, what's a group of ten to a hundred, even 500 mortals next to Pentex or a Black Spiral Hive? Their resources can be surprisingly extensive, though, and their influence among mortal society twice that of a supernatural threat like that of a fomori First Team. They're trouble.

Methods of recruitment vary widely. Most folks join out of curiosity, a desire to fit in or a need to believe in something other than the community faiths, but there's no pigeonholing the "average cultist." They can be jaded hedonists in search of thrills, suburbanites with nothing else to do, deathmetal enthusiasts, pillars of the community looking to exercise some *real* power, yuppies looking for that extra edge — and yes, those black-wearing kids who hang out in the occult sections of bookstores. Once the new recruit is in, some cults go full-bore with brainwashing techniques, demanding that the faithful remain isolated from the "corrupting" influences of society; others don't touch their members' personal lives at all — for a while, at any rate. Just make sure you show up next Saturday night, all right?

Degrees of Ignorance

Only a very few Wyrm-cults *really* understand what it is they serve, and this ignorance is one of the more appealing aspects to using them in stories. The most "out of the loop" example is a group of people who follow practices and a faith that's not based on any existing spiritual entity, but whose activities draw Banes to the lure of their depravity. The Reverend Jim Jones may have been an example of this; although even in the World of Darkness, he might not have been calling on the Maeljin Incarna, the Banes nonetheless feasted when he led his followers into death. These cults can be more insidious than they seem, since their lack of knowledge makes them apparently a lower priority — but they're capable of doing plenty of spiritual damage in their own right.

A step up from the completely ignorant is the cult with a little knowledge. These are usually led by a charismatic leader who's somehow gotten hold of some form of information, although this might be so sullied in passing from one hand to another that it's hardly recognizable. A good example would be the Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon, who based much of their rituals and structure on a misunderstanding of their Black Spiral allies' auspice roles. These cults are particularly interesting, given that the players must piece together not only what the cult serves, but how much the cultists know about their masters — and how they got the information.

Sponsored cults are another story. Such cults are led by an active supernatural presence, one with some literacy in the spiritual language of the Wyrm. Charismatic Black Spiral Dancers or their debased Kin; vampires of the Baali, Setite, Tzimisce, Lasombra or Tremere

bloodlines; the fallen mages called Nephandi; even Spectres who speak their Oblivion-sermons through their host bodies — all are possible heads for a sponsored cult. The Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth was penned by Black Spiral Kin, and has become the basis for many cults of this nature.

Of course, many of these are little more enlightened than any other cult. Despite the fact that Banes follow them around like hungry puppies, most vampires know as much about the spirit realms as does the local Burger King cashier. A vampire with some occult learning might head a cult of sensuality and depravity in the name of the Empress Aliara, not once recognizing that the Maeljin he serves actually has plans for him. Nonetheless, they are dangerous organizations that often receive spiritual "backing" from Malfeas itself.

A Question of Purpose

What does the Wyrm benefit from having mortal cults? It's hard to say for certain. Few directly advance its agendas, true. Few even manage to get its name right. However, the Wyrm benefits immensely from having plenty of people with their hearts in the wrong place.

Cults feed Banes, who gain Power in proximity to rituals of high perversion. Stronger Banes, in turn, nourish their superiors. The chain of sin leads all the way back to the Urge Wyrms, Maeljin Incarna and even Triatic Wyrms. What's more, mortals in contact with cults usually come away the worse for the experience — leading to the general degradation of humanity, weakening civilization as we know it bit by bit, a chink at a time.

Storytelling Cults

Using mortal cults in your games should be a more involved story than the Garou simply blowing through a number of fragile punching bags in an evening's light work. Mortal cults are an opportunity to showcase the layman of the World of Darkness, to reveal the average person's fear and imperfect understanding and to explore how far such a mortal will go to reach some sort of security.

Of course, the main problem with mortal cults is that they're hardly any sort of match for Garou in physical combat. For this reason, the pack shouldn't get a chance to fight the cultists toe-to-toe until the end of the story — who can respect a foe that obediently offers his neck to your jaws? Let the players begin by discovering tiny scraps of evidence — shreds of burnt flesh, graffiti that looks an awful lot like Pretanic Keys or Black Spiral Dancer glyphs, bloodstains in parking garages, that sort of thing. Play up the cult's ability by having certain of the pack's allies disappear over the course of the investigation. Have someone's Kinfolk threatened, attacked or captured. If you can manage it, you might even want to have a pack member first encounter a cult ritual — while shackled in silver and stretched across the altar. Stealth and anonymity are the cult's allies — by the time the Garou are able to fight the cult head in person, the fight's probably already over.

But not necessarily. If you want to bolster the cult's credibility and threat level, then don't forget the possibility of Banes being nearby; Wyrm-spirits are drawn to ritually obscene behavior like flies to a carcass. Garou who try to safely spy on a cult from the Penumbra may well find themselves besieged by Banes — possibly even in the dozens. And then there's the possibility of these Banes using various Charms to bolster the cultists' physical presence (and strengthen the devotees' faith in the process). What's more, there's also the possibility of their fanaticism being a strength in its own right — even if the only supernatural advantage the cultists have is an immunity to the Delirium, that's still enough to scare the hell out of Garou. ("Why aren't they running? What's going on?!?")

Also, don't overlook the possibility of beefing up the cult head (or even his lieutenants, depending on the cult's size) with some minor supernatural powers of his own. These can take the form of psychic powers (explaining his highly successful "conversion" rate), Investments (see the Appendix), supernatural merits, hedge magic (see **World of Darkness: Sorcerer**), True Faith or any other option you can rationalize. And nobody said that just because the cult was mortal, its leader has to be....

Finally, if the Garou care at all about their mortal allies and families, the cult becomes very dangerous. No pack can protect everyone at once. Worse, since Garou are rarely home to take care of their children, what if one of the characters' adolescent children actually shows up in the cult's ranks — even acts as a human shield when Daddy moves to put her new "guru" down?

Mood

Wyrm-cults, properly used, should certainly evoke some emotion in your players. One of the defining moods is that of paranoia — the fact that someone out there knows more than they should, and is quietly acting on that knowledge behind your back. Even the most ignorant cultist is convinced that she possesses some of the most secret knowledge in the world — *she* knows the *truth*, and *you* don't. There should always be a nagging doubt in the back of the pack's minds: What did these people know that made them so sure of themselves?

Further, these cults should be exotic in flavor. The Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon was successful because it blended the gentlemanly aspects of a Masonic society — pillars of the community and all that

— with the debauched revelry of a twisted Bacchanalia. Black Spiral Dancer Kinfolk combine the primitive rituals of ancient Pictdom with the madness of the Manson family. Even the cult assembled for a single night's game should somehow stick in the players' minds — otherwise, there's really no point to using it at all.

Theme

The most basic theme of most cult stories is that of knowledge — whether ignorance or "enlightenment." On the one hand, a secret society might be so woefully ignorant of the powers they're feeding with their rituals that their lack of knowledge is a horrible thing. On the other hand, the more a person learns, the more dangerous he gets to himself and others. Which is better? How do Garou deal with people who have opened themselves willingly to the Wyrm — but who aren't necessarily aware of what they're doing?

One of the themes common to most of these twisted cults is that of Pandora's Box — only without even a ray of hope at the very bottom. In their ignorance, curiosity and greed people open doors they shouldn't and let... *things* out. Many of these would-be dark messiahs wind up strangling themselves within the very fetid coils they labored to summon. Unfortunately, they all too often take others with them when they go. Maybe a werewolf's Kinfolk daughter is just looking to shake off her responsibilities to the Garou Nation and falls in with the wrong crowd just to spite mom — and through no fault greater than poor judgment, is consumed by the spiritual rot her "guru" brought her. Maybe when the werewolves arrive and the fighting begins, that fourteen-year-old runaway on the altar doesn't manage to escape with his life.

Another theme is ignorance. Ignorance kills. The idiot who swerves into a lane just in front of a school bus, killing twelve people just because he "didn't see it" — he's as much a menace as the contract killer who quietly minds his own business. Many of a cult's members *should* know better — but they don't, and often they don't *want* to. How can Garou deal with people that are willfully heedless of the evil they work? Killing them isn't really the answer, since another cult will crop up like mushrooms to take their place....

Finally, a theme that shouldn't be ignored is faith. Many cults start simply for kicks, or a common desire to belong, or some other trivial reasons. However, when the attention of the spirit world drifts onto these gatherings, the rituals often get much more deadly serious. Banes encourage cultists to *believe*, and when one or two cattle start to run, the herd usually follows. Before long, that hedonistic little pleasure cult might be willing to give their very souls to the Defiler Wyrm if it were only to ask. The pack suddenly finds itself up against a band of fanatics — and fanatics are capable of being very dangerous opponents.

Sample Cults

The Seventh Generation

The Defiler Wyrm is in many ways the most dangerous of the Triatic Wyrms. It feeds on betrayal and victimization, delights in the poisoning of trust and faith, and grows stronger on sexual abuse, rape and domination. Its breath is rot, and it seeks to degrade rather than destroy. Whatever it touches turns to misery and suffering.

Small wonder, then, that a cult dedicated to the Defiler Wyrm's service is one of the most foul institutions in the World of Darkness.

The Seventh Generation is a highly mysterious organization. Very little is known about them at all; few realize that they're the most dangerous cult to come down the pike since the Weeping Moon. The organization is an interlocking network of politicians, businessmen, corrupted religious figures, military officers, millionaires and even serial killers. The heads of the cult are very learned in Wyrmish cosmology, and seek to strengthen the Wyrm by weakening humanity's will. Horribly enough, one of their main targets is the bonds between man, woman and child; the Seventh Generation are a decidedly misogynistic, even pedophiliac lot who feed their urges and further the Defiler Wyrm's

The Werewolf Cult

If you *really* want to get nasty with your players, you might want to set up a story where the pack gradually learns more and more about the operations of a cult in their area. This cult apparently kidnaps impressionable adolescents after some trauma (possibly arranged by cult members) hits the young inductees, then teaches the younglings that they're somehow special. The recruitment pitch always stresses that the tragedy hit because the potential initiate was different, destined to be set apart from his family by these circumstances. After working a few "miracles" to show the initiates the "truth" about the cult's professed cosmology, the cult head sets the newcomers a task; if they succeed, they are ritually brought into the cult and taught the various rites and duties now expected of them, as members of this hidden "society outside society." The initiates, now full adults in the eyes of their comrades, are trusted with various missions towards the cult's ends.

If you handle it right, the pack should be halfway through their plot to put a stop to this Wyrm-ridden abomination before they start reflecting on their *own* Rite of Passage....



agenda at the same time. They work against social reform and women's rights, the better to keep the family fractured and weak. In fact, it is virtually impossible to name all their practices, as there are far too many of these cultists in power — and each one has his own twisted agenda.

The Seventh Generation has the feel of an "old boys' club"; many of their higher-ups are centuries old, kept alive by pacts with the Defiler. Their policies of hatred also tend to bar women from joining this cult in numbers; not that any women would be safe here. They divide themselves into various castes, each of which carries out cult policy in the appropriate manner (the Government Caste pushes political agendas that would be favorable to the cult, the Warrior Caste is responsible for enforcing the cult's security, and so on).

Using the Seventh Generation in chronicles should be an exercise in subtlety. They can be almost wherever the Storyteller deems appropriate, whether brutalizing and desensitizing children in a state-run orphanage (in the interest of creating broken, compliant adults who form weak, dysfunctional family relationships) or quietly pushing an agenda of "medical care reform" that will gradually turn local hospitals into pits of apathy and isolation. The variety that exists within the cult allows for a great deal of variety in stories — if it serves the Defiler Wyrm, someone in this cult has probably at least considered the idea.

The Seventh Generation has profited from anonymity. There are very few werewolves, mages, vampires or humans who know of their existence. As a result, they have had little to fear from organized resistance.

For many years, their most persistent enemy was Loba Carcassone, a Silver Fang who worked tirelessly to maintain Heaven — an underground railroad dedicated to rescuing the organization's victims and running them to freedom. In order to keep her network secret, she told very few Garou of her fight.

The Seventh Generation has come a long way without being exposed to the Garou Nation at large. However, that may be about to end. King Albrecht of the Silver Fangs is well aware of the Seventh Generation's existence, and now wields the power to do something about it. Certain power players in the Wyrm's legions have speculated that the Defiler Wyrm's pet project might be the offering on the altar of Apocalypse — a necessary sacrifice, one that will occupy the Garou just long enough for the other forces of the Wyrm to end the war once and for all.

The Mouth of Vorax

This cult is a relatively small gathering, numbering only about 50 or so members. They name themselves

after their "patron" Vorax, whom they believe to be a proper Judeo-Christian devil, one of seven captains devoted to the deadly sins. The Mouth is a cult of gratification — it offers its largely blue-collar members pleasures they couldn't normally acquire. In reality, however, they serve Vorus, Urge Wyrm of Greed — and not one of them knows it.

The Mouth's genesis lies with its current "high priest", Isaac Denholm. He seemed an innocent enough man — working daily at the plant, teaching Sunday School on weekends — but was always quietly envious of the people in the front pews. He grew to hate the folks who had much more than he did and barely had to work for it, while he did his best and lived off microwavable "meals for one."

Finally, when he was searching the local bookshop's self-help section, he noticed a strange pamphlet jammed into one of the books. It was a litany of blasphemies, preaching that in time the seven demons of Sin would ride across the world, passing over only their faithful. Two years ago, Isaac would have dropped the leaflet in the trash can; instead, he took it home. His faith in "Vorax" was born soon thereafter.

The Mouth of Vorax is composed of a number of blue-collar workers, recruited from the various plants and bars of Isaac's home town. The cult meets twice a month, where they devour great feasts in Vorax's name, indulge in some rather uncreative orgiastic behavior and eventually drift home. However, the cult is much less harmless than it looks. Isaac gets the money for "high ritual" and much of the meat for the feasts from the same source — human victims. Most of the cult is fully aware of the fact that they're eating long pork taken from travelers staying at the local motel. Frankly, they don't care; and to tell the truth, the taste is beginning to grow on them.

Isaac himself is a heavy-set man with an unpleasantly doughy complexion. However, he's deceptively quick and strong, due in some part to his fanaticism, and is easily capable of wrestling a line backer to the ground. He is immune to the Delirium, and constantly attended by a flock of invisible Banes.



Chapter Three:
In Nomine Vermis

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer
Things fall apart, the center cannot hold
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
— Yeats, "The Second Coming"

In the Name of the Wyrm

Only a century or so — some say even mere decades — ago, the Black Spirals Dancers were considered an historical anomaly: a tribe of bastards seduced and corrupted by the Wyrm. Sacrificing their sanity in exchange for dark powers, the Black Spirals acted as the disciples of a minor cult. For each Spiral hiding in the night, ten Garou waited to hunt him down. Though the werewolves of this tribe had always been dangerous, most of Gaia's defenders thought of them as insane monsters, villains hunted by ambitious heroes in search of honor and glory.

The world has changed since then. As the Apocalypse draws closer, the Wyrm's strength increases. The Garou do not understand their most dangerous foes, failing to see them for what they really are: their own reflection. Gaia's defenders charge into battle against Hives of Black Spirals, not realizing that their greatest enemy is not without, but within. Corruption has festered throughout the Garou Nation. As a result, more Garou fall before the Black Spirals each year, not under assaults of fangs and claws, but by the subtle seduction of the Wyrm's lure.

The seeds of corruption have already been planted. As the Earth Mother dies, the oldest werewolves are overwhelmed by the call of Harano. As they fall into introspection, these elders gaze into the maw of hell and realize their destiny. Cubs insist that the same fate will not befall them; instead, they indulge freely in rage, allowing hatred to overcome reason. Anger destroys souls as surely as apathy.

While some werewolves are born into the Black Spirals' tribe, many fall into the Wyrm's tendrils because of their own tragic failings. Once a werewolf has lost her will to resist temptation, she learns to accept the pain of unseen wounds and embrace the horror within herself. Pain is a path to her own destruction, a journey leading straight into the depths of Malfeas. Fallen Garou are drawn to the center of the Black Spiral. And once they cross over, they are eagerly welcomed by the winning side....

History

The origins of this tribe can be traced back to the days of the Roman Empire, when legions of soldiers struggled to build a nation that would place Rome at the center of the known world. In distant lands, generals conducted campaigns against chaos and barbarism. After A.D. 80, their most valiant enemies were the fierce tribes of Northern Britain. While the southern tribes quickly fell before the Roman advance, the stalwart defenders of the north held off the assaults of the Romans for over two centuries.

Hadrian's Wall marked the furthest limit of this empire with a boundary of stone and mortar. The edifice was originally constructed to defend Roman settlements from the raids of the northern tribes. On the north side was Caledonia, where dozens of tribes warred incessantly against each other. To the south, the furthest outposts of the empire served as refuges for Roman civilization.

Today, Garou Galliards sum up the conflict in rather simplistic terms. The force of the Wyld was strong in the north, but minions of the Wyrm aided the Romans in the south. Though the Celtic Fianna and Gothic Get of Fenris had brilliant tactics for opposing the Roman advance, they could not learn to coordinate their efforts. Throughout Southern Britain, werewolf heroes fell before shock waves of fomori and Fomorian Unseelie.

The last defense of the northern caerns depended on the White Howlers, a fanatic and dangerous tribe stalking in the Scottish highlands. Long after the Impergium, the Howlers remained isolated in Northern Britain. This desolate landscape was also home to the Picts. Legends tell of a hero named Cluid who led them on an epic journey to these lands — thus, their descendants referred to themselves as the "Children of Cluid," or "Cluithi." The greatest Pictish warriors became Kinfolk to the White Howler tribe.

Aided by Pictish Kinfolk, the Howlers were truly awesome in battle. They demonstrated courage and ferocity in action. Their greatest totem, Samladh (pronounced SAU-lah), represented these qualities. While Roman centurions hid behind armor and shields, the Picts often fought in the nude, proudly displaying war paint and tribal tattoos. Invigorated by the chill Scottish winds, they raced each other across Roman battlefields screaming horrible war cries. Many warriors painted themselves a fierce shade of blue before battle to draw upon their deepest energies. This use of warpaint and tattoos inspired the Roman name for their tribe: the "Pictii" or "Painted Men."



The white-furred Howlers fought without restraint, reveling in savagery and brutality. Ancient heathen rituals and violent Rites of Passage had made them incredibly vicious. The most arduous of these rituals involved spirit quests into the darkest realms of the Umbra. Cubs proved themselves not only by defeating physical foes, but also by descending into the dark heart of the underworld to prove their worth. The greatest arena for these ordeals was a Malfean realm known as the Spiral Labyrinth. Picts knew the shamanistic tradition of confronting these spirits as "walking the spiral"; Howlers used Gaia's blessings to travel further into the spirit world than any human mystic ever could.

While the White Howlers were masters of shocking violence, the Wyrm's legions were more subtle. Many thought that continual assaults on the realm of Malfeas would strike at the heart of hell, weakening the Wyrm's strength and purifying the bawns of their caerns. Unfortunately, Banes from outside the Malfean labyrinth had already begun to seduce and possess their Pictish Kinfolk. Slowly, they tainted the Picts, stunting their growth and corrupting their minds. While the werewolf rulers of the tribe maintained the purity of their own blood, their Pictish Kinfolk became bestial and degenerate.

The Fall of Caledonia

How can I wear the harness of toil
And sweat at the daily round
While in my soul forever
The drums of Pictdom sound?

— Robert E. Howard, "The Drums of Pictdom"

From this point on, legends differ. Some modern Galliards believe that the Wyrm's servitors spawned in the Scottish moors faster than the White Howlers could slay them. Others relate that a few enemy spies within the northern septs betrayed the Howlers to their undead enemies. Allegedly, vampires and the Garou they subjugated opened Moon Bridges to call down diabolical allies. In these tales, loyal White Howlers were completely overwhelmed, and the Wyrm's assault completely eradicated all traces of the tribe.

Though the original tribe is indeed extinct, these stories are not entirely correct. By completely abandoning themselves in combat, the White Howlers' Rage became utterly uncontrollable. Their heathen beliefs also insisted on the tradition of descending into Malfeas to improve their insight and prowess, placing them at spiritual risk. By following these two beliefs, the White Howlers succumbed to the Wyrm's temptations.

As their heroes' journeys into darkness became more perilous, the warriors who returned understood many dark mysteries of the underworld. Blasphemous revelations tested their sanity. In glimpses of insight, some survivors argued that the Wyrm was not a force of corruption, but merely one of balance. Those who rejected this idea responded with overwhelming rage, but as the Howlers indulged in violence, forces unseen preyed upon their Kinfolk. The tribe was never destroyed from without. It was corrupted from within.

By the time Roman legions finally broke through the Picts' defenses, the vampires who came with them were completely unprepared for what they found. The White Howlers had descended further into corruption than their Cainite invaders. To secure the freedom of their homelands, many within the tribe had made dark pacts with infernal forces. After witnessing the true nature of the Wyrm, they willingly opened gates and portals leading to infernal depths. These spiritual visionaries destroyed those who questioned their desperate defense of their homelands. By the time the Romans arrived at the first corrupted caern, hellspawn waited to shatter their minds and consume their souls.

The last caern to fall was the Sept of the Mile-Deep Loch, an island where the purest members of the tribe ruled over the White Howler werewolves. Elders looked out over the bleak moors of Scotland from a high peak at the center of the lake. When they learned of their brethren's treachery, they tried to summon reinforcements from other distant septs, but by then, it was too late. Outsiders could do little but watch as wave after wave of Wyrmish forces assaulted the sept's defenses.

When the sept was finally defiled, black tendrils reached out from the depths of the lake and dragged the tribal elders into the underworld. Destiny awaited them in the greatest gateway to the Spiral Labyrinth, a Malfean fortress known as the Temple Obscura. There, the last heroes of their race were prepared for spiritual corruption. According to legend, Coruroc, Last of the White Howlers, was the final victim to fall.

In the weeks that followed, the Romans were driven back past Hadrian's Wall, but at a perilous cost. The Picts had secured their Scottish homelands again, but their Garou guardians had fallen prey to the conqueror Wyrm. The caerns of the north became breeding grounds for Banes, which werewolves immediately bound into Wyrm-tainted fetishes. Eventually, the elders of the tribe returned from their final journey into the depths of Malfeas, but when they did so, they emerged as werewolves of the Black Spiral tribe.

Early Scotland: Homeland of the Black Spirals

Gods of heather, gods of lake,
Bestial friends of swamp and brake,
White god riding on the moon,
Jackal-jawed, with voice of loon.
Serpent god, whose scaly coils,
Grasps the Universe in toils.

— Robert E. Howard, "Men of the Shadows"

As late as 297 A.D., the Picts continued to attack Hadrian's Wall. By that time, the many tribes had consolidated into two kingdoms: Maeatae, in the north, and Caledoni, in the south. Within a century, Irish raiders began to assault both of these Pictish kingdoms. (In fact, the word

"Scot" is derived from the Gaelic word for "raider.") Over time, Scottish and Pictish blood mixed with that of Angles and Saxons. By the end of the 4th century, the many human tribes of the north elected one Pictish king to watch over their diverse cultures.

Galliard historians recall this saga in greater detail. The Fianna claim the werewolves of Scotland as their own flesh and blood. After helping to drive armies of Fomorians back into the sea, the lupine defenders of Eire migrated to the homelands of the Picts. Many Silver Fangs clarify that the Fianna didn't do this alone. They insist that these Garou couldn't muster the courage to raid the Pictish kingdoms until a few of their own pure bred heroes led the way.

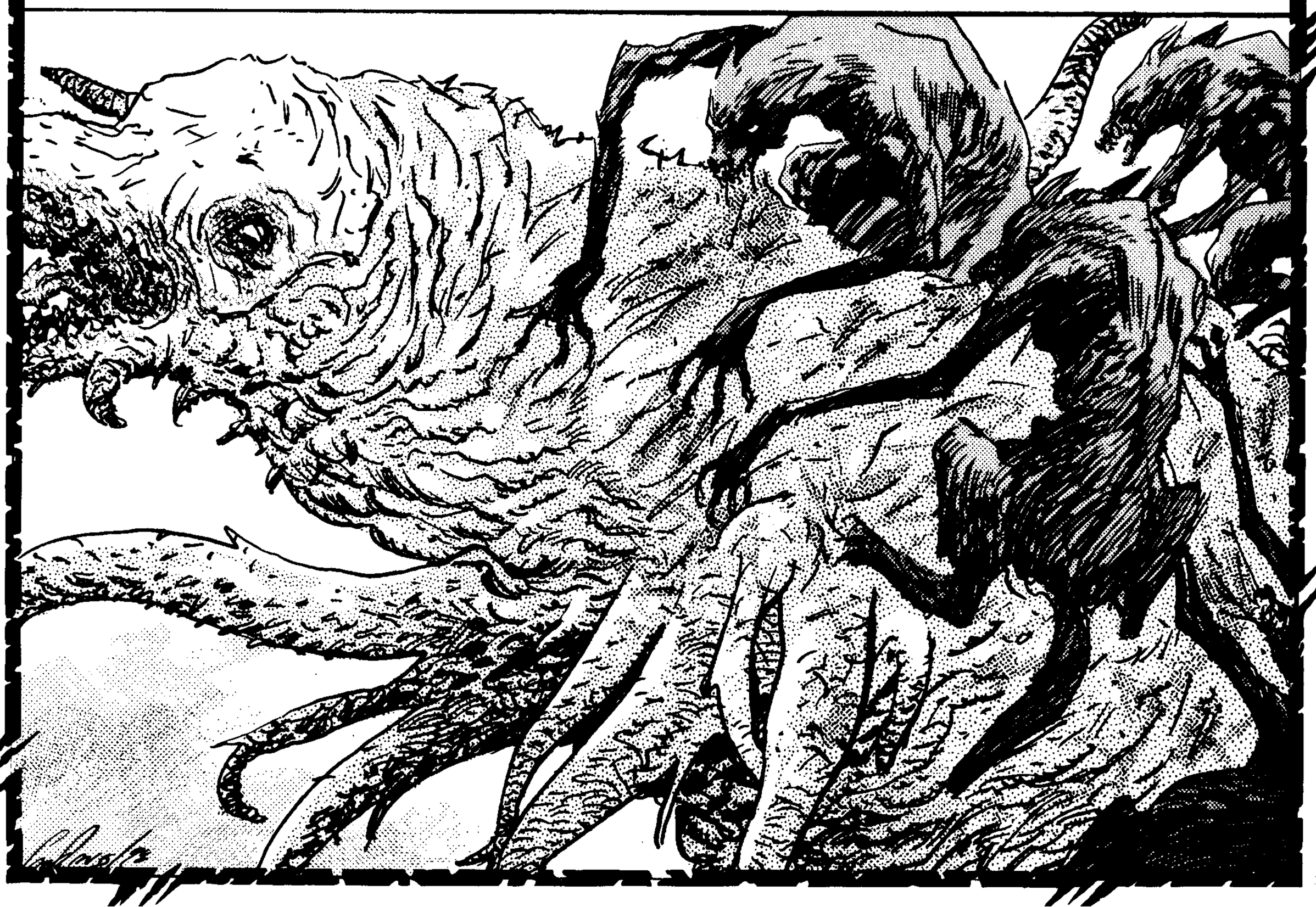
The legacy of Caledonia also includes a dark secret most Garou would prefer not to admit. Though the White Howler tribe was destroyed in the 3rd century A.D., the Picts were not. In fact, several families of Pictish Kinfolk survived, some of them integrating themselves with other surviving tribesmen. The Scots, Picts, Angles and Saxons didn't remain separate cultures for long. Over five centuries, they married and remarried enough times to form one homogenous Scottish culture.

The same integration took place among the Garou Kinfolk. The Scottish descendants of demented Pictish Kinfolk bred with the Black Spirals, but also passed a thin streak of tainted blood on to the Fianna, the Silver Fangs and other tribes of the north. A trace of this corruption survived. In the years that followed, degenerate Kinfolk exhibited a host of strange afflictions: stunted growth, a predisposition for bestial violence, and symptoms of mental degeneracy, ranging from depression to borderline madness. Some Garou cubs even dreamt of shocking Past Lives. Those of purer strains could hear the voices of the Wyrm's servitors calling to them. The White Howlers died, but their legacy lived on....

The Kingdom of Alba

During this time, a valiant Silver Fang Ahroun named Caledon the White led an army against the first Black Spirals and their degenerate Kinfolk, driving them further north. This white-furred hero became a legend among the Scottish Garou. Caledon's many descendants recaptured caerns throughout southern Scotland. Unfortunately, they then warred with each other for centuries, struggling to find one Garou who could follow Caledon's example and unite all of the local tribes. The Silver Fangs who triumphed in this struggle would later form the basis for one of their more obscure camps: the Highlanders. Yet as part of this, the "nobility" of Scotland began to isolate themselves from the concerns of commoners. This would prove to be a weakness that the Black Spirals could repeatedly exploit.

In 843, Kenneth McAlpin, a Kinfolk of the Silver Fangs, proved to be a suitable figurehead for uniting the many clans and tribes of Scotland. McAlpin rose to assume power over both the Scottish and Pictish kingdoms, establishing the Kingdom of Alba. An esteemed pack of High-





land Silver Fangs and Lowlander Fianna proclaimed themselves as his personal defenders. They united their pack under one totem — the regal and courageous Lion.

While the warriors of this "Lion pack" waited for the night when the Black Spirals would attack, they never realized that the enemy had already infiltrated their ranks. As the Scottish Garou heard the unnatural howls of the Black Spiral Dancers at night, something stirring within them answered. By day, they performed rituals in service to Lion to bolster their strength, but at night, they had horrible dreams of shocking Past Lives. Some remembered dark rituals performed by the shores of the Mile-Deep Loch. Others dreamt of the madness preying upon the leaders of the Highlander Camp. Blood called to blood.

Some melodramatic Fianna add a sinister theme here, insisting that the White Howlers left another cursed legacy behind for the Scottish Garou. The werewolves of Alba never realized the truth about their spiritual guardian. The greatest of the White Howlers' tribal totems was an Incarna of courage and ferocity. McAlpin's Silver Pack knew him by a different name. The White Howler totem became familiar to the Scottish and English Garou by a different name — Lion.

While armies of Garou guarded the lands surrounding McAlpin's fortress, the morale of his personal defenders deteriorated. One by one, McAlpin's guardians went screaming into the northern lands of Alba, answering the call of their distant brethren. As these souls were claimed by the Wyrm, the Black Spiral tribe grew stronger. Once the local Garou had been thoroughly demoralized by the fall of McAlpin's personal defenders, Black Spiral werewolves attacked. McAlpin fled further south, the surviving Garou desperately prayed for guidance, and the Wyrm rejoiced.

The Lion of the North

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee...
Art thou but dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
— Macbeth, Act II, Scene 1

Garou following the Lion Incarna continued to watch over the nobles of their kingdom, but far to the north, the Black Spiral tribe remained in exile in the most desolate realms of Scotland. Looking out on the dark moors, they dreamt of retaking their tribal homelands. Though the Spirals continued to spawn armies of warriors, they knew they would never succeed by force. After all, the Garou vastly outnumbered the isolated Black Spiral tribe. Instead, they would have to make further pacts with their powerful allies, the spirits and servitors of the Wyrm.

Anyone who doubts the ability of the Wyrm to spread corruption, especially when aided by the Black Spiral Dancers, need only look at early Scottish history. Though the Scottish clans — and the Highlanders who led them — could have unified to secure their freedom and destroy the Spirals early on, they fought each other instead. Scotland's

one king could never unify the local nobles for long. Whenever heroes fell prey to temptations of greed or ambition, the Wyrm whispered to the taint in their veins. When the call of the Wyrm grew too strong, Garou fell into introspection. And at last, when their morale was at its lowest, the most violent and deranged Black Spiral Dancers would attack.

One example from Scottish history illustrates this tactic admirably. In the 11th century, the Scottish nobility depended on a system of succession known as *tanistry*. Any male member of a king's family could succeed a Scottish ruler. This successor, or *tanist*, could even be named during the ruler's lifetime. As a result, many successions in Alba involved an ambitious noble killing his predecessor and all competitors to the throne. The legendary Macbeth exploited this tradition. After secretly killing his father, he triumphantly assumed the throne of Scotland.

Not surprisingly, Shakespeare's retelling of these events differed from the accounts of the Garou Nation. In his famous play, werewolves never ran through the hallways of Macbeth's castle. In truth, the Black Spirals never attacked outright. Instead, Macbeth was threatened by enemies he could never see. Long before the armies of his brother Malcolm advanced through Birnham Wood, prophecy and madness destroyed Macbeth's mind. As Black Spiral Theurges summoned unseen Banes against this notable Kinfolk and his defenders, Macbeth was laid low by his own ambition. In the process, the Kingdom of Scotland lost its independence.

Even heroes fall prey to temptation. Garou can fight off evil with claws and fangs, but overcoming self-doubt, ambition, greed or lust is far more difficult. Black Spirals proved themselves masters of exploiting these weaknesses. Corrupt totems taught them that open warfare was not the only way to destroy their enemies. Over the next thousand years, Scottish history reflected a saga of ambition and tragedy. Garou desperately attempted to purchase freedom for the former Kingdom of Alba, but their own failings sabotaged these efforts.

Inquisition and Colonization

In the years that followed, the werewolves of the Garou Nation learned to travel to caerns in distant lands. Though journeys by Moon Bridge were relatively slow in those early days, Luna's "spirit paths" helped wolves from vastly different parts of the world gather together into one Garou culture. Nonetheless, Luna would never aid the Wyrm-tainted Black Spiral werewolves in the same way. Stargazers and Wendigo could send messengers to Silver Fangs and Shadow Lords, but the Black Spiral tribe remained in exile.

Yet as this tribe learned more about distant tribes from their victims, they realized that their Scottish homeland was only one distant island in a world of constant conflict. If they were to survive, they would have to explore, colonize and breed. The Black Spirals' migration out of Scotland took centuries, especially since they needed to hide their presence from the Garou Nation. At sites where the Wyrm was at its strongest, these werewolves established corrupted underground caerns called "Pits" to act as the spawning pools for their struggling tribe. Through foul rituals, they then dedicated gates to the underworld from these profane sites, constructing "spirit tunnels" of their own. Slowly, Black Spiral Theurges crafted a network of labyrinthine tunnels to connect their distant spawning pools. Unseen, the tribe spread into Europe.

Over the next four centuries, as the Black Spirals gradually infiltrated the European continent, they also faced increasing resistance from many other societies of occult creatures hidden there. The Old World had become a battleground for dozens of diverse supernatural societies. Vampires, werewolves, witches and wraiths all tried to preserve their own ancient traditions, each trying to subtly influence the humans around them. The limits of human ignorance could only be pushed so far. In response, the mortals pushed back.

In 1484, Pope Innocent IV penned his infamous "Witch-Bull," calling for an inquisition against satanic covens throughout Europe. Staunch Christians wrote scathing tracts

Lord Craven's Scottish Conspiracies

Some occult scholars have focused not on the Black Spirals' military conquests, but on their subtler ambitions. An excellent example of this approach can be found in a mortal history text — the collected works of Lord Edward Craven. In 1735, he published the first edition of the *Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth*, a wildly improbable tome detailing an occult conspiracy in Scotland. Lord Craven spent most of his career defending England against the ambitions of Charles I, the Scottish crusader known as the Old Pretender. After he was wounded in the first Jacobite uprising in 1715, he spent the next twenty years detailing an alleged conspiracy that had not only infiltrated the courts of British royalty, but also the governments of Europe and the Americas — an alliance known as the Black Labyrinth.

Allegedly, a religious cult, complete with hidden rituals and satanic allies, hid in the moors of Northern Britain to aid the Scots on their brutal raids against England. By Lord Craven's twisted reasoning, the Scots conspired against the British royalty as part of their dark pacts with satanic forces. Later editions have broadened the scope of this delusion, supplementing Craven's original documents with treatises on other demonic creatures and religious groups, including the infamous Pretanic Order. Many doubt the authenticity and intent of the 1735 edition, immediately citing it as an inflammatory work. His reasoning is based on false logic, questionable scholarship, and falsified sources. Nonetheless, though his interpretation is decidedly racist, it is a shadowy reflection of more horrific events.

about the presence of demonic creatures throughout God's kingdom. Not surprisingly, the average mob of irate peasants made little distinction between demonic incubi, European vampires, and Wyrm-tainted werewolves. Satan's forms were legion, and good Christians opposed all of them. The Burning Times led to the destruction of thousands of supernatural monsters, ignoring all imaginary boundaries of sect, society, clan or tribe.

Obviously, this crusade also threatened the survival of the Black Spiral tribe. Their existence depended on the secrecy and security of their Pits, where breeders spawned cubs for their cult. While Garou leapt vast distances by Moon Bridges throughout the world, the Black Spirals needed centuries to establish their warrens and spawning pools. Each time one of these colonies failed, the Black Spirals reaffirmed a time-honored precept: even creatures of the Wyrm needed to preserve the Veil.

The New World

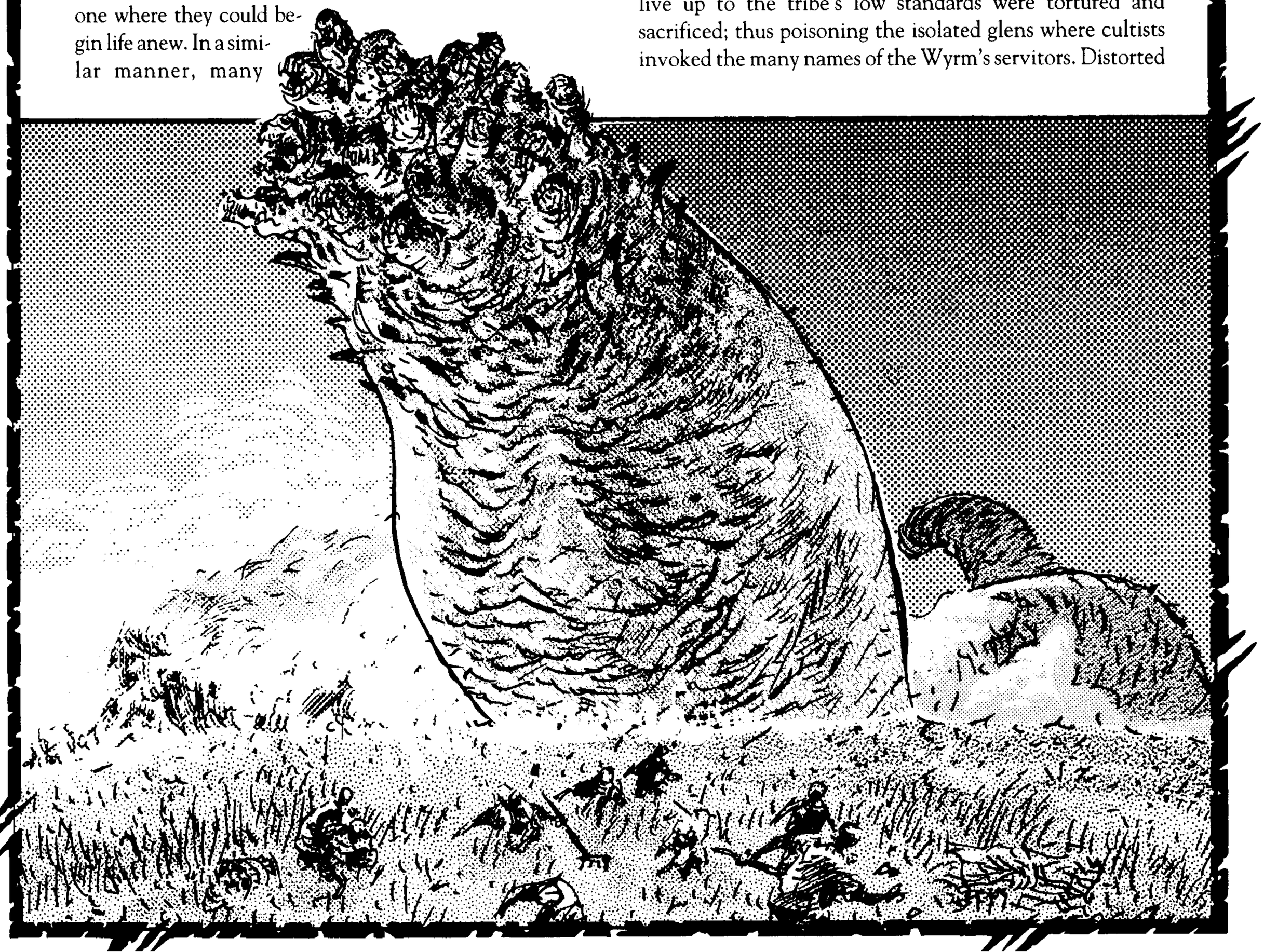
Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

— 1 Peter, 2:8

The carnage continued until a momentous discovery offered an escape from inquisitorial madness. At the end of the 15th century, Europeans discovered another continent, one where they could begin life anew. In a similar manner, many werewolves set out on long journeys to the tribal homelands of three fiercely isolationist and xenophobic tribes in North America — the Wendigo, Uktena and Croatan.

On the creaking ships of explorers, Black Spirals also set out to seed more of their spawn. Wherever men went, the tribe followed. The migration of Gaia's bastards was somewhat slower than that of the Garou, however. Fleeing from the madness of the Burning Times, packs of Black Spiral Dancers had to smuggle their cubs onto ocean-going vessels. Several had to find supernatural patrons to sponsor these occult quests, but over decades, enough survivors made the journey to begin breeding again in the New World. The Black Spirals then established their first spawning pools on the North American continent, tunneling from the caves of New England to the primal wilderness beyond.

Not far from these dens of iniquity, European colonists remained isolated in the forest primeval, far from the security of their old civilizations. The unprepared humans made for easy prey. Black Spiral cultists practiced foul rituals in the woods, stalked the unprotected colonies, and sought foolish mortals to abduct and suborn. By infesting carefully chosen Europeans with Wyrm-taint, they brought fresh blood into the sinister black covens of their Kinfolk. Men and women of weak virtue were also offered places of honor in the tribe's orgiastic procreation rites. Those who failed to live up to the tribe's low standards were tortured and sacrificed; thus poisoning the isolated glens where cultists invoked the many names of the Wyrm's servitors. Distorted



by the Delirium, tales of witch-cults in New England spread throughout the colonies.

One of the greatest legends of the tribe's unholy activities concerns the village of Roanoke. There, Black Spirals harried and hunted the isolated colonists for months, summoning Banes to spread madness and hatred. The demented werewolves performed the bidding of the Eater-of-Souls, an aspect of the Wyrm that physically manifested itself in the fields outside the colony. Its efforts continued until the members of one Garou tribe — the Croatan — overcame the local Black Spirals and sacrificed themselves into the very maw of the Wyrm. Despite this, the entire village was destroyed. Though human history does not offer an account of this tragedy, the bloodshed that resulted is recorded in the Garou epic known as *Croatan Song*.

Wherever the Wyrm sought to unleash its wrath, the Black Spirals waited to answer its clarion call. By recruiting the weak-minded into their cults, they found both human agents and breeding stock. If their schemes failed, Hives swarmed to destroy all evidence of such nefarious activities, allowing the Delirium to mask their exterminations as "Indian attacks" and "harsh winters." Yet as Black Spiral Kinfolk began to integrate with the surviving colonists, they also spread their tainted blood. Far from the law and order of Europe, the unseen tribe preyed on unprotected humans, desecrated the Wyld, and, most importantly, continued to breed.

Other Heads of the Hydra

Back in the Old Country, survival remained as difficult as ever. Though the Inquisition culled the supernatural population of Europe, the survivors became increasingly territorial. This presented further problems. Black Spirals couldn't burrow tunnels into new territories until they had established Pits there, and they couldn't dedicate those sites until the lands surrounding them had been desecrated. Despite the gradual nature of this advance, the Spirals did manage to secure a few strongholds in Northern Europe.

One of the tribe's most extensive networks lay hidden in the wilds of Scandinavia... until Nosferatu scouts uncovered the entrances to these "spirit tunnels" in 1803. Soon thereafter, a sect of vampires began to crusade into the tribe's Scandinavian territories. The leaders of their society, the Sabbat, hoped to establish a haven from their enemies in the Camarilla. Without the slightest regard for Black Spiral domains, Sabbat vampires openly moved into the major cities of the region by night. After slaughtering the Camarilla rulers, they held violent revels in the streets to celebrate.

The elders of the Black Spirals considered this an immediate threat to the security of their spawning pools. If the Sabbat's indiscretions continued, they argued, the results would be like the inquisitions of the 15th century all over again. Even Black Spiral werewolves had to maintain some pretense of the Veil. To secure their lands, the tribe waged war against nocturnal invaders. Hives of Spirals searched for the havens of vampires by day; in response, packs of vampires sought out the Hives of Gaia's bastards by night.

Neither side saw any immediate victory in this conflict until a werewolf pack on a visionquest in Malfeas uncovered a startling revelation. The ruler of the local Sabbat vampires, the Archbishop of Stockholm, had made a dark pact of his own. Though the Black Spirals were not familiar with the phrase "Path of Evil Revelations," they soon learned that the Archbishop worshipped a manifestation of the Beast-of-War.

Garou and Black Spirals alike could sense the taint of the Wyrm in these inhumane vampires, but one Theurge's insight encouraged an alliance between Leeches and Lupines in the Wyrm's name. Through this occult connection, the few remaining Hives in northern Sweden were able to make an alliance with the local Sabbat Archbishops. Once this unity had been forged, both sects were able to protect their lands in Scandinavia over the next two centuries.

As news of this tenuous alliance spread, Black Spiral Dancers in the New World found the idea eminently practical. Gangrel *antitribu* of the Sabbat were especially receptive to the concept. While a vampire could afford excellent protection for a pack at night, the Black Spirals could ensure security for the same vampire by day. Although the Garou Nation and Camarilla could never find common ground, Black Spiral Dancers find no real ethical or practical reason to forbid alliances with the rather less idealistic Sabbat sect out of hand.

To this day, there is no guarantee that Black Spiral werewolves and Sabbat vampires will hold a treaty in any given city. However, vampiric pacts with demonic forces have always made such alliances much easier. When both societies find they have a common goal, elders can often find a way to strike a devil's deal.

Ecoterror

After the dawn of the 20th century, the Black Spiral tribe found another method of spreading the Wyrm's influence. Wherever the Earth was poisoned, Banes thrived. By spreading toxic waste, radiation and filth, these warriors' "ecoterrorist" activities despoiled and corrupted the Wyld. In recent years, Black Spirals have begun infiltrating extreme environmentalist organization as part of this crusade, exploiting the hatred of truly fanatic activists. Nonetheless, the most extensive and powerful ally in the tribe's campaign of ecoterror is a corporation that has been in business for over sixty years. When the local fringe groups fail you, you can always count on Pentex.

The story of this alliance begins in the 1940's with a cunning weekend warrior named Marvin Lossen. As a night-shift employee of a Philadelphia sewage plant, chemical recreation was the only sane way for him to survive his lunch break at 3 a.m. In one infamous reverie, he had a dream of toxic waste drowning the humans of the Eastern United States.



Joining with several friends and co-workers, he also spent his weekends hunting in the nearest national park. After his first mind-altering vision of destiny, Marvin had a voyage of discovery in the woods. With the aid of three submachine guns and a four-wheel-drive truck, Marvin's human pack found the big game they were looking for — an isolated sept of Garou. Leading them into battle, their alpha human underwent the Change that weekend. The Delirium offered his friends a weekend they would never forget. Mr. Lossen became Walks-in-Sewage, a Ronin Garou with a thick sludge of Black Spiral blood in his veins.

His personal totem revealed more allies to his cause. Encouraged by further weekend expeditions, he continued with his boring job until he could approach the corporate offices of the Pentex Corporation with his resumé and a gift: the ears of 20 slain werewolves. That night, a psychedelic vision led him to the threshold of Malfeas. Soon thereafter, he quit his job to draw a salary from Pentex Incorporated. Within ten years, after obtaining command over a corrupted caern and several toxic waste disposal plants in the Eastern U.S., he made his dreams come true.

In the early years, Pentex regarded the Black Spiral werewolves as easily manipulated shock troops. Executives hired them for Pentex First Teams, incorporating a bizarre approach to team-based management. Recruiters for the corporation brought together deviants from vastly different supernatural backgrounds. Mr. Marvin Lossen, for instance, organized a pack of sewer-dwellers known as the Lurkers Below. For over thirty years, Walks-in-Sewage led generations of Nosferatu and Black Spiral Dancers on missions to spread biohazardous waste throughout the sewers of the East Coast. This continued until the early-80's, when he was finally killed by a sanctimonious coterie of Camarilla Nosferatu.

In the mid-80's, several werewolves broke out of the ranks of labor and ascended to positions of management. A few of the more insidious Black Spiral werewolves even began to supervise minor operations. One notable example was Robert Allred, a Kinfolk who blackmailed his way onto the Pentex Board of Directors. After Allred was killed in the early 1990s, a demented werewolf named Francesco took his place. Since then, this lupus Black Spiral has gained control of a vast scientific organization. He acts as the supervisor of Project Iliad, a visionary project dedicated to blending the innovation of genetic engineering with the hideous possibilities of Wyrm taint.

For a race of demented, inbred werewolves, the Black Spiral Dancers have come a long way. Though the tribe once needed centuries to ooze out of their original warrens in Scotland, the tribe has since perfected its scorched-earth tactics of spiritual warfare. Since European explorers first sought virgin lands to develop and conquer, the tribe has helped rape the energies of the Wyld, spreading corruption throughout the world. After millennia of struggling to

The Trinity Hive

Radiation is your friend! The detonation of the first nuclear bomb added a few new spirits to werewolf cosmology, along with a new arsenal of weapons for the Black Spiral Dancers. One night in the early 1940's, a pack of Black Spirals camped out in the desolate deserts of New Mexico. The sight of a glowing mushroom cloud beckoned to them like the hand of God. On one of the most radioactive stretches of land in the desert, the pack burrowed into the unearthly glow of the local Penumbra. There, they established a Pit known as the Trinity Hive.

Massive Thunderwyrms now burrow through the Umbra surrounding the bawn of this tainted caern. Black Spirals stalk in the desert not far from Almogordo. Some Garou theorize that by breeding in a radioactive wasteland, the Black Spirals of this sect are preparing themselves for a global thermonuclear war — one of the most grisly ways for the Wyrm to win absolute victory in the Apocalypse.

endure, the Spirals have found diabolical allies, including the Sabbat and Pentex. At last, Gaia's bastards have learned to suborn and corrupt in the name of the Wyrm.

Hell's Legions in the Modern World

No goddess of love,
No ethereal deity,
No vestal virgins in the Temple of Flesh —
She's a daughter of Kali.
— Electric Hellfire Club, "The Temple of Flesh"

The evolution of the Black Spiral Dancers continues. Only a century ago, the Black Spirals only formed about one-fourteenth of the world's werewolf population. Now they're equal to one-tenth of the Garou population, easily outnumbering any other tribe. The Black Spirals are the only tribal society that is growing instead of decreasing. Though some purebred Black Spiral Dancers proudly trace their tainted lineage back to the days of the Pictish Kingdoms, many are recent initiates into the Wyrm's cults. As the Final Days approach, an increasing number of spiritually fallen Garou find rebirth and redemption in the Black Spiral tribe, joining their distant brethren.

There are several reasons for the tribe's increasing strength. First, the Black Spirals spawn far more cubs than the Garou. Since their early days of isolation in northern Scotland, overpopulation has always been crucial to their survival. Reveling in their carnal lust, demented werewolves evolve and preserve ancient orgiastic rites to breed more bastard children. Even fights for dominance typically have a sexual element, establishing "who's on top" in more ways



than one. The strong breed; the weak submit. (Pity the "omega wolf" of a Dancer pack — whenever any other packmate feels frustrated or insecure, he or she typically slakes his or her perverted and usually violent desires on the pack's weakling, just to prove that there's someone weaker and of lower station.)

In addition, Black Spirals have no taboos against breeding with their own kind. It's quite common for an alpha female to spawn with several werewolf partners at any given time. These practices have ancient origins. The Picts originally lived in a matriarchal society, one where women could chose their lovers freely, even outside of wedlock. The White Howlers have since devolved these traditions into a never-ending sexual ballet performed for the Wyrm's delight.

As darkness falls, the number of metis raised in each Pit slowly grows. While bastard Garou are prone to uncontrolled degeneracy, metis Black Spiral Dancers grow stronger as the Final Days approach. Genetic abnormalities, like insanity, are taken as blessings from the Wyrm. The use of radiation and toxic waste in spawning pools has also helped them breed "better" Black Spirals. Today, Theurges scramble furiously for some sort of rite, Gift or other trick that would allow their metis to breed. If they ever prove successful, then within a generation, the Garou Nation will surely be doomed.

A second reason for these werewolves' triumph is their cunning ability to lure Garou into the seduction of the Black Spiral Labyrinth. As their legion of genetic aberrants grows, the number of Garou impressed into serving the Wyrm increases as well. Some Black Spirals pursue this goal openly, organizing hunting parties to abduct Garou cubs. Subtler cults have learned to lead elder Garou to their destruction without raising a claw. After establishing a "hunting ground," a Hive typically begins a shadowy campaign of victimization and destruction, demoralizing local Garou and humans alike.

There are also numerous legends of Black Spiral werewolves capturing nearby Kinfolk and Garou to increase their numbers. Underground warrens hold the unwilling "breeders" of their cult. The Delirium has mutated evidence of these spawning pools into many unusual urban legends and satanic scandals. When Black Spiral Kinfolk act on behalf of "demonic voices" in their heads, the Urge Wyrms may also convince them to walk willingly into nearby hunting grounds, where they can be abducted and fertilized.

Banes also direct packs of Black Spiral Dancers to the walking wounded of the Garou Nation. Elders consumed by Harano, Garou with a thin trace of Pictish blood, and werewolves stalked by unseen spirits all make for excellent recruits. Hives serving the Whippoorwill totem are especially good at finding them. When victims of the Apocalypse fall into despair, they often find the path to damnation in the depths of their own hearts. Sometimes, Black Spiral Dancers only need to give them a little push.

There is a third reason this tribe has succeeded: strong alliances with other supernatural factions. The Black Spirals' alliance with Pentex, for instance, is working brilliantly. The corporation has diversified into hundreds of different companies, no longer needing to hide behind a single name. High profits gives them the means to sponsor or invest in entire packs. Through their connections, they've managed to secure employment for dozens of Hives of Black Spiral Dancers.

Though the Weaver is strong in many of these corporations, Black Spiral employees act as a sort of corporate cancer in the business world, eating away at the more banal organizations and corrupting them from the center of a vast corporate web. A few Black Spirals have even risen to positions of management. With Pentex' connections to the supernatural world, local directors can provide these consultants freshly-summoned Banes, newly corrupted fomori, and even high-tech equipment. Business is good when the world embraces its own destruction.

Finally, the fanatic beliefs of the Black Spirals' army of darkness have given them an edge the Garou do not posses. They have seen the future, or at least think they have. They no longer see the Apocalypse as a final conflict between "good" and "evil." It is the dawn of a new age. Dark revelations in the depths of the Spiral Labyrinth have

The Facts of Life for Metis Black Spirals

Over half of the werewolves of this tribe are of the metis breed. As a result, these "mules" enjoy a far better standard of living than they would receive in the Garou Nation. Though a metis Black Spiral is sterile and cannot spawn, it is still usually encouraged to participate in orgiastic procreation rites, often acting as a third partner (or fourth... or fifth...) in sexual congress.

Metis involved in this sort of relationship may later be offered the honor of raising the resultant offspring. (After all, the metis was there when the cub was conceived!) A metis may even choose to become a "nanny" for the mewling brat, especially if the parents have abandoned it. While Garou rely on "Den Mothers" (or "Den Fathers") to raise a sept's young, the metis of a Hive often share the responsibility for watching over the Hives' bastards. Only the tainted mind of a metis understands the proper balance of love and cruelty it takes to nurture (and brainwash) a Black Spiral cub.

When the little bastard comes of age, the metis then instructs it on proper breeding practices... firsthand. Of course, when the cub completes his Rite of Passage, he no longer needs to practice spawning with the nursemaids; instead, he is invited to join in the Hives' consensual orgiastic rites. If the young wolf later seeks out a younger metis to join the *menage-a-trois* (or *quatre*... or *cinq*...), the circle of life continues.

shown them the path they must follow. When the world is utterly consumed by darkness, the Wyrm will grant them power over all creation. For Black Spirals who aren't content with absolute freedom, cathartic violence or damn fine orgies, this last incentive can be a powerful motivator.

Philosophy

Much madness is divinest sense
To the discerning eye;
Much sense the starkest madness.
— Emily Dickinson

The Dancer's tribal philosophy is a corrupted version of the White Howlers' ancient beliefs. Their worldview didn't dwell on absolute concepts of "good" and "evil," instead preferring to see all things as part of a greater whole. The Garou and Banes were once reflections of each other. Neither one could completely dominate the other if the world was to keep its balance. While manifested spirits could be driven back to slumber in the spirit world, they could never truly be destroyed.

The practice of "dancing the spiral" to find communion with spirits can be traced back to many ancient shamanistic traditions, including those of the Picts. Led by the guidance of their spirit totems, those who walked the spiral could commune with the elemental forces of the world. Time itself was a great spiral. Rituals marked the turning of the seasons, which also reflected the cyclical nature of the year. Winter followed spring, but spring always followed winter. There was no evil, only the light and shadow of the world.

As part of this, saner Black Spirals profess that the Wyrm originally represented a force of balance, not only between the Weaver and the Wyld, but between light and shadow. The Wyrm's servitors prevented either force from growing too powerful and upsetting the balance of creation. Then, as we all know, the balance was shattered. Trapped within the Mad Weaver's web, the Wyrm was itself driven insane. Fighting to survive, the Wyrm lashed out at all creation, seeking to eradicate the source of its madness.

Curiously enough, the Garou responded by crusading to destroy the Wyrm. When the first Concordiat was reached, the Garou Nation unified their fifteen tribes by pledging to destroy the Wyrm's servants and save Gaia's world. Gloryhounds charged further and further into the Malfean realms, seeking to utterly destroy the forces of the underworld. Young heroes declared the Wyrm as the enemy of all creation. Oddly enough, today's Garou seem to espouse the same philosophy, professing that when the last Bane is killed, the Earth will be pure.

After the White Howlers left the world, the Black Spiral werewolves abandoned this delusion. Even then, they knew that purifying the world was somewhat more difficult than "killing all evil." Destroying the servants of the Wyrm wouldn't have restored the balance, because the Wyrm was not the source of the world's madness. In fact, the Wyrm only corrupts to gain allies in destroying the Weaver's



insane creations. To save the world, heroes must sever the Weaver's webs. All that humanity has built up must be torn down. When the Wyrm is freed from the Mad Weaver's schemes, its servitors will return to their original task — restoring the balance of the world.

Of course, dancers of the Black Spiral won't further this goal out of pure altruism. Just as the Weaver has driven the Wyrm insane, the Black Spirals have been afflicted with its horror as well. In the heat of battle, their reason is abandoned. The rage in their hearts is no longer a force they can contain; it lashes out in deviant urges of sadism and perversion. To destroy order in the world, Black Spirals break all the rules of human morality and ethics. As part of this, they tear down the institutions and creations of mankind — the webs that have driven them insane.

Fortunately, mankind is creating the means of its own destruction. As the humans poison their own world, they kill their own kind. An Apocalypse is coming, one that will destroy what the humans have constructed over thousands of years. Once the Wyrm is strong enough, it will destroy the madness of the Weaver. The Apocalypse is destined to occur. If the world cannot be redeemed, it must be destroyed. The Garou hinder the armies of the Wyrm, not realizing that the Weaver is their true enemy. If the Garou cannot aid the Wyrm's cause, then they too must be destroyed... or brought into the Wyrm's legions.

And what will the world look like when this battle has been won? Recall the Impergium. Remember what Gaia's world looked like when humans knew their place. After humanity returns to its former position of submission, the Wyrm's servitors will rule over the world. Werewolves will herd humans once again... leading them to their own destruction. And when the failed defenders of Gaia submit to the same fate as their Black Spiral brethren, they will be reborn. The Wyrm will show how the balance will be restored... once the world has been remade in its own image.

In Nomine Vermiis. In the Name of the Wyrm.

Organizations and Deviant Activities

Look at that flesh,
Pink and plump!
Hello, little girl!
— The Wolf, *Into the Woods*

Throughout the world, Black Spiral Dancers hide from their enemies, the werewolves of the Garou Nation. Their armies of darkness maintain corrupted caerns in underground lairs, which they call Pits. The term not only applies to the caerns themselves, but to the lands around them. Pits are often found among the most bleak and dismal places on earth. Rural Pits are cesspools of pollution; sometimes, they're even tainted by biohazards or radiation. Urban Pits are surrounded by the most horrific slum life imaginable — the suffering of nearby humans sates the caern's hunger for pain. Regardless of where they're found, these cesspools of corruption serve as the spawning grounds for the tribe.

The servitors of a Wyrm-tainted caern are allied in packs, and several packs stalking around the same Pit form a Hive. The Hive also includes many of the local Wyrm-spirits and Kinfolk of the tribe. The correlation between a Hive and its Pit is usually one of geographical convenience. Though two packs may serve distant Hives, they are still united in service to the Wyrm. The defenders of one Pit have no qualms about providing refuge to Spirals fleeing from another one. Calling for reinforcements from nearby territories in times of trouble is a common practice.

Black Spirals must be subtle in their travels, however. While Luna grants Garou the freedom to travel by Moon Bridge, several Wyrm Incarna allow Black Spiral Dancers the ability to travel between various Pits through a series elaborate tunnels infesting Gaia's surface. Even corrupt werewolves have difficulty telling where the physical portion of these tunnels end and the Umbral segments begin. More than one Garou has gotten lost within one of these underground labyrinths. If the pain in a Garou's heart is great enough, the non-Euclidean path may lead into Malfeas... or possibly straight into the Black Spiral Labyrinth itself.

Because the tribe has been vastly outnumbered by the Garou throughout their history, sexual spawning is a high ritual to the Black Spiral Dancers. Love and devotion are alien to them, but one female may freely take as many partners as she chooses, Garou or otherwise. The stigma of being a "bastard" is therefore irrelevant. There is some pressure to select breeding partners from distant Hives, but matriarchal authority over breeding allows females to spawn where and when they please. As a result, over half the tribe is composed of metis werewolves. What Garou disdain, Black Spirals revere.

Once in a generation, a pale mockery of a White Howler is born. These bastards are often sacrificed almost immediately after birth. When such throwbacks are born among Gaian Garou, they instantly draw the attention — and often enmity — of the nearest Hive. If a Fianna wolf exhibits all of the characteristics of a Howler, for instance, he is still, first and foremost, a Fianna. Despite this, freaks of this kind are mistrusted by the other members of their sept and hunted by Black Spiral Dancers.

Though the Black Spiral tribe wants to spawn freely enough to increase the size of their army of darkness, some aberrations actually fail the tribe's genetic muster. For instance, some Black Spirals are so insane that they must be destroyed for the good of the Hive. The most honorable death is in battle, explaining why so many of the "shock troops" Garou face are in the extreme throes of dementia — and thereby why so many Garou make the fatal error of underestimating the Dancers' intelligence as a tribe. The most subtle (or functional) demented werewolves rise to



hidden positions of leadership. A few rejects are allowed to go Ronin; they're accorded the same respect as pack members. If one is ever proven guilty of having abandoning the needs of the Wyrm, however, he is immediately hunted, tortured and slain.

Black Spiral Moots

Black Spiral moots are almost always held underground. Numerous Wyrm-spirits are found in attendance, though they do not have equal say as do the packs of the tribe. A Hive does not recognize one "sept leader" within the Pit; instead, three elders lead a moot, each representing one Head of the Hydra. The gathering begins with the Black Spirals in attendance casting aside their facades. This often involves divesting themselves of clothing and revealing hidden tribal tattoos. If their true identities are less visible, the Rite of Woad (see below) reveals them.

These gatherings are never orderly. Rarely does one werewolf address the entire assembly; instead, several discussions often take place at once. Ragabash and Galliards add to the anarchical, chaotic mood of their soirees by offering impromptu amusements, obscene performances and licentious displays. A Black Spiral moot is more than a chance to show solidarity within a Pit; it's also a chance to ensure the local werewolves' fanaticism and morale.

The only time the attention of the entire assembly is focused on one speaker is when an individual is meant to receive punishment. First, the Heads of the Hydra halt all discussions as a Galliard addresses the entire assembly concerning a crime. The werewolves then split into various groups to discuss the offense, and the three Hive Leaders wander about the chamber. The Three Heads of the Hydra then decide on a consensus and render a verdict. Often, this involves a further trial by ordeal.

The moot is concluded when the three surrogate leaders gather at the center of the meeting chamber. There, they inform each other of their uncoordinated and unpredictable plans. By the end of the evening, after the ingestion of mushrooms, lupine displays of dominance and submission, and a little violent sex (or just plain violence), the Wyrm's servitors go their separate ways. The Garou like to spend their evenings posturing and grandstanding as they stalk around their campfires, but Black Spiral werewolves have better things to do with their time.

The Pentex Connection

Black Spirals make for highly effective (albeit unstable) employees of the Pentex Corporation. Corruption and greed in the business world has allowed the Wyrm to spread its tendrils further than ever before. Hundreds of different Black Spirals—from street dealers hawking Wyrm-tainted crack to government lobbyists in Washington—have found endless employment opportunities through the company's referrals. Even a Black Spiral Dancer who isn't

getting a kickback from the corp might be willing to help out Pentex from time to time.

Black Spirals who work within Pentex First Teams use their connections to further their service to the Wyrm. They receive sizable salaries, enjoy all the conveniences of modern life, and command a vast series of perks, including big discounts on all Pentex products. Though their habits are not what one would call "professional," company wolves spend most of their time out in the field following up leads provided by Pentex.

While "project teams" of Black Spirals do excellent work, many corrupt mystics find a steady living raising spirits for the company instead. Creating fetishes can garner some quick cash or quick favors. Theurges also supply the Tainters and Infestors that infect products on Pentex assembly lines. With so many Banes and otherworldly spirits drifting about secret boardrooms, mystics are highly prized by the corporation. In a similar vein, Philodox consultants can also make a quick buck running weekend retreats and workshops regarding Garou spirituality. Such seminars rarely impart the *whole* truth to attendees, since the Dancers are loath to reveal weaknesses that might be their own undoing — but they're certainly better than ignorance.

The smallest segment of Black Spirals within Pentex serve as managers. These "company wolves" typically have attitude problems, as they consider themselves the elite members of their tribe. After all, they have the most wealth and power, don't they? Nonetheless, Black Spirals bought off by Pentex often lack strong connection to their local Hives. In fact, they're treated with less than absolute respect at local moots.

As the business world becomes more complex, an increasing number of Black Spirals are critical of Pentex. Many Hives strongly distrust this human-dominated subsociety. Sure, Pentex is working hard to destroy the environment, but does it really make sense to use the Weaver's methods to do it? Would the Picts who leapt over Hadrian's Wall to make haggis of their enemies really approve of corporate retreats? Perhaps the true spirit of the tribe has been lost.

While the corp has a veritable army of werewolves at its command, Black Spiral Dancers aren't always willing to sell out their freedom for a lifetime of direct-deposit paychecks. Though the tribe's Consultants (see below) prefer long-term contracts, even an insane, satanic dimension-dancing werewolf isn't dumb enough to stay with the same subsidiary of Pentex for very long. Such delusional addictions are best left to humans.

Camps

Like other tribes, the Black Spirals must deal with their own internal disagreements. Not all genetic freaks are created equal. A lupus who yearns for the glorious days of the Pictish Kingdoms (as he misunderstands them) is going to have a very different outlook on life than a Wyrm-tainted homid insisting on a 401k plan from Pentex. Though attendance at Black Spiral moots is required for all tribalists, Black Spirals also gather with their bastard brethren through an isolated and bizarre series of Camps.

The Cluithi

Long ago lived a mystic race known as... the Druids! No one knew where they lived... or... what they were doing....

— Spinal Tap, "Stonehenge"

Despite their valor and tenacity, the White Howlers have passed from the world. Within the Black Spiral tribe, however, one Camp has done its best to preserve their predecessors' heritage. The Cluithi still prowl the most desolate moors and forests of Scotland, imitating the appearance their ancestors had centuries ago. When preparing for war, they rend their clothing, proudly smear themselves with blue body paint and display Pictish tattoos. In battle, they are without mercy, each charging into battle to outpace his allies.

Unfortunately, the Black Spirals of this Camp have very distorted memories of ancient cultures, especially the Picts. They celebrate perverse anarchical freedom, even while trashing the natural world the heathens treasured. The rulers of this camp also have an elitist bent, considering themselves the nobility of the tribe. At Black Spiral moots, they insist that they are the most qualified for leadership. Cluithi Theurges are particularly cantankerous. They insist on the honor of calling themselves "Fiobshan" or "Sennasche," and many claim to be modern druids.

The Camp's name is a reference to the original rulers of the Pictish Kingdoms. Many Cluithi see themselves as the truest children of Cluid, the hero who first led the Picts to Caledonia. Unfortunately, their so-called "research" allows them to justify any bizarre or blasphemous practice they please. Take one part of the Society for Creative Anachronism and add two portions of a satanic cult. Mix liberally with shaky historical research and throw in a dash of testosterone. Voila! The Cluithi charge into battle once again!

The Genetic Irregulars

"Hey, boy! You know how to squeal like a pig? You got a pretty mouth, boy."

— Jethro Whately, metis Irregular (misquoting *Deliverance*)

Rumors persist of backwater caerns in the Eastern United States where Garou inbreeding is just a little too common. Valiant Bone Gnawers who tire of rejection from other clans retreat into shacks and hovels deep within the American wilderness. Many of their Ronin neighbors are the genetic cast-offs of the Garou Nation. Shockingly, they also harbor Ronin of the Black Spiral tribe — folks is folks, after all. Regardless of their varied geographical preferences, these various corrupted werewolves have gained one derisive appellation: the Genetic Irregulars.

These good ol' boys band together in groups of ten or twenty to form small communes just outside America's smallest cities. From rural villages in New England to

isolated hamlets in the South, enforcement of the Litany in their tiny backwater septs is surprisingly lax. Wading in their own shallow gene pools, they spawn bastard children who are easily infected with the taint of the Wyrm.

They also form extended families, though usually through blood and buggery. Everyone is related to everyone else. Lazy orgiastic sex is more popular than television. Some residents have a hankerin' for human meat as well, especially certain Ronin Bone Gnawers and Red Talons. Any Garou who discover these podunk hells soon find themselves praying for deliverance. These folks is always lookin' fer more breeders.

While these bastards' intelligence and social skills are weak, many develop new mutations that any fomori would envy. They haven't the intelligence to question the orders of powerful Black Spirals — let's face it, they'd think of the *Beverly Hillbillies* as a forum for intellectual debate — but this makes them outstanding shock troops. Though they may eventually be allowed to pass through the First Circle of the Rite of Transmogrification, most fail it, resigning themselves to a life of waiting in trailer parks and hoping to be called up as the Wyrm's reserves.

Generation Hex

"Anarchist webpages, Aryan Nation propaganda sites, pedophiliac chat rooms — there's a reason the Internet is known as the Misinformation Highway."

—Mob'loc, Generation Hexer and 33rd Degree Subgenius

All werewolves know they've got to watch their Kinfolk closely. Black Spiral Kinfolk in particular carry a streak of insane genius deep within their souls — this often encourages them to drift toward the fringes of human society. Mild insanity, emotional problems, or obvious voices in their head lead them away from the human herd. One Camp of Black Spirals watches over these slackers, selectively placing packs within their bizarre human societies. Religious cults, ecoterrorist groups and heavily-armed militias keep in touch through a network of disaffected werewolves. This forms the elaborate conspiracy known as Generation Hex.

E-mail is the most common medium used to mobilize the servants of this secret society. A Hive member within Generation Hex typically has a broad range of questionable contacts, usually through other Black Spirals. Stirring up trouble with a Neo-Nazi cabal or Sacrificial Elvis Cult only requires a few phone calls. The recent popularity of militias has also helped them recruit more psychotic, heavily-armed shock troops. Drifting toward the lunatic fringe, they arm themselves for the Wyrm's cryptic agenda.

The Consultants

"Yeah, yeah, it took you three hours and five sacrifices to summon the Urge Wyrm of Greed. Big deal. I can speed-dial him on my cell phone."

— Francesco, Philodox manager of Project Iliad

Anyone who puts his loyalty to Pentex above his obedience of the local Hive is going to have trouble with his relations. "Consultants" are the most hard-core and loyal werewolves employed by corporate subsidiaries. While many werewolves are content to do a little part-time work for Pentex First Teams, "company wolves" are on the fast track to management. They're more likely to be found at company meetings than local moots.

Pentex has enough subsidiaries that Consultants don't have to stay with the same front company for long. Their fees are high; their allegiance, brief; their loyalty, absolute. Once a contract is fulfilled, they sever their human ties in the corp and stalk to the next opportunity. The closest approximation of "trust" they entertain is directed at the other werewolves of their insular society. These servants of the Evil Empire don't fully understand Black Spirals of other camps, but still somehow consider themselves superior. They often demand support from other members of their tribe, and always consider themselves "alpha managers" of these operations. Despite this, they tend to drift away from the concerns of their local Pit.

Traditional Black Spirals think Consultants stalk a little too far into the Weaver's web; they're a little too willing to trade in their woad and mushrooms for a good deal on a cell phone and a lime green BMW. Their expenses are somewhat more elaborate than those of the average metis troglodyte, and their integration with members of human society make them a definite security risk. Black Spirals who serve Pentex are clannish and treacherous enough to be considered their own separate camp.

Black Spiral Kinfolk

"You're gonna hold hands in some stupid circle...
You're gonna jump up and scream...
You're going to jump up and...
Burn an 'X' in your head..."

— sampled by White Zombie

Kinfolk of the Black Spiral tribe don't always recognize the dark powers they serve. Like their pure-blooded brethren, they have a taint of insanity in their veins. Delusional beliefs, conversations with imaginary voices, and uncontrollable rage are all possible indicators of tainted Kinfolk blood. Consider the type of mindset that leads someone to join a religious cult, torture animals or victimize innocents. Then imagine them secretly serving a thousand-year-old cult of deranged werewolves.

These wounded souls pray to infernal powers that can release them from their suffering. The Wyrm answers. In dreams and nightmares, servitors of the Wyrm show them what they must do to find salvation. Kinfolk obey these commands, never realizing their full importance. In fact, human Kinfolk are far more likely to believe they're visited by angels, demons or aliens than werewolves.

Wolf Kinfolk also exist, though they are rare. Many are unstable cross-breeds, including the various strains of dog-wolf

hybrids. These half-feral creatures may be even more unstable if their upbringing is particularly cruel. Unsure of their own identity, they lash out at anything they do not understand.

Black Spirals feel free to breed with Kinfolk of any tribe or species. Dark Gifts assist the Spirals in altering and distorting the memories of these breeders. Interspecies breeding is also quite common. For instance, some homid Black Spirals find sexual unions with caged lupus Kinfolk quite convenient. Regardless of personal preference, blood calls to blood, and demented insights often encourage Black Spiral Kinfolk to aid their unseen masters.

Walking the Spiral: Life Within the Tribe

Serving the Wyrm as part of the Black Spiral tribe is a great honor...and a terrible curse. Werewolves born into the tribe are nurtured through a life of horror and forced to witness endless atrocities. Concepts such as a love and humanity are never instilled. A Garou who is seduced by the Wyrm's power abandons her so-called "finer" qualities, facing the shadow of evil within the darkest recesses of her soul. Yet as the world is consumed by darkness, the Black Spirals are the only tribe that is truly prepared for the Apocalypse.

Rites of Passage and Transmogrification

Since the latter days of the Pictish Kingdoms, Black Spirals have descended into Malfeas to further their spiritual decay. One particular realm of the underworld is the most effective for bringing further communion with the Wyrm. It is a dimension known by many names: the "Shattered Labyrinth" and "Black Spiral Labyrinth" are the most common. A Black Spiral cub typically pursues his Rite of Passage in this realm around the age of 14. He also visits it each time he is about to increase in Rank and "spiritually devolve." The metamorphosis that takes place in the Shattered Labyrinth is known as *transmogrification*.

When a Black Spiral Dancers has gained sufficient Renown to increase in Rank, he is recognized before his Hive with an elaborate ceremony. A Theurge begins the rite by tracing a complicated design on the floor of her Pit's central chamber. A Galliard then acts as "speaker" for the initiate by chanting the dancer's accomplishments. (If a cub is undergoing his Rite of Passage, a simple recital of his lineage will suffice.)

Over the next ten minutes, the mystic creates a gateway between the physical world and Malfeas. After the Black Spiral initiate enters a trance-like, shuffling state — the "dance" for which he is infamous — the Theurge then helps the werewolf step sideways directly into the Black Spiral Labyrinth.

The initiate's spirit may then attempt to penetrate the various thresholds of the labyrinth. As the dancer moves "toward the within" on his Malfean quest, every aspect of his being is tested, from his insight and cunning to his rage and sanity. Various occult texts — from the latest editions of *Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth* to the apocrypha of the Pretanic Order — recognize nine such tests. Each corresponds to a "circle" of the labyrinth. Respect is accorded by the number of circles the Black Spiral Dancer has crossed.

Garou abducted from other tribes can also be hurled into the Black Spiral. The victim usually abandons all hope after entering the First Circle, when he receives insights into the taint of evil within himself. Since the poor fool is not a Black Spiral Dancer, this revelation usually drives him insane. It is possible, though rare, for a valiant hero to cross three or four circles during his first visionquest, rising to higher orders within the cult. Regardless, the experience reshapes the initiate's very identity. In fact, the first syllables the adopted bastard mutters after leaving the labyrinth becomes his new name within the tribe. (Of course, particularly infamous Black Spiral Dancers often gain deed-names if their claim to fame is more widely spoken than their name. No-Soul from the opening fiction is one example; his complete desensitization to the world became the talk of Hive rumor mills nationwide.)

A Method for Madness

As the Wyrm is enraged by its growing confinement, its servitors echo its madness. Just as the Garou feel sympathy for Gaia's suffering in the throes of Harano, the boundless rage and fury of the Wyrm is strong enough to shatter the

Out of Space, Out of Time

Tracing the Black Spiral takes approximately ten minutes. After this ritual, a mystic present must burn off two points of Gnosis. Her energy sparks the spiral design, forcing it to simmer at an unnatural hue beyond the range of human vision. Any dancer present can see these energies and discern the maelstrom raging at the center with a successful Gnosis roll (difficulty 6). The time required to dance across the Gauntlet depends on this roll.

5 successes 1 minute
4 successes 5 minutes
3 successes 10 minutes
2 successes 30 mystical minutes of shocking visions (the Storyteller and player both relate psychedelic visions the dancer experiences along the way)
1 success One hour (and roll Stamina, difficulty 7, or lose one permanent Gnosis)

If the roll is botched, servitors of the Wyrm are released from the labyrinth. They close the entrance behind them and either attack or test the dancer. These guardians cannot be dispelled by Gifts like Bane Allies.

sanity of many Black Spiral Dancers. Though not every Black Spiral is driven insane by the Rite of Passage, many are gifted with madness.

This insanity is taken as an omen, indicating that one of the Urge Wyrms has blessed the initiate and showed his potential for infamous achievement. The spirit may even choose to speak in voices to the initiate throughout his cursed life, offering secret guidance. Usually, these dementia are not strong enough to incapacitate the initiate's usefulness to the tribe — "deranged" does not have to mean "useless." Absolute raving lunatics are usually either released as shock troops against the Garou, abandoned as Ronin, or immediately destroyed, especially if they are flawed enough to jeopardize the security of a Pit.

In game terms, a Black Spiral Dancer who travels through the First Circle for the very first time must roll Willpower; the difficulty is equal to his maximum Rage + 3. If he can't score at least three successes, she gains a Derangement. A werewolf of another tribe who enters the First Circle for the first time must roll maximum Gnosis instead (at a difficulty of 9).

Either way, unless the poor bastard obtains three successes on this "transmogrification" roll, he gains a Derangement, undergoes a brutal shift to his personality, and becomes an adopted bastard of the Black Spiral tribe; otherwise, he returns to receive further abuse from their cult. If this roll is botched, the pitiful creature goes completely and uncontrollably insane, attacking everything within reach until it is destroyed.

The Dark Litany

Once a werewolf has undergone his Rite of Passage for the Black Spiral tribe, he has the freedom to act out his basest and most unspeakable desires. Ultimate freedom requires great responsibility, however. Just as the Black Spirals have perverted their ancient White Howler traditions, the Litany they once knew as Garou has been distorted to serve the Wyrm's agenda. Their own "Dark Litany" details the rules of their culture. When dealing with other servitors of the Wyrm — from the First Teams of Pentex to mystical cultures deep within Malfeas — these rules are strictly observed.

Serve the Wyrm in All Its Forms

The Thirteen Tribes continually war with each other, but the forces of the Wyrm must be stronger. This mandate enforces the tribe's unity, allowing their alliances with such diverse societies as Pentex and the Sabbat. Service to the Wyrm is more important than philosophical debate.

Beware the Territory of Another

This dictum allows separate Hives to maintain separate territories. Competition for land is usually not a problem, since most new Hives are created from distant Garou caerns. This law



Common Black Spiral Dementations and Dementia

Amnesia or Delusion: These dementia are blessings from Pseulak, the Urge Wyrm of Lies. The terror of your former life is gone; now Pseulak has dreamt a new identity for you.

Berserker: The Beast-of-War has chosen you. In violence, you find ultimate freedom. All of your Rage rolls are at a -2 difficulty.

Grandeur: Your mind has been kissed by the fetid lips of Mahsstrac, the Urge Wyrm of Power. You believe that your role in the tribe is much greater than what others suspect of you...obviously a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Hallucinations: Kirijama, the Hidden Foe, has shown you things which should not be. Only you can see them; they mock everyone else.

Klazomania: The voices in your head won't stop, and you can only quiet them by screaming at the top of your lungs. You can't speak without shouting, and your glorious words echo through the polluted air that H'rugg taints each day.

Masochism: Pleasure and pain are one and the same. Karnala, the Urge Wyrm of Desire, has shown you the way.

Misomania: Your hate is constant and focused against everything. Abhorra, the Urge Wyrm of Hate, can guide you in your dementia.

Multiple Personalities: You could never choose one head of the Hydra, so you now serve all three. Each of your personalities should have a different name, follow a different auspice, and obey a different Hydra of the Dark Trinity.

Paranoia: Sykora, the Urge Wyrm of Paranoia, wants to drive you insane. Her minions are everywhere, so you had best live up to her ideals.

Phagomania: You hunger constantly. Any meat you kill is quickly devoured. The Eater-of-Souls may even show you the glories of cannibalism.

Sadism: You adore the reactions of others in pain. The suffering of others satisfies Angu, the Urge Wyrm of Cruelty.

also applies when Black Spirals from different Hives encounter each other within the tunnels of the underworld. A Black Spiral may travel through the tunnels of another Hive as long as he does not endanger it. If he does, the transgressor is tortured and devoured by the offended werewolves.

Slay Those Who Will Not Join You

Offering a Garou the chance to walk the spiral is a signal honor. Prisoners are sometimes offered the chance to transmogrify instead of submitting to hours of messy torture. Those treated with such esteem should show proper deference. Those who reject such overtures are destroyed.

Respect All Those Who Serve The Wyrm

This stricture allows Hives to consider ideas advanced by humans within Pentex and Sabbat vampires. Though they may choose to disregard the Veil or extol the use of technology, they both serve the Wyrm. Black Spirals may also accord a modicum of respect to Garou who are on the long dark path toward corruption. One might argue against slaying a Shadow Lord cultist or Uktena occultist outright if they believe the cur is destined to walk the Shattered Labyrinth.

The Veil Shall Not Be Lifted

This idea is not only upheld by Garou and Black Spirals alike, but by most supernatural creatures. By enacting their schemes silently and discreetly, Black Spirals can hide from the Garou who hunt them, infiltrate human society more thoroughly, and employ the advantage of surprise. In a more general context, this dictum sometimes becomes a point of contention between Black Spirals and the Sabbat. The werewolves don't care for plans that force them to compromise the secrecy of their Hives, but they also don't mind if Sabbat vampires bring down human retribution on themselves.

Do Not Suffer Thy People to Tend Thy Sickness

Unlike some tribes of the Garou Nation, the Black Spirals uphold this dictum religiously. A weak cub should not grow old enough to poison the tribe's gene pool. A weak elder is a liability, and if he cannot defeat challenges against his position, he should be destroyed. As a corollary to this, some Black Spirals are actually so insane that they pose a threat to the security of a Hive. In this case, they are either made Ronin or torn limb from limb in sacrifices to dark powers.

The Leader May Be Challenged At Any Time in Peace

This stricture has remained intact since the days of the White Howlers. Defeating Black Spirals of renown is an effective way to gain infamy and power. If a leader cannot defeat his own followers, he has no right to lead them against their enemies.

The Leader Shall Not Be Challenged in Time of War

Once battle begins, the forces of the Wyrm must be united. This is the Black Spirals' chief advantage over the Thirteen Tribes. Admittedly, arguing this point of the Dark Litany is difficult, as the tribe is almost always involved in some sort of conflict, but it's usually reserved for when an outright skirmish has begun. There are few notable excep-

tions, such as when a vampire or Nephandus is attempting to lead Black Spirals in battle and does so poorly.

Ye Shall Take No Action That Causes a Pit to Be Violated

The interpretation of this guideline usually applies to security and secrecy. If anyone who is not a Black Spiral Dancer or Wyrm-spirit enters a Pit, he must be killed swiftly. Prisoners are never brought back to a Pit, nor does anyone speak of the sanctum when outside its boundaries. If prisoners are honored with an invitation to the Shattered Labyrinth, the Rite of the Black Spiral must be performed away from the Hive's sanctum.

Through a Mirror Darkly: The Thirteen Tribes

And what rough beast, its time come 'round at last,
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?
— Yeats, "The Second Coming"

As the tribes of the Garou Nation insult and malign each other, the Wyrm rejoices. Race hatred and stereotypical prejudice are common among the Garou, even within the strongest and most effective packs. Every tribe also has weaknesses, offering subtler packs of Black Spiral Dancers opportunities to corrupt and destroy them.

When a Garou grows tired of endless battles against the Wyrm, she retreats to her banal life among humans. As Harano and hopelessness grows stronger, she begins to isolate herself from the company of other Garou, even withdrawing from the obligations of her local sept. In dreams and nightmares, a spiritually wounded Garou remembers the atrocities of her Past Lives and the triumphs she will never experience again. She then visualizes a surcease to her suffering. The answer to her spiritual pain lies waiting within the depths of the underworld.

Those who accept the revelations of the Spiral Labyrinth are forever changed. Though they gain true knowledge of their darkest secrets and flaws, they do so at a terrible price. A spiritual traitor may also exploit knowledge of her former sept to aid her new family. When one Garou falls to the Wyrm's lure, several more may be captured later. One of the most demoralizing experiences imaginable is to be hunted and harried by a hero you once respected, especially if she used to fight beside you.

Once a Garou has been baptized in darkness, she becomes a mockery of her former self. A dancer's madness may even be guided by the philosophies of her former tribe. The reborn werewolf abandons the weaknesses of her former identity, pursuing true understanding of the darkness in her soul.

• **Black Furies:** Though the Furies would dearly love to seize more power in the Garou Nation, human-born prejudices still deny them their ambition. The Garou were once able to guide and influence human society, but now, they can do little to alter humanity's patriarchal and sexist attitudes. For women who dream of a life where they can fulfill their desires — even ones they themselves do not recognize — the Black Spiral Dancers consummate their grandest dreams.

Furies who have walked the Black Spiral no longer find themselves restrained by society's taboos. In fact, many receive dementia that completely redefine issues of gender. Extreme sexual practices, violent misandrysm, and fetishism involving severed genitalia are all common responses. Very few fully renounce their feminist beliefs, though some abandon their independence, submitting themselves to simple lives as breeders for the tribe.

• **Bone Gnawers:** The Gnawers are often treated with scorn, regarded as little more than objects of ridicule. They live desperate lives, and they often resort to extremes when escaping the horror of their transient existence. Is this what Gaia intended for her children? Eating out of garbage cans, receiving the abuse of others, and living like rats in the streets? Those who walk the Black Spiral are often shocked by what they have endured in Gaia's name.

Abductees who survive the Shattered Labyrinth are terrified when they realize the depths to which they've sunk. Some street dwellers overcompensate, resorting to obsessive cleanliness and other compulsive behaviors. Others become even more grotesque, embracing depression or hebephrenia. Mental illness is a common affliction among the homeless, allowing them the freedom to indulge in the most shocking behavior imaginable. The Black Spirals respect these desires, and reward them amply.

• **Children of Gaia:** Many members of this tribe are known for their liberal attitudes towards free love and recreational drug use. While a few find love or revelation, others become jaded, "running away" from responsibility in hollow physical pleasures. For these cast-offs of the tribe, the Black Spirals can offer pleasures beyond the Gaians' wildest dreams.

The Black Spirals offer many perks to former Children of Gaia, including orgiastic breeding ceremonies, toxic chemical psychedelia, and fanatically communal societies of allies. Sexual philias and fetishes are indulged and encouraged. Many also learn to serve the Bane-totem known as the Dark Fungus, reveling in his mycological glory.

• **Fianna:** Eire's werewolves are proud of their heritage, almost to a fault. Though the modern world does not fully understand Fianna beliefs, traditional Black Spiral Dancers have preserved (and perverted) many of the forgotten traditions of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Some Fianna have enough of a streak of tainted blood in their veins to receive strange dreams of the ill-fated Pictish Kingdoms long ago.

Once Fianna return from the Shattered Labyrinth, their delusions become real, offering strange remembrances of false Past Lives. Fallen Fianna may aspire to join the ranks of the Cluithi, a very traditional sect within the Black Spiral Dancers' ranks. Others become deeply ashamed of their

former heritage, and may resort to stalking Irish, Welsh and Scottish humans — Northern Ireland is a particularly popular hunting ground.

• **Get of Fenris:** Why does violence never seem to fully satisfy? The Get are a bestial tribe, one filled with rage and bloodlust. Those who succumb to Frenzy a little too often feel the call of the Wyrm deep within their souls. It's a horrid revelation. A Get begins his life thinking that he can kill all of the Wyrm spirits that torment him, but as his need for violence grows, the taint of the Wyrm within him also grows stronger. Then the need for violence increases, and the cycle repeats itself....

Once a Get submits to the Shattered Labyrinth, his shame is gone. He can experience ecstatic bouts of ultraviolence with no regrets. Ultimate freedom is his. He has accepted his true self and is no longer fettered by moral doubts. Former members of this tribe treasure pain in all its forms, running the gamut from sado-masochistic genius to philias for victimization and psychotic mutilation. Life becomes one thrill kill after another.

• **Glass Walkers:** Both the Garou Nation and the Black Spiral Dancers agree on this point: The Glass Walkers are an abomination. Unable to fully embrace either the Wyld or the Wyrm, they thrive in cities that choke both forces of the Triat. Nonetheless, their status as *urrah* among the Garou allows them to consider allies no sane wolf would ever choose. Pentex constantly sends out headhunters to recruit Glass Walkers. As the name suggests, if they can't convince a Garou to go through "employee orientation" in the Spiral Labyrinth, they'll return with his head instead.

After their rebirth, Glass Walkers act as very knowledgeable spiritual consultants regarding the spirits of the Weaver. Some become raging technophobes, displaying their anarchistic tendencies in all-out assaults against the evils of technology. Obsession-compulsion and mechanophilia are other common dementias.

• **Red Talons:** The Garou Nation denies lupus werewolves a chance to fully indulge in their bestial natures. The leaders of the Garou Nation endlessly pursue pointless debate —much like the humans they emulate—even as the world is destroyed. Yet as we all know, the real problem with the world is with the humans. Red Talons who can't hold their patience any longer give in to absolute and unquestionable hatred. Once their hearts break under the strain of so much rage, they begin their descent into the Shattered Labyrinth.

When a Red Talon's mind has been freed by the Black Spiral, he may dream of the height of the Impergium. Remember when humans knew their place? When a human who wandered a little to far from his village wound up with his eviscerated organs hanging from a tree? Remember the joys of savaging human flesh? Dementias for former members of this tribe include fetishes for various human body parts, brutal versions of bestiality, and a hankering for "the other, *other* white meat." Misomania is also a favored madness, as Abhorra has great plans for the former members of this tribe.

• **Shadow Lords:** False pride and lust for power are the Lords' greatest weaknesses. Shadow Lords seem to think they can play both ends against the middle, gaining vast power by meddling in occult practices, then using them to seize control of the Garou Nation. When will they learn? No doubt it'll be as soon as they summon up something they can't put down.

Shadow Lords who have walked the Spiral usually either rise to positions of authority quickly or kneel before powers that are far greater than anything they've ever imagined. Hakaken (He Who Is the Heart of Fear) has gathered entire packs of Shadow Lords to do his bidding. Sykora and Kirijama also recruit elite Shadow Lords. Paranoia and delusions of grandeur are common dementias.

• **Silent Striders:** The members of this tribe are known for traveling through the most dangerous places of the physical world and the spirit realms. They are especially familiar with the lands of the dead. Why, then, do they resist the most challenging journey of all? There are many paths leading to the center of the Shattered Labyrinth, and not all of them originate at the Temple Obscura. Many times, a Silent Strider who has ventured a little too far into the underworld realizes in horror that he's arrived at the threshold of the First Circle. The despair in his soul has shown him the way. By then, it's too late.

Fallen Silent Striders become utter masters of the realms of Malfeas and the Stygian depths. The hidden tunnels connecting the Black Spirals' Pits are vaster than the Garou ever imagined; learning their intricacies is a distinct honor. The insight granted by the Wyrm aids them in communicating with horrid things that would drive a saner Garou into fits of frenzy. As their price for this knowledge, they often lose their ability to obey the moral strictures of the physical world. Expect to see former members of this tribe adapting odious habits that are fully acceptable in the underworld, but regarded as shockingly grotesque in the human world.

• **Silver Fangs:** The so-called "nobility of the Garou" are already close enough to corruption as it is. It doesn't take much to push one over the edge. If only they'd realize that the madness they already experience is a sign of their Wyrm-taint. As a Silver Fang slides towards corruption, he begins to doubt the purity of his past, remembering the most shocking details of his Past Lives.

Once Silver Fangs have passed through the Shattered Labyrinth, many are granted freedom from guilt. Amnesia is one common dementia, allowing the reborn Black Spiral to be forgiven of all his past sins. Others gain delusions of grandeur, rationalizing their fall as the way to lead the Black Spirals to a glorious victory during the Apocalypse. Multiple personalities and delusional Past Lives are other common results of transmogrification. ("Don't you remember what you *really* did during Caligula's reign?")

• **Stargazers:** Stargazers have so much wisdom and learning, yet often, it leads to nothing. While pursuing the



mysteries of the universe, these ascetics often let their crude physical lives deteriorate. Some still pursue the greatest mystery of all: What is the true nature of the Wyrm? How can the balance of the world be restored? The Wyrm is willing to provide answers, but only for the price of one's soul.

Stargazers who return from the Black Spiral often give up on finding revelations through calm reason. Instead, they reject external thought in favor of becoming one with their actions—usually violence or the delusions brought on by insanity. If you've had enough of this "lotus blossom" crap, you should rip your enemy's heart out! Others continue their path of meditation, seeking revelations that are only offered by the Wyrm. A few develop new philosophies in service to Dark Powers; the greatest of these become minor messianic figures.

• **Uktena:** The members of this tribe preserve ancient traditions from throughout the world, including many occult traditions. Unfortunately, human civilization is encroaching on the many homelands they once protected. How much would an Uktena give up to purchase freedom for the members of his tribe? Is sanity too much to ask? If an Uktena has made one bargain too many with the dark powers his tribe studies, it's possible for him to lose his mind and give in to the evil he hasn't admitted to serving.

Fallen Uktena quickly gain knowledge regarding the spirits of the Wyrm, the servitors of Oblivion, and the demonic allies of the Nephandi. They easily submit to whatever humiliating display of obeisance that is required. A penchant for live sacrifice, scarification, self-mutilation or torture can quickly become a philia. Another common dementia is panzaism, the belief that supernatural influence is everywhere, and that only the true occultist can easily command it.

• **Wendigo:** The further a Wendigo wanders from his tribal homelands, the easier it is for him to fall prey to self-doubt and introspection. On a long winter night, whistling arctic winds call to the depths of his soul. Fallen Wendigo often come to resent their former alliances, changing their focus from defending their lands to using their knowledge of the local defenders to the Wyrm's advantage. Others have fallen into reverence for the lost Eater-of-Souls, a cannibal spirit greater than even Great Wendigo himself. And a few have had dreams of ancient mysteries buried in the depths of Antarctica, following the call of another great Black Spiral migration....

The Others

Ask a Black Spiral about his allies, and he'll tell you about their weaknesses. The unholy alliance between such diverse societies as the Sabbat, Pentex, the Unseelie and the Nephandi doesn't work as well as you might think it does. Subtle differences of philosophy tear these unions apart. The three Heads of the Hydra don't coordinate their actions. Why should the Wyrm's servitors?

Bridge-in-Brooklyn, Philodox of the Black Spirals, speaks:

Psst! Hey, cub! Yeah, you! C'mere, I've got something for ya... Listen, if your Hive plans on hooking up with other servants the Wyrm, there's a few precautions you should take. They may be corrupt, but that don't mean they're stupid. I'll show you the ropes, kid, but you're gonna owe me one...

• **The Sabbat** — *Watch these guys. They've got similar goals and a healthy attitude toward the Final Battle, but if they had their way, they'd probably want to put the Black Spirals on a short leash. Well, kid, we're not their watchdogs. We're their equals, even if they don't treat us like such. They don't fully understand the Wyrm; instead, they blather on about destroying their elders to gain more power. They're convinced that Gehenna will wipe their kind from the face of the Earth unless the oldest vampires are destroyed. Guess what happens then? I ain't buying it. We're going to have to show them we won't be their slaves if they win their Jyhad.*

• **The Unseelie** — *These saps are temporary allies at best, and not much use in a fight. Unseelie have an annoying habit of changing their loyalties, especially if they lead others. The warriors of the Shadow Court are promising, though. They understand that the Apocalypse isn't the end, but only the beginning. The seem to think that their people will eventually rule over a world of "Endless Winter." Let them believe it, as long as they're willing to die in battle.*

• **Nephandi** — *Never trust anyone who spells magic with a "k." These guys want "POWER!" the quick and dirty way, and they'll screw over anyone to get it. Once a Nephandus gets what he wants, he doesn't need you anymore. (Rule Number One from the Diabolical Cultist Handbook: After summoning up something nasty, stand behind someone else.) If you've gotta ally with one of these guys, time your betrayal carefully. Shove the sacrificial knife in his gut before he does the same to you.*

• **Spectres** — *If only we had their power — they're what our tribe really should be. The Garou outnumber us ten to one. Overpopulating our Hives to build bigger armies just won't work. We should act like these unseen spirits. We should drift into the midst of Garou society and seduce them with lies. Eventually, we'll sell them on severing all their ties to the human world and serving ultimate darkness. One word of warning is necessary, though — we serve gods with great plans for the world. Spectres serve nothing but Oblivion. Though their methods are wondrous, don't be fooled into joining them on their damn fool nihilistic crusades.*

Corruption Spreads Throughout the World

As human explorers expanded the boundaries of human civilization, the Black Spirals infested the lands they conquered. Wherever men built, Spirals destroyed. Through centuries of ecoterror, spiritual warfare, abduction, rape and conquest, the Black Spirals have spread their corruption throughout the known world.

The United States

The Black Spiral tribe is firmly entrenched in the good old U.S. of A. They've built a system of intricate tunnel systems through several corrupt major cities, especially those held by the Sabbat. They're strongest along the East Coast, especially in New York and Philadelphia. Other major Hives are hidden in West Virginia, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. Their most unusual staging ground is the Trinity Hive, a Pit maintained on radioactive fields where atom bombs were once tested.

Canada

Wendigo in other parts of the world are easier to isolate and corrupt, but in Canada, their efforts have held the Black Spirals' advance at bay. Nonetheless, the Black Spirals have expanded their influence throughout the Dominion, exploiting wolf hunts, logging concerns, and Sabbat crusades. Massive Hives are hidden in Quebec, Montreal, Ontario, Toronto and Newfoundland.

Mexico

For decades, the Wyrm has kept this nation tightly wrapped within its coils. The Spirals account for nearly a quarter of the Garou population in Mexico. Deep under the Earth, they've also found some of the most powerful Wyrm-spirits imaginable. Mexico City is a festering example of what happens when the Sabbat and Black Spiral Dancers coordinate their efforts. Though Sam Haight made his last stand there, legions of darkness still control the city.

South America

The Amazon remains the most important battlefield in the war for South America. Though the media hype surrounding the destruction of the rainforests has diminished, the Black Spirals believe they've already won their War in the Amazon. While more Bastet are beginning to side with the Garou Nation each day, they still can't drive the Wyrm from the Amazon rainforest.

Rio de Janeiro is another major battlefield in South America and the slums of several South American cities are quickly becoming spawning pools for Black Spiral Kinfolk. The strangest allies of the South American Black Spiral Dancers, however, are the members of the Thule Society, a network of Third Reich survivors in Argentina. Rumors of Pentex preserving Hitler's brain, however, are ludicrously exaggerated.

Europe

The Old Country is infested with ancient evils. In the Balkans, the Black Spirals are particularly strong, having capitalized on the Shadow Lords' divisiveness. In particular, the atrocities committed in Bosnia and Serbia nourish the Wyrm's hunger for hatred and destruction. In Germany, the war between the Get of Fenris and Black Spirals in the Black Forest continues, but the infamous European Green Knights have become little more than an anachronism. A counter-group, the Knights of Orange, have suborned their environmentalist allies.

Russia

Though *glasnost* has allowed this nation to interact more with the rest of the world, the Shadow Curtain surrounding Baba Yaga's kingdom remains strong. As Russian Black Spirals remain isolated from the rest of their tribe, rumors continue of Silver Fangs with tainted blood undergoing rebirth in the Shattered Labyrinth. In addition, the brilliant success of the MIR Space Station caern has led to a hidden facility in the Ukraine where Black Spirals are planning new schemes for space.

Africa

Recent victories have allowed the Black Spirals to spread further into Africa than ever before. The rapid extinction of endangered species of African wildlife, the spread of the delightful Ebola virus, widespread poaching, and the continuation of race hatred are all furthered the Wyrm's causes. Granted, political changes in South Africa and various supernatural resistance in Egypt have both slowed the advance of the Wyrm, but the number of Hives on this continent is slowly increasing.

Asia

The *shen* of the Far East have maintained their secret societies for centuries, faithfully resisting the Black Spiral's crusades. Eastern attitudes regarding the Wyrm — particularly the belief in maintaining a balance between yin and yang forces — have kept the Kuei-jin and their allies from falling prey to the Black Spirals' lies throughout the 20th century. The force of the Wyrm is present in East Asia, but Eastern philosophies have kept it under control. Even the Wyrm-tainted Goblin Spiders refuse to link arms with the Dancers, preferring a more "refined" approach to conquest.

Now, however, increasing tension between the East and West has distracted the Changing Breeds of the East from their common enemies. With conflict comes hatred and prejudice, allowing corruption to take root. In addition, economic turmoil in East Asia, especially Hong Kong and the Philippines, has given Pentex the opportunity to seize power quickly.

One other nation is worthy of mention here: Japan. The Japanese Shadow Lords and Glass Walkers are at each other's throats. The *shen* of that nation cannot offer an organized resistance to the Wyrm's advance. Though Hives typically do not operate in Japan without Pentex' approval, the Consultants Camp is very powerful in the largest cities.

Australia

While the tribe is strong in Australia, there are still unsolved mysteries in the Outback that threaten them. Though they still rejoice at their brilliant scheme to force the Red Talons into destroying the Bunyip, the Wyld is gaining some peculiar new strength. Strange things are afoot in the Dreamtime, and several Black Spirals have already perished on visionquests to determine the cause.

Antarctica

Something ancient lies dreaming beneath the ice of Antarctica. A vast power is summoning dozens of Hives of Black Spirals to the most desolate place on Earth. Visions of a vast underground city haunt the dreams of Gaia's bastards. Far from the watchful eyes of human civilization, a few werewolves are starting to colonize this barren wasteland. Who knows what secrets lie beneath the ice, waiting to be uncovered?

The Path of the Black Spiral

Since the days of the Roman Empire, werewolves have "walked the spiral" to commune with the spirits of the Wyrm. This spirit quest is usually performed in the Shattered Labyrinth. The largest entrance to the maze is a great inlaid spiral on the floor of a Gothic cathedral known as the Temple Obscura. Inside, the stench of sulfur and monoxides is overpowering. Rows of sickly green balefire lamps ceaselessly churn lava and effluvium. On the floor of the cathedral is an intricate, interweaving pattern stained in blood.

As a dancer weaves back and forth along this elaborate path, he enters a trance, one that gives him visions of an insane realm stranded outside of space and time. The valiant cultist then pursues a visionquest towards the center of the labyrinth. His Black Spiral Dance allows him to permeate the membranes that separate the concentric circles of this realm. As the initiate pursues the mysteries of his order, he follows an Umbral journey through a series of underground tunnels. His ordeal tests his inner wisdom and answers his doubts with madness.

The Nine Circles

Theurges speak of nine thresholds of wisdom in the Spiral Labyrinth, nine concentric circles of unspeakable ordeals. Each circle offers a test that a dancer must overcome before she can advance in Rank. If she is particularly ingenious, she may even learn a deviant Gift from the servitors of the labyrinth. The experience often resembles a little story, a surreal vignette set within endless corridors and presented by a host of treacherous Umbral spirits.

The First Circle: The Dance of Insight

Before a werewolf can be recognized as a true Black Spiral Dancer, she must survive this first ordeal. The experience always begins in darkness. The dancer then receives visions representing dark truths within her soul. Often, these secrets have been hidden for the sake of the initiate's sanity. Blasphemous revelations offer the promise of further understanding, but the dancer must first overcome the limitations of her own mind. If she is weak, the experience shatters her sanity.

The Second Circle: The Dance of Rage

In the second circle, the initiate learns the strength of her anger, allowing her to indulge in violence as no mere Garou ever could. A dancer who enters this portion of the labyrinth is beset by overwhelming problems. The only way to overcome them is through frenzy. Utter psychotic ultraviolence is the only path leading out of this circle, encouraging the Black Spiral to enact any act of violation or destruction to achieve her goals.

The Third Circle: The Dance of Endurance

In this realm, the dancer must endure tests of physical and mental anguish. The experience is often a twisted version of a test the dancer underwent in her previous life, ultimately showing that she is too strong to fall before such opposition now. Physical anguish results in a higher tolerance to pollution, radiation, or sheer pain. Mental anguish allows communion with the Urge Wyrms, increasing understanding of the spirits' tactics so that the dancer may use similar methods against her foes.

The Fourth Circle: The Dance of Cunning

The guardian at the threshold of the fourth circle is a treacherous Bane, one who must be misled in a test of wits before the dancer can pass. This draws upon the dancer's Gnosis, requiring her to twist wisdom into false logic. Surviving this test allows the initiate to see through the deception of others, especially the spirits who serve the Wyrm. The Dance of Cunning may also involve realizing the truth behind a great lie.

The Fifth Circle: The Dance of Combat

Before crossing the threshold of the fifth circle, the petitioner must overcome a legion of foes. This ordeal is more of a symbolic epic battle than a blow-by-blow brawl. Sometimes the dancer tries to impress her tormentors by using violence in the most imaginable ways possible. If she can overwhelm these enemies without betraying her fear, her prowess in battle increases dramatically.

The Inner Mysteries

Only a truly gifted werewolf can overcome one of the four Inner Mysteries. As part of this, very few Black Spirals are recognized as being above the Fifth Rank. The Dance of Corruption, Dance of Loyalty, Dance of Paradox and Dance of Deceit are pursued in the four innermost circles. In the history of their order, only two Black Spirals have allegedly crossed the threshold of the final circle. The first, Hakaken, was invested by the Wyrm as an Incarna. The second is rumored to be Number Two, the former ruler of Malfeas.

The Sixth Circle: The Dance of Corruption

The dancer's sense of self is distorted through vast physical mutations and mental schisms. The most secure aspects of her identity must be systematically destroyed, rebuilding the Spiral into a reflection of the Wyrm. Those who conquer this circle often undergo radical personality shifts. The journey may even resemble a little Kafkaesque story, one where the dancer realizes that a seemingly sane part of reality has become utterly corrupted.

The Seventh Circle: The Dance of Loyalty

The dancer is presented with a situation where he must show how willing she is to sacrifice for the sake of the Wyrm. She may have overcome her greatest taboo, sacrifice her greatest love, or face her greatest fear. Often, the dancer sacrifices a link to the sane, human world, one that she has kept hidden all this time.

The Eight Circle: The Dance of Paradox

Very few pass this test, wherein the dancer must overcome a riddle contest posed by the Bane of Enigmas. Upon returning, any understanding the dancer gained during the test is lost. No one who has survived this test has ever been able to repeat the mysteries discussed, though many suspect that it has something to do with the true nature of the Triat.

The Ninth Circle: The Dance of Deceit

The dancer must conquer a manifestation of the Wyrm, destroying it in single combat. Some believe that in the ninth circle, the dancer must briefly become the Wyrm, and that the revelation of the Wyrm's true form is quickly forgotten. Regardless, only two Black Spiral Dancers have ever passed this ordeal; the rest were presumably devoured.

Bane Totems

And he asked him, "What is thy name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion: for we are many."

— Mark 5:9

The forces of corruption are legion, a spiritual army arrayed behind the three Hydra heads of the Triatic Wyrm: the Beast-of-War, the Eater-of-Souls, and the Defiler Wyrm. After a Black Spiral completes his Rite of Passage, he must accept one of these "three Heads of the Hydra" as his personal totem. This is the first step towards true spiritual decay.

The next step is to ally with a pack. Black Spiral Dancers have their own rituals for establishing this allegiance, although they are notably more perverse than Garou equivalents. The pack then chooses a Bane totem to serve as their spiritual focus. It is entirely possible for a Dancer to have a personal totem that conflicts with the pack's choice of a Bane totem.

Once the pack members have chosen their communal corrupter, they are referred to as "bastards" of that totem. The choice of Bane totem also establishes what kind of pack the Dancers serve. There are three varieties of spiritual guardians: totems of Cunning, totems of Corruption, and totems of Strength. Traditional Black Spirals refer to this spirit as a "Saulah," a phonetic corruption of the name "Samladh," the original incarnation of Lion.

The next step is the Rite of Alliance. The pack must work together on their first, great infamous task in service to the Wyrm. During this initiation, the servitors of this cult receive mystical insights, often through visions and illusory voices. Black Spiral Ragabash call this quest a "Road Trip." Galliards retell tales of the most infamous quests in an epic poem entitled *Fear and Loathing* (the first journey involved the pursuit of Raoul King, a renowned Gangrel "gonzo" journalist). The type of Bane-totem — Cunning, Corruption or Strength — influences the type of journey required.

Totems of Cunning

These Bane totems serve the Defiler Wyrm. If a pack chooses a Totem of Cunning, it's a sure sign that outright violence is not their first choice of action for resolving a problem. Contrary to the stereotype of Black Spirals being "cannonfodder" eager to die in battle, these bastards are masters of false logic and deceit. Rites of Alliance in service to these totems typically involve the performance of a

seemingly impossible quest. A great betrayal, incredible theft or brilliant abduction is often involved.

The Whippoorwill

Background Cost: 6

In the early days of the world, this totem chose to reshape itself in the image of the whippoorwill, a nocturnal bird of legendary insight. According to one legend, whippoorwills are drawn to places where mortals are about to die. Singing in chorus, they await the moment when the victim's soul is about to cross over into the underworld. When the birds' prey dies, the flock swoops down and consumes the unfortunate mortal's soul.

In a similar manner, the Whippoorwill totem is able to find souls that are weak enough for the Wyrm to devour or suborn. This totem is especially good at sensing Garou who are losing their internal battle against Harano. Once a werewolf has begun to question his own values, a spirit guided by this Bane-totem advises them on how they will bring their quarry into the Shattered Labyrinth. This may involve a Whippoorwill-spirit, just as Garou rely on "Kin-Fetch" spirits watch over werewolves who are ready for their first Change.

Traits: Another benefit granted by this totem is the ability to imitate all known species of birds. Whippoorwill's bastards do not need to use Howls to signal their brethren. Instead, perverse variations of bird songs suffice. All followers of Whippoorwill also gain an additional two dice for any Perception rolls that involve spotting enemies at night.

Ban: The Whippoorwill demands a moot in its honor twice a year. This often involves the sacrifice of a spiritually wounded human or Garou to the Black Spiral Labyrinth. In addition, its bastards may not harm birds of any kind. Torturing any predator that hunts birds, and whippoorwills in particular, pleases it.

Kirijama, "The Hidden Foe"

Background Cost: 7

This hidden enemy can only materialize in the physical world as a faint shadow. By manipulating darkness, Kirijama has powers that allow him to deceive his enemies into fighting imaginary foes. More commonly, he appears in the Umbra in a form just beyond the senses of the Garou. Many of Gaia's warriors believe Kirijama was destroyed long ago, but the Gifts he provides to his bastards prove otherwise.

When a pack serving Kirijama attends a Black Spiral Moot, they prefer to remain hidden, appearing as a series of shadows on a nearby wall. Only one member of the pack may whisper on behalf of the pack at any given time. Others see the shadowy form take on different guises as the different auspices of the pack speak.

Traits: Kirijama's bastards gain an additional die to any Stealth Dice Pool. They also learn the Gift: Invisibility, though servants of Kirijama can cast false shadows or leave false clues regarding their presence as part of this Gift. They typically prefer intrigue and subterfuge to crude displays of physical power.

Ban: Kirijama's minions can never become famous, even within their own Hives. This makes it difficult for them to rise in rank, but typically, they recognize Renown only among their own kind. Their achievements are only recognized immediately before a Rite of Transmogrification.

Totems of Strength

When reason fails, force prevails. Totems of Strength serve the Beast-of-War, and for these bastards, too much violence is never enough. Though packs arrayed behind this Bane-totem are capable of subterfuge and cunning, they excel once they're able to indulge in unbridled bloodlust. Rites of Alliance in service to these totems often involve the victimization of innocents at their climax. Wrecking a school bus, killing mallwalkers is in a shopping mall, or abducting a suburban family tests the limits of the Delirium, but can still act as the finishing touch of this type of misadventure.

The Green Dragon

Background Cost: 9

The Green Dragon is a symbol of pure power, an absolute monster that destroys its enemies through overwhelming force. When its anger is released, its green fiery breath scorches the Earth. Bastards who personally serve the Beast-of-War are accorded more respect when serving this Bane-totem.

Traits: The Dragon's bastards can emulate their guardian's greatest power. A servant of the Green Dragon can spew forth toxic flames three times a day. Any victim within six feet of a vomiting servitor can attempt to dodge the attack — this requires at least four successes on a Dexterity + Dodge roll. (Note that if several packmates attack the same victim at once, the difficulty for the target's Dodge roll increases by 1 for each additional attack!) The inferno inflicts two Health Levels of damage if it strikes successfully and is as hot as a chemical fire (difficulty 9 to soak). In addition, the Dragon's bastards gain an additional die to soak damage from any source. Other Dancers revere the Dragon's bastards as warriors among warriors.

Ban: This totem abhors cowardice. Any of his bastards who run from a fight lose the ability to vomit flame for a full day. In addition, the Green Dragon may instruct other Black Spirals to hunt the coward down and torture him for his failure.

The Bat

Background Cost: 4

The Bat soars freely through the Shattered Labyrinth, mocking those who fail to find their way. The night is hers,

and she uses her advantage in darkness to torment those who are lost. She instills terror in friend and foe alike. Her bastards like to swoop down out of the night, attacking with the element of surprise.

Traits: Bat grants an additional die to all Intimidation, Stealth and Survival rolls. She also teaches her bastards two Gifts: Patagia and Ears of the Bat. Though the dancers she leads astray find crossing the Second and Third Circles of the Shattered Labyrinth more difficult, she later rewards them by lowering the difficulty of all Gifts involving flight or sonar by two.

Ban: The pack must breed a small family of bats. When these lovelies feed, the werewolves must also devour the insects they have gathered. Bat's bastards are also fanatic about preserving the Veil. Without it, their element of surprise is lost.

Hakaken, "The Heart of Fear"

Background Cost: 5

Hakaken was a great Shadow Lord Ahroun, a villain corrupted by his own overwhelming pride. For over forty years, he led his tribe to victory against the Wyrm time and time again. His overconfidence eventually led him to believe he could overcome the Shattered Labyrinth itself. According to this legend, he danced to the threshold of the sixth circle during his first transmogrification. He later advanced to the center of the abyss. Once he survived this final quest, the experience destroyed his sanity so thoroughly that he immediately became an Incarna.

Traits: Hakaken's Gifts rely upon the ability to bestow absolute fear and the madness caused by it. His greatest weapons are paranoia and phobias. Thus, his bastards add one die to their Intimidation Dice Pools. They also learn the Gifts: True Fear and Icy Chill of Despair. Some cults of Shadow Lords secretly worship him, believing that he has further powers to bestow.

Ban: Hakaken's bastards must instill fear into their foes before slaying them.

Totems of Corruption

These Incarna of the Defiler Wyrm revel in ultimate foulness. The bastards who serve them aren't gloryhounds; instead, they delight in infamy. The Delirium distorts their most extreme activities; humans only remember them as horrid atrocities. Rites of Alliance serving corruption are not easily forgotten. Infesting a forest with toxic waste, confusing the police with cryptic serial killings, or establishing a remarkable cult are all examples of infamous acts.

The Dark Fungus, "His Mycological Majesty"

Background Cost: 3

Black Spirals burrow labyrinthine tunnels beneath the surface of the world. The Umbral reflections of these spirit paths are even more treacherous. Damp corridors become farming grounds for the servitors of the Dark Fungus. The Plant-spirits that serve His Mycological Majesty hover over mushrooms and lichen, steeping them in phosphorescent bacteria and psychoactive chemicals.

Only bastards of the Fungus may partake of this holy sacrament. Eating fungal wonders grants great insight, but at a further cost to one's sanity. When ingesting dark fungus, the dancer must make a Stamina roll; the difficulty is (10 - the ingestor's Gnosis). Failing the roll means the dancer gains a Derangement and a hell of a bad trip; success reveals further mysteries of the underworld; five successes bestows the Gift: Pulse of the Invisible.

Traits: Bastards of the Fungus gain one die to their Enigmas and Occult Dice Pools. They also typically carry a stash that would amaze the protagonist of a Carlos Casteneda book.

Ban: Servants of this Plant Incarna must tend to growing mushrooms wherever they find them.

Relshab, "The Faceless Eater"

Background Cost: 10

This Bane-totem manifests as a huge anthropomorphic, hermaphroditic form covered in rolls of flesh. Its ponderous bulk crawls and ripples in sickly waves. Its face is obscured by thick, callipigenously roiling layers of fat. Relshab's right arm is a tube through which it can ingest any substance. Digested substances are boiled within a surging stomach furnace. The palm of its left hand holds a chittering maw of canine teeth, through which it utters demands for more flesh. Though this may seem repulsive, it pales compared to Relshab's sexual activities, in which dozens of servitors attend to its unspeakable desires.

Traits: A servant of Relshab can "eat" portions of a victim's soul, lowering Traits through the Gift: Whelp Body. If the bastard can humiliate her victim through perverse sexual activity, she can reduce his Willpower instead. The bastard can also use a point of Gnosis to consume anything smaller than their her head: severed body parts, steel, toxic waste... anything. Bastards who serve Relshab especially well receive the Fomori Gift: Stomach Pumper.

Ban: Relshab's servitors greedily consume any edible substance placed before them. They have a fierce hatred of Unseelie redcaps, and must fight them on sight.

G'louogh, "The Dance of Corruption" or "The Demon Goddess"

Background Cost: 15

G'louogh manifests as an ever-changing ball of shifting energy. She continually forms and reforms vile horrors from her anatomy. Some worship her as a tainted fertility goddess, claiming that she is the "mother" of all Banes. Cultists who revere her speak of her never-ending blasphemous dance, one in which she spawns an army of foulness at the center of the universe. The Demon Goddess can easily spawn Jagglings

and Gafflings by "budding" them off her twisted form. The most powerful of her spawn are the infamous Nexus Crawlers, guardians who eagerly enact their mother's bidding. The very fabric of time and space can be preserved or corrupted by their deeds.

Traits: G'louough grants its bastards the Gift: Fabric of the Mind.

Ban: The bastards of the Demon Goddess must be capricious in their behavior; they can never support the status quo. G'louogh also asks for a sacrifice of a mutilated body part once each month. If the pack can't find a victim to chop up, G'louough will choose one randomly from the Hive.

Gifts

All these will I give you if you fall down and worship me.
— Matthew 4:9

Just as Garou learn Gifts from Umbral spirits, Black Spiral Dancers can learn dark powers from the spirits of the Wyrm. The most effective place to develop these talents is, of course, the Spiral Labyrinth. When overcoming one of the nine ordeals, the initiate may learn the Gift as a way of surviving her visionquest.

Black Spiral Dancers possess Gifts according to breed, tribe and auspice as normal, although certain Gifts (largely those that draw aid from Gaian spirits, or are taught exclusively by Gaian spirits) are useless to the Dancers. For instance, a Dancer Theurge can of course learn Spirit Speech, although Mother's Touch is unlikely. Storytellers should be creative in altering certain Gifts, however; a Iupus Dancer who invokes a sinister version of the Gift: Song of the Great Beast should receive an appropriately creative response (which should be good for a reaction from the players).

In addition to the talents listed below (and those listed in **Werewolf**, pg. 253), Black Spiral Dancers can learn the following Gifts: Resist Toxin (Level One), Shroud (Level One) and Doppelganger (Level Three).

• **Bane Protector (Level One)** — The Black Spiral can summon Banes to aid her. Before these servitors can act, the Black Spiral must convince them of her intent. Her actions must be in the best interest of the Wyrm. The servitors can fight for her, but will not allow themselves to be bound or destroyed. The spirits will also try to arrange a bargain, agreeing to help the summoner if she performs a service (or sacrifice) for them afterward.

This Gift is taught in the first circle of the Spiral Labyrinth. The dancer may find a way to deceive the Banes that torment her, convincing them to aid her instead. Alternatively, a Black Spiral who performs an especially difficult task for a Bane-totem might receive this knowledge in return.

System: Use of Gift burns a point of Gnosis and requires a Manipulation + Leadership roll.

• **Wyrm Hide (Level Two)** — The Black Spiral hardens his skin into an leathery hide, covering himself with pustulent, discolored flesh. If he's actually wounded, the skin around the wound takes on a bluish tinge.

The second circle of the labyrinth requires a Dance of Rage. Sometimes the initiate is wounded repeatedly until he is forced into an unrelenting fury. If he survives, he may then discover how to harden his spirit against such assaults, developing his Wyrm Hide in the process. This Gift may also be taught by a Dratossi.

System: The Dancer expends a point of Rage by stamping about and taunting his foes. His mystically thickened hide gives him an additional three dice for soaking damage; these bonuses last for the scene.

• **Dagger of the Mind (Level Three)** — The Black Spiral can command a Bane to seed a particularly dark emotion in the mind of his prey. The emotion is chosen when the Gift is learned (e.g., paranoia, despair, remorse, lust; "rage" is not an option, for obvious reasons). The Black Spiral calls upon the proper Urge Wyrm; one of its servitors then evokes the proper emotion from the victim.

Within the Shattered Labyrinth, the Dance of Endurance tests the limits of a dancer's self-control. If the initiate survives, one of the Urge Wyrms will show him how to inflict similar tortures on his enemies. Curiously enough, Stormcrows have learned this Gift; they guard their knowledge carefully. Theurges often use this rite to weaken their enemies before battle; Philodox use it to give themselves an edge in negotiations.

System: The invocation burns a point of Gnosis and requires a Gnosis roll; the victim can resist this with a contested Willpower roll. Unless the victim can overcome his emotional struggle, he succumbs to the desired emotion for a full hour. For an additional Willpower point, the temporary dementia is accompanied by a brief, revelatory illusion.

• **Unseelie Faerie Kin (Level Three)** — The Black Spiral can call upon changelings, just as Fianna do, but his fae allies will be members of the Unseelie Court.

This Gift cannot be learned in the Shattered Labyrinth. However, an Unseelie noble or Shadow Court instigator may offer to teach the proper rituals of this Gift in return for a quest or geas. In some instances, the changeling may also learn to summon the Black Spiral's pack!

System: As with the Gift: Bane Protector, the petitioner must explain his dilemma, usually in rhyme or dance (in some cases, this performance is particularly violent or destructive). He must then burn a point of Gnosis and roll Manipulation + Leadership.

• **Beautiful Lie (Level Four)** — When the Veil is endangered, Gaia protects the minds of the innocent with the Delirium, granting false memories and delusions. Since Black Spirals commit particularly grisly crimes, they can use this Gift to channel the Delirium, producing further misdirection or even summoning false evidence to cover up their activities.

Spirits serving Kirijama and Hakaken are both proficient in this sort of activity. They typically employ subterfuge to deceive those they wish to suborn. If a werewolf

recruits enough servants for their schemes, this Gift may be taught in exchange. A Black Spiral with a particularly ingenious Dance of Cunning may also learn this Gift in the Shattered Labyrinth, especially if he exposes (or perpetuates) a particularly brilliant lie.

System: A Black Spiral observing a particularly unsubtle crime may attempt to cover it up with a "beautiful lie." He begins to chant a story of what humans nearby are actually seeing. The Dancer spends one point of Gnosis and rolls Wits + Subterfuge; the difficulty is 6 (as long as the story is vaguely plausible). Mass delusions follow, and ephemeral evidence (e.g. animal footprints, a bloody chainsaw, saliva from a rabid dog) remains for an entire hour to obfuscate the truth.

• **Call Elemental (Level Four)** — As the Uktena Gift; however, the Dancer's call is always answered by a Wyrm elemental, such as a Furmling or Hogling.

• **Open Wounds (Level Four)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift.

• **Totem Form (Level Five)** — This powerful Gift allows a Black Spiral to take on the appearance — and much of the power — of her pack's Bane totem. For instance, a Dancer sworn to the Dark Fungus might sprout slime molds and toadstools in place of fur, radiating a cloud of hallucinogenic spores, while a bastard of the Green Dragon might swell into a draconian war form the equal of any Mokolé.

This Gift is only taught by the pack's totem spirit, and only to the Dancer who shows the most promise. Some packmates have been known to horribly maim one another in the process of proving who is worthy to learn this Gift.

System: The Dancer must spend a point of Willpower and roll Stamina + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7) to make the shift. It takes a full turn to transform, although the form lasts for the duration of the scene. The Storyteller must best adjudicate the appearance and abilities of the totem form; for instance, one of Hakaken's bastards might radiate fear so intense that opponents have to make Willpower rolls just to act against him, much less confront him. The results, of course, should always be impressive.

Ragabash Gifts

• **Touch of the Eel (Level Three)** — The Black Spiral Ragabash releases a current of electricity through conductive materials nearby. If he is touched in any way during the use of this talent, the assailant receives an even greater shock.

Only a Ragabash has the patience and deviance to learn this Gift. With the assistance of a servitor of its Bane-totem, the Black Spiral must capture an electricity elemental. In most urban environments, this may take several hours. The dancer then torments, taunts and tortures the spirit until it offers him this Gift. Alternatively, the Ragabash might have to survive a Dance of Endurance involving electricity.

System: The Gift burns one point of Rage. The resultant charge can carry up to 30 yards if transmitted through the proper conductor. At a distance, it does three dice of damage (difficulty 7 to soak); by touch, it does four dice.

Theurge Gifts

• **Blood Omen (Level Three)** — By examining the entrails of a freshly-killed creature, a Black Spiral Theurge can gain insights into a possible future. As expected, the vision is almost always tragic or violent.

A Theurge can receive this Gift during the Dance of Cunning. Sometimes this visionquest involves the dismemberment of the mystic, who watches the violation of her own body. This grants her insights into her true nature by an examination of her own internal organs.

System: This burns one point of Gnosis and requires an Intelligence + Enigmas roll; the difficulty depends on the type of creature used — 7 for a Garou, wolf or human, or 9 for any other warm-blooded creature. More successes will grant a clearer picture of the possible atrocity to come.

Philodox Gifts

• **Smell Fear (Level One)** — A Philodox employing this Gift can tell if anyone nearby is threatened by her, as well as the degree of her victim's fear.

In any arena of the Shattered Labyrinth, an initiate can experience the many subtle flavors and variations of fear. If he overcomes that terror, she can learn to inflict it on others. Spirits serving Hakaken and Sykora also know this Gift intimately... and teach it that way.

System: This requires a Perception + Empathy roll; the difficulty is equal to the target's Willpower. For every hour this sense is active, the Black Spiral loses one Gnosis, but as a side effect, she can also tell if anyone is using Sense Wyrm on her.

• **A Thousand Voices (Level Two)** — The Black Spiral Philodox can distort the sound of his own footsteps, creating a series of illusory noises. Instead of one werewolf, enemies will hear an entire pack. Howls, shadowy apparitions, footfalls and even illusory scents are all possible.

During the Dance of Rage, a dancer may learn this Gift as his anger multiplies many times over. Kirijama's servants also offer mastery of this talent.

System: For each point of Willpower the user currently possesses, one illusory ally can be created. The Storyteller should secretly roll Perception + Alertness for each witness present; the difficulty depends on the immediate surroundings (difficulty 4 in a dense forest; difficulty 9 on a vast plain). The Black Spiral using this Gift should remain hidden; once he is spotted, the Gift fails.

Galliard Gifts

• **Allies Below (Level Three)** — Howl, you crazy bastard! If you let forth a rousing yawp, the spirits of the Earth will answer you. Wyrm creatures far beneath the Earth's crust will cause minor tremors in the ground above them.

Although the terrible quakes caused by this Gift seem awful, they merely reflect the sort of test the Galliard must endure in the Shattered Labyrinth to learn it. The worst scenario is one in which the labyrinth collapses in on itself.

System: The extent of the damage inflicted depends on the amount of Gnosis channeled into the Galliard's "rousing yawp." One point of Gnosis causes a minor tremor, possibly throwing people to the ground. Three points can collapse underground tunnels, knock down trees, or open sinkholes. Five points can cause structural damage to a building, collapsing walls on anyone within several feet of it. In each case, victims should roll Dexterity + Dodge or Dexterity + Athletics to stay on their feet, escape from collapsing buildings, or dive for cover.

Ahroun Gifts

• **Horns of the Impaler (Level Two)** — This talent endows the Black Spiral with a pair of spiraling, chitinous black-and-green horns. Usually, they're worn as antlers, although some Dancers have learned to protrude them from other parts of their bodies.

This Gift is usually taught by a Dratossi. A Bane inside a physiologically freakish fomor might also bless an ally with this talent.

System: This appendage inflicts the same damage as a Bite attack; it can be used a maximum of twice each round of combat. A horned Black Spiral may instead choose to charge his enemies; this increases the amount of damage to Strength + 5 dice, but only one such charging attack can be made that round.

Black Spiral Rites

Rite of the Survivor

(Level One Punishment Rite)

This is one of the most dangerous rites a Black Spiral can learn. It is only bestowed by a spirit, Incarna or Black Spiral elder who has victimized the poor bastard in a particularly brutal manner. If the victim survives, she cannot recall what she experienced, but inherits this rite instead. The Black Spiral never realizes the source of her continuing pain, but still feels an overwhelming need to exact her frustrations on others. The survivor can then perform similar abuse on selectively chosen victims. The most common application of this ritual is during ceremonies of abduction and breeding.

System: While victimizing another living thing, the ritualist uses a point of Gnosis to erase her victim's memory of the event. She then channels the energies of the Delirium to construct an alternate memory. The torturous experience must continue for at least ten minutes. The survivor cannot remember how he was victimized, but still has glimpses of the experience. Unfortunately, the victim can burn a point of Willpower to dredge up a vivid glimpse of the horrific event. Ragabash call this dark pact "Our Little Secret."





Rite of the Sacred Tattoo

(Level Two Mystic Rite)

Through this rite, a Black Spiral Theurge may permanently mark a sacred tattoo on another dancer. This serves as more than mere decoration. The sigil forms a spiritual connect between the initiate and the Wyrmish spirit represented. The first tattoo is usually the Dancer's chosen head of the Hydra, displaying his personal totem; the second is often his pack's Bane-totem.

The recipient must make an important choice during the casting: Will the tattoo be visible or hidden? Visible tattoos are worn with pride by Dancers who have no desire to hide their true natures. Granted, the sigil may be concealed under clothing, but the Black Spiral knows that if he is captured, his clothing may be torn from his body to reveal signs of his dark alliances.

Hidden tattoos are inscribed by the tracery of a profane fetish. Though not immediately visible, these marks are revealed during the Rite of Woad. Sacred tattoos may also be used to inscribe patterns used in Gifts, showing the Dancer's mystical accomplishment. Alternatively, a series of glyphs can show the achievements that granted the dancer Renown — every scarified decoration brings back delightful memories.

System: The tattoo artist and the walking canvas each burn one Gnosis. The mystic then rolls Dexterity + Occult; frighteningly enough, the quality of the inscription depends on the number of successes. Since the marks are made on the initiate's very soul, a second roll is allowed if the first one scores less than three successes. The rite requires standard tattoo equipment, alcohol and appropriate dyes.

The Rite of Woad

(Level Three Mystic Rite)

The name of this rite is derived from the blue pigment once used in Pictish tattoos. That particular hue was intended to draw upon a mystic's deepest energies, showing his most sincere beliefs. Others apply the term to the blue warpaint worn by Scottish tribalists in battle. A Theurge casting this rite reveals the hidden Sacred Tattoos (see above) worn by a Black Spiral. Even if those present are wearing clothing, the sigils and glyphs become visible, glowing with an unnatural blue tinge.

The Wyrm's servitors must assent to the casting of this rite; it is by no means automatic. Thus, though some Garou may think that capturing a mystic and forcing him to enact the Rite of Woad may reveal all enemies present, the spirits may prevent this from occurring. The rite also has a curious

In Case It Needed to be Said

Black Spiral Dancers begin play with 3 Willpower. They cannot purchase the Pure Breed Background unless they buy all five dots. They aren't designed to be used as player characters, and we don't recommend that any but the most mature groups try roleplaying a group of them — these guys are monstrous even by the Red Talons' and Shadow Lords' standards. That said, you certainly can use them as player characters if that's the sort of one-off story you're interested in. Just remember that there's nothing "cool" about rape, serial murder or other such Dancer practices. Even in a fictional setting, that shit is sick — so treat it responsibly, okay?

effect on bastards of the Hidden Foe — their glyphs shine on the wall where their shadows are projected. As a side effect, the rite may also reverse the Doppelganger Gift, the Obfuscation of any vampires present, and so on (compare the number of success against the level of the Gift or Discipline used.)

When all hope of subtlety has been lost, Theurges cry out the invocations of this rite to reveal the warriors who aid them. Those who are unerringly loyal to the ritualist may even shift the color of their skin to a brilliant blue to show their battle frenzy. This is a sign that the Black Spiral Dancers will show no quarter, fighting until their enemies are utterly destroyed.

System: The rite requires one point of Gnosis and a Manipulation + Occult roll. The mystic calls for the names of the various Bane-totems he believes are present. Just to be safe, he usually chants as many as he can name. The beliefs of the mystic may influence the nature of the ceremony — it can range from the somber proceedings of neo-Druidic affair to the high rituals of an ancient (pre-90's) heavy metal concert.



Chapter Four: The Wretched

Fomori

They have existed for as long as men and women have been willing to sell their souls for power. They have gone by many names over the centuries, as well. To the Pure Ones, they were mockeries; the shapeshifters of the East called them bakemono. But thanks to their legendary battles with the fae and Fianna of the British Isles, the Fianna's name for them has stuck: the fomori.

Fomori are created when a Bane possesses a human. The association is, with only a few exceptions, permanent. The Bane is released when the human dies, but only a few rare treatments can separate the Bane from its mortal host and leave the human alive.

Most fomori are immune to the Delirium; certainly all of Pentex's creations are. The Wyrm taint has, besides erasing their humanity, erased the Veil also. This is not the case with all of them, and their immunity seems dependent on the amount of Wyrm-taint. To ensure that all their fomor agents do not seize up in terror when combating Garou, Pentex injects them with their special serum, destroying the part of the brain susceptible to the Delirium. Assume that all fomori created by Pentex will not be affected.

For more information on fomori than what's here — possibly more than you probably really want — mature players are directed to the Black Dog product **Freak Legion: A Players Guide to Fomori**.

Using Fomori

Generally speaking, fomori are tailor-made for the role of shock troops and specialists. They're not as powerful as Garou, but they can be damned dangerous and outright lethal if the Garou meet them on their own terms. Fomori should reek of lost humanity — each one is a human being who, through his or her own weakness, bartered away his or her soul in return for power that wasn't worth the price. They are the promise of the future if the Wyrm wins — they are what the human race will become. If you show your players the last vestiges of humanity in fomori, then you can evoke feelings of pity for these wretched, doomed souls; they really are better off dead, but any Garou with a conscience should feel at least a twinge of regret that these poor bastards' lives had to come to this.

Fomori Powers

The following is a more complete listing of potential powers available to fomori; those already cited in the **Werewolf** main rules (pp. 251-252) appear with an asterisk, and are abbreviated here. Most possess three powers, although the number can vary widely. Pentex's creations usually have three to five, in addition to Immunity to the Delirium. Although supernatural beings, fomori cannot do aggravated damage with ordinary nails and teeth; however, unless otherwise noted, any damage done by actual fomori powers is aggravated.

• **Berserker*** — The fomor has five Rage points and can spend them as if he were Garou; however, he is also subject to frenzy.

• **Body-barbs** — The fomor has razored, bladelike bone growths at her joints; the size, shape, number, and placement of the barbs vary from fomor to fomor. If successful in an appropriate combat maneuver (a knee strike if the barbs protrude from her knees, for instance) the fomor can inflict two extra dice of brawling damage.

• **Claws and Fangs*** — The fomor can use claw or bite maneuvers.



• **Exoskeleton** — The fomor has grown a hard, osseous carapace all over his body. The exoskeleton is often quite gnarled, sporting veinlike tubes and odd shapes. The coloration varies, but is usually a dull rust or oily black. The exoskeleton grants the fomor +3 Strength and +3 Stamina.

• **Extra Limbs*** — The fomor has a number of extra limbs, usually tentacles or masses of tendrils.

• **Eyes of the Wyrm*** — Those meeting the fomor's gaze must make Willpower rolls (difficulty 8) or be frozen in place for (five turns - Wits).

• **Fungal Touch*** — The fomor can infect opponents with a fungus that slowly drains Physical Attributes and Appearance.

• **Gaseous Form** — The fomor can virtually boil his body into a gaseous state in a mere two to six seconds. He must expend a point of Willpower to become gaseous and expend another point to become solid again. The gaseous form holds together well even in a strong wind, and usually stinks of sulfur, urine, excrement or some other horrible stench.

• **Hide of the Wyrm** — The fomor has a leathery, almost iron-hard skin, usually covered in knots, scales, lumps, boils or other foul features. The hide provides the fomor with three extra soak dice.

• **Immunity to the Delirium*** — About as literal a power as you could want.

• **Infectious Touch** — The fomor is able to cause fever and sickness by her touch. The fomor must make flesh-to-flesh contact with the victim and expend one point of Willpower; the victim can resist the infection by rolling her Stamina + 3 (difficulty of 8). For each success less than six, the victim will take one Health Level of aggravated damage. Unless cured by mystical means (Mother's Touch is insufficient), this damage heals at the rate of one Health Level per week, during which time the victim feels absolutely miserable.

• **Lashing Tail** — This is similar to an extra limb, but it cannot be used for precision work. The fomor can attack with it, snapping it like a whip (difficulty 8 to connect, Strength +2 damage, six foot reach).

• **Mega-Attribute** — The fomor has three to five additional points in an attribute of the Storyteller's choice (usually Strength), even if this takes him over a rating of 5.

• **Mind Blast** — The fomor can send a mental blast of energy into a target's mind, immobilizing him with pain. The fomor must spend one Willpower point and roll Wits + Alertness (resisted by the victim's Willpower). The victim is wracked with agony and cannot act for one turn for each of the fomor's successes.

• **Mouth of the Wyrm** — The fomor can distend his jaw to swallow objects or creatures in his grasp, up to the size of a medium-sized dog or a small person. If he devours a living creature, the victim may well suffocate if it cannot somehow escape, and will be digested as food. All indigestible parts (bones, shoes, glasses, etc.) are eliminated normally.

• **Plasmic-form** — The fomor can literally melt into a puddle of thick reddish-brown liquid which can move about of its own free will. The liquid has the fomor's usual number of soak dice, but is immune to kinetic attacks (knives, bullets, fists, etc.) Changing forms either way requires the expenditure of one Willpower point.

• **Poison Tumors*** — The fomor is covered in tumors that splatter attackers with acidic pus (three dice of damage, five to those biting the fomor) whenever she is hit in hand-to-hand combat.

• **Regeneration** — Even in combat, the fomor may spend a Willpower point and make a Stamina roll, difficulty 8, to heal one Health Level. This can be done only once per turn, although the fomor may take other actions while regenerating.

• **Roar of the Wyrm** — The fomor is able to strike terror into the hearts of all near her by issuing this guttural scream. The fomor rolls Charisma + Intimidation versus her opponents' Willpower; those affected must run as fast and far as they can to get away from the fomor, for two turns per success.

• **Stomach Pumper** — The fomor can vomit forth all that he's eaten recently covered in a gout of clinging stomach acids, up to a range of 25 feet. Each regurgitative blast (and few fomori have enough for more than three such blasts) can cover a single foe. The attack does two dice of damage if it hits (Dexterity + Athletics to hit, difficulty 7), but any victim struck must expend a point of Willpower to keep from stopping whatever they are doing and start gagging.

• **Tar Baby** — The fomor's skin is made of a thick, sticky substance like molasses or tar. Anyone attacking the fomor in brawling combat gets stuck to the fomor like a fly on flypaper. The opponent may not use whatever limb is stuck to the fomor; he must make a resisted Strength roll versus the fomor's Stamina +3 to escape. If the fomor is hit by a melee weapon, he may make a resisted Strength roll versus the user's Strength to wrest the now-stuck weapon from the opponent's hands.

• **Umbral Passage** — The fomor is able to step sideways in and out of the Umbra just like a Garou; the roll is Willpower rather than Gnosis.

• **Voice of the Wyrm*** — The fomor may speak in the Wyrm's language, forcing non-Wyrm listeners to roll Willpower (difficulty 8) or lose half their Gnosis points.

• **Webbing** — The fomor has a special gland about the size and shape of a football over their abdomen; the organ's orifice usually lies above the navel. This spinneret can spin massive amounts of gunk rather like spider silk. The webbing almost one inch in diameter, but it is very sheer and hard to see from a distance (Perception + Alertness, difficulty 7 to spot). Fomori must learn how to utilize the webbing by purchasing Webmaking as a secondary Skill; however, skilled weavers may seal off passages or objects, capture opponents or lower themselves from high positions. The webbing has six soak dice and three Health Levels. It is extremely strong and sticky, and has an effective Strength of 7 for purposes of trapping victims.

Fomori Breeds

Although many fomori are unique, there are a few "breeds" that commonly recur. These breeds may be naturally arising (as in the case of a certain strain of Banes that commonly possess people to a definite end) or deliberately engineered (thanks to the research divisions of Project Iliad or independent manipulators). The following are a few examples of fomori breeds that Garou are especially likely to encounter.



Enticers

"Dear Gaia." Reiksana Crown-Daughter sat bolt upright, staring across the restaurant with a hungry gaze completely inappropriate to a Garou of her breeding. "That man. He's completely beautiful. Sweet Mother, if he's not Kin to the Fangs, he should be. The cubs he could... and his..." A faint blush crept into her cheeks, but she didn't avert her eyes a millimeter. "Callan, do you see him? There, just coming in. Tell me I'm not hallucinating."

"Yeah, yeah, he's gorgeous. Sure." Callan Howls-in-the-Fog was staring directly at the entryway, along with the rest of the restaurant. And why not? The woman smiling back — at him, no less! — was possibly the most beautiful, wonderful creature he'd ever seen. A tiny voice nagged at him to be polite and actually look for the man Reiksana was blathering about, but it was shouted down by the pure lust swirling in the bottom of his guts and below.

Oh, hot damn, *Callan thought.* She's coming over to our table. I'm blessed.

As the woman of his dreams approached the table, Callan completely failed to notice that Reiksana was staring at the newcomer just as passionately as he was. All he noticed was the delightful, flirtatious smile that was beginning on the wonderfully sculpted brunette's face....

The Enticers are one of the most subtle fomori threats in existence. Each one constantly exudes spiritually charged pheromones that stimulate their prey's pleasure centers and simultaneously pull images of idealized perfection from the prey's mind. The end result is that an Enticer can effectively seduce any creature that lives.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 6 (3), Manipulation 6 (3), Appearance 6 (3), Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2 (bite, Str +1), Dodge 2, Expression 2, Empathy 4, Subterfuge 5, Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Performance 5, Survival 1, Computers 1, Enigmas 1, Linguistics 2, Politics 1

Backgrounds: Enticers can have almost any of the Backgrounds available (with Allies and Contacts a natural), but all Enticers have at least a 3 in Resources — their allowance from Pentex.

Powers: Claws/Teeth (can use Bite maneuver), plus two unique powers.

• **Enhancement** — By scanning her target's mind, the Enticer can become any living creature's ideal mate. The Enticer must make a Charisma + Empathy roll against a difficulty equal to her opponent's Rage (or Willpower -3 in the case of non-shapeshifters). Success means that she has become that opponent's ideal mate in physical appearance, even if this involves an apparent gender change. If the Enticer fails, she simply appears as an attractive individual, and her gender can't be concealed to fit the target's desires. If she botches the roll, her target feels decidedly uncomfortable in her presence, sensing that the Enticer desperately wants to be liked and needed.

• **Succubi's Veil** — The power requires a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll, difficulty of the target's Wits + Primal-Urge. If the Enticer is successful, his target is enthralled, wanting nothing but to be with the Enticer whenever possible. If the roll is failed, the target still finds the Enticer attractive, but is not enchanted by his beauty. For every scene in which the Enticer is around his targets, he can attempt another roll; if the Enticer achieves more than 10 cumulative successes, his target becomes fanatically enchanted, and longs to serve and protect the Enticer at any cost. However, if the Enticer botches even one roll, his target senses that there is something decidedly wrong with the Enticer — something very dangerous about associating with the creature — and cannot be enthralled.

Willpower: 5

Equipment: Enticers are always armed, and are usually decked out with plenty of the trappings of luxury. Few are without exceedingly expensive clothes and cars, usually "presents" from previous victims.

Image: Without powers, Enticers simply seem to be normal humans — save for the rows of barbed teeth in their mouths. However, they are rarely perceived except through the veil of their Wyrm powers, which makes them appear intensely alluring.

Genesis: The Enticer breed, while occurring "naturally" in some instances, gets the majority of its numbers from the machinations of Siren Cosmetics, a Pentex subsidiary. Their creation involves a "special hypoallergenic," line of products commonly given in one-year supplies to the winners of a yearly contest. The cosmetics are, of course, tainted. The Banes within linger over the process of possession, causing their hosts-to-be to become thoroughly addicted to the make-up within a month.

As a result, most Enticers are so physically and mentally addicted to the special cosmetics and the pleasure they bring that they will do anything at all to ensure a steady supply. Needless to say, Pentex has plenty of work for them, and often sends Enticers out to work special deals with other companies, to lure the megacorp's enemies into traps, and to generally bring as many people under the megacorp's thumb as possible. Francesco is currently looking into the feasibility of increasing the number of yearly contests, but the cost of the cosmetics is prohibitive, and the Board requires further market analysis of the Enticers' utility before they reach a final decision.

Storytelling Notes: Nobody — *nobody* — can resist you. You are the object of ultimate desire to every last person you meet — and you know it. You can fight if you have to, but you don't like to do so; you'll avoid physical confrontation if at all possible. It's so much easier to stir your prey into fighting each other for your favors, or to lead them into ambush. You corrupt as many people as possible into needing you — after all, if you can't shake your addiction, you might as well share it.

Ferectoi, the Larvae of the Wyrm

"I am very disappointed in you, Shiroi." The aged Japanese man sighed and shook his head, neatly drumming the fingers of one hand on the mahogany tabletop. "I have taken you in and raised you as my own son. I have given you the honor of making you my kobun, even when my brother's son would have done as well. You, in turn, have given me unswerving obedience — until now."

He shook his head. "I am well aware that the Western women you have been gathering through your talent agency have not reached our buyers in Chiba. And still you refuse to explain yourself. I give you one last chance to do so..." The older man's gaze flickered to the two enforcers standing behind the young man seated before him. "...That when you die, you may do so honorably."

"I apologize, but I am not permitted to die just yet," Shiroi replied softly. There was a sudden jerk of movement from his silk shirt — and then a glistening tendril lanced forth, punching through the older man's torso with a spray of blood. The oyabun gasped, but made no other sound, his stupefied gaze passing from the enforcers — who were inexplicably standing stock-still, no emotion showing on their faces — and back to the freshly malevolent face of Shiroi.

Shiroi's smile was refined poison, even as the barbed tendril tore itself from the older man's ribcage and shot back under his shirt. "You see, Ushigome-sama, I have responsibilities that involve taking our organization to heights you could never dream of. Be reassured that you will be remembered fondly."

The Ferectoi are princes among fomori, bred from the genes of a human and birthed by a Bane parent. Their power is exceptionally high, rivaled only by their cunning and malevolence. Worst of all, Ferectoi are able to walk easily among humankind, slipping in and out of mortal society with ease. They have full understanding of human weaknesses and the ability to exploit those weaknesses to great effect.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 5, Etiquette 3, Leadership 4, Stealth 3, Computer 3, Enigmas 4, Occult 5, Science 2 — add others as appropriate

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Resources 4

Powers: At least five fomori powers. All Ferectoi are unique.

Willpower: 9

Equipment: Ferectoi have whatever equipment they might require in the course of their business (mundane and other). Their high Resources usually ensure that they have plenty of tricks up their sleeve besides their already potent fomori powers.

Image: Despite their monstrous inhumanity, the Larvae of the Wyrm appear mortal in almost every respect. Even the fomor powers that betray their Wyrm-taint are easily concealed (extra limbs are always retractable, and so on).

Genesis: These creatures are the spawns of a Breeder Bane, a hideous spirit that is little more than a walking womb. This creature manifests and rapes humans as they sleep, using potent charms to make them believe it was nothing more than a harmless dream. The Breeder then retreats to the Umbra, where it lets its new "child" gestate in its transparent womb-sac. It manifests again to birth the Ferectoi in the physical realm.

The Ferectoi look and act like the rich and powerful humans they appear to be, but they are ultimately less human than any other fomor. Many have humanlike interests and foibles, but often with a slightly alien flavor. Ferectoi are creatures of division, and their humanity often struggles against the overpowering Wyrm-nature of their heritage. As Ferectoi age, they become less and less human.

There are rumors of a few Ferectoi whose human sides have managed to wrest temporary control away from their Wyrmish sides, although it's hard to find anyone who actually claims to have met one first-hand. Apparently, such tortured creatures wage a desperate, furious struggle against the forces of the Wyrm, attempting to atone for their natures in a blaze of glory rather than allowing their Bane halves the time to regain control.

Storytelling Notes: You were born of evil and to evil, and you aspire to nothing but pure malevolence. You exude corruption and debasement, the product of your half-spirit nature. You are debonair and brutal by turns, as necessary in the pursuit of your personal power. You rule over your entourage of Bane and fomor servants with an iron fist, always harsh and uncompromising.

Breeder Bane

This hideous creatures is little more than a walking womb. The Breeder will Materialize and rape a human as he or she sleeps, using potent charms to make the victim believe it was nothing more than a harmless dream. If the victim is male, the Breeder gains its semen; if the victim is female, the Breeder extracts the eggs it has impregnated. The Breeder then retreats to the Umbra, were it lets its new life-form gestate in its transparent womb-sac. It later Materializes again to birth a Ferectoi in the physical realm.

Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 5, Power 25

Charms: Airt Sense, Breeding Trance (Power cost: 5; the sleeping victim of this trance is raped, but believes it was all just a dream once he wakens later), Materialize (Power cost: 9; Str 2, Dex 2, Sta 2, Stealth 5, 7 Health Levels)

Gorehound

"Deer Jason, i am your biggest fan. i've seen all your movees. You kick but. I wanna be just lik you. I found this new vidio "Blood the impaler". i have seen it ten times alredy. yor not init, but it's cool anyway. This Conan-type guy impales all these slutts on big spikes. you wood like it.

"I wanted to try it out, so i took my naybor's cat and stuck it on a stick. It screamed real loud and it was neat. I bet you startit the same way. Lik i said, i wanna be just like you. Is this a good start?

"Yors in Blood; Dr. Pain"

Slaughterhouse Video, a particularly vile filmmaking company under Pentex's aegis, has its "films" in seedy, irresponsible video stores across the world. Each one acts as a kind of magnet to the breed of Bane which creates Gorehounds; disturbed viewers who watch these films risk possession by the Banes, who turn their victims' sick fantasies into a sadistic lust for real blood. The result is a fomor that makes the average maniac slasher look like a kindergarten teacher.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Perception 5, Wits 4, all others negligible

Abilities: Brawl 4, Melee 5, Stealth 5

Backgrounds: None

Powers: Berserker, Immunity to Delirium, Regeneration

Willpower: 8

Equipment: Each Gorehound tends to carry some sort of "household" weapon, be it a meat cleaver, chainsaw, pitchfork, cordless drill, or whatever.

Image: The Banes don't alter their human hosts much apart from dramatically adding to their muscle mass; however, Gorehounds often adopt personalized "touches" to befit their new personae. Storytellers are invited to be creative; self-inflicted scars, masks, signature items of clothing or signature weapons are among the most common.

Genesis: The "Bane magnets" in Slaughterhouse Video's products usually draw at least one Bane to any VCR that runs such a tape. An ideal victim is a viewer who's typically a loner, picked on by other kids, possibly from an abusive or neglected home environment. The Bane taps into such a host's rage, granting him dreams of slashing his tormentors into bits. Horribly enough, such a Bane might well possess a homid cub who has not yet reached his First Change. An unknowing Garou from a difficult home would make an ideal subject for Gorehound corruption.

Once possessed, the Gorehound begins to act out his sadistic impulses, most likely beginning with small animals but soon moving on to human targets. The viewer's days and nights become obsessed with torture and death, and the new fomor begins to follow his dream of becoming a masked killer, a figure of fear like his slasher film heroes.

Gorehounds often display a cunning that belies their youth. They usually conceal their homicidal actions fairly well in the beginning, but become more reckless and overconfident as their murderous streak continues. After ten human deaths or so, the possessing Bane usually goads its host into a killing spree, gleefully riding the fomor into oblivion.

Roleplaying Notes: You can't be stopped. Just like your slasher "heroes," you don't understand the concept of self-preservation; once you start fighting, you don't stop until you're utterly destroyed.

Toads

Randall shuddered quietly to himself as opened the door and stepped into the darkened office. It'd been two years since he came to work for Mr. Dresk, and he'd never really gotten used to his boss. There was the way he looked, of course, and the way he talked, and the stuff he ordered for his lunch....

Thankfully, the high-backed chair was facing away from him. One heavy, warty hand was just visible on the armrest. Randall quietly cleared his throat.

"Mr. Dresk, we've just found out that someone's been reading our files. From a computer, I mean. No solid leads yet, but we're working on it." He coughed. "Do you want us to put one of the specialists on it?"

The voice that came back was strong, but mumbled, as if Mr. Dresk was trying to talk around a mouthful of hamburger. He always talked like that.

"No, Randall. I think I know who's involved... and I believe I'll be looking into this myself."

More than cannon fodder and less than master manipulators, Toads are the Wyrmish equivalent of middle management made good — well, *bad*. These ugly fomori squat at the center of their own little webs of intrigue, bullying the weaker ones in their care and obsequiously bowing and scraping to those more powerful than they. Although they aren't much threat to a werewolf pack on a rampage, most have enough common sense to get in out of the rain, as it were. The thing that makes these guys threatening is the way they manage to avoid attention until just the right opportunity presents itself to strike — or, more typically, sic somebody else on the problem.

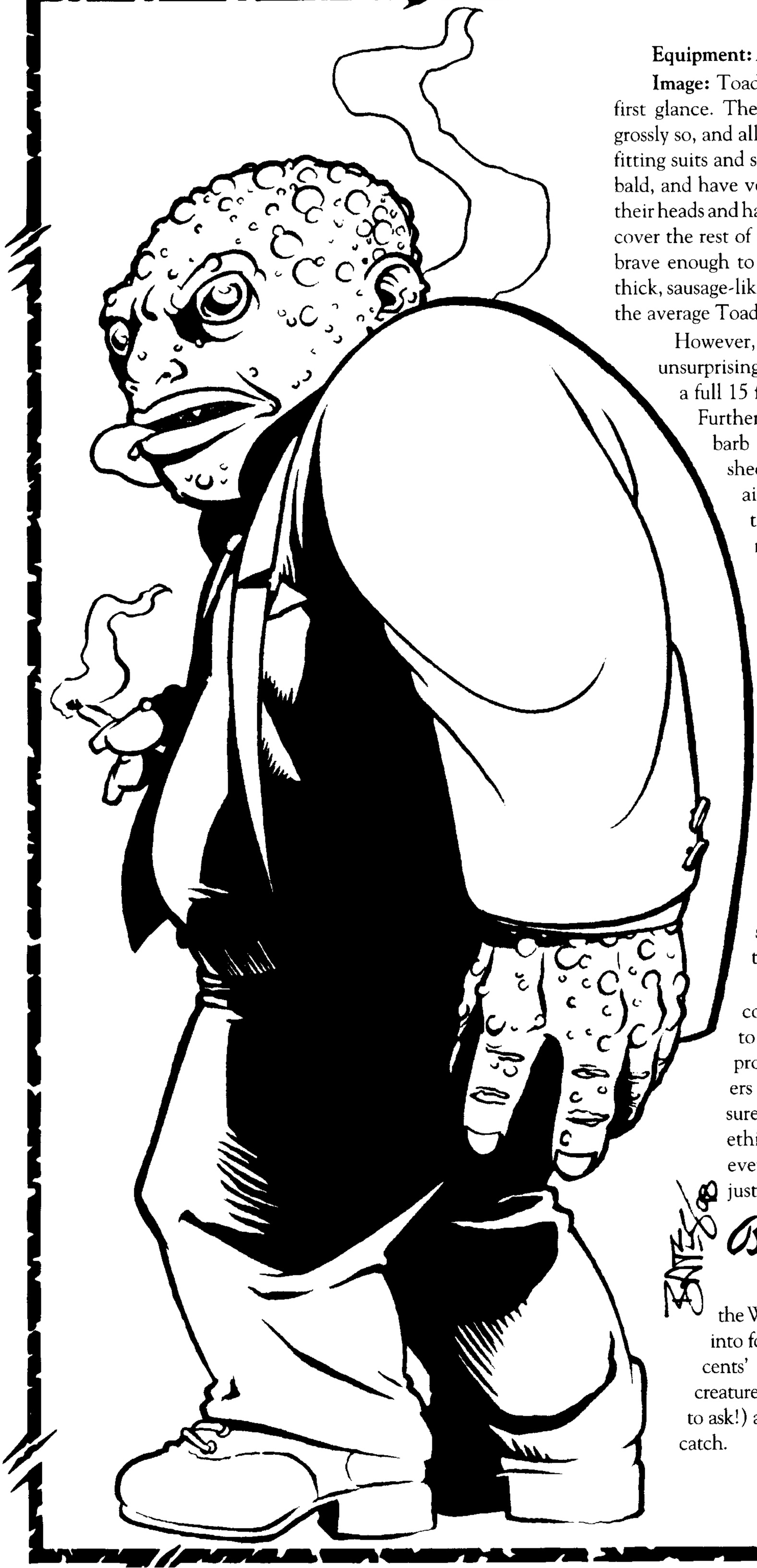
Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4, Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 4, Investigation 3, Law 1, Politics 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 3 (Toads know *everybody*)

Powers: Barbed Tongue — as Lashing Tail, but doing Strength + 3 aggravated damage. The tongue retracts automatically, and at Storyteller discretion might do some additional damage on the way out as well. There are rumors of particularly old and vicious Toads who have the ability to inject neurotoxins with their tongues, but no proof or surviving witnesses exist.

Willpower: 7



Equipment: Automatic pistol, large car, cellular phone.

Image: Toads appear more-or-less human, at least on first glance. They are all male, all overweight (but not grossly so, and all dress the same (stained trench coats, ill-fitting suits and scuffed shoes). Furthermore, Toads are all bald, and have veritable constellations of warts adorning their heads and hands. (It can be assumed that the warts also cover the rest of a Toad's anatomy, but there aren't many brave enough to check.) Heavy-lidded, bulging eyes and thick, sausage-like fingers are also distinguishing features of the average Toad.

However, the thing that makes a Toad a Toad, is, unsurprisingly, his tongue. This appendage can extend a full 15 feet from his mouth at whipcrack speeds. Furthermore, the tongue ends in a viciously sharp barb quite capable of cutting through flesh, sheet rock and on one notable occasion, an airplane's windshield. As a result of having this unusual appendage, Toads tend to mumble a little bit; most sound like they're doing bad Brando impersonations.

Genesis: No one's quite sure where the Toads came from. They started appearing in the mid-'80s, transferring into upper middle management positions at assorted Pentex subsidiaries. Within a few short years, Toads had a firm grip on many COO, warehouse management, accounting and personnel positions, and started refitting their corporate environments to their liking. Of course, with the relative success of many Pentex-owned operations it wasn't long before headhunters and outplacement operations came sniffing around the Toads, offering to place them elsewhere....

Roleplaying Notes: You're always in control of your situation. You have the power to hire or fire, to destroy careers or create protégés at a whim. You enjoy watching others scurry to please you, and take great pleasure in breaking down subordinates' morals, ethics and senses of self. Every so often you even like to indulge in your own dirty work, just to prove you're not getting soft.

Banes

It's easy to blame Banes for most of the ills of the World of Darkness. After all, they turn people into fomori, whisper nasty suggestions into innocents' ears, gladly lend themselves out to most creatures of the Wyrm (even Leeches who know how to ask!) and tear apart any servitor of Gaia they can catch.

However, Banes aren't the cause of the disease — they're a symptom. As corruption gnaws at the heart of the spirit world, as more and more people sell out their Mother in the name of a quick buck or easy lifestyle, the number of Banes grows. The Garou can never be rid of them, unless the collective spirit of humanity is somehow cured — but at the same time, the Banes make it impossible for the werewolves to ignore them in favor of devoting themselves to full-time healing. In the end, the relentless assault of these incarnations of hate, greed and disease may be what dooms the Garou and the rest of the world with them.

Using Banes

The very nature of a Bane makes it rather difficult to apply much moral subtlety to its actions. Since, as with all spirits, a Bane is literally defined by its purpose, there are damn few repentant or morally gray Banes. Even if a Bane can be somehow purified (a tricky process, and far more involved that a simple discussion of principles), the spirit becomes reformed in both senses of the word. Corruption defines Banes — it shapes their form, their powers, their sense of purpose. As spiritual representations of archetypes, they are relatively one-dimensional (well, the Gafflings and Jagglings are, anyway; the higher the spirit on the celestial food chain, the more independent personality it is allowed to have). With Banes, the key element is the symbolism inherent to the spirit world, not the anthropomorphization of a more humanlike enemy.

As such, Banes aren't quite as satisfying antagonists in a central role. Only the vastly powerful ones (and therefore the ones with the most personality) make good nemeses. Banes are at their most effective in two situations: when they are used as a hazard (a swarm of almost hive-minded Banes is a terrible enemy that cannot be placated or reasoned with, only avoided), and when they serve as atmosphere, a very visual, symbolic and dangerous cue that the situation is far worse than it looks. Yes, that elementary school looks peaceful enough on the outside — but when the Garou step sideways, and are nearly torn to pieces by the Bane swarm that's grown fat and strong on the premises, the players become much more alert to the gravity of their situation. Throw in some interesting symbolism (what if the school's Bane population looks largely like wizened children with the mouths of dogs?), and you're cooking with gas.

Bitter Rages

It was a hot and cloudy summer afternoon, and Jurgi Hautala was working diligently on rebuilding his front porch when Sven Thousand Fangs, his packmate and friend arrived — in such a way that Jurgi's heart skipped a beat. Sven looked bad. *For one thing, he was wearing his Crinos form, pacing on all fours down the street as if the thought of being noticed was the farthest thing from his mind. Several of Jurgi's neighbors were already screaming and tearing at their hair in the throes of the Delirium; just what he needed in an area where he was barely tolerated already. For another thing, Sven was snarling, looking crazily from one spot to another and gnashing his teeth as if trying to bite the air. Worst of all, blood matted his fur and dripped from his muzzle in a pink frothy flow.*

Jurgi heard the sound of police sirens in the distance, coming closer by the moment. He calmly set down his hammer and spat the nails from the corner of his mouth. "Sven?" he called, looking at his friend. "Is there something you wanted to talk about?" Never show fear — one of the first rules of being a Get of Fenris. *Sven cocked his head as if noticing Jurgi for the first time, then bounded across the sidewalk towards Jurgi, murder in his bloodshot eyes. Jurgi willed the Change and let the Rage wash over him. There'd be time for worrying about what caused the problem when he was done killing his friend.*

Bitter Rages exist for the sole purpose of driving Garou mad. They feed on Rage, and in turn they fuel that Rage, pushing their prey into frenzies of ever-increasing proportions. In many ways, they are the spiritual equivalent of rabies. While these Banes prefer to target Garou and other Changing Breeds, they can also affect humans and even animals who come too close to Wyrm-infested areas. Even creatures which normally don't possess Rage gain the powers of spiritual anger when ridden by these Banes, including the ability to regenerate and to frenzy.

Rage 8, Gnosis 6, Willpower 8, Power 60

Charms: Airt Sense, Possession, Raging*, Reform

***Raging** — Each Power Point that the Bitter Rage spends increases its target's Rage. In the case of creatures who normally cannot Rage, the cost is two Power Points. The increase is usually gradual and occurs over a number of days, but a Bitter Rage can force the issue if it so desires, and send any possessed target into an instant frenzy.

Background: Bitter Rages are something of an exception among Banes; they are in the minority that do not permanently possess hosts and turn them into fomori. They can be driven out, although it's a difficult task. Once in possession of a host, the Bane fuels the target's Rage constantly, increasing it above the normal maximum into insanity. The pain of possession grows from the equivalent of a minor headache to gut-wrenching sensory overload, where even a whisper seems like a jet engine and moonlight burns the eyes. Victims inevitably succumb to a frenzy that can't be stopped as long as the victim is conscious. Only complete exhaustion slows these wretches down, and then only until they've recovered enough to start attacking everything in sight again. Bitter Rages are only vulnerable in the Umbra, and are notorious for running away as soon as they are located.

Storytelling Notes: Bitter Rages are the equivalent of a disease, and they seek to cause as much chaos as they can. These Banes prefer to simply cause trouble and leave the Garou they've infested to kill everything in sight. Should a Bitter Rage use all of its own power, it can use its host's own Gnosis to fuel her Rage. Many Galliards tell cautionary tales of encounters with these Banes in order to teach young cubs the dangers of losing control.

Drattosi

Kaleisha Mother's-Mourning padded wearily through the Penumbral cityscape. It had hurt to leave her pack to visit her husband and daughter, and now it hurt again to leave her family behind to rejoin her pack. She especially hated leaving Isaac and Neferi alone when the sept was meeting to call a war party against the city's Leeches — she couldn't be there to protect them, but so much more would be lost if she didn't stand with the Garou.

As she crossed into the relatively web-free stretch of a vacant lot, her heart leaped. There, pawing the ground and tossing her head, was Pegasus! Was it a vision? A messenger? Kaleisha yipped in delight and began bounding across the lot toward the spirit of her totem. Perhaps she was here to offer some advice on—

Then the ground gave way beneath her, as if she'd run across an inch-thick crust of clay with nothing but emptiness beneath. The Pegasus-spirit flickered and vanished like a mirage, and a blast of sulfurous, hot air stunned Kaleisha with its intensity. Her sense of smell mostly gone, her paws finding no purchase, she howled in terror as she slid down the steep walls of the pit toward the chitinous monstrosity below....

Drattosi are hideous creatures that live in huge radioactive pits within the Umbra. They are gigantic mockeries of ant lions, preying on whatever Umbral traveler is unfortunate enough to stumble into their mephitic traps.

Rage 7, Gnosis 8, Willpower 5, Power 30 + whatever it has absorbed lately

Charms: Airt Sense, Consume Essence*, Illusory Desire*

***Consume Essence** — This Charm allows the Drattosi to eat another spirit and take its own Power into itself. A spirit consumed in this manner will not Reform. The Drattosi attacks with Rage as usual, but drains one Power point into itself per success. Surplus Power fades at a rate of five points every 24 hours if not spent beforehand. The Drattosi can even use this Charm to eat a spirit or Garou's Gnosis, although it requires two successes to drain away a point of Gnosis.

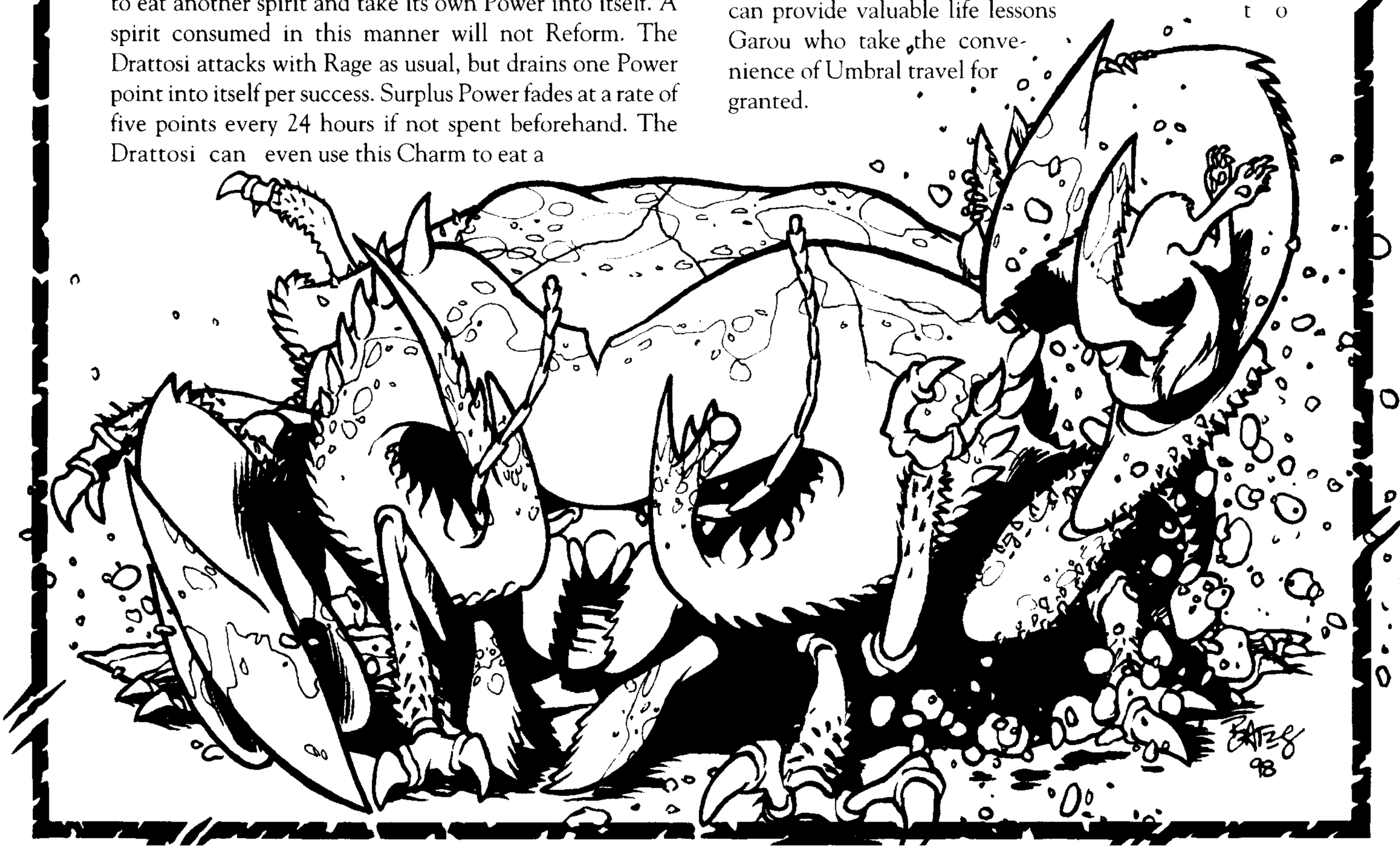
***Illusory Desire** — The Drattosi must make a resisted Gnosis versus Willpower roll to pluck out an image from a potential victim's mind, then spend two Power to create the illusion. This power may be used on more than one victim, but only one victim's mind can be read at a time.

Image: The Drattosi are rarely seen — a Drattosi crawls from its lair in the bottom of its pit only to feed. They vaguely resemble gargantuan crustaceans with thorny projections covering their reddish-black carapaces. They have multiple limbs with sharp piercers which they use to skewer their prey. Their bodies are often steaming from the heat of their surroundings.

Background: The Drattosi live in pits within the Penumbra, which they conceal with their illusions. These Banes prefer to create illusory creatures or objects as bait, pulling the most appropriate lure from their potential victims' minds. A victim is typically allowed to get all the way up to the image before the Drattosi emerges to attack.

The Drattosi are intelligent predators. They can communicate intelligibly with Garou and spirits, but rarely bother to do so. They are often very knowledgeable about all goings-on within the area, even in the physical world corresponding to their Penumbral lair — however, it is quite difficult to wring such information out of them.

Storytelling Notes: The Wyrm has many servitors who embody deception and false promises; the Drattosi are simply another variation on this theme. Although they are a bit too one-dimensional to be the center of a story, they can provide valuable life lessons to Garou who take the convenience of Umbral travel for granted.



Dream Makers

"What is your wish, master?" The voice was back, a subservient, almost gratingly pleasant voice that echoed in his head whenever he was thinking about the way he wanted to world to work, and how it never seemed willing to listen to his desires. Kevin Charles was a lonely, bitter man, and he hated what little he'd managed to accomplish in his life. Just the same, he'd been doing his best to ignore the voice, fearing that he might be losing his sanity.

He looked around the office, sticking his head over the side of the cubicle and squinting past glasses that needed replacing, to look at the world where he was forced to spend far too much time. Over by the water cooler, Walter Macavee, the fat little office manager with the gin-blossomed cheeks, was flirting with Crystal. A lump came into Kevin's throat every time he looked at Crystal; she was one of the few people who treated him like a human being, and a stunning woman besides. He spared a glare for his manager before focusing his eyes and heart on her beautiful form. "What do I wish? I wish Crystal was in love with me, and I wish Walter Macavee would die of a stroke. I wish I had his job and his success."

The voice in his head spoke again, a slight sound of triumph echoing through its words. "Then it shall be so..."

When the Triat was young and the universe was still whole, these Banes served to create the world, working as servants of both the Weaver and the Wyld. What exists now is but a faint echo of the power these dark spirits once represented, the power to shape an entire universe at the whims of their masters. They still serve today, but the masters they serve are somewhat different than the ones they were created to please....

Rage 10, Gnosis 10, Willpower 10, Power 300

Charms: Airt Sense, Armor, Alter Reality, Break Reality, Blighted Touch, Calcify, Cleanse the Blight, Corruption, Create Fires, Create Wind, Disorient, Flood, Freeze, Frozen Breath, Healing, Ice Shards, Lightning Bolts, Materialize (only when the Master permits), Reform, Shapeshift, Solidify Reality, Tracking, Umbraquake, Updraft

Image: Whatever works best. They can appear as the Hollywood image of the genie, complete with earrings, turban and pointy slippers, or they can seem to be a perfectly normal person. Most recently, there's been something of a trend among Dream Makers to appear as angels — if you can't trust an angel, who can you trust?

Background: What better way to win converts than to give them what they want? Dream Makers have always been around, although their names have varied. By whatever title they choose, these Banes exist to corrupt the bitter and the angry, granting them their desires and aiding those they help in achieving power.

There are complications, of course. The Dream Makers are bound outside of Gaia's Realm, forbidden by their very nature to enter the physical plane unless invited in. These Banes are very powerful and capable of incredible maliciousness, though they can only act on the desires of humans. Once a "master" is chosen, the Dream Makers act to fulfill their every whim, but all the while they have their own agenda. Each one works to wheedle a special wish from their rulers, a wish for them to Materialize in the Gaia Realm. If the remaining Dream Makers are ever freed, the power they still wield is great enough to cause incredible disasters. There are ancient legends among the Garou which state that these very Banes are destined to destroy all that they created.

Storytelling Notes: These are bad Banes to encounter, at least if you aren't their master. A Dream Maker is the traditional djinn, the demon who grants every wish, no matter how petty. They cannot accomplish anything without their chosen master's wishes, which is the one thing that has stopped them from destroying everything so far. They are bound to a master until that master dies, or until that master is foolish enough to wish them into the Gaia Realm — a feat that has not yet been accomplished, though several have come dangerously close before being stopped. The Dream Makers are capable of virtually anything, though some requests might take a great deal of time to accomplish. Most terrible of all, they choose masters they know are capable of almost anything, the morally dead and the emotionally warped.

Gray Masses

"Have you ever wondered about mushrooms, Arnie?" The voice on the other end of the phone line belonged to Steve, Arnie's best friend for more years than he could remember. Though he recognized the voice, it was a close thing. Steve sounded weak, almost as if he had laryngitis. Before he could reply to the question, Steve spoke again. "Come on over, I have something to show you." The dull drone of the dial tone buzzed in Arnie's ear. He'd been on his way over to Steve's when the call came, so the decision to head over there was easy enough.

Five minutes later he was in front of Steve's house, looking at the slightly open door and calling his friend's name to no avail. Getting slightly worried, he nudged his way in. The smell was hideous, bad enough that he could almost taste the scent of rot in the air. The beautiful weather outside was held at bay by the tightly drawn shades, and Arnie blinked several times as he adjusted to the darkness inside the residence.

Steve's voice came from the familiar direction of his favorite recliner, although the shadows were too dark to reveal him. "Have you ever given thought to mushrooms, Arnie? I used to think they were just there, something to sauté with your steak, or toss into a salad. I never realized they were intelligent." As Steve spoke, he stepped rose from his chair and shambled forward, moving like an old man instead of a 25-year-old athlete. Arnie gasped in shock as his friend shuffled into the pale light of the room. "I never imagined they could do something like this to a man..."

The Wyld has its own ways. Life grows even in the face of death, a part of an endless cycle that isn't meant to change. Fungi are a part of that cycle, decomposing the dead

flesh of plant and animal alike, leaving rich fertilizer behind — Gray Masses are different.

Rage 0, Gnosis 4, Willpower 2, Power 10

Charms: Blighted Touch, Corruption, Possession, Sporing*

***Sporing** — The Gray Masses' primary agenda is to make more of themselves, and they begin to multiply when they find a host. Each Power Point spent by a Gray Mass allows the Bane to create another of its kind. Each of these new Banes is as powerful as the original, and will also produce offspring once it finds a host. Without a host, a Gray Mass is little more than a spore, virtually powerless to accomplish any task. Most of the Power in a Gray Mass goes to creating more copies of itself. Each of these Banes is capable of producing eight or nine more just like itself, and each of these in turn is capable of creating a new fomor from its host and still more of the Banes that transmit them.

Image: The Gray Masses have no real spiritual presence, as tiny as they are. It's only when they manifest through their Gray Men hosts that they become obvious.

Background: Once they broke down the dead, recycling the dead mass of the spirit world and making it anew, in the name of the Wyld. Now the Gray Masses are creatures of the Wyrm, and they ignore the dead to infest the living. In the Umbra these corrupted spirits are little more than a nuisance, a bad smell that festers as it waits. But these fungal Banes slip easily into the physical, normally carried along by whatever else breaches the Gauntlet, unnoticed because they are small. When they reach the Gaia Realm, however, they grow at a frightening rate.

Within hours of arriving, the Fungal Masses — which Materialize as spores identical to those passed by regular fungi — find a host and make themselves at home. Within a day, they produce more spores, carrying their entropy as far as the winds permit and starting the cycle again. Their purpose is simple enough: replace the life that exists with their own form of life, a Wyrm-tainted, fetid growth that is far more virulent than most diseases.

The Gray Masses have no allies, even among other Banes. 999 out of 1000 are destroyed by spirits, shapechangers or other threats. But when the remaining one gets through, the results can be horrific.

What happens to a Garou infected by the spores? Can the werewolf's regeneration fight off or delay the infection?

Nobody knows for certain.

Storytelling Notes: The parasitic nature of most fungi is key to using the Gray Masses effectively. The vivid image of a living thing caked with their horrific presence can be very effective. These Banes are fast growing and voracious; they have no subtlety, only a need to consume and pervert whatever living matter they touch. Though the Possession these Banes create is not as strong as most — the hosts still have their own memories and agendas — the effects are still powerful. Entire communities or forests can be overwhelmed by these Banes in a matter of only days.

Obviously, the Gray Masses and the Gray Men should only be encountered rarely. There are Gifts and rites that can counter the effects of the Masses' possession if performed soon enough. A pack might encounter one of the older and far more powerful Gray Men who has survived long enough to re-develop a real sentience, and changed into something far, far worse than a walking infection. The Gray Masses are such a threat that the pack might even find itself fighting alongside a band of Black Spiral Dancers to end the menace — a sobering prospect indeed.

Gray Men

Gray men are the fomori created by the unpleasant union of Gray Mass Bane and human, though they can also be created from virtually any living creature. These monsters, like their parasitic masters, exist solely to spread their blight to every living thing they encounter. They are little more than animated lumps of fungus, capable of combat and a limited amount of rational thought. Their slick gray skin appears almost greasy, and the slime they produce carries a highly contagious infection that continues to spread Gray Mass spores to everything alive. When killed (an unpleasant but not difficult task) the bodies of the fomori explode like a giant puffball, releasing the millions of the spores that created them.

Most of the Gray Men are little more than ambulatory fungal forests, though a few are rumored to be capable of intense thought and can, in time, achieve a powerful connection to the Wyrm. Theoretically, some of them might be able to live for centuries — if so, there might be ancient Gray Men with great bases of power and almost godlike abilities.

Powers: Fungal Touch, Immunity to the Delirium

Phantasmi

William Black was still adjusting to his new life as one of the Garou. The last thing he'd ever expected was to discover that he was a werewolf. Everything in his life had changed, and, as far as he was concerned, little of it for the better. Now he aimlessly wandered his old neighborhood, trying to remember when his life had made sense. The recollections seemed harder and harder to find, the sense of comfort the old junkyard used to grant him was gone, replaced by an awareness of how much shit had been thrown away by humanity. Welcome to the wonderful world of Disposable Goods.

He kicked a battered aluminum can out of his path, heard it clatter across the ground and sighed. Moments later he heard answering calls from all over the place, rustling papers and rattling cans, the flotsam and jetsam of human tides crashing against the shore of the junkyard. He turned when he heard the sound of a dozen or more pieces slamming into each other with deliberate force. Turned, and faced a nightmare. Plastic wrappings and water-stained magazines soared through the air in a

dervish of activity, weaving themselves around a skeleton of discarded mop handles, ruined fencing and bent cutlery. Not far away, a second shape was growing from the debris almost human in its shape, and completely alien in its demeanor. With a sound half moan and half shriek of pain, the twisted piles of garbage slithered forward on feet made of glass, concrete and rusting barbed wire.

For some fomori, even death is not an escape from the pain of servitude. The Wyrm sees to that. An unfortunate few of the damned once-humans suffer a greater agony still when they die under Garou talons. For them, the Corrupter has a special fate in mind, a destiny of pain and revenge. They become the Phantasmi.

Rage 10, Gnosis 6, Willpower 5, Power 50

Charms: Airt Sense, Materialize (Cost 26, Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Melee 3)

Image: Though they have no bodies of their own, the Phantasmi assemble their own forms from the remains of anything created by humans. Any junk at hand becomes the building blocks for their bizarre new "bodies." Metal flows at their command, glass and plastic warp into forms almost like the ones these wretched spirits had in life. Almost.

The materials these Banes use to build their material forms can make a substantial difference in how they can attack an enemy. In some areas they are little more than paper and stray wires, in others they might well form from toxic sludge spilled across the ground. Whatever debris is available is what the Phantasmi must recreate itself with, and the mode of attack can be anything from claws and solid blows to a liquid attack that oozes into the Garou's throat and lungs.

Background: Locked forever in the place of their deaths, these angry spirits are left without form, unable to escape the Wyrm's hold on their very souls. These Banes are something like a psychic booby-trap left for the werewolves — and the Phantasmi's bottomless thirst for revenge against the creatures who killed them makes them very efficient killers. However, they are hardly versatile; they are completely unable to commit any acts of their own volition until members of the Changing Breeds come within range of the places they died. The lot of a Phantasmus is doubly wretched; small wonder that each one of these Banes is incurably insane.

Storytelling Notes: Phantasmi are a reminder that every action has consequences. These creatures are similar to wraiths, but without as much free will. They are captured forever in the place where they died, or in the rubble that is left of that place. They wait, unable to take any actions until their enemies come to them. They are particularly effective when used at the site of the pack's previous battles, so that the players can slowly realize that they are facing down their previous enemies, back for more.

Ooralath

Khefri Red-Heart stumbled, in human form, into the Penumbral forest. The spirit trees here were gnarled and black, tainted by the proximity of the Firemouth Hive. He crouched low and began breathing in rhythm, focusing all his will to heal the welts across his back.

Turgolkh, *he thought*. That six-breasted bitch. Just like her to decide that hunting a Strider is the best sport of all. *He stood again and cocked his ears back to the plain he'd just left.* Her mistake. Wounded or not, I can outrun her and her pack easily, especially with the head start they've given me. Then I can circle back to the Hive — and, Owl willing, free the others while the slut's hunting party is just giving up. But why did she bring me to the Umbra first? Even she's not that stupid....

Then he heard the clacking, a mad, rhythmless staccato that made his flesh crawl.

"The Ooralath," he whispered to himself as he dropped to all fours, taking on his wolf form. "Damn her. And damn me."

They prowl the desolate places of the Umbra, and where one is found, many more are just within a stone's throw. Mindless Banes for the most part, the Ooralath are nonetheless adept hunters. They almost always attack with the tactical advantage, outnumbering their prey and striking from ambush. Even Garou packs must test their teamwork to the limit to resist an attack by the Hounds of the Wyrm.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

Abilities: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Primal-Urge 4

Rage 5, Gnosis 3, Willpower 7, Power 50

Charms: Airt Sense, Armor (four soak dice, no Power cost), Burrowing*, Embody* (cost: none, this Charm is permanent for the Ooralath)

***Burrowing** — The Ooralath can tunnel through the ground, whether Umbral or physical, as if it were a fish through water. The cost is one Power per turn.

***Embody** — This is almost identical to the Materialize Charm, save that the spirit does not build a physical body; instead, the spirit may take on a "more suitable" combat form in the Umbra by spending Power to build a body, just as if it were creating a physical form.

Image: The Ooralath are shaped something like hounds, but run hunched over, like strange hunting dinosaurs. Their bodies are almost entirely composed of thick, serrated carapace. When they run, the clacking of their claws and armor plates precedes them — they make no other sound.

Background: The Ooralath once had another name, but that name has been long lost. They were once devoted servants of the Weaver, but have one and all been corrupted into Banes. Their near-mindless perseverance, once the trait that allowed them to accomplish great works, is now their most fearsome trait. Once a pack of Ooralath has scented its prey, nothing short of total destruction will slow them.

The process of corruption has had an interesting side effect on the Ooralath — their Weaver-nature has been

changed into static physical forms in the Umbra. They cannot Materialize, but if dragged into the physical world by other means, their forms are as physical as any mortal's.

Storytelling Notes: The Ooralath are implacable, virtually mindless hunters. Although they have no individual creativity or cleverness among them, the hive-mind that each pack shares makes them brutally efficient, and their pack tactics can embarrass — or exterminate — divisive werewolf packs. Garou facing down the Ooralath had better learn the value of strength in unity, or the Hounds of the Wyrm will tear them to shreds.

The Ooralath are especially fond of preying on the lone traveler, and have a decided taste for Net-Spiders. They remain hidden within the ground until the appropriate time — then they burst forth simultaneously, falling on their prey in numbers and ripping their victims to shreds.

Scryer

"Dammit!" Jonathan Longstride punched at the alley wall, heedless of the worried looks of his bloodied, weary packmates. "They knew we were coming! Now Irina's dead, and they'll soon be after us to finish the job!" He whirled and leveled a finger at Elisha Storm-Growl. "Somebody must have warned them of our presence. Well, Shadow Lord, any ideas who it might have been?"

"Your psychoses are showing," the dark-haired homid growled in reply. "I did no such thing, but if you want to damn me with your mad ravings, I will be more than glad to settle this — and the alpha position — here and now."

The two swelled up into Crinos and began to circle one another. A protest began in Tailbiter's throat, but died as Jonathan's low, vibrating growl reverberated through the alleyway.

And from the Penumbra, a small, sickly spirit, mostly eyes and coils, watched the whole scene most carefully from high above the alley.

Scryers are a weak type of Bane whose only apparent purpose is to spy on targets for stronger Banes. They are rewarded with Power, and thus their loyalty is absolute.

Rage 2, Gnosis 7, Willpower 4, Power 30

Charms: Airt Sense, Reform, Report (maintains a mental link to the Scryer's patron for one Power per turn), Scry (costs one Power per scene; allows the Bane to "peek" into the material world and use the Gift: Scent of the True Form to observe those it sees there)

Image: Scryers vary widely in form, but all are thin and fleshy, easily pulled apart if caught. In all cases their eyes are the most distinctive parts of their forms, whether the eyes are beady, bulbous, luminescent, catlike, compound, or what have you. Subjects in the physical realm may not see a Scryer while it peeks at them unless they use either of the Gifts: Pulse of the Invisible or Umbral Sight

Certain Garou with Gnosis of 7 or higher may feel an uneasy feeling of "being watched" when beneath the Scryer's gaze. This unease may become extreme after long periods of time. Garou without the Gifts necessary to find their tormentors may even be driven slowly mad by constant observation. The gaze of a Scryer may tickle, tingle, or even burn one who can feel it, though this is a sensation only and does no physical damage.

Background: A Scryer usually bonds to a particular Bane, exchanging a period of observation for Power. Usually the patron grants the Scryer between five to ten Power for a given task, more if the observation takes place over an extended period of time. However, if the Scryer fails its master in some way, the master may remove five to ten Power from the Scryer's being, possibly destroying it for a time. Some other masters have devised ways to feed Scryers, and many Black Spiral Hives have several Scryers under the wing of their caern's Bane totem.

Storytelling Notes: Scryers are an example of a Bane evolved to fulfill a specific task. They are highly specialized to perform their function, but have few capabilities apart from spying. There are indubitably many other breeds of similarly specialized Banes; the Storyteller is encouraged to create more such creatures to emphasize the manner in which the Wyrm can engineer entire spirit-forms for specific duties. These cowardly Banes have no means of attack, and use their Reform Charm to escape when detected.

Wyrmholes

It made no sense to them. The park was almost free of the Wyrm's taint — as free as any place in an urban sprawl could be, at any rate — and still the Banes kept coming, spilling from the air and rampaging throughout the area. The Ragabash, Laughs at Shadows, was the one who finally thought to look into the Penumbra, and when she came back, all the humor was gone from her expression.

"It's a funnel," she said, her voice shaky and strained. "There's a damned vortex ripping open a hole in the Penumbra, going to Gaia alone knows where, and spilling every kind of monster into the park." As if to prove her point, the air above the swing sets rippled, and a tearing sound erupted even as a swirling mass of cloudy vapors started growing in the sky some dozen feet or so above the ground. The pack backed away slightly, feeling their hackles rise as the gibbering laughter spilled from the air and reverberated across the park's perfect landscaping. Even as they surged into Crinos, the monstrosity started crawling from the Umbra, a dark, bloody miscarriage that shrieked its mirth to the world.

The boundaries between matter and spirit mean little when a Wyrmhole is present. These rare Banes are a danger of paramount levels, for they can birth Banes into the material world by the dozen, releasing the newly physical spirits of pure malice onto whatever — or whomever — is handy.

Rage 0, Gnosis 10, Willpower 0, Power 200

Charms: Gateway*, Possession, Reform

***Gateway:** Gateway allows a Wyrmhole to use the Materialize Charm on other Banes, spending the necessary

Power itself to bring the creatures through. The cost of Materializing any Bane is the same as it would be for that particular Bane to Materialize itself; if the Bane cannot ordinarily Materialize, the Wyrmhole may choose the physical form's parameters itself. When in a mortal host, the Wyrmhole must still keep track of its Power; it regains Power at a rate of one per day when embodied in a host.

Image: When met in the spirit world, Wyrmholes appear as swirling waterspouts made of thin, oily spirit "liquid." As Banes pass through the funnels, the sides of the Wyrmhole swell like a snake swallowing an egg. When these powerful Banes possess mortal hosts, they are relatively subtle; the main differences are usually that the new fomor's surroundings are always rich with static electricity, and the fomor's eyes become swirling pools of dark indigo.

Background: There was a time when the Gaia Realm was one with the Umbra, before the Weaver spun its maddening webs across the universe and divided the physical from the spiritual. In response, the Wyld created spirit doorways to the Wyrm's myriad lairs in the Umbra — all the better to let the creatures of Balance walk between the worlds as needed. Unfortunately, the Wyrm was no longer a force for Balance. Now the Wyrmholes are nothing more than powerful chess pieces at the Corrupter's fingertips.

In some cases, Wyrmholes form in the air, or in the water, leaving a portal for the Wyrm's minions — a one-way door back to the Gaia Realm and the places tainted by humans. More often they find a host, a person or animal that welcomes the power they bring and gains a certain amount of control over whatever spills forth from them. In times long past, there were few of these walking disasters. They're growing more common all the time, and they inevitably lead to disaster.

Storytelling Notes: Wyrmholes are dangerous in the extreme. In the best of cases, where they simply form, these rifts in the Gauntlet are open invitations for the Wyrm's minions. In the more common cases, where they possess a mortal, that human gains phenomenal power over the creatures drawn through its Gateway. The Banes summoned in this way are often inclined to obey the amalgam of Bane and flesh, because as long as the Wyrmhole is available, they can reenter the Gaia Realm without expending any of their own Power. Those possessed by Wyrmholes are always willing victims, and sometimes develop further fomori powers as a result of the merger.

Wyrm Elementals

The following elementals are the Gafflings of the Elemental Wyrms (see Chapter One). They are found throughout the Umbra, although they tend to seek safety in numbers around Blights, Hellholes and other "safe zones." As with most other elementals, particularly Gafflings, these Banes have little by way of individual personality — but are downright dangerous in droves.

Hoglings (Smog)

These appears as thick clouds of noxious fumes, rolling ominously over their targets. They are usually bluish in color, and the occasional facial feature is visible in their roiling forms.

Rage 8, Gnosis 7, Willpower 3, Power 40

Charms: Airt Sense, Create Wind, Reform, Updraft

Furmlings (Balefire)

These appear as sickly luminous blobs of napalmlike gel. They glow with an irradiated, flickering phosphorescence and dart about like insane fireflies.

Rage 10, Gnosis 5, Willpower 5, Power 30

Charms: Airt Sense, Blast Flame

H'rugglings (Sludge)

Possibly the most nauseating Banes alive, H'rugglings appear as rolling piles of raw sewage, with a stench to match. They constantly leave trails behind themselves, making them easy — if revolting — to track.

Rage 3, Gnosis 5, Willpower 9, Power 40

Charms: Umbraquake

Wakshaani (Toxins)

These appear as sheets of purplish fluid with blotches, veins and bubbling warts, continually shifting and changing. Wakshaani rear up and wash over their prey like sails in the wind.

Rage 7, Gnosis 7, Willpower 3, Power 40

Charms: Blighted Touch, Flood

The Monsters

There are... other things that lurk below the earth's surface. Back when the Changing Breeds were young, the Wyrm corrupted many of the species that were on Gaia's face. Some of these creatures have survived over the millennia, and occasionally they surface again. Although they move quietly and never in great numbers, the Garou know that when the Apocalypse's final battles begin, the earth will split open and all the Wyrm's monstrous creations will rush into battle.

Sometimes the Black Spiral Dancers manage to appease these creatures, feeding them captives in return for the great beasts' services. Some say this is because the Dancers know the route to the ancient, long-forgotten cities far below the earth, where these monsters writhe and spawn and await the call to the Last Battle.

Using Monsters

Generally speaking, monsters are the tools of outright terror. They are the least subtle of the Wyrm's minions (for the most part), and tend to frighten through sheer might and

revulsion rather than gut-churning horror. Not that there's anything wrong with that, of course; sometimes subtlety isn't the preferable tactic. Monsters, simply put, should not be — they're things that have somehow remained hidden from humanity throughout the centuries, foul aberrations that exist at the fringes of civilization, secretly preying on the unlucky. Still, they make for highly effective terror sequences, particularly when the Garou realize that the universe that allows these creatures to exist is a universe in trouble.

Blood Vines

They'd set up camp far from the city, content to escape from the noise, the chaos and the ever-present pressures of the regular work day. Alan and Jenny were planning to have a great week with the kids, regardless of what might come their way. Summer was coming to a close all too soon, and then it would be time to resume the mind-numbing workloads of the real world.

Everything was going beautifully until little Joey found the vines. Before he could so much as scream, the plants wrapped around him and forced their way in into every opening on his body. He died thrashing, every fiber of his body violated and torn apart. If he moved a little stiffly when he came back to camp, no one noticed. No one thought anything was unusual until the vines moved through the darkness and found them one by one. Three days later the family was back in their own neighborhood. Five days later the bodies were found, ruptured and emptied of all but their bone and cartilage. By then the Wilsons down the street were playing host to the vines — and already looking toward their next-door neighbors for sustenance.

Blood Vines are quasi-sentient predators who must feed on the living. They exist solely to eat and multiply. Each person who becomes a victim to a Blood Vine is consumed from within, their meat and fluids used to produce more of the vines in an exponential feeding frenzy.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Brawl 3, Survival 1

Willpower 2

Health Levels: 0, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -3, -4, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Insinuate (Strength +3)

Powers: Seeding*

***Seeding** — When a Blood Vine takes over a host, they "possess" the host by forcing themselves into the flesh. Once inside, they do their best to imitate the normal life of their victims, waiting for the time when they can send out the rapidly growing offshoots of their form to feed on others. Though the actual seeding process takes several days, there is no physical change in the appearance of the victims, as new vines grow to fill in the space vacated by consumed body mass. More than one Blood Vine can possess a host at one time, leading to some rather unpleasant surprises for anyone who encounters the host. Freed from a host body, Blood Vines attack with their entwining tendrils. Should they manage to enshroud a victim, they will then work on burying themselves inside the person's body and multiplying. When attacking through a host, most vines can do little more than punch, kick and bite with all the skill of a five-year-old child.

Image: When found in the wilds, or in a city dump, the Blood Vines look very much like kudzu. The only noticeable difference to the naked eye is the long, thin, flexible thorns growing on the vines themselves. The texture of these vines, however, is more akin to that of raw meat. Their hosts can pass easily for human, save for some stiffness of movement, until the vines have completely devoured them from within.

Background: Few Garou have encountered Blood Vines, and even the most world-wise Silent Strider would be hard-pressed to recount many tales of the horrid things. Some say that the Blood Vines were once more populous, but that they were nearly destroyed long ago. It seems likely that somehow, some clippings were preserved and finally raised into full flower again.

During the five days it takes for vines to incubate, their hosts are very noticeably not themselves. The vines do their best to mimic human actions, but they can only go through the motions and remember the simplest things from the host's life. Anything the host can do by rote, the vines can manage.

Storytelling: Blood Vines aren't very powerful individually, but they are hard to kill and tend to multiply at a frightening rate. In a matter of a few weeks the Blood Vines could conceivably overrun and decimate a small town, gleefully seeking bigger and better bounties. Should even one of these Wyrmlings escape an active attempt to destroy them, the cycle begins anew.

Heart Eaters

The December air was frigid, but he hardly felt the cold. She would be there soon, and he could once again hold her in his arms, feel her sweet, warming touch and forget the pain of the day. Her smile alone was enough to make him feel ten years younger and holding her hand drained the tensions from him as nothing else could.

She called his name, and he turned to look at her, feeling the quickening of his pulse, the almost overwhelming flood of emotions that came to him whenever they met. Their affair was a secret, one he kept from his wife and from everyone else. She was the only person alive who knew about his investigation of Pentex, the only one in the world he knew he could trust.

As he moved toward her he couldn't help smiling, feeling awkward as a teenager in her presence. She always did that to him. She spread her arms in invitation, and it was all he could do to avoid running to reach her. Her soft, warm skin felt so right, as if she were designed only to please him. Her delicate arms wrapped around his waist and her sweet, perfect face rested against his chest. Even as he settled into the comfort of the hug, his fingers dimly registered the slit in her skin, running from her neck to the seam of her low-cut dress. "Leah? Honey? Are you alright?"

Her voice was much deeper than it should have been, and the warmth of her body suddenly seemed far too hot. "I'm perfect, darling." He tried to pull back, but the tentacles erupting from the growing wound in her back prevented his escape. Searing pain ran the length of his wrists, where serpentine coils held him trapped. "I've never been better."

Heart Eaters feed on terror. They thrive on the fear inherent in every pure emotion, just as surely as they consume the flesh of their victims. Their favorite means of generating their chosen emotional repast is by using the object of affection in the ultimate act of betrayal.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Empathy 5, Expression 4, Subterfuge 5, Performance 5, Culture 4, Investigation 4, Politics 3

Rage 5, Gnosis 8, Willpower 7

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Strength +3 bite, Strength –1 tentacle lash, Strength +1 sting (see below)

Powers: Body Barbs, Clean Scent*, Empathy*, Extra Limbs, Sting*

***Clean Scent** — By spending one Gnosis per scene, the Heart Eater can hide its Wyrm-taint from detection.

***Empathy** — With a Wits + Empathy roll (difficulty 5), the Heart Eater can discover not only whom their victim loves passionately, but if the object of the victim's desire feels the same way. By consuming their prey's heart and brain and spending two Gnosis, the Heart Eater can successfully impersonate their victim.

***Sting:** The Heart Eater can inject a powerful toxin into an enemy, paralyzing their foe unless the target successfully makes a Stamina roll against a difficulty of 9. The toxin in the sting lasts for one scene.

Image: When a Heart Eater is removed from its borrowed skin, it appears so hideously malformed that only the most charitable — and strong-stomached — observer could classify it as human. However, it is extremely flexible, and can thusly easily fit into a more "comfortable" image....

Background: Using their gift of empathy, Heart Eaters discover and prey on people who expect to meet with their lovers. When their victims are dead, they consume the brain and the heart, using a crude divination to find the identity of the lover they were to meet. Finally, they flay their victims and wear the skins as outer costumes, contorting their bodies to fit perfectly. The false skin is flawless, seamless, until the time when the Heart Eater chooses to reveal itself. In some cases the charade lasts for hours or even weeks before the Heart Eater reveals itself.

The empathic nature of the creatures allows them to choose the best time for generating the maximum sense of fear and betrayal. In most cases, the Heart Eater leaves its second victim alive, allowing the bitterness it plants within them to grow into something far worse than would have existed otherwise. Anger, frustration, emotional devastation: All are part of the Heart Eater's duties to Empress Aliara, the Countess of Desire. Each betrayal leads the devastated human one step closer to her domain, and one step closer to the Wyrm.

Storytelling Notes: Though Heart Eaters are capable of fighting, they are cowardly. They prefer to cause emotional damage to an enemy, rather than actually engage in physical conflict. In cases where the victim is human, the Heart Eaters often reveal themselves and kill the target of their emotional onslaught, but only as a last resort. Their main purpose is to corrupt, not kill. A few people have suffered from repeated visits by Heart Eaters, gradually driving them mad. Garou are even more popular for such repeat treatment, although being deceived by a Heart Eater is often enough to keep a person from ever becoming romantically close to someone again. Heart Eaters often choose supernatural targets as their secondary victims, knowing that the pain of betrayal often strikes more deeply with those who suffer from the separation of themselves from most of humanity.

Skull Pigs

Thunder-Throat coughed and spat blood on the forest floor, his lupine senses still reeling. Who could have expected prey such as that? The taste was like fire — no, not fire, because fire was clean. The creature's meat was poison. Tusks as long as his Homid foot, eyes that weren't visible back in the thing's sockets — that wasn't an animal. That was a monster, a Bane made flesh.

His head snapped up. A crashing sound, and coming nearer too damn fast. More than one — the things were trying to surround him! Thunder-Throat quickly considered turning Homid and climbing a tree — no, that wouldn't work. The things looked like they could uproot any tree he could get up in time.

The question was suddenly moot. Four of the pony-sized boars burst from the foliage, so close to simultaneously that they had to have planned it. Their immense white skulls bobbed and weaved as they skidded to a stop. Then one of them — Thunder-Throat realized with a start that it had some kind of patterns gnawed into its flanks, like ritual scarring — took a step forward, and executed what looked like, for all the world, a mocking bow.

Then the roars and squeals and howls began.

The Skull Pigs are eaters of carrion who draw sinister strength from their practices. They can subsist on flesh or garbage, even toxic waste (a favorite). However, they also dig through graveyards seeking human bones, devouring them to regain their Rage. When they eat bones tainted by the Wyrm, though, the Pigs gain a malevolent intelligence that makes them all the more dangerous.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 8, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 0 (1-5), Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Primal-Urge 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4

Powers: Regeneration (as Garou)

Rage 5, Willpower 3

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Tusks (Strength +3), Body Slam

Image: Skull Pigs are tapirlike creatures that stink of grave-rot. The deathly pale flesh covering their skulls is so thin, and the bone structure so distinctive, that it's easy to get the impression that they have no flesh to their heads at all, only bare skulls.

Background: These things were originally natural animals, large Ice Age relatives of the tapirs and peccaries of prehuman North America. Before the Wyrm's minions were driven from the Americas by the Pure Ones, the seeds of corruption had been planted in these creatures. The result was the Skull Pigs.

The Pigs roam in packs of three to seven or as single elderly males who have been displaced; packs are either families or groups of young males. They litter like pigs, though no witnesses to this are known. If they are able to feed on the bones of a creature tainted by the Wyrm, they gain a twisted sentience, and become much more dangerous. Intelligent Skull Pigs quickly pick up on mysticism, earning them the nickname of "Voodoo Pigs"; they usually have the equivalent of one Gift for every dot of Intelligence they possess. (Storytellers may also adapt Hedge Magic rules from **World of Darkness: Sorcerer** or Thaumaturgy from **Vampire: The Masquerade** to simulate the Pigs' magical powers.)

The flesh of a Skull Pig is poisonous. Any creature biting one must roll Stamina, difficulty 6, or take an aggravated Health Level of damage (Resist Toxin defends against this).

Storytelling Notes: The Pigs almost always attack Garou, but humans often ignore them or think that they saw a normal animal of some kind (this is handled like the Delirium; many Native Americans can see them for what they are). Even ordinary Skull Pigs have a level of animal cunning; however, Voodoo Pigs are decidedly twisted and perceptive. They can smell weakness, and take especial pains to prey on the weak. They are an excellent foil for teaching players not to underestimate even the most simple-seeming threats.

Thunderwyrms

The pack looked at the ruined landscape with expressions somewhere between disgust and fear. The trees of the small forest were devastated, shattered into little more than green wood flinders. The deep scar sunning across the ground looked like the sort of damage most people only see in news footage of a tornado, a long gouge running across the ground, leaving little to prove that anything had ever grown there. The air still stank heavily, a mixed odor like carrion and burnt matches.

Alura Heartbreaker opened her mouth to speak, but was silenced by the sudden movement of the ground beneath her. The



remains of the trees vibrated, lifting from the ground and dropping back down, only to sail into the air again and again in larger leaps. The soil moved beneath the pack's feet, and then a mountain grew in the distance, coming toward them with hideous, unstoppable speed.

The world went mad as the creature finally broke from the soil, heaving its bulk into the air and roaring thunder from a mouth large enough to swallow a school bus. The smell of death blasted through the air, mingled with an odor like sulfur. Alura's screams were drowned by the hideous noise of the creature, but her warning came too late anyway — the spot where Fears-No-Foe had been a moment before was filled with the blubbery bulk of the monster as it slammed back into the ground, taking her packmate with it.

Thunderwyrms are a threat unlike most the Garou face. They are, without doubt, some of the largest of the Wyrm's earthly minions. Massive, pale, bloated things, they move silently beneath the ground, often sleeping for months at a time before the need to eat comes over them and sends them on a quest for food.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Note: The Attributes listed above reflect the statistics for an average (25-foot) Thunderwyrm. All Physical Attributes increase substantially the larger the creatures grow. Grandmother Thunderwyrm is allegedly strong enough to shatter concrete by rippling her skin.

Abilities: Athletics 5, Brawl 5

Rage 6, Willpower 5

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -3, -3, -4, -4, -5, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Bite (Strength +3), Body Slam (Strength — more than three successes indicates the target is pinned under the creature's bulk), Punch (Strength)

Powers: Armor (four extra soak dice), Burrow (as the Garou Gift, but with no Gnosis cost)

Image: Thunderwyrms range in size from merely huge to absolutely gigantic. The most commonly encountered — and presumably the youngest — of these creatures normally range around 30 feet in length, and almost eight feet wide. The largest, and presumably the first, is called Grandmother Thunderwyrm: she spans the length of two football fields, and contains an entire Wyrm caern in her gut. The smallest seen so far was only five feet in length — presumably newly hatched. These pillars of pale gray flesh constantly spill a thick, mucuslike substance from their bodies, and are capable of hiding all traces of their movement through the ground by literally devouring and then defecating the earth through which they move. Thunderwyrms most strongly resemble earthworms with enormous mouths filled with jagged teeth. Some are aquatic and develop bodies more like those of leeches.

Background: According to Uktena lore, the first Thunderwyrms were born from the radioactive soil at the Trinity nuclear test site. Rumor has it that the Thunderwyrms' numbers are rapidly swelling in time for the Apocalypse's final battles. Reports of Thunderwyrm attacks ever increase in frequency — a disturbing sign, given that there are fewer Garou than ever before to encounter them.

Storytelling Notes: Thunderwyrms should be encountered infrequently, and generally in rural areas. Many Thunderwyrms follow trends in their attack patterns: only coming out during a storm, for example, or repeatedly returning to favorite locations. The marks they leave on the ground strongly resemble the patterns left by tornadoes. While their trails leave a very obvious Wyrm-taint, no chemical analysis of their slime or the soil they've consumed shows any indication that the creatures alter the ground they pass through.

These creatures can consume up to 70 times their own weight in vegetation before growing sated. Over half of what they eat is metabolized into making them larger and more dangerous. Their long "sleeps" are actually caused by their bodies breaking down the materials they eat and using them to increase the sheer bulk of the monsters.

Thunderwyrms are perfect for stories where "something" is beginning to terrorize a small farming settlement. The SAD investigators may be checking things out themselves, but if the Garou don't step in, the entire settlement may be devoured by a hungry Thunderwyrm — or its newly-hatched brood. The hunt for the Thunderwyrm can be highly suspenseful, as the tension mounts and finally the Garou are faced with something worse than nightmare.

War Wolves

The night was almost over and Simon sighed heavily. Another hour or two, and he would have to change back to his human form and go to work. Still, he couldn't complain too much. How many people got to relieve the workday's stress by loping through the woods and reveling in the glory of Gaia? When he caught the other wolf's scent, he wagged his tail in pleasure. A chance to meet another Garou, or just another of his lupine cousins? Either way, he looked forward to the encounter.

The strange wolf was standing still in a clearing, as if waiting for Simon — peculiar, because Simon knew he was downwind. He carefully paced into the clearing, his body language respectful of the new wolf, optimistic but cautious. Another strange wolf emerged from the brush — then another, and another — soon, a whole pack was carefully pacing toward him. Okay, *Simon thought*, a territory challenge. Sorry, guys, but we don't want to have a fight.

He opted to make his point the simple way: growing to his full height in Crinos form. The wolves surrounding him began to growl, moving even closer. What? *Simon thought.* This is wrong. Very wrong. They should have bolted.

But instead they slowly rose on their hind legs, and while he watched, they changed...

Now and then things go right for Pentex. Neuro-Dynamic Laboratories has created a monster, and from what they've seen so far they couldn't be more pleased. Using the



genetic material from several captured werewolves, the scientists have created a perfect killing machine. They have no morals, no need to understand their prey, and an appetite for the flesh of Garou that makes them a deadly threat.

Attributes: Strength 4*, Dexterity 4*, Stamina 4*, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

*before modifiers for Crinos or Lupus form

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Primal-Urge 3, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Rage 8, Willpower 6

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Strength +3 Bite, Strength +2 Claw (both aggravated)

Powers: Immunity to Delirium, Regeneration

Image: War Wolves appear to be emaciated, drooling wolves with pelts as varied as any Garou's. In Crinos form, they are rangy and savage. They smell faintly of the Wyrm, and many smell mildly ill. Unfortunately, they smell enough like wolves to be able to work their way close enough to wolf Kin that even when their victims realize the danger, it's too late.

Background: The War Wolves are Pentex's answer to the Garou: genetically altered dogs and wolves with an immunity to the Delirium and the ability to fight on the same level as the Garou. More importantly, they have a very selective diet, and remain constantly hungry until they encounter either Kinfolk or Garou. Only on such a gruesome diet can they satisfy their need to eat and grow strong. Other meat nourishes them, but does not satisfy.

The War Wolves' shapeshifting is mildly mystical in nature, but since the Wolves aren't half spirit like true shapechangers, they can't manage any form other than Lupus or Crinos. They cannot use Gifts, have no Gnosis, and aren't considered werewolves in any way (although they do have the same allergy to silver). In essence, they are very like, but not quite, fomori.

Storytelling Notes: The War Wolves hunt in packs, and their selective diet means that any of these brutes encountered are probably starving. They are the ultimate insult to Garou, a slap in the face to any werewolf proud of her wolf heritage. Worse, they are a very real threat to Garou Kinfolk, who probably won't recognize these "strangers" until it's too late. These monsters can provide several terrifying stories beginning with the Garou finding gnawed bones, realizing what's going on, and finally avenging their fallen Kin.

The First Ronin

Again he'd defied the elders of the sept, and again he'd been punished, sent into the world to contemplate his mistakes. Andy Lerrous, called Fights-with-Anger by the tribe, was furious. So he'd been seen by humans, so what? None of them would remember seeing anything but a bear or a wild dog. He'd been seen by them before and each time it happened, the news reported a wild animal sighting. Humans were weak — they couldn't handle the truth, so their minds made up lies that were more soothing.

As he wandered, his anger turned to frustration and then to regret. He'd been given a mission and he'd accomplished it, but only by breaking the rules. Impatience had led him to attack his target in town instead of waiting for the Pentex courier to go someplace less conspicuous. Perhaps he'd been wrong and the punishment was deserved. Just as quickly as he had the thought, though, he shoved it aside angrily, scolding himself for giving in too quickly.

He was considering going back to the caern and telling the elders where they could shove their judgments when the sound came from his left. A deep, angry growl that sent shivers down his spine. Andy turned in the direction of the noise, only to have it come again, from closer to him, and from his right. He saw the creature as it rose to its full height, almost 12 feet from head to toe. The metis' deathly white skin was covered in ancient, faded tattoos, glyphs that clearly told of how Fights-with-Anger had met his death, facing an enemy that could not be destroyed. A feverish chill of recognition shot through Andy's body. The metis grinned, peeling black lips back from its muzzle, revealing teeth that were silvery in the moonlight.

"Gaia save us all, the legends are true." The whispered words were a half-prayer, but they came too late. Before he could even change shape, the First Ronin was upon him.

All Garou are told the story of the First Ronin, who was also the first metis. The stories claim he was ostracized, banished for the sins his parents committed and sent to live in the wild when he was only a pup. The legends also tell of how he met with the Wyrm, and in gratitude for the friendship the Great Corrupter offered him, allied himself with the enemy of all the Garou hold sacred.

Many think the story is merely a cautionary tale, a reminder that even the metis are Garou and should be accorded a certain level of respect. Those werewolves who walk alone often learn otherwise. The First Ronin is real, and he is among the most powerful Garou ever to walk the earth. The Wyrm took the deformed Ronin into his embrace and taught him how to survive against almost any odds. Still ,the First Ronin prefers to fight against solitary Garou, to test himself in combat again and again in an effort to teach all who would walk alone that there is a penalty for what was done to him so very long ago.

Traits: The First Ronin knows all the Gifts of every tribe to the fourth level. He is always at least as strong as whatever opponent he faces in combat. The Storyteller is encouraged to give a character plenty of warning when the First Ronin is on a character's trail. This creature is fond of tormenting prey, letting them know that he will soon face them in combat and giving them plenty of time to worry about the implications of the coming battle. When encountering more than one Garou, the First Ronin is very fond of hit and run tactics.

Image: The First Ronin stands almost 12 feet in height, and is never seen in any form other than Crinos. His skin is pale white and his body is covered in ancient patterns that bear the name and legend of whichever Garou he faces. His fangs and claws are silver, and the flesh around them is blackened from the burning pain they inflict on him. There is no shred of compassion in the First Ronin's facial expressions, merely a hatred that burns furiously and a need to inflict pain on any werewolf he faces.

Storyteller Notes: The First Ronin is as deadly a foe as any Garou is likely to face. He cannot be killed, though he can be bested. He cannot be captured, though it is possible to escape him. He only ever attacks solitary Garou, though he has been known to mistake isolated members of a pack for other Ronin from time to time.

The First Ronin is ancient, and his Wyrm-corruption is complete. He is a favorite servant of the Wyrm, completely loyal to his master and capable of any atrocity. He does not speak, nor will he willingly communicate with any Garou, save through the tattoos on his body which only state the deeds of his next intended victim and how well they will die in combat.

The Alien

No, not "greys" from Roswell or rubbery H.R. Giger creations — these creatures are examples of things unfathomable even to the wisest scholars of Wyrmish cosmology. They do not gather in Malfeas or rank themselves in the great, corrupt hierarchy; nothing definite can be said about them in the *Chronicle of the Black Labyrinth*. They are an unknown. And in the World of Darkness, it's somehow fitting that nobody has all the answers....

Using the Alien

The appeal of having mysterious, unfathomable entities appear in a chronicle is obvious. People *fear* the unknown, often even moreso than more mundane but no less dangerous threats. The alien is particularly appropriate for groups that have been playing in **Werewolf** games for a long time, and believe they've seen it all. When the players suddenly realize that the creatures they've been tracking down don't match the behavior patterns of anything they've met before; when they find their victimized Kinfolk and don't recognize the strange marks on their bodies; when they realize that the scent their prey leaves behind makes no sense — then they start to worry.

Naturally, alien threats work best with foreshadowing and half-glimpses. The players should have to work hard to catch even a glimpse of their enemies (who might not consider themselves the players' enemies at all), or even to piece together a name or two that might refer to the unknown entities. Keep them guessing, and it will be all the more rewarding.

Admittedly, we could have put more than the following two alien threats in this book — but that might have proved counter-intuitive. After all, players can sneak glimpses at the books, but can't see inside the Storyteller's head (we hope). Use the Inquisitors and Vhujunka as you see fit, but don't dismiss the possibility of creating your own inscrutable menaces. Then those sneaky little players will *really* worry.

Inquisitors

The information came to Listens-To-The-Wind from the best sources he had. Vital information on the chain of command for Pentex, and the best times and places to isolate them. Crucial stuff, data that could help them undercut the megacorporation's influence throughout Europe.

Listens unlocked his Fiat and began to climb inside. The idea of waiting until he got to the caern to alert the elders never even crossed his mind. But before he could sit down and reach the phone, a cold hand grabbed his wrist, yanking his arm back into a painful position. Its skin was black and slightly oily to the touch, rather like cheap plastic. Listens-To-The-Wind looked at the hand and the arm it was attached to with equal parts surprise, anger and pain. He tried pulling free from the grip, but it was too powerful.

He began to focus, to will the change — then a calm, friendly voice that spoke to him and thought better of it. "If you change now, your arm will be shattered. I've done this to others of your kind. The stresses of the metamorphosis, combined with the pressure I've already placed on your wrist and elbow will break your bones like cheap glass. But please, continue if you feel you must. I can wait."

He looked more closely at his uninvited guest and the three identical figures standing behind him. Each was dressed in fine clothes, and each was completely featureless. No eyes, no mouth, no ears, just slight hills and valleys across a featureless plain where the face should be.

"You've come across information that we require," continued the one holding his hand. The mannequinlike figure held out its other hand and Listens watched while long, thin silvery needles slid smoothly from underneath the black, featureless fingertips. "Will you give the information freely? Or will I have to remove what I need to know from your exposed brain?"

Wherever they come from, the Inquisitors have an agenda, and the information they seek is their only apparent goal. The two options when meeting them are simple: talk freely and live, or hide the information and die painfully.

The Inquisitors reek of the Wyrm, though they seem as interested in gathering information on the Corrupter as they do finding out where the minions of the Wyld and the Weaver are located. They express compassion if it fits their goals to do so, but never hesitate to use force to find out what they need to know.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Stamina 6, Charisma 6, Manipulation 6, Appearance 3, Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 6

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 4, Expression 4, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4, Drive 4, Etiquette 4, Firearms 4, Melee 4, Leadership 4, Performance 4, Repair 4, Stealth 4, Survival 4, Computer 4, Enigmas 4, Investigation 4, Law 4, Linguistics 4, Medicine 4, Occult 4, Politics 4

Rage 5, Gnosis 5, Willpower 10

Powers: Armor (four soak dice), Control Electrical Systems (Cost: 1 Gnosis), Cyber-Senses (As the Glass Walker Gift), Mind Probe*

***Mind Probe** — In the case of the Inquisitors, Mind Probes involve actually inserting several metallic filaments into the skull of a restrained victim and literally draining knowledge from the target's brain. Each turn the Inquisitor spends 1 Gnosis and rolls Wits + Enigmas

against a difficulty equal to the target's Willpower. Each success removes several years of memories from the victim as well as stealing away one dot of Intelligence. It's possible to retrieve the lost Intelligence and even most of the memories given several days of rest and mystical healing — at least for Garou and other characters capable of regeneration. Any memories permanently lost are at the discretion of the Storyteller.

Image: Inquisitors are silent, save when asking questions. They are without faces and have no distinguishing marks aside from their expensive clothing and the jet-black skin that covers every part of them not concealed by cloth. Tall and slim, the Inquisitors come in two shapes, roughly male and almost female.

Background: The Inquisitors are an unknown quantity in the equations of the Triat. Everything about them suggests they belong to the Weaver, but they are very heavily tainted by the Wyrm. Pentex is very interested in them, and desperately wants to know who is behind these faceless creatures. So far they've managed to locate and torture over 50 Pentex agents, at least seven Garou and one Corax. Whatever their agenda might be, they've yet to reveal it to anyone.

Storytelling Notes: The Inquisitors are meant as an unknown threat; who they work for and their final agenda are fully unclear. Although their constant quest for information has its own chilling implications, you are encouraged to devise a motive for the Inquisitors best fitting your chronicle's themes.

Vhujunka

"But why?" The albino werewolf slunk slowly on his belly towards the balefire pit where the elder sat, huddled near the warmth. "Why can we not open the tunnel again? Such things as we could find—"

"Nobody goes down that tunnel," the eyeless elder breathed. "Nobody." He extended one arm and held it close to the balefire. In the greenish light, strange scars were visible — weird patterns of scar tissue that gathered in whorls and blotches. "It serves us nothing to be taken by... them..." His skin twitched, horselike. "Nothing. Throw away your life in service to your Father if you must, but do not go there."

The youngling exhaled, a half gasp and half pant. "What did this to you?"

The elder Dancer shook his blind head. "I could not tell you if I wanted to. Even their name has no meaning to us...."

The Vhujunka are a race of humanoid creatures who live far below the surface of the Earth. Their goals are unknown, but they apparently serve the interests of the Wyrm. Even the Black Spiral Dancers, masters of the underground tunnels, know almost nothing about them. The Vhujunka apparently compel many Banes into their service — and no Bane can be persuaded to reveal the secrets of this race to outsiders.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 6, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Firearms (rod-like devices) 4, Repair 2, Stealth 2, Torture 3, Enigmas 5, Investigation 4, Linguistics 2, Medicine 5, Occult 4, Science 5

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Resources 5

Gifts: Mindspeak, Mindblock

Gnosis 9, Willpower 10

Powers/Equipment: Pseudopodia (variable, based upon the shape taken; damage is not aggravated), bite (sharp, dagger-like teeth; Str +2), many carry laser or electrically charged rod-like devices.

Fetishes: Some carry the most bizarre of fetishes, a combination of both weird science and magic, including strange medical devices and bizarre electrically-charged, organic-looking armor.

Image: These things seem like extremely tall, thin, robed humans from a distance — but only from a distance. They have no eyesockets, and their faces are little more than gaping mouths full of rows of huge teeth. Their skin is slightly purplish, and their many-fingered hands have entirely the wrong number of joints.

The Vhujunka "see" through a means not understood by outsiders — a sort of psychic awareness. It allows them to operate when in their underground lairs as if they had sight, but this ability sometimes fails them on the surface, so they take "seeing-eye" Banes with them when they travel "above" on their rare, unfathomable missions. Beneath their robes are three large orifices, one on the back, and two that reach from the sides to the front. These orifices can be opened to reveal a large yellowish-opaque viscous blob of luminescent protoplasm. The Vhujunka excrete this substance naturally, and use it as their primary energy source. It gives off light, it may be reingested, and it may be used as a tool or weapon. The Vhujunka are able to control the substance as if it was ectoplasm, using it to create pseudopodia which can be altered into any number of shapes and sizes.

Background: The Vhujunka are a race which live far far below the surface world in elaborate cities constructed by unknown means. These cities exist only in the nightmares and firelight tales of the Garou. The Vhujunka's morals are incomprehensible, and their thought patterns alien to all but the most insane (or is it enlightened?) of homids. The Vhujunka have complex technologies, some superior and some inferior to that of the surface world. None can say what their actual society is like — those who are carried away by the Vhujunka are never seen again.

Storytelling Notes: The Vhujunka are virtually noiseless, communicating only through telepathy, and usually overlook humans and Garou as if they were not present. If provoked, however, the Vhujunka act quickly and efficiently. They are methodical by nature, and do not appear to register emotions. While few ever see the surface, those that do have unknown missions. They have never been known to work with Pentex or the Black Spiral Dancers, but they do excise considerable power over certain Banes. They also have the power to create bizarre fomori through *most* freakish medical and chemical treatments.

The Fallen

Sadly enough, in the World of Darkness the people (or "people") with the most opportunity to follow their own roads are the supernaturals, the beings with enough individual power to take control of their destinies. Of course, even for them, it's not that easy. There are the pressures of the various hidden societies, from the vampiric princes and sects to the high courts of the changelings. There are responsibilities and rivals, tasks and new enemies. It's not surprising, then, that some of these individuals soon discover that a new benefactor is quietly waiting to offer them all the power they require — in return for a little loyalty.

Certain members of these supernatural groups need not even be knowingly in the Wyrm's service, even by any name. The Wyrm doesn't ask that the vampires bow down and worship it — their usual pastimes of hunting, seducing and murdering are more than satisfactory. The Cultist of Ecstasy who's a little too enamored of forbidden pleasures might never notice the cloud of Banes that swarms to him whenever he "breaks in" a new sex partner. In fact, the Garou who discover that their latest acquaintance is tainted by the Wyrm might be quite confused — not only do they not know what deeds this person has done to merit such a taint, but the subject probably doesn't know herself!

After all, few people following their own rules think of those rules as "wrong"....

Using the Fallen

Unlike fomori, Banes, monsters or alien spirits, fallen supernaturals should hold a certain extra element of horror for Garou. These are individuals on the werewolves' own level, many of whom might have proven allies had things turned out otherwise. They can challenge Garou on a more-or-less equal position of power and use their influence to make life hell on Gaian werewolves. Worst of all, they are proof that nobody is immune to the blandishments of the Wyrm.

"There, but for the grace of Gaia, go I...."

Obviously, one of the great lures of using fallen supernaturals is the potential to run crossover games. That devilish Nosferatu who nonetheless struggles to retain his mortal sensibilities might prove to be a dangerous but useful ally against the greater threat of a Sabbat/Black Spiral Dancer mixed pack. If the players know most of the tricks in the Dancers' bags, they might be rewardingly startled by the virtually limitless enchantments a Nephandi cabal can throw at them. A little variety goes a long way, after all; used sparingly and to taste, the touch of other supernaturals can vitalize a chronicle in surprising ways.

(Just remember that familiarity breeds contempt; it's awfully easy for a play group to say, "Oh, gee, another morally gray Tremere seeking help against a demonic Tzimisce, huh?")

Fallen Shapeshifters

Obviously, the most poignant example of any fallen supernatural being is that of the Wyrm-ridden shapechanger. Once a proud servant of Gaia, the fallen shapeshifter is a traitor to her Mother, to her Kin, and to her entire race. Sadly enough, no Changing Breed can boast of complete purity — there have been traitors to all.

The Storyteller can no doubt think of countless possibilities for Wyrm-serving shapeshifters. The Garou alone boast certain cannibal Ronin and the twisted Skin Dancers as individual examples. Many a Bastet has offered up her soul in exchange for greater and more powerful secrets, and a handful of the dying Gurahl have surrendered to desperation and hatred. The Ratkin and Ananasi no longer give allegiance directly to Gaia, and many have stumbled along their darkened paths. Mokolé and Rokea alike have fallen to Beast-of-War, and even a tiny number of Nuwisha have abandoned the Trickster's path to laugh mournfully at the decay of the universe.

Turning to the Wyrm is generally an individual process for most Changing Breeds. Only the Garou have an entire tribe of fallen members, a tribe that has become its own society. The only other society of fallen shapeshifters is formed from the recipients of spirit eggs stolen from the Corax and corrupted. These poor, rare creatures are detailed below.

Vampires

The hatred between the Kindred and the Garou is legendary. It has kept the vampires inside the cities throughout the centuries, with only the strongest or most foolish daring to travel to new locations. The vampires themselves have no idea why the "Lupines" hate them so much, but presume that it must have something to do with ancient slights between the elders of both races. Considering the centuries-old rivalries between their own clans, it hardly seems impossible. What's more, the vampires work to expand the cities in order to have more "cattle", and the territorial werewolves resist such expansion. Simple enough.

Garou know differently. Vampires are intrinsically "of the Wyrm," the bastard children of Beast-of-War (who granted them the "gift" of frenzy) and Eater-of-Souls (who kindly gave them their hunger). Worse, some stink even of the Defiler Wyrm — a taint not inborn, but acquired. Interestingly enough, some vampires have freed themselves of much of their taint, although it seems to be only a matter of time before they give in.

There are a few vampires with attention toward the spiritual — warlocks and sorcerers who use their blood magic to tap into the Umbra's power. Even though such vampires reject the idea of being created with some "Wyrm's"



talons in their breasts, they invariably are answered by Banes, the only spirits willing to deal with the walking dead.

In the end, there are only a few vampires who acknowledge the Wyrm's existence and willingly serve it. However, the vast majority of Leeches are unwittingly under its thumb, and lack the spiritual fortitude to do anything about it. They are thematic examples of how even the least spiritual being can serve the Enemy on a wholly mundane level; the Garou would do well to be wary of them.

Mages

Most mages, enlightened though they claim to be, have no real perception of the Triat and its influence. Hermetic scholars note that the universe seems to be governed by the forces of dynamism, stasis and entropy, but scoff at the notion that any of these forces have any sort of guiding philosophy. Only the Dreamspeakers know enough of the spirit world to recognize the corruption that crawls throughout the Realms — and they are few enough.

Mage antagonists, therefore, are usually opponents of circumstance, draining caerns to suit their own purposes rather than in the Wyrm's name. The wizards are dangerously self-interested, and each one pursues an individual agenda to his or her fullest.

The exception, of course, is the Nephandi.

Nephandi are sorcerers as bloody and corrupt as the worst Black Spiral Dancer. In many ways, they are even worse — each Nephandus deliberately chose to surrender his soul in the name of power, enlightenment and gratification. They honor poisonous Masters with many masks; the rituals of a Nephandus may range from diseased shamanism to amoral pseudo-science. Some even acknowledge the presence of the Wyrm itself, and attain positions of power with its minions' ranks. Whenever a Nephandus is involved, you should do your best to emphasize the most terrifying aspects of her calling — that she is potentially more powerful than any Garou, that her power defies Gaia herself, and that she chose this path deliberately and knowingly, for whatever dark reasons she cares to admit.

Wraiths

Wraiths think like people, for the most part. They have an excuse — they were once human themselves, and in many ways are still the most human of all the supernaturals. As a result, few are interested in the "greater picture" of spirituality, at least unless it has something direct to offer them. Otherwise, the chains of regret and longing are the only real motivation the average wraith knows.

However, the Wyrm's fangs are deep within each ghost in the Dark Umbra. Wraiths fall by the thousand, becoming the dark entities known as Spectres. These creatures are virtually Banes in their own right, retaining only the worst and most vile aspects of their former personalities, and surrendering themselves to the vast Spectral hive-mind. As such, they are the footsoldiers of the entropic, apparently quite malevolent force that the wraiths know as Oblivion.

A dead rose by any other name....

The Spectres most likely to interact with Garou are usually former victims, people whose hatred and lust for revenge didn't let them pass on to another fate. Whether they served the Wyrm or not in life, their loathing for the Garou certainly puts them in the camp of the Enemy now. Used properly, these invisible, implacable foes can make life hell for the Garou — and death might not even be an escape.

The Fae

The fae are creatures of dreams. They have very tenuous ties to the spirit world as the Garou know it, but very strong ties to mortal hopes, dreams — and nightmares. Although creatures of the Wyld first and foremost, some fae find themselves influenced by the horrific dreams the Wyrm visits on humanity. They are very circumstantial pawns — with a few exceptions.

The Shadow Court, one of the more sinister societies of changelings, sometimes allies with Black Spiral Dancers; however, this is an alliance of convenience rather than common goals, much like the Dancers' ties with the vampiric Sabbat.

More worrisome is the apparently ancient cooperation between the Unseelie noble house of Balor and the Wyrm's legions; the fae have ancient legends of their ancestors making war on an entire race of fomori, and House Balor apparently is readying to provoke a second war. The Balor fae seem to have an understanding of fomori (and how to create them) that would make Project Iliad frankly envious — add to that the rumors of Balor fae mingling their blood with that of the British Black Spiral Dancers, and it would seem that the Wyrm has a very solid foothold on the creatures of nightmare.

Carrion Crows

Sometimes we get careless, kid. We get cocky. We think that because we watch everyone else, there can't be anyone else watching us. Makes sense, right? I mean, if we know where everyone is, we know where the people trying to keep an eye out for birdies are. Unfortunately, there's one group of folks out there who can match us, move for move and trick for trick. We don't like to talk about 'em much, 'cause we honestly don't like admitting the bastards exist. Every single one that does, you see, is a slap in the face to Raven and to Helios. Every single one is walking, talking, breathing, bullshitting evidence that one of us screwed the pooch — and on the most important duty that any one of us can have.

Still don't get it, kid? Let me put it in short words and simple sentences. The only guys out there who can spy on us, are us. The only bird who can catch a Corax is another Corax.

Christ, were you dropped on your head when you were born, or did you do it to yourself because you liked the feeling? I'm talking about members of the breed who have gone over to the

other side. Quislings. Traitors. Spirit eggs that got stolen and hatched out where the Bad Things live, so that the poor bastards come back to earth full of Wyrm-stuff and hatred. They've got most of our tricks, and a few of their own, and they're not shy about using them.

On anyone.

Including us.

Raven's Lost Children

Most wereravens follow a fairly straightforward lifecycle. Picked for Breed status at birth, they find themselves bound to a spirit egg in a ritual. As they mature, the egg slowly cracks, releasing the very essence of Coraxness which then infuses the nascent wereraven's soul. When the egg hatches completely, the freshly minted Corax undergoes the First Change and then takes her place among the ranks of the Breed.

Creating a spirit egg takes a great deal out of the "parent" Corax; so much so that few wereravens produce more than one in a lifetime. The Corax rightly see the eggs as the most precious part of their heritage, and guard them fiercely. To be granted guardianship of a spirit egg is to be given one of the highest tokens of respect one Corax can earn. No Corax takes the responsibility lightly, and when an egg is threatened, even the normally flighty wereravens fight beak and claw to protect their own. Even if three or four Corax fall in that battle, they consider the price worth it — it drives the point home that the eggs are not easy prey.

But not every defense is successful. Not every guardian upholds his trust. And sometimes, just sometimes, the Enemy's minions get lucky, find a spirit egg's hiding place, and steal it.

Deleterious Effects

The impact of the theft of a spirit egg is immediate and profound — but not at all positive. As the thieves — usually Black Spiral Dancers — carry their prize back to Malfeas, the spiritual connection between the egg and its soulmate attenuates, frays and ultimately snaps. The soul originally tied to the egg suffers the most. At the moment the spiritual thread breaks, the human or raven linked to the egg suffers tremendous backlash. Most go incurably catatonic; many die.

The impact on the egg is less visibly dramatic, though no less serious. The broken connection leaves a spiritual wound in the very substance of the egg, which starts dissipating immediately. If the process goes on long enough, the Corax-stuff simply wafts away, leaving an empty shell. That's the best-case scenario.

The worst case involves the thieves returning with the Egg to Malfeas. Once there, the egg is placed in a so-called birthing pit with a stolen human infant. The wounded egg and the child are placed in the pit in preparation for still further degradation.

If a suitable human and a still-functioning Spirit Egg are brought together, the next step is the Rite of the Broken Wing. This mockery of the Rite of the Fetish Egg allows the Black Spiral Dancers performing the rite to bind the wounded egg to a new host. The actual rite is relatively short, but does necessitate that the leader of the rite take a bird and systematically shatter every bone in its left wing before the final binding can take place. Any bird will do, but the insult to Raven is greater if a raven — or a captive Corax — is used.

If the rite goes poorly, the egg's essence fades away and the mortal child dies. If the rite goes well, however, the egg and the child are bound together in a travesty of what a Corax should be. While human and raven essences still combine in this faux-Corax, the combination of the forced joining and the loss of whatever essence leaked from the egg before the rite was enacted produce a beast that is lacking certain of the essential qualities of a Corax. Such a monster is called a Buzzard or a Scab by true Corax, when the Corax deign to speak of them at all.

Growing Up Scabby

The Rite of the Broken Wing has another unfortunate effect: It triggers the Buzzard's First Change instantly. As the pseudo-Corax is invariably no more than two or three years old, the shock of the change and the flood of raven essence drive the Buzzard mad. The twisted upbringing the creature then receives, either on Malfeas or under the tutelage of Black Spiral Kinfolk on earth, doesn't help matters. The young monster is trained in the arts of subterfuge and sabotage, observation and assassination. In a parody of true Corax fashion, Buzzards learn to operate solo.

Young Scabs are also taught whatever their mentors know of Corax lore, signs and customs. This is not so much to help the Buzzard to blend in with other Corax — let's face it, even the dumbest Corax in the world is going to figure out something's up when the poor "lost soul" opposite him starts barfing up worms — but to allow the spy to interpret what intelligence he can, and to help him to predict his prey's actions.

Buzzards are turned loose by their families and mentors in their late teenage years, and given *carte blanche* to uncover what they can. Sharing the Corax compulsion to yammer, Buzzards report everything they've seen to whatever other servants of the Wyrm they find. Occasionally less-balanced Buzzards will just blurt out everything they know to anyone they meet; the occasional street corner preacher ranting

Physiology

Buzzards have the same basic construction as do homid Corax — the same addiction to shiny things, the same hollow bones, and so on. The one advantage they don't have is that Raven's turned his back on them, and as such they don't get the benefits of his patronage.

about Armageddon is actually a Buzzard relating everything he's seen.

However — Buzzards are, underneath it all, still Corax. They're not Banes and haven't danced the Black Spiral. They're just hideously twisted, psychologically tortured Corax. They still have Gnosis, Renown and whatnot; they're just working for the enemy.

What's Missing?

Buzzards are the spiritual equivalent of a soufflé made by a chef with no sense of precision. All of the ingredients are there, combined in more or less the proper order, but the lack of care and patience inevitably dooms the result.

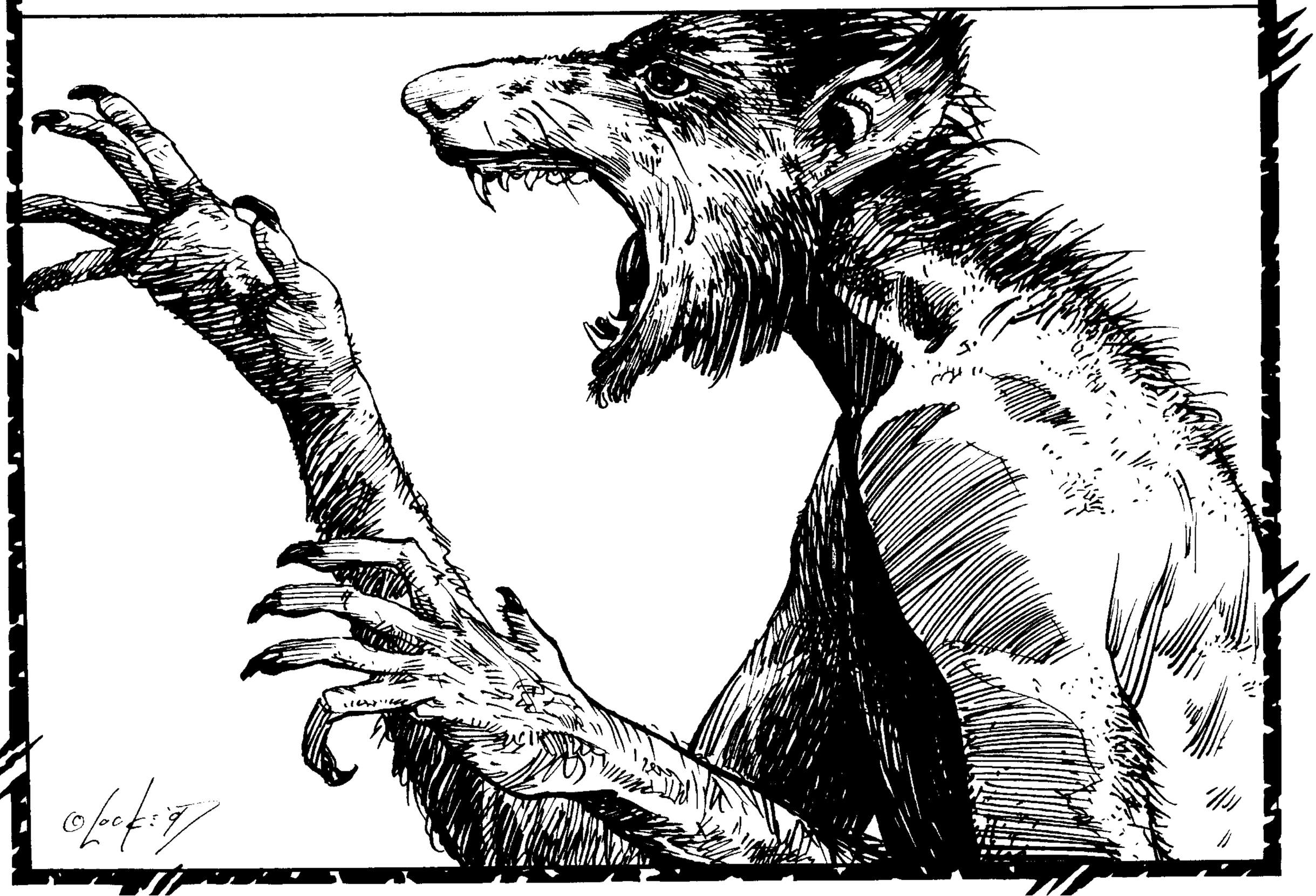
The whole point of Raven's creation of Corax is a gradual melding of two of the strongest personalities in the animal kingdom — human and raven. The long process of the spirit egg's hatching allows the two to come to terms with one another and to blend harmoniously. The Rite of the Broken Wing doesn't allow for that sort of blending, however. It forces the two aspects of the nascent Corax together, placing them in direct conflict rather than harmonious union. As a result, Buzzards are usually a tangle of nervous tics and inappropriate mannerisms, as one nature constantly attempts to subvert the other. Furthermore, Buzzards are always ungainly in both flight and gait, walking like a bird and flying like a human, so to speak. They're also prone to violent outbursts of temper, alternating fits of rage, depression and euphoria.

Lookers

While there are no true metis among the Corax, there are persistent rumors of sightings of such beasts by Garou and others. What these unfortunate observers are seeing, however, are not metis wereravens, but rather the poor, Wyrm-tainted spawn of the birthing pits. Such Corax often exhibit some of the "classic" signs of metis status, including incomplete transformations or a total lack of feathers. Other Buzzards manifest more Bane-like properties, such as rotting flesh, warts, extraneous fleshy growths or even occasional attacks of worms. The average Buzzard, however, has tatty feathers and often leaves some behind after each transformation. In human form Buzzards are tall, lanky and arthritic-looking; most have protruding eyes and noses, not to mention bony shanks and a generally skeletal appearance.

Bad Habits

A Buzzard's most important job is to spy. In other words, he watches the watchers, sees what they've dug up that's interesting, and passes along the news. To be honest, Black Spiral Dancers and others who work with Buzzards aren't so much interested in what the Corax are doing, per se. Rather, they want to know how much the Corax have uncovered of what they themselves are doing — how much of their plans are known to the enemy, in essence. To that end, Buzzards follow Corax, tap lines of Corax communications, eavesdrop as much as possible on Parliaments and most impor-



tantly, create online personae for themselves that they attempt to insinuate into Corax virtual communication nets. The last was initially a very successful tactic, though true Corax have started mounting countermeasures involving Gifts picked up from Glass Walkers.

The second most important function the Buzzards serve involves breaking up Corax operations. Under that broad rubric can be found activities as diverse as planting false signals along well-traveled Umbral pathways (It's not that hard to turn the glyph meaning "Slaughter" into the one for "Party," for example), inciting disruptions of Parliaments (chainsawing host trees works well), dropping long-distance ordnance from high altitudes on folks Corax are trying to tail discreetly and so on. Disruptions can also cover anything up to and including assaults on solo Corax. In those situations, the collective term "murder" takes on an entirely different meaning, as a gang of Buzzards can brutalize and kill a lone Corax in a matter of seconds. It's just a matter of organizing enough (since there aren't more than, say, twenty in all the Tellurian at any given time) Buzzards and finding a victim.

Number three on the list of Buzzard priorities is a little freelance spying of their own, doing for the Wyrm what Corax do for Gaia and Helios. That means picking out moots and other, less formal meetings, and just generally snooping around what the Garou and the other breeds are doing. In fact, many of the worst behaviors attributed to Corax by other breeds have in fact been perpetrated by Buzzards, either failing at spying or doing their best to blacken the Corax' name deliberately.

Finally, there is the stunt for which the Corax hate the Buzzards most emphatically. When there's not other pressing business, Scabs poke around the Umbra looking for spirit eggs. Oddly enough, they can't actually touch the eggs — theorists figure it's Raven's vengeance — but they can pick out nests and hiding places, and lead Black Spiral Dancers to an egg's location. While a Corax will always do his level best to put a Buzzard down, a Buzzard found poking around a spirit egg's hiding place is in for a painful and expedient demise.

Rites

The Buzzards are completely cut off from any of the uniquely Corax rites. Helios and Raven (and their attendants) know Scabs for what they are, and will not lend them any assistance. While Buzzards can still pull off just about any rite that a Bane might be able to empower, they don't have access to the Corax' most closely guarded secrets.

On the other hand, they do have a few tricks of their own.

Rite of the Closed Eye (Level One)

Just as true Corax feel compelled to drink secrets out of dead men's eyes, Buzzards prefer to cloud the issue. Their tactics for doing so can be as simple as plucking a corpse's eyes out physically, or as complicated as the Rite of the Closed Eye. Not only does this rite wipe the memory from a cadaver's eye, it also leaves a nasty little booby trap behind. Any Corax attempting to drink from an eye marked with this rite is in for a vicious, and possibly fatal, shock.

System: A lone Buzzard can perform this rite, though it takes a full 15 minutes to do so. By investing a point of Gnosis, the Scab wipes the memory from one of a corpse's eyes (not both) and replaces it with a vision of sheer, gut-wrenching horror. Any Corax drinking from that eye needs to succeed on a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) or be driven temporarily mad with the vision. Victims of this effect are helpless for five minutes, plenty of time for an enterprising ambusher to make short work of them.

Rite of the Lowered Sky (Level Three)

As one of the most important functions the Corax fill is that of aerial surveillance, it only seems natural that their mirror opposites have learned a rite designed specifically to confound them. The Rite of the Lowered Sky, when performed properly, makes tracking from above impossible. In some cases, it even restricts or eliminates the possibility of flight. The Lowered Sky in question is actually a heavy bank of foul-smelling fog, exhaled from sewers, marshes or whatever other miasmic sources are handy, a low-hanging mass of slightly greenish fumes that obscures sight, fouls scent and muffles sound. When the Lowered Sky descends on a city, wise Corax fold their wings and lock their doors. It's a sure sign that there are Buzzards in the vicinity, and that they're out in force.

System: The Rite of the Lowered Sky takes three full hours and the work of four Buzzards to enact. Each must spend at least a point of Gnosis; every additional point after that allows the Lowered Sky to persist for an hour. While the fog remains, all Perception rolls made by non-Wyrm creatures are at +2 difficulty. Furthermore, the stink of the fog will linger on anyone foolish enough to be out in it for a period of two to four days, making it hard to hide from anyone with a good sense of smell.

The Lowered Sky takes an hour to coalesce, starting from the time the rite ends. During that hour, sewers, pools of standing water and other likely sources breathe forth visible vapors, which can be observed thickening into the choking clouds of fog.

Gifts

Buzzards cannot learn the following Gifts: Raven's Gleaning, Truth of Gaia, Word Beyond, Sky's Beneficence, Swallow's Return, Sun's Guard, Helios' Child, Moments of Eclipse or Theft of Stars. However, they more than make up for it with their own Gifts, stolen from or taught by Banes and fallen Bird-spirits.

• **Targeted Heave (Level One)** — A trick swiped from real buzzards, Targeted Heave may well be the most disgusting weapon in the Scabs' arsenal. When cornered or just

feeling ornery, a Buzzard can call upon this Gift and heave up the contents of his stomach — digestive juices and all — at a target up to 10 feet away.

System: The results of this Gift are very similar to the fomori power: Stomach Pumper. The attack does two dice of damage if it hits (Dexterity + Athletics to hit, difficulty 7), but any victim struck must expend a point of Willpower to keep from stopping whatever they are doing and start gagging.

• **Poisoned Flesh (Level Two)** — By calling upon Poisoned Flesh, a Buzzard can taint the meat of a corpse — anything from a roadkill squirrel to a human body — so that it is poisonous. Even a Corax' legendarily tough digestive tract can't do anything with the garbage this gift leaves behind; it's sheer poison.

System: The Buzzard invests a point of Willpower and spits on the target corpse. With a successful Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 7), the corpse is poisoned, and it will remain poisoned until the last bits of flesh are flensed away by the elements. Shapechangers indulging in any portion of a cadaver tainted with this Gift get violently ill for a period of 24 hours unless she succeeds on a Stamina roll (difficulty 9, two successes needed); mortals take three Health Levels of damage. The symptoms include vomiting, dizziness (so flying is out), and occasionally hallucinations. Plus, if she botches the Stamina roll, the unfortunate gourmand smells of the Wyrm for the duration of her sickness.

• **Plague Feather (Level Three)** — Calling upon Plague Feather allows the Buzzard to distill sickness into a single one of his pinfeathers, pluck it, and leave it behind as a trap for the unwary. The first three people to have skin contact with the feather then run the risk of falling terribly ill. Children in particular are vulnerable to Plague Feathers, as they're the most likely to find a big, black shiny feather on the ground an irresistible plaything.

System: Using Plague Feather involves the expenditure of a point of Gnosis and a point of Willpower, as well as a successful Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 8). At that point, the feather is imbued with the power of sickness, and will transfer that contagion to the next three people to touch it. Resisting the disease the feather spreads requires the same roll as does fighting off the effects of Poisoned Flesh.



Appendix: Dirty Tricks

Yuri: *The use of deadly force is a sadly frequent but highly unfortunate part of our work, a part that we don't enjoy... really...!*

—Adam Warren, *The Dirty Pair: Fatal But Not Serious*

Investments

Looking for a little extra punch for an antagonist? Wondering how to simulate the Seventh Generation elite's mystical powers without going out and immediately purchasing another sourcebook? Do you generally require something not quite Gift nor rite to make a foe more than human, but not a supernatural beast in his own right?

Well, you could always throw on some supernatural Merits, but another possible way is the use of Investments. First introduced over in the **Mage** supplement **The Book of Madness**, these represent the eldritch powers that are granted in demonic pacts. You know the sort: "Keep me safe from aging and let no knife cut my flesh and in return you may have my soul." Of course, the **Werewolf** cosmology doesn't necessarily posit the existence of demons and Hell as most folks think of them as fact. (And frankly, the Wyrm's big enough that we don't need to introduce any more camps of pure supernatural evil — at least not in this book.). Still, when detailing someone who obviously has some sort of power granted to him by a spiritual benefactor, the following quick-and-dirty suggestions on Investments might be useful.

[Warning: The following rules are not play-tested for balance! They are not meant to be used for player characters! Hand them over to your players at your own risk!]

The Deal

Essentially, Investments work something like fomori powers; there's an almost endless variety of them, some of them are somewhat like Gifts, and they don't depend on the half-spirit nature of a shapeshifter. However, the recipient retains much of his free will — although his responsibilities become much more severe. They're called Investments for good reason; the "benefactor" (Maeljin Incarna work very well in this role) invests some portion of the Wyrm's power in the recipient, and is also making an investment in the sense that it hopes to receive the recipient's soul at the end of the

pact. These pacts vary widely in extent, but the more potent the nature of the pact, the more power the mortal receives.

Pact's Nature	Investment Points Gained
Minor favor	1
Typical favor	2-3
Important favor	4-6
Important and dangerous favor	7-8
In exchange for soul	9-10

Essentially, the more points in the pact, the more powerful the nature of the granted power. A short list of examples follows; use these as a guideline for creating your own Investments. Naturally, the nature of the "benefactor" should influence the sort of favor bestowed; Empress Aliara is far more likely to grant a mortal the power of great beauty than skin of iron. A mortal with 5 or more Investment points becomes immune to the Delirium — at that point, he becomes part of the club.

Sample Investments

• **Body Armor (variable)** — The mortal gains an extra soak die per point placed in this Investment. The greater this Investment's power, the more noticeable it becomes.

• **Inhuman Strength (variable)** — The mortal gains a point of Strength for every point placed in this power, to a maximum of 8. His physical form does not change; a wizened old man with this power might seem harmless, but be fully capable of lifting a motorcycle.

• **Hunter's Eye (2 pts)** — As the Gift: Fatal Flaw.

• **Youth (2 pts)** — The mortal becomes twenty years younger when this pact is struck. Not a powerful ability in combat, but certainly the temptation that starts many down this road of corruption.

• **Incredible Beauty (3 pts)** — The mortal's Appearance is raised by 3, even if this takes the Trait above 5.

• **Poison Immunity (3 pts)** — As the Gift: Resist Toxin.

• **Inferno's Kiss (5 pts)** — The mortal becomes immune to harm from all forms of heat and fire — even balefire. This protection does not extend to one's clothing, however.

• **Devouring Touch (6 pts)** — The mortal's hand gains the power to kill plants, gnarl wood, rust metal and rot flesh with a simple caress. The effect does one Health Level of aggravated damage per success on a Dexterity + Brawl roll, although this damage can be soaked. The effect lasts for one scene, after which the mortal's hand is crippled with palsy.

• **Regeneration (9 pts)** — The mortal is no longer mortal; she now regenerates as if she were Garou, substituting Rage for Willpower. What's more, she is immune to disease.

Fetishes

The following fetishes are often found in the hands of Black Spiral Dancers; at the Storyteller's discretion, other powerful servants of the Wyrm might be able to use some of these fetishes. Forcing a spirit into a Bane fetish is a tortuous process, even to willing Banes. Nonetheless, some Banes readily agree to enter into and empower such fetishes, in the hopes of having a front-row seat for the misery the fetish inflicts.

Bauble

Level 1, Gnosis 1

The handiwork of fallen Corax, a Bauble is nothing more than a piece of metal or glass imbued with an unnaturally bright shine. The shine is *so* bright, as a matter of fact, that it can be seen up to a mile away, other conditions permitting. And the sparkle of a bright, shiny object is of course irresistible to any true Corax, who will feel compelled to check the bangle out....

The only problem Buzzards have with Baubles is a comical one: Unless they're lucky, they can't tear themselves away from the damn things, either.

Brush of the Ancients

Level 1, Gnosis 8

Also called the Omen Brush, this small paintbrush allows a Black Spiral Dancer to paint intricate and accurate scenes, guided by the hands of an ancestor. These paintings often reflect signs of things which have past and things yet to come. An Intelligence + Enigmas roll (difficulty 7) is required to fathom the painting's significance and symbolism.

Stolen Eye

Level 1, Gnosis 2

The Stolen Eye is one of the less pleasant things a Buzzard is likely to have in her pocket. Consisting of a eyeball plucked from a still-living person or creature, the Eye always looks in the direction of the nearest true Corax. All the Buzzard needs to do with his Stolen Eye is to take it out, dip it in salt water, and let it orient itself on a flat surface. The Eye turns in the appropriate direction and comes to rest in under a minute.

A Stolen Eye generally stays fresh for a month or until the eye's



original possessor dies, whichever comes first. Furthermore, they do tend to smell, and have an unpleasant habit of getting squashed if not cared for properly.

Umbraphone

Level 1, Gnosis 3

This is a common toy among the Consultants camp of Black Spiral Dancers. It seems to be a simple black cellular phone, but to those who know how to work its numerical codes, it can be used to make calls to and from the Umbra. Naturally, this can make a Dancer's Rolodex a worrisome thing indeed, as there's always the possibility of finding a direct line to someone like Lady Aife — or worse. The Glass Walkers have developed their own version of this fetish, although other tribes rumble that they might have been taught the secret by the wrong teachers....

Bane Lantern

Level 2, Gnosis 5

The Bane Lantern is a steel lantern painted with obscene glyphs and eldritch runes. When commanded to ignite (in either Pictish, the garbled Garou-speak of the Dancers or the secret tongue of the Wyrm), it casts a light of an unnatural purplish hue. The Bane Lantern's light illuminates all spirits hit by the beam, making them fully visible even in the mortal world. Fomori or Kami struck by the light seem much the same, although their shadows reflect their spirit "occupants." The beam has a sirenlike effect on spirits in the area; spirits in the vicinity are drawn like moths to a flame, by curiosity or by some sinister effect of the lantern itself.

Delirium Mask

Level 2, Gnosis 7

This fetish takes the shape of a stone helmet with the face plate carved in some grotesque demon's likeness. Anyone wearing the mask, even non-Garou, can cause the effects of the Delirium in a chosen victim by activating the fetish. The victim reacts to the wearer as if she were actually a werewolf in Crinos form, no matter how harmless she would otherwise seem. As Black Spiral Dancers have little use for such fetishes, many are fashioned so that they can be activated by Willpower rather than Gnosis.

Devilwhip

Level 2, Gnosis 6

This thorned, black, fifteen-foot lash is actually the severed tentacle of a Bane, specially treated to remain permanently in the material world. The handle is sewn over the torn end of the tentacle, and is always slightly sticky to the touch. The lesser Bane that powers the Devilwhip can animate the whip on command, lashing and directing the whip just as if the Black Spiral Dancer were wielding it herself. A Devilwhip does Strength +1 aggravated damage, giving off a sound like a lunatic's laughter each time it draws blood. When cracked just before an opponent's face and activated, the whip compels the foe prostrate himself on the floor (Willpower roll, difficulty 6 to resist).

Power Goggles

Level 2, Gnosis 3

First seen in the pages of a Pentex propaganda comic distributed among First Teams, these goggles are now available for use in installations around the world. These Bane fetishes are usable by fomori (who attune to them by rolling Willpower instead of Gnosis), and allow the wearer to see Garou as they traverse the Gauntlet from the Penumbra to the physical world. (The wearer must roll Perception + Occult, difficulty 7, to be alerted in time.) This warning may give a fomor that crucial, extra instant necessary to save his life.

Tambertail's Heart

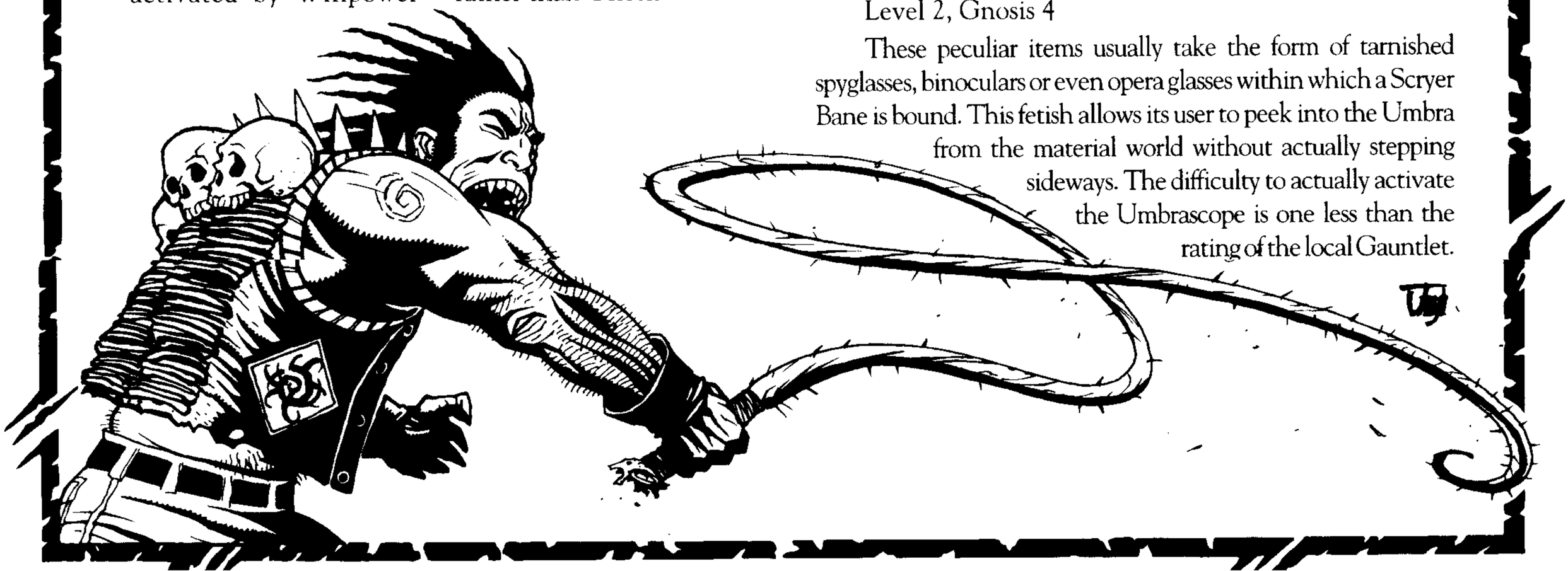
Level 2, Gnosis 7

The original version of this fetish was the mummified heart of a Fianna Theurge. Now a number of these dirty toys are in existence, each one the preserved heart of a Gaian Garou, but bearing the name of the original nonetheless. The heart begins to beat arhythmically whenever danger menaces its attuned owner. Furthermore, the heart can also be commanded to drive off unfriendly spirits by casting a reddish glow and making a noise that sounds much like feedback. To use this power, the wielder activates it as normal; any hostile spirits in the area must make Willpower tests (difficulty 7) or flee at top speed for seven turns.

Umbrascope

Level 2, Gnosis 4

These peculiar items usually take the form of tarnished spyglasses, binoculars or even opera glasses within which a Scryer Bane is bound. This fetish allows its user to peek into the Umbra from the material world without actually stepping sideways. The difficulty to actually activate the Umbrascope is one less than the rating of the local Gauntlet.



Gut Bonds

Level 2, Gnosis 5

This bizarre fetish takes the form of strands of especially strong gut that cannot be cut or burned (except with appropriate magic). Struggling against the bonds only causes nausea unless the bound character can make a successful Stamina roll against the Gnosis of the bonds. The only way to escape is by twisting a certain way and through changing forms in a certain order: Crinos form to stretch the bindings; Hispo or Lupus to slip loops over head; Glabro or Homid to slip lower body through; back to Lupus to slip paws through. All these maneuvers require Dexterity + Athletics rolls, difficulty 7; the character must accumulate five successes. If the character scores more than one but less than five successes, he's free — but has taken one aggravated Health Level of damage for every success less than five (broken bones by resisting the tight bonds).

Frater Vermiis' The Pretanic Keys

Level 3, Gnosis 5

This nineteenth-century tome is a compilation of lore concerning the legions of the Wyrm. Its original editor wrote under the pseudonym "Frater Vermiis" and affected a style reminiscent of Israel Regardie's *Golden Dawn*. He professed to instruct his readers on methods of channeling the unseen — powers of the "Black Labyrinth." His grisly death in 1892 increased the book's notoriety, especially since his limited budget could only finance 92 copies.

The chants and invocations are only marginally useful, but the serious intent of occult students still allows various Banes to taint and mislead the reader. If a scholar examines the book for over an hour, increase the difficulty of any roll to resist the Possession Charm (or similar Arcanoi) by 2. Though much of the information is revealed in allegorical and metaphorical form, a few sections make an admirable attempt at categorizing the hierarchies of Malfeas.

This makes a perfect Samhain gift for any promising occultist the Black Spiral wants to infect. Through diligent study, the reader may even be able to increase his knowledge of the Wyrm's servitors (that is, a character may increase his proficiency with the Occult skill). Reading the entire book takes at least a day and a half; this requires a Gnosis roll that may result in madness.



Deathrattler

Level 3, Gnosis 6

This fetish is made from a dried rattle taken from some unknown rattlesnake-like creature. The rattler has the power to frighten away all animals or humans within hearing range; no roll is necessary. All Garou hearing the rattle, other than the individual using the rattler, may be forced to run away: roll the rattler's Gnosis vs. their Willpower. The number of successes is the number of turns the target will flee.

Warshirt of the Wyrm

Level 3, Gnosis 6

This leather tunic is adorned with a number of eldritch designs. The shirt lends the wearer three extra soak dice, changes shape as the wearer changes forms and is fully effective in Umbra and physical world alike. However, if a wound ever does get through the Warshirt, the shirt lets out a deafening wail from the pain and red blood runs down the outside of the shirt.

Magic Spewer

Level 4, Gnosis 5

This fetish is fashioned from a human skull (although homids, young vampires and mages are also excellent sources for raw materials). It has a handle on top allowing it to be carried easily. The lower jaw is still hinged to the rest of the skull by leather bands. On command, the skull issues forth, as if vomiting, a stream of viscous, foul-smelling toxic waste. Anyone hit by the slime of the Spewer will take damage as if it were fire — three Health Levels' worth, difficulty of 7 to soak. The Magic Spewer's eyes glow red when it is active and the lower jaw moves on its own. Obnoxiously enough, anyone hit by the slime will gradually manifest a debilitating disease that comes to a head weeks later. This disease even affects vampires and Garou, who must heal it with Mother's Touch or Resist Toxin or suffer the Storyteller's choice of detrimental effect.

Baneklaive

Level 5, Gnosis 7

The Black Spiral Dancers' answer to the Grand Klaive, this carefully tooled sword-length klaive is typically engraved with twisting runes and gleams with pale green balefire when activated. Although not as skillfully tempered (it only does Strength +3 aggravated damage), it counts both as silver and as Wyrm emanation for purposes of inflicting damage. It is difficulty 7 to use, and a few Black Spiral Dancers have devised their own, dirtier form of Klaive Dueling to use with such an object. The Baneklaive adds one extra die to its wielder's Melee pool when activated, and also allows a Dancer to siphon Gnosis from spirits for his own use. After a successful hit versus a spirit that does at least one point of Power (or one Health Level, if the spirit is materialized), the Dancer may roll the Baneklaive's Gnosis versus that of its victim. The Dancer may siphon out Gnosis at a rate of one point for each success, although this power may only be used once per scene.

Churjuroc's Tusk

Level 5, Gnosis 9

This blackish-purple tusk once belonged to a massive, wormlike creature of the Wyrm. The Black Spiral Dancers gleefully fought alongside it until it began to turn on them out of stupidity and hunger, whereupon they destroyed it in a long, hard battle. There are said to be seven of these tusks (the creature had four mouths) still in existence. The tusk is about two feet long; it's capped with a platinum ball on one end and covered with intricately perverse carvings along its length. The tusk may be used to summon a Nexus Crawler once per full moon. The Bane must be appeased with the sacri-



fice of a Garou (and if none is provided, the summoner will certainly do). The Crawler will then perform a task for the summoner, as long as the mission doesn't require more than twenty-four hours to complete.

Soul Ruby

Level 5, Gnosis 7

The Soul Ruby is a ruby the size of a woman's fist, cut from the veins of rock at the heart of the Black Spiral Dancers' underground Pits. Priceless by virtue of the stone's value alone, each Soul Ruby also contains the spirit of a fallen Black Spiral Dancer. When activated, the ruby gives telepathic advice to its bearer, allowing the bearer access to whatever Knowledges the Dancer possessed in life. The fallen Dancer's spirit may also visit the fetish holder in his dreams, possibly giving glimpses of the future.

Talens

Pretanic Talisman

(1-5 Background points)

This occult talisman is an actual physical key containing one of the Ninety-nine names of the Wyrm's servitors. This talen is useful for Black Spirals who wish to call up a "deity" without serving as its bastard. By meditating upon the artifact, the occultist bearing it may attempt to open a gate between a Malfean realm and the physical world. The key has a limited number of charges, usually between one and five.

Activating the talen requires at least four points of temporary Gnosis and a roll against permanent Gnosis. The difficulty depends on the importance of the entity (e.g., 5 for a Bane, but 9 for a Bane-totem). If the roll is botched, a Nexus Crawler — one of "Those Who Watch the Gates" — arrives to correct any rifts in the spirit world that may result. Many keys have been lost or transferred between occultists (or dimensions) in this manner.

Bean-Bane

Gnosis 7

A Bean-Bane seems to be a small dried bean of any type, but a Bane slumbers within it. Once the bean is planted in soil, mud or clay, the Bane is freed. For each success on the activation roll, the Bane may manifest itself for one turn without expending any of its Power. Naturally, summoned Banes are rather inclined to help Black Spiral Dancers polite enough to give them such an "in" into the physical realm.

Dragon's Ichor

Gnosis 5

Usually found in small jars or vials, Dragon's Ichor is black blood taken from a powerful Wyrm-creature. If the nearly-congealed gunk is rubbed all over one's body it will cause the Black Spiral to become temporarily immune to all attacks from spirits. This effect lasts for only five turns. Usually there is only enough blood contained in one of these jars for two uses.



Goblin Ale

Gnosis 4

This alcoholic elixir is typically bartered from the goblin brewers of the Shadow Court. One quaff of these spirits causes the drinker to suffer violently intense hallucinations, and may even shift a Garou accidentally into the Umbra. (Roll Gnosis against the local Gauntlet. If the drinker scores four or more successes, he instantly shifts sideways; three or fewer successes and he remains in the physical world.) Goblin Ale is completely intoxicating, and gets even the stoutest Garou drunker, quicker, than could any human brew. (Shapeshifters who get drunk on Goblin Ale are mean drunks—reduce the difficulty to frenzy by 2 while under the influence.) It's a perennial favorite at Black Spiral moots, and usually makes the evening bloodier than usual.

Storm in a Bottle

Gnosis 6

This opaque bottle contains an entire Wyrm-tainted storm within. Once unleashed, the storm rampages across physical world and Penumbra alike; it comes and goes quickly, lasting only five turns in all. Any enemy of the Wyrm caught without shelter will be struck by lightning unless the victim makes a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7). The lightning does ten dice of aggravated damage, and will only strike an individual once. Rumor has it that the majority of these existing talens were bottled in the 19th century American West, when there were Wyrmish storms aplenty to harvest.



Balefire

Balefire is, as some Dancers put it, "the shit of our Father the Wyrm." It appears to be greenish flame, yet with more consistency, almost like molten wax. It flows and bubbles and roils, glowing with its own internal incandescence. Some Pentex scientists believe it is corrupted ephemera, the "physical" substance which makes up the spirit world. Whatever its origins, it's damn dangerous stuff.

The name apparently comes from the fae's word for their hearthfires, meaning the fires of Beltane. Presumably, the White Howlers were familiar with the equinox fires, and kept the word after their fall — only using it to refer to the feast fires of the Wyrm. Even today, Black Spiral Dancers sometimes "sacrifice" themselves to it, exposing themselves to its glare for hours in the hopes of gaining mystical insights. What they usually get instead are a crop of cancerous brain tumors, but that doesn't deter the Dancers from presuming that the tumors will grant them corrupt enlightenment.

Pity the person exposed to this stuff. It burns just as if it were fire (**Werewolf**, pg. 197). However, this damage cannot be soaked, takes twice as long to heal, and adds +10 to any roll on the Battle Scars Chart (**Werewolf**, pg. 199). Thankfully, the Gift: Resist Toxin can prevent this damage.

Wyrm-wood

Gnosis 3

Wyrm-wood is a blackened, unnatural vine that grows deep within the earth, absorbing the light of the balefires below. When enough of this wood is collected and burned, it has the power to protect all within the range of its horrible smell from attacks by spirits of all sorts, regardless of how powerful they are.

Equipment

The following list of mundane and not-quite-so-mundane equipment is primarily intended for equipping Pentex operatives; however, many of the following items can be used to outfit any antagonist if the story calls for it. It's obscenely unlikely that a balefire flamethrower will pop up on the black market, for instance — although if the local street gang *did* get hold of one, look out!

Note: The following pieces of equipment have a "Rank" trait. In simple terms, this means that most characters carrying such equipment are presumed to have spent Background points to purchase the gear, much like a fetish's rating. This is a fair yardstick to determine whether or not given operatives are "cleared" to handle such equipment if necessary; that pack of security guards fresh out of Pentex's

training camps probably won't be sporting any nerve gas, but good ol' T.F. MacNeil, head of one of the finest First Teams in existence, can be assumed to own as much silver nitrate ammo as he figures he needs for the mission at hand.

Ammunition

Silver Nitrate Hollowpoints

Rank Five

These are hollowpoint bullets filled with silver nitrate. Essentially, they act like regular hollowpoints, exploding inside the wound on impact and releasing the silver nitrate. Aside from the aggravated, non-soakable damage these do to Garou who are not in their breed form (and metis who are), silver nitrate is a poison in its own right, and spreads its toxin to affect the werewolf (regardless of form). The poison causes one Health Level of damage per turn for three turns to an infected Garou; this damage cannot be soaked. Because they are so potentially deadly and would therefore draw considerable attention were they to be discovered by agents of the law, they are issued on an absolute need-to-have basis only.

Armor

Pus Armor

Rank Three

This loathsome item is somewhat like Kevlar (affording the wearer an extra soak die), but when the outer part is pierced by claws, teeth or bullets, oozing, highly infectious pus sprays out in a two yard long arc. The pus causes one Health Level of aggravated damage if it contacts unprotected skin. Unless it is wiped off within the next two turns, it causes an ulceration in the area. The ulceration can only be healed by magical means. Each day that the recipient fails to be healed, the ulceration digs deeper, causing another Health Level of aggravated damage. Unless healed, the victim eventually dies as it eats through him. Cutting out the ulceration is an option, but does as much damage as all the damage which the victim has sustained up to that point (i.e. if he has taken two Health Levels of damage, cutting it out causes two more). This armor is still in the Beta testing stage; any problems with the suits (and there surely are some) have yet to be discovered.

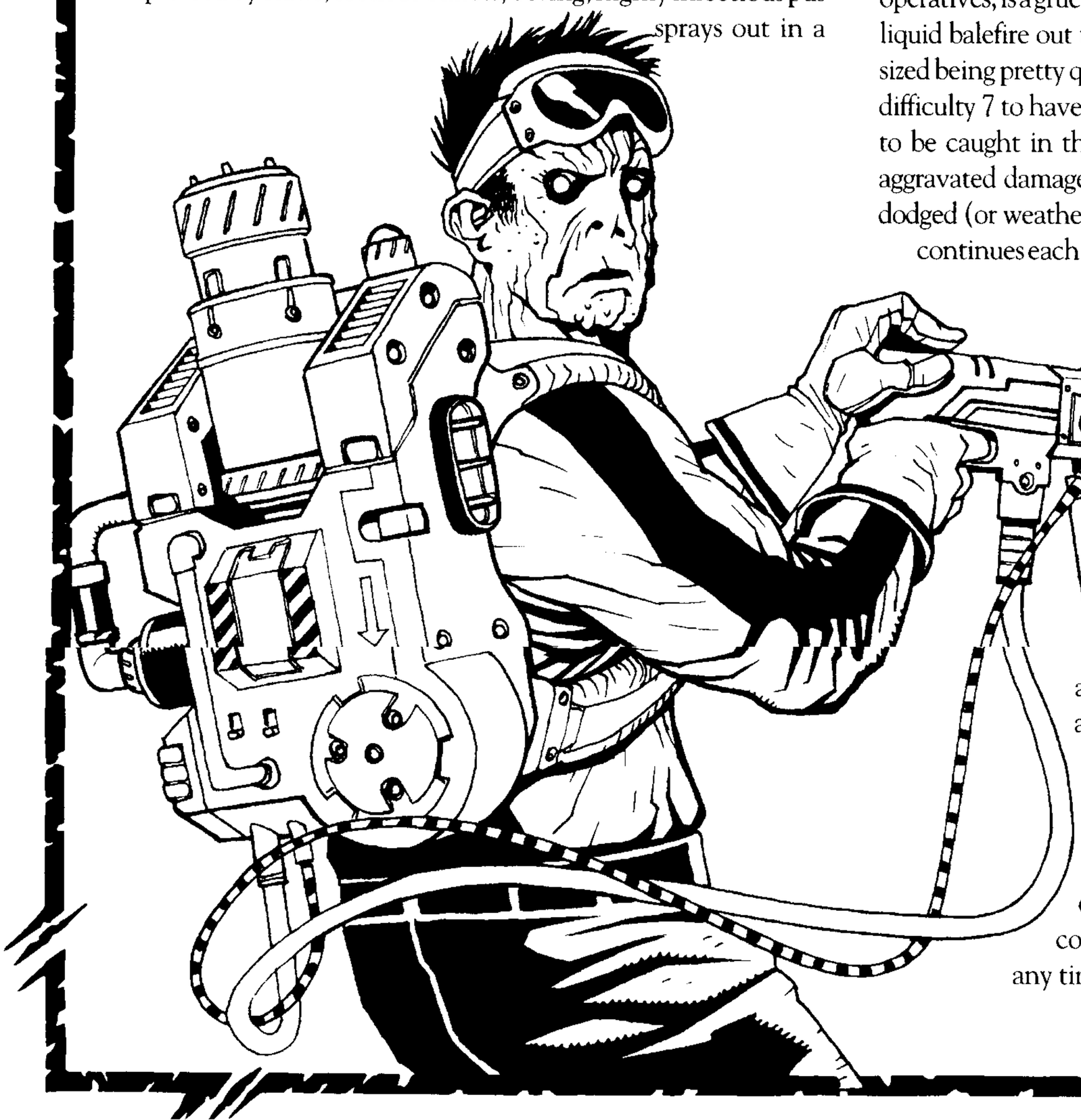
Weaponry

Balefire Flamethrower

Rank Five

This highly dangerous and very experimental weapon is actually not quite a fetish, although it certainly borders on the quasi-mystical. It resembles more conventional flamethrowers in shape, although there is no pilot light and the fuel tank is encrusted with humming machinery (not unlike those portable reactors in *Ghostbusters*). The back unit is actually more than a fuel tank — it's an active containment unit keeping the refined balefire in check. Pentex is the only source for this weapon, and they don't sell it.

The "Baleflamer," as it's come to be known among field operatives, is a gruesomely brutal weapon. It fires a stream of semi-liquid balefire out to a range of 30 feet, and can coat a human-sized being pretty quickly. It requires a Dexterity + Firearms roll, difficulty 7 to have the fire be on target. Those unlucky enough to be caught in the stream take two Health Levels of highly aggravated damage; this cannot be soaked, although it can be dodged (or weathered via the Gift: Resist Toxin). The damage continues each round until the victim manages to extinguish the fire. Naturally, balefire burns take twice as long to heal, and add +10 to any rolls on the Battle Scars chart necessitated by the burns. The containment unit has enough 'fire in it for six bursts; the operator can hose down multiple targets in a turn by expending more fuel.



However (and you knew there'd be a "however"), the weapon isn't totally reliable. Should the wielder botch his attack roll, the propulsion unit explodes in his hands, causing as much damage as if he'd been hosed down himself (and with no chance of dodging). If the fire hasn't been extinguished by his action next turn, the containment unit explodes. If the wielder is, at any time, hit in the back by any attack scoring at

Pentex First Teams

The First Team is the elite of the Pentex fighting force. Very few people outside the corporation know that Pentex has such trained mercenaries in their employ, much less bands of operatives with varying supernatural powers. First Teams are usually five to seven members strong, all carefully trained in complementary skills. Pentex's brass are no fools — they want their elite strike forces as effective as any Garou pack. They have mostly succeeded.

An average-strength First Team has fomori as its backbone, all of whom are well-trained in gunplay and unarmed combat (particularly the use of their powers). If an Odyssey-trained psychic is available, one is assigned to the team. Most First Teams manage to include one Black Spiral Dancer, to provide the team with much-needed field advice on fighting Garou. Finally, it's not unusual for the team to sport a human with no real powers other than a chemically induced immunity to the Delirium and a plethora of useful skills. In many cases, the human rises to the leadership position — after all, fomori degenerate quickly, Dancers are usually mad, and who can trust psychics?

Each member of a First Team has the following equipment as standard issue: uniforms complete with the team's specific badge, one heavy pistol and one light pistol, commando knife, compass, and radio. The team itself is issued six clips of silver ammunition as standard, and receives any other equipment as deemed necessary for their mission. This includes heavy weapons, sniper rifles, extra ammunition, special ammunition, nightvision goggles, transportation, armor, and most other forms of equipment. (Note that medical kits and body armor are not standard issue even for First Teams; some team members don't require such things, and those who would even try to request such goods don't usually make the cut anyway.)

least five damage successes (whether soaked or not), the containment unit explodes. If the Storyteller rules that the testy weapon has at any time taken more punishment than could be expected of it (being caught in a high voltage current, for instance), the containment unit explodes.

When the containment unit goes up in a brilliant green fireball of radioactive napalm, it's officially a Very Bad Thing. The wielder immediately takes three Health Levels of damage, and will continue to take three more each turn — his entire body is doused in the stuff. Anyone within fifteen feet must take an action to dodge (difficulty 8) or be caught in the explosion, taking one to three Health Levels of damage and the same number each turn, depending on how much of their bodies was exposed (see **Werewolf,** pg. 197). And remember, balefire isn't soakable!

Despite the risks involved, the "Baleflamer" is prized by the more macho specimens of Pentex soldiers, and the boys and girls in SPD are more than happy to provide them with these weapons in the name of further field-testing. Naturally, it's pretty much the duty of any right-thinking Garou to make sure that no field testers get a chance to file a report — heaven only knows what an *improved* version would be like!

Grenades

Since grenades aren't justifiable as self-defense weapons and cause deaths in ways that are harder to cover up, they are not usually issued as everyday equipment. They are reserved for those who need them due to the nature of their normal work, or they may be requested when a character takes on a special assignment in which the grenades might prove useful. The police tend to shoot anyone who flashes these things around and ask questions later.

Fragmentation Grenades

Rank Three

A fragmentation grenade has a damage pool of 12 dice at ground zero (such as in a character's hand). For every yard between the grenade explosion and the character, reduce the damage pool by one die. For example, if a grenade detonates 5 yards away from a character, the damage pool for that character would be 12-5, or 7 dice of damage.

Smoke/Tear Gas Grenades

Rank Two

Smoke grenades emit a dense cloud of white or colored smoke. Tear gas grenades emit a cloud of irritating gas (see *Poisons*, below). There is no blast from these grenades; the smoke is released through holes in the canister. The cloud fills a 10 yard by 10 yard area in one minute and will last 10 minutes in still air. Pentex operatives usually harm as many of their own troops while firing into the smoke as they do Garou — but nobody ever said that Pentex was afraid of a little collateral damage.

White Phosphorus

Rank Three

White phosphorus grenades generate a temperature of 2700° F when they explode. A WP grenade has a damage pool of 12 dice at its point of detonation, reduced by one for every two yards between the character and the grenade. This is aggravated damage, although Garou can try to soak the damage. WP grenades will ignite most common materials that are even slightly flammable.

Weight: .6 lbs **Size:** A 7" x 3" cylinder

Poisons

Ionone Gas

Rank One

Vector: Inhaled

Effects: This gas is extracted from the common violet, and is a simple weapon that's most useful against Garou. Ionone completely short-circuits the sense of smell of anyone

who inhales it; the effects last approximately an hour and can be particularly damaging to the smell-dependent lupus. This gas may also fully or partially prevent victims from using any Gifts that depend on smell (e.g., Heightened Senses, Scent of Sight, Scent of the True Form, etc.). This gas cannot block the Gift: Sense Wyrm, which is not based on smell (no matter how similar Wyrm-taint is to olfactory cues).

Protection: Don't breathe it.

Kiss of the Wyrm

Rank Four

Vector: Injected

Effects: This yellowish liquid is a highly experimental toxin used in conjunction with a dart pistol or rifle. Its purpose is to heighten feelings of paranoia and bloodlust, causing the target to frenzy without provocation. It has been proven effective against Garou, but the exact amount needed for the optimum effect has not been quantified as of yet.

The serum is placed into a capsule attached to the dart pistol or needle. Upon impact, the capsule breaks, releasing the toxin into the target's bloodstream or muscle tissue. Once within the target's system, it begins to stimulate chemicals associated with paranoia and anger. A successful injection will cause a shapeshifter or vampire to fly into a frenzy, and mortals to become very angry and filled with paranoia.

Garou may resist this toxin with a Willpower roll against a difficulty based on the amount of toxin that was used. A pistol load is difficulty 6; a rifle load is difficulty 8. The Gift: Resist Toxin nullifies the poison's effect completely. The toxin will eventually lose its potency, causing the werewolf to fall into a deep sleep. A Rite of Cleansing is required to fully remove the effects of the Kiss of the Wyrm. Until this ritual is performed, the Garou will find himself edgy, and suffering from mild paranoia.

Protection: Armor, Resist Toxin

Tear Gas

Rank Two

Vector: Contact/Inhaled

Sensory: Colorless (frequently mixed with smoke), distinct odor

Effects: Coughing, gagging, severe irritation of the eyes and mucus membranes. Victims subtract two dice from all dice pools until clear of the gas cloud for 10 minutes.

Protection: A gas mask protects fully, a scuba mask or goggles protect the eyes, and breathing through a wet cloth protects the lungs. The Resist Toxin Gift negates the effects of tear gas.

Mustard Gas

Rank Three

Vector: Contact/Inhaled

Sensory: Faintly yellowish, distinctive odor

Effect: Caustic; causes exposed flesh to blister. If inhaled, blistering inside the lungs may prove fatal. Subtract one Health Level per turn the skin is exposed to the gas. Victims lose two Health Levels per turn of breathing the gas.

Protection: Full-skin coverage and a gas mask are necessary for any protection. Ordinary clothing will protect for one turn only. The Resist Toxin Gift is also effective.

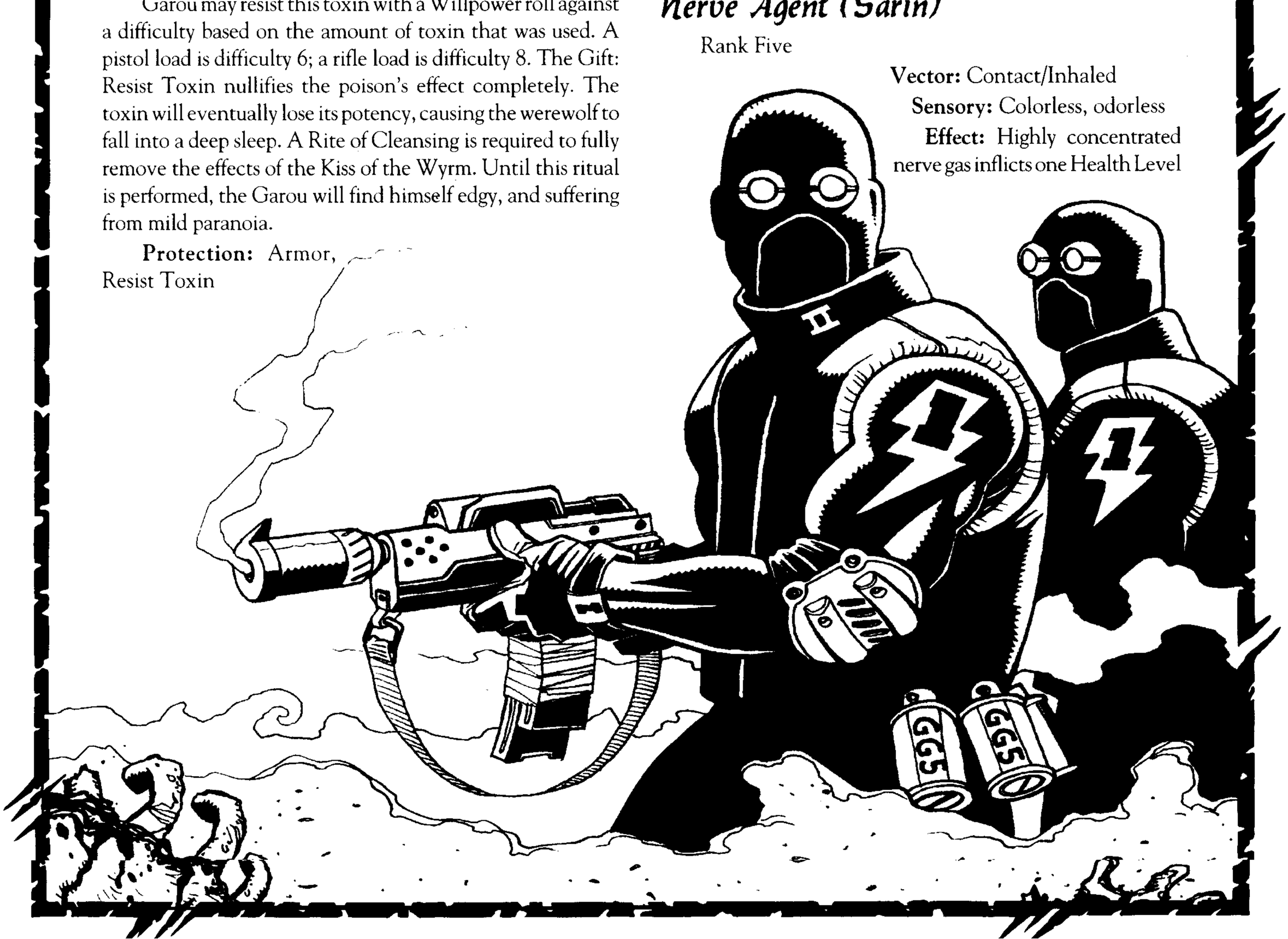
Nerve Agent (Sarin)

Rank Five

Vector: Contact/Inhaled

Sensory: Colorless, odorless

Effect: Highly concentrated nerve gas inflicts one Health Level



per turn; this cannot be soaked. At a low concentration, it inflicts one Health Level per minute with the same restriction. At a trace concentration, it inflicts one Health Level per hour.

Nerve gas causes nausea and disorientation, followed by death. It is important to realize that the lethal effects of Sarin occur at a concentration of 10 - 100 parts per million and that the effects are *always* lethal. (Chances of nonlethal but still symptom-inducing exposure are less than 1 in 10,000). For obvious reasons, Sarin is so damned illegal that Pentex doesn't issue it to *anybody* unless there's both a very compelling reason and sufficient cause to believe that its usage can be completely covered up.

Protection: Sealed NBC suit

Antidote: Atropine Injection Kit (hypodermic needles with antropine; must be administered before symptoms begin. Atropine taken without exposure to Sarin becomes a toxin). There are rumors that Pentex has engineered this poison so that atropine will only give the victim three to four more hours of life. The Resist Toxin Gift will negate the effects of the gas.

NOTE: It may be possible to protect oneself from Sarin by remaining in a sealed room in a high place. Israel used this approach to protect its population during the 1991 Gulf War, but the effectiveness was not tested (there were no gas attacks).

Sensory

Sub-Dermal Radio

Rank Two

Some lucky operatives get small radio receivers and transmitters implanted in the base of their skulls. This allows an operative to receive orders and send information discreetly. The range is limited (about twenty-five miles radius), so it is usually only of use within the operative's immediate circle (First Team, etc.). The radio frequency automatically shunts up and down the band width, making it difficult for enemies to listen in on. Those receiving the transmission can hear everything that the operative does. The operative can shut the radio off at will, but Pentex can reactivate it discreetly from a distance to guard against treachery. Several of these devices have been captured by the Garou known as Monkeywrenchers. This has worried Pentex, and the megacorp is constantly improving the radios to discourage Garou tampering.

Drugs

Fomorol

Rank Three

This drug is actually constituted from the bodies of "recycled" fomorach, a particularly wretched breed of fomor. When injected into a fomor, it temporary boosts his powers. However, it is highly addictive, and the fomor will crave more. After injection, the fomor must roll Willpower, difficulty 7, to access the drug's powers. If successful, the effects of any power he uses are roughly doubled; for example, his claw maneuvers do Strength +4 damage, his Hide of the Wyrm provides six extra soak dice instead of three, and so on. After even one use, however (regardless of whether it was successfully activated or not), the character becomes horrifically addicted to the drug. Not that Pentex thinks this is a bad thing.

