PLAYERS GUIDE TO THE™ CHANGING BREEDS



A Sourcebook for Werewolf: The Apocalypse™


03



Worldwalker's Treasure: a Tale of the Fera

by Jackie Cassada

"Did the Fera always hate us?" Cries-for-Justice asked his mentor, the Galliard known as Sarah Tells-the-Tales, one night after most of the other members of the sept had retired for the night.

"That's a good question, child," the Galliard elder said. "Most Garou just want to know about the Wars of Rage and why we have so little contact with the other Changing Breeds. Few ask if it was always that way. Sit now and hear a tale I know about a time when things were different, when we almost had a chance to dwell peacefully with the other shapeshifters."

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Long ago and longer, before humans had become more than a slight nuisance, all the changing folk dwelled in their own lands, each basking in their special place in Gaia's eyes.

The Mokolé lived in the swamplands and rivers, basking in the sun's warmth and in the memories Gaia charged them to hold. The oceans were the province of the Rokea, and they kept to themselves, only occasionally coming ashore to reassure themselves that the land was inferior to their watery homes. The Ratkin, drawn to humankind's nests even in those days when human settlements were few and far between, practiced their methods of population control and studied the ways of the hairless beings for future reference.

The Bastet roamed the lands, each according to her own preference, gathering secrets and seeking out knowledge for its own sake. The Gurahl ranged throughout their wide territories, exercising their duties as protectors and teachers. They, too, formed bonds with some human tribes and used their influence to curb the excesses already beginning to form among humankind. The Corax ranged the skies of both the physical and Umbral realms, keeping their eyes open for juicy tidbits of information to share with one another and, sometimes, with one or another of their changing cousins.

The Nuwisha had not yet retreated into the Umbra and they, too, roamed the lands they called their own, finding deserts and plains particularly to their liking. Whenever they encountered anyone besides themselves, whether human, beast or shapeshifter, they shared their love of laughter and trickery — though their jokes were not always appreciated by their targets. The Nagah, proud and silent, kept their

homes in the great rivers, jungles and deserts of the world and in many other places to their liking. Judges of the Changing Folk, they kept their own counsel, emerging only when needed to settle a dispute. The enigmatic Ananasi, watched the others from deep within their webs and kept themselves apart from the rest. Some say they carried on secret conversations with the Weaver and the Wyrm, but I can't vouch for the truth or falsity of that.

And the Garou? Where were we in this distant age? We were close to Gaia, as She wanted us to be. We ranged here and there, doing Her bidding, protecting and defending Her from any and all dangers.

In this time before time, oh beloved child, Gaia called upon one of us to accomplish a great task for Her. The ages have hidden the name of that Garou, but let us call him Worldwalker, for that is what he became. Worldwalker was young, like you, and had yet to prove himself to the other Garou. But when Gaia summoned him, he answered Her eagerly.

Worldwalker bowed before Gaia and paid Her the respect She was due. "What do you want from me, Mother?"

Gaia smiled at the young cub and Worldwalker felt Her loving presence surround him. "I wish you to find something for me," Gaia said. "On the other side of the world is a great treasure, the greatest gift in the world. I wish you to find that treasure and bring it to me. Will you do this?"

Worldwalker smiled, his heart bursting with pride that Gaia had chosen him over all the other Garou to find such a great treasure.

"I will leave right away," he said, and with his words, Worldwalker set off to seek the greatest gift.

In those days, the world was always changing, forming new vistas and shifting its features. Mountains grew where no mountains had been before, and rivers changed their courses as they desired. The Gauntlet was thin in most places, since power still infused the air, the water, the ground and every living creature that walked or flew or swam. Worldwalker traveled alone through this changing world, glorying in his changing self and in the charge Gaia had given him.

He walked for many days, traveling through fields and forest, sometimes running alongside small streams as they directed him on his quest. "Go this way," the streams trilled, and Worldwalker went "this way." "Go that way," they chortled, and again, Worldwalker heeded their counsel.

Eventually, the young Garou grew lonely, for Gaia's quest had taken him far from his usual course of travel. "I wish I had a companion," he said aloud to the air and the spirits of the air that hovered invisibly around him.

"I thought you'd never ask," a voice replied from behind a bush full of thick leaves and blossoms. A minute later, a young coyote-girl trotted out of hiding and sat in front of Worldwalker.

"My name is Laughing Dream," she said, "and I have been following you for three days now. Why don't I follow you a little more closely? That way neither of us will be lonely for companionship."

Worldwalker thought for a moment then decided that Gaia must have heard his wish. "I am Worldwalker and Gaia has asked me to travel to the ends of the earth to retrieve for Her a great treasure. I wouldn't mind some company, though, and if you wish to travel with me, that would be all right."

So Garou and Nuwisha set off together, sharing the beauties of Gaia's creation and talking of matters that would probably make up a story in and of itself.

Soon, however, they tired of each other's company. Occasionally, they would disagree about some trivial matter and, since there was no one to settle their disputes, these arguments would go on for days. During one such argument, when they rested near a river, each sitting apart from the other silently planning their next rebuttal, a soft voice from nearby hissed at them.

"The river-spirits have carried news of your dispute to me," the sibilant voice said. "I can settle your dispute, if you truly wish me to." A slender young snake-man rose up from a rock beside the river. "I am called Silent Striker, and will travel with you if you like so that your disputes can be settled fairly, for that is what I do."

Worldwalker and Laughing Dream were tired of their frequent squabbling and welcomed Silent Striker, though they sometimes felt uncomfortable in the presence of the quiet young Nagah. Still, their quarrels grew less frequent and only once did Laughing Dream attempt to play a trick on Silent Striker. Only once!

Even three companions can grow tired of one another's company, though, especially when one of the three rarely speaks and simply watches the other two with snake-like dispassion. To amuse himself, Worldwalker picked up some brightly colored stones he found as the trio crossed a field where many rocks broke through the earth to greet the sky. As he walked along, he tossed the rocks into the sky and tried to catch them as they fell back toward the earth. When first one, then another rock failed to return to his open palm, and, indeed failed to return to earth at all, Worldwalker finally looked up. Hovering above him was a large black bird, with a bright colored stone grasped firmly in each claw. Laughing raucously, the raven landed in front of the trio and revealed himself as a raven-child.

"I've been watching you try to make the rocks fly," he said. "My name is Sharp Eyes. Do you mind if I keep these stones?"

Worldwalker looked at his companions. Laughing Dream nodded and Silent Striker did not object. "Keep them," said Worldwalker. "In fact, since you seem to have nothing better to do, why don't you join us on our quest?" He explained to the Corax boy about Gaia's greatest treasure and Sharp Eyes readily agreed to join the group. "I can scout ahead for you," he offered, " my eyes rarely miss anything of importance."

Worldwalker nodded. "Just remember, Gaia asked *me* to bring the treasure to Her.

"We can't help but remember," Laughing Dream said chidingly, her serious eyes belying the laughter in her voice.

Now numbering four, the group of changing children set off once more toward the end of the earth. They hadn't gone far before Sharp Eyes, who had been flying above them, keeping watch for anything that might look interesting to him or to his companions, gave a loud caw and landed in front of the group.

"Something is following us," he said. "Something that smells...curious."

Worldwalker sniffed the air just as the wind changed and caught the scent of another predator. Moving swifter than sound, he dashed into a copse of trees, where the scent grew strongest. Suddenly, with a snarl, a figure dropped down out of the trees and landed on Worldwalker's shoulders. The Garou rolled backward, knocking the creature off his back and, continuing his movement, pinned his attacker to the ground. He found himself staring into a pair of bright green lynx-eyes.

"Get off me, you big piece of fur and spit!" the lynx-girl said. "I'm not going to hurt you. I was just curious."

Wolf Walker sensed that the Bastet was not going to continue the fight and, remembering Gaia's rules about honorable conduct, stood back and let the lynx-girl stand. She brushed the dirt off her fur and looked at him quizzically.

"My name is Moondaughter," she said. "Where are you going and why are so many of you traveling together?"

By this time, the others had joined Worldwalker, who introduced his companions and explained to Moondaughter the reason for his quest and his desire for companions.

"I'll come, too," she said. "You never know when a cat may prove useful."

Worldwalker sighed, since he noticed that his companions were growing in number by leaps and bounds.

"Very well," he said. "But try to curb your curiosity. We have work to do."

Soon after Moondaughter joined the travelers, she heard a chittering sound as they approached a small human settlement surrounded by gentle hills and small copses of trees. Swift as lightning, the Bastet streaked up one of the hills and into the trees.

Her companions heard the sounds of struggle and an angry cry of surprise and pain. Worldwalker ran toward the battle and found Moondaughter trapping a rat-boy between herself and a tree.

"He was spying on us," she said, a note of defensiveness in her voice.

"I was defending my territory," the rat-boy replied, his voice shaking as he saw the Garou approach, followed closely by the Nuwisha, Corax and Nagah.

"He speaks truly," Silent Striker whispered. "Let him go, for now."

Moondaughter released her hold on the Ratkin, who stood his ground, casting his eyes furtively toward the village.

"Don't worry, we're not interested in your human-place," Sharp Eyes said, cawing scornfully. "We're on a quest for Gaia."

"Gaia told me that a great treasure lay at the end of the earth and asked me to bring it to Her," Worldwalker said. "I agreed to let these others accompany me."

"A treasure?" the Ratkin asked. "Sounds interesting. I'll come along, too, if you don't mind. You might need my expertise."

The rat-boy introduced himself as Scrounger and soon learned the names of his new traveling companions. The group continued walking. When they grew weary, they stopped to rest wherever they were, hunted for food to suit their tastes and regaled each other with stories of their people until they grew tired enough to sleep.

One morning, they heard a low growl as they approached a range of high mountains. Before they could react, a large shape came lumbering toward them from behind a huge boulder.

"I greet you, wanderers," the bear-woman said. "My name is Mountain Song and you have entered my territory. What is your business here? If you do not come in harmony, you will have to leave."

Worldwalker stepped forward and stared the Gurahl in the eyes. "I am Worldwalker, and I travel to the end of the earth to retrieve a great treasure at the request of Gaia. Let us pass."

"Who are these who travel with you?" Mountain Song asked, looking quizzically at the group of assorted shapeshifters. Worldwalker introduced his companions to the Gurahl.

"Looks like a large group to keep track of," Mountain Song said. "You'll probably need someone like me around, if you don't mind my joining." Worldwalker regarded the Gurahl carefully. He had heard tales of the bear-folks' great ferocity in battle and their secret knowledge of many healing ways.

"You may come along," he said. "So long as you realize that the quest is mine."

Mountain Song nodded her head but said nothing as she joined the growing company of changing folk.

Soon they came to a vast bayou, where they had to move carefully to keep from sinking into the thick dark water. Scrounger took the lead, skittering from solid place to solid place, testing each patch of apparent "ground" for strength. Several times, he misjudged a likely path and found himself breaking through the ground into the water. The others followed cautiously, testing their own weight and avoiding the places that could not even support the slender Ratkin. Only Sharp Eyes kept completely dry by taking to the air. Silent Striker, relaxing into his snake form,

merely slithered through land and water comfortably and inconspicuously.

While they were still in the middle of the bayou, they heard movement in the water. A long low form crawled up onto a big patch of nearly dry ground and regarded the group with eyes that seemed to see everything.

"Not many people come to my bayou," the alligator-man said. "This place belongs to me, Sun Bright Scales, and my kind."

"And who are you?" Laughing Dream asked, her eyes glimmering as she saw several possibilities to get the better of the scaly creature that glowered at the group.

"Oh, no, you don't," the Mokolé said. "I know about you, child, and all your kind. In fact, there's not much I don't remember."

"Is that true?" Moondaughter said, finding the pause in their journey provided her a convenient excuse for grooming her disheveled coat. "You remember lots of things?"

"That is why Gaia created us," Sun Bright Scales said. "We are Her memory."

"I am Worldwalker," the Garou spoke up. He introduced his other companions before he said, "I am going on a quest to the end of the earth to find a great treasure that Gaia wants. Do you remember what the treasure is?"

"Hmmm," mused the Mokolé. "Let me think on it while I accompany you on the rest of your journey. "I'll let you know if I remember anything worthwhile about the treasure, and in the meanwhile, I'll keep the record of your quest in my mind so that it will never be forgotten."

"You'll remember that it is *my* quest, of course," said Worldwalker.

"Of course," returned Sun Bright Scales.

Another day of traveling allowed the companions, now eight in number, to reach the end of the bayou. Ahead of them loomed a massive range of mountains, even taller than the ones where they found Mountain Song.

"It will take us forever to climb," said Worldwalker. "Maybe there's another way around the mountains."

"I could fly over them," Sharp Eyes said, "but the rest of you would have trouble and I couldn't possibly carry any of you, except, perhaps for Scrounger."

Silent Striker crawled up near the mountain and started to climb. As soon as he had gained a few feet, he slid down again. Several tries produced the same result.

"It's no use," he said. "The surface is too slick for climbing. We must turn back."

"No!" Worldwalker said, his refusal echoed by his other companions. "We can't give up."

"Perhaps I can help," a quiet voice spoke.

"Who said that, and where are you?" Mountain Song asked, looking around for any signs of danger.

"I'm right here," said the voice. The Gurahl looked down at her feet and saw first one, then another, then a hundred, then many hundreds of small spiders scurrying toward one another, forming a pile of spiders that coalesced into a sleek spider-woman. "I am called Aracha Darkdweller," she said, "and I know a way through the mountains, for they are my home."

"If you know how to help us to the other side of the mountains, we would welcome your assistance," Worldwalker said. "We are on a quest for Gaia." This time, he did not bother to distinguish his part in the quest.

"I'll come with you, if you like," the Ananasi said. "You never know when you might need a spider's help."

"You are not one of Gaia's children, are you?" Moondaughter asked, fascinated with the spider-woman's slinky presence.

"No," Sun Bright Scales answered for her. "Her mother is a cousin of sorts, though, and she respects Gaia well enough."

"That's so," Aracha said. She waited as one last spider hurried up to her and assimilated itself into the greater whole.

Worldwalker shivered a little, but agreed to let the Ananasi accompany them if she would guide them to the other side of the mountain.

Aracha led the group to a small cave opening in the side of the mountain. Worldwalker stepped inside right after the spider-woman. Mountain Song had to stoop to enter the cave, but once inside, she could straighten up. The others followed and soon the company was traveling in darkness, guided only by the sounds of one another's voices and the soft-spoken directions of Aracha.

The journey seemed to take forever, as journeys through dark places usually do, but only a few days passed before the group saw a glimmer of light up ahead.

"The other side of the mountain," Aracha announced.

"Are we getting close to the end of the earth?" Worldwalker asked, for he was beginning to wonder if his quest would ever reach its destination.

Sun Bright Scales thought for a moment, and the answer came to him. It didn't take him long at all, because there wasn't as much to remember in those first times.

"We are a little more than halfway there," he said.

"Then now is the time of testing," Silent Striker offered in his soft voice. "This is how it always is."

Just then, the group reached the end of the caves. "Thank you for showing us the way through the mountains," Worldwalker said to Aracha. "Are you sure you want to go with us?"

Aracha was quiet for a moment, thinking. "I am sure," she said. "It will serve more than one purpose." Worldwalker waited to hear what the other purpose was, but Aracha said no more and the Garou decided that no more information would be forthcoming. "Then let's go onward," he said, thinking all the while about the tests that Silent Striker said would be coming.

The landscape changed around them as they traveled, passing through fields, forests, deserts, swamps, great open plains and stony mountain passes. Finally they came to a body of water that was both deep and wide, so wide, in fact, that even Sharp Eyes could not see the other side.

"What is this?" Worldwalker said, for he had never seen so much water in one place. He had seen many rivers and lakes, but nothing to compare with this vastness.

"This is Sea," a raspy voice said as a figure emerged from the water and approached them. "And I am one of its guardians." The newcomer scowled at the collection of individuals standing before him.

"Who are you?" Laughing Dream asked, already fascinated with the possibilities of playing tricks on such a dour creature.

"I am Swims the Deep. My people are the Rokea." the creature said. "And if you are not enemies of Sea, I will take you across to the other side."

"We are not enemies of something so beautiful," Mountain Song said. Silent Striker and Sun Bright Scales nodded in agreement. Moondaughter and Laughing Dream looked slightly dubious, but said nothing. Scrounger walked up to the edge of the Sea and stared at it. "It's very big," he said. "I wouldn't want to be the enemy of Sea."

Worldwalker stepped in front of his companions. "There are no enemies of Sea here," he said. "Please take us across. We must reach the end of the earth, unless this place of water is where we need to be."

Swims the Deep shook his head. "No, there is earth on the other side of Sea, so you have not reached your destination. Why do you travel to the end of the earth?"

Worldwalker explained his quest to Swims the Deep, who listened carefully. "Well, perhaps I will just go with you once we reach the other side. I do not often walk upon that which is not Sea, so this will be a time of learning for me."

"Wait until I return to the water, and then walk out into Sea as far as you can go. I will be waiting for you." With those words, Swims the Deep turned and ran into the Sea, catching a cresting wave and disappearing beneath its curve.

Worldwalker led the way, since it was his duty to be first whenever he could, or so he thought. The others followed with different degrees of eagerness. Shivering with distaste, Moondaughter took a deep breath and marched toward the water, followed by Laughing Dream, the last two to wet their feet and fur in the ocean.

Sharp Eyes took to the air in raven-form, as Bastet, Ratkin and Nuwisha looked enviously up at him. When the sea was nearly up to the waist of the tallest of the companions and to the neck of the shortest, they sensed a huge creature moving toward them.

"Should we stand and fight?" Worldwalker asked. "Where is Swims the Deep?"

Sun Bright Scales considered the approaching figure. "That is Swims the Deep in his shark-form," he said.

"Of course I am Swims the Deep," the Rokea replied. "Climb onto my back or hang onto my fins," he said. "I will take you across Sea."

The journey was long and many times, one or another of the companions despaired of ever seeing the land again. Finally, those who were holding onto the fins of their Rokea guide felt solid ground beneath their feet.

"Here we are," Swims the Deep said. "I have done what I promised."

"For that, we are grateful," Worldwalker said. "And you may come with us if you wish."

"I am curious to see what treasure you have been sent to fetch," Swims the Deep said.

After drying themselves, the group continued on their journey. Soon the land they traveled through began to change. This change was not like any of the other changes. Whether they had walked through field or forest, desert or swamp, they had always been surrounded by Gaia's beauty and fecundity, Her profusion of plants and animals, rocks and rivers.

This new landscape was like none of those that had gone before. They walked through a forest where trees were twisted and blighted and the air smelled foul. A sluggish black river filled with misshapen and dying fish and lined with stinking reeds crawled through the forest. Even the ground felt sick and broken, as if all that was green and growing had been leeched from it by some malicious, lingering presence.

"Is this the test you said was coming?" Worldwalker asked Silent Striker.

The young snake man narrowed his eyes for a moment, then nodded once. "I think... yes... that it is," he whispered.

Just then, the land beneath their feet rose up in a mighty convulsion, throwing the companions to the ground. A gigantic chasm opened up as the earth split in two, dropping everyone into a deep, dark pit.

A booming voice that seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere thundered out. "You have trespassed on my master's lands. Now you will die!"

Sharp Eyes was the first to notice the earth closing above their heads. "We're going to be trapped under the earth," he cawed frantically.

"Quick, raven-friend," Worldwalker cried. "Fly out of the hole and let the rest of Gaia's children know of this place so that if we die here, they can come and do what we could not do."

With a mixture of relief and reluctance, the Corax shifted to raven-form and streaked upward.

"Wait, I can help!" Aracha said, shifting into the form of a giant spider. Quickly she spun a thick, strong cable of webbing. "Take this in your beak and pull it upward. Anchor it to a tree and perhaps we can climb to the surface before the earth closes completely."

Sharp Eyes paused in his flight and caught up the end of Aracha's ropy web in his beak, doing as she instructed him to do. Swiftly, the others grabbed the rope and clambered up out of the pit, just before it crashed together.

"Where's Aracha?" World Walker, who had waited until last to climb up the rope, as befit the leader of a group, asked. "I thought she went up before me?"

Everyone looked around, but no one could see her. "We will have to mourn her later," the Garou said. "We have an enemy that seeks our death, one we cannot see or smell."

"How, then, can we defeat it?" Sun Bright Scales asked, spoiling for something he could fight.

Moondaughter looked thoughtful for a moment. "Everything has a weakness," she said, "and everything has a secret flaw." Her face brightened suddenly. "It cannot be seen or smelled, but we know we can hear it, for we heard its voice, and perhaps we can even feel it, for it may have a body."

"Listen, it's approaching!" Scrounger said. As everyone concentrated on listening, they heard the loud crashing sound of giant footsteps.

"It's enormous," the Ratkin whispered as the murky sky grew darker with the creature's shadow.

"It is invisible, but it casts a shadow," the Bastet cried. "We can use that to attack it.

Worldwalker gave the signal to attack as the companions shifted into their war-forms to attack what could not be seen but could be heard and felt. While Garou, Bastet, Rokea, Gurahl and Mokolé threw themselves into the fight, Silent Striker sat back and studied the battle. "Something is wrong," he said after a minute. "They are not truly harming the creature but they are taking grievous wounds."

The Ratkin, Nuwisha and the Corax, who had also not joined the battle immediately, saw that the Nagah's words were true. "Perhaps we must fight its spirit self as well," Laughing Dream said. "I'll be back." In the blink of an eye, the Nuwisha disappeared. Just as quickly, she returned. "I've seen it," she said, "and it has four great eyes on the top of its head. If it can be blinded, perhaps we can change the battle."

Sharp Eyes smiled a large, beaky smile. "I can do that." The Corax shifted to his fighting form and slipped into the spirit world along with Laughing Dream. There, they saw a hideous, deformed creature with many arms and legs, four large eyes on its head and a huge, gaping mouth with sharp teeth that oozed poison. Sharp Eyes took to the air high above the monster and



swooped down atop it, striking for its eyes. In the meantime, Laughing Dream pelted the creature with stone-spirits and darted in and out among the beast's many legs, nipping at its heels and worrying it so that it could not concentrate on the physical battle.

Still watching the battle, Silent Striker saw the beast begin to tire, yet World Walker and Moondaughter were bleeding from wounds already growing pustulant. "They do not have much time," he said to Scrounger. "There is one thing that might work, if you can conjure up something that will sicken the monster."

"I can do that, but I need some of the creature's blood," said the Ratkin.

"I'll take care of that," a hundred tiny voices answered from the ground. Silent Striker and Scrounger looked as a horde of small spiders crawled up from minute holes in the ground where the pit was that had nearly buried them all. The spiders scurried toward the beast, crawling through the beginnings of the Weaver's webs to enter the Umbra. Soon a few of the spiders returned, each bearing a droplet of blood on their backs. Scrounger collected the monster's blood and used it to create a fast-spreading disease.

"Here, coat my fangs with it," Silent Striker said, changing into snake-form. "Combined with my venom, it might help to weaken the abomination."

His fangs dripping with disease-carrying venom, Silent Striker crawled toward the battle, noticing as he did, that there was little time left for his companions. Even the fearsome Rokea looked near death, and the others were fighting with only their Rage to drive them. Finding an opening, the Nagah struck.

Within seconds, the disease coursed through the body of the beast. Gradually, all the wounds inflicted on it by the others started to fester. A raging fever caused the beast to grow faint. In the Umbra, Sharp Eyes ripped out the last of the beast's four eyes and threw it on the ground. Laughing Dream, tired of throwing stones, found a heavy vine and twisted it around the monster's legs, immobilizing the creature so that, in its weakened state, it tottered and started to fall.

"Run!" Laughing Dream called out at the last moment, her voice carrying across the thinnest of Gauntlets to the ones engaged in close combat.

"Get clear!" Worldwalker called, as he sensed the creature's imminent fall. The wounded combatants barely had time to back away before the monster fell to the ground, becoming visible in both worlds as it did so.

All the companions gathered together and embraced each other, looking at their victory and at their miraculous survival.

"Let me tend to your wounds and then we will purify this foul place," Mountain Song said, and used her many healing talents to bring her wounded companions back from the edge of death. Afterward, she guided the group in a ceremony to purify the land, restoring it to the beauty Gaia had intended for it to have.

"Well done!" a melodious voice called out, and Worldwalker and the others recognized the sound of Gaia's voice.

"Great Mother!" said Worldwalker. "What are you doing here? We have not yet returned from our quest and our hands are empty of the treasure you wanted."

Gaia approached all Her changing children, laughing and smiling at them.

"You have already found the treasure I sought," she said. "For a long time, you have all dwelled apart from one another, each serving me separately. Now you see how working together has made you strong. I knew of this place where a great servant of the Wyrm had created a home for himself. I also knew that only a group such as you, working together, could defeat it."

Worldwalker looked humbled, as did the others. Gaia embraced each of Her children, one by one, giving them words of encouragement and thanking them for choosing to cooperate with one another. For a time, the companions remained together, basking in Gaia's approval and enjoying one another's company. Then Aracha decided that she needed to return to her caves, where her true mistress had another task for her. Swims the Deep felt the call of Sea and left the group, as well. One by one, each Fera returned to the place he or she knew best. As the years passed, they forgot the tale of Worldwalker and the search for the greatest treasure.

Soon the Wars of Rage would destroy the harmony that emerged from that quest and turn Garou against Fera and make the Fera wary of each other. Only Sun Bright Scales kept the memory of the deed and passed it down to his descendants, who occasionally shared it with others, including an ancestor of mine.

That is the end of my tale, beloved child. I wish that it had another ending, but it doesn't.

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Sarah Tells-the-Tale looked at Cries for Justice, who sat deep in thought.

"Weren't there others?" he asked? "The bats... and others?"

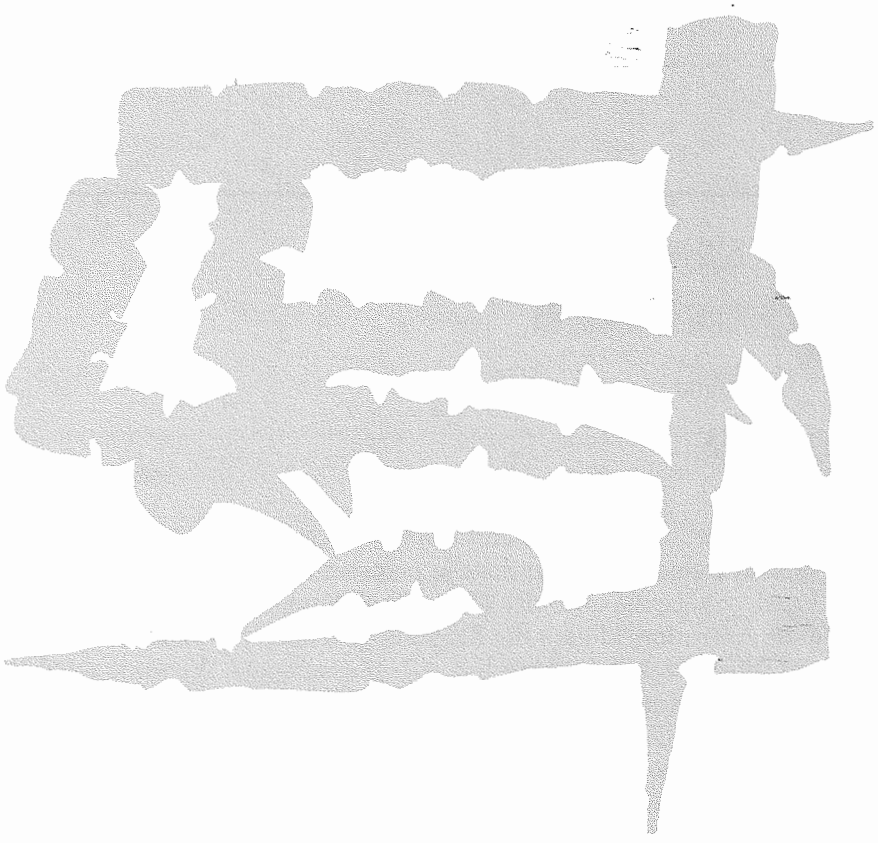
"There were," she replied sadly, "but they do not enter the tale. I cannot say why; this is just as I learned it."

"Do you think such a time of harmony will ever come again?"

His mentor shrugged. "Who knows? Perhaps you will be the one to rediscover the secret of cooperation with the Fera. Perhaps not. Only Gaia knows."

Long after Tells-the-Tale had gone to sleep, Cries for Justice remained awake, thinking. In the morning, when the sept arose, the young Garou was gone. When the sept leader asked his lorekeeper if she knew where Cries for Justice had gone, Sarah Tells-the-Tale only smiled. "I think he was sent out on a quest to find a great treasure," she said. "Let us hope he can succeed where others have failed."

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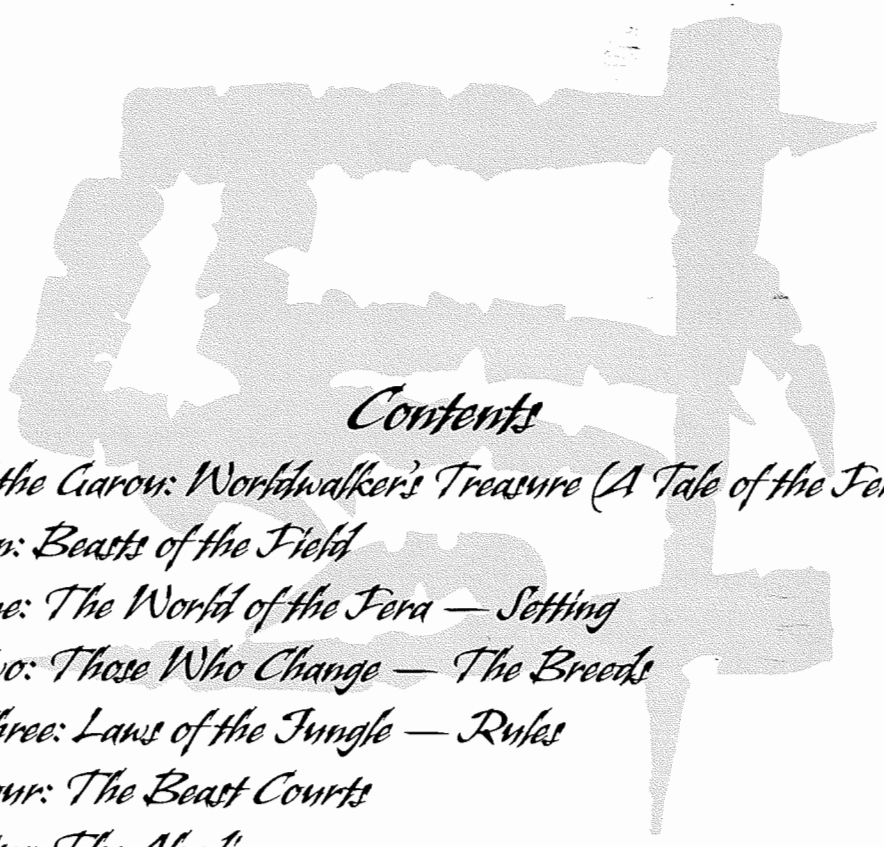
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PLAYERS GUIDE TO THE CHANGING BREEDS™



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03



He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god.
— Aristotle, *Politics*

Different Skins

So you've played **Werewolf** and decided to tackle something a little out of the ordinary or you've seen the books but never got turned on by the whole wolf thing. Instead, you like cats or lizards or something even more exotic. Maybe this is your first experience with roleplaying and the idea of doing something unexpected appeals to you. Or maybe you're a long-term fan of the game that's been looking for a Revised Edition update to your favorite Changing Breed for the longest time. Whatever the reason you decided to pick this book up, you should get plenty of mileage out of it.

The **Players Guide to the Changing Breeds** gathers together all the basic information players need to create and play all the interesting "other" shapechangers inhabiting the World of Darkness. Whether you're into cats, rats or bears, coyotes, spiders or oriental foxes then this is the sourcebook for you. Rather than putting out your hard-earned cash for dozens of books and searching through all of them to find the essential facts you need to play a Fera character, all you need to get started is included here.

Of course, any of the individual sourcebooks you may already own or be thinking about picking up aren't rendered instantly useless by this volume. Far from it. Each individual Breed book contains more information on the Breed it details than we could ever fit into this hardback; don't feel cheated if you own one. In many ways, the Breed books are still elaboration on the basics presented here. That said, even long-term veterans of **Werewolf** are going to find new, previously only hinted at things within these pages.

It may be called a Players' Guide but Storytellers can find lots of slinky, crawly ideas for running games based around the Fera within it as well. Even if you run for an all-werewolf pack, this book can help. Herein are materials to help you create interesting contacts and dangerous antagonists for you players, as well as some greater exploration of the issues that concern non-Garou. The end result can help you fashion several different sorts of games than those that your players are used to experiencing.

Playing Fera

What makes playing Fera so different from portraying Garou? They share some basic qualities: *most* agree they are Gaia's children to one degree or another, and each is an embodiment of some sort of greater purpose or specialty. Each is a shapechanger, a combination of human and some

animal such as a bear or cougar. Aside from such obvious differences as playing a fox or a big cat rather than a wolf the main change lies in each Breed's perception of itself and its role in the world and in the animalistic part of the character. Further, most of them have a long-standing grudge against the werewolves — the War of Rage — which may lead them to fear, distrust or even hate the Garou.

Whereas the Garou think of themselves as Gaia's warriors, those to whom She has entrusted Her welfare and ultimate salvation, the other Breeds generally see the Garou as, at best, braggarts and overly aggressive bullies. Eastern shapechangers have an additional culture clash with Western Garou, seeing the Garou (and for that matter, most other Western shapeshifters) as creatures who have an imperfect understanding at best of their part in the Earth Mother's greater plan.

Each group of Fera knows they have been given other, but not less important, duties than the Garou. Most feel that their own contributions equal or exceed those of the wolf-changers. They may serve as Gaia's eyes, Her memory, Her messengers or some other function. They may see themselves as chosen children of forces even greater than Gaia Herself. They each have their own particular practices, rites and Gifts that help them in these jobs. Taking into consideration what those powers are designed to do will determine part of how you'll play your Fera character. So will having knowledge of the animal side of the equation.

Acknowledging the Animal Within

Part of immersing yourself in the role of a Fera character is knowing something about the non-human side of things. If you want to play a Gurahl, it's more fun if you learn something about bears first. For example, most people assume bears are slow and lumbering. That would indicate to most players that they should put few points into their character's Dexterity, but in fact, bears are only slow when they stand on their hind legs. Ask any unlucky camper how easy it is to outrun a bear or get away from one by trying to climb a tree, *then* decide how many points to put into your Dexterity. Further, the Gurahl pride themselves on being artists, an undertaking that usually calls for a better Dexterity. So while looking at the animal side, you have to also consider the human portion as well.

If you also take the time to read about the continuing curtailment of wilderness leading to bears starving, then being shot when they wander into towns in search of food, you'll have a much clearer picture of what werebears might be pissed off about. Take the knowledge and use it to customize your character, to suggest quirks, Merits or Flaws or to figure out what your character does for a living. Use it to decide how your character moves or sits, how she talks or any other details you like to pin down. You can do the same thing with coyotes or foxes, spiders or lizards, ravens or alligators.

Acting the Animal

It is up to you as a player to establish how far you want to go in portraying the animal portion of your character. Many players feel uncomfortable going beyond projecting an attitude or trying on a different voice or an accent. That's fine if that's as far as you want to take it. Even that much can usually get the point across, but there are plenty of other ways to emphasize the aspects of the feral side of your character. Think about how animals move. As a great cat you might slink, tense for a jump, dig your claws into the dirt prior to leaping on prey, feel safe in high places and exhibit almost supernatural grace. Use those descriptions of what you are doing rather than saying, "I'm gonna jump him." Practice the wide-eyed stare of the predator and the mannerisms that differentiate the great cats from the domestic cat. You may be surprised how such non-verbal cues make the character memorable.

The same attention to detail can be applied to all the various Fera. An Ananasi related to web-spinning spiders will be a very different creature than an Ananasi who is kin to hunting spiders. The one will likely be patient and methodical, perhaps with very precise and calculated movements, while the other might consistently be in motion (even scuttling), always alert and watchful in an emotionless manner. Knowing the differences between shark breeds and their habits will make your Rokea characters stand out more, while a knowledge of the odd head movements ravens make can make all the difference in portraying an effective Corax.

And if you know nothing about the beast side you want to play? Here the advantages of the so-called Information Age come into play. Nature documentaries abound, if you have cable; even if you don't, you can find films or public television specials that can be very helpful. Study them for movement, sounds, temperament. There are hosts of websites devoted to animals of all sorts, which often have very good information, and the reference section of most large bookstores will boast a few works on animals that are aimed at the layman. Find out weaknesses and preferred foods, methods of hunting or ways the creatures amuse themselves. The more you can bring to the table concerning your animal side, the better you can make your character. Just remember when doing so that you aren't playing just the animal, but a hybrid, supernatural creature with full human intelligence and all the benefits that brings. If you're just playing the "dumb animal" you're missing a lot of the clever ploys you might use and the chance at great fun juxtaposing each side of the character with the other.

Global Concerns

The majority of **Werewolf** games are set in the European, Russian or North American landscape, often with a flavor of American Indian to them (in part due to the animistic nature of the world of **Werewolf**). This isn't

cultural bias — Europe, Russia and North America are just where the wolves (and the wolf-changer myths) are. But Fera games are more global in scope. While some Bastet, for example, are primarily found in North America, others range from Central and South America to Russia, the Far East and Africa. Most Eastern Fera even consider themselves part of the Beast Courts of the Emerald Mother rather than having any particular identification with the West, and especially not with the Western Garou. There are also many areas of the world that have never had wolves in them and in those places, the Fera are the masters and probably have little knowledge of werewolves and their ways. Certainly, if the pack comes to the Fera's territory, the non-wolf changers will have a low tolerance for any overly aggressive moves or nonsensical practices on the part of the Garou.

When portraying Fera, whether as part of a player group or as Storyteller-controlled characters, one of the main issues confronting troupes is to venture beyond the Euro-North American bent of most **Werewolf** games and incorporate a more global feel into the game. Because they live elsewhere, most Fera have concerns that reach far beyond the immediate focus of Western Garou. Rather than raging against corporate depredations in North America's wilderness areas, South American Bastet fight to protect the ever-diminishing rainforest. Finners, who cut the fins from sharks to sell in Far Eastern markets while abandoning the shark to die, enrage both Rokea and Same-Bito. The destruction of wetlands worldwide leave Mokolé with fewer spawning grounds each year even as their alligator Kinfolk begin to recover from being an endangered species. Khan aren't so lucky, as their tiger kin in Siberia and Asia face extinction.

These Fera have little interest in the problems that concern the Western Garou. Many of them even place the blame for some of their problems on the Garou, citing the decimation of their ranks during the War of Rage, from which many Breeds never recovered. When portraying such Fera both players and Storytellers should consider carefully just how much events outside their own homelands concern the Fera characters. Unless the game centers on Fera interests or is set where they have real reason to become involved, they have little to motivate them.

Believable locations and several other issues confront both the player and the Storyteller when dealing with Fera characters. But the single most important question is this: When and where do they fit into play? All the other issues stem from that one. Troupes must decide whether to go for an all Fera game or a mixed group, whether to set the game in some place the non-Garou would normally be found or if the character is truly going to be a fish out of water. How will the character fit with others or is everyone going to create a new Fera character? Some Storytellers may even feel that they just don't want to muddy the waters by introducing Fera as potential characters for players at all. These issues are addressed below so that troupes may feel more comfortable deciding how to deal with Fera with more knowledge of what to expect.

Integrating Fera into a Garou Pack

It's bad enough, you say, getting the Red Talon, the Get of Fenris, the Shadow Lord and the Black Fury to work together in a pack. Now you want to add something in that isn't even a Garou? How are you going to integrate a Corax or a Nuwisha, a Mokolé or a Bastet into a game created around and featuring Garou? That depends on a number of things.

First, players must be aware that the Storyteller is under no obligation to allow a Fera character into a **Werewolf** game at all. While there are similarities, the other shapeshifters' goals and ways of achieving their aims may be too divergent to allow certain Fera and Garou to work together on anything approaching a regular basis. Because of these differences, and in some cases due to fallout left over from the War of Rage, it isn't always possible or desirable to combine Fera characters with Garou. Players who truly desire to play Fera should be prepared to make their case to both the Storyteller and the rest of their troupe explaining how they plan to mix with the pack and why the story might call for something other than a Garou character. Then they'd better be prepared for whatever interactions come from it.

After all, Garou can be pretty arrogant and distrustful of other changers. It would be unrealistic for a pack to just automatically accept a newcomer who isn't even Garou with the same trust and enthusiasm they might show one of their own. Both players and Storytellers should be aware that any games featuring the Fera and the pack will have to allow extra time for the group to gel — or make the fact that they don't get along an integral part of the plotline.

Furthermore, it can certainly be tempting to try to play a character that's "different from all the others." However, your fellow players might interpret your desire to play a radically different character as an attempt to usurp more than your fair share of the spotlight, forcing the Storyteller to focus as much on your Fera character as he does on the rest of the pack combined. It might not be a fair accusation, but it might still hang over the game. This is doubly true if you want to play a character that has no interest in the Garou ideals of honorable battle and the crusade against the Wyrm. It's something of a backhanded insult to players who *are* interested in roleplaying those things, and it's disruptive to the game to demand that every story cater to your own character's motives as much as the pack's. **Werewolf** assumes that the characters are going to possess a pack bond, and therefore greater cooperation than do the protagonists in a **Vampire: The Masquerade** or **Demon: The Fallen** game. Undercutting that vital chemistry has a way of making the game less fun for people who appreciate that aspect of **Werewolf**, and we don't recommend making the game less fun for your fellow players as any sort of preferable approach to roleplaying.

If the Storyteller agrees to let you play one of the Fera on a temporary basis, just to see if something can be worked out. To some extent it is incumbent upon you as the player to create a character that can get along with the Garou. If you insist on playing a character that hates the Garou or that cannot find any common ground, the mix is bound to fail. Players would do far better to approach the game by playing a Fera who either likes or is indebted to Garou for some reason. Perhaps curiosity about the wolf-changers or even an open mind concerning them is enough to motivate positive character interaction. Whatever method you choose, make certain it doesn't interfere with or detract from the overall story the Storyteller is trying to present. The object is to enhance the story, not overpower it.

Consider the importance of whether the game is set somewhere it might be appropriate to introduce such a character. Obviously, if you insist on playing a wereshark in Wyoming, you've already saddled yourself with enough problems without adding an attempt to join a pack of werewolves. You need to consider what the setting is, how appropriate the character would be to the setting and just how strained relations are between your Breed and the Garou. Finding something compatible may be the key to the success or failure of the experiment.

Nuwisha, for example, might be perceived as particularly scrawny Ragabash types and Gurahl might be an object of fascination, shame and wonder for the Garou, highly welcomed for their healing abilities and great strength. On the other hand, Mokolé don't thrive where Garou usually roam and Corax and many Bastet could easily drive the Garou into a rage with their chatter or lazy, snide attitude respectively. Strangely, various members of the eastern Beast Courts, while their world views are considerably different, might most easily fit in with Garou simply because they are more used to working with changers other than their own Breed. If you need to find some common ground with the Garou, don't feel compelled to follow every stereotype about your Breed, but don't simply throw it all out and pretend like this is a werewolf that happens to be dressed in a spider suit either. The heart of any successful chronicle with a mix of Fera and Garou characters is not extremism, but compromise.

All-Fera Games

Naturally, one way to avoid the problems associated with playing Fera in a **Werewolf** game is for your troupe to all run Fera characters. The information presented in this book should provide players and Storytellers with plenty of material for creating Fera characters, either for player use or as supporting cast, for one-shot stories or for full chronicles. While all-Garou games invariably lead to combat sooner or later (status as Gaia's warriors aside, bloodshed is as integral to the werewolf myth as seduction is to the vampire myth), such concerns may be secondary in Fera games. Intrigue, the acquisition of knowledge, stealthy theft, clever manipulation or the cleansing of a horrid blight might be the order of the day depending on what sort of Fera the game involves. Some of the same types of stories that appeal to Garou can also work with Fera, but ones that speak to their particular interests and talents make for better games.

When planning all Fera games, Storytellers and players should get together and decide whether they'd prefer games that feature one Breed with everyone playing characters of that Breed or games that accommodate several different Breeds working together. Each has its merits and its drawbacks.

Melting Pot

The largest strength of a game with multiple types of Fera is its diversity; there's a certain amount of vitality that comes from a game where everyone is not only playing exactly the type of shapeshifter they like best, but enjoying the ability to play off other Breeds. This sort of scenario obviously works best with players that enjoy watching their fellow players take the limelight as much as they enjoy their own turn on center stage. (Those who are less interested in watching other players have their turn than they are in trying to grab the other players' attention suffer from the dreaded "look at me" syndrome, which can badly injure games. If everyone wants to be looked at but nobody wants to look at anyone else, it's a formula for disaster. Be warned!)

A group of mixed Fera also has the advantage of a wide variety of skills and abilities to apply to any task at hand. A mixed group might not be as stealthy as an all-Corax group or as proficient at sinking ships as a slew of Rokea, but they can outfight enemies that would tear the murder of Corax to ribbons and have far more success on dry land than the Rokea would. They have the advantage of diversity that carried the Garou packs to victory, only more so. Such a group can meet a wider variety of challenges while still not being so over-specialized that they are guaranteed success in any one endeavor.

A mixed-Fera group is also potentially the best way to experience the culture of one of the major shapeshifter organizations — the Beast Courts and the Ahadi. A mix of different Breeds showcases the diversity and the strength through shared culture that makes those two alliances as effective as they are.

On the other hand, a group of mixed Fera can lack focus (particularly in games that don't focus on the Beast Courts or Ahadi). Some of the members of the group might not have any real reason to get along (such as, for instance, a Ratkin and a Bastet). They can also look somewhat implausible when lined up together; all members of very rare Breeds, somehow gathered in one place by a common purpose. Extra work at devising reasons for your characters to know and respect one another is highly recommended. After all, you can only play the "we're trying to set an example of Breed cooperation" card so many times.

The diversity of abilities being as extreme as it is, players may feel less helpful in certain situations. After all, a Corax who travels with a Rokea, a Mokolé and a Khan isn't going to pull the same share of weight in the average combat. The Storyteller should do his best to mix up the challenges so that each player has a feeling of contributing equally when the overall story is considered, even if they didn't feel the same way in every scene.

Breed-Specific

Games featuring characters from a single Fera Breed are much more like the usual **Werewolf** story. There's less need to jump through hoops trying to get the characters together — they may already know one another. Even if they are strangers, they already have their Breed in common and have some idea of what to expect from each other. Chances are they have similar outlooks or goals even if their personalities are divergent. Usually such groups have common interests and goals as well.

Although most troupes enjoy combat to one degree or another, not all Fera are combat monsters or even well suited to fighting. Many benefit more from staying out of toe-to-toe battle and engaging in other forms of conflict. Instead, stories that play to the strengths of each Breed should form the backbone of any Fera campaign.

Ajaba

Hyenas run in clans, and the Ajaba are equally social. An all-Ajaba game is a natural way to play the hyenas — although their numbers aren't near where they should have been without the Simba's genocidal war, the Ajaba are still more likely to gather their own together than to mingle with other Breeds. An excellent focus for an all-Ajaba group would be to have female members of the same clan, with males from other clans that have pledged their temporary support. The story might involve working towards a greater good (such as one of the Ahadi's goals), following the path of personal ambition (as Ajaba are so status-conscious), rooting out corrupt Ajaba that sided with the Wyrm, or even acting out a personal revenge drama (avenging themselves against a Simba war criminal who is currently "under protection"). The Ajaba's role in the Ahadi gives the pack opportunity to interact with other shapeshifters in a variety of ways. An Ajaba pack also provides ample opportunity for roleplaying conflicts, as the Ajaba bicker amongst themselves but set aside their grievances when a greater threat looms. In many ways, the Ajaba are very like Garou, which tends to make an all-Ajaba game an easy one for any group of **Werewolf** veterans to play out.

Ananasi

The children of the Weaver's handmaiden Queen Ananasa serve their queen by trying to free the Weaver from its entanglement with the Wyrm. As the Wyrm has captured their queen, they attempt to free her through their dealings with humans, trying to manipulate them and attempting to restore the balance to the Triat. Ananasi groups might focus their attention on weaving threads of manipulation from one important group to another, mostly remaining hidden from those they use. They might as easily help to free someone from imprisonment, provided it serves their purposes in the long run. Ananasi often take their orders from their queen, who can communicate with them and for this reason, they might be found doing almost anything at her bidding, whether they understand the ultimate reason for it or not. Most other Fera distrust and hate the Ananasi, misunderstanding their aims and purposes. For this reason, groups of all Ananasi are frequent and they are often unsuited to traveling with other breeds — especially Garou. Nonetheless, should the queen command it, Ananasi will undertake even a lengthy and possibly fatal quest with other Fera.

Bastet

Bastet pride themselves on *knowing*. As solitary creatures (the Simba and Swara excepted), Bastet aren't naturally prone to fit themselves into groups. Nonetheless, the Bastet gather together in prides now and again — often simply because the Bastet involved are curious. Groups of Bastet might be happiest witnessing secret rites of the other shapeshifters, spying on the enemy and gathering enough dirt on those who hunt their Kin or despoil their lands to rip them to shreds — after they rip away everything dear to them first.

Games featuring a Bastet pride may focus on seeing what's happening and deciding to tell those best suited to act on the information or withholding the news from those who annoy them. Nonetheless, the Bastet are more than capable of tearing up those who oppose them in combat. Each type of Bastet has different capabilities to offer, which leads to great versatility within the group, but many Bastet tribes dislike or distrust one another. This could lead to in-fighting among the group's members, which might limit their capability in dealing with external threats. Bastet can get along with other shapeshifters; the question is the same as that which plagues anyone who knows cats — do they care to?

Corax

Corax groups usually serve as information gatherers or messengers; sometimes both. Stories involving a murder of Corax might concern ferreting out secrets, hearing rumors and investigating, acting as reconnaissance, performing messenger services and talking themselves out of trouble. Corax use their flight abilities, stealth, knowledge and quick wits far more often than resorting to combat. The difficulties of a murder of Corax are that not everyone can talk at once and jealousy over who gets the best gossip could undermine relationships within the group. When mixing with other Breeds, a Corax can be an invaluable companion who fulfills advance scouting, information gathering and aerial combat roles within the group.

Gurahl

Although rare, the werebears have begun making a comeback in recent years. Younger Gurahl move more freely in the world than their elders, having no personal memories of the War of Rage. While there are so few werebears that large packs of them are impossible, a few small groups may patrol areas too large to be policed by a single Gurahl or form a squad to accomplish specific goals as needed. Stories involving the Gurahl should feature everything from stopping predation on bears to providing nurturing or healing for those injured creatures and people that cross their paths; they are also heavy with dramatic import. The rarity of the Gurahl means that a group of them is a rare, rare thing, likely with a great task ahead of them. Gurahl cooperate well with one another and the different tribes offer varied skills. They are also prone to get along better than might be expected in a group of mixed Fera. Some other Fera may still harbor some of the doubts the Garou raised regarding the Gurahl's taint, and the Gurahl are by no means pacifists — they're still creatures of great Rage. But the Gurahl have the tools to overcome those prejudices, if they're willing to meet the challenge. While their healing talents are greatly appreciated, the werebears possess their share of combat prowess as well. Stories that focus on righting wrongs, heavy combats and healing are all viable for Gurahl.

Kitsune

The Kitsune's strong affiliation with the Beast Courts tends to make them ideal characters for mixed-Fera games. But the foxes have other goals and secrets that they keep separate from the other shapeshifters of the Courts, and are prone to gather in all-Kitsune groups to achieve these agendas. The most auspicious Kitsune gathering is four, one of each Path — providing ample versatility of skills and magic. An all-Kitsune story or chronicle may focus largely on stealth, roleplaying interaction and magic, as the fox-shifters use their natural gifts of guile, sorcery and grace to bypass obstacles. For players that enjoy being effective and looking damn good doing it, the Kitsune are a fine choice.

Mokolé

Mokolé have their roles strictly cut out for them based on their sun signs, much like their enemies the Garou follow the auspices granted them by the moon. Whether hunters, judges, clowns or nurturers, Mokolé live in clutches, close communities of family groups concerned with preserving the memories of their local territory. These provide natural "packs" for Mokolé to work together and can consist of both Mokolé and Kinfolk. While it is possible for Mokolé to work with other Changing Breeds, many find it difficult to forgive the Garou for their wholesale slaughter of the reptile folk during the War of Rage. Mixed groups see them chiefly for their combat value, though some more astute Fera realize that the Mokolé's extensive memories could assist them more than their battle prowess. As the memory of Gaia, Mokolé should enjoy stories that help them recover lost knowledge. They also work to prevent humans from damming streams and rivers, clear cutting forests, despoiling Gaia and harming their Kinfolk.

Nagah

More than any other shapeshifter, the Nagah were designed to be played in single-Breed stories. Most Fera believe Nagah all perished in the War of Rage and the Nagah do not intend to tell them otherwise. They move secretly, policing the other Breeds, watching to make sure that all perform their duties as they ought to. Those who prove traitors, should they not fall to their own Breed's justice, may eventually fall to the Nagah, who slay them in the same emotionless fashion with which they appear to conduct themselves at most times. Unlike any other Breed, the Nagah cannot associate with other Fera —they're supposed to be extinct— and must therefore *only* be part of a pack made up of other Nagah. This is not necessarily true in a game set against the backdrop of the Courts of the Emerald Mother, but even there, secrecy is paramount.

Seemingly dispassionate, they can be the most difficult of the Breeds to play, for their emotions are subtle and expressed more quietly than other Breeds. Games featuring the Nagah focus on discovering Fera who shirk or betray their duties, judging the severity of the crime and if it warrants such, tracking and cornering them where they can be brought down and punished. As the Nagah must remain undiscovered, the crime must call for death, for that is the punishment the Nagah deliver. Other aspects of Nagah stories may revolve around the concepts that they are not themselves perfect and dealing with the question of who punishes the judge and executioner when he himself is corrupt?

Nuwisha

The Nuwisha have many faces, each of which serves Coyote in its own way. Whether through outright trickery, playing the odds, lying, gathering information or fighting, the Nuwisha serve their purposes of honoring Coyote and teaching others. While most other Fera believe the Nuwisha are little more than dangerous fools and unpredictable tricksters, the children of Coyote conspire to keep the others in the dark concerning their true nature. Thus, while mixed groups of Nuwisha and other Fera may exist, those groups seldom understand or appreciate what the Nuwisha bring to the mix.

All-Nuwisha groups are rare; the Nuwisha don't tend to cooperate too tightly. Coyote himself was a loner who didn't get along too well even with other trickster-types like Iktomi, and his children are much the same. Still, an all-Nuwisha story is far from impossible. It might, in fact, make the perfect one-shot scenario full of black humor and clever dialogue — almost a caper flick, albeit one where the final twist and joke have that deadly touch to them.

Ratkin

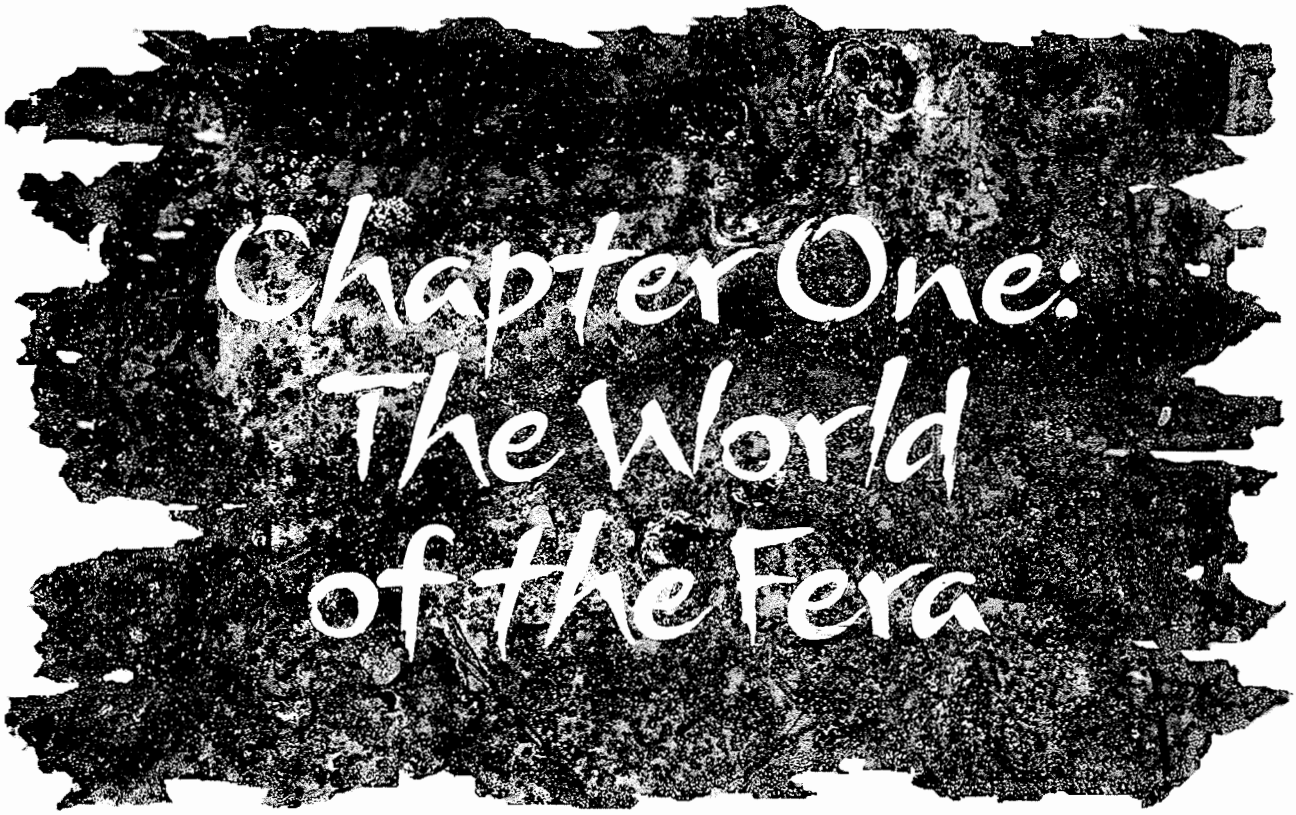
The Ratkin are an antisocial lot, and don't always mix very well with other shapeshifters. The worst of them view the warlike Breeds as bloodthirsty morons and the more reserved Breeds as weak-kneed pacifists. That said, a Ratkin may strike a temporary alliance with other shapeshifters if need be; Bone Gnawers are the most obvious way to tie Ratkin to a group, thanks to their common devotion to the Rat totem. A Ratkin is unlikely to show any real devotion to other shapeshifters, treating them almost like a disposable handgun or rented car — but if a common cause can be found, Ratkin can make useful, if frenetic, allies.

All-Ratkin games tend to work much more smoothly. The Ratkin are a social Breed at heart, and although they lack the strong bonds of a Garou pack or Nagah nest, they find a certain safety and comfort in numbers. A Ratkin nest can be a subtle and dangerous force for infiltration or sabotage, or it can be an exercise in barely directed keening madness.

Rokea

Rokea slews find it easiest to locate near the sea, if not in it. Since Rokea have a problem with being on land and must also fight off incursions from other Rokea who consider them traitorous if they leave Sea, if they *do* choose to locate on dry land, stories concerning them should be fraught with frustration and paranoia. Their concerns can be anything that threatens Sea or their shark Kin. As there exist different types of Rokea, there is room for some diversity and specialization within the group, but since many Rokea are natural killing machines, combat oriented games and quick, hot-blooded action may take precedence over more analytical or stealthy fare. Sharks do not normally swim together that often and all that togetherness may erode tempers in the group. Conversely, weresharks really don't get along with others, be they humans or other Fera, so groups featuring Rokea along with other Breeds should be few and far between. Such cooperation would be considered only when the cause would truly be so important to the weresharks that they agree to put up with others for the duration. Such causes might be preventing the destruction of all Rokea or of Sea herself.





Chapter One: The World of the Fera

"Up until today, you believed there was a line between myth and reality... Those things out there are real. If they're real, what else is real? You know what lives in the shadows now. You may never get another night's sleep as long as you live..."

— Meghan, *Dog Soldiers*

Wars of Rage

When the world was young, Gaia created and appointed sacred creatures to watch over her world. The first shapeshifters not only protected the savage world of beasts, but also walked in the primitive world of men — we now know them as the *Changing Breeds*. And just as they could walk as humans, they could breed with them — in the time before time, humanity served as their breeding stock. Their children were the first of their Kinfolk: the offspring of sacred creatures. It is a time eradicated by human memory, remembered only in nightmares.

The monsters humans feared most were the very ones pledged to protect them from unseen horrors: We call them werewolves; you know them as the Garou. Filled with rage and pride, these werewolves often looked down on humans as lesser creatures, treating them as little more than slaves. Each of the other shapechangers — to the Garou, the *Fera*, meaning "shapeshifter that is not Garou" — watched over its own "herd" of humans as well, cultivating their human "flocks" as they defended their territories. For generations, the Fera raised their offspring, watched over the sacred places of the world, and carried out the tasks Gaia appointed to them. Those who flew as ravens served as the messengers of the supernatural world; those that skulked as snakes served as the Earth Mother's chosen assassins, and so on. Each of the shapechangers had its place — but the werewolves placed themselves above all others.

The werewolves had their own sacred tasks: They openly hunted natural beasts and supernatural evil, demonstrating deeds so glorious they proclaimed themselves the greatest of Gaia's creatures. And then, for reasons that have been argued about for millennia since, the Garou began to hunt the Fera as well. As they expanded their territories, seized herds of humans, and demonstrated their dominance, they launched a series of crusades modern werewolves shamefully remember as the War of Rage.

No one event sparked the War of Rage; in fact, some Fera refer to them as "Wars of Rage" instead. Some of these conflicts were actual wars, with both sides vying against one another for the usual reasons of territory, resources or blood vendetta. Others were clearly one-sided atrocities, where Garou found reasons to punish the other shapechangers, to hunt them, and to drive them to near extinction. Although the Garou were pack creatures, individual motives drove them to enact scenes of horror. Some killed to expand their territories; some to seize

human breeding stock; others for glory, or for misperceived honor. Some attacks may well have been justified or provoked, but revenge was just as common; once one werewolf died, it was all too easy for the rest of the pack to seek vengeance for their fallen comrade. Whatever the true reasons, they are lost to the mists of legend, hidden in the time before time. The Garou fought for supremacy around the world. When the dust finally settled and the last graves were filled in, the werewolves pronounced their enemies wounded, missing, or dead. In some cases, they were entirely mistaken.

For millennia, the Fera were on the verge of extinction, at least in the world of flesh. Yet in the world of spirit, in the shadows, and in the hidden places of the world, a few endured, nursing their hatred against the creatures that had hunted them. Ever vigilant against supernatural evils, the Garou neglected to watch out for the greatest danger in their midst: the very humans they oppressed. And as was nature's way, the world evolved into a world of men. The time before time became a distant memory — but the Wars of Rage were not forgotten.

The Survivors

Where beasts ruled once, man now rules. In the modern millennium, Garou have learned to hide in the shadows, waging an unseen war against forces mankind can neither perceive nor understand — and without the aid of the Fera, it is a losing battle. Everywhere, it is evident that the End Times are approaching. Strange days are at hand, and in some cases, the impossible has become quite real. Supernatural forces are returning to the world, if only to bring about some cosmic reckoning humanity cannot comprehend.

Some of the Fera survived the Wars of Rage by fleeing to the depths of the spirit world. Now, as the stars are right, they have returned in numbers the world has never seen before. Because of their supernatural talents, humanity cannot recall their true forms — but when hidden evils emerge, the Fera come out to hunt. Ten of the Fera have been seen in the world today, not by humans, but by others shapechangers. Werewolves have rarely encountered these creatures, for the Fera have little reason to trust them.

The shapeshifting races were not designed for diplomacy, and thus alliances between the various Changing Breeds were few even in the Dawn Times. "Reason" is not a principle one applies to the most monstrous of beasts, especially legendary ones. Just as wolves have instincts to hunt in packs, werewolves succumb to frenzies of Rage, and their society depends on them hunting together to defend and define their world. By contrast, the Fera rarely work together except in the most extreme circumstances — and most are also driven by Rage, making them even less social and cooperative. Most of the Fera Breeds are also separated by geography, claiming vastly different ecosystems as their homelands. For the vast majority of each race, existence is defined by overriding needs to protect their Kinfolk, breed more young, and keep their spawning grounds hidden. Yet for each of these races, a few of their young are idealistic enough to journey outside the world they know, seeking fulfillment in some elusive higher cause.

A few Fera feel an overwhelming sense of wanderlust that must be satisfied. Others hope to find new places for their kind to thrive, causes to fight for (and die for), or mysteries they may solve. Ignorance keeps them apart — each regards the other Fera through the usual falsehoods of lore, legend, and base stereotypes. Like the Garou, they are trapped between two worlds: caught between the dictates of their dying races and the dangers of the human world. Perhaps if they can survive this conflict, they may return to their homelands with the wisdom and experience to save their own kind. Perhaps there will be a reckoning for the Fera as well. In the End Times, almost anything is possible.

Eleven Fera

Masters of ancient lore remember the old names. Shapechanger mystics piece together what they know from the few events that have been witnessed. As the Apocalypse approaches, those events have become more common, and true knowledge grows by leaps and bounds. Recite the old names with reverence, for their power is growing.

The **Ajaba** hyenas have been exiled from their homeland for almost a decade. Shapeshifters around the world revile the tyrannical werelion named Black Tooth, a monster who mustered an army to secure the African wilderness and isolate it with wards of power. Many Fera died attacking the tyrant and his minions; the Ajaba now nurse a furious hatred of the killers who defended him. They have no home, and they have few leaders — only anger drives them onward.

Ananasi werespiders are known for their love of intrigue; some would say that extends to a penchant for treachery. Caught between the three cosmic forces of the Triat, they are a race set against itself. Most share a powerful communion with the Weaver; a few Kumoti spiders surrender to the libertine freedoms of the Wyld; dark and bloated Hatar spiders worship the Wyrm. Their subtlety is as great as that of any vampire, yet their thirst for blood is relatively restrained. It is said they can move unseen as swarms of scurrying insects... even now, they may be under our very feet.

Bastet cats are among the most widespread shapeshifters in the world. They stalk their territories with the sort of vigilance — and arrogance — that almost equals the Garou. Eight tribes wander the world; most possess an insatiable curiosity and a need to explore. Territorial by nature, they have the brawn and speed to defend their isolated homelands. Because their curiosity often draws them to supernatural and magical enigmas, they'll need those strengths.

Corax ravens are praised as messengers by some... and condemned as spies by others. The bravest are adept at soaring between the different communities of shapechangers, gathering secrets, gossip, and lies. The wereravens assume many guises. In some cultures, they are revered as symbols of war; in others, they are celebrated as tricksters. No matter where they fly, they gather tales of their travels, and for the right price, they will tell all they have seen. Sometimes they must even deal with the consequences of spreading such knowledge.

Gurahl bears may well be the least populous species of shapechangers. They were among the first to die in the Wars of Rage; as such, they have hibernated longer than all the other Fera. In the time before time, they were great healers, keepers of the land who used powerful rituals to purge it of corruption. Now they do all they can to heal their own numbers, as many species of bears are now perilously close to extinction. The world is dying, and the werebears barely have enough heroes to save their own kind... still they have not yet passed from the Earth.

The youngest of the Changing Breeds are the **Kitsune**, the foxes. These clever and mystical shapeshifters arose in Asia many centuries ago — but unlike other shapechangers, they arose during the time of humanity, not before. They have yet to spread to all the areas where foxes are found, and it is uncertain whether they will have time to do so before the End. It is also uncertain just what role they play, as they seem to be equal parts spy, courtier, mystic and warrior — and the Kitsune merely smile quietly and change the subject when asked.

Conversely, the **Mokolé** might be the oldest of the Changing Breeds. Long before the first Garou, even before the emergence of mammals, dinosaurs walked the Earth. Man was not the first creature to walk on two legs; sentient saurians remember that their ancestors could assume a form that walked upright, used tools, and built a crude civilization — even though they cannot fully remember or agree what this creature looked like. They are the keepers of ancient memories and lore, and as their numbers increase, those visions become clearer. When Gaia's first great experiment died out, lizards, reptiles, and crocodilians inherited these ancient legacies. They sometimes walk as men, but when their prepare for war, they can assume monstrous battle-forms that recall ancient genetic legacies— horrors no human scientist would dare contemplate.

Nagah serpents maintain Sacred Secrets, including their true numbers and purpose. In fact, most shapechangers don't even realize the Nagah survived the Wars of Rage. As Gaia's enforcers and assassins, they answer Her silent demands for swift justice. Operating in tightly intertwined "nests" of two or three, they act with a secrecy no other race can emulate. When one of the Fera strays, the wereserpents are swift to mete Gaia's punishment. They strike so quickly that even other shapechangers do not realize who is responsible.

Nuwisha share the same trickster spirit as Coyote, who first brought them into the light of day. They laugh at the darkness in the world, unleashing deadly "pranks" against those who serve it. Yet with their great joy comes an even greater ability to peer into the shadows of the world. They first came onto the Earth in what is now the American Southwest, but throughout the End Times, they insist on bearing witness to the fate of all creation. Werecoyotes cannot take life too seriously, yet they are willing to risk their lives when true darkness emerges.

Long ago, **Ratkin** were reviled for culling populations of human Kinfolk. Nature is not without a sense of balance, however, and the wererats saw their duties as sacred. Slaughtered in great numbers, they fled to the Umbra... and now they are returning in vast swarms. Driven insane by thousands of years of spiritual exile, they are amassing an army for the Apocalypse. The wererats rampage to bring the chaos of the Wyld back into the world... by any means necessary. Snapping the threads that hold human civilization together is merely the first step. If the Garou insist on defending humanity, destroying them is the next one.

Other Fera rarely encounter **Rokea** sharks, but as their numbers grow, their young are more willing take human form and explore dry land. The world of men is a mystery waiting for them to solve. Yet there are countless mysteries beneath the waves as well; after all, most of Gaia's world lies underwater. So do horrible aquatic creatures twisted by the Wyrm, beings so alien only the weresharks can understand or oppose them. If these wars beneath the seas are lost, the wars above the waves will become pointless.

The Wild Survives, The World Endures

Throughout the World of Darkness, the wilderness is shrinking. Areas where the wild can thrive are few and far between, and the Earth is dying. Whether through perseverance, spiritual escape, supernatural talent, or heightened subterfuge, the Fera have maintained their meager colonies, protectorates, and spawning grounds since the Wars of Rage. Each of the Fera has its own traditional homelands, and each has seized new ones. Now as the world tilts further out of balance, the Wyld surges through these places, and a few young heroes seek new places where there kind can thrive.

To understand where they are going, one must know where they have been. Here, then, is a summary of where the many Fera have been seen and encountered in the World of Darkness. Consider it the penultimate chapter of the world's history, if you will — the heroes you represent must write the final chapter.

Africa

Millennia ago, Africa was a haven for shapeshifters. With no wolves present, the Garou had little reason to expand south of the Sahara. The vigilance of Simba, Swara and Bagheera Bastet — and titanic saurian Mokolé — repelled the few packs of werewolves who entered the area regardless. Human incursions were far subtler, bringing European culture into the heart of Africa. As humans arrived, so did the vampires who preyed on them. Yet even the most feral vampires tread lightly on the Dark Continent. In the depths of wilderness, Fera defend their territories with the same ferocity they displayed millennia ago.

The most dramatic development in recent years was the formation of the Ahadi, a loose coalition of African shapeshifters that have to date demonstrated more cooperation between Breeds than any other alliance outside the Beast Courts has for millennia. Although the Ahadi does not control territory with an iron claw, and neither does it guarantee cooperation be-

tween African Fera, it is far more wide-ranging and efficient a treaty than Africa's shapeshifters have ever seen.

The Ajaba can trace their origins to the Serengeti grasslands; they have ranged as far as India and South Africa. The last of the Hyena Kings died twenty years ago, slain by a ruthless Simba Bastet named Black Tooth in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro. Black Tooth's sinister allies have magically warded the area, preventing hyenas from ever returning. By migrating to urban areas, they have ensured their own survival, and recently their queen, Kisasi, almost single-handedly engineered the alliance that formed the basis of the Ahadi. However, they still have no real home, despite advances made during the Ahadi's establishment.

For the Ananasi, no matter where they are born, two places on the planet are considered their homelands — Africa is one of them. From its desolate deserts to its deepest jungles, there is no place in Africa where the werespiders cannot thrive. Other Fera contemplate the shortages of food in remote lands, but for the Ananasi, as long as there are people, there is food. Blood satisfies the spiders' hunger like nothing else. On this continent, in a place known as Estotilandia, Ananasi ancestors first crawled into the world; it is a sacred place, one that attracts Ananasi pilgrims from all over the world. In the same way, its location is kept secret, and its guardians vow that none but their own kind will ever set foot in it.

The Bastet are numerous on this continent as well, so much so that they consider the Ananasi intruders. The leonine Simba dominate their territories with strength even Garou cannot easily overcome. Simba value strength and order, considering themselves the most noble of their kind. Swara, the cheetahs, patrol the plains and grasslands, demonstrating their swiftness as they chase down any who invade their lands. Known for their extreme xenophobia and mistrustful natures, they have become increasingly willing to hunt what they do not understand. Bagheera are drawn to places where their leopard Kinfolk thrive. Even more enigmatic are the magical Bubasti of ancient Egypt. The werecats go by many names, and they have helped many African cultures prosper.

The African Corax have a presence in the Makunguru, a splinter group of Corax that breeds with white-necked ravens. The Makunguru serve as messengers and witnesses to the supernatural world, from the Sahara Desert to Capetown. Unfortunately, they've seen many of the horrors this continent has to offer: corpses piled high, villages devastated by plague, monsters feasting on fields of plague victims, and children starving while nearby warehouses of food rot. Each of these physical horrors casts shadows in the spirit world that are even more horrific. The wereravens have seen too much, and they know too much. Because they've witnessed events they shouldn't have — sometimes plucking those memories from the eyes of the dead — they have made great enemies, monsters that seek revenge against those who refuse to keep the rest of the world ignorant of such atrocities.

Africa's native shapechanging crocodilians, the Mokolé-mbembe, are relatively diverse for their kind. Although the Mokolé-mbembe have spread into the Americas, those that remain breed largely with the Nile crocodile, and are fierce warriors among their own kind. Repopulation is their most immediate goal, but African heroes hear the call to fulfill ancient prophecies — revelations only contained in the collective memories of the Mokolé.

Stranger days await these strange crocodiles. In the Umbral swamps of the Congo river, a large community of reptilian brothers and sisters worship the last of the Dinosaur Kings, a creature too impossible to exist in the physical world. Their young lead raids against Wyrm-tainted creatures across Africa. In Nigeria, Lagos, Angola, Burkina Faso, and more remote regions, Kinfolk priests and local cults keep ancient Mokolé safe from the outside world — while secretly worshipping them as the ancient powers they truly are. Along the Zambezi River, Mokolé patrol for the last remnants of Black Tooth's pride, the Endless Storm, the band of killers once led by that maniacal Simba. In mythical Khem, Nile crocodiles aided the Bubasti in their crusades against Set's followers; their descendents now skulk through the swamps of the Sudan... and have spread across the rest of Africa. Far stranger events take place in the shadows, existing only in the memories of isolated Mokolé.

Wherever humans suffer, African Ratkin rejoice. Plague and pestilence spread quickly there, especially among populations weakened by starvation and poverty. On this continent, disease is the wererats' greatest weapon. The patriarch of a local wererat tribe prides himself on an almost spiritual understanding of his favorite infection, the Ebola virus. Other "Plague Lords" contest his position of supremacy, struggling to increase the virulence of competing outbreaks. Unfortunately, the most powerful Plague Lords are finding themselves haunted by the ghosts of humans they have slain; in the Final Days, some of have returned to the world as Walking Dead bent on vengeance. Rodens-breed Ratkin know that this continent is also home to the infamous three-foot-long African giant rat. Carrying these genes to other parts of the planet has gradually increased the size of their Kin on all the continents.

The Rokea consider Africa a mysterious place, since they know many shapechangers inhabit the interior. In cities along the shores, Rokea "Betweeners" live in human settlements, but even they fear to travel far inland. Weresharks hold few designs on those who live on land. Humans are capable of much greater aggression against the seas, especially on the Southern coast, where sharks have been drawn to food and garbage dumped into the water by men. Following through, the local humans have set up huge nets in the water, which snare and kill hundreds of sharks each year, as well as other marine creatures. While the killing of trapped sharks has decreased in recent years, the Rokea are tortured by the urge to take action. The sinking of ships may not be prudent for their long-term survival, but as the waters are increasingly polluted, long-term prospects seem uncertain... and violence may escalate.

Egypt

The Bubasti have lived in Egypt since the days of mythic Khem. The kingdom, it is said, was laid low by a vampire lord

known as Set — but even he has failed to drive them away. Some outsiders believe there is a mystical connection between the Bubasti and their homeland that ensures its survival — the Bubasti certainly aren't telling. Unlike many Bastet, these "shadowcats" prefer to remain in a single place for years or even decades. Yet no matter where they make their homes, they are invariably curious about their origins, usually traveling to Egypt at some point during their life. Curiosity compels them to seek mysteries. In Egypt, they find what they seek.

Long ago, the Mokolé found a way to coexist with the humans of Ancient Egypt, particularly in the legendary "Crocodilopolis" where humans once worshiped Mokolé nobility. Some of their rituals were absorbed into the Gifts and rites of Garou and Bubasti, including ceremonies performed for the Silent Strider's Crocodile totem. Now all that remains of that culture are the few hidden bodies of mummified Mokolé... and shapeshifting crocodiles along the Nile who dream of an empire long since past.

The Nagah have always prospered in Africa, particularly in Ancient Egypt. The Nile was a bountiful breeding ground. Although the Egyptian Totems worshipped in godlike forms did not deign to watch over the wereserpents, a growing respect for "snake cults" allowed the race to survive. The rise of more physical gods, including the vampire lords known as Set and Sutekh, led to the corruption of the land. While the Nagah joined in many assaults against the vampire cults that worshipped these false gods, it was a futile crusade. Most died, or left... and their descendents harbored an undying thirst for revenge against Set's children.

Today, Egypt is a focus for conflict as the Silent Striders redouble their efforts to break the curse laid on them and recover their homeland. The Fera of Egypt are left with a choice — do they aid the Striders against the vampires who displaced them, thus potentially opening the road for another Garou invasion, or do they wash their hands of the affair and potentially hand the Wyrm's forces another victory? For some of the bitter Bubasti and Mokolé, the choice is not an easy one.

Western Africa

As corruption set into East Africa, many Fera developed hunting grounds in the West. For instance, the Nagah of Western Africa found new serpent Kin, including mambas and kraits. Less than two hundred years ago, European slavers sought out new populations to exploit. Just as they decimated human kingdoms, they enslaved human Kinfolk. Mokolé Kinfolk were valued for their strength, and Nagah Kinfolk were renowned for their health and fitness. The atrocities of slavers spread these offspring to other parts of the world — and inspired quests to find lost Kinfolk.

The Ahadi has no real strength in Western Africa — instead, Western Africa is home to scattered individual Fera who hold their own territories and conduct their own affairs with little contact with their cousins. The Rokea are busy off the coast, savagely targeting those that they recognize as the worst trespassers in their seas. The Ratkin are strong here as well, and are particularly vicious when dealing with their human targets. The strong Ratkin presence tends to undermine the efforts of the Ahadi to increase its presence here — the Ratkin don't require a new social order, and are very resistant to efforts to impose one.

The Middle East

This region has no shortage of reporters; so it is with the Corax. With constant wars and rumors of wars, they have as much to fear from the human populace as the supernatural population. Humans often perpetrate these atrocities on their own, but when supernatural forces influence the outcome, the wereravens are skilled at finding out who is responsible. Unfortunately, they lack the wisdom to keep quiet about what they find.

The Ananasi have encountered a new horror hidden in this part of the world. A network of spider cults extends from the Mediterranean to India, with threads that reach as far away as America and Australia. Mysterious Kumoti cults are led by Ananasi who have forsaken the gods of their kind, elevating themselves to the status of godhood. Suffused with the madness of the Wyld, these messianic creatures ensnare humans and force other "lesser creatures" to worship them. The oldest horrors hide in the Middle East, where they have become bloated and megalomaniacal — and sometimes so utterly convincing in their dementia that they recruit the very Ananasi sent to destroy them.

One of the most successful breeding grounds for the Rokea lies in the Bay of Bengal, where they swim with Ganges River sharks. Because many humans cast their dead to the waters, feeding upon them has become a sacred rite. By contrast, the Persian Gulf has become a spawning ground for the Wyrm's creations. Oils and contaminants have spread, the result not only of industry, but also due to recurring wars. Sharks in the nearby Arabian Sea make repeated raids into the area, but the "Small Wounds" inflicted by mankind are festering. Brave souls try to live on the land in coastal cities in Pakistan and Oman, but as outsiders to human culture, they find the local religions and politics alien to their ancient sensibilities.

Asia

These are the lands of the *hengeyokai*, Eastern shapeshifters who avoided the Wars of Rage and fought different wars of their own. Most of the local Garou have withdrawn from the ways of the West, including the Stargazer tribe and isolated cousins of the Shadow Lords known as the Hakken. The spirit of cooperation is greater here among shapechangers than in other parts of the world. Some hengeyokai gather in mixed-Breed packs called *sentai*, protecting sacred places called Dragon Nests. For each of the Fera, there is an Asian society that is hesitant to welcome travelers from the West — and with good reason.

Many Eastern shapeshifters are cautious about entering large cities, for they know about the Kindred of the East, Kuei-jin vampires who are ruthless in their ambitions.



Hakken guard urban territories in Japan, while Glass Walkers patrol other major Asian cities, particularly in Hong Kong; thus, hengeyokai are still cautious in such places. Although they escaped the Wars of Rage, Eastern shapechangers still prefer the wilderness, if only to hide the Earth's holiest places from unholy evils.

For the Ananasi, among the greatest dangers to their kind are the tortured and Wyrm-tainted werespiders known as Kumo, or goblin spiders. Their greatest heresy is a claim that the Wyrm is the "Mother-Queen" of their race. Ananasa, a "totem" of the werespiders, sometimes sends Ananasi as agents to seek out and destroy these abominations. Yet the corruption of the Wyrm is stronger than many noble souls, and as more werespiders scurry in, more seem to join the swarm of Kumo.

Asia is home to many species of bears, but Gurahl are still fearful when they enter these lands. Most native species, including the moon bear, sloth bear, and sun bear, are close to extinction, and the giant pandas are too dissimilar to the Gurahl for successful breeding. Despite the hengeyokai's reluctance to allow Westerners into the territories, three Gurahl have been granted the right to do what they can defend and rebuild populations of these species. The native Asian werebears, the Okuma, were slaughtered long ago. They were one of the few races to die here — a mystery no Stargazer seems willing to solve. Rather than seeking revenge, the Gurahl are content to heal and restore the natural world where they can.

The Khan can trace their origins back to India, but they have roamed as far north as Siberia and as far east as Japan. Their leaders have fallen, and they are now far more concerned with survival than prowling their former hunting grounds. Regal creatures, they exceed many Silver Fangs — and Simba — in their nobility. Khan heroes risk their lives to demonstrate that they are just as worthy of glory, but it's a dangerous game; there just aren't enough Khan lives to go around.

North of the thirtieth parallel, true-blooded Asian Nagah are scarce. While some Kinfolk live in the region, its cold and mountainous areas are inhospitable to cold-blooded creatures. Southern Asia is quite different. In the jungles and rivers of Southern China, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Vietnam, serpents and wereserpents thrive. Throughout the islands of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, Nagah spawn in ever-increasing numbers. Some have even come to consider this a new homeland, one that rivals India (see below).

Among the hengeyokai, a tribe of Asian Ratkin known as the Nezumi demonstrate their mastery of the ways of "low war" — tactics employed when all sense of honor has been abandoned in battle. Sabotage and assassination allow them to bring any conflict between different groups of shapechangers to a quick (and often fatal) conclusion. In Japan, Nezumi Kinfolk have their origins in the lowest

castes of feudal Japan. In other parts of Asia, nomadic packs trace their roots to more barbaric origins.

Unlike Western Rokea, the Same-Bito sharks of Asia are bold enough to actually interact with other hengeyokai — if only in limited ways. They have a need for such alliances, for it is dangerous to be a shark in these waters. In Japan and China, humans maintain the barbaric practice of "finning:" cutting off a shark's fin and leaving it to thrash and die. Shark and shark fin are human delicacies, and hunting takes place unrestrained near the sea's surface. While the Same-Bito are not as disdainful of human civilization as are their Western cousins, they are not so permissive that they have forgotten their bloodlust or righteous anger.

In the Beast Courts of the East, Tengu wereravens soar where Corax fear to fly. Even among the chattiest hengeyokai, some secrets are never shared, and some topics are taboo. The activities of Cathayans — the Eastern vampires — include a great deal of forbidden knowledge. Wyrm-tainted Tengu, on the other hand, may volunteer to serve as messengers for these monsters... and possibly spies for the Wyrm as well.

Eastern Mokolé, called Zhong Lung, avoid cities when they can. They hide in the wilderness of China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, Viet Nam, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Their descendants can only incarnate as crocodilians native to these lands. Unlike Western Mokolé, a Zhong Lung's role in society is defined by the time of year when he was born; this has given rise to beautiful seasonal poetry that captures the spirits of these "Dragons of the East."

At the end of the last century, some shapechangers claimed these lands harbored rare Fera that had survived in obscurity for millennia. One of the most outrageous tales manages to persist despite any proof to support it: that of sapient shapeshifting orangutans. Some urban legends simply will not die.

The Middle Kingdoms: China, Japan, and Korea

The Kitsune, a race of Japanese werefoxes, have their homeland in this part of the world. The Nine-Tails remain an enigma for Westerner shapeshifters, displaying a talent for magic and a playful (almost mocking) attitude when they are encountered. They are most populous (again, relatively speaking) in Japan, where they are regarded as more arrogant than mainland Kitsune. Few are seen outside the island of Japan, but that shouldn't prevent a werefox hero from wanting to explore lands her ancestors never saw. No doubt she'll find wonders... even if she can't find allies.

Just as the Sea of Japan separates this island from the mainland, it also separates the attitudes of different Kitsune. Chinese Kitsune are far more adaptive than Japanese Nine-Tails, adjusting to the tumultuous human history of the mainland. While they vastly prefer the wilderness, they cannot resist the allure of the cities, where they find opportunities to explore and play. By the same measure, Korean Kitsune are considered the most welcoming, despite the many conflicts that have torn the local human civilization apart. When traveling across the Asian mainland, the Nuwisha share a certain kinship with the Kitsune, admiring their humor and perseverance. It is a friendship that sets Kitsune against other hengeyokai.

The Eastern Nagah do not keep their existence a secret from other hengeyokai, although they still have a few Sacred Secrets they keep to themselves, such as the activities and location of their governing councils. A rare few even dare to join a hengeyokai sentai, working with other shapeshifters to aid the Beast Courts of the East. However, even the bravest Nagah do not normally venture into Northern China, Japan, and Korea, as the "hordes" of Asian Ratkin have effectively wiped out all likely Kinfolk populations. Although cooperation exists in the East, old enmities have not entirely disappeared.

Southeast Asia, on the other hand, is becoming almost as populous with wereserpents as India is. Warm rivers with ample plant life, such as the Mekong, Si Kiang, and Hong, are ideal breeding grounds for their kind, and have been for thousands of years. It is even rumored that in the remote wilderness of Thailand, there is a village populated solely by Nagah and their Kinfolk — a haven for physically and spiritually wounded serpents to renew themselves. Some believe that certain regions in the Southeast Asia may become more important to Nagah culture in the new century than any other places in the world. Others look to the approaching signs of the End Times and abandon such optimism.

Throughout the Middle Kingdom, Asian Mokolé called Zhong Long struggle to maintain their numbers. This "stream" of Chinese alligators inhabits many communes along the Yangtze River, which include a fair number of Kinfolk and would-be dragons. Their solitary elders retreat to the mountains, where they recall the many purges and slaughters of the human population throughout the last century. The gradual disappearance of Chinese alligators is just as troubling to them; it requires the latest generation of Zhong Lung to travel far from home to breed. They're still better off than their Japanese relations, however: the scarcity of reptiles on the island of Japan has forced the few remaining Mokolé communities there to "lose the dragon." Young Japanese and Korean Mokolé must either bring reptile mates from abroad or leave their homes to find them. Meanwhile, in Thailand, a clutch has been waiting years for one nest with six eggs to hatch; why it has not hatched remains a mystery.

India

The Nagah have thrived in India for thousands of years, even while Wars of Rage continued. Their ancestors learned to move unseen in some of the most populated places on Earth, and they still do so today. Hidden amidst the crowds of places like Calcutta, Mumbai, and New Delhi, nests of serpents walk as men, hunting the few Fera who are foolish enough to confront them on the Nagah's native soil. The Nagah have skills to infiltrate any supernatural society, but some of their most infamous enemies have detected the wereserpents sent to assassinate them — and tracked them back to India.

Some wereserpents consider the Indian Nagah to be paragons of their race. Long ago, their Kinfolk included

human nobility; idealists would go so far as to say that these offspring were actually destined to become royalty. Learning from the failures of Silver Fangs, they expanded their extended families, breeding with humans who exhibited qualities they most admired. At one point, they claimed a percentage of the two highest castes of Indian society — Brahmin priests and Kshatriya warriors — as their Kinfolk. In neighboring regions, they bred extensive Kinfolk families in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. It is said that in those distant days, major cities and significant villages each had at least one Nagah to act as an intermediary with the supernatural world and its denizens. In the most remote corners of the world, the practice may well have survived.

The Makara Mokolé spring from a source in India as well. Werecrocodiles believe that some of their greatest heroes helped shape the legends of this land. Their modern descendents assume the forms of saltwater crocodiles, mugger crocodiles, and gavials. India's native crocodiles are endangered, however, and fewer Makara are hatched each year. Despite epic pilgrimages of idealistic young clutches, their breeding grounds remain isolated from each other, and communication between them is rare.

An obscure sect of Ratkin has distorted myths of murderous cults to expand a shadowy society in India's more remote corners. Claiming to be among the finest assassins in the world, the Thuggee refuse to work for anyone outside their cult. Instead, they listen to the directives of their Rat God—their unpredictable religious zealotry will not doubt serve as a random force in the coming Apocalypse.

The Bastet are represented in India by both Khan and Bagheera; both tribes have a very long history in the region, but are very much on the defensive at the moment. The Khan are down to a mere vestige of their former numbers, but refuse to abandon the Indian subcontinent that their ancestors watched over for millennia. The Bagheera have less of a stake in the continued occupation of India, as Africa is still a place of some potential refuge, but the Indian Bagheera are unwilling to leave. The two tribes of Bastet have something of a truce between them — but being Bastet, and not social animals by nature, they tend to cooperate more sporadically than would be ideal.

Indonesia

A temple in Indonesia is home to one of the most insidious criminal masterminds in the world: the direct descendent of a Victorian Ratkin known as the Giant Rat of Sumatra. His empire of crime extends across Southeast Asia, though few outsiders dare to guess what the true purpose behind his machinations might be. It is said that the Thuggee are at his command; others suggest he is gathering tribeless Ratkin against them in a secretive conflict.

Russia

Throughout the twentieth century, most of this country was surrounded by a mysterious boundary called the Shadow Curtain, a spiritual barrier that prevented many supernatural creatures from entering its Penumbra. Asian Ratkin claim credit for its collapse, citing the many "boltholes" they created to bypass it. Regardless of the actual cause for the Curtain's fall, the other Fera have been quick to seize various sacred sites behind the fallen curtain and find more breeding grounds. Tragically, the Silver Fangs that guarded many of these sites for centuries are lacking the strength to repel them. Indian Fera, expanding their territories northward, justify their attacks on Silver Fangs through the concept of "karma;" others call it revenge.

From Mongolia to Siberia, a tribe of nomadic Ratkin known as the Horde does all it can to spread the chaos created by the fall of the Shadow Curtain. Each month, they assemble in a different location to share information about the activities of various Fera, as well as other supernatural creatures. The assassination of degenerate Silver Fangs is considered one of their most noble (or ignoble) goals. All of them are required to wield fetishes called "Pain Daggers," regardless of their aspect in wererat society.

Russia is also allegedly home to some of the greatest Gurahl heroes who ever lived; there are tales of secret dens where a few great bear-lords slumber away the centuries, awaiting the Apocalypse.

Australia

This continent was once home to the Bunyip, a wise tribe known for their mastery of the Umbra, or at least a portion of the spirit world they knew as the Dreamtime. The War of Rage never affected Australia, since the continent remained isolated until several centuries ago. Yet the Wyrm is vigilant: some say the treachery of a pack of Black Spiral Dancers brought about the untimely demise of the Bunyip tribe. Others blame the aggression and ambition of European Garou. Among the Fera, the distinction between Wyrm-tainted werewolves and Garou enslaved by Rage is a minor one. Death is death, and wolves are wolves.

Greater horrors lurk here. Over a century ago, the Ananasi roamed this land freely — until dozens of their kind were found slaughtered in the wilderness. Werespiders hunted the perpetrator of this atrocity... until their remains were found scattered across the Outback as well. Aboriginal mystics called the monster responsible for these horrors the Yahwie, a ferocious creature capable of assuming many forms. The few survivors who have seen it describe it as a black-clad human, a specter of Death Itself. Whenever it is reported dead, it rises again; thus, only very brave Ananasi dare to enter Australia.

The Corax didn't arrive Down Under until the Bunyip were almost extinct. Despite their best efforts to speak to the villains responsible, the real identity of the Bunyip's killers is one secret they haven't managed to snatch. At the same time, Europeans introduced a different culture to the continent, along with a number of species that played havoc with the local ecology. Although the Europeans brought ravens with them, true Corax are few and far between here, even now.

Invaders continue to arrive, but this will always be the homeland of the Gumagan Mokolé: a *stream* that takes the forms of perenty monitors and saltwater crocodiles. Many of their homids have aboriginal ancestry, but as the End Times approach, some Europeans have awakened to the Dragon's Dream, realizing their distant relation to the saurians. A few Mokolé clutches have survived in Ulungan, in New Guinea, in the deserts of Bandaiyan, and throughout the Torres Strait Islands. A few are found in more isolated "island mobs," such as the clutch on Melville Island. In Southern Australia, survivors claim the "last War of Rage" decimated much of their stream in 1788. Now rebuilding the fragile population of a dying race is their highest priority.

Centuries ago, the Nagah lived harmoniously with the Bunyip. After all, the tribal totem for these Garou was the Rainbow Serpent, and the mystics of both societies held close communion with the many varieties of snake-spirits found there. Rarely were they forced to act against the Bunyip, but when the first Europeans arrived, the Nagah found much to do. The tragic loss of the Dreamtime tribe encouraged the Nagah to protect this land, and they have defended it ever since. Australia is home to some of the deadliest snakes in the world; even its waters teem with venomous sea snakes. Some Nagah travel to this land for the honor of breeding with such species. The race not only has serpentine Kinfolk in Australia, but also human Kinfolk living among aboriginal tribes.

Nuwisha passing through Australia fear what lies in the local Penumbra. When they must enter this realm, they prefer using their true forms, for it is said that the ghosts of the Bunyip still seek revenge against the remaining tribes of Garou. Brave Umbral travelers seek out these tortured souls, hoping to offer them solace. A few even use their Gifts to disguise themselves as Bunyip, performing ceremonies to honor the spirits this lost tribe worshipped — a deception only the coyotes would dare attempt. When such ceremonies succeed, their joy is great. When these spirits encounter Garou from the surviving tribes, their rage is equally great.

The waters surrounding Australia are critical to the Rokea, as they contain many breeding grounds for their kind. Humans are familiar with the Great Barrier Reef, one of the weresharks' most sacred places, but they are not so bold as to swim from Shark's Bay in Western Australia to the Chill Water Bites Grotto, where the local spirit world has a pronounced affect on human visitors. Three other "grottos" are hidden in more remote places in Australia's reefs. With such a respectable population of Rokea, their young are more willing to travel onto land; the Makara Mokolé have even aided a few of them. Garou have encountered them as well, with results both promising and dubious.

Europe

In the many cities of Europe, the Ananasi learn to live in close proximity to humans. Rigidly developing cultural camouflage, they survive in areas where far older and stronger creatures rule the night. Since this is the Old Country of more traditional vampires, Ananasi must be subtle and patient enough to work in plain sight, even when everyone around them is suspicious. When traveling from one region to the next, cultures and mores can change even more quickly than national boundaries; thus, European Ananasi must be masters of subterfuge. If they fail, they are slain by other supernatural creatures that question their motives. After all, if the vampires won't crush a wayward spider, a Garou pack in the throes of bloodlust certainly will.

Brown bears originated in Europe, and the Gurahl never really left. Not all are gone, a scant few remain, merely sleeping, waiting for the time when they will emerge from slumber. In the Scandinavian arctic, a few surviving members of the Ice Stalker tribe have carved a niche for themselves. In fact, all four of the Gurahl tribes are represented here. Despite their best efforts, the ursine population of Europe is close to extinction. Other Fera may chide the werebears for failing to heal the world, but first, they are desperately concerned with healing their Kinfolk and their own kind.

Northern Europe once served as the homelands of the Ceilican Bastet tribe, a hidden tribe that resembled domesticated cats more than any other tribe — save for their surging passions and rebellious sensibilities. Their ancestors were the wildcats and maneless lions that inspired ancient kings. They seemed to have an intuitive understanding of fey magic, and were allegedly consumed by wanderlust. But their yearly gathering was held on the Scottish moors, in the heart of Black Spiral Dancer territory — and eventually, the Dancers took notice. The Ceilican were slaughtered, and if any escaped the Dancers' clutches, nobody has heard from the survivors.

Another extinct Changing Breed had their homelands in Europe as well. The Grondr wereboars maintained rituals to purify the land. As the Wyrm grew in power, it destroyed them, twisting them into ephemeral creatures that only exist in the Umbra. Various Banes, known by such colorful names as "Skull Pigs" and "Flesh Hogs," are descended from them.

Corax fly freely over Europe, resting in aeries across the continent. In Southern Europe, Greece harbors an entire colony of Corax Kinfolk. In northern Europe, Scandinavian wereravens hope to live up to the legends of Hugin and Munin, Odin's loyal companions. Everywhere in-between, they whisper secrets learned from other shapechangers, but their contacts are careful, and very well hidden. Europe serves as a haven for many ancient vampires, and most are vigilant in making sure secret lore stays secret. Thus, wise European ravens don't stay in one place for long.

The Mokolé have always been rare in Europe. It is believed that the "dragons" of European legends were actually Wyrm-tainted creatures — but it would more horrific if their ranks included corrupted Mokolé. Such tales are but distant legends now, blasphemous and insulting tales no sane Mokolé would dare contemplate. Dreams of such events would surely manifest as nightmares.

European Ratkin have a passion for intrigue and mystery. A plague of spies and informers known as the Gamine scurries across the continent. They filter back what they see, hear, and acquire to their matriarch, an elderly female Ratkin named DeFarge who hides in the sewers of Paris. Her court passes judgment on outsiders with outrageous atrocities mirroring those of the French Revolution, and her tribe screams for mob rule. Of course, this is also the continent where black rats spread the earliest incarnations of the Black Plague; the Plague Lords have faithfully maintained, spread, and mutated this horror ever since.

Next to North America, Europe holds the highest population of Rokea "Betweeners" in the world — the number of countries bordering the sea encourages them to venture onto land regularly. In coastal cities, a rare few Rokea have encountered the local undead. It seems some vampires have adapted the practice of casting their enemies into the sea, and the weresharks have developed a taste for their victim's foul flesh. In the Aegean Sea, Rokea have actually begun spawning near a stronghold of female werewolves calling themselves the "Furies." Because the local spirits are appeased there, the weresharks' fertility has increased around the island. One wonders what will happen when the werewolves find out. The opposite is true in the Baltic Sea, where pollution has created a supernatural barrier that blocks off most of the Gulf of Finland. No Rokea who has entered that corrupted realm has ever returned.

Great Britain

Although Great Britain has traditionally been one of the strongholds of the Garou, a few Fera manage to stake out some territory on the British Isles. The Corax have strong ties to supernatural communities across the United Kingdom. A millennia ago, the Celts and Saxons considered the wereravens patrons of battle, extolling them in art, music and legend, including the tales of Morrigu and Morrigan. Any wereraven worth his black feathers should be able to recite these tales from memory. Unfortunately, many of the youngest Corax cannot, for the bright and shining distractions of modern human culture have distracted them.

The Nagah are rarer in Europe than they are anywhere else. While the continent has a relatively high population of potential Nagah Kinfolk, very few Nagah gather their nests there. The chief exception, oddly enough, is in parts of Great Britain, particularly among Kinfolk from India and Pakistan. Despite this, legends of Fianna "driving the snakes from Ireland" are still told with grandeur and glory in werewolf caerns. The few Nagah who have manage to breed with Kinfolk in Ireland have done little to rebuild their population.

South America

The Amazon rainforests remain a critical location to many of the world's shapechangers, even the Garou — yet there is far more to this continent than this one area. The Fera's mastery of guerilla tactics kept the Garou from overrunning the sacred places of this continent during the Wars of Rage. While the Western Concordiat of werewolves is still obsessed with retaking the Amazon, even after ten years of war, the other shapechangers remain unchallenged in the rest of South America.

South America is a stronghold for the Ananasi. They are fanatic about keeping the Garou from spreading their conflicts in the Amazon to other parts of the continent. Ancient and patient elders lie in wait for fools who would dare enter their domains. In fact, the same sense of propriety forces them to punish Balam and Mokolé guilty of such crimes. Although the signs marking their territories are subtle, that has not stopped werespiders from ruthlessly punishing (and sometimes devouring) those who do not recognize these warnings. The most cryptic warning is a serious of gigantic designs made along the Nazca Plain... symbols so huge they are only fully recognizable from the air.

The Balam are werejaguars that have retreated to the rainforests of Central and South America. Reclusive creatures, many have established Umbral refuges called Den-Realms, where they are content to maintain their honor and raise their families. Unfortunately, they are just as territorial as werewolves, often coming into conflict with farmers, loggers, fomori, Pentex developments... and of course, Garou. Many of their ancestral estates have fallen in recent years, leading to acts of honor, revenge, and violence. A few have begun establishing Den-Realms in cities instead, but wherever a Balam establishes her home, she will fight to the death to defend it. Young Bastet sometimes patrol around these areas to ensure their safety... and look for a fight.

A few Corax are brave enough to try to coordinate the many communities of Fera in South America. This is largely an effort to influence the outcome of the War for the Amazon — and it's largely considered a futile war. Garou, Bastet, and Mokolé must sometimes stand together against the Wyrm, particularly Pentex security, but they spend nearly as much time fighting each other. Because they cannot stand together, they are failing separately.

Three tribes of Gurahl maintain small "protectorates" on this continent: the River Keepers, Forest Walkers, and Mountain Guardians. Though they breed with native species — such as the spectacled bear — local governments have few resources to aid their attempts at conservation. The South American werebears tend to make way for the Bastet who roam this continent. Sadly, they have begun to realize the werecats are capable of the same arrogance as the Garou. Their numbers are too few to bother participating in the War for the Amazon, even as healers.

Almost two hundred years ago, South America served as a New World for the Mokolé-mbembe. Shipments of African slaves brought to this continent included Mokolé Kinfolk; later arrivals included Mokolé searching for lost Kin. Escaping from their human captors, they explored an environment with an ideal climate and abundant prey. It also included a diversity of Fera not seen in many other parts

of the world. Within the last few decades, the Mokolé have been roused from their isolation by the increasing devastation of the Amazon Rainforest. Some young heroes have joined with other Fera to drive Wyrm-tainted humans out... but they suffer scorn for the alliances they make.

Lush rainforests and their watery domains make ideal homes for the Nagah. Hidden from civilization, undiscovered species of venomous Kinfolk conceal the wereserpents' true numbers. Political and economic conflicts do not concern them. Because the Garou are content to continue to die in a never-ending war for the rainforest, the wereserpents breathe a bit easier here.

Nuwisha passing through this land confirm that mankind has not lost its ability to prey upon its own kind. Wherever the rich and powerful exploit the poor and suffering, Coyote demands justice... and the chance to laugh at the Nuwisha's acts of revenge. Pranking keeps many travelers busy, since they were never invited to join in the War for the Amazon. Nonetheless, the few who coyotes who are brave enough to enter this war zone have been learning the fine art of monkeywrenching, secretly aiding the war against the Wyrm.

South American Ratkin are drawn to some of the most horrific slums the Third War has to offer. Overpopulated cities stoke their sinister urges, encouraging them to regard all human life as disposable. They gather wherever starvation and poverty are prevalent, taking credit for these forces as they fester and spread. A local tribe called the Borrachon consists largely of cursed Kinfolk who can never escape this cycle of poverty and suffering. When they are first Infected, they accept their fate, and eventually do all they can to inflict the same suffering on humans . Other Ratkin call these sick creatures "drunken rats," largely because of a South American Ratkin rite involving poisoned liquor and the delirium tremens it creates.

The Nagah of this continent do not travel much. With so many shapeshifters present here, they have redoubled their efforts to obscure their race's existence. Judging the local Bastet, Mokolé, Ananasi, and Garou keeps them busy, and monitoring the activities of the Wyrm's minions creates a constant battle for survival. It is rumored that a few nests of Nagah have made pacts with Uktena itself, suggesting that some of its spiritual servitors may also ally with the Nagah's spiritual guardians, the Wani.

South America has been home to many species of Fera, who sometimes return to their homelands to reconnect with their spiritual roots. One species of Fera will never return. The Camazotz werebats bore witness to evil acts committed in darkness; unfortunately, they could not see the danger of foreign invaders. It is said that Shadow Lord homids helped direct Conquistadors to hunt them down, but no witnesses remain.

The Caribbean

Some Nagah Kinfolk stolen from their homelands to satisfy the African slave trade spread the lore of their people to other lands. In the Caribbean, Yoruban religion and Christian myth have combined to form many synchretised beliefs. As part of this, many Caribbean Kinfolk, traveling as far as Louisiana, have altered their animistic beliefs to incorporate human religions. Caribbean Nagah have a few unique rites celebrating their own "serpent god," whom they call Dhamballah.

The Rokea are also slowly building their numbers here, and thus some are bold enough to venture onto land. Human ships, festivals on land and sea, and cults of Samedi vampires have made for many intriguing confrontations. The Delirium has covered up such events with even stranger supernatural mysteries. Even more unusual are rumors of a race of "merfolk" crossing through the area— one wonders if these stories are merely the result of the Veil at work again, covering up something far more sinister.

North America

The Weaver is strong in North America; thus, the Ananasi on this continent learn to lead highly structured lives. Secrecy is a discipline, and strictly emulating human habits is essential to survival. As a matter of fact, the werespiders have more potential enemies in the so-called civilized world than they do in the wilderness. Human prey is a delicacy that must be hunted discretely, so much of an Ananasi's life is spent in Homid form. Their sanctuaries are small, sometimes as tiny as a closet or basement, but the interconnected nature of human civilization fascinates them. They love to watch the spiritual forces at work around them... especially when they can lie in the center of it all.

Pumonca are native to the North American continent. Wanderers and loners, these werecougars are fiercely defensive of lands native to the continent's indigenous peoples. A second tribe, the Qualmi, are werelynxes that typically build solitary houses or dens, usually living nearby for a lifetime. If they become any more isolated, they may very well die out... a fact the latest generation of Qualmi has already realized. Thus, the tribe has a few young heroes looking for an alternative to extinction. There are stories of Bastet of other tribes who have made their way to North America as well, from the Bagheera said to make his home in upstate New York to the Balam said to hunt in the Southwest. Certainly, North America has so many big cats in captivity that it is almost comparable to areas with natural populations — almost.

The United States

One particular rumor holds that the Nagah and certain Corax created a pact to ensure their survival of the Second War of Rage. As part of this, the Nagah apparently disappeared from North America when the European Garou began their first crusades against the various native Changing Breeds, including other Garou. Soon thereafter, Corax messengers spread the news that the Nagah were dead. From there, the announcement spread throughout the Western world. Even other Corax were kept in the dark so that modern wereravens continue to believe that the American Nagah died out long ago. This is likely for the best, as American Corax are a notoriously chatty bunch.

There are four tribes of Gurahl in the world, and each of them live somewhere in North America — even though they aren't very populous. A few River Keepers, for instance, have made a concerted effort to establish protectorates near the Mississippi, Ohio, and other rivers. More werebears live in the U.S. than anywhere else in the world; the same applies to their ursine Kinfolk. Despite this, they fear that they may have "slept for too long," and that it may be too late to prevent the extinction of their kind. Their young heroes do what they can to stave off the coming Apocalypse through their healing powers and battle prowess. Otherwise there is no hope for keeping their race from extinction.

The first Mokolé-mbembe on this continent came north from the Caribbean, where they established extensive settlements in southern swamps and bayous. Wanderers bred with native lizards of the Southwest, creating bizarre new races of shapeshifting Gila monsters and Mexican beaded lizards. When the three Garou tribes known as the "Pure Ones" first arrived, only the Croatan werewolves were comfortable living near Mokolé wallows. Their totem, Turtle, shared spiritual Gifts with the Mokolé; thus, they later mourned the passing of this tribe. Years later, when the slave trade brought African Kinfolk to North America, African Mokolé-mbembe made the journey to find their Kin — and in the process, found the American Mokolé-mbembe.

While Nagah Kinfolk have prospered along the banks of great rivers like the Mississippi and Columbia, the wereserpents' North American population is small in spite of these fertile breeding grounds. Relations between Nagah and their "abandoned" Kinfolk are highly strained from the Nagah's long period in hiding. Because nests are so closely intertwined, surviving "nests" of Nagah Kinfolk have learned to mistrust their distant blood relations. While America has many poisonous snakes, some species (such as the eastern diamondback) are not well represented in the Nagah's heritage. Even more distressing is that the few Nagah born on this continent in recent years are of the ahi breed — the "metis" of the wereserpents.

For the Nuwisha, this is the Land, the place of their birth. Although they wander the world, this is the landscape they always return to — although they cannot wander their homeland as they once did. It is the land where Coyote first ran across the Earth Mother's back, and it is where his laughter is still strongest. America has since been overrun by fools, they say, humans who do not realize that killing the land they kill themselves. Thus, this country offers limitless opportunities to "educate" the human populace. The spirit of Coyote still has its limitless energy and enthusiasm to protect the Land.

The average American Ratkin is typically violent, deranged, and dangerous, with a revolutionary sense of zeal. The most dangerous and unpredictable ones follow the dictates of "the Rat God," a hostile avatar of their Incarna that orchestrates vast campaigns of chaos. Across the continent, his minions stockpile weapons, both physical and spiritual, conventional and biological, for the latter days of the End Times. Some wererats have focused more on blending in with human society; they jokingly refer to themselves as "the Rat Race." In the war against humanity, they intend to win by any means necessary. Until then, they make minor strikes against calcified areas where the Weaver has grown too strong. By freeing the spirit of the Wyld in the world, extremists among them hope to change the outcome of the Apocalypse.

More Rokea venture onto land in the United States than anywhere else — though relatively speaking, such encounters are extremely rare for creatures like humans and Garou. Travel there is unrestricted, at least for the time being, and the land is vast. Americans are relatively tolerant of the Rokea's Homid forms, no matter how freakish weresharks disguising themselves as humans may seem. The land is also beset with enough supernatural activity to cover the few sightings of the wereshark's battle forms. Nonetheless, venturing from the sea for too long is suicidal — it is only attempted because the consequences of ignorance events in the "Unsea" may actually be worse.

The American Southwest

The Southwest is home to desperate and ruthless varieties of Nuwisha, veritable "coyote banditos." Wherever coyotes roam freely, their shapechanging cousins run with them. As human cities have sprawled further and into the surrounding desert, raping the land for the quick and easy profits of land development, ordinary coyotes have become braver about approaching the periphery of human civilization. Nuwisha have been delighted to lead these incursions, raiding for food, for supplies, or simply for amusement. Once this scouting is done, proper monkeywrenching can commence.

The American Northwest

Protected communities of Corax thrive up and down the West Coast, especially in Oregon, Washington State, Vancouver, B.C., and Alaska. Native American cultures have many versions of Raven trickster tales, and the wereravens do their best to live up to them. Their raven Kin, however, prefer unspoiled wilderness habitats that are becoming few and far-between.

The Pacific Northwest is also home to a few Gurahl River Guardians; some pride themselves on their understanding of Native American culture. Nearly all of them are also accomplished fishermen, working not only to increase and defend the populations of bears, but also the salmon and other fish they depend on.

Canada

Although certainly the northernmost portion of North America is wolf country, there's plenty of territory left to what few Fera thrive here. The Gurahl are as strong here as they are in the United States, perhaps even stronger — all four Gurahl tribes are sparsely represented somewhere in the North. Canada in particular has been home to the occasional moot called between Gurahl of all four tribes, what few can make it. Such gatherings haven't been called more

than once a century for millennia — but now, with the End Times so close, the Gurahl are trying to organize their efforts as quickly as they can.

The Corax are present in Canada, just as they are in the Northwest, and Canada is also home to the Qualmi, the riddling lynx-shifters. The Qualmi deal poorly with gatherings, and tend to keep to themselves, but they have been very busy combating the local environmental hazards in recent years.

Mexico

South of the border, this country has become a nightmare for shapechangers who fear the Wyrm's corruption. Bane-tainted fomori walk in broad daylight; pollution and poverty have tortured the land. Corax speak of supernatural traffic from Mexico City to the American Southwest, risking their lives to learn what they can. A few Gurahl Mountain Guardians are present in Northern Mexico, defending natural reserves and parks.

The Arctic and Antarctica

Far from human civilization, the Wyld's minions grow increasingly bizarre. A fanatic cult of "Arcadian Ratkin" dwells in the Antarctic Umbra, living in an impossible city of ice hidden from human civilization. A delusional would-be wererat Galliard named Howard Phillip Gallomo tells cautionary tales to his followers. He speaks of horrors that will infect their secret city: outsiders who will come from the depths of the Umbra, arriving from places outside of time and space. The most delusional Ratkin make pilgrimages to meet this prophet, bringing the grandest legends they can. Many of his relations trace their origins to a cursed family in New England, the DeLaPoers, who share his madness and vision.

On the other side of the planet, the Ice Stalkers — a rare tribe of shapeshifting polar bears — can be found in Greenland, Scandinavia, and Siberia. Long, cold nights give them the opportunity to seek beauty in the landscape. Their artists have a passion for carving ice and snow into pleasing designs. Polar bears roam as far south as Hudson and Baffin Bay, but many outsiders don't realize that brown bears and grizzlies can be found in sub-Arctic territories of Canada and Alaska. The Ice Stalkers welcome representatives of these species as well. A few brave Gurahl have made expeditions to the Antarctic, but the utter lack of bear Kin on the southernmost continent makes any continued presence all but a wasted effort.

Around both poles, Earth's most unexpected defenders are the Rokea. Contrary to what many humans may think, some sharks (such as the Greenland shark) are quite capable of living in frigid waters. While there are few horrors to destroy in the cold deep, the weresharks are capable of assuming Homid form, and there are mysteries hidden on icy islands where man rarely treads. Other Fera know nothing of creatures like the Qyrlings or forces like C'et, and they cannot understand the secret crusades that take place beneath the waves.

Beneath the Waves, Across the Seas

Six-tenths of the world's surface is covered in water. While the Rokea rarely have contact with other shapeshifters, they patrol vast areas unseen. They are also drawn to islands where humans gather. In remote Pacific Islands, humans once worshipped the Rokea; it is rumored that some of these cults still survive in more modern forms. Around the Marshall Islands, mankind tested some of its first nuclear weapons; now places like the Bikini and Enewetak atolls have become breeding grounds for Wyrm-tainted horrors. The Hawai'ian islands are far more tranquil, especially since they harbor so many homid Kinfolk. Although the natives here once spoke to the Rokea, and some modern humans still preserve the old ways, one human death is sufficient to stir outrage and hunts against the neighboring sharks. The most exotic Rokea Grottos can be found at the bottom of the Mariana Trench and the remote corners of the Bermuda Triangle.

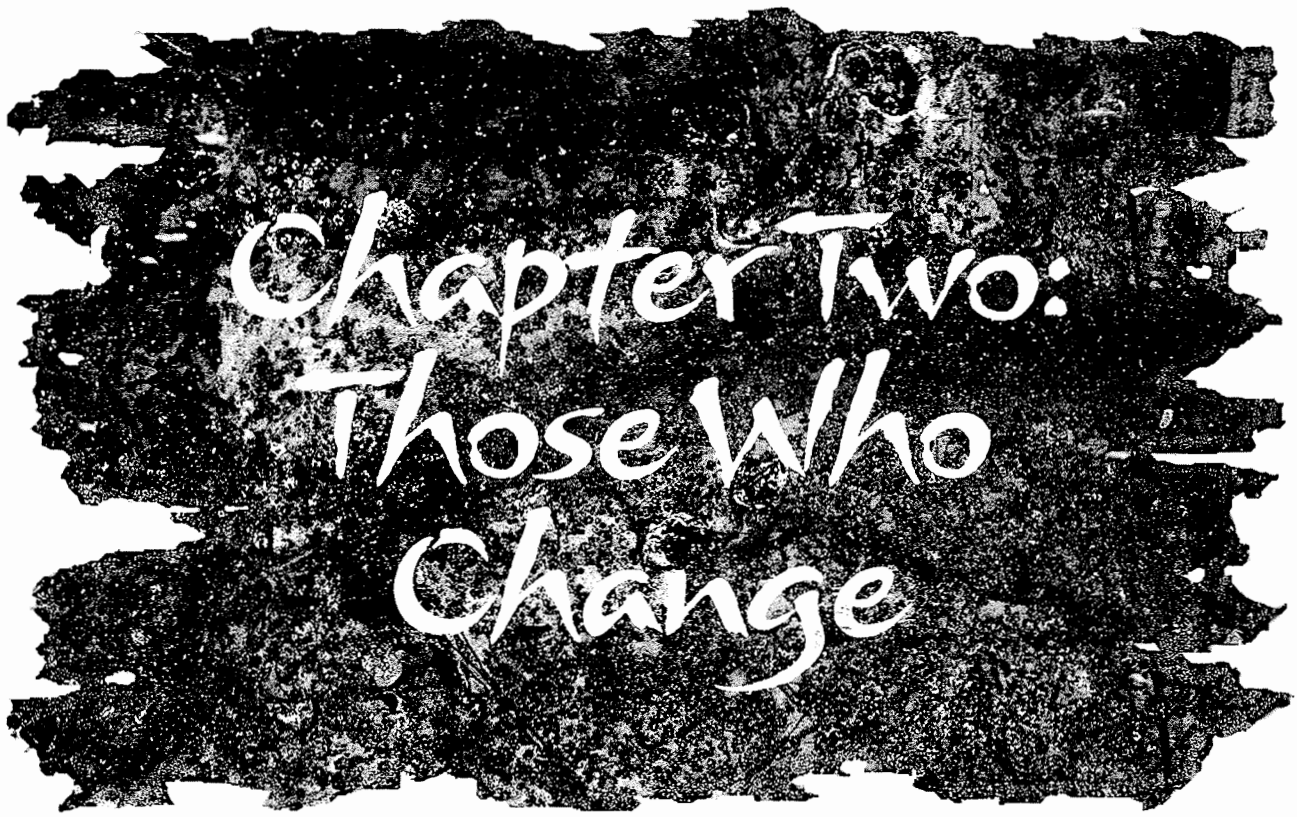
The Nagah are not trapped in isolated territories they have guarded for millennia; instead, they can hide in the world's lakes and rivers. Wherever there is water, they can survive. Some dive into the depths of great oceans, while others breed with the sea snakes of more tropical oceans. The Pacific and Indian Ocean hold hidden Nagah Den-Realms called Ananta from the watchful eyes and readied claws of other supernatural creatures. Malaysia in particular is a haven for their kind, attracting many usual nests of inspired artists... and skilled killers.

At any time, thousands of seaworthy vessels ride the waves — and any ship that has rats on board may hide a few Ratkin. These wererats wander the world, forsaking dry land. Many have formed their own tribe, an extended community of Ratkin ronin. Some tell tall tales of their origins in feudal Japan, where a group of 48 Nezumi committed an unspeakable (and always unmentioned) crime that resulted in their exile. Others insist this is another one of Howard Gallomo's ridiculous tales, and use it as further evidence that the wererats have gone mad after centuries of isolation in the spirit world.

What Else Lies in Shadows?

This is but a glimpse of what has been seen in recent years. Some scholars of the arcane dismiss these stories as rumor — tricks of light and shadow, if you will — but ignorance can be dangerous. As the Apocalypse approaches, shadows lengthen, and more creatures emerge from the darkness. The latest generation of Fera is united in their worship of Gaia, but they see Her in vastly different ways. Cooperation is rare, and mistrust is common. Only one passion unites them all: their resistance to the dominating ways of the werewolves. While it may be too late for revenge, the Garou will soon see that they are not alone in the world. Wherever werewolves fear to tread, the Fera have returned.


03



We look like men, We walk and talk like men, in your presence We act like men. But We are not men. Believe that too.
— Bill Pronzini, "Ancient Evil"

The Garou won the Wars of Rage. That much is obvious. There is a Garou Nation that stretches across continents. The Garou have traveled beyond the ordinary ranges of the wolves they breed with — they have engaged in wars in South America, run across the Australian desert, even walked in Africa and crossed the Himalayas.

But the Fera, the shapeshifters who lost the War of Rage, have had a long time to replenish their strength. And although they too have been in decline with the coming of human "progress," they have managed to hold on with surprising tenacity. Today, the list of Changing Breeds that managed to survive to the present day is much longer than the list of Breeds that have been driven to extinction. They are still out there, no more ready to roll over and die any more than the Garou are.

Within this chapter are rules for the ten surviving Breeds of Fera, some of whom are further divided into tribes or other social factions. Each one has at least two breeds — homid and animal-born, and most have some sort of role division besides (such as an auspice). When considering the various combinations of Breed, breed, tribe or faction, and auspice or aspect, there are literally *hundreds* of potential combinations that can be made into character concepts — enough to keep most groups going for a lifetime. When the Apocalypse comes, fighting in the Final Battle won't be the privilege of Garou alone — the Fera will have the chance to war against the Great Enemy one last time. Nobody can say for certain whether or not their efforts will be in vain...

...Except, of course, for you and your fellow players.

Enjoy.

Ajaba

Kisasi yawned and stretched, gratefully accepting the heat the morning sun had to offer. As she glanced around her encampment, she scowled and (not for the first time) found herself questioning her own sanity. She would probably have better luck managing a pack of baboons than a clan of Ajaba, and she was certain the task would be much less frustrating. As it was, maintaining any sense of order or discipline in an Ajaba clan that numbered 20 strong was, to put it mildly, difficult. When the associated human and hyena Kin needed for a war party were factored in, that task became flatly impossible. What Ajaba in her right mind would subject herself to such nonsense?

Of course, leadership was not without its rewards; thanks to her influence, the Ajaba had managed to put their wars with the Bastet behind them, and with the help of the Garou and the Ahadi they had become a major player in the affairs of Africa's Changing Breeds. Today, Kisasi hoped to secure that position. The clan's target was the largest Wyrm-infested mining operation in all of Central Africa, and if they were successful in taking it out even the Simba could not hold the Ajaba back. Bringing the mining operation down would shatter the Wyrm's hold in the region, and that in turn would catapult the Ajaba into a position of eminence and respect among Gaia's children. Kisasi could hardly wait.

Bolstered by her thoughts of victory, Kisasi chortled gleefully and rubbed her hands together, relishing the prospect of flaunting her victory in the faces of those Amadu'o bastards back home. She began barking orders as she sought to bring order to chaos, thinking about the day ahead and all the potential it held for her and her clan.

Legend

Long ago, when Gaia was populating the world with Her creations, She found that the wolves She had created to police the humans had limited themselves to the northern regions of the world. I do not know why this was true; perhaps Wolf had some quarrel with Lion and did not want to live with him. Or, perhaps he found the climate in the south was not to his liking. In any event, there were no wolves in Africa, and this vexed Gaia to no end. How could She police the humans with no wolves? With no wolves, there could be no Garou. With no Garou, the humans would grow beyond their means, and there would be hardship everywhere.

Since it isn't Gaia's way to tell Her children what to do, She decided to make a new animal to take the wolves' place in Africa. That animal, of course, was the hyena, and from these creatures Gaia created our people — the Ajaba. The Ajaba were to be Gaia's warriors in Africa, using their strong social ties to form mighty packs capable of shattering the minions of the Wyrm — or of humanity. The Bastet, in their many and varied roles, would support the Ajaba, delving into the secrets of those around them and showing the hyena shifters where and when to strike. It was a fine idea; sadly, things didn't work out that way.

Back when Gaia created the Ajaba, plenty of humans were primarily male-dominated societies. Some were matriarchal — but not all. The homid Ajaba from these societies might have accepted the thought of being ruled by women as is, but there was a bigger rift to overcome. In human societies throughout time, men have always done the majority of the fighting, if not all of the fighting; men are simply more expendable, from a survival standpoint. But the way Gaia designed the Ajaba, the women were the warriors, and the men were the mystics. They were designed that way. This flew in the face of what the homids had grown up believing; but to the hyena-born, it was natural.

Now, in any of the Changing Breeds, there will be a gap of understanding between the animal-born and the human-born, one that shrinks only when both have spent time walking in other skins, seeing through other eyes. But this gap was too wide for the Ajaba to deal with easily. Too often, an Ajaba clan would fall prey to divisive bickering and in-fighting, as each werehyena tried to sort out where he or she belonged in the new order, and how that related to where he or she felt she belonged. They were simply not as effective as they could have been — and the Bastet took exception to this.

The Bastet felt that the Ajaba were betraying their heritage by spending so much time in divisive struggle, and their reactions were mixed. Where the Simba had been created to be elite warriors buttressing the Ajaba's efforts, they now found themselves forced to take on the Ajaba's role instead. The Bagheera, ostensibly the lawmakers of Africa's shapeshifters, felt they lost their credibility when they could not keep the Ajaba in line. It was the same with all of the Bastet tribes, each taking on a role for which it was ill prepared, each finding it had been cheated of its birthright due to the pride of the Ajaba. They were infuriated, and have been punishing the Ajaba ever since. Regrettably, that gave the Ajaba the unity they previously lacked. Now they had a clearly visible common nemesis — the Bastet.

In the wake of the rivalry with the Ajaba, the Bastet adapted to the situation as best they could. Unfortunately, they just weren't up to the task. The Bastet are more solitary than not, and they usually find it difficult to coordinate their efforts for any extended period of time. The other shifters in Africa similarly weren't much help — the Ratkin were insular, the Ananasi alien, and the Rokea... well, the Rokea just weren't around. So, as you can imagine, they were ill prepared to face the Wyrm and its minions, and as a result the Defiler and Eater-of-Souls have sown strong roots in Africa that we, all of us, are struggling to uproot even now.

As time went by, the Ajaba acquired and ruthlessly defended their own territories, staving off the Wyrm's influence in their own way — and largely for their own benefit — with no attention spared for assisting the other Changers. The Bastet were not pleased, and the Simba in particular decided that, if the Ajaba

could not be persuaded to protect Gaia from harm, they could at least be made to see the folly of their ways. So it was that the long true war between the Simba and the Ajaba began, a war that ended only with the near-annihilation of the Ajaba tribes.

The Ajaba Today

The war with the Bastet went poorly for the hyenas, but also took a terrible toll on the Simba tribes, particularly the Amadu'o. These were proud people, and the indignities the Ajaba forced upon them were unconscionable. Their Rage built to unimaginable heights, and it turned these proud warriors into the very things they sought to destroy. As the Ajaba were defiant, so the Amadu'o became tyrannical. As the Ajaba were rebellious, so the Amadu'o became despotic. None were safe from their wrath, and all were expected to participate in their wars of annihilation. These battles mirrored the War of Rage waged by the werewolves in the north, save for the fact that it was an ongoing conflict that never seemed to end. The Garou were motivated by fear and ignorance, and these things can be assuaged. Not so pride, the greatest sin of them all. And no Simba's pride was fiercer than that of Black Tooth, the most tyrannical Amadu'o the world has ever seen. He was a nightmare given form, and his reign was legendary for its cruelty. Ironically, his destruction, and the beginnings of restoration for Gaia's children in Africa, was set in motion by a lone Ajaba upstart named Kisasi. Her story changed the face of Africa, and it will quite possibly change the face of the world before all is said and done.



Kisasi was born to a Maasai woman of noble blood, one who wanted nothing to do with the ruling Ajaba king of the time. She was raised with no knowledge of her heritage, or even her name, which means "revenge" in Swahili. After her First Change, Kisasi began to explore her heritage and the legacy her mother had left for her. This is how she met Kiva, the revered Bagheera elder, who told Kisasi of the significance of her name, as well as the events that led to the destruction of the Hyena King and his court. Surprisingly, however, the young Ajaba wanted nothing to do with the vengeance her name suggested; rather, she decided then and there that she was going to fix things, and was too young to realize that that was a hopeless venture.

Thank Gaia for the stubborn resolve of the young!

As it turns out, Kisasi made an excellent diplomat, and managed to make contact with the Mayi'o Simba, other Bagheera, the Swara, the two tribes of Garou in the region, the Mokolé, the Rokea, and a number of extended Kin networks throughout sub-Saharan Africa. She didn't know she wasn't supposed to like the Simba, and didn't much care that they didn't like her. She simply refused to surrender in the face of antagonism, and they found her enthusiasm infectious. Before long, all of Africa's Fera believed that a united attack force could defeat Black Tooth's Endless Storm, and lo, so it was. She also made them believe that that coalition was worth maintaining thereafter, and the Ahadi is the result of this belief.

Kisasi's efforts have paid off in spades for the other Ajaba in the world. She gave them a banner to rally behind and the chance to redeem themselves, and they snapped it up with all the eagerness of a starving hound. The Mayi'o Simba and the other Bastet finally forgave the Ajaba's past

sins, and as a result the Ajaba are once again growing in strength and numbers. Unfortunately, not all are as committed to the Ahadi as Kisasi and her supporters are. Those who remember Black Tooth's reign of terror still nurse old grudges, and they are unwilling to forgive and forget, no matter the cost to themselves or others. The most radical of these, led by a fearsome male named Shari, know only hatred for the Simba and all who stand by them. Their hatred is unreasoning, unabating, and undeniable, and the threat they pose to the Ahadi is nearly as great as that of the Wyrm or the vampires that infest Africa.

Organization

Ajaba society, like that of their hyena Kin, is made up of tightly knit family groups. These groups consist of related Ajaba and their Kin, and they form the basis for larger groups called clans. In some ways the clans are analogous to Garou tribes, though they tend to be smaller and are limited to specific geographical regions. They lack the racial and cultural influences that characterize Garou tribes, and rarely even have official names (if named at all, they are named for the most prominent female member of the clan, e.g. 'Kisasi's Clan').

Ajaba society is fiercely matriarchal, to an extent that would do the Black Furies proud. Females, who serve as the pack's warriors, leaders, and spies, dominate most packs. In contrast to the Black Furies, however, the role of males is not trivial — males, in fact, play a critical role in pack society. Those who survive to adulthood leave the pack at an early age, joining up with other packs to serve as mystics and taletellers. In this way, the legacy of Gaia and the history of the Ajaba remain intact. Without this custom, Ajaba packs would remain hidebound and insular, and vulnerable to external threats (a weakness the so-called "Ajaba King" discovered the hard way).

Politicking among the Ajaba is fierce, and social status is very important. Reigning females must always defend their position against challenges from their underlings, and these challenges are often quite a bit bloodier than similar affairs among Garou. As such, it is not uncommon for Ajaba in power to have numerous allies, among them both warriors and mystics that can help to legitimize their position. This is where the power of males in Ajaba society reveals itself: males that enter a pack do so with no preset social rank, which allows them to ally themselves with any females who will have them. This means that Ajaba mystics wield considerable power, as they alone often determine the fate of an entire clan simply by choosing whom they wish to support in the numerous ritual challenges that plague the typical pack.

Beyond the pack scale, there is currently no real structure to Ajaba society. The Ajaba of today are still recovering from the near-genocide of their breed in 1984, and at the same time they are also reorganizing their clans, discarding the chauvinistic ways of the Ajaba King and instead adapting new traditions more in keeping with Gaia's will. It goes without saying that Kisasi speaks for the Ajaba as a whole, but at a local level her influence is often quite limited.

Traits

Before the Ajaba fell to Black Tooth, they made use of a Renown system that was, in most respects, similar to that of the Bastet. Like the Bastet, they placed a high priority on Ferocity and Cunning. But while the Bastet value Honor, the Ajaba instead valued Infamy, and were thus little better than the Wyrm foes plaguing the rest of Gaia's children. Because they are currently redesigning their society from the ground up, however, their priorities have shifted somewhat in response to prolonged contact with both the Bastet and the Garou. The clans today continue to value Ferocity and Cunning, but they have found that the Honor practiced by the Garou and the Bastet is more trouble than it's worth. With their newfound commitment to Gaia, however, praising Infamy no longer seems appropriate. Instead, modern Ajaba value an individual's willingness to place the needs of Gaia and the pack above her own, which is embodied in the trait of Obligation.

Complicating matters in the Ajaba's "great leap forward," as it were, is the fact that, though they'd like to think otherwise, they simply aren't like other Fera. They are pack animals, which makes them more social than most Fera, but they are not as organized as the Garou (despite the fact that they often have much larger packs). Additionally, Ajaba society has rigid gender roles, roles reinforced by the fact that Ajaba males are typically blessed with more Gnosis while females are typically blessed with more Rage. The fact that the Ajaba need to balance two radically different branches of their society, even as they recover from the disastrous events of the past two decades, gives them unique obstacles that few other Fera can truly appreciate.

For reasons the Ajaba don't entirely understand, a small number of males and females in each generation have their Rage and Gnosis scores inverted; that is, males have scores as though they were females, and vice versa. Such individuals are both innovative and unpredictable, and the Ajaba view them both as omens of good luck and as portents of doom (how they tell which is which remains a mystery). Kisasi is one such inversion; she is a gifted prophet, and maintains much better control of her Rage than most of her female companions. Similarly, the renegade Shari is also an inversion. His rage is boundless, and many Ajaba elders fear he will destroy the Ajaba from within.

Breeds

Ajaba breed quite rapidly, and in some cases they breed true as much as 30% of the time. Since they are in quite a crunch to restore their population to its pre-1984 heights, hyaenid breed Ajaba are especially common at the moment. In contrast to the Garou, and perhaps because of their persecution over the past two decades, metis Ajaba tend to be fully accepted as members of the tribe. Despite this fact, however, most metis tend to remain on the periphery of Ajaba society, acting as bodyguards and lieutenants instead of war leaders or mystics.

• **Homid:** Most homid Ajaba are of African or Indian descent, though Africa's racial diversity ensures that homids of nearly any ancestry are possible.

Beginning Gnosis: Females 1, Males 3

Starting Gifts: Master of Fire, Smell of Man

• **Metis:** Most Ajaba metis are hermaphroditic, and even those that aren't might as well be spiritually. They lack the gender-based benefits to Gnosis or Rage enjoyed by males and females respectively, hovering in the middle of the scale for each trait. This gives metis Ajaba a unique place in Ajaba society, as they are considered some of the most stable and balanced individuals of the breed. The irony of this state of affairs is not lost on them.

Beginning Gnosis: 3

Starting Gifts: Primal Anger, Sense Wyrm

• **Hyaena:** Hyaena Ajaba have a deeper connection to Gaia and the spirit world than homid or metis Ajaba do. This is particularly true of males, whose spiritual awareness is equal to that of lupus Garou.

Beginning Gnosis: Females 3, Males 5

Starting Gifts: Heightened Senses, Sense Prey

Aspects

In the past, all Ajaba were functionally Ragabash. This is changing, however, with the current trend toward restructuring Ajaba society. Currently, two major aspects are recognized among Ajaba elders, and it's possible that more might emerge at some point in the future.

• **Dawn:** Dawn Ajaba, if female, are filled with fury and Rage, eager to battle the Wyrm and prove their worth to Gaia and their clan. They are feisty and combative, easily offended and hyperactive, and they are one of the main reasons the Wyrm is feeling the Ajaba's bite in Africa. In the case of males, Dawn aspects tend to be taletellers, a role similar to that of the Galliards in Garou society.

Beginning Rage: Females 5, Males 3, Metis 4

Starting Gifts: Falling Touch, Inspiration or Razor Claws if female, Beast Speech, Call of the Wyld or Mindspeak if male; metis may choose from the Gifts of either gender

• **Dusk:** Dusk Ajaba turn their Rage inward, learning more subtle ways to leave their mark on the world. Dusk females tend to become skulking assassins, striking down their foes in the manner of a Rage-filled Ragabash. Dusk males commit themselves fully to the study of Gaia's mysteries, and they are some of the most potent mystics Gaia's children have ever seen.

Beginning Rage: Females 3, Males 1, Metis 2

Starting Gifts: Blur of the Milky Eye, Open Seal or Scent of Running Water if female, Mother's Touch, Sense Wyrm or Spirit Speech if male; metis may choose from the Gifts of either gender

While their Rage and Gnosis often swing to great heights, Ajaba are not especially strong-willed. All Ajaba start with a Willpower score of 3.

Forms

Like the Garou, Ajaba can change into five forms: Homid, Anthros, Crinos, Crocas, and Hyaenid. They function in most respects like their Garou counterparts, and the difficulties associated with shifting forms for the Garou apply to the Ajaba in exactly the same fashion.

• **Homid:** Ajaba in Homid form look just like normal humans. They tend to be of rather stocky build, and often have hoarse voices and bristly hair. They have an unsettling air of cunning about them, and some have an unnerving habit of laughing maniacally at odd intervals.

• **Anthros:** The Anthros form is a hybrid of human and hyena characteristics, with the emphasis on the human traits. The Ajaba's limbs lengthen and thicken, she grows in height, and her facial features and teeth become thicker and more robust. Her body hair bristles, and she becomes disturbingly inhuman.

• **Crinos:** This hybrid form is a balanced mix of hyena and human, and it is built for battle. Strong and capable, the Crinos form (slightly smaller than a Garou's Crinos) affords the Ajaba the greatest protection of all of his forms, and also allows him to manipulate weapons and equipment with little difficulty. Ajaba in Crinos form invoke the Delirium, just as Garou do.

• **Crocas:** The primordial war-form, the Crocas



takes the normal hyena form and enlarges it, making the Ajaba much more dangerous. Ajaba in this form are the size of small bears, and their crushing bite inflicts one extra die of damage thanks to the werehyena's thickened jaws.

• **Hyaenid:** The Ajaba's Hyaenid form is like that of her normal hyena Kin, strong and capable and deeply attuned to the world around her. It is more useful for movement than any of the other forms, but lacks the strength of the battle forms or the flexibility of the humanoid forms.

Form Statistics

Anthros	Crinos	Crocas	Hyaenid
Str: +2	Str: +3	Str: +3	Str: +1
	Dex: +1	Dex: +2	Dex: +2
Sta: +2	Sta: +4	Sta: +3	Sta: +2
Man: -1	Man: -2	Man: -2	Man: -2
App: -3	App: 0	App: 0	

Gifts

Ajaba are hardy folk, and they have managed to retain much of their old knowledge even through their years of hiding from the Simba set on murdering them. They learn and use Gifts just as Garou do, and while some turned to other sources of mystic might (particularly the Wyrm), such individuals are unwelcome among the true clans.

Ajaba begin play with one breed Gift, one auspice Gift, and one Ajaba Gift from the list below. Ajaba may choose auspice gifts based on their gender and their Aspect. Females choose Ahroun Gifts (if Dawn Aspect) or Ragabash Gifts (if Dusk Aspect). Males choose Galliard Gifts (if Dawn Aspect) or Theurge Gifts (if Dusk Aspect). Metis may choose from either list for their Aspect.

• **Feral Grin (Level One)** — With a snarl or a harsh glare, the Ajaba makes his victim uneasy and forces him to back away, intimidated.

System: By rolling Manipulation + Primal-Urge, the Ajaba adds one die to all subsequent Social rolls for the remainder of the scene. If he rolls four or more successes, he adds two to his rolls. This only works on one target at a time, and only for rolls meant to intimidate or coerce the target in some fashion. The difficulty of the roll is the subject's Willpower, though it drops to 4 if she is already inclined to fear the Ajaba.

• **Gift of Terror (Level One)** — As the Red Talon Gift: Wolf at the Door.

• **Primal Anger (Level One)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Sense Prey (Level One)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Crushing Jaws (Level Two)** — By invoking this Gift and snapping her jaws shut on prey, the Ajaba gets a solid hold that lasts until either the bone shatters or the hyena lets go (or dies). By using this Gift together as a group, several Ajaba can shred even the mightiest opponent.

System: The player makes a Strength + Brawl roll (difficulty 6) to get a firm grip, then spends a point of Willpower. Each turn, the Ajaba inflicts an additional health level of aggravated damage as her teeth mash the bone to marrow and splinters; the added damage is cumulative. The target cannot escape this grip unless he kills the hyena; her grip makes her an easy target (reducing his Dexterity + Brawl difficulty by 2), but prevents him from escaping.

• **Curse of Hatred (Level Two)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Sense of the Prey (Level Two)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

• **Clan Loyalty (Level Three)** — As the Bone Gnawer Gift: Friend In Need.

• **Laughter of the Soul (Level Three)** — The hyena's barking chuckle is unsettling under the best of circumstances; augmented by this Gift, it becomes a maddening threat. Normal humans and animals panic at the sound of this echoing laughter, and even supernatural creatures have been driven off in fear. An Epiphling of Fear teaches this Gift to the hyena-folk in exchange for a little extra influence.

System: To activate this Gift, the Ajaba simply has to laugh. The player rolls Manipulation + Expression or Intimidation (whichever is higher) against the victim's Willpower. Each success makes the panic more profound: one success makes the target uneasy, while three sets him shivering uncontrollably and five drives him into the night, screaming. A Garou or vampire must check for frenzy if the Ajaba rolls three successes or more, and the results should send Garou into fox frenzy until the Laughter ends. Only by spending Willpower can he keep his self-control, and even then the chuckling disturbs him badly.

• **Culling the Weak (Level Four)** — By studying a foe or a group of prey, a hyena can tell which one of them is most ready to die. The Gift reveals states of sickness of the mind, body, and soul and helps a hyena choose her next victim. This vision can be fairly abstract and open to interpretation; a young Garou on the verge of Harano is more likely to be spotted than an elderly wolf with a healthy heart. Even so, the sight is accurate, and provides disturbing insights that a target may not even recognize in himself.

System: The player rolls Perception + Awareness and spends a Gnosis point. The difficulty depends on the severity of the subject's illness, or on the number of subjects nearby. Spotting a man with a bad liver is easy if he's alone (difficulty 5), harder if he's in a crowd (difficulty 7), and harder still if he's healthy but emotionally unbalanced (difficulty 8). If more than one person in range is unhealthy, the magic picks out the sickest one. This disease may be physical, mental, or emotional, but should be significant. A minor case of the flu doesn't qualify, though pneumonia would. This Gift lasts one scene; its results, while accurate, depend on the circumstances of the story and its characters.

• **Gnaw (Level Four)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Gorge (Level Four)** — As the Red Talon Gift.

• **Survivor (Level Five)** — As the Bone Gnawer Gift.

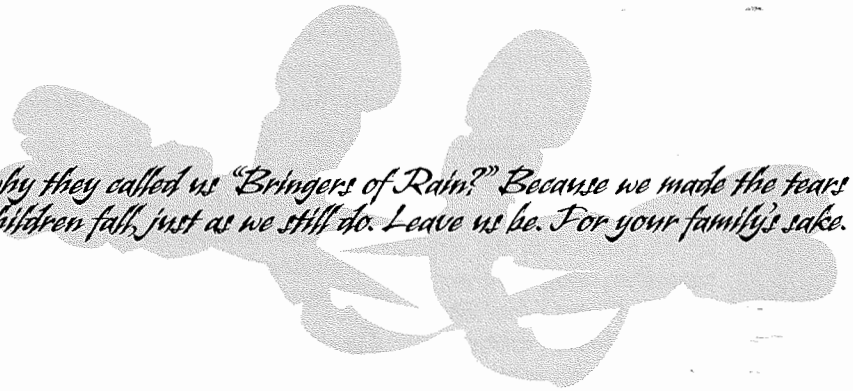
Rites

Since most of the breed was annihilated at the claws of the Endless Storm, and since they have only recently begun organizing themselves into clans once again, the Ajaba have not yet developed (or rediscovered) any unique rites. They do share rites with the rest of the Ahadi (as described in the Ahadi section of this book) and they have copied several rites from the Garou, but the best, as they say, is yet to come.

Stereotypes

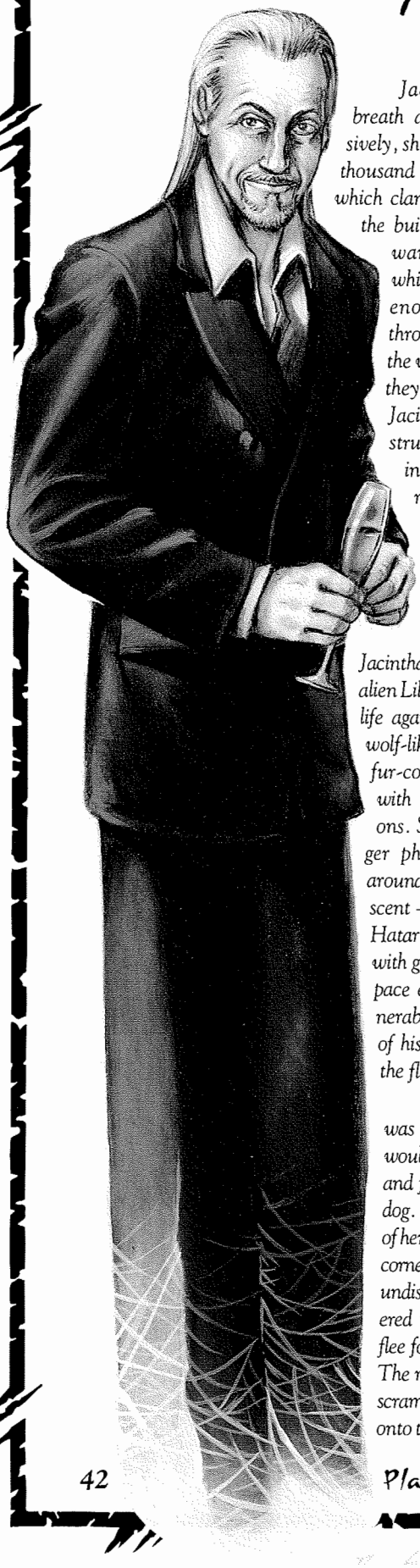
Ironjaw advises:

- **Ahadi:** An alliance is all well and good, but Black Tooth is dead now. Can't we get back to what really matters? Y'know, killing Simba?
- **Ananasi:** What good do these guys do for Gaia again?
- **Bagheera:** Smug jackasses, one and all. Still, they keep the lions at bay, so they can't be all bad.
- **Bubasti:** Oh, whatever. If they ever came out of Egypt I might have an opinion on them.
- **Kucha Ekundu:** Weird little shits, and too mystical for my tastes.
- **Mokolé:** Damn, they stomped the hell out of Black Tooth and his pride! I don't care how freaky they are, that makes them okay in my book.
- **Ratkin:** Stinky little vermin, but they're smaller than we are and they hate all the right people. Good allies, but don't trust them.
- **Silent Striders:** They're tough fighters, so I guess that counts for something.
- **Simba:** New regime or not, I still say kill 'em all and let Gaia sort 'em out.
- **Swara:** Sneaky bastards. They're just like all the other cats: talk pretty to your face, then stab you in the back when you aren't looking.



Do you know why they called us "Bringers of Rain?" Because we made the tears of widows and children fall, just as we still do. Leave us be. For your family's sake.

Ananasi



Jacintha took a deep breath and released it explosively, shattering her body into a thousand tiny spiders, each of which clambered up the wall of the building and scuttled toward the window sill, which would afford them enough space to enter through the tiniest gaps in the window frame. As she/they neared the window, Jacintha grew aware of a struggle already going on inside the building. Her rival was here — as was the other one.

Edging through the cracks, the lead Crawlerlings that made up part of Jacintha's body saw Carver's alien Lilian form fighting for his life against a creature with a wolf-like head and a gigantic, fur-covered body complete with deadly, knife-like talons. She could smell the anger pheromones in the air around her, along with a rare scent — Carver's fear. The Hatar was badly wounded, with great gashes in his carapace exposing the soft, vulnerable flesh beneath. One of his hands lay severed on the floor.

All Jacintha had to do was retreat and her enemy would perish at the claws and fangs of Gaia's watchdog. Instead, she sent a few of her Crawlerlings into a far corner, where they would stay undisturbed and undiscovered in case they needed to flee for their (and her) lives. The remaining Crawlerlings scrambled up the wall and onto the ceiling just above the werewolf. They flowed together, merging into a gigantic version of Jacintha's spider of choice, the unassuming but deadly brown recluse. Quickly she drew upon the blood gained from a recent feeding, spinning it into a gigantic, shapeless web, its strands nearly impossible to break. She dropped the web squarely atop the werewolf, entangling the snarling beast in its steel-like cables.

"Now!" she hissed at Carver and joined in the attack on the momentarily trapped werewolf. It was over quickly; the werewolf could not withstand the massive doses of venom from two Ananasi. Once his struggles stopped, all that was left was slowly draining him of his vital (and extremely tasty) blood.

Once they were certain the werewolf was dead, the two werespiders reassumed human form and carried the corpse from the building and dumped it unceremoniously into a nearby alley. "Let the police wonder about vampires," Carver said, before turning suspiciously to Jacintha.

"That letter. 'We'll settle it here and now.' You set me up, didn't you?"

Jacintha's face remained impassive. "I hate you, Hatar, for what you've done to a place I've grown fond of. But I respect the laws of our people and our Queen. Our feud is between the two of us. I would never bring in outsiders to settle our differences."

Carver nodded briefly. "I'll accept that, Wyld-servant," he said. "Maybe I'll seek out other hunting grounds for a while and leave this slum to you."

"Then we'll have no quarrel," Jacintha said. With unblinking eyes, she watched Carver's body collapse into a thousand tiny wolf spiders and disappear into the darkness. Jacintha turned her back on the corpse and her former enemy and made her own way home through the night.

Legend

At first only the Triat existed: Weaver, Wyrm and Wyld. The Wyld's first and best creation was Gaia. She, in turn, created Her own children — the Mokolé, the Garou, the Bastet and all the other Fera. But the Wyld was not the only creator; the Weaver, too, created a child — Ananasa. It is from the Weaver's first and only child that the Ananasi are descended. Ananasa emulated her mother, the Weaver, and created her own children from a union with the spirit of Spider. The first Ananasi, called Anansi, created more children and the Ananasi prospered.

When the Weaver grew mad and bound the Wyrm in her Webs, in retaliation, the Wyrm captured Queen Ananasa, holding her prisoner in a flawless opal prison. Then the Wyrm coerced the Ananasi into its service in order to keep the Queen Mother safe. Given no other choice, the Ananasi agreed.

Only her first and best beloved child Anansi was able to find her in the Wyrm's realm of Malfeas. Seeking to free her,

Anansi cajoled and tricked the Corax , the Garou and other Fera into storming Malfeas to capture what he claimed was the Wyrm's very heart — Ananasa's prison. The Garou seized the opal and brought it out of Malfeas, but they could not destroy it. They did make a crack in it that allowed Queen Ananasa to communicate with her children, which was her intention all along. Though still a prisoner, the Wyrm could not harm her through the tiny flaw in her opal cage.

The Garou were enraged by what they saw as a betrayal and swore vengeance against the Ananasi. Fortunately, Queen Ananasa taught her children to hide and thus they were able to weather the initial fury of the Garou, which soon erupted in the conflagration now known as the War of Rage. Though few Fera realize it, the Ananasi fed the flames of that war, driven to it by the arrogance of the Garou, whose culling tactics during the Impergium offended Queen Ananasa.

After the end of the Impergium, the Ananasi slowly emerged once more into the world. Still doing the work of their Queen Mother, they cultivate human society for their efforts as builders. Many Fera do not believe the Ananasi still exist; others remember their ancient duplicity and consider them servants of the Wyrm, hunting them whenever they find evidence of their existence.

Where the other Fera serve the will of Gaia, the Ananasi serve their captive Queen. Even those who still obey the Wyrm know that Queen Ananasa holds their true loyalty and do their part to accomplish her grand design — the restoration of the original balance between Wyrm, Weaver and Wyld.

The Ananasi Today

Today, the Ananasi still hold to their original purpose, to do the will of their Queen and to free her from her imprisonment. They accomplish this through their interaction with human society. By manipulating human affairs, including economics, politics and society, the children of Queen Ananasa build a complex web of millions of strands, linking every creature in the world with every other creature. Though their immediate purpose may remain unfathomable except to their own perceptions, their ultimate goal lies in recreating the Symmetry that held the world in perfect balance.

To this end, Ananasi have found havens in all parts of the world and in all strata of society. Camouflaged by their adaptation to the human realm, they exercise their hidden agendas disguised as the normal actions of everyday life.

Ananasi Lexicon

Damhàn (DOM-hahn): The Ananasi's personal name for themselves.

Fylfot: An Ananasi fetish.

Grandmother Spider: Another name for The Weaver.

Great Web: The Ananasi's name for the universe. The Great Web is flawed and the Ananasi seek to restore it to its original perfection.

Ovid (OH-vid): The other Changing Breeds, considered insignificant by the Ananasi.

Sylie (SI-lee): Similar to a Den-Realm, this is a spirit haven, created by each Ananasi, connected to the Umbra and Queen Ananasa.

Symmetry: The ultimate goal of the Ananasi and their Queen: the restoration of the balance by restoring the original harmony of the Triat.

Tapestry: The name given to the Ananasi's concept of the universe, a giant masterwork created from many interwoven threads.

Triumvirate: The political structure of the Ananasi, as dictated to them by their Queen.

Unweaving: The intentional destruction or alteration of part of the Tapestry or Great Web to serve the purpose of Symmetry.

Weaving: The purposeful creation, change or restoration of part of the Tapestry or Great Web in the name of Symmetry.

Organization

Most Ananasi lead solitary lives, each one doing her part to carry out the will of Queen Ananasa, with whom she maintains a personal connection. When they need to organize in groups, either for some great goal or for mutual protection, they do so under the leadership of elder females.

In general, Ananasi society recognizes three distinct groups, called the Triumvirate: those who serve the Wyrm, those who serve the Wyld and those who serve the Weaver. Within each group, distinct factions act as warriors, balancers and questioners. This complex organization of roles keeps the webs of the Ananasi society strong and dynamic, an ironic situation for children who love pattern and stability.

The Metamorphosis

Unlike the First Change that marks the point of no return for most Fera, the evolution of a human (or arachnid) into a full-fledged Ananasi does not occur all at once. The pre-Metamorphosis Ananasi experiences a gradual rise in curiosity, as she notices details and patterns in the world around her to a greater extent than in her previous life. The soon-to-become Ananasi also finds her emotions cooling as she grows more dispassionate and analytical in her feelings and actions.

Physical changes soon follow as the Ananasi's body slowly transforms itself into one capable of achieving many disparate forms. The individual's tastes change; she loses the desire to eat for satisfaction and eats primarily for sustenance and to fuel the changes in her body. Her muscles undergo sporadic spasms and subtle changes manifest; hair may sprout on heretofore-bare portions of skin or swellings may move under the skin. While these changes may seem terrifying to the young Ananasi, more often the individual finds them fascinating, predisposed to accept them by the emotional and psychological changes that have already taken place. Simultaneously, the new Ananasi learns to control her changes at will so that they are not obvious to the uninitiated.

Finally, the Ananasi learns that she needs blood to power her changes, discovering the Hunger. While she can still eat food, she learns that her true need is for the blood of warm-blooded animals to power her change.

Umbral Instruction

The final Metamorphosis of a young Ananasi inevitably attracts the attention of others of her kind, who, following instructions from Queen Ananasa herself, bring the fledgling, sometimes with others who have just discovered their spider-selves, to the Umbra where they receive a thorough grounding in their new life, learn their roles in the Great Web and meet with the Mother-Queen herself.

The Sylie

Each Ananasi learns to build her own private place that connects her to the Umbra and to Queen Ananasa. This place, called the Sylie, serves as a place of rest, in which the Ananasi can replenish her Gnosis. It also allows the Ananasi to communicate directly with Queen Ananasa, broadcasting the Ananasi's thoughts to the Queen Mother in her opal prison. The Sylie may be an apartment, a house or an abandoned cellar — anywhere the Ananasi feels safe enough to set up residence. Most Ananasi bring their prey into their Sylie to feed, luring their victims by their seductive wiles and ensuring that they keep returning once they are firmly under the werespider's control. In the physical world, the Sylie seems like just another dwelling place. In the Umbra, it appears as another part of the Great Web, no different in feeling from other parts.

The Laws of Ananasa

Obey the Mother-Queen in All Things

Defend Your Brethren From All Who Would Do Them Harm

Follow the Aspect and Faction that Ananasa Chooses for You

Understand the Ways of the Triat, Both as They Were and as They Are. Know the Difference

Know Your Enemies

Know The Great Web for What It Is

Know Your Place

Keep Your Mouth Shut

Worship None But Ananasa

Traits

Unlike other Fera or the Garou, the Ananasi lack Rage. Instead, they possess a blood pool that they may use for extra actions and healing wounds. Ananasi can hold up to 10 blood points (each one about the equivalent of a health level of damage), although some Gifts enable them to exceed this maximum.

Werespiders may eat normal food, but they gain their real sustenance and power from ingesting blood. Running out of blood does not weaken an Ananasi, but until she has acquired at least some blood points, a werespider on "empty" can use none of the special abilities granted by her blood pool.

Ananasi can accomplish the following by using blood points:

- Spending one blood point allows a werespider to shift automatically into a chosen form.
- Spending one blood point gives an Ananasi an extra action in a turn.
- Ananasi use blood points to power certain Gifts and rites.
- Ananasi may spend blood to heal wounds.
- Blood points fuel an Ananasi's ability to create webs.

Unlike vampires, who also use blood to fuel their actions, werespiders cannot employ blood to boost their Physical Attributes, nor do they gain extra bonuses from the blood of Fera or other supernatural creatures (though they may enjoy the taste and potency). A werespider may spend only *one* blood point per turn (unless possessing the Gift: Blood Pump, or unless a Gift requires more than one point), and may never expend blood and Gnosis in the same turn.

Healing

Ananasi do not regenerate as do most other Changing Breeds. Instead, they use the blood stored from their feeding to heal both normal and aggravated wounds. To heal normal damage, werespiders spend one blood point per level of damage. In order to heal one level of aggravated damage, an Ananasi must spend five points of blood all at once. This process takes an entire scene.

Unless a werespider uses blood to heal damage, she heals at the same rate as normal humans do. Ananasi may spend blood for healing while in any form except their Crawlerling form. They may also use blood to purge themselves of diseases as if they were healing aggravated damage. The more serious the disease, the more "levels" they need to heal. Spending five blood points, or the equivalent of healing one level of aggravated damage can purge common ailments such as the flu. Serious illnesses such as AIDS, lupus or Crohn's disease count as three to five levels of aggravated damage. Ananasi seeking to purge their systems of serious diseases must, therefore, consume blood in large quantities, probably requiring multiple feeding forays.

Ananasi possess no vulnerability or allergy to silver.

Peculiarities

The Ananasi naturally share many physical traits with spiders. Human-born werespiders may have as much difficulty adjusting to such manifestations as multiple eyes and legs as spider-born Ananasi have adapting to the seeming restrictions of human form.

In all except their Homid form, Ananasi have multiple eyes. Though this does give them greater sight-range, werespiders must still make a Perception + Alertness roll to notice specific things within their expanded peripheral vision. Unless they have Gifts that grant them 360° vision, Ananasi cannot automatically see everything around them.

Most of the Ananasi forms have multiple limbs. This abundance of appendages, however, does not allow werespiders extra actions. They are bound by the same

penalties for taking extra actions as other characters. They can use their extra hands to carry more items; moreover, should they lose the use of an arm in battle, they still have a spare or two in reserve.

By rolling Charisma + Primal-Urge, Ananasi can use pheromones to draw potential mates, as per the rules for Animal Attraction (**Werewolf**, pg. 199). For Ananasi, the difficulty is always 4.

Rage and Shapeshifting

Ananasi do not use Rage in the process of changing from one form to another, nor does their lack of Rage affect their ability to change forms. When a werespider wishes to move from one form to another, she rolls Stamina + Primal-Urge, in the same fashion as the Ovid.

Because Ananasi lack Rage, they do not frenzy. In fact, they tend to experience emotions differently from most other shapeshifters, not to mention normal humans. Though werespiders do feel joy, sorrow, anger and other emotions, they do so in a muted fashion, as if distanced from their feelings. They can be induced to frenzy through supernatural means, but the difficulty to do so is raised by 2.

Entering the Umbra

Rather than stepping sideways where the Gauntlet is weakest, werespiders must assume their Crawlerling form and make their way through the Great Web's strands. They may assume any form they wish once they have crawled across the Web, but they may only successfully enter the Umbra as Crawlerlings. Because of their patron's affinity to the Weaver, the Ananasi use a different difficulty to step sideways. Where most Fera find a low Gauntlet easiest to breach, the Ananasi find it easier to cross where the Weaver is firmly entrenched.

Area	Difficulty
Science lab	3
Inner city	4
Mini-mall	5
Open highway	6
Rural countryside	7
Lonely train track	8
Untouched wilderness	10

Where the Wyrm's taint is significant, most of the Damhàn have greater difficulty, finding the Web sticky and hard to traverse. Only those werespiders of the Hatar faction can enter the Umbra at no penalty. Other factions of the Ananasi add +2 to their difficulty to crawl through a Wyrm-infested Web.

Venom

The Ananasi possess venom-producing glands. Depending on the Damhàn's current form, the venom varies in potency. Ananasi in Pithus form produce full strength venom; in Lilian form, their poison is somewhat diluted. Storytellers should determine for themselves the exact amount of damage, but it should always be considered aggravated damage that can only be healed through medical attention or magical healing. In order to affect the Ovid or other supernaturals with their venom, the Damhàn must use Gifts. Normal humans are affected automatically by the bite of an Ananasi; the type of poison depends on the breed of spider.

The bite of a brown recluse Ananasi produces a poison that has a necrotic effect that spreads throughout the body over a matter of weeks, killing all flesh it comes in contact with. An Ananasi tarantula emits non-lethal but extremely painful venom, while a black-widow Ananasi's bite can prove fatal for humans who botch a Stamina roll unless they receive an antidote quickly.

Webs

When in Pithus form, Ananasi can spin extremely strong webs that they can use for a multitude of purposes. Creating webs of any substance costs one blood point, which the Ananasi uses in the process of spinning her webs. These webs have a tensile strength approaching that of steel yet they retain the flexibility of spider webs found in nature. When used to trap an enemy, they possess an effective Strength of 9 and take four health levels of damage before they break. In Crawlerling form, Ananasi can spin webs that have the strength of ordinary spiderwebs.

Backgrounds and Abilities

The Ananasi's breed determines beginning Willpower and Gnosis. Ananasi have no restrictions concerning which Backgrounds or Abilities they may take except those dictated by their breed. Ananasi automatically gain Queen Ananasa as their totem, regardless of their faction.

As a totem, Queen Ananasa grants Occult +3 and Enigmas +2 while her child is meditating in his Sylie (or, in the case of an Ovid child, while meditating in solitude). Her ban is that her children must follow the Laws of Ananasa, and Ovid must cooperate with Ananasi. Those Ovid she favors must pay 10 points to purchase her as a personal totem; she does not favor packs.

Breeds

Ananasi admit to two distinct breeds: arachnid and homid. Metis werespiders simply do not exist. Whether this is true because matings between two Ananasi produce no issue or any "child" born of such a match either dies or is killed at birth, the Ananasi do not say.

• **Homid**—Homid Ananasi, born of one human parent, have an early life that differs little from most human children. As they near the time of their First Change, however, they notice significant differences between themselves and their human friends. By the time they undergo their transformation, they are usually ready and relieved. They have an advantage over the arachnid breed in that they already have the mass they need to support their new forms.

Beginning Willpower: 3

Beginning Gnosis: 1

• **Arachnid** — Ananasi born from a mating with a spider hatch from an egg sac. They must literally eat their way to a size that can accommodate their change in form, usually feasting on their sac-mates and any other spiders in the area until they achieve the necessary size. Arachnid Ananasi usually possess the appearance of their local spider population, characteristics that show up in their non-Homid forms.

Beginning Willpower: 4

Beginning Gnosis: 5

Aspects

Instead of auspices that determine the role each werespider plays in her greater community, Ananasi have aspects, chosen for them by Queen Ananasa. Each of the three aspects of Ananasi — those dedicated to the Wyrm (Hatar), the Weaver (Tenere) and the Wyld (Kumoti) — has three factions. The Warrior, or Myrmidon, fights for her faction under the direction of Queen Ananasa. The Balancer, or Viskr, serves as judge, wizard and seeker of truth for her faction. The Questioner, or Wyrsta, acts as a counter to the other two aspects and dedicates his to understanding the structure of the Great Web and his faction's place in it.

Shortly after an Ananasi's Metamorphosis, the markings that designate her aspect appear, marking her as Tenere (Weaver-dedicated), Hatar (Wyrm-servant) or Kumoti (Wyld-born). Her faction becomes clear to her during her period of Umbral instruction.

• **Tenere: Weaver-Dedicated** — Ananasi dedicated to the Weaver have the best control over their emotions and pay the most attention to order and pattern. They aim to restore the Weaver to her original aspect, not the mad, out-of-control creature she has become. Tenere tend to value neatness in their personal lives, order in their relationships and pattern in their day-to-day activities. Logical, calculating and precise, they strive to maintain stability in the Great Web and to embody the Weaver in everything they do.

Starting Gifts: Groom, Patience of Ananasa

Hatar: Wyrm-Servants

Like the Tenere, the Hatar serve the Wyrm's original aspect of Destroyer, not Corrupter. They believe that the Wyrm is, itself, corrupted by its imprisonment by the Weaver and that it must be freed before it can again fulfill its true place in the Triat. Hatar live to destroy, under the command of the Queen Mother. They are the Unweavers of Ananasi society.

Starting Gifts: Blood of Pain, Wyrmling Kinship

Kumoti: Wyld-Born

Dedicated to change, the Kumoti work to affect a dynamic approach to the world. They emulate the Wyld as it should be, rather than as it is. Their goal is to fight stagnation and entropy by instituting subtle changes. Even though some of the changes they support may not be for the best, they believe that any change is better than standing still.

Starting Gifts: Inspire, Mother's Touch

Forms

Ananasi possess four forms, each of them distinct. Each form serves its own purpose in Queen Ananasa's scheme. Even the forms that seem most "normal" have their own oddities and unique characteristics.

• **Homid:** The Ananasi's Homid form outwardly resembles the human body in size, shape and other external physical characteristics. This form, however, differs from human in some distinctive ways. After the Metamorphosis, the human body undergoes several alterations. Its internal organs are no longer precisely human. The blood chemistry alters to accommodate both human hemoglobin (or iron-based) and spider hemocyanin (or copper-based) molecules. The Homid form also possesses vestigial fangs and pedipalps in its mouth. The lungs change as well, combining normal human lungs with the type found in arachnids. Despite these changes, the Homid form is interfertile with normal humans.

• **Lilian:** This form serves as the Ananasi's primary combat form. Combining characteristics of human and spider, the Lilian form appears both formidable and disturbing. While the precise appearance differs from individual to individual, the Lilian Ananasi has some general characteristics. An exoskeleton develops, muscles alter drastically, and the circulatory system becomes more spider-like. Beyond that, the variations in the Lilian form can include extra appendages, a human head on an upright spider form, a spider head on a human form with a hard carapace or any other permutation of spider and human. Ananasi can alter their Lilian form through practice and the consumption of particular spider types to give them the desired appearance. The Ananasi can use bite and claw maneuvers in this form.

The Lilian form increases in height and weight from the human form by about one-third. Thus, a male Ananasi who stands 6' in human form would tower about 8' in Lilian form, while his weight would alter proportionately. This form invokes the full Delirium in mortals who see it.

• **Pithus:** The Ananasi's Pithus form resembles nothing more or less than a giant spider. The werespider's weight increases by half so that a 120-pound female Ananasi in human form becomes a 180-pound spider. The physical changes include a mixture of spider and human organs, including the lungs. Flesh and chitin become tougher and more powerful. The circulatory system becomes more hydraulic, allowing the Pithus to shift her weight about and increase her strength where it matters most. The Pithus form is ideal for producing webs with the tensile strength of steel (see above). The Ananasi can use bite and claw maneuvers in this form.

This form, like the Lilian form, invokes the full Delirium.

• **Crawlerling:** The most misunderstood of all Ananasi forms, the Crawlerling "form" involves the breakdown of the Ananasi into hundreds of normal-sized spiders equal in mass to the Ananasi's human mass. When an Ananasi assumes this form, she usually designates some spiders as leaders, with others as followers. These "leaders" possess the

sum of an Ananasi's memories and consciousness and direct the movement of their followers.

This form is best for escape, hiding or infiltration. If even a few Crawlerling spiders survive, the Ananasi can eventually reconstitute herself, given time and the mass consumption of spiders to rebuild her mass. If a "leader" dies, the portion of memories contained by that spider dies with it. If more than 30 percent of the Crawlerlings perish, the reconstituted Ananasi may appear (and act) quite different from the original individual.

Crawlerlings can produce webs as normal spiders do. Although the form itself does not invoke the Delirium, any mortal who happens to see the breakdown of an Ananasi into Crawlerling form suffers the full effect of the Delirium.

Form Statistics

Lilian	Pithus	Crawlerling
Str: +2	Str: +4	Str: 0
Dex: +3	Dex: +1	Dex: +5
Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: 0
Man: -1	Man: -3	Man: 0
App: -1	App: -2	App: 0
	Web	
Diff: 6	Diff: 7	Diff: 6

Gifts

Ananasi begin play with three Gifts: one auspice, one faction and one General Gift. All Gifts are taught by the Mother-Queen, usually in the individual Ananasi's Sylie.

General Ananasi Gifts

• **Many Eyes (Level One)** — The Ananasi acquires a vision that encompasses 360 degrees. Anyone looking directly at the werespider notices nothing, but if an individual uses peripheral vision, the Ananasi appears to have eyes all around her head.

System: The player spends one blood point. The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Stolen Moments (Level One)** — The Ananasi can rob a victim of the most recent few minutes of memories, a handy ability for dealing with anyone who discovers something the werespider wishes to keep hidden, such as her existence or the location of her Sylie.

System: The Ananasi must touch the intended individual. The player spends one Gnosis point, and must succeed in a Gnosis roll (difficulty of the target's Willpower). Success steals the last 15 minutes of the target's memories.

• **Hand Fangs (Level Two)** — The Ananasi's "hands" develop a sharp, fang-like point that allows her to inject one dose of venom per hand into a victim.



System: The player spends one point of Gnosis and makes at least one success on a Stamina + Occult roll. The "fangs" last for one scene and do aggravated damage equal to the Ananasi's Strength.

• **Replenishment of the Flesh (Level Two)** — This Gift provides the Ananasi with another option for healing besides spending blood points. The werespider summons spiders and insects into her body, destroying the insects and assimilating the spiders.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point per health level healed (if the Ananasi is consuming spiders) or two Gnosis points per health level (if using other insects). The werespider may take no other action during this process. The length of time the healing takes depends on how many wounds must be healed and how many spiders or insects are in the area.

• **Blood Pump (Level Three)** — The Ananasi may use more blood than usual to power her actions.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point in order to spend as many blood points per turn as she needs, either to gain more actions or to heal wounds. The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Part Webs (Level Three)** — The Ananasi use this Gift to move through any webs, even the Great Web, without disturbing them. This enables them to walk through uninhabited buildings or avoid traps set just for them.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Wits + Alertness. Only one success is necessary. The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Entropic Bite (Level Four)** — The Ananasi injects a powerful necrotic toxin (similar to that of a brown recluse) into her victim, whose flesh dies around the spreading poison. A full-grown human dies in 15 seconds from being bitten. Other werespiders are immune to its effects.

System: If the Ananasi succeeds in biting her victim, she may spend two Gnosis points and roll her Gnosis (difficulty of the victim's Stamina +5 to a maximum of 9). The poison acts for one turn per success; the victim takes one level of unsoakable aggravated damage per turn. A human who dies from this Gift becomes soft enough inside for the werespider to "drink," thus enabling the Ananasi to heal herself or replenish her blood pool. Vampires must spend five blood points to expel the poison; those who cannot spend more than one point per turn may die from this Gift.

• **Iron Web (Level Four)** — The werespider may spin a transparent and durable web with this Gift, useful in creating permanent lairs or Sylies.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and succeeds in a Gnosis roll (difficulty 7) to activate the Gift. She must spend blood points as usual to produce the webbing. The web lasts indefinitely as long as it is properly maintained. It can absorb damage from fire and other sources, soaking damage as if it possessed the Ananasi's Stamina in homid form. Each cubic foot can take five health levels of damage after soak before breaking.

• **Carapace (Level Five)** — The Ananasi acquires an armored carapace over her exoskeleton that provides additional protection and can regenerate damage.

System: The character spends one Gnosis point to gain +4 Stamina for the purpose of soaking damage. The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Survivor (Level Five)** — As the Bone Gnawer Gift.

Aspect Gifts: Tenere

• **Groom (Level One)** — This Gift enables the Tenere to look her best regardless of the situation.

System: Once learned, this Gift is always active.

• **Patience of Ananasa (Level One)** — The Tenere remains motionless for long periods of time without experiencing discomfort. This stillness may make the werespider harder to notice.

System: The player rolls Willpower (difficulty 7) and the Tenere may remain perfectly motionless for one hour per success achieved. Moving ends the Gift, which may not be used again for an amount of time equal to the time spent motionless.

• **Beneath Notice (Level Two)** — The Tenere can make one object or a small group of objects blend into the surrounding area.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge. An active searcher must exceed the number of successes on that roll in order to find the camouflaged object.

• **Breath of Ananasa (Level Two)** — The Tenere creates an air pocket that provides her with a few minutes of breathable air.

System: The player rolls Gnosis to gain one minute of air (plus an additional minute per success).

• **Mother's Look (Level Three)** — As the Galliard Gift: Eye of the Cobra.

• **Reshape Object (Level Three)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Understanding the Tapestry (Level Four)** — Tenere use this Gift to see connections between apparently unrelated objects, solve puzzles and to gain a broader perspective on a knotty problem.

System: The player rolls Wits + Enigmas (difficulty 7). Each success reveals more connections between the targeted objects or more clues to the puzzle or problem under consideration.

• **Web Sheet (Level Four)** — The Tenere can create a large web extremely quickly.

System: The Ananasi spends two blood points, allowing her to cover a football field-sized area with a sticky web with an effective Strength of 9. This web does not affect other Ananasi.

• **Spider on the Mirror (Level Five)** — The Tenere can create mindless duplicates of herself to act as drones, possessing her physical abilities. The drones act on the Ananasi's command, following orders to the letter and

ceasing activity when their task is done — until the next order is given.

System: The player rolls Gnosis (difficulty 8) to create one physical copy of the character per success. In addition, she must spend one blood point per duplicate. After four turns, one duplicate disappears, followed by the others at a rate of one per turn until only the original werespider remains.

• **Thieving Touch of Spiders (Level Five)** — As the Ragabash Gift: Thieving Talons of the Magpie.

Aspect Gifts: Hatar

• **Blood of Pain (Level One)** — The Hatar turns her blood into a debilitating poison.

System: The werespider spends one blood point and wounds herself to produce the necessary blood. Anyone who drinks it must make a Willpower roll (difficulty of the Ananasi's permanent Gnosis) or fall helplessly ill. To take an action, the victim must make a Stamina roll each turn. The effects last for one scene or until the poison is neutralized.

• **Wyrmling Kinship (Level One)** — The Hatar can convince local Wyrm creatures that she is either an ally or someone of no importance.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge (difficulty 8). For each success, the difficulty of Social rolls versus Wyrm creatures is reduced by 1. Wyrm creatures must roll their Willpower (difficulty of the werespider's successes + 4) to resist.

• **Blood of Illusion (Level Two)** — Similar to Blood of Pain, but this Gift changes the blood into a hallucinatory toxin.

System: Affected characters must roll their Willpower (difficulty of the werespider's Gnosis) or become trapped in an illusory vision, possibly structured by the Ananasi's suggestions. Though the hallucination cannot harm the victim, the trapped individual may do herself harm in response to what she sees. The Gift lasts for as many turns as the Ananasi has Gnosis.

• **Call of the Wyrm (Level Two)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Corrupt (Level Three)** — The Hatar can weaken an object with this Gift, bringing natural flaws to the fore so that it can be more easily destroyed.

System: The player rolls Gnosis. Each success causes the targeted object to lose one soak die. This Gift does not affect living creatures, only inanimate objects.

• **Pulse of the Invisible (Level Three)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Ill Wind (Level Four)** — The Hatar weakens the barrier between worlds, allowing Banes to materialize in a certain location more easily than normal.

System: The werespider cuts her arm and spends three blood points, spreading them over the target area; the player rolls Intelligence + Occult. Each success reduces the Gauntlet by 1 for one hour per success.

• **Still Blood (Level Four)** — The Ananasi's blood can paralyze a victim through contact.

System: A victim splashed by the werespider's fresh blood loses one point of Strength for each point of the Ananasi's Gnosis. She may offset this loss by a Stamina roll to reduce the number of points. Lost Strength comes back at the rate of one point per hour.

• **Burning Blood (Level Five)** — The Ananasi turns her blood to acid, inflicting burning damage upon her victim or any object affected by acid.

System: The Ananasi may activate this Gift at will once it is learned. The acidic blood creates a dice pool of aggravated damage equal to the werespider's permanent Gnosis. This causes great harm to anyone biting the Ananasi.

• **Touch of the Unweaver (Level Five)** — The Hatar can make a targeted creature incapable of healing diseases or regenerating damage.

System: The character must touch the victim, spend two points of Gnosis and roll Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty of the target's Gnosis). If the target has no Gnosis, the difficulty is the target's Willpower -2. Success completely stops the healing process and gives the target a +5 difficulty (maximum 10) to resist disease. The Gift's effects last for one day per success or until nullified.

Aspect Gifts: Kumoti

• **Inspire (Level One)** — The Kumoti can fill the target individual with a sudden burst of creativity, though the person may not necessarily use it in the best possible manner.

System: The werespider must spend a point of Gnosis and come within 10 feet of the target. The Gift enhances the subject's natural creativity, enabling them to do something they might do normally but have not been able to do before, such as make a stirring speech, produce a master artwork or speak her mind in a forceful manner.

• **Mother's Touch (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Arachnophobia (Level Two)** — The Kumoti may inflict an irrational fear of spiders on her victim; natural arachnophobes are especially susceptible.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty of the target's Willpower). The effect lasts for one day per success, though victims may spend a point of Willpower to negate the fear for one turn per point. Characters already afraid of spiders become catatonic until removed from the site of a spider.

• **Insight of the Mother (Level Two)** — As the Theurge Gift: Sight from the Beyond.

• **Alter Lilian (Level Three)** — The Kumoti may alter her Lilian form at will, rearranging it to suit her whim.

System: The player makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). The effect lasts for one scene or until the werespider shifts to another form.

• **Sense Motion (Level Three)** — The Kumoti may sense motion around her, regardless of illumination, size of the moving object or person or invisibility to normal vision.

System: The Ananasi spends one Gnosis point to detect even the slightest motion with a successful Perception + Alertness roll. The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Mindblock (Level Four)** — As the Silver Fang Gift.

• **Nature of the Beast (Level Four)** — The Kumoti can reduce an individual to their most base (or basic) interest or driving emotion. An angry person grows enraged and attacks the nearest target; a sorrowful person becomes inconsolably sad.

System: The character rolls her Gnosis (difficulty of the victim's Willpower). The effect lasts for one scene.

• **Assimilation (Level Five)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Mass Confusion (Level Five)** — The Kumoti changes the perceptions of creatures in her immediate area, confusing them to the extent that they forget where they are, see friends as enemies and lose accurate perceptions in all their senses.

System: The player spends two Gnosis points. For the entire scene, any intelligent individual in the area, including other supernaturals, must roll Wits (difficulty 8) before taking an action against a selected target. Failure means they mistarget their action. Gifts fail, speeches become unintelligible, etc. Only the Ananasi using the Gift remains immune but can take no action. Doing so before the expiration of the Gift ends it prematurely.

Faction Gifts: Myrmidon

• **Illusion of Size (Level One)** — The Myrmidon creates an illusion that he is larger than his normal size. This image does not give the Ananasi any extra qualities but does aid in intimidating opponents into backing down, or in a hasty disguise.

System: The player rolls Manipulation (difficulty 6) against the opponent's Willpower (difficulty 7). The effects last for as many turns as the Ananasi's permanent Gnosis score.

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

• **Might of Ananasa (Level Two)** — This Gift allows the Myrmidon to dramatically increase her Strength.

System: The player must succeed on a Strength + Medicine roll. By spending blood points while invoking the Gift, the character increases her Strength by one per blood point spent. The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **True Fear (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Scorpion Tail (Level Three)** — This Gift, usable only in Lilian or Pithus form, creates a fully functional scorpion tail.

System: The player spends three blood points to form the tail, which has a Strength equal to the werespider's and does Strength +2 aggravated damage. The neurotoxin rarely affects Ovid but damages other creatures susceptible to it. The Ananasi may use other known Gifts to amplify or change the toxin. The tail lasts for the scene, or until the Ananasi changes form.

• **Weak Arm (Level Three)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Blood Hunt (Level Four)** — The Myrmidon may locate any single creature encountered within the last 24 hours or any individual she has ever fed from.

System: The Ananasi rolls Wits + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7) and spends one point of Gnosis for every scene of pursuit. The Gift lasts until the werespider locates her target or calls off the search.

• **Drying Bite (Level Four)** — As the Ragabash Gift: Whelp Body.

• **Image of the Great Mother (Level Five)** — This Gift enables the Ananasi to channel Ananasa's power into her own body, changing her into an enormous Lilian-like creature with four spider legs, four human arms, eight glowing red eyes and a pair of poisonous fangs. Tough, chitinous armor covers the body. When the Gift is over, the character reverts to Crawlerling form for one week to recover from the extreme metabolic changes.

System: The player spends two Gnosis points and rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 9). Success gives her character the following: Strength +5, Stamina +6, Perception +2, Appearance -5. Each arm does Strength + 2 aggravated damage. Any creature seeing this figure, even other Ananasi, must roll Willpower (difficulty 7) or suffer the full effects of the Delirium. Ananasa requests some favor for bestowing this Gift. The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Thousand Hands (Level Five)** — This Gift enables the Myrmidon to perform several tasks at the same time.

System: The Myrmidon spends a Gnosis point to gain 15 dice to her dice pool for the remainder of the scene. These dice may be used only for splitting her dice for multiple actions and she can never use more dice for one action than she normally possesses.

Faction Gifts: Viskr

• **Curse of the Great Web (Level One)** — The Viskr may make the process of entering the Umbra more difficult for a single individual.

System: The Ananasi touches her target and rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty 6) in order to increase the Gauntlet by 1 for the victim. The effects last for a scene.

• **Shroud (Level One)** — As the Uktena Gift.

• **Mindspeak (Level Two)** — As the Level One Galliard Gift.

• **Minor Unweaving (Level Two)** — The Viskr may negate a spell, Gift or other supernatural power by Unweaving the effect.

System: Usable only on Level One Gifts, Disciplines, Sphere effects or other magical abilities, this Gift requires the player to spend one Gnosis point and roll Dexterity + Occult. The werespider may interrupt powers that take place instantaneously if she delays her action to do so. The Gift does not affect powers that damage more than one target.

• **Calcify (Level Three)** — The Viskr may cause any one area in the Great Web to become resistant to change of any sort. This is useful in protecting areas significant to the Ananasi or to the Mother-Queen.

System: The player rolls her Gnosis (difficulty 7) and gives the targeted location or object three extra soak dice per

success. The area cannot be greater than one acre and the effect lasts for one scene. Targeted objects must be inanimate (which excludes undead!).

• **Cocoon (Level Three)** — As the Level Four homid Gift.

• **Attunement (Level Four)** — As the Bone Gnawer Gift.

• **Brethren Call (Level Four)** — The Ananasi may contact the two werespiders closest to her physically or may summon many natural spiders to her aid. The Ananasi contacted do not appear immediately but are notified that their presence is needed; normal spiders appear all at once and are ready to aid the Ananasi.

System: The character spends one blood point and rolls her Willpower (difficulty 7 to contact normal spiders, difficulty of the distance in miles divided by 10 to a minimum of 3 for Ananasi). When calling spiders, 20 respond for each success on the Willpower roll.

• **Shattering (Level Five)** — This powerful Gift unweaves a particular magical effect. It can, conceivably, seal a caern or destroy a fetish.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty equal to the original Gift or effect +4) and spends three points of Gnosis. Success destroys the effects of the targeted magical power, whether beneficial or baneful.

• **Web of Illusion (Level Five)** — The Ananasi can create a false reality in a targeted area. The werespider controls the sights, sounds, smells and other sensory characteristics of the area, affecting the perceptions of everyone that enters the location. The Ananasi may remain to actively control the effects or may pre-program the illusion to act in a certain way. She may only maintain one such area at any given time.

System: The player spends two Gnosis points — one to create the illusion and one to animate it — and rolls Manipulation + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). Every success adds one to the difficulty of detecting the illusion, which may be resisted actively by making a Perception + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 5 + the number of successes made by the Ananasi in the creation of the illusion, to a maximum of 10). The illusion lasts for a number of days equal to the Ananasi's permanent Gnosis.

Faction Gifts: Wyrsta

• **Alter Mood (Level One)** — The Wyrsta may slightly alter the mood of a single individual, making that person elated rather than just happy or despairing instead of sad.

System: The werespider spends one Gnosis point to affect a target in her area of vision. The target may resist with a Willpower roll, difficulty 7. The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Beastmind (Level One)** — As the Level Two Red Talon Gift.

• **Blinding Spit (Level Two)** — If the Ananasi hits her victim's face with her venomous spittle, she blinds her target temporarily. This effect does no real physical damage but causes the eyes to sting during the blindness.

System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Dexterity + Melee (difficulty 8). Success blinds the victim for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled.

• **Visceral Agony (Level Two)** — As the Level Three Black Fury Gift.

• **Aura of Ananasa (Level Three)** — The Ananasi projects an aura that causes affected creatures to enter a state of horror and panic. Though victims may not immediately express their fear, even a slight noise such as fireworks, thunder or a tap on the shoulder may set them off.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7) and spends one point of Gnosis. Success creates tension and a state of near-hysteria in mortals in a radius of 100'. Supernaturals may resist this effect by making a Willpower roll (difficulty 7).

• **Tick Body (Level Three)** — The Ananasi concentrates her blood, enabling her to store more sustenance in the same volume (10 blood points).

System: The werespider does not have to roll. Once she learns the Gift, it takes effect, increasing her blood pool by 5 blood points per rank, beginning with third rank. (Rank 3 = 15 blood points; Rank 4 = 20; Rank 5 = 25). Unless she possesses the Gift: Blood Pump, she may still only spend one point per turn.

• **Web Snare (Level Three)** — The Wyrsta spins a trap triggered by certain circumstances.

System: The player spends one blood point to spin a series of webs in a designated location. A successful Wits + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 7) hides the webs from sight as if they were invisible. Anyone stumbling across the webs is ensnared. The Ananasi may use these webs to haul the victim into the air or spring a more deadly trap.

• **Blades of the Mantis (Level Four)** — The Wyrsta's arms grow to resemble those of the praying mantis, with sharp, bladed ends.

System: The character spends one blood point and her first pair of arms extends two feet in length, growing blades that do Strength + 4 aggravated damage with a difficulty of 5 on her attack roll. This Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Wither Limb (Level Four)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Razor Webs (Level Five)** — The Ananasi causes strong, thin razor-sharp webs to coat a target or individual. Anyone touching the target suffers damage.

System: The werespider can spin enough webs with one blood point to cover a Garou in Crinos form. More blood points increase the amount of webbing. If the web covers a doorway or inanimate object, it lasts until it receives six health levels of unsoaked damage. Anyone simply touching the web takes one unsoakable level of damage (more if the individual hits the web with any force). If the Ananasi covers a living being with the webbing, any motion by the victim causes the victim's Strength in unsoakable damage. Anyone caught in the web rolls their Strength to damage the web and takes as much damage as they cause in unsoakable damage to themselves. If they survive, they may continue attempting to break the web by rolling their Strength until they achieve a total of six levels of damage. All damage is aggravated.

• **Summon Net Spider (Level Five)** — As the Glass Walker Gift.

Rites

Ananasi share a few rites with the Ovid, in particular the Rite of the Questing Stone, Breath of Ananasa (as Breath of Gaia), Rite of Binding, Fylfot's Rite (Rite of the Fetish) and Rite of Talisman Dedication. In addition, the werespiders have their own rites, taught them during their period of Umbral instruction or else learned in their Sylie by contact with the Mother-Queen. Many of these rites deal with acknowledging or understanding her place in the Great Web, such as the Rite of Appeal (a Level Two rite used to gain rank through communion with Ananasa). The following are two of the most significant general rites.

Rite of Spinning

Level One (Mystic)

The first rite learned by the new Ananasi allows her to create her Sylie. Usually placed in a secure corner of her abode, the Sylie appears to be a large cobweb. Its style varies according to the Ananasi's personal preference. Here, the werespider comes to communicate with the two Ananasi in closest physical proximity to her. The Ananasi can send messages to their geographic partners in a manner similar to telepathy if both or all participants are currently in their Sylie. Knowledge can be given to or taken from the Great Web by tapping into its strands from the Sylie. The Mother-Queen may also communicate with her child within the Sylie, but only if she herself initiates contact; Ananasa may not be summoned. The Sylie may be located in a small room, an attic, a closet, a cave or wherever the Ananasi feels most secure.

System: The werespider purifies herself and the chosen area for a week, removing outside objects from the site and spending her time guarding the area from outside influences. The Ananasi rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 10), though each day of fasting and meditation reduces the difficulty by 1, to a minimum of 4. After spending four Gnosis points, the Ananasi may build her Sylie, which exists in both the physical world and in the Umbra. Each success lowers the difficulty to crawl sideways in the Sylie by 1. The Ananasi must spend one hour per square foot in weaving her Sylie. If interrupted, she must start the entire ritual over from the beginning.

Tapping Ananasa's Wisdom

Level Two (Accord)

The Ananasi secludes herself in her Sylie and use this ritual to gain the attention of the Mother-Queen in order to learn a new Gift. If she succeeds, Queen Ananasa turns her attention to her child and teaches her the desired Gift, which the werespider must practice until she gains the approval of her Queen.

System: The ritemaster must roll Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 7). The Ananasi must also bring an offering of some sort — a treasured object, even a Fylfot. When it disappears from the Sylie, she knows that she has learned the Gift to the Mother-Queen's satisfaction.

Stereotypes

Penelope Calls-the-Dance Pronounces Judgment:

• **Bastet:** Like us, they often desire solitude and can sometimes prove useful if distant allies. They lack discipline, though, and their internal quarrels, unlike ours, serve no greater purpose. Keep them at arm's length.

• **Corax:** The Ravens hate us, remembering how we used them in our struggle to free our Queen. Avoid them as much as possible.

• **Garou:** They are Gaia's beloved children, but their arrogance and anger leave little to commend them to us or to our Queen. Their wars have endangered themselves as much as they have their enemies.

• **Kumo:** Our Eastern cousins have taken their service to the Wyrm to an extreme. Beware of them, for they will betray you without a thought.

• **Mokolé:** Older even than we are, they are the world's memories. We have little to do with them, by most deliberate choice.

• **Nuwisha:** Some call themselves spider-followers, but of no spider we know.

• **Ratkin:** They are survivors, but they have given up much just to remain alive. They are good sources of information — but don't expect anything more from them, and be willing to pay for what you get.

• **Rokea:** We know very little about these creatures. Perhaps that's the best way to be.

Even your enemies may become allies, at least for a time. It's all part of the pattern.

Bastet

Markhat stifled a growl, staring at the forms below him with unbridled hatred in his eyes. Garou. Their very presence made him want to sink his teeth into their skulls, crushing the life from them as just recompense for the crimes they'd committed... but no, no. Now was not the time for such things. Black Claw had counseled patience, and asked that Markhat stay his hand in hopes that the conflict between their peoples might be brought to an end. It was lunacy, Markhat knew, but even he could not deny the fact that the dogs had at least tried to make things right. Their efforts were pitiful, of course, and came far too late to undo the damage that they had done, but their motives at least appeared to be sincere. So, Markhat would watch, and wait, and turn his efforts to prey more deserving of his attentions... such as the Wyrm forces the Garou now hoped to destroy.

As he leaped from tree to tree, scouting ahead of the Garou in hopes of keeping them alive long enough to make themselves useful, Markhat was amazed at the werewolves' ineptitude. Their senses were dulled by their city lives, and they apparently felt compelled to talk amongst themselves rather than focus on their surroundings. Markhat had no such limitations. He saw the ambush that was waiting for the war party long before they had a chance to walk into it, and was able to react accordingly. He struck swiftly and silently, his war club flashing to and fro, slaughtering the Pentex operatives even as they began to register his presence. When the Garou entered the clearing, Markhat shot them a look of disdain before taking to the trees once again, leaving them to stare at the blood-soaked ground and wonder how they had missed such an obvious trap.

An hour later, it was Markhat who was staring in awe, still trying to understand just how the Garou had managed to take out a Pentex force that outnumbered them ten to one. The coordination and teamwork exhibited by the Garou was breathtaking, and if Markhat had any doubts about the wisdom of an alliance between their peoples they were dispelled in that moment. It galled him to think of these invaders, these miscreants, as his allies, but the facts of the situation were clear -- they fought on the side of Gaia, and they valued the Balam's aid. What more could he ask of them?



How the Bastet Came to Be

Long ago, before the humans learned to bend the world to their will, Gaia created the Changing Breeds. Powerful beings borne of flesh and spirit, the Changing Breeds had the task of safeguarding Gaia's creations, both from the ravages of the spirit world and from their own selfish desires. She created the Garou to be Her warriors, the Corax to be Her eyes, the Mokolé to be Her memory, and so on and so forth. There were many Changing Breeds, and all had an appointed role to play in protecting Gaia's children from the trappings of Rahjah, the madness of Cahlash, and the raw chaos of Mother Nala. All of Gaia's creations excelled at

their tasks, and She moved Her attention to other matters, secure in the belief that all would be well.

Sadly, it was not to be. When Gaia looked in on Her creations a short time later she found that, while most of them were quite good at doing what She designed them to do, all were rather inept when it came to working together. The Garou, for example, spent more time fighting one another than anything particularly malign, while the Corax were so intent on sharing information with one another that they forgot to share it with anyone else. The Ratkin were so caught up in their task of spying on humanity that they neglected the world beyond, and since the Mokolé spent all their time wallowing in the mud and remembering the past they did little to address matters in the here and now. Similar problems existed with all of the Changing Breeds, and Gaia pondered the situation for a while as She tried to figure out what to do.

Some time later Gaia tracked down Cat, and asked him for his assistance in resolving the matter. Cat wasn't sure how he could help Gaia, since he was by nature a solitary creature. This was, in fact, the reason Gaia passed him up when She was creating the Changing Breeds to begin with. But She needed his help now, and he could hardly deny Her. So it was that, with Cat's help, Gaia created Bagheera, the first of the Bastet. She would see things as the Corax did, and guard secrets as the Mokolé did, and fight fiercely as the Garou did. She would do all these things and more, and in the process she would remind the other Changing Breeds of how they must work together to accomplish their goals.

Gaia looked upon the beautiful Bagheera and She was most pleased. She saw, however, that there were places Bagheera could not go. Some were too far away, and some were simply inhospitable. There were also things Bagheera could not do; she was swift, but not so swift as the Corax. She was strong, but not so strong as the Gurahl. She was clever, but not so clever as the Nuwisha. Fearsome and beautiful as she was, Bagheera would need help if she were to truly aid Gaia's children. And so Gaia created Qualmi, a clever beast whose riddles encouraged Gaia's children to think and ponder, to look inward as well as to fight. Some say the Qualmi inspired the Garou to create their Stargazer tribe, and who knows? It might well be true. Gaia next created the fierce and mighty Balam, who stole off into the dark places where others were afraid to go, and tore the hearts out of any who would defile Gaia's beauty. Then came Swara and Pumonca, the brothers, whom Gaia charged with wandering the worlds of flesh and spirit, bringing their lore to all they encountered. Gaia looked upon all of these children of Cat, and She was pleased. But She did not stop there. As Cahlash's madness sought to engulf Gaia's children, She responded by creating the mighty Khan, whose strength could shatter mountains and whose claws could rend spirits. And when Cahlash sought to tempt the hearts and minds of humans Gaia created the mystical Bubasti, who slipped inside of human society in an effort to help the Ratkin control humanity from within.

So it was that Gaia bore Cat seven children, all of them beautiful and strong and proud. But Gaia knew they would be unruly, as all such children are. She knew that if they become enraptured with their own beauty they would forget their duties to their Mother, which would leave the world in worse shape than when She started. And so She bore Cat one final child, the most majestic and regal of them all. This child was Simba, and his pride was such that there was no battle he would not fight, no challenge he would not meet, no obstacle he could not overcome. The other Bastet looked upon great Simba and were shamed, and Gaia saw that they all took their duties much more seriously from that day forward.

Gaia was pleased with Her new creations, and confident that they would solve the problems Her other children had encountered. But it was not to be; the others were jealous of the Bastet's beauty, and felt insulted by the werecats' mere existence. What did it say about their own abilities if Gaia created others to do the things She had assigned to them in the first place? Of course, this was nonsense; the Bastet were created to help the other Changing Breeds, not to take their place. The fools would have known this if they had spoken to Gaia directly, but since they were hurt and offended they simply assumed that they understood Her intentions and treated the Bastet accordingly.

For the Bastet this was, in a word, intolerable. All they really wanted out of life was the simplicity of the hunt and the luxury of naps in the sunshine. But Gaia had given them a task, and they felt it was their duty to respond to the best of their ability. Now, however, they were being punished by the very people they were created to help, and the insult to their pride was unbearable. When the Ajaba openly defied Gaia and the Garou began to subordinate the other Changing Breeds to their will, the Bastet skulked off in disgust, vowing to ignore the other Changing Breeds until the time came where they could show the cats the appreciation they deserved.

As we all know, the Garou did not react well to this turn of events. Their response, in fact, was nothing less than genocide, as they destroyed anyone who would not obey them. The Bastet suffered terrible losses as a result; most of them were eradicated in the places that would become the Americas and Europe, and the only reason they did not suffer similar fates in the south was because the Garou simply did not exist in those places. In the aftermath of that calamity their hatred and spite rose to new heights, and the bitterness born during those times remains even to this day.

The War of Rage

Long ago, before the werewolves began their epic campaign of genocide, the Bastet could be found all over the world. The Simba held grand courts in Europe and North America, while the Khan were mighty emperors whose grip encompassed all of Asia. The Bagheera and the Qualmi were mystics and advisors, and the Swara ran all across the world. It was a golden age for the Bastet, and they were content to share their power with the Garou, who were Gaia's chosen warriors. But the Garou would have none of it.

The War of Rage left deep and horrible scars on the Bastet, not just physically but spiritually as well. In some ways, these scars are similar to those left on humanity by the Impergium; in the case of the Bastet, however, the result is a deep and abiding hatred of the Garou, one that can only be controlled with great effort. Modern Bastet are thus conflicted: The wise among them recognize the necessity of working with and helping the Garou to whatever extent possible, and also realize that modern Garou are not responsible for the sins of their ancestors. That realization, however, wars with an instinctive desire to kill the werewolves on sight, in effect doing their part to right Gaia's greatest mistake.

Despite the bad blood between them, Garou and Bastet *can* work together when the situation calls for it; the Hengeyokai of the East and the Ahadi of Africa have proven this. In all cases, however, the willingness of the Garou to swallow their pride and seek to make amends is the key to successful cooperation. The Bastet know that they need the Garou, but their own pride compels them so strongly that they would rather die than be forced to play a subservient role to that of the werewolves in their service to Gaia. It is only when the Garou take the initiative in asking help that the Bastet are willing to listen.

The Bastet Today

As any Bastet elder is glad to point out, things have certainly been better. The fate of the big cats in the wild is very much in question, and without wild Kin, no Changing Breed can survive. What's more, the Nine Tribes were recently handed a demoralizing blow when they became the Eight; by all accounts, the Ceilican, a secretive European tribe of Bastet, were utterly destroyed at one of their gatherings in the heart of Scotland. Although the Ceilican were the only tribe to gather together in such a fashion, the sudden loss of an entire Bastet tribe has rather shockingly pointed out the Breed's mortality to the rest of the cats.

Despite the increase in the rate of global industrialization, not to mention alarming rates of habitat fragmentation and destruction worldwide, the modern era has spurred some changes for the better in the Bastet. The growing trend toward global diversity has taken root in a few homid Garou, who have begun making concerted efforts to contact and make peace with Changing Breeds of all stripes. This effort has paid off particularly well with the Bastet. It might well be too little too late, however, as the Bastet's feline Kin are being annihilated all over the world. Only time will tell if they can recover in time to take full advantage of the Garou's peacemaking efforts.

Bastet Lexicon

Asura: Refers to spirits (Banes) that feed on the destruction of the world, and on their father, who is analogous to the Triatic Wyrm.

Cahlash, the Unmaker: The Bastet concept of the Balance Wyrm, believed to still be at work in the world today.

Chatro: The war-form that all Bastet attain between Crinos and Feline forms.

Den-Realm: An Umbral home territory, staked out by a powerful Bastet. Creating a Den-Realm is hard work, and violating it is a deadly crime.

Gaia: The Earth. The Bastet conception of Gaia does not extend beyond the bounds of the Earth.

Jamak: Spirit allies who aid a werecat in return for favors and friendship. Similar to the totems of the Garou, although the relationship between Bastet and Jamak is more egalitarian.

Killi: Bastet term for the non-Bastet Changing Breeds.

Nala, the First Mother: The half-crazy mother of creation. Analogous to the Wyld.

Pryio: The Bastet's true personality, based on the time of day she attained her First Change. Similar to the inborn tendencies aspect of a Garou auspice, but without the accompanying the social role.

Rahjah, the Maker: The Bastet concept of the Weaver. Brother to Cahlash.

Sokto: The near-human form of the Bastet, similar to the Glabro form of the Garou.

Taghairm: A Bastet social gathering, usually held in one's Den-Realm during the full moon.

Taklah: A grouping of Bastet gathered together for a common purpose. Used almost exclusively by Bagheera.

Tribes

Bagheera

Known to some as Kali's executioners, the Bagheera are renowned for their mystic insights and ferocious tempers. They are a strong and sagacious folk, constantly plumbing the depths of Gaia's wisdom even as they fight savagely to rip the talons of Asura from the Earth. Until recently they have tended to their tasks in solitude, patiently stalking Gaia's foes and meeting only rarely to exchange information and share insights. Now, however, they have taken to working closely with other Changing Breeds, in hopes of bringing the raging multitude of humanity under control and saving their brethren and their Kin from utter annihilation.

The Bagheera claim that when Gaia was creating the Bastet, She hoped the Bagheera would be the lawgivers of catkind. This role never fully materialized, but traces of Gaia's intent linger still, filling them with a keen sense of justice and a spirit of righteous wrath that is terrible to behold. This legacy has made the Bagheera the most approachable of the Bastet, as it means that they are the ones most likely to leave the past behind so that they can do what needs to be done to deliver the world from the ravages of Asura's grasp.

Recent History

The most pressing concern for Bagheera in recent years has been the growing popularity of the Camp of Shiva, a multitribal Garou camp advocating the belief that Gaia's

children have no obligations whatsoever to humanity. As far as they are concerned, the only duty of the Changing Breeds is to the land; so long as it is protected, the fate of humanity is of no consequence.

The Bagheera are *not* pleased.

The Bagheera are not fools. They understand that humanity is far from perfect, and that there are far, far too many people running around on the Indian subcontinent. But they also believe that, for all their teeming multitudes, the Indian people still have enough regard for life to want to protect their natural heritage. They still respect and revere the world around them, even if they fear it. And they still recognize the need for balance, even if their lives have spun out of control. The Bagheera are unwilling to abandon humanity just because they've grown inconvenient — such is not Gaia's will. The Camp of Shiva must be reminded that Brahma and Vishnu are just as important to the great cycle as Shiva is, and if the Bagheera have to crush a pack of upstart Garou to make it happen then so be it. India is Bagheera turf — the panthers call the shots here, not the wolves, and visitors to the region had best remember that.

Meanwhile, the African Bagheera have taken on a central role in the formation of the Ahadi, the covenant between most of Africa's Changing Breeds that binds them together in the pursuit of their common interests. While the leopard folk initially wanted no part of such an association, the fact that they were the only group that was universally respected by all the Changing Breeds of Africa left them little choice in the matter. They have proven to be able arbiters, bringing the Silent Striders into the pact even as they allowed the Mayi'o Simba to take on ceremonial leadership duties. In many respects they are the glue that holds the Ahadi together; without their efforts, particularly those of old Kiva, the pact could crumble within a matter of weeks.

But all is not well in Africa. Despite the success of the Ahadi movement, Africa as a whole is falling apart. Disease runs rampant across the land, governments are crumbling on every front, and drought and starvation plagues the land. The Ahadi is, in fact, the only good news Africa's shifters have had in the last two decades, and things don't seem to be getting any better. Africa's Bagheera have been investigating various tactics to address these problems, including seeking aid from their more stable Indian brethren. Only time will tell if their efforts are successful, but it's entirely possible that the problems Africa faces are beyond the control of any single group, no matter how dedicated.

Organization

While they are not particularly social creatures, Bagheera social organization is nonetheless more highly developed than that of other Bastet tribes. Low-ranking Bagheera tend to maintain close ties with their elders, and it is not uncommon for the cats to form regional or even global networks dedicated to keeping in touch and sharing information. These networks have served the Ahadi movement well, as they allow the Bagheera to coordinate the organization's activities throughout Africa using nothing more than the werepanthers and their extended Kin networks.

Bagheera are the lawgivers of the Bastet, and they take their duties very seriously. Bastet (or, indeed, any of Gaia's children, as the Bagheera are not particular when it comes to punishing the guilty) who turn against Gaia, or who threaten to rend the Veil with their activities, can expect to be held accountable by any Bagheera who happen to be in the area. If the foe is particularly powerful, several wereleopards will band together to take him down, only to disperse once the deed is done.

Bagheera war parties, known as *taklah*, are truly fearsome entities. While they are not as coordinated as a Garou pack, and fare poorly in wars of attrition (as seen in their battles against Pentex and the Endless Storm), they nonetheless represent a devastating short-term concentration of power. *Taklah* are strictly short-term affairs; the Bagheera use a combination of Gifts and Rites to run a victim to ground, then crush him as quickly as possible.

Bagheera in a war party do *not* mess around. It takes a serious threat to get one together in the first place, and the Bagheera involved typically have other things to do (particularly because they tend to be high-ranking individuals). As such, there is no room for socializing, no tolerance for bickering, and no patience for obstacles or delays. The Bagheera war party is a hammer, and one to be used sparingly. Having one form in a chronicle should be a momentous event, and it should terrify the characters even if the Bagheera involved are nominally their allies. It's that important.

Distribution and Kin

Bagheera are the most populous of the werecats, and are found throughout Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Their numbers are strongest in India and central Africa, but their influence extends to the south and the east in Africa, and to Nepal, Southeast Asia, and even China in Asia. While Bagheera are curious sorts prone to exploration, they rarely settle in lands far removed from their Kinfolk (and are thus quite rare in places like the United States).

Traditionally, Indian Bagheera chose human Kin from the religious caste, but with the fall of the caste system in India they have defaulted to individuals with both a scholarly bent and the wherewithal to act on their convictions. In Africa, the werepanthers have typically chosen shamans and witch doctors as Kin, and they have never been particularly fussy about race — bushmen and pygmies are as appealing to them as Zulu warriors, and even whites and Arabs find their way into Bagheera family trees.

Appearance

Bagheera are sleek and graceful in all their forms, and they exude a sense of power and ferocity that is truly awesome to behold. Many have black fur in their feline forms, but males often have the standard leopard coloration

instead. A rare bloodline from Nepal has allegedly managed to breed with snow leopards, but no one's heard from them in years (leading many elders to believe they might be extinct).

Bagheera Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str +1	Str +3	Str +3	Str +2
Dex +2	Dex +2	Dex +3	Dex +3
Sta +1	Sta +3	Sta +2	Sta +2
App –1	App 0		
Man –1	Man –3	Man –3	Man –3

Beginning Rage: 2
Beginning Willpower: 4
Starting Gifts: Humbaba's Escape, Treeclimber

Balam

If fury were given a physical form, it would look much like the Balam. There is intensity in their eyes unmatched by that of any other Changing Breed, and the depths of their anger and Rage seem to be almost limitless. Balam are antisocial in the extreme, to a degree far greater even than other Bastet, and they do not play well with others. They merely wish to be left alone, to prowl the twilit depths of their homes and lash out at the dark things that hope to dwell there. But that is something that cannot be, for Pentex and the horrid coils of Asura are doing everything in their power to rend the forests of the Amazon asunder. The Balam fight, and they make the invaders know the depths of their hatred and anger, but they are overwhelmed. Only the Garou can save them now, and relations with those dog-faced invaders have never been good....

Balam are, and have always been, the fiercest of Gaia's guardians. In the times before Europeans came to the Pure Lands, they used superstition and terror to steer humanity away from the territories under their care, be they sacred or malign. Now they strike directly, lashing out at invaders of all stripes in an effort to safeguard the forbidden lore that Gaia has given over to their keeping. As the Garou learn more and more about the Balam's true purpose, they are learning to work around the jaguars' territories, letting the cats join the fight against Pentex and its allies on their own terms.

Recent History

Just over two years ago Golgol Fangs-First, the war leader of the Garou intruders in the Amazon river basin, began a series of initiatives to win the allegiance of the Balam, and hopefully forge an alliance between the two Changing Breeds that would turn the tide of the war against Pentex. Sadly, however, the efforts seemed doomed to failure, mainly because the Garou expected the Balam to join the war effort on their terms, and had little to no respect for the Balam's sovereignty in the region. Recently, in a last ditch effort to win the Balam's trust, Golgol swallowed his pride and apologized personally to Black Claw, the de facto leader of the Balam in the region. He ordered the destruction of a number of fetishes that had been made without Gaia's sanction, and he ordered his troops to withdraw from territories claimed by the Bastet (even though doing so was tactically unwise). The Balam recognized the enormity of this act, and thereafter began making efforts to help the Garou in subtle yet effective ways.

One of the reasons the Balam cultivate such a fierce hatred of the Garou stems from the loss of the Camazotz in the Second War of Rage. These gentle bat folk acted as a distinct counterbalance to the Balam's ferocity, and the Balam valued them as advisors and companions who aided them in controlling the teeming masses of humanity. The other Bastet have dim memories of the War of Rage and its effects, and thus hate the Garou merely on an instinctual level. But the fact that the Balam only recently (within the last 500 years, that is) bore witness to acts of genocide has given their hatred of the Garou a more immediate edge that simply cannot be denied. While the Balam understand that the Garou of today are not the Garou of yesterday, they are nonetheless hard-pressed to put their feelings behind them, despite their best efforts.

As astounding as it is for a Rank Six Get of Fenris to bow his head to *anyone*, much less a non-Garou, Golgol's efforts come at a time when the Balam's aid might not be enough to save the rainforest from Pentex's clutches. Too much damage has been done, and Golgol's apparent death hasn't helped matters any. But for better or worse the Balam have now largely committed their support, and recent revelations by the Mokolé indicate that it might be possible to undo Pentex's damage, presuming a substantial portion of what's left of the forest can be saved. The Garou, with Balam and Mokolé support, have begun an all-out assault against Pentex refineries all over the Amazon basin, and they have even called upon aid from the African Changing Breeds involved in the Ahadi movement. While the Africans have problems of their own to worry about, it is nonetheless possible that their help might enable the Garou turn the tide of the war.

Organization

Balam are highly solitary creatures, to an even greater extent than most other Bastet. Most keep territories bordering those of several jaguars, or perhaps a Kinfolk village or two, and encounter others of their kind only rarely. They do, however, recognize the rank and experience of their elders, and they will listen to the advice of others when appropriate (whether or not they will take that advice is, of course, another matter).

Recent contact with the Garou and Pentex is driving the Balam mad, and not only because both parties in the conflict are destroying Balam Kinfolk and Den Realms. The mere proximity of so many foreigners to Balam territory is unsettling to the werejaguars, and this alone has been enough to drive the cats to associate more closely with the Garou, in hopes of helping them to finish their business so that they will ultimately go away.

Balam Magic

While the most momentous events in the Balam's recent history have centered on their interaction with the Garou, it would be a mistake to think they are defined by that relationship. The Balam have goals and aspirations of their own, and one of these deals with the recovery of lost lore. This is unsettling to those who know the werecats; the Balam have always been among the most violent of their kind, and when they were at the height of their power, shortly before the Europeans came to the Americas, their violent natures were reflected in their magic. Many of their most potent rituals were lost in the Second War of Rage, and Bastet reactionaries, particularly the fearsome Markhat, have devoted a great deal of time and energy to the task of locating these ancient magics for use against the forces of the Wyrm — and, if necessary, the Garou who pretend to be the Balam's allies.

The Uktena who know anything about this lost lore find it very nearly as terrifying as the Banes they keep locked away beneath the Earth. They cannot oppose the Balam's efforts to discover their lost heritage openly, of course, since doing so would crush any hopes of a much-needed Balam-Garou alliance. They do, however, use more subtle methods to stymie the Balam's efforts, and they have been successful — so far. How long this remains the case is anyone's guess.

Distribution and Kin

These days, Balam are found exclusively in heavily forested areas of Central and South America. The Central American cats are nearly impossible to find, though, since the governments of most of these countries are so heavily pro-environment (particularly Costa Rica and Belize) that the cats don't have to show themselves much.

Balam Kin are fairly diverse; while they once bred exclusively with the native tribes in Central and South America, the incredible diversity of immigrants to the area has expanded their breeding options, and they have reacted accordingly. Nowadays, a Balam is as likely to be of Carifuna stock as Yanomamo, and mixed-race Kin are now more-or-less the norm.

Appearance

Jaguars are solidly built cats, and the Balam take after their feline Kin in this respect. Werejaguars tend to be short and stocky, and ferociously powerful. Like the Bagheera, many have black fur in Feline form.

Balam Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str +1	Str +3	Str +3	Str +2
Dex +1	Dex +2	Dex +2	Dex +2
Sta +2	Sta +3	Sta +3	Sta +2
App –1	App 0		
Man –1	Man –3	Man –3	Man –3

Beginning Rage: 4

Beginning Willpower: 3

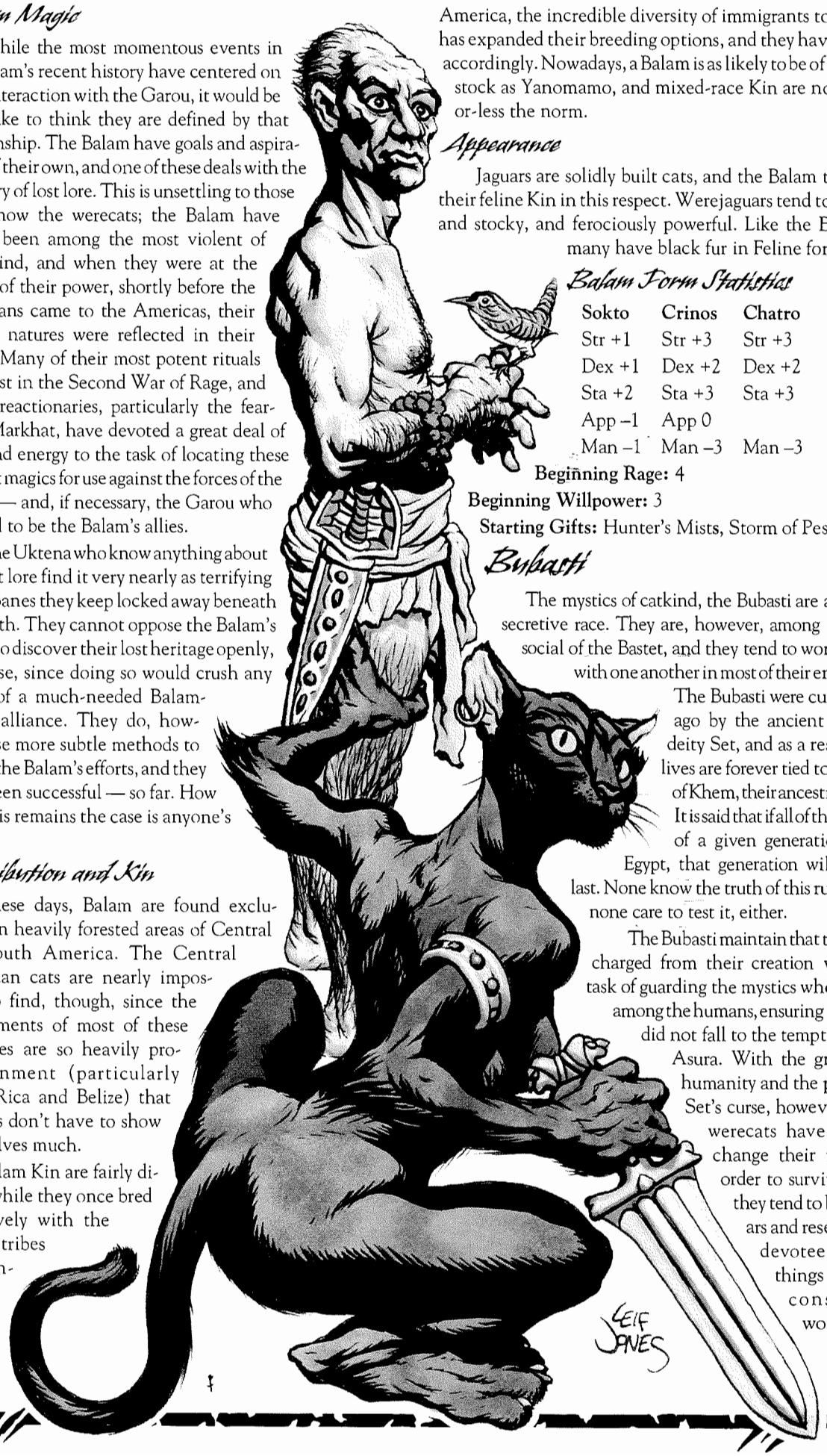
Starting Gifts: Hunter's Mists, Storm of Pests

Bubasti

The mystics of catkind, the Bubasti are a shy and secretive race. They are, however, among the most social of the Bastet, and they tend to work closely with one another in most of their endeavors.

The Bubasti were cursed long ago by the ancient vampire deity Set, and as a result their lives are forever tied to the soils of Khem, their ancestral home. It is said that if all of the Bubasti of a given generation leave Egypt, that generation will be the last. None know the truth of this rumor, but none care to test it, either.

The Bubasti maintain that they were charged from their creation with the task of guarding the mystics who walked among the humans, ensuring that they did not fall to the temptations of Asura. With the growth of humanity and the plague of Set's curse, however, these werecats have had to change their focus in order to survive. Now they tend to be scholars and researchers, devotees of all things arcane, constantly working be-



Bubasti Magic

Bubasti are highly mystical werecats, and they are renowned for their magical ability. If the Storyteller is inclined to do so, she may allow Bubasti to make use of hedge magic paths found in **Sorcerer Revised**, or design spells for the Bubasti to use. These spells resemble rites in that they take time and preparation to use successfully. Bubasti tend to favor summoning, cursing, herbalism, and alchemical magics. On the down side, such arts have some rather unpleasant side effects; accomplished Bubasti sorcerers of Rank 2 or higher smell faintly of the Wyrm, often hampering their relations with other Changing Breeds. Bubasti with magical leanings thus tend to stay in the shadows even more than their cousins, leaving relations with the Killi to their less magically inclined associates.

hind the scenes in an effort to sabotage the darker forces in the world through indirect means. Many denizens of the World of Darkness count them as potential contacts or allies, even though they rarely take direct action against anyone. Their knowledge and magical affinity seem to be enough to ensure that others will find their contributions worthwhile.

Recent History

While they are not active participants, the Bubasti are nonetheless loosely affiliated with the coalition of African shifters known as the Ahadi. Some are currently plotting ways to potentially sway some of the shifters involved into lending them a hand with their greatest concern — the potential liberation and healing of some of their ancient Kin. For millennia, the last of the Kyphur cats have been kept prisoner by vampires, transformed by vampiric blood into something no longer quite mortal. This has been a form of insurance that has to date effectively kept the Bubasti well away from the affairs of the vampires of Egypt. But with the Ahadi, the Bubasti see a possibility for enlisting (or manipulating) a group of committed shapeshifters into destroying the Leeches, reclaiming and healing the Kyphur cats, and effectively giving the Bubasti a new lease on life. The question is, though, how to proceed....

Organization

Bubasti are highly organized as Bastet go. The tribe is ruled by six elders, known as khepur, who have an intriguing secret — they are effectively immortal. Potent gifts allow them to seize new bodies upon their deaths, which gives the tribe's elders a level of patience rivaling that of even the eldest vampires. This means the tribe tends to be more circumspect in its activities than most other Changing Breeds, since they can afford to bide their time until circumstances favor them.

Each of the tribe's elders has his or her own projects, and each coordinates the activities of a portion of the tribe in the pursuit of those projects. Bubasti society is thus rather clannish in nature, with each faction minding its own business unless something truly momentous demands the attention of the tribe as a whole.

Distribution and Kin

Set's curse ensures that the Bubasti can never entirely flee Egypt, as doing so would destroy the tribe within a single generation. Because of this, and because of the clannish organization described above, the Bubasti tend to spend most of their time in their ancestral homeland, and rarely venture forth to visit other lands.

Bubasti Kin are almost exclusively of Egyptian descent, and it is quite rare to find even Nubians among them. This is less an issue of breeding preference and more one of dynastic succession: the khepur elders of the tribe have maintained rather rigidly controlled families for centuries, and they are loath to introduce new blood when they can avoid it. The younger Bubasti think this is absurd, but the will of the elders cannot be denied.

Appearance

Long-limbed and graceful, Bubasti are unusually attractive in all of their forms. Though they mate with servals and caracals, their fur is always jet black in feline form, a legacy of the Kyphur cats that were their ancestral breeding stock. In human form they show a penchant for words and symbols of power, and tend to wear jewelry depicting such whenever it's appropriate.

Bubasti Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str +0	Str +1	Str +2	Str -1
Dex +2	Dex +3	Dex +3	Dex +4
Sta +0	Sta +1	Sta +1	Sta +1
App –1	App 0		
Man –1	Man –3	Man –3	Man –3

Beginning Rage: 1
Beginning Willpower: 5
Starting Gifts: Alms to the Poor, Scholar's Friend

Khan

Raw power. This is what defines a Khan. They are not subtle, or nimble, or patient, and they are infamous for their explosive tempers. But their strength is that of mountains, and their fury knows no bounds. Because of this, they are accustomed to being worshipped as gods. The Khan are the strongest of the Bastet, and they know this. But they know something else as well: they are their champions. The Khan may be insufferable bastards, filled with arrogance and Rage, but there is no one better to have at your side when the world comes apart beneath you.

The Khan do not merely aspire to the role of champions of Gaia — they are also Her protectors. While the Garou venture forth to battle against dread Asura, the Khan ensure that they will always have something worth saving. Whether the foes be Wyrm creations or simply Banes, and whether their

charges be their feline Kin or the masses of humanity, matters little; the Khan live only to protect, to guard, and to fortify.

Recent History

The Khan have fallen on hard times in the last few years. The Nagda-Rackbur feud during the middle of the last century devastated the tribe, and despite the tigers' best efforts they haven't been able to recover in the years since. This is due in part to massive losses among their Kin, both from poaching and increasingly severe habitat destruction. The real problem, however, goes far deeper than that. It seems obvious to many outsiders that the Khan are a dying people, one whose time in the world has come and gone. The weretigers do not want to admit this — indeed, they will not even discuss the matter — but in their hearts they know it to be true. Some battle against their destiny, but others have taken a far more philosophical approach to the matter — if they are destined to leave the world, then so be it. But they will not leave quietly, and they will not leave alone. They will die with their claws embedded in Asura's throat, and Gaia help anyone who gets in their way.

Organization

In ancient times, the Khan ruled as sultans among men, with the eldest Khan holding court over his lessers and his tiger and human Kinfolk. That system collapsed in the 1950s, when the last sultan betrayed his Kin and in the process nearly annihilated the Khan in their entirety. These days the Khan have no organization, instead carving out their territories and protecting their Kin as best they can. The Bagheera aid them in this endeavor, though never openly; the Khan wouldn't hear of it if the Bagheera's efforts were too obvious. But ties between the two tribes remain strong, and that is unlikely to change in the near future.

Distribution and Kin

The Khan, like their tiger Kin, once roamed throughout all of Asia, as well as the islands of Malaysia and Indonesia. With the horrible feuds and the catastrophic loss of their feline Kin, however, the Khan have limited themselves in recent years to India and Nepal. Only the Hengeyokai Khan journey into China and Tibet, and even they prefer to remain among their tiger Kin in India.

Non-Hengeyokai Khan tend to be of Indian descent more often than not, but the Khan are not terribly picky about matters of ethnicity — so long as a potential mate is strong and powerful and dedicated to the protection of his fellows, that is all that matters. Unfortunately, some Khan in the past have allowed their human racial affiliations to color their judgment, which in turn led to the horrible feuds of the last century. Modern Khan are thus being a bit more circumspect in their choice of partners, choosing mates who will put the battle against Asura above petty nationalistic concerns.

Appearance

Most Khan are massively built, weighing upwards of 300 lbs in human form and close to 800 lbs in Feline form. When the take the Chatro they dwarf even normal tigers, and are matched in size only by the largest of the Gurahl or Mokolé. In all forms Khan exude a sense of grace and majesty that other Bastet can only dream of; even the Simba cannot match them, and were the two tribes to interact the resulting conflicts would likely annihilate them both.

Saving the Khan

Not all of the Khan are willing to see their kind vanish from the world. One in particular, known as Roar-of-Heaven, has undertaken a perilous Umbral Quest in hopes of finding some way to save his Kin. The specifics are left to the Storyteller, but some possibilities include:

- Finding a rite that increases the chances of offspring breeding true (which would have *huge* implications for the rest of the Changing Breeds as well).
- Erecting spirit wards around existing tiger habitat, so that humans will never want to harvest lumber or otherwise use the land.

While Roar-of-Heaven is a Khan, and thus prone to working alone whenever possible, the stakes are high enough here that he would be willing to work with others if they show that they can assist him in some tangible fashion.

Khan Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str +2	Str +3	Str +4	Str +3
Dex +1	Dex +2	Dex +2	Dex +2
Sta +1	Sta +3	Sta +3	Sta +2
App –1	App 0		
Man –1	Man –3	Man –3	Man –3

Beginning Rage: 5
Beginning Willpower: 2
Starting Gifts: Razor Claws, Skin of Jade

Pumonca

At one time, the Pumonca shared their lands with many other tribes of Bastet, and many other Killi as well. Since the Wars of Rage, however, they have walked alone, and this has hurt the tribe considerably. Gaia never intended for the werecougars to function without the support of the other Bastet, and they are not terribly well equipped to go it alone. They managed to make do with the aid of America's other native shifters, but the near-genocide of the second War of Rage and humanity's war on predators effectively removed even that tenuous support. As a result, the Pumonca are bitter, confused, and angry, and most are looking for a way to serve Gaia that lets them keep their pride and dignity intact. The lucky ones forge ties with Garou of the Pure Tribes, or perhaps with Mokolé or Gurahl, but most just wander aimlessly, fighting dread Asura however they can so long as no one wounds their pride too terribly.

Most of the Changing Breeds spend the bulk of their time either watching humanity or confronting the Wyrm directly.

Not so the Pumonca — these wanderers spend their entire lives traveling from place to place, looking for signs of Wyrm taint in the spaces in-between. It is their task to meander, to take their time, and to notice the world around them. Pumonca have a penchant for spreading stories and lore wherever they go. In the past, these were typically tales of great deeds, whether of Garou or Pumonca or anyone else who tickled their fancy. Nowadays, however, these stories are often bitter tales; the Second War of Rage has cut off the Pumonca from the rest of the Killi, and they have lost their focus as a result. This makes them quite difficult to work with, as they tend to be filled with bitterness and regret. That aside, if you can inspire a Pumonca enough to join your cause the information he provides can be quite useful indeed.

Recent History

With the war in the Amazon heating up and their feline Kin re-establishing themselves in North America, the Pumonca have begun to take a more active role in the affairs of the Killi in general and the Garou in particular. In the process, they have become involved in everything from native rights movements to wars against the Sabbat vampires, and they have been happy to find that the Garou are typically glad to receive their help. So, for that matter, are the other Bastet tribes in the Americas. In the north, the Pumonca are aiding the Qualmi in their efforts to protect Alaska's great Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is under siege by political minions of Pentex that have opened it up for oil drilling. They have also taken to forming close ties with the Gurahl, whose recent reappearance is taken by many Pumonca to be a good omen for the future. Meanwhile, the southern Pumonca are becoming involved in the great war in the Amazon, fighting to protect the rights of Brazil's native peoples even as they assist the Balam and the Garou in ousting the Pentex invaders. The range of the Pumonca's activities is truly extraordinary, and is everything you'd expect from Gaia's Wanderers.

Pumonca Rank

Due to their rather extreme isolationism, Pumonca have great difficulty advancing in rank. To represent this, Storytellers may wish to treat them as ronin for the purposes of gaining renown. They have as cordial a relationship with Gaia and the spirit world as anyone, but word of their deeds tends to travel slowly, and they advance in rank slowly as a result. On the bright side, Pumonca aren't accountable to anyone, and don't have to deal with the normal rituals associated with gaining rank. This is, of course, cold comfort to a tribe who feels shut off from the rest of Gaia's children.

When dealing with South American Pumonca (a recent and relatively rare branch of the tribe), the above restrictions on rank should be removed. Native shifter communities in the Amazon and the surrounding environs are still relatively intact, and Pumonca in such communities have more opportunity to interact with those they would regard as their peers. Contact between these groups is still relatively new, but they nonetheless speak the same language (spiritually speaking, anyway).

Organization

Pumonca have no organization. They are so isolationist, in fact, that they are the only Changing Breed in existence whose members are more likely to encounter other Changing Breeds than others of their own kind. This has hurt the tribe considerably, since cubs have no real way to advance their rank and learn about Gaia and their role in protecting the world. Some of the tribe's elders (such as they are) are quite concerned about this, and are working on establishing at least rudimentary communications networks with their fellows. The Pumonca are independent enough that this is slow going, though.

Distribution and Kin

Pumonca have traditionally been most populous in North America, despite the fact that their feline Kin extend all the way into South America. Specifically, they tend to prefer wooded, mountainous areas, particularly the Rocky Mountains of the United States and Canada. But they have also found the Andes to be very much to their liking, and the Balam don't seem to mind sharing their territory with their northern cousins, particularly since the Pumonca rarely stay put for long and always respect the territories of those they encounter. Pumonca rarely establish territories, preferring instead to wander the continent and take in all it has to offer.

Pumonca tend to choose their human Kin from Native American racial stock, but the tribe is so loosely knit that this is no more than a general trend. The werecougars tend to be pickier about their feline Kin, however; those born from Florida panthers will find other cats in that population when it comes time to mate, and the same holds true for cougar populations ranging from the Rocky mountains right on down to the Andes.

Appearance

Pumonca are strong and lithe, and tend to be of Native American descent more often than not. They don't radiate either the power or the raw grace of many other Bastet tribes, but they have stronger ties to the land than most of their kin and this is apparent in all of their forms. They never seem to look out of place, and as a result they are rarely caught off-guard.

Pumonca Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str +1	Str +2	Str +3	Str +2
Dex +2	Dex +3	Dex +3	Dex +2
Sta +1	Sta +3	Sta +2	Sta +2
App –1	App 0		
Man –1	Man –3	Man –3	Man –3

Beginning Rage: 4

Beginning Willpower: 4

Starting Gifts: Mockingbird's Mirror, Wanderer's Boon

Qualmi

Sly and witty, the Qualmi are the most introspective of the Bastet, and the most maddening to deal with. While they enjoy company, few beyond close friends and family can stand to be around them for long, and even they have to take a break once in awhile. But the Riddle Dancers, as they are known, are good friends and fierce fighters, and as a result they get on well with the Garou and the other Changing Breeds who share their lands.

It is not uncommon for a Qualmi to "recruit" a Garou pack to accomplish some task, typically one involving a battle with the Wyrm. It never occurs to the Qualmi to ask the Garou to participate; after all, they are Gaia's warriors. This is what they do, is it not?

The Qualmi exist merely to question, and to remind Gaia's other children of just why they were created to begin with. They are not content to simply lecture, however. Rather, they pose their questions as riddles in an effort to make the other Changing Breeds in their territories (particularly Garou) actually *think* about the things that they're saying. And so, if the Nuwisha are Gaia's Laughter, the Qualmi might be thought of as Gaia's Conscience. Both question the status quo, and it is only their methods that differ.

Recent History

In recent years Qualmi have focused heavily on disrupting industrial activities in Canada's and Alaska's wilderness areas. While the lynxes have little in the way of contact with the urban side of industrial development, they do have quite a bit of knowledge about the things going on in the field, and they have made a habit of relaying that information to the Garou's contacts so that the werewolves can engage in a bit of industrial sabotage for the sake of Gaia. They understand little of Garou politics, and find it odd that packs from the Wendigo and Get of Fenris (the tribes with whom they have the most contact) have so much trouble getting along with one another. But, they pay it no mind; the Garou are here to serve Gaia, just as the Qualmi are, and the lynxes have no qualms whatsoever with recruiting a Garou pack to do a good deed here and there.

In addition to their monkeywrenching activities, the Qualmi have also been making efforts to restore the Ice Stalker tribe of the Gurahl. The werebears' numbers are critically low, but thanks to aid of the Qualmi (to say nothing of their own efforts) they're managing to make a comeback of sorts. The Ice Stalker resurgence might be cut short, however, since Pentex has rooted its claws in the northern reaches of the continent, and the past few years have seen a dreadful increase in Black Spiral Dancer activity in the region. If only the Garou could get along....

Organization

Qualmi grow uncomfortable in one another's presence if they stick together for long, so they tend to avoid one another most of the time. This does not mean, however, that they have no organization to speak of — indeed, nothing could be further from the truth! Qualmi tend to know quite a bit about the goings-on of their kind, and they keep tabs on one another through contact with other Changing Breeds groups. They are particularly close to both the Gurahl and the Wendigo, both of whom share their preferences for northern territories.

Young Qualmi are fostered for a period of roughly six months by their elders, during which time they learn about keeping in touch with other Qualmi, keeping tabs on the Killi in the region, working with their allies to defeat the evils of Asura, and, most importantly, being cryptic. They likely spend more time on the last than any of the others, but since they pull their weight in a fight no one much begrudges them their eccentricities.

Distribution and Kin

Qualmi are found exclusively in the northern regions of North America; the European Qualmi were exterminated in the War of Rage, being unlucky enough to share territory with several Garou tribes. They don't travel abroad much, and in fact they don't even like to leave their own territories if they can help it. Qualmi aren't picky about their human Kin, largely because they can't afford to be; they simply don't have that luxury. This might be one reason why the enigmatic cat known as Ponders Sunlight has chosen to emigrate to Spain, enlisting the aid of a bemused pack of Shadow Lords in his quest to re-establish a Qualmi population in Europe (using the Iberian lynx as feline Kin). The Lords find the whole endeavor hilarious, but they're willing to indulge the lynx for a time so long as he doesn't unduly disrupt their own activities.

Description

Qualmi are short, compact folk, well adapted for surviving cold environments. They tend to come from Native American stock, but they aren't terribly picky about their mates. In lynx form they look like, well, a lynx, tending to have dappled grey fur more often than not.

Qualmi Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str +0	Str +1	Str +2	
Dex +2	Dex +2	Dex +3	Dex +3
Sta +1	Sta +2	Sta +2	
App –1	App 0		
Man –2	Man –2	Man –2	

Beginning Rage: 2
Beginning Willpower: 5
Starting Gifts: Breakfast of Stones, Turned Fur

Simba

The Simba represent the best Gaia has to offer, in that they are regal, proud, and powerful beyond compare. However, they are also arrogant, domineering, and malicious, even under the best circumstances. Black Tooth and the Endless Storm magnified these latter traits a thousandfold, and in the process blackened the Simba's reputation almost

beyond repair. But when the Mayi'o came to help the beleaguered warriors fighting to crush the Endless Storm's tyranny, Gaia's defenders couldn't help but forgive the Simba their failings. Lord Hakimu proved that, whatever their faults, many Simba were clearly on the side of Gaia, and they were planning to stay there for the long haul.

The most social of the Bastet, the Simba are a symbol of strength, unity, and perseverance for all of Gaia's children. Just as the Silver Fangs serve to inspire and lead the Garou of the world, the Simba similarly serve as a rallying point to unify and direct all of the Changing Breeds of Africa. This role, ordained by Gaia, has given the Simba gigantic egos, and as a result few are content to follow the dictates of others; they must always lead, and if their fellows do not recognize their authority they will battle for dominance until they are beaten into submission. While this makes the Simba phenomenally poor team players, it is nonetheless true that there are few things more inspiring than watching a pride of Simba in action.

Recent History

If Black Tooth was the personification of Simba greed, hatred, and spite, the current ruling monarch, Lord Hakimu, exemplifies the tribe's political acumen and sense of *noblesse oblige*. While many in Africa feel that Black Tooth gave the Simba much to answer for, Lord Hakimu has instead used diplomacy and a ruthless clarity of vision to refocus the Changing Breeds' efforts on ensuring that the Changing Breeds of Africa work together in the manner that Gaia intended. While this has raised the hackles of many groups, particularly the Ajaba and the Amadu'o Simba, it has also brought the Simba into close contact with everyone from Ratkin subversives to Swara revolutionaries. For better or worse Africa's Changing Breeds are coming together, and that is thanks in large part to the coordinated efforts of the Mayi'o Simba.

Of course, not everyone cares for change. Plenty of Amadu'o renegades plot to overthrow the Mayi'o monarch even now, and they are finding aid in a most unusual ally: the werehyenas led by the outcast Ajaba mystic, Shari. An alliance of this nature is truly mind-boggling, but it appears as though both groups are willing to put aside their eternal feud long enough to bring down the current regime. In essence, they are willing to work together now so that they can destroy one another later, and there's precious little Hakimu or the rest of the Ahadi can do about it.

In southern Africa, near the Mayi'o's ancestral home in the Kalahari desert, the Simba are consolidating Changing Breed activity on other fronts. With the aid of Tinus Grellman's Swara and the Kucha Ekundu Garou of Botswana, the Simba are investigating a terrible, alien evil in the sands of the Kalahari. Some believe this is a manifestation of the Wyrm, but that is only because they have no idea what else it could be. Some Garou who have heard about this malevolent presence wonder if it isn't connected to a similar force lurking beneath the streets of Cairo, Egypt. Only time will tell.

Outside of Africa, the Simba can be found in only one other region in the world: India. Little is known of the Indian Simba, as they have largely kept to themselves ever since the War of Rage wiped out the Simba throughout most of Eurasia. India's Bagheera have seen signs that they might yet rejoin the supernatural community, however, particularly given the disastrous results of the Khan feuds of the last several centuries. The Week of Nightmares further thinned the ranks of Gaia's children in India, so it is quite possible that the Simba will step in to fill the gap.

Organization

Simba organization is nightmarishly complex, to a degree that baffles even the Garou. The basic unit of Simba organization is the pride. In lions, this is straightforward; two or more males dominate a group of females, reaping the benefits of the females' hunting efforts while they defend their territory from other males (and other sorts of predators). Since breeding is forbidden between Simba, however, the werelions' organization is not quite so simple. Typically, feline Simba form a pride of mixed Simba and lion Kin, with a ratio of about one male to every three females. The Endless Storm, for instance, consisted of three male Simba, two male lions, eight female Simba, and seven female lions. Homid Simba typically have several wives or husbands, with about 3-5 Kin to each Simba. Some Simba prides maintain both lions and a number of human Kin, resulting in huge Kin networks that are extremely difficult to follow. Fortunately, the Simba seem to have it all well in hand.

Beyond the pride scale, most Simba interactions are handled via ritual, much like those of Garou. Stronger prides rule over weaker ones, and have first choice when it comes to Kin (be it lion or human) and, rarely, sacred sites, such as caerns. Pride is very important to the Simba, and social interactions center on rituals of respect and deference. Simba typically don't have established ranks or positions within the pride; they simply establish a pecking order and are *very* careful to respect it (until such time as they are willing to challenge those who are higher up the chain than they are, of course).

Distribution and Kin

Simba are found throughout Africa, and to a lesser extent in parts of India. The Amadu'o of East Africa favor Kin found in and around the Serengeti region, while those in the south favor the lions of the Transvaal. The Mayi'o, for their part, seem to favor the lions of the Okavango Delta, relying on their ferocious strength to keep their bloodline strong.

Simba human Kin vary depending on the tribe; the Amadu'o favor accomplished hunters and killers, and tend to choose mates from among the Bantu tribes (such as the Zulus or the Maasai) or even whites, who fancy themselves big game hunters. The Mayi'o, on the other hand, favor more reclusive peoples, and often avoid relative newcomers like the Bantu and the whites altogether. Instead, they choose their mates from among ancient peoples like the San bushmen, looking to their human halves for wisdom and understanding just as the Amadu'o look for cunning and ruthlessness.

Description

Simba are massively built, and beautiful to behold in all of their forms. Males have manes of varying lengths in Crinos, Chatro, and Feline forms, and luxuriant long hair in Homid and Sokto forms. The most striking feature about a Simba is his presence, which is awe-inspiring.

Simba Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str +2	Str +3	Str +4	Str 2
Dex +1	Dex +2	Dex +2	Dex +2
Sta +1	Sta +3	Sta +2	Sta +2
App –1	App 0		
Man –1	Man –2	Man –2	Man –1

Beginning Rage: 5
Beginning Willpower: 2
Starting Gifts: Majesty, Submit

Swara

When you look upon a Swara, you see a creature built for speed. He is quick, and wiry, and fast, and you could be forgiven if you thought that the best of his talents. But if you judged him thus you would judge him falsely, for the blood of Mother Africa sings in his veins, and that is where his true talents lie. If you look at a Swara do it quickly, for he will be gone shortly thereafter, running into the world of spirit as easily as you or I run through the world of man.

The Swara are a persecuted race, their feline Kin preyed upon by vicious lion and cunning hyena alike, and they are never given a moment's peace in the world. Even their bodies betray them, leaving them vulnerable to disease and injury in a way the rest of Gaia's children cannot even begin to comprehend. But even with the world, with fate itself conspiring against them, the Swara never forget their duty to Gaia. The world of spirit speaks to them, calling them as it does the Garou Theurges to fight on Gaia's behalf. This they do, and gladly, and because of it they are among the most courageous of all of the Changing Breeds.

More than any other Changing Breed, the Swara like to fix things. The nature of the thing does not matter — it may be physical or spiritual, natural or mechanical, real or imagined. So long as they feel the task aids Gaia, the specifics do not concern them. Unfortunately, the werecheetahs are also plagued with a crippling xenophobia that makes interacting with other Changing Breeds difficult. They have been hurt and betrayed by others often enough that they do not give their trust easily, and the fact that their need to help Gaia often overrides their paranoia only serves to expose them to more harm, and thus amplify their xenophobia to the point of madness. For good or ill, the Swara have been dragged out of hiding, and forced to play the role Gaia intended for them in plain view of all of their peers. Whether this newfound status liberates them or destroys them remains an open question.

Recent History

Tinus Grellman and his Swara allies have come a long way in overcoming their breed's xenophobic tendencies. Indeed, they are now counted as some of the Mayi'o's strongest allies in southern Africa. Grellman's ranch has long been a haven for Swara of all stripes, and its proximity to Botswana and South Africa gives the breed easy access to all three nations — allowing them to investigate the goings-on in the Kalahari and explore South Africa and its parks with equal ease. Unfortunately, the Swara's newfound openness has come at a price: the other shifters of Africa have discovered the werecheetahs' ability to step sideways nearly at will, and as a result the Swara have been pressed into service for the Ahadi and its allies. The Swara look on this as a mixed blessing; on the one hand, nobody likes being drafted for a cause, no matter how noble it may be. The Swara want to serve Gaia as much as the next Bastet does, but not at the behest of the Simba (it's true that the Mayi'o may be a step up from Black Tooth, but as far as the Swara are concerned that just means they aren't genocidal maniacs). On the other hand, even the more conservative Swara have to admit that the alliance seems to have provided them with strong, reliable allies; while they have a pathological fear of treachery, none seems to be forthcoming, and that is something most of them find at least mildly encouraging.

Exposure has had another unexpected side benefit for the Swara: they've been encouraged to travel the world, and in the process have made a number of unexpected new friends. Travels to India have revealed lands once populated by healthy cheetah populations, and plans are in the works to transport a number of Namibian cheetahs to India in hopes of re-establishing a breeding population there. A pair of Swara are overseeing the project, and if they are successful the various tribes of Indian Bastet will soon have new allies to call upon in times of need.

Organization

Like Pumonca, Swara tend to be wanderers, and rarely have established territories. Since they are often terrorized by Amadu'o Simba (not to mention other creatures like Ajaba or even normal lions and hyenas) they are shy and reclusive, and often stick together to better their odds against the world. It is not uncommon to find young Swara traveling in bands of two or three, especially if they are related individuals. Some make good use of their numbers, relying on rapid pack tactics to take down their foes. Solitary Swara, on the other hand, are more likely to flee into the Umbra than stand their ground and fight (unless, of course, the target is of the Wyrm, in which case they fight to the death unless a more sensible option presents itself).

Distribution and Kin

Swara used to be found throughout Africa, the Middle East, and southern Asia, but nowadays they are concentrated in southern Africa. Many live in Umbral realms as well, having fled the world in the manner of the Nuwisha long ago. Swara human Kin are, interestingly, often whites, since these

are the people who control most of the private ranches in Namibia (which is about the only suitable cheetah habitat left in all of southern Africa). This is less so in the east, where Swara mate freely with any human that strikes their fancy.

Description

Swara tend to be long-limbed and lanky, with short hair and a nervous air about them. In Chatro form their fur occasionally has the striped king cheetah morph running through it, which is considered a sign of good luck.

Swara Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str +1	Str +2	Str +2	Str +1
Dex +2	Dex +3	Dex +4	Dex +4
Sta +1	Sta +2	Sta +2	Sta +1
App –1	App 0		
Man –1	Man –3	Man –3	Man –3

Beginning Rage: 2
Beginning Willpower: 4
Starting Gifts: Diamond Claws, Impala's Flight

Traits

Because they lack the close connection to Luna enjoyed by the Garou, Bastet do not have auspices. They do, however, have Pryio, which are somewhat similar. Gnosis is determined in the same manner as it is for Garou, and tribe determines Willpower.

Feline Bastet have similar restrictions on Backgrounds and Abilities as lupus Garou do; also, they may not take the Ancestors or Pack Totem Backgrounds. If they are beyond their first year they also may not take the Mentor Background (Storytellers may wish to make an exception for Bagheera, who maintain loose ties with one another throughout their lives).

The restriction on the Ancestors Background may also be waived for Swara, Swara have a deep connection to the land, and as such the Storyteller may want to allow Swara to purchase Ancestors to represent this connection. The Swara isn't channeling an ancestor-spirit in the same fashion as Garou do, but the game effects are similar enough that the mechanics used by the background represent the effects reasonably well.

Bastet determine rank in a fashion similar to that of Garou, but they value Ferocity above Glory and Cleverness over Wisdom. All Bastet except for Pumonca perform Rites of Recognition to gain Renown, typically in the presence of others of their tribe (it is a particularly ritualistic affair among the Simba, for example, while among the Bagheera it is typically a simple ceremony between a panther and her mentor).

Bastet cannot step sideways without a Gift. The reasons for this are unclear, as the Bastet are very loath to discuss the issue; whatever theories are most likely are also apparently not very palatable to the werecats.

Breeds

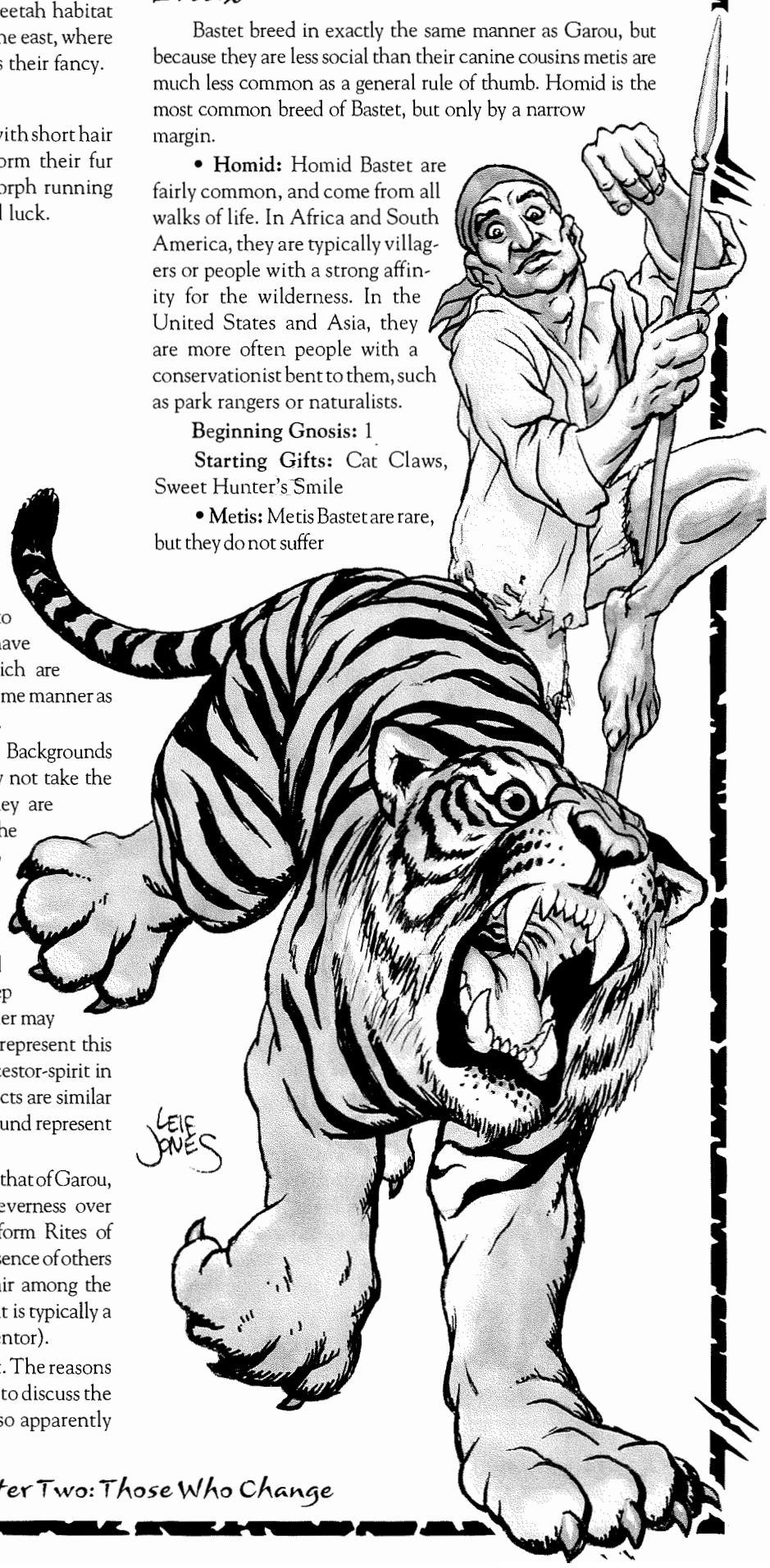
Bastet breed in exactly the same manner as Garou, but because they are less social than their canine cousins metis are much less common as a general rule of thumb. Homid is the most common breed of Bastet, but only by a narrow margin.

• **Homid:** Homid Bastet are fairly common, and come from all walks of life. In Africa and South America, they are typically villagers or people with a strong affinity for the wilderness. In the United States and Asia, they are more often people with a conservationist bent to them, such as park rangers or naturalists.

Beginning Gnosis: 1

Starting Gifts: Cat Claws, Sweet Hunter's Smile

• **Metis:** Metis Bastet are rare, but they do not suffer



Thinking Like a Bastet

When roleplaying a Bastet character, either as a storyteller or as a player, it is important to remember that Bastet are inherently antisocial creatures. Like their cat Kin, they simply do not understand the intricacies of social interaction. This means that many customs and social niceties that seem perfectly obvious to most Garou (or, indeed, most homids in general) will be completely beyond the Bastet, since they just aren't wired to think in that fashion. This may make them seem distant and aloof, but that impression is somewhat misleading; rather, the Bastet are simply unaware of the social norms that they ought to be observing.

Another issue to keep in mind when playing Bastet, and which reinforces the problems described above, is the fact that they are fiercely independent creatures. This should come as no surprise, given their solitary natures, but it is the sort of thing that defines a Bastet's interaction with Garou and other Changing Breeds. Bastet simply cannot operate as part of a pack; they cannot abide taking orders from others, particularly those they barely know, and they are unwilling to delegate responsibility for accomplishing tasks they feel they should accomplish on their own. This does not mean they are of no use to the Garou, however, as the following example indicates.

Shortly after Golgol Fangs-First made his grand gesture to appease Black Claw, the de facto leader of the Balam in South America, some rather enterprising werewolves developed an entirely new approach to involving the werejaguars in Garou war operations. These Garou, a coalition of Children of Gaia and Get of Fenris (an odd pairing under any circumstances), found that simply inviting the Balam to the Garou's war councils could prove to be quite fruitful. As the Garou discussed the current state of the war, the Balam interjected at odd intervals with all sorts of useful information, ranging from details on Pentex logging operations to logistical information on Black Spiral Dancer hives plaguing the region. This information was valuable in and of itself, but the Bastet volunteered their services in other ways as well. Occasionally, a Balam privy to knowledge of a Garou raid would volunteer to aid the Garou in some unorthodox fashion, while at other times Garou battlemasters would receive reports that the Bastet had undertaken commando-style operations of their own volition, and done so in a fashion that ultimately saved Garou lives. These "passive tactics," as Balam-Garou coordinated efforts have come to be known, have proven to be so effective that the War Council now considers them standard operating procedure. Many Garou in other parts of the world are now trying to duplicate the Amazon warriors' success.

the persecution Garou metis often do. After all, when you rarely see others of your kind, what time do you have for prejudice? Metis Bastet are judged by their deeds, and are valued just as much as their homid and feline cousins, despite their deformity.

Beginning Gnosis: 3

Starting Gifts: Create Element, Sense Primal Nature

• **Feline:** Feline Bastet are not quite as common as homids are, but they are more common than lupus Garou. Bastet try to breed with the strongest feline Kin they can find, but thanks to loss of habitat and excessive poaching pickings are often slim. Most Bastet only breed with wild Kin; captive animals are too tainted by humanity to make good partners, and they teach their cubs strange things.

Beginning Gnosis: 5

Starting Gifts: Heightened Senses, Pounce

Pryio

Because Bastet do not share the Garou's connection to Luna, they lack auspices. They do, however, have Pryios, which serve the same general purpose but have a much more subdued influence on the Bastet's personality. Pryio is a subtle indicator of a Bastet's true personality, and it determines how the cats approach life and handle the challenges it throws their way. While it is often determined by the time of day in which the Bastet achieved her First Change, Pryio can shift if the Bastet undergoes a severe life change for whatever reason.

The most important function of Pryio in game terms is tied to its influence on a Bastet's Willpower. A Bastet regain Willpower whenever they do something particularly in keeping with her Pryio, just as a Garou regains Willpower when he performs the duties of his auspice exceptionally well.

• **Daylight:** Bastet with the Daylight Pryio are typically open and direct in their dealings. They can be taken at their word and prefer straightforward battles if conflict is necessary. Daylight Bastet tend to be diplomats, warriors, lawgivers, and protectors. They are nurturing sorts, and have an optimistic take on the world and the events therein. Those with a Daylight Pryio regain Willpower when they face serious challenges head-on and win through courage or good nature.

• **Twilight:** Twilight cats have a penchant for mysteries and magic, and tend to see the world in shades of grey. They are often detectives, lawyers, spies, or mystics, searching for hidden meanings in all of their endeavors. They may also be romantics or artists, letting their emotions drive them in positive or negative fashion. Twilight Bastet are insatiably curious, and they regain Willpower by solving mysteries, thinking through their challenges, or creating works of art or literature.

• **Night:** Night Bastet tend to be withdrawn and perhaps duplicitous, focusing on their own endeavors to the exclusion of all else. They are short-tempered and fiercely territorial, and prefer to be scholars, taskmasters, or other driven, dedicated sorts. Bastet with this Pryio are the ones most likely to become assassins or man-eaters, and they tend

to acquire a degree of infamy in relatively short order. They regain Willpower when they protect their space, safeguard secrets, or bring pain to others.

Forms

Like the Garou, Bastet can change into five forms: Homid, Sokto, Crinos, Chatro, and Feline. They function in most respects like their Garou counterparts, and the difficulties associated with shifting forms for the Garou apply to the Bastet in exactly the same fashion.

• **Homid:** Bastet in Homid form look just like normal humans. They tend to be supple and lithe, and are often quite attractive. Bastet in Homid form are often perceived to be strongly sexual creatures simply because of the way they move, but this is typically unintentional on the Bastet's part.

• **Sokto:** The Sokto form is a hybrid of human and feline characteristics, with the emphasis on the human traits. The Bastet's limbs lengthen, claws extend from her fingers upon command, and her facial features, eyes, and teeth become more catlike. Her body hair thickens, and she becomes disturbingly inhuman.

• **Crinos:** This hybrid form is a balanced mix of cat and human, and it is built for battle. Lithe and supple, the Crinos form affords the Bastet the greatest protection of all of his forms, and also allows him to manipulate weapons and equipment with little difficulty. Bastet in Crinos form invoke the Delirium, although to a lesser degree than normal (Delirium is reduced by one rank on the Delirium Chart).

• **Chatro:** The primordial war-form, the Chatro takes the normal feline form and enlarges it, making the Bastet much more dangerous. This form is massively built, is stronger than any of the other forms, and is utterly terrifying. The Bastet's canines extend to a length of 3-5 inches, allowing her to inflict an extra die of damage with bite attacks, and her reflexes are heightened in proportion to her strength, allowing her to maneuver with ease despite its great bulk. The Bastet evokes the Delirium in this form at full strength; it is in this form that the Bastet waged their own version of the Impergium.

• **Feline:** The Bastet's Feline form is like that of her normal feline Kin, strong and fast and deeply attuned to the world around her. It is more useful for movement than any of the other forms, but lacks the strength of the battle forms or the flexibility of the humanoid forms.

Gifts

Unlike Garou, Bastet tend to learn their Gifts from one another instead of from spirits of various sorts. They also learn Gifts via "swiping," where they watch a Gift being used by another shapechanger and then practice it until they learn how to make it work for them. This is difficult with auspice Gifts, but relatively easy otherwise.

Bastet begin play with three Gifts: one common, one breed, and one tribe.

Common Gifts

• **Catfeet (Level One)** — As the Level Three lupus Gift, but obviously easier for Bastet.

• **Lick Wounds (Level One)** — Like the Theurge Gift: Mother's Touch, this power heals normal or aggravated wounds. However, the Bastet can only use this Gift on herself. This Gift can be used as many times as the player wants, but each "lick" costs another Gnosis point.

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

• **Sense the Truth (Level One)** — As the Philodox Gift: Truth of Gaia.

• **Sense the Unmaker's Hand (Level One)** — As the metis Gift: Sense Wyrm.

• **Silent Stalking (Level One)** — This common trick allows a Bastet to move without making any sound. Even squeaky or shifting surfaces, including wooden floors or piled twigs, can be passed over noiselessly.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Stealth, difficulty 5. Failure renders the Gift unusable for the rest of the scene. Note that this Gift does not prevent footprints — it stifles the sound of the Bastet's footsteps, nothing more.

• **Cat Sight (Level Two)** — As the Level Three metis Gift: Eyes of the Cat.

• **Eerie Eyes (Level Two)** — As the Garou homid Gift: Staredown.

• **First Slash (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Spirit of the Fray.

• **Night's Passage (Level Two)** — By attuning himself to the shadows from which he was born, a Bastet may walk through dim or dark areas and be effectively invisible. Others may hear him or spy him with magical sight, but until he makes his move, he remains hidden from view. This Gift even foils sudden lights, as long as some shadows still exist in which to hide.

System: By spending a Gnosis point and rolling Dexterity + Subterfuge or Occult (difficulty 7), the Bastet effectively "disappears" for the rest of the scene, or until he attacks someone. Supernatural beings can use their own magics to detect him by rolling Perception + Occult (difficulty 8). Otherwise, nothing short of total illumination can reveal the skulking Bastet.

• **Sense of the Prey (Level Two)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

• **Sense Silver (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Shriek (Level Two)** — With an ear-splitting scream, the Bastet deafens everyone nearby. Careless shriekers beware — your allies are not immune!

System: This Gift demands a scream, a Stamina + Expression roll (difficulty 7) and a mean streak. Everyone within 10 feet is deafened for one turn per success, and all but the Gift user end up in a world of pain (+1 to all difficulties for the duration).

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

• **Impala's Flight (Level Three)** — An essential Gift on the open plains, Impala's Flight doubles the werecat's running speed. As the name implies, Bastet credit Impala with this wisdom.

System: A successful Stamina + Athletics roll (difficulty 6) boosts the Bastet's maximum speed to double normal. The Gift lasts two turns per success, and works in any form.

• **Touch the Mind (Level Three)** — As the Garou metis Gift: Mental Speech.

• **Clawstorm (Level Four)** — Any cat is at his most terrifying when cornered. This Gift allows him to become the proverbial shredding machine.

System: By spending one point each of Rage and Gnosis, the Bastet gains three extra attacks that turn)to a maximum of four, total – he cannot spend Rage for extra actions while using Clawstorm). Only slashing attacks apply — he can't perform elaborate maneuvers, shoot guns, or travel more than 10 feet, although he could use edged melee weapons. A Bastet may use Clawstorm as many times in a single combat as he has dots in Stamina.

• **Walking Between Worlds (Level Four)** — Some tales claim that Coyote taught Bastet to step sideways; others insist the trick was stolen from Garou. In any case, this Gift allows a werecat to step sideways as Garou do.

System: See **Werewolf**, pp. 227-228. The talent for stepping sideways becomes natural once a Bastet learns this Gift.

• **Wolf's Terror (Level Four)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Silver Claws.

• **Withering Stare (Level Five)** — This Gift lets a werecat kill with a glance, a favorite trick of Simba lords and wandering Pumonca. Using this Gift against other Bastet is considered deeply dishonorable, but it happens nonetheless.

System: The werecat locks gazes with his target, spends a Gnosis point, and rolls his Rage. The difficulty is the victim's Willpower, and each success inflicts one aggravated health level of damage. Only a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) can soak the Stare, which twists the victim into agonized convulsions until either death or the Bastet grants release.

Breed Gifts

Homid Gifts

• **Cat Claws (Level One)** — By calling on her heritage, a Bastet in Homid or Sokto form can unsheathe her claws and attack as if she were in beast-form.

System: A simple Stamina + Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 7) brings out the Bastet's claws. They remain out as long as she cares to keep them, but they look peculiar and are painful to use (+1 to all combat or Dexterity difficulties). Once resheathed, the Bastet must invoke the Gift again to call them forth.

• **Sweet Hunter's Smile (Level One)** — As the Garou homid Gift: Persuasion.

• **Jam Technology (Level Two)** — As the Garou homid Gift.

• **Eavesdropper's Ear (Level Two)** — By listening carefully, a Bastet may hear things outside the normal human range, or understand something spoken some distance away.

System: A simple Perception + Enigmas roll (difficulty 6) boosts the werecat's hearing into the high and low sonic spectrums, and adds two dice to her Perception dice pool for hearing rolls only. The Gift lasts one scene, and makes the Bastet susceptible to sudden loud noises (which might inflict one to three health levels of bashing damage in extreme cases like explosions or high-frequency alarms).

• **Craft of the Maker (Level Three)** — As the Garou homid Gift: Reshape Object.

• **Monkey's Uncle (Level Four)** — As the Glass Walker Gift: Doppelganger, although the Bastet can only take the forms of humans, great cats or Bastet.

• **Madness (Level Five)** — As the Garou metis Gift.

Metis Gifts

• **Create Element (Level One)** — As the Garou metis Gift.

• **Sense Primal Nature (Level One)** — As the Common Gift: Sense Unmaker's Hand, except that it detects a strong affinity for the Weaver, Wyrm, or Wyld. The difficulty is one higher than that for Sense Unmaker's Hand.

• **Whisker Sight (Level Two)** — By attuning herself to her surroundings, a metis Bastet can get a sense of her surroundings. Anything within reach — even if it's behind her, or invisible — is plain to all her senses.

System: The player rolls Perception + Primal-Urge. Success grants the character total sensory perceptions within a 10-foot radius. This doesn't automatically reveal hidden or invisible objects, but it allows her to try a normal Perception roll to notice things that would normally be beyond her sight. The Gift lasts one scene.

• **Fist of Cahlash (Level Three)** — By channeling raw destructive power, an angry Bastet can destroy any material thing with a snarl.

System: The player spends a Rage point and rolls Rage against difficulty 6 (for inanimate objects) or 8 (for living or undead beings). Each success either destroys 10 points of matter, or inflicts one aggravated health level. The latter damage can only be soaked by a Gnosis roll (difficulty 6). Affected targets literally burst or fly apart. The Fist cannot affect spirits.

• **Moon's Gateway (Level Four)** — By calling upon a Lune for help, the Bastet opens a moon bridge between caerns or Den-Realms. Such travel only occurs at night. The Gateway forms as a glowing fog, which slowly swirls into the shape of the werecat's intended destination. Anyone can use the Gateway, but as soon as the summoner passes through the Gateway disperses.

System: The Bastet spends one Gnosis point per 100 miles to be traveled, and rolls Intelligence + Alertness. The difficulty depends on the Bastet's familiarity with the

destination, ranging from 5 (for very familiar places) to 10 (for unknown locations or destinations in the deep Umbra). The two travel points must involve a mystical location of some sort. A botch lands the traveler in some strange or dangerous place.

• **Wrath of Nala (Level Five)** — This Gift whips up a wild storm that devastates the werecat's vicinity. This tempest springs up out of nowhere and lasts for five minutes or less, then calms down and disperses. Nala herself teaches this Gift in dreams.

System: The werecat spends two Gnosis points and rolls Manipulation + Survival (difficulty 8). If he rolls five or more successes, he summons a severe thunderstorm that lasts only a few minutes and remains beyond the werecat's power once it's in motion.

Feline Gifts

• **Heightened Senses (Level One)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Pounce (Level One)** — As the lupus Gift: Hare's Leap.

• **Perfect Cover (Level Two)** — By scratching around a place, trail, or object, the Bastet obscures it from normal and magical view.

System: After the Bastet "buries" all traces of the hidden thing, she rolls Perception + Survival and spends a Gnosis point. From that point on, the place or object is safe from any normal perception until it moves or is moved. Any magical senses scanning the area add 1 to their difficulty to notice the hiding place for every success the Bastet rolls. The difficulty of the roll depends on the size of the object and the surroundings: hiding small objects in areas with thick cover would be 5, while hiding larger objects in areas with light cover would be 9. The Gift cannot conceal obvious objects, and it does not make objects invisible — it only enhances existing cover.

• **Whisker Sight (Level Two)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Underbelly (Level Three)** — By sizing up a foe or obstacle, a Bastet can get a feeling for its weakest point.

System: By rolling Perception + Primal-Urge, the Bastet can find a weak spot on living beings. Picking a weakness on a technological object requires Perception + Repair, while noticing a flaw in a natural one takes Perception + Survival. The difficulty of the roll ranges from 6 (for typical objects, like humans or computers) to 9 (for heavily fortified objects, like humans in heavy body armor or heavily armored vehicles). Each success rolled adds one to the Bastet's damage pool against that target for one scene. Spotting a weakness in a magical object or mystical protection requires a Gnosis point in addition to the roll. This Gift doesn't work against spirits.

• **Beast Life (Level Four)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Revolt of the Land (Level Five)** — As the Red Talon Gift: Gaia's Vengeance.

Tribe Gifts

Bagheera Gifts

• **Humbaba's Escape (Level One)** — One of the tribe's first and most valuable tricks, this Gift allows a wereleopard to dislocate her limbs and slide through small openings. Though the Bagheera claim that the wise cat Humbaba invented the trick, the Simba maintain that he originally learned it from mouse-spirits.

System: The player rolls her Dexterity + Athletics to dislocate her limbs. The harder the attempt, the higher the difficulty becomes. Escaping handcuffs would be difficulty 6, while dislocating her spine and ribs to get through an airshaft would be 10. The Bagheera's Stamina drops by two while she is out of joint. Simple adjustments don't cost any Gnosis, but large-scale body-shifts cost one point.

• **Treeclimber (Level One)** — By extending and sharpening his claws, then invoking this Gift, the Bagheera can travel up or down any vertical surface, from tree bark to concrete.

System: Climbing this way requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll. Really hard or slippery surfaces, like ice or steel, are difficulty 8, while easy ones like rock or bark are at difficulty 6. A character traveling this way moves at 10 feet per turn or so, and may have to make new rolls if the circumstances change (in an avalanche, for example).

• **Lawgiver's Legacy (Level Two)** — It is said that Gaia intended the Bagheera to be the arbiters of the catfolk. This Gift lends credence to that claim, as it offers an edge to Bagheera trying to exercise this ancient right with minimal force. With it, a werepanther can raise her voice to drown out all others without actually shouting, and it adds a note of command that makes even Simba take the user's words seriously.

System: The Bagheera rolls Manipulation + Expression (difficulty 7) to get everyone's attention for one scene. The Gift also reduces the difficulty of her next social roll by 1 for every success she rolls for the Gift. Anyone who wants to contest the Bagheera's authority must win a resisted Willpower roll with the panther (difficulty 7).

• **Ojas Surge (Level Two)** — By channeling *ojas*, the mystical energy inside us all, a Bagheera can boost his physical and perceptual abilities beyond their normal limits. To do so, he attains a posture and meditates for a moment, then guides the ojas through his body, directing it to whatever his needs might be.

System: To perform this Gift, the Bagheera must first meditate for five minutes. He may reduce this time by one minute for every rank he's achieved beyond first (to a minimum of one minute). After he's centered himself, he rolls Gnosis (difficulty 7). Each success can be used to boost one of the following attributes by one dot: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, Charisma, Perception, or Wits. The successes can be distributed in any way the Bagheera wishes, and the effects last for one scene. Multiple uses of the Gift are not

cumulative. The Bagheera may use the Gift as often as he wishes, but each use beyond the first in a given day raises the difficulty by two and doubles the meditation time. A failed attempt to initiate the surge leaves the Bagheera depressed, and the Gift cannot be used again that day.

• **Eye of the Cobra (Level Three)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Potter's Clay (Level Four)** — As the Level Three homid Gift: Craft of the Maker.

• **Shiva's Might (Level Five)** — The mightiest of the Bagheera may change into a form reminiscent of Shiva the Destroyer. In a burst of holy light, the Bastet becomes a 12-foot-tall, six-armed Crinos-form werepanther wielding flaming weapons. Until the ground is littered with bodies, this godlike force of destruction hacks everything around it — foe and otherwise — into bloody gobbets. Obviously, this Gift is a last resort, but it is a very effective one.

System: The Bastet invoking this Gift spends two Rage points and two Gnosis points, then immediately rolls for frenzy (difficulty 3). If he wins five successes or more, the Bagheera springs into Crinos form, grows three feet taller, and sprouts four more arms, each bearing a flaming weapon. This destroyer form, the *Juddho*, enters a killing frenzy that lasts for one turn for every point of Rage in the Bastet's permanent rating. If he fails, nothing happens; a botch brings on a fox frenzy instead. The *Juddho* form statistics are:

Strength: +6
Dexterity: +3
Stamina: +6
Appearance: 0
Weapons: Strength +4 (aggravated)

No one is safe from Shiva's Might — anyone in sight is attacked. The Bagheera is totally incapable of any form of rational communication or combat strategy. Until the *Juddho* form disappears, he knows only how to kill. When the Gift finally fades, the panther drops to zero Rage, assumes his breed form and falls asleep for at least four hours.

Balam Gifts

• **Hunter's Mists (Level One)** — As the Black Fury Gift: Curse of Aeolus.

• **Storm of Pests (Level One)** — By singing a plea to the Fly Lord, a werejaguar can call up a cloud of mosquitoes, gnats, biting flies, or some equally obnoxious bugs. These creatures don't so much damage as distract their prey, allowing the Balam to either prepare an ambush or escape.

System: The Balam rolls Manipulation + Survival. In rainforests or coastal areas, the difficulty is 5. In other places it rises to 7, or 9 in areas where insects are scarce. For each success, an area roughly 10 feet square is filled with stinging and biting insects, reducing all dice pools by 2 for one turn per success. After that, the insects disperse. The Gift's user is not immune to insect bites, but usually knows what to expect and can act normally.

• **Perfect Cover (Level Two)** — As the feline Gift.

• **Terrors (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift: True Fear.

• **Wandering Forest (Level Three)** — As the Red Talon Gift: Trackless Waste.

• **Vision Cloud (Level Four)** — Among the old folk, the jaguars were respected for their insight. Many Olmecs and Maya came to them for visions, and the tribe responded by invoking this ageless Gift. By calling to the spirits of the air and the plants, a modern jaguar can still conjure the Vision Cloud, a swirling fog that wraps itself through the clearing or cave, bringing mystic insights to those who seek them — and to those who do not.

System: By succeeding on a Manipulation + Enigmas roll (difficulty 5) and spending a Gnosis point, the Balam can fill an area up to 50 feet square with a misty cloud that affects everyone without breathing gear or magical protection — including the Balam herself. The visions seen are left to the Storyteller's discretion, but should foreshadow possible future events, reveal lost lore, or offer clues that clever characters can decipher.

• **Jungle's Vengeance (Level Four)** — By tapping into his ties with the land, the Balam urges the jungle itself to turn against any invaders. It begins with simple annoyances — biting insects, entangling vines, and so on — and progresses to deadlier tactics if the interlopers don't take the hint.

System: The Balam spends a point of Rage and two points of Gnosis, and sets in motion a purposeful series of events designed to drive invaders away from the werejaguar's domain. Although the Storyteller has the final say about what happens and to whom, the one constant with the Gift is the fact that it gets more and more dangerous as time goes by. It won't be enough to harm supernaturals (much), but it will drive humans to the brink of madness and beyond (and might significantly interfere with Garou operations, should they be unlucky enough to rub the Balam the wrong way...).

• **Feed the Gods (Level Five)** — By reaching out with her hand, the Balam can rip the heart out of an enemy from a distance, pull it to his palm, and consume it in a burst of fire. This Gift kills the target if it succeeds.

System: The Balam rolls Gnosis (difficulty 7) and spends two Gnosis points. If the werejaguar's successes amount to twice the target's dots in Stamina or more, the victim dies. Supernatural defenses (vampiric fortitude, Gifts, etc.) subtract one success for every dot or level of protection. Hence, this Gift isn't useful for killing supernatural foes, but it's devastating against normal humans.

Bubasti Gifts

• **Alms to the Poor (Level One)** — Beggars are an all-too-common feature of Bubasti homelands. As a kindness (and perhaps as a bribe to the gods), the shadowcats developed this secret, which allows one to conjure up a small bit of food or money to give to a beggar. Naturally, the cat can use the "alms" for himself, but they taste slightly bitter and leave the palm greasy if used for selfish means.



System: The Bubasti spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Gnosis against difficulty 6. Each success creates a handful of food or cheap copper coins (no bills, silver or gold). Most Bubasti disguise this "miracle" by reaching into a sack or box before sharing this wealth.

• **Scholar's Friend (Level One)** — This secret allows a Bubasti to read a book, scroll or tablet in any written language. This talent doesn't teach the cat any new language, nor does it help him understand esoteric concepts or missing bits of text. Even so, the ability to read anything set in front of you is a subtle yet powerful Gift.

System: The Bastet spends a Gnosis point, rolls his Willpower and begins reading. The difficulty of the roll depends on the obscurity of the text; modern languages are difficulty 5, while archaic languages are 7 and obscure pictograms are 9. Only one roll is allowed per reading session. The Gift lasts for one hour per success, and the werecat must rest his eyes for several hours after finishing. Note that a failed roll doesn't mean the cat can't read the language — it might indicate misunderstanding instead. Storytellers are advised to keep the difficulty of the roll secret, and to be fiendishly imaginative with missed rolls.

• **Dreamspeak (Level Two)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Spirit Barrier (Level Two)** — This Gift allows the Bubasti to erect a ward that walls off an area from spirit traffic — no spirit can move in or out of the place without the Bubasti's permission.

System: The Bubasti spends a Gnosis point and rolls Willpower (difficulty 8). Each success raises the Gauntlet in a 30-foot square area by one, and extends it so that the barrier exists in both the material and Penumbral worlds. The Ward lasts for one day per point of the Bubasti's permanent Gnosis, unless some spirit destroys it. Doing so requires three successes on a Rage roll against the difficulty of the new Gauntlet rating.

• **Banish Cahlash's Brood (Level Three)** — By calling upon the Father of Dark Spirits, a Bubasti may command one of his brood to depart. This is a potent Gift, but it is not without price: each time the Bastet uses this Gift, his fur grows a deeper shade of black and his actions become more... erratic. Changing Breeds with Sense Wyrm may detect a bit of taint upon him until he purges himself somehow. The more spirits he banishes, the deeper the taint becomes.

System: The Bubasti rolls Manipulation + Enigmas and spends a Willpower point to attempt to dismiss the spirit. The difficulty is the spirit's Gnosis or Rage, whichever is higher. Each success removes three points of the spirit's Essence, and more powerful spirits can be banished using extended rolls (of course, the spirit won't sit still in the meantime...). For fetishes, the difficulty is 6 + the level of the fetish (maximum 10). In either case, the cat may sacrifice health levels to lower the difficulty of the roll on a one for one basis. Gaia help the cat who botches the roll, however; doing so requires a frenzy check against a difficulty of 6, and failure fills the cat with Wyrm taint. Atonement isn't impossible, but it is arduous and brings the cat no Renown.

• **Shadowplay (Level Four)** — As the Theurge Gift, except the Bubasti does not have to mimic the shadow's movements; once free, it can go about its business as if it were a perfect duplicate of the Bastet. Also unlike the Garou Gift, some light must be present to cast the shadow in the first place.

• **Shadow Brethren (Level Five)** — As the Shadow Lords Gift: Shadow Pack.

Khan Gifts

• **Razor Claws (Level One)** — As the Level One Ahroun Gift.

• **Skin of Jade (Level One)** — Willing himself solid, a Khan can harden his skin to the strength of jade. It's said the spirit of the rock itself taught this Gift to Yu Kwan, a warrior in the service of the alchemist Ko Hung.

System: By spending a Willpower point and rolling Gnosis (difficulty 7), the weretiger gains an additional two dice to his soak rolls. This Gift lasts one scene.

• **Heart of Fury (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Snarl of the Predator (Level Two)** — As the Get of Fenris Gift.

• **Paws of the Raging Spirit Tiger (Level Three)** — By channeling his chi energy through this Gift, a Khan can wreath his paws or hands in crackling spirit power. Thus fortified, the tiger can rip through enemies in the spirit world without stepping sideways to do it, as long as he can see them. Obviously, no spirit teaches a Bastet such a damaging Gift; the Khan has to learn it from another Khan (and considering the Gift's nature, learning it can be very dangerous!).

System: The Khan spends a Gnosis point and concentrates. The next turn, his paws or hands begin to smolder with blue-white light. The light burns from blue to green to yellow to red. When it attains a pinkish hue, the Gift dissipates. This takes roughly six turns.

• **Asura's Bane (Level Four)** — As the Level Three Bubasti Gift: Banish Cahlash's Brood, except that using it turns the tiger's pelt white instead of black. Unlike the Bubasti, tigers channel the Weaver to banish corruption.

• **Call to Battle (Level Five)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Strength of Will.

Pumonca Gifts

• **Mockingbird's Mirror (Level One)** — This Gift lets a Pumonca imitate whatever he wishes — birds, animals, humans, even machines — and allows him to throw his new voice for some distance. As the name implies, a mockingbird-spirit teaches this Gift, usually in return for food.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (Difficulty 6) to imitate sounds within the normal human vocal range. If he's successful, his mimicry is flawless. Mirroring sounds outside the normal range he must spend a Gnosis point and the difficulty is 7. This Gift lasts for one scene, and sounds can be "thrown" up to 100 feet away from where the werecougar stands.

• **Wanderer's Boon (Level One)** — Travel is difficult, especially given the Spartan ways of the Pumonca. This Gift allows the cougar to adapt to changing climates quickly or to ignore the pangs of hunger or thirst for some time. Bird-spirits and bear-spirits teach this Gift.

System: By rolling Stamina + Survival (difficulty 6) and spending a Willpower point, the Pumonca can do one of the following things: ignore the worst effects of normal heat and cold for a week, go one day without water or go three days without food. Particularly harsh conditions (blizzards, droughts, etc) can raise the difficulty by 2 or more. The Gift can be repeated, but the difficulty rises by one each time it's performed in succession.

• **Speak With Wind Spirits (Level Two)** — As the Wendigo Gift.

• **Spirit of the Fish (Level Two)** — As the Uktena Gift.

• **Thunderbolt (Level Three)** — A pact with the spirits of the storm allows some Pumonca to call down a thunderbolt. If at least one cloud hangs in the air above, the cougar can summon lightning. Most cougars learn this Gift from Thunderbird himself.

System: The Pumonca spends a point of Rage to summon a bolt of lightning and rolls Dexterity + Survival to hit his target. Under normal conditions the difficulty is 8; a large target or stormy skies can reduce the roll to 6, while dry conditions or unusually small targets can raise it to 10. The bolt inflicts two dice of fire damage for every point of the werecougar's Gnosis. Whether or not the lightning strike hits, victims must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to avoid running in fear.

• **Call Elemental (Level Four)** — As the Uktena Gift.

• **Thunderbird's Cry (Level Five)** — As the feline Gift: Wrath of Nala, only the storm may last longer if five or more successes are rolled. This Gift is taught by Thunderbird himself.

Qualmi Gifts

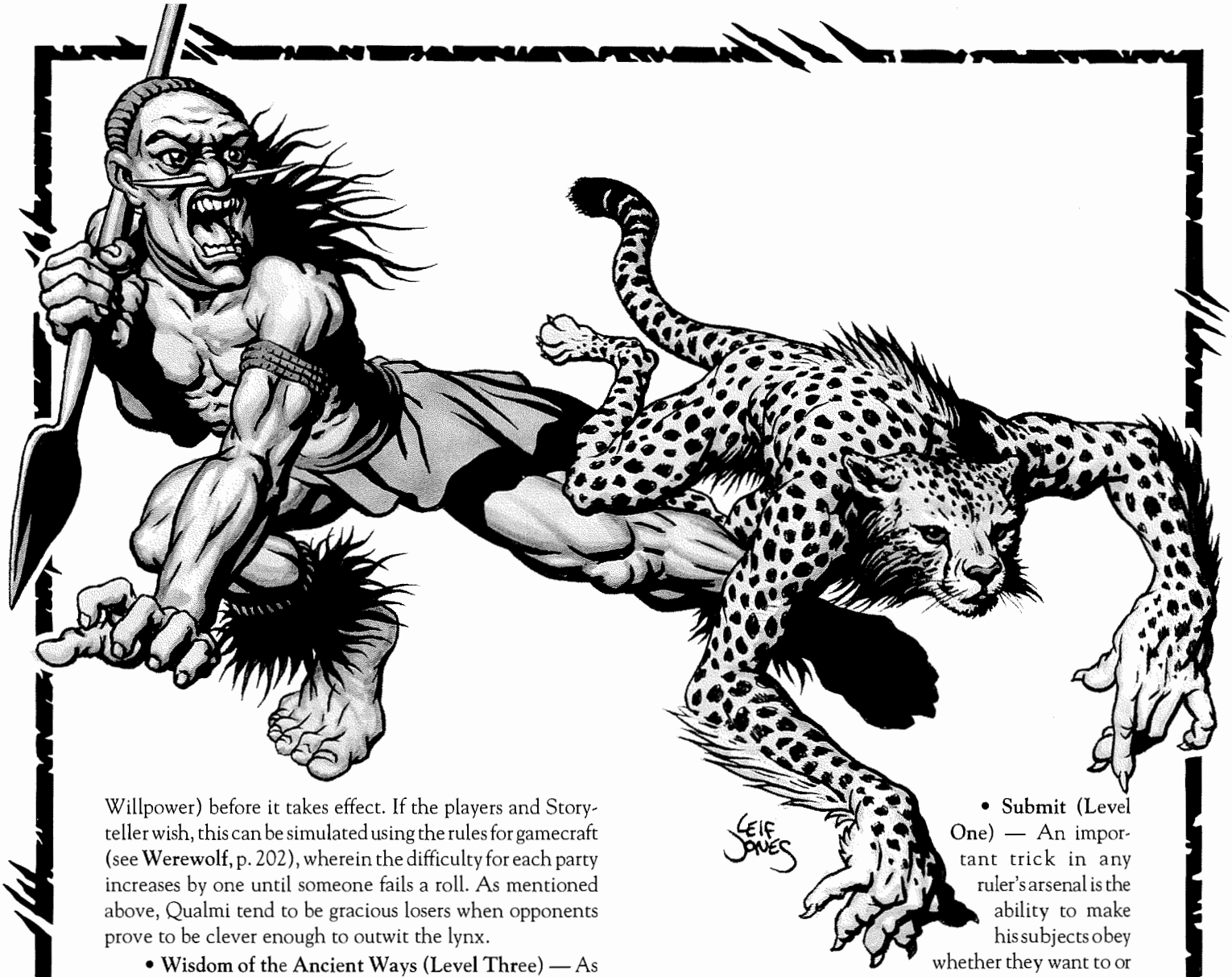
• **Breakfast of Stones (Level One)** — As the Pumonca Gift: Wanderer's Boon.

• **Turned Fur (Level One)** — As the Wendigo Gift: Camouflage, save that the Qualmi must discard any clothing and gear before the Gift takes effect — only the lynx himself changes color.

• **Wind From the West (Level Two)** — This Gift takes the form of a series of high-speed riddles designed to tie a victim's mind into knots. Most Qualmi are rather pleased if this Gift fails; it's not often they find someone clever enough to keep up with them.

System: The Qualmi rolls Manipulation + Enigmas (difficulty equals the target's Willpower). Success scrambles the target's sense of direction and relationship. Three or more successes send the target into a panic; Changing Breeds must check for frenzy, and normal humans flee in terror. The Gift's effects last for about 15 minutes, then slowly fade.

If the target is clever enough, he might try to figure out the puzzle (Wits + Enigmas, difficulty equals the Qualmi's



Willpower) before it takes effect. If the players and Storyteller wish, this can be simulated using the rules for gamecraft (see **Werewolf**, p. 202), wherein the difficulty for each party increases by one until someone fails a roll. As mentioned above, Qualmi tend to be gracious losers when opponents prove to be clever enough to outwit the lynx.

• **Wisdom of the Ancient Ways (Level Three)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Chill of Early Frost (Level Four)** — As the Wendigo Gift.

• **Water's Vision (Level Five)** — With this Gift, the Qualmi can look through barriers to glimpse what lies beyond them. It doesn't matter if the barriers are mundane or spiritual — all becomes like glass to a Qualmi who wants to see past them.

System: Seeing through barriers requires a Perception + Primal-Urge roll against the local Gauntlet rating. For each success, the lynx can see 100 feet without obstruction. Every object, living or not, appears translucent and immaterial. It's unfortunately rather difficult to focus on one thing when you can see through everything; it often requires a Perception + Alertness roll to notice details. The vision stops at ground level, but the Qualmi can see into basements or cellars if her sight extends far enough. This Gift lasts for one turn per success.

Simba Gifts

• **Majesty (Level One)** — As the Level Two Bagheera Gift: Lawgiver's Legacy, except it involves Manipulation + Intimidation. Other Simba are immune to its effects.

• **Submit (Level One)** — An important trick in any ruler's arsenal is the ability to make his subjects obey whether they want to or not. By mastering her body, a Simba can force others to fall to their knees or roll over on their backs in submission.

System: Like the Level Four Philodox Gift: Roll Over, although the Simba must spend a point of Gnosis for every Rank he is short of Rank Four (thus, a Rank One Simba must spend three Gnosis to use this Gift). The Gift can't change a target's mind, but it can master his body if the Simba earns at least three successes in a resisted Willpower roll (difficulty 7). This Gift lasts for one turn per success. Simba are immune to this Gift if it comes from one of their kind.

• **Armor of Kings (Level Two)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift: Luna's Armor.

• **Fireroar (Level Three)** — Bellowing like a thunderclap, the Simba vomits a ball of fire on his foes. This burning exhalation continues to blaze until either it or its target is consumed.

System: This Gift costs one Gnosis point to activate; the Simba blasts out a fireball worth one health level of damage for each point of the Simba's current Gnosis. A successful Dexterity + Brawl roll puts the fireball where the lion wants it; extra successes do not add to damage. It burns anyone

within 10 feet of the blast unless he makes a Dexterity + Dodge roll (difficulty 8). If the target has already acted this turn, the Fireroar inflicts its full damage. Next turn, it will burn for half that damage igniting anything flammable in its range. On the third turn, the Gift's fire burns for one additional health level, then dies. A fire begun by the Gift will burn like any normal blaze (see **Werewolf**, p. 188).

• **King of Beasts (Level Four)** — Like the Level Two Philodox Gift: King of the Beasts, except that it affects all animals within 300 feet.

• **Obedience (Level Five)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift.

Swara Gifts

• **Diamond Claws (Level One)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Razor Claws. Since Swara cannot fully retract their claws, they find this Gift especially useful.

• **Impala's Flight (Level One)** — As the Level Three common Gift, but obviously easier for the swift Swara.

• **Sense the Unnatural (Level Two)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Walking Between Worlds (Level Two)** — As the Level Four common Gift. Until recently, the ease with which the Swara learn this Gift was a closely guarded secret.

• **Dance of the Chaya (Level Three)** — One of the greatest favors a Bastet can offer a spirit is the chance to ride in his skin for a while. Although most Bastet would never consider such a "loan," many Swara see voluntary possession as a service, not a chore. This Gift, which begins with a frenzied dance, allows a spirit to hitch a ride in the Swara's body. The Swara, in turn, gets various side benefits tied to the type of spirit summoned.

System: After either checking the Umbra or using a Rite of Summoning to call a spirit to his side, the Swara rolls Charisma + Enigmas (difficulty 7). The Gift lasts two turns per success, and allows the Swara to do things that are normally impossible — wild contortions, great feats of strength, flight, etc. The exact effects will depend on the spirit involved, the Bastet, their circumstances, and the relationship between the three, but it should emphasize drama over game systems.

• **Ghost Caress (Level Four)** — This Gift, so named because most people blame ghosts for its effects, allows the Swara to use sympathetic magic to send sensations across a distance. Although the magic can't physically harm someone, it can drive him mad as phantom pains or pleasures wash over him without perceptible cause.

System: To reach across space, the Swara spends a Willpower point and rolls Gnosis. The difficulty depends on the distance between the Bastet and her target; short distances (under a mile) are difficulty 7, while great distances (up to 50 miles) are difficulty 10. Whatever she does to her focus from that point onward passes the sensation on the person on the receiving end. Each success gives the Swara one action to perform. When those actions are done, the spell ends.

• **Speed Beyond Thought (Level Four)** — As the Level Four Gift.

• **River of Blood (Level Five)** — The soil of Africa has been bathed in the blood of its inhabitants for tens of thousands of years. A Swara can call that spilled blood together through the soil and give it form, creating a pool, a river, a mass of tentacles, or a variety of other things. In modern times, this bond to blood seems to be limited to African soil; if a Swara has ever used this Gift outside his native land, no tales of the event survive.

System: It costs a Rage point to pull a large amount of blood together. A successful Manipulation + Primal-Urge roll is also required. The roll's difficulty depends on location; a place that's seen a lot of bloodshed (a watering hole, the site of a massacre, etc.) is only 7, while a remote mountain peak would be 10. It takes several turns for the blood to coalesce into solid form; once it does, the cheetah can work it into any of the following shapes: a wall, a column, a shower, a geyser, a pool, a river, a rope, a bridge, or a mass of "arms" which wrap the target in a liquid embrace. All forms have Strength or Health levels based on the cat's successes. For each success, the blood attains two dots of Strength or two Health levels. Although it remains liquid, the River of Blood can be as solid as thick sand or as fluid as water. This Gift lasts for one scene, then the blood drains back into the earth. The Swara who uses the Gift will be sad for hours afterward; the blood of innumerable deaths has passed through his hands.

Rites

While Bastet don't place the same importance on rites as Garou do, they still recognize that some occasions are significant enough to warrant an elaborate ritual. Bastet thus take their rites seriously, even if they use them only rarely. In game terms, Bastet rites function much like Garou ones. Each rite level requires at least 10 minutes' worth of ceremony to enact, though most can be performed alone. The cat must set aside a ritual space by clearing and preparing a spot for a sacred working. She must be in the proper state of mind to invoke the requisite magics, and among some tribes that might take a bit of preparation in itself.

Overlapping Rites

Many Bastet rites duplicate Garou rites in effect, if not in form. Storytellers and players should work together to define variations in a rite, which might be as minor or elaborate as desired. The following rites are shared between Bastet and Garou: Bind the Spirit-Fetish (Rite of the Fetish), Dedication Rite (Rite of Talisman Dedication), Rite of Cleansing, Rite of Contrition, Rite of Summoning, Rite of the Opened Bridge, and Rouse the Sleeping Spirit (Rite of Spirit Awakening).

Jamak Promise Bond

Bastet are solitary sorts, but even they like to have friends and allies they can rely upon. Jamak are the closest of these allies, and this rite represents a mystic bond between the two that both parties take very seriously. The two

participants meet in a secluded area, and recite certain promises: to help one another when possible, to always be truthful, to respect one another, and to trust one another. They also agree to meet once in awhile to share secrets and enjoy one another's company. By the end of the rite, both the Bastet and the spirit feel happy and content, for the Bond carries with it a sense of fellowship and love.

System: Standard roll. A Bastet may only have one Jamak at a time. Breaking the Bond is a very bad idea, and carries with it a reduction in rank commensurate with the strength of the spirit in question (minor Gafflings might lower it by one, while a major totem spirit could lower it by up to three).

Rite of Warding

This simple rite is performed around any site of importance, typically the borders of a Bastet's territory, or the site of an important gathering. The rite bars the site against lesser intrusions and alerts the ritemaster against greater ones.

System: By spending a Gnosis point, the ritemaster ties herself to the place for the duration of the Warding. The Warding continues for one hour per success unless the ritemaster either leaves the area or dismisses the guard. For as long as it lasts, anyone who enters the area triggers a mystic feeling of unease; the ritemaster does not know exactly who or what the culprit is, but she knows something isn't right. Intruders cannot enter a warded site at all without succeeding in a Willpower roll (difficulty 5 + the caster's successes) — the energies of the place simply drive them away for no explicable reason. Even spirits cannot pass through a warded area without alerting the ritemaster.

Rite of Recognition

To gain a new rank, the Bastet must perform this ceremony before his peers, spirits, or both. While it doesn't have to be done with others, this ritual is often performed with other Bastet, simply as a point of pride. To petition for a new rank, the werecat stands in a circle prepared for the rite with herbs and, if possible, trophies of his achievements. Speaking the ritual phrases, he recites his deeds, relates his accomplishments since attaining the last rank, and demands to be recognized for what he has done. If he succeeds, the others agree and declare his new standing; if not, they tell him why they're dissatisfied and deny his petition. These reasons can range anywhere from a lack of progress to bad politics. The Bastet may only perform this rite once per season.

System: In addition to the usual rite roll, the Bastet must make a good impression (either Charisma or Manipulation + either Enigmas, Etiquette, Expression, Leadership, Occult, or Politics, depending on the werecat, his audience, and attending circumstances). The difficulty for this roll often depends on what the petitioner has done in the past, and how he stands in the eyes of his jury. Unless the werecat does something truly striking between attempts, this rite rises in difficulty each time it's failed, then repeated. Neither the Bastet nor the spirits respect a loser.

Fetishes and Talens

Bastet around the world have an incredible diversity of fetishes and talens available to them. Some of the most well known are presented here.

Frog Skin

Level 2, Gnosis 5

Favored by the Balam, this skin, typically wrapped around the hand in the manner of a glove, allows the user to neutralize all manner of poisons with but a touch. Normal poisons (even man-made ones) require a simple touch, while supernatural poisons (including Wyrm toxins) require the expenditure of a Gnosis point.

To make a Frog Skin, one must bind a tree frog spirit into the skin of a tree frog. Gaia help the Bastet who kills a tree frog for this purpose, however!

Ice Knife

Level 2, Gnosis 6

This weapon is favored by the Qualmi, both because it is easy to make and because it affords them excellent protection against both spiritual and mundane threats. It inflicts aggravated damage against both spirits and physical creatures (including supernatural creatures), but carries with it a special ban — it melts if the temperature of its surroundings (not including the Qualmi) ever exceeds 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Qualmi in seasonal environments (such as, say, the United States) often make pacts with ice spirits, wherein the Ice Knife melts at the turn of Spring (releasing the spirit) and the spirit returns the following Fall to be bound into another incarnation of the fetish. Indeed, the spirit in question may even be a Jamak to the Qualmi.

Silver Hakarr

Level 4, Gnosis 7

Found exclusively among the Bastet of sub-Saharan Africa, the hakarr is the Bastet equivalent of the Garou klaive (and is treated accordingly when it comes to its creation and use). It is, in essence, a silver hunga-munga, and is notable both because it is a many-bladed monstrosity capable inflicting terrible wounds in melee combat and for the fact that it can be effectively hurled to strike foes at range. The difficulty to attack with a hakarr is 6; it inflicts Strength + 2 aggravated damage, and can be hurled up to (Strength x 3) yards. Bagheera in particular favor these weapons, but they are also used to some extent by the Simba.

Judgment Hammer

Level 5, Gnosis 8

A treasured relic among the Khan, this mighty weapon doubles the Strength of any who wield it. Furthermore, each successful strike with the weapon allows the user to spend a Gnosis point to create an effect exactly like that of the level 2 Shadow Lord Gift: Clap of Thunder. The Judgment Hammer is quite heavy, and cannot be lifted at all until it is activated. Even then, it cannot be wielded properly by anyone with Strength less than 5.

Foe's Heart

Gnosis 5

These talens are gruesome and difficult to make, but quite potent. To make a Foe's Heart, one must first engage a foe in single combat, killing him without leaving her breed form. Once this is accomplished, the foe's heart is removed and invested with a spirit of the Wyld. At any time thereafter, the talen's possessor can eat the heart to fully regain all of her Willpower.

The designation of "foe" in the talen's name is important; a being weaker than the Bastet doesn't qualify.

Jaguar Teeth

Gnosis 6

These powerful talens appear to be normal arrows with heads made of obsidian. Once fired from any sort of bow, however, their magic activates, allowing them to inflict terrible wounds to supernatural creatures. The Jaguar Tooth inflicts aggravated damage once it strikes, but it has a secondary effect as well: the act of striking the target shatters the arrowhead, scattering thousands of obsidian shards throughout the wound. So long as even one shard remains in the victim, the wound cannot be healed by supernatural means. Normal healing is not impeded. Jaguar Teeth are normally only found among the Balam, but the Khan make use of jade-tipped arrows which function in a similar fashion.

To create a Jaguar's Tooth, a spirit of death must be bound into the arrowhead.

Quicksilver

Gnosis 2

This talen is nothing more than a vial of mercury that is bound to a water spirit. Each vial contains 6 applications of quicksilver, and each application allows the user to take one additional person with him into the Umbra, provided he can make the journey himself (typically by means of the Gift: Walking Between Worlds).



Corax

There's about twelve of them around the fire and maybe four of them want to believe me. The rest are looking from one to another like they're mentally swapping recipes for hot wings. It's typical, really.

The leader, a big one with red fur and a dangly earring hanging halfway down to his shoulder, stamps on the ground a couple of times. This shuts the rest of them up. "Are you sure of what you saw?" he asks me. He even nods twice, to make himself look more serious.

"Of course I'm sure," I say, "There were three of them, big as his momma—" I point to one particularly sour-looking specimen at the back — "and twice as ugly. Warty skin, long tongues, big eyes – they're kind of hard to mistake."

I'm rewarded with a snarl from the one at the back and dirty looks from some of his buddies. I flash them a beaky grin. Ugly steps forward, around the fire, and jabs a finger into the big one's chest. "How do we know he's telling the truth?" he demands.

I step forward. "Look, you there. What's your name?"

Ugly turns to me. "Walks-in-High-Places, eater of carrion. Why do you ask?" He's got a lot of teeth, most of them yellow, and he bares all of them in my direction.

"Just curious, which is the point, really. I like knowing things. I like knowing your name, I like knowing what the weather's going to be, and I like knowing why there are truckloads of glowing green goop being hauled out of the warehouse on pier 23. Capiche?"

He thinks about it. His brow furrows. Mountain ranges were raised with less effort. I ignore him and turn to the leader. "The next shipment's coming in Thursday, half an hour short of midnight. The toads will be there. I don't think they'll be expecting you."

The crowd murmurs to itself. They're all thinking ahead to Thursday, thinking about the fight. The leader looks around for a second and figures out his pack's sold. He's not dumb. He's polite, though, and he bows. "I thank you," he says, with grave dignity. "What do we owe you for this gift of knowledge?"

"Nothing," I say, and get airborne. And then, like a cool breeze, I'm gone. The fire vanishes below me as I catch some air, and head up, up and away. The sounds of the Garou arguing fade into the distance, mixing in with the million voices of the night. I do my best to listen to them all.

And as I do, just one thought keeps running through my head: Man, I love my job.

Legend

Where we came from? It's a long story. We were the last Breed Gaia made, you know. So, after about fifteen minutes of total chaos once all the other Breeds got let loose, She decided to make us. Why? So we could keep an eye on everyone else for Her. You know how the littlest kid is always the one who runs to Mom and Dad with every little thing you've done wrong? That's us. And to make sure we did it right, She gave us a few extra features, and a few *geasa* that make life a real pain in the ass. You know why we can't shut up? Gaia. She wanted to make sure we wouldn't cover for the rest of the boojums out there, so She gave us a compulsion to talk to anyone who'd listen. You want to know why we can't settle down? It's because She put wanderlust in our veins. We're built to go everywhere, see everything, and then spread the news. Information wants to be free, but we're there in case it needs a helping hand to get loose.

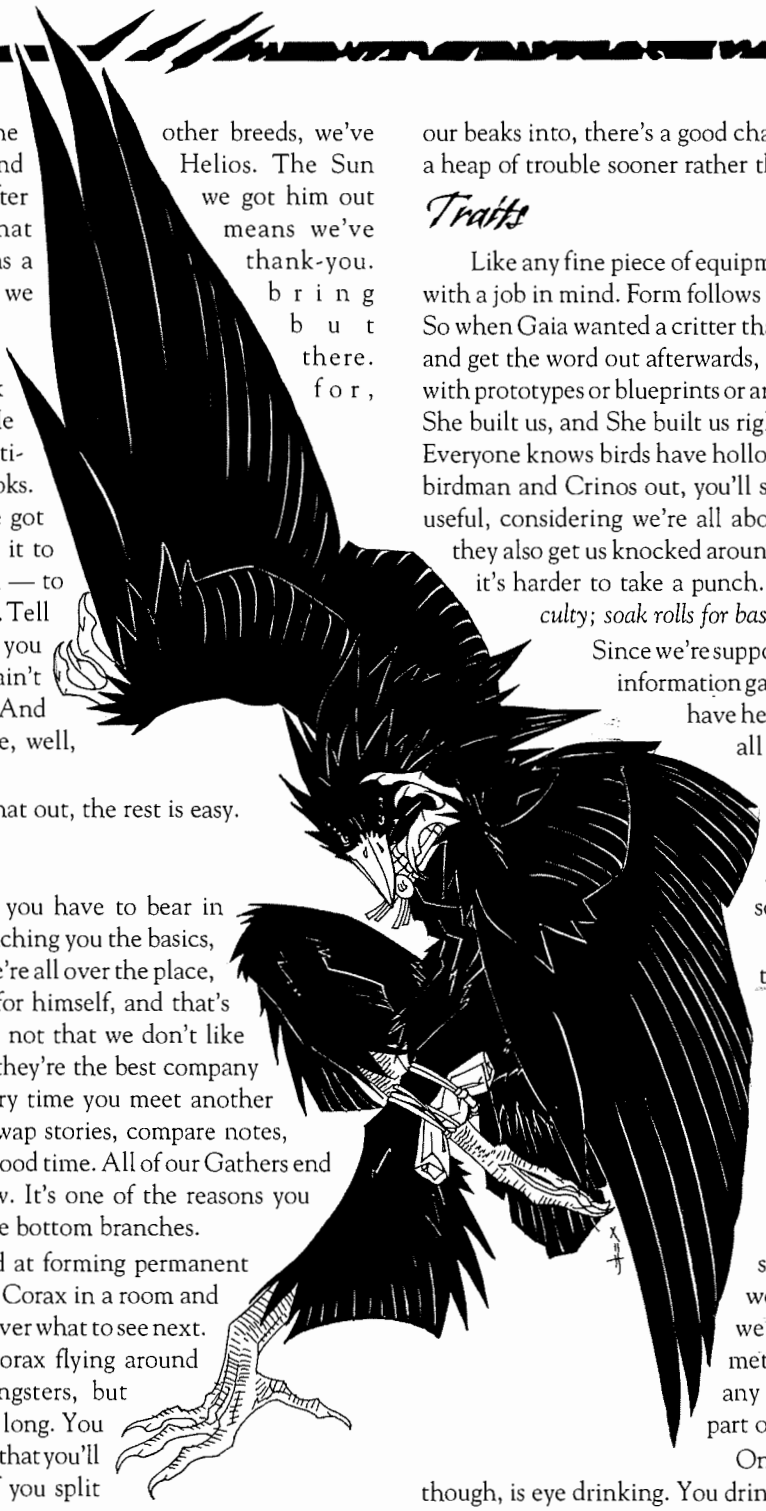
Mind you, back when Gaia made us, we were white, and I'm talking pure as the driven snow here. How'd we get turned black? Well, that's a whole other story, having to do with the time we tricked the Sun into coming out of his house on a day he didn't want to. For a celestial body, Helios ain't too bright, but he is mighty warm, and he followed a little too close when we finally coaxed him outside with a mirror and a big heaping of bull. If you doubt me, go ask the Sun. He'll tell you the same thing. That's why we got handed over into his service, by the way, but that's another story, and we're short on time, junior.

The Corax Today

We Corax happen to occupy a very privileged place in the modern world. Seen the Internet? Compared to a half-dozen Corax playing whisper-down-the-lane, it's slow as frozen jam. Our job, plain and simple, is to find stuff out and then tell everyone what we saw. Doesn't matter if it was Mommy kissing Santa Claus or a pack of tentacled three-eyed freaks getting ready to rumble in a chemical plant in Jersey, we spread the word. It's what we do, and we're very good at it. We were built to get in, see what was going on, and get the hell out so we could spread the word. Information's no damn good if the messenger never makes it.

That's one of the reasons we don't fight, in case you were wondering. Oh, we're nasty enough in a scrap, and we've got a few tricks up our sleeves, but the sad truth is we're not built for it. Fight sneaky, the way we do everything else, and you're more likely to survive.

The only other thing we like doing is playing jokes. More often than not, we use 'em to get the point across. You wouldn't believe how many Garou won't listen. So every so often you need to set one of these jokers up so he's in a position to listen to you. Then, once he's stuck wiping the cream pie off his face, you can tell him about the chemical sludge that's getting piped into the local aquifer.



Unlike most of the other breeds, we've got two bosses: Raven and Helios. The Sun took an interest in us after we got him out of the house, and that means we've got all sorts of Gifts as a thank-you. Some say it's because we bring things into the light but that's neither here nor there. The other guy we work for, big surprise, is Raven. He gave us our spirit, our attitude, and our good looks. Everything we are, we got from him. So you owe it to yourself — and to him — to obey his laws. Find stuff. Tell people. Laugh when you can, because the world ain't getting any prettier. And most of all fly, because, well, because you can.

Once you figure that out, the rest is easy.

Organization

Here's something you have to bear in mind: Once I finish teaching you the basics, you're on your own. We're all over the place, you see. Every Corax for himself, and that's the way we like it. It's not that we don't like other raven-kin; hell, they're the best company you can hope for. Every time you meet another one, it's a chance to swap stories, compare notes, and have one hell of a good time. All of our Gathers end up that way, you know. It's one of the reasons you don't want to sit on the bottom branches.

But we're no good at forming permanent arrangements. Put five Corax in a room and you'll get six opinions over what to see next. You'll find gangs of Corax flying around together, mostly youngsters, but those groups never last long. You get older and you realize that you'll cover more territory if you split up. Besides, you don't want anyone looking over your wing and telling you where to fly next, even if they're doing it with the best of intentions.

As for specific operations, well, I can't tell you that because I don't know. What I can tell you, though, is that we're everywhere. Off in the Umbra? We're there, and some of us even like to come back. Hi-tech business? We're there, too. Japan? Europe? The Internet? You name it, one of us has an eye on it. That's another good reason to talk to all the Corax you meet, by the way. You'll want someone who'll notice if you go missing, and with the sorts of stuff we poke our beaks into, there's a good chance you'll find yourself in a heap of trouble sooner rather than later.

Traits

Like any fine piece of equipment, we were put together with a job in mind. Form follows function, and all that jazz. So when Gaia wanted a critter that could fly far, look sharp, and get the word out afterwards, She didn't waste any time with prototypes or blueprints or any of that garbage. Instead, She built us, and She built us right. First of all, we're light. Everyone knows birds have hollow bones, but when you go birdman and Crinos out, you'll still have 'em. That's very useful, considering we're all about flying. The trouble is, they also get us knocked around a bit. Light bones means it's harder to take a punch. [*Athletics rolls are -1 difficulty; soak rolls for bashing damage are at +2*]

Since we're supposed to be spies, excuse me, information gathering specialists, we also have heightened senses. Now, not all of them are boosted — you can't smell when you've got a beak, for one thing — but we can see like we've got a sniper scope in each eye.

Oh, and we're immune to silver. I thought that might get your attention. It's one of the perks of being handed off from Luna to Helios back in the day. What? You don't know that one? I'll tell you later. Right now, we've got the basics to cover. The short version is that we can wear all the silver toe rings we want, but gold, the solar metal, is *verboten*, at least in any of the feathered forms. It's part of the deal.

One of the biggest things, though, is eye drinking. You drink an eye from a corpse — don't make that face, you'll take to it quick enough — and you see the last thing that poor schmuck saw before he died. Only about a minute or so, but this is one of the things we do that nobody else does better; hell, they don't do it at all. You want some interesting information? Go for the dead man's eyes.

There are a couple of downsides to being Corax, too, though I prefer to think of them as "occupational challenges." For one thing, we can't shut up. Don't tell me you noticed. It's disrespectful. For another thing, we can't help but go looking at shiny things. If it sparkles and we see it, we're there. Just try to maintain a modicum of caution as you

come in for a landing, though, Junior. Sparklies are fomor's favorite bait for us, so think on that the next time you do a power dive to scoop up a dime. It takes real willpower [*Willpower roll, difficulty 7*] to be able to look away.

Breeds

There are two breeds of Corax, homid and corvid. That being said, it don't matter none which side you come from, 'cause we don't discriminate. Like the man said, we got both kinds of music here, country and western. Seriously, kid, there are a few slight differences physically, but socially, everyone treats everyone else the same. In either case, it's spirit more than heredity that makes the raven, if you know what I mean. Each of us is made as much as born, and you can have a Corax parent of either breed. That Corax, when the urge takes her, picks out a likely candidate, usually from among Kinfolk. At that point, the Corax in question does a rite to make a spirit egg, and then that particular creation gets hog-tied to your soul and hidden in the Umbra. When the spirit egg hatches, the new Corax gets a double dose of soul, and there you go. It's more complicated than that, of course, it always is, but there's the basics for you.

Oh, one last thing — there ain't no metis Corax. You can't tie a fetish egg to the spirit of a Corax-Corax cross-breed, because Raven's a slippery cuss and he likes us to spread the wealth. Bear that in mind when you're thinking about nesting. It can be heartbreaking.

• **Corvid:** Corvids are born ravens. They generally undergo First Change at about 8-10 months, and live a normal human lifespan, as opposed to a normal bird one. They are occasionally cliquish, talkative even by our standards (in bird or human; it doesn't matter), and fuzzy on the notion of property rights where shiny things are concerned.

Corvids know nothing about Computer, Law, Linguistics, Medicine, Politics or Science when they start out (may only be purchased with Freebie Points at character creation), but they do know their way around the sky (2 dots in Flight).

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

• **Homid:** Homid Corax tend toward the twitchy loner type. They're tall, skinny, and have long fingers, and most of 'em have noses that can politely be called "sharp." They tend to take very serious interest in stuff — what normal folks call obsessive-compulsive — and they like to move around a lot. Homids get screwed in the Flight department (unable to take Flight except with Freebie Points at character creation) but pretty much have the rest of the spectrum to play with.

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

All Corax begin play with "Raven's Gifts" — an additional point in Subterfuge, Enigmas and Dodge, representing their bond with Raven. All Corax also begin with the same Traits: Rage 1, Gnosis 6, Willpower 3

Tribes

Technically, we ain't got tribes. We're generalists, built to survive anywhere, under any circumstances. That being said, it just doesn't make any sense to break us up into "tribes," where one batch of us can call down Helios and another can eat eyeballs to see what a dead man saw, but never the twain shall meet. Gaia wants us all to be able to do what we have to in order to bring back the stories. And besides, we're all such blabbermouths that none of us would be able to keep from spilling the beans on our Gifts or Rites or whatever.

That being said, we're a global breed. We went intercontinental back in the days when obsidian arrowheads were high-tech, and that means that we've got little subcultures, if you know what I mean. You'll meet someone from every little branch of the family sooner or later, but it's good to get a little primer first, so you don't accidentally make more of an ass of yourself than you intended. Here are the big breakdowns. There's a few dozen smaller ones out there, but these are the ones you absolutely need to know so you don't get punched in the face.

• **Leshy** — Leshy are the Corax from Russia and that neck of the woods. Most of them are bald in Homid form, not to mention missing one ear, but they make pretty birds. They're tricksters as bad as any of us, forest-critters who keep to the deep woods when they can. Lots of the Leshy are corvid — it's maybe 75% — but the homids are pretty sharp. Leshy are more paranoid than the rest of us put together, but that just makes them very good at certain types of spying expeditions. And once they start talking, pack a lunch. You're gonna be there a while.

• **The Gulls of Battle** — Make no mistake, kid, the raven-kin who live in Scandinavia — or act like it — aren't fans of seagulls. They take their name from the name the Norse gave 'em in poetry, and if you give one lip about it you're going to wind up flat on your can. On one hand they have a lot of respect for Hugin and Munin — Odin's two best buddies, Thought and Memory — and spend a hell of a lot of time on the wing looking for stuff to schmooze about. On the other hand, they like corpses as much as any of us (and more than some). If you want to find a fight, follow the Gulls. I mean, the Valkyries used to ask these guys directions. Think about it.

• **Tulugaq** — Tulugaq is the name the Corax of the Pure Lands give themselves. The word itself is Inuit, but none of the rest seem to mind, so who am I to raise a fuss? The Tulugaq (you pronounce it just like it's spelled, honest) are cool customers; at least that's the impression they'll give you right before you realize they've stolen your shorts. They're the biggest tricksters of all of us and they take the job damn seriously, which means they're always practicing. Raven and Coyote are tied up pretty tight in a lot of Amerind myths, so it's no surprise that the Tulugaq hang with the Nuwisha more than most. What is a surprise is that they're still speaking to one another after all the jokes they've pulled.

It takes a while for a Tulugaq to open up to outsiders, but once you get one to trust you, they're as chatty as anyone else. Getting them to trust you is the hard part — a lot of the time you need to spend a few weeks or months following one around and learning the way they think. If you can pull that off — and a really good practical joke along with it — you'll be all right.

Forms

We've got three forms, kid: Corvid, Crinos, and Homid. Truth be told, we don't like going into Crinos much. It looks kind of goofy, and you walk funny while you're in it.

• **Homid:** When we're in Homid, we tend to look like underfed punk rockers. Black hair, black eyes, black wardrobe, you name it. Most of us are thin and don't get good tans. And if you want to spot a Corax in a crowd of monkeys, look at the fingers. We tend to have ring fingers longer than our middle ones.

• **Crinos:** Crinos form just plain looks funny. While we're in it, we've got feathers, sort of, and a beak, sort of, and walk around on two legs. We've got wings, not arms, and our fingers are claws. And the feet? I just don't want to talk about the feet. There's no good reason to go into Crinos form except to fight, because the claws — hands and feet here — are nasty [*Corax in Crinos can claw for aggravated damage*]. By the way, it's hard to walk when you're in Crinos, so most of us spread our wings while we're doing it. It's the only way to stay upright.

• **Corvid:** And Corvid form? You're looking at it, baby. We're talking big honkin' ravens here — four and a half feet of wingspan. That's no chicken we're talking about, no bird-feeder robin. By the way, if you get in a fight when you're in Corvid, go for the eyes, then fly like hell. Trust me on this one. It's good advice.

Form Statistics

	Crinos	Corvid
Str:	+1	-1
Sta:	+1	-
Dex:	+1	+1
App:	-1	-
Man:	-2	-3
Per:	+3	+3

Gifts

We've got our own special Gifts, and we've also gotten pretty good at swiping everyone else's. I'll just talk about ours, though. You're not going to hear this stuff anywhere else.

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

System: The Gift requires a Perception + Expression (or Mimicry) roll, with the difficulty based on the complexity of the sound.

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

System: With a successful Perception + Stealth roll the Corax can pick up hints as to the nature of enemies in the area. Usually a Corax who uses this Gift successfully can pick out the number and type of his opponents; with five or more successes sometimes more can be learned.

• **Morse (Level One)** — By merely tapping out his message onto any hard surface and using this Gift, a Corax can make sure that someone out there gets his message *right now* — because there may not be time for a later. This Gift is taught by a machine-spirit.

System: With this Gift, the Corax can tap out a Morse code message on any surface and, by spending a Gnosis point (and succeeding on a Wits + Empathy roll, difficulty 8), have the nearest Corax hear the message clear as day.

• **Raven's Gleaning (Level One)** — In essence a value detector, the Gift allows a Corax to look at a shiny object and, at a glance, discover whether or not it's worth picking up. Raven himself, or a raven-spirit acting under orders, teaches this Gift.

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

• **Word Beyond (Level One)** — When traveling through the Umbra, Corax often feel the need to leave information for their fellow birds. This Gift allows a Corax to create a recognizable sigil out of whatever's handy. A spirit in service to Coyote teaches this Gift.

System: In the Umbra, the Corax (by rolling Wits + Expression, difficulty 6) can create a marker out of available materials for any other Corax who come by. The number of successes indicates the complexity of the message that can be encrypted into the marker, which can be decrypted by another Corax rolling Perception + Occult (difficulty 7).

• **Razor Feathers (Level Two)** — One of the Corax's few combat-related Gifts, Razor Feathers operates only when the Corax is in Crinos form. The primary effect of Razor Feathers is to make the feathers along the edge of the raven's wing hard and sharp as steel. The hardened feathers are strong enough to parry knives or claws, and are sharp enough to slice easily through unprotected flesh — or even stronger materials. Razor Feathers is taught by a steel-spirit.

System: To access this Gift, the Corax spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Stamina (difficulty 6). The number of successes indicates the number of turns that the effect lasts. With Razor Feathers active, the Corax can use the Wing Swipe maneuver (pg. 165).

• **Sky's Beneficence (Level Two)** — Sky's Beneficence allows a Corax to drop a package of any sort onto a target from any altitude that the bird can fly to. Any aerial spirit can teach this Gift.

System: Sky's Beneficence requires a Perception + Melee roll (difficulty 7). If this Gift is used, the Corax automatically takes into account factors like crosswinds, precipitation and so on, meaning that the difficulty of the roll is *always* 7. The Corax must be able to see her target to use this Gift.

• **Eyes of the Eagle (Level Three)** — One of the few Corax Gifts available in any form, Eyes of the Eagle allows the wereraven's vision to pierce fog, smoke, cloud and darkness. When this Gift is called upon, the Corax can suddenly see through anything short of a solid object. Eagle-spirits teach this Gift.

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

• **Hummingbird Dart (Level Three)** — Hummingbird Dart permits a Corax to pluck one of her own feathers and throw it like a dart. A Hummingbird spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The Hummingbird Dart requires that the player spend a point of Rage and then roll Dexterity + Melee (difficulty 5). The thrown feather does Dexterity +3 dice of lethal damage. If a Corax chooses to use this Gift after calling for Razor Feathers, the results can be vicious — the damage is aggravated.

• **Mynah's Touch (Level Three)** — This Gift allows a Corax to know the details of any Garou Gift of a lower level than the Corax herself. This knowledge flees the instant that the Corax actually uses the "borrowed" Gift, but in the meantime an impressive body of knowledge is there for the taking. This Gift is only taught by mynah-spirits.

System: The use of this Gift demands two points of Gnosis, as well as a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 6). If there are any successes, the Corax using the Gift can now pick and choose knowledge of a single Gift from the entire list of Garou Gifts lower in level than he is. The stolen Gift can be used once.

• **Airt Sense (Level Four)** — As the spirit Charm.

• **Gauntlet Runner (Level Four)** — Any Wyld-spirit can teach this Gift, which allows the Corax to lower the Gauntlet in her vicinity.

System: A roll of Wits + Enigmas (difficulty 8) reduces the Gauntlet by 1 for every two successes. The area affected can be up to twenty feet on a side.

• **Helios' Child (Level Four)** — Occasionally, the Sun deigns to lend a bit of himself to a Corax in need. This present



takes the form of a ball of lambent flame that materializes in the Corax' hand. This fire doesn't burn the Corax, but ignites anything else it touches. One of Helios' spirit-servants teaches this Gift.

System: To summon Helios' Child, the Corax first asks Helios for help. Beyond the request, the Corax must spend two points of Gnosis and close his eyes for a brief second (and roll Manipulation + Subterfuge, difficulty 7). When the Corax opens his eyes, if the Gift has functioned properly, a little piece of the sun will be resting in his palm.

• **Gift of Eyes (Level Five)** — With Gift of Eyes, a Corax can pass along a vision from an eye he's drunk to any non-Corax he chooses. The image is transferred in all its glory and gore, just as the Corax himself first saw it. Raven or one of his spirits teaches this Gift.

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

• **Portents (Level Five)** — Taught by a wind-spirit, this Gift is a look at the most important events of the near future.

System: By spending two Gnosis points and rolling Intelligence + Enigmas (difficulty 8), the Corax can see one future event with clarity. Portents must be used at the discretion of the Storyteller.

Rites

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

This one turns on the sun, no matter where you are or what time of day it is. Damn useful when you're poking around in the dark, let me tell you.

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

Rite of the Fetish Egg (Level Two Mystic)

Making a spirit egg requires some hefty investment. The binding is done with a feather or a human hair from the "parent" and ensures that the egg and the kid/chick stay linked until such time as he can handle getting the extras. If the binding breaks, it devastates the poor kid — autism is the usual response. The parent usually just goes into depression. It ain't pretty.

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

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

Rite of Becoming (Level Two)

This one's important. It's all about how you become you.

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

If the braid is destroyed, the Corax takes a health level of damage and must make a Wits roll (difficulty 6) to return to the Near Umbra.

Rite of Memory Theft (Level Four)

This one is saved for the real screwups. We don't do it often, and we don't do it lightly, and whoever ends up leading the rite ends up with all of the loser's memories between her own ears. The target ends up rewound to right after First Change, so you don't need to teach 'em not to make a mess on the carpet. And if we're really lucky, the poor sap grows up a little better this time.

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

The Corax performing the rite must then seal and crush the box, at which point all of the memories contained enter his mind. This is not a burden to be undertaken lightly.

This rite costs a point each of Gnosis, Willpower and Rage, and lasts as long as it takes to sing all of the deeds of the victim. The rite also calls for a contested Willpower roll between the Corax casting the rite and the target, though each additional Corax present lowers the ritemaster's difficulty by 1, to a minimum of 3.

This rite can only be used on other Corax.

Stereotypes

Sammy Eyes-On-The-Sewer shares the straight stuff:

Ananasi: Spiders don't think or talk in straight lines, and that's something you've got to keep in mind. If an Ananasi ever asks you, straight up, for anything, you know the crap is about to hit the fan. Keep your eyes open, and your ears too, when you're dealing with spiders. They're much more comfortable talking to things they've *caught*.

Bastet: There's only one way a cat likes to see a bird, and that's as dinner. It makes it hard to have a lengthy conversation, all things considered. On top of that, most of the Bastet are *schnorrers* — they'll try to take you for everything you've got without giving you boo in return. Play to their vanity; it's your only hope.

But remember, the bastards can climb trees.

Gurahl: The great thing about the Gurahl is that they, unlike everyone else in our little family, don't think they know it all. That means they like to listen, and they're good at it. And if you tell them enough interesting stuff, they'll tell you something right back — something about their notion of fair play.

Garou: You ever hear about one of those court cases where a kid is accused of killing his mother, and his dad's standing there in the background looking like he just got hit on the back of the head with a shovel. He loves the kid, but wants his liver on a plate. Well, that's how I feel about the Garou. Gaia must love 'em because She made so many different types of 'em, after all, and they've done as much as anyone to try to knock the universe back on track.

That being said, any Garou's one bad day away from pure savagery. They, more then any of the other Breeds, have a long and bloody history with the word "genocide" plastered all over it. We don't forget that. We *can't* forget that, because we need to remind the Garou of it every so often.

I mean, yeah, they can be good friends. Good people, even, and good to have at your back in a fight. But pick the ones you trust carefully, and watch your back around the ones you don't. Tell 'em what they need to know, but never expect them to say "thank you." And half the time you're going to have to trick them into doing what they need to, and then listen to them brag about how it was their idea all along. But they're the best we've got, kid, so grin and bear it.

Mokolé: Mokolé are slow. They think long, slow thoughts, they tell long, slow stories, and they make up their minds about as fast as cold molasses decides to come downhill in January. They're kin, too, in a weird sort of way — all us bird types and them lizard types are distant cousins, and that buys us a little respect. They've got old secrets tucked away in their lizard brains, but it takes a long time to talk 'em into sharing anything with you.

Nagah: I can't even prove these guys exist, so all I've got for you is hearsay. I *hear* that they're close-mouthed, suspicious, and solitary. I *hear* that they're honorable, and they'll trade you fact for fact. And I *hear* that finding them is damn near impossible, which is why so many of our folk like chasing the damn rumors.

Nuwisha: Old Man Coyote and his kin are the only ones out there who can match us joke for joke. They're not the most accurate sources of information, but they're great to hang around with. Just never let the coyote pick the bar, and never tell one you've got his back. It's safest that way.

Ratkin: The first thing you need to know about Ratkin is that they're paranoid. The second is that half the time, there's a good reason for you to be out to get them. Ratkin are dirty, and I'm not talking hygiene here. They're doing stuff in those tunnels you wouldn't *believe*. So keep an eye out for them, and don't hesitate to take one down if necessary. Just never fight them on their own turf. You'll lose.

Rokea: Rokea are all about appetite. They don't really give a rat's ass about all the politicking that's going on up on land, except where it directly affects them. Remember that, and bring plenty of food, and you'll deal with them just fine. Forget it, and you'll end up as lunch.

Look, three eyes have seen this thing — the two in my head and the dead man's that I drank. If you don't believe me, that's fine, but don't come crying to me when you wake up ass-deep in fomori.

Gurahl

The hunters leaned over the body of their kill, a young black bear they had found wandering in the deep woods.

"Clean shot," the tall one said to his wiry partner. "He'll make a good 'un for mounting."

His companion nodded. "I can't even see where the bullet holes are." He bent over closer to search the body, his stubby fingers ruffling the coarse bear-fur as he searched for the wounds. Suddenly he pulled back, his eyes wide with something akin to fear.

"Jeez, I can't find no holes," he said. "The wounds're gone!"

The tall hunter bent over the bear, not quite believing what he heard. Just as he placed his hand on the bear, the beast's eyes opened and the creature shrugged.

"What the—?" he backed up, not believing what he saw. The bear stood up, his body changing until he loomed over the two frightened hunters. The creature continued to change, his body taking on the horrendous shape of a man-bear nearly twice the height of the taller of the men.

With a roar that echoed through the forest, the beast struck out with his massive paw, taking the gun and part of the arm from the tall hunter, who screamed as he clutched the stump of his right arm.

The sharp odors of terror filled the air as both hunters realized that they would die in the next few seconds. The bear's second blow took the tall man full in the face, snapping his neck and obliterating his features. Then he turned to the wiry man, frozen in place, a look of disbelief and horror etched on his face. With one powerful embrace, the bear crushed the hunter's spine.

In the forest, all was quiet. Two men lay broken and mauled on the ground where there had once been a bear corpse. Slowly the bear diminished in size, his features becoming more and more human until he looked like a muscular man dressed in hiking gear, a single bear tooth worn around his neck, his shoulder-length hair tied in the back with a leather thong.

Jonathan Farwalker studied the hunters. He had a little cleanup to do before he left the clearing. He wouldn't want word to spread of another bear-attack, after all. But he felt a deep satisfaction within him at a necessary job well done. "You'll never kill another bear, and that's Gaia's truth," he said.

Legend

Some Gurahl claim to be the first of Gaia's Changing children, but others simply say that in the time when Gaia made the children of Her heart, She created the Gurahl to be Her protectors and nurturers. The story has many versions, depending on which tribe of Bear's children tells the tale.

All agree, however, that first Gaia created Her three eldest children — the Yarn Spinner, the Tapestry Maker and the Pattern Breaker, called by others the Wyld, the Weaver and the Wyrm. Together the three created the Great Tapestry of existence, in which everything had a place and a designated time to occupy that place.

The details differ from Breed to Breed, but the story remains the same. The Tapestry Maker trapped the Pattern Breaker in a web of threads, driving the Pattern Breaker to madness and destruction, throwing the Tapestry off kilter, an event from which it has never recovered.

Gaia next created Her Changing children to accomplish certain tasks. The Gurahl, She made to serve as Her protectors, defending Her against the madness of the Pattern Breaker. When its destruction grew too widespread for the Gurahl alone to handle, they petitioned Gaia for help. Thus, She made the Garou.

For some time the Gurahl treated the Garou as little brothers and sisters, teaching them many Gifts. The werebears taught humans, as well, showing them how to plant crops to ensure a steady food supply. In return, they asked that humans show respect for bears.

The Garou, however, grew jealous of the many Gifts the Gurahl knew that they would not teach the wolves. Unable to understand the Gurahl's devotion to their human Kinfolk, the Garou included them in their Impergium, much to the distress of the Gurahl. The biggest rift between wolf and bear, however, came when the Garou discovered that the Gurahl knew the secret of bringing life back to the dead. They demanded that the Gurahl teach them this Gift.

This demand led to the First Great Council. The elders, in their wisdom, decided not to share the secret of restoring life with any other Changing Breed, particularly to the warlike and razor-edged Garou. They realized that Wolf's Children would want to bring back every warrior slain in battle in order to continue the fight against the Pattern Breaker and that this desire went against the cycle of life and death.

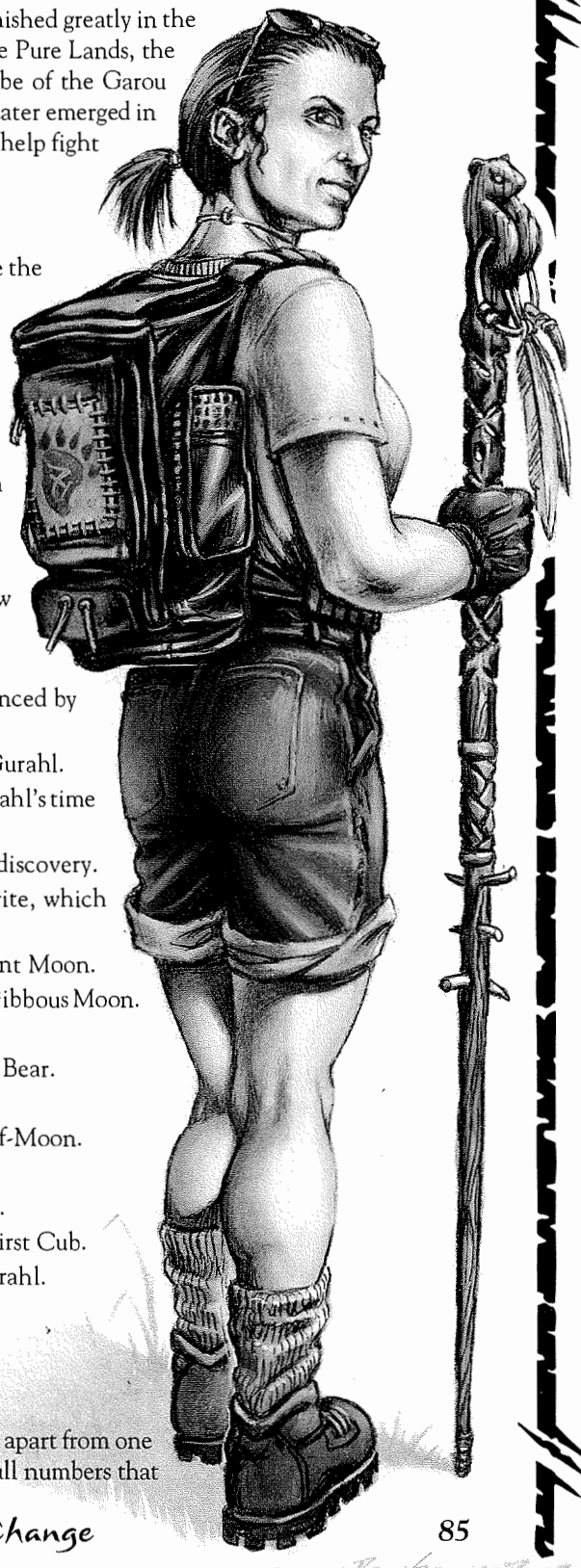
When the Garou found out that the Gurahl would not teach them our most closely guarded Gift, they spread the word to the other Fera that the werebears were hoarding Gaia's gifts. Somehow, rumors started that the Gurahl had turned to the Wyrm. When the Time of the Great Ice began, the Garou called it proof that the Gurahl had fallen. Some of the werebears, as well as some of the Garou tribes that did not believe the rumors, crossed the ice bridge into the Pure Lands. There they managed to live amicably with each other and with the human tribes that became their new Kinfolk.

When the War of Rage finally broke out, it affected those living in the massive Eurasian continent more than it did those in the Pure Lands, though even that land felt the scourge of the conflict. During that War, the Gurahl gave way to their Rage and fought long and hard against the Garou and any others who tried to destroy them. But the

Garou were used to fighting in packs and could eventually take down even the fiercest Gurahl. Many of us died and whole tribes of Gurahl were obliterated. Those who were captured were tortured to force them to give up the Gift of rebirth. Not one did so.

When the Gurahl saw that the Garou were bent on becoming the only Changing Breed, they withdrew from the world in order to save their Breed. Some ancient ones left their bodies and moved into the Umbra, seeking the Summer Lands. Others went to their Umbral Glades and fell into a deep sleep. The Garou believed they were all gone. Finally, the War of Rage ended.

The centuries went on without the Gurahl. Only the Great Grandfather or Great Grandmother remained awake to monitor the changes in the world. Gurahl Kinfolk diminished greatly in the absence of the werebears. Finally, with the coming of the Europeans to the Pure Lands, the Gurahl awoke in force. They had not yet emerged when the Croatan tribe of the Garou sacrificed itself to rid the continent of the Eater of Souls. When the Storm Eater emerged in the Umbra, the Gurahl appeared and offered their services to the Garou to help fight it, a fact that the Garou are reluctant to admit.



The Gurahl Today

Today, the Gurahl fight a desperate battle to increase their forces before the Final Battles begin. The Children of Bear know that their talents for healing and cleansing will become vital in those last days. Even more, they realize that their often-suppressed skills as warriors and defenders will become more and more important in the days to come. And so the Gurahl hone their martial skills and remember that they, too, were born to Rage. When they consider the destruction that has been done to Gaia's lands and Her creatures, including the bear population, giving way to Rage does not seem that hard.

Gurahl Lexicon

Arcas (ARE-kus): The stage of a Gurahl's life governed by the New Moon.

Arthren (ARE-thrun): The near-human form of the Gurahl.

Bhernocht (BEAR-noct): A state of near-despair and sorrow experienced by some Gurahl.

Bjornen (Bee-YORE-nen): The cave-bear or near-bear form of the Gurahl.

Buri-Jaan (BOO-ree-ZHAWN): A Gurahl mentor; the period of a Gurahl's time as a student.

Gallivant: The first part of a Gurahl's life; a period of wandering and discovery.

Hibernation: The deep sleep of some Gurahl, attained by a Gift or rite, which resembles the winter slumber of normal bears.

Kieh (KEE-yuh): The stage of a Gurahl's life governed by the Crescent Moon.

Kojubat (KOY-yu-baht): The stage of a Gurahl's life governed by the Gibbous Moon.

Kovi (KO-vee): A Rank One Gurahl.

Mangi (MAN-GEE): The aspect of Bear corresponding to the Death Bear.

Pattern Breaker: The Wyrm.

Rishi (REE-SHEE): The stage of a Gurahl's life governed by the Half-Moon.

Tapestry Maker: The Weaver.

Ursa Major: The aspect of Bear corresponding to the Great She-Bear.

Ursa Minor: The aspect of Bear corresponding to the Little Bear or First Cub.

Ursus: A Gurahl born from to a bear parent; the bear-form of the Gurahl.

Uzmati: The stage of a Gurahl's life governed by the Full Moon.

Yarn Spinner: The Wyld.

Organization

Gurahl have no formal organization, such as a pack, preferring to dwell apart from one another. This is not for lack of sociability, but the Gurahl exist in such small numbers that

they usually live and travel alone (or with a student or mentor) in order to cover as much of Gaia's lands as possible and to minimize the chances of a concerted attack destroying most or all of the Breed.

Some Gurahl do travel in groups. In areas where the Wyrm's forces are numerous, several Uzmati band together for mutual assistance. Gurahl who spend time studying sometimes travel with others to learn their tales and increase their knowledge. Elder Gurahl sometimes travel with younger ones for support and protection. One tribe of werebear, the Ice Stalkers, habitually gathers in small units similar to packs.

Soon after a Gurahl's First Change she receives a mystical "call" from another Gurahl, who senses the transition of an individual from a seemingly "normal" human to one of the Children of Bear. The new Gurahl experiences dreams and visions that lead her to the summoner, who becomes the fledgling's "Buri-Jaan," or teacher. Together, teacher and pupil embark on a yearlong journey of travel and experience. The young Gurahl is encouraged to explore her nature, ask questions and enjoy the natural beauty she must later protect. Occasionally, the Gallivant takes an additional year, particularly if the cub must eventually perform some important task for Gaia or the Gurahl.

Many Gurahl, after they have spent a few years in the pursuit of their duties, feel the need to become a Buri-Jaan and give to a young Gurahl the same kind of attention and teaching that she received during her formative period as a werebear. This experience not only fills the necessary purpose of passing along the knowledge and history of the Breed to the new generations, it also allows the Buri-Jaan to recover some of the wonder of youth, particularly if the Buri-Jaan has spent time fighting the Wyrm's forces. When necessary, a Buri-Jaan will accept two students in areas where Gurahl are so few in number that teachers are hard to find.

Because of their solitary wanderings, Gurahl look forward to the times when they do gather together. Werebears have several levels of gatherings, depending on the circumstances. These range from chance get-togethers to formalized meetings.

• **Fests:** When two of more Gurahl meet one another in their wanderings, they sometimes take advantage of the situation to hold a fest. Such spontaneous meetings may simply involve exchanging news and sharing artwork or crafts or they may involve commemorating some occasion such as the salmon run. When several Gurahl hold a fest, they often turn the occasion into a mini-fair, celebrating the meeting with feasting, song and stories.

• **Regalias:** Each year, at the beginning of spring, each Gurahl tribe hosts a tribal meeting, or regalia, to bring together as many members of the tribe as possible and to discuss matters of tribal import. Usually held in some isolated spot as far from intrusions by outsiders or attack from enemies as possible, regalias combine formal ceremonies with debates and information exchanges about local concerns, environmental and otherwise. Often the highlight of these gatherings is a performance of the Dance of Creation. Though displays of artwork and other handcrafts are generally not part of a regalia, Gurahl often exchange gifts among friends and trade homemade goods and adornments with one another. Despite the serious overtones, regalias celebrate tribal unity and the creative and nurturing spirit central to the Gurahl.

• **Powwows:** During the summer, the Gurahl participate in intertribal gatherings, called powwows, which last for a few days. Gurahl from different tribes gather together to share information, display their artwork or crafts and strengthen the ties among the tribes. Most Gurahl only attend a few of these gatherings a year, but all Gurahl try to participate in at least one. No werebear can afford to take too much time off from the work of guarding her protected lands. New Gurahl get a chance to introduce themselves to others of their Breed and learn more about what it means to be Gurahl. No dancing occurs during the powwows, however, since only at the Council of Autumn do the Gurahl dance before members of tribes other than their own.

• **Council of Autumn (The Great Council):** By far the most elaborate and serious gathering is the Council of Autumn, held during the fall of the year. Not all Gurahl attend, but many feel this council is the most important meeting of the year. Unlike the less formal powwows, regalia and fests, rites and ceremonies govern the Council of Autumn. All attendees undergo a ritual cleansing before they attend and each tribe approaches the Council site from the direction associated with it: Ice Stalkers from the north, Forest Keepers from the east, River Keepers from the south and Mountain Guardians from the west. The Great Council, composed of elders from all four tribes, uses this meeting to rule on matters that affect the Gurahl as a whole, hear any grievances and welcome new cubs. The new cubs from all the tribes perform the ancient Dance of the Centuries, an event that marks the only time in which all the tribes dance together.

Each night a different tribe hosts a feast for the gathering; during the day, the Council meets, making decisions by consensus and giving dissenters one year to come up with an alternative. Those attendees who are not on the Council either listen to the elders' discussions or else occupy themselves during the day by cooking for the coming feast, working on their particular arts or crafts, sharing stories and engaging in their own discussions.

• **Meeting the Great One:** The rarest meeting occurs in times of dire need, when one of the four current Ancient Ones decides some disaster looms over the Gurahl. This venerable werebear sends out a mystical summons that draws all Gurahl, including those in hibernation, to a site where they can unite to defend their Breed or some part of Gaia's creation.

The Code of Ursa

Cherish the Cubs
Protect the Land
Heal the Sick
Nurture the Needy
Teach the Supplicant

Breed Wisely
Cleanse the Tainted
Guard the Secrets
Rights of the Elder
Remember Your History
Punish the Guilty
Avenge Wrongful Slaying

Traits

Gurahl share many Traits in common with the Garou, including their reactions to silver and their ability to invoke the Delirium in Crinos form. Differences are explained below.

Gurahl use Gnosis in the same fashion as Garou do. They refresh their Gnosis through meditation or by using the Rite of Replenishment (see below). Umbral Glades provide a regular source of fresh Gnosis for those werebears who have access to one.

All Gurahl begin play with a Willpower of 6.

Rage and Frenzy

Though Gurahl employ Rage less frequently than Garou, when they do so, they exhibit an anger and intensity equal to that of the most belligerent Garou. Rather than increase their speed in battle, Gurahl use Rage to enhance their Strength, Stamina or gain additional health levels.

By spending Rage, a werebear may increase her Strength so that she can often bring down an opponent with a single blow. A Gurahl may double her Strength in Homid form by spending one point of Rage per dot. She may do this in any form, but her total Strength can never exceed twice her Strength in her human form.

A Gurahl may also increase her Stamina up to twice that of her current form through spending Rage on a one-for-one basis. Gurahl may combine increases in both Strength and Stamina by dividing up her expended Rage points between the two Attributes according to the limitations described above. Such increases in Strength and Stamina last for one turn.

Gurahl may use Rage to gain additional health levels, though any levels gained do not heal prior damage. For example, a Hurt Gurahl may spend two points of Rage to gain an additional two "Hurt" levels before she becomes "Wounded." If a Gurahl does this before engaging in battle, the levels gained count as additional "Bruised" levels. This effect lasts for a scene or until they are lost through taking damage.

Because they can channel their Rage in combat in several ways, Gurahl retain a more deliberate attitude in the midst of Rage (though they are still deadly). Werebears regain spent Rage more slowly than Garou, however, since they must work harder to get angry. Direct threats to lands or protected creatures restore a Gurahl's Rage; angry words or rebuffs do not.

Gurahl must score five or more successes on a Rage roll (difficulty 8) in order to succumb to frenzy. A frenzied Gurahl never flees, but instead stands and fights, refusing to retreat no matter what the circumstances, sometimes even charging their enemies. A Gurahl may spend a point of Willpower to offset the frenzy, though she may only move or speak during the same turn in which she does so.

To fall prey to "Wyrm frenzy," a Gurahl must have a Rage of 6 or higher and must achieve a multiple botch on her Rage roll. In this unhappy event, no Willpower expenditure can stave off the effects of the Beast-of-War or the Eater-of-Souls.

Marks of the Bear: Advantages and Vulnerabilities

Gurahl receives several advantages from Bear that help them fulfill their purpose. To balance these enhancements, however, Gurahl have an equal number of relevant disadvantages that also stem from being Bear's children.

• **Adamant Will:** Gurahl gain one automatic success in any opposed Willpower roll involving their need to protect and defend. Attempts by vampires or other supernatural creatures to affect the mind or will or to possess the body of a Gurahl are made at +2 difficulty. In most other cases where Gurahl engage in a contest of wills over their duty to Gaia, they receive a boost to their roll (or their opponent suffers a penalty, at the Storyteller's discretion).

• **Intractability:** A Gurahl's will is, in fact, so strong that getting a werebear to change her mind is nigh impossible once she has decided on a course of action. When faced with opposition to a decision, a Gurahl must achieve three successes (difficulty 8) on a Willpower roll to change her mind.

• **Keen Smell:** In all but the Homid form, a Gurahl's sense of smell is highly developed. Perception rolls involving odors are made at a –2 difficulty (except when the Gurahl is in Homid form). This sensory acuteness includes enabling the Gurahl to identify individuals by their perfume or natural body scent as well as sniffing out taint or toxins in food or water and performing other tasks involving smell.

• **Poor Eyesight:** While in Homid form, Gurahl have normal eyesight (subject to individual variations), in every other form, werebears have relatively poor vision. They are not blind, but they do not rely primarily on their sight and tend not to notice visual cues as rapidly as other Breeds. Perception rolls based on sight alone are made at a +2 difficulty unless the Gurahl is in Homid form.

• **Biorhythmic Control:** All werebears may make slight alterations in their body's internal metabolism, such as raising or lowering their temperature a few degrees or speeding up or slowing down their pulse rate by a few beats. With practice, they may increase their ability to alter their internal processes.

• **Seasonal Lethargy:** A Gurahl's body is also attuned to seasonal changes. In wintertime, most werebears grow sluggish and experience a psychological need to tuck themselves in for the winter. Though Gurahl do not have to hibernate every winter, they do become more lethargic during the winter months. This manifests in small ways,

such as habitual lateness. Gurahl subtract two from their initiative score during the winter.

Bhernocht

A Gurahl who willingly (i.e., not under duress) fails in his duties or abandons his responsibilities for a trivial course of action suffers a one-point loss of Willpower and loses the advantages gained from Adamant Will. His Willpower decreases by one point per day (not excluding deliberate expenditures of Willpower) until he resumes his responsibilities or returns to his duties, whether that involves protecting a person or area or accomplishing some appointed task. If the Gurahl's Willpower reaches zero before he has stopped the process, he enters Bhernocht.

Similar to a Garou who has fallen into Harano, a Gurahl in Bhernocht experiences a profound depression, becoming fixated on his own worthlessness and feeling unwilling to do anything about it. Unless the Gurahl finds some way to overcome this state either by himself or through the assistance of others, he eventually enters a state of deep hibernation and can only be awakened through sustained force or by the Gift: Waken. If awakened, he must still find a way out of Bhernocht. This process should involve role-playing rather than dice rolls.

Backgrounds and Abilities

Gurahl have the same Backgrounds and Abilities as Garou with the following differences. The Kinfolk Background represents fewer individuals for Gurahl (see chart). All Gurahl begin with at least one dot in Mentor. Gurahl may not begin play with the Resources Background. Gurahl tend not to have the Subterfuge Ability and Ursine Gurahl have the same starting restrictions as lupus Garou. Gurahl may also purchase the Biorhythms Talent and the Den-Realm Background (which they refer to as Umbral Glade) — see Chapter Three.

Kinfolk

- • 2 Kinfolk
- •• 4 Kinfolk
- ••• 6 Kinfolk
- •••• 10 Kinfolk
- ••••• 15 Kinfolk

Breeds

Gurahl have only two breeds — homid and ursine. Because werebears choose their mates carefully through the use of a special ritual, metis Gurahl are unknown. Gurahl consider this a special boon from Gaia as a result of their generally solitary lifestyle. A deformed or otherwise flawed Gurahl would seldom survive the rigors of wilderness life on her own. Should two Gurahl willfully or unknowingly mate, the union results in no pregnancy or else a stillbirth.

• **Homid** — In recent times, Gurahl born from humans have made a comeback, though they are still sparse in number. Many human-born Gurahl grow up in tribal societies and acquire the values of a tribal people. They tend to respect the natural world and some are extremely unfamiliar with modern culture and technology. Other Gurahl grow up in urban situations and feel comfortable with high-tech gadgets, cars, computers and the like. To make up for past losses in Kinfolk, Gurahl have tried to select new groups of humans as Kinfolk, choosing mates from among those involved in medical careers or wilderness living.

Beginning Rage: 3

Beginning Gnosis: 4

Starting Gifts: Persuasion, Ursa's Light

• **Ursine** — Though the ratio is slowly changing, most Gurahl active in the modern world come from bear-parents, born and bred in hiding in the years after the War of Rage. Where bears are endangered, though, ursine Gurahl are rare. Most bear-born Gurahl grow up within protected places such as restricted wilderness areas and national parks, retaining bear form until some crisis forces the First Change. Once they have taken on human form, ursine Gurahl often remain in that form out of curiosity about human affairs, learning as much as their human born cousins (though usually later in life). Gurahl born in zoos usually escape (or are "liberated" by other Gurahl) soon after their First Change.

Beginning Rage: 4

Beginning Gnosis: 5

Starting Gifts: Heightened Senses, Voice of Woe

Auspices

Gurahl have five auspices that correspond roughly to those of the Garou. Instead of having one "birth" auspice that governs an individual throughout his lifetime, Gurahl migrate through all five auspices in the course of their lives. In more peaceful times, a Gurahl would take an entire lifetime to experience all five auspices. In the last days, however, many Gurahl rush through all the auspices in a few years, finally settling on the one most suitable to their temperament or most necessary to their location as a long-term auspice.

A Gurahl who enters a particular auspice may learn Gifts peculiar to that auspice. When he passes to the next phase, his potential for learning Gifts expands to include his new auspice though he may still learn Gifts from past auspices. A Kieh may pick up a heretofore unlearned Arcas, Uzmati or Kojubat Gift to round out her knowledge, though learning too many Gifts outside one's current auspice is sometimes seen as evidence of poor judgment and a possible cause for loss of Wisdom Renown for dependence on hindsight.

• **Arcas: the New Moon** — This auspice governs a Gurahl from her First Change through her Gallivant and the time with her Buri-Jaan, ending when she experiences her first full battle after leaving her mentor. This auspice resembles the Ragabash Garou.

• **Uzmati: the Full Moon** — This auspice governs a Gurahl's solitary travels and introduces him to his place as a warrior of Gaia. Uzmati Gurahl feel the music of battle in their spirit, preparing them to fight off any threats to their protected lands or creatures. Gurahl in areas where they

must continually fight the Wyrm's minions sometimes remain in this auspice for several years, while others remain in this stage of their lives only briefly. At some point, usually after taking a mate or feeling the need for a more settled life, they progress to the next auspice.

• **Kojubat: the Gibbous Moon** — This auspice guides Gurahl through a period of remembering and learning. In this phase, which corresponds to the Garou's Galliard auspice, Gurahl study the lore of the werebear, including history, songs and stories. Most Gurahl begin their Lifework during this phase of their lives, if they have not already done so. Kojubat Gurahl receive great respect from other Gurahl because they embody the knowledge imparted to the Breed by Gaia Herself.

• **Kieh: the Crescent Moon** — After learning comes reflection and a turning inward, hallmarks of the Gurahl's version of the Theurge auspice. This is a time of peaking mysticism and Gurahl in this auspice spend time learning and performing rites and expanding their knowledge of Gifts. Many Kieh become Buri-Jaan to fledgling werebears.

• **Rishi: The Half Moon** — This phase of the moon is the last in the Gurahl's natural progression. Rishi Gurahl have usually built up a font of knowledge and experience and other werebears look to them for guidance. Rishi perform duties equivalent to Philodox Garou, judging disputes, keeping the peace and mediating between quarreling factions.

Totem: Bear

All Gurahl have Bear as their totem, but each Gurahl acknowledges one of Bear's three faces according to their auspice or temperament. The Great She-Bear or Ursa Major is the healer and appeals to Kojubat and Rishi Gurahl. Arcas, the First Cub or Ursa Minor, is the discoverer and questioner, and is most often the patron of Arcas Gurahl. Mangi, the Death Bear, is the warrior and mystic, drawing both Uzmati and Kieh to him.

Tribes

The Gurahl have four major tribes that encompass the majority of bears in the world. A few smaller groups exist in limited numbers in other parts of the world. The Okuma, the werebears of Japan and lower Asia, were entirely annihilated during the Eastern lands' War of Shame.

Forest Walkers

Background: One of the earliest Gurahl to inhabit the Pure Lands, the Forest Walkers migrated across the North American continent, settling mainly in the eastern and southern woodlands. Some fought and died along with the Croatan in the fight to defeat the Eater of Souls. Others had Kinfolk among the American Indian tribes driven westward along the Trail of Tears, though some hid with their Kinfolk and remained in the eastern forests. Still others withdrew from the world as the Europeans ravaged the wilderness of the continent, some remained. When those who left for the Umbra returned in the late 20th century, they found a land bereft of Kinfolk. The Forest Walkers now work to increase their numbers and preserve the lore of their Kinfolk as well as their own.

Home Territories: Though they range across the breadth of the North American continent and even into Mexico, Forest Walkers are most plentiful in the woodlands of the eastern United States; many stay in protected habitats such as national parks and wilderness preserves. They have also made inroads into the South American rainforests and African jungle in search of new Kinfolk. Now and then they attempt to cross into Asia, but so far have met with little acceptance.

Culture and Kinfolk: Bear Kinfolk consist mainly of black bears with a smattering of other bear types. A few have bred with the spectacled bears of South America. Homid Kinfolk used to come solely from Native American stock; now the Walkers have expanded to include Hispanics, African-Americans and even some Europeans.

Tribal Organization: Forest Walkers tend to form small groups for mutual support. They regularly attend powwows and gatherings, eager to learn and share new tales. Though independent-minded, they revere their elders and cooperate with one another.

Appearance: Ursine Forest Walkers usually resemble their bear parent stock, while human-born members of the tribe tend toward small stature and stocky build and resemble the ethnic type of their human parent.

Ice Stalkers

Background: The Ice Stalkers become silent when anyone suggests that the Gurahl brought about the Ice Age, leading some to believe that they may have summoned the ice to cleanse the lands of Wyrm taint. They maintain a keen interest in polar bears as well as the native peoples of Alaska and Northern Canada, watching the Wendigo Garou carefully and staying out of their way. The coming of the exploiters of the northern icelands has hurt both the human and polar bear populations, and now the Ice Stalkers labor furiously to protect what remains of their lands and peoples, especially now that the polar lands are warming.

Home Territories: Ice Stalkers inhabit Alaska, northern Canada, Russia and the circumpolar regions in general. Some have moved further south in Canada and into Scandinavia in search of potential Kinfolk.

Culture and Kinfolk: Most bear Kinfolk are polar bears (with the occasional brown or grizzly bear appearing). Human-born Kinfolk come from the native Aleut and Inuit peoples as well as other northern folk with an occasional foray into other ethnicities. By far, most come from polar bear stock rather than humans. Highly inquisitive, impulsive and curious, the Stalkers also have a keen sense of humor and playfulness, even though they can be fierce in defense of their lands or Kinfolk. They cultivate art zealously, excelling in crafting jewelry and other items from the bones and hide of animals they kill for food and sculpting the ice into intricate shapes.

Tribal Organization: Gregarious by nature, Ice Stalkers congregate in semi-permanent "family groups." Buri-Jaan and cub often remain together for two or three years. They attend and hold more powwows and fests than any other tribe.

Appearance: Most Stalkers come from polar bear stock and resemble their bear-parent in human form. Homid Stalkers resemble their human parent, whether Aleut, Inuit, Scandinavian or other ethnic type.

Mountain Guardians

Background: The Mountain Guardians arose after the Gurahl crossed into the Pure Lands. They learned to coexist with the Wendigo, Uktena and even the local Bastet, becoming shamans for the native northern tribes and sometimes living openly with the American Indians of the southwest. They worked with the Garou to cleanse the Pure Lands of Wyrm taint while the wolves bound the Wyrm-creatures they found. They withdrew *en masse* when the European Garou arrived. During their absence, the grizzly bears had almost become extinct. Their return to fight the Soul Eater signaled their re-entry into the world. Today they fight to preserve their existing grizzly bear Kinfolk and prepare themselves to stand with the Garou on the front lines of the Last Battles.

Home Territories: Once they occupied most of North America. Now, most Guardians dwell in national parks and preserves, particularly in the Rockies of North America and Canada. Some travel to other parts of the continent to make contact with other Gurahl.

Culture and Kinfolk: Primarily coming from the American Indians of western North America, the Guardians have recently expanded their human Kinfolk base to include Hispanic, Asian and African-Americans as well as a few European ethnic types. The endangered grizzly bears form their primary ursine breeding stock, though they have been forced to seek Kinfolk among polar and even spectacled bears. The most competitive of the Gurahl, the Guardians' culture revolves around challenges and competitions, emphasizing ritual combat more than any other Gurahl tribe.

Tribal Organization: The Guardians tend toward solitary travel, coming together at powwows and gatherings. They value independence, self-sufficiency and privacy.

Appearance: Human-born Guardians exhibit the appearance of their human ethnic heritage, though they tend toward the high end in both height and musculature. Most ursine Guardians resemble grizzly bears (or their bear-parent).

River Keepers

Background: River Keepers once dwelt along all the major rivers of the world, including the Nile, Amazon, Mississippi and other large waterways, serving as shamans and weatherworkers to the native populations. During the War of Rage, most River Keepers died, and their lands in the Amazon and Nile were left to the native Bastet. The survivors went into hiding or hibernation, coming out only when there was an impelling need. In North America, the River Keepers remained active longer, assisting the Garou of the Pure Lands in their fight against the Wyrm, though they kept a low profile. The coming of the Storm Eater brought them out in force, where they saw the near disappearance of the brown bear. Today they work to bolster the existing bear population wherever they can. They work to maintain their ties with the river, knowing that it might present the armies of Gaia with some unexpected help against the Wyrm in the Final Battles.

Home Territories: Once common to all riverlands, the Keepers now stay mostly in the more remote rivers of Alaska, Russia and the Pacific Northwest, though a few have sought out the rivers of other parts of the world to make their homes.

Culture and Kinfolk: Human Kinfolk of the Keepers are perhaps the most diverse, crossing many ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Many are well versed in modern society, while others retain strong tribal ties. Human-born Keepers resemble their human parent. Ursine Keepers come primarily from brown bear stock but have diversified to include the sloth bear of India, the Himalayan or moon bear, the Malayan sun bear and South America's spectacled bear. Much of the Keepers' culture revolves around the giving and receiving of gifts, whether material items such as food or artwork or less tangible things such as stories, poetry and songs. They also share Gifts and rites as part of the gifting. River Keepers also consider hosting gatherings a sacred duty.

Tribal Organization: Keepers have no formal organization, though they manage to meet informally to exchange information and gifts. They have at least one large gathering a year. Though they usually travel alone, they sometimes work in small groups.

Appearance: Homid River Keepers have the same phenotype as their human parent and exhibit the most variations among the Gurahl. Ursine Keepers resemble their bear parent.

Forms

Gurahl possess five forms, similar to those of the Garou. Werebears change forms in the same fashion as Garou, though they are less likely to change instantaneously except under extreme circumstances.

- **Homid:** Gurahl in human form are indistinguishable from normal humans, though many tend to be above average in height and musculature. Werebears with human parents resemble their ethnic physiotype. Gurahl with a bear parent retain the general pigmentation of their bear-form, which is quite varied and offers almost the same spectrum as human skin and hair color. A Gurahl's voice has a rich timbre; they tend to speak slowly and thoughtfully.
- **Arthren:** The "near-man" form of the Gurahl resembles the stereotypical wild man of the mountains. Arthren Gurahl gain both height and weight, approaching the human extreme for both. This form does not invoke the Delirium but does tend to intimidate or awe most normal-

sized humans. Their voices are often guttural and harsh, but they speak normally.

• **Crinos:** The Gurahl's "fighting" form inspires nightmares in humans (invoking the Delirium). Reaching somewhere between 10 and 16 feet in height, the Crinos Gurahl may weigh up to a ton. The face becomes bearlike, nonretractable claws extend to nine inches on both fore and hind paws. The Gurahl's fur takes on a denser texture, providing natural armor to absorb damage. These Gurahl can speak only in harsh monosyllables.

• **Bjornen:** The "near-bear" form calls to mind the prehistoric cave bears. Taller and longer than contemporary bears, they have elongated claws and sharp fangs. In this form, a Gurahl reverts to instinctual "thinking" and lose the ability to converse in human languages altogether.

• **Ursus:** Gurahl in Ursus form are no different in appearance than normal bears. Homid Gurahl tend to take the Ursus form of their tribe. They can speak the language of bears and a limited version of the Gurahl tongue. When in this form, Gurahl tend to think like the bears they resemble.

Form Statistics

Arthren	Crinos	Bjornen	Ursus
Str: +3	Str: +5	Str: +4	Str: +3
	Dex: -1	Dex: -2	
Sta: +3	Sta: +5	Sta: +4	Sta: +3
Man: -2	Man: -3	Man: -3	Man: -3
App: -2	App: 0		
Diff: 7	Diff: 6	Diff: 7	Diff: 6

Gifts

Gurahl begin play with three Gifts, one each from their breed, auspice (Arcas, usually) and Gurahl Gift lists.

General Gurahl Gifts

• **Fiddlefish (Level One)** — The Gurahl may acquire a fish that provides a nutritious meal by scooping her paw through a body of water that contains fish. Overuse of the Gift causes it to fail. A Gurahl may not acquire more than one fish per half mile of stream or lake through this Gift.

System: The Gurahl does not need to roll for a single fish. If she wishes to acquire more than one, she must relocate to a new spot and roll Dexterity + Athletics. Success gives her another fish; failure ends the Gift. A botch indicates Gaia's displeasure and the Gurahl must make restitution before the Gift will work for her again.

• **Healing Tongue (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift: Mother's Touch.

• **Ignore Wounds (Level One)** — As the Philodox Gift: Resist Pain.

• **Calm (Level Two)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift.

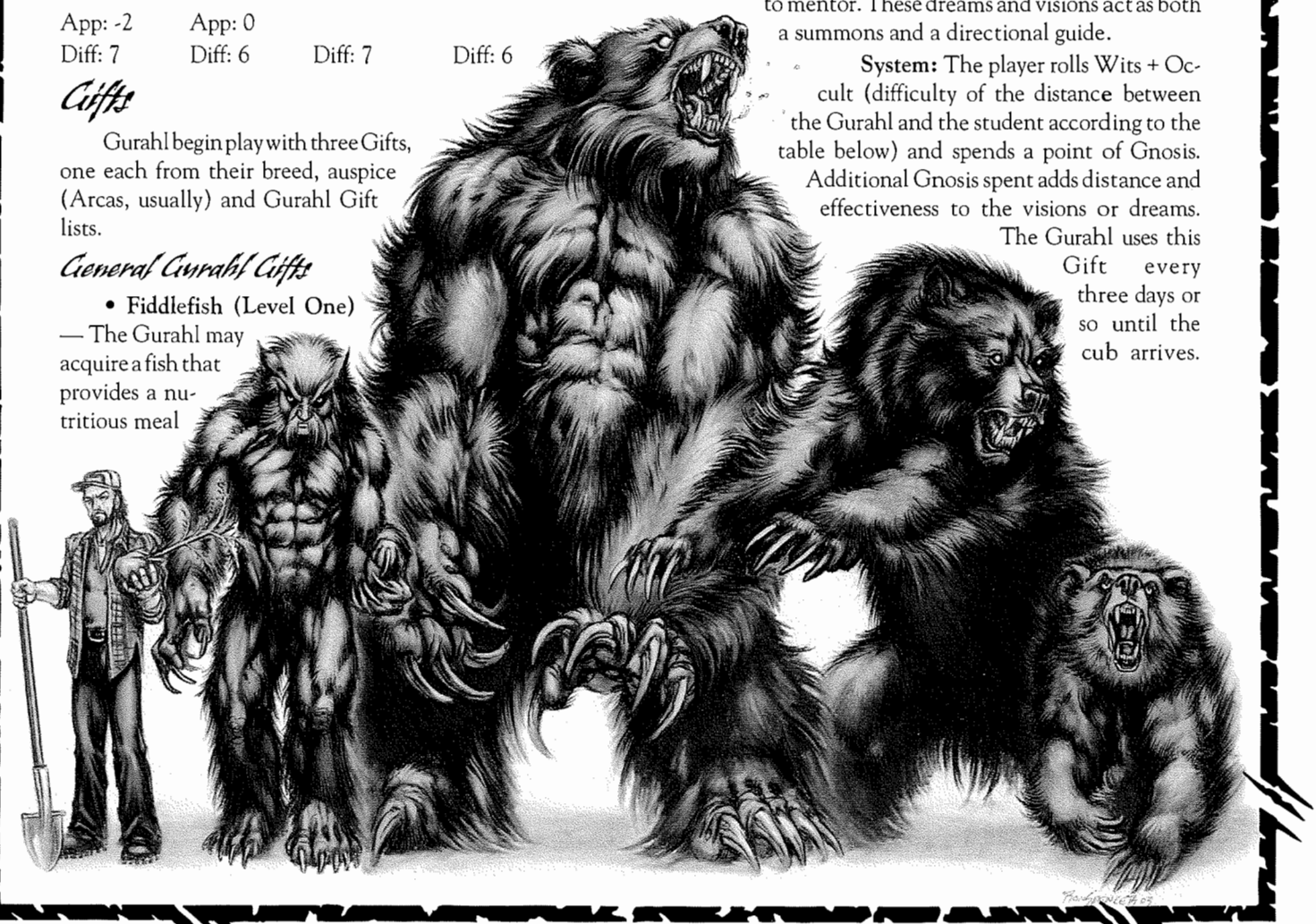
• **Survival of the Bear (Level Two)** — As the Silent Strider Gift: Adaptation.

• **Treeshake (Level Two)** — The Gurahl may procure food for one or more individuals by shaking the trunk of a tree, shaking down acorns and other tree-fruits regardless of the tree's type or whether it is in season.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Strength + Rituals. Each success provides enough food for one individual.

• **Dreams of the Buri-Jaan (Level Three)** — The Gurahl sends dream messages to a known cub she has chosen to mentor. These dreams and visions act as both a summons and a directional guide.

System: The player rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty of the distance between the Gurahl and the student according to the table below) and spends a point of Gnosis. Additional Gnosis spent adds distance and effectiveness to the visions or dreams. The Gurahl uses this Gift every three days or so until the cub arrives.



The prospective Buri-Jaan may send dreams without a specific target on the chance that a seeking cub may be waiting for some direction. In such cases, the difficulty increases by two up to a maximum of 10.

Distance between Buri-Jaan and Cub	Difficulty
Less than a mile	4
Up to 10 miles	5
Up to 100 miles	6
Up to 250 miles	7
Up to 500 miles	8
Up to 1000 miles	9
More than 1000 miles	10

• **Ease the Fevered Mind (Level Three)** — The Gurahl uses this Gift to treat such mental states as schizophrenia, depression, stress, trauma-related emotional difficulties and other non-physical conditions, including temporarily removing Derangements. Repeated use combined with the expenditure of Willpower can remove some Derangements permanently.

System: The player rolls Perception + Medicine (difficulty 7). Each success allows the Gurahl to suppress the desired condition for one scene. By achieving 20 successes over a period of time (with no failures or botches), a Gurahl may permanently remove a Derangement or mental illness. Gurahl may not use this Gift on themselves. While the symptoms may disappear, unless the root cause is also addressed, the problem may recur later.

• **Masking the Hunted (Level Four)** — The Gurahl may employ available terrain to conceal individuals or creatures pursued by hunters. The Gurahl may mask up to 12 humans or large mammal-sized creatures (or twice that number of small creatures) long enough to elude their pursuers.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Stealth (difficulty of the Perception + Alertness of the hunters). Success enables the Gurahl to hide the targets; additional successes increase the duration or effectiveness of the Gift. The Gift fails with no successes and a botch leads the pursuers to their quarry.

• **Gaia's Breath (Level Five)** — With this Gift, a Gurahl may return a departed spirit to a dead werecreature, restoring it to life. No evidence exists that Gurahl have ever used this on a non-Gurahl or on a werebear who has been dead for more than a few hours.

System: The player spends two points point of permanent Gnosis and two points of permanent Willpower and rolls Charisma + Occult (difficulty of 6 + the number of hours since death up to a maximum of 10). One success restores life to the target but leaves her incapacitated unless healed magically. Additional successes add lost health levels on a one-for-one basis. Missing body parts are not restored unless separate Gifts are used. Failure means the spirit does not return. A botch indicates that a malicious spirit or Bane has possessed the body. This Gift may be used once and only once on a single creature.

Breed Gifts

Homid Gifts

• **Persuasion (Level One)** — As the Garou Homid Gift.

• Ursa's Light (Level One) — The Gurahl may draw down the light of the stars for illumination or a directional beacon.

System: The Gurahl reaches toward the sky while the player makes a Charisma + Occult roll. Success produces a soft light that illuminates a 100' square area or sends a direction beacon 100 yards. If Ursa Major or Minor is in the sky, the effect is doubled.

• **Climate Control (Level Two)** — The Gurahl can alter the temperature around her by 5-25 degrees and can sometimes include additional creatures in the effect's area.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Primal-Urge. One success allows the Gurahl to raise or lower the temperature around her by 5 degrees. Each additional success gives her another 5-degree increment or allows her to encompass one additional person or creature within the affected area. (The target can roll Willpower (difficulty 8) to resist.

• **Dolorous Countenance (Level Two)** — As the Garou homid Gift: Staredown.

• **Shape Matter (Level Three)** — As the Garou homid Gift: Reshape Object.

• **Sense Need (Level Three)** — The Gurahl can open her senses to discover someone in need of rescue or succor.

System: The Gurahl clears her mind while her player rolls Perception + Empathy. One success allows her to sense someone needing assistance within a mile. Additional successes expand the range by 10-mile increments to a maximum of 50 miles. Zero successes indicate the Gurahl hears nothing, while a botch sends her on a false trail. If no one is in need, the Gift alerts the Gurahl to that fact.

• **Ursa's Coat (Level Four)** — Similar to the Homid Gift: Cocoon; this Gift surrounds the Gurahl with a protective coat of night-sky colored fur.

System: The character spends a Gnosis point and attacks after that must do damage equal to the Gurahl's Occult + Rituals to penetrate. Spending an additional point of Gnosis extends the effect for one scene. The Gurahl is at a –1 penalty to Dexterity while "wearing" the coat.

• **Spirit Shield (Level Four)** — Similar to the Garou homid Gift: Spirit Ward, this Gift distinguishes between friendly or neutral and hostile spirits, simply causing the former to bypass the Gurahl while actively intimidating hostile spirits. Bear-spirits may ignore the aura if they wish.

System: The Gurahl rolls Manipulation + Rituals. Each success on this roll causes spirits who attack the Gurahl to lose one die from their dice pools.

• **Fearless Unveiling (Level Five)** — Similar to the Garou homid Gift: Part the Veil, this Gift enables the Gurahl to appear in Crinos form before a human without invoking the Delirium, thus enabling the werebear to render

assistance without harming the individual. The Garou usually performs the Rite of the Ban on the human afterwards.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Empathy. The effect lasts for one scene or until the human departs.

Ursine Gifts

• **Heightened Senses (Level One)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Voice of Woe (Level One)** — This Gift sends out a call of distress to creatures in the area, who come to the assistance of the Gurahl.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge. One success sends the call for 5 miles; additional successes increase the distance in 5-mile increments to a maximum of 50 miles. Other Gaian shapeshifters who hear the call know a Gurahl is in trouble, and roughly what direction he's in and how far away.

• **Burrow (Level Two)** — As the Garou metis Gift.

• **Weather Watch (Level Two)** — The Gurahl can accurately predict the weather without any prior knowledge.

System: The werebear sniffs the air for signs of change. The player rolls Perception + Primal-Urge. The number of successes determines the degree of information the Gurahl receives about major or minor changes in weather patterns. This Gift can be used once per scene.

• **Pull of the Chosen Land (Level Three)** — The Gurahl can find the shortest, fastest route to his protectorate, regardless of where he is and how he got there.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). This Gift also works in the Umbra.

• **Shelter of the Earth (Level Three)** — The Gurahl uses the local landscape as a secure hiding place. Rapid movement gives away the Gurahl's position, but slow movement is possible without revealing his location.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Dexterity + Stealth. One success provides minimal cover while three or more conceals the Gurahl entirely. The Gift does not work where cover is unavailable.

• **Gnaw (Level Four)** — As the Garou lupus Gift.

• **Sweet Swarm of Vengeance (Level Four)** — The Gurahl summons a swarm of angry bees to harry or attack an enemy, directing them as she chooses.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Animal Ken. One success summons 100 bees; additional successes add more, up to an entire swarm with five successes. The bees can simply harry an opponent or cause serious injury (or even death from severe allergic reaction).

• **Call of the Cave Bear (Level Five)** — Similar to the lupus Gift: Song of the Great Beast, this Gift summons a prehistoric cave bear from the spirit world to aid her.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge. The animal has the maximum statistics for a Gurahl in Bjornen form (Str 9, Dex 3, Sta 9) and remains for one scene.

Auspice Gifts

Ahroun Gifts

• **Open Seal (Level One)** — As the Garou Ragabash Gift.

• **Walk Like a Man (Level One)** — A Gurahl in Ursine, Bjornen or Crinos form may use this Gift to leave human footprints instead of bear prints.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Stealth. One success causes the Gift to last for one scene; additional successes extend the duration on a one for one basis.

• **Cajole (Level Two)** — The Gurahl uses this Gift to coax another individual into giving her something, such as food, some item or some service.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Empathy. The more successes, the larger the potential gift or service may be.

• **Sense of the Prey (Level Two)** — As the Garou Ragabash Gift.

• **Safe Passage (Level Three)** — The Gurahl and those traveling with him may journey without leaving any trace of their passage.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Dexterity + Primal-Urge. Each success beyond the first enables the werebear to include another person in the Gift's effects. The duration is one scene.

• **Trackless Waste (Level Three)** — As the Red Talon Gift.

• **Favor of Ursa Minor (Level Four)** — As the Ragabash Gift: Luna's Blessing.

• **Natural State (Level Five)** — The Gurahl may cause a portion of the land to revert to its original wild state: fields reject planted crops, clear-cut areas regain their trees, buildings and their contents lapse into ruin and disappear. This can be used both to restore once-tainted land after cleansing it and to cause chaos directed against despoilers of the wilderness.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Manipulation + Repair. The number of successes dictates the degree of reversion a 100' square area undergoes.

Uzmati Gifts

• **Slash of the Death Bear (Level One)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Razor Claws.

• **Ultimatum (Level One)** — By pitting his will against an opponent's, the Gurahl may reduce his enemy's actions to two options. ("Fight me now or flee like a rabbit!")

System: The Gurahl must get the opponent's attention. The two then engage in an opposed Willpower roll. Success means that the Gurahl may present the enemy with two options and the opponent may take no action not specified by the Gurahl. The Gurahl cannot make one or both demands clearly suicidal to his opponent.

• **Mangi's Strong Arms (Level Two)** — The Gurahl's classic "bear-hug" gains strength through this Gift, enabling her to squeeze her opponent to the point of unconsciousness or death.

System: The Gurahl concentrates on drawing Mangi's favor, taking a full action to do so. The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Strength + Primal-Urge. Each success adds one die to the Gurahl's damage for a successful grappling attack. All damage must be expended at once, but the werebear may activate this Gift before combat and wait until she has grappled her opponent to inflict damage with it.

• **Threaten (Level Two)** — The Gurahl stands upright and roars, causing her opponents to flee in terror.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Intimidate (difficulty of the victim's Willpower + 2). One or two successes cause the opponent to cringe in fear; more successes make the victim flee. Five successes can cause fear frenzy in vampires or shapechangers subject to frenzy and make humans collapse in dead faint or die from fright.

• **Crush (Level Three)** — This Gift delivers a "bear-hug" from a distance, causing damage enough to crush or kill a victim without touching him.

System: The player rolls Strength + Brawl (difficulty of the target's Dexterity + Dodge). The attack inflicts aggravated damage as a claw strike; each additional success adds to the Gurahl's damage on a one-for one basis. Creatures capable of soaking may do so, but three unsoaked levels causes the victim to fall unconscious as the breath is squeezed from his lungs.

• **Silver Claws (Level Three)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Delay the Death Bear's Coming (Level Four)** — This allows the Gurahl or a chosen individual to take massive damage without dying, allowing him to remain alive long enough to receive magical healing.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Wits + Occult (or Medicine). Each success grants the target one additional Incapacitated health level, thus keeping her alive. The Gurahl may not use this Gift on herself if she is already Incapacitated.

• **Rage of the Mother Bear (Level Five)** — The anger of Mother Bear allows the Gurahl to act with rapidity during combat or in an emergency situation.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Dexterity + Rituals. Each success gives the Gurahl one additional action, all of which must be taken in the same turn or they are lost.

Kojubat Gifts

• **Beast Speech (Level One)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Stonesight (Level One)** — The Gurahl may look through a piece of stone or rock to see its potential or composition.

System: The player rolls Perception + Enigmas (difficulty 7). Each success reveals a piece of information about the stone.

• **Eyes of the Soul (Level Two)** — As the Philodox Gift: Scent of the True Form.

• **Song of Terra (Level Two)** — The Gurahl may touch the earth and hear what occurred in that spot in the recent past.

System: The Gurahl makes contact with the earth. The player rolls Perception + Primal-Urge and spends a point of Gnosis. One success reveals a significant event that occurred within the last 24 hours. Additional successes increase the amount of time that can be "heard" by 8 hours per success up to a maximum of 48 hours.

• **Mind Sight (Level Three)** — The Gurahl may read the surface thoughts of an individual creature of greater than animal intelligence.

System: The player rolls Wits + Empathy and spends a point of Gnosis (difficulty of the subject's Willpower). Each success gives the Gurahl one "idea" in the subject's mind. Supernatural creatures may spend a Willpower point to resist.

• **Mind to Mind (Level Three)** — Similar to the Garou Galliard Gift: Mindspeak, this does not require a dream-state but merely requires the Gurahl to send out a mental call.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Expression (difficulty of the target's Willpower) and spends one point of Willpower for each intended recipient. Targets must be within line of sight and are at –1 to their dice pools while maintaining the link. The Gift lasts until the Gurahl breaks the link or targets leave the Gurahl's sight.

• **Probe Thoughts (Level Four)** — This Gift enables the Gurahl to acquire hidden thoughts of an individual.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Wits + Empathy (difficulty of the subject's Willpower). Each success reveals one piece of information hidden below the surface of the mind. The Gurahl must spend a point of Willpower to read the mind of a supernatural creature.

• **Aversion Therapy (Level Five)** — This Gift allows the Gurahl to rehabilitate wrongdoers by attaching negative emotions to a particular desire. A thief, for example, may be doubled over by intense fear every time he considers robbing someone. This effect lasts for a year and a day.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Wits + Empathy (difficulty of the target's Willpower). To affect a supernatural creature, the Gurahl must also spend a point of Willpower.

Kieh Gifts

• **Diagnose (Level One)** — The Gurahl can determine a person's general health by studying that individual carefully.

System: The Gurahl focuses on her target. Her player rolls Perception + Medicine (difficulty 7). One success reveals the target's general health. Each additional success gives more specific information. Zero successes fail to determine anything, while a botch produces a false (and possibly dangerous) diagnosis.

• **Spirit Speech (Level One)** — As the Garou Theurge Gift.

• **Refresh (Level Two)** — The Gurahl may enable a target to ignore wound penalties until the end of a combat, thus aiding in victory and survival for that individual.

System: The Gurahl must be within touching distance of her target but does not have to touch that individual. The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Wits + Medicine (difficulty 6 for the Gurahl and 7 for another person). Each success temporarily "heals" a health level of damage, whether aggravated or normal, though the target may still take additional damage after the Gift is activated. The damage returns after the combat at the rate of one health level per turn until healed magically or through normal medical treatment.

• **Sense the Unnatural (Level Two)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Exorcism (Level Three)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Name the Spirit (Level Three)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Spirit Healing (Level Four)** — The Gurahl may replenish the Essence of a wounded spirit in the Umbra.

System: This Gift works only in the Umbra. The player rolls Charisma + Occult (difficulty of the spirit's Willpower). Success means that the Gurahl may spend a point of Gnosis to give the spirit two points of Essence. Each additional Gnosis point adds another two points to the spirit's Essence. Afterward, the spirit usually acknowledges a debt to the Gurahl who "healed" it.

• **Image of the Sky Bear (Level Five)** — The Great She-Bear grants the Gurahl a body that glows with seven pinpoints of light similar to the seven stars of Ursa Major's constellation, allowing the Garou to perform additional actions of healing or protection.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Wits + Rituals. The Gurahl may then receive up to seven actions that include healing both aggravated and normal wounds or providing the equivalent of body armor to his target or targets. Each action extinguishes one of the points of light. The Gift expires when all the lights are gone but the effects linger until lost through receiving damage.

Rishi Gifts

• **Befriend (Level One)** — The Gurahl may alter the emotions of an individual in a more positive way.

System: The Gurahl takes a non-threatening stance as the player spends one Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Empathy, opposed by the target's Willpower. Success reduces the hostile target's feeling toward the Gurahl to neutral, while additional success move the individual's emotions in more positive directions. Zero successes indicate failure, while a botch adds to the target's hostility.

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

• **Compel Truth (Level Two)** — The Gurahl compels an individual to speak the truth.

System: The player rolls Wits + Empathy (difficulty of the subject's Willpower) and spends a point of Gnosis. Each success means that the target cannot lie for one minute.

• **Presence of the Great Bear (Level Two)** — Similar to the Garou Philodox Gift: King of the Beasts, this Gift allows the Gurahl to cause nearby bears (one at a time) to assist her and follow her instructions.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Animal Ken against a difficulty that depends on the Gurahl's relationship with the target bear. The bear must be within 100 feet of the Gurahl for the Gift to work. The duration is one scene.

Relationship	Difficulty
Sibling	3
Kinfolk	4
Protected creature	6
Strange bear	8
Angry or hostile bear	10

• **Ways of the Tapestry (Level Three)** — The Gurahl gains insight into a mystery or puzzle, seeing how an event fits into the larger scheme of things.

System: The player rolls Wits + Enigmas (difficulty 8). For each success, the Gurahl gains an important piece of information about a problem or puzzle, receiving hints and clues rather than specific knowledge.

• **Waken (Level Three)** — The Gurahl may arouse an individual from supernatural sleep or unnatural slumber, including bringing vampires out of torpor and awakening Gurahl from hibernation caused by Bhernocht. Recipients may not appreciate the awakening.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Wits + Rituals. The Gurahl must spend a point of Willpower to bring a Gurahl out of sleep caused by the Rite of the Long Sleep.

• **Quell Mob Rage (Level Four)** — The Gurahl can diffuse the anger of a crowd, including lynch mobs and rioters.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Leadership (difficulty of the person in the crowd with the highest Willpower). Each success reduces the hostility of up to 50 people by one degree. More than three successes allows the Gurahl to sway the crowd to his own beliefs.

• **Oath of the Great Bear (Level Five)** — Similar to the Philodox Gift: Geas, this Gift grants the Gurahl the ability to cause an individual or group oath to be binding. The oath cannot force the oathsworn to act in ways detrimental to himself but can compel anything else within the target's capabilities.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Leadership (difficulty of the target's Willpower). To affect a group, the Gurahl must roll against the difficulty of the person in the group with the highest Willpower. Targets who break the oath lose a point of Willpower per day until that Trait reaches zero followed by some other Trait or Attribute. This process continues until the target dies, returns to the oath's terms or successfully requests the Gurahl to release her from the oath.

Rites

Gurahl place great emphasis on rites and ceremonies. The following are some of the more important Gurahl rites. The werebears also know most of the other rites common to Garou, having taught many of them to the werewolves to begin with.

Rite of Rending the Gauntlet

Level One

With this rite, the Gurahl takes on his Bjornen form and rips a hole in the Gauntlet to enter the Umbra. The hole closes immediately afterwards. Witnessing this rite causes the Delirium in humans.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty of the local Gauntlet). One success means the Gurahl takes five minutes to open the hole. Two successes reduce the time to 30 seconds, while three or more successes allows the Gurahl to rend the Gauntlet and cross over almost immediately. The Gurahl need not roll to return from the Umbra.

Rite of the Healing Winds

Level Two

The Gurahl cleanses the land of poisonous gases, liquid or airborne dangers with this Gift. The Gurahl enters the Umbra, summons a Chinook spirit and binds it, sending it to the designated spot. The spirit's cold nature causes the temperature to drop 10 degrees for 24 hours, though this does not harm the vegetation in any way.

System: The Gurahl enters the Umbra and rolls Manipulation + Rituals to find and summon a spirit (difficulty of the level of pollution in the target region). No successes indicate failure, while a botch means that the rite angers the spirit.

Rite of the Pure Land

Level Three

Gurahl may purify an area of all pollution, destruction, sickness or other form of ill, whether caused by nature, humans or the Wyrm by re-establishing the ancient connection between the damaged land and Gaia Herself. The Gurahl mixes a handful of soil with her blood and uses it to draw a line around the area's perimeter, incurring one health level of damage from the blood loss. By using more of her blood (and suffering the damage accordingly) the Gurahl may purify a square mile for every health level taken. Gurahl usually act in a group to purify large areas.

System: Each participant rolls Stamina + Rituals (difficulty 8). Each Gurahl must achieve one success for the rite to be successful.

Rite of the Ban

Level Four

This rite prevents the spread of secrets vital to the Gurahl or their Kinfolk, acting as a mental block that deters the target from revealing a specific secret in any way. Humans who have witnessed a Gurahl change form or who receive magical healing usually receive this rite. Though the individual may not speak, write or otherwise reveal the secret, the rite does not remove the memory from his mind. Gurahl planning to spend a lot of time among humans often willingly undergo this rite. The rite's enactor must use a hypnotic chant that relates the nature of the affected information, lulling the recipient into near-slumber. When she awakens, refreshed and unchanged, the Ban is in place.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Rituals (difficulty of the target's Willpower + 3 if the subject is resistant or 6 if the subject is willing). This Ban affects both normal and supernatural creatures.

Rite of Fighting the Death Bear

Level Five

A Gurahl wishing to restore life to a body that has been dead too long to be affected by the Gift: Gaia's Breath may attempt this perilous rite to bring back the spirit from the lands of the dead. The Gurahl enters the Umbra, calls upon Mangi, makes suitable offerings to the Death Bear and then issues a challenge for the departed's spirit. The Gurahl and Mangi engage in Umbral combat. If the Gurahl defeats Mangi, he may enter the realm of the Death Bear and reclaim the spirit he wants, returning it to its body. If the Gurahl fails, he is ejected from the Umbra and the rite fails. If the Gurahl died during the combat, Mangi sometimes takes the Gurahl's spirit in place of the fallen one, restoring life as if the rite had succeeded. Gurahl rarely use this rite and only use it on other Gurahl due to the great risk involved.

System: Once the Gurahl has summoned Mangi, he issues the totem spirit a challenge using the rules for Umbral Combat in **Werewolf: the Apocalypse**. The rite fails automatically if the individual falls under the time limit for the Gift: Gaia's Breath or fails to respond to that Gift. It is not a "second chance," but an alternative for a Gurahl dead longer than the time specified in the Gift: Gaia's Breath. Only one attempt can be made on any single creature.

Stereotypes

Benjamin Grayfur, venerable Rishi, expounds on the Fera:

Ananasi: Some say they serve the Wyrm rather than the Weaver, but then, they once said we'd fallen to the Pattern Breaker, too. We don't know much about them, but we'd like to know what they're all about.

Bastet: They spy on everyone. While that's not necessarily a good thing, it's useful sometimes. We aid them when we can, since we share a bond of suffering from the old times.

Corax: Good information sources, if you can stand all their jabber. Of course, we remember they spied on us for the Garou during the War of Rage. But then, they wanted to survive.

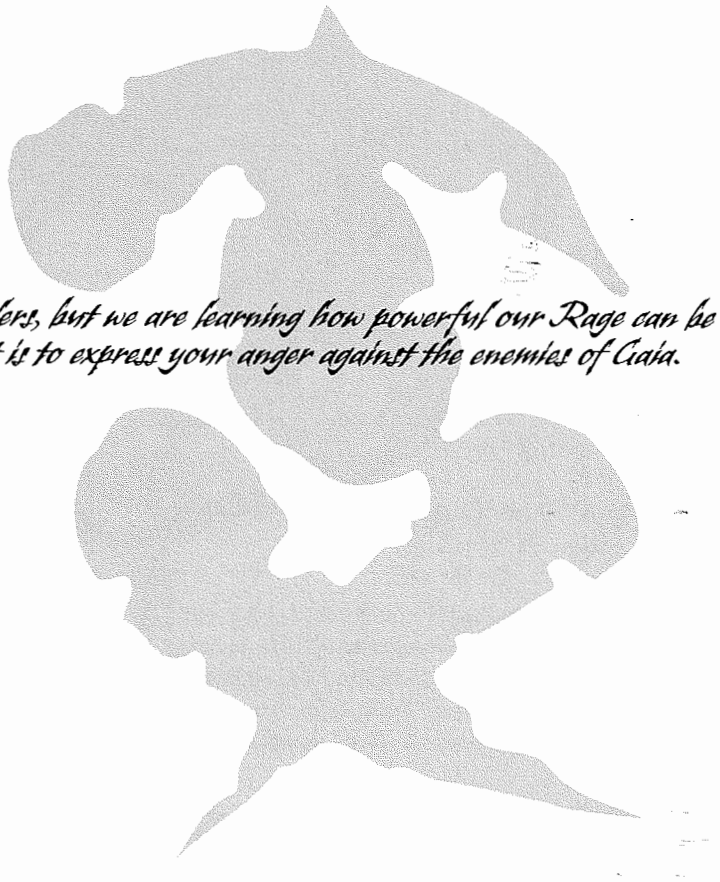
Garou: They were once our little brothers, but the War of Rage has left a legacy of bitterness, if not downright hatred, that's hard to overcome. Still, we need to resolve our differences quickly, for the last days are in the wind.

Mokolé: They keep to themselves, only occasionally making themselves known to the Keepers. They suffered in the War of Rage and have no love for other Fera. If they are Gaia's memory, we need to learn to communicate with them.

Nuwisha: Incorrigible tricksters, they keep us laughing, something we sorely need in these hard times. We need them back in the world with us.

Ratkin: They tend to stay in the cities, and it's better that they do.

Rokea: We know so little about the oceans and their inhabitants. We should probably make the attempt, if there's time.



Quote: We may be healers, but we are learning how powerful our Rage can be and how satisfying it is to express your anger against the enemies of Gaia.

Kitsune



The Fox dances,
leaping from drift to drift
Red stains white
with prey's demise.

Miyoko waited in darkness, her breath shivering as she heard his approach. The rope that bound her chafed against her ankles and wrists. She smelled the hot flame of the lantern before she saw its light peeking around the doorframe.

The man entered the cramped space where she lay, holding the lantern high to see his prize. Crossing the room, he bent to see her better, leaning over her and leering. Was this truly a highly placed official with the government? His lust and excitement obscured any dignity he might otherwise have held. Yet she recognized him from the pictures she had seen of him in his official photographs.

She struggled a little, as though afraid and he smiled, a predatory look that spoke volumes of his greed and moral corruption. Well, she had been sent to stop his predations, had she not?

Roughly, he fondled her, then thrust his tongue through her lips. She bit him, grasping his thin lips in her sharp, white teeth, drawing blood. He jerked violently and she made her true attack. Relishing her power and knowing the terror she caused as he realized what was happening, the werefox spoke the words to transform herself into spirit and surged inside his body, completing her possession of him.

She smiled as she forced her new body to stand and leave the room, extinguishing the lantern. There would be no more kidnappings of the innocent and no more despoiled lands in this territory. And if she was lucky, she could use this form to get close enough to his black-hearted superior and lodge a knife where it would do the most good. Laughing, she licked her bloodstained lips.

Legend

This is the story of the Kitsune's creation as handed down from one Fox to the next. Kitsune are the youngest of the Changing children, having first arisen during the Fourth Age. Before this time they claim to have been carefree, cavorting as they chose without thought for the consequences.

During the War of Shame, when Gaia's children fought and killed one another, Gaia knew despair. As She sorrowed, She thought and decided to create a new child. Bai Mianxi, the White-Faced One, was born like any other fox. Like any other, she played and hunted and learned to hide from her enemies, but unlike others she was smarter, faster and more nimble. As she moved through the world, she heard the voices of the spirits and discovered how to speak with them. Meeting other clever foxes, she banded together with them and taught them the wisdom she had learned. She was the best and cleverest of foxes. She and her people played and danced and played tricks

on animal and human as they liked while all around them the world fell further into chaos and other Changing children fought and died.

Then the first Kitsune, Bai Mianxi, the White-Faced One, was led away from her consort, Prince Inari and taken by the Silver lady, Luna, to the court of Gaia. There she was told of her people's destiny — to grow up and serve Gaia rather than overbreeding and hunting and making life miserable for the humans with all their tricks.

In Gaia's court, Bai Mianxi wheedled and argued, attempting to bargain with Gaia for her people's freedom from the duties asked of her, using every ounce of her cleverness. The Silver Lady had told Bai Mianxi not to raise her eyes to Gaia and to kowtow before Her. Even knowing she was meeting a great personage, the little fox resorted to her trickery. She tried to give Gaia information the Mother had never heard, then attempted to arrange a bet (at which she intended to cheat), and finally offered to fight a champion, all to avoid servitude.

Gaia refused all her offers, saying Her other children had either already told Her the news, tried cheating before or would destroy Bai Mianxi in a fight. In desperation because her best tricks had failed, the White Faced One raised her eyes and said that if Gaia's other children were already better than the Foxes at everything, then Gaia did not need them and they could be let off the hook. Gaia's anger almost destroyed her, but the Silver Lady interceded and persuaded Gaia to look into Bai Mianxi's heart and see her true worth. When Bai Mianxi recovered from her swoon, Gaia promised her three things. In return for obedience, service and their best effort to fight for Gaia, her people would be best at something some day, that Gaia would help the Kitsune to survive—even through the Sixth Age — and that in the last ages of the world, She would give the Kitsune back their freedom.

Bai Mianxi had unknowingly spent a year in Gaia's court and when she returned, she found her own court scattered and Prince Inari gone. She went in search of him, crisscrossing Asia repeatedly in her attempts to find her beloved consort. After searching fruitlessly for a great many years, she finally stopped and looked around her, weeping for the devastation she saw. Changing children were maimed, separated, prevented from performing their duties and some had even ceased to exist, all while she selfishly searched for her love. She asked Luna what she was to do, realizing the time had come for her to accept her duties. The Silver Lady explained that her travels had shown her the terrible state the world was in and the harm done to Gaia thereby and commanded her to take up the assassination of nations that no longer held the mandate of Heaven, and Bai Mianxi began Gaia's work.

Thus Bai Mianxi brought back both Gaia's blessing and Her commands to the foxes of Asia and the cleverest of them became the Kitsune. From that time to this, most werefoxes have served faithfully, though not always in the way Garou would think honorable. Throughout the ages, the Kitsune have used their wits, nimbleness, humor and magic to undermine Gaia's enemies. They helped to mold the politics of the Middle Kingdom during the earlier parts of the Fifth Age through manipulation, assassination and possession of key personnel. A whisper here, a clever ruse there and the Nine-tails, as the Kitsune came to be called, could topple kingdoms or raise up a new ruler, all to further Gaia's ultimate aims.

The Kitsune Today

Kitsune continue to serve the Mother and further their own goals to this day. In some ways, they anticipate the Sixth Age with something less than dread for Gaia pledged to help them survive it and that She would free them of their obligations to Her afterward. They struggle, as do most of the Changers, with the loss of ever more of their fox Kin throughout Asia as they are hunted for everything from their pelts to their bones for use in elixirs or salves to make the user clever and quick. In repressive societies, as many in Asia are, their human Kinfolk also suffer, though the Foxes aren't as constrained when it comes to choosing such.

The Asian world both reveres the legends of magical foxes and fears them. So long as that is the case, they will probably remain much as they have been for centuries until the coming of the Sixth Age. In fact, the Kitsune are far more likely to survive than the Garou and other warrior *shen* for they live by their wits, as they always have.

Kitsune Lexicon

Kitsune have their own language, called Kitsune-go. Although communication in fox form is instinctive, young werefoxes learn Kitsune-go during their Nogitsune time. This costs no points to learn. The grammar gives those other than Kitsune headaches as the logic behind the sentence constructions is fox, not human. The Kitsune embraced writing as far back as Bai Mianxi and Prince Inari stole their first shang oracle bones. Many words, as shown below, are particular to the Kitsune.

Batsu: A Kitsune's closest friends and allies.

Byakko: A white-colored fox; usually a servant of Inari.

Doshi: One of the Four Paths; Kitsune Sorcerer.

Eji: One of the Four Paths; Kitsune Warrior.

Go-en: Kitsune-go for contact and favor networks.

Gukutsushi: One of the Four Paths; Kitsune Dreamweaver or Illusionist.

Hitogata: Homid form for Kitsune.

Juko: Form of a wolf-sized fox, the equivalent of the Garou Hispo form.

Jyu-ho: All Fox magic.

Kataribe: One of the Four Paths; Kitsune Bard.

Kiko: Spirit Fox; a second rank Kitsune.

Kojin: Human breed Kitsune.

Koryo: Haunting Fox; a third rank Kitsune.

Koto: A werefox's "Crinos" form.
Kuko: Air Fox; A Kitsune who serves the Wyrm.
Kyubi: A Kitsune's vulpine form.
Nine-tails: Another term for Kitsune.
Nogitsune: A Kitsune without rank, usually a Kit.
Reiko: Ghost Fox; a fourth rank Kitsune.
Roko: Fox breed Kitsune.
Sambuhenge: The rarely-used Glabro form of Kitsune.
Sempai: Mentor; teacher or organization of teachers.
Shen: Supernatural beings.
Shakko: A red-colored Fox.
Shinju: Pure breed Fox; offspring of two Kitsune.
Silver Lady, the: Luna
Tamamono: Gifts
Tenko: Celestial Fox; a fifth rank Kitsune.
Yakan: Fox; a first rank Kitsune.
Yojutsu: Hedge magic.
Yomi: Power of the Wyrm; Yomi spirits of Yin are Spectres. Yomi spirits of Yang are Banes.

Organization

It isn't common for Kitsune to meet together in large numbers. Foxes have many enemies and large gatherings would make it too easy for them. Kitsune are also quite busy, with little time for grand moots and such. The Nine-tails hold few courts and cannot meet concerning Fox business in a court held by other Breeds. When gathered in any numbers other than a proper court or moot, Kitsune do so utilizing the most auspicious numbers of one, two and four. One Kitsune can do things on her own without much help from others. Two Nine-tails function well together, with one awake while the other rests and a mixture of Yin and Yang bringing things into balance. Of all peoples of the Middle Kingdom, no others see the number four as auspicious. Four Kitsune, one of each Path, creates a perfect sentai, utilizing force, cleverness and magic to succeed where others fail. Add a non-Fox to cover any lack or weakness and it creates perfection.

When Foxes gather, such are brief meetings at which highly important topics are heard. Usually, it is thought sufficient to simply pass the word along from Fox to Fox as time and place permit. Being quite well connected, news can pass across the Middle Kingdom in less than a week this way. Kitsune also honor spirits as individuals rather than groups, so there is small need for large gatherings to perform rites.

Fox relationships with the Beast Courts are as follows: most serve the Kitsune first and the courts second. One in four may follow the Way of Emerald Virtue, but every Fox knows at least one Nine-tails pledged to the Courts. Not all serve forever, but are courtly and as perfect as possible when under pledge. Kitsune make good ambassadors to others, acting as such for the Beast Courts. Kitsune also make great regents and seers. Stations such as general are not suited to Foxes and the post of historian is too venerable a position for a race so young.

Kinfolk and the Curse

Whenever a Kit is born to the full powers of a Kitsune, it is paid for by the taking of a life. One or both parents may die or may live depending on the vagaries of fate. Many might believe the Kitsune incapable of loving the mates almost certainly doomed to die, but such is not the case. Many love deeply and sorrow greatly. Others remain aloof, but yearn for a love they feel is a weakness given the mortality rate among partners. In ancient times, many such pairings were arranged with the knowledge that those sent to partner Foxes might never return. Still today, that custom prevails in some areas. Nevertheless, most Foxes cherish their Kinfolk as much as any other hengeyokai.

Traits

Kitsune attributes and abilities are determined utilizing the same number of points as other hengeyokai. Their Path determines their beginning Rage, while their Initial Gnosis score comes from their Breed. All Kitsune begin with a Willpower of 5.

Kitsune lack the regenerative abilities of the Garou. Without healing Gifts they would heal damage just like ordinary mortals. In effect, all non-bashing damage is counted as lethal damage, making the Nine-tails more likely to avoid combat whenever possible, but also making it easier to heal them with healing Gifts. They may still soak damage at the usual difficulty rate from many aggravated sources, such as from a Kuei-jin's claws and teeth in the same manner as Garou. When in Koto or Juko form, Kitsune's teeth do aggravated damage.

Kitsune benefit from their magical strength and versatility. Not only are they able to learn potent Gifts of their own, but can easily learn the Gifts of other Changing Breeds as well. They rely heavily on their magic. The Nine-tails enter the Umbra with as little trouble as the Garou.

Because they lack regenerative abilities, it is very important for Kitsune to avoid being damaged. To that end, they need to be both quick and agile. Kitsune receive one extra dot in Dexterity for free during character creation. Further, Kitsune cannot botch Dodge rolls, though they may still fail them.

Because they are children of Bai Mianxi, who received her calling from the Silver Lady, the werefoxes, unlike Garou, may attempt to soak damage from silver (difficulty 8). Any damage not soaked is lethal. Otherwise, silver affects them just as it does Garou.

Werefoxes have the advantage of a long lifespan. Whenever a Kitsune goes up in rank (except when advancing to First Rank) their potential lifespan doubles. This leads to the Kitsune elders being quite venerable. With each rise in Rank Kitsune gain another tail. Thus, a Fox with nine tails (of whom there has been only one — Bai Mianxi) is actually immortal. Foxes that do not subscribe to the Way of Emerald Virtue of other hengeyokai value Chie (Cunning), Toru (Honor), and Kagayaki (akin to Glory) Renown. Kitsune

gain a new tail only when they acquire new rank, though the lack of tails may be hidden or covered up with lies. Most of the time, the tails are not visible. A Kitsune may hide or reveal his tails by making a Gnosis roll versus the local Gauntlet. The Foxes were created just after the Fourth Age. Thus, they were never part of controlling humanity. Because of this their Koto (Crinos) form does not invoke the delirium. Werefoxes are very careful to hide this form from mortals, though slips throughout the ages have led to the many legends of terrifying, magical foxes prevalent throughout Asia.

Kitsune frenzy, but such is always a fox frenzy as they were never meant to be berserkers.

Backgrounds and Abilities

Kitsune have no new Talents, Skills or Knowledges essential to creating characters, but Storytellers may introduce Calligraphy and Origami as Secondary Skills. These abilities will make life far easier for Fox sorcerers and are respected as art forms throughout the Eastern world.

The werefoxes may purchase the Backgrounds of Ancestors, Fetish, Resources and Rites without any modifications. They may buy Totem if they are a part of a sentai or wish a personal totem, but can usually live without the patronage of spirit totems. Pure Breed is redundant. All have pure blood, even if other *shen* don't always recognize that. Additionally, they have a somewhat unique take on Allies, Contacts, Kinfolk and Mentor as described below:

• **Batsu:** Batsu are the Kitsune's allies, his friends and cohorts, who stand by him and assist him when needed. To a werefox, one's friends and allies define who he is and what he stands for.

• **Clan:** Kitsune Kinfolk are immune to the Delirium. As the werefoxes don't inspire the Delirium, this isn't so important. Rather than having a "Kinfolk" Background, the Nine-tails have Clan, a group of family, Kin and friends who know the truth about the werefoxes and their grand purpose. While many clan members are indeed Kinfolk, others are chosen with great care.

• **Go-en:** This is a network of minor contacts the Kitsune maintains. Rather than relying on one important contact for information, the werefoxes prefer to have several possible sources handy for a variety of situations.

• **Sempai:** This is the equivalent of Mentor, but Kitsune are likely to have a group of hengeyokai as patrons. A sempai can be an aunt or uncle, a Kitsune parent, court sentai (group) who adopt the Kit as a mascot or a Gai'nan (the ranking court official in the hengeyokai courts). A Sempai may help simply to assist the Kitsune in reaching her potential or may be grooming her for a task.

- • Kiko or Iron Rank official; an inexperienced or very distant sentai
- •• Koryo or Steel Rank official; a moderately accessible, experienced sentai.
- ••• Reiko or Gold Rank hengeyokai; an influential courtier, often accessible and quite capable.
- •••• A Five-tailed Fox, a Gai'nan, a powerful, friendly sentai.
- ••••• A Fox with Six or more tails; Gai'nan to an important court, a legendary sentai.

Breeds

Kitsune recognize three breeds. Like Garou and most other Changers, they acknowledge the human-born, the animal-born and the metis.

• **Kojin:** The kojin are the human-born Kitsune. Usually of Asian descent, some may be of mixed blood, but always have Asian ancestry. Hyperactive as children, kojin grow into slender, clever and manipulative adults, as might be expected of Foxes. Kojin know that they are different before they are even able to speak. Even as children many are aloof and self-absorbed, certain that they are more than they appear to be; equally certain that this is a great secret they are meant to discover. This leads many into a great curiosity about the world around them and the secrets it might contain. A kojin's First Change is often traumatic, but the Kitsune soon recovers as she has always known she was somehow special and now has the proof to justify her arrogance.

Beginning Gnosis: 3

Starting Gifts: Persuasion, Seduction, Smell of Man

• **Roko:** Roko are the fox-born Kitsune. Often, the parents place the child with foxes so the kit can be raised in a more normal environment. Many roko experience difficult childhoods either due to having only one parent to care for them (if one dies when they are born) or because of the numerous predators that hunt fox kits (if placed with normal foxes as a baby). Nonetheless, they are usually insatiably curious and show great glee when they undergo their First Change, delighted when they discover that hands give them many more opportunities to undergo new experiences as they get into more trouble than ever before. Inveterate wanderers, they love to see new places and discover novel things.

Beginning Gnosis: 5

Starting Gifts: Burrow, Cricket Leap, Heightened Senses

• **Shinju:** The shinju are the metis Kitsune. Among the Kitsune, metis birth is not considered a curse. They do not have deformities, but if a Fox-Fox pairing produces a child there is only a ten percent chance they will produce a shinju; most are normal foxes or humans. Tragically, shinju children are born at a cost, for one of the Fox parents may die (even odds whether they live or die; even odds which is taken) when the mating is Kitsune to Kitsune. Raised in the court of their parents, shinju kits learn their grand destiny early. Their heads swelled by tales of the greatness that is theirs, many become insufferably arrogant and absolute perfectionists.

Beginning Gnosis: 4

Starting Gifts: Scent of the True Form, Sense Wyrm, Truth of Gaia

Paths

What the Garou would call auspices, the Kitsune refer to as Paths, reflecting their eastern philosophy. Paths constitute both a profession and something of a sacred calling. They are not determined by the sun, moon or time of birth of the Kitsune, but are chosen by each Fox. When a young Kitsune reaches her Nogitsune-time, she is given the Rite of the Crossroads by a more experienced nine-tails. The element the young Fox chooses at this time determines what Path she will follow. Unlike other hengeyokai, Kitsune cannot undergo the Rite of the Second Face, since the Rite of the Crossroads (if performed correctly) reveals her true essence and thus her life-choice.

Each of the four elements recognized by Kitsune correspond to a particular Path. Rather than the singular elements common in the spirit world (fire, earth, water, air), the Nine-tails accept a blending of two of the primary elements as a singular element in and of itself. The Paths thus correspond with the following blended elements:

- **Nendo (Clay)** — combines the elements of earth and water.
- **Kiri (Fog)** — combines the elements of water and air.
- **Inazuma (Lightning)** — combines the elements of air and fire.
- **Yogan (Lava)** — combines the elements of fire and earth.

Kataribe (Kah-tah-ree-bay)

Corresponding to clay, this Path is made up of builders and doers. Like a potter using clay, the Kataribe make many things that aid the other Nine-tails. They are in contrast to the Doshi and Eji, who practice selective destruction as parts of their Paths.

Along with a love of crafted things, the kataribe particularly love lore, thus earning them the title of bard. They spend much time collecting lore from around the world, learning stories, songs and poetry and weaving them together into a tapestry of knowledge. The bards spend time with court historians and Zhong Lung to avail themselves of the ancient history known to these *shen*. These Kitsune are in particular accord with the Beast Courts and most Kitsune on the Way of Emerald Virtue are Kataribe. They get along with other *shen* and with humans as well.

Initial Rage: 2

Starting Gifts: Beast Speech, Fable, Truth of Gaia

Gukutsushi (Goo-koots-shee)

The Dreamweavers correspond to the element of Kiri, Fog. This is a difficult Path for outsiders to understand, combining the way of the trickster with their mastery of the mind and illusion with the role of healer. They bring solace to the suffering and take delight in deceiving those who prove needful of such tricks. Their skills are less physical than the other Paths, and Gukutsushi, but can use their mind-bending skills to devastating effect against foes. Their knowledge of both human and *shen* minds is unsurpassed and they have honed their own minds into both keen weapons and insightful analysts to heal the fevered mind.

Initial Rage: 2

Starting Gifts: Clear the Mind, Mother's Touch, Open Seal

Doshi (Doh-shee)

The Sorcerers element is Inazuma, Lightning. Masters of magic and spirit communication, they are considered to have a slight taint of darkness to them, with all betraying the hint of Yomi within them. On a successful use of Sense Wyrm at difficulty 9, the Doshi detect as slightly Wyrm-tainted. They believe that evil can be a powerful weapon against evil and have not completely abandoned the use of some questionable sorceries. They will enslave Banes if they believe it necessary for a greater good. Their knowledge of the Centipede and its minions is vast and they utilize this advantage to great effect. Their dark Path forces the Doshi to distance themselves from other Kitsune and *shen* and many live alone in abandoned areas such as old monasteries and the like. The darkness within many of the sorcerers tends them toward cynicism and inhumanity, but they are neither irredeemably evil nor enslaved by their hatreds.

Initial Rage: 3

Starting Gifts: Blessing the Blade, Sense Magic, Spirit Speech

Eji (Ay-jee)

The warrior Kitsune are those associated with Yogan, lava. They are the cavaliers of the Nine-tails, with strength as powerful as the earth and ferocity to equal the burn of fire. They consider themselves as surgeons cutting away any "cancers" that threaten the Emerald Mother. Oddly, they may display the greatest respect for life while at the same time being those among the Foxes who most often take life, either as hunters or fighters. Nonetheless, when someone pollutes the world, the Eji find no difficulty in performing a neat and swift execution. They may battle and kill bakemono, crazed Kuei-jin or Banes, almost without thought or emotion. When in human guise, they often appear as adventurers, daredevils or religious figures that encourage others to strive for the best while they secretly remove those that add to the illness infecting the Emerald Mother.

Initial Rage: 4

Starting Gifts: Razor Claws, Resist Pain, Sense Hostility

Forms

Kitsune have five forms. Though not as combat oriented and effective as the Garou, Foxes take immense pride in being elegant and beautifully shaped. In any of his forms, the Kitsune may manifest one or more of his tails (by making a Gnosis roll against the local Gauntlet) or he may hide them in the same fashion. Although the Koto, Juko and Kyubi forms always show at least one tail; the Kitsune can simply hide the extras gained from rank.

• **Hitogata:** The Kitsune's Homid form, no different from an Asian man or woman. Other than the mischievous look, they are indistinguishable from any other person. They like to keep in shape and pride themselves on being good-looking.

• **Sambuhenge:** Analogous to the Glabro, the Foxes rarely take this form as it is somewhat comical in appearance. Roko kits may assume the form more often as they begin learning to walk in human form. Some use this form to play jokes on other Foxes. Body mass remains constant, but the ears point upward. The eyes become slanted and thin, the nose lengthens and whiskers appear. This form also naturally sports a fox's tail.

•**Koto:** Standing only an inch or two taller than the Hitogata (Homid) form, this form adds no real bulk. The head becomes fully that of a fox, though the intelligence of the eyes is unmistakable. The body id covered with fur and has an obvious foxtail. Kitsune usually only assume this form for courtly affairs, to impress visitors or for the comfort of having fur. They never assume the Koto form unless they are certain of their privacy. Koto may bite for Strength +1 aggravated damage, but few Kitsune do so unless they have exhausted other options first.

•**Juko:** This is a wolf-sized fox form. The Kitsune has a great amount of "manual" dexterity with his mouth. Many have learned to hold daggers in their mouths with which to fight.

• **Kyubi:** In this form, the average Kitsune appears as an ordinary red fox. A few Kitsune are gray foxes, but werefoxes cannot breed with animals of more exotic coloration.

Form Statistics

	Sambuhenge	Koto	Juko	Kyubi
Str:		+1		
Dex:	+1	+2	+3	+4
Sta:	+1	+2	+3	+2
Man:	-1	-1	-2	-1
App:		0 (+0)*		
† Per:		+1	+1	+2
Diff:	7	6	7	6

* The Koto form has an appearance of 0 to humans, who frighten easily. To *shen* and other enlightened beings, the Fox's beauty is not compromised in any way.

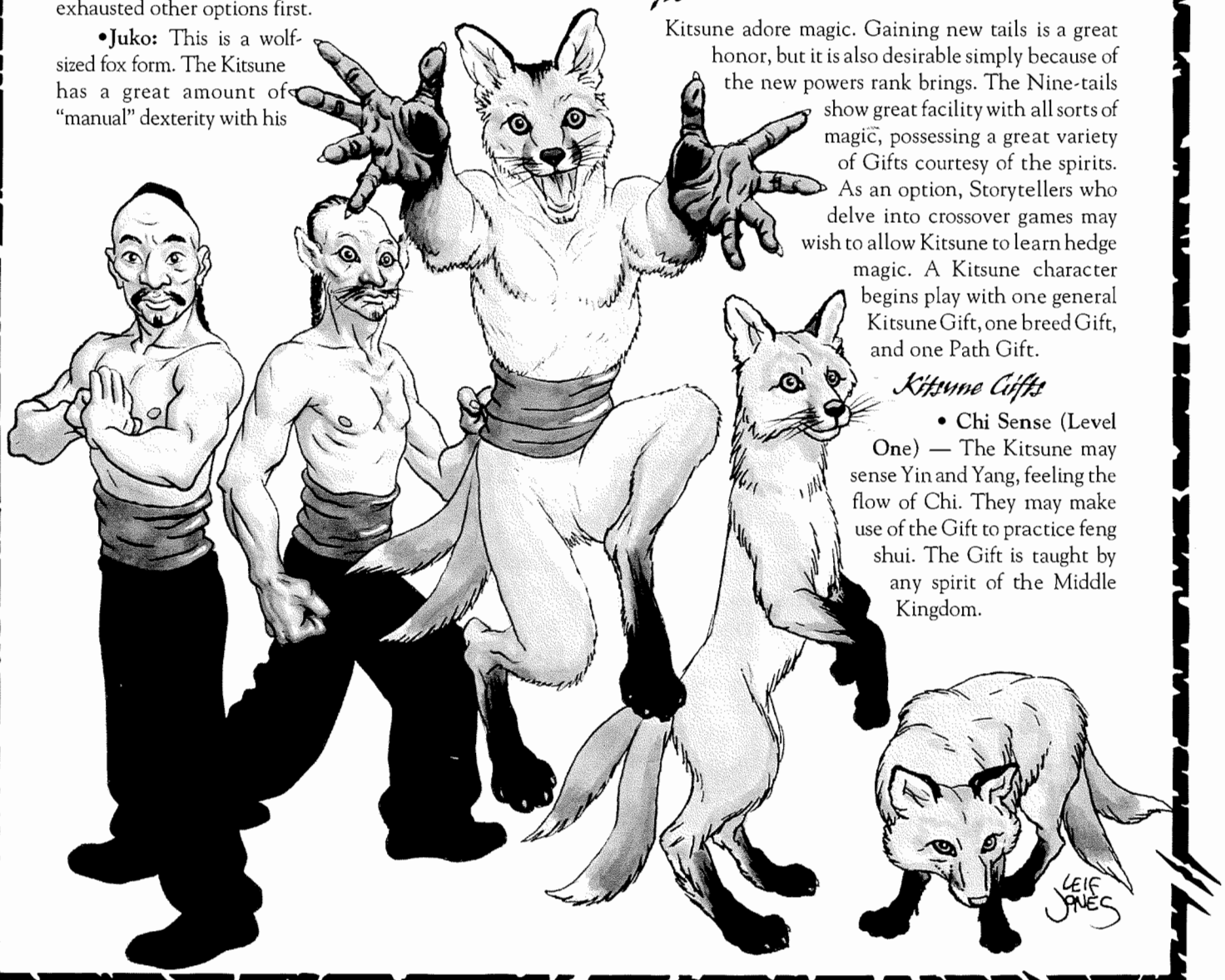
† Difficulty for hearing Perception rolls is reduced by 2 in all forms except Hitogata.

Gifts

Kitsune adore magic. Gaining new tails is a great honor, but it is also desirable simply because of the new powers rank brings. The Nine-tails show great facility with all sorts of magic, possessing a great variety of Gifts courtesy of the spirits. As an option, Storytellers who delve into crossover games may wish to allow Kitsune to learn hedge magic. A Kitsune character begins play with one general Kitsune Gift, one breed Gift, and one Path Gift.

Kitsune Gifts

• **Chi Sense (Level One)** — The Kitsune may sense Yin and Yang, feeling the flow of Chi. They may make use of the Gift to practice feng shui. The Gift is taught by any spirit of the Middle Kingdom.



System: The player rolls Perception + Occult, with the difficulty and information received dependent on the local distribution of Chi. Discerning the Yin of a graveyard might be a difficulty 3 task, while noticing the surreptitious sabotage of a lab's Chi flow could take a roll of 8 or 9.

• **Ishin Denshin (Level One)** — The Kitsune communicates telepathically with others of her kind. Both must possess the Gift and be willing to communicate. The Kitsune find it hard to lie when using the Gift, and so uses it less often than might otherwise be expected. The Gift is taught by snake-spirits.

System: The player rolls Perception + Empathy, difficulty 6, while gazing into the other Nine-tail's eyes. No effort is necessary to sustain contact, once established, but prolonged distractions (such as combat) break the link. For each success, the connection lasts through one round of combat or confrontation without breaking.

• **Scent of Running Water (Level One)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

• **Moon Dance (Level Two)** — The Kitsune becomes completely invisible so long as no moonlight falls on her. She may step in and out of moonlight, appearing and vanishing as she does. Lunes teach the Gift.

System: The Kitsune spends one Gnosis point. The effect lasts an entire night. The Gift does not mask scent, sound or other sensory cues, just vision.

• **Sense Magic (Level Two)** — As the Uktena Gift.

• **Spirit Speech (Level Two)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Ghost Speech (Level Three)** — This Gift allows Kitsune to speak with the inhabitants of the Yin Realm. It is taught by ancestor-spirits and spirits associated with death or Yin.

System: No dice need be rolled and there is no cost. Kitsune may speak with Yin spirits, wraiths and suchlike either in the Yin Realm or in the Middle Kingdom. If using crossovers with **Wraith**, treat all Kitsune with this Gift as Mediums.

• **Puppeteer's Secret (Level Three)** — All Kitsune pick up a few tricks. Though not turning a Fox invisible, it makes him one of the crowd. Wherever he uses this everyone simply assumes he belongs and has been there for ages. He's a familiar, loyal face, a supporter. Deer and other well-camouflaged spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Subterfuge, difficulty 7. The Kitsune should be wearing attire appropriate to the group he is attempting to infiltrate and should act inconspicuously. A janitor would not be cracking a safe or singing on stage, for example, but could sweep the floor for hours without drawing attention. The less he says and does, the better. If the Fox begins to go beyond the character chosen, the Storyteller may ask for more skill rolls using Wits, Manipulation or some such + Streetwise to fend off suspicion.

• **Shadow-Fan-Flowers (Level Four)** — One creature within the Kitsune's line of sight sees a vision and believes. The illusion is perfectly detailed with color, light, and motion. Chimerlings and other illusion spirits teach the Gift.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Empathy versus the target's Willpower. The viewer may free himself by finding a flaw in the vision and convincing himself it isn't real. This is so difficult that normal humans may have no chance at all (Storyteller's discretion). All others may escape with a Willpower roll at difficulty 9 once they have a good reason to attempt disbelief.

• **Possession (Level Five)** — The Kitsune abandons her body to take over another's, which is the most famous (and infamous) power the Foxes wield. Humans across Asia still tell frightening legends of fox possession. The Gift is taught by a lesser Incarna of Luna or by one of Fox's brood.

System: The Fox must be in contact with the victim, the victim's hair, nail cuttings or an extremely important personal token. She spends a Gnosis point to become a spirit form, then spends a Willpower point to take over the host. The player rolls Manipulation + Occult, difficulty of the target's Willpower. *Shen* can resist at this point and once each day from then on with Stamina + Occult, difficulty of the Kitsune's Willpower. Humans with supernatural assistance (priests, *shen*, etc.) can resist once per week with straight Stamina rolls (again versus the Kitsune's Willpower). The Gift: Exorcism can be used to counter this Gift. If successfully exorcised, the Kitsune returns to her own body.

Breed Gifts

Kojin Gifts

• **Persuasion (Level One)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Seduction (Level One)** — A Nine-tails with this Gift has a powerful allure for humans and can cause them to fall in love with her. A cloud or rain spirit teaches it.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Subterfuge; the target resists with a Willpower roll (both are difficulty 6). Each success increases the emotion's depth, with one success a mild crush, while five successes could cause a haunting fascination. Storytellers may occasionally choose to activate this power secretly (without an expenditure of Gnosis) if the Fox uses the Gift often, and apply the results as part of the ongoing story's complications.

• **Smell of Man (Level One)** — As the homid Gift. It is particularly useful to Kojin new to the wilderness to avoid unnecessary combat.

• **Jam Technology (Level Two)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Silver Tongue (Level Two)** — As the Fianna Gift: Glib Tongue.

• **Staredown (Level Two)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Disquiet (Level Three)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Reshape Object (Level Three)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Tongues (Level Three)** — The Fox may read and write any human language she encounters, including language and script. A wind-spirit teaches the Gift.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Linguistics and spends one Willpower point, difficulty depending on the age of the language. This ability lasts until the next sunrise.

• **Forgetfulness (Level Four)** — Kitsune using this Gift can erase information or memories of a specific event from the target's mind. This is sometimes the only way that the Foxes, who do not invoke the Delirium, can keep their secrets. It is taught by fog or mist-spirits.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and one Willpower point, then rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 6). The target may resist with a Willpower roll with a difficulty level equal to the Kitsune's number of tails + 3.

• **Spirit Ward (Level Four)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Assimilation (Level Five)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Call to Allies (Level Five)** — Rivalries, debts and friendships inform the Kitsune's network of acquaintances. They may call on them when needed. This Gift is the Fox's ultimate distress call. Her Batsu, clan and sentai will hear it, but it also affects friendly neutrals and unknown allies in the area (which might call forces as diverse as a Hakken, a Kuei-jin and a number of other *shen*, strange as that might seem to Garou). Local spirits, *shen* and particularly sensitive mortals hear the growl, scream or cry of the Kitsune for a moment. The Fox's location becomes apparent, with her fear or rage acting as a locational beacon that brightens the closer rescuers approach. There is no compulsion to act, but because they may someday need the Kitsune in turn, most respond. The situation must be dire for the Kitsune to make the call as false alarms lead to the grave displeasure of those summoned for trivial reasons. The Gift is taught by an ancestor-spirit.

System: This costs nothing and no roll is made. The Fox calls and must accept whatever result comes of the call.

Roko Gifts

• **Burrow (Level One)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Cricket Leap (Level One)** — As the lupus Gift: Hare's Leap.

• **Heightened Senses (Level One)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Scent of Sight (Level Two)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Sense Imbalance (Level Two)** — As the common hengeyokai Gift (pg. XX).

• **Ten Chi (Level Two)** — The Kitsune always knows where he is in the Middle Kingdom, Yin or Yang Realms by feeling his relationship to Gaia. Additionally, he carries his "territory" with him wherever he goes. Natural foxes and animals sense this, allowing him to pass through their territories without challenge. Other Roko usually show the same courtesy. Migratory bird spirits such as crane or goose teach the Gift.

System: The Roko spends a Gnosis point to know whether he is in the Yin, Yang, Yomi or physical realm, where the cardinal points are and what direction his home lies.

• **Blind (Level Three)** — The Fox can make an enemy blind for one day. Stinging pain accompanies the blindness. The Gift is taught by a porcupine-spirit.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Medicine (difficulty 7). The target resists with Stamina (also difficulty 7).

• **Catfeet (Level Three)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Name the Spirit (Level Three)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Carrion Clothes (Level Four)** — Wild foxes may catch birds by pretending to be dead; fox-changers may catch larger prey this way as well. This Gift clothes the Kitsune in the likeness of death. The user betrays no aura, breath, pulse or movement. A faint smell of rot surrounds him and the Gift affects the minds of those being lured by creating the certainty in their minds that the Fox is indeed dead. Even magical senses may be fooled. The Gift is taught by insect spirits such as flies and flesh grubs.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and makes a Stamina + Stealth roll (difficulty 7). The Gift hides only small motions. Visible attacks, creeping about or gesturing (such as when utilizing Gifts) breaks the spell. Mortals and inexperienced *shen* may not realize the ruse if movement occurs. They may believe the body is undead. *Shen* with special senses may roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 9) to tell that the spirit still dwells within.

• **Forest Lord (Level Four)** — As the lupus Gift: Beast Life.

• **Elemental Gift (Level Five)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Song of the Great Beast (Level Five)** — As the lupus Gift. Depending on where the Kitsune is in the Middle Kingdom when she uses the Gift, anything might answer the call—yeti, whales, even lower dragons.

Shinju Gifts

• **Flow of Aura (Level One)** — The Kitsune gains a perception for the feel of a place, its general bent and any psychic residue left on an area by strong emotion. Births, deaths, sicknesses, joys and other such emotions may be sensed. The Gift is taught by wood and stone-spirits.

System: The player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7). One success gives a vague notion of past events (a death occurred here). With three successes, there is more detail (a betrayal led to a massacre here), while with five or better, the exact emotional texture and intensity (a century past a lover betrayed his intended bride to a group of foreign mercenaries to save his own life).

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

• **Sense Wyrm (Level One)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Call to Duty (Level Two)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Imperial Authority (Level Two)** — Shinju know they are elite; by gazing into another's eyes and exerting their personality they can assert this. Animals fawn, while humans assume the Nine-tails is of higher caste or better family, from senior management, etc. *Shen* with weak wills

are likewise affected. The Gift is taught by a dragon, phoenix or other animal spirit accustomed to royalty.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty 6). *Shen* can oppose this with a Willpower roll (difficulty 7).

• **Past Whispers (Level Two)** — The Kitsune can learn the thoughts impressed upon a place. Thought fragments (especially those spoken aloud), especially intense ones, may remain even years later. Wind-spirits and epiphlings teach this Gift.

System: The player rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty 8). As with Flow of Aura, the more successes achieved, the more detail is received.

• **Distant Whispers (Level Three)** — This trick is somewhat like the metis Gift: Mental Speech, but with a Fox twist. The Kitsune speaks his message into the river, ground, fire or other element and the target hears the Fox's voice coming from a similar source nearby. Storms are popular vehicles due to the drama they invoke. Any elemental spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Empathy (difficulty 8). The Kitsune can send her message twenty miles per success as long as the element she chose to carry her message is present both at the source and the terminus. The conduit doesn't allow mind reading or work with strangers unless the Fox has something personal of the target's such as fingernail clippings, a wedding ring, etc. It does permit Social Abilities to be used on the receiver as long as no visual cues are necessary.

• **Eyes of the Cat (Level Three)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Wisdom of the Ancient Ways (Level Three)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Roll Over (Level Four)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Scent of Beyond (Level Four)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Imperial Obligation (Level Five)** — As the Philodox Gift: Geas.

• **Marionette (Level Five)** — The Kitsune can make the target move in any fashion by mimicking the desired action. Snake-spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 7). The victim may resist with a difficulty 7 Willpower roll; if he fails, the Kitsune is in control for one turn per success.

Path Gifts

Doshi Gifts

The sorcerers claim more Jyuho and more powerful Gifts than any others. Such power has a price; it taints the Doshi very slightly by at least one of the tricks they've stolen and the *shen* they robbed.

• **Blessing the Blade (level One)** — The sorcerer calls on a local spirit to inhabit a blade for a finite time to enhance it with supernatural power. The Nine-tails can use it instantly (such as in immediate combat) or prepare such a blade ahead of time. Outside of combat, the Gift will only function if the Kitsune activates it with a specific enemy in mind. Special wrappings restrain the spirit until the bearer speaks the enemy's name. Only one weapon of this sort may be carried at a time. The Gift is taught by a fire-spirit.

System: The players spends one Gnosis and rolls Wits + Rituals, difficulty 7. The weapon does aggravated damage for one scene only.

• **Breath of Yu-Chiang (Level One)** — As the Black Fury Gift: Curse of Aeolus; Yu-Chiang is the Chinese God of the Sea Winds.

• **Sense Magic (Level One)** — As the Uktena Gift.

• **Sense Wyrm (Level One)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Spirit Speech (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Blood Omen (Level Two)** — The Fox reads the future through a sacrifice and reading the entrails, but readings also come through the smoke of burnt offerings and reading the bones. Legend says the Doshi stole this from Black Spiral Dancers. Doshi insist they never use hengeyokai, wolves or anyone's Kinfolk for this. In times of crisis, however, the odd human may go missing. Doshi are careful to dedicate the sacrifice to spirits opposed to the Wyrm who aren't offended by the bloodshed.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Enigmas (difficulty 9) — (difficulty 7 when using human or *shen* sacrifices, tsk!) — and spends one Gnosis. The more successes, the more accurate and detailed the information gained, provided the patron asked can and wants to illuminate the future (local spirits only have local answers, for example).

• **Command Spirit (Level Two)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Ghost Speech (Level Three)** — As the Level Three Kitsune Gift.

• **Name the Spirit (Level Two)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Sight from Beyond (Level Two)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Exorcism (Level Three)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Pulse of the Invisible (Level Three)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Spirit Ward (Level Three)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Swarm of Servants (Level Three)** — From the fur of his tail a Doshi can summon tiny vermin to serve him. Mice, lice, beetles, frogs, etc. can all be called. The spirits of these creatures teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower and rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty 8). Each success calls 25 vermin that are under the Doshi's control. The swarm must stay within 20 feet of the Fox and can harass foes (-1 to victim's Dice pool per 25 creatures) and can perform simple tasks (at Strength 1 per every 10 creatures).

• **By the Light of the Moon (Level Four)** — The Kitsune can see any hidden creature by moonlight, including obfuscated, invisible, spirits in the Penumbra, mages, hengeyokai, changelings and anything else attempting to hide. Owl and bat-spirits teach the Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Perception + Alertness. The Storyteller sets the difficulty

based on distance, physical barriers, crowds, etc. that could block the view. The effect lasts until moon set, but the Fox must roll each time she wants to find another hidden creature.

• **Grasp the Beyond (Level Four)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Spirit Drain (Level Four)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Feral Lobotomy (Level Five)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Malleable Spirit (Level Five)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Seal of Inari (Level Five)** — Using this Gift a sorcerer can secretly "brand" any *shen* or mortal he encounters with sigils only Kitsune can see. These may be warnings, death marks, requests for help and such. Even coverings do not conceal the ghostly marks so long as the bearer's head is visible. They are visible at any distance. Chimerlings and epiphlings teach this Gift. Doshi rarely teach it to other Doshi.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 8). For each success, he may inscribe one character of his choice on the recipient. Other Kitsune see the seal without difficulty and usually act in accordance.

Eji Gifts

• **Falling Touch (Level One)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Razor Claws (Level One)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Resist Pain (Level One)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Sense Hostility (Level One)** — The Eji can sense hostile beings within 100 feet.

System: The player rolls Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6). The Gift must be actively used to be effective; it is not "danger sense."

• **Bolt (Level Two)** — The Kitsune can call on great elemental forces to use against his foes. A lethal bolt of lightning, wind, fire or other force strikes the enemy. Elemental spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage point and rolls Dexterity + Occult, difficulty 6. The target takes aggravated damage equal to the number of successes rolled; the range is 50 yards.

• **Enduring Warrior (Level Two)** — Eji using this Gift heal just like their hengeyokai cousins. The Gift is taught by a bear-spirit.

System: The player spends one point of Rage. She then recovers one health level per turn as do Garou. The effect lasts for one scene.

• **Sense of the Prey (Level Two)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

• **Spirit of the Fray (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Call of the Dead (Level Three)** — The Kitsune's attunement to Yin allows them to disrupt the vital energies of the living with just a touch. This exposure to the Dark Umbra causes chills, confusion and possible damage to living beings. Water and cold spirits teach this uncommon Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage and one Gnosis point and rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty 8). Animals (including humans), halfway creatures like hengeyokai and changelings, and Yang Realm spirits suffer damage as charted below. The victim loses health levels to the extreme reached on the chart regardless of their Stamina; the effects are lethal damage, but become aggravated at higher levels. Yin creatures and spirits are not harmed; they may even be strengthened or healed. Kindred of Humanity 6 or higher and Yang aspected Kuei-jin take damage. Yin aspected Kuei-jin do not.

Successes	Effect
1	Victim is functional, but may have head-aches, joint pain, chills and difficulty concentrating (Willpower roll to continue any complex mental or difficult physical activities successfully).
2	Victim is Injured, experiencing fevers, sprains and cramps.
3	Victim is Wounded. Convulsions wrack his body as his muscles tear his body apart.
4	Victim is Crippled. Hypothermia and seizures occur. Humans will likely die at the end of this time if left unaided. Sturdier creatures such as vampires and Garou are only Wounded, but the damage is aggravated.
5+	Victim is Crippled with aggravated damage. Humans die instantly.

• **Song of Fear (Level Three)** — The Kitsune has enough control over her fear that she can throw her fox frenzy off onto someone else. Garou and similar berserkers will be most unhappy should such be used on them. Enemies react with undying vengeance. Allies, even if the Fox saved their lives by forcing them to flee may seek retribution or break off contact from the Fox who used them thus. This Gift is taught by hare-spirits.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Intimidation, difficulty equals the target's Willpower. Each success sends the recipient into flight for one turn.

• **Weak Arm (Level Three)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Elemental Meld (Level Four)** — This Gift allows the Eji to transform into any physical element (earth, water, fire or air), allowing her to merge with and move through that element. It can serve as a vehicle for scouting or escape. On attaining rank five, the Kitsune can change into secondary elements (mist, electricity, moonlight, etc.). Elemental spirits teach the Gift.

System: The Kitsune spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Gnosis (difficulty 8). He must be in contact with the desired element to change and changes on contact so he takes no harm from ones such as fire or lightning. He reverts to his natural form on leaving the element. When taking the new form, the Kitsune gains its immunities (water is bullet proof, air can escape from anything except hermetically sealed containment) and limitation (water can be frozen, fire needs oxygen). His body remains the same size and in one piece but can distort

(flattening, stretching, etc.) to avoid obstacles. Movement is at the Kitsune's normal rate.

Silver, radioactivity and toxic waste harm him as normal and will bar his progress. Kitsune may not become one with radioactivity or toxic waste without joining the Wyrm. While merged, the Nine-tails is hard to detect. Observers need enhanced senses and a successful Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 9) to spot him.

• **Sorcerous Bite (Level Four)** — The Kitsune can transform his teeth into any substance he wills; silver and jade are most commonly chosen. The teeth are uncommonly strong regardless of the substance chosen. Elemental spirits teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Stamina + Primal-Urge. Silver teeth do not harm the Kitsune by their mere presence in his mouth, but he gains no greater silver immunity (such as if forced to bite himself).

• **Dragon Ally (Level Five)** — Kitsune warriors may find help with this Gift by calling forth a mighty warrior from the elements around him. He must have a substantial amount of the raw material (strong winds, a fair sized pool or stream, etc.). The creature takes the shape of a dragon. Elemental spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage point and makes a Gnosis roll (difficulty 8). For each success, the "dragon" has five feet of length, five health levels, two soak dice and does two dice of aggravated damage. It may attack with one bite and one body slam per turn. These allies are friendly to their creators; if the Kitsune ceases to concentrate on his ally, it disappears. Eji may only take simple actions while thus concentrating. Regardless, the creature vanishes at the end of the scene or when it loses all its health levels. Each time the dragon loses a health level, it loses five feet of length until it is entirely gone.

• **Fire Immunity (Level Five)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Kiss of Helios.

Cukutsushi Gifts

• **Blur of the Milky Eye (Level One)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

• **Clear the Mind (Level One)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift: Calm.

• **Mother's Touch (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

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

• **Dreamspeak (Level Two)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Fan-Shadow-Robe (Level Two)** — The Kitsune can change her appearance. This does not give perfect imagery; the Fox cannot exactly duplicate someone else's appearance, reproduce complicated patterns, garments or equipment (uniforms, etc.) and doesn't hide her actions. Chimerlings and illusion-spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Empathy versus the target's Willpower. There is no limit on how many beings may be affected. However, the fewer the witnesses, the fewer chances for one to see through the disguise. This lasts for one scene.

• **Silver Tongue (Level Two)** — As the Fianna Gift: Glib Tongue.

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

• **Distant Whispers (Level Three)** — As the Shinju Gift.

• **Ebisu's Fingers (Level Three)** — As the Ragabash Gift: Gremlins. Ebisu is the Shinto luck god and patron of honest work. Kitsune see machines taking work from honest laborers; this Gift gives it back.

• **Shadow-Fan-Flowers (Level Three)** — As the Level Four Kitsune Gift.

• **Moon-Fan-Face-Shadow (Level Four)** — As the Glass Walker Gift: Doppelganger.

• **Whelp Body (Level Four)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

• **Madness (Level Five)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Violation (Level Five)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

Kataribe Gifts

• **Beast Speech (Level One)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Fable (Level One)** — The Kataribe uses her expression and will to sway onlookers. By telling an appropriate story or singing a particular song, she can plant a suggestion in the minds and hearts of listeners. Bird-spirits (in particular Nightingale) teach this Gift.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Empathy to plant a faint compulsion (about as strong as a song that won't leave a person's head). Listeners are influenced for a number of days equal to the Nine-Tail's Manipulation + Performance dice pool. The Gift does not work if targets are forced to listen or when the Kitsune is not in the same room or area. Recordings and broadcasts are ineffective.

• **Mindspeak (Level One)** — As the Galliard Gift.

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

• **Centipede's Beckoning (Level Two)** — As the Galliard Gift: Call of the Wyrm.

• **Distractions (Level Two)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Lore (Level Two)** — The Kitsune can access the memories of other bards, living or dead, to find out information. Similar to Wisdom of the Ancient Ways, this brings forth stories, riddles, songs and such rather than obviously useful things. The Gift is taught by tortoise or elephant-spirits.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Rituals. The Storyteller sets the difficulty to reflect the information's relative obscurity. The Fox must have had personal contact with the subject (memory, sight, touch, etc.) or the Gift fails to work.

• **Tongues (Level Two)** — As the Level Three Kojin Gift.

• **Seek (Level Three)** — The Gift opens communication with local spirits so the Kitsune may ask for a single individual's location. Spirits answer correctly if they can;

should the individual be beyond their territory, they admit such. The spirits of predatory animals teach this Gift.

System: The Gift requires the expenditure of a Gnosis point to reach the spirit required. This sacrifice is waived if the Kitsune is currently in that spirit's presence or shrine. The player rolls Wits + Occult, difficulty 6.

• **Silence (Level Three)** — Kitsune may silence an area so that no sound whatsoever may be heard. Lake and mountain-spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player spends two Gnosis points and rolls Manipulation + Stealth, difficulty 8. The area affected is 5 yards in radius per success. Any Gifts or actions that require sound to work will call the two users to make a resisted Gnosis roll (Chi and similar appropriate rolls can be made if the opponent is not has no Rage difficulty 6. The winner's action takes precedent. Silence continues except for the interruption for one scene or until the silencer is rendered unconscious.

• **Uzume Sings (Level Three)** — Kataribe voices become incredibly beautiful, paralyzing an enemy or luring him forward to his doom merely by the voice's power. Nightingale and snake-spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Performance, difficulty of the target's Willpower. For every success, the victim is under the Kitsune's power for one turn. The Kitsune may roll for additional successes once the first ones expire, but need expend no more Gnosis. If the Kitsune leaves, the spell ends when the duration expires.

• **Kuei Dance (Level Four)** — This Gifts calls on the dead to bear witness. Usually used to discover the manner of their deaths, but occasionally the events of their lives are examined. There is no compulsion, but the dead are pitifully eager to be remembered, so few refuse. The spell may take any form, from story to song to dance, with the ghost acting out her part as appropriate. The Gift is taught by ancestor-spirits.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Gnosis +Empathy, difficulty 8 to establish contact. To communicate the deceased's memories to the audience, the Kitsune rolls Manipulation + Performance, difficulty 6. The more successes, the better it comes across. The Gift works only on the dead who have retained some semblance of themselves (hengeyokai ancestors, wraiths, Spectres, and all manner of hungry ghosts). It cannot call up the living, including a soul that has reincarnated. It might call up a Kinjin or Kuei-jin if the Kataribe is rank five or more. Their bodies do not go with their spirits and return unharmed at scene's end, though this may cause such beings great anger.

• **Shadows by the Firelight (Level Four)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Assimilation (Level Five)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Fabric of the Mind (Level Five)** — As the Galliard Gift.

Rites

Few Kitsune-created rites exist. The Foxes are a relatively young Changing Breed, and are more than happy to borrow rites from other hengeyokai and other sources and adapt them to their own needs. Kitsune express flattering (and usually sincere) admiration and respect for other *shen's* customs. Though this doesn't gain them access to the others' most secret rites, they have learned many lesser rituals through this tactic. Consider Nine-tails to have potential access to first and second level rites of the less reclusive hengeyokai. Some who have good reasons (sentai members, Batsu or Sempai of another Breed) may learn more advanced rites appropriate to the race of their allies, where the allies' live and the relationship they hold to exist between themselves and the ally in question. Elder Kitsune who travel widely might have picked up just about any rites they please. The rites work as usual unless they are tailored specifically to a race (for example, Baptism of Fire requires Garou tribal spirits unavailable to Kitsune, and no Kitsune could use the Rite of the Fetish Egg).

The Opening of the Eyes

Level One

This rite is simple and is used after a Kit first manifests his powers — which may not always be in the form of a First Change. It is not exclusive to the Kitsune, as they teach it to other hengeyokai in case a Kit needs the rite before an elder Kitsune can arrive on the scene. The Opening of the Eyes takes five minutes to perform. It requires that the ritemaster touch the Kit's eyelids and murmur a few words explaining the Kit's heritage and the role he is to play.

System: The ritemaster rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 5).

Rite of the Crossroads

Level Three

This rite is similar to the Beast Court's Rite of the Opened Way. Foxes use the power of the four directions to celebrate a new Kit's choice of Path. The Rite is always performed in a transitional area, with a crossroads being most auspicious. Bridges overrunning streams, gates and even doorways work as well. The ritemaster purifies the kit, then brings her to the site of the ritual. There, after making obeisance to the Emerald Mother, the Silver Lady, Bai Mianxi and prince Inari, the ritemaster asks all four for their blessing on the new Ninetail's arrival into adulthood.

The ritemaster lays out four bowls before the kit, one in each direction. The Kit sees each bowl as being filled with one of the four Path elements — clay, lightning, lava or mist. The kit reaches into the proper bowl, choosing her Path. Although this can be painful for new Eji or Doshi, the fledgling takes no permanent damage. Once the choice is made and the young one's paws drip with the element of her path, the Ritemaster ends the Rite, taking the new Yakon to her training.

System: The ritemaster rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 6). The Kit is officially Rank One at the end of the Rite. It is considered to be a great honor to perform the rite.

Successfully sponsoring a new Kitsune grants the ritemaster two points of temporary Toku (Honor).

Stereotypes (Courtesies)

Miyoko, Kitsune Kataribe speaks concerning her fellow shen:

Boli Zouhisze: As yet, these wolf changers have not recognized the need for allies beyond their own kind. We foresee that the day fast approaches when they must accept the Beast Courts' offer of assistance.

Hakken: Though they are perhaps too enamored of their own virtue, they are honorable. We work well together, complementing one another's skills.

Khan: They are too certain of their own importance, yet they are a noble and good people. The Fifth Age has greatly humbled them through the destruction of many of their tiger Kin. Aid the Khan lest there one day be none left to assist.

Kumo: Evil and depraved, these foul creatures may be set against other enemies, but should they discover your wiles (and they are clever) their vengeful poisons may well fill your veins.

Nagah: We do not speak of the Nagah. We have our reasons, though others do not understand them.

Nezumi: Ratkin. We are not so troubled by their actions as many other hengeyokai. They are not afraid to dig up excrement to find the rot beneath it.

Same-Bito: The weresharks fiercely guard the waters and keep the seas free of Yomi. For this we honor them.

Stargazers: Though led astray at one time, these wolf-changers have returned to their proper place among the Beast Courts and *shen* of Asia. We can only applaud their good sense and wish other Garou were half so wise.

Tengu: Our friends, full of information and gossip that they share with us. Keep your ears open and you will learn much. Treat them well and your reward will be self-evident.

Zhong Lung: Even if you are the most proud Kitsune to walk the Middle Kingdom you should bow before the terrible might of the Middle Dragons. We pray that no more turn to Yomi and assist the remaining dragons as we may.

Do not worry that you will see my skill in battle, my enemy. Were you to see me I would be disappointed indeed. Feel my teeth and claws, yes. See me, no.

Mokolé

Naked, Jacob is supremely happy. Though human in form, at least for now, his arms and legs slide joyously through a puddle of mud, reveling in the primal pleasure of the warm earth and hot sun. His clutchmate, Wallowing-Pride, prefers her experiences filtered through reptilian scales. She soaks up the sunshine of the Nevada desert while perched on a pristine boulder. Granted, Jacob's activities would look a little suspicious to a passing stranger, but in the warm noonday sun, danger is the last the last thing on his mind...

... until shots are fired.

"Shit!" the naked man reflexively screams. Bullets ricochet off Wallowing's boulder, for reasons too esoteric for the lizard to guess. The sounds seem like semi-automatic fire, at least to human ears. Two men in a Range Rover have taken up position fifty feet away, parked in the middle of nowhere. Chrome and mirrorshades reflect the glorious desert sunlight. In a curious display of fascist idiocy, one of the men shouts, "DON'T MOVE!"

Famous last words.

In a blur of motion, Jacob leaps from the mud, like a crocodile bolting from a riverbank — literally, as his human legs waddle and shift. Who's sold us out? he contemplates lazily, as his skin hardens into scaly resiliency. Who's hunting us now? he speculates, as his body mass doubles and ridge-plates form along his back. An atavistic amalgam of Jurassic horror, he roars a meaty bellow from his collapsible lung-sacs. Shifting to his battle-form, his body races as his mind idly contemplates the now-useless 9-millimeter shells ricocheting off his rock-hard, rugose exterior.

The two men from Developmental Neogenetics Amalgamated don't have time to present their credentials. Their highly trained minds instantly go slack with fear. They might as well be monkeys. Within heartbeats, a five-hundred-pound behemoth defying reason and resistance slams into the Range Rover. A sickening aluminum-can crunch signifies the lost integrity of the car's internal components.

The two men fumble to use their M-16s as clubs, blissfully oblivious to the real threat: the scurrying monitor lizard that's used this brief diversion to run under the car. The lizard's jaw chews silently on hissed words, forming the verbs of an antediluvian Draconic language. In a forked and spiritual tongue, Wallowing commands unseen spirits to infest the electrical system. As the incantation ends, Jacob and Wallowing quickly withdraw — as the car's engine sparks and sputters.

The car continues to rock from the impact. Its ruptured gas tank pools petroleum around the base of the Range Rover. How ironic. Millennia ago, that fluid on the desert sand came from a dinosaur, an extinct species. This human world, how long will it survive before it goes extinct? How much longer until the Old Ones that stalked the Earth return?

A spark. A flame. A fireball. Jacob and Wallowing are suffused with warmth as the incendiary blast clears two more humans from the gene pool. Another pleasant memory for their descendants to recall after the Age of Man ends. The body that's been thrown clear is lightly singed, but meat is meat. Jacob and Wallowing feast.

Legends

From an early age, schoolchildren know that monsters are real — because they know that dinosaurs once walked the Earth. Hundreds of millions of years ago, scientists affirm, the world we know served as the spawning grounds for titanic reptilian predators. We are told massive cataclysms wiped their kind from the Earth — though science is helpless to deduce exactly what force was responsible. Mankind's history is but a moment compared to the pageant of evolution, and there are histories far older than mankind. Before human history, before science, life thrived in millions of exotic forms, most undocumented in the relatively brief annals of human civilization. Before Man walked, Things roamed the Earth.

The ancient legends have not been forgotten. Slithering, stalking, and stomping in the unseen places of the wilderness, reptilian shapeshifters remember monstrous forms humans never knew. Modern descendents of the Lizard Kings, vast and disparate inheritors of forgotten genetic legacies, remember what the world was like when the Earth was young and untroubled by men. They are the Earth Mother's memory, shapeshifting reptiles and crocodilians hiding atavistic traits scavenged from lost paths of evolution.

The troubled histories of other Changing Breeds are the blink of a nictitating membrane to the Mokolé. Their numbers have dwindled for centuries, as they hid in the darkest corners of the wilderness. But now, in the Final Days, an orgy of reptilian reproduction has gradually increased their numbers and secured their territories. As man's world dies, the Mokolé are slowly returning to the world.

Don't bother seeking for some Lost World where dinosaurs have survived extinction; it's a myth distorting the real truth. The Mokolé are more common than you may think. Descendants of dinosaurs have devolved into more reptilian forms, surviving as alligators and crocodiles, monitor lizards and Gila monsters, gavials, caimans, and perenties — and stranger things that furtively spawn in the shadows. Too few to form tribes, the survivors of this evolutionary pageant have gathered in four major streams. And throughout their epic existence, murkier tributaries and rivulets have seeped into the forgotten corners of the Earth — genetic wellsprings that time has overlooked.

Preserving the mitochondrial memories of untold ages, the Mokolé can not only assume human form, but also masquerade as reptilian and crocodilian species mankind

has cataloged and classified. Yet when weresaurians take their true forms, they shift into shapes only the Mokolé can dream of — warrior forms so horrific that no two are quite the same. Unprepared human minds cannot cope with the sight of these genetic terrors: atavistic shapes blending scales smooth or scaly, jaws dripping with venom or jagged with toothy maws, lizards scurrying on tiny stumps or thundering like shibboleths and behemoths. Dwelling outside the sane classifications of known science, they dream of their mythic and legendary origins. Here there be dragons — or pieces of them, if only in a wing here, or a talon there....

The Age of Kings

In a time before time, these draconic descendents were not plagued with genetic madness. When dinosaurs walked the Earth in great numbers, the greatest among them were Lizard Kings: emperors of lands that time forgot. The first great saurian kings were shapeshifters blessed by the Earth Mother. They did not take human form — because there were no humans then — but they did make tools, and build a civilization from nothing.



No one Mokolé remembers this era perfectly. Their collective memories are reflections of a thousand Things that thrived, that died, or that never survived. Dreaming as dragons do, they recall creatures that walked on two legs, or four, or six, beings that fashioned objects with dexterous claws, feathered paws, and myriad clumsy scaled appendages. Worshipping the warm sun, they reverently raised towers of mud and meat to the heavens. Fearing the pale moon, they enacted strange and shamanistic rites around cold menhirs at midnight. Like the Mokolé's true forms, these tales are patchwork abominations, combining things that were, never were, and never should have been.

According to legend, the first Mokolé walked in three forms: the reptilian Devisor shape, the saurian Dissolver shape, and the drachid Designer shape. A thousand different Designer shapes flourished, most with wings and articulate talons. Gaia experimented with endless combinations, as Her first-born slinked out of the genetic soup of primeval seas. Kingdoms warred to prove their superiority, destroying all evolutionary rivals, until the Lizard Kings arose from the wastelands of carrion left behind. Once dinosaurs ruled the Earth, but with the changing of ages, even the greatest empires can fall... and what has happened once can happen again.

The Age of Sleep

No one knows why the Mokolé's kingdoms fell. Perhaps the tyrannical Lizard Kings grew too proud, attracting Gaia's wrath. Maybe She grew tired of the saurian kings' oppression of lesser creatures, turning Her attention to mammalian worshipers. It may be that Gaia loved all living things, and the dinosaur emperors hated what they could not control. Masters of Mnesis — the keepers of memories — know that the Mokolé raised their monstrous voices to the Sun in their prayers, while the other creatures of the Earth hid from saurian screams. The Sun did not forsake the Mokolé, but something from the stars, it is said, drastically changed the course of their evolution.

When the Old Ones passed from the world, other Changing Breeds rose to dominate the Earth. Mokolé sages believed that once the weresaurians were the only shapechangers on the planet, but as Gaia's favor changed, She created mammalian shapeshifters as well. As the sages say, Gaia made the first humans as breeding stock, so that all of the Fera could survive. Half-breed offspring served as their Kinfolk, preserving the living legacies of the Changing Breeds in their genes. The Mokolé had their Kinfolk as well, humans who had worshipped the Lizard Kings for generations. Other civilizations grew, with other beasts as rulers... and men as their slaves.

The many Fera could have shared the Earth, but they warred for petty and primal reasons, contesting for territory, herds of breeding

stock, or foolish pride. The most territorial shapeshifters were the Garou, werewolves who waged war against all the other Fera. Mokolé who took huge and monstrous forms were easy targets for wolf packs, but those that took the form of lesser saurians and reptiles could hide in the shadowy places of the Earth. If the other Fera had allied against the Garou, these "Wars of Rage" could have been averted, but instead, it cleared the way for the rise of the werewolf tribes. By the time that mankind waged war against the Garou, the Mokolé had become relics of an older time, their greatest history left only as memories — Mokolé memories.

The Age of Man

Man rules now where Beasts ruled once. For the saurians, the only true civilizations died out millennia ago. The world of today is not made in their image — it is an abomination a lesser race dominates. For most Changing Breeds, the Apocalypse represents the end of the world, or at least the end of human civilization. But the Mokolé know: the Old Ones were, and when the cities of Men have been laid low, the Old Ones will rule again. They have no need to bring about the end of the human world — only to wait, patient and potent, for human civilization to fall. Spawning and seizing enough clutches to survive, they struggle to endure the Wyrm's depredations, the Weaver's encroachment, and the Wyld's madness. The Dragon's Dream speaks of what was, and what may be again. Once again, great kings will emerge from the carrion wastelands.

Mokolé Lexicon

Apocalypse: A time when one race's civilization falls, and another rises to take its place. For instance, the Mokolé survived an Apocalypse when the dinosaurs became extinct (see Wonder-Work).

Archid: The intermediary "battle-form" of a Mokolé.

Bête: Non-Mokolé shapeshifters.

Clutch: A social grouping of Mokolé, usually a family. Most guard and defend breeding grounds.

Designer: The shaper of Life (known to Garou as the Weaver). She has helped build up mankind's civilization, which is destined to fall.

Devisor: The source of all creative power (known to Garou as the Wyld). It is responsible for many freakish innovations in the Mokolé's evolutionary pageant, and it can awaken maddening and now alien memories of those other times.

Dissolver: The Unmaker of Life (known to Garou as the Wyrm). With each Apocalypse, the Dissolver has laid a civilization low so that the Devisor could create a new one. Each time, the Designer shapes the creation into a form the Devisor did not intend... and Dissolver lusts to tear it down again.

Drachid: The "lost" toolmaker form of the Mokolé, the shape of the Lizard Kings. Since the Apocalypse that destroyed their Kingdoms, no Mokolé has been able to assume this form. Some believe that there were many such forms, because no one can fully agree on what the original Drachid form looked like.

Dragon's Dream: Mokolé dream of a time when weresaurians ruled the Earth, although some cannot agree which parts of these dreams are actually real. The latest generation of their kind has begun to dream of a new age, a time when mankind's civilization will fall, and the lost races of the Mokolé will return to the world.

Innocents: The ghosts of the deformed and stillborn children created when two Mokolé mate. They haunt the Umbra, seeking vengeance against all living Mokolé.

Mnesis: The ancestral memories of the Mokolé. Each stream (see below) usually has related dreams, but all of them include children who share the Dragon's Dream (see above).

Stream: An interwoven group of related Mnesis bloodlines native to a specific area. Not "tribes" as such; more relatives that have grown apart.

Suchid: When capitalized, the reptilian form of a Mokolé. When not capitalized, a Mokolé born from two reptilian parents.

Varna: The species of reptile into which an individual Mokolé can transform.

Wallow: A home for suchid breed Mokolé and other crocodilians or reptiles.

Wonder-Work: The Apocalypse that ended the civilization of the Lizard Kings; known to human scientists as the "Cretaceous-Tertiary Boundary event," which occurred 65 million years ago. Mnesis dreams of the event vary greatly, and many of these dreams may be false or distorted, but most attribute the event to the work of the Dissolver.

Organization

Mokolé live much humbler lives than they did millennia ago. Their dreams speak to them of impossible times of saurian supremacy, but in the modern world, they maintain modest places where they can hide, spawning enough hatchlings to perpetuate their race. These breeding grounds are known as wallows, homes for the human and reptilian shapes they take.

Most wallows evolve in places where humans and reptiles can live side by side: alligator farms in Florida, ruined temples to forgotten gods in India and along the Nile, riverside fishing communities in China, isolated hot springs in the Australian outback, and many similar locales. Such places are few and very far between. Mokolé know that there are some wallows where human forms are never taken, but such places have thoroughly isolated themselves from human society.

Wherever intelligent living things gather, a community emerges. Weresaurians form small, moderately social clans called clutches. Two clutches may harbor grudges and petty rivalries for generations, sometimes warring over misperceived slights, but for all of them, survival is their chief concern. When two clutches fight, they do it not to kill each other, but to injure and shame their enemies enough to temporarily delay further conflict. This preserves their numbers, but rarely eliminates the rivalries between clutches.

A healthy, functional clutch depends on the relationships between the different aspects (or "auspices") of Mokolé society. In the West, a grouping that contains representatives of all seven aspects is known as a "perfect clutch" — an extremely rare occurrence. Some young weresaurians venture into the world specifically to form a perfect clutch, for there are legends and prophecies of what such groups can accomplish. A group that includes five auspices is known as an "imperfect clutch" — these are becoming increasingly more common as more young heroes leave isolated clutches to change history.

The Mokolé Today

In recent years, more Mokolé young have felt the urge to claim new breeding grounds. Some cautiously venture into the human world in search of signs of when the Dragon's Dream will become real. Increased numbers and curiosity have, of course, attracted the attention of other shapechangers, including the Garou. Mokolé have long memories, and they are fanatic about keeping their breeding grounds safe from other shapechangers, including those who do not understand the subtle forms of conflict that exist between clutches.

When Mokolé must interact with the Bête, they do it far from their wallows — preferably in a location that gives them some kind of tactical advantage. As curious Garou and other shifters begin to learn more about the Mokolé, the need for violence has steadily increased. Many elders of the streams believe their race's survival depends on hiding and breeding; idealistic or younger weresaurians defy such reason, attempting to form "imperfect clutches" to help sway destiny or prophecy. They travel wherever the Dragon's Dream may take them. Mnesis may convince a Mokolé to side with one aspect of the Triat (Dissolver, Designer, or Devisor) to help shape history, though most clutches work for balance between all three forces. The latest generation of Mokolé do more than witness history; they want to create it, for they claim a new age is at hand.

Traits

A Mokolé's Rage is determined by his varna (the reptilian form he can assume); breed determines Gnosis; Willpower is determined by auspice. In addition, all share the following traits:

Mokolé regenerate wounds at the same rate as Garou, following the standard rules for healing and regeneration. However, Mokolé, as creatures of both Sun and Moon, are harmed by gold *and* silver in the same way that Garou are harmed by silver.

All Mokolé instinctively share a common language, the *lingua draconis* spoken by all Lizard Kings in the time before time. Mnesis memories reveal the simplest parts of this language when a Mokolé undergoes its First Change. They refer to this language as the Dragon's Tongue.

Mokolé cannot enter the spirit worlds of the Umbra without assistance; that is, without specific Gifts that allow them to cross the Gauntlet. In the spirit world, a few saurian spirit-paths lead to the High Umbra, a realm of abstractions and high ideals. There, mystics may contemplate places that never were, but could have been — imaginary realms where the Tyrant Kings continued to evolve. In recent years, the Pangaea Realm and Legendary Realm have become gathering places for Mokolé.

Breeds

Mokolé only have two breeds: homid and suchid. One form comes from the human world; the other slinks from the realms of reptiles.

Although metis Mokolé can be conceived, they die before birth, often right after conception. In the womb, they are unable to dream their Archid forms — what would be their birth forms — as other Mokolé do during adolescence, and therefore cannot develop true bodies. Saurian mystics believe that the strongest souls of the departed linger on in the spirit world. With motivations both reptilian and infantile, a precious few are capable of briefly taking physical forms. The baser multitude spawn unseen in unknown dimensions, for what purpose even the mystics dare not guess. For now, it's enough to say there are terrors in the world greater than the Mokolé.

• **Homid:** A homid Mokolé's ethnicity usually depends on its stream. Mokolé-mbembe walk among humans in the Americas and Africa, from the streets of the first world to the rainforests and jungles of the third world. Fera who think they understand the rarer streams of Mokolé — such as the Indian Makara, Aboriginal Gumagan, and Asian Zhong Lung — may find the stereotypes they seek. However, just as nations are culturally diverse, a stream is not limited to any one ethnic group. As the End Times approach, unexpected individuals are awakening to the Dragon's Dream, rediscovering their reptilian heritage.

Beginning Gnosis: 2

• **Suchid:** A suchid Mokolé is hatched from a reptile egg. Civilized homids consider the suchids' views on their world to be straightforward, brutal, and at its basest, crudely laced with self-interest. In actuality, suchid are capable of subtler thoughts than mere "slaying and breeding" (or "fighting and fucking"). When in throes of reptilian Frenzy, however, immediate gratification of the id and ego are a suchid's primary concerns, confirming the breed's base reputation.

Beginning Gnosis: 4

Streams

Stories of Lizards Kings stalking the primeval wilderness are ancient legends. In the modern world, four streams of Mokolé flow from that primal source. In the distant time before time, the disparate continents of the Earth were united in one continent: Pangaea. With continental drift, the streams have become separated from each other, isolated and flooded in their own genetic pools.

Africa and the Americas are the now stalking grounds of the **Mokolé-mbembe**, the Stream of the Fighters. They are by far the largest of the four streams, and as the End Times approach, their numbers are steadily growing. Decades ago, they were rarely sighted by other shapechangers outside the depths of the Amazon Rainforest; now a more diverse variety

of humans have awakened to the Dragon's Dream. The stream's most common suchid forms are as alligators and crocodilians (including the American crocodile and Nile crocodile), but a few take the shapes of caimans or Gila monsters.

Australia and Oceania are the homelands of the **Gumagan**, a stream represented primarily by Aborigines and Melanesians. Known as the Stream of the Forerunners, they are known for their insights into the spirit world, particularly the Dreamtime. Unlike the other streams, all Gumagan are capable of entering the Umbra. They are known for their extensive and primeval Mnesis: their memories of the earliest days of the Earth. In Suchid form, most take the shapes of saltwater crocodiles or perenty monitors.

The Indian subcontinent serves as the spawning grounds of the **Makara**, the Stream of the Folk. Indian politics, religion, and mysticism have heavily influenced this stream. The seasons determine their four auspices, which are further subdivided by the caste systems of their homelands, so much so that outsiders cannot hope to understand the finer distinctions between them. In Suchid form, Makara typically assume the forms of gavials, mugger crocodiles, and saltwater crocodiles.

Working with the other Asian Changing Breeds, the **Zhong Lung** are known as the Stream of the Philosophers. Although they have inherited the millennial Mnesis of countless scholars and teachers, they have the fewest memories of conflict with other shapechangers. Throughout the Middle Kingdoms of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, they have endured as the stream least harmed by the Garou. Known for their epic patience, their aspects are measured by the season in which they are born. In Suchid form, they typically take the shapes of Chinese alligators, saltwater crocodiles, and monitor lizards.

Solar Auspices

Mokolé-mbembe and Gumagan recognize seven solar auspices. For these streams, the time of day a Mokolé is born determines his auspice. (For the Traits bestowed by the seasonal auspices of the Makara and Zhong Lung see p. 200)

• **Rising Sun, Striking:** Between the reddening of the eastern sky and noon, sunlight strikes at the heavens. Mokolé born at this time of day excel as soldiers, hunters, explorers, and seekers. They are fascinated by the present, especially in times of danger, when they must live for the moment. In dreams of such times, the sky reddens with the blood of their foes, usually the same hue as the light of the rising sun.

Beginning Willpower: 3

Aspect Benefit: A Striking Mokolé has the option of rerolling his initiative once per scene. The character must use the second result, regardless of whether it's higher or lower than the first result.

• **Noonday Sun, Unshading:** At high noon, the sun reigns supreme over the Earth, seeing all. Mokolé born within an hour of noon may inherit this aspect. (It is just as likely, however, that one born slightly before noon will be Striking, or one born slightly after will be Warding.) Most either become judges or enforcers of law (in its many forms) or guards who patrol the areas surrounding wallows. They are also known as the Laws of the Sun, or the Will of the Crowned.

Beginning Willpower: 5

Benefit: Once per scene, the Unshading can subtract one die from the dice pool of one of the following "creatures of darkness": vampires, fomori, demons, Black Spirals, Spectres, Nephandi, or Banes.

• **Setting Sun, Warding:** As the sun sets, the wise ward against evil hidden in the growing darkness. Mokolé born between noon and sunset inherit this aspect, dreaming of dangers hidden in shadows. Many become guards, nurses, healers, or caretakers. They are usually better at taking defensive measures than the more aggressive Rising and Noonday Suns. When on the attack, they usually support and heal their comrades.

Beginning Willpower: 3

Benefit: A Warding gains an extra die to one dice pool while defending others, retreating, or following specific orders. This benefit may be used once per scene.

• **Shrouded Sun, Concealing:** When the sun is obscured, unseen forces scheme against those who live in the light. Shrouded Suns are born during the day, but only at times when the sun is hidden. Most become mystics, teachers of spirit lore, or scholars of secret knowledge. They are usually the most skilled at magic and supernatural Gifts, relying on subtle methods of hunting and exploration. Their shamanistic powers allow them to channel spirits, and some interact with human shamans to learn powerful lore.

Beginning Willpower: 4

Benefit: The Concealing gain an extra die on Stealth rolls used to hide themselves or other objects or persons. This extra die may be used once per scene.

• **Midnight Sun, Shining:** When creatures of the sun are born at night, strange and contradictory events occur. Drawn to darkness, they burn with Helios' light. Midnight Suns are born between sunset and sunrise. They tend to love puzzles and paradoxes. Many act as poets, jokers, artists, mythmakers, or guides to the dead.

Without the sun to guide them, they follow other sources of light, and other philosophies. All share the same Benefit and begin play with the same beginning Willpower, but they are the most diverse of the seven "solar" aspects. In fact, they are so diverse that they have their own three "midnight" aspects.

— *Night-Suns* are born by moonlight, under Luna's light. They seek Gifts from the moon, calling her the "Sun of the Night." At the Storyteller's discretion, they can learn Garou Gifts taught by Lunes or take Phoebe/Sokhta as a Totem (see **Rage Across the Heavens**).

— *Many-Suns* are born under the stars. They often claim that "every star is a sun," and thus insist that they are a

thousand times more blessed. They follow as many paths to truths as the stars themselves, falling in love with wild ideas.

— *No-Suns* are born under the lightless sky, the most mysterious aspect of all. They draw wisdom from the empty spaces between stars, claiming that "light is sometimes darkness."

Beginning Willpower: 4

Benefit: When all is hopeless, a Midnight Sun shines with courage. When a Shining Mokolé brings humor or courage in the midst of a hopeless situation, the Storyteller may bestow an extra die to be used on any one dice pool. The Storyteller should not grant this benefit more than once per scene.

• **Decorated Suns, Gathering:** When light gathers, the sun is surrounded by a halo. Decorated Suns are born when the sun is surrounded by rings, rays, or flares of light (sometimes called "sundogs"); thus, they are among the rarest of the Mokolé. Other aspects consider them list-makers or busybodies, but they see themselves as hardworking organizers, coordinators, or matchmakers.

Younger Decorated Suns love to either draw a clutch together or attach themselves to a successful clutch (which would no doubt benefit from the expertise of a Gathering Mokolé). The Crowning may reign, the Decorated Suns claim, but the Gathering actually get things done. Some are actually effective at what they do.

Beginning Willpower: 5

Benefit: A Gathering may gain an extra die to one dice pool when acting in a collective effort. The Storyteller may bestow this die once per scene.

• **Solar Eclipse, Crowning:** In moments of astronomical wonder, fantastic events can occur. The rarest of all Mokolé are born during a solar eclipse. They are the ruler-priests of Mokolé society; all weresaurians defer to a Crowning Mokolé, unless she acts as a tyrant. The Crowning solicit advice from the Concealing, while depending on the Gathering for their practical knowledge. Crowning characters are rare enough that they should only be played with the express permission of the Storyteller; their powers are certainly above that of other Mokolé.

Beginning Willpower: 5

Benefit: A Crowning born during a total eclipse becomes *Jewel-Crowned*, a high priest leading proper ceremonies of worship to the sun. When the sun is shining, the character gains one extra die once per scene to apply to any one die roll.

A Mokolé born during a partial eclipse is *Crescent-Crowned*, a warrior king destined to lead loyal followers into battle. During a scene when a battle occurs, the character gains one extra die to apply to any one die roll.

If an annular eclipse occurs during a Mokolé's birth, the child shall become a *Unity King*, forging alliances between disparate clutches, inspiring great deeds, and amassing great wealth. When involving herself in diplomacy or financial dealing, the character gains one extra die to add to any one Social dice pool once per scene.

A child born during the night of a lunar eclipse shall become one of the infamous "rascal kings," fated to be Crowning rather than Shining. Such legendary and reckless heroes are known for ridiculous whims, deadly practical jokes, and highly inspired ideas that may "save the day." Once per scene, the Storyteller may choose to award an extra die to a dice pool related to an act of inspired lunacy.

Archid Characteristics

The following characteristics are appropriate for a Mokolé's Archid form:

• **Armor:** +2 Soak.

• **Bladed Tail:** Gains a tail lash maneuver (Str +2 aggravated damage, difficulty 7).

• **Color Change:** +1 difficulty to spot a Mokolé in hiding.

• **Constricting Coils:** +3 dice to attempts to immobilize target.

• **Fins:** Double swimming speed.

• **Gills:** Fully amphibious.

• **Grasping Hands:** Normal manual dexterity in Archid form.

• **Horn:** Gains a gore maneuver (Str +2 aggravated damage, difficulty 7).

• **Huge Size:** Stamina +1, +2 damage to Body Slam or Overbear attempts.

• **Long Teeth:** Bite damage is increased to Strength +3.

• **Poison Sacs:** May inject poison once per day on a successful bite attack; the victim must soak four additional dice of poison damage.

• **Royal Crest:** +2 to Social rolls involving Nagah or any Mokolé stream.

• **Terrible Claws:** Claw damage increases to Strength +3.

• **Upright Walking:** Frees up forelimbs when walking.

• **Webbed Feet:** May swim at 150% speed and walk without trouble on soft mud. Other Dexterity rolls on dry land are at +1 difficulty due to webbing.

Forms

Mokolé have three forms — they need no others. Shapechanging requires a Stamina + Primal-Urge roll, difficulty 6 (regardless of form). Changing from Homid to Suchid (or back) requires two successes. Changing to Archid (or back) requires one. As usual, the shapeshifter can assume any form instantly by spending one Rage.

• **Homid:** This form is indistinguishable from an ordinary human. The ethnicity in Homid form usually depends on the creature's stream, although it is almost always from a warm climate. As the End Times advance, the streams are slowly becoming more culturally diverse.

• **Archid:** This intermediary form is an amalgam of the Mokolé's genetic legacy. Reptilian and crocodilian creatures are sometimes blended with behemoths that have been forgotten, or never were. The form first appears to a potential

Mokolé in his nightmares, but during the First Change, it becomes real in the waking world. The form usually resembles an impossible dinosaur or dragon, or even a prehistoric reptile (such as a pteranodon or Archelon) or a sea serpent.

During character creation, a player can choose "enhancements" to the creature's Archid form. When the player knows his character's final Gnosis Trait, he can purchase a number of points of Archid Characteristics equal to the character's Gnosis. (Thus, a character with Gnosis 3 can choose 3 points of Archid Characteristics.) Some (where specifically listed) may be purchased multiple times. Of course, approving the details of this form is left purely to the discretion of the Storyteller.

• **Suchid:** This is the reptilian or crocodilian form of the creature. Each stream consists of two or three specific suchid forms, called "varna." Because of vastly different sizes and body shapes, the Rage of a Mokolé is determined by its varna. See the statistics sidebar for more details.

Archid Form Statistics

Strength +4, Dexterity –1, Stamina +4, Manipulation –3, Appearance 0; causes Delirium, may bite and claw for aggravated damage

Suchid Form Statistics

A Mokolé's stats for suchid form depends on its varna; that is, the type of reptile it becomes in this form. The character's varna also determines its starting Rage.

Halpatee/Paisa: Str +2, Dex -1, Sta +3, Man –2, Rage 4
American alligator/American crocodile

Note: Running speed is halved; swimming speed equals Homid form's land speed.

Ora: Str +0, Dex +0, Sta +2, Man –4, Rage 5
Monitor lizards

Note: Running speed same as Homid form; sprints are possible; limited swimming.

Unktehi: Str –1, Dex +0, Sta +1, Man –3, Rage 5
Gila monsters

Note: Half human running speed, cannot swim. Bite inflicts Strength -1 damage.

Karna/Champsa: Str +3, Dex –2, Sta +3, Man –4, Rage 2
Saltwater and Nile crocodiles

Gharial/Syrta: Str +1, Dex –1, Sta +3, Man –4, Rage 4
Gavials and caimans

Makara: Str +1, Dex +0, Sta +2, Man –3, Rage 3
Mugger crocodiles

Gifts

Mokolé begin play with one aspect Gift and one common Mokolé Gift. A weresaurian who spends time with others of his stream may later learn "stream Gifts."

Common Mokolé Gifts

• **Falling Touch (Level One)** — As the Garou Gift. Usually taught in dreams by the spirit of a Dinosaur King or Bird King.

• **Fatal Flaw (Level One)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift.

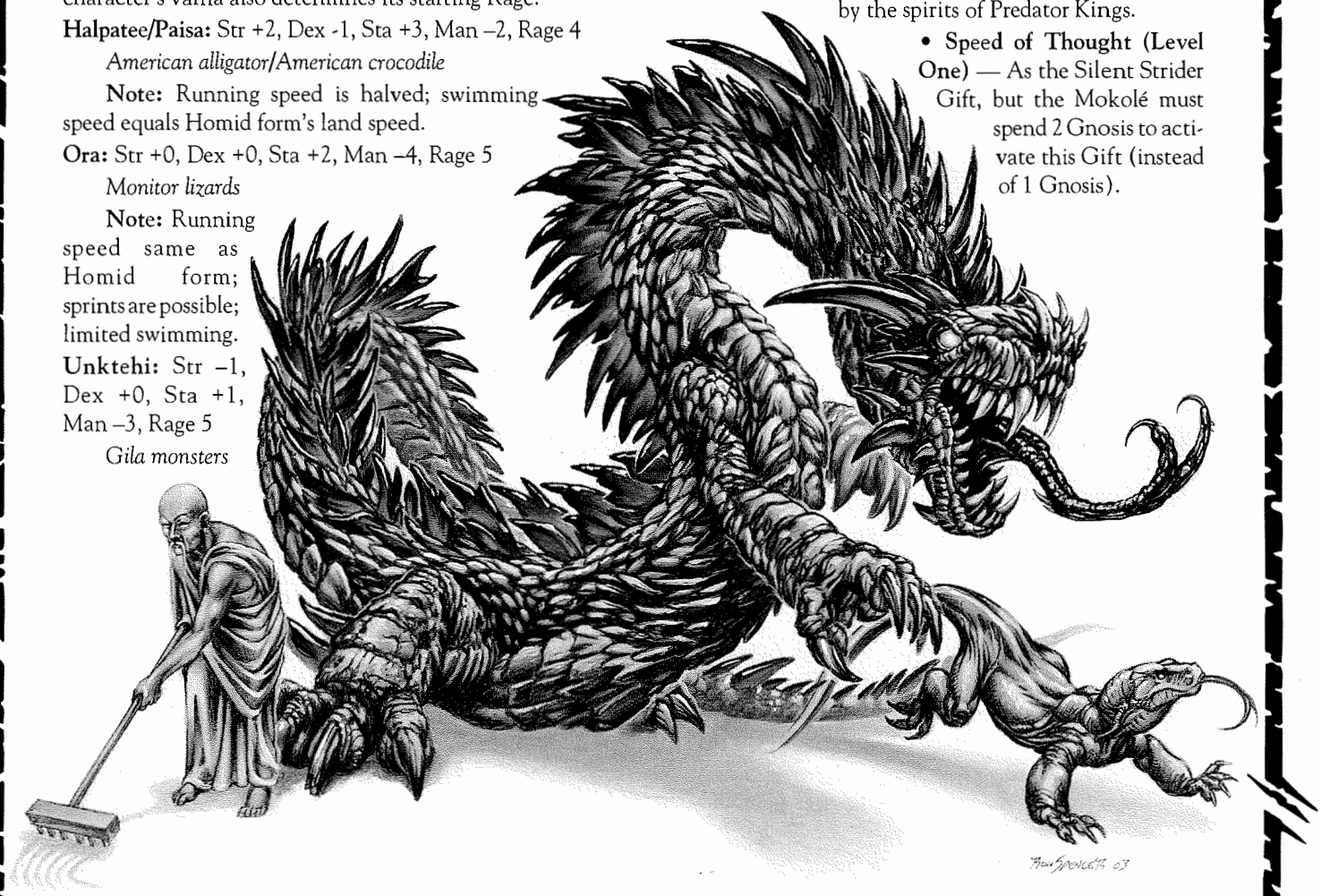
• **Inspiration (Level One)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Razor Claws (Level One)** — As the Ahroun Gift; only useable in Archid form.

• **Sense Dissolver (Level One)** — As the metis Gift: Sense Wyrm.

• **Sight of the True Form (Level One)** — As the Garou Gift: Scent of the True Form; taught in dreams by the spirits of Predator Kings.

• **Speed of Thought (Level One)** — As the Silent Strider Gift, but the Mokolé must spend 2 Gnosis to activate this Gift (instead of 1 Gnosis).



• **Sense Gold (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Sense Silver, save that it detects the presence of gold.

• **Silver Claws (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift. There is no common "Gold Claws" Gift, because Mokolé do not typically attack each other with the intent to kill.

• **Sense Gold (Level Three)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Sense Silver, save that it detects the presence of gold.

• **Walking Between Worlds (Level Three)** — The creature can breach the Gauntlet and enter the Umbra just as Garou can. Mokolé prefer pools of water to other reflective surfaces.

System: The Mokolé can step sideways as Garou do.

• **Dragon's Breath (Level Three)** — The Mokolé can spit fire; taught by Dragon himself.

System: The player spends one Rage and rolls Dexterity + Brawl (difficulty 8); the flame inflicts two health levels of aggravated damage. If the roll succeeds, the creature can spend additional Rage; each point spent inflicts two additional levels of aggravated damage.

• **Attunement (Level Four)** — As the Bone Gnawer Gift.

• **Cocoon (Level Four)** — As the Garou homid Gift; used when a Mokolé is sleeping the Sleep of the Dragon.

• **Grasp the Beyond (Level Five)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Song of the Great Beast (Level Five)** — As the lupus Gift. Usually taught to suchids by Dinosaur Kings; used to summon dinosaur Great Beasts.

Rising Sun Gifts

• **Bellow (Level One)** — The Mokolé terrifies all who hear him with a powerful reptilian roar; taught by a crocodile-spirit or alligator-spirit.

System: The player spends one Rage and rolls permanent Rage; the difficulty is the target's Willpower. If the roll is successful, the listener reacts as though affected by Delirium. Subtract the number of successes from the target's Willpower before consulting the Delirium Chart. A supernatural creature can spend a Willpower point to resist this effect for one round; for another shapeshifter, one Willpower cancels the effect for a scene. Even if the roll fails, humans are affected normally.

• **Eye of the Raptor (Level One)** — The creature can see for miles, as if the distance were a mere twenty yards; this Gift is taught by a bird-spirit, usually one known for its amazing eyesight.

System: The player rolls Perception + Alertness (difficulty 8). The number of successes equals the number of miles the character can see clearly, although it does not grant the ability to see through objects.

• **Sense Silver (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Paint the Meadows (Level Two)** — This peculiar Gift allows the Mokolé to utter pitiable moans to lure prey closer.

System: The player rolls Wits + Expression; the difficulty is either 5 or the target's Willpower (whichever is higher). For each success, the victim moves closer for one turn; if the victim is harmed, the Gift's effects end.

• **Combat Healing (Level Three)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Might of the Kings (Level Three)** — As the Get of Fenris Gift: Might of Thor.

• **Scream of Gaia (Level Four)** — As the Get of Fenris Gift.

• **Wall of Granite (Level Five)** — As the Philodox Gift.

Noonday Sun Gifts

• **Truth of Olodumare (Level One)** — As the Garou Gift: Truth of Gaia; taught by a sun-spirit.

• **Sight of the True Form (Level One)** — As the common Gift.

• **Strength of Purpose (Level Two)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Calm (Level Two)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift.

• **Clear Mind (Level Three)** — This Gift encourages clarity of thought, no matter what the distractions; it is taught by a crow-spirit.

System: The player spends one or more Willpower points, then chooses a Mental dice pool (such as Intelligence + Enigmas); each Willpower point spent adds one die to that dice pool for the remainder of the scene.

• **Raptor's Gaze (Level Three)** — As the Fianna Gift: Balor's Gaze.

• **Serenity (Level Four)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift.

• **Geas (Level Five)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift.

Setting Sun Gifts

• **Mother's Touch (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Resist Pain (Level One)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Clap of Thunder (Level Two)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift.

• **Paint the Meadows (Level Two)** — As the Rising Sun Gift.

• **Might of the Kings (Level Three)** — As the Get of Fenris Gift: Might of Thor.

• **Combat Healing (Level Three)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Clenched Jaw (Level Four)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Halo of the Sun (Level Five)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift.

Midnight Sun Gifts

• **Darksight (Level One)** — For the Mokolé using this talent, the ambient light of the Penumbra illuminates the physical world, even when darkness surrounds her. A moon-spirit of some sort teaches the Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower; the effects last for one scene. In complete darkness, the user can see only the outlines of his surroundings. In any other lighting conditions, she sees as though the sun was shining.

• **Lambent Flame (Level One)** — As the Silver Fang Gift; taught by a fire-spirit or sun-spirit.

• **Dreamspeak (Level Two)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Glib Tongue (Level Two)** — As the Fianna Gift.

• **Invisibility (Level Three)** — As the Uktena Gift.

• **Open Moon Bridge (Level Three)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

• **Fool's Luck (Level Four)** — This Gift grants a temporary immunity to "bad luck."

System: The player spends one Gnosis, and rolls Gnosis (difficulty 8). For the rest of the scene, each success allows the creature to convert a botched roll into a failed roll.

• **Take the True Form (Level Five)** — As the Level Four Philodox Gift.

Shrouded Sun Gifts

• **Mother's Touch (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Spirit Speech (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Sense Designer (Level One)** — As the metis Gift: Sense Wyrm, save that it detects the presence of Weaver-spirits.

• **Sense Dissolver (Level One)** — As the metis Gift: Sense Wyrm.

• **Walking Between Worlds (Level Two)** — As the Level Three common Gift.

• **Send the Dream (Level Two)** — As the Level Three metis Gift: Mental Speech.

• **Exorcism (Level Three)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Grasp the Beyond (Level Four)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Malleable Spirit (Level Five)** — As the Theurge Gift.

Decorated Sun Gifts

• **Persuasion (Level One)** — As the Garou homid Gift; taught by a Snake-spirit.

• **Mother's Touch (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Pilot Snake (Level One)** — The pilot snake is known to Mokolé mystics as a helpful creature, eager to help find shelter, wallows, drinkable water, or fresh meat. This Gift is taught by a snake-spirit.

System: The player rolls Gnosis and calls on Pilot Snake. The Gift only works in a place where snakes gather. The difficulty in wilderness is 6; in sight of human works, it's 7; in a park or suburb, it's 8; in a city, it's 9; near the Dissolver's corruption, it's 10. The roll must score at least three successes, unless pilot snakes are normally found in the area (in which case, one success is required). It does not speak, but will guide the mystic to any place that does not endanger itself, as long as it's a place it knows (unlike, say, a Garou caern).

• **Call to Duty (Level Two)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Walking Between Worlds (Level Two)** — As the Level Three common Gift.

• **Reshape Object (Level Three)** — As the Garou homid Gift.

• **Long Running (Level Three)** — Reduce the travel time of a journey, whether on foot or in a vehicle.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Dexterity + Athletics (or Drive, if driving) against the difficulty of the local Gauntlet; each success reduces travel time by 5%. The effects last for one day.

• **Strength of the Dominator (Level Four)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift.

• **Obedience (Level Five)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift.

Eclipsed Sun Gifts

• **Aura of Confidence (Level One)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift; taught by the spirit of a Dinosaur King.

• **Lambent Flame (Level One)** — As the Silver Fang Gift.

• **Walking Between Worlds (Level Two)** — As the Level Three common Gift.

• **Awe (Level Two)** — As the Silver Fang Gift.

• **Wrath of Dragon (Level Three)** — As the Silver Fang Gift: Wrath of Gaia.

• **Eye of the Cobra (Level Three)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Mastery (Level Four)** — As the Silver Fang Gift.

• **Stop Continental Drift (Level Five)** — The Crowning with this powerful Gift can travel between the continents almost as though they were one, as they were in the time of Pangaeä. A journey from the shores of Africa to South America, for instance, may only take a matter of days.

System: Once the Mokolé begins her journey, the player rolls Stamina + Rituals, difficulty 7. The Crowning and her clutchmates must sing in the Dragon's Tongue as they travel. The clutch really passes through a "tunnel" of sorts in the Umbra that connects the continents; the number of days spent in this dimension equals (5 minus the number of successes; minimum 1). If the chanting stops before the transoceanic journey is complete, the group arrives back on the shore of the last continent it touched.

Rites

The weresaurians observe ancient rites performed in traditional manners. While a ritualist may alter a rite to accommodate a different environment, stream, or varna, the elemental parts of a rite do not change much from one wallow to the next. Mokolé have few rites connected to the Umbra, largely because of their fear of Innocents (that is, the souls of unborn "Mokolé metis"). In fact, Mokolé ritualists must learn to be subtle, since they perform most of their ceremonies in the physical world, not the spirit world.

Burning the Library (Mystic)

Level One

This rite is named for the day when fire destroyed the Library of Alexandria. It can erase a memory from someone who has witnessed (or perpetrated) an event; if the rite is performed communally, remove all of the participants' memories of the event.

System: The ritemaster rolls Charisma + Rituals, difficulty 7. The ritualist describes the memories that must be destroyed, then quietly intones Words of Unmaking (which can be perilous for outsiders to hear). The Words seek out and destroy the offending memories. For each success, one memory (up to a scene long) is destroyed. The ritualist can

perform this rite on himself, but if the roll botches, he forgets how to perform this rite, and must learn it again.

Feed the Wallow (Caern)

Level One

Through this rite, food for one can be transformed into food for many.

System: The ritemaster blesses the food and divides it repeatedly. Each success on the ritemaster's roll doubles the number of people the food can feed. Food affected or created by this rite cannot be subjected to this rite again.

Silence of the Oracles (Mystic)

Level One

With this observance, the ritualist can protect a person (or creature) from memories that would drive him mad. It is often used to protect the survivors of torture or atrocities; on rare occasions, it may also be used to heal the mind of someone that has survived an encounter with the supernatural. Some Mokolé gather these memories into their race's collective Mnesis, so that they are fully aware of evils witnessed in the Age of Man.

System: For each success on the rite roll, one memory (up to a scene in length) may be "sealed": The recipient does not forget the events that occurred, but is no longer injured by his memories. Once he can analyze the event without pain, he may have a chance to heal. When used against a Derangement or Harano (or similar state), the patient acts normally for one scene per success.

Stereotypes

Tale-of-Ages, elderly sage of the Mokolé-mbembe, shares his memories and judgment:

Ananasi: Inconstant and devious, they cannot be trusted. One never knows which part of the Triat they serve. Drinking the blood of humans is the least of their crimes, for our tales speak of exotic powers that can drive the innocent mad. Let them destroy themselves.

Bastet: When it suits them, the catskins are willing to work with others. There have been times when we our races have had to help each other, particularly in the Amazon. When we have no common cause, however, they remain aloof, hiding their own mysteries from the other shapechangers of the world.

Corax: Gaia's messengers watch what should not be seen, and say what others would dare not speak. Sun smiles on them, warming their wings as they search the Earth for news. For the right price, they will speak of what they've seen. Getting them to stop talking, however, is far more difficult....

Gurahl: In the Age of Sleep, the Bearskins were the great healers of the world, and of Gaia Herself. They could heal anyone, even (so it is said) the dead. Like Dragons, they learned to sleep in the Earth. But the wolfskins, with their cunning and Rage, hunted the healers first, and now few are left to tend to the wounded and dying of this new Apocalypse.

Nagah: They act in secret; some say they pass judgment, or carry secrets Gaia did not entrust to our memory. In the time before time, they worshiped dragons as their gods. In the age before the War of Rage, they kept the balance between the many Fera. Now the world is out of balance, and who they serve, or how, or where, remains a mystery.

Ratkin: The ratskins have gone mad, more so than any other Bête. Striking without reason, they wage war against all mankind, randomly rending the Weaver's webs as their madness grows. Their strength is in numbers — if the first is not driven away, many will follow. The best we can hope for is to drive off or destroy any that approach our wallows.

Rokea: An ancient race, one that hopefully has preserved their ways from the time before time. They are content to let our Kin pass on the surface of the water. Dive deep, however, and you may see their wrath.

I am the entire line of my people, stretching back to the beginning. I am my ancestors' wisdom, I am their hope, and I am their anger.

Nagah

Silk sheets luxuriously surround Ghita's prone body, brushing against her almond skin. A waterfall of raven hair cascades across her pillow. With wide and honest eyes, she watches the man sleeping next to her: a tanned and angry man who seems troubled, even in sleep. Inching away from his body, she gradually pulls away, moving from the pool of moonlight on the bed to the cold shadows surrounding it. On the other side of the bed, a second woman shifts onto her side, obviously exhausted, and fast asleep.

A hand darts out from under the sheets, grabbing her wrist. "Going so soon?" The man tightens his grip.

"I... I wasn't expecting you to wake up."

"Of course you weren't. You thought you could get away from here, take what you could find in the middle of the night. You knew there was something in my suitcase, didn't you?" His lumbering body shifts suddenly, feet on the floor, shoulders leaning forward. He moves with practiced grace, despite his bulk.

"You're hurting me."

"It's nothing compared to what you did to me. What did you put in that drink? I didn't... smell... anything odd about it. You used the same trick on your last victim, and that's one time too many."

With one swift motion, he rushes from the bed, forcing her against the wall. He gets ready for her to fight back, preparing for an obvious counterattack with a knee to the groin or nails to the face.

"Four men dead," he hisses, staring into her eyes from inches. "Four of my friends, from New York to San Francisco, each the same way. Two women working in a bar buy a man a drink, walk him to a hotel room. Then another drink, with something inside it. Not this time. Your poison doesn't affect me. This time, I'm prepared."

On the bed, the second woman groggily wakes up, watching the drama by the door of the hotel room. "What... what's going on?" Her green eyes lazily focus on the two intertwined forms. With a silent scream, she bolts upright, red hair falling around her shoulders. "What the hell are you doing?"

"I was about to break your friend's arm. Stay in bed if you know what's good for you."

Although Ghita's arm is still pinned to the wall, she's able to lunge for the light switch. In a heartbeat, light floods the room. As the man is disoriented, Ghita takes advantage of the distraction, not with a knee to the groin, but a practiced rabbit punch to his throat. Her opponent gasps for air... and then stares at a shadow on the wall. The lack of air doesn't surprise him as much as the shadowy serpentine form he sees — the outline of an impossibly large cobra.

Turning slowly, he looks at the form casting the shadow. The second woman towers above him, as her body lengthens and... changes. Her skin takes on a sinuous sheen of scales. Her red hair fans into a cobra's hood, as she hisses something obscene. A twelve-foot-long snake coils around the bedpost, fangs bared.

"What... is... good for me?" She spits in his face from ten feet away, splattering venom towards the wall...



Legend

Most of the Changing Breeds have some legends of the Nagah, the strange serpent-changers who lived long ago. They are remembered, strangely, as dancers — sinuous creatures in both human and serpent form, whose dances spelled out some ancient ritual. But they were sinister creatures, and had few friends. It is little wonder that they were slain to the last in the Wars of Rage — or so the other Changing Breeds believe.

Each Changing Breed knows it was appointed a task in the working of the world; the Nagah know that their first duty to was to monitor the Khurah, acting as judges or executioners when Gaia needed them. Not bound by any one force of the Triat, hidden in shadows, they measured the actions of the Changing Breeds, judging them with cold-blooded efficiency.

The wereserpents were the keepers of Sacred Secrets, hiding their purpose and true numbers from the other Changing Breeds. On a few rare occasions, the actions of one nest of Nagah would be uncovered, but their subterfuge was so complete that the rest of their race could walk openly in the midst of human settlements. In the lands now known as India, the greatest of the legendary Nagah helped shape one of the first great civilizations. In those days, many humans obeyed the most "human" Nagah, the balaram breed, as they would royalty. For generations, the balaram's descendants were regarded as nobility. From there, the most esteemed lineages spread to other parts of the world, forming Crowns of Nagah encircling the world.

Across these generations, Nagah heroes passed judgment when Gaia's children went astray. When a Garou died, of course, the werewolf's tribe was always eager to find the assassin responsible. If they could not find an individual, they would freely wage war with whomever they suspected, satisfying honor by seeking glory. As the old tales tell, one indiscreet Nagah was foolish enough to openly assassinate one of the corrupt and haughty Silver Fangs leading these crusades. The Nagah assassin was named Vinata, and when she was finally caught, the Garou used her as an example to slaughter — and almost drive to extinction — an entire generation of Nagah. The wereserpents were masters of silent assassination, but when the Garou began waging war openly against all Changing Breeds, the serpents were helpless to turn the tide of battle. Against a Garou pack, a lone Nagah could not survive.

No one event sparked the War of Rage; it was a conflagration that was stoked for generations, as the Garou found or fabricated reasons to wage war against each of the Changing Breeds in turn. Many of the survivors retreated to the spirit world. In the same way, the Nagah retreated further into their sacred places in the Umbra. Deep under great rivers, they guarded sacred Glens called Jeweled Waters; hidden from caerns and cubs, they watched over Den Realms known as Ananta. In times of darkness, they would skulk from their spiritual havens to swim in the depths of great rivers, but only long enough to prevent themselves from becoming spirits.

And far from the spirit realms known to Garou, they maintained their allegiances to the Lu Lung, worshipping great dragons in the fabled realm of Xi Wang Chi. Like the dragons they serve, the Nagah have learned great patience, cooling their passions as they wait for the right time to strike. Since it is now a time of great injustice, the Nagah are needed once again.

The Nagah Today

As the End Times approach, the Nagah are very, very busy. The Nagah hear the whispers of Gaia's warrior aspect, Devi. As the world dies screaming, the balance between the forces of the Triat is more important than ever. While the Garou openly conduct crusades against the Wyrm, the Nagah silently strike against the Wyrm and anything else that threatens Gaia — including the most nefarious shapeshifters. The Black Spiral Dancers alone provide a wealth of targets for the Nagah, but the wereserpents cannot neglect the other portion of their calling — to judge those who sin against Gaia but do not wear their crimes openly. Any Garou can look on a bat-faced Black Spiral Dancer and realize that it needs killing; but the Nagah must eliminate those who aren't so easy to identify.

Nagah assassins prefer to strike without warning, then erase all traces of their presence. Sometimes even the corpse disappears. When crimes are great enough, evidence that the target ever existed may also be annihilated. Gaia guides silent assassins to carry out Her punishments, sometimes to cease the warring between one breed of Khurah and another. For all their cold and ruthless professionalism, the Nagah still remember the consequences of Vinata's failure. If they do not remain hidden, the Garou will slaughter them again.

Nagah Lexicon

Ananta: A Nagah Den Realm. Unlike a Bastet's Den Realm, it is portable if it has been dedicated to a specific Nagah.

Crown: A regional council of Nagah.

Devi: The Earth Mother, or "Emerald Mother." Gaia is an aspect of the Earth Mother known for Her love; Devi is an avatar known for Her wrath.

Khurah: The Nagah's word for other shapeshifters.

Nandana: The Ananta of the Sesha, the spiritual realm where the nine elders of the race meet in secret.

Nemontana: A regional council ("Crown") of Nagah that has decided to judge the local shapeshifter population of Europe. In India and Asia, it is known as "Vritra;" in the Middle East "Yamilka;" in America, "Zuzeka."

Nest: A nomadic "pack" of Nagah, usually two or three. Their lives are intertwined. Their ties are often deeper than bonds they have made with their former lovers or former families.

Sacred Secret: The secret that the Nagah still exist, kept carefully from the Garou. It is known to the hengeyokai

of the Beast Courts, and suspected by the Mokolé (who do not remember the Nagah's death).

Sannyasin: A solitary Nagah, or one that has chosen a life of solitude. Nagah society forbids a wereserpent from hunting alone, so retiring from a life of passing judgment is akin to becoming a hermit or ascetic. When a Nagah loses all others in his nest, he may choose to atone by becoming a sannyasin.

Serpent Waters: Aquatic Glens (purified areas of the Umbra) sanctified and claimed by the Nagah. Any wereserpent can step sideways in Serpent Waters, at least until those lands are corrupted by the Wyrm or rededicated by another species of Fera. Sometimes called "Jeweled Pools" by young Nagah.

Sesha: The ruling council of the Nagah, and the highest governing body of their kind.

Wani: The great dragon-spirits that act as patrons to the Nagah, also known as "Dragon Kings" or "Lu Lung." They are remotely related (but separate) from the primitive Mokolé. Nagah do not have totems; they serve these ancient dragon spirits instead.

Xi Wang Chi: The spiritual realm of the Wani, the Nagah's gods. Only Nagah and Mokolé can reach this sacred place in the Umbra, and even then, only briefly.

Organization

The Nagah are not solitary creatures; in fact, their laws forbid solitary hunting. Nonetheless, they are scattered in twos and threes across the world, gathering in small nests around the planet. Each grouping is self-sufficient, waiting until the time is right to consult their elders.

The Wani: Esteemed above all of the wereserpents, the ancient Incarna spirits of the "Dragon Kings" hold audiences with the paragons of the serpent race. Dragon Kings act as spirit patrons to the Nagah; they are often petitioned as Incarna are. The wereserpents never made the same pacts with spirits that the Garou did; instead, the spiritual servants of the Wani aid them. From their isolated spirit realm of Xi Wang Chi, the Wani offer spiritual guidance. The greatest of heroes may ascend in spirit to their realm, if only for a heartbeat, to receive the greatest Gifts and wisdom.

The Sesha: In the spirit world, the most illustrious wereserpents, the Nine Sesha, hold audiences with Nagah who want to advance in rank. Nine Nagah — three of each breed — pass judgment on their own race. Their location, and their very existence, is part of the Sacred Secret. Their private Umbral realm, the Nandana Ananta, receives wereserpents from all over the world. An incautious serpent that betrayed its location would suffer great shame, as it would force the Sesha to move the Nandana once again. They keep the Nagah's laws, decide punishments, and reward the virtuous with an increase in rank. The servants of the Wani act as their messengers. Presumably, each of the Nine must return to the physical world once every three months to prevent the dissolution of their flesh — and to see what their race is fighting for.

The Crowns: In the physical world, no more than twenty-seven Nagah are dedicated to governing the regions where Nagah hunt and spawn. Crowns rule regional areas of the world: there is one for India and Asia, one in Africa, one in Europe, and one in the Americas. Each Crown has its own Ananta. The Crowns play a more direct role in directing assassinations and executions than the Sesha do. When a nest's quarry flees one region, the victim's trouble mounts as a second nest pursues him in the second region — Crowns coordinate these efforts as well.

The Nests: Nagah do not travel alone; they prefer to travel intertwined in groups of two or three. Unrestrained by the urges of pack instincts or the obligations of pack totems, their highest obligations are to their missions and to each other. A Nagah may have a husband, wife, or partner, but the bond will never be as close as the union with the others in a nest. Carrying the gate to an Ananta with them, they have great autonomy in pursuing their appointed roles. On rare occasions, one nest may share information with another, but such exchanges are best left to the Crowns and Sesha. Few outsiders can guess the cool emotions and hidden passions of a Nagah, but any supernatural observer can see the supernatural strength that keeps a nest intertwined.

Traits

• A Nagah's Rage depends on his auspice, while his Gnosis depends on his breed. A Nagah regains one Rage for each hour spent underwater or partially submerged. However, their cold-blooded natures prevent them from developing the Garou's extremes of anger. When increasing a Nagah's Rage Trait, the freebie point cost (2 per point) and experience point cost (current rating x 2) is double what it is for Garou.

If a Nagah's Rage is higher than his Willpower, he radiates a cool and calculating sense of violent menace. Thus, for each point his Rage is higher than his Willpower, he loses one (cumulative) die on all Social-based dice pools. Humans instinctively avoid prolonged contact with such a ruthless and inhuman creature. Nagah are subject to frenzy (but not the Thrall of the Wyrm); the difficulty to enter that state is normally 6 (7 if near polluted water).

• Nagah are partly amphibious, able to hold their breath twice as long as werewolves normally can. In their Kali Dahaka form (see below), they can breathe water as easily as they can breathe air.

• Like many other Changing Breeds, the Nagah have their own instinctive language, which they inherit as part of their First Change. The wereserpents' speech is called the Tongue (or sometimes the Forked Tongue), but it relies more on pheromones and body language, including the coiling and sinuous motions of a serpentine body, than words. Although all Nagah understand this language, regardless of their place of origin, ordinary serpents do not.

• Nagah do not have easy access to the Umbra. A Nagah can only step sideways in the immediate presence of the Nagah Ananta to which it is dedicated. If a Nagah carries the

Ananta "within himself," however, he can attempt to step sideways anywhere, leading his other nestmates across the Gauntlet with him. Any Nagah can also freely pass into and out of Serpent Waters (see the Glossary, above).

• Nagah do not have pack totems, as Garou do, but wereserpents that dedicate themselves to the same nest share a spiritual bond. (At the Storyteller's discretion, this may allow them to purchase variants of pack maneuvers.) A Nagah can lead another of his kind into the Umbra if they belong to the same nest.

• In all forms, a Nagah has decent eyesight and color vision. As it shifts from Balaram to Vasuki form, the creature's sense of taste and smell become more acute. For each form removed from Balaram, it gains a cumulative –1 difficulty to Perception rolls involving taste and smell (to a minimum difficulty of 3). In Kali Dahaka form, the shapeshifter gains the benefits of the lupus Gift: Scent of Sight.

Unfortunately, the species also has poor hearing in certain forms. In Kali Dahaka form, the creature gains a +3 difficulty to all hearing-based Perception rolls. In Vasuki form, the Nagah is deaf to all airborne sounds, since it is dependent on vibrations passing through solid objects it's touching to actually "hear" anything.

• In any form other than Balaram, a Nagah can inject a chosen victim with a supernaturally potent venom. She has enough "doses" for three venomous attacks; after the last one is used, she must wait 24 hours before regaining all three doses.

The Nagah can only transfer this poison after she has inflicted at least one health level of damage with her bite (after the victim's soak roll). Poisoned victims suffer seven health levels of lethal damage; this damage is soaked separately. This venom cannot affect spirits (even materialized spirits) or other Nagah. Vampires take half damage from this venom (that is, they halve this damage, rounding down, after soak).

In Azhi Dahaka form, the Nagah can attempt to spit this venom into a target's face, blinding him. (A Nagah with the 2-point Merit: Spitting Cobra can also do this in Vasuki or Kali Dahaka form.) This special attack uses up the equivalent of two doses of venom. Roll Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 7 (difficulty 9 when targeting the eyes). If the attack hits, the venom still inflicts seven (soakable) health levels of damage, but the damage is delayed for one round. If the venom is washed off before then (such as with water created by the metis Gift: Create Element), the venom has no effect. If the attack hits the eyes, the victim is immediately blinded for a number of rounds equal to (10 minus his Stamina; minimum 3 rounds).

• All Nagah begin play with Willpower 4.

Breeds

A female Nagah knows at the moment of conception whether her child has "bred true" as another Nagah. If both parents are wereserpents, she intuitively knows she is giving birth to an ahi (a Nagah "metis"); if so, she begins preparations to give birth to a single egg. Otherwise, she may choose to perform the Rite of Bearing within a day to determine whether she gives birth to a human child or a clutch of snakes. If the rite is not performed, the offspring's breed is the same as the Nagah parent.

• **Balaram:** A Nagah born to human parents may have a relatively peaceful childhood living in the human world. In such cases, the first transformation (known as Shedding the First Skin) can be devastating. Most are raised in ignorance of their supernatural legacy, although curiously enough, some share an instinctive dread of snakes — making the First Change even more horrific.

Long ago, balaram traditionally bred with nobility, but they have since learned from the example of Silver Fang werewolves. Modern weresnakes typically breed with humans who possess traits they find admirable, and they are not limited to any one ethnicity or culture. Abandoned mates or foster parents often raise balaram; in such cases, Nagah may leave spirits behind to watch over the children. When (or whether) this guardian first materializes is a matter left to the judgment of the individual spirit.

Beginning Gnosis: 1

Beginning Gifts: Persuasion, Prehensile Body

• **Ahi:** When two Nagah mate, the result is an ahi. In all but a few rare cases, the parents typically belong to the same nest. Although balaram or vasuki offspring can be born in a day, the mother can choose to carry her unborn ahi child for up to six months, taking on all her forms during that time. The child must be born in an Ananta or Serpent Waters. Although a female Nagah can birth an entire clutch of cobras, she can only breed one ahi in her lifetime. An ahi is not deformed as the metis of other Breeds are; they are creatures born to maintain harmony, not the result of forbidden lust.

An ahi typically grows up in the spirit world, although the parents must escort the child into the physical world at least once every three months; otherwise, their offspring becomes a spirit. Ahi are treasured, raised in rarefied conditions, and encouraged in their idealism. They are fiercely dedicated to their chosen nests, and see matters in the spirit world in sharply defined terms. The physical world is typically regarded as an illusion hiding the truths of the spirit world.

In the physical world, their delicate scales blister and burn when exposed to harsh toxins and pollution (possibly increasing the difficulty for certain rolls by 1). In the same way, their idealism is sorely tested in the uncaring real world. As the End Times advance, some find themselves spending more time isolated in their Ananta than strangling the Wyrm in the physical world. Others become a vital part of a dedicated nest, protected by loyal allies.

Beginning Gnosis: 3

Beginning Gifts: Weaver Sense, Wyld Sense, Wyrm Sense

• **Vasuki:** Vasuki are born in clutches of 10 to 20 offspring, growing up surrounded by serpents and living like snakes. Within a clutch, one of the snakes will "breed true" as a wereserpent. Shedding the First Skin vastly expands the adolescent snake's view of the world, offering such novelties as the ability to hear speech and airborne sounds, move when it is cold, and most importantly, use limbs and hands.

A clutch containing a vasuki is always watched by a snake-spirit, since the education of an adolescent vasuki is a long and tiresome process. Relatively simple tasks like tying knots or using weapons do not come easy to the vasuki. They are, however, among the most "physically spiritual" of the Nagah, with an intuitive understanding of the natural world many balaram do not possess; the spirit world is far more mysterious to the vasuki. When a Nagah grows too old to effectively fight outside his Ananta, he may dedicate his final days to teaching the next generation of vasuki.

Since Nagah can breed with any venomous serpent, they represent an amazingly diverse array of snakes. Nonetheless, the original cobra heritage of the Nagah remains spiritually present; in all forms except Balaram (human form) or Vasuki (snake form), a Nagah may manifest a cobra-like hood. Beyond that, each regional group of Nagah has its own preference of species. North American Nagah, for instance, tend to breed with snakes native to that region, such as rattlesnakes.

Beginning Gnosis: 5

Beginning Gifts: River's Gift, Treesnake's Blessing

Auspices

A Nagah is prone to certain feelings, impulses, and philosophies that are influenced by the season in which she is born. Her auspice is determined and defined by this season. The location of the Nagah's birth does not matter; a Winter Nagah feels the same basic inclinations whether he was born in the heat of the Australian outback in December or the subzero cold of an Antarctic research facility. In common speech, it is acceptable to refer to a Nagah by his season instead of the proper name of his auspice. Such informality is not welcome before the Sesha, however.

• **Kamakshi (Spring):** During the spring, serpents in colder climates end their hibernation, and more young are born than at any other time of year. Kamakshi have temperaments that reflect the warming of the world. Many are skilled in healing the ill, caring for children, and motivating others. They prefer an active life to sloth and lethargy. When it is time to kill, however, a Spring Nagah is mercilessly skilled at dealing death — he may regret a needless death more than Nagah born in other seasons, but is just as capable of killing. Most have an affinity to the element of Earth.

Beginning Rage: 3

Beginning Gifts: Ganga's Caress, Resist Pain

• **Kartikeya (Summer):** Summer is a time of war. While not overly passionate, a Kartikeya understands emotions like passion and temper better than other Nagah do. When overtaken by bloodlust, her anger burns like a terrible fever. Some claim this fervor interferes with a Kartikeya's subtlety, but Summer Nagah see their zeal as a source of inspiration. They feel an affinity to the element of Fire, raging like a conflagration in the heat of battle.

Beginning Rage: 4

Beginning Gifts: Eyes of the War God, Scent of the True Form

• **Kamsa (Autumn):** Blood cools in autumn. Logic and introspection are highly developed in a Kamsa Nagah. Creatures of other auspices do not possess an Autumn Nagah's skill for understanding a devious enemy, even one corrupted by the Wyrm. Nothing pleases these snakes more than to coil around a conundrum, writhing as they contemplate machinations and fall into introspection. With such calculating natures comes a lessened sense of compassion, sometimes extending to disdain for those who do not share their patience. Kamsa possess an affinity to Air, the element of intellect.

Beginning Rage: 3

Beginning Gifts: Executioner's Edge, Slayer's Eye

• **Kali (Winter):** Acting in winter requires great will, particularly when your surroundings are deathly cold. The Kali are driven creatures, motivated to strive for excellence in all things. Unlike a Spring Nagah, the Kali are ruthless; in contrast to the Summer Nagah, they prefer calculated revenge to the passions of war; unlike the Autumn Nagah, they see through complicated schemes quickly to strike at the heart of a problem. They possess an affinity to Water, the element of clarity.

Beginning Rage: 4

Beginning Gifts: Guided Strike, Iron Coils

Forms

• **Balaram:** In Balaram form, a Nagah is indistinguishable from a normal human. Most simply appear as humans of Indian or Asian descent, but nests of Nagah thrive around the world. Behind any human face, the spirit of a snake may wait patiently, watching its prey.

• **Silkaram:** The "serpent-man" form of a Nagah has the same height and only slightly more weight than its Balaram form. The facial features become more serpentine, with snake eyes, fangs, and ophidian nostrils. With refined shapeshifting (and Primal-Urge rolls), the creature can form a cobra hood around its head, or if necessary, retract its fangs. Slouching, scaled, and completely hairless, it often hides scutes or bright patterns under the clothes it wears. Its fingers and toes become webbed, doubling its swimming speed, but these digits are still dexterous enough to manipulate small objects. Far from human civilization, rogue colonies of Nagah once preferred to wear this form almost all the time, giving rise to legends of insidious serpent men.

• **Azhi Dahaka:** The Nagah's "battle form" is a massive and ruthless nine-foot-tall monster of destruction. Regardless of its serpentine relations, its head can flare out the hood of a cobra, and its fangs are that of a viper; its other features vaguely resemble its Vasuki (snake) form. Its barrel-shaped torso supports two powerful arms, and a tail suitable for balancing its titanic bulk trails at least 15 to 20 feet behind it. Its claws are as terrible as those of any Garou, and their scales have a supernatural resilience to harm.

• **Kali Dahaka:** This "great serpent" form resembles a massive snake over thirty feet long, typically with more mass than the largest anacondas. A Nagah's Kali Dahaka form resembles the Nagah's serpentine relations, although it may

include characteristics of several different species. An average Kali Dahaka body is as thick as a man's leg. A hero's ritual scars are evident in this form.

• **Vasuki:** When a Nagah assumes its "snake" form, it takes the shape of an ordinary serpent — albeit a highly skilled and intelligent one. Wereserpents can breed with any form of venomous snake, so an individual's Vasuki form resembles one of his serpent relations. A vasuki-breed Nagah has a Vasuki form that resembles its (closest) serpent parent.

Form Statistics

Silkaram	Azhi Dahaka	Kali Dahaka	Vasuki
Str: +2	Str +3	Str +2	Str –1
	Dex +2	Dex +2	Dex +2
Sta +2	Sta +3	Sta +2	Sta +1
App –2	App 0	App 0	
Man –2	Man –3	Man 0	Man 0
Claw: Str	Claw: Str +1	Claw: Str	
Diff: 7	Diff: 6	Diff: 7	Diff: 6

Gifts

Wereserpents begin play with three Gifts: one Nagah Gift, one breed Gift, and one auspice Gift. Gifts are usually learned during "review" sessions with the Sesha. If a Nagah needs a particularly rare Gift to complete a mission, he may make a spiritual journey to Xi Wang Chi. Because the Nagah live outside the "pact" that allows other shapeshifters to learn Gifts from spirits, any spirit that does not directly serve the Wani cannot teach them. Nearly all of these Gifts are taught by different species of Wani snake-spirits.

Nagah Gifts

• **Scent of Running Water (Level One)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

• **Sense Wyrm (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Slayer's Eye (Level One)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift: Fatal Flaw.

• **Sense of the Prey (Level Two)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

• **Combat Healing (Level Three)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

• **Swimming the Spirit River (Level Four)** — The Nagah can enter the spirit world in the same manner as Garou; she no longer requires an Ananta to do so.

• **Breath of the Dragon Lords (Level Five)** — The wereserpent exhales huge gouts of scalding gases; these can wound opponents, but can't cause materials to combust.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Firearms; if the roll succeeds, use the damage rules for firearms. The "breath" does a base amount of damage equal to the user's Gnosis. The damage is aggravated, and has a range of 20 feet.

Balaram Gifts

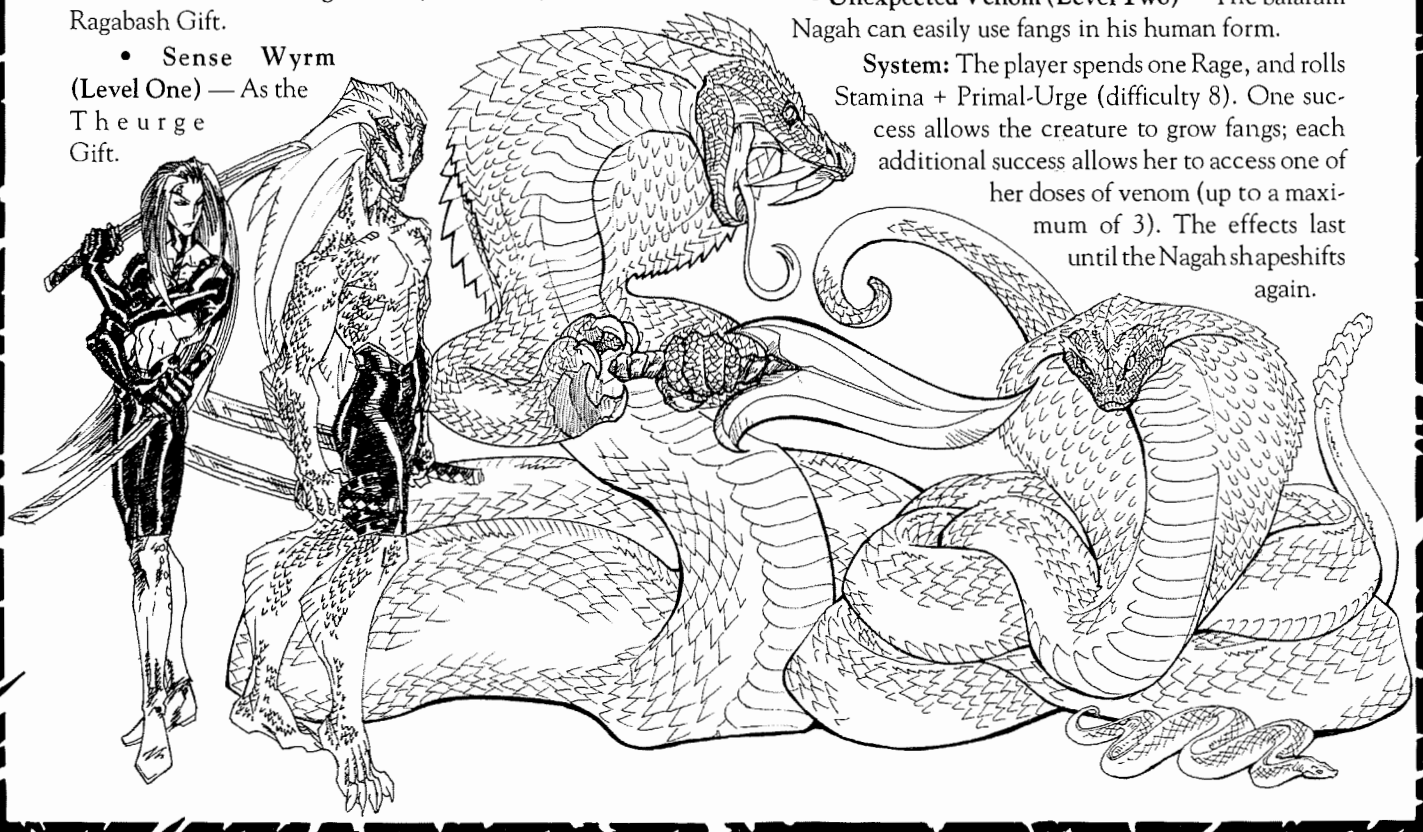
• **Persuasion (Level One)** — As the homid Gift. The Nagah version of this discipline involves hyper-acute control of pheromones and body language.

• **Prehensile Body (Level One)** — In forms other than Balaram, the Nagah can grasp and manipulate objects with her tail (or coils) as easily as she can with her hands in human form.

System: Once the Nagah learns this Gift, its effects are permanent. Simple acts, like turning a doorknob or holding a small object, shouldn't require a die roll. At the Storyteller's discretion, more complex acts, like reloading a gun, should require a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7). If a complex physical action requires a different die roll, like fixing a car with Dexterity + Repair, the Storyteller may elect to simply increase the difficulty of the roll (instead of calling for an additional Dexterity + Athletics roll).

• **Unexpected Venom (Level Two)** — The balaram Nagah can easily use fangs in his human form.

System: The player spends one Rage, and rolls Stamina + Primal-Urge (difficulty 8). One success allows the creature to grow fangs; each additional success allows her to access one of her doses of venom (up to a maximum of 3). The effects last until the Nagah shapeshifts again.



• **Fluid Grace (Level Three)** — As the lupus Gift: Catfeet.

• **Spirit Ward (Level Four)** — As the homid Gift; it is learned from the Wani to deter the attention of unwanted spirits.

• **There Is No Body (Level Five)** — The balaram is capable of freeing himself from the limitations of flesh, becoming effectively incorporeal while remaining in the physical world. For the duration of the Gift, the Nagah is immune to any physical contact that he does not desire; fire, silver, walls, nothing save magic designed to affect the immaterial is proof against him.

System: The player spends three Gnosis points and rolls Perception + Enigmas, difficulty 7. The Nagah may remain immaterial for two turns per success.

Ahi Gifts

• **Weaver Sense (Level One)** — The ahi is sensitive to the workings of the Weaver and her minions. He may also be able to notice patterns when there should be randomness, order where there should be chaos, and possibly times when such forces are out of balance. From the physical world, he can sense Weaver spirits in the surrounding Penumbra.

System: The player rolls Perception + Enigmas; the difficulty is the strength of the local Gauntlet. With at least one success, the Gift reveals the presence of obvious Weaver energies and spirits. With three or more successes, the Gift may reveal more subtle influences. The Nagah can also "peek" into the Penumbra with this Gift, but she only sees constructs and spirits serving this aspect of the Triat. Truly powerful manifestations may be disorienting. The Gift lasts up to one scene, but only as long as the ahi is actively concentrating.

• **Wyld Sense (Level One)** — By focusing on a specific scene or person, the creature can detect the presence of the Wyld. She may also be able to notice forces that favor chaos, creation, or primordial energies. This doesn't mean the Nagah necessarily understands them, however. From the physical world, she can sense Wyld spirits in the surrounding Penumbra.

System: As Weaver sense, but attuned to the Wyld. With three or more successes, the Gift may reveal more subtle influences of madness or chaos. With five or more successes, it may detect the presence of magical energy, but cannot precisely identify it. (In other words, this isn't a combination of the optional Garou Gift: Sense Wyld and the Uktena Gift: Sense Magic.)

• **Wyrm Sense (Level One)** — The ahi becomes attuned to the presence of the Wyrm in all its forms. Banes, fomori, certain vampires (those with a Humanity Trait below 7), Black Spiral werewolves, and other creatures corrupted by the Wyrm become glaringly obvious by the spiritual stench the Nagah can taste in the air around her. From the physical world, she can sense Wyrm spirits in the surrounding Penumbra.

System: As Weaver Sense, but attuned to the Wyrm. With three or more successes, it may (at the Storyteller's discretion) reveal more subtle traces of corruption and decay, such as a tumor in a human body.

• **Indra's Cloak (Level Two)** — As the Black Fury Gift: Curse of Aeolus.

• **Venom Blood (Level Two)** — As the Get of Fenris Gift.

• **Command Water Spirit (Level Three)** — As the Uktena Gift: Call Elemental, but only water spirits can be called.

• **Whirlpool (Level Four)** — In any body of water larger than a swimming pool, the creature can create a whirlpool for one scene.

System: The player spends one Gnosis, and roll Gnosis (difficulty 7). If the whirlpool is created under a target, it needs a minimum number of successes to "suck it down" as detailed below. A living target can make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (opposed by a Strength of the Nagah's Gnosis) to escape, usually by swimming out of the area.

Successes	Diameter	Can pull down
1	5 feet	a human
3	10 feet	a Garou in Crinos
5	20 feet	a rowboat
6+	50+ feet	a small boat

Vasuki Gifts

• **River's Gift (Level One)** — Normally, a Nagah is amphibious in Kali Dahaka form, breathing water as easily as she breathes air. With this Gift, she can perform the same feat in any other form.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6), and spends one Gnosis. With at least one success, the Nagah becomes amphibious in Silkaram, Azhi Dahaka, or Vasuki form for one scene. The change requires at least two successes for Balaram form.

• **Treesnake's Blessing (Level One)** — The creature with this Gift is unusually swift when climbing trees, mountains, cliffs, and even rough walls. She can also climb any surface a snake normally could without making a roll for climbing, regardless of her current form.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) and spends one Gnosis. For the rest of the scene, the wereserpent's climbing speed is equal to his slithering speed for that form (or walking speed, if in human form) multiplied by the number of successes on the roll. Surfaces a snake could not normally climb, such as a sheer wall, may require an additional Dexterity + Athletics roll to climb, but the creature still moves at this increased speed.

• **Lightning Strike (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Spirit of the Fray.

• **Sidewind (Level Three)** — The vasuki can move with an amazing burst of sinuous agility.

System: The player spends one Gnosis, then rolls Stamina + Athletics (difficulty 7); for up to eight hours, the Nagah can move up to six times its normal land speed. (Multiply the creature's land speed by the number of successes plus one.) The Nagah must move continuously at this speed; if it slows down, the Gift's effects end.

• **Belly Ride (Level Four)** — While in Vasuki form, the Nagah can enter an unconscious human's stomach by wriggling down her throat. The human will be oblivious to the creature's presence, even using rationalization to deny its presence.

System: The player spends one Gnosis, then rolls Dexterity + Stealth. The serpent can remain in the victim's stomach for one day per success; after that, he is vomited out. At any time, the Nagah can trigger this vomit reflex or escape from the sleeping victim through her throat. The Nagah is unaffected by anything unpleasant or harmful created by the victim's stomach, and he cannot harm the victim while inside her belly.

• **Assassin's Well (Level Five)** — The vasuki has become capable of supernaturally manufacturing venom at an astonishing rate.

System: The player spends two Gnosis. For the rest of the scene, the vasuki effectively has unlimited doses of venom.

Kamakshi (Spring) Gifts

• **Ganga's Caress (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift: Mother's Touch.

• **Resist Pain (Level One)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Calm (Level Two)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift.

• **Dazzle (Level Three)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift.

• **Assassin's Insistence (Level Three)** — This Gift denies a healer's ability to save a condemned victim.

System: The Nagah must touch the target; the player spends one Gnosis and rolls Intelligence + Medicine. Each success cancels one success on the next roll to heal the target (including a Stamina roll made to regenerate damage in combat). If the Nagah's roll scores more successes than the healer does, the healer's target suffers the difference in bashing damage. The effects last for one scene, or until someone attempts to heal the target.

• **Denial of Wellbeing (Level Four)** — With a touch, the Nagah can prevent another creature from healing or regenerating. The Nagah must first learn Assassin's Insistence before learning this Gift.

System: The Nagah must touch the target. The player spends two Gnosis and makes a contested Intelligence + Medicine roll against the target's Gnosis (or Willpower minus two, if it's not a shapeshifter.) Success halts the healing process, and the victim suffers a two-die penalty to resist disease and poison. This lasts for one hour or until the Gift is nullified.

• **Surya's Radiance (Level Five)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift: Halo of the Sun.

Kartikeya (Summer) Gifts

• **Eyes of the War God (Level One)** — The name of this auspice comes from a god of war who could never be surprised. The son of Shiva, he had six faces and could watch all of his surroundings. This Gift grants a similar blessing on a Nagah of this auspice.

System: The player rolls Wits + Alertness (difficulty 6), and spends one Gnosis. With at least one success, the Nagah gains full 360-degree vision for the remainder of the scene. In addition, each success bestows an extra die to all Perception-based rolls for noticing enemies.

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

• **Secret Serpent (Level Two)** — As the Ragabash Gift: Blissful Ignorance.

• **Forked Tongue (Level Two)** — As the Ragabash Gift: Obscure the Truth.

• **Blood Running Hot (Level Three)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Stoking Fury's Furnace.

• **Veil of Maya (Level Four)** — As the Fianna Gift: Phantasm.

• **Madness (Level Five)** — As the metis Gift.

Kamsa (Autumn) Gifts

• **Executioner's Edge (Level One)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift: Seizing the Edge.

• **Slayer's Eye (Level One)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift: Fatal Flaw.

• **Staredown (Level Two)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Forked Tongue (Level Two)** — As the Ragabash Gift: Obscure the Truth.

• **Eye of the Cobra (Level Three)** — As the Galliard Gift.

• **Doppelganger (Level Four)** — As the Glass Walker Gift.

• **Open Wounds (Level Four)** — As the Shadow Lord Gift.

• **Heartstrings (Level Five)** — As the Galliard Gift: Head Games.

Kali (Winter) Gifts

• **Guided Strike (Level One)** — This Gift increases the Nagah's accuracy for his next attack.

System: The player rolls Gnosis (difficulty 8) and spends one Willpower. Each success adds one die to the next roll to hit a target; the ability must be used during that scene, and the dice pool cannot be raised over 12.

• **Iron Coils (Level One)** — As the Silver Fang Gift: Grasp of the Falcon, except that it increases the Nagah's chance of catching a foe with his coils (not his jaws). The Gift does not bestow additional damage.

• **Executioner's Gift (Level Two)** — As the Get of Fenris Gift: Halt the Coward's Flight.

• **Discern Weakness (Level Three)** — As the Philodox Gift: Weak Arm.

• **Destroying Blow (Level Three)** — As the Black Fury Gift: Coup de Grace.

• **Mindblock (Level Four)** — As the Silver Fang Gift.

• **Magistrate's Icy Judgment (Level Five)** — As the Wendigo Gift: Heart of Ice.

Samskara: Nagah Rites

The Nagah are not part of the Pact that Garou have made with the world's many spirits; instead, they are limited to calling on spirits that directly serve the Wani. In a way,

the Wani are like Incarnae, and their many spiritual servitors are like lesser Gafflings and Jagglings. For every variety of snake, there is a Wani snake-spirit. A Nagah can attempt to influence a common snake-spirit (like the ones Garou can summon and learn from), but the Storyteller should increase by 1 the difficulty for any rolls involved.

Nagah rites are also less social than Garou rites, since a nest is usually small enough that the Nagah dedicated to it are already intimately familiar with one another. Conversely, wereserpents find it embarrassing to perform rites with anyone who is not a part of their nest. Unless the Sesha or the rulers of a Crown are involved, it is also rare for two nests to work together on a rite (increase the difficulty for the rite's roll by 2 if they do; increase the difficulty by 3 if outsiders are involved).

Naming the Target (Mystic)

Level Three

A nest performs this rite when it is ready to conduct an assassination. When their last mission has been concluded (usually with the Votive for the Dead, see below), they gather in a dark room or near a river, join hands or coils, and chant a mantra to invoke the Wani. If the rite succeeds, the Wani grant flashes of insight about the nest's next target. Properly performed, the rite may also reveal more of the target's offenses against Gaia, his current location, or other facts relevant to the hunt.

System: Up to three of the Nagah in the nest may roll Perception + Rituals (difficulty 7), adding their successes. Five successes reveal a flash of the target's name and face. Seven successes grant insights from the Wani of the target's location. Nine successes detail the target's crimes and transgressions, beginning with those committed against Gaia. Twelve or more successes grant additional and scandalously tasty morsels of information, each a precise fact about the target. Some revelations may even predict the target's next suspected activity.

Votive for the Dead (Death)

Level Four

After completing an assassination, the nest must ritually review why the victim's death was justified, reaffirming their actions. The ritualist chants the victim's crimes against Gaia, gradually repeating them until they become a simple mantra. The Votive for the Dead (also called the Conclusion) must be performed before the nest can begin another hunt or enact the Naming the Target rite.

System: The ritemaster must score at least one success. With a failed roll, the nest must spend a week meditating on the mission in great detail. A botched roll causes the nest to lose a point of Willpower apiece, and they must report to the Sesha within a week.

Stereotypes

Voiceless One, gatekeeper to the Sesha, shares his confidences:

Ajaba: They see themselves as victims of the Simba, but do not admit that for centuries, they fought each other like jackals for dominance. The fight against Black Tooth is over; they must heal their own kind.

Ananasi: Werespiders spin tangled threads of deceit and deception; if they defy Gaia's will, we will sever them.

Bastet: Curiosity compels them to seek out secrets, but they are not free with what they learn. They could stand taller than the Garou — but they are afflicted with a pride as great as any wolf's.

Corax: Like us, they watch and remember, but they do not learn. Like fools, they give up freely the secrets they snatch. As long as they do not steal ours, we should not care.

Gurahl: When Vinata killed a Silver Fang tyrant, that tribe turned to the werebears and demanded they heal their comrade. Now that the Garou have slaughtered nearly all of them, they are in no position to make further demands.

Mokolé: Our older brothers are worthy of respect, for they remember when we were great. Should you be called upon to destroy one, please remember this.

Nuwisha: Why are they laughing? We do not understand.

Ratkin: Violent creatures, consumed by madness and passion. Treacherous creatures, zealously slaughtering mankind. Terror is their greatest weapon. We will use it against them.

Rokea: They live and thrive alone in the deep, and they police their own kind. Should they invoke Devi's wrath, however, we can also swim…

In your heart, you knew that what you were doing was unjust, and in your heart, you knew that someday punishment would come. And we are here.

Nuwisha

The guy spent thousands on the fire safe. This thing could go through a blast furnace and come out with a slight scorch. Into the fire safe, he put all his important documents — his financial records, the passwords to his overseas accounts, a wad of cash (just in case) and a small handgun. He put the gun in there because his wife insisted. She didn't want it lying around for the kids to find.

Yeah, he had kids. I watched them go to school and get in trouble so that maybe they'd feel like they had parents. But no dice; the guy was making money hand over fist and didn't much care about his family. That was his claim to fame at work; he'd ditch his son's Little League game to glad hand a visiting investor. Great businessman, lousy dad. Nothing new, except he was so damned smug about it.

When I set fire to his house, I figured he'd have dumped as much money into fireproofing the kids' rooms as he had into protecting his investments. Turns out, he'd kept meaning to do that, but hadn't quite gotten around to it. Sad. Tragic, really. He remembered to insure them, at least.

'Course, the punch line was, the fire safe came through it all completely intact. The papers inside, well...that's another matter. Did you know that bullets fire if you get them too hot?

Coyote's Song

The humans in the Pure Lands recite legends about Coyote. They say that he created the world, humanity, and every living thing under the sun. Some stories say that he had help — one legend speaks of two ducks with red eyes that pulled the Earth from endless water at his behest. Others simply state that he was bored, and sang every living thing into existence. The truth of the matter is somewhat different, but the humans who keep these legends still know much more of the truth than the Kinfolk of the Garou, many of whom have fallen to lies about someone saying, "Let there be light" and then later creating a lot of asinine laws to follow.

The truth is this: Coyote created almost all of the life on Gaia. He created water and ducks first (and the ducks have always remained special to him, which is likely why they feature in human creation legends). But Coyote *does* get bored easily, so he sang the rest of the world into creation. He called up beasts and birds of all stripes, he called up the land and then cracked it into chunks and set the chunks floating away, with only a few animals and trees on them. But before he did that, he taught all the animals how to copulate. He only showed them once, but for most species, that was enough. He stopped paying attention to the animals of other lands, and stayed on one of the chunks of earth that hadn't drifted far.

But not all of the life on Earth was Coyote's doing. As he sang the world into creation, creatures from other places and other stars fell to Earth to listen. Gaia, still drying off from rising from the water, made them feel at home. Coyote wasn't sure about these visitors at first. He studied them all to learn about them and their homes, but most of them became confused when Coyote asked them questions. "We have always existed," they said when he asked where they came from, "we have always been here listening. And now we hear your song, and we come." Some of these creatures came from the far-off stars, and some came from Luna, Gaia's sister and neighbor. Luna was not at all pleased when all of the beings living on her surface left for Gaia, to better hear Coyote's song. Coyote tried to make amends by vowing to sing to her nightly, but Luna is fickle, and some nights she turns away entirely.

Life Uncontained

Coyote, as some of his children say, is a great father but a lousy dad. He didn't look after his children very well, and some of them *changed*. Some legends speak of Coyote creating humans out of the bones of a monster, and some legends talk about humans being sculpted of clay. The truth is somewhat more grotesque — humans are born of blood.

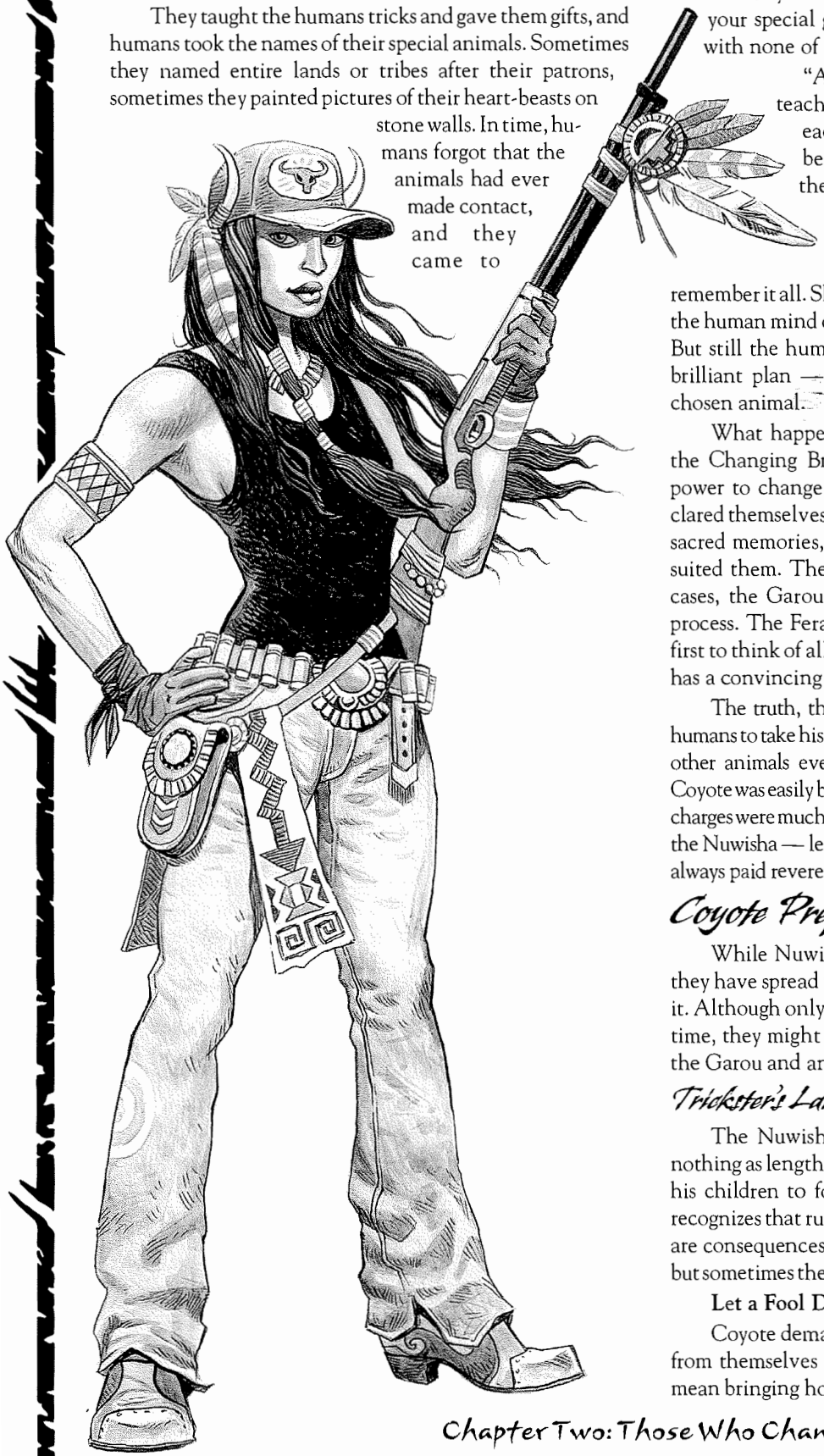
Coyote found a clot of blood on the ground once, and idly kicked it. When he did, he was surprised to see it grow a little. Coyote, never one to ignore his curiosity, kicked it again and again, until finally it grew into the first human. Where the rest of humanity came from is more of mystery, since Coyote never kicked another blood clot (something just seemed *off* about the new creature) but nonetheless, in less time than it takes to tell humans were springing up all over the world, even on the lands that Coyote had set adrift.

All over the world, all living things had to learn to adapt to these new creatures. Some of the animals ate them, and some of the animals fed themselves to the humans. This was nothing new; animals had been making pacts like that since their creation. But the humans didn't quite understand that it was their lot to be predator one day and prey the next, and finally to feed the world with their bodies. They were afraid of death — maybe because they were all made of blood and had no breath or spirit — and so they tried to stay alive as long as they could. They whipped and beat some animals until they agree to serve; even some of proud Wolf's children fell into their clutches and became the silly creatures today called dogs.

Many of the creatures of the world wished to correct the humans' attitudes, and they asked Coyote for permission to do so. Coyote agreed, and watched as Wolf, Bear, Snake, Lizard, Rat and many others besides chose humans with the qualities they liked best. Spider took the most humans, so many that Worm crawled into her web to take some of his own, and there he became stuck. Coyote laughed at his brother Worm, and Worm was so hurt that he refused Coyote's help. And there Worm remains to this day, thrash-

ing about and becoming ever more tangled in Spider's web. Spider's humans learned her ways well, and now have spread over the world, building nest after nest. But in that time-before-time, each animal that chose to teach humans loved their charges, and shared their most precious secrets.

They taught the humans tricks and gave them gifts, and humans took the names of their special animals. Sometimes they named entire lands or tribes after their patrons, sometimes they painted pictures of their heart-beasts on stone walls. In time, humans forgot that the animals had ever made contact, and they came to believe that they, the humans, commanded all animals, not merely the ones they had dominated.



The animals came to Coyote again and said, "How can this be? We taught them to think as we do!"

Coyote said, "No, children. You taught them only your special gifts. They enjoy the same blessings, but with none of the responsibilities."

"Ah!" the animals said. They raced off to teach their charges about responsibility. They each tried in different ways. Wolf tried to beat it into them. Rat made them sick so that they would learn to appreciate being well, and grow stronger through the sickness. Snake filled their heads with so much knowledge that they couldn't possibly remember it all. Shark gave up on his charges, reasoning that the human mind could never learn all of the sea's mysteries. But still the humans resisted, until someone thought of a brilliant plan — let the humans take the form of their chosen animal.

What happened then is common knowledge among the Changing Breeds. Those humans so gifted with the power to change forms started wars with each other, declared themselves the greatest beings in the world, keeper of sacred memories, guardians of the gates, or whatever title suited them. They went to war on each other, and in all cases, the Garou won the wars but lost the most in the process. The Fera argued about whose progenitor was the first to think of allowing humans to change shape, and each has a convincing argument.

The truth, though, is that Coyote was the first to allow humans to take his form, for he had been doing it long before the other animals even asked for permission to teach humans. Coyote was easily bored, even with his own form, and his human charges were much the same. These changing children — called the Nuwisha — learned gifts of trickery and shapeshifting, but always paid reverence to their father, Coyote.

Coyote Prepares to Howl

While Nuwisha were native only to the Pure Lands, they have spread the world over. Coyote's demands require it. Although only 100 Nuwisha walk the Earth at any given time, they might be found anywhere, pranking the Wyrm, the Garou and anyone else who needs a lesson.

Trickster's Laws

The Nuwisha follow a Litany of sorts, though it is nothing as lengthy and complex as the Garou's. Coyote asks his children to follow only six tenets, and even then he recognizes that rules are made to be broken. Naturally, there are consequences for going against the Trickster's decrees, but sometimes the werecoyotes simply don't have any choice.

Let a Fool Die a Fool's Death

Coyote demands that his children protect the humans from themselves and the Wyrm. That does not, however, mean bringing hope to the hopeful, nor does it mean being

particularly compassionate. A human set on dying for whatever reason — despair, fanaticism, love and so on — doesn't need to be dissuaded from that path. This applies to the Garou as well; Nuwisha have led the Garou into death countless times over the years, and the werewolves never seem to learn to question what's in front of them.

Teach Those Who Need Teaching a Proper Lesson

The Nuwisha are not instruments of vengeance, or even justice. If anything, they are the embodiments of "just desserts," the cosmos' sense of irony given form. That in mind, they are perfectly content to make an example of one fool in order to teach many. If the lesson is one that must be learned in a fool's next life, so be it. Coyote himself had to die many times to gather the knowledge he has.

Always Prank the Wyrm

The Wyrm could be free of his prison at any time. All he must do is swallow his pride and ask Coyote for help, and yet he would rather swallow all of creation than his pride. Coyote takes offense at this, and demands that his children make servants of the Wyrm suffer whenever possible. Nuwisha pranks might be harmless when applied to humans or even other shapeshifters — but never when the Wyrm is the target.

Be Subtle

One of the few tenets of the Litany that the Nuwisha agree with is that the Veil cannot fall. Many humans hate coyotes, seeing them as destructive, vicious scavengers (which is occasionally true, the Nuwisha admit). If the humans knew of the werecoyotes and their true nature, they would certainly hunt them down. Coyote has grown to appreciate sly and cunning humor as the world has grown more complex; subtle pranks win his favor more than cheap sight gags in the modern world.

Respect Luna

This is the only one of Trickster's Laws that some Nuwisha doubt. Some werecoyotes feel that the Garou must have somehow inserted this tenet into the list so that they could hear the Nuwisha's howl and therefore prepare themselves for the coming prank. Most Nuwisha, however, remember that Coyote wronged Luna and serenade her nightly. At any rate, they claim, being prepared for the pranks never seems to help the werewolves anyway.

Think, Then Act

The Nuwisha are not warriors (although they can fight). They are not sages or shamans (although they can certainly traverse the Umbra and truck with spirits). Though they are swift, they are not swift enough to flee all their foes. The one great advantage they have over the rest of the world is the wisdom Coyote grants them. He commands them to use that gift, ephemeral though it may be, rather than relying on their strength or speed. Often this wisdom is best expressed through laughter — in finding the humor in a situation, more than one Nuwisha has discovered the only way out of it.

The Garou often make the mistake of seeing the Nuwisha as comedians. The phrase "Gaia's sense of humor" is bandied about occasionally as werewolves explain the werecoyotes to their cubs. But this phrase isn't really accurate, and even to the degree that it is, the connotation of the phrase is wrong. The Nuwisha are tricksters, but their pranks are meant to teach first and foremost. The student on the receiving end of a prank can choose (assuming he survives) to laugh along with the teacher and any spectators, changing his ways in light of his lesson.

In times past, few Nuwisha wouldn't play lethal pranks immediately, unless the target was a willing servant of the Wyrm or was otherwise causing so much damage to Gaia that he needed to be put down. Instead, the Nuwisha would give the target subtle warnings about his behavior, often couched in the form of insults and japes, giving the target a chance to realize what was happening and laugh along with the werecoyote. Only when the target had proven completely unwilling to change his ways would the Nuwisha free the poor soul from his current life, with the hopes that, in the next life, he would learn the lesson.

In recent years, however, Coyote's children have grown slightly more vicious. Although no Nuwisha has come forward and stated why, the werecoyotes' pranks offer fewer chances to correct behavior before the final fall. The assumption among those few beings that know of the Nuwisha and have been able to notice the change in temperament, is that Coyote is tired of trying to teach entire races lessons that should have been learned long ago. The Nuwisha, therefore, travel the world seeking the path that Coyote has laid for them, and in the process "teach" as many fools as possible.

The Realm and the Umbra

Only 100 Nuwisha walk the Earth at any given time. Most of the species dwells in the Umbra, but their activities there are shrouded in secrecy (even from other werecoyotes). Most earthbound Nuwisha assume that these "Umbral Dansers" protect the spirit realms from incursion by hostile forces, thus keeping some of the most sacred places free from both human and Garou invasion. This is true, but the Umbral Dansers are also charged with keeping hostile forces out of the Penumbra, and have done their job well for many years.

When a Nuwisha has proven himself, he is inducted into the Umbral Danse. An Umbral Danser begins looking for a new candidate whenever a Nuwisha enters his First Change. Since the Danser has only 100 potential candidates, and the Danse rarely accepts Nuwisha below rank three, this rarely takes long. The new Umbral Danser is then given a short period of time to set any affairs in order, finish any outstanding lessons, and join his new mentor in the Umbra.

The Umbral Danse kept itself very much apart from the Realm, and especially from the Garou, up until very recently. At the Sept of the Painted Sands in Arizona, during a recent meteor shower, a werecoyote appeared suddenly from the Umbra. The Nuwisha, called Ptah Star-Rider, bled from horrible wounds and was missing his right hand. Before he expired, he whispered three words to the Garou of the sept: *"No more time."*

Life as a Trickster

The Nuwisha travel alone, for the most part, but can be found all over the world. They venture wherever their curiosity takes them, trusting in Coyote's luck and their own cleverness to extract them from whatever trouble they stumble into. Sometimes this works, but not always — Coyote loves to see the proud suffer, even his own children. A werecoyote who does not remain humble and true to her purpose is likely to find herself without the aid of her Gifts when she needs them most (that is, whenever it would funny for her to lose them).

Nuwisha do not organize themselves into tribes; they are all children of Coyote. Likewise, they all belong to the same auspice — Ragabash. (Why exactly this is the case is a point of contention; the obvious answer is that all Nuwisha are tricksters, but the falling out with Luna is another possible explanation.) Some Nuwisha are born of coyote stock and some of human, but if a Nuwisha/Nuwisha mating produces anything but a Kinfolk child, no one but Coyote knows the truth.

The only "camp" of Nuwisha is the Umbral Danse, and since the vast majority of werecoyotes belong to it, calling the earthbound Nuwisha a camp would probably be closer to the truth. Nuwisha do not have much in the way of organization; they don't spend much time around each other (having more than one trickster in the same area tends to make everything a bit *too* funny) and only keep in touch occasionally, often via spirits.

When a Nuwisha enters her First Change, a mentor typically arrives within a few days (sent by Coyote himself, or so the Nuwisha say). The mentor instructs the newly Changed prankster in her sacred duties, teaches some rites (if the mentor is that patient) and then leaves the pup on her own. Most Nuwisha take to their duties quickly. The first task before any werecoyote, however, is to find her totem.

Unlike Garou, who worship a myriad of totems, all Nuwisha follow Coyote. But Coyote takes many forms, and the exact form of a Nuwisha's totem determines her agenda and relationship with Coyote. Some of Coyote's more common faces are:

• **Chung Kuel:** A master of chance like Xochipilli, Chung Kuel focuses his power of luck on his foes, rather than himself. Chung Kuel Nuwisha have crashed stock markets, fixed elections, and in general manipulated fate at just the right moment to thwart the Wyrm for years upon years.

• **Kishijoten:** Probably the kindest aspect of Trickster, and certainly the most rarely followed totem, Kishijoten is a nurturing healer. She lends her skill at soothing pain to her children, many of whom appear in disguise to the other Changers as well as to humans who need succor. Kishijoten is the most difficult of Coyote's faces to follow — Nuwisha are not kind by nature, and following the healer's path means subsuming the impulse to play hurtful pranks on others.

• **Loki:** Few Nuwisha are warriors, but those that are usually follow Loki. Sometimes, subtle, cunning humor doesn't work and the point of the lesson must be beaten into the student's head. Loki's children gladly take up the cudgel in such circumstances. Many Nuwisha that work next to the Garou follow Loki, not because they wish to fight with the werewolves (which is usually tantamount to suicide even for the strongest Nuwisha) but because the Garou only respect fellow warriors.

• **Oghma:** Followers of Oghma are responsible for singing songs to enrich and teach others. Oghma is a bard, but is still a face of Trickster: The songs Oghma sings are designed to teach, inspire and, if necessary, ridicule those who need Coyote's lessons. No Nuwisha chooses to follow Oghma; Oghma makes that choice himself.

• **Pan/Kokopelli:** Both of these faces of Trickster are fertility gods, and both demand that the Nuwisha that follow them sate their desires early and often (but never by force). Coyote is a sly, randy being and his seductive nature comes to the fore in these totems. Nuwisha that follow them have been responsible for inconvenient pregnancies, political sex scandals, and other such embarrassments, but also revel in life and dance.

• **Ptah:** Most Ptah followers reside in the Umbra, and the few that remain on Earth guard existing gateways into the spirit worlds. Like the Umbral Dansers, they work to prevent incursion into the Umbra by human sorcerers and other, fouler beings, and to hide the pure places from the Wyrm's minions.

• **Raven:** Just as the Corax watch over Gaia and all creation, Raven's Nuwisha watch over the Changing Breeds. Raven is crafty and curious, and the Nuwisha that fall under his banner are the most subtle and cunning of the werecoyotes. Their pranks are also less likely to be deadly; killing a subject off makes learning from his mistakes very difficult.

• **Ti Malice:** The Spider Queen, Ti Malice's Nuwisha work within the largest cities in an attempt to bring them down. They spin webs of lies, malice and misery, all designed to push humans away from the huge, sprawling nests of corruption that the cities have become. In recent years, however, the Ti Malice are growing frustrated that humans don't seem to be getting the hint. The time has come, perhaps, for more drastic measures than unsafe working conditions and ridiculous minimum wages — the humans have to be shown that the cities just aren't *safe*.

• **Xochipilli:** Nuwisha who follow this totem only care about the odds insofar as they wish to chance danger in the most insane way possible. Xochipilli's children take chances that are nothing short of insane, laughing all the while. They don't always (or even often) come out unscathed, but neither do they feel the need to brag later. Everyone knows how brave the Xochipilli are.

A Nuwisha can change her totem, but doing so requires Coyote's permission, and obtaining that permission usually involves a long, complicated and thoroughly harrowing journey. Sometimes the supplicant must find and ask forgiveness of her former totem, and sometimes Coyote simply grants permission and says no more about it. No one can predict Coyote, after all.

Traits

Nuwisha are similar to Garou in many respects. They regenerate and soak damage as werewolves, but suffer no special vulnerability to silver. Nuwisha do not use Rage, having no connection to Luna (beyond their promise to sing to her). Nuwisha breed with Kinfolk, non-Kinfolk, and pretty much anyone they can (they are quite capable of using Animal Attraction, but would rather seduce a potential partner through more conventional means) but do not produce metis.

A Nuwisha's breed determines starting Gnosis. All Nuwisha begin with 4 Willpower.

All Nuwisha have a personal Totem. Three are described below, and others may be found in **Nuwisha**. Players and Storytellers are, of course, free to choose additional faces of Trickster from any mythology that appeals and convert them into Nuwisha totems. Some totems, such as Raven, have followings from other Changing Breeds. It is *possible* for a Nuwisha to join a Garou pack and be bonded by their totem, provided the Nuwisha also follows a face of that particular spirit. The Nuwisha, however, learn quickly that the werewolves rarely appreciate their humor.

When purchasing a totem, the player can use Background points and/or freebie points to buy the required Totem score for the desired spirit. Nuwisha use the name of their totem when speaking with other Nuwisha; for instance, a werecoyote named Steps-Lightly who follows Raven would simply be called Steps-Lightly among werewolves, but would be called Raven Steps-Lightly among her own kind.

Werecoyotes pursue Glory and Wisdom, subject to much the same guidelines as werewolves, but do not recognize Honor as a form of Renown. Instead, they gain recognition for Humor. Humor is not simply how much the Nuwisha can make her peers laugh, rather, it measures ingenuity and originality in pranks as well as the appropriateness of the trick to the lesson that the Nuwisha is teaching. Werecoyotes gain rank in the same manner as Ragabash do (a set amount of permanent Renown in any combination across the three categories), although a Nuwisha's totem often dictates what sort of Renown she seeks. Followers of Loki, for instance, usually wind up with more Glory than followers of Kishijoten.

Nuwisha gain Renown by spirit recognition, and when the time comes to gain a permanent dot of Renown, seek out one of their own kind *or* an avatar of their chosen totem for recognition. Gaining rank, however, requires the Nuwisha to travel into the Umbra and seek out one of the Umbral Dansers. This is usually enough of an ordeal that the higher-ranked Nuwisha normally doesn't put the supplicant through and further tests — but some do, just for fun.

Breeds

Nuwisha have two breeds, homid and latrani. As with werewolves, homid Nuwisha are born of human parents, whereas latrani are born of coyote stock. There are no metis Nuwisha; not only do Nuwisha/Nuwisha couplings fail to conceive, they're usually bouts of bad, incompatible sex. The werecoyotes prefer lovers that don't hold a mirror up to their own foibles.

• **Homid:** Human-born Nuwisha might grow up as class clowns, attention hounds, or simply that quiet child in the corner that everyone just *wonders* about. When the First Change comes, it usually isn't the traumatic bloodbath that the werewolves suffer so much as a breakthrough as the fledgling werecoyote realizes her power and responsibility to teach and prank.

Beginning Gnosis: 1

Starting Gifts: Persuasion, Master of Fire, Smell of Man

• **Latrani:** The Nuwisha born of coyote stock are more numerous than lupus Garou, probably because coyotes need less space and are generally more adaptable. Latrani are curious creatures as pups, often sticking their noses into traps or other dangerous situations. When the First Change comes, it's usually because their luck and cunning *can't* help them escape from their latest plight, and Coyote takes pity on them long enough to grant them additional resources.

Beginning Gnosis: 5

Starting Gifts: Hare's Leap, Heightened Senses, Speed of Thought (as the Silent Strider Gift)

Forms

The Nuwisha have five forms, very similar to those of their werewolf cousins.

• **Homid:** As with Garou, this form is indistinguishable from a normal human.

• **Tsitsu:** Similar to Glabro, the Tsitsu form is stronger than the Nuwisha's Homid form but looks much more human than the Garou's near-man. The Tsitsu grows several inches and gains between ten and twenty pounds of muscle, but does not gain as much hair as the Glabro form and suffers little difficulty speaking.

• **Manabozho:** As close to a "war form" as the Nuwisha get, the Manabozho form stands nearly eight feet tall and gains roughly 250% of the Homid form's mass. Similar to the Crinos form, Nuwisha can speak human languages in Manabozho form, although the voice is deep and gravelly. This form inflicts the Delirium in human witnesses, but at a reduced effect. Move any witnesses two levels "up" on the Delirium chart.

• **Sendeh:** The Sendeh form is a small cousin to the Hispo, and Nuwisha in this form are easily mistaken for red wolves. While in this form, Nuwisha cannot speak, but can mimic other sounds, including laughter, sobs and screams.

• **Latrani:** The natural form of the breed of the same name, the Latrani form is indistinguishable from a normal coyote.

Form Statistics

Tsitsu	Manabozho	Sendeh	Latrani
Str: +1	Str: +2	Str: +2	Str: +0
Dex: +1	Dex: +3	Dex: +3	Dex: +3
Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: +3	Sta: +3
	App: 0		
Man: -1	Man: -2	Man: -3	Man: -3
Diff: 7	Diff: 6	Diff: 7	Diff: 6

Gifts

Nuwisha can learn homid and lupus Gifts (depending on their breed), and can learn any Ragabash Gift. Players choose three Gifts; one from the appropriate Garou breed list, one from the Ragabash list, and one from the Nuwisha list. General Nuwisha Gifts are listed below.

• **Snake's Skin (Level One)** — The Nuwisha sheds a layer of skin and flesh (and instantly regenerates it), allowing her to slip free of bonds or even grappling opponents. A snake-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6). Success allows the character to slip free of most bonds, and any successes on the roll are added to any roll made to escape a hold (see page 209 of **Werewolf**). Additional rolls might be required to escape more complex traps.

• **Spirit Speech (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Swollen Tongue (Level One)** — With a touch, the Nuwisha can stop a target from speaking. The targets tongue swells, preventing her from making any sounds beyond frantic grunts and moans. A spider-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The character must touch the target. The player rolls Gnosis (difficulty of the victim's Willpower). Normally, the target is prevented only from speaking, but if the player rolls three or more successes, the target's hand shakes uncontrollably and she cannot sign or write. Swollen Tongue lasts for one scene.

• **Odious Aroma (Level Two)** — As the Level Two Bone Gnawer Gift.

• **Sheep's Clothing (Level Two)** — The Nuwisha can take the form and scent of another shapeshifter. While this Gift is in effect, the Nuwisha may take the appearance of any form common to the type of shapeshifter she is impersonating. Even Gifts designed to identify shapeshifters cannot pierce Sheep's Clothing (unless Coyote feels it appropriate). A cuckoo-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Wits + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6 for mammalian Changer, 7 otherwise). The character thereafter looks and smells like whatever kind of shapeshifter she chooses. She does not, however, gain any of the special powers of the Breed — a Nuwisha impersonating a Rokea could assume Gladius form, but would gain neither the enhanced strength nor the Sending that the form usually confers. This Gift lasts for one full day, though the player can extend that duration by spending additional Gnosis (one day per point spent).

• **Gift of Rage (Level Three)** — While the Nuwisha do not, for the most part, envy their Garou cousins' ability to Rage, they admit that is comes in handy. With this Gift, the werecoyote gains Rage for a short time, with all the benefits and drawbacks it carries. A spirit servant of Loki teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Willpower (difficulty 7). If successful, the character gains a Rage rating of 5 for the scene (though she may cancel it at any time). While this Gift is in



effect, the character can take extra actions and shapeshift instantly, as Garou can — but is also subject to frenzy and vulnerable to silver.

• **Happy Thoughts (Level Three)** — Shapeshifters with Rage are dangerous to be around. More than one Nuwisha has lost her life when an unappreciative werewolf has lost control after a prank. This Gift allows the Nuwisha to remove the threat of frenzy for a short time (hopefully long enough to get away). An avatar of Coyote teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point. The character must touch the target. For the duration of the scene, the target loses access to his Rage. He cannot frenzy, take extra actions, or use Rage in any way. He can still change shape, however — the Rage is still present, the target just can't make use of it.

• **Bridge Walker (Level Four)** — As the Level Four Galliard Gift.

• **Trickster's Skin (Level Four)** — Similar to Sheep's Clothing, this Gift allows the Nuwisha to "trade skins" with a target. The Nuwisha takes on the appearance, voice, and scent of the target, while the victim becomes identical to the Nuwisha. Superb for making an escape from an angry werewolf pack, this Gift is also useful in combination with Swollen Tongue; the hapless target knows the truth, but cannot communicate to his friends that he is anything but a stranger.

System: The player spends one point of Gnosis and rolls Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty of the target's Primal-Urge +3, or 7 if the target cannot possess the Prima-Urge Trait). The Nuwisha may use this Gift on any target within line of sight, and it lasts for one scene.

• **Assimilation (Level Five)** — As the homid Gift.

• **Coyote's Mask (Level Five)** — In one Kwakiutl Indian legend, Coyote dons masks of various animals and then allows the animals to die for him, thus saving his life. The most powerful Nuwisha may accomplish a similar feat, using their Gift as a shield against death. Only Coyote teaches this Gift.

System: In order to learn this Gift, the Nuwisha must first learn a Gift that changes his shape, including Sheep's Clothing, Trickster's Skin, or the Ragabash Gift: Thousand Forms. If the character wishes to invoke this Gift, he must spend a full turn in concentration after first using the chosen shape-changing Gift. The player then spends one Gnosis point and rolls Willpower (difficulty 8). If successful, the Nuwisha may "die" once while wearing something or someone else's form. If the Nuwisha drops below Incapacitated from lethal or aggravated damage while wearing Coyote's Mask, the Nuwisha immediately appears in breed form not more than 10 feet away, and all that is left of the "corpse" is a small scrap of coyote fur. The Nuwisha is considered to be at full health.

Rites

The Nuwisha can make use of most Garou rites, including Cleansing, Talisman Dedication, and Questing Stone. They don't normally bother with the Rite of the Fetish (they prefer to steal fetishes), although they can use it if necessary. The Nuwisha know a few rites that they have never shared with the Garou, as well. Of these, the most important is Sing Back the Dead.

Sing Back the Dead

Level Five (Mystic)

Of the 100 Nuwisha on Earth, only one knows this rite at any given time. When the Nuwisha who knows it dies or joins the Umbral Danse, Coyote Himself selects a new werecoyote to carry this rite. With it, the Nuwisha can call the dead back to life with a song. Just as Coyote is the only being who can teach this rite, only he can authorize its use. A Nuwisha who attempts this song without first gaining his explicit permission to restore the beings in question will surely die in the process.

System: The player spends one *permanent* Gnosis for each being that the character wishes to resurrect. In addition, mangled or dismembered bodies might require additional permanent Gnosis expenditure, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Totems

Below are three of the more common Nuwisha totems. Raven, described on p. 297 of **Werewolf**, is also a common choice.

Ti Malice

Background Cost: 4

The Spider Queen is subtle and just as vicious and amoral as her earthly counterparts. Nuwisha who follow her are vengeful and ruthless, suffering no moral qualms at all about their schemes and lies.

Traits: Followers of Ti Malice gain two dice to all Manipulation and Enigmas dice pools.

Ban: Ti Malice demands that her followers show no mercy to the weak, and regards humans as nearly universally weak.

Loki

Background Cost: 7

Loki is just as happy to participate in pranks as any face of Trickster, but believes that the best pranks are the ones in which the mark realizes the prank just before dying. His followers are violent, brave and usually young.

Traits: Loki grants an additional Bruised health level and one permanent dot in a physical Attribute of the player's choice.

Ban: Loki asks that Nuwisha in his service offer their kills to him as sacrifice, and that they never refuse a direct challenge (however, they are under *no* compulsion to fight fair).

Xochipilli

Background Cost: 5

Xochipilli is not a totem for planners, worriers, or strategists. Followers of this totem leap into the fray, guns blazing, a curse on their lips, and hope for the best. Interest-

ingly, the more apparently suicidal the stunt, the more likely it is that Xochipilli will allow his child to survive (though the Nuwisha might be maimed in the process).

Traits: Aside from their tendency to survive acts of bravado that should tear them limb from limb (the Storyteller adjudicates this effect), Xochipilli grants his children three extra dice to Survival.

Ban: Followers of Xochipilli may never refuse a dare.

Stereotypes

Raven Steps-Lightly, a student of shapeshifter nature, shares her favorite one-liners:

Garou: Frankly, I think it's too late. No, I'm serious. We've thrown everything in our book at them, and they *still* don't know what's going on. What do we have to do, sing it?

Corax: Our brothers in arms. Wings, I guess. They get our jokes, but can they turn the Wyrm back by plucking out its eyes. Or could they?

Ananasi: Yeah, we've got Ti Malice. Let me tell you a secret — among the spiders, that doesn't mean shit. We're just another breed of dog to them.

Gurahl: Wake up! You're on!



Ratkin

"DOWN IN FRONT!" *In the back of the bus, a rat-faced little teenage girl is screaming. A twitching little mass of giggling and pigtails, she hurls a small package towards the front of the bus.* "INCOMING!"

Cowed and callous passengers look around the bus, straining to see what's going on. A murmur of dissent drifts across the crowd, as the humans, roused from their complacency, bitterly complain about another delay. Just in case the shouting didn't rouse them, the horrible stench wafting from the package gets them to their feet. Spreads like a cloud. Drifts like smoke. Smells like gas.

Three of the girl's friends are all laughing hysterically on the giant seat at the back of the bus. They seem to be immune. The rest of the passengers begin scrambling for windows, fighting each other in an effort to reach the door — or wherever there's fresh air. Looks like someone won't make it home in time for the five o'clock news....

The bus driver has already begun stomping on the brakes, as the bus careens wildly down Third Avenue. It's rocketing right for the corner of Pike and Third, a corner affectionately known to locals as the "asshole of downtown Seattle."

A green-haired geek in the front seat leaps forward, helping the bus driver steer, even as the gas attack spreads. Pumped with adrenaline, the would-be hero scrambles over the driver's unconscious body, then madly turns the steering wheel to straighten out the bus. "Goddammit!" he screams. "To the left! To the left!"

"Johnny wants a diversion," the little pig-tailed girl croons. "Johnny's gonna get it!" Shrieking in joy, she shifts her body— and the pig-tailed girl quickly becomes a six-foot-tall beast, a slouching, frothing, hyperactive rat creature... with massive tufts of torn and tattered pigtails.

The humans scream as the rest of the "rat pack" shifts. Men and women swarm over each other in a display of selfish self-preservation few rodents could equal. Mothers and children, homeless bums and businessmen, latte-sipping upwardly mobiles and frantic down-and-outers — they ignore each other every day on this bus, but now that they're trapped together, they're united in their desperation. How very human.

A few hundred feet away, humans shuffle around the corner of Third and Pike, munching burgers and fries from a local O'Tolley's "restaurant." The humans are oblivious to the Wyrm-tainted food festering in those colorful wrappers, or the mind-altering Muzak wafting from the speakers overhead... or the human meat blended into their cheeseburgers. Now all they can think of is the two-ton bus headed this way...

Two shapes on the street corner step into this nightmare, and onto the street Dropping cheeseburgers and fries, the seemingly human shapes shift to Crinos form. The two Wyrm-tainted werewolves scream in rage, racing towards the bus. Tainted meat scatters across the asphalt.

"Aim for the doors!" Pig-Tailed Girl shrieks, keening in a high-pitched scream. "Get the doors! Garou! Ga-roooooooou!"

The green-haired hero lunges across the steering wheel. Within seconds, the bus crumples into the storefront, collapsing like an aluminum can and pinning werewolves to the wall. A mass of metal instantly shuts down another store in the chain, immediately crippling the profits of another Pentex subsidiary... and crippling the two Wyrm-tainted Bone Gnawers who were feeding there.

Green-haired boy is hurled toward the windshield. He triples his mass as he hits the glass. The collision hurls human bodies to the floor.

"Good job, Johnny!" Pig-Tailed Rat-Girl replies. The Ratkin pack chitters in agreement.

Green-Haired Johnny smiles, covered with blood in his Crinos form. As the wererat's wounds begin to heal, he steps over the unconscious bus driver and kicks open the door.

"Yeah," says Green-Haired Johnny. "They needed a drive-thru...."

Legend

Like any human being, a wererat can be good or evil. Asking a Ratkin to obey the law, on the other hand, is entirely out of the question. Chaos and madness plagues the Ratkin race, driving them to insane insights and outbursts of creative destruction. Yet in legends of the time before time, the wererats played a very different role...

When the world was young, the veil between worlds was perilously thin. Realms of flesh and spirit existed side by side, and monsters bred in the shadows between them. When monstrous horrors stalked in the night, Gaia's greatest warriors, the Garou, were ready to cull the spiritual population. Yet Mother Nature is not without a sense of balance: When the human populations grew too strong, Gaia's most cunning warriors, the Ratkin, culled the human population.

When Ratkin came in the night to weaken human settlements — striking with disease, pestilence, and selective elimination of the weak — the Garou had little trouble justifying their hunts against them. The wererats saw their sacred duty as part of Nature's design, but the Garou maligned them as cowards, as thieves, and when bloodlust took them, as enemies. The Garou were looking for reasons for war... and the Ratkin's worst atrocities further inspired them to crusade against all of the world's shapeshifters.

In their overwhelming pride, werewolf warriors hunted the Fera, counting coup, counting skins, and counting the dead. What began as demonstrations of dominance led to the Wars of Rage. The Garou struggled to prove themselves supreme, worthy of all the tasks the Earth Mother had entrusted to the Fera. As entire races fell to the werewolves'

claws, the Ratkin, as masters of stealth, fled to the hidden place of the world. Subterfuge and sabotage were their greatest weapons, but faced with packs of rampaging Garou, they fled to the depths of the spirit world.

Some shapechangers said the feral Rage of the primitive werewolves had overcome them; others whispered that the Wyrm had seduced corrupt Garou into greater acts of horror. The werewolves, on the other hand, took their triumphs as a sign that they were now the greatest of Earth's guardians—that through their vigilance, they would protect the world from all the terrors of the night. Garou Galliards described the wererats' methods for culling human herds as atrocities... just as the werewolves' acts of genocide were retold as acts of heroism.

When the Impergium ended, it wasn't the result of any supernatural force. The human race, terrified by the horror of endless wars, rose up against the Garou. The Ratkin had worked to limit the human population, but the werewolves were oblivious to the threat humanity posed. By then, of course, the Fera were too weakened to reclaim what they had lost. The race of man began overpopulating the world, building a civilization that would contain the rage of the Wyld... as the werewolves skulked into the shadows.

The Ratkin Today

Millennia later, over six billion humans dominate the planet. The Changing Breeds remember the Wars of Rage, sharing tales that grow more horrific with every retelling. The distant descendants of subjugated humans have since conquered the world. Whether through design or neglect, they have forced back the wilderness.

The Garou have long since failed in their crusade to defend creation. The Wyld barely survives in the largest cities in its many feral forms. The Weaver has gone mad, running rampant as technophilia spreads. The Wyrm has grown corrupt enough to poison the souls of millions of minions. The signs of the End Times are evident everywhere, and those who can read their hidden meanings can see the truth: the Wyrm threatens to strangle all creation in its coils...

...unless someone can shift the balance.

Reason has failed; the Ratkin respond with inspired insanity. After countless generations isolated in the depths of the spirit world, the Ratkin are returning to the world in unseen numbers. Driven mad by exile, their blood surges with hatred for the Garou. Because of the werewolves' failures, the webs of the Weaver have ensnared the planet. As all animals have their instincts, the wererats obey their urges to snap the Mad Weaver's threads, liberate the Wyld, and summon chaos to overwhelm the Wyrm. For those who cannot articulate such philosophies succinctly, the two greatest obstacles to their endeavors are the Garou... and six billion humans. There's a world at stake, after all.

In moments of meditation and introspection, the Ratkin can plan well enough to orchestrate their own vast crusades



and expand their breeding colonies. From hidden places in the worlds of flesh and spirit, they strike out at human civilization — and lately, they have intensified their wars against the Garou. Without technology or resources, they rely on numbers, subterfuge, cunning, and fervor. Desperate times call for extreme measures; thus, the Ratkin are preparing their army of the Apocalypse.

To the Garou, the Ratkin are ancient adversaries. For humanity, they are forgotten horrors reborn. And to the most desperate and energetic forces of the Wyld, they are the last chance for creation's rebirth. In the End Times, even the deities known as the Incarnae have gone mad. The Rat Totem calls... and his children answer without outbursts of shocking and ingenious violence.

Ratkin Lexicon

Colony: A breeding ground for Ratkin, usually attended by packs of courtiers and ruled by a sagacious and elderly Rat King.

Courtiers: A group of Ratkin that defends a colony and serves a Rat King.

Crèche: A temporary home where a rampage of Ratkin can rest and heal, usually spiritually cleansed with wererat rites. Also known as "crash space."

Deceit: Any gathering of wererats, from a rampage of ratlings to a courtier rat pack.

Nest: A colony built around a sacred site where Ratkin can meditate and regain Gnosis.

Ramblers: The wererats in a rat pack. They serve no king and have no home. They can, however, choose a totem.

Rampage: An anarchistic and temporary rat pack. A rampage has no home and can only serve the Rat Totem. (Courtiers sometimes call them "gangs.")

Rat Pack: A group of Ratkin dedicated to a totem and each other; a group of ramblers.

Ratling: A Ratkin who has not yet earned rank (rather like a Garou cub). Ratlings form rampages.

Organization

Most Ratkin wander the world, seeking opportunities to unleash chaos and monkeywrench human civilization. When the wererats' population surges, another generation of self-destructive ratlings swarms through the human populace in hastily assembled gangs called rampages. A Ratkin rampage shows evolution in action; instead of cultivating a strong pack alpha, the pack is obsessed with who its weakest member is, degrading him as the "runt" of the pack. In short, the runt gets the shit jobs nobody else wants, until he can shame another packmate into taking his place. Rampaging wererats who do not hold rank in Ratkin society are known as ratlings.

Soldiers and saboteurs cunning enough to survive this troublesome time of life create rat packs with longer-term goals — these rodents are known as ramblers. When a rat pack is formed, they must choose which totem they will serve through a Dedication Rite; otherwise, they must all follow the Rat Totem. Filled with fury on the eve of the Apocalypse, the Rat Totem sends visions, messengers, and madness to disparate Ratkin, summoning them in campaigns against the Weaver, the Wyrm, the Garou, and concentrations of human population.

Not all Ratkin see the Rat Totem as destructive, however. Werewolves know Rat as a totem of war, teaching them to strike with subtlety and subterfuge. Wise wererats follow a totem called Mother Rat, a healer who cares for the sick and diseased. For the most violent Ratkin, however, their Incarna is the Rat God, and he has great plans for his children. Breeding an army for the Apocalypse is one of the Rat God's most ambitious goals. Mother Rat breeds and heals; the Rat Totem sneaks and kills; the Rat God leads a swarm of violent retribution.

Hidden from the other Changing Breeds, the Ratkin spawn in unprecedented numbers. Their most fertile breeding grounds are sprawling colonies, labyrinths extending from the physical world to spiritual tunnels through the boundaries between realities. Metis Ratkin are usually brought to such places, and wererat heroes are drawn to them by visions. The survival of a colony depends on a strong Rat King. Packs of heroic Ratkin who do his bidding are the courtiers of his kingdom.

The largest colonies are based around sacred sites, much as Garou caerns are. In these rare cases, a council of elders rules this colony, usually with one representative for each of the aspects of Ratkin society. Ramblers and rampages have little tolerance for such places, especially when it clings to the orderly aspects of society a Ratkin's Rage compels him to destroy. Feeble and fragile, the most esteemed elders refuse to accept anarchists in such sacred places.

Most Changing Breeds remain unaware of the Ratkin's hidden breeding grounds, however. The wererats they most commonly encounter are the skulking, scavenging, and sometimes psychopathic packs that swarm the world, tearing down anything that upholds order, law, or civility. And as the End Times advance, the swarms of gangs and ramblers are growing larger.

Traits

Ratkin regenerate as do Garou, and are equally vulnerable to silver. They begin with 3 Willpower. In addition, they possess several traits peculiar to the Breed:

- **Maze Memory:** A Ratkin's "tunnel sense" prevents him from ever getting lost underground. Even if the creature is bludgeoned into unconsciousness and abandoned deep beneath the Earth, his intuitive and absolute sense of direction can help him find his way home.
- **Acute Senses:** When the creature is in its rat form, his hearing and smell become hyper acute. In addition, he has an strong sense of touch along his whiskers (called vibrissae), which are prominently displayed in both Rodens and Crinos form. In any form, Ratkin get a –1 difficulty on all Perception rolls involving ears, noses, or whiskers.

• **Night Vision:** Wererats have amazing night vision. By spending one Gnosis, the Ratkin can draw upon the dim illumination of the Penumbra to see rough outlines in the night. This ability lasts for one scene, but with the Gift: Darksight, it can be extended up to eight hours, and the creature's vision becomes clearer.

• **Immunity to Disease:** Ratkin can shapeshift after the first time they are infected with the Birthing Plague, an ancient and continually mutating infection that courses through the blood of their kind. The disease is transmitted in a virulent "creation rite;" those who survive it are immune to all diseases, whether natural or supernatural in origin. Ratkin can also carry and transmit deadly infections without suffering their effects or displaying their symptoms.

• **Reduced Delirium:** Wererats relied on stealth and subterfuge during the Wars of Rage; thus, they do not induce the Delirium as strongly as Garou do. When a human sees a Crinos-form Ratkin, consult the Delirium Chart, but reference the victim's Willpower as two higher than it normally is.

• **Stepping Sideways:** With the Rite of the Bolthole, a pack of Ratkin can "step sideways" into the spirit world. Without this rite, a lone Ratkin must stare into a "shiny thing" to enter the Umbra (usually a reflective object). The creature also needs privacy; he can enter the spirit world when Ratkin or spirits are nearby, but the presence of another type of shapechanger or another physical race (such as humans) prevents the wererat from crossing the Gauntlet.

• **Keening:** In moments of danger, a Ratkin can "silently scream" to all other wererats within hearing range. Wererats can only "keen" when actually threatened. Other supernatural creatures cannot emulate or imitate this sound, even with supernatural abilities.

• **Speaks in Squeaks:** In any form, wererats can speak a rodent language only they can understand. Speaking to ordinary rats is a separate ability, one that transmits emotional content better than complex ideas. Ordinary rats (like those summoned by vampires) do not understand the innate language of Ratkin.

• **Blessings of the Rat Incarna:** The Rat Incarna watches over a Ratkin from the moment of his first Infection (through the Rite of the Birthing Plague) to the catharsis of the First Change. After that, the wererat gains all the benefits of the Rat Totem; if he does not adhere to its ban, he temporarily loses those benefits until he performs an act of atonement. Wererats can change their totem each time they form (or disband) a rat pack; this involves the Dedication Rite (see below).

• **Blood Memory:** Wererats share racial memories carried in their blood. The simplest version of this requires a Gnosis roll. The creature may remember the name of another Ratkin he's never met (difficulty 6) or recognize a place where he's never been (difficulty 8; 6 for Tunnel Runners). Only knowledge shared by other Ratkin can be accessed by blood memory.

By spending one Gnosis and rolling temporary Gnosis, the creature can experience a sensory vision from the past, possibly one that's relevant to a problem he's facing (Storyteller's discretion). The creature accesses the experience of another Ratkin or rat-spirit from the past. With one success, the vision can be from 10 to 50 years ago; with five successes, it may from up to two millennia ago. Blood Memory cannot reach further than that, unfortunately, and it cannot compete with a Mokolé's Mnesis.

• **Festering Blood:** Ratkin blood is poisonous to anyone trying to drink it. A vampire or other supernatural creature attempting to drink wererat blood suffers one unsoakable health level of damage each round; he also receives disturbing psychedelic images created by misperceptions of the Birthing Plague.

Breeds and the Birthing Plague

In many werewolf legends, lycanthropy is a disease, a transformation that takes place when a victim is mauled, but not killed. The Garou see their origins as far more noble, an inheritance or a birthright — but to the Ratkin, shapechanging is a curse. Carriers of plague, their legacy is a disease that has mutated over thousands of years: the Birthing Plague.

All Ratkin Kinfolk carry some small measure of this taint in their blood. When a Kinfolk is bitten by Ratkin (or by a rat-spirit summoned by one) and the proper rites are invoked, the infection of the Birthing Plague surges through the Kinfolk's blood. Most victims die, but as the End Times advance, more survive, some in strange and insidious new forms.

Before infection, Kinfolk are often oblivious to the taint of corruption in their blood. When a Ratkin breeds with a human, the child is homid Kinfolk. When a Ratkin breeds with a rat (perhaps while slumming), the nest of offspring swarms with rodens Kinfolk. The taint in their blood manifests in subtle ways: as flashes of madness, cursed streaks of bad luck, or even as sudden outbursts of violence. The Rat Totem leads its followers to these tainted souls. After Infection, The Kin's true breed emerges: human Kinfolk become homid Ratkin, and rodent Kinfolk become rodens Ratkin.

• **Homid:** A homid begins life as a human, usually unaware of her cursed heritage. Some claim "chemical imbalances" are to blame for a homid child's deviant urges, which can manifest in all sorts of interesting ways. Some show a talent for schoolyard brawling or "creative destruction." Others are more introspective, listening to a "singing in their blood" and experiencing dreams they cannot possibly understand — until Infection awakens the true form carried within them.

Homid Ratkin adults, like ratling children, are rarely successful in life, at least by human standards. But with the Rat Totem guiding them, Gifts from Gaia empowering them, and the strength of the Crinos form sleeping within them, they have the resources to seize what they need,

deceive those who oppose them, and unleash pure chaos into the world.

Beginning Gnosis: 1

Starting Gifts: Cooking, Eau de Rat, Persuasion

• **Metis:** When two Ratkin breed, the result of their furtive coupling is a deformed and tortured creature, a huge furred and fanged monstrosity, the very sight of which horrifies humans on a primal level. This bestial creature is secretly abducted by a Ratkin pack and taken to the nearest wererat nest or colony. Sharp teeth punish disobedience, and endless brawls with swarms of ratling relatives develop strength. Metis who survive this feral "childhood" must tend to the young, mind the treacherous manipulations of their elders, and listen to the whisperings in their blood of the world outside their hidden havens.

As they grow older, metis tentatively explore tunnels that stretch into the surrounding Umbrascape, offering chances to learn of the "Wylder" aspects of the spirit world. Other breeds consider metis fanatics, since they grow up in the relatively "pure" surroundings of the spirit world. To join with a Ratkin pack in the human world, preparing and crusading for the end of the world, is a great honor — and a blessed release from the festering, sprawling middens of a Ratkin colony.

Beginning Gnosis: 3

Starting Gifts: Cloak of Shadows, Rat Mother's Touch, Sense Wyrm

• **Rodens:** Born as a rodent and raised by rats, rodens Ratkin have strong instincts for survival, even when surrounded by the largest cities. When they need to be cunning, they have sudden flashes of insidious insight, knowing the best place to tunnel, gnaw, or sabotage. When cornered, they can summon outbursts of primal Rage, gleefully joining with a swarm of brothers and sisters to drive off (or devour) larger and stronger enemies. After Infection, madness and hatred can utterly overwhelm the clever mind of a rodens Ratkin, offering new thresholds of exploitation and revenge.

Beginning Gnosis: 5

Starting Gifts: Absolute Balance, Leap of the Kangaroo Rat, Survival

Aspects

When a Ratkin is first Infected, his disease grants him feverish dreams: visions detailing the fate of the world, the curse in his blood, and his role in the world. Some dreams are granted by spiritual forces; others are the result of madness and delirium. Ratlings lacking ambition are simply content to fight and die, or spawn and breed. A few are chosen to follow one of the four major aspects of wererat society.

• **Tunnel Runner:** The scouts of the swarm, Tunnel Runners wander the world gathering lore and witnessing what it has become. As messengers and mavericks, they never carry wealth or keep a permanent home, at least beyond the backpacks and knapsacks they often carry. Loners learn to blend into human society, learning weaknesses that warriors can later exploit.

Rampaging Tunnel Runners gather a band of companions, usually ones with spiritual or martial talents. In any wererat pack, a Tunnel Runner must be clever enough to scout ahead and cautious enough to always have an escape route planned. Like the proverbial rats leaving a sinking ship, they are ready to take to the road on a moment's notice... even when their companions are not as quick to follow.

All Tunnel Runners have the following Strengths & Weaknesses:

• **Culturally Gifted:** In one day, a Tunnel Runner can develop a persona that helps him blend into his cultural surroundings. It's a quiet alternate identity that average people don't question (as long as the Ratkin is discreet). His appearance doesn't change; he just blends in. All Manipulation or Subterfuge rolls related to maintaining this façade are at a –2 difficulty. Each persona must have a different name. The effects end when he leaves town and changes his identity, although he can change it back when it returns.

• **Wanderlust Visions:** When a Tunnel Runner is physically or spiritually lost, the Rat Totem may grant a vision of a destination that may offer help or a way out.

• **Traveling Light:** Tunnel Runners below Rank Three cannot have points in the Resources Background. Rank Three Runners cannot have more than two points in that Background.

Beginning Rage: 1

Starting Gifts: Danger Sense, Silent Running

• **Shadow Seers:** Masters of spirit stare into the shadows, often contemplating forces that others cannot see, or even believe. Shadow Seers seek wisdom in forgotten places, learning from things and ideas humanity has discarded. Since everything is holy to them, they often uncover "holy relics" among the refuge of the largest cities, turning trash into talens and filth into fetishes. As scholars of street magic and urban spirituality, they listen to the pulse of the city few others can hear.

Like other insightful Ratkin, however, prolonged contemplation can drive them to raptures of insanity. The invisible then becomes more real to them than the physical world around them. Such zeal is considered admirable, especially since Shadow Seers must often enact the rites the hold packs of Ratkin together — and justify the extreme acts rambling packs of anarchists are capable of executing.

All Shadow Seers have the following Strengths & Weaknesses:

• **Spirits Speak to Me:** All Shadow Seers begin play with the Theurge Gift: Spirit Speech.

• **Spirit Sight:** By spending one Gnosis in the physical world, a Seer can instantly see what is happening in the local Penumbra; her eyes turn white when she does this. Although her body remains in the physical world, she cannot see what happens around her in that world. Instead, her spirit watches what transpires around it in the spirit world. Unfortunately, that leaves her quite vulnerable to physical attack. Spirit Sight requires active concentration, lasting up to a scene.

• **Disconnection:** When Shadow Seers botch a Rage, Gnosis or Willpower roll, they often see the spirit world as more "real" than the physical world. A petty dispute be-

tween local Gafflings and Jagglings may be more important than the physical objects and people nearby.

Beginning Rage: 2

Starting Gifts: Rat Mother's Touch, Sense Weaver

• **Knife-Skulkers:** Ratkin must make temporary alliances to survive, working with a vast array of conspirators, from scheming rulers who want to eliminate enemies to the scum of supernatural society. Such interactions are best handled by the Knife-Skulkers, creatures skilled in negotiation, execution, and assassination. Experts at stealth and subterfuge, Knife-Skulkers not only know how to kill unseen, but also how to lead a pack against enemies larger and stronger than they are. For Knife-Skulkers, social interaction requires negotiations, especially when other creatures of the night are involved. Most are skillful enough to craft contracts that benefit both parties. When negotiations break down, Skulkers love to enforce the "punishment clauses" of a contract.

All Knife Skulkers have the following Strengths & Weaknesses:

• **Contracts and Contacts:** Skulkers begin play with three points of Contacts (in addition to their normal starting Backgrounds), usually in the form of "extralegal" informants. Some have other Changing Breeds as Contacts. Once a pact is made, Knife Skulkers take their contracts very seriously. A Skulker who breaks one may be hunted by other Knife-Skulkers.

• **Sense of Justice:** A Skulker regains one Rage whenever he witnesses an act of injustice performed by another race; this serves as a reminder of when the Garou betrayed the other Changing Breeds.

• **Assassin's Code:** When contracted for an assassination, a Knife-Skulker cannot allow himself to be seen killing his enemy. He cannot confront his enemy face-to-face, and he cannot strike while hidden by a Cloak of Shadows. Failure means a loss of Cunning Renown.

Beginning Rage: 3

Starting Gifts: Sticky Paws, Truth of Gaia

• **Blade Slaves ("Warriors"):** Rat is a totem of war, and the Blade Slaves are his most feral warriors. The samurai (and Nezumi) of feudal Japan would describe their tactics as "low war": options used when all pretense of honor has been abandoned. Enemies must be studied and gradually weakened before this type of war begins. When the time is right, the swarm descends in force, strikes first, and overwhelms its foes. These warriors get their name from the fetishes they carry: each learns to bind a violent spirit inside his favorite knife, sword, or other implement of destruction. When in the throes of rapturous meditation, they whisper and chitter to their tools of destruction. And when they revel in heights of Rage, they unleash hidden spiritual talents that cripple their opponents — often literally.

All Blade Slaves have the following Strengths & Weaknesses:

• **Pain Dagger:** Only Blade Slaves can perform the Rite of the Pain Dagger, which binds a spirit inside a favored weapon so that it inflicts aggravated damage. At the Storyteller's discretion, the warrior may also be able to access one of the Charms of the spirit within the blade (he must pay an additional Background Cost to use the item as a fetish; see below). Another Ratkin can wield a Pain Dagger, but only if he undergoes special rituals (and buys the 2-pt. Merit: Enslaved by the Blade); however, he cannot access the Charm bound within the blade.

• **Buff and Tough:** All Blade Slaves have an extra health level. Draw an extra square above the character's Bruised Level, and label it "Tough."

• **Blood Lust:** Blade Slaves are more susceptible to Rage than other aspects of Ratkin society. The difficulty for their Rage rolls is always 5, regardless of the phase of the moon, direction of the wind, time of the month, or any other factor.

Beginning Rage: 4

Starting Gifts: Resist Pain, Slicing Teeth

Freak Aspects

Strange days are upon us. As the world dies screaming, swarms of Ratkin gather, and some of their offspring possess supernatural talents never seen before. Ratkin who experience deviant visions during their Infection are called *Freaks*, and their esoteric ways form the basis of *Freak Aspects*:

—*Twitchers* succumb easily to frenzy, exploiting their supernatural anonymity and Freak Gifts to unleash epic outbursts of anarchy.

—*Ratkin Engineers* exploit insights into the Weaver's ways, exploiting hyperactive lab rat intelligence to scavenge supplies and weapons for the swarm.

—*Plague Lords* master the ways of disease, using their spiritual insight to craft new biological terrors to unleash on mankind.

—*Munchmausen* are delusional enough to think they're the world's greatest heroes, leading epic expeditions that invariably further their megalomania and madness.

Forms

Ratkin can assume three forms.

• **Homid:** Ratkin can blend into human society well — especially its seedier elements. Not all human-form Ratkin are handsome: some do not have sharp front teeth, scrawny physiques, a stoop or slouch, a nervous twitch, or beady eyes that dart about constantly. Ugly Ratkin tend to be of average height, with a steady gaze, a calm disposition, and quiet patience. This allows them to secretly plot against the human race without being interrupted by curious humans. Some Ratkin actually emulate the qualities humans find attractive, so that they may raid the human gene pool and produce more of their kind. By breeding more human Kinfolk, they increase the number of potential wererats.

• **Crinos:** When a Homid form Ratkin shifts to Crinos, its height increases by about 20% — almost as tall as a Crinos-form Garou. Okay, so maybe it slouches a bit more, and perhaps you might find its dexterous rattail unattractive. Maybe its fur and muscles twitch a bit too nervously when it's filled with Rage. However, its handsome whiskers extend a good two or three feet from its elegant snout, and its sharp teeth can puncture steel. The creature's eyes don't really glare

with a crimson sheen in the night. That's just a myth — unless the Ratkin wants them to shine. A Crinos-form Ratkin can use bite and claw maneuvers; these cause aggravated damage.

• **Rodens:** This form resembles a typical *Rattus rattus* or *Rattus Norwegicus*. It may be as small as a kangaroo rat or as large as a housecat. Either way, it can crawl and climb anywhere an ordinary rat can, squeezing through an opening as small as a coin, walking with perfect balance along a taught rope, and scurrying behind cover quickly enough to not be noticed. Rodens-form Ratkin have one featured ordinary rats do not, however: *on each paw, one of the digits can be used as an opposable thumb.*

Form Statistics

Crinos	Rodens
Strength +1*	Strength –1
Dexterity +4	Dexterity +2
Stamina +2*	Stamina +2
Charisma –2	
Appearance –1	
Perception +1	Perception +3

*Metis Ratkin have a +2 modifier to Strength in Crinos, but only add a single die to Stamina in that form. They have surging muscle mass, but little long-term endurance.

Gifts

Ratkin begin play with three Gifts: one for their breed, one for their aspect, and one Ratkin Gift. A few of these talents are curious variants of Bone Gnawer Gifts, especially those taught by the many varieties of rat-spirits. While Bone Gnawers can teach Ratkin Bone Gnawer Gifts (if they're taught by rat-spirits), wererats can't teach Bone Gnawers any of their Gifts. Spiritual revelations are far too rare, and gifts of socks or cheeseburgers are much cheaper. Various rat or rodent spirits teach most of the following Gifts.

Ratkin Gifts

• **Cloak of Shadows (Level One)** — The Ratkin can hide himself and anyone he's touching in shadows. A night-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Stealth; if there's a witness, the difficulty equals its Perception + Awareness dice pool. (If there are multiple witnesses, use the highest value.) The area cloaked depends on the number of successes.

Successes	Cloaks the Ratkin...
One	and no one else
Two	and one other human-sized person or object
Three	and three other human-sized people, or an object as big as a car
Four	and eight or more human-sized creatures, or an object as big as a van or SUV
Five	and 12 or more human-sized creatures, or an object as big as a tractor-trailer truck

• **Darksight (Level One)** — All Ratkin have a limited degree of night vision; this Gift magnifies and extends this ability. The Gift is taught by a night-spirit.

System: The player rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty 7); each success adds one die to all Perception rolls for the rest of the scene (maximum of three extra dice). With five successes, the Ratkin might even see sound or sense heat signatures. If the roll succeeds at all, the wererat's "night vision" (as described under Traits) still costs 1 Gnosis, but lasts for eight hours.

• **Crawling Chaos (Level Two)** — The Ratkin can skitter across vertical surfaces with preternatural ability.

System: The roll to climb a surface is Dexterity + Athletics; the difficulty depends on the surface, from 5 for rough wood or stone to 9 for glass or ice. The difficulty increases by one if the Ratkin is defying gravity.



• **Backbite (Level Three)** — The wererat can disappear into the Umbra, instantly reappearing behind an opponent up to 50 feet away.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and one Rage; the victim must be within line-of-sight. The Ratkin can immediately attack in this same turn; the strike is rolled at a –2 difficulty (minimum difficulty of 4).

• **Attunement (Level Four)** — As the Bone Gnawer Gift.

• **Riot (Level Five)** — As the Bone Gnawer Gift.

Homid Gifts

• **Eau de Rat (Level One)** — Punish foes with a supernaturally festering stench! This Gift works best on creatures downwind from a Ratkin, but with a bit of practice, the creature can waft the smell in a specific direction..

System: The player spends one Rage and rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge; if the target is downwind, it's difficulty 7. To waft the stench in a different direction, increase the difficulty by 1. Humans and Weaver-spirits lose one die from all dice pools while the stench is in the air. Weaver Gafflings who can't make a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 9) flee. The effects last for a scene.

• **Persuasion (Level One)** — As the Garou homid Gift.

• **Instinct (Level Two)** — This Gift can force a victim to indulge in his basest impulses for one round. The Ratkin must provoke the victim's reaction in some way.

System: The player spends one Rage and rolls permanent Rage (difficulty equals the victim's Willpower). If the target is another player's character, the player must name the first petty or brutal act his character would perform; the Storyteller can choose to revise or modify it.

• **Reshape Object (Level Three)** — As the Garou homid Gift, but taught by a Wyld-spirit.

• **Body Wrack (Level Four)** — As the Black Fury Gift.

Metis Gifts

• **Rat Mother's Touch (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift: Mother's Touch.

• **Sense Wyrm (Level One)** — Ratkin can use all of their senses to detect the Wyrm, although smell is perhaps the easiest to use. Sensing the Wyrm requires a round of active concentration.

System: This Gift works differently from its Garou variant. Roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 7); the number of successes required depends on the concentration and strength of the Wyrm's taint. Smelling a fomor in an empty room would require one success, for instance, but if he's standing in the warehouse of King Breweries surrounded by crates of Wyrm-tainted whisky, it may require five successes to pinpoint where he's hiding.

• **Stink (Level Two)** — The Ratkin with this dubious blessing is able to saturate a 10-foot-by-10-foot area with a horrific odor to drive victims away.

System: The player spends one Rage and rolls Intelligence + Occult. Anyone wanting to remain in the area must succeed at a contested Willpower roll (difficulty 7).

• **Sliver Tooth (Level Three)** — The Ratkin's incisors can leave nasty splinters behind when used in a successful bite attack.

System: After a successful bite attack, the player spends one Rage. Any damage inflicted cannot be healed until all the splinters are removed. The victim must score at least 5 successes on a Dexterity + Medicine roll to remove them; this takes a number of turns equal to (10 minus the number of successes).

• **Whelp Body (Level Four)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

Rodens Gifts

• **Absolute Balance (Level One)** — With this Gift, the creature can maintain her footing on any solid object, whether that's a wire connecting rooftops or the icy slope of a mountain. As long as the Gift is active, the rat won't leave tracks.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Athletics; the difficulty is 6, but extremely narrow or treacherous surfaces may raise this to 7 or 8. The number of successes serves as an indicator of climbing or running speed. For the duration of one scene, the rat cannot slip or fall, even when he's in Crinos or Homid form.

• **Leap of the Kangaroo Rat (Level One)** — A kangaroo rat is capable of amazing leaps, and can even change its direction in mid-air. Ratkin can use this Gift in any form, including Crinos. The Gift is, of course, taught by a kangaroo rat-spirit.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Athletics (difficulty 7); with at least one success, the Ratkin can leap once up to three times its normal jumping distance.

Alternatively, she can use this Gift as part of "long running," crossing long distances with a series of hops up to twice her normal jumping distance. (The wererat moves an average speed of 10 miles per hour.) Spend one Rage and make one roll for each hour of travel; on a failed roll, the wererat takes one level of lethal damage. The damage can't be healed until the Ratkin rests.

• **Devour the Dead (Level Two)** — This gruesome Gift is used to clean up messes. The Ratkin summons a swarm of rat-spirits to consume a dead body, removing all physical evidence it was there.

System: The player spends one Gnosis; the swarm consumes the body in three turns. All items on the body at that time are carried off somewhere into the Umbra, probably never to be seen again.

• **Sliver Tooth (Level Three)** — As the Ratkin metis Gift.

• **Mind of the Swarm (Level Four)** — The wererat with this Gift is able to command a horde of ordinary, mundane rats through sheer will.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Animal Ken; the effects last a number of hours equal to the Ratkin's Willpower. Each success allows the Ratkin to command up to ten ordinary, mundane rats. (For detailed rules about swarms, consult a copy of the **Ratkin** book.)

Tunnel Runner Gifts

• **Danger Sense (Level One)** — When a ship is sinking, the rats leave first. Tunnel Runners act as scouts for their race, so when danger is near, they may receive a flash of warning about a possible danger.

System: The Storyteller may roll for the character's Wits + Alertness when danger is near; this is normally difficulty 6, but subtle or supernatural danger may raise this to 7 or 8. The warning doesn't have to be specific; it may just be an image affecting one sense. The player can then declare one quick-thinking or panicky reaction for the character before the threat of danger becomes real.

• **Silent Running (Level One)** — The Ratkin can hide his tracks and path of travel from all methods of detection, supernatural or otherwise. Rat-spirits may also erase or falsify evidence of the wererat's passing, counteracting methods of detection like Rite of the Questing Stone.

System: The player spends one Gnosis, and rolls Intelligence + Subterfuge. Each success raises the difficulty for a "tracking roll" by 1, to a maximum of 10; each additional success beyond that point subtracts one success from any tracking roll.

• **Urban Camouflage (Level Two)** — The Tunnel Runner can become nondescript enough that people ignore her presence utterly. This Gift doesn't work during combat.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Intelligence + Stealth. If the number of successes exceeds a witness's Perception rating, the witness ignores the Tunnel Runner. For large groups, compare this against the highest Perception in the crowd. The Gift lasts for one scene, or until the Ratkin decides to end it.

• **Bolt! (Level Three)** — Fighting to the death is a fool's game. This Gift permits a Ratkin to escape from combat he can't win.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and one Rage; the Ratkin can appear up the 50 feet away, as long as his destination is within line-of-sight. The Ratkin may spend additional Rage in the turn he uses this Gift to gain extra actions (usually to run away). Halt the Cowards' Flight doesn't prevent the initial 50-foot leap. Returning to a fight after using this Gift to escape is foolhardy, resulting in a loss of two Cunning.

• **Speak in Tongues (Level Four)** — The Ratkin with this Gift can choose to speak and understand any one human language under the sun.

System: The player spends one Willpower; the knowledge lasts for one scene.

Shadow Seer Gifts

• **Rat Mother's Touch (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift: Mother's Touch.

• **Sense Weaver (Level One)** — The wererat can sense Weaver-spirits of all varieties. The spirit must be within sensory range, and each type of Weaver-spirit has a distinctive sound or smell. This perception may vary from rat to rat. Shadow Seers can also sense when an area has been "calcified" by the Weaver, and thus help their packs "snap the Weaver's threads."

System: The player rolls Perception + Occult; the difficulty depends on the strength and concentration of the spirits. A lone Weaver Gaffling, for instance, only requires one success. More successes may give some insight into the spirits (such as their relative strength), although this is always from a Ratkin's perspective.

• **Name the Spirit (Level Two)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Command Spirit (Level Three)** — As the Theurge Gift.

• **Pulse of the Invisible (Level Four)** — As the Theurge Gift.

Knife Skulker Gifts

• **Sticky Paws (Level One)** — The Skulker can snatch a weapon from an enemy's hands (or paws, or claws) and use it against him in the same turn.

System: The player spends one Rage, and rolls Dexterity + Melee to grab the weapon; the difficulty is the victim's Dexterity +3. The victim cannot resist; such is the nature of the Gift.

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

• **Stalk (Level Two)** — As the Ragabash Gift: Sense of the Prey.

• **Doppelganger (Level Three)** — As the Glass Walker Gift.

• **Open Wounds (Level Four)** — As the Garou metis Gift.

• **Geas (Level Five)** — As the Philodox Gift.

Blade Slave Gifts

• **Resist Pain (Level One)** — As the Philodox Gift.

• **Slicing Teeth (Level One)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Razor Claws, but works with a Ratkin's bite attack. • **Curse of Hatred (Level Two)** — As the Garou metis Gift.

• **Bolt! (Level Three)** — As the Tunnel Runner Gift.

• **Persecution Complex (Level Four)** — As the Stargazer Gift: Preternatural Awareness.

Rites

Unless otherwise specified, a Ratkin rite can be learned by any wererat. Some are variants of Bone Gnawer rites, most notably the Rite of the Cardboard Palace (see **Tribebook: Bone Gnawers**).

Dedication Rite

Every Shadow Seer knows this rite, but any Ratkin can learn it. Dedication drives a pack, even a temporary one. As part of this ritual, the gathered Ratkin dedicate themselves to the same totem, acknowledging the collective goal they want to achieve. The wererats form a circle, each placing one object in the center. The ritemaster then walks widdershins (counterclockwise) around the gathering and speaks to the heavens on the pack's behalf. The objects in the center vanish until the goal is achieved or the pack disbands. When the first goal is achieved, the pack must decide whether to renew the rite, staying together for another enterprise. Of course, idealistic long-term goals (such as "overwhelm the Wyrm with the chaos of the Wyld") can take a lifetime to achieve.

System: The ritualist spends one Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 6) at the climax of the ritual. Each success yields one temporary Background Point for the purpose of choosing the pack's totem. If the ritemaster doesn't get enough successes for a particular totem, the rats in the pack can spend temporary Willpower for additional successes (as many as necessary); the points don't refresh until the goal is achieved. Some bonds are easier to forge: dedicating to a City Mother or Father requires 3 successes; an aspect of the Rat Incarna (Rat, Rat God or Mother Rat) requires 5 successes; Grandfather Thunder asks for 7.

Rite of the Birthing Plague

Garou inherit a legacy of heroism; Ratkin receive a curse. The Rat Totem leads packs of wererats to places where their Kinfolk have been hiding. As in classic werewolf tales, a solitary shapeshifter attacks its victim. The intent is not to wound or kill, but to infect the victim with the Birthing Plague. If the Kinfolk has a strong taint of Ratkin blood, he'll contract a feverish illness, culminating in his First Change. Ordinary humans, and weak Kinfolk, die horribly from the same illness — an outcome ruthless Ratkin welcome with equal joy.

System: This ritual only affects humans, rats, and Ratkin Kinfolk; it does not affect other supernatural creatures. First, a Ratkin or rat-spirit must bite or claw a chosen victim. If the attack does damage (after soak), the ritualist rolls Wits + Rituals (difficulty 7) during that same scene to spread the Infection. The virulence of the disease depends on the number of successes.

One success inflicts one health level of aggravated damage.

Three successes inflict enough aggravated damage to take the victim down to the Wounded health level, bestowing a fever dream of terrible visions (chosen by the Rat Totem) and a full day of unconsciousness.

Five successes inflict enough aggravated damage to take the victim down to the Incapacitated health level. The dreams continue until the victim is resuscitated.

Humans get sick, and sometimes die. Ratkin Kinfolk, on the other hand, have a chance of becoming Ratkin. In the last millennium, Ratkin Kinfolk had a one-in-ten chance of receiving Infection and undergoing their First Change; at the Storyteller's discretion, the odds may have increased since then, and will increase as the End Times advance. Roll 1d10; on a roll of 1 or 2, the Kinfolk "breeds true" and becomes a wererat.

If that d10 roll fails, roll Stamina (difficulty 6); three successes means the victim survives after a protracted illness. Otherwise, inflict one additional level of aggravated damage each day until the victim dies. Oh, by the way, if the victim isn't Ratkin Kinfolk, he must make that same Stamina roll, but against a difficulty of 8.

Stereotypes

Johnny-Kill-Lately, Ratkin Blade Slave, launches into a rant:

• **Rokea:** What the hell do you need to know? Stay out of the fucking sea. How hard is that? Stay on the goddamn boat, and you'll be fine.

• **Nuwisha:** Supernatural coyotes with a sick sense of humor. They love practical jokes — deadly practical jokes — so they're pretty fucking amusing. I've also heard they don't like to wear pants.

• **Mokolé:** Lizards and dinosaurs, and every weird-ass reptilian combination in-between. Long memories, ancient grudges, don't seem to give a damn about the Apocalypse. The big ones are easy to avoid. Watch out for the small ones, though. One supernatural alligator in a sewer can wipe out an entire colony if you don't kill it quick.

• **Gurahl:** Stupid, stupid bears. They had the right Gifts to heal the world, and they fucked up a long time ago. Then the Garou almost wiped them out. Now the world is going up in flames, and I think those lazy shits are going to sleep right through it.

• **Garou:** Rat-killing, egotistical, homicidal motherfuckers. You know the story: they hunted the Fera down one by one, and now — lo and behold! — the world is going to hell. Me, I think we should let them die fighting the Wyrm. Other folks, they'd just as soon kill them before they kill us. Maybe that's not such a bad idea.

• **Corax:** They lie. They spy. If you catch them, they die. They're useful for trading secrets, but they don't know when to shut the fuck up. Death's the best way to silence them.

• **Bastet:** Heh, heh, heh, heh. Bastet are fun. They preen, and pose, and skulk around all pretty-like. They're pretentious egotistical assholes, all secretive and territorial and shit. And they've got some bullshit about cat magic, too. Makes it all the more satisfying when you eviscerate them — catgut has a thousand uses.

• **Ananasi:** Um... they serve the Weaver, or the Wyrm, or maybe they're on our side. Fuck if I know. They eat children, drink blood, enter some kind of mind-meld shit with swarms of insects. I have no fucking idea what to do about them. Rats are good at hiding, but spiders are smaller. It would be cool if you could pop them like fleas, though.

• **Ajaba:** Diseased African hyenas? Who gives a shit? Are you going to Africa? No! Talk to the Plague Lords, then. Africa will be theirs, soon enough. I need a drink. Enough talking! Let's go get a beer! And let's find a Bastet!

You can just shut the hell up and lie flat on the floor before somebody gnaws your face off. Your people had your chance, and you blew it. Now it's our turn to fix things.

Rokea

Roger coughed from the smell. Sharks were good money, but he could barely stand their stink long enough to slice the fins off them. He shook his head and muttered something about the hippies making shark fishing illegal, not for the first time. Fuck the hippies, anyway, *he thought. What they didn't know wouldn't hurt them, and he could sell today's take for close to a thousand bucks. Not bad.*

The boat gave an odd lurch, as though an extra weight had been added suddenly. Roger looked up and nearly put his hand too close to the monster's mouth. Cursing, he stood up and kicked the fish in the gills. He had a few more fins to cut off, and then he could get rid of it and start heading home.

Something tapped him on the shoulder. He spun around, heart pounding, and found himself staring into a woman's eyes. The woman was soaked and completely naked, with a jaw that jutted out too far and bulging muscles. She looked down at the shark behind Roger, and then back at his eyes.

Roger could not think of one thing to say. If she was a swimmer, she was a long way from shore. Maybe she'd gone overboard? Possibly over one of those lonely-hearts cruises; she sure wasn't any kind of looker. Roger was still pondering that when she walked past him, picked up the shark, *and threw it overboard.*

She turned back to him and gave him a look that Roger could only interpret as pure hate. Then, without so much as a backward glance, she jumped into the sea.

Roger ran to the boat's railing and peered over, but saw nothing but the black night-ocean. Grabbing his flashlight, she peered down into the water to see any sign of the woman.

He did not see her. What he did see was something huge, rushing towards his boat from below.

Fucking hippies were right, *was Roger's last thought.*

Sea's Truth

Before Gaia, before any life at all, there was Sea. Sea, the mother of all, was constant and yet ever-changing, and for a time was satisfied with that simplicity. But then she desired company, and so she churned her waters and created her Three Daughters, C'et, Kun and Qyrl.

The Three Daughters fought constantly, and pushed up land and mountains, forming Unsea. In time, each of the Three ventured to Unsea, forming the land so

that it could hold tiny pieces of their mother, and thus creating lakes and rivers.

The Three Daughters bear some resemblance to the Triat. C'et, the mother of hard-shelled creatures, might easily be compared with the Weaver. Kun, the mother of all fishes and the force of creation and fertility, is reminiscent of the Wyld. Finally, Qyrl, the Tentacled One, who desires nothing more than to extinguish the sun and plunge the world into darkness, shares some traits with the Wyrm. But these names — Weaver, Wyld and Wyrm — are recent creations, just like the Garou. The Garou have their legends about Helios and Luna, and about how life began. The Rokea know the truth.

Qyrl, after venturing to Unsea, wished to explore further, and climbed to Oversea, biting hold of his skin with her beak. Though she was finally torn down, she rent a wound in Oversea, which bled hot, fiery light and boiled Sea where it touched. Only through Kun's ingenuity and Unsea's help was the Wound soothed, for they created a balm that covered the fiery Wound. Other Changers know the Balm as the moon, but the Rokea know the truth.

The Three Daughters now spawned, creating new life to swim through Sea, walk on Unsea, and fly through Oversea. But Qyrl, barred from Oversea forever for what she had done, wished to close the Wound (thus ending the world) and schemed to do so. Kun, realizing that she might one day succeed, created a race that would survive the Great Unmaking. That race is the Rokea.

The Impergium and the War of Rage passed the Rokea by, for the most part. Coastal humans who violated Sea's trust by taking too much from her often met gruesome ends, but for many years, not enough humans plied the waves to be worth the Rokea's notice. Besides, Qyrl was far from idle — she called forth hideous monsters that require the Rokea's attention. The War of Rage, likewise, never touched the Rokea. Even the Garou that knew about the weresharks weren't fool enough to swim out into the oceans and proclaim their dominance. The Rokea swam beneath the waves for millennia, following Kun's first and most important command — *survive*.

And then the Industrial Age dawned, and the humans went to war on Sea. Between the sudden influx of pollution, the sudden presence of immense steamships, and the teeming numbers of humans living on and near Sea, the Rokea were at a loss as to what to do. They were under no orders to war on humans, and many responded to the threat as predators are wont to — by leaving the area. The seas are vast, and no matter how the urge to explore gripped the humans, they could not venture everywhere. But many of the sharks with which Rokea bred swam near coastlines, and the command to survive required the Rokea to protect their Kin. The weresharks never warred on humanity to the same degree as the werewolves, but they sank their share of ships and even ventured on land when curiosity took them. Even with the damage the humans were doing, however, the Rokea could easily have endured — until the first Small Wounds opened.

Rokean Law

All Changing Breeds have their Litanies, and appropriately enough, the Rokea's is probably the simplest.

- **Survive:** The first and principal law by which all Rokea abide. The race must survive, for the weresharks were created to endure the Great Unmaking. Rokea therefore do not rush into foolishly heroic endeavors, unless not doing so would spell doom for the race.
- **Hunt:** Rokea are predators, like the sharks with which they breed. Part of their sacred duty to Sea, therefore, is to hunt, thinning the schools and keeping the oceanic ecosystem alive.
- **Spawn:** Although Rokea do not die naturally, they fall to their enemies (and each other) often enough to require them to breed. In the wake of Turna'a, the breed has attempted to build their population again, but they reproduce very slowly. Kun, mother of life, requires that they spawn, however, and so they do.
- **Swim:** If sharks cease swimming, they die. The Rokea equate forward motion with life, and so they swim to new waters whenever given the chance.

Turna'a

The nuclear blasts, which Rokea call Small Wounds, poisoned entire areas of Sea and destroyed grottoes and Rorqual as well as mundane sea life. The Rokea called a Gathering at a grotto called Turna'a in the Pacific Ocean. It would prove to be the greatest tragedy of the race.

The humans opened a Small Wound directly above the grotto, killing almost all of the Rokea in attendance. As most of the world's Rokea attended the Gathering, the humans had (without their knowledge) nearly wiped out the weresharks in one sickening moment. Worse yet, the Gathering had been called to reach a decision on what course of action to take about humanity and its war on Sea — but the decision never reached the massed Rokea before the bomb detonated.

The Betweener War

The survivors did as they wished for more than a decade, some living intermittently on Unsea and Sea ("swimming between"), some warring with humans, some swimming far from humanity and waiting for the Great Unmaking. But then an unidentified Rokea proclaimed that *no* Rokea should venture to Unsea under any circumstances, and any sea-dwelling wereshark should hunt down such rogues and retrieve them. Of course, restraining a Rokea is nearly impossible, and so the war escalated. In a few short years, the "betweeners" faced death at the jaws of hunting parties if they made their existences public. This war rages even today; ocean-dwelling Rokea hunt down the betweeners and slay them. This practice is even part of the Rokean Rite of Passage.

The Last Days

The Rokea exist much as they always have — they follow Kun's Law (see sidebar), breed occasionally, and war on anything that threatens the Breed. The betweener war, still less than 20 years old, is the most immediate threat to the weresharks' continued survival, although the fact that humanity massacres nearly *one million metric tons* of sharks a year is likewise a concern for ocean-dweller and betweener alike.

Opinions vary among the Rokea about how best to survive the coming Unmaking (for all weresharks agree, in the wake of Turna'a and the Red Star, that the end is near). Some feel that they must breed with humanity, producing human-born weresharks. After all, the humans have proven to be incredibly tenacious in clinging to life, even for all their attempts to kill each other off. Other Rokea feel that they must simply swim to the deeps and await the End, emerging only when Unsea has cracked and sunk and all that remains is Sea.

Rokea may be found anywhere that sharks live, and some places that they aren't. Some Rokea live on land full time (with occasional trips to the ocean to replenish their Gnosis; see below), others never set foot on land. The controversial betweeners split their time between land and sea, becoming knowledgeable about humanity (and often the creatures that live alongside humanity) and dodging attempts by the ocean-dwellers to hunt them down and kill them.

The Rokea follow their sacred duties (of course, their most important such duty is to survive, which isn't the sort of thing to rebel against) more faithfully than some other Breeds. In fact, the Rokea are under no compulsion to gain Renown. A Rokea fulfills her duty to Sea simply by surviving, spawning and hunting, and these things can be accomplished without coming close to shore or any other sentient being. And indeed, some Rokea choose this lonely life.

Most, however, recognize that in the face of Turna'a and the betweener war, the rules have changed. It may not be possible to simply hide in the water and await the end of the world. The Kunspawn might have to act, decisively, if they are to survive — but that requires coming to consensus on the betweener war, possibly reconciling with the Same-Bito (see Chapter Four) and deciding what to do about the humans and their slaughter of sharks. Some headway has been made in the past few years towards opening discussion with the Garou, and as the Same-Bito are part of the Beast Courts, they could perhaps open relations with other Fera. But until the Rokea stop hunting each other down, they will be unable to act cohesively — and this, perhaps, is exactly what Qyrl intends....

Rokea Lexicon

Betweener: A Rokea who chooses to live mainly on land, returning to Sea to regain Gnosis and retain her shapeshifting powers.

C'et: One of the undersea Triat, the incarnation of stasis and permanence, analogous to the Weaver.

Dirtwalker: Derogatory term for a land-dweller.

Grotto: An undersea caern. Some have specific totem spirits, some are overseen by Sea or Undersea.

Kadugo: Human Rokea Kinfolk, the offspring of a normal human and a Rokea. A Rokea mating with a *kadugo* may produce a homid Rokea.

Kraken: Another name for Qyrl, the one that most land-dwellers know her by.

Kun: One of the undersea Triat, the incarnation of creation and fecundity, analogous to the Wyld.

Kunspawn: Another name for the Rokea.

Moon's Blood: Silver, believed to be the discarded remnants of the Oversea's Balm mixed with his blood.

Oversea: The sky; the term is used to described both the physical sky and the Celestine who rules the sky.

Oversea's Balm: The moon, sometimes simply called the Balm. The Rokea do not recognize the moon as an Incarna as such; to them is it simply part of Oversea.

Qyrl: One of the undersea Triat, the incarnation of destruction, ambition, and entropy, analogous to the Wyrm.

Rorqual: A dolphin or whale in service to Sea. Rorqual supply Gnosis to Rokea, and sometimes act as mentors to the weresharks.

Same-Bito: Asian weresharks, considered traitors and heretics by most Rokea.

Sea: The oceans and seas of the world; the term is used to describe both the physical ocean and the Celestine who rules it.

Sea's Soul: The Umbra (on land, referred to as Unsea's Soul).

Small Wounds: In the past, this term was used to describe stars. Now more commonly used to describe nuclear explosions.

Three Daughters: The undersea Triat: Kun, C'et, and Qyrl.

Undersea: The sea floor.

Unsea: Any land; the term is used to describe both physical land (both the sea bottom and dry land) as well as the Celestine who rules the solid earth.

Wound, the: The sun. Sometimes called the Great Wound.

Organization

The Rokea have little in the way of true organization; their numbers are too few. They learn Gifts from undersea spirits (all Rokea can communicate with such spirits without the use of a Gift) and gain Renown from recognition by Sea, Kun and each other (see Chapter Three for particulars on Renown).

Rokea have no animal Kinfolk; they simply breed with natural sharks. The result of such a mating always produces one Rokea (regardless of how may offspring that species of shark would normally produce). When the new Rokea

reaches sexual maturity (usually two or three years) she enters the Long Swim. Unlike the bloody First Changes of the Garou, the Long Swim is a voyage of discovery and self-awareness, ending when the Rokea finds a spirit, Rorqual or another Rokea who can guide her to a grotto. There, the Rokea enters Sea's Soul and meets with Sea, who teaches the wereshark her first Gifts and explains the Law.

When a Rokea mates with a human, however, the result is never a wereshark. Instead, the offspring of a wereshark and a normal human is called *kadugo* — Rokea Kinfolk. If such a being mates with a Rokea, the result of *that* pairing has the usual chance to breed true and produce a homid Rokea. The Same-Bito mate with humans more regularly than other weresharks, and even among the Eastern weresharks homids are rare in the extreme. No human-born Rokea have ever been allowed to reach maturity outside of the Middle Kingdom; they usually fall prey to the hunting parties searching for their betweener parents.

Despite the Rokea's usual distaste for humans in general, and the breed's overriding feeling that breeding with them would weaken the race, every Rokea that sets foot on Unsea feels a strong and constant urge to mate. Betweeners first noticed this sensation during the summer of 1999, corresponding roughly with the first appearance of the Red Star. No Rokea, however, has been able to discern why this urge is present. Some postulate that Kun is pushing the weresharks towards merging with humanity and creating a new breed better able to swim in mankind's circles. Most Rokea hold this view as heretical and offensive.

Traits

Rokea share many of the Garou's powers, but several subtle differences exist.

• Rokea use Animal Attraction at +1 difficulty, but are still able to influence potential mates in this manner.

• Shark-born Rokea (which is most of them) cannot begin with an Appearance rating higher than 2.

• All Rokea are constantly compelled to move. On land, Rokea pace unless the player succeeds in a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) each scene. If restrained, the Rokea must check for frenzy.

• Rokea frenzy with only *two* successes on a Rage roll. Four or more successes indicate that the wereshark enters a state called Kunmind, similar to the Thrall of the Wyrm. In such a state, the Rokea attacks and eats any being within reach. Rokea do not enter fox frenzy.

• Rokea inflict full Delirium in Chasmus form and partial Delirium in Gladius form (treat the viewer as if his Willpower were two points higher).

• Weresharks regenerate as Garou do, except that Squamus Rokea can regenerate in breed form, provided they are immersed in salt water. Also like werewolves, Rokea cannot soak silver damage except in breed form.

• Rokea communicate by means of electrical signals called the Sending. They can receive the Sending in all forms (including Homid) but can only broadcast it in Squamus, Chasmus and Gladius forms. The player rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge to convey information via the Sending; the difficulty varies based on how complex the message is. All Rokea within line of sight can understand and communicate via the Sending with no rolls required; normally a Sending carries for a quarter mile underwater (and deciphering a Sending at that range requires an Intelligence + Primal-Urge roll). On land, the Sending only carries for 50 feet and can only be broadcast in Gladius form.

• Rokea have superb sense of smell (-3 to scent difficulties in Squamus form, -2 in Chasmus and Gladius form, -1 in Gladius while on land). Also, weresharks can orient themselves by sensing electrical currents; this requires a Perception + Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 6, or 7 on land but then in Gladius form only).

• Rokea gather in slews, much like Garou packs. Slews are often bonded by a totem and may learn and execute slew maneuvers.

• Any opponent who strikes a Rokea in Chasmus or Gladius form barehanded must immediately soak two levels of lethal damage due to the wereshark's tough, tooth-like scales.

• Rokea cannot step sideways without using a Gift or the Rite of Passing the Net. They can perceive and communicate with pelagic spirits without the use of a Gift, however. Two of the more common sea-creatures with which they interact are remora and Rorqual. Both are Kami (Gaian spirits in physical bodies). Remora act as messengers between Rokea, but cannot fulfill any other function. Rorqual are nothing short of living caerns, and carry massive amounts of Gnosis that Rokea can absorb (with permission, of course).

• Rokea do not die naturally. Once they reach adulthood, they simply stop aging.

Rage, Gnosis, and Willpower

All Rokea begin with 4 Willpower. Rage and Gnosis are determined by auspice and breed, respectively. Rokea begin with two Gifts, one from auspice and one general Rokea Gift.

Breeds

Rokea do not produce metis, because they never mate with each other. Even only land, where the urge to mate is so strong, the weresharks do not feel the urge to breed with one another. Therefore, only two breeds of Rokea exist — homid and squamus.

• **Homid:** Prevalent only in the Middle Kingdom and rare in the extreme even there, human-born weresharks enter their First Change around the same time homid werewolves do. Aside from looking much more human than squamus Rokea, homids also have the advantage of understanding the surface world and speaking human language. Other Rokea, however, consider the notion of human-born among them abhorrent.

Beginning Gnosis: 1

• **Squamus:** The vast majority of Rokea are born of sharks. Of the nearly 400 species of shark in the world, however, the Rokea breed only with the largest and deadliest (only about 20 percent of the species). Rokea might be born of makos, white sharks, tiger sharks, hammerheads, blue sharks, thresher sharks, blacktip sharks or bull sharks. A bit of light research should provide plenty of inspiration for Rokea characters of differing species.

Squamus Rokea are under the same Ability restrictions as lupus Garou (see p. 61 of Werewolf). As stated, a squamus-breed character cannot have an Appearance rating above 2. Such characters do gain a free dot of Primal-Urge and Survival, however.

Beginning Gnosis: 5

Auspices

Rokea have three auspices, based on when they are born. The weresharks see the sun as an immense wound in the sky, and believe that night is the result of Oversea applying medicine to the Wound. As he runs out of medicine, the Wound shows through, becoming visible even at night (as seen in the waxing of the moon). Once the moon is full, Unsea and Sea make more medicine for him, and the cycle begins again.

• **Brightwater:** Rokea born during the day when the sun is shining or under the full moon are Brightwaters. Brightwaters are warriors among warriors, vicious and brave, but they possess an odd desire to be near the surface. This is due, they say, to their connection to the Wound — they feel Oversea's pain because they were born when his pain is greatest.

Beginning Rage: 5

Starting Gifts: Eyes of the Wound, Restraint

• **Dimwater:** Dimwater Rokea are born during the day when the sun is clouded over, or at night during any moon phase except full or new. As such, most Rokea fall under this auspice. Dimwaters are the stabilizing force in Rokea society, deciding policy and leading slews. They are also the strongest proponents of the hunt for betweeners, and responsible for creating what few fetishes Rokea use.

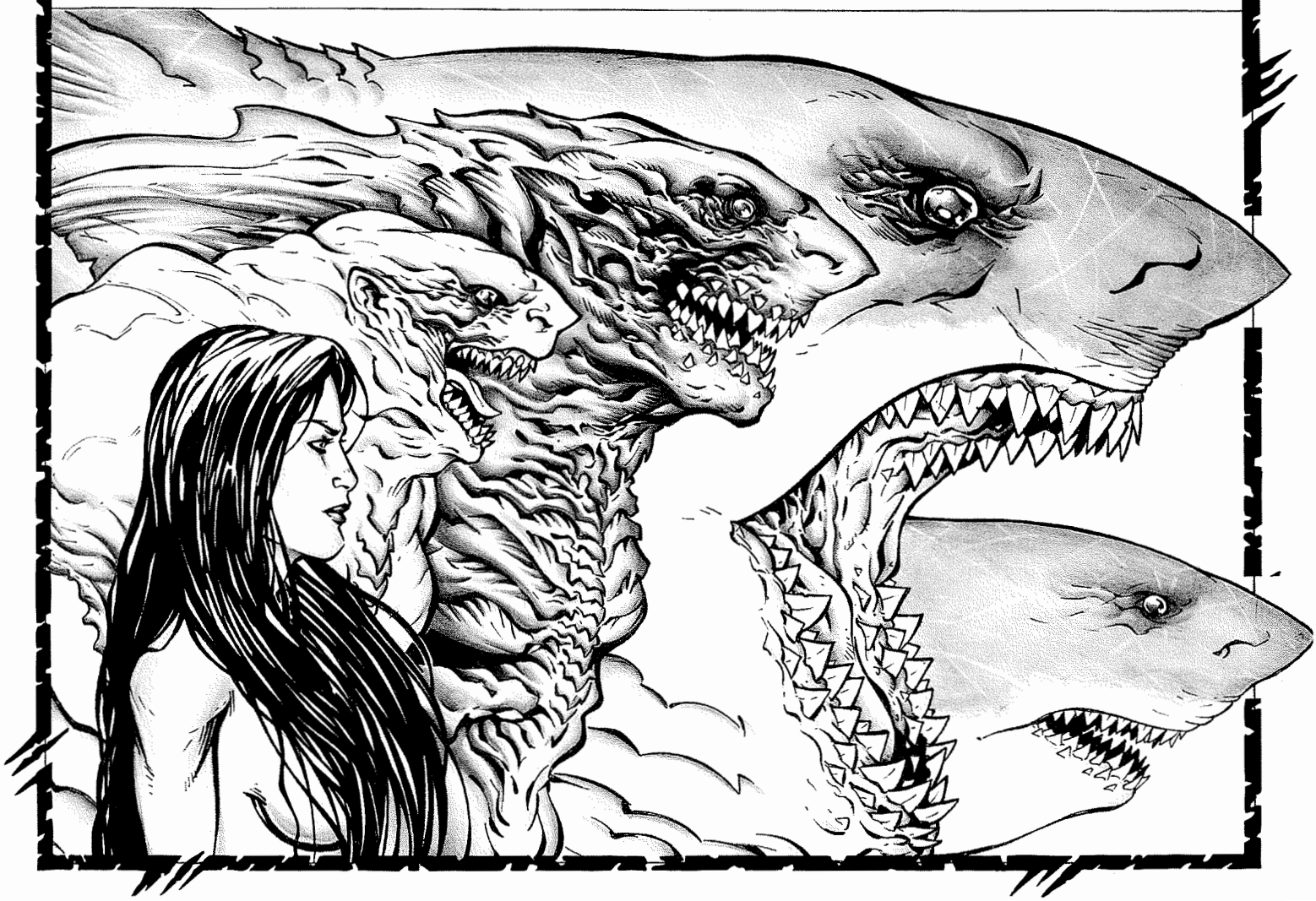
Beginning Rage: 4

Starting Gifts: King Fish, Sea's Voice

• **Darkwater:** Nicknamed the "mad ones" by other weresharks, Darkwaters are born under eclipses or on the new moon. They are the most curious and innovative of the Rokea, diving to the frigid depths or walking on land to uncover new secrets. Although they are the rarest of the Rokea, most of the greatest victories — and worst defeats — in Rokean history can be traced to a Darkwater.

Beginning Rage: 3

Starting Gifts: Blood of the Deeps, Silent Sending



Forms

Rokea have five forms, much as the werewolves do, but most Rokea only have access to four of them. Their Glabro form — called "Round Back" by the Rokea — is only accessible to weresharks who have ventured on land long enough to learn how to assume it.

All five the Rokea forms have Latinate names as well as the more descriptive ones (Swimming Jaws, Fighting Jaws, etc.). The Latin names were coined by a Glass Walker called Martin One-Name who was fascinated with the Rokea. He was probably responsible for most of the knowledge that the werewolves have about the elusive weresharks. Ironically, he met his end at the jaws of a Brightwater called No-Prey-Remains in the waters off the coast of Australia.

• **Homid (Long Fins):** An unnatural form for most weresharks, the Homid form tends to be ugly, hunched, and walleyed. Squamus Rokea tend to "imprint" on the first humans they see to determine the race of their Homid form.

• **Glabrus (Round Back):** The Rokea loses all body hair and grows even more ugly. She gains little in the way of height but nearly 100 percent of her weight in muscle. Her back broadens as the dorsal fin begins to form (hence this form's name). As stated, ocean-dwelling Rokea don't usually know how to assume this form, although betweeners and homid-born Rokea do.

• **Gladius (Standing Jaws):** A Rokea in Standing Jaws is a ten-foot sharkman, a walking nightmare. Capable of beheading a werewolf with one bite, and easily capable of cutting a human being half, Standing Jaws combines the power of Fighting Jaws with the versatility of a humanoid form. Some weresharks retain their tails in this form; betweeners usually don't (as it serves no purpose on land). This form incites partial Delirium in humans.

• **Chasmus (Fighting Jaws):** As fearsome as Standing Jaws is, most Rokea prefer Fighting Jaws for battle. In this form, the Rokea is a shark, but is half again as long as her Swimming Jaws form (meaning a 20 foot white shark grows to 30 feet in Fighting Jaws). This form incites full Delirium in humans.

• **Swimming Jaws:** The natural form for most Rokea, this form is indistinguishable from a normal (if large) shark of the character's species.

Glabrus	Gladius	Chasmus	Squamus
Str: +2	Str: +3	Str: +4	Str: +2
Dex: +0(+1)*	Dex: -1(+2)*	Dex: N/A(+1)*	Dex: N/A(+3)*
Sta: +2	Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: +2
Man: -2	Man: -4	Man: -4	Man: -4
App: -2	App: 0		
		+1 Bite Damage	
Diff: 9	Diff: 6	Diff: 7	Diff:6

*The numbers in parentheses apply in the water, where the Rokea are obviously more maneuverable.

Gifts

Rokea begin play with two Gifts, one chosen from the general list and one from the auspice list.

General Rokea Gifts

• **Breach (Level One)** — As the Level One lupus Gift: Hare's Leap.

• **Killing Bite (Level One)** — A Rokea can slay most enemies with one bite, but sometimes a more powerful blow is needed to fell determined opponents. This Gift allows the Rokea to deliver a fearsome bite in any form. A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage point to activate the Gift. The next successful bite attack the character lands inflicts two additional levels (not dice) of damage.

• **Gulp (Level Two)** — A favorite of betweeners, this Gift allows the Rokea to swallow any non-living object she can fit into her jaws, and then regurgitate it later, unharmed. A tiger shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point to activate the Gift. The Rokea may store items in her gullet indefinitely, and anything swallowed is considered dedicated for purposes of shapeshifting. The Rokea must be in the same form when she swallows and regurgitates the items, and may not use this Gift to swallow something new without first spitting up anything already carried.

• **Restless Waters (Level Two)** — As the lupus Gift: Scent of Sight.

• **Gift the Ray (Level Three)** — Stingrays belong to the same family as sharks — elasmobranchs, fish whose skeletons are made of cartilage. This distinction means nothing to the Rokea, but they can and do learn Gifts from any fish-spirit, rays included. The Gift allows the Rokea to deliver a venomous sting with its tail or fingertip, often a good defense against an opponent too tough to simply be beaten down.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point for the character to manifest the stinger, either at the end of the tail or at the tip of the index finger. The character can then sting an opponent (this requires a Dexterity + Brawl roll, difficulty 7). The victim must roll Stamina (difficulty 7). Failure indicates the target takes lethal damage equal to the Rokea's Rage. One or two successes means the target suffers no damage, but does take a –2 penalty to all rolls for the remainder of the scene due to the extreme pain the wound causes. Three successes negate the effect, as does the Gift: Resist Toxin.

• **Shark's Bones (Level Three)** — Rokea in human form are often annoyed by how hard and brittle their bones become. This Gift allows the Rokea to change her Homid form bones into the pliable cartilage she is used to, if briefly. This allows her to squeeze into small openings (as tiny as eight square inches) and resist blunt damage. A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point, and the Gift lasts for one scene. During that time, halve the damage of any bashing attack made on the character before soak is rolled. This Gift can only be used in Homid or Glabrus forms.

• **Kun's Maw (Level Four)** — As the level four Get of Fenris Gift: Fenris' Bite.

• **Relentless Hunt (Level Four)** — Once a Rokea chooses a course of action, few forces beneath Oversea can change her mind. With this Gift, the Rokea may apply her determination to her chosen course of action, adding sheer persistence to her strength and skill. A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: When the Rokea learns this Gift, she chooses a goal or action. This goal must be easily stated ("Protect the Chill Water Bites Grotto" or "Destroy Hallahan Fishing"). No form of mental or emotion control can force the Rokea to abandon or act in a manner counter to her goal. The player receives one automatic success on any roll that furthers the character's goal. If the goal is ever accomplished, the player may choose another. If the character wishes to change the goal before accomplishing the original one, the player must spend a *permanent* point of Gnosis. The goal must be specific — "Survive" or "Fight enemies" is not acceptable.

• **Great Summons (Level Five)** — As the lupus Gift: Song of the Great Beast. This Gift is usable only at sea, and typically calls up giant sharks or aquatic dinosaurs.

• **Ocean's Peace (Level Five)** — Before Sea created the Three Daughters, she existed in an ever-changing and yet very serene perfection. The most powerful Rokea can experience just a fragment of that peace, and draw strength from it. A spirit-servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The player always adds 30 to initiative rolls for the Rokea. Also, the player may roll Willpower (difficulty 7) at the beginning of any scene. If successful, for the remainder of the scene, the player may spend a Willpower point for an automatic success on any roll, but does not actually lose the point unless no successes are rolled naturally. That is, if the roll fails, the character still gets one success and the Willpower point is marked off as usual. If the roll botches, the character loses the Willpower point but the botch is treated as a simple failure.

Brightwater Gifts

• **Eyes of the Wound (Level One)** — As the metis Gift: Eyes of the Cat, except that the Gift also immediately compensates for sudden flare-ups of light. A shark-spirit teaches the Rokea this Gift.

• **Restraint (Level One)** — Rokea, and Brightwaters in particular, enter frenzy easily. This Gift, taught by a spirit-servant of Sea, allows the Brightwater to ignore her slewmates and allies entirely, even when lost to Kunmind.

System: The Rokea must activate this Gift *before* entering frenzy. The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Willpower (difficulty 6). For each success, the player chooses one character. The Rokea, if she enters frenzy, will ignore each chosen character entirely.

• **Narke's Gift (Level Two)** — The Greeks called the electric ray *narke*, and had great respect for the little fish that could produce a charge powerful enough to stun a man. The Brightwaters respect the ray as well, and long ago learned its deadly secret. Obviously, a ray-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage point and rolls Rage (difficulty 6). Each success inflicts one level of lethal damage to anyone within 20 feet (in the water). On land, the damage can only be inflicted on one grounded target (unless the Rokea can touch the target directly). After using this Gift, the Brightwater must wait three turns before doing so again.

• **Undertow (Level Two)** — The Rokea stirs up a vicious current that sweeps a target in whatever direction the wereshark chooses. The Brightwater might use the Gift to pull a human out to sea, force any opponent towards the surface, or draw a victim towards her waiting maw. A spirit-servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Strength + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). The number of successes determines the strength of the undertow — anyone caught in it must beat the Rokea's successes on a Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 8) to escape it.

• **Bends (Level Three)** — When air-breathers dive into the depths of Sea, they run the risk of suffering from decompression sickness or the "bends." The humans mumble about nitrogen bubbles in the bloodstream, but the Rokea know that Sea simply punishes the humans for trespassing. This Gift allows the Brightwater to inflict these pains on any target, in the water or not. A spirit-servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Strength + Medicine (difficulty 7). Each success inflicts one level of lethal damage. On land, any target may soak this damage, even those not normally capable of doing so. In the water, however, only water-breathers may attempt to soak it. The wounds caused by this Gift are extremely painful, and inflict an extra die of wound penalties.

• **Strength of the Crashing Waves (Level Three)** — As the Level Three Get of Fenris Gift: Might of Thor.

• **No Walls (Level Four)** — Nothing confines the Rokea in Sea, but on Unsea, the humans have erected so many barriers that it drives the Brightwaters to madness. This Gift, taught by a spirit-servant of Kun, allows them to bypass such blockades in the most direct way possible. The character simply batters his way through whatever stands before him, no matter what the material.

System: The player rolls Strength + Athletics (difficulty 7). The character smashes through any man-made barrier in a number of turns equal to (8 – the successes on the roll). This Gift does not function on barriers that do not directly impede the Rokea's movement; the Rokea could not batter his way through a ship's hull, as he could more easily swim around the ship.

• **Blood of Darkness (Level Five)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift: Halo of the Sun (Rokea see light as the blood of Oversea).

• **Pain of the Wound (Level Five)** — The Wound streams with fiery blood, and the Brightwaters are born in the light of that blood. Elder Brightwaters can harness that destructive power and turn it on their enemies, calling up mystical flame that burns even in the coldest depths of the ocean. A spirit-servant of Oversea (more specifically, a servitor of Helios) teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends two Rage points and rolls Strength + Rituals (difficulty of the target's Stamina). Success means that target bursts into flames, suffering three health levels of aggravated damage per turn until dead or until the Rokea discontinues the Gift (very powerful magic might also be able to interrupt the Gift; Storyteller's discretion). The target may spend a permanent point of Willpower to avoid the damage for one turn. The flame burns anywhere, regardless of lack of oxygen or other such conditions.

Dimwater Gifts

• **King Fish (Level One)** — The shark is regarded as regal or divine in many cultures (though not necessarily benevolent). The Kunspawn grudgingly admit that this is one thing the humans have right. This Gift allows the Dimwater to command respect. A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). Success subtracts one from the difficulties of any Leadership or Intimidation rolls made during the scene.

• **Sea's Voice (Level One)** — As the Level One Galliard Gift: Beast Speech.

• **Crushing Depths (Level Two)** — The Rokea can inflict the pressure of the ocean depths upon a target, simply by making eye contact. The target cannot move while this power is in effect, and can barely muster the strength to breathe. The wereshark can act normally, but breaking eye contact disrupts the Gift, and so the Dimwater's usual action is to slowly move toward her victim. Any deep-sea fish-spirit can teach this Gift.

System: The character must make and hold eye contact with the target. The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty of the target's Willpower) each turn. As long as the player achieves one success on these rolls, the target cannot take any action at all. The only way to escape this Gift is by entering frenzy (provided the target is capable of doing so).

• **Spit Teeth (Level Two)** — The Rokea may spit her teeth at any opponent from a distance. While Spit Teeth can be used in the water, its greatest utility is in the fact that it can be used in any form (Homid included) and therefore is just as useful on land. A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6) to loosen the teeth; one tooth per success becomes loose. The player then rolls Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) to strike with them. The maximum range for spitting the teeth is 25 feet. Each tooth inflicts one health level of damage, provided that the roll to hit succeeds. This damage is considered aggravated.

• **Drown (Level Three)** — The Rokea causes an air-breather to grow gills, so that she must breathe water to survive. More diplomatic Dimwaters might use this Gift to allow a visitor to come to Sea, but most of the time, the Gift is used to kill air-breathers or force them leap into the water... where the Dimwater's slew awaits. Any fish-spirit can teach this Gift.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Willpower (difficulty of the victim's Stamina + 4). Success forces the target to breathe water (fresh or salt) to survive, but offers no protection from other sea-borne hazards (pressure, temperature, sharks). The effects last for one hour.

• **Sea's Wisdom (Level Three)** — The Rokea swims about in a tight circle, forming a small whirlpool. In the rushing water, she can hear the advice of her mother, Sea. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Sea.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Rituals (difficulty 7). This Gift can only be used in the water. The more successes achieved on the roll, the more detailed and direct the advice given to the Rokea on any topic she chooses — with one exception. Sea has thus far refused to give any Dimwater an opinion on the betweener war. Most Dimwaters assume this means she approves.

• **Living Sea (Level Four)** — The Dimwater causes the waters to become semi-solid, able to attack a target or hold it in place, or even propel it towards the wereshark. On land, the Rokea may cause a nearby body of water (such as a fountain) to extrude a tendril of water, capable of strangling or drowning a target. A spirit-servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 6). Five cubic feet of water are animated for each success. While Living Sea can be used as a weapon (by drowning air-breathers or strangling water-breathers — this inflicts the Rokea's Gnosis in lethal damage dice each turn), the animated water responds to any mental command the Rokea gives it. It can therefore propel the Rokea through the water are great speed, immobilize a foe, or even propel the Rokea a distance into the air. The Gift's effects last for as long as the Rokea concentrates.

• **Quick Currents (Level Four)** — As the Level Four Child of Gaia Gift: Strike the Air.

• **Common Foe (Level Five)** — The Dimwaters believe that all creatures should know and stay in their places, but Qyrl routinely upsets the natural order. Therefore, the eldest of the auspice can rally any being not corrupted by Qyrl to fight against her, regardless of their usual inclinations towards the other parties on the battlefield. A spirit-servant of Kun teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 6). The character emits a Sending or, if on land, needs to attract the attention of those nearby with a shout or growl. If the roll succeeds,

any supernatural beings in the area (including Garou or other Fera, mages, and imbued hunters) cannot attack one another if a common threat is present. "Common threat" typically means a servant of Qyrl; willing servants of Qyrl (in any of her incarnations) are not affected by this Gift. Any affected party who attempts to attack someone other than the common threat suffers wound penalties as though Crippled (supernatural means of mitigating this pain do not function). Common Foe lasts for one scene or until the common threat is vanquished.

• **Leviathan (Level Five)** — While the Gift: Great Summons allows any elder wereshark to call up aid from the unseen depths, the Dimwaters dislike the disruption in Sea's harmony that such beasts cause. This Gift allows them to take matters into their own jaws, becoming such a beast rather than summoning one. A spirit-servant of Kun teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends two Willpower points and two Rage points. The character changes into a monstrous shark, nearly 80 feet long. This grants +5 to all physical Attributes *after* Fighting Jaws modifiers (so a Rokea with Strength 3 in Homid form would have Strength 12 as a Leviathan). Also, the Rokea regains at least one Rage point per turn. This Gift lasts until the end of the scene.

Darkwater Gifts

• **Blood of the Deeps (Level One)** — Most sharks are not built for cold or extremely deep waters, but the most intriguing secrets of Sea can be found below the sunlit zone. The Darkwaters, therefore, learn this Gift to help them reaches those depths. Any deep-sea fish-spirit can teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Stamina + Survival (difficulty 6). For three hours per success, the Rokea suffers no damage from cold or pressure. This includes travel time, however, so the Rokea must reach a safe depth before the Gift expires. Blood of the Deeps only protects Rokea from natural environmental harm; Gifts and other supernatural powers that inflict cold or pressure damage have their normal effects.

• **Silent Sending (Level One)** — While Rokea dislike keeping secrets, the Darkwaters recognize that the Dimwaters and Brightwaters simply don't *need* to know all the disturbing things that the mad ones see. This Gift allows the Rokea to use the Sending selectively, rather than simply broadcasting a message. Remora-spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6) to activate the Gift. If successful, the player may choose who receives her character's Sendings for the remainder of the scene.

• **Enter Sea's Soul (Level Two)** — Ordinarily, Rokea cannot step sideways without using the Rite of Passing the Net (see below). Darkwaters, however, long ago discovered how to part the thin aquatic Gauntlet on their own. Any spirit-servant of Sea may teach this Gift.

System: Once learned, this Gift is permanent. The Rokea may step sideways just as werewolves do. This Gift does not provide protection from the increased pressure and cold of the undersea Umbra, however, although the Gift: Blood of the Deeps does.

• **Piercing Shriek (Level Two)** — The Darkwater emits a horrible wail that paralyzes any who hear it. The Rokea's allies are affected by this Gift as well, although the Darkwater can emit a Sending to warn them and mitigate the effect somewhat. This Gift is taught by a dolphin-spirit.

System: The player spends one Rage point and rolls Wits + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6). Anyone within 30 feet (in the water) or 15 feet (on land) must oppose the Rokea's roll with a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). Anyone not matching or exceeding the Rokea's successes collapses in agony for a number of turns equal to the difference in successes. Characters using powers that heighten their sense of hearing (such as the Gift: Heightened Senses) may not attempt to resist; they simply collapse for a number of turns equal to the Rokea's successes. If the Darkwater chooses, she may warn allies before using the Gift. This requires the use of the Gift: Silent Sending and reduces the difficulty on the Willpower roll to six.

• **Scent of Blood (Level Three)** — As the Level Three Shadow Lord Gift: Direct the Storm.

• **Swim Through the School (Level Three)** — The Darkwater may move through crowds with ease, slipping through thronging masses as easily as if swimming. This Gift even curbs the effects of the Curse. It is taught by an eel-spirit.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point. For the remainder of the scene, the character may move through a crowd at her top land speed; people simply move out of her way unconsciously. Plus, her Rage rating is considered half its normal value for purposes of the Curse.

• **Shock Wave (Level Four)** — The Darkwater emits a powerful blast of force, much like a depth charge. This Gift is useful both on land and in water, although force carries much farther underwater. This Gift is taught by strange spirits of force in water called Breakers.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Rage (difficulty 6 in water, 7 on land). Success creates a concussion that travels out from the Rokea in a cone. Any living thing caught in the blast suffers lethal damage equal to the successes on the Rage roll. On land, targets must also roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 8) or be knocked down. In water, the Gift's range is the Rokea's Stamina x 2 in yards; on land, this range is halved.

• **Wave's Passage (Level Four)** — By focusing on a object, the Rokea can cause it to age as though left underwater for years. Wood becomes brittle, paper yellows and falls apart, metal tarnishes and rusts, etc. A spirit-servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: This Gift takes one full turn to invoke. The player rolls Wits + Enigmas (difficulty 7). Each success ages the object one year underwater. One is usually enough to erode wood to the point that it crumbles, while metal might

require three or more. The Rokea may use this Gift as an extended action, wearing away at the object until it breaks.

• **Madness (Level Five)** — As the Level Five metis Gift.

• **Oversea's Gift (Level Five)** — The Rokea can walk on land or swim the sea, but they cannot visit Oversea, and this expansive territory calls to the curious Darkwaters. This Gift allows them to assume a form capable of flying. The wereshark's body becomes light and a thin membrane stretches from her wrists to her ankles, granting her "wings" much like a butterfly's. A spirit-servant of Oversea teaches this Gift.

System: This Gift may only be used in Gladius form. The player spends two points of Gnosis. Once in this form, the Rokea can fly (maximum speed is 30 mph) but can swim much faster (up to 70 mph for short bursts). The Rokea's Attributes do not change, nor does her natural weaponry, which allows for some impressive attacks while airborne. While this Gift is active, normal humans ignore the flying sharkman unless it attacks them, and even supernatural beings must roll Willpower (difficulty 8) to see her unless using some special power (such as the Gift: Scent of the True Form). This Gift lasts until the Rokea wills it to end.

Rites

Rokea make use of comparatively few rites. The rites of Cleansing, Spirit Awakening, Summoning, Opened Caern, Wounding and (occasionally) the Fetish are some of those that they do commonly use. Also, three Rokea-specific rites are discussed below.

Rite of Rokea Blood

Level One

Both betweeners and ocean-dwelling Rokea use this rite often. Ocean-dwellers use it to find sharks of a specific breed, so that they can mate. Betweeners use it to find *kadugo*. However, either type of Rokea can use this rite to find either type of breeding partner, meaning that ocean-dwellers sometimes hunt betweeners by hunting their offspring.

System: The Rokea either leaps into the sky (in the water) or stretches her arms skyward (on land). The player rolls Perception + Rituals (difficulty 8). Success allows the Rokea to find *kadugo* within five miles, or sharks of a specific breed within 10.

Rite of Passing the Net

Level Two

The Rokea sometimes refer to the Gauntlet as the Net. Weresharks cannot swim sideways normally; they require Sea's permission. This rite is the means of asking her permission. To perform the rite, the Rokea involved must swim to a grotto and ask Sea for her leave to pass the net. If she agrees, the Rokea may enter Sea's Soul for one cycle of the moon (28 days). At the end of this time, the Rokea appears in the Realm outside the grotto where she (or they) asked permission.

System: The player whose character leads the rite rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 7). Only one success is necessary.

Rite of Sea's Distant Voice

Level Two

Betweeners are very much on their own when it comes to receiving Valor Renown, but Sea and Kun grant Harmony and Innovation, and the ocean-dwellers can't take away a betweener's connection to his spiritual mothers. This rite allows mental communion with Sea, so that the Rokea may report her doings and gain Renown for them.

The Rokea must be at least partially immersed in salt water, but even a bathtub sprinkled with table salt counts. The wereshark then mentally recounts her doings and takes her rewards (or punishments) as Sea and Kun see fit.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 5 + 1 for every 10 miles from Sea). If successful, the Storyteller decides Renown gain (or loss) as usual.

Stereotypes

Guards-the-Shoals, a Dimwater hunter, recounts the lessons of centuries:

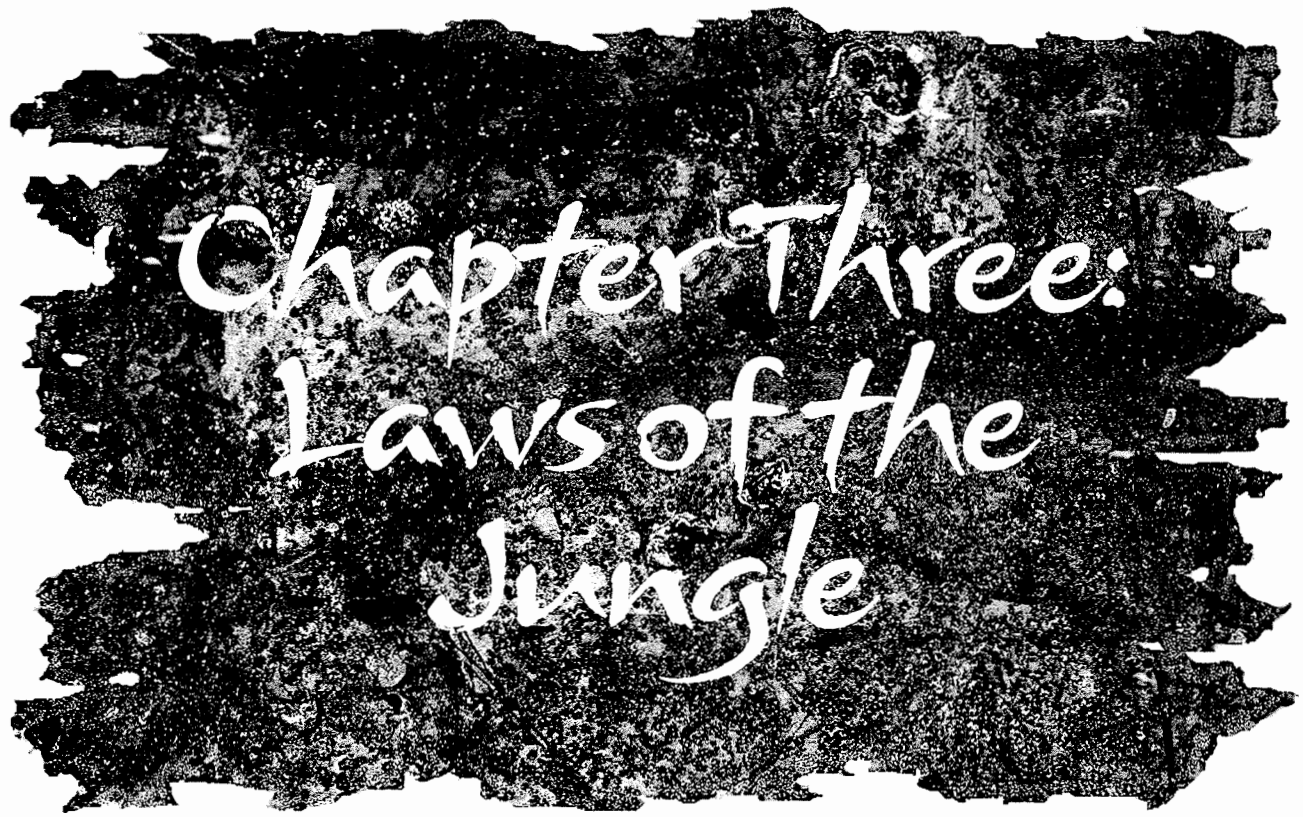
• **Garou:** The wolves want to rule the dirt? Let them.

• **Ratkin:** These creatures, I hear tell, were once asked to check the growth of the human schools. Either they failed miserably or they were prevented from doing their tasks. Pity; as many of their kin cross Sea on human vessels, we could have worked together against the dirtwalkers.

• **Mokolé:** The closest of the Changers to us, and the only ones who even remotely understand what it means to be eternal. If we can save them from the Unmaking, we will.

Stay out of the water. That is the last warning you shall have.





After the wolf had been sent away, there came a dog, a deer, a hare, a bear, a lion, and all the other animals of the forest, one after the other.

— The Brothers Grimm, "Mrs. Fox's Wedding"

A Fera character works more or less like a Garou in many ways. Many of the things that define the werewolf also hold true for most Fera. Most Fera, for instance, regenerate as Garou do, are allergic to silver (or gold), frenzy when they receive too many successes on a Rage roll (difficulty for frenzy checks being 6 if the Fera does not possess lunar auspices), and learn Gifts and rites in much the same manner.

Of course, there are several significant differences for every Fera, even those who seem superficially close to Garou such as the Nuwisha. Most of these differences are covered in Chapter Two, but this chapter also presents a number of exceptions, as well as compiling the various new Abilities, Backgrounds and similar Traits available to Fera characters into one place. Some of the new ideas presented here might even be modified for Garou characters in an alternate chronicle (such as presenting a world where Garou can use Den-Realms), although the Silver Rule applies: Ask your Storyteller first.

Abilities

Fera characters generally possess the Abilities listed in **Werewolf**, with the following additions, available as secondary Abilities. Note that some of the following abilities are restricted to certain Fera, namely Biorhythms and Flight. Players and Storytellers owning **Players Guide to Garou** might wish to pick other Secondary Abilities described in that book.

New Talent: Biorhythms

Hibernating through an entire season, bears and many other animals have the ability to make changes to their metabolism and some bodily functions, such as subtly changing body temperature to withstand great cold or heat, and even shutting down great parts of the body to survive when death would normally be imminent. This Talent reflects the bear in the Gurahl, and even homid werebears find it incredibly useful to be able to control their metabolism to such a degree that they can actually shut out pain, lower respiratory functions to almost nothing, increase fertility, or change blood circulation.

Only Gurahl characters may possess this Talent.

- Novice: You can make minor changes in your body temperature and heart rhythm.
- •• Practiced: You can slow down your metabolism, letting you go great periods without taking sustenance.
- ••• Competent: You can actually control parts of your respiratory system and even involuntary muscles.
- •••• Expert: You can isolate some parts of your metabolism while others remain normal.
- ••••• Master: You can actually stop your heartbeat and start it again after a prolonged hiatus.

Possessed by: Gurahl

Specialties: Breath Control, Circulatory System, Enduring Pain, Fasting, Fertility, Total System Shutdown

New Talent: Flight

Birds of a feather, what do they do? Well, they fly, for one. And that's what this Talent demonstrates. Flight represents the wereravens' capability of complex air travel, such as accurate navigation, evaluating mid-air hindrances and aerial acrobatics. This ability covers everything related to flying that is not lifting off and landing on flat land, and flapping the wings. Those come naturally to the sky-born.

This Talent is only available to Corax and what precious few other winged Fera that might exist, such as certain Mokolé.

- • Novice: You can perform some tricky take-offs and landings.
- •• Practiced: You can maneuver through city streets and forests — while airborne.
- ••• Competent: You can fly through dense forests or office landscapes with no difficulty.
- •••• Expert: Your aerial acrobatics and speed of wing are unmatched in the animal kingdom.
- ••••• Master: The Red Baron? Storm?! No way. Watch this, and eat that, ugly!

Possessed by: Corax

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

New Skill: Seafaring

Seafaring represents the ability to rig, maneuver and perform light repair on various kinds of seagoing crafts. Though anyone can row a simple dinghy and muck around within the cove or on the lake, it's no simple task maneuvering an oil tanker, let alone rig a large sailboat.

- • Novice: The oars on side, and your back to the direction you're going in, right?
- •• Practiced: You've scrubbed your share of decks and know what goes where and what knots to tie.
- ••• Competent: Advanced technical knowledge is the only flaw in your expertise.
- •••• Expert: You're qualified to serve as a ranking officer or first mate.
- ••••• Master: Trim the sails, boys, tonight we're sailing through the Devil's Straits!

Possessed by: Sailors, Dockworkers, Navy Officers, Betweener Rokea

Specialties: Motorboats, Sailboats, Seamanship, Kayaks

New Skill: Tactics

If there's anything that wins a game, any game, it's planning. Whether a simple football match for fun or a world-scale military campaign it's the team with the best tactics that wins. Characters possessing this Skill know what weak spots in the enemy to look for, and to use that against him. To use your own weak spots and anything else handy to your advantage. Add a bit of Intimidation, Subterfuge and Leadership, and you can't lose.

- • Novice: You played junior football when you were a kid.
- •• Practiced: You played football in high school.
- ••• Competent: You coached football in high school.
- •••• Expert: You coached football in the NFL.
- ••••• Master: Your memoirs will be the foundation of military school textbooks.

Possessed by: Football Players, Simba, Wild Predators, Military Personnel

Specialties: Strategies, Maneuvering, Campaigning, Planning

New Skill: Navigation

To certain Fera, navigation skills could mean death or life. Whether navigating the high seas, the skies above, or the treacherous Umbra, none should go too far without at least basic understanding of Navigation. The Corax are renowned for their ability to discern directions from above, while none rival the Rokea under the sea. Characters skilled in Navigation can use this Knowledge to cut down on travel time as well as avoid getting lost.

- • Novice: Yeah, I've been there. I think.
- •• Practiced: You can read a map and figure out where you are.
- ••• Competent: With this level of expertise you're able to draw up a detailed traveling plan through rough terrain and follow it through without difficulty.
- •••• Expert: You're a natural explorer, able to rustle up a Dr. Livingston with little trouble.
- ••••• Master: Sure, I know the way through that insane death-trap tunnel in the bowels of hell. Piece of cake. But it's gonna cost ya....

Possessed by: Corax, Pilots, Rangers, Nuwisha

Specialties: Aerial Navigation, Nautical Navigation, Routing, Map Reading

Backgrounds

Some of the Backgrounds presented here are specific to a certain Changing Breed. Others, such as Den-Realm, are possessed by a number of Changing Breeds. Players and Storytellers should feel free to customize the look and feel of a Background to better reflect the personality of the Breed in question. A Nagah's Ananta is very different from a Gurahl's Umbral Glade in look and feel, even if the mechanics are the same.

Den-Realm

Den-Realm. Ananta. Umbral Glade. These are all forms of "pockets" of Umbra the shapeshifter calls her own (or, as in the case of Ananta, the Nagah shares with her nestmates). Bastet, Gurahl and Nagah can purchase this Background.

A Den-Realm is a patch of the spirit world that has been attuned to the shapeshifter, tying them together spiritually, like a metaphysical singer and her song. A shapeshifter can only be attached to one Den-Realm at a time, though several partners may share the same glade, fueling skeptics' theories that it is really the Den-Realm that chooses its hosts and not the other way around. Garou, in particular, do not understand how Den-

Realms work, and some believe that the Fera, upon creating a Den-Realm, steals a piece of the Umbra, which in turn "hurts" it.

Coming into possession of a Den-Realm happens one of two ways; either it is handed down, as some kind of price or heritage, or it is ritually created. Naturally, the various Fera have different rites for this, such as the Bastet Rite of Claiming.

A Den-Realm is situated between the Umbra and physical reality, extending into the Near Umbra like a burrow between both worlds. This den is in many ways like a Domain, and unwanted trespassers may not enter. Most Den-Realms are tied to the areas in physical reality where they are created, although a Nagah Den-Realm is actually transportable, and the wereserpent may carry it inside of her. While carrying it she may enter the Umbra at any time in the manner of the Garou. Den-Realms are most common among the shapeshifters without the inherent ability to step sideways; they are a means of claiming a portion of the Breed's spiritual birthright.

The Realm may look basically however the creator wants it to look. Some favor grand Den-Realms furbished like Victorian mansions, Incan pyramids, or Hindu temples, with magnificent gardens, springs and hunting grounds, though the Gurahl, for instance, prefer a patch of dense but lush and beautiful woodlands, with perhaps a cozy cave for rest.

Though an Ananta lies hidden underwater, chancing upon any other Den-Realm within the Umbra is no walk in the park either. Not even spirits pay any attention to them, seeing only some sort of neutral boundary without any more attraction to it than any other part of the Umbral geography.

Possessing a Den-Realm can have more benefits than merely having a hideout and a short cut into the Umbra, though. The following are innate powers the owner(s) of the Den-Realm can do within its borders (and only there):

• **Stepping Sideways:** The Den-Realm's master can step sideways into the Umbra at a base difficulty of three, but the owner of the Glade can opt to raise the difficulty for others (see below). No shiny object is required as a focus.

• **Skipping:** The character can "blink" from place to place within the Glade. This requires a standard Gnosis roll, and the character can "blink" as many times per scene as she has Gnosis points. The distance for a skip is the same as the character's ordinary movement capacity, though the character may certainly move out of range of sight if this is within that movement capacity.

To perform a blink the character leaps from her current position, to emerge out of any solid object, such as a tree or a stone, and emerges from it the following turn. She must have a solid object to blink into, but the object need *not* be large enough to logically contain her form. Failed rolls leave the character at her original jump point, botches freeze her in mid-blink.

• **Sensing:** Being at one with her lands, the owner of the Den-Realm knows what transpires within them. If some act of evil or violence (including bulldozing or forestry) is performed on either side of the Gauntlet, a lingering pain in the soul follows the Fera until she finds out what it is, and preferably deals with it. The player rolls Perception + Den-Realm (difficulty 8) for the character to instinctively get an idea of the transgression, or to locate the anomaly.

• **Tracking:** The Fera always instinctively knows the way to her Den-Realm.

• **Peeking:** The character may Peek into the Glade from either side of the Gauntlet, like the ability of the Garou. The Gauntlet counts as three for this action, regardless of what it truly is.

• **Transport:** The Fera may transport one additional being with her to her Glade. There is no limit as to how many she may bring with her, but she can only do so with one person at a time.

When creating a Den-Realm, there are several other neat options available for purchase by expending more Background Points on it. Obviously, a Nagah nest can afford more options between them than a single Bastet, but since a Fera can only be part of one Den-Realm, most Nagah have to chip in to the communal Ananta, and not possess a personal one.

Below is a list of options for how to invest points in Den-Realms. Size is automatic, and the character also gains one free option point with the first point spent. All additional options are purchasable by investing one Background Point per option per level to increase either or all. Obviously it costs one point to purchase one level one option, two points to purchase one level two option, three points for one level three option, and so on.

• **Replenish Gnosis:** Each level increases the amount of Gnosis replenished per day within the Den-Realm.

• **Provides nourishment:** Each level increases the amount of nourishment, illusory or actual, the Den-Realm provides.

• **Inner Peace:** A certain appropriate ability is picked, for instance Enigmas or Meditation, upon creation of the Den-Realm. This Den-Realm is now attuned to this particular ability, and using it within the Den-Realm is substantially easier.

• **Reduce or Increase the Gauntlet:** The Gauntlet of the Den-Realm may be reduced or increased by up to three points. This does not apply for the owner, whose base Gauntlet is always 3. Please note that the Gauntlet modifier is applied to the level of the Den-Realm, so if you've spent two points of strengthening the Gauntlet, it is eight if your Den-Realm is level two, but eleven if your Den-Realm is level five.

Den-Realms are measured primarily by size, which is the base and obligatory option for level one. Pick one additional free option for level one, and purchase additional options at the cost of one Background Point each per level.

- A 20 x 20 ft. area. Base Gauntlet is 5. Options: The Glade can replenish one point of Gnosis per day. No sustenance is provided, and there is no Ability modifier at this level.
- •• A 50 x 50 ft. area. Base Gauntlet is 6. Options: the Glade can replenish two points of Gnosis, food for two people can be provided (although it conveys no true sustenance at this level), Ability modifier is minus one difficulty.

••• A 100 x 100 ft. area. Base Gauntlet is 7. Options: The Glade can replenish three points of Gnosis per day, true sustenance for one person can be provided (or "empty" food for a whole group), the Ability modifier is minus two difficulty.

•••• A 500 x 500 ft. area. Base Gauntlet is 8. Options: The Glade can replenish four points of Gnosis per day, sustenance for three people can be provided (nearly as fine as real food), and the ability modifier is minus three difficulty.

••••• A 1000 x 1000 ft. area. Base Gauntlet is 9. Options: The Glade can replenish five points of Gnosis per day, sustenance for five people can be provided (and it's as fine as any mortal food), the ability modifier is minus three difficulty and an automatic success.

Mnesis

This Background is the Trait that defines the Mokolé in their role as Gaia's Memory. Although Mokolé are unable to channel ancestor-spirits as the Garou do, they are able to tap into the racial memory of the Dragon Breed, remembering things that may have happened many millennia ago. The rating in this Background determines how far back the Mokolé can remember — with sufficient effort.

Activating Mnesis is not a simple matter; the Mokolé enters directly into the memory of his Breed, going on a Mnesis quest just as Garou might quest for a vision in the Umbra. The process is something like undergoing self-hypnosis or deliberately entering a dream with no control over the outcome; the Mokolé enters a trance when Mnesis questing, and is oblivious to the outside world until the quest is complete. Since a Mnesis quest might be long and complicated enough (or even enrapturing enough) to last for hours, most Mokolé only enter Mnesis while in the safety of their wallows.

• A century or so.

•• A millennium or so.

••• The Impergium and the beginning of human civilization.

•••• Back until the awakening of the mammalian shapeshifters.

••••• The time of the Dinosaur Kings.

Secrets

This Background is just what it sounds like. The character has some sort of information that would be considered desirable by someone else. So much, in fact, that the character might gain from saving it until the perfect



time. Where the character got the information from or what it is, well, that's up to the Storyteller. The character probably *shouldn't* know what she does.... Like the Flaw: Dark Secret, this Background can pose potentially lethal problems, but ultimately, it's an Advantage, not a Flaw. The character is the potential blackmailer, not the potential victim.

Secrets may be used like Resources in some cases; you trade your secret for information or supplies or whatever. The character doesn't lose the secret unless he tells it to too many (Storyteller's discretion), in which case it's not a secret anymore. It might also be used as bribery, blackmail, influence or pay-off. The main use for it is obviously plot-related, and therefore the Storyteller should work out such direct specifics to avoid last-minute improvisation.

The Storyteller is always the arbiter of what sort of secrets the character possesses (although the player may suggest possibilities as usual). This Background is not meant to be a way to gain information that the Storyteller might prefer no characters begin play with; it certainly isn't a rationale for using information out of various World of Darkness books. A secret is a potential plot hook and a means of wrangling some manner of influence, not an excuse to know the weaknesses of every supernatural creature out there.

Of course, a secret is not a piece of gossip, however. It's a cold, hard fact that can hurt if used wrongly. It should be jealously guarded, milked for whatever it's worth, and then gotten the hell away from to avoid suspicion.

- • A small secret. The guy next door is cheating on his wife, or on his taxes.
- •• A moderate secret. The human identities of a local Garou pack or the whereabouts of a criminal on the run.
- ••• A substantial secret. A matter of life and death for someone. Someone's gonna ice Slick Jimmy within the next few days, or where that Cross of the Forsaken is stashed.
- •••• Pretty heavy stuff. The location of a nationally known fugitive from justice, a minor vampire's "little black book" of contacts, or the location of a Gurahl.
- ••••• Something so big it'd be a genuine sensation if it got out, or might mean the death of someone (presumably you, but most likely others too). Most high-level Pentex plots fall under this "deep black" level.

Altered Background: Totem

Not all Fera run in packs, like the Garou. As such, most have no pack totems. In fact, not all Fera adhere to totems at all! Those who do, however, are divided between those who follow a personal Totem, and, as is the case with the Ratkin, those who run in packs and follow a pack totem just like the Garou do.

A totem is a patron spirit that lends its strengths to the character in exchange for worship and respect (and sometimes other things...). Usually a totem is just a minor spirit such as a Jaggling in service to the Incarna that the Fera worships as her totem. As a representation of the great spirit, the Jaggling serves, aids or directs the Fera. In most cases a totem spirit comes to the Fera and asks that the character serve her, but occasionally a character or a pack goes on extensive quests to prove themselves worthy of a particular Incarna, with various results.

Since Bastet, for instance, can only rarely bond a totem to their Pride, Ananasi only follow Queen Ananasa, and Ratkin hardly ever have personal totems outside their packs, it is hard to generalize this Background. Personal Totems can never be pooled, not even if several characters adhere to the same Incarna. The spirits are still two different incarnations of it, and a personal spirit will never share the special bond it has to the character with anyone else. However, it is not unheard of for a group or pack each having the same personal Totem to experience greater aid from both spirits, as if the spirits in question recognize the honor bestowed upon them by the other characters as well as their ward. Spirits are elusive beings, and may surprise even the most jaded Theurge at times.

In the case of pack-based Fera, Totem is an automatically pooled Background. First the characters must have between them enough to purchase a totem spirit as per its cost determined by its patron Incarna (see **Werewolf**, pp. 293-298), and then purchase further abilities for it listed below with additional Background points. If the Storyteller is willing, he might allow other options as well, at his discretion. If a character is a member of a Changing Breed that traditionally follows pack totems instead of personal totems, he can still purchase a personal totem (although he may have only one totem at a time; no character can serve two totems directly at once), but the cost is doubled.

Players may even purchase new abilities for the spirit by allocating part of their experience pool to it. A new ability costs two experience points per point of its Background cost. It is the Storyteller that decides what the spirit spends its experience points on, though the troupe should be allowed to make suggestions.

Every starting totem spirit has the following traits:

- Eight points divided amongst Willpower, Rage and Gnosis
- Charm: Airt Sense
- Charm: Re-form

Additional abilities can be bought for Background points at the following cost:

Cost	Power
1	Three additional points to spend on Willpower, Gnosis and/or Rage per Background point spent
1	Ability to communicate with the pack without using a Charm or the Spirit Speech Gift
1	Ability to almost always locate each pack member
2	Totem follows the pack at almost any time
2	Totem is well respected among other spirits
2	An additional Charm known per Background point spent
3	An additional pack member can use the powers of the totem in a turn per Background point spent
4	Ability to communicate with all the pack members simultaneously regardless of the distance between them
5	The Wyrm and its agents know of and fear the totem

Umbral Maps

A necessity for those not as knowledgeable about the Umbra as the Garou, the Corax or the Nuwisha, or a helpful trinket for the more practiced spirit travelers, Umbral Maps are routes or paths tried-out and established by experienced Umbral travelers. Common among the Corax, it's not impossible to come into possession of a handful of maps through bartering with a wereraven or a werecoyote. An Umbral Map is not a hard piece of equipment, like most other Backgrounds, but the knowledge of various routes the character has already traveled or has otherwise gained intimate knowledge of. Only Corax or Nuwisha can distribute Umbral Maps.

A character with this Background has a fair idea of what paths to choose when faced with a choice, where dangers could possibly lurk, how to deal with them, or maybe even how trick others onto the wrong track.

- • A few safe paths and refuges.
- •• Several routes to common destinations.
- ••• Safe zones, routes to virtually any place, and knowledge of where *not* to go.
- •••• Several safe places and refuges, extensive knowledge of Umbral paths and dwellers in those areas.
- ••••• No one knows the Near Umbra like you. If you ain't been there, it's because it's not worth going to.

Merits and Flaws

This optional system of "character extras" is detailed in full in the **Players Guide to Garou**. The short version, though, is that Merits are Advantages of no particular type that can be purchased with freebie points, and Flaws are a form of "disadvantage" that actually give back freebie points — thus, a 2-point Merit costs 2 freebie points, while a 2-point Flaw gives the character an additional 2 freebie points to spend. A player may elect as many Merits as she wishes, but only up to seven points worth of Flaws. Of course, if the Storyteller allows, the player can choose as many Flaws as she damn well likes, but only gain seven freebie points total from them.

A plethora of Merits and Flaws are listed in the **Players Guide to Garou** (pp. 158-168). Most of these are suitable for Fera characters, with some exceptions for common sense. For example, the Merit: Fair Glabro would be appropriate for Bastet, but inappropriate for shark-born Rokea (who seem "off" even in Homid form), and impossible for Ratkin (who have no Glabro form). Similarly, the Flaw: Metis Child is worth no points for Kitsune (who suffer no social stigma for siring or bearing shinju, or "metis"), and certainly not for Ananasi (who have no metis whatsoever). In addition, the following are also appropriate for most Fera characters.

Garou Companion (3-pt. Merit)

Despite the centuries of stigma and hatred between the werewolves and the various Fera, you and your unlikely friend have overcome them, on whatever common grounds. Obviously, such a relationship is best kept secret from both camps, to avoid provoking the wrath of either, but you nurture it, because it gives you unique insight from the perspective of the wolfskins.

Bizarre Taste (1-pt. Flaw)

You are considered somewhat disgusting among even your peers. Your appetite just isn't socially acceptable. You'll get a hunger for human junk food while in your animal form, or road kill or other carrion in your human form. This can make your life both interesting and problem-filled, unless you make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to repress your hunger.

Geas (1-5 pt. Flaw)

You are under some sort of geas, a curse that requires you to do perform some action, or prevents you from it. If you break the geas a curse will befall you, and you might even die. Whether it is an inherited duty, something that runs in the family, or something just for you, depends. What matters is that something horrible will befall the character should he break his geas. Exactly what will happen depend son the geas, and on the Storyteller's whim — although a broken geas usually leads to a hero's doom in most legends. .

The cost of the Flaw should reflect the severity of the geas:

- One point reflects a *geas* or taboo that is very unlikely to happen. ("Never drink beer while sitting in a tree with a red-haired man")
- Two points reflect a *geas* or taboo that is unlikely to happen. ("Never eat the meat of red dogs")
- Three points reflect a *geas* or taboo that likely could be broken. ("Never touch red paint that is wet")
- Four points reflect a *geas* that is likely to be broken ("Never do harm to a red animal")
- Five points reflect a *geas* that will almost certainly be broken ("Never walk on red surfaces")

The *geas* need not be a taboo, it could also be a requirement, as the samples below suggest.

- Give to charity at the turn of the seasons (1 pt.)
- Fast for one day per lunar cycle (2 pt.)
- Leave an offering for Gaia once a week (3 pt.)
- Spend an hour in complete solitude once per 24-hour cycle (4 pt.)
- Howl to Luna four times a day (5 pt.)

Exactly what happens if the *geas* is broken is up the Storyteller. It is suggested that the wording of the *geas* at least hints at the punishment, but it could also be a complete mystery to the character. Perhaps he even thinks the *geas* is just superstition.

Some possibilities of punishments include: losing access to Gnosis or Rage, losing access to Gifts, inability to soak damage, only being able to shift to breed form, loss of fur or hair, loss of Willpower, banishment to an Umbral Realm, loss of a fetish or talen. The duration of these effects is rarely permanent, often disappearing when the character does something to right his wrong.

Combat Maneuvers

"Lions don't do this... Lions don't kill like this..."

— Charles Remington, *The Ghost and the Darkness*

Some of the Fera have access to special combat maneuvers that take advantage of their unique abilities — a Corax's flight, a Mokolé's size, an Ananasi's Crawlerling form, and the like. The following maneuvers are examples of the kind of tricks these Changing Breeds have learned to tip the odds in their favor in a fight.

Ananasi

• **Engulf:** The Ananasi lunges at her foe as she dissolves into a million spiders, all biting and tearing at their opponent, and entering as many body cavities and openings as they can find. Each turn that the Ananasi maintains the Engulf, the target cannot breathe, and runs the risk of suffocation (see **Werewolf**, p. 189). If the Ananasi is in another form when beginning the Engulf maneuver, the action requires a blood point, but the difficulty is reduced to 5 for the initial attack — the surprise (and shock) of the Ananasi's body breaking into a swarm of spiders gives her an edge.

Usable by: Any
Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 6 (5)
Damage: Strength; suffocation **Actions:** 1

Bastet

• **Barrel Roll:** The Bastet attacks at running speed on all fours, grabs the opponent by the shoulders, and uses her body mass to topple him. Using the momentum of the tumble, she rolls with the opponent, immobilizing him, usually by biting over the muzzle of the prey to choke it, but since biting into fomori can prove fatal, bleeding it is another option.

The player rolls a standard grapple roll to seize the opponent, and then a contested Strength roll to bring the opponent to the ground. (The contested Strength roll is reflexive for both combatants). The attacker then rolls Dexterity + Athletics to perform the barrel roll (as a separate action), at difficulty 7. In all consecutive turns the attacker can choose to roll her Strength against her opponent's Stamina, as per the Suffocation rules on p. 189 of **Werewolf**, or use a more violent approach, like tearing the throat out from her victim. These count as separate actions, though.

Garou and Nuwisha can also perform this maneuver, though at a difficulty of 8.

Usable by: Crinos – Feline
Roll: Dexterity + Athletics **Difficulty:** 7
Damage: Special **Actions:** 2

Corax

• **Eye Pluck:** Corax can attempt to pull the eye from a living opponent — not as easy as drinking a corpse's eye, but a dangerous combat maneuver nonetheless. If the Corax scores four successes on the attack roll, and at least two health levels of damage go unsoaked, the opponent's eye is torn out (raising the damage to aggravated even if the Corax is in raven form). Shapeshifters who do not receive a Battle Scar from this maneuver can regrow the eye over time.

Usable by: Crinos – Corvid
Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 9
Damage: Strength + 1 **Actions:** 2

• **Wing Swipe:** This maneuver requires the Gift: Razor Feathers. The Corax lashes out with a wing, slashing the target with the cutting edge of his newly steel-hard and razor-sharp feathers. This maneuver has some utility out of combat (as it's effectively a sword slash that can cut ropes, slash tires and so one), but in combat it may put an opponent off his balance. Even if a wing swipe misses, the target must make a Dexterity roll, difficulty 5, or be off-balance (and at +1 to all Physical difficulties) for the next turn.

Usable by: Crinos
Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 7
Damage: Strength + 2 **Actions:** 1

Mokolé

• **Tail Lash:** The Mokolé lunges out with her tail, slapping her opponent with it. Characters in Suchid form may only use this maneuver if the opponent stands directly behind her. Damage is bashing, unless the Mokolé's tail is spiked.

Rokea in Chasmus – Squamus forms can also perform this maneuver, but only under water.

Usable by: Archid – Suchid
Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 7
Damage: Strength + 1 **Actions:** 1

• **Head Butt:** This maneuver is a charge forward, head lowered. It works exactly like Body Tackle (**Werewolf**, p. 209) except that the Mokolé does not suffer damage if in Archid form, and the target isn't unbalanced unless knocked down. If the roll is botched, the attacker suffers her own Strength in dice of damage and is stunned for the rest of the turn.

Rokea in Chasmus through Squamus can take advantage of a similar maneuver underwater where she rams into her opponent, headfirst. The same specifics apply.

Usable by: Homid - Archid
Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 7
Damage: Strength **Actions:** 1

• **Jaw Shear:** This maneuver requires that the Mokolé has succeeded a bite attack in the previous turn. Through this attack the Mokolé can snap his head back and forth, tearing the victim to shreds with his powerful bite. If the Mokolé's grip isn't broken (by an opposed Strength roll or other circumstances), he can continue to attempt this maneuver each turn.

In a similar maneuver, Rolling Bite, the Mokolé rolls repeatedly with his victim in her mouth, causing much the same effect.

Rokea in Chasmus or sufficiently large enough Gladius or Squamus forms can also perform these maneuvers.

Usable by: Suchid – Archid
Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 6
Damage: Strength + 2 **Actions:** 1

• **Swallow Whole:** Only a character with a size allowing for this can perform this action. A large enough Archid or Great White, however, could. The prey must be half the character's size or less, and the attacker must land a bite attack, and then make an opposed Strength roll. If she succeeds, the opponent goes down the hatch. The opponent can continue to take limited actions for a number of rounds equal to his Stamina, and is smothered after this. If the attacker changes to a smaller shape while the opponent is still alive within her, she suffers five health levels of lethal damage as the hapless opponent breaks through her insides.

A Rokea in Chasmus form can also perform this maneuver, that is, if she is large enough.

Usable by: Archid

Roll: Special **Difficulty:** Special

Damage: Special **Actions:** 2

Nagah

• Constrict: By successfully catching an opponent of appropriate size, the Nagah may attempt to constrict her opponent. The Nagah needs to be in either of its large serpentine forms (Azhi Dahaka or Kali Dahaka, though a Nagah can constrict small opponents — such as a Corvid-form Corax — while in Vasuki as well), and cannot move from his current location while constricting. Treat the Nagah's dodge rolls as +2 difficulty during constriction.

On each successive action after having caught the victim, the Nagah's player rolls Strength +Brawl against a difficulty of the trapped victim's Strength + Brawl -2 (as a free action), and success inflicts the Nagah's Strength as bashing damage. Failure means that the victim wriggles free, which he can always attempt as an action on a contested Strength-roll anyway. The Nagah can attack his trapped victim with teeth or claws at -1 difficulty, but to others hitting the victim is at +1 difficulty, and a botch strikes the Nagah.

Usable by: Azhi Dahaka – Vasuki

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 6

Damage: Strength **Actions:** 1

• **Injection:** By performing this maneuver the Nagah can bite gently into an unresisting target with venom without causing aggravated damage from his fangs. This can be used for several purposes, such as with the Sting of Sleep Gift. This maneuver is usually used when not in combat, although some Nagah occasionally attempt to slay a foe with a "gentle touch."

Usable by: Any form capable of injecting venom

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 7

Damage: Venom only **Actions:** 1

Rokea

• **Great Bite:** The Rokea takes hold of her opponent by the shoulders, and bites down across the latter. Depending



on the size of the opponent, the Rokea could potentially chew through the entire torso, but usually it is the head or upper torso that is affected. To grab hold of the opponent the player must perform a standard grapple roll. The bite attack is administered in the same turn.

Some Mokolé may also perform this maneuver in Archid form.

Usable by: Gladius

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 6

Damage: Strength + 3 **Actions:** 2

Pack Attacks

Group-oriented Fera such as Nagah and Ratkin employ a fair amount of pack, or group, tactics. In addition to those listed below and those found in the **Werewolf** main book (p. 212-213), players should be encouraged to devise their own tactics and maneuvers. The more creative and effective the attacks, the better it is for the pack as a whole. The Storyteller always has final say, though.

Bear in mind that the characters need to have a pack totem (or similar bond, such as that of the Nagah nest) to be able to perform this sort of attacks, and a character creating new maneuvers needs the Skill: Tactics (see above) to develop them.

New Pack Tactics

• **Circle:** This maneuver is usually used to interrogate or intimidate an opponent. The pack surrounds the opponent, trapping him within a tight circle. If he tries to break free, the nearest character snaps at him, but not necessarily to injure him. Unless the opponent is in frenzy or is similarly dead determined to break free, there is no roll required after having been positioned. Otherwise each player must perform a Dexterity + Athletics roll at difficulty 8 for their character to prevent the opponent breaking free.

Packmates Required: 3 **Performable Alone?:** No

• **Slice 'n' Dice:** This tactic is a favorite of Ratkin, though some Garou packs use it as well. The characters attack their opponent with surgical precision, using their claws as weapons, and slicing at him from different angles and with different body parts in mind. This increases the Dexterity + Dodge roll difficulty for the opponent by 1 per packmate involved. The dodge difficulty cannot be raised above 10, but the target must somehow get free of the pack before the difficulty returns to normal.

This maneuver requires the target to be surrounded by the pack.

Packmates Required: 3 **Performable Alone?:** No

Delirium

One of the most horrifying aspects of the Garou, their raging war-form Crinos, is hidden from our sanity by means of the Delirium. Genetically remembering the Impergium, the body shuts down the part of the mind that understands what is happening, thus shielding us from the terror of what we see. This is true for many of the other Fera as well, but not all. Some of the Fera do indeed invoke the full Delirium, but others only invoke a lesser degree of it, similar to what the Children of Gaia experience. Exactly why is a matter of heated debate, but as it remains, it is anyone's guess.

The Veil's Effect

In effect, reduced Delirium raises the Veil's effect (as per the table on p. 192 of **Werewolf**) by two.

The following is how the Veil affects the various Fera:

• **Ajaba:** Crinos form incites full Delirium.

• **Ananasi:** Lilian and Pithus forms both incite full Delirium.

• **Bastet:** Crinos form incites reduced Delirium, while Chatro incites full.

• **Corax:** Crinos form incites reduced Delirium.

• **Gurahl:** Crinos form incites reduced Delirium.

• **Kitsune:** Werefoxes do not incite Delirium *at all*, not even in Koto form.

• **Mokolé:** Archid form incites full Delirium.

• **Nagah:** Azhi Dahaka form incites full Delirium.

• **Nuwisha:** Manabozho form incites reduced Delirium.

• **Ratkin:** Crinos form incites reduced Delirium.

• **Rokea:** Glabrus form incites reduced Delirium, while Gladius and Chasmus incite full.

Renown

Since only a handful of the Fera follow the same system as the Garou, Glory, Honor and Wisdom, this section compiles contains one big chart listing the different denominations, ranks, and game-term points for each rank, and a Breed-by-Breed description of the various Breeds' Renown systems. The core Werewolf book holds an elaborate section on Renown for the Garou (**Werewolf** pp. 123-125), and it might be a good idea to re-read these two-and-a-half pages to get an idea about what Renown is all about and why the Fera use it.

Types of Renown

Ajaba

The Ajaba follow a system of Ferocity, Obligation and Cunning — two traits learned from their Bastet cousins, and a third that stresses their more pragmatic nature. To advance in Ferocity, an Ajaba must be fearless (and vicious) in combat and out; to advance in Obligation, the werehyena must put his race before himself; to advance in Cunning, he must prove clever and resourceful in all situations. Advancement in rank is handled by much the same sort of social challenges and rites that the Garou use.

Ananasi

The Ananasi do not truly let their Renown lead them, they are all judged by Queen Ananasa, not each other. Each category correlates directly to the aspect of the Triat that the Ananasa follow; Cunning — Wyrm, Obedience — Weaver, Wisdom — Wyld. They follow every aspect, at least to a

degree, to gain a better understanding of the other aspects. Queen Ananasa marks a pattern upon the skin of her subjects, and this pattern, visible in all forms like the markings on a red-back spider, reveals the rank of the werespider. For Tenere werespiders it resembles very fine spider-webs that join together, with the number of anchoring strands revealing rank. For Hatar the patterns resemble slithering snakes akin to Celtic knotwork. For Kumoti it looks like lightning bolts sparking across each other.

To advance in Obedience the werespiders have to follow the ways and laws of Ananasa, and to follow their aspects of the Triat.

To gain Cunning Renown, a werespider has to perform acts of resourcefulness and cleverness.

For Wisdom Renown, demonstrations of good judgment and intuition (in the eyes of other Ananasi, of course) are required.

Bastet

The werecat Renown fits fairly well with their feline nature. Based on individual achievement first and foremost, the cats do not concern themselves too much with their servitude to Gaia when measuring Renown. Their three categories are as follows.

Cunning is awarded through the werecat's capability to discover secrets, manipulate rivals, her riddle craft abilities, or her commercial talent.

Ferocity is awarded through cool and conquest; the Bastet's abilities of being a bad ass with an attitude, pure and simple.

To gain Honor Renown Bastet must display that they are loyal and honest, but also prideful.

Advances in rank are awarded at a taghairm, though it is not unusual for solitary cats to demand an increase in rank, and have their petition granted by spirits, who then bring the word to elders of the cat in question. If they agree, the rank is awarded to him. In either case the Bastet has to perform a Rite of Recognition.

Corax

Corax follow Glory, Honor and Wisdom as do the Garou, and Wisdom is certainly the category they value the most. Rumormongers and chatterers, Renown is precious to Corax because if you do something to gain respect it's you that others talk about....

Uncovering great secrets and passing it on to others gains Wisdom. Acting with wisdom as anyone other than Corax knows it, doesn't get a raven noticed at all.

Honor, though usually ignored, is gained through actions that benefit all Corax, especially through acts of selflessness.

Glory, even less popular than Honor, is awarded for fighting the good fight if it is a necessity to do so, not for acts of rashness and rage.



Rank is generally given through acclamation rather than ceremony, though Helios has the final say. Forecasts and omens in the sky can make a huge difference for someone about to advance in rank. Let's just say it's a bad idea to claim your new place in the Parliament when the skies can cloud over any minute....

Obviously it's easy for a wereraven to lose Renown and rank. They are rumormongers, after all....

Gurahl

The werebears acknowledge Honor, Succor and Wisdom to be the appropriate categories of awarding Renown.

Honor is awarded through showing one's devotion to the Code of Ursa and from dealing respectfully with others, assisting their Kinfolk when they are in need, acting selflessly for the greater good of the Breed, and for ignoring feelings of vengeance or hatred.

Succor is awarded for acts of healing and purification, giving aide to those in need, or saving lives. Any other act of attempting to preserve or save Gaia and Her beasts can be rewarded with Succor Renown. Succor is considered to be the most important category of Renown by many Gurahl.

Wisdom follows the same precept as the other two categories; it is generally awarded when the Gurahl perform actions that help restore or preserve knowledge and insight in all its forms, such as ancient relics or old stories, and even through the study and research of lore and legends. Gurahl who attempt to gain understanding of what it means to be what they are, are often awarded with Wisdom Renown as well.

Gurahl respect the wisdom and experience of their elders and, while they do not stress status among one another, they do acknowledge rank. In general, when a Gurahl progresses through each auspice, she also gains in rank. Gurahl learn rites and Gifts according to their rank. Gurahl use rank titles that emphasize their kinship with one another.

Gurahl gain rank through the recommendations of their elders, either at the Council of Autumn or at other meetings. A Gurahl wishing to advance in rank must relate her deeds, usually in song or story, and win the approval of their elders. If a Gurahl cannot attend a meeting, she can claim the rank and attempt to gain confirmation at a later date. The solitary lifestyle of the Gurahl reinforces the need for such an honor system of rising in rank and Renown.

Kitsune

The three categories of werefox Renown are reminiscent of the Renown categories Cunning, Honor and Glory. However, the Kitsune don't really care too much about Renown and rank; it's just one of those pesky necessary things to keep track of what's going on, and it's what everyone else seems to be doing, and have been for millennia (therefore they have to be on to *something*). It is also easier for the Kitsune to relate to and communicate with the other Breeds this way.

Chie (Cunning) is awarded for exhibiting superior cunning and cleverness; they say that the ideal of Chie is the killing of two enemies by tricking them into destroying each other, while you yourself are far removed from the scene.

Toru (Honor) is awarded through living one's life in accordance with Gaia and Luna's rules, preferably through honoring and acknowledging being Kitsune without willingness to compromise, and still achieving ones goals.

Kagayaki (Glory) is awarded for, put simply, perfection. To shine in the eyes of others. Kitsune care little for, say, accomplishments in war, unless it makes them shine in the eyes of their older Changing Breed cousins. Also, Kagayaki is awarded for doing "good deeds" in the sight of anyone who matters.

Rank, however, is both sought after and revered. Especially since the foxes gain additional tails for each new rank they achieve!

Mokolé

Mokolé gain Renown and advance in Rank in largely the same way and same categories that the Garou do.

Nagah

The Nagah do not follow a set of Renown categories. The Sesha (that is to say, the Storyteller) decides whether or not a Nagah advances in rank.

Nagah advance in Rank by reporting to the Sesha, the highest governing body of their kind (represented by the Storyteller). This takes place in Nandana (the Sesha's Ananta). Afterwards, the petitioner may rest for one week while their case is judged. The members of a nest usually report together. This is not a journey to be taken lightly. For a start, the nest must travel in absolute secrecy, or the Sesha must then move their Nandana to keep it secret from other Changing Breeds.

Nuwisha

The Nuwisha gain Renown in the categories Humor, Glory and Cunning. They aren't a very status-conscious Changing Breed, but even the Nuwisha see a need to honor their best — as well as a system to establish bragging rights.

Humor is awarded based on how skillful a werecoyote is. Humor does not cover silly behavior and bad jokes and pranks, but how well conceived a Nuwisha's actions are, what scale she is able to think on, and what the consequences are, and for whom.

Glory is awarded for actions of flamboyance, especially if the Nuwisha gets away with it....

Cunning is awarded for craftiness; for clever and ingenious actions that are subtle and well thought out.

Ratkin

There are three different ways for Ratkin to gain Renown. One is to tell about her latest endeavors at a Ratkin moot, and the elders award Renown if they approve of her actions. The second is to periodically commune directly with one's chosen totem. The third is to tell stories about furthering chaos and entropy at so-called revels: the raucous Ratkin equivalent of a pep rally, hosted by rat-warriors on the eve of battle. This last method is most appropriate for gaining Infamy.

Infamy is generally awarded for outrageous deeds that further the reputation of the Ratkin.

Obligation is awarded for accepting tasks and assignments that absolutely need to be done in the name of Rat. Sometimes such tasks and assignments cause loss of other types of Renown, but, damn it, they need to be done!

Cunning is gained through performing stunts and tasks that are clever, resourceful and crafty, especially if the Ratkin pulls a stunt that would usually result in serious trouble — and either gets away with it or has someone else blamed. Note that silliness and slapstick generally are not rewarded with Renown at all.

Rokea

Rokea observe three different types of Renown, just as Garou do. The three categories are Valor, Harmony and Innovation.

Valor involves taking on challenges, finding mates and obeying the Rokean Law secure in the knowledge that you are following the right course of action. The Valorous Rokea is honest and fearless. Rokea gain Valor by upholding the Rokean Law and fighting off threats to Sea and the Rokea. Participating in the Hunt for betweeners is worth Valor (as it is the Rokea themselves who award this type of Renown).

Harmony is born of recognizing one's place in the world and staying there. Rokea who choose to do nothing but survive gain no Valor or Innovation, but do gain Harmony, as survival is the most important that Sea asks of them. However, Sea also views the Rokea as her guardians, and anything that upsets the balance of life in her waters is a target for the weresharks. Obviously, then, Sea adjudicates Harmony Renown.

Finally, Innovation is Renown born of ingenuity and adaptation. Rokea, like all fishes, are born of Kun. Kun is also the incarnation of fecundity and creativity, and demands these traits from her children. A Rokea can gain Innovation by determining a new method of dealing with a problem, learning (or discovering) a Gift or rite, or even creating a fetish (which few Rokea learn how to do).

Gaining Harmony or Innovation Renown simply requires the wereshark to swim the seas and find a spirit servant of Sea or Kun, respectively. The player then rolls Wits + Rituals to communicate the character's Renown-worthy deeds. Gaining Valor, however, requires finding another Rokea and asking to be recognized. Rokea usually don't lie (especially since doing so is a violation of Valor, which rather goes against the point). When simply reporting deeds, Rokea may tell their tales to remora, but when attempting to gain a permanent dot of Renown, the wereshark must find another Rokea or a suitable spirit and ask to be recognized. Members of the Rokea's own slew are ineligible for this purpose.

Rokea do not require rank challenges the way werewolves do. A wereshark who reaches the requisite amount of permanent Renown is simply considered to be of the appropriate rank.

Sample Renown Awards

These sample awards may be very general. Storytellers interested in devising more specific awards may use those listed in the **Werewolf Storytellers Companion** (pp. 50-53) as a guideline or as inspiration.

Cunning

Sample Behavior	Award
Drawing first blood in combat; creating a talen; discovering a useful secret	1
Protecting an important secret from discovery; surviving an incapacitating blow	2
Wounding a powerful foe and prudently retreating; performing a monkeywrenching operation; creating a successful diversion	3
Creating a fetish; hatching a plot of Machiavellian proportions that succeeds; stealing something of value from within an enemy lair	5
Destroying an enemy stronghold; creating a Den-Realm; creating a new Gift	7
Failing attempts at craftiness; being captured by an enemy	-1
Exposed as a liar; becoming pack's runt (Ratkin); not protecting a secret	-3
Hurting other members of your Breed through recklessness or conniving; getting caught trying to foil Elders	-5

Ferocity

Sample Behavior	Award
Proving one's bravery in a routine situation; resisting frenzy	1
Ignoring a non-fatal wound in combat; remaining unaffected by attempts to taunt you	2
Defeating an enemy without being harmed; remaining calm in the face of extreme adversity	3
Upholding protocols in the face of humiliation; performing an outrageous and dangerous deed without being harmed	5
Single-handedly being responsible for success in a common goal for your Breed; causing your enemy to completely lose face (and rank) when attempting to taunt you	7

Succumbing to fox-frenzy	-1
Losing to an enemy without even harming him	-3
Performing an outrageous and dangerous deed and being hurt so that others must rescue you (and thereby exposing them to the danger)	-5

Glory

Sample Behavior	Award
Telling a good story at a gathering; participating in a just challenge; proving one's bravery in a routine situation	1
Surviving an incapacitating wound; defeating a minor threat; telling a true epic that is later retold by others	2
Defeating an average threat; traveling to an Umbral Realm and surviving	3
Defeating a strong threat; dying while defending a Den-Realm	5
Defeating a very powerful threat; sacrificing oneself for the greater good	7
Succumbing to fox-frenzy;	-1
Losing territory to a major enemy	-3
Conscious cowardice that results in the death of another of your Breed	-5

Harmony

Sample Behavior	Award
Destroying a minor threat to Sea; preventing minor pollution	1
Destroying a sizeable threat to Sea; stopping reckless humans	2
Regulating size of a species to restore balance; stopping a threat to Sea before it reaches the ocean	3
Repairing damage to coral reefs; destroying major threat to Sea	5
Clearing an oil spill; destroying an awesome threat to Sea	7
Ignoring minor pollution	-1
Killing humans to restore balance (leads to added killings of sharks)	-3
Hunting carelessly and upsetting balance of a species	-5

Honor

Sample Behavior	Award
Showing restraint in the face of certain death; showing devotion to the greater good; dealing respectfully with other Fera	1
Protecting helpless humans in need; participating in a just challenge	2
Acting selflessly for the greater good of the Breed; meditating a dispute fairly and impartially	3
Ignoring strong feelings of vengeance and hatred; being truthful in the face of extreme adversity; protecting helpless animals related to the Breed	5
Enduring torture to protect fellow Breedmembers; death in defense of Gaia	7
Acting selfishly; not protecting helpless humans; being deceptive in the face of extreme adversity	-1
Failing to keep promises; being deceptive; participating in an unjust challenge	-3
Not protecting a helpless Breedmember; completely ignoring etiquette; giving false testimony against a Breedmember	-5

Humor

Sample Behavior	Award
Conceiving a new riddle; besting another Changer (not Nuwisha) in a riddle-contest	1
Crippling a Wyrm-operation through "unfortunate accidents;" leading an enemy astray without hurting him	2
Leading two enemies against each other; persuading other Changers to perform necessary tasks for you if they believe they have credit for it; besting another Nuwisha in a riddle-contest	3
Fooling agents of the Wyrm to perform necessary tasks for you even if it hurts them; covering over dangerous secrets without hurting anyone, or even arousing suspicion	5
Creating plots that involve entire septs (or the equivalent) of other Changers (particularly Garou) to further your ends (which are not egotistically motivated) that succeed; banishing the Wyrm from an area through non-violent means	7
Losing a riddle-contest to another Nuwisha	-1
Hurting innocents through your schemes; being manipulated by another Changer	-3
Losing a riddle-contest to a human; furthering the Wyrm through your actions (involuntarily)	-5

Infamy

Sample Behavior	Award
Helping guard a Nest; fooling a human	1
Defeating a formidable foe not of the Wyrm or Weaver; getting even	2
Defeating a Garou; defending a Nest through trickery or negotiation; becoming pack leader	3
Ending a serious threat without harm to any of your Breed; becoming famous among your Breed	5
Defeating a very powerful Wyrm or Weaver threat; creating or discovering a new Gift	7
Being fooled by a human	1
Killing a Bone Gnawer	-3
Falling into the thrall of the Wyrm	-5

Innovation

Sample Behavior	Award
Striving to understand a new situation or item; creating a talen	1
Teaching another Rokea; gaining knowledge through bargains with spirits	2
Learning a new Rite; discovering a place unknown to other Rokea	3
Learning a new Gift; creating a fetish	5
Creating a new Gift; stopping a threat to Sea before it reaches the ocean	7
Acting without thinking	-1
Killing humans when matter could have been solved through cunning	-3
Ignoring the counsel of spirits	-5

Obedience

Sample Behavior	Award
Teaching another Ananasi; honoring Ananasa through your actions	1
Aiding another Ananasi; destroying an enemy	2
Discovering flaws in an enemy that can benefit others in the future; protecting an important secret from discovery	3
Bringing balance to a situation of great imbalance; destroying a Corax (with good reason)	5
Sacrificing yourself to protect Ananasa(posthumous); learning something that will benefit all Ananasi	7
Disobeying one of higher rank than you	-1
Worshipping someone other than Ananasa	-3
Disobeying Ananasa	-7

Obligation

Sample Behavior	Award
Teaching another member of your Breed; participating in a just challenge	1
Creating something that helps the Nest or clan; committing a sophisticated crime (Ratkin)	2
Serving as pack's runt (Ratkin, award once per story); repairing the Veil	3
Earning the respect of another member of your Breed; exacting vengeance on someone who has greatly harmed the Nest or clan	5
Dying to protect the Nest or clan (posthumous); performing a deed that affects all of your Breed	7
Giving bad advice	-1
Taking the word of an outsider over that of one of your own	-3
Harming the Veil	-5

Succor

Sample Behavior	Award
Healing another Changer unselfishly; performing a Rite of Cleansing; sparing game	1
Giving aide to a Changers of another Breed; performing a Rite of Healing Winds; nurturing a helpless animal back to health	2
Performing a Rite of the Pure Land; saving the life of a human	3
Reclaiming spoiled or corrupted land; saving an animal of an endangered species; performing a Rite of the Freed Spirit	5
Nurturing an endangered species so that its population increases; reclaiming a lost Glade; cleansing a major pollution site	7
Failure to save a small animal from pain; polluting	-1
Failure to save a human's life; losing land to the forces of corruption and pollution	-3
Losing an endangered species to extinction on account of carelessness; losing a Glade to the Wyrm	-5

Valor

Sample Behavior	Award
Participating in a challenge; drawing first blood in combat; being truthful	1
Participating in a hunt; mating	2
Surviving an incapacitating blow; being truthful in the face of extreme adversity	3
Exacting vengeance without seeking it; destroying a betweener (for ocean-dwellers)/evading destruction by ocean-dwellers (for betweeners)	5
Defeating a very powerful Qyrling; dying while protecting a Grotto (posthumous)	7
Actively seeking vengeance	-1
Lying when it is not needed	-3
Refusing to mate	-5

Wisdom

Sample Behavior	Award
Showing mercy to a wayward Changer; discovering a talen; staying at ones post when tempted not to; healing another Changer unselfishly	1
Giving good advice; summoning an Incarna avatar; maintaining good relations with Kinfolk	2
Completing a Spirit Quest successfully; choosing a mate and breeding; teaching another Breedmember	3
Having and properly following a prophetic warning; giving a prophetic warning that comes true later; ending a serious threat without harm to any Breedmembers	5
Discovering or creating a new Gift; participating in a rite to create a Den-Realm	7
Suffering a frenzy; accidentally breaking a talen; using a fetish for selfish reasons only	-1
Having poor relations with Kinfolk; attacking a much more powerful enemy without aid; breaking a fetish	-3
Breaking a powerful and necessary fetish; acting disrespectfully during a Rite	-5

Renown Chart

Ajaba

Rank	Renown Cost
1	3
2	10
3	15
4	20
5	25

Ananasi

Tenere

Rank	Cunning	Obedience	Wisdom
1	0	3	0
2	1	5	1
3	3	7	4
4	4	9	6
5	6	10	7

Hatar

Rank	Cunning	Obedience	Wisdom
1	3	0	0
2	5	1	1
3	7	4	3
4	9	6	4
5	10	7	6

Kumoth

Rank	Cunning	Obedience	Wisdom
1	0	0	3
2	1	1	5
3	4	3	7
4	6	4	9
5	7	6	10

Bastet

Rank	Title	Renown Cost
1	Tekhmet	3
2	Aka	10
3	Tilau	15
4	Hani	20
5	Bon Bhat	25

Corax

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

Gurahl

Rank	Title	Address	Renown Cost
1	Kovi	Child	4
2	Verde	Brother/Sister	8
3	Sorna	Aunt/Uncle	12
4	Talchwi	Mother/Father	24
5	Matae	Grandmother/Grandfather	32

A sixth Rank, occupied by only one Gurahl from each tribe at any one time, has no "title," but Gurahl address that individual as Great Grandmother (or Great Grandfather) or simply "Ancient One." No Renown Cost exists for this Rank, but any Gurahl who meets an Ancient One immediately knows it and acts accordingly.

Kitsune

Dashi

Rank	Title	Chie	Toku	Kagayaki
1	Yakan	2	1	0
2	Kiko	4	3	0
3	Koryo	6	5	1
4	Reiko	8	7	2
5	Tenko	10	9	3

Eji

Rank	Title	Chie	Toku	Kagayaki
1	Yakan	1	1	1
2	Kiko	3	2	2
3	Koryo	4	4	4
4	Reiko	7	5	5
5	Tenko	8	8	6

Gukutsushi

Rank	Title	Chie	Toku	Kagayaki
1	Yakan	2	1	0
2	Kiko	3	3	1
3	Koryo	6	4	2
4	Reiko	8	6	3
5	Tenko	10	8	4

Kataribe

Rank	Title	Chie	Toku	Kagayaki
1	Yakan	1	1	1
2	Kiko	3	3	1
3	Koryo	5	5	2
4	Reiko	7	7	3
5	Tenko	9	9	4

Mokolé-mbembe and Cunnagan (Mokolé)

Striking and Warding

Rank	Title	Glory	Honor	Wisdom
1	Hatchling	1	1	1
2	Son/Daughter	4	2	2
3	Brother/Sister	6	3	3
4	Father/Mother	8	4	4
5	Grandfather/Grandmother	10	5	5

Unshading and Crowning

Rank	Title	Glory	Honor	Wisdom
1	Hatchling	1	1	1
2	Son/Daughter	2	4	2
3	Brother/Sister	3	6	3
4	Father/Mother	4	8	4
5	Grandfather/Grandmother	5	10	5

Concealing and Gathering

Rank	Title	Glory	Honor	Wisdom
1	Hatchling	1	1	1
2	Son/Daughter	2	2	4
3	Brother/Sister	3	3	6
4	Father/Mother	4	4	8
5	Grandfather/Grandmother	5	5	10

Shining

Rank	Title	Renown Cost
1	Hatchling	3
2	Son/Daughter	9
3	Brother/Sister	14
4	Father/Mother	19
5	Grandfather/Grandmother	24

Makara and Zhong Lung (Mokolé)

The Makara and the Zhong Lung use a Renown system that is almost identical with that of the Garou (**Werewolf** p. 185). Their rank titles are different, however, but corresponds with the Garou auspices as the following:

Garou Auspice	Makara	Zhong Lung
Ragabash	Hemanta	Pei Tung
Theurge	Zarad	Sai Chau
Philodox	Grisma	Nam Hsia
Around	Vasanta	Tung Chun

Nagah

Rank	Title
0	Opening Eye
1	Singing Brook
2	Razored Arrow
3	Silken Noose
4	Thunder Chakram
5	Silver Coil
6	Mouth of the Sesha

Nuwisha

Nuwisha gain Renown just as Garou Ragabash do; a specific number of dots spread between the three traits of Glory, Humor and Wisdom. (See **Werewolf**, pg. 185.)

Nuwisha do not introduce themselves by rank, and therefore have no specific rank titles.

Ratkin

Rank	Title	Renown Cost
1	Rakka	3
2	Voto	7
3	Tava	15
4	Teppen	23
5	Rrrrr't	30

Rokea

Brightwater

Rank	Valor	Harmony	Innovation
1	2	(1)	(1)
2	4	2	1
3	7	4	2
4	9	6	4
5	10	8	5

Dimwater

Rank	Valor	Harmony	Innovation
1	(1)	2	(1)
2	5	7	1
3	3	5	0
4	7	9	2
5	8	10	3

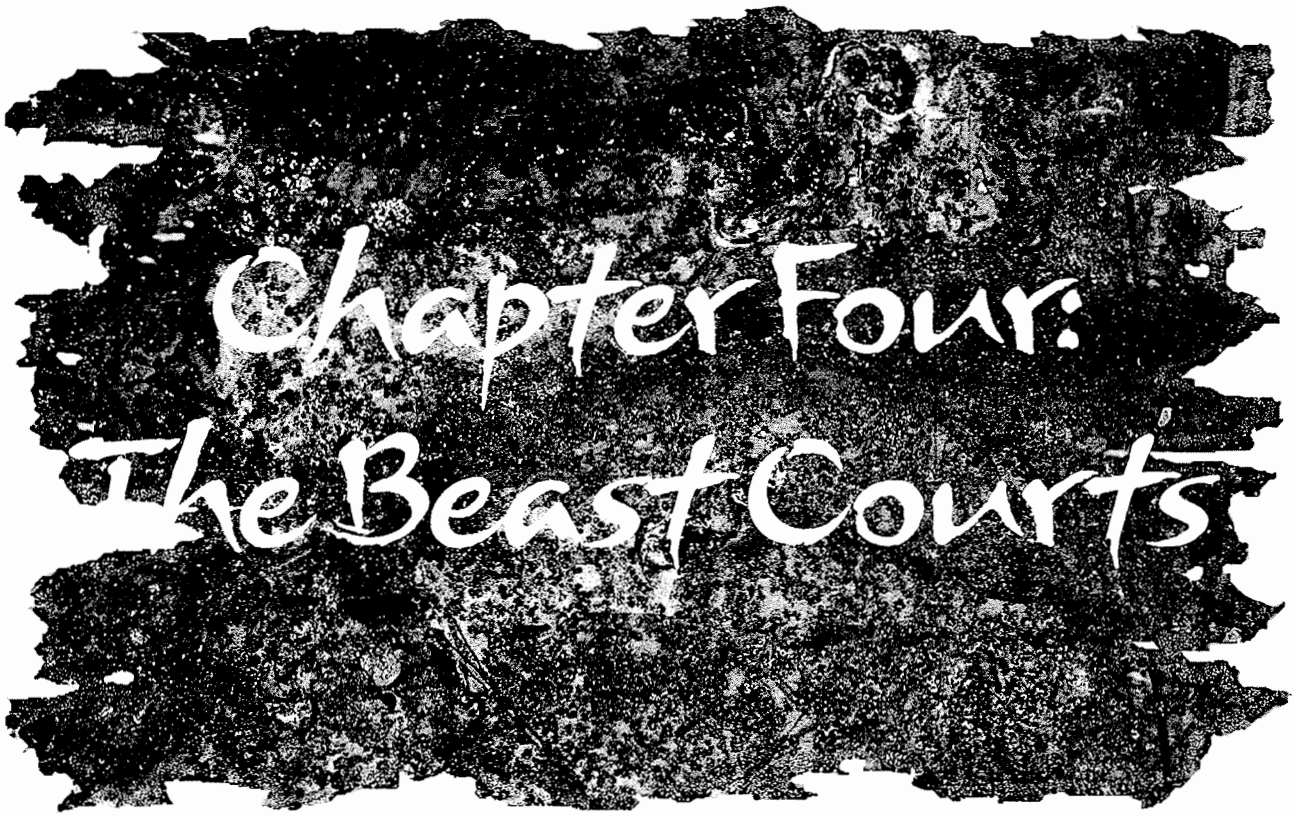
Darkwater

Rank	Valor	Harmony	Innovation
1	(1)	(1)	2
2	1	2	3
3	2	4	6
4	3	6	8
5	4	8	10

Note: All Rank 1 Rokea begin with two dots in a set category, and one she may place in either of the other two categories.







Chapter Four: The Beast Courts

Heaven and Earth are not humane.
They regard all things as straw dogs.
— Lao-Tzu

History of the Beast Courts

The Changing Breeds of the East have evolved into very different creatures from their Western — or Sunset — counterparts. Their appearance and abilities may be similar, but the likeness ends there. The society and culture of these Changing Breeds, who call themselves *hengeyokai*, differs radically from those of the western Fera. Theirs is a history not so much of good and evil, but of alternating currents of positive and negative energy: yin and yang, dark and light, passivity and action. They gather not in a Nation, but in a society of many Breeds with a common purpose — the Beast Courts of the Emerald Mother.

The world of the Beast Courts of the hengeyokai comprises much of Asia as well as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. These lands, which the hengeyokai refer to as the Middle Kingdom, represent the physical manifestation of the meeting of the Yin and Yang realms. The hengeyokai, part spirit and part flesh, see themselves as the guardians of the Middle Kingdom, protectors and devotees of the Emerald Mother, whom the western Changers know as Gaia, and bridges between the animal and human kingdoms.

The Wheel of the Ages and the Great Cycle

To understand the Middle Kingdom and the shapechangers dwelling therein requires a knowledge of the eternal cycle of change and flux known as the Wheel of the Ages. This great pattern of movement from creation to destruction and back to the beginning forms the basis of understanding and practice for all those that do the will of the Emerald Mother. The Wheel of the Ages is nothing less than the story of the world itself — as well as the tale of the worlds before and to come.

The hengeyokai see themselves as part of the Great Cycle of Being, the endless pattern that includes birth and death, mortality and immortality, the repetition of the seasons and the transmutation of spirit to flesh and flesh to spirit. Made of equal parts of both spirit and flesh, the hengeyokai enjoy a unique place within the Great Cycle. They embody the principle of change in the many forms of their bodies and in their ability to cross between the physical and spiritual realms, between the Middle Kingdom and the Mirror Lands.

The Wheel of the Ages, a procession of twelve stages of change set into motion by the Emerald Mother when time and history first began, moves inexorably through the eons. Each spoke of the wheel equates to one age; as the wheel turns, so do the times reflect the lesson contained within that particular age. The hengeyokai devote themselves to understanding those lessons and helping the Wheel of the Ages turn so that the pattern set forth by the Emerald Mother may be complete.

This is the story of the world, as the hengeyokai tell it.

Age of the Dawning

In the beginning, only one thing existed. This thing constituted all things that were yet to be. Time and space did not exist apart from each other. Matter and spirit were one and were part of the one thing that was. Some call this age the Age of Ten-Thousand Truths, for all the stories of creation, all the tales that explain the origin of the many things, have their roots in this Age — and all those tales are true tales.

Others call this age the Dawn of Time, before the birth of all things from the womb of the Emerald Mother. This was a time of perfection. The hengeyokai did not exist apart from everything else in this age. They were not needed as a balance or bridge between matter and spirit; this division did not yet exist.

The First Age came to an end when the Emerald Mother gave birth to the San Yuan, which western Fera call the Triat. The emergence of the Wyld, the Weaver and the Wyrm began the cycle of creation and destruction and broke apart the union and harmony of the one thing.

The lesson of the First Age is divinity. All things come from the one thing, which was perfect and, therefore, divine. All things long to return to that perfect state of divinity — and this is the start of the turning of the Wheel of the Ages.

Age of the Ten Thousand Things

With the birth of the Triat, the Great Cycle of Being sprang into movement. The Wheel began turning. The San Yuan gave birth to an abundance of things — plants, animals, rocks, mountains — taking spirit and wrapping it with flesh, giving it substance and differentiating one thing from another. The Weaver tried to name all that she created from the stuff of the Wyld, working as fast as she could before the Wyrm destroyed what she created to make room for more new ideas-made flesh.

The world formed at this time as land and water parted — giving birth to the Middle Kingdom. Spirit creatures bickered with one another; creatures of matter did the same. Great objects fell from the newly created sky and tore the world apart, only to have it reshaped and refilled with new creatures.

The dynamic process of birth and death, of creation and destruction, took firm hold on the world. During this time, humans came into being, filled with intelligence and an adaptability that made them different from all the other animals and spirits.

The Yama Kings came forth from the Yomi World, the realm of the Wyrm and of destruction. Facing them, opposing them, were the Ministers of Heaven, also known by Western Fera as Incarnae. These two forces fell to fighting for dominion over the world; soon, it became clear that the Serpent of Balance, the Wyrm in its original form, had fallen into corruption, seeking to destroy the balance and bring about total destruction. Thus was born the Centipede, the instrument of Corruption.

One of the most powerful Ministers of Heaven, known as the August Personage, selected humans to defend the earth from the Centipede. Imbuing them with spirit and granting them great powers, he sent them to Earth, where they were known as the Wan Xian, or Ten Thousand Immortals. Likewise, the Wyld created her own protectors — the *hsien* — spirit clothed in fleshy shells, like the fae of the West.

The Emerald Mother, however, understood the need for an equal bond between flesh and spirit. She took humans and beasts and bound them together, using the strongest and fiercest of spirits. With the blessings of the Sun and Moon to seal the balance, Gaia gave birth to the hengeyokai and gave them their purpose — to act as Her defenders and, by fighting Her enemies, as the protectors of the Ten Thousand Things.

During the Second Age, the hengeyokai made the Great Pact with their spirit brothers and sisters, swearing to honor them and to come to their aid in return for mutual assistance on the part of the spirits. Only the Banes, spirit children of the Centipede, stayed away from the Pact, having made their own arrangements with their creator and with the Yama Kings.

The lesson of the Second Age is creation. Everything that exists has a purpose. Nothing is created uselessly or without reason. With the coming of the hengeyokai, everything was set into place for the Great Wheel to turn again. And so it did.

Age of Legends

This Age, the Third Age of the Great Cycle, is a time to remember when the nights are coldest and the world seems to hold no light. It was a time of heroes, when all the hengeyokai rallied to war in the name of the Emerald Mother. Fighting alongside the Wan Xian and the great dragons, the shapechanging children of the Emerald Mother battled the armies of the Yama Kings, bringing the art of High War to its greatest peak.

During this time, legends came to life, and tales that are still told to inspire the young and old had their roots. The armies of the Emerald Mother drove the Yama Kings back to the Yomi Lands. All the hengeyokai did their part, Wolf's children and the sons and daughters of Tiger proved particularly fierce in their task of ridding Gaia of the creatures of the Centipede. No one shirked her duty. The children of the great dragons, the Zhong Lung, fought the minions of the Yama Kings with particular ferocity. When the Yama Kings fled the world, the Zhong Lung followed them, bringing the fight to the Yomi Lands.

That was their greatest mistake, and it cost them dearly. In their pride and over-zealousness, the children of the great dragons gave the advantage of home territory to their enemy. The Zhong Lung died in great numbers, a loss from which they have never completely recovered — all because they forgot the First Mandate and took on a task that was not theirs to undertake.

The lesson of the Age of Legends is twofold. The first lesson is that of acceptance — of knowing the task assigned by the Emerald Mother and fulfilling that task instead of searching for greater glory or responsibility. The second lesson is that of cooperation — of realizing that the Emerald Mother created many kinds of hengeyokai and that She had a reason for creating each one. All Her children were meant to work together in harmony to accomplish their tasks and thus keep in harmony with the Great Cycle of Being.

Age of Testing

The Fourth Age, the Age of Testing, marked the first quarter-turn of the Wheel of the Ages and began the inexorable descent into the dark half of the Wheel. Marked by blood and betrayal, this Age also coincides with the emergence of humans into the tide of history. Though mortal men and women had existed since the time of Ten Thousand Things, humans had not yet come to an understanding of their true power. The Wan Xian, guardians of humans, had previously kept their numbers to acceptable levels and had ensured that these intelligent and enterprising creatures did not encroach too noticeably on the Emerald Mother's verdant lands.

Now the Wan Xian grew greedy and saw the increase in human numbers as one of the ways to power. They thirsted, as well, for the Chi power that resided in the sacred places of the hengeyokai. These beloved children of the August Personage fell to the temptations of power and greed, sent to them, undoubtedly by the Centipede's wiles. In their fall from grace, however, they also threatened the unity of the Beast Courts.

They used their subtle ways to set one court against another and, just as the Western lands became the battleground for the War of Rage among their Changing Breeds, the Middle Kingdom served as the staging ground for the War of Shame.

Although the hengeyokai eventually discovered who had played them false, the damage was done. The Okuma, the children of Bear, left the world because of the tragedy played out before them. They have not been seen since. The trust between the hengeyokai and the Wan Xian — now known as the Kuei-jin — was broken.

The Nagah went into hiding, and remain in the shadows for the most part, to this day. The Kumo, wholly given to the Centipede, feasted on the blood of all the other hengeyokai and strengthened their webs.

The Lesson of the Fourth Age is suspicion. The hengeyokai need allies to accomplish the work of the Emerald Mother, but they cannot always trust those with whom they compact. Neither can they depend on the same solution to solve every problem.

Change is constant and a questioning heart is the best approach to the ever-changing cycle and the ever-turning wheel.

Age of Shadows

The Fifth Age coincides with the coming of the Westerners to the Middle Kingdom. Known as the Age of Shadows, this time presages the darker ages to come as the Great Wheel dips fully into its darkest cycle. The Kuei-jin seldom work as anything other than rivals while the hsien grow fainter and fainter as the webs of the Weaver grow stronger. The power of humans increases while their hearts fall more completely to the wiles of the Corrupter.

The Great Dragons sleep, leaving only their lesser children, the Zhong Lung, to remind the hengeyokai of the times of greatness that once existed. The future grows daily darker, and Westerners speak of a great catastrophe — and Apocalypse — that will mean the end of all things.

The hengeyokai hold true to their belief in the Great Cycle of Being, knowing that this Age is but a necessary precursor to an even darker time that is not the end of all things, but a new stage in the turning of the Wheel.

The lesson of the Fifth Age has yet to be determined, for only when an age has passed and a new time has begun can the meaning of the last age come clear.

Age of Sorrow

The world hovers on the verge of the Sixth Age, and it is not an age for happiness. This time represents the nadir of the Great Wheel of the Ages. From the perfection of oneness, creation has splintered into many factions. From unity has come chaos and the Sixth Age epitomizes that chaos. A great darkness hangs over the future; only a few dare to see the light that glimmers faintly beyond.

The hengeyokai, born as guardians of the Emerald Mother, know that one thing must lead to another, according to the Great Cycle of Being. The Wheel of the Ages must turn to utter darkness before it can begin its movement back toward the light. Only by passing through a time of utter

Hengeyokai Lexicon

Bakemono: A fomor; fomori.

Dragon Nest: A caern.

Gai'nan: A ranking court official; "magistrate."

Hsien: Eastern fae.

Kuei-jin: The vampire-like undead of the East.

Mirror Lands: The spirit world.

Namebreaker: A human mage; one who misuses the power of Naming.

San Yuan: The Triat.

Sentai: A mixed war party, or "pack," of hengeyokai. Mountain sentai are permanent groups bonded by a totem; wave sentai are temporary alliances.

Shen: Supernatural beings; vampires, werebeasts and the like.

Sunset People: Western shapechangers; the term references the Westerners' fatalism as much as their place of origin.

Tapestry: The Near Umbra.

Yang World: The Deep Umbra.

Yin World: The Dark Umbra.

corruption and despair can the Wheel move again into the light of perfection.

There are those, mostly in the West, who seek to halt the turning of the Wheel, thinking that by averting what they call the Apocalypse, they can preserve what is left of the Emerald Mother's vision. They are wrong.

The Wheel must turn.

Future Ages

What happens when the Sixth Age passes into the Seventh Age, as it must? Only the Emerald Mother and Her equals in the Celestial and Infernal Courts know for certain. The hengeyokai can only infer that, just as life gives way to death in order to make room for more life, the Great Cycle of Being will push the Wheel of the Ages away from darkness toward an upward cycle of growing perfection.

When that time approaches, the light of Gaia's perfection will outshine the darkness of the Wyrm's corruption and the Weaver's webs will once more unite all things into one perfect, harmonious whole — and the Great Cycle will begin again.

Organization and Society

Unlike Western shapechangers, who tend to keep to themselves and generally distrust other Breeds, the hengeyokai by necessity cooperate and coexist with one another. Calling themselves the Beast Courts of the Emerald Mother, they use their system of "courts" to unite the varying Breeds while maintaining their distinct purposes.

The Beast Courts hold most of their caerns in common and tend to have septs that contain members from several of the Changing Breeds. Even their smallest working unit, the sentai, frequently consists of more than one hengeyokai Breed. Any hengeyokai who swears fealty to the Emerald Mother and follows the Way of Emerald Virtue may join the Beast Courts, even if they come from the strange Sunset Lands of the West.

Not all the hengeyokai belong to the Beast Courts. The Kumo, or Asian werespiders, have given their service to the Great Centipede and eschew the Beast Courts of the Emerald Mother. The Khan divide themselves between the Beast Courts and the Bastet, while the Glass Walkers of Hong Kong and Japan have not yet pledged themselves wholly to the Emerald Mother, though individuals from those groups have cast their lot with the Beast Courts. Those who remain apart, however, recognize and respect the Beast Courts and work with them when mutual concerns dictate cooperation.

Hengeyokai who belong to the Beast Courts differ from those who do not because they follow a Renown system, known as the Way of Emerald Virtue, which emphasizes different values than the Western systems of Renown followed by the Changing Breeds. This Renown system rewards those who follow their chosen auspice, determined not by their birth but by certain rituals designed to disclose a hengeyokai's role in the Courts.

Just as not all hengeyokai give service to the Beast Courts, some hengeyokai who do belong to the Beast Courts uphold the Renown systems of their Changing Breed rather than the Way of Emerald Virtue. These hengeyokai serve the Emerald Mother but do not fully adhere to all the ways of the Beast Courts.

Hengeyokai that hold official positions in the Courts' sacred places or that bond together in a mountain sentai usually follow the traditional Way of Emerald Virtue, giving themselves fully to the Beast Courts.

Those belonging to the Beast Courts also follow a common code of behavior, called the Mandates, rather than the individual Litany or Laws of their breed. This common set of dos and don'ts ensures that the hengeyokai of the Beast Courts share the same laws, which take precedence over the individual codes of the various Changing Breeds. This helps minimize disputes when the Mandates conflict with one or another of the Litanies.

When such conflicts do arise, however, hengeyokai who adhere to their Breed's Litany or Laws may cite the First Mandate to support their actions.

The Courts

Each hengeyokai caern, or dragon's nest, has a court to guard it. In many ways, a caern's court occupies the same position as that of a sept in Western lands. Many of the hengeyokai belonging to the court live there, following a highly structured hierarchy of offices, not unlike the Garou pecking order. In past Ages, the various courts were elaborate structures containing many positions and requiring a thorough knowledge of etiquette in order to negotiate the maze of protocol and ceremonies. In the present Age, however, the courts have diminished and only a few offices remain functional. These offices, however, do hold great power within the court. The number of hengeyokai is on the decline, just as the Changing Breeds diminish in the Sunset Lands. Now each hengeyokai caern must struggle to maintain a few sentai to carry out the wishes of the court and the Emerald Mother.

One thing all the courts agree on, however, is that each hengeyokai race has its rightful position in the Courts of the Mother. From the regal Khan to the lowly Nezumi, all are honored for their chosen role and respected for the part they play in the greater whole.

The Kumo form the sole exception to this harmony. The Goblin Spiders, sworn to the service of the Centipede, have set themselves the role or adversaries to the rest of the hengeyokai Courts. Nevertheless, the Beast Courts respect them as worthy enemies, even honoring any ambassadors sent by the Kumo to the Courts. Such visitors are watched carefully, though, to make certain that they do not violate any of the protocols and that they behave with the utmost propriety during their stay at the Courts. Occasionally, the hengeyokai and the Kumo find themselves drawn into a temporary alliance against a common enemy. These alliances are short-lived, however, and Kumo do not, as a rule, join the Beast Courts.

Offices

There are four official positions that are common to most Beast Courts. Called Gai'nan, or "magistrate," each position helps to uphold the framework of hengeyokai society and keep order within the caern. While some larger caerns may add minor positions such as Questioner of the Law or Herald of All Tongues, the four magistrate positions described below are essential to the smooth functioning of any hengeyokai caern and can usually be found in even the smallest dragon's nest.

• **Regent** — The elder who holds this title occupies the highest position in the caern hierarchy. Responsible for the well-being of the court's members, the regent also interprets and upholds the laws, serves as judge in any disputes that might arise and decides what duties the court should assume. Chosen by the acclaim of members of the court, rather than elected, the regent must also receive the approval of the Court of Ancestors, which is petitioned when the regent is named.

Members of the court watch the regent's every move closely, for she must serve as an example to all her underlings. She must make sure to uphold the Mandates and preserve all the traditions that keep the court together or else suffer great loss of face and Renown for her shortcomings.

In times of crisis, the regent may be removed from office by the other Gai'nan, but only if she fails to listen to the suggestions and recommendations of the other magistrates and makes inauspicious decisions regarding the court. If at any time, the regent acts against the court's best interests or in clear violation of the Mandates, the other court officials have the right to replace her with a more suitable temporary or permanent regent.

If, however, the Gai'nan cannot prove that they acted out of necessity in removing the regent, they stand to lose much Renown for acting against a regent approved by the Emerald Mother and the Court of Ancestors.

• **General** — The general serves as war-leader to a hengeyokai court. Much as the Garou Warder bears the ultimate responsibility for the defense of the caern, the general undertakes the task of training the members of the court for both offensive and defensive actions on behalf of the caern and the Emerald Mother. In the past, this training usually consisted of traditional ways of both High and Low war. Today, generals may be more comfortable using modern methods of war, including commando and guerrilla tactics as well high-tech defenses.

While the general's influence within the court may vary depending on the political situation surrounding his court, the state of near constant war against the Centipede's encroachments as well as the depredations of human society usually mean that the general's words and actions are seldom ignored. The safety of the caern may rest with the general's requests for supplies, funding or other necessities.

• **Seer** — The seer serves as the spiritual liaison between the caern and the inhabitants of the Mirror Lands (the spirit world), working in the same capacity as the Garou Master of Rites. The hengeyokai holding this position is responsible for summoning and commanding spirits when necessary, for overseeing the rituals and rites that bind sentai, and for requesting favors or Gifts from the spirits.

The seer enjoys great personal power within the caern, a factor that makes her vulnerable to corruption through ambition or greed. In addition, the seer's position as mediator between the spirit and physical worlds places her in a high-visibility role in the spirit world; thus, she is often the first target for a concerted attack on the caern by Umbral minions of the Centipede or the Yama Kings. Because of this vulnerability, most seers usually have at least one successor in training in case the worst should happen.

• **Historian** — This position involves keeping the oral traditions of the hengeyokai in general and the caern in particular alive and close to the members of the court. The historian must learn by heart the history of the caern, the legends of the hengeyokai, and other important pieces of lore, thus making himself a walking library accessible to all members of the court. He also receives reports from scouts, for he is best at piecing together disparate bits of information and, thus, interpreting current events for the other Gai'nan.

Historians usually spend a lifetime in training for this role and are, therefore, chosen soon after their First Change. Zhong Lung are ideal for the role of historian, though metis hengeyokai of any breed are also suitable since they live their early lives in the court surrounded by all the information resources at the court's disposal.

• **Sentai** — The primary action unit of a court, similar in nature to a Garou pack, the sentai has its own special place in court. Mountain sentai, bound together for long-term actions, often enjoy a reprieve from other court duties because of the importance of their work. Wave sentai, formed for more temporary reasons, do not have the same concessions and may, in fact, be made up of hengeyokai from more than one court.

• **Courtiers** — Those hengeyokai who do not hold one of the four major offices and who do not belong to a sentai act as courtiers. Though they have lesser roles, they are still vital to the well-being of the court. Larger courts often assign minor positions of responsibility to courtiers; these hengeyokai may also act as assistants and apprentices to those holding key positions in the court. They, too, must follow the Mandates and conduct themselves in ways that meet with the approval of their peers and the Emerald Mother. Most wise regents make certain that every member of their court has a role to play in the upkeep of hengeyokai society.

The Mandates

When the Emerald Mother first brought the Beast Courts into being, She instituted a code of laws to maintain harmony and cooperation among the various courts. Hengeyokai legend claims that the Emerald Mother gave these laws, known as the Mandates, directly to the First Regent of the First Court.

These laws are considered the wishes of Gaia Herself and all hengeyokai loyal to the Beast Courts are expected to obey the Mandates to the best of their ability. Even though different Breeds cast their own interpretation onto the Mandates, their existence as a common code of behavior is often the only unifying bond among otherwise fractious hengeyokai Breeds.

Of all the Mandates, the First and Final Mandates hold the most importance. These two laws form the lynchpin upon which hengeyokai society hinges. While the First Mandate serves to keep each hengeyokai Breed mindful of the purpose for which they were created, the Final Mandate ensures that the lifeblood of the Emerald Mother continues to flow unimpeded by Weaver or Wyrm. While violations of the other mandates usually receive swift and often harsh punishment, violation of either the First or Final Mandates is met with the most prolonged and excruciating penalties.

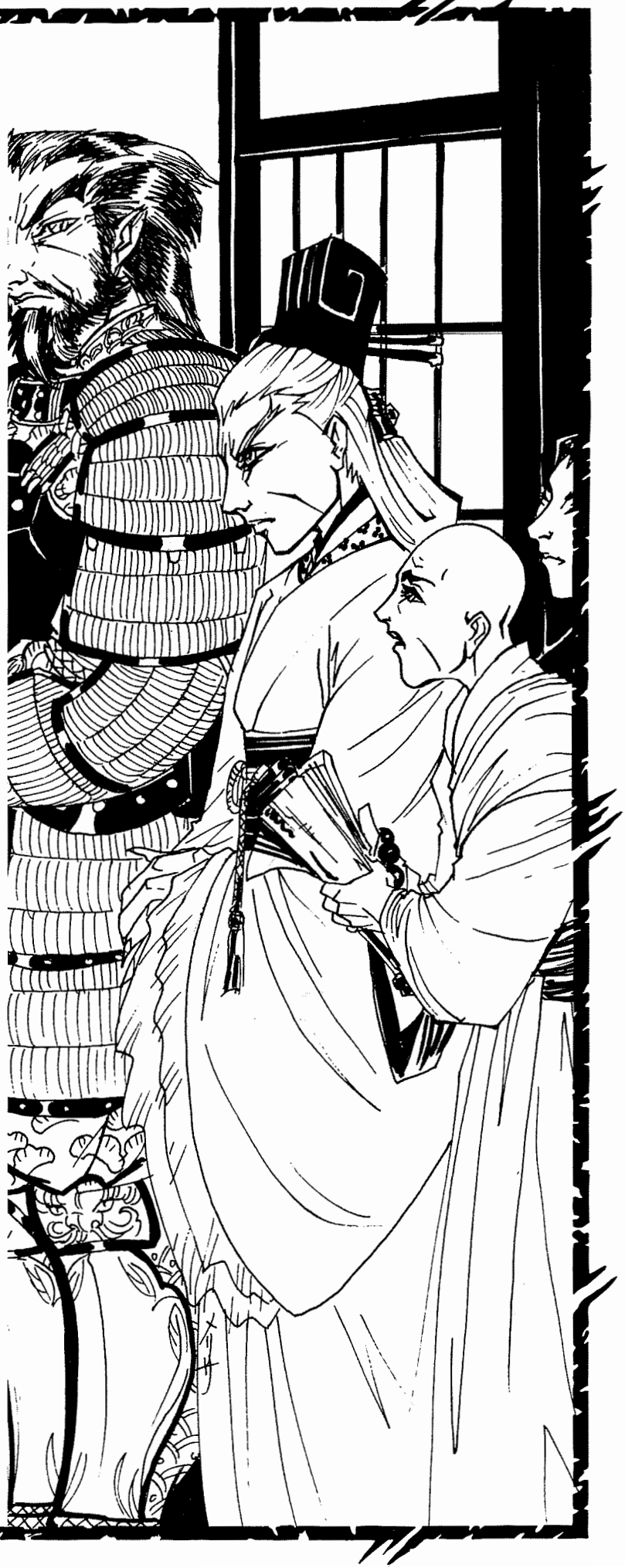
Shirk Not the Tasks Which Have Been Given You

The Emerald Mother created each hengeyokai Breed with a specific purpose. She made the Hakken Garou to fight the Wyrm, the Tengu to uncover hidden things, the Nezumi to keep humans from overwhelming the balance, the Zhong Lung to hold the memories of the world, the Khan to gather the Wyrm's secrets and serve as warriors, the Nagah to act as judges (and sometimes executioners) for the hengeyokai and the Same-Bito to defend the Mother's seas. No hengeyokai may refuse to fulfill her purpose. Because of this mandate, no hengeyokai can abandon her duty in order to live a normal "human" life without facing retribution from her peers. Usually, hengeyokai who violate this Mandate suffer the punishment of the Rite of Quiet Burial.

Reality: Occasionally, a hengeyokai is born into one Breed but is better suited in the role of another. A naturally weak Hakken may serve the Emerald Mother better as a collector of information, the prerogative of the Tengu, for example. As long as the balance is kept, some leeway is allowed; but there must be an appropriate task at hand. A Hakken who turns to information gathering must devote his attention to information concerning the court's wars, and is usually expected to become a strategist. To ignore the duty to contribute in war is to not be Hakken, and therefore in violation of the Mandate.

Guard the Wheel That It May Turn in Fullness

The Wheel of the Ages must go through its entire cycle in order to achieve the state of perfection that once existed during the First Age. The hengeyokai know that they are the guardians of the Wheel and that it is their job to make certain that the Fifth or present Age flows into the Sixth, regardless of the bloodshed associated with that darkest of times. Some of the *shen*, the Kuei-



jin in particular, would prefer to stop the Wheel in an age that favors them, but the Emerald Mother's changing children know their purpose and dedicate their lives to the turning of the Wheel.

Reality: Some hengeyokai actually wish to reverse the Wheel, sending it back to the time of the First Age without going through the dark cycle. These reactionaries are rare, however, and hide their motives from the Courts. Most hengeyokai put more trust in the wisdom of the Emerald Mother.

Presume Not to Instruct Your Cousin in His Task

This law prevents hengeyokai from stepping on one another's toes. Warriors should not tell scholars or scouts how to do their job, while those who deal primarily with the spirit world and enact rites and rituals should not tell warriors how to fight their battles. The Third Mandate enforces acts of trust upon the hengeyokai; not only must they trust one another to perform the tasks they are most suited for, they must also see that they, themselves, live up to their purpose. Only the Nagah have the right to presume on the deeds of other hengeyokai, since they act as judges. Even they, however, may only punish those who betray their purpose and the Emerald Mother; they have no jurisdiction over the merely incompetent.

Reality: The politics of the hengeyokai courts lends itself to gossip and meddling, so this Mandate often gets stretched to its limit. While courtiers do not usually openly challenge the actions of others, they may spread rumors and gossip of a pejorative nature.

Honor Your Territory in All Things

Each hengeyokai court is responsible for maintaining its caern in good order, keeping the spirits associated with the caern placated and cooperative and seeing to the health and well-being of the local Kinfolk. How they do this is largely left up to the internal customs and traditions of each Breed.

Reality: Conflicts among supernaturals often involve people, places or spirits that fall under the aegis of hengeyokai "territory." The most common battles involve hengeyokai and any Kuei-jin who prey upon Kinfolk or other protected groups or individuals.

Let Mercy Guide You in Our August Mother's Courts

This Mandate is necessary when dealing with groups of supernaturals subject to Rage or frenzy. The Fifth Mandate dictates tolerance and cooperation among the hengeyokai and requires the Asian shapechangers to control their anger so as not to waste their aggressive tendencies on one another.

Reality: Western shapechangers and other foreign supernaturals are often considered fair game and are not protected by this Mandate.

Honor Your Ancestors and Your Elders

Asian cultures in general pay special attention to honoring their living elders and their dead ancestors. So, too, do the hengeyokai hold those who are older and wiser in reverence, listening to their wisdom and learning from their experience. Hengeyokai often perform rituals to honor their ancestor-spirits in addition to honoring the elders of their courts and their Breeds.

Reality: This Mandate is not a particularly hard one to keep, since so much of it is bound in traditional practices. A few of the younger hengeyokai may question the wisdom of their elders but they usually learn better. Rarely do hengeyokai fail to honor their ancestor-spirits, since they have learned that it does not pay to neglect their Umbral relations.

Honor the Pacts With the Spirit World

Hengeyokai are creatures of flesh and spirit, and it only makes sense that they pay proper homage to the spirits of the Yang world. This obeisance serves as a reminder of the ties that bind the hengeyokai to their spirit kin and of the ancient pacts forged between spirits and animals in the Second Age.

Reality: Again, young hengeyokai sometimes question the traditions of their elders, particularly if they are drawn to Western culture. They usually discover, however, that the old ways are the best for them. Spirits help those who remember to honor them, so even the most radical hengeyokai learn that they cannot perform their duties without aid from the spirits.

War Not Upon Human Nor Beast

This Mandate serves a dual purpose. First, it reminds the hengeyokai that they, too, have both animal and human natures and that they should honor both halves by refraining from war against either. Second, this law prevents hengeyokai from declaring war on groups of creatures, whether in an attempt to curb human populations with another Impergium or in a catastrophic war against other hengeyokai Breeds such as occurred during the War of Shame.

This does not prevent hengeyokai from attacking individuals or small groups of humans or animals that have made themselves enemies of the Emerald Mother. Deaths often occur when carrying out the work of Gaia, but these should never be the purpose of a hengeyokai action.

Reality: This Mandate has had an ironic effect among the Hakken, who have become so enmeshed in Japanese culture that they have lost much of their connection with their wolf nature. Other hengeyokai have varying degrees of contact with human society. The Tengu indulge their fascination with humans from a distance, while the Nezumi see this Mandate as preventing them from using the arts of High War against humans. They see no problem with using more subtle forms of Low War to control the human population, since such is their purpose according to the First Mandate.

Let No One or Nothing Violate the Sacred Places

This Mandate, along with the First Mandate, defines what it means to be hengeyokai. The sacred places, where the power of the Emerald Mother gathers, keeps the spirit world alive and allows the Great Wheel to continue turning. To let any of these places fall, either from neglect or betrayal, constitutes one of the most heinous crimes against the Emerald Mother. Any hengeyokai who betrays a dragon nest to its enemies is punished, if discovered, with the fearsome Rite of Hell Made Flesh.

Reality: Betrayals do occur, since even the hengeyokai are not immune to corruption. The punishment for such an action, however, is horrible enough to give many potential traitors cause to rethink their actions.

The Sentai: Groups in Action

Sentai, or war parties, arise among the hengeyokai in accordance with ancient traditions and with the approval of the Court of Ancestors and the spirits of the Mirror Lands. While they serve the same purpose as Garou packs, sentai also usually include more than one hengeyokai Breed. Some sentai come together out of immediate necessity and dissolve when the need has passed. Other sentai form with the intention of staying together for an indefinite period of time and devote themselves to the ongoing service of their court and the Emerald Mother.

According to tradition, the ideal sentai consists of five members. The number five is most pleasing to the spirits since it has so many correspondences: the five cardinal directions, five elements and five phases of the Moon. To correctly balance a sentai and ensure the most auspicious beginning of a hengeyokai war party, each element and direction should be represented once and only once. Furthermore, each member has an assigned task to perform within the sentai.

Mountain Sentai

Mountain sentai form for long-term purposes. Members of a mountain sentai owe unswerving and complete loyalty to the Courts of the Emerald Mother. Each member puts her sentai above herself and fulfills her task in accordance with the ancient traditions. Mountain sentai choose a common totem in the manner of Garou packs. The bonds between members of mountain sentai are strong and lasting. All members of mountain sentai usually follow the Way of Emerald Virtue as their system of Renown.

Wave Sentai

Wave sentai, like the natural phenomenon that gives them their name, are transient and ephemeral, though no less important than mountain sentai. Formed often on the spur of the moment to respond to an immediate need, members of the wave sentai need not follow the common Renown system of the Beast Courts. In fact, some rare wave sentai consist of Western shapechangers, trusted Namebreakers or other trusted non-shapechangers as well as standard hengeyokai. They take no common totem and need not do anything more than cooperate in the task at hand.

Auspices

Among the hengeyokai, auspices do not depend on the time of birth or the phase of the moon; rather, auspices refer to the particular role a hengeyokai fulfills within her sentai. How well an Eastern changer performs her assigned task determines how much Renown she receives according to her auspice.

Both mountain and wave sentai ideally include one member of each auspice in order to attract the most auspicious luck from the spirit world. Mountain sentai that do not have enough members to represent each of the five auspices may still function, though they are considered inauspicious and unfinished. Similarly, wave sentai do not have to have a member of each auspice in their group, but if they ignore the tradition, they may find themselves beset by bad luck.

Lantern

The Lantern serves as the heart or beacon of the sentai. Usually the leader of the group, the Lantern directs the actions of the sentai and binds the members together into an efficiently functioning whole. While the Lantern may cede his leadership to other auspices under the proper circumstances — such as allowing the Fist to command in battle and encouraging the Leaf to direct scouting and stealth missions — he maintains his position as guiding light and chief decision maker for the sentai. Wisdom and good judgment are prerequisites for this demanding role. Renown comes easily to Lanterns who excel in their assigned role.

Concepts: Mediator, executive, hero, director, teacher, judge, police lieutenant

Fist

The Fist acts as primary war-leader for the sentai. Skilled in weapons, martial arts or simply knowledgeable in the ways of war and willing to put himself on the front lines, the Fist takes the lead whenever the sentai faces an enemy on the field of battle. Since hengeyokai possess at least some degree of Rage, battles are often inevitable; hence, the Fist occupies a place of primary importance within the context of the sentai. This auspice concerns itself with both offense and defense, for sometimes avoiding combat by not offering a weak spot to an enemy is the best way to victory. Gaining Renown in battle requires more than just bravery; skilled Fists must show a good command of tactics and the ability to act wisely in combat.

Concepts: Martial artist, weaponsmaster, professional soldier, hit man, hunter

Mirror

The Mirror acts as the tongue of the sentai, speaking to allies and, occasionally, enemies in both the physical world and the Mirror Lands. She contacts the spirits on behalf of the sentai, approaches individuals or groups who might form alliances and often defuses tense situations that might otherwise result in combat. The Mirror provides magical

support for the sentai with her well-developed arsenal of Gifts. While this role is fraught with danger, since Mirrors are often targets for spirit attacks, hengeyokai who show wisdom in this role gain great Renown.

Concepts: Seer, mystic, healer, ritemaster, orator, sorcerer

Leaf

The Leaf acts as the sentai's eyes and ears in hidden places. She serves as a scout, spymaster and information analyst. Her cleverness and circumspectness are her chief assets, since she risks much in her practice of stealth. At times, the Leaf may act as an assassin, when the arts of Low War suit the sentai's purposes. She risks much, but in return, gains much glory if she is successful. A responsible sentai does not hesitate to use their Leaf to advantage, but when she falls into trouble, they also act without hesitation to rescue her from danger.

Concepts: Spy, hacker, detective, tracker, assassin, escape artist

Pillar

The Pillar is the workhorse of the sentai; seldom occupying center stage or a position of leadership, the Pillar acts as a support to the other members of the sentai. A steady influence on the more focused members, the Pillar provides inspiration, physical backup and any other kind of needed assistance. Usually, the Pillar is a competent fighter who is well-versed in other skills as well. Not a specialist, the Pillar can often fill in for any position if a sentai member falls in battle or needs rescuing from an enemy. While not as glamorous a role as the other auspices, Pillars may gain Renown by providing constant assistance to their comrades.

Concepts: Philosopher, jack-of-all-trades, medic, lorekeeper, foot soldier, technician

Changing Auspices

Occasionally, the disbanding of a sentai or some other major event may signal a change in a hengeyokai's chosen role. While hengeyokai seldom change auspices, letting the wisdom of the Emerald Mother dictate her chosen path, anyone who feels strongly that she needs to undertake a different role may do so by undergoing the Rite of the Second Face. Undergoing this rite more than once is believed to bring bad luck upon the fickle individual.

Courtiers who decide to abandon the Way of Emerald Virtue and devote themselves primarily to the ways of their Changing Breed may do so by undergoing the Rite of the Great Burden. Doing so means that the hengeyokai may no longer learn Gifts peculiar to the path she has forsaken. For the most part, hengeyokai seldom veer from their destined auspice or path.

The Way of Emerald Virtue

The Beast Courts of the hengeyokai follow a Renown system known as the Way of Emerald Virtue. Rather than taking into account the particulars of each Changing Breed represented in the Beast Courts, the Way of Emerald Virtue emphasizes the common threads that unite all the hengeyokai breeds and set them apart from other *shen*. This system grants rewards and respect to those who follow the Mandates given to the hengeyokai by the Emerald Mother, who serve as faithful courtiers within the Beast Courts, who distinguish themselves in their sentai or who otherwise act to defend Gaia's sacred places in the Middle Kingdom.

Renown

The Renown system contained within the Way of Emerald Virtue recognizes three categories, distributed among six auspices: the five-fold auspices represented in a sentai as well as a sixth auspice, that of courtier. Courtiers take a less active role in the outside world than the other five auspices; nevertheless, they use their skills to maintain and defend the caern itself.

Even though hengeyokai Renown consists of three types, all Eastern Changers know that the three categories are intermixed. Hengeyokai who pursue Virtue may also accrue Glory and Wisdom in the process, while Glory cannot truly manifest without Wisdom and Virtue nor can Wisdom express itself without taking Glory and Virtue into consideration. Regardless of which category is primary in a particular auspice, hengeyokai of all auspices recognize the importance of all three types of Renown in preserving personal balance and harmony.

Gaining and Losing Renown

Hengeyokai gain Renown by acting in accordance with their auspice and distinguishing themselves in the eyes of their peers, their elders, the Court of Ancestors and the Emerald Mother. Renown is awarded in court ceremonies, though occasionally a hengeyokai may receive an immediate reward on the field of battle for extraordinary actions.

Losing Renown causes great loss of face to any hengeyokai so unfortunate as to do so. To lose Renown by acting against one's auspice or by committing shameful acts is considered barbaric behavior, typical perhaps of ignorant Western shapechangers but not expected of civilized hengeyokai. Poor behavior, acting contrary to the dictates of auspice or manifesting base qualities such as cowardice or greed usually results in heavy losses of Renown. Not only does the offending hengeyokai lose Renown for her wrongheaded action, but she also loses Renown due to the shame of losing Renown! The hengeyokai demand much. Where rewards are great, losses are equally great.

Glory

Glory speaks for itself — risking one's life on the battlefield against the Centipede's armies, valiantly defending a dragon nest from attack by hostile Namebreakers thirsty for the power contained within it, overcoming overwhelming odds to achieve an important mission for the Emerald Mother. These deeds spring from the lips of Court historians. But Glory also includes less glamorous actions, as long as they embody courage, steadfastness and loyalty.

Useless deaths or ritual suicide does not earn Glory Renown. The hengeyokai know that their numbers are so few that useless death does not add to the cause of the Emerald Mother. Those who live bravely and fight honorably and fiercely accomplish more than those that die gloriously but to no effect.

Virtue

Virtue Renown includes holding fast to the Mandates, cultivating honesty, integrity, compassion and civility in one's everyday dealings and striving to live in perfect accordance with the Great Cycle of Being and the Wheel of the Ages. Where Western shapechangers might consider these qualities to be contained within their definition of Honor, hengeyokai recognize that honor carries many meanings. To the Hakken, honor requires living up to the code of the warrior; the Nezumi, however, have a different definition of honor. Virtue, however, consists of living up to the standards set out for each particular hengeyokai breed, rather than behaving according to a specific set of morals. Nezumi earn Virtue through adhering to their purpose in Gaia's plan; Hakken by serving as Gaia's warriors. This Renown category encourages cooperation among the hengeyokai and those with little Virtue lose respect within the Beast Courts.

Wisdom

Wisdom Renown comes from listening to one's inner nature and paying attention to the teachings of the spirits of the Mirror Lands and the Court of the Ancestors. Hengeyokai earn Wisdom by adhering to duty, obeying the elders of the Court, and trying to live the perfection epitomized by the unity of the First Age. Hengeyokai with little Wisdom often fail to achieve anything of lasting import — including the rise in rank that comes with earning Renown.

Rank

Hengeyokai acknowledge five levels of Rank, just as do Western shapechangers. They name their Ranks after significant materials: wood, iron, steel, gold and silver, in that order. All hengeyokai use these titles, regardless of their Breed. When introducing themselves formally and stating their rank, they combine rank and auspice, naming themselves as Iron Courtier, Steel Leaf, etc.

Hengeyokai usually wear badges or some other outward symbol of their rank for identification by other hengeyokai and by the spirits. This rank symbol is usually combined with the badge or colors of their court; thus a Steel-rank Tengu of the Bright Feather Court might wear a steel feather on his person or else wear robes embroidered with dark blue feathers. Silver rank is usually represented by the color white, since most hengeyokai have trouble with the actual metal. When necessary, hengeyokai vulnerable to gold use yellow badges instead of a gold medallion.

Hengeyokai that have not yet gone through their Rite of Passage are referred to as Stone; their color is gray. From lowest to highest, the Ranks and their associated colors are Wood (brown), Iron (red), Steel (blue), Gold (yellow) and Silver (white). Silver holds the highest rank due to its association with the Moon. Some few hengeyokai attain the rare Sixth rank, called Jade and associated with the color green. Jade-rank hengeyokai are accorded the greatest possible reverence whenever they are encountered.

While it is theoretically possible for an individual to pretend to a rank she has not attained by wearing the badge and color associated with that rank, the spirits generally know from other signs and look unfavorably on duplicitous hengeyokai. Since the spirits witness Rites of Renown, they make such attempts at cheating known when they occur. Only rarely do great tricksters succeed in fooling the spirits; for successfully doing so, these legendary figures earn respect if they do so in extreme circumstances when the defense of the caern is at stake. When hengeyokai do find it necessary to disguise their rank, they often masquerade as someone of lower rank, since this is considered less dishonorable than pretending to a rank that has not yet been earned.

The Breeds

Each of the hengeyokai Changing Breeds has its own similarities and differences to their Western counterparts. Their cooperation with one another may seem unfamiliar and strange to Sunset Fera, but their union in the Courts and their devotion to the Way of Emerald Virtue keeps them united despite differences in Breed. Only the Kumo, or Goblin Spiders, occupy a place outside the Courts, but they are included here because they have more in common with other hengeyokai than with their Western counterparts, regardless of whom they serve.

Hakken

Description

The Hakken make their home primarily in Japan. To Western Garou, they seem like an Asian version of Shadow Lords. The Sunset Garou couldn't be more wrong. The Hakken consider themselves far superior to the Shadow Lords, whom they see as uncivilized barbarians. As the Hakken would put it, the subtle maneuvering and cutthroat politics practiced by the Shadow Lords are the crude and blatant bumblings of incompetents compared to the elegant and sophisticated maneuverings of the Hakken.

During the Fourth Age, the Hakken of both lupus and human stock made a pact to protect their island home against the wars raging among hengeyokai courts and between mortals and shapeshifters. To protect Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun, the Hakken worked assiduously to strengthen their ties with mortals. As they did so, they found themselves increasingly drawn to the culture and customs of Japan and straying from the tribal structure followed by most Garou. They adopted more and more Japanese ways, their human Kinfolk increased and their involvement in the then feudal government, politics and culture of Japan increased. The wolf population was neglected; wolf Kinfolk diminished and the wolf-strain grew thin within the Hakken population.

Renown Chart

Lantern

Rank	Glory	Virtue	Wisdom
1 (Wood)	0	3	0
2 (Iron)	1	4	1
3 (Steel)	2	6	2
4 (Gold)	3	8	4
5 (Silver)	6	10	7

Fist

Rank	Glory	Virtue	Wisdom
1 (Wood)	2	1	0
2 (Iron)	4	1	1
3 (Steel)	6	3	1
4 (Gold)	9	5	2
5 (Silver)	10	9	4

Mirror

Rank	Glory	Virtue	Wisdom
1 (Wood)	0	0	3
2 (Iron)	0	1	5
3 (Steel)	1	2	7
4 (Gold)	3	3	9
5 (Silver)	5	8	10

Leaf

Rank	Any Combination
1 (Wood)	3
2 (Iron)	7
3 (Steel)	13
4 (Gold)	19
5 (Silver)	25

Pillar

Rank	Glory	Virtue	Wisdom
1 (Wood)	1	1	1
2 (Iron)	2	2	2
3 (Steel)	3	4	3
4 (Gold)	5	5	5
5 (Silver)	7	8	8

Courtier

Rank	Glory	Virtue	Wisdom
1 (Wood)	1	1	1
2 (Iron)	1	3	2
3 (Steel)	2	5	3
4 (Gold)	4	7	4
5 (Silver)	6	9	8

Today the Hakken are almost exclusively born to human Kinfolk and find themselves more and more distanced from their animal natures. The Hakken still consider themselves warriors of Gaia, but they lead very human lives. Homid Hakken, the vast majority of the tribe, follow the code of *bushido*, or the way of the warrior. The rare lupus Hakken do not hold so tightly to the code though they do follow it to a certain extent. The way of the warrior consists of the following tenets:

• **Benevolence and unselfishness** — The traditional two swords of the samurai were the *katana* and *wakizashi*, symbolizing not only the samurai's authority but also his willingness to show mercy in honorable combat. The Hakken often duplicate this tradition of bearing swords. Using swords is far more merciful in a battle between shapechangers than using natural weaponry, and the *dai-sho* serve as a reminder of that fact. Hakken do not bind spirits into their weapons, nor do they draw them without provocation (though werewolves may find themselves more easily provoked than humans).

• **Straightforwardness** — Symbolized by a jewel, straightforwardness does not mean the same thing to Hakken as it does to Western Garou. The Hakken practice the appearance of straightforwardness while managing to exercise extreme subtlety in speech and action. Hakken can often succeed in insulting a rival without appearing to by the clever use of forthright speech.

• **Wisdom** — The mirror, symbol of this tenet, reminds Hakken that wisdom begins with reflection and knowledge of the inner self. Each Hakken spends time in contemplation of his motivations, actions and deepest feelings, looking for reflections of the outer world within himself.

These three tenets form the divine virtues, known as *shintoku*.

• **Loyalty (*chushin*)** — This principle embodies faithful service to the *daimyo* or clan head. The virtuous Hakken would rather die than betray their lord. Those who fail in their duty to their *daimyo* suffer great loss of face and honor. Even in disgrace, however, Hakken rarely resort to *seppuku*, or ritual suicide, since they do not wish to reduce their numbers any further.

• **Quality in Everything** — Hakken aim for perfection in all things, from their personal appearance to their behavior in public situations. Art, music, politics and war all receive the same attention to detail.

• **Eternal Obedience** — Hakken trust that their superiors' orders will always be in accordance with the will of the Emerald Mother. Thus, they swear obedience in all things and strive to follow the commands of their *daimyo* to the best of their ability. If, however, a Hakken believes her *daimyo* acts wrongly, she may choose to become Ronin in order to avoid an action that could result in the loss of honor to the clan. This is seen as a preferable solution even though it results in loss of personal honor.

• **Acceptance of Just Punishment** — When a Hakken fails in her duty, she does not make excuses. She accepts the punishment meted out to her with stoicism and humility. As a balance, however, a *daimyo* has the duty of making certain that any punishment meted out is fair and fits the crime.

• **Acceptance of Just Fate for Injustices to Others** — If a Hakken acts unfairly toward someone, he knows that the laws of karma will extract their toll from him someday. If a *daimyo* commands the Hakken to perform such an action, the Garou must consider the balance between loyalty and karma. Usually, the Hakken will put obedience to his *daimyo* above loss of personal honor.

Organization

Hakken organize themselves into clans based on family lineage rather than camps or traditional packs. They usually incorporate their clan name into their own and wear their family crest (*mon*) in ceremonies or battles. Only the lupus Hakken maintain the pack structure. They are more likely to join hengeyokai sentai than are their homid counterparts.

Hakken settle their disputes through single combat, either with swords or else through some other type of competition, such as a haiku or storytelling contests. Despite their assimilation into modern Japanese society, complete with its traditions and its high technology, Hakken still remember that they are first and foremost Garou; they gather in caerns and hold regular moots that differ little from other werewolves.

Most Hakken live in Japan, but a few have immigrated to the United States' West Coast or to other parts of Asia. In some cases, Hakken find themselves in competition with Asian Glass Walkers (Boli Zouhisze) in cities like Tokyo and Hong Kong.

Hakken serving the Beast Courts act as elite soldiers. Their martial training and natural ferocity, in addition to the discipline brought about by their adherence to the way of the warrior, make them superior generals, bodyguards and defenders. They prefer serving in sentai that contain Kitsune or Tengu and rarely feel comfortable cooperating with Nezumi or Khan.

Traits, Breeds and Forms

With only minor exceptions, Hakken follow the rules for Shadow Lords with regard to breeds, forms and auspices. They differ only in the extreme rarity of lupus stock. Metis Hakken are very rare and those that do exist serve the Beast Courts and follow the Way of Emerald Virtue exclusively.

Hakken have no Background restrictions, but Allies, Kinfolk and Past Life are often given primary consideration. Though Hakken do not bind spirits into their *dai-sho*, they may carry other weapons that are also fetishes without any loss of honor.

In general, Hakken follow standard Garou paths of Renown, though some substitute the three divine virtues of Benevolence, Straightforwardness and Wisdom for Glory, Honor and Wisdom. Those who serve the Beast Courts, however, usually follow the Way of Emerald Virtue.

Gifts

Hakken begin with three Gifts, one each from breed, auspice and tribe. Those who follow the Way of Emerald Virtue and serve the Courts choose a breed Gift, a Hakken Gift and a general hengeyokai Gift, though they may also learn Shadow Lord Gifts if they can find an ancestor-spirit to teach them.

• **Dream of a Thousand Cranes (Level One)** — By folding an origami crane, the Hakken enjoys good luck for a short period of time. An ancestor-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The origami takes a full turn to complete; the player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Charisma + Occult. For the next scene, the Hakken gains one die per success to add to other dice pools; each die can be used only once.

• **Fair Path (Level One)** — The Hakken appears at formal ceremonies clean and dressed in proper attire, even if he has just returned from battle. A water-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The Hakken places her hand in clean water; the player rolls Charisma + Etiquette. At the Storyteller's discretion, the player may gain one die to all Appearance-related rolls for one scene.

• **Storm Winds Slash (Level Two)** — Hakken may use their katana to injure Wyrm creatures at a distance. This Gift is taught by a metal or wind-spirit.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Dexterity + Melee (difficulty 7). Success enables the Hakken to strike an opponent from as far away as 50 yards; the opponent may attempt to dodge the strike and takes lethal damage as usual for a katana strike.

• **Dark of Night (Level Three)** — A Hakken can cause an opponent to become temporarily blinded. Using this Gift in a formal duel or against an honorable opponent results in loss of Renown, so Hakken reserve this power for use against enemies of the Emerald Mother. This Gift comes from a raven-spirit.

System: The Hakken spills a vial of ink; the player spends one Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge, resisted by the target's Gnosis (if any). Each success blinds the victim for an hour.

• **Living Treasure (Level Four)** — A Hakken can convince the spirit of a treasure in his possession to relate its history and lore. An ancestor-spirit imparts this Gift.

System: The Hakken touches the object; the player rolls Manipulation + Etiquette (difficulty 7). Each success causes the spirit to reveal one fact about itself. Hakken may use this Gift on common items as well, making it a useful tool for investigations or problem solving. A Hakken may use this Gift once per object.

• **Divine Wind (Level Five)** — The Hakken can call forth a powerful storm in a designated area. The storm uproots trees and overturns cars in its fury. An ancestor-spirit or a servant of Narukami, Lord of Thunder, teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Enigmas (difficulty 7) and spends a minimum of one Rage point. Each success equals a one-mile radius for the storm. Each Rage point

spent adds a success and, therefore, increases the size of the storm, which lasts for no more than one scene.

Rites

Hakken make use of most Garou rites, tending to favor Rites of Punishment, Accord and Death. A rite unique to them is the solemn Rite of Seppuku, used when a Hakken wishes to restore lost honor to her clan after failing her duty or when she wishes to join a deceased *daimyo* in death as a gift of supreme loyalty. The Hakken earns posthumous Renown in the form of five Honor and two Wisdom. If the *daimyo* lives, he must give permission to the Hakken wishing to perform the rite.

Stereotypes

• **Boli Zouhisze:** Their claims to be the first tribe may be exaggerated. Their appreciation of technology supports their ancient lineage. They provide us with a challenge we are confident we can meet.

• **Khan:** Formidable warriors, they have an unshakeable belief in their own superiority. Sadly, they know little of true perfection.

• **Kitsune:** Though secretive, they are loyal and perceptive.

• **Kumo:** Implacable enemies, they seek to corrupt beauty and destroy the balance. We have no mercy in our hearts for them.

• **Nagah:** How can they judge what they do not understand?

• **Nezumi:** Masters of the art of Low War, they know little of honor and less of perfection. Still, they have their uses.

• **Same-Bito:** They follow their own peculiar code of honor, yet their façade of civilization seems thin. We respect their devotion to protecting the seas of the Emerald Mother.

• **Stargazers:** They have finally made the long journey from the barbaric West to the civilized lands of the Middle Kingdom. This is a start, but they have yet to prove themselves worthy of our company.

• **Tengu:** They are not warriors, but they excel in their roles as scouts and messengers. We enjoy their zeal and their willingness to serve.

• **Zhong Lung:** Their memories are long and prodigious. They withhold their approval from us, which saddens us.

Quote

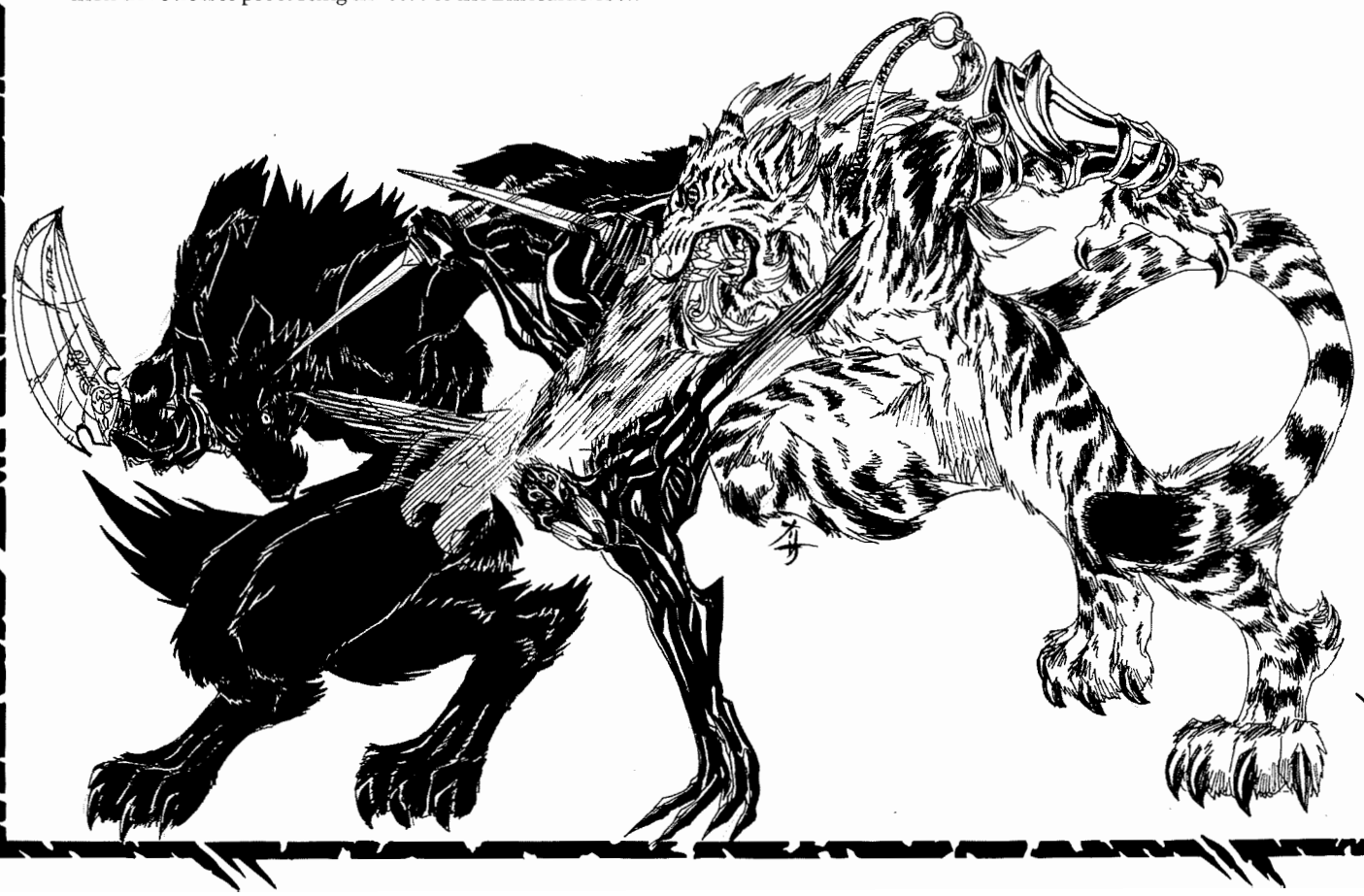
Your pretty speech emphasizes your belief in yourself. Would you turn your words to action and cross blades so that we may truly assess your worth?

Khan

Description

The Khan are the only Bastet tribe represented in the Beast Courts in significant numbers. Khan of the Courts differ little from their cousins in most of their Traits, but their emphasis on social responsibility differs somewhat from unaffiliated Khan.

Khan of the Courts balance wisdom with strength, acting as gatherers of the Adversary's secrets for use by the forces of the Emerald Mother and as warriors in service to the Beast Courts. They are the rarest of the Breeds among the Courts; although mighty, they have lost many of their number from entering boldly into combat while at the same time, their feline Kinfolk population nears extinction. Nevertheless, the Khan exhibit great pride in their identity and purpose, striving to live up to their ideals as kings of beasts and men.



Organization

The Khan of the Middle Kingdom tend to live in solitude, rarely traveling with other weretigers, unless one is a cub under the tutelage of an elder. This solitary life has evolved as a survival mechanism to prevent the Wyrm's forces from destroying more than one Khan in a single strike.

Within the Beast Courts, the Khan work as generals or as champions of the Emerald Mother. They have a comprehensive knowledge of warfare, as do the Hakken, but unlike those Asian Garou, the Khan fight to win by any means possible, regardless of the strictures of honorable combat. Khan who join a mountain sentai make loyal and brave companions, serving best as Fists or Pillars.

Traits, Breeds and Forms

Middle Kingdom Khan have only a few differences from their Western counterparts. Like other hengeyokai but unlike other Bastet, they may purchase the Ancestors Background; their ancestors' ties to the Courts have resulted in a similar tie to the Umbral realm of the Courts of the Ancestors. Asian Khan who follow their Breed rather than the Courts use the Bastet system of Renown.

The feline breed of Khan is nearly extinct; occasionally a Khan will sneak into a breeding facility in China and breed with captive tigers to maintain their connection to their animal nature. Homid Khan, while slightly more numerous, are notoriously picky about breeding partners, wishing to mate with only the elite of human society. Occasionally two Khan mate and produce a metis, who, like most other hengeyokai metis, spends her entire life within the Courts.

Gifts and Rites

Asian Khan begin with three Gifts: one hengeyokai Gift, one breed Gift and one Khan Gift as described in the **Bastet** sourcebook or in Chapter Two. The Khan use Rites of Purification frequently, but their limited connection with the spirit world prevents them from using many rites used to ask the favor of the spirits. They leave this to other hengeyokai to do.

Stereotypes

• **Boli Zouhisze:** All we need are more wolves. At least they remember they *are* wolves sometimes.

• **Hakken:** They have fallen far from their beast nature yet they claim they are still warriors. They imitate humans at their peril.

• **Kitsune:** They are ambitious in secret and polite and respectful in public. We don't trust the foxes.

• **Kumo:** They have too many failings to list; they reek of the Centipede. We delight in their slaughter.

• **Nagah:** They work the will of the Emerald Mother, though we regret they must stoop to poison so often.

• **Nezumi:** They run from us, but whether out of fear or some darker motive, we don't know. We must remember they, too, have a purpose.

• **Same-Bito:** They are graceless and primitive, but somehow, suited to the coming dark times.

• **Stargazers:** They are contemplative rather than aggressive more often than not, but they do seem worthy of alliance.

• **Tengu:** These gossips spend too much time talking and not enough time on the battlefield. They purport to know tactics, but rarely do they put them to use.

• **Zhong Lung:** We regret that they do not practice the way of war, for they would be formidable battle companions. Their wisdom serves us all well.

Quote

Heaven shakes. Earth cracks. The Wheel turns. And the Khan will fight on.

Kumo

Description

Though similar to the Ananasi in many respects, the Kumo differ in that the entire faction, a subdivision of their original Breed, is devoted to the service of the Wyrm. Any goblin spiders that serve the Emerald Mother are targeted by their brethren. Like their Ananasi cousins, the Kumo possess great intelligence and wit and are often willing to parley with the hengeyokai of the Beast Courts and other supernaturals.

Three main families, each devoted to one of the Wyrm's aspects, dominate the Kumo:

• **Marawa's Brood** — These Kumo follow the Destroyer-Wyrm, tend toward Yin-aspected victims and prefer the methods of straight-ahead killing and destruction. They have the least subtlety of their kind.

• **Children of Nareau** — The Lord of Spiders exhibits more balance than most aspects of the Wyrm; even so, Kumo dedicated to Nareau possess a tremendous capacity for cruelty and prolonged suffering along with an insatiable curiosity and profound wisdom. They also claim some knowledge of the Weaver.

• **Blessed of Rati** — Devoted to the Wyrm of Lust, Kumo of this family prefer Yang-aspected prey, retaining a little of the Wyld within them. They have a highly developed appreciation for sexual behavior of all (and mostly deviant) kinds.

The Kumo dwell throughout the Middle Kingdom, preferring to lair in abandoned buildings, deserted caves or forgotten ruins. While they co-exist with each other in relative harmony, occasionally the three families succumb to internecine rivalries and outright warfare.

Organization

Although most Kumo prefer darkness and solitude, others form small villages, complete with an elder, several younger Kumo and their Kinfolk. These communities, usually well hidden from casual visitors, are eerie and often fatal places for the traveler unlucky enough to stumble upon them.

Kumo defer to age and wisdom, considering the eldest Kumo in a group as the current leader. If a disagreement about leadership arises, both Kumo resort to the Endless Maze, a deadly game in which young Kumo fill an abandoned building

or cave with complicated mazes for the rivals to negotiate while hunting each other. The one who emerges alive earns the right to call herself the leader of a given group.

Followers of Rati mate with anyone who catches their eye, whether Kinfolk or not. In general, goblin spiders do not concern themselves overmuch with selecting their mating partners for special qualities. If two Kumo wish to mate, they must receive permission from an elder, since the resulting metis birth results in the death of the mother. This is considered a rare sacrifice to the Wyrm and is not undertaken lightly or when the Kumo cannot afford the loss of an individual.

Most Kumo do not go out of their way to interact with other *shen*, though occasionally they have some contact with the hengeyokai. Their insatiable curiosity leads them to Umbral exploration, where they encounter many spirits. Though they seldom attack other supernaturals on sight, they are easily provoked when their food sources or communities are threatened.

Traits, Breeds and Forms

Kumo differ slightly from their Ananasi cousins in the following ways. Unlike Western werespiders, they lack aspects. They do not follow the Way of Emerald Virtue for Renown purposes; instead, they earn rank and Renown as if they were Ragabash Garou. Other hengeyokai do not recognize the Kumo's system of rank; they simply consider them as weak or powerful enemies, according each the respect he deserves. Kumo are especially vulnerable to *hong mu*, a particularly rare and aromatic type of rosewood. Weapons made from this wood cause unsoakable aggravated damage.

Kumo have three breeds, homid, arachnid and metis, unlike the Ananasi, who have no metis.

• **Homid:** Born from human parents, either Kinfolk or non-Kinfolk, homid Kumo are watched by their werespider parent and snatched before their metamorphosis.

Beginning Gnosis: 2

• **Arachnid:** Like the Ananasi spider-born, arachnid Kumo feed on their sac-mates in order to gain enough bulk to flesh out their Aghora, or giant-spider form before undergoing Metamorphosis. They are rarer than their Western counterparts.

Beginning Gnosis: 4

• **Metis:** Born from a mating between two Kumo in which the mother dies giving birth — eaten from within by her hungry child —metis Kumo are rare and auspicious, generally arranged for by special permission with full knowledge of the consequences. Metis Kumo are considered favored, since so much was sacrificed to bring them into the world.

Beginning Gnosis: 5

Less disciplined than the Ananasi, all Kumo have a beginning Willpower of 2, regardless of breed.

Kumo have forms that are identical to the Ananasi, though they substitute the name Aghora for Pithus and Thousand Fang for Crawlerling. See the section on the Ananasi for form statistics and characteristics.

Gifts

Kumo begin play with three Gifts: one breed Gift, one Ragabash Gift and one general Kumo Gift. In addition, Kumo may learn general Ananasi Gifts as well as Aspect Gifts as appropriate for their family and function. Marawa's Brood may learn Hatar Gifts; Children of Nareau may learn Tenere Gifts; and Blessed of Rati may learn Kumoti Gifts. Warriors may learn the Myrmidon Gifts appropriate for their faction, sorcerers may learn the Viskr Gifts, and tricksters or scouts may learn the Gifts of the Wyrsta.

Kumo Gifts

• **Nimbleness (Level One)** — The Kumo may make extraordinary leaps and jumps. This Gift is taught by a flea-spirit.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point to add two dice to any Athletics or Dodge roll for one scene.

• **Shadow Step (Level One)** — The Kumo seems to disappear and reappear in another location, while in reality she has not moved at all. A spirit minion of Nareau teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Dexterity + Subterfuge. Each success allows the Kumo to appear to be two feet away from her current location. Anyone who realizes the image is illusory may attack the real Kumo at +3 difficulty. Heightened Senses or some other Perception-enhancing Gift or power reduces the difficulty to +1. The Gift lasts for as many turns as the Kumo has Gnosis, or until the Kumo strikes an opponent, but only works once per scene.

• **Spittle of Corruption (Level Two)** — The Kumo may spit digestive fluids at an enemy in unarmed combat. A spirit of Marawa teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a blood point to activate the digestive juices, and makes a Dexterity + Brawl roll (difficulty 7) to strike a target within 30 feet. The damage is equal to Stamina + 2, aggravated.

• **Snare of Beauty (Level Three)** — The Kumo increases her attractiveness, making herself nearly irresistible to the object of her desire. A servant of Rati teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 7). Each success raises the Kumo's Appearance by one point for the next three hours.

• **Web Tremors (Level Four)** — The Kumo can know if anyone is watching or stalking her, either in the physical realm or in the Mirror Lands, by concentrating on the spirit webs around them. A servant of Marawa bestows this Gift.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and makes a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7). Two successes inform the Kumo of anyone lurking about nearby (although those using supernatural abilities to hide themselves may resist the roll with Gnosis or Manipulation + Stealth, whichever is higher). More successes add specific information about the nature of the intruders.

• **Elder Wisdom (Level Five)** — This Gift enables the Kumo to commune directly with her family's patron. If Marawa, Nareau or Rati are in a bad mood, they may take out their displeasure at being summoned on the Kumo. Otherwise, they

may offer advice or information useful to the user of the Gift. A servant of any of the three patrons teaches this Gift.

System: The Kumo must make appropriate ceremonial actions and proffer chiminage of some sort before spending one point each of Gnosis and Willpower. The player rolls Charisma + Primal Urge (difficulty 7) and must attain three successes for the Gift to succeed. A botch means that the summoner has aroused the ire of the desired patron.

Rites

The Kumo have their own variations on Mystic and Renown Rites as well as rites to honor their family patrons. Rumor credits them with originating the Rite of the Goblin Chrysalis, a foul Level Five rite that transforms a person into a bakemono.

Stereotypes

- **Boli Zouhisze:** Like the Hakken, only more pretentious.
- **Hakken:** The most traditional and conservative of our enemies, they stand for all that we oppose.
- **Khan:** So wrapped up in their regal bearing and ferocious nobility, they are amusing and dangerous. Unfortunately, they will soon be gone. Poor *koneko-neko*!
- **Kitsune:** Too clever for their own good, they do not know how closely they tread our path. Perhaps one day they will join with us instead of trusting to the Courts.
- **Nagah:** They realize we fulfill a purpose in the way of things, yet they despise and hunt us. Destroy any you see.
- **Nezumi:** They have served our purposes well, if in ignorance. Perhaps we should openly court them in preparation for the Age to come.
- **Same-Bito:** They pretend to civility and honor, yet they have secrets we need to uncover.
- **Stargazers:** They should have stayed in the West. Now they slink to the Middle Kingdom to lick their wounds. Pitiful.
- **Tengu:** As different from us as day is from night. We prefer things of the dark; they enjoy the bright objects that glisten in the sun. Their wings distance them from us. They would be interesting to examine...
- **Zhong Lung:** Formidable adversaries worthy of the utmost respect and caution. Pray you never come to their attention.

Quote

We, too, claim the Middle Kingdom as our rightful home. You ignore us at your peril, for you do not see the importance of what we do. Someday, you will and you will regret your disdain for us.

Nagah

Description

The Nagah serve as judges and enforcers for the Beast Courts and their abilities reflect their duties. The ultimate Balancers of the Emerald Mother, they tend to remain outside the mainstream of Court society, ever watchful for times when they must intervene. They make certain that the Mandates are upheld when the Courts fail in their duty to do so.

Most hengeyokai do not speak openly of the Nagah, referring to them by oblique sobriquets such as "the shadows that lengthen," or "the awakening silence." They rarely join sentai, preferring to serve the Emerald Mother in the shadows. When they do, they are compliant, if somewhat sinister, companions, fulfilling their chosen auspice (usually Leaf or Pillar) with quiet dedication. The other hengeyokai are aware that the Nagah attempt to conceal their presence from the Sunset People, and keep that secret alongside the Nagah — presuming not to instruct their cousins in their task.

Nagah excel at killing, considering it another art to be mastered to perfection. It is, after all, part of their duty, which they do well with grace and beauty. The Nagah suffered the highest casualties next to the Okuma during the War of Shame, for their attackers feared that the overall corruption rumored to infect the hengeyokai Breeds had rooted itself in those who were their judges. The Nagah of the Courts are still recovering from their losses.

Organization

Nagah seldom work alone and have no caerns of their own. Rather, they seek the protection of friendly courts or maintain their own pocket-realms near river bottoms. They always stay near at least one or two others of their kind, for mutual protection.

They serve the Beast Courts silently and invisibly, counseling from the shadows and exercising their judgments when necessary. They have risked much to expose themselves to the Courts at all; their Western brethren remain more hidden lest the Khurah unite against them out of fear.

Traits, Breeds and Forms

The Nagah of the Middle Kingdom do not differ significantly from other Nagah. They have the same Traits, vulnerabilities, breeds and forms as Western Nagah. Nagah serving the Emerald Court and following the Way of Emerald Virtue willingly take on Beast Court auspices and acquire Renown as necessary to fit in with their Court duties. In all things, Nagah bow to necessity and the need to be inconspicuous.

Gifts and Rites

Nagah of the Beast Courts use the same Gifts as Western Nagah. Wereserpents who follow the Way of Emerald Virtue begin with three Gifts: one Nagah Gift, one breed Gift and one hengeyokai Gift. All Gifts are taught by the Wani, or spirit-servants of the dormant Dragon Princes, who are the only spirits who have congress with the Nagah. All Nagah share the same rites as well.

Stereotypes

- **Boli Zouhisze:** More wolves enamored of humans. We watch them more carefully than they know.
- **Hakken:** They, like the humans they mirror, are caught in the Weaver's strands and have all but forgotten

their duties. We may need to shear away their ties, however unpleasant the results.

• **Khan:** Full of pride and eager for blood, they sow the seeds of their own destruction. Will their demise bring on the Sixth Age? We wait.

• **Kitsune:** Their slyness makes them difficult to judge, yet we do our best. They confuse us, though we are older than they by far.

• **Kumo:** They are not of us, and not ours to judge; we slay them only when it is war. Until then, we allow them to exist, but we do not pretend to like it.

• **Nezumi:** They, like us, pass judgment of a sort, but their concerns are often petty and less than noble.

• **Same-Bito:** Children of the Sea, they have something in common with us in their devotion to water, yet they know so little of grace and beauty.

• **Stargazers:** They seem upright in their reasons for coming to us, but we cannot be too careful.

• **Tengu:** Their loose tongues hold the risk of betrayal; if we wish to remain as hidden as we do, we must avoid coming to their attention.

• **Zhong Lung:** Wise and selfless, they have suffered and sacrificed much to attain their wisdom and knowledge. We honor them and the Sleeping Lords they serve.

Quote

We live in a world where the souls consigned to Hell can rip themselves free and walk the earth in corpses. But though Hell is imperfect, we can feed it nonetheless.

Nezumi

Description

Historically, the Nezumi have served the Emerald Mother as Her control over the human population. In the Second and Third Ages, the wererats used disease and famine to ensure that humans did not become too numerous. When the Impergium ended during the Fourth Age, the Nezumi still worked to maintain the balance, a concept understood by the hengeyokai even as their western kin, the Ratkin, suffered for their part in population culling.

While the Hakken mastered the art of High War, the Nezumi developed a very different kind of warfare — called Low War. When the way of honorable war failed or one side broke the rules, the Nezumi moved in and evened the odds with their own arsenal of dirty tricks.

Nezumi have customarily made their homes among the slums of Asia's largest cities. Here they can concentrate on increasing their numbers while at the same time keeping watch over the steadily increasing human population. Eager to continue their task of balancing the populations and preventing overcrowding of the Emerald Mother's lands, they have already begun waging Low War against humans. Today, they have augmented their repertoire with biochemical and other high-tech weapons of mass destruction. They hold themselves in readiness should the other hengeyokai fail in their assigned tasks.

Organization

Nezumi dwell in nests, communal groups united under a leader (often called *sifu* or *sensei*), the eldest among them. This wise one teaches the younger Nezumi what they need to know: how to live in cooperation with other nests, how to manipulate the human population around them, how to wage war with subtlety, how to assassinate enemies and other important information.

The children of Rat are a close-knit group; the Asian wererats consider their Western brethren part of the same huge family. Like the Ratkin, the Nezumi refer to each other as sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles. rodens Nezumi are more numerous than their homid kin, because they are less noticeable and find it easier to hide.

As Nezumi grow in importance, they gain up to three names: their human name, their gang name and their court name. Thus, Ping Run, a noted Seer, calls himself Eye of Dawn. He also has a court name made up of a specific grouping of chittering sounds, translated into common speech as Run-Fly-Bite.

Those Nezumi who survive the Birthing Plague and the many other dangers of growing up in the squalor of overcrowded cities practice for the coming war. They hold skirmishes in the sewers and rat-made tunnels beneath the streets of the cities. They prepare for the Sixth Age and are making ready to offer their aid to the Hakken as experts in the art of Low War.

Traits, Breeds and Forms

Nezumi have the same advantages as Ratkin: highly developed senses, an absolute sense of direction when underground and superb night-vision in all their forms. Nezumi who survive their first year of life choose an auspice, usually suggested to them in a vision during the Birthing Plague. Their forms work just as those of the Western Ratkin.

Aspects differ little between Eastern Nezumi and Western Ratkin; they are simply called the Tunnel Runners, Seers (Shadow Seers), Skulkers (Knife Skulkers) and Warriors (Blade Slaves). Nezumi gain Renown according to the chart for their sentai auspice: Seers attain rank as Mirrors; Skulkers rise in rank as Lanterns; Warriors increase their rank as Fists; Tunnel Runners gain rank as Leaves.

Gifts

Nezumi start with three Gifts: one breed Gift, one Nezumi Gift and one common hengeyokai Gift. In addition, Nezumi can learn Western Ratkin Gifts provided they can find a teacher. (With some work and chiminage, Ratkin can also learn Nezumi Gifts from friendly spirits or a tolerant *sensei*.)

• **Hunter in Crowds (Level One)** — The Nezumi can sense the presence of another shapeshifter in a large group of people. A dog-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Perception + Stealth (difficulty of the other shapeshifter's Stealth + 4).

• **Raiding the Umbral Hoard (Level One)** — A Nezumi may summon rat-spirits in order to steal small amounts of hidden food and carry it through the Umbra to another location no more than a mile away. An alternate version of this Gift enables the spirits to spoil caches of food. A rat-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Wits + Survival. A rodens can acquire a few handfuls; a homid can take a few pounds; a metis can move up to ten pounds of food. By spending Rage instead of Gnosis, the Nezumi can spoil as much food as he could otherwise spirit away.

• **Cloak of Darkest Night (Level Two)** — The Nezumi calls upon her totem to aid a rodens-swarm or a homid-pack on a mission, extinguishing light sources along their route and making other darkness-related Gifts easier.

System: The player must spend three Gnosis points and roll Intelligence + Stealth to invoke this Gift indoors or underground. Stealth rolls for Stealth or Subterfuge related Gifts receive a -1 to their difficulty. By spending five points of Gnosis, the Nezumi can cause a clear daytime sky to cloud over, achieving the same results. The Gift lasts for one minute per success.

• **Keening of Swarm Panic (Level Three)** — The Nezumi may cause a group of at least 50-60 humans to grow uneasy and even panic by making a high-pitched wail. The affected crowd may become violent if they attempt to flee. Other supernaturals are immune, but may become caught up in the crowd. A fear-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and makes a Charisma + Rituals roll (difficulty 7). Three successes cause a crowd to go for a selected exit. Four successes arouse the crowd to panic surges, causing anyone not part of the crowd who gets caught in the surge to take one health level of bashing damage (difficulty 8 to soak). Five successes cause the crowd to bolt. Anyone caught in the mob must roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 8) or be trampled, taking two health levels of bashing damage for each turn until he can regain his feet (difficulty 9 to soak). The Gift lasts for ten minutes per success.

• **Gnaw (Level Four)** — As the lupus Gift.

• **Snake Bites Itself (Level Five)** — A Nezumi may touch an opponent and cause their poisons to turn upon them. Thus, Kuei-jin fall prey to their Yin-poisons, Kumo suffer from their own venom and bakemono are affected by their own toxins.

System: The Nezumi touches her victim, the player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Wits + Medicine (difficulty of the target's Willpower). If successful, the victim suffers the full effects of the standard dose of any poisons, toxins or other harmful powers he normally uses against others, even if normally immune. This Gift does not affect spirits.

Rites

Nezumi use most rites available to Garou. They enjoy ritual and perform their mystic rites with a great deal of reverence. Because they treat the spirits with such honor, they respond in kind and favor the Nezumi.



Stereotypes

• **Boli Zouhisze:** They might learn the importance of Low War where the Hakken cannot.

• **Hakken:** Their "honor" gets in the way of their ability to put victory first. Their weakness will be their undoing.

• **Khan:** Self-aggrandizing and deluded in their belief that they are superior, they are like pitiful kittens when lured into a swarm's territory.

• **Kitsune:** Clever they may be, but they do not realize how serious the times have become. They will learn the hard way.

• **Kumo:** Like us? Pfah. We fight these bloated baby centipedes wherever we find them.

• **Nagah:** They distrust us more than the Khan and watch us closely, ready to blame us for the least little thing. Let them come into our territory and see who's the better enforcer.

• **Same-Bito:** These berserkers have little in common with us. We avoid them and their sham civility.

• **Stargazers:** Their heads stay in the clouds, but their feet have to walk in the back alleys sometime. If they don't look where they're going, we will trip them up.

• **Tengu:** Good thieves, but they spend too much time in the open air. Sewers are better by far.

• **Zhong Lung:** They know what is to come and will not speak against it. Does this make them wise?

Quote

We fight in the hidden places and in the dark times. As the Wheel turns and the darkness nears, we will rise to the occasion.

Same-Bito

Description

The Same-Bito, or Asian weresharks, differ considerably from their Western cousins, the Rokea, primarily in the underpinnings of their society. Same-Bito have embraced the Beast Courts and now follow a different path from the Rokea.

In distant ages, their legendary hero, Mizuchi, listened to the teachings of the Dragon Lords, who gave him new insight on how the Children of the Sea should conduct themselves. Mizuchi returned to the Same-Bito and brought them a new code of behavior, the Code of Sensei Mizuchi, simpler than the Hakken's Way of the Warrior but just as essential to the wereshark's way of life. The literal-minded weresharks of Asia follow this code to the letter, not needing or desiring much interpretation or explication.

Attend the elders; you owe them all.

Respect tribe members, and they honor you in return.

Dishonor is a mark of lower beings.

Battle is always honorable.

If you are alive, you are still learning.

Protect territory that Tiandi and the Dragon Kings have given to you.

The Same-Bito serve Tiandi, the Lord of Thunder and the patron of their teachers, the Dragon Kings. They take fierce pride in proving to all concerned that they are no longer the primitive killing machines they once were (and that their Rokea cousins still are). The weresharks have adopted many of the traditions and customs of their land-dwelling allies in the Beast Courts, though they find the internal politics of the hengeyokai boring and unintelligible. They care little for protecting the lands of the Emerald Mother, but they devote themselves utterly to the safety of Her seas and defend them from any who do not belong there or who do not treat the oceans with reverence.

In secret, however, a movement stirs among the Same-Bito to return to the practice of honoring Teanoi, the Great Shark Spirit. Teanoi has responded by giving some of his Gifts to the Same-Bito, who guard the knowledge of these Gifts with their lives. The inability of Same-Bito (with one exception mentioned below) to enter the Umbra without the use of certain Gifts (see General Hengeyokai Gifts) means that they cannot discover for themselves Teanoi's purpose behind re-establishing communication with his Same-Bito children. Some believe that Teanoi seeks to reunite the Same-Bito with their Western kin, the Rokea; others feel that the Great Shark Spirit is voicing his approval of the Same-Bito's current path among the Beast Courts.

Organization

Same-Bito tend to congregate in slews that number 3-12 members. Similar to a Garou pack, slews function as a unit in protecting the seas. Unlike the Rokea, who do not care for human Kinfolk or accept homid weresharks, Same-Bito have a few Kinfolk among the populations that live in the islands and along the coastal waters of Asia. Most of their Kinfolk, however, are made up of the various shark breeds of the Asian seas.

Same-Bito also belong to families or factions called *habatsu*, similar to the Hakken clans. Leadership within each faction is decided through trial by combat. A two-part process, one part takes place on land, the other in the water. Three judges witness the trial, adjudicate disputes and proclaim the victor. The loser usually suffers loss of face and endures the insults of his peers.

The weresharks that most often become leaders among the Same-Bito are not the strongest warriors. Rather, the smaller "goblin sharks" have ascended to the ranks of Same-Bito nobility. These sharks' ability to enter the Umbra by stepping sideways gives them status as masters of the spirit world and, as such, worthy of respect and honor.

Traits, Breeds and Forms

Same-Bito differ from the Rokea in some significant ways, reflected in their lowered starting Rage scores and in their attitudes toward their homid kin and Kinfolk, among other factors.

Like Rokea, Same-Bito have three auspices, which correspond roughly with those of Western weresharks.

• **Karui:** Born during the day, Karui serve as the warriors of the Same-Bito. They receive Gifts as if they were Brightwater Rokea.

Beginning Rage: 4

• **Koshuku:** These Same-Bito were born at dawn or dusk. They serve as judges and enforcers of the Code of Sensei Mizuchi. Koshuku receive Gifts as Dimwater Rokea.

Beginning Rage: 3

• **Irono:** Born in the night hours, the Irono are charged with seeking the mysteries of the oceans, they also serve as questioners of traditions. They receive Gifts as Darkwater Rokea.

Beginning Rage: 2

Same-Bito all begin play with Willpower 4. They may only gain Gnosis while in water. Like the Rokea, Same-Bito cannot enter the Umbra without the aid of certain Gifts. The Kagesame, or "goblin shark," is an exception. Same-Bito descended from this species of small, horned shark can step sideways as easily as Garou can. Same-Bito, unlike Rokea, may purchase human Kinfolk as a Background at a cost of two points per dot. They may not purchase Ancestors or Pure Breed and their Contacts usually consist only of other *shen*.

Asian weresharks differ from Rokea in their recognition of two breeds, acknowledging and welcoming human-born Same-Bito. Beginning Gnosis depends on breed, but most Same-Bito, except Kagesame, only use Gnosis for Gifts since they cannot use it to step sideways.

• **Rongo:** Homid Same-Bito are rare since mating between a wereshark and a human always produces Kinfolk rather than a Same-Bito. In order to have the slightest chance of producing a wereshark, a Same-Bito must mate with Kinfolk. Rongo Same-Bito are protected by the Same-Bito, who make certain they do not fall prey to the Rokea's hunts for "betweeners." Before their First Change, rongo find themselves drawn to the sea. They may learn Gifts from the homid Garou list.

Gnosis: 1

• **Tangaroa:** Shark-born Same-Bito come from the mating between a Same-Bito and a shark, regardless of whether or not the shark is Kinfolk. Tradition prevents an overabundance of tangaroa Same-Bito by dictating that Same-Bito mate only twice in a century. They may learn Gifts from the lupus Garou list.

Gnosis: 3

The Same-Bito have five forms, similar to those of the Rokea except for the names: Kabina (Homid), Tsufu (Glabrus), Karvu (Gladius), Warui (Chasmus) and Watasami (Squamus). Same-Bito use the same form statistics as Rokea.

Gifts

Same-Bito begin play with three Gifts: one breed (use homid for rongo and lupus for tangaroa), one auspice and one general Same-Bito Gift. Weresharks with the Courts learn a hengeyokai Gift in place of their beginning auspice Gift. Same-Bito use discretion when activating Gifts taught by Teanoi, avoiding public use of these powers. The following Gifts are common to the Same-Bito, as are most general Rokea Gifts.

• **Shou of Zhong Lung (Level One)** — The Same-Bito may acquire some knowledge or advice from their Zhong Lung allies. A Frog-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Expression. Two successes sends a message through the Umbra to the nearest Zhong Lung, who may take some time to reply but always responds eventually (usually within one game session). The Gift brings the message back to the Rokea. This Gift may be used more than once per story, but it tends to offend Zhong Lung if used frequently.

• **Blood Scent (Level One)** — The Same-Bito can sense the presence of hengeyokai or other *shen*. A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Perception + Primal Urge (difficulty 7). Two successes lets the wereshark know if the target is *shen*, though the Gift does not identify the type of supernatural.

• **Sight Without Sight (Level Two)** — The Same-Bito makes use of electromagnetic signals to see even when blinded or in dark water. A squid-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Perception + Alertness. Success allows the Same-Bito to sense creatures and objects within a 15' radius. The Gift does not give fine details, only general shapes.

• **Iron Jaws (Level Three)** — As the Level Four Ahroun Gift: Clenched Jaw.

• **Voracious Hunger (Level Three)** — The Same-Bito can increase the size and strength of his mouth and jaws so that he can bite anything. A manta-spirit teaches this Gift, which only works in water.

System: The player spends a point of Rage to reduce his difficulty to bite by 2. The wereshark can penetrate objects he cannot normally bite or swallow due to size or shape.

• **Tsunami Form (Level Four)** — In Karvu or Watasami form, the Same-Bito may double his size. A servant-spirit of Teanoi teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Stamina + Primal Urge. Three successes means that the Same-Bito doubles in size for one hour. Each additional success adds an additional hour. The wereshark gains +2 to Strength and two more Bruised Health Levels.

• **Teanoi's Rage (Level Five)** — Kept secret by the Same-Bito, this Gift causes the wereshark to enter an unstoppable blood-rage. One of Teanoi's servants teaches this Gift.

System: The wereshark petitions Teanoi ;the player rolls Willpower (difficulty 7). Three successes gives the Same-Bito three additional points of Rage, causes her to recover two Rage points each combat turn and increases by two dice her damage dice pools. The Gift lasts for one scene.

Rites

Same-Bito do not perform their rites in the Umbra, preferring the waters of the Mother's Sea for their most sacred ceremonies. They conduct Rites of Accord, Punishment and Renown most often. The weresharks also perform

new year's rites in honor of Tiandi and the Dragon Lords. Some also hold secret ceremonies to honor Teanoi.

Stereotypes

• **Boli Zouhisze:** We see little of them except when they come to us. Little is enough.

• **Hakken:** Their sensei was not as wise as ours, or perhaps he was too fond of his human form.

• **Khan:** They have as much care for water as we for deserts and jungle. They have little effect on us.

• **Kitsune:** They may outthink us, but we have the wisdom of the ocean around us. Who is wiser?

• **Kumo:** We rarely see them, though some have tried to make us their allies. We have no use for them.

• **Nagah:** They exist. We say nothing more.

• **Nezumi:** Our patrons, the Zhong Lung, are more tolerant of these vermin than we are. They are welcome to stay away from our oceans.

• **Stargazers:** They look to the stars, but the waters could teach them more.

• **Tengu:** The sky is their ocean; we have nothing and everything in common.

• **Zhong Lung:** We owe much to our teachers. We pay our debts.

Quote

These are not your waters. You are a stranger here and should remain so — unless you prefer to mix your life-blood with the ocean.

Tengu

Description

The Tengu, like their Western cousins the Corax, find human society, culture customs and mores intriguing. Given the task of uncovering secrets and dispensing information by the Emerald Mother, they throw themselves wholeheartedly into their duties, even exceeding the bounds of propriety at times — at least according to other hengeyokai. Only the Hakken challenge them for familiarity with the world of humans, but even they do not pry into humanity's dark corners and private places. The Tengu recognize no bit of knowledge as off limits.

Eastern wereravens serve as scouts, messengers and information gatherers for the Beast Courts. Not only does their curiosity make them excellent at uncovering juicy bits of knowledge, their penchant for gossip leads them to share their information with others. They exercise some prudence over their tongues, however, telling their most important secrets only to other hengeyokai. Minor gossip is often traded with other supernaturals and, rarely, with humans.

In addition to sharing information, the Tengu are also experts at selective disinformation — passing along myths and superstitions to humans as fact. In the past, such misleading and outright bogus knowledge served to protect the hengeyokai from hunters, who, armed with improper weapons based on what they had "discovered" about the weaknesses of certain supernatural creatures, had little success in bringing down their quarry. The existence of widespread access to information — and misinformation — of all sorts in the modern world has somewhat negated the Tengu's ability to control access to sensitive information. However, although information is easy to come by, truth is still hard to find.

Organization

Tengu tend to live alone, congregating occasionally for group meetings in which they enjoy each other's company and share information. If necessary, Tengu agree to join sentai; though they do not always enjoy remaining in such close company for extended periods of time, they perform their duties loyally and enthusiastically. Tengu also act as advisors to the various courts, since their ability to acquire information puts any court lucky enough to have a wereraven counselor at a distinct advantage.

Tengu society is relatively egalitarian, without auspices or ranks. Those who serve the Beast Courts adhere to the rank system espoused by the Way of Emerald Virtue. If they belong to a sentai, they take on the auspice assigned to them, usually that of Leaf. Otherwise, they gain rank as Courtiers.

Disputes between Tengu are usually settled through some form of gamecraft rather than physical combat. Occasionally, they select human champions and use their actions to settle disputes — usually without the knowledge of the participants. Selecting the winner of a kickboxing match or a haiku competition demonstrates a wereraven's knowledge or wisdom and often serves as a trial by proxy.

Some Tengu have formed a society known as the Gray Clouds Temple. They specialize in abducting humans and training them to hunt down non-hengeyokai *shen* as well as Kumo or bakemono. These humans, known as "goblin-slayers," come to their tasks with a fair amount of knowledge about the creatures they have been trained to uncover and destroy.

Traits, Breeds and Forms

Tengu share many traits in common with Western Corax, such as their vulnerability to gold rather than silver. They have a loose system of Renown based on the Mirror's path among themselves, valuing Wisdom most of all. Even when serving in a sentai and following another auspice's path (such as Courtier), they still attempt to gain as much Wisdom Renown as possible, citing the First Mandate as justification for deviations from the auspice's primary Renown category.

Tengu may select any Background except Pure Breed. They enjoy Raven as their totem unless they join a sentai, in which case they honor their sentai's totem as their own.

All Tengu begin with 1 Rage, 6 Gnosis and 3 Willpower.

Gifts

Tengu begin with three Gifts, one each from breed, Tengu and common hengeyokai Gifts. Even wereravens not associated with the Courts may learn the Tengu Gifts, just as Tengu may select from standard Corax Gifts.

• **Crane's Wisdom (Level One)** — As the Philodox Gift: Truth of Gaia.

• **Sweet Words (Level One)** — As the homid Gift: Persuasion.

• **Courtly Speech (Level Two)** — As the common hengeyokai Gift.

• **Shoulder Cracker (Level Two)** — Named after the Chinese method of fortunetelling called scapulimancy, this Gift enables the Tengu to predict the future through reading portents of various kinds. Using this Gift too often, however, leads to misinterpretation and paranoia. A Stormcrow teaches this Gift.

System: The Tengu focuses for a minute; the player rolls Wits + Occult to notice and interpret an omen in her surroundings. The omen is usually cryptic.

• **Yoshitsune's Sword (Level Three)** — The Tengu may use this Gift to increase dramatically a companion's or sentai mate's skill with a melee weapon. An ancestor-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The Tengu touches the target's fighting arm and rolls Wits + Melee (difficulty 5). Success allows the wereraven to spend Gnosis points to increase the target's Melee dice pool by one die per point spent for one scene.

• **Bloody Feather (Level Three)** — This is the Tengu name for the Corax Gift: Hummingbird Dart.

• **Bloody Feather Storm (Level Four)** — This Gift causes the Tengu's feathers to rain down on everyone beneath him, creating a deadly razor-storm that damages foes and friends alike. Used as a last resort, this Gift is taught by a monsoon or hurricane-spirit.

System: The Tengu must be in the air and spend three Gnosis and two Rage as his only action for the turn. The feather storm causes Dexterity + 4 dice of lethal damage to a 15' square area. Those caught in the storm must gain three successes on a Dexterity + Dodge roll (difficulty 8) to avoid damage. If the Tengu uses the Gift: Razor Feathers beforehand, the damage is aggravated.

• **Deceptive Demise (Level Five)** — Used to fake a death and fool her enemies, the Tengu disappears in a feathery cloud, leaving behind only a bit of blood and, perhaps, some ashes — but no body. This Gift, taught by a fox-spirit, enables the Tengu to escape while her foes are distracted.

System: The Tengu spends one Gnosis point and gives up one health level to create the blood or ashes left behind (unless she has already lost enough blood to die from another wound, in which case she's already leaving plenty of blood behind). When the Gift is activated, the Tengu immediately steps into the Mirror Lands in whatever form she chooses, either staying to watch the results of her charade or escaping through the Umbra.

• **Thieving Talons of the Magpie (Level Five)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

Rites

Tengu use few rites as a rule other than the Rite of Talisman Dedication, used to keep favorite items with them regardless of form. They also favor the Rite of Becoming and enjoy acting as ritemaster for the Courts' less strenuous Rites of Punishment, such as the Stone of Scorn and the Sarcasm Rite (for which they are superbly well-suited). The Corax Rite of the Fetish Egg (pg. XX) is another must-have, as it is the only way to continue their race.

Stereotypes

• **Boli Zouhisze:** They need to move closer to the Courts to accomplish their goals. They serve the Emerald Mother even when apart from Her.

• **Hakken:** We agree with them in many ways: humans *are* worth watching, learning from, and, perhaps, teaching. The price these wolves have paid is high, but the reward is endless fascination.

• **Khan** — Better than the other cats, if you can overlook their compulsive pride, they make loyal companions.

• **Kitsune:** They preen as if they were the chosen of the Emerald Mother. They work hard at appearances, but they are overindulgent children.

• **Kumo:** They seek to halt the Wheel, I fear. Their webs are strong, but with fortune and the Mother, we shall break their hold.

• **Nagah:** They judge others. We watch them. They resent it, but who can trust them to judge themselves?

• **Nezumi:** Their secret plans are dark and devious, but we have discovered more than they think. Yet we cannot tell all that we know, lest we interfere with the First Mandate and their assigned task.

• **Same-Bito:** So alien to us, with their ignorance of the land and devotion to water only. We love the air, but that does not stop us from caring for the earth. They do their job well, though, so we do not voice our complaints in their hearing.

• **Stargazers:** They look to the stars for guidance. We can understand their fascination. They may be worth cultivating for the stories they know about the Sunset People.

• **Zhong Lung:** Their knowledge of what has gone before astounds us. We learn from them and, in return, we give them word of what goes on today. It is a good arrangement.

Quote

Don't listen to the courts. There's so much more to the world than just the Middle Kingdom. Things come from the West all the time; sometimes people are worse off for accepting them, and sometimes people are worse off for rejecting them. Our duties are here, but our hearts are not blind.

Zhong Lung

Description

Charged by the Emerald Mother to hold Her memories and keep the history of the world, the Zhong Lung have exercised their duty faithfully since the time of the Age of Beauty. The Zhong Lung consider themselves the eldest of the hengeyokai and leaders in the search for balance and purity of thought. As children of the great Dragon Kings, they believe themselves the inheritors of the legacy of those fiercely wise and terrible creatures. This connection with the Dragon Kings has led them to honor the Sun, rather than the moon.

Though they have some similarities to other Mokolé, the Zhong Lung are in some ways the strangest divergence of the Dragon Breed. Both dream their war-forms by envisioning images from their ancient past, but where the Mokolé hearken back to their ancestors, the great dinosaurs of prehistoric times, the Zhong Lung return in time to the age of the Dragon Princes themselves and draw their war-forms from those legends.

Zhong Lung have mastered the art of *chuming*, or "inner knowing" and can see into the hearts of whomever they meet. Many Zhong Lung have attained great age, even by hengeyokai standards, through Gifts that prolong their lives and through the practice of Chinese mystical disciplines.

So steeped in the ways of the past and in the memories of the ages are the dragons that they lack a keen interest in current affairs and often demonstrate a naïve simplicity in their understanding of modern times. Though they possess Rage and rouse to heights of passion when the Emerald Mother's sacred places are threatened, they take little interest in everyday concerns of human society and have little knowledge of the world around them.

Zhong Lung have declined in numbers in modern times. Homids outnumber dracos significantly. Most make their homes in China and Tibet. Alligator Kinfolk dwell along the Yangtze River while crocodiles can be found in Malaysia and India. The Komodo dragon, another source of Kinfolk for the Zhong Lung, live in Indonesia, while other Zhong Lung live in Southeast Asia and Hawai'i. Through all their long lives, the goal of the Zhong Lung remains to contain and preserve the memories of the Emerald Mother as the Wheel of the Ages makes its inevitable round.

Organization

Male Zhong Lung (or *k'iulung*) tend to live alone, coming together with others of their kind only to mate, confer, protect their homes or attend to court matters. Female Zhong Lung (or *chi'lung*), on the other hand, live a more social life, usually congregating in groups of three or four, called *ching-tu*, in order to protect their young and any pregnant females. Female Zhong Lung Kinfolk also form *ching-tu* under the leadership of an elder chi'lung, known as "aunt" (*aiyi*). Zhong Lung, unlike Mokolé, do not breed with partners not of their breed form.

The *aiyi* negotiates any Zhong Lung matings and oversees the courtship and mating rituals. Male Zhong Lung impress prospective human mates with displays of storytelling or other forms of wisdom or lore. Homid *k'iulung* usually enter into storytelling or artistic competitions; draco *k'iulung* more often resort to physical combat to first blood. Both breeds enjoy riddle contests as a means of settling disputes. Though both sexes and breeds go to war when necessary, they prefer not to spill blood needlessly over mating practices.

Male Zhong Lung spend as much time as they need to with their mates before once again taking up their solitary life. When the female gives birth, the aiyi invites the father to visit his child or children to pay respect to his mate and greet his progeny. Zhong Lung Sai Chau (Theurges) often introduce young Zhong Lung or young Kinfolk to the greater world and the philosophy of the Great Cycle of Being. These



mystical Zhong Lung also guide the young ones on their first journeys to the crossroads of the Yin and Yang dragon lines.

Traits, Breeds and Forms

The Zhong Lung have four auspices that, unlike most Mokolé, follow the seasons rather than the solar phases. Each auspice corresponds with a season, a color and a wind. Each auspice also has a rough correspondence with a Garou auspice for purpose of learning Gifts. Since all Zhong Lung are considered lorekeepers, they may learn Galliard Gifts regardless of auspice.

Name (Garou Equivalent)	Season	Wind	Color	Starting Rage
Tung Chun (Ahroun)	Spring	East	Blue/Green	4
Nam Hsia (Philodox)	Summer	South	Yellow	3
Sai Chau (Theurge)	Autumn	West	White	2
Pei Tung (Ragabash)	Winter	North	Black	1

Sai Chau focus primarily on the guardianship of dragon nests. When a Middle Dragon joins a mountain sentai, she attempts to bring her auspice into harmony with her role in the sentai. Since the Zhong Lung are credited as the first to accept the Way of Emerald Virtue, few argue with their choices.

Zhong Lung have no Background restrictions except that they may not purchase Ancestors. Most possess Pure Breed, while Kinfolk and Allies are less frequently found as starting Backgrounds. Like the Mokolé, Zhong Lung have access to Mnesis. Purchase of this Background allows the Middle Dragon to roll Intelligence + Rituals (difficulty 8) after assuming a trance state. 1 dot gives the Zhong Lung access to memories of the Fifth Age, 2 dots expands the time to include the Fourth Age, etc. Zhong Lung regenerate damage as Garou but are susceptible to both silver and gold. Most Zhong Lung lie in the sun while they heal their wounds as a way of giving honor to their patron. They know the Dragon Tongue, as do their Mokolé kin, though their accent differs considerably.

All Zhong Lung begin with Willpower 4. They gain Rank within their breed as do Garou of their equivalent auspice. For example, a Sai Chau would gain Rank as a Garou Theurge. Those who serve the Beast Courts substitute the rank and Renown system of the Way of Emerald Virtue.

Like their Mokolé cousins, Zhong Lung posses two breeds: homid and draco (as suchid; they come from Chinese alligator, crocodile or Komodo dragon stock). Metis die at birth.

Zhong Lung have three forms: Homid, Archid and Suchid. Both Zhong Lung and Mokolé dream their Archid or war-forms during their Rite of Passage. Their Archid forms most closely resemble the Eastern dragons of traditional lore, though sometimes they include dinosaur features. Their statistics are as the Mokolé form statistics.

Gifts

Zhong Lung begin play with three Gifts which may be selected in any combination from the Zhong Lung Gifts, from the appropriate Garou auspice or from Galliard Gifts regardless of auspice. Middle Dragons who follow the Way of Emerald Virtue may also choose from the general hengeyokai Gifts. Ancestor-spirits or servants of Tiandi or Si Wang Mu teach many of these Gifts.

Archid Characteristics

Use the rules in Chapter Two (pg. XX) for designing a character's Archid form. Armor may take the form of glistening scales, while horns may take the form of great red antlers. In addition, the following enhancements are suitable for Zhong Lung.

- Fiery Pearl: +3 to Intimidate versus Kuei-jin, Wyrm-creatures or superstitious individuals.
- Resplendent Crest: +3 to Appearance and +1 to Charisma in Archid form.

- **Chi'ih Ming (Level One)** — This Gift enables the Zhong Lung to walk on air as if on land. A bird-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Athletics and spends a Gnosis point. This Gift does not allow the Zhong Lung to run on air, merely walk normally for one turn per success.

- **Dragon's Milk (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift: Mother's Touch, but the character must mix his blood with the target's blood. A water-spirit teaches this Gift.
- **Shou (Level One)** — As the Level Three Philodox Gift: Wisdom of the Ancient Ways.
- **Breaking the Tomorrow Wall (Level Two)** — This Gift allows the Zhong Lung to see the future by burning a bird feather. A crane-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Perception + Enigmas. Each success gives the Middle Dragon one obscure insight or fact about the near future.

- **Clap of Thunder (Level Two)** — As the Shadow Lords Gift.
- **Send the Dream (Level Three)** — As the Metis Gift: Mental Speech.
- **The Dragon's Tongue (Level Three)** — The Zhong Lung calls lightning down on an enemy with this Gift.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Strength + Intimidation to inflict one level of aggravated damage per success on the target.

- **Anger of the Wani (Level Four)** — As the Level Five Wendigo Gift: Invoke the Spirits of the Storm, but afterwards the Zhong Lung falls into a sleep that lasts a full day, dreaming his thanks to the Dragon Lords for use of the Gift.
- **Harmony of the Soul (Level Four)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift: Serenity, often used to keep peace at court when "honored visitors" (problematic *shen*) attend a session.
- **Sleep of Si Wang Mu (Level Four)** — This Gift enables the Zhong Lung to hibernate, adding years to his life. A servant of Si Wang Mu teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a permanent point of Gnosis and rolls Stamina + Enigmas (difficulty 7). Success allows the character to sleep for one lunar month, adding 12 years to his life.

• **A Thousand Secret Faces (Level Five)** — This Gift, a closely guarded secret of the Middle Dragons, allows the Zhong Lung to assume a nearly perfect illusion of any human of any age. Supernatural Gifts or powers may penetrate the disguise at a difficulty of 9 and anyone who attempts to do so must have a reason to suspect the illusion. An ancestor-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower and one Gnosis point and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 7). The Gift lasts for one day per success or until cancelled by the Zhong Lung.

Rites

The Middle Dragons love rituals and celebrate Rites of Accord and Mysticism regularly, along with other rites similar to those of the Garou. They also honor the passage of the seasons. The Rite of Nanfeng (south wind) celebrates summer; the Rite of Xifeng (west wind) acknowledges autumn; the Rite of Beifeng (north wind) celebrates winter; and the Rite of Dongfeng (east wind) commemorates spring. The Rite of Renewal celebrates the New Year. The Zhong Lung seasonal rites employ colors, incense, dance, quests for knowledge, poetry and other arts. The Middle Dragons also perform Minor Rites to honor the Sun.

Stereotypes

• **Boli Zouhisze:** So focused are they on the here and now that they forget the past and the distant future. They should honor the cycles.

• **Hakken:** They serve the Mother well, though they are blind to the whole picture. We pity their oversight.

• **Khan:** Long ago, they were our worthy adversaries, noble yet hungry for blood and violence. They have retained their combative spirit though they are now our allies.

• **Kitsune:** The Emerald Mother may love Her youngest for their cleverness and their trickery, but we are wary of their comprehension of the truth.

• **Kumo:** They are trapped in their own webs and are under the power of the Centipede; still, they have knowledge that is useful and a place in the Great Cycle.

• **Nagah:** They judge, sometimes too harshly, but their blood and the blood of their victims oils the Wheel.

• **Nezumi:** Clever and helpful, they repay kindness with a thousand favors. Do not underestimate or discount them.

• **Same-Bito:** We share much with them and have tried to teach them all that we can. Still, some remain primitive and brutal. They must learn to discipline themselves.

• **Stargazers:** They have come to the Middle Kingdom seeking aid and knowledge. We will give them both, but ask loyalty in return.

• **Tengu:** They love finding and sharing secrets and their knowledge of tactics is formidable. They ally themselves with the Hakken, which gives us some cause for concern.

Quote

The future is uncertain, but the past is clear. We do not know if the Wheel will still be turning tomorrow — we know only that it must.

Splinters of the Garou

Apart from the Hakken, there are two other factions of werewolves with a strong presence in the Beast Courts. One is a sub-tribe (though preferring not to think of themselves as such); the other a venerable tribe in its own right that has demonstrated that they have more in common with the hengeyokai of the Beast Courts than with the Western Garou. Though the Boli Zouhisze use the same statistics and rules as Glass Walkers and the Stargazers have retained their abilities and Gifts, their roles in the Middle Kingdom have placed them apart from the Garou Nation.

Boli Zouhisze (Glass Walkers)

Similar in many core philosophies to the Glass Walkers, this splinter group has a history as old as its parent tribe — though according to them, they are the root tribe and the Glass Walkers a later permutation. Though centered in China for most of their history, they moved the heart of their operations to Hong Kong in 1842. A crossroads for shen of all kinds, Hong Kong brought them into constant contact with western Glass Walkers. The restoration of Hong Kong to China dealt them a harsh blow and many Boli Zouhisze lost power when the government moved against the Triads. The Mother of Peach Trees caern, the seat of their most powerful sept, nearly collapsed from the death of their elder.

The recent appearance of a number of new Boli Zouhisze cubs in one year indicates that these Asian Glass Walkers have an important role to play in the development of Hong Kong. The Beast Courts have offered them assistance, but they have maintained their independence for so long that it is hard for them to accept help. Still, they may soon have no choice as the minions of the Wyrm make their move on the Mother of Peach Trees sept.

For more information on the Boli Zouhisze, see **Tribebook: Glass Walkers.**

Quote

You didn't hear this from me, but most of the courts are stuck in the Fourth Age. They don't so much as touch computers, they turn up their noses at guns like they're trying to fight the Boxer Rebellion all over again, and they sure do hate that Western culture is all over the place. A respect for tradition is good, but you'd think they'd want to prepare for the Sixth Age a little better, no?

Stargazers

The Stargazers recently returned to the Middle Kingdom following the destruction of their most sacred caern, the Shigalu Monastery in the Himalayas. While the Garou nation did little to help, the Beast Courts offered the Stargazers an alliance and they accepted.

Now these Western Garou who have always looked to the East for guidance find themselves part of the Beast Courts. They have a long road to walk as they seek to understand the politics and beliefs of the hengeyokai while still maintaining some relations with their friends and allies in the Garou Nation. They have found the Way of Emerald



Virtue compatible with their tribal beliefs and seem to thrive in their new life. Whether or not they can provide a bridge between the Middle Kingdom and the Sunset Lands remains to be seen, though some believe that the fate of the Wheel of the Ages rests in the actions taken by the Stargazers in the near future.

For more information on the current state of the Stargazers, see **Tribebook: Stargazers.**

Quote

We have had much to learn since we returned to our homelands; much to learn about our cousins and new allies. And yet so much that we have had to learn are things that we have known, within, all along. Our road has been painful, but we tread it willingly.

General Hengeyokai Gifts

Any hengeyokai associated with the Beast Courts and pledged to the Way of Emerald Virtue may learn these Gifts without restriction, except that they must qualify for each Gift by rank. Other hengeyokai, even if they do not serve the Courts, may acquire these Gifts in return for service to the Courts.

• **Create Element (Level One)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Mindspeak (Level One)** — As the Galliard Gift. Hengeyokai use this with new arrivals at Court to provide immediate communication.

• **Sense Imbalance (Level Two)** — The hengeyokai can sense if any one of the Triat has upset the balance in a given area. She knows if the Weaver is too strong in a particular place or if the Wyld is lacking somewhere. A spirit servant of the Emerald Mother teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Perception + Occult, with the difficulty dependent on the strength of the dominant force in the area.

• **Blaze Talons (Level Two)** — The hengeyokai can cause his hands, paws or wings to burst into flame, adding considerably to his damage in battle. This Gift is also impressive to see, as the attacks leave flame trails behind them. A flame-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Strength + Primal Urge. Each success causes the flames to last for two turns. The Gift adds one die to the damage roll and causes flammable materials to burn. Vampires may frenzy. All damage caused by the strike is aggravated. Same-Bito, Zhong Lung and Nagah must learn this as a Level Three Gift due to their attunement to water.

• **Courtly Speech (Level Two)** — This Gift enables a hengeyokai to speak any of the Changing Breed languages — the strange animal tongues equivalent to the Garou High Tongue — as fluently as if it were his own. This does not give knowledge of writing nor does it affect human speech. A Crane-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Linguistics (difficulty 7). The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Waking Dream of Unity (Level Three)** — This Gift sends waking dreams into the minds of a group of hengeyokai,

making communication easier than with the Gift: Mindspeak. Most Gai'nan know this Gift and use it for communicating with the whole court at once. A Chimerling or spirit-servant of the Ministers of Heaven teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and can place up to 30 individuals into silent communication. Only those present at the time of the activation of the Gift are included. Actions are possible at a one-die penalty. Even unwilling individuals may be drawn into the waking dream if the Gift's activator makes a Manipulation + Expression roll (difficulty of the target's Willpower). If the user of the Gift fails this roll, the dream terminates.

- **Exorcism (Level Four)** — As the Level Three Theurge Gift. Hengeyokai use this Gift to drive away influences from the Yama Kings and cleanse the courts of their interference.

- **Part the Wall (Level Four)** — This Gift allows hengeyokai Breeds that cannot enter the Mirror Lands normally to do so as easily as if they could do it naturally.

System: Any hengeyokai who learns this Gift permanently gains the ability to step sideways as Garou do.

Hengeyokai Rites

Hengeyokai enjoy participating in rites and use them as ceremonies that bind together the many Breeds of the Beast Courts in a common practice. Though hengeyokai usually teach their rites to any shapechangers who ask politely (even Sunset People), they hold some apart for their own use and teach them to no one outside the Beast Courts.

Rites of Accord

The Beast Courts have their own versions of the Rites of Contrition and Cleansing and teach them to as many hengeyokai as they can. The Rite of the Great Burden is their version of the Rite of Renunciation and is used when a hengeyokai wishes to change from service to the Courts to service to her Breed or vice versa or when a Western Changer wishes to join the Beast Courts. When a hengeyokai changes her auspice to one more suited, she undergoes the Rite of the Second Face. This rite can only be performed once per individual and usually takes place at a crossroads.

Caern Rites

Caern rites have an important role in the lives of hengeyokai and they have their own versions of most Garou caern rites, except for The Badger's Burrow. The appearance and form of the rites reflect the customs of the Middle Kingdom, but the effects are the same as those practiced by the Garou or Western Fera.

Death Rites

Rites to honor the dead usually take place within the Breed rather than in the courts. If a hero of the Courts has died performing some great service to the Emerald Mother, his court performs a rite of honor celebrating the life of the fallen hero. Called Journey's End, this rite, if successful, conveys the body of the deceased directly into the Umbra.

Mystic Rites

Mystic rites play a large part in court life and allow those hengeyokai who cannot otherwise access the spirit world to do so as a rite participant. Rites of Binding, Talisman Dedication, Spirit Awakening and Summoning are common to all the courts. Other rites are peculiar to the hengeyokai. The Rite of the Harmonious Journey, for example, binds a group of hengeyokai into a mountain sentai.

Punishment Rites

The hengeyokai use their own variants of the Satire Rite and the Stone of Scorn to punish errant members. Two rites, however, are unique to the hengeyokai and are used to punish severe crimes against the Emerald Mother or the Beast Courts.

Rite of Quiet Burial

Level Three

The hengeyokai that demonstrates an inability to correct her misdeeds may need time alone to contemplate her errors. Members of the court escort the subject of this rite to an isolated place where she is buried alive for a period that usually lasts from sunset to sunrise. If the rite succeeds, the victim does not need to breathe, eat or drink for the duration. A hengeyokai subjected to this rite must make three Willpower rolls (difficulty 8) or lose a permanent point of Willpower from the harrowing effect of being buried alive.

System: The ritemaster rolls Charisma + Rituals to ensure the rite's success. The ritemaster knows if the rite fails and immediately exhumes the victim so that she does not die, believing that the Emerald Mother has decided that the punishment was undeserved.

Rite of Hell Made Flesh

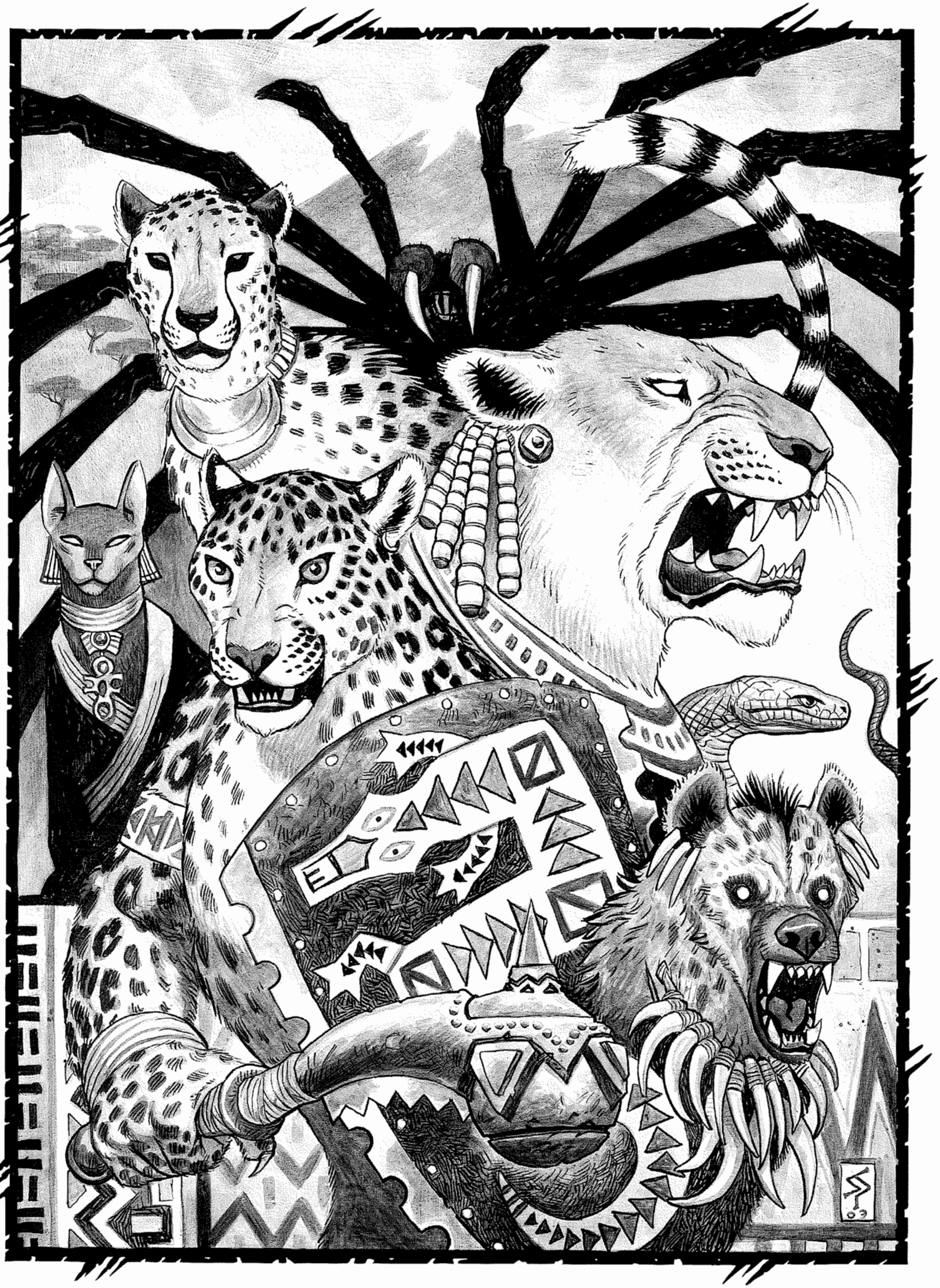
Level Five

This horrific rite is reserved for traitors to the Emerald Mother. The victim is taken to an out-of-the-way place where his screams cannot be heard. The rite slowly transforms the victim's body, from the inside out, to silver, gold or whatever material is appropriate. The rite is irreversible.

System: The ritemaster reads the crimes of the victim and pronounces the punishment before rolling Charisma + Rituals. If the rite fails, the victim is declared innocent, and a second attempt may not be made on the same victim for the same crime. Success indicates a slow, painful death.

Renown Rites

The hengeyokai have few Renown Rites. They celebrate the addition of a new hengeyokai to the Courts with the Rite of the Opened Way, which reveals the cub's auspice and role in the Courts. A variant of the Rite of Accomplishment acknowledges the gaining of a new rank and accompanies the awarding of an appropriate badge of rank.





Chapter Five: The Ahadi

Africa has always walked in my mind proudly upright, an African giant among the other continents, toes well dug into the final ocean of one hemisphere, rising to its full height in the graying skies of the other; head and shoulders broad, square and enduring, making light of the bagful of blue Mediterranean slung over its back as it marches patiently through time.

— Laurens Van der Post, *Flamingo Feather*

Prologue

There are many faces here, many people young and old, familiar and new. Good, good. There is much you must learn, for we are living in extraordinary times, and we must keep pace with the rhythm of the world around us if we are to make headway in our war against the Wyrm and its minions. It may seem odd to have an outsider tell you of the goings-on in Africa, but that is only appropriate; there are things I see that the natives do not see, things I understand that they miss because they cannot look upon their circumstances with unclouded eyes. Change is in the wind, my friends, and we must be ready to embrace it when it comes. So listen well if you would learn of Africa's secrets, for I am Walks-With-Might, and this is the truth.

The History of Gaia's Children in Africa

The First Races

In ancient times, long before the rise of men, the world of spirit was torn apart from the world of the physical, and the very world itself wept as a result. Our Earth-Mother, Gaia, saw this calamity and despaired, for She knew that without the spirits to guide them the creatures of the world would easily lose their way. But Her wisdom is vast and timeless, and so She decided to create the Changing Breeds, creatures of the spirit world given bodies of flesh and bone. These beings, who shared the souls of animals and men, were charged with walking among the world's creatures and guiding them according to Gaia's will. The Ananasi were to weave, the Corax to listen, the Mokolé to remember, the Garou to destroy. She gave each of them a task to do, and they did it gladly. All was well, for a time. But as is often the case, things did not work out quite so well as Gaia had intended....

The Bastet

After some time, Gaia found that Her children had difficulty working together. The Ananasi wove but would not stop, the Corax listened but did not hear, the Mokolé remembered but would not speak, and the Garou... heh. The Garou destroyed, but did so indiscriminately. Saddened by this, Gaia

realized that She needed to find a way to make Her creations work together, and it was to this end that She created the Bastet. They were a fierce and proud people, and Gaia asked that they help the rest of us to work together. They gladly accepted the task, but unfortunately were not... ideally suited to it. Their arrogance created resentment among the other Changers, particularly the Garou and the Ajaba. While we recognized our own weaknesses, we did not take kindly to having some young upstarts constantly pointing them out. We also took offense at the fact that they were eager to help, but only on their terms. They were independent beasts, those Bastet, and while they were well adapted to finding flaws in others' work they were not particularly adept at learning to work well with others. The War of Rage was the result.

The Ajaba Desertion

As war raged in the north, a different sort of conflict reigned in the south. The Ajaba, the Choosers of the Slain, found their stars falling; we Garou were slaughtering them along with everyone else in the Americas and Asia, and the Bastet kept harping on them about how they were falling down on the job. It's no wonder, really; everyone was falling down when we werewolves were snapping at their heals. But the Ajaba were sick of it. They were content to do their job as best they could, but when they faced slaughter at the hands of the Garou and criticism from the Bastet's mouths, they up and decided they'd had enough. If the Bastet were so damn good at figuring out what had to be done in the world, let *them* deal with it. The Ajaba had better things to do, or so they thought, and as far as they were concerned the world beyond their territories could just go to hell.

The betrayal of the Ajaba shocked and angered the other Fera of the world. The Bastet were particularly annoyed, since the Ajaba's departure meant they had to take on the werehyenas' duties — a task for which they were ill-prepared. Anger soon turned to resentment, and resentment to hatred, for by the Bastet's reckoning the Ajaba's refusal to cooperate with them was a sin beyond imagining. Even the Wyrm did not enrage them so, for while that being is the essence of corruption it is nonetheless a thing of nature. It is doing as its nature commands it, and as such it cannot be condemned out of hand. But the Ajaba... they were not corrupted. They did not fall to the Wyrm. Like the Ratkin, they simply *turned their backs on Gaia*, abandoning Her when their job became too much for them to handle. The Bastet found this intolerable, and so decided that the werehyenas had to be punished. That is our way, as it has always been. And yet....

There comes a point when one goes too far. The Simba turned their hatred of the Ajaba into a science, and when the other Bastet wondered if they'd gone too far they became the enemy as well. And when the whites came to Africa, and when the vampires began to strangle the land, and when the Wyrm sank its talons into the Earth, the Simba knew that there was no price too great for punishing the guilty. They had passed the point of no return, but the other Bastet found to their horror that it was far was too late to stop them. They had become the Dark Kings of Gaia, and it would take the threat of utter annihilation to get the rest of us to do something about it.

A lot of people had to die to make us understand that.

Black Tooth and the Endless Storm

When we look back on the madness of Black Tooth, it's tempting to write him off as an aberration. If we were to do so, however, we would be overlooking the tradition of hatred and resentment that fostered his rage, and that has existed for centuries. The Endless Storm was righteousness and pride made manifest, and while it was a perversion of all we stand for it is nonetheless instructive. We know now how it all ended; we know that the Mokolé crushed Black Tooth's pride, that we Striders shattered his vampire allies, that the Bagheera and the Bubasti stripped him of his magical might, and that still others finally broke him, once and for all. But all of that is in the past, and it is not what concerns us now. Now we must look to the future, and in so doing seek to understand how it was that the old hatreds began to bleed away, and how the crucible of war helped us to forge an alliance that will last forever. That understanding begins with an Ajaba, the hyena known as Kisasi.

Kisasi

When death came to the Ajaba in the Ngorongoro in 1984, the survivors scattered to the four winds. Some ran to Europe or the Americas, but most made their way to India, which was home to their hyena Kin. Africa had become a dangerous place for them, since Black Tooth and his pride now ruled the whole of the continent. Few chose to weather the storm's winds, but those who did were crafty and tenacious out of necessity. One of these, a mere child to look at her, was Kisasi, the Ajaba who barely understood the meaning of her own name. For you see, she was a hyena, and while she hated lions as much as any hyena could she was not plagued by a thirst for vengeance. But that was the name she was given when she underwent her First Change, and so that was the name she called her own from then on.

Kisasi was more interested in survival than anything else, and she understood the land in ways that most of her kin could not. They spoke of vengeance and politics, but what did that matter to her? Those were abstract concepts, and she had more primal concerns. Gaia spoke to her in a way normally reserved for the males of her clan, and it was thus that she was blessed with wisdom instead of rage. So it was that she cast off the hateful legacy of her elders, vowing to chart her own course as she eked out a living on the plains of the Serengeti. Her fellows called her foolish and a traitor, but she didn't care. She ignored their silly human ways, scoffed at the notion of hatred for hatred's sake, and instead used the land to help Gaia as best she could. This, of course, was her greatest virtue; she recognized the pulse of Gaia around her, and knew that there had to be more to life than hating the lions and preying upon the weak. This knowledge led to curiosity, and that curiosity opened the door for many things indeed.

The Leopard and the Hyena Cub

I cannot imagine what must have gone through old Kiva's mind when she first laid eyes on Kisasi; what Ajaba could be mad enough to be traveling alone in Africa? Indeed, what Ajaba would be so bold as to walk right up to a leopard and ask her what she was doing? And yet, this is exactly what Kisasi did. As fate would have it, she picked the right leopard; we all know Kiva isn't exactly known for her temper, and I daresay it would take the Wyrm itself to do anything more than mildly irritate her, such is the extent of her control over her Rage. And so the Bagheera and the Ajaba proceeded to have a conversation, wherein Kiva told the young pup all she knew of Gaia and their role in Her grand design, and of the sorrowful history that had led to the massacre in Ngorongoro. She spoke of Black Tooth, and of why he had been allowed to become so fearsomely powerful, and of how no one knew what to do about him now. And the others... she mentioned the others, too, I think. The Mokolé and the Garou and the Bubasti and all the rest of Gaia's children.

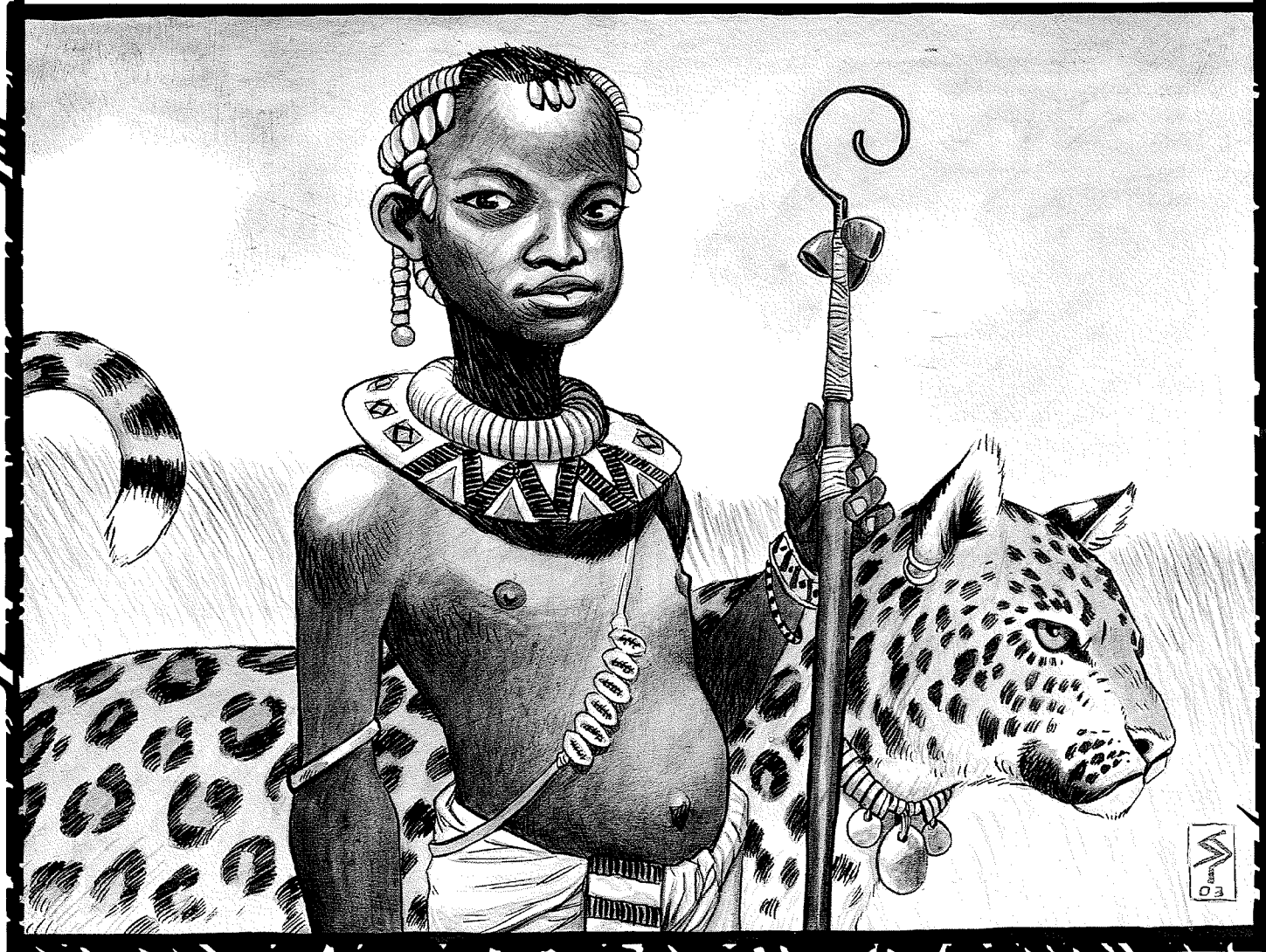
When Kisasi heard of the great power of the Mokolé, and of the Garou's role as Gaia's teeth, and of all of the mystic might of the Bubasti and the Bagheera, she asked her ersatz mentor why they didn't all just team up and get rid of Black Tooth once and for all. Ah, the wisdom of the young! Kiva told her this probably wasn't going to happen, seeing as how the various Breeds didn't really get along very well, and Kisasi decided on the spot that this was a dumb and foolish thing, and that she would just have to fix it.

It would seem that one should not underestimate the power of a tenacious young Ajaba — particularly one prone to positive thinking.

Making Friends Along the Nile

Since the Bagheera have relatively good ties with the werecrocodiles who share their territories, Kisasi decided they'd be a good place to start. I'm not sure why Kiva went along with the pup's insane plan; perhaps she was just humoring the child, or perhaps she figured that things couldn't get much worse without triggering the Apocalypse itself. With nothing to lose, then, the two set out to find the Mokolé.

Now, the Mokolé are, by nature, rather placid sorts. We Striders have had an agreement with them for years, staying away from them at worst and working with them on occasion in kinder times. This is the way it has to be; one cannot fight the vampires in Egypt if one is fighting his friends as well, and we realized that long ago. Not surprisingly, then, the crocodiles tend to be rather open-minded, at least by the standards of the Fera. When a Bastet and an Ajaba showed up at their sacred watering holes, the one looking put upon



and the other with wagging tail, the Mokolé must have been rather curious to say the least.

Curious they were, but that is all. When Kisasi asked for their assistance against Black Tooth, they were unmoved; it was not, after all, their department. They were sympathetic, to be sure, but they were Gaia's memory, not Her warriors. If Kisasi was bent on working against Black Tooth, they would offer her and her kin aid and shelter, but they would not fight for her unless there was no other way to do what needed to be done. She would have to go elsewhere for aid, they said. She would have to come to us. To the Garou.

The Striders' Demands

Kisasi was an enthusiastic child, but she was not foolish. The thought of dealing with the Garou directly frightened her very nearly as much as facing the Simba did, and she was uncertain as to how to proceed at this point. But the Mokolé gave her some names to work with, and so with a bit of effort she found a Strider sept to speak to.

The results were not encouraging.

When we first heard of Kisasi's scheme, we thought it was a nice idea. It was encouraging to find an Ajaba who actually gave a damn for once, and the peace and cooperation she spoke of was all nice and idyllic. But what she was suggesting was a concerted effort — one that would generate considerable casualties — to take down Black Tooth once and for all. The question we had, though, was this: then what? What was the point of clearing out Black Tooth's pride if some other Simba, or a vampire, or who knows what else, would just step in to take his place? No, we said. Not good enough. If she wanted our help, she would need to convince us that something good would come of it. Something lasting. She would need to find a new king for Africa's Changing Breeds.

The Mayi'o

Our demands of Kisasi were great, but they were necessary. The Bastet only truly respect their own, and we knew that, for all their hatred of the Simba, they nonetheless recognized the brutes as the closest thing catkind had to kings, and therefore lords of Africa as well. We Garou and the Mokolé might look askance at that, but our perceptions don't much matter; Africa belongs to the cats more than anyone else, and if we were to shake things up down there we needed proof that the cats could look after things on their own. Kisasi didn't care for that much; Kiva liked it even less. But that wily old Bagheera had an intriguing idea, one we didn't learn about until after the fact.

Kisasi's next stop was farther south, far beyond the domains of Black Tooth and his pride. There was a place in Africa even they wouldn't go, and for good reason: They weren't the only Simba game in town. Long ago, the Mayi'o separated from the rest of their kin and settled in the Kalahari, where they adopted a more peaceful and spiritual existence (how ironic that they prey on elephants there, far more fearsome prey than any the Amadu'o would care to tackle!). If they could be convinced to enter the fray... but then, there was the rub. The Mayi'o left Simba society for a reason, after all. They wanted no part of it. How, then, could Kisasi tempt them to rejoin Africa's Changing Breeds, and help them to end the scourge of Black Tooth?

Only Kisasi and the Mayi'o king, Hakimu, know what happened next. But I do know that Hakimu rebuffed her time and again, and that she would not back down. How sad and pitiful she must have looked, terrified and alone, a tiny Ajaba child standing firm in the face of a Simba's rage! But how proud, too; whatever he demanded of her, she was willing to provide, and her word stood as bond for all the Ajaba of the world. Hate the Simba though they may, none could ignore the possibility of a life without war, without being hunted, without being reviled for the sins of their ancestors. Somehow, Kisasi redeemed her race in the eyes of the Mayi'o, and as long as she stands as their queen the wounds of the past will not be reopened.

Garou Allies

With Hakimu and his pride committed, Kisasi returned to us once again. This was not the same woman who had come begging for our help in the past, however. Gone was the bright-eyed child, the little hyena who found the notion of fighting one's kin absurd. In her place stood a young woman with fire in her eyes, and this time she did not request our help — she demanded it, reminding us of our duties to Gaia and our pacts with the spirits who called Africa home. She had spoken to the Mokolé, and to the Bagheera, and to the Mayi'o, and to us. She knew what was at stake, and she knew this was not a game. We could not possibly refuse her, she said, because doing so would mean turning our backs on Gaia just as the Ajaba had in the past. She was proud and defiant, supremely confident in the righteousness of her quest. We looked at her through hard eyes, embittered as we were in our war against Black Tooth's allies in the north, and we resented her impudence. Be that as it may, however, we knew something else as well — she was right. It was time to end things, time to put the dark king of Africa in his place as we should have long ago. It was time to go to war.

The Covenant

The war with Black Tooth was long and bloody, but it finally ended with the utter annihilation of his pride and all who supported them. The Garou of the south, the Kucha Ekundu, destroyed the Simba's feline Kin, and we Striders disemboweled his vampiric support. The Mokolé erupted from their wallows to crush the Endless Storm, and the Bagheera stripped the errant king of his most potent magics. When all was said and done only Black Tooth's skull remained, his body torn to ribbons and his soul destroyed for all eternity. Even Malfeas cannot claim him now; his hold on the world is broken forever.

With the battle ended, the real story of Africa's Fera began to take shape. The Amadu'o Simba were disgraced, and the Mayi'o rose from the Kalahari to take their place among Gaia's defenders. They had placed a terrible burden

Black Tooth's Killer

It's been said before, but it bears repeating: Black Tooth's killer has not been named, and never shall be. This is because that role is left for the player characters, should they care to do the deed (or have already accomplished it), or to whomever else the Storyteller chooses for the chronicle. The glory of destroying the fallen king is easily great enough that the victor would play a prominent role in the formation and subsequent direction of the Ahadi, and players and Storytellers alike are encouraged to shape the events described below accordingly.

on Kisasi's shoulders, one that bound the two races in a way the rest of us couldn't understand. In so doing, they had formed the basis for a much larger coalition of interests: if the Ajaba and the Simba were to work together, how much of a stretch was it to include the other Changers? The Bubasti, Mokolé, and we Silent Striders already had an accord of sorts in Egypt, and both the Bubasti and the Simba had ties to the Bagheera. Once we recognized the bonds we all shared, the next step seemed obvious. We had to extend our bonds of cooperation into an agreement to work together in the future as we had in our efforts to topple Black Tooth. We had to create a covenant, a sacred pact that would amount to more than empty promises and whispered words of cooperation. We needed an *ahadi*.

Recent Events

Most of the Fera who initially agreed to join the Ahadi were surprised by how easy the entire process was. Kiva, Kisasi, Swims-in-Mbembe's-Wake, Hakimu and myself formed the nucleus of the organization, and the Bagheera managed to draw up a constitution of sorts in fairly short order. Treaties followed, often ending centuries of conflict, and the accumulated Changers soon realized possibilities the new alliance offered were staggering. The greatest alliances were those forged between the Silent Striders and the Bagheera, and between the Simba and the Ajaba. But when the Mokolé threw their accumulated knowledge into the mix, and the Bubasti tentatively offered up some of their magical ability, the Ahadi members felt a quickening in their veins the likes of which they had never before experienced. They knew, now beyond all doubt, that they could actually accomplish something here. It wasn't about killing some vampires or putting one's own house in order; they were making history, and they knew it, and they rejoiced. This was the single most encouraging event the Changing Breeds had seen since the formation of the Beast Courts in ages past, and they knew that their combined efforts could change the world.

Black Tooth's Legacy

The fallout from Black Tooth's death has been staggering. His vampire allies, held in check by their agreements with him and the raw power he commanded, were free to do as they would once he died, and for a long while there was little anyone could do to stop it. His death scream woke something evil in the Kalahari desert, something the world was never meant to see, and it is something that may yet consume all of the life in Africa. No minion of the Wyrm could operate unchecked by Black Tooth's power, and even the spirits of the dead paid homage to his might. In all the ways that count he was like unto a god, and when he died the fear of crossing him was lost as well. For a time, it seemed like the world was coming to an end.

Those terrifying weeks are the reason the Mayi'o Simba remain in power today. The other Bastet wanted to give in to despair, because they saw threats on all sides and no way to defend against them. The Silent Striders were unfamiliar with the land, and this left them unable to help their newfound allies. The Kucha Ekundu were shattered by the war with the Endless Storm, and they hadn't the strength to fight the enemies who now confronted them. The Mokolé clutches had been destroyed, and the Swara were still in hiding. The Ajaba, though critical in the formation of the Ahadi, were still a weak, inexperienced, hopelessly embittered group, incapable of fighting in a coordinated fashion without Garou support. Things were a mess, and Africa's outlook in the wake of Black Tooth's death looked ten times worse than it had before.

But the Mayi'o do not know how to surrender. Perhaps they are more refined and even-tempered than the Amadu'o, but they are still Simba. The other Changers wanted to run and hide, but the Mayi'o would not allow it. The Simba would fight the Wyrm, they said; they would fight the Wyrm, and the vampires, and anything else that stood in their way, because that was what Gaia had told them to do. They would fight, and they would win, and no one would stop them. And when the other Changers heard this, when the Simba informed them of this, they found that they believed it. They believed it because they knew, they knew in that moment, that what the Simba were saying was true, and because they knew this they also knew that they could not fail. This was their birthright, their mandate from Heaven, and they resolved then and there to crush their enemies or die trying.

It was not easy, of course. Their foes were legion, and they seemed unstoppable. But the forces of Gaia were working in concert as never before, and the Mayi'o kept them going by raw force of will alone. The lions did not allow them to bend, or to break, and they scoured the countryside piece by piece, using the Bastet to find their enemies, and the Ajaba to divine their weaknesses, and the Mokolé to show them the way. And once they learned their enemies' secrets, they used the Garou as a divine hammer to crush all who stood against them. As the weeks rolled by, the headway they made was remarkable. The largest threats yet remained, of course. The Wyrm had not gone away, and the Banes awakened by Black Tooth had not gone away, and the vampires had not gone away, but all of these things knew that the Fera could not be besieged, and that they could not

be crushed. They knew that Africa belonged to the Bastet, and the Ajaba, and the Mokolé, and the Garou, and they knew that they would have to fight for every bit of it they took, and that it would cost them dearly to keep it. The Ahadi had passed its greatest test, and the bonds that formed in those early weeks are powerful enough that they can never be broken. Black Tooth's legacy became the crucible that defined the Ahadi, that made it a symbol of hope for all of Gaia's children around the world. And that hope has struck a terrible blow against the Wyrm, a blow that cannot be measured in blood or bone alone. That is the Mayi'o legacy, and that is why they rule the Bastet of Africa today.

Mokolé Recovery

The Mokolé losses during the war with the Endless Storm were incalculable, as entire clutches of young were defiled in the war's final days. Crocodiles do not tend to breed very quickly, and as a result their recovery has been slow and painful. But all is not lost: a number of Mokolé from the Congo basin have moved outward into the world, mingling their streams and their memories with those of their kin in hopes of revitalizing their nests in Africa. The Spear of Mokolé-Mbembe has given them new life, and it symbolizes the bonds they share with the Kucha Ekundu and the Bagheera. And they are not alone in their efforts; their participation in the final battle with the Endless Storm has ensured that their recovery is listed as a top priority for the Ahadi, and every member of the council agreed with this sentiment. The Mokolé are deeply grateful, and have been more forthcoming with their knowledge as a result (provided people ask for it, of course; they rarely know what's needed and what's not, so the Ahadi Fera have had to learn how to ask the right questions if they want the Mokolé to give them answers).

The Future of the Kyphur Cats

Fate has been kind to the Bubasti of late, for she has revealed to them the location of the last of the ancient Kyphur cats, the Bubasti's ancestral feline Kin. This chain of events began when agents of Sashet Davis, the Bubasti charged with locating and rescuing the captive Kyphurs, chanced to overhear a conversation between two Garou in a Cairo bazaar. The particulars of the conversation turned Davis' stomach, but the information it provided was nonetheless of great value; apparently, one of the Garou had consumed the brain of a vampiric ghoul, and in the process learned of the location of the Bubasti's Kin.

Davis now finds herself in an unenviable position. She knows she must act quickly, before the information she has goes stale. She also knows that she is in a position to call upon the Silent Striders for aid, as stipulated by the Ahadi. However, the Striders are not known for their subtlety, particularly in matters concerning vampires. The prospect of reclaiming some of her Kin at the cost of the lives of the others makes her ill at ease, and as a result she has been researching other options in hopes of finding a better solution to the problem.

Liberating the Kyphur Cats

There are many ways Sashet Davis might go about rescuing her feline Kin. Some of the most dramatic include:

- The Ratkin aren't on terribly good terms with the Garou, but they might be more sympathetic to the plight of the Bubasti. If Davis can convince the ratlings to aid her cause, she would find that the Ratkin make superb infiltrators, and might well stand the best chance of rescuing the Kyphurs. Doing so would open a doorway for their joining the Ahadi, if they are inclined to do so.
- The ties between the Bagheera and the Bubasti are strong, and it's possible Davis might be able to prevail upon the werepanthers to intercede on the Bubasti's behalf. The only problem with this tactic is the fact that the Bagheera are notoriously hidebound when it comes to matters of propriety – meaning the prospect of taking action under the radar of other Ahadi members likely won't sit well with them.
- Bubasti are more likely than most Changing Breeds to establish close ties with various sorts of mages. These could prove to be helpful allies against the vampires who hold the Kyphurs, but their aid would no doubt come at a high price.
- The Silent Striders might get involved, with Davis' blessing or without. Walks-With-Might would certainly see the liberation of the Kyphur cats as an excellent means of solidifying ties within the Ahadi, and the fact that it would involve dealing a sect of Cairo's vampires a crippling blow is just icing on the cake. The problem with such a strategy is that even the slightest misstep could result in catastrophe, which makes the Garou option unsettling to say the least.

Ultimately, the fate of the last Kyphurs should rest with the chronicle. If the Storyteller would like to have the players get involved with this rescue mission, that's fine; if the Storyteller feels that a little more tragedy is necessary to balance the many positive gains of the Ahadi, having the mission go poorly is fine too.

The Swara's Secret

When she was recruiting allies for her battle against Black Tooth, the Swara were among the first of the Fera that Kisasi contacted. No one save the Ajaba had been harassed and terrorized by the Wyrm as much as they had, and she figured they'd be eager to oust the Simba dictator from power. She was in for a shock. Their response when she told them of her quest was something akin to "It sounds like a worthy goal. We wish you the best of luck!" She never saw them again.

Kisasi thought this response rather rude, but it was understandable: the Swara are understandably paranoid creatures, and they can't really be faulted for their desire to do anything *except* face Black Tooth. And honestly, how could they have known Kisasi had a chance of succeeding? Her quest was likely

a fool's errand, and playing it safe is what the Swara do best. Which has kept them in the game, as it were, until now.

The Swara's current situation is the result an overactive desire to help others. Since they were rational beings, they were unwilling to face Black Tooth directly. But when they learned of the rather awful situation plaguing the Kucha Ekundu, they felt a need to help out as best they could. So, they offered to protect a number of Kucha pups, isolating them from their diseased packmates in hopes of keeping them safe for another day. It was a grand idea, and it likely saved the Garou of the south from extinction; unfortunately, it also made it difficult to keep secrets.

It wasn't the Garou's fault, really; they had no idea that they Swara ability to step sideways was such a closely guarded secret, and the Swara they were watching didn't know they were around. So when they innocently mentioned the incident in mixed company, the cat, as it were, was out of the bag.

This is why the Swara are so relentlessly xenophobic.

Once a Bastet got wind of the Swara's secret, it seemed to spread like wildfire. You'd think a damn Corax had clued into things, what with the way everyone seemed to know about it. The Mayi'o thought this was a great and wonderful thing, as it made the Swara uniquely equipped to scout the Umbra, and bolster the Kucha Ekundu's efforts to investigate the evils lurking in the sands of the Kalahari desert. The Swara were dragged from their territories, promised rich rewards in the form of both protection and prey, reminded of their duties to Gaia (which they found insulting, since they probably took those duties more seriously than any other Bastet tribe), and pressed into service. So it was that the Swara joined the Ahadi, to the delight of all its many Fera.

The Swara think the whole affair stinks, but nobody asked them. They despise that, too.

Gaining Leverage

The Swara aren't terribly happy about being pressed into service for the sake of the Ahadi. Yes, yes, they understand it's for the good of Gaia, and that it's unprecedented, and that everyone else is involved, and so on and so forth. That's all well and good, but abuse in the name of noble ends is still abuse, and some Swara have decided that they aren't going take it lying down. The trick, of course, lies in figuring out how to improve their own position without holding the interests of Gaia hostage, for while all the Changing Breeds serve Gaia, none have made it so central to their identity as the Swara. They therefore find that they have to continue to further the efforts of the Ahadi and at the same time bargain themselves into a position of strength within the organization.

Whisper-of-Sands, a Feline Swara mystic, has made some progress on this front. It was he who brought the Kucha Ekundu to Tinus Grellman's ranch in Namibia, and it is he who maintains the closest ties to the painted wolves today. With Strongest Son's help, Whisper is maneuvering the Swara into a position of strength in the southern lands of Africa, both by exploring the Kalahari and by keeping the renegade Ajaba at bay. Lord Hakimu, the Mayi'o Simba king, has begun to take notice of Whisper's efforts, and is now wondering whether the wily Swara is a threat or merely a helpful asset. In either case, the Simba is beginning to understand that the Swara cannot be ignored, and that their role in the future of Africa might be bigger than he'd anticipated.

Terror in the Kalahari

The Mayi'o of the Simba, Shari's clan of the Ajaba, the Kucha Ekundu of the Garou, and the Swara of Botswana all have one question: what in Gaia's name is lurking beneath the sands of the Kalahari desert? The Mayi'o have felt something here for years, but Black Tooth somehow kept it in check. The two tribes of Simba weren't exactly on speaking terms, though, so the Mayi'o don't have any of the details. The Ajaba, for all their desire to undermine the Ahadi and all it represents, don't like the emanations coming from the desert any more than the Simba do, and the one thing they can agree on is the fact that whatever's out there has to be found and dealt with before it causes any more trouble. But what is it?

The Kucha Ekundu are can-do types, and once they were brought on board the Ahadi they took to exploring the desert in hopes of finding whatever was out there and tearing it to pieces. But they didn't find *anything*. Nothing at all, beyond a feeling of dread that they couldn't isolate. When the Swara were pressed into service for the Ahadi, they too searched the desert, to no avail. When asked to journey into the Umbra, they did so; that was when they discovered something, something that never should have been born. Several of the werecheetahs died that day, and those who returned would not speak of whatever it was they encountered. But they know where it is, and that was enough to get the Garou on the right track. Now, Strongest Son of the Kucha Ekundu has sent out a call for volunteers, trying to put together a pack capable of tearing into whatever it is the Swara found. It is a matter of weeks before his strike team can be assembled, and he hopes to acquire advance scouts to give them some idea of what they're dealing with before the Ahadi forces enter the fray. But the Swara want no part of it, and no amount of cajoling from the Simba or anyone else can get them to change their minds. Even appealing to their sense of duty to Gaia does not sway them, so terrified are they of what they found. That worries Strongest Son. A lot. But an evil of this magnitude simply cannot be ignored, and he will find a way to deal with it, or die trying.

Dissent

Despite the obvious advantages to having the Ahadi bind Africa's Changers together, some of Africa's shapeshifters want to see it abolished. Chief among these are Ajaba who



have returned to Africa in the wake of Black Tooth's death, and are incensed that the Simba are even allowed to live, much less hold a position on the ruling council of the Ahadi. They do not understand how instrumental the Simba were in the overthrow of Black Tooth, nor how critical their role was in the terrible days and weeks that followed the mad Simba's death. They want only revenge, and they plan to reach out and take it any way they can. If that means turning against their fellows or, indeed, turning against Gaia, they do not care. They've spent their lives ruled by a madman, watched their entire race reduced to a handful, and all that matters to them now is their own selfish pride.

But they are not alone. The Amadu'o Simba want the Ahadi to end as well, and for very different reasons. For you see, the Amadu'o do not want allies in their fight against the Wyrm; they want subjects. And they do not want rapprochement with the Ajaba; they want the hyenas exterminated. None can quell their ambition, and all know they are a time bomb waiting to go off. For now, the Mayi'o keep them in check, but how long can that last?

Sickening as these dissenters are, there is something about both of them that is even more disturbing: they appear to have formed an alliance, designed to undermine the very support of the Ahadi and ultimately tear it to pieces. The very concept is mind-boggling, for there are no greater foes in all the world. Even the hatred between the Garou and the Black Spiral Dancers, the very minions of the Wyrm, cannot match the enmity shared by the Amadu'o and the expatriate Ajaba. And yet, these two hateful foes are willing to quell their hatred solely to tear down the very force that keeps them from fighting, simply because each wants the chance to kill the other. Such unreasoning hatred is incomprehensible, and most of the Fera are so stunned by the idea that they do not even know how to begin to address it.

Ahadi Structure and Function

Organization

The Ahadi member races have accomplished quite a bit in the last couple of years, but to understand those accomplishments, it would be helpful to understand just what it is that makes the Ahadi tick.

The Ahadi is ruled, as it were, by a central council of elders from its primary member races. These elders tend to the issues of relevance to their individual regions, but also gather in larger council meetings to discuss matters of

relevance to all of Africa. In the north, the most prominent members of the council are Sand's-Last-King of the Mokolé, Walks-With-Might of the Silent Striders and Shroud-of-Night of the Bubasti. These three dictate Ahadi policy in North Africa, and even the Simba abide by their wishes when visiting this region.

In the east, centered in Ngorongoro Crater, the day is ruled by Kiva of the Bagheera, Thunder's Sovereign of the Amadu'o, and Kisasi of the Ajaba. The Amadu'o presence is somewhat misleading; while they have a seat on the council, they haven't the nerve to make their voices heard. Hakimu has made it quite clear that the Simba have much to apologize for, and he doesn't let the remnants of Black Tooth's tribe forget it. In addition to the Simba, a number of Swara have been invited to council meetings as well; however, since they fear the Simba, and since they are not as organized as the Swara of the south, they have thus far declined. For their part, the Mokolé of the east seem content to live by the dictates of either Sand's-Last-King or Swims-in-Mbembe's-Wake, and while they join council meetings to keep apprised of what's going on they otherwise have little to say.

To the south the Simba hold sway, and the council in this region includes Hakimu of the Mayi'o, Shari of the Ajaba, and Swims-in-Mbembe's-Wake of the Mokolé. Strongest Son, leader of the Kucha Ekundu packs in the Okavango, also plays a critical role in the governing of the southern Fera, but he does not directly participate in meetings because he feels somewhat removed from Fera society. Also, since he devotes most of his energy to managing the affairs of his pack and the caern they control, he has little time to deal with the issues of the Fera unless directly called upon by Hakimu or the Mokolé.

While there is a plethora of Fera in western Africa, they have little involvement in Ahadi affairs. This is not because they want no part of the covenant, however; rather, they are simply too isolated to effectively interact with the rest of the Ahadi councils. The Bagheera and the Mokolé of the Congo have a tight relationship, and both are on good terms with the Kucha Ekundu and, to a lesser extent, the Mayi'o Simba. But they do not attend council meetings, and so their voices go largely unheard by the Ahadi proper.

Members

There are a number of permanent members in the Ahadi, and a few who have formed close bonds with them in recent months. Additionally, several Fera are considering membership, and the coming months will tell us whether we count them as allies or antagonists.

Ajaba

Along with the Mayi'o Simba, the Ajaba form the core of the eastern Ahadi council. Kisasi is their main voice in Ahadi affairs, but hers is not the only one; in particular, the inverted male Shari has significant influence with the Ajaba of the Okavango delta, who are contemporaries of the Mayi'o Simba. They were none too pleased with the agreements forced upon them by the Simba in return for aid against Black Tooth, and even now Shari's voice of dissent serves to weaken the southern coalition of the Ahadi. In the east, however, Kisasi's voice remains strong, and the pact will hold for as long as she does.

Kisasi's main ally in the south is Strongest Son, the Kucha Ekundu whose pack slaughtered Black Tooth's feline Kin during their war with the Endless Storm. Kisasi is nearly as close to the Talon lord as she is to Kiva, and between these alliances and the treaty with the Mayi'o the Ahadi is mighty indeed in the south of Africa.

Bagheera

Always the arbiters of catkind, the Bagheera have found themselves forced to be the backbone of the Ahadi, the unifying presence between the northern and southern branches of the pact and the ones to negotiate peace agreements whenever one faction or another decides it's had enough and wants out. The Ajaba depend on them, the Simba respect them, and the Mokolé count them as friends. Even the Garou find them easy to get along with, since they tend to be far less arrogant than is the norm for catkind. The Bagheera do not relish this position, however. They are more amenable to tasks of scholarship and exploration than their fellows are, and they do not like being forced to play diplomat in matters that do not directly concern them. But since they are fiercely dedicated to the ideals of the Ahadi, and since no one else seems able to do the job, they do the best they can and keep their mouths shut the rest of the time. Mostly.

The Dual Personalities of the Ajaba

While Kisasi's voice has set the tone for Ajaba politics around the world, the tribe as a whole does not universally support her views. Indeed, most of Kisasi's strongest supporters come from new blood, Ajaba born in the years following the slaughter of the tribe in Ngorongoro in 1984. The elders of the tribe, those who yet remember the horrible days of Black Tooth's reign, still bear well-earned grudges against the Bastet in general and the Simba in particular, and nothing so simple as a shift in tribe politics will convince them that the Simba are anything more than genocidal butchers in desperate need of killing.

For the most part, the Ajaba elders are reluctant to directly jeopardize the Ahadi by openly attacking the Simba; they simply don't have the support within the tribe at the moment to justify such a risk. But they are biding their time, waiting for the chance to damage Kisasi's credibility and make good on her namesake. Then, the fires that have sustained them for twenty years will burst forth to consume the world, and their gnawing hunger for vengeance will finally be satisfied.

Unwilling Leaders

While the Bagheera can be considered the de facto leaders of the Ahadi movement, they serve in that capacity under protest. The werepanthers are, by nature, extreme isolationists, and the strain of continually having to resolve disputes, coordinate the activities of disparate and often antagonistic groups, and tend to their normal activities is driving them to the brink of madness. The fact that they are the most open of the Fera is irrelevant; they are simply not equipped to act as leaders and diplomats, and the pressures they now endure are beginning to crush their spirits. In time, the entire leadership structure of the Ahadi will crumble to dust, and the Ahadi Breeds will go their separate ways. If this calamity is to be avoided, the Simba and the Ajaba will have to learn to work together, to keep the Ahadi alive without the moderating influence of the Bagheera. The hatred these Breeds feel for one another makes that hope seem like a distant vision, and the Bagheera fear they can do nothing more than watch as the fruit of their labors is reduced to ruins.

Kiva is the Bagheera of note in East Africa, and it is she who crafted most of the treaties that currently govern the interactions of Africa's Changers. She is a patient and tolerant sort, but her fury when aroused is legendary. Even Hakimu and Walks-With-Might show her a healthy respect that goes beyond her diplomatic abilities, and all who come to Africa quickly learn that her suggestions — for that is how she phrases them — are not to be ignored.

Kiva is not the only Bagheera in Africa, of course, and she is not necessarily even representative of their attitudes. Many Bagheera in the Congo, for instance, are much closer to the Mokolé than the other Bastet or the Ajaba, and they have no real patience with any Garou beyond the Kucha Ekundu. In some ways the Congo leopards are an entirely different sect of the Bagheera, and while they are ostensibly members of the Ahadi — and take it quite seriously – they are much more isolated and insular than their fellows, and even less friendly.

Bubasti

Despite their close ties with the Mokolé and thawing tensions with the Silent Striders, the Bubasti are only provisional members of the Ahadi. This is largely a matter of choice, since the elders of that tribe — the *khepur* — are more concerned with their own pursuits in Egypt than with the activities of the Ahadi as a whole. This is not to say they do not take the pact seriously; on the contrary, the success of their coordinated efforts with the Silent Striders has convinced them of its power, and its necessity. However, none of that changes the fact that their goals are somewhat tangential to the Ahadi's stated purposes.

Kucha Ekundu

Provisional members of the southern axis of the Ahadi, the Kucha Ekundu — Red Talon offshoots that have adapted to African wild dog stock — have little influence in Ahadi affairs mainly because their numbers are small enough that they often have other concerns. While they used the scourge of distemper to help break Black Tooth's pride, their Kin nonetheless bore the brunt of that virus, and recovering from its ravaging touch is proving to be a long and drawn out process. Nevertheless, they are counted as valuable allies by the Bagheera and Mokolé of the Congo, and often wind up being de facto arbiters when disputes arise between the Mayi'o and the Ajaba of Shari's clan.

Strongest Son, the ranking elder of the Caern of the Bloodied Rock, is a wise and open-minded Garou, and he is one of the foci of the southern axis of the Ahadi. He is loath to take a life unless it is absolutely necessary, and this restraint has earned him the respect of the Mayi'o and Kisasi's clan of the Ajaba. It has not, however, endeared him to the Ajaba of Shari's clan, who would happily abandon the Ahadi if they could get away with it. These troublemakers are a constant thorn in Strongest Son's side, and they make his task of investigating the horrors lurking in the Kalahari all the more difficult.

Strongest Son works closely with Hakimu when investigating the strange goings-on in his territory, since the desert is home to the Simba every bit as much as it is to the Kucha Ekundu. Neither knows quite what it is that Black Tooth was keeping at bay here, but both fear it. Recently, Strongest Son prevailed upon several Swara to journey deep into the desert, using their great speed to cover more ground than the Talons themselves ever could. Only two of the Swara returned, and they would not speak of the things they saw, so great was their terror.

Mayi'o

Most of the Ahadi tribes were unprepared for the majesty of the Mayi'o, accustomed as they were to the savagery and pride of their Amadu'o brethren. But the new regime calling the shots among Africa's Simba is considerably closer to the Simba ideal, and as a result the tribe is finding it easier than expected to overcome the legacy of Black Tooth's reign. Hakimu is a harsh sovereign, but he is also reasonable and fair. He does not play favorites, and he does not tolerate insolence or bickering among his people. As far as he's concerned, the southern lions are there to show everyone else how it's done, to inspire them to bigger and better things, and to help the Changers of Africa heal the wounds of the past, and Gaia help anyone who stands in the way of such noble goals.

For all of their nobility, the Simba are brutish beasts, and few Changers can tolerate being in their presence for long. Even the Bagheera, easily the most tolerant of Africa's Changing Breeds, find them difficult to deal with, and the

Garou and Ajaba cannot stand them. But the most maddening thing about the Mayi'o is the fact that they take their words quite seriously; by all accounts, they sincerely buy into the notion of the Changing Breeds working closely together, of them sharing information and resources to fight the Wyrm, and of their coming to one another's aid in times of trouble. Even Kisasi, who hates the Mayi'o king more than anyone, has found much to admire about the Simba lords, something that galls her to no end.

The Mayi'o operate primarily in the Kalahari and Okavango region, and they have made a number of friends and enemies there in the years since Black Tooth's death. They have pressed the Swara into the service of the Ahadi, but at the same time have expanded the territory allocated to the surviving cheetah populations in southern Africa. The time-honored tradition of lions preying upon cheetah cubs has been greatly slowed, even in cases where there are no Swara directly involved. The Swara have mixed feelings about this; the Simba may be bastards, but who can fault them when they're being so reasonable about it?

Hakimu is also close to Strongest Son, the crafty Kucha Ekundu who was instrumental in forging the southern Ahadi council. Hakimu coordinates efforts by the Garou and the Swara to investigate the disturbances in the Kalahari, sharing his information with shapeshifters throughout Africa in an effort to learn exactly what is going on. He suspects the problem may be connected to a similar situation in Egypt, but he is finding the Bubasti difficult to talk to, and his influence there is limited. In the meantime, he rules his people with an iron fist, forcing them to cooperate with all the Changers of the land and earning them a bizarre mixture of irritation and gratitude as a result.

Mokolé

For such a serene and placid race, the Mokolé have been rather active lately. Keenly aware of the implications of the Ahadi, Sand's-Last-King has been working feverishly to co-opt the services of the other Changers to the Mokolé cause. He's sent Silent Striders into the Umbra in an attempt to find out why no Crowned Mokolé have been born in recent years, and whispered secrets to the Bubasti to help them fight against the vampires of Cairo. He's further convinced the mystical cats to investigate the odd events paralyzing the city's Ratkin, effectively helping the wererats whether they care for it or not. His manipulations have not gone unnoticed, but they come at a particularly auspicious time: between the corruption of Egypt's Bone Gnawers, a rogue camp of the Silent Striders, and the paranoia of the Ratkin, the shapeshifters of Cairo may soon find themselves in the midst of a civil war. The Ahadi races are now in a strong position to dictate the terms of that war, if they don't manage to stop it before it begins.

Meanwhile, in West Africa, the Mokolé of Swims-in-Mbembe's-Wake's clutch is pursuing altogether different ends. The Bagheera of the Taï rainforest have called upon the Mokolé for help, since they've learned that a Bane of great power has taken refuge deep in the heart of the forest. They are uncertain as to where it came from, knowing only that it showed up after Black Tooth's death. The two allies are fighting against the clock, since the combination of human interaction and Wyrmish influence ensures that the forest will be destroyed within a decade if the Bane isn't stopped. Swim's-in-Mbembe's-Wake has considered the possibility of inviting the Garou to help them, but the Bagheera are skittish about the idea; as a result, the Mokolé elder has spoken to a number of Silent Striders about the topic in confidence, and there's been some talk of setting up some sort of joint effort if the Bagheera can be convinced to let the Garou in. Unfortunately, the Ahadi only mandates that Changing Breeds provide assistance when asked; it does not allow others to force their hand, no matter how justified such action may be.

Silent Striders

Of all the Changing Breeds of Africa, the Silent Striders have easily been the most active in recent months, and that's primarily due to the efforts of Walks-With-Might. Between near-daily assaults on vampire nests throughout North Africa, investigation of the Bone Gnawers and even rogue camps of the Striders themselves, and intense efforts to control the effects of human fighting across the continent, the Garou have been very busy. Such activity has a price, however. Walks-With-Might is gaining a reputation for being a militant zealot, and while his heartfelt respect for the ways of the Fera is appreciated the fact remains that he spends an awful lot of time fighting vampires. Many of the other shifters in Africa are beginning to wonder if they don't have better things to do with their time. Yes, vampires are repugnant beasts, abominations in the eyes of Gaia, but they are not direct minions of the Wyrm, and many of the problems plaguing the Changing Breeds today seem a bit more pressing and immediate than killing off a bunch of Leeches. None will say this to Walks-With-Might directly, because he *is* among the fiercest and most committed of Gaia's warriors in the world today. But the rumblings of dissent are there nonetheless, and Walks will have to diversify his activities if he hopes to maintain faith in the boundless opportunity the Ahadi has to offer.

Swara

Most of the Ahadi races joined in the covenant willingly, but that's not quite the case with the Swara. It would be more accurate to say they were "recruited" to the cause by Hakimu and his Mayi'o Simba, and they're not happy about it. To be fair, their fortunes have improved markedly since Black Tooth's fall; their territories are more secure than ever, and the spirits of the land rejoice in the newfound unity of many of Africa's children. All well and good, but nobody likes having their destiny charted for them, particularly when it's by a group that at one point was a sworn enemy. The fact that the Swara's affinity with the spirit world has become common knowledge hasn't helped; now they've been pressed into service as ersatz Corax or Garou, and this has driven the paranoid cats to the brink of madness.

Easing the Swara's introduction to the Ahadi and the greater African shapeshifter community are a number of unexpected friends. The Swara don't particularly want these friends — really, they just want to be left alone, and they tend to be pretty paranoid about friendship anyway — but they have them nonetheless. When the Kucha Ekundu were losing their Kin to distemper, the feline Swara Tinus Grellman helped protect what remained of the Talons' healthy Kin, and in the process quite possibly saved the African Garou from extinction. Meanwhile, the Swara of Kenya search the Umbra at the behest of the Bagheera, charting the map of Africa's spirit world so that the Ahadi can do its work. This makes the Bagheera very happy, but leaves the Swara feeling overwhelmed and overstressed. Elsewhere, a trio of Swara worked closely with, of all people, Rokea, in hopes of finding a way to protect the weresharks from their oceanic brethren. They succeeded, and earned the respect and admiration of the betweener Rokea as a result. The gratitude is nice, but the Swara just wish everyone would leave them alone. More than one has wondered why they can't just be useless beings, much like the Ananasi, but the spirits won't hear of it.

Currently, the Swara are investigating the menace that lurks beneath the sands of the Kalahari, and what they've found terrifies them. They don't know how Black Tooth managed to keep this thing in check, but it's certain that if they don't rediscover his trick soon the world will become an extremely unpleasant place in which to live.

The Unaffiliated

Many Fera have opted to join with the Ahadi, en masse, but just as many have chosen to chart their own courses instead. Some of these groups do not have adequate representation in Africa to contribute to the Ahadi cause. Others simply value their independence too much to commit to a common code of conduct. Still others find the notion appalling, or too good to be true. In all cases, however, some members of these Fera will join up with the Ahadi on their own; they simply cannot resist the potential the Ahadi offers, and they know that holding the organization at arm's length can only hurt them in the end. Fortunately, it is Ahadi policy to accept any Fera shapeshifter who expresses interest in the cause, so the occasional oddball is not uncommon.

Ananasi

The Ananasi have not joined the Ahadi, and they will not do so in the future. They are too alien for its ways, and its tenets of shared information and cooperation with those not of their kind are anathema to the spider shifters. This does not mean, however, that they have no interest in the Ahadi or its activities. Indeed, it does not even mean that Ananasi do not associate with members of the Ahadi when the opportunity presents itself — presuming, of course, that the Ovid can stand to be around them.

Each faction of the Ananasi appreciates the Ahadi for different reasons. The Tenere find it fascinating because to them it represents a shift in Ovid behavior toward a more constructive, Weaver-influenced method of interaction. The Ahadi races are operating in concert, and this pleases the Tenere because in some small way it helps to restore the balance between the members of the Triat. It is mostly the Secean of the Tenere (the Tenere's Myrmidons) who follow the activities of the Ahadi, and it is they who are most likely to approach the Ovid in hopes of coordinating efforts against a particular threat.

The Hatar are a fierce and violent sect of the Ananasi, but they are dedicated to restoring the Balance aspect of the Wyrm, and they find that the Ahadi is useful for that purpose. The Silent Striders' crusade against vampires is of particular interest to them, since the Leeches' activities subtly reinforce the Defiler aspect of the Wyrm, even if such is not their intent. Both the Agere (Myrmidon) and Anomia (Viskr) factions of the Hatar might have some interaction with the Ovid, the one because they act much as the Striders do and the other because they hope to manipulate events to serve their own ends.

The final faction of the Ananasi, the Kumoti, is an odd bunch. They appreciate the Ahadi because it loosens humanity's oppressive grasp on the natural world, but also because it fights with great conviction against the minions of the Wyrm who seek to corrupt the land. The Amari Aliquid (Viskr) are particularly drawn to Ahadi affairs, since the Ahadi is all about action and constantly working for change.

No matter their affiliation, Ananasi do their best to keep the Ahadi at a safe distance. Much as some of them might like to take advantage of its resources, they know that their presence would only unnerve the Ovid, and that is something that must be avoided if the Ahadi is to do its work.

Corax

It's said that when the Ahadi principles were being drawn up, the Corax were invited to the proceedings just like everyone else. They looked at the proposed rules of conduct, scratched their heads and said, "Don't we do all of this anyway?" A look at the faces of those present indicated that was not the case, but the Corax have always been unusual in the fact that they've never really shirked their duties to Gaia in the least. They're chatty with everyone, and they love to

The White-Necked Ravens

While the Corax proper have no official presence within the Ahadi, the same is not true for their southern cousins, the Makunguru. These Corax, who breed with the white-necked ravens of eastern and southern Africa, enjoy a close rapport with most of Africa's Changing Breeds, and as a result they were quick to join up with the Ahadi once the opportunity arose. It hasn't changed their operating procedure much, since they've always been willing and eager to share any and all information available to them, but they like the feeling of being part of the group. For their part, the other factions of the Ahadi like knowing the Makunguru are available to facilitate communication between the various shapeshifters of Africa.

pass on stories and information. Most of it isn't terribly relevant, but that's hardly their fault. It is, after all, important to get the details right, is it not?

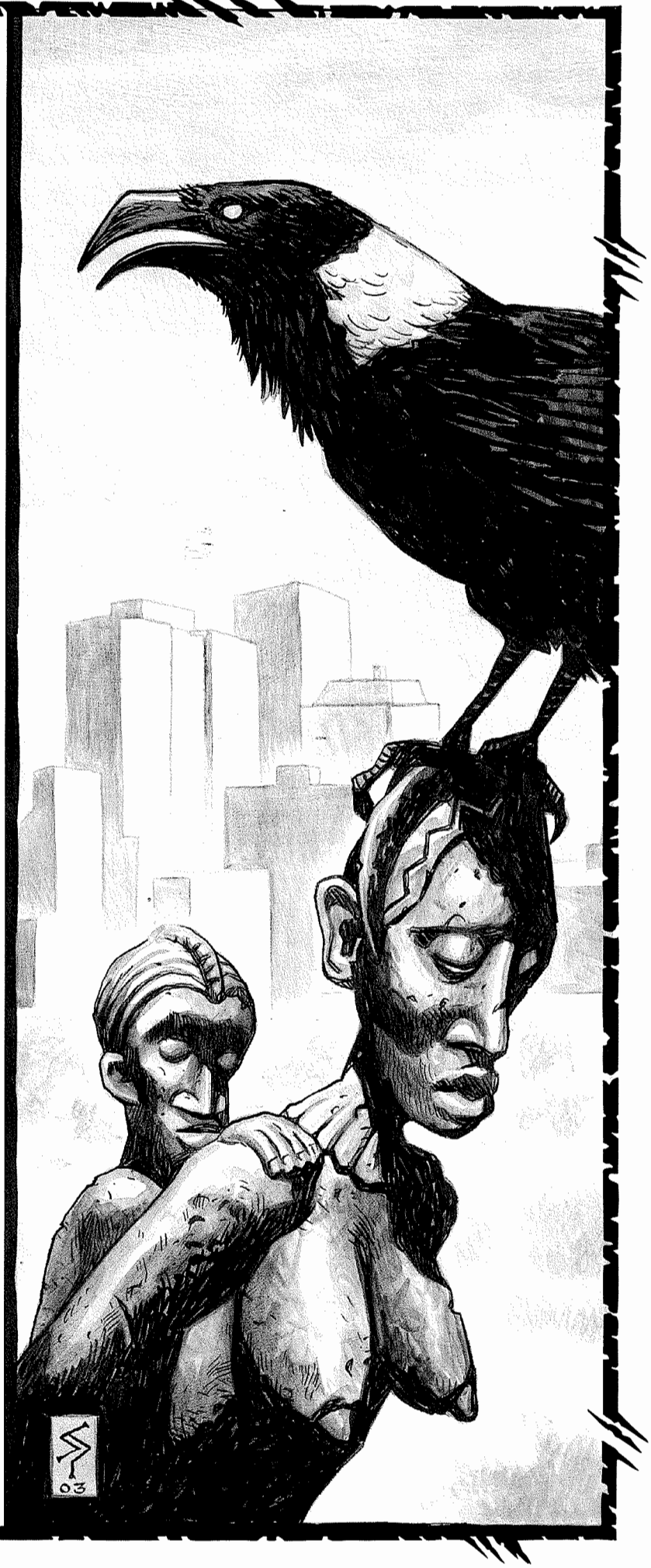
In any event, the Corax haven't seen any real need to join up with the Ahadi. They don't object to the idea — they love it, actually — but since it won't change the way they interact with anyone else they just don't see the point. Regardless of the formalities involved, the Corax are, for all intents and purposes, de facto members of the Ahadi, and are treated as such by all involved.

Ratkin

Africa's Ratkin have gone to the dogs. In some cases this is literally true, as the Ratkin fall in scuffles with corrupted Bone Gnawers in Egypt and Black Spiral Dancers in Nigeria and elsewhere. But the aphorism holds true in other regions as well, as the Ratkin's paranoia has risen to heights that make the Swara look positively open-minded. They have, for all intents and purposes, completely lost touch with Gaia, fallen to the madness that infests the cities and the sickness that pervades the wilds. Lord Ebola of the Congo has repeatedly turned down offers of alliance with *anybody*, be they Bagheera, Mokolé or Garou, and it doesn't look like he'll be changing his tune anytime soon. As such, he's regarded as an enemy by most of the Ahadi races.

Such is the official Ratkin party line. Unofficially, however, there are many Ratkin who are eager to join up with the Ahadi. Paranoia only takes you so far, and the whole Ahadi thing starts looking damn attractive once you're convinced it isn't just some stupid sham to capitalize on the lesser Breeds.

What is particularly surprising is that a few wererats have hinted to the Council about the existence of a few of their Umbral tunnel networks, one of which is said to actually lead to South America, where they hook up with the tunnels of the Borrachon in the Amazon rainforest. These subversives have been talking of a coup against Ebola, which, if successful, might link two of the oldest and most important of Gaia's sacred sites in the world. The possibilities for the Amazon war are obvious, but the renegades can't get too carried away — yet. After all, opening up Ratkin tunnel networks for general Changer use is a ridiculously generous thing to do, the sort of thing that would make it all too easy for the other shifters to massacre the Ratkin like another War of Rage — should they be so inclined. Even relatively open-minded Ratkin would tend to look on such a proposal with the same horror that Garou would view the offer to share their caerns with any and all supernatural comers. The extremists must play carefully, or they're sure to be executed for racial treason.



Rokea

The few Rokea who walk the shores of Africa aren't terribly organized, but those who've heard of the Ahadi find it interesting. They aren't terribly clear on why the surface-dwellers haven't been doing this sort of thing in the past, but they still think it's a rather good idea. Unfortunately, they have their own problems to deal with at the moment. Shreds-the-Surface, the terrifying Karkha (white shark) wereshark whose rampages have drawn unwanted attention to the Rokea, has gained a fair number of converts, and he and his slew are visiting tremendous destruction all along the Atlantic coast. To their credit, they are also cleaning up the humans' messes, swallowing all of the pollution the Wyrm's foul industry can produce, but the Changers who know what's going on know that something must be done, and soon. The chaos throughout southern Africa is providing them with some cover for now, but no one knows how long it will last.

The Ahadi Code

The law code of the Ahadi is in fact a number of treaties interconnected by a common set of precepts agreed to by all members. The treaties are rather arcane, involving spirit pacts as well as more traditional written agreements, but the shared code of conduct members are expected to follow is surprisingly simple. All Ahadi members generally recognize the following rules and agreements :

Members must perform their duties to Gaia above all others.

The Theory: Essentially, this rule means that Ahadi business must always come first, and trumps internal matters (within reason). Obviously, this does not extend to pacts or behaviors mandated by Gaia; it mostly covers tribal politics and inter-Breed feuds (such as that between the Ajaba and the Simba).

The Reality: Most Ahadi Breeds pay lip service to this rule, but work around it when they can. The Amadu'o and older Ajaba are the most notorious violators of the rule, but the Striders have been known to focus excessively on their feuds with vampires, and the Mayi'o have been using it as an excuse to bully other Breeds into playing by their rules. Many shapeshifters even see this tenet as a warning not to let Ahadi business interfere with their Breed's greater duty to Gaia; after all, there are duties to Gaia, and duties to the Ahadi, and it is perilous to confuse the two.

Members must provide aid to other members when called upon to do so, provided the aid requested lies within their ability to provide and is in accord with their duties to Gaia.

The Theory: This rule is important, since it mandates that each race serve the others in their capacity as agents of Gaia. Thus, the Garou must fight when called upon to do so, provided the battle is necessary and furthers Gaia's ends in some fashion. Similarly, the Mokolé must be forthcoming with their wisdom (even if not asked directly), the Bastet must share their secrets, the Ajaba must learn to fight as the Garou do, and so on.

The Reality: This rule works well in some places, and terribly in others. When the Bastet, Ajaba, and Garou are present in equal numbers (particularly in Egypt, Tanzania, and Southern Africa), the rule is enforced and the Ahadi runs pretty smoothly. In other regions, particularly West Africa and areas torn by war, this law is all but unenforceable. That might change if the Ratkin join up, since their presence in Central and West Africa is considerable.

Members must cooperate when possible, even if it might prove to be inconvenient at the time.

The Theory: Obviously, all of the Breeds perform their duties to Gaia as best they can, but this rule means they have to cooperate while doing it. That's difficult, but it fosters a community spirit and makes it easier to share information and call upon one another for aid as described in the rule above.

The Reality: Most of the Changing Breeds just don't get along. They recognize one another's territories and help out when they can, but most of the time they just want to be left alone to do their work in peace. This is particularly true of the Bagheera — the werepanthers are perhaps the strongest philosophical supporters of the Ahadi, but they aren't team players by nature and don't function well in a pack setting. This rule is thus more of an ideal case than an expected norm.

The organizational structure of member races must remain intact.

The Theory: This is a vital law. Essentially, this means that no Ahadi member can force another group of shapeshifters to adopt its way of doing things; Garou work in packs, but Bastet don't, and the Garou cannot expect nor require that they do so. Instead, the Garou must learn how the Bastet think, and vice versa, and must figure out how they might integrate their activities for mutual benefit.

The Reality: This rule works pretty much as written. The Ahadi Breeds quickly realized that they just wouldn't get anywhere if each insisted that everyone else do things their way, so no one bothers to try.

The spirit pacts of all member races must be respected, even if they are foreign.

The Theory: While Garou make pacts with totems, the Bastet form alliances with Jamak. So it goes with all of the Changers, and this rule makes sure they all respect those pacts whenever possible.

The Reality: This rule doesn't come up much, since spirit pacts are by nature private affairs. None of the Ahadi Breeds seem to have any difficulty in following it.

Caerns and other holy places must be open for use by all Ahadi members, provided the use is reasonable and in accord with Gaia's interests.

The Theory: This mostly affects the Ajaba, the Garou and the Simba, as the other Ahadi members don't make heavy use of caerns. It also applies to all Bastet Den-Realms, though; those have to be respected, and the Breeds have to be mindful of where they are.

The Reality: Caerns are holy places, and even the most wise and welcoming of shapeshifters may have difficulty opening their holy places for public use. The Kucha Ekundu worry that the free coming and going of homids in their caern will infuriate Griffin, while the Silent Striders have so few caerns of their own that some feel very put-upon to share openly what few places they can call home. The Ajaba do not allow Simba to use their caern in Ngorongoro Crater without explicit instructions from a ranking Ahadi member (typically Kisasi), and the Simba only grudgingly allow non-Bastet to use their caern in South Africa. This rule tends to be followed without question (although not without grumbling) only when a major war council is called; at other times, this is clearly the tenet of the Ahadi code that needs the most work.

Shared Wisdom

Since the advent of the Ahadi, the Changing Breeds of Africa have worked together to create a number of rites and fetishes meant to be used by all of Africa's shapeshifters. A few of these are described below.

Caern Rites

Rite of Communion

Level One

This rite functions in much the same way as the Garou Moot Rite, save for the fact that it is designed to open multi-Breed moots. Each of the Ahadi Breeds is honored in turn, and each calls out to Gaia in his or her own manner. If performed at a caern, the rite is functionally identical to the Moot Rite. Otherwise, it functions in a manner similar to the Bastet rite of Caliah, replenishing the participants' Gnosis and filling them with a sense of well-being.

System: When performed at a caern, the system is identical to that of the Moot Rite. Otherwise, every two successes on a standard roll gives each participant in the rite one temporary Gnosis (round up). Each participant may only benefit from one Rite of Communion per month.

Mystic Rites

Ahadi Rite

Level Five

This rite is a sacred covenant designed to link the destinies of all participants in the eyes of Gaia and all who serve Her. Entering into such an alliance is no small matter, and a Changing Breed's choice to do so is typically an event of historic significance. This is the rite used to create the Ahadi alliance, and the focus of the rite was, ironically enough, Black Tooth's skull.



System: To perform the rite, each participant donates one permanent Gnosis point to bind a powerful Wyld spirit to a stone tablet, clay pot, or other item of significance. So long as all members of the group abide by the terms of the Ahadi, none suffer any ill effects. Should any one of them violate the terms of the agreement, however, the Wyld spirit is released to harass and possibly destroy the offending party (and perhaps the other rite participants as well).

Fetishes

Token of Passage

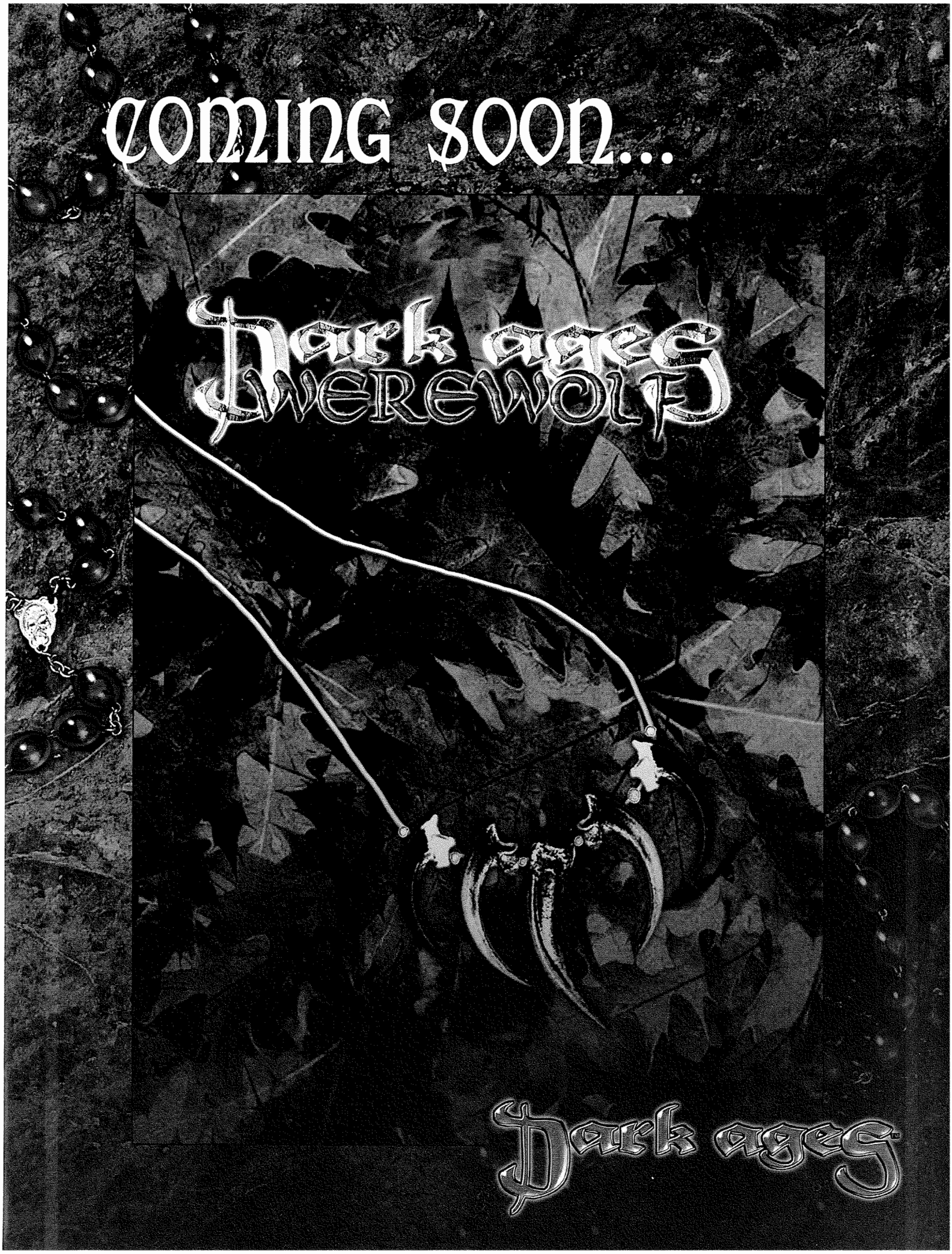
Level One, Gnosis 3

This simple item indicates its possessor is a member of the Ahadi. It has no real power of its own, but it does add one die to all social rolls with other Ahadi members. It also allows the user to demand aid from local shapeshifters and their Kin according to the tenets of the Ahadi Code, so long as the demands are reasonable.

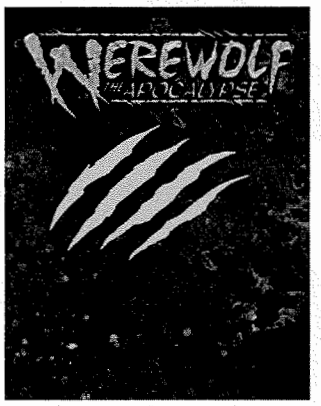
War Mask

Level Three, Gnosis 5

Designed by the homid Kin of the Ahadi breeds, these masks are only usable in Homid form. The Ajaba and Simba especially favor them, but most African shifters make use of them to a greater or lesser extent. Once activated, all foes engaging the user in melee combat lose two dice from all combat dice pools.


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The other werebeasts of the World of Darkness are brought fully to light in this hardback, allowing players and Storytellers to integrate these shapeshifters into a chronicle. Each of the eleven different Changing Breeds is covered in detail, along with the mysterious alliances among their kind. Storytellers searching for the perfect new antagonist for a game or players interested in stepping into the skin of a different werebeast are both welcome here; now there are more options for Werewolf than ever.

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