

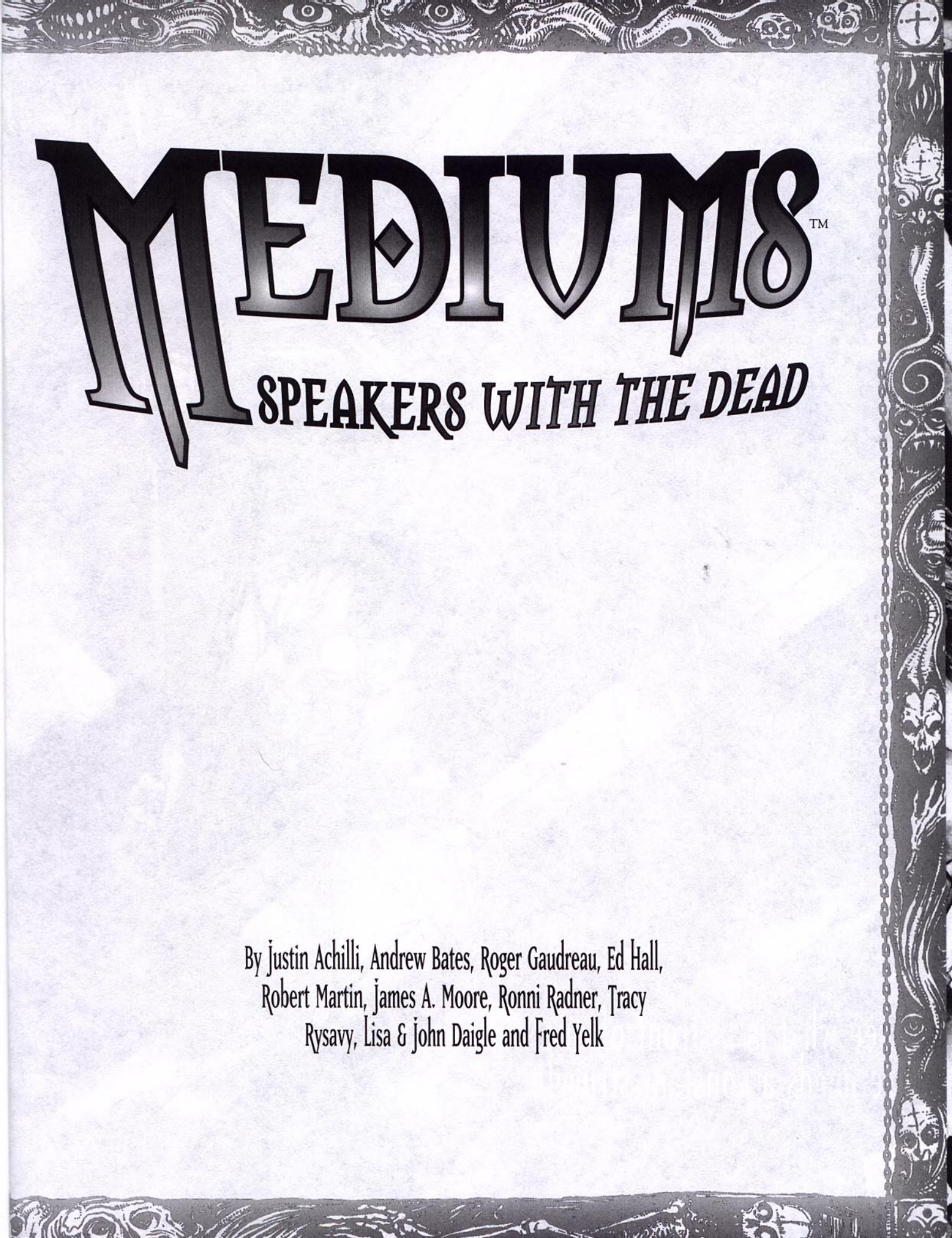
MEDIUMS

SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD



A Sourcebook About Mortals Who Know Too Much for
Wraith: The Oblivion™

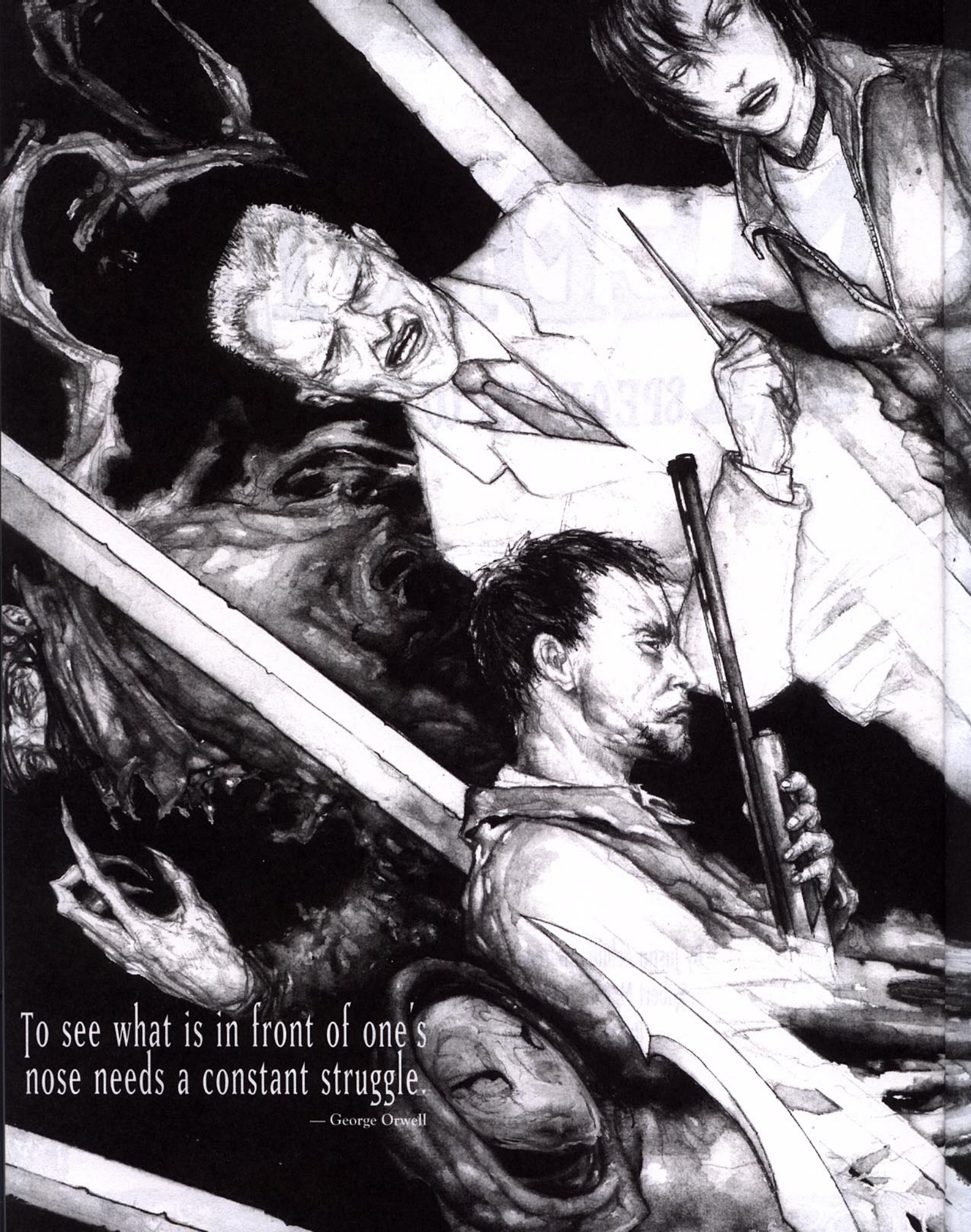




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SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

By Justin Achilli, Andrew Bates, Roger Gaudreau, Ed Hall,
Robert Martin, James A. Moore, Ronni Radner, Tracy
Rysavy, Lisa & John Daigle and Fred Yelk



To see what is in front of one's
nose needs a constant struggle.

— George Orwell



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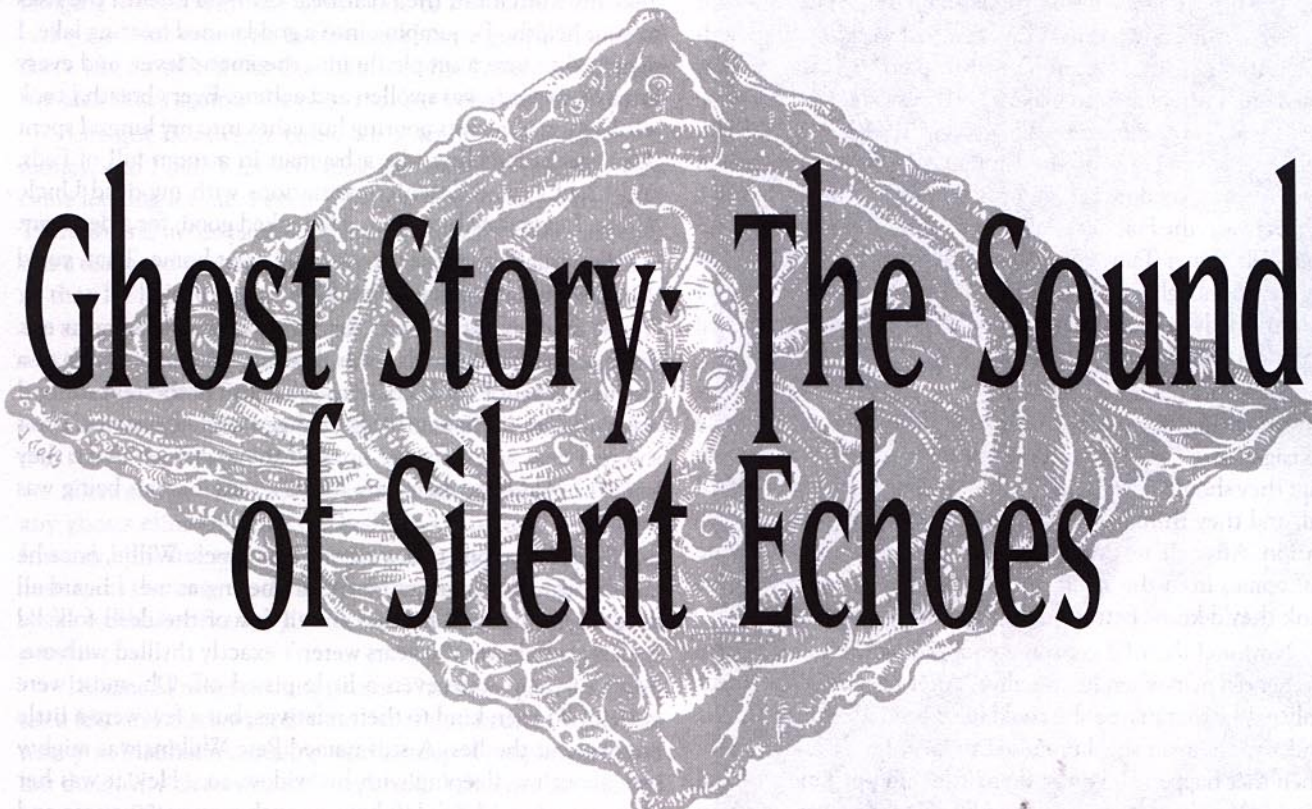
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Ghost Story: The Sound of Silent Echoes

By James A. Moore

The first thing you need to understand is that I never meant to cause anyone any harm. When I started working the Boardwalk (Atlantic City; you can hear the capital "B," can't you?) as a medium, I was aiming to make a few bucks and pass out some good advice at the same time. I'm good with advice; it's a talent. I've never steered anyone the wrong way as long as I've been alive. It was a good racket, and it paid enough for me to get a shop between the Fun City Amusement Pier and Costanzo's Famous Salt Water Taffy. The customers just came streaming in then, even though a few were kind of disappointed that I wasn't a little old lady in a shawl or some gorgeous babe with smoldering eyes and a plunging neckline.

Some people asked me what they should do about certain situations, like a cheating girlfriend or a husband a little too eager to use his fists as a means of persuasion. I'd tell 'em what they should do and I'd throw in a "The spirits have heard you, and they think..." just to make sure they would pay attention. After all, no one wants my advice, but when the same stuff comes from the *spirits*, all of a sudden it's gospel. You'd think they'd know better, you'd think they really would.

Now and then I'd get some poor old lady who really tore into her old man when he was alive. After he'd died, she'd suddenly realize that maybe she could have been nicer in her time. Kinder to the man she'd promised to love, honor and cherish. When that happened, I'd just do a little mind-picking and find out what her old man was like, then I'd give the proper answer to let her sleep easier at night.

Mind-picking...it's sort of hard to describe, but I'll give it my best shot. Whenever I concentrated, I could listen in on other people's thoughts. Nothing like in the movies, you understand, but enough to make educated guesses about certain things. For instance, if a woman was talking to me about her late husband, I could sort of hear him talking through her memories. It wasn't an exact science or anything, but it was something I could do, and I knew how to use it.

So this little old lady named Gladace came in, worrying that her dear departed Frank couldn't forgive her for the things she said just before his heart gave out, right? Well, I just listened to Gladace's thoughts, and I mimicked the sort of thing he would have said (if he hadn't dropped dead) when they finished an argument. For the cost of my \$20 fee, Gladace gets to sleep better at night and I get beer money. Hey, I figure a shrink would have cost her five grand to tell her the same thing. My way? Faster and cheaper, and just about as honest.

But thought-picking isn't what I can do now, not any more. Mind you, using my other talent wouldn't be a real bright idea right about now, but even so, it's the sort of thing you should know about. Just for protection's sake, really. Honest.

You ever watch any of those shows about dying and coming back? Well, if you have then you know all about the people who come back from the "other side" with miraculous powers and the ability to talk to the dead. I'm not one of 'em. For me all it took was three weeks with a fever of a hundred and two.

Take my word for it, the Polar Bear Club isn't worth the risks to your health. By jumping into a goddamned freezing lake, I managed to turn a simple flu into rheumatic fever, and every joint in my body was swollen and aching. Every breath I took felt like someone was pouring hot ashes into my lungs. I spent three weeks babbling like a bagman in a room full of Feds, and I had a good dozen conversations with my dead Uncle Willie. I even saw him once. He looked good, for a dead guy.

Eventually the fever broke and I went home. That, you'd think, should have been that. Hah.

A few days after that, the Dead started talking to me. They already knew who I was, because when you work as a medium, a lot of them come to see if you're the real thing. I wasn't before then, but things changed while I was sick. I was the real deal when I woke up, and they knew it. Once they knew I could hear them, my life as a sane human being was over.

I had me a long talk with my dead Uncle Willie, once he cut through all the other bozos yammering at me. I heard all sorts of stuff. And I learned that a few of the dead folk I'd impersonated over the years weren't exactly thrilled with me. Some of them were even a little pissed off. Oh, most were grateful I'd been kind to their relatives, but a few were a little angry about the lies. A stiff named Pete Wilkins was mighty sore about me sleeping with his widow, too. Hey, it was her idea, not mine. She didn't have enough money to pay me and we...negotiated. For what it's worth, I'm still dating her. It ain't like I was a jerk about it or anything. There was about three weeks when every other time I saw her, I had to pass on messages from her dead husband. Finally, she just told him to go to hell, and I haven't heard from him since.

Anyhow, from then on, things changed. I couldn't mind-pick people anymore, but I could talk to the Dead. And let me tell you, some of them dead folks have a lot to say, whether you want to hear it or not. Still, even that was cool for a while. Listen, the Dead have things they left unresolved. Sometimes they need to pass on a message, and sometimes they want to answer a question for someone they cared about when they were alive. Either way, when they learn about somebody who can actually hear what they have to say, you've got a crowd on your hands. Most of the time they're sort of quiet about it, but once in a while all hell breaks loose and they all start screaming at once. They told me they have to come to me when the "Hierarchy" isn't around, because talking to living people is against the rules. But they manage to say a lot anyway.

I gave up the Boardwalk not long after that, and I started doing seances. People pay a lot more when you're willing to make house calls. From time to time someone would try to set me up, but I didn't use any gimmicks, so that made it harder for them. If a dead person couldn't be contacted, I told the people as much and I left it alone. I know I said the Dead like to talk, but a lot of them are either really shy, or they aren't

hanging around with the ones I talk to the most, or they're just gone. Not everyone becomes a ghost, I guess. The Dead don't like to talk about the details of the "other side." I get the idea that's against the rules too, but I couldn't confirm it.

Life got downright cushy for a while. I was rolling in money, and I didn't have to look for people to hire me, they came looking for me. I even got a few interviews on the local TV news and in the papers. Especially around Halloween; that was a real good time for me. I made some deals with the Dead so that I'd help them in exchange for some slack time, and the arrangement seemed to work out. I'd talk to them when I was on duty, and they left me alone the rest of the time. Now and then I'd even find someone for a few of my ghostly pals and pass along a message. Hey, they helped me make my living, it was the least I could do.

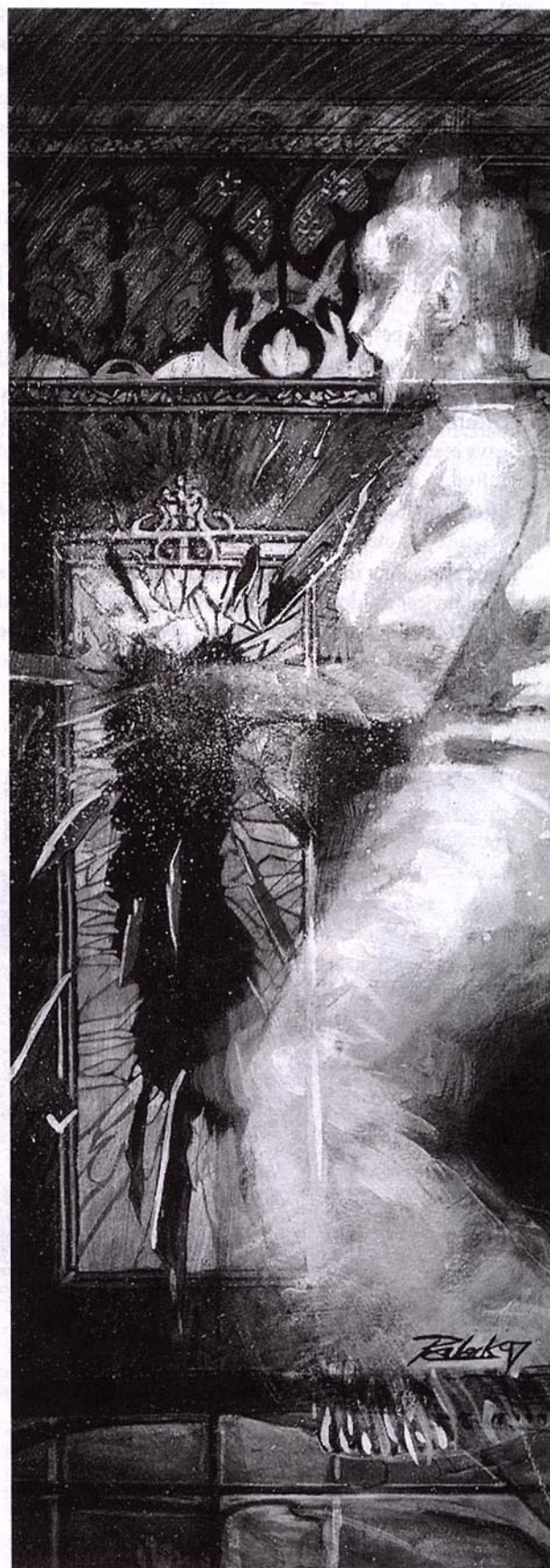
Contrary to what Hollywood likes to portray, I never had any ghosts climbing into my body and talking through me. Instead, I just listened to what they said, and I gave my living customers the answers their dearly departed gave me. I never spoke to Elvis or even to Jim Morrison. I just talked to regular people.

I claimed I never saw any ghosts. That's not quite true. I did see a few, and that's what got me out of the medium business. I was up in Manhattan, dealing with a group of people who'd just lost their old, rich auntie, and they couldn't find her last will and testament. They were greedy, so I gladly milked them for a little extra. Ramona Willowsby, the recently dead relative in question, liked that. She cackled like I'd made a great joke. "You take those vultures for everything you can, Jerry! Bleed them dry," she cried, "just like they did me!"

I'd been answering their questions for about an hour, and Ramona was having a great time playing coy about the will's location. Her nephew, Herbert Owens-Forsythe Willowsby III, was doing most of the questioning. "Can Auntie Ramona tell us where the will is, Mister Walker?" He didn't ask questions, he sniffed them, as if being in the same room with me caused his sinuses to go nuts.

Ramona spoke to me again, her voice cracking with laughter. "You tell 'em I put it someplace close to my heart, Jerry! You tell 'em I hid it where they'd never look, 'cause they were only after my money!" Ramona couldn't just speak, she had to scream in my ear, and she had a set of lungs on her. Looking at the dignified, well-crafted portrait of her that hung over the fireplace, I could almost see her speaking. She looked a little crazy, though the artist had apparently tried to downplay that aspect of her personality.

I gotta tell you, these dummies were thick. Everything she'd said told me the will was hidden in the frame of her oversized portrait, but they wouldn't get the hints and I wasn't gonna make it easy for 'em. Ramona was having too good a time, and I was being paid by the hour. "Ramona says she kept it someplace close to her heart, where she knew you'd have an easy time finding it."



"Oh, for God's sake!" That was Tiffany, a very attractive woman with a very ugly mind. I didn't need to look beyond the contempt in her almond eyes to know that she thought I was about as pleasant as a roach. "Why is she being so difficult? It's a simple enough question, even Ramona should be able to figure it out!" Tiffany lit another cigarette, which she puffed on angrily. She left a blood-red trail of lipstick on the filter.

I was looking beyond Tiffany, staring at the mirror, when I saw the figure for the first time. No one else seemed to notice the new addition to the crowd, but I couldn't miss it. I say it 'cause I'm still not certain if the figure was a woman or a man. It wore a three-piece suit, charcoal gray with light pin-stripes. The suit was about 40 years out of style, but it still looked sharp. The figure stood very still, and looked at me from beneath a perfectly smooth brow. Even as I watched, dark, heavy eyebrows grew in, and the brown eyes that stared at me shifted to a cold, dangerous shade of blue.

It lifted one long, delicate finger to thin, harsh lips, and made a gesture for me to be silent.

"You keep sucking those things down, you harpy!" Ramona screamed in my ear as I looked around the room. The figure I'd seen reflected in the mirror wasn't visible anywhere. "You'll be dead in six months the way you're going! You've got a tumor the size of grape in your skull, and it's only getting bigger!"

I turned to look at Tiffany. Something in my expression must have caught her eye, because she looked at me with genuine concern. "Whatever is the matter, Mister Walker?"

"Your aunt wanted me to tell you that you've got to get to a doctor as soon as possible. She says you've got a brain tumor."

I heard Ramona's gasp of disbelief more clearly than I heard anyone else's. "Damn it, Jerry, that was supposed to be a secret!"

"Ramona," I sighed. "You can't keep that sort of thing a secret. People should be warned when their health is involved."

I heard a grating noise, and I looked toward the mirror again. The thing in the suit was back, shaking its head and looking at me with green eyes that promised retribution. If I'd known what it wanted I'd have gladly complied. It scared me. Even as I watched, its fingers reached out toward me, through the mirrored surface. Where each finger touched the glass, I saw frost grow on the reflective surface.

Ramona hissed in my ear. "You don't understand!" Her voice was urgent, almost frantic. "They don't want that sort of knowledge passed on! If you tell the living what's coming their way, they might change things. I was just talking out loud, you can't say that sort of stuff to the Quick! It'll cost me my existence if they find out!"





I was vaguely aware that everyone in the room was looking toward me, but I was still watching the figure in the mirror. Once again, it pressed long fingers to its lips and shook its head. I got the message: silence. It wanted me to be quiet.

"If who finds out, Ramona?"

"The Hierarchy! Damn your eyes, Jerry, the Hierarchy! Even talking to you is against the rules, but they're willing to overlook certain indiscretions. Now you're pushing the limits!" I couldn't see Ramona, but I could imagine the look on her face, her eyes wild and staring, her tight bun of silvery hair disheveled and her brow greasy with fear-sweat.

"Ramona, you're already dead. What could they possibly do to you?"

When Ramona spoke again, her voice was soft, almost a whisper. "You don't ever want to find out, Jerry. Believe me, you can't begin to imagine."

"Do you want to stop now, Ramona?" All around the room, her "beloved" kin raised their voices in protest. At the same time, I saw the frost lines on the mirror grow into jagged lightning bolt patterns. Even as I tried to sort out what my clients were saying, the massive, antique looking glass shattered, raining silvery blades through the air. For just an instant, I thought I saw a figure move into the room. A figure in a gray pinstripe suit.

Knives of glass flew through the air and landed in a perfect circle around the chair where I was seated. Ramona screamed in my ear, more frightened than I'd have thought possible: "Run Jerry! He'll want you dead! I—No! Wait, I'll keep my silence! I'm sorry I'm so very sor—"

That was the last I heard of Ramona. There were no screams of anguish, but I knew that she was gone. I sensed it.

In the mirrored shards around my feet, I saw that face again, reflected and broken, but still obviously the same strange creature. I opened my mouth to speak, though I've no idea what I would have said. It lifted that one, long finger again, and placed it before thin, angry lips.

It wanted silence, and this time I knew better than to argue.

When I complied, perfect, even teeth showed themselves, framed by a full, sensual mouth. "I'm going to say this only

once," the creature said in a voice as warm and friendly as a viper. "You have offended the wrong people."

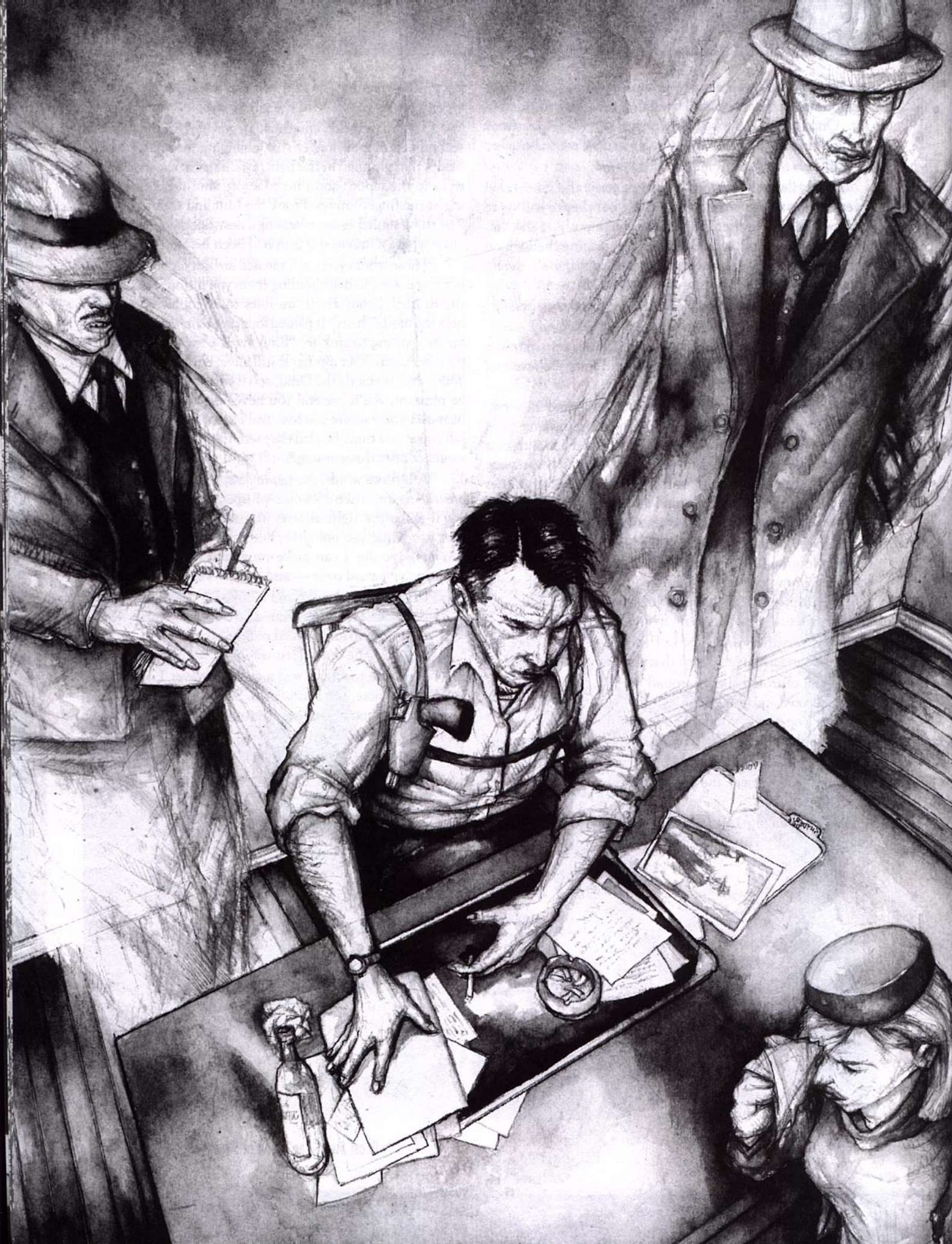
I started to speak, and the long graceful fingers I'd seen a second before grew longer still, changing into nasty-looking blades that gleamed in the light. Once again, the index finger went to the mouth and I heard a soft, shushing noise. Looking at the finger-knives, I took the hint and shut the hell up. The thing smiled again, revealing a nasty looking row of jagged fangs where a movie-star grin had been before.

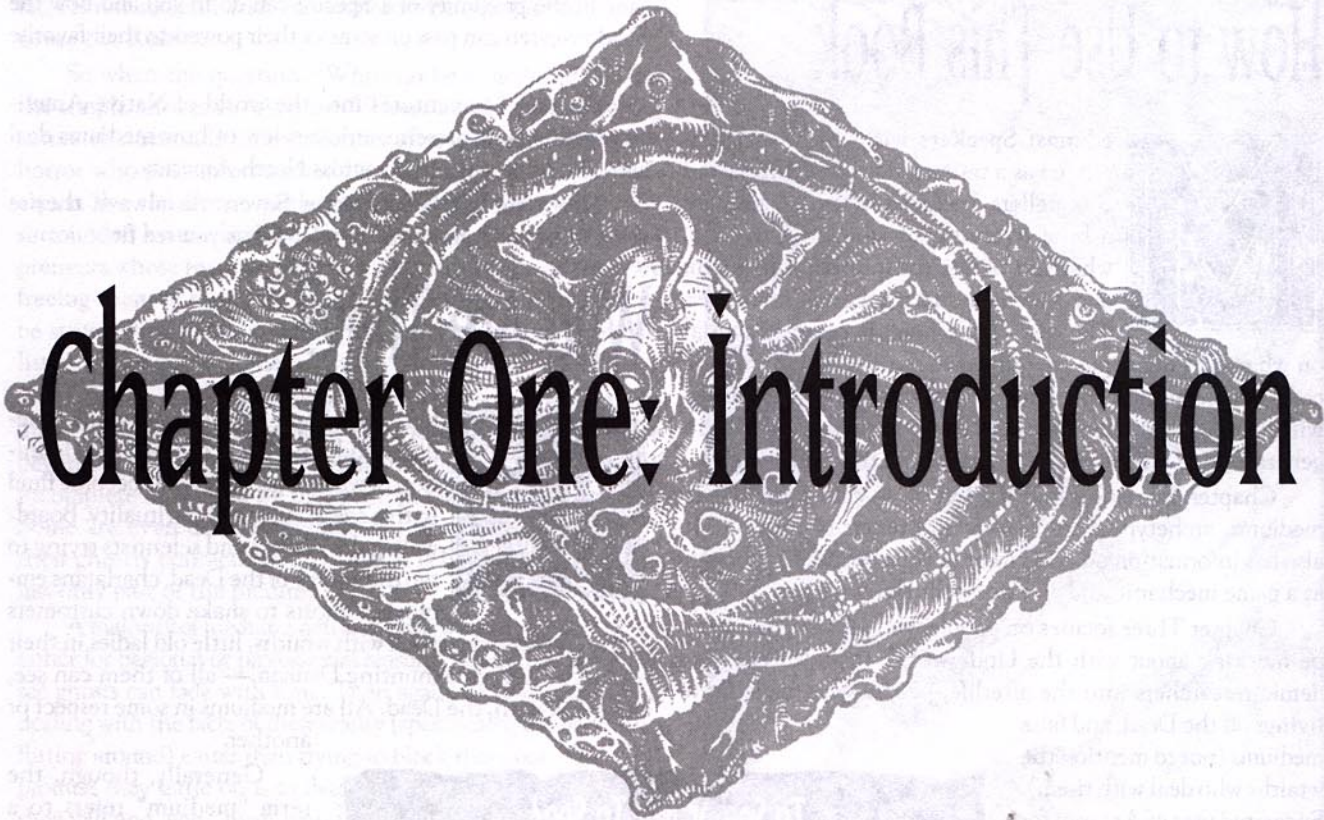
"Those whom you've displeased are not among the living, but if you want to delay joining them you'll stop speaking with the Restless Dead. There are rules to be followed, and I am here to enforce them." It paused for a moment, just long enough for its warning to sink in. "Ramona is gone. You won't hear from her again. Your mother is still alive, but I can change that. Your father is among the Dead, and if you want his existence to be pleasant, you'll pretend you never could speak with us or hear us. I know where you live, and I know where you go. I can kill you at any time. Be glad they sent me; there are others who wouldn't offer this warning."

With those words, the figure disappeared. I was about to breathe again, when its voice whispered in my ear. "I know you'll make the right choice. You see, I can scare you and hurt you while you are alive, but I can do so much more to you after you die. I can make your suffering last an eternity once you've passed over — and that's a very long time."

The voice faded away, and I looked at the people around me and shook. The others stared at me expectantly. After a minute, I stood up and walked out of the room. I didn't even bother to close the door. That was my last job as a medium.

I went back to school, and now I'm a lawyer. I don't talk to the dead anymore, but I still listen. Sometimes they call me a coward, and sometimes they call me other things. I'd like to help them, but I'm just a little too addicted to breathing to do that. I don't know what the hell that thing was, but I've taken its warning to heart. I've got a nasty feeling that it can be anyone it wants to be, and that keeps me on the straight and narrow. I've got just one thing to say to the Dead these days: you talk, I'll listen. But whatever you say goes no further than me.





Chapter One: Introduction



The word “medium” has many definitions, but one of the most important in the World of Darkness is “a means of communication,” for that is really what human mediums are: a means of communication between the living and the Dead, a pipeline of information between two worlds. While the Dead have no trouble seeing and hearing what the living do, it’s more difficult for the Quick to hear the whispers and demands of the Restless. Despite all of their power, the ghosts who haunt our world need a bit of an assist getting their point across when the Shroud’s in the way.

They need mediums.

Which is not to say that more arrogant wraiths don’t resent the need for assistance from mortals — particularly mortals who, because of their interactions with the Dead, tend to end up a little off-kilter. It galls wraithly pride to have to rely on others, and more than one wraith’s Shadow has taken advantage of that dependency. It leads to all sorts of problems, and mediums take more than their share of abuse from the very souls they’re often forced to help. And that’s just wraiths — there are plenty of Spectres who make mediums their own personal projects.

Being a medium, then, isn’t necessarily the safest, or the easiest job around.

How to Use This Book



Mediums: *Speakers with the Dead* is intended as a resource for both players and Storytellers. Included in this chapter are a brief overview of who mediums are, what sort of wraiths interact with them, and how to build a medium character.

The rest of the book is source material on what sorts of people are talking to the Dead, and in some cases which specific individuals or groups are messing about with the Restless. The focus of the book is to allow you to generate good characters and stories from that information.

Chapter Two offers information on so-called boardwalk mediums, archetypal card readers and tellers of fortunes. It also has information on using tarot in your *Wraith* game, both as a game mechanic and as a storytelling aid.

Chapter Three focuses on people who perhaps shouldn't be mucking about with the Underworld. Included are academic researchers into the afterlife, people who make their livings off the Dead, and false mediums (not to mention the wraiths who deal with them). Suggested uses of Arcanoi for teaching these dilettantes a lesson are included as well.

Chapter Four hearkens back to *The Quick and the Dead* and gives a quick update on what some of the more energetic ghosthunting societies are up to these days. The Benandanti, the Paranormal Research Wing and the Orphic Circle all get more in-depth treatment. Plus, the question of what the Benandanti do with all the bodies finally gets answered.

In Chapter Five, things take a supernatural twist. Up front is an explanation of the connection between wraiths and televangelists. Deeper in is information on the Giovanni, and more on how they actually make use of wraiths. Closing things out is a section on the care and feeding of a Spectre cult, including the gory details of what spending too much

time in the proximity of a Spectre can do to you and how the Shadow-eaten can pass on some of their powers to their favorite servants.

Chapter Six ventures into the world of Native American mediums. It presents an overview of how mediums deal with the living and Dead across North America.

New templates fill Chapter Seven. As always, they're there to be used, modified or adapted as you see fit.

Who Are They?



There's no simple definition of who's a medium and who isn't. Indeed, the definition of what a medium is has become fluid in this age of skeptical spirituality. Boardwalk palm readers and scientists trying to tap the energy of the Dead, charlatans employing ghosts to shake down customers and revivalists who speak with wraiths, little old ladies in their tea circles and ghosthunting *Dannati* — all of them can see, and speak with, the Dead. All are mediums in some respect or another.

Generally, though, the term "medium" refers to a mortal human who can see and hear ghosts without any extra expenditure of energy or will on the ghost's part. Variables such as whether the mortal must spend energy to see and hear ghosts or to block out her ghostly visions follow no set pattern. There are mediums who must work hard to get spirits to speak with them, and ones who require all their will just to block out the spectral voices in their heads.

Breakdowns

Trying to create a demographic chart of mediums is an exercise in futility, if not dementia. They come from all walks of life and attribute their visions to different sources. The point is that the "gift" of seeing the Dead is something bestowed randomly, and neither genetic

To See or Not To See?

The advantages and disadvantages of voluntary versus involuntary mediumhood just about balance. The involuntary medium doesn't have to spend any Willpower to speak to a ghost; indeed, she doesn't even have to make a roll. However, this ability means she sees all of the ghosts in a given vicinity, and unless those wraiths are exceedingly stupid, they'll realize it rapidly. What follows is chaos, as practical jokers, sadists and "normal" wraiths desperate to get word across the Shroud descend on the hapless medium. The result can be anywhere from low comedy to tragedy, particularly if the wraiths bring their Arcanoi (or Shadows) into play.

On the other hand, a medium who must work to see ghosts has his own problems. While his existence is relatively normal most of the time (in other words, not disrupted by assorted disembodied dead people floating through his living room and demanding that he pay attention), he has to work hard, focus his will and usually spend some sort of mental energy in order to make contact with the other side. This limitation means he can't listen to the Dead all that often, as doing so would take too much out of him. It also means that he doesn't necessarily hear his ghostly friends when they want — or need — to get in contact with him. If an emergency situation occurs and the medium's not listening, things can get hairy quickly.

factors nor societal ones can explain who gets picked by fate to see the Restless.

So when the question, "Who can be a medium?" arises, the simple answer is, "Anyone." There are scientists peering across the Shroud; lone searchers after eldritch, tenebrous horror who peer into haunted houses; boardwalk tarot readers on the run from wraiths they've displeased; young girls surrounded by maelstroms of poltergeist activity; and entrepreneurs whose income derives from granting ghosts peace by freeing them of their Fetters. It's an open field: Anyone can be struck with the bug, and wraiths talk to anyone who can listen (as long as the Hierarchy isn't watching).

But that still begs the question, what is an average medium like? Most of them have some knowledge of existence beyond the Shroud, though their information is likely to be incomplete or tainted by the medium's own preconceptions. Some are even deliberately misled, for whatever reason, by their ghostly contacts. In any case, it is likely that a medium has only part of the picture.

A majority of mediums actively work with their gifts as well, either for personal or professional reasons. An unused ability to see ghosts can fade with time. Then again, most mediums find dealing with the facts of their reality (specifically, the dead folks flitting around) easier than trying to block them out. The compromise they settle on is to determine conditions under which they will and won't work with the Restless. Mediums often establish Contracts (see p. 51) with one or two wraiths who serve as brokers on the other side. This arrangement keeps the burden on mediums manageable, while also making sure that their post-mortem operations are low-key enough to avoid prosecution for *Dictum Mortuum* violations.

Not every medium deals with ghosts per se. Many are involved in fortunetelling, and use their connections to wraiths merely as a means to that end. Others are looking for answers from New-Agey spirits (or old-time devils) and just happen to get wraiths instead.

Look Who's Talking

The wraiths who talk to mediums are almost uniformly Renegades or, less frequently, Heretics. Most good Hierarchy citizens avoid talking to mediums, as doing so breaks Charon's Law. Of course, talking to a medium *once* in a while can't hurt. Can it? (*Only if you get caught*, the Shadow whispers — and so the illicit trade goes on.)

Wraiths who cut deals with a particular medium are in high demand on the outskirts of Necropoli, where they barter access to "their" medium in exchange for Pathos, services and goods. Competition for access to reliable mediums is fierce, and a wraith who tries to cut in on another wraith's business is liable to get himself pummeled into a Harrowing.

Several of the Guilds do heavy business with mediums, in particular the Puppeteers, Proctors and Oracles. The Pup-





peteers have a vested interest in seeing and being seen by the mortal population, but in controlled doses. Oracles (and, to a lesser extent, Monitors) often wind up linked with boardwalk-style mediums, who make excellent use of these wraiths' fortune-telling capabilities in exchange for access to the mediums' highly emotional clients.

One might expect the Haunters to do a booming (and crashing and thudding) trade with mediums, but it's simply not the case. Haunters aren't much for communication or the open exchange of ideas. They'd rather just send everyone screaming into the night, regardless of who "should" or "shouldn't" see them. Most cases of poltergeist activity involve Haunters, as newly receptive mediums make prime Hunter targets. However, no Hunter worth his salt takes the time to talk to his victim in such a case, except perhaps to spew obscenities in her direction.

Finally, there's the question of Spectres. As mediums, by virtue of their spectacular auras, stand out even to a Shadow-

Numina-Based Mediums

Step One: Character Concept: Who are you?

- Choose Nature, Demeanor, Membership
- Determine Concept, Motivation, Catalyst

Step Two: Select Attributes

- Prioritize your three categories: Primary 6, Secondary 4, Tertiary 3
- Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Stamina and Dexterity
- Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation and Appearance
- Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence and Wits

Step Three: Select Abilities (11, 7, 4)

- Prioritize your three categories: Talents, Skills and Knowledges
- Choose Talents: What can you do naturally?
- Choose Skills: What are you trained to do?
- Choose Knowledges: What have you studied?

Step Four: Select your Advantages

- Choose Background Traits (5)

Step Five: Finishing Touches

- Record Base Willpower (3)
- Spend Freebie Points (21) on Numina, optional Merits and Flaws (in *Wraith Players Guide*), or to increase Attributes, Abilities, Willpower or Backgrounds.
- Record Personalia: Appearance, Home, Talismans, etc.

For more information on Numina, Talismans, etc., see chapter 3 of *The Quick and the Dead*.

eaten's dimmed sight, they are easy targets for harassment from the other side. A Spectre who comes across an established medium — one who knows what she's doing — is likely to go on the offensive and do his damndest to drive the medium insane. There's plenty of Angst to be had in such pursuits, not to mention the frustration and panic inflicted on the local wraiths by an assault against the local medium. On the other hand, brand-spanking-new mediums are the perfect seeds for a Spectre cult, as these naive or greedy individuals can often be turned to Spectral service.

Character Creation



here are two options for creating a medium character. The first involves following the template for character creation found in *The Quick and the Dead*, which postulates that mediums' powers are, in fact, a sort of Numina — hedge magic, in effect. This method is a perfectly good way

to create a medium character, and allows for a great deal of versatility in the sorts of interaction with the Dead the medium character has.

On the other hand, some players don't want to deal with hedge magic systems, and prefer a more straightforward approach to a medium's abilities. For these players, an alternate system follows, based on Merits and Flaws. Neither system is "better"; they are simply alternative routes to the same goal.

Opposite is the chart for creating a Numina-based medium character. Rules follow for building a medium with Merits and Flaws.

Merit-Based Mediums

Merit-based mediums' powers come from a variety of supernatural sources. You can mix and match the Merits and Flaws below to create the appropriate combination of powers for your medium character. Otherwise, character creation for this sort of medium is identical to that for a "normal" medium.

Creepy Feelings (1 Point Merit)

While a mortal with this Merit can't actually see ghosts, he gets a shiver up and down his spine whenever a wraith is nearby. By succeeding on a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 6), the mortal gets a weird feeling every time a wraith is in the same room as he is. Many Benandanti have this Merit.

Wanted (1 Point Flaw)

The Hierarchy has heard about the medium and wants to put her out of business. Odds are the local Legionnaires concen-

trate on the ghostly side of things — discouraging clients and so on — but there's always a slim chance that an overzealous Centurion might decide to go to the root of the problem.

Extremely Depressing (2 Point Flaw)

Extremely Depressing mortals are so tied up in gloom and doom (perhaps because they can see, right there in front of them, the walking, talking evidence that existence is futile) that they actually radiate Angst. Any wraith dealing with an Extremely Depressing person automatically soaks up a point of Temporary Angst.

Dead Connection (2 Point Merit)

A Dead Connection is a single wraith with whom the medium has extensive and friendly relations, and who serves as a liaison with the Underworld for the character. The Connection helps conceal the medium's activities from the Hierarchy, arranges ghostly clients and basically keeps the medium from being overwhelmed.

A medium must be able to see ghosts before taking a Dead Connection, and this Merit does not cancel out the effects of Mobbed.

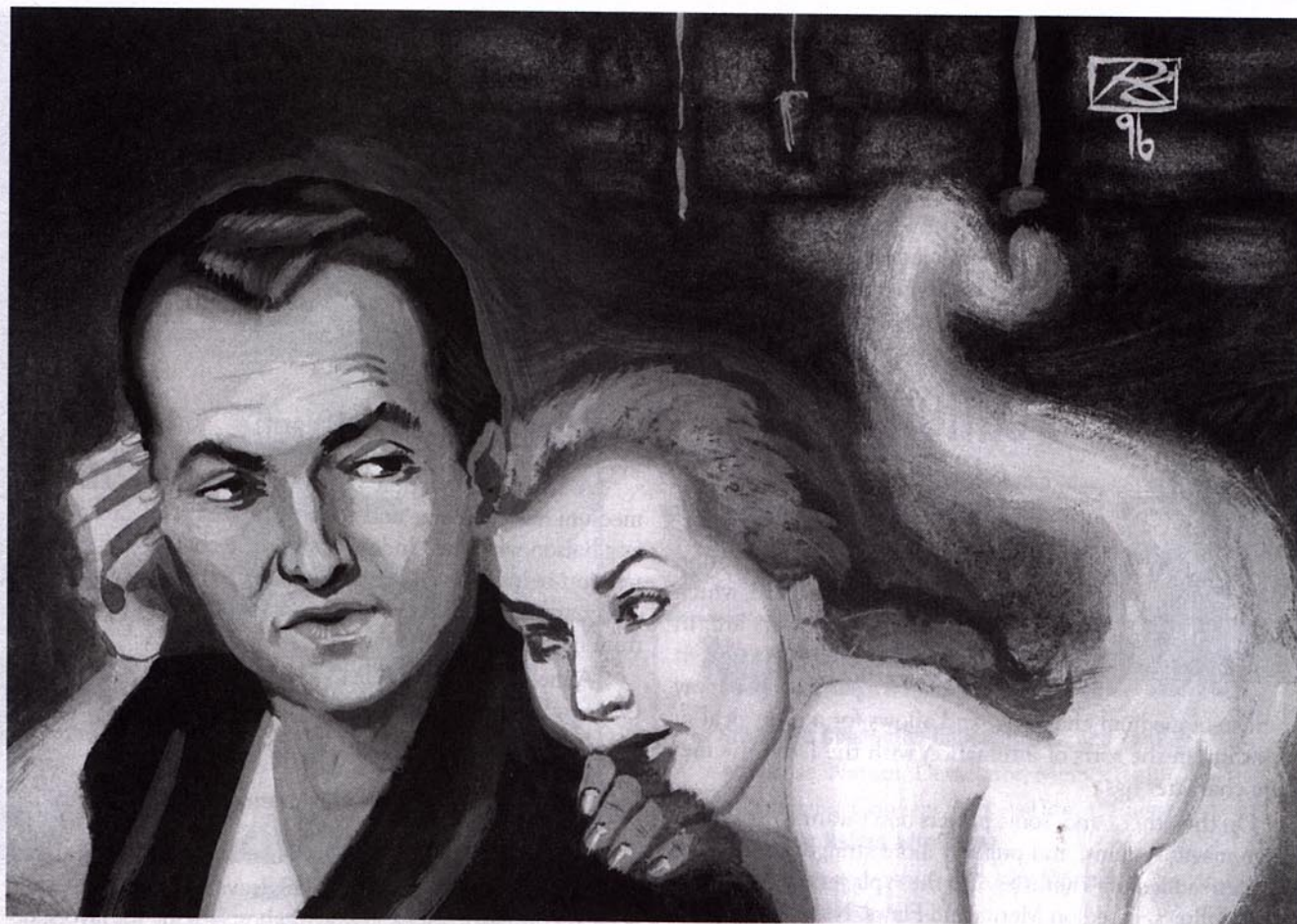
Mobbed (3 Point Flaw)

A Mobbed medium is very popular with the Restless Dead. Too popular, in fact — wraiths won't leave her alone. The character is constantly inundated with ghosts asking for favors, demanding attention or just wanting to spend a little quality time. This can be annoying, embarrassing or even potentially dangerous: Consider what happens if a particularly attentive wraith's Shadow takes over just as the Mobbed medium is trying to negotiate a particularly difficult curve in the rain....

Freebie Points

Freebie Points may be used to purchase Numina, Merits, or to increase Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds and Willpower. Flaws may be chosen to add Freebie Points, up to a maximum of five. See Wraith Players Guide for a full listing of Merits and Flaws.

Trait	Cost
Attributes	5 per dot
Abilities	2 per dot
Backgrounds	1 per dot
First Numina Type	7 per dot
Second Numina Type	4 per dot
Extra rituals	3 per dot
Willpower	2 per dot



Note: This Flaw also lends itself to the sort of low comedy wherein one character attempts to carry on simultaneous conversations with a ghost and a mortal (who, of course, can't see the ghost and wants to know who the hell the medium is talking to).

Poltergeist Party (3 Point Flaw)

A medium with this Flaw has attracted the attention of a Circle of Hunters and/or Spooks, who've decided to have a little fun. This Flaw automatically grants the medium the ability to see and hear only the wraiths who are tormenting her. More to the point, the Guildwraiths in question do their best to make the medium's life a living hell. Often, the goal is to drive the medium insane — or to kill her.

Small Gift (3 Point Merit)

With an effort, you can see wraiths. Your vision even occasionally extends across the Shroud and into the

Shadowlands, but only when you work at it. This effect is achieved by rolling Perception + Awareness (difficulty 7); the number of successes indicates the number of minutes for which the medium can converse with and see the other side. Wraiths cannot counteract their newfound visibility (except with • Argos: Enshroud).

Spectre Meat (3 Point Flaw)

The medium stands out not only to wraiths but also to Spectres. As a matter of fact, he stands out from the crowd *especially* well to Spectres. This, as you might expect, is not a Good Thing. Any Spectres in the area, if given a choice of whom to harass, will head immediately for the character.

Easy Consort (4 Point Merit)

The medium, while not necessarily able to see across the Shroud, is an easily accessible host for a Puppeteer. All mediums with this Merit are considered to be Attuned, and the

difficulty of all Puppetry rolls involving them is decreased by 2. Furthermore, the medium maintains full awareness while the wraith is in possession of her body. This condition can lead to particularly benign Puppeteers allowing "time-share" at seances.

This Merit has its downside as well, making the medium easy prey for less scrupulous wraiths — and Spectres.

Deathsight (4 Point Flaw)

This Flaw often comes in conjunction with Speaker with the Dead. When cursed with Deathsight, a medium sees the world as a wraith does: as a blasted, decaying morass of rot and desolation. Living humans appear diseased and distorted,

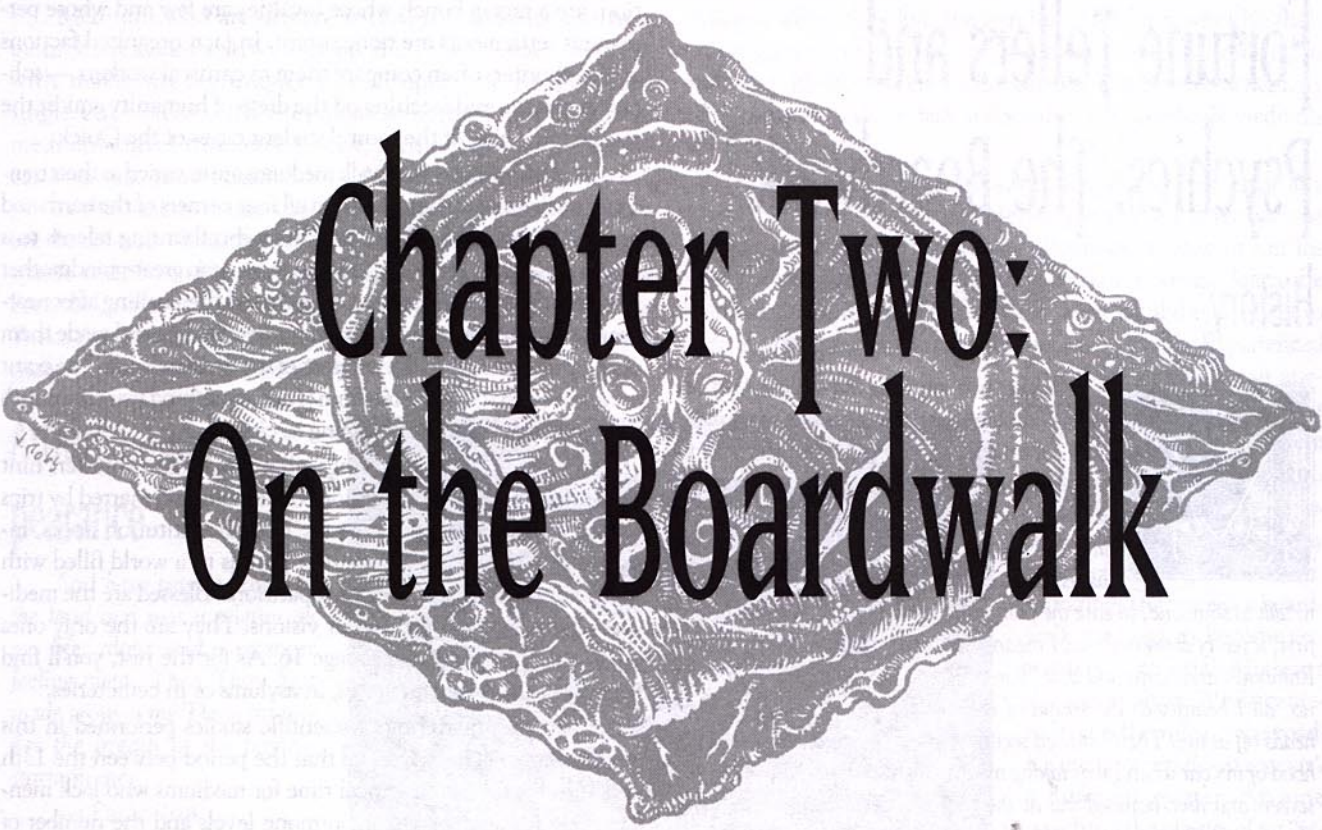
plants appear blighted and buildings seem to be on the verge of collapse. Seeing the world through grave-colored glasses naturally wears on the medium's nerves, and most mortals with this Flaw are edgy, depressed and always on the lookout for incipient disaster.

Speaker with the Dead (5 Point Merit)

A Speaker with the Dead can, without additional effort, see and hear wraiths and can even see, dimly, across the Shroud into the Shadowlands. This vision cannot be controlled except through the use of Normalcy (see p. 23). A true Speaker with the Dead is never free from her visions of ghosts, and either learns to reconcile her existence in dual realities or goes mad.







Chapter Two: On the Boardwalk

*For I would walk alone
Under the quiet stars, and at that time
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound . . .
And I would stand,
In the night blackened with the coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence I did drink the visionary power.
— William Wordsworth, "The Prelude"*

Fortune Tellers and Psychics: The Boardwalk

History



My 16th year was anything but sweet. As if my raging hormones and the consequent fact that I bore a marked resemblance to Chaucer's Summoner weren't enough to deal with, that was when the voices I'd heard ever since I was a little girl got worse. Starting then, they were always there, always asking me to find someone, to talk to someone, to ease the pain that life-after-death gave them. At first, it really depressed me. I mean, isn't death supposed to be better? Rainbows and harps and that "lions sleeping next to lambs" shit? But no, all I heard was the sound of a thousand ghosts screaming their heads off at me. Then I started seeing them. They crawled all over the hood of my car when I was taking my driving test. They flew out of the screen and dive-bombed me at the movies. I was unprotected, my chakras so wide open you could drive a small tank through them. Next, my romantic life went to hell after my first and only date; at my junior prom Seth grew another head that projectile-vomited Purple Passion Punch all over the new Jessica McClintock dress I'd worn for the occasion. After that, every guy I thought was cute would suddenly appear to have maggots crawling in and out of his facial orifices. It wasn't exactly conducive to a blossoming relationship. I guess I was just meant to be alone. Just me and the voices of the damned.

After a while, I got a nagging feeling that if I didn't do something soon, I was going to end up like my Aunt Lula, who's been in mental hospitals since she was my age. So, on a hunch, I started meditating, reading books at the New Age store with all the crystals sparkling in the windows. And I bought a pack of tarot cards. The pictures were pretty. Anyway, having them in front of me gave me some focus. It was like magic; I'd choose a card, and then I'd hear only one voice. I eventually learned to isolate and even block the voices without the cards when I needed to. I did it. I controlled the ghosts on my own, quieting the cacophony inside my head. I made them start coming forth as individuals, and they would share bits and pieces of their former lives. They tell me that I help them. They tell me I'm their chosen one. So I wander from city to city in search of actual fragments of their lives here on Earth. I make connections for them, find the objects of their desires. They need me. It's better than being with people who think I'm a freak, you know?

As motley a crew as there ever was, boardwalk mediums almost defy categorization. Almost. These loners and wanderers, who associate themselves with no particular group or organiza-

tion, are a ragtag bunch whose loyalties are few and whose permanent settlements are nonexistent. In fact, organized factions of ghosthunters often compare them to carnival workers — solitary, nomadic, and leeching off the dregs of humanity amidst the intoxicating glitz of the most decadent cities of the Quick.

The histories of boardwalk mediums are as varied as their transitory settlements. They hail from all four corners of the earth and from all walks of life. Some owe their ghosthunting talents to a trickle of Romani genes or to a Latin-American great-grandmother versed in the arts of Santeria. Others found their calling after near-death experiences penetrated their protective Fog and made them open up unwittingly to the denizens of the Shadowlands. The point is, however, that being a medium is not something you choose; it's what you are. There's no escaping it, either.

Whatever their beginnings, all nomadic ghosthunters hint at childhoods haunted by visions of demons and marred by trips in and out of mental institutions. Behind institution doors, innocuous ink-blot became sinister portals to a world filled with maniacal shadows and twisted apparitions. Blessed are the mediums who learn to control their visions. They are the only ones you'll see on the streets past age 16. As for the rest, you'll find them sleeping on steam grates, in asylums or in cemeteries.

From the smattering of scientific studies performed in this field, researchers have learned that the period between the 13th and 16th birthdays is a critical time for mediums who lack mentors. Due to rapidly shifting hormone levels and the number of physiological and emotional changes that whipsaw the average adolescent, puberty leaves a natural medium extremely susceptible to the encroachment of Underworld denizens. In this case, natural selection comes into play, as the medium must defend herself or succumb to the maddening cries of the Shadowlands' residents — or to the whims of Spectres who may choose her as their plaything. The strongest mediums learn, through self-teaching and meditation, to ward off the unfriendly wraiths and control their own channeling abilities. The weak...well, there are those who say that the insane have seen the face of God. In actuality, many have simply gazed on the hideous visage of one Haunter (or Spectre) too many.

Following their 16th year, mediums who are fortunate enough to avoid becoming mental patients — or worse — spend the rest of their youth honing their protective skills, learning to control the voices and visions dancing in their heads. Individuals who are willing to discuss the particulars of their spiritual growth say that visualizing themselves surrounded by a wall of white or gold light is usually enough to quiet the Restless and block out the presence of all but the strongest and most persistent wraiths. Many natural mediums become so adept at shutting out the Dead that they do so permanently, preferring "normal," sedate lives to those of their unsettled sisters and brothers (normal and sedate, that is, until someone comes calling who is powerful enough to break down their defenses).

Mediums who are driven instead to capitalize on their metaphysical skills strike out on their own, experimenting with makeshift techniques to call upon the Restless and single out voices until they hear something useful. These mediums travel from city to city, turning various urban areas into year-round carnivals of the supernatural as they reply to the voices inside their heads and follow where they are beckoned. Wraiths tend to beckon to them in places where the Shroud is thin and the crowd is just right — the French Quarter in New Orleans, the artist colonies of New York, the boardwalks along the Jersey shore — hence the name “boardwalk mediums.”

Attitude and Appearance

So I have traveled through the land and was a pilgrim all my life, alone and a stranger feeling alien. Then Thou hast made grow in me Thine art under the breath of the terrible storm in me.

— Paracelsus

Boardwalk mediums often act like stereotypical Scorpios, though they may have been born under any sign of the zodiac. Mysterious and brooding, they shun the company of nonclients and are often extremely self-centered in demeanor. Since most boardwalk mediums grow up with no mentor to guide them down a metaphysical path and with no peers who understand their particular trials and tribulations, they are very much aware of being “different.” In fact, after that pivotal 16th year, the emotional growth of most mediums appears to cease. They often look, dress and act like errant teenagers well into middle age and beyond — a valuable asset that regularly causes anyone who would harass boardwalk mediums to underestimate them. They are the kind whose parents send them to Catholic

colleges, where they join the handful of students who dye their hair magenta and have one body-piercing too many to blend in with their khaki-trousered schoolmates. Their own clothes may be bright and gaudy or dark and somber, but boardwalk mediums always stand out.

Paradoxically, these nomads generally can be found only when they wish to make themselves known. Whether because of their need to escape unhappy clients or because of run-ins with the religious right, wandering mediums quickly learn the value of virtual invisibility, and they share the ability to adapt to their surroundings in the most minute ways possible. Experienced

boardwalk mediums can analyze the dress, walk, and accent of the locals and imitate them to perfection, blending in with a crowd in a matter of seconds.

Perhaps it is this uncanny knack of melding with her surroundings that causes a boardwalk medium to become extremely territorial wherever she sets up shop. While camaraderie is the rule on the road, if a medium sets down roots it's a different matter. Anyone poaching the clients of an “established” medium is just asking for trouble. The medium may hurl curses — complete with voodoo doll and pins — at the hapless competitor who dares to invade her temporary camp, or she may begin a campaign to discredit the other medium and exaggerate her own skills. The most powerful (and least scrupulous) mediums may even summon a trusted Companion wraith to torment the interloper through the use of various Arcanoi. After a few of these supernatural battles, most mediums soon learn to avoid others like themselves intuitively, all in the interest of self-preservation.

If a medium ever opens up about the genesis of her career, she invariably says that she was “chosen” — either by a Supreme Being or by the spirit world — to commune with the

New Talent: Normalcy

You have learned how to shut out the voices and visions of the Restless Dead through sheer force of mental effort. By visualizing a wall or other protective shield for yourself, you can ward off unwanted ghostly visions. On the other hand, ghosts may take offense at your refusal to listen to them and could resort to more drastic methods to get your attention.

- Novice: You can slow the onslaught.
- Competent: You can drown out the murmurs.
- Practiced: Spectres find you a tough nut to crack.
- Expert: I hear you knockin' but you can't come in!
- Master: Heck, I can't even hear you knock.

Wraiths can attempt to break down a medium's resistance to their presence by making a contested roll: a wraith's Wits + Intimidation against the medium's Wits + Normalcy. If the medium scores more successes, she successfully blocks out the wraith's presence for a scene. If the wraith produces more successes, the medium's attempt fails. However, with the expenditure of a Willpower point, the medium can duplicate the effects of a success. By the same token, a wraith can use Willpower to knock down a medium's defenses. Occasionally a medium and wraith get into a duel of wills, with each trying to out-stubborn the other.

A medium can also create a “standing defense” for one scene by rolling Intelligence + Normalcy (difficulty 7) at the beginning of a scene; a wraith must equal the medium's number of successes on a Wits + Intimidation roll (difficulty is the local Shroud rating) to be seen by the target.

Note: A successful Normalcy roll even allows the medium to ignore the effects of Embody • (Whispers) but not any more potent uses of that Arcanos.

Normalcy may be learned only by a medium character, one who has taken the Merit: Speaker with the Dead. Normal characters who try to learn Normalcy develop splitting headaches and absolutely no ability whatsoever to lock out ghosts.



Restless. The spiritual and philosophical bases for the rest of their beliefs are as varied as world religions. Interestingly enough, most have little or no knowledge of the real workings of the Shadowlands, the Hierarchy or Oblivion, as they prefer to see the Underworld through rose-colored crystal balls. No matter what their reasons for hawking their talents — whether financial, altruistic or commercial — these ghosthunters do have at least a vague notion that their communion with the spirit world helps bring “peace” to the Restless.

Natural mediums tend to believe that their peaceweaving gifts elevate them slightly above the rest of the human race — a presumption that often includes other mediums. Having no tolerance for naively optimistic New Age prattle about how “everyone is psychic,” they instead choose to revel in their own uniqueness. As a cynical channeler from L.A. told one crystal-bedecked client, “Comparing my psychic abilities to the meager talents inhabiting the rest of this Darwinian cesspool of a planet is like comparing the finest Chardonnay to a jug of Boone’s Farm.” This arrogance doesn’t usually carry over to dealings with the Restless, though. It’s just mere mortals and wannabes who earn mediums’ contempt.

Such mediums also have a strong tendency to wax poetic when excited. Some resort to impromptu rhyming of couplets when they feel they have something of particular significance to impart to a client. These mediums feel that rhyme adds to the credibility of what they’re saying. Others infuse their speech with archaic or foreign phrases to add weight to their words. Boardwalk mediums also revel in being cryptic and metaphorical, leaving bewildered clients to chew on lyrical, convoluted phrases. An example might be, “I see a stallion! Proud is the beast that throws his rider in the shadows,” meaning that the client is going to wrap his new Mustang around a telephone pole tonight.

Regular patrons of boardwalk mediums say that the more frivolous one’s question, the more quixotic the medium’s reply. This behavior is hardly surprising, considering the low tolerance most mediums have for the rest of the species, but it does encourage clients to phrase their questions properly. Satisfied patrons allege that one must present a significant, interesting problem to get a successful consultation with a medium. A prosaic question such as, “Who am I going to marry?” merely catapults the medium and her companion wraiths into boredom and perhaps a lackadaisical use of Fatalism. Such questions often lead the medium to compose riddles rivaling that of the Sphinx as revenge for this “insult” to her considerable talents. More interesting questions, however, produce genuine effort on the medium’s part and often clearer answers as well.

Modus Operandi

Meditation plays a large role in a medium’s method of operations. When listening to the voices of the Dead, a medium almost always uses a prop of some sort to focus her thoughts. Props may range from the ubiquitous crystal ball to tarot cards to

tea leaves, runes, dominoes, or even toothpicks. When a medium is just beginning to learn control over her ghosthunting abilities, these props are often the tools of her momentary salvation. Having an object to concentrate on allows her to isolate the voice of one spirit or to block such voices altogether. Most mediums choose a favorite prop and work with it to the exclusion of all others. In fact, during a medium's fledgling stage, traveling too far away from one's chosen tool is an open invitation to a loss of control and subsequent madness.

Most mediums instinctively understand that their gifts are not necessarily their own. They may invent a prayer or chant to the spirits before casting their runes or dealing their tarot cards. Some even feel themselves fall into a light trance when they are communing with the Dead — a trance that lends awareness of being Skinridden. These mediums often tell their clients that they are channels or transmitters for "higher beings" who deign to guide the living through a problem by poking and prodding cards and stones into their predestined spots.

A daring medium may willingly open herself up as a consort to Puppeteers and allow these skilled wraiths to use her voices and bodies to interact with the living. Of course, this behavior is a risky one, exposing a medium to the dangers of perpetual torment or even the destruction of her soul by the summoned Puppeteer. However, individuals who'll take the risks necessary to utter platitudes in eerie, blended voices or to achieve other special effects have a better chance of winning over skeptics and gaining prestige or fortune, if such are their goals.

Certain mediums are fortunate — or unfortunate — enough to be able to summon one particular wraith on a regular basis. These summoned ghosts can become a channeler's trusted Companions and form a symbiotic relationship in which the medium's calls are always answered, and the wraith's needs — to be near her Fetters, to "speak" with loved ones left behind, etc. — are fulfilled to the best of the mortal counterpart's abilities. Mediums who have a Companion often introduce the spirit to clients by name before beginning a consultation. However, it is almost impossible for the channeler to tell whether or not her Companion is what she seems or not. Doppelgangers, in particular, enjoy standing in for trusted Companions....

The Diary of Cecile Prejean

*Tactics is knowing what to do when there is something to do.
Strategy is knowing what to do when there is nothing to do.*

— Savielly Tartakover, Polish Chess Grand Master

Although boardwalk mediums are not part of a coherent organization, they do follow certain rules (mediums with a conscience do, anyway) much like the medieval code of honor among knights. Where these rules come from, and why so many boardwalk mediums follow them in the absence of a solid network are something of a mystery, especially since most books on the subject are written by nonmediums or fledglings with little sense of self-preservation. However, most mediums trace the genesis of

the fortuneteller code of honor to the unpublished diary of 19th century debutante Cecile Prejean.

In March of 1828, in the middle of the New Orleans French Quarter, Cecile Prejean and her twin sister, Colette, ran over a small gray cat with their carriage. Against the advice of their driver, the two young women immediately went looking for the cat's owner to offer their apologies and make what reparations they could. Unfortunately, the cat belonged to one Celestine Laveau, second cousin to Marie Laveau, the celebrated voodoo queen of New Orleans. According to Cecile, Celestine was as well versed in the voodoo arts as her cousin, and she "cursed and spat and carried on so, I thought Colette would surely perish of fright."

Shortly after their encounter with Celestine Laveau, Cecile and her sister began to hear the voices of the Restless calling to them across the Shroud. By far the more intrepid of the two, Cecile searched every cheap tavern and seedy brothel in New Orleans for Celestine Laveau to beg her to break the curse. By then, though, the woman had disappeared.

Cecile did find the voodoo queen herself, however. Eager to undo the damage her cousin had done, Marie Laveau gave Cecile the choice of dispelling the spirits altogether or learning to harness her gifts. For reasons irretrievably lost with several pages of her diary, Cecile chose the latter. She recorded Marie Laveau's teachings in several parts of her journal for Colette's benefit.

Unfortunately, all of Cecile's efforts to save her sister were in vain. Colette refused to have anything to do with voodoo, which she considered evil and "an affront to God." She ran about the Prejean plantation in nothing but a nightgown, tearing at her hair and terrorizing the servants and slaves with her ramblings. Colette ultimately disappeared into the Atchafalaya swamps, hounded by the voices that had driven her to the point of self-destruction.

In her grief, Cecile Prejean disappeared as well, though she resurfaced from time to time in various cities and towns throughout the country. Her powers as a medium became legendary, and the mere hint of her presence could cause riots and stampedes of the credulous. It is said that whenever she found another natural medium in the same predicament she and her sister had confronted, Cecile would tear out a page or two from her journal and leave them behind so as to share the teachings of Marie Laveau. Although rare, several pages of her diary still exist. The lucky medium who finds one of these treasures gains control and peace beyond her imaginings.

One page that has been widely distributed in duplicate form is Madame Prejean's Code of Conduct for Mediums and Seers. Cecile seemed to consider it paramount that all mediums conduct themselves in what she felt was a "professional and dignified manner," and so she created and distributed her personal set of rules. As Cecile Prejean has achieved cult status amongst modern-day mediums, her Code of Conduct — the only part of her diary that is still widely extant — is still followed today.

Madame Prejean's Code of Conduct for Mediums and Seers

In order to share the wisdom imparted to me by Marie Laveau, the celebrated seer, I have put in writing the six questions most often asked by beginning mediums for their personal edification. It is my hope that all fortunetellers will conduct themselves honestly and ethically, with the best interests of the querent foremost in their minds.

1 — What if I see tragedy ahead for my client?

Never impart news of impending tragedy to your clients, particularly predictions of a querent's own death or that of a loved one. Though death and pain are inevitable, one must not spend one's life in constant fear and anxiety. If you feel that you absolutely cannot direct the querent to a different path — one which she could follow and thus avoid a terrible episode — perform a Cold Reading so as not to prolong her misery by foretelling what cannot be avoided. Should you feel an obligation, religious or otherwise, to be truthful to a particular individual, hide your meaning in metaphors.

2 — What do I do when the spirits are not answering my call?

If the medium is confident that no harm to her person or reputation will result, she is obliged to return any payment made prior to the reading and confess that communication with the spirit world is currently impossible.

However, a Cold Reading may be performed in the most dire of circumstances. For example, if a powerful, well-connected querent were to become belligerent over her reading — or lack thereof — you may perform a Cold Reading to prevent bodily harm.

3 — How do I perform a Cold Reading?

Everyone has a bad day on the job, and we are not excepted. There are times when you may be unable to call a single spirit or when your tarot cards do not fall into any sensible order. If the circumstances demand it, in these cases you may need to perform a Cold Reading. To do this, you observe your client, reading what you can from her attire, speech and gestures, and then you try to fabricate satisfactory answers to her questions. You may ask a few leading questions as well. Do so with the utmost confidence and all will be well. A talent for "coldreading" is very useful when your companion ghosts take a hiatus from the supernatural circuit. If you regularly channel spirits, you may have to draw upon latent acting talents to fake possession. In addition, use any basic knowledge of your chosen prop — your tarot cards, runes, etc. — to piece together whatever messages you can.

4 — What should I do if another medium is seeing clients very close to where I have settled?

Inexperienced mediums soon learn not to infringe on the territory of an already established channeler. If you notice another practitioner already in session with clients, move your own camp a safe distance away. What constitutes a "safe" distance differs from location to location. On Jackson Square in New Orleans' Vieux Carré, a few feet may suffice. In a small midwestern village, however, the town may not be big enough for two spirit channelers.

5 — Why do you travel from city to city? Is wanderlust necessary to be a successful fortuneteller?

The transitory nature of our profession, more of a practice than an actual rule, plays a large part of defining us as a group. Wandering fortunetellers were around long before I started my practice. I myself find it comforting to change my locale whenever the whim strikes, although I do often return to favored locales. Most mediums of my acquaintance rarely remain in one place for more than a few days. Two weeks seems to be the longest time we spend in one location, though there are rare occasions when a medium stays in one place for almost a month. There are a few of our kind who set up permanent shops, but they are far more visible than they are numerous.

6 — How much contact do you have with other mediums? Do you owe any of them loyalty?

We do display a certain amount of loyalty to our own. A medium about to depart from a city may pass on objects such as city maps, business cards of financially secure clients or information about safe lodgings to other mediums. However, these gifts are often made under the cover of darkness, with no more interaction than a parcel tossed on a fortuneteller's table. The medium who leaves the gift may, it is assumed, ask a favor in return at any time.

We have an innate distrust of any other type of ghosthunter. (I find myself to be the exception to this rule.) Out of an understandable sense of self-preservation, we rarely share information about our skills, and we take great pains to avoid each other and members of established ghosthunting factions, in particular those organizations that are flashy and obtrusive. We have a higher purpose and place in the great chain of psychic beings. Our *raison d'être* is simply to be of assistance to others who lack our gifts and to bring peace to those who have passed on. Learn well what I have told you; from here, it will be up to you to hone your skills and survive. Use your talents fairly, and use them well.

Reasons Fair and Foul

To the souls in the Shadowlands, mediums exist among the Quick to act as portals to the world of the living. Through them, the Restless can again speak with loved ones across the Shroud. Mediums can be used to protect Fetters, work toward the resolution of Passions and otherwise meddle in the affairs of the living, if the wraith's level of influence is strong.

On the other hand, what drives boardwalk mediums to travel onward in their endless quest, to make their way down every road? What causes them to give parts of themselves to the shades of persons heretofore unknown? Below are just a few reasons why a seemingly normal individual would cast off her material goods and follow where her ghostly Companions take her.

Understanding

I've often felt that I was born in the wrong time and to the wrong parents. Their terms of endearment included "different" and "eccentric." Oh, you want to hear about the voices. I've always heard them. I tried to tell my mother about them, but she slapped me and said never to mention that "craziness" to her again. Sometimes I think the voices are the only things that make sense in this world, and everyone else has gone as mad as they say I am.

Many mediums feel more at home with the voices inside their heads than they do with other humans. The Quick seem to have little use for such "gifted" people other than to cast them out of "normal" society and pretend that their gifts do not exist. Well aware of their eccentricity, these mediums use wraiths to form connections with other humans, even if only for a short while. They use their channeling abilities only to aid other people, hoping that those others may turn to them in gratitude and make them feel a sense of belonging. They move on only when they hear too many pejorative whispers about their practices. One dissatisfied customer is often all that it takes.

Finding Transcendence

The spirits I speak with are caught between worlds. They are too attached to this Earth to leave it behind for a higher plane of existence, and so they are trapped until they sever their bonds. The spirits need someone to help them find peace. Although I am humbled that I am the instrument through whom they give guidance to those wise enough to listen, I feel I must help guide them toward the light.

The highest goal of a medium driven by spiritual beliefs is to help the Dead find some brand of Transcendence. Because they think of the Dead as luminous, higher beings, such mediums channel and perform readings to impart the wisdom of "those on the spiritual plane" to the Quick. However, the medium's main purpose is to send the wraith on her merry way to Nirvana, Heaven or a similar place where everything is beautiful all of the time. In fact, the drive to do so may even verge on fanaticism, as this sort of medium sees herself as something of a savior. Such so-





called “evangelical” mediums believe that assisting wraiths to achieve Transcendence will eventually secure their own destiny as well; many keep running tallies of how many ghosts they’ve “helped along.” The craftiest often try to trick a wraith into revealing the location of her Fetters, only to destroy the objects shortly thereafter out of a fervent belief that, without these bonds, the wraith will move on to a “better place.”

Altruism

Everyone has his own special gifts in this life. My small talent is that I can hear the ghosts of our ancestors when they call. I am grateful that spirits from a higher plane than our Earth use me as their vessel. It is my fervent hope that their messages help my sisters and brothers find out what it is that they need to learn in their respective lifetimes. My wants are really insignificant; where the spirits beckon, I must follow and bring comfort.

Certain mediums use their abilities to assist the living with a touching sincerity. They often have a warm, fuzzy view of the Shadowlands as a “plane of higher learning,” and not even the ravings of the most malevolent Spectres can dissuade them from their vision. They possess a deep faith their own purpose, which they feel is to offer solace to those living whom the Dead left behind. Unable to ignore the voices of the Dead, who implore them to find and contact their loved ones, to let someone know that they still exist in some fashion, these mediums go wherever their spiritual guides take them. Often acting in direct opposition to those mediums who try to help spirits find the light, the medium who listens to her heart can be easily goaded into protecting Fetters and strengthening Passions.

The Curse of Cassandra

When I foretold pestilence, they said I’d brought it. When I warned them of fire, they claimed that I’d started it. No matter how accurate my prophecies, no one believed me. They’ll know soon enough that I am not a fake. They’ll learn.

Perhaps no one else believed the rantings of their youth. Perhaps a horrible occurrence resulted in someone’s unwillingness to listen. Maybe others ridiculed them when the words of their spirit Companions didn’t turn out as foreseen. Like the seer who foretold the fall of Troy, only to have no one in the city believe her words, these mediums are on a quest to ensure that as many people as possible know that their messages are for real. They are the most driven and the most dangerous of all the wandering fortunetellers. Even the most gregarious of mediums knows better than to contradict one of these crusaders for Truth.

Fame and Fortune

I don’t know why any of these ghosts would want to talk to or through me. My God is the dollar, my Sabbath payday, and I don’t give a damn whether or not Great-aunt Sally is throwing herself at my front door in desperation. Great-aunt Sally had better have

some cold cash on her if she wants to talk to little Johnny, or I'll tell her little Johnny's gone bye-bye to hell.

As with any profession, there are always individuals whose main focus is to secure as much profit and glory for themselves as possible. They are the types of mediums who work the boardwalks with an eye on the casinos, who operate in hopes of building up a big enough reputation to curry favor with the rich and powerful. Such mediums are the types who progress to circus-like shows and television appearances, amid theatrical puffs of smoke, outlandish costumes and canned shouts of adulation. To them, Rasputin and Merlin were the most enviable of people — chief advisors to persons of wealth and distinction and distinguished by an aura of the occult. After all, these hungry souls reckon, if Linda Evans and Yanni could all but adopt JZ Knight and her spirit Companion, Ramtha, why isn't there someone in Hollywood for them?

Control

Last night, I sat in a chair beating my wrists against the armrests over and over again for what seemed like a few minutes, in the belief that this small ritual would drive these demons out of my head. It worked, but I was stunned to find that four hours had actually passed. And there I sat, using my precious time on this Earth to drum bruises into my flesh. Sometimes, I can single out a voice. It's always the same voice, and it's always asking for something. Maybe if I just do what it wants it'll give me some peace and quiet. I need peace and quiet.

For those poor individuals who never learn to shut out completely the pleas of souls demanding assistance, there is a fine line between sanity and madness. Some of them learn that it is easier to listen closely to one voice than to the clanging cymbals of many tongues, and so they travel on, speaking to the one Restless who would, for a moment, bless them with something close to silence in exchange for favors granted.

Tarot and Candle Magic: Peeking Through the Shroud



While the crystal ball is the stereotypical tool of choice for mediums, most practitioners prefer to use tarot decks and candles to peer across the Shroud. While a crystal ball certainly is flashy and provides something of a focus for concentration and emotion, tarot cards provide for more specificity when a medium tries to contact an individual wraith. Candle flame offers the same sort of focus that a crys-

The Ghostly View

Wraiths who deal with boardwalk mediums are almost inevitably Renegades. By its very substance, any discussion between mortal and wraith breaks the *Diction Mortuum*, and extended associations like those between medium and Companion gleefully stomp on the bits. Thus, working with a medium on a regular basis can be a hazardous operation for a wraith. On the other hand, the chance to deal with someone who can actually see wraiths is too much of a temptation for most Shadowlanders (even normally stolid Legionnaires), and they mob any medium they see — at least for a little while. Most won't make a habit of it — it's just that the temptation of getting a message across or ensuring the safety of a Fetter is a strong one.

The two Guilds that work most closely with boardwalk mediums are the Oracles and Puppeteers, for obvious reasons. The former use their powers of Fatalism (with sanction from the Ladies of Fate, some say) to grant directives unto mortals, while the latter just get off on Skinriding.

Ex-mediums who wind up as wraiths often do their best to help out their spiritual descendents. These wraiths also work hard on the other side preventing young mediums from getting overwhelmed; most of them have Passions along these lines.

tal ball does (and a brighter beacon to Death-sight-afflicted wraiths). Plus, crystal balls are heavy, expensive and hard to replace — all negatives for mediums who might have to pick up and run at a moment's notice.

For these reasons and others too numerous to go into, tarot readings and candlelight are integral to the process of contacting the Restless. Below is an outline of how to work Tarot readings into your **Wraith** chronicle, what actually happens in terms of ghostly metaphysics when you do so and the game mechanics of tarot use by mediums.

Shedding Light on the Matter: Let the Readings Begin

Breathe deeply as I light this fire. I want you to close your eyes and inhale the patchouli oil I put before you to invoke the wisdom of Saturn. Spread a dropper's worth of this oil in your palms, then cup your hands around the flame to mix your aura with the earth, fire, water and air that the sacred candle embodies. Good. Breathe the essence into your body and soul. Now envision the departed soul. Where has this soul gone? How can this soul help the living? What remained unanswered with the passing of

Planet	Moon	Saturn
Main Association	Spirits	Death
Day/ Candle Color		
Monday (Pearl)	Women's mysteries	Past lives, the Crone
Tuesday (Red)	Prehistory, Female power	Illness, War, Endings
Wednesday (Yellow)	Ancient mysteries and secrets, Charon	Learning the secrets of death
Thursday (Purple)	Expansion of spirit	Transmutation, Religion, The Hierarchy
Friday (Pink, Green)	Female power, Self-love	Open relations, Needs, Enfants, Fertility
Saturday (Black)	Death's door, the Shroud, Endings	Old age, the Deathlords
Sunday (Orange)	Balance of Shadow and Psyche	Transformation, Lemures

this soul? Think of the departed mortal's eyes, but with golden irises. Now, repeat after me, seeker:

*Saturn shed wisdom on the secrets of death,
Please manifest answers for thee,
Speak to me like before your last breath,
Please offer an epiphany.*

Now, with the same questions in mind, I want you to take this deck of cards and hold it to your heart. Shuffle your question into the deck until you feel that your vibrations have entered each and every card. Now, seeker, open your eyes slowly, look immediately at the dancing flame, then hand the deck back to me. Together we will choose the appropriate significator card for the departed....

Readings commonly begin in such a manner, with the medium helping the client to focus her thoughts. It is customary in many cases for the medium to request the aid of Saturn, the planet most often associated with wisdom and death. Some readers choose, however, to seek guidance and knowledge from the moon, as the moon is commonly associated with spirits. Spirits, however, are a Garou matter; readings done with the invocation of Saturn tend to work a bit better.

Candle magic is best performed on certain days of the week that correspond to the type of knowledge the seeker is pursuing. Below is a chart that explains various associations with planets, days of the week and the sort of information that can be best communicated by the Dead on a particular day.

How It Actually Works

Obviously, having a deck of tarot cards and a candle doesn't give you the keys to the realm of the Dead. What really happens when a medium attempts to use tarot and candles to extend her perception across the Shroud is simple. The tarot reading, intended to echo the spirit of the wraith, provides an emotional focus for both medium and client (in addition to whatever prophetic function it may serve). The card spread helps to clarify the image of the wraith in the minds of both reader and querent, and thus "focuses" the client's emotion into something more directed than just free-floating Pathos. At the same time, the candle flame shines extremely brightly in the Deathstight-tainted eyes

of the Restless, and it attracts attention even as it aids concentration. (Note: Strong incense also attracts the Restless, who are thankful for any scent besides the faint whiff of decay that often rides the breezes of the Underworld.)

In any case, the directed emotional energy created by the reading crosses the Shroud and, with luck, attracts the attention of the wraith for whom it is intended. Readings don't always work, though; not every soul becomes a wraith, the wraith might be in Stygia or soulforged into a boot scraper, or the wraith might not want to answer. In that case, there are myriad possible outcomes: What responds instead may be a wraith with a strong connection to the target of the reading, or perhaps a Spectre with hive-mind knowledge of the desired wraith, or perhaps just a fragment of memory that wafts loose from the Tempest. How these impostors may react to medium and querent is up to the Storyteller, though most mediums (Perception + Enigmas, difficulty 7) know fairly swiftly if something is going wrong.

As for the matter of choosing the right day, invoking the proper celestial entity and so on, most research done on that topic has come up with a pair of contradictory conclusions. The first camp believes that choosing the appropriate day for a reading simply provides a psychological crutch for the medium, en-

In addition, each day is associated with a particular Legion — and those wraiths who make up a Legion's ranks (or should).

Sunday	The Penitent Legion
Monday	The Silent Legion
Tuesday	The Skeletal Legion
Wednesday	The Grim Legion
Thursday	The Legion of Paupers
Friday	The Emerald Legion
Saturday	The Iron Legion

The Legions of Fate, not surprisingly, stand outside this correlation. Depending upon whom you believe, this Legion is linked to all days or to none.

abling her to be more efficient in her efforts. Other researchers fall back on the "It just works better; we have no idea why" theory. It's not a surprise that the first batch of researchers is generally much better funded than the second.

It's All in the Cards: Recommended Tarot Decks

For Storytellers wishing to introduce tarot-reading NPCs or individuals who wish to play a medium in a **Wraith** chronicle, nearly any tarot deck will suffice, though we suggest using the **Mage Tarot Deck**; its World of Darkness imagery should be inspirational during your journey beyond the Shroud.

When selecting tarot cards, it's of great importance to choose a deck with which you feel comfortable. Although many experts recommend that beginners start out with the classic Rider-Waite deck, you may find that the artwork on the cards is not as appealing or inspiring as some on other decks. It's helpful to select a deck that will evoke certain moods to facilitate interpretation.

Playing with a Full Deck: The Basics of Tarot

Before you can introduce tarot into your **Wraith** chronicles, you've got to understand some tarot basics. You can use the information in this section for **Wraith** chronicles and for readings in general.

What's in Your Deck?

Standard tarot decks consist of 78 cards. Fifty-two of these cards are numerical and court cards, similar to the cards found in any playing-card deck. In playing-card decks, the suits are spades, clubs, diamonds and hearts; tarot cards are divided into wands, swords, pentacles/coins and cups. In either type of card deck, the

- Aces** — Beginnings, births, gifts, potential
- Twos** — Affirmations, balance, dynamism
- Threes** — Planning, synchronicity, advancement and growth
- Fours** — Manifestation, planning for the future, stability, control
- Fives** — Struggle, strife, adjustment, challenges
- Sixes** — Abundance, exuberance, adjustment, adaptation, beauty, harmony
- Sevens** — Imagination, introspection, self-analysis, maturation
- Eights** — Change, evolution, organization, intensity
- Nines** — Completion, integration, fulfillment, culmination of the Ace's potential
- Tens** — Fully developed manifestation of the depicted suit

suits have nearly identical meanings. A predominance of **wands** in a reading suggests creative inspiration; a predominance of **swords** suggests intellect or mental power; a predominance of **pentacles/coins** suggests material or monetary matters; and a predominance of **cups** suggests an emotional outpouring or an emotional lesson to be learned from the reading.

Each card in any suit has a numerological correspondence that helps to identify the meanings of that particular card. The information below is a general guideline to follow when conducting a reading.

Court cards, which usually consist of Kings, Queens, Knights and Pages, also hold great influence over readings. Before a reading, it is customary for the inquirer or reader to choose a court card as a **significator**, a card representing the inquirer at the time of the reading. The significator card is usually chosen based on the inquirer's gender, age and astrological sign.

When consulting the tarot in a **Wraith** chronicle, the medium usually uses the significator for the wraith rather than for the person making the inquiry. The medium takes into account the zodiacal correspondence of the wraith's "deathdate" and uses the appropriate card as a significator. Laying this significator card in a spread theoretically puts the influence of the deceased into a reading. If you do not know your wraith's "death" sign, or are unsure of the dates corresponding to each of the signs, check your daily newspaper's horoscope section. The dates appear next to each of the signs used in Western astrology.

Court Card/Significator	Astrological Sign	Gender
King of Cups	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Male
Queen of Cups	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Female
Knight of Cups	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Young Male
Page of Cups	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Young Female
King of Pentacles	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Male
Queen of Pentacles	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Female
Knight of Pentacles	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Young Male
Page of Pentacles	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Young Female
King of Swords	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Male
Queen of Swords	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Female
Knight of Swords	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Young Male
Page of Swords	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Young Female
King of Wands	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Male
Queen of Wands	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Female
Knight of Wands	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Young Male
Page of Wands	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Young Female

The Spread

The method of arranging the cards in a graphical pattern is called the spread and is very important to a tarot reading's outcome. In **Wraith** chronicles, most mediums use a spread known as "the Shroud." The Shroud spread uses only five cards, and tells the inquirer about the wraith's Passions, Arcanoi, Fetters and Background in Restless society. It is laid out as follows:

There are two horizontal rows in a Shroud spread. The top row consists of only one card: the card chosen as the significator for the wraith. The second row consists of four cards. From left to right, these four cards are: Background, Arcanoi, Fetters and Passions. The card layout should look like this:

Significator

Background Arcanoi Fetters Passions

The **Significator** card is the card that represents the wraith, and it is placed above the other four cards to exert the wraith's influence or "vibes" over the reading. Often this card is a "face" card of one of the four suits, though some mediums "in the know" reserve the suit of Cups (Primordialism in the **Mage Tarot**) for Spectres.

The **Background** card indicates the wraith's place in the society of the dead. It also indicates the socioeconomic status of the wraith, and the wraith's wealth in oboli.

The **Arcanoi** card indicates the special talents or arts that the wraith is currently practicing or has mastered. Often this card depicts a Guild to which the wraith may belong. Numerical cards usually reflect the degree or strength of the particular Arcanos.

The **Fetters** card shows to the inquirer or medium information about the physical objects that hold the wraith to his former life.

The **Passions** card is probably the most important card, at least where inquirers and mediums are concerned. This card is key in determining the wraith's probable path or motivation in the Shadowlands, and indicates what is currently motivating the wraith in question. This card is similar to the outcome card in a typical tarot layout.

Example

Julia wishes to consult a medium to communicate with her mother, who died while giving birth to Julia 17 years ago. Because, according to the chart, Friday is the best day to receive information pertaining to fertility, Julia's medium decides to consult Saturn by lighting a pink candle during a



Friday-evening tarot reading. With luck, this combination will help to attract Julia's mother's attention.

Friday evening rolls around and Julia returns to the medium's shop. They choose the Queen of Dynamism as the significator for Julia's mother; the Medea figure's loss of her children strikes Julia as appropriate. Then Julia cuts the deck and whispers her question (even as the medium lights the appropriate candles) and lays down the four cards. The Background card is the Ace of Primordialism reversed, which strikes the medium as a bad sign. It would seem that Julia's mother is just starting down a dark road, perhaps that of Spectrehood. Next comes the King of Questing, which rests in the Arcanoi card slot. It indicates mastery of powers and a certain tendency toward dominion over others, perhaps Puppetry. The third card, the Fetters slot, is the Page of Questing — Julia herself, as she seeks her mother. Finally, there is the Passions card: the two of Pattern, reversed. This is a card of opposition and strife, with patterns overthrown. Looking at the reading as a whole, the medium gets worried. It seems to indicate that the wraith of Julia's mother isn't necessarily that friendly any more and just might come looking for her daughter. She opens her mouth to warn her client, but another voice issues from her throat.

It says, "Hello, daughter."

Mechanics

As noted previously, ownership of a deck of tarot cards and a candle, or even of a crystal ball the size of a watermelon, does not automatically make one a medium. Most boardwalk mediums have the Merit: **Speaker with the Dead**, which eliminates the real need for paraphernalia such as tarot cards. These mediums may still use tarot decks and whatnot either to impress clients or to help them focus, but they can see and hear ghosts just fine without any props.

The remainder of boardwalk mediums have the Merit: **Small Gift**. (Most also possess the Merit: **Easy Consort**.) When attempting to contact the Restless, these mediums must roll Perception + Occult, difficulty 10. For each mitigating factor (appropriate day for the wraith's Legion, proper color candle, etc.) the difficulty decreases by 1. The number of successes determines, within reason, how well contact is established with the appropriate wraith. Any possibility of contact, of course, assumes that the wraith wants to be contacted, can respond to the summons and, in fact, still exists.





Chapter Three: The Good, the Bad and the Incompetent

Charlatans



he girls started reflexively at the percussive burst of rain that hammered against the bedroom windows. "Well," Bonnie said, her voice a touch too energetic, "It was a dark and stormy night!" Her friends laughed. Janet sat on the rug and leaned against the ottoman. "We sure picked a good night, didn't

we?" she said, hugging her flannel-clad knees to drive off the chill that passed through her.

"This is perfect sleepover weather," Bonnie agreed. "And just the right conditions for a seance." Along with the other two girls, Bonnie joined Janet on the floor. Wrapped in blankets and resting on pillows, the girls arranged themselves around a Ouija board. Thunder rumbled distantly; Rae said "Oooooooo!" amid more laughter.

The last girl sat cross-legged, looking intently at the board as her friends settled down. In a solemn voice, she said, "Are you prepared to contact the spirits who dwell beyond the land of the living?" Her gaze pierced the three other girls, but the effect was ruined when she burst out giggling at the faces Bonnie was making. "Cut it out, Bonnie! This is serious stuff." She threw a pillow for emphasis.

Bonnie tossed popcorn back. "So come on, Gwen. Show us how it's done."

"Okay, but you have to be quiet. The spirits won't come if you make a lot of noise." Gwen touched her fingers to the plastic planchette resting on the Ouija board, then closed her eyes. Someone slurped loudly from a soda. "Stop it, Rea," Gwen said without looking.

Ignoring the hushed giggles and shhh!-ing, Gwen said, "Oh spirits of the Dead, hear me! I, Gwendolyn Pearsall, command your presence. Attend me on this dark night, and answer the questions I put to you." There was a moment where the only sounds were the steady hiss of rain and Bonnie crunching on popcorn.

"Spirits!" Gwen called out, making the others jump. "Do you hear me?" The planchette under her fingers moved lazily, wandering over the board until the plastic pointer finally slid over to YES. ("How does she do that with her eyes closed?" Janet wondered and was instantly hushed by Bonnie and Rea.)

The planchette resumed its aimless patterns while Gwen spoke again. "Attend me then, spirits. I—" Gwen's eyes opened in shock as the planchette shot to the NO, seeming to drag her arms with it.

"No' what?" Janet asked. "You didn't ask a question yet, Gwen." The pointer was already moving in fast, jerking patterns. Rea wrote the letters on a notepad while Bonnie called them out, so only Janet noticed the strained look of terror on Gwen's face.

"Gwen?" Janet said in a small voice. "Bonnie, something's wrong with Gwen."

Just then, the pointer stopped moving; Gwen yanked her hands away. She curled into a ball, shaking uncontrollably. As the girls rushed to her they could hear Gwen murmuring, "I couldn't stop" over and over.

Bonnie and Rea held Gwen, and whispered soothing words, while Janet picked up the notepad. Seventeen letters marched across the page, menace clearly conveyed through a simple connection of lines:

YOUDONOTCOMMANDUS

There was a moment of stunned silence, then the temperature dropped ten degrees and all three bedroom windows exploded inward, showering the screaming girls in glass shards and wood splinters....

For every living person who actually pierces the Fog to reach a wraith, there are two who simply fake it. Call them frauds, hucksters, poseurs, shysters, Madame Zorbas or your Aunt Claire, these folks simply don't have what it takes. These Quick share two things in common: interest in the afterlife, and the total inability to contact it.

True mediums apply many terms to any mortal who plays around at the business of touching the Underworld. Most of the labels used aren't fit for polite company, so "charlatan" is the common substitute. In the mediums' opinions, these hacks are the ones who give the profession a bad name. Charlatans cheapen the time-honored art of the occult with their stumbling, hackneyed "channeling" and their ridiculous, superstition-filled "seances." In gen-

eral, however, most mediums find charlatans relatively harmless and easy to ignore (although hardly agreeable company).

Wraiths can find charlatans irritating as well. The Restless already have too much to worry about, what with all manner of threats lurking in the Underworld and the hassles posed by true mediums, to waste their time on Muffy and Buffy, who've gotten a deck of tarot cards and think that they have uncovered the secrets of the universe. Wraiths don't take it kindly that some mortals think ghosts exist strictly for entertainment value. Whether those Quick truly have the power to contact the other side or just play at it is a minor consideration. The affront is still just as grievous in the wraith's mind, whether it comes from the Pinball Wizards or a gaggle of high school girls with a Ouija board.

Yet, in their constant struggle to survive, the majority of wraiths tend to disregard charlatans' fumbling antics. The Restless who take it personally are in the minority — albeit a rather active minority. These "medium-busters" consider it their duty and privilege to show charlatans (in often horrifying detail) the forces they tempt. Some Restless ask only for respect from the unwitting transgressors, while others are determined to punish charlatans' ignorance severely. Some are subtle and benevolent, others are blunt and brutal. The wraiths' methods and intents vary wildly, but all feel the need to put charlatans in their proper place.

While any number of individual wraiths and groups deal with charlatans, most can be placed in a couple of categories. These are most often referred to as tutors and thrashers.



Tutors



Tutors look on charlatans as well-intentioned fools. From the viewpoint of these wraiths, Quick who play at the occult are honestly ignorant of what they're dealing with. They dabble, not truly knowing the enormity — or horrifying ramifications — of what they do. It is the tutor's responsibility to educate the charlatan on the potential repercussions of her actions, with the intent that the "student" will thereafter treat the dead with more respect.

Methods

With their goal being to educate the ignorant, tutor wraiths use their powers to reveal the reality of the Underworld that lies behind the misconceptions of the living. Tutors use their Arcanoi to teach, not harm. Frightening a student is acceptable to a point, since sometimes "tough love" is the only way to get the message through.

However, there's a huge difference between what an average tutor is willing to do and the measures even the most benign Bedlameer may take. While it might be simpler and faster to assault a charlatan as thrashers do, tutors see this way as counter-productive. In the tutors' opinion, violence ends up spreading more confusion and ignorance. In the end, no one, Quick or Dead, learns anything. Instead, by teaching charlatans the truth of the world that exists beyond the Shroud and the perils involved in toying with that world, tutors hope to impress upon their students the folly of any further meddling. Tutors try to have transgressors leave off playing necromantic games. Still, there have been rare occasions when promising charlatans were recruited to act as liaisons between wraiths and the land of the living.

Considering the dubious success of tutors' methods, it's surprising that they even bother. And, truth be told, the tutor turn-over rate is rather high. Tutors are often looked at with amusement and even outright derision by other wraiths (other Renegades, anyway; Hierarchs tend to be less than pleased with tutors' energetic disregard of the *Dictum Mortuum*), and clearly

positive results are few and far between for them. Most wraiths who start off as tutors end up in thrasher groups or simply shake their heads in frustration and give up on the entire business.

Wraiths who stick with it do so mainly because of their Passions. Such Restless were most often teachers, counselors or members of clergy in life. The Passions of such wraiths often involve dedication, responsibility, love, perseverance and even guilt, pride and loneliness. Passions of this sort make a wraith well suited to spending long periods of time under frustrating circumstances with little hope of positive results. In this way, even if the wraith doesn't turn any charlatans from their necromantic pastime, she can at least get some Pathos out of the attempt.

Arcanoi

Most tutors use rather standard techniques when they begin. As time goes on, those wraiths who stick with it develop individual styles. The following are Arcanoi that have application to the living, and have found at least some use in the tutors' curriculum.

- **Embody:** This is most useful when a wraith combines Whispers and Phantom to appear before the charlatan and warn her about the forces with which she conspires. The combination of ghostly manifestation and spectral speech is enough to strike fear in many who have little true experience with the supernatural.

- **Flux:** This Arcanos sees little use, but can be effective nonetheless. Most often, Flux is used to destroy the charlatan's props. After her Ouija board rots to ragged splinters and her crystal ball shatters into powder, a charlatan typically decides to pursue a different hobby posthaste.

- **Inhabit:** This Arcanos is used by tutors less often, as it tends to backfire on the wraiths employing it. Generally, the tutor possesses something in the room whenever the charlatan plays at summoning spirits. The intent is to frighten the living so that they'll leave the afterlife alone. Of course, after this

demonstration of "power," many charlatans instead seek more knowledge of the spirit world, in hopes of seeing more miracles.

- **Intimation:** This would likely be the most commonly used tutor Arcanos if it weren't nearly impossible to find a wraith who can teach it. After all, what is more effective in dissuading someone from pursuing an interest than simply to remove that desire entirely? On the other hand, any remaining Solicitors tend to have more pressing concerns....

Success Rate

While some charlatans who are instructed by tutors turn to more prosaic pursuits, the majority are more intrigued than ever by the afterlife once they get a taste of the "real stuff." As a result, these Quick delve into the occult with a renewed fervor. Their tutors then return for another "session," hoping in vain that this time the lesson will stick. It never does, of course, and all that's happening is that Quick and Dead fall into a co-dependent relationship. This sort of cycle usually ends only when the charlatan is visited by a thrasher instead of her regular wraithly tutor, when the tutor succumbs to Oblivion or when the charlatan dies (thereby receiving first-hand information on the Shadowlands).

• **Keening:** Keening is possibly the most useful Arcanos in dissuading charlatans from further forays into the occult. The wraith can generate feelings of disquiet and fright in the target whenever the charlatan attempts to meddle in things metaphysical. After a few instances of this Pavlovian training, many charlatans refuse even to look at a crystal ball.

• **Mnemosynis:** Applied infrequently due to its limited availability, this Arcanos can be quite effective. Dragging the charlatan into a flashback of a disturbing memory every time she takes out the Ouija board is bound to turn her away from such arcane dabbling. Alternatively, Mnemosynis is also handy at erasing any memory of supernatural encounters, thereby taking away the charlatan's impetus for further study.

• **Outrage:** Too blatant for most tutors, Outrage is usually used only to knock over vases, shake tables and otherwise disrupt the charlatan's seance. Much like Inhabit, this sort of exhibition often serves to intrigue the living further.

• **Pandemonium:** This used to be the tutors' standby Arcanos; when all else failed, Pandemonium could always be relied upon to scare the bejeezus out of the target. It's still rather useful, but as people become more skeptical and jaded, Pandemonium's effectiveness lessens. Furthermore, tutors dabbling in Pandemonium have a nasty tendency to meet with untimely ends. The rumors say that the old Guildwraiths don't take kindly to this sort of thing.

• **Phantasm:** Phantasm is very handy for a tutor, since the wraith need only implant severe nightmares about the occult in the charlatan's dreams. After a few weeks of waking up screaming every time she dreams of a tarot deck, the charlatan often decides the entertainment she gets from dabbling with the Dead isn't worth the disturbing dreams it brings.

• **Puppetry:** Using this Arcanos can be a very poor idea. While many charlatans are left feeling terrified and violated after a wraith finishes possessing them, there are others who take such an action personally. These Quick often plunge into the occult with a passion, looking for some way to get back at their spiritual rapist.

The Ministry

The Heretic cult called the Ministry is composed of wraiths who claim that they exist in Purgatory, and must atone for their sins by steering the living toward redemption. Those mortals in the most danger of falling under Satan's spell are any who indulge in occult practices. They must be shown the error of their ways, and it's up to the Ministry to dissuade them from such infernal customs.

The cult's main focus is on those Quick who make a game of contacting the afterlife. The Ministry feels it's vital to stop the living before they walk down that dark road; a display of the true dangers existing in the afterlife should teach misguided Quick to pursue holier goals. While officially condemned by the Hierarchy, the Ministry seems to have a steady influx of new recruits. Few stay for very long (the group has

some monastically severe codes of conduct), but the cult has an average of 30 to 40 members at any given time.

Some wraiths wonder why the Ministry doesn't also go after the living who have a proven ability to traffic with the "other side." The Ministry's leader, Finlay Morrison, claims that once the Quick obtain their infernal powers, they are lost to all but God's own salvation. The Ministry's job is to stop misguided men and women from even getting near that point. Considering Morrison was a preacher in life, this explanation is more than good enough for his wraithly flock; however, others find such motivation a little suspect.

Finlay Morrison

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Leader

Circle: The Ministry

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Empathy 3, Expression 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Leadership 3

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Linguistics 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Haunt 4, Legacy 1, Notoriety 3, Status 4

Fetters: Tree from which he was hung 3, Old Bible 3

Arcanoi: Argos 1, Embody 3, Keening 3, Phantasm 4

Passions: Save others (Pride) 3, Deny the powers of darkness (Faith) 4, Atone for mistakes (Guilt) 3



Willpower: 8

Permanent Corpus: 10

Pathos: 7

Angst: 5

Shadow: The Rationalist

Thorns: Trick of the Light, Shadowplay, Shadow Familiar

Dark Passions: Point out your mistakes (Shame) 3, Lure others to failure (Hate) 2, Force others to share your views (Pride) 2

Image: A middle-aged man of average height and build, Morrison seems rather unassuming but for his piercing gaze and rich, mellifluous voice. Routinely garbed in a somber suit and tie, Morrison exudes a feeling of pious determination.

Background: Morrison, a small-time preacher in Utah near the end of the 19th century, found brief notoriety when he claimed the region was infested with evil spirits. It was his duty, he claimed, to drive the darkness from the territory so that God-fearing men and women could safely make their lives there. At first, his fiery speeches and wild claims found ready acceptance among the more superstitious settlers, but as the land was tamed Morrison's words became irritating. He met his end, finally, at the hands of some short-tempered trappers who didn't take too kindly to Morrison's insistence that they let him "cleanse" them. Since emerging in the Shadowlands, Morrison has renewed his dedication to this cause, although he's slightly modified his targets to ones he knows can't strike back across the Shroud.

Roleplaying Hints: You made a mistake in life that you still find hard to admit to in death. While you felt the evil in the world, your pride let you think that it fell upon you to eradicate it. Unfortunately, you didn't learn much from twisting at the end of a rope. It's only your stubborn nature that's kept Oblivion at bay this long.

Thrashers



Unlike tutors, thrashers do not seek to rehabilitate charlatans. Instead, these wraiths actively seek to punish the Quick for their ignorant meddling. Thrashers don't really care why the living mess with the Dead. It just pisses them off merely that mortals do so. In thrashers' eyes, while

those Quick able to pierce the Shroud are a problem, they at least deserve a little respect for the powers at their disposal. On the other hand, the sort of half-assed dabbling that charlatans do is insulting, and thrashers don't take insults kindly.

Methods

As their nickname implies, thrashers have one goal in mind: trouncing anyone dumb enough to intrude into realms

of existence where they don't belong. Thrashers care little for "explaining" such punishment to their victims, or indeed giving any sort of justification for their actions. They're dead — to whom do they have to answer?

Thrashers' techniques vary, but most have no problem inflicting psychological and/or physical duress upon their targets. Even in this, though, the assaults themselves have their own levels of intensity. Some thrashers are not dissimilar from tutors, causing severe fright but stopping short of actual physical harm. Others see a few contusions and broken bones as the price the Quick pay for playing in the big leagues. And there are thrashers with a rather extreme view, who feel that if a charlatan is so damn interested in death, why not give her an intimate perspective?

Still, what mainly element differentiates thrashers from tutors (apart from the severity of actions the two groups take) is thrashers' desire to punish transgressors. This desire most frequently comes from a highly developed sense of propriety, but it sometimes springs from tremendous anger or frustration toward charlatans. Such feelings can come from a number of sources: exposure to a carnival palm-reader's insensitive treatment of the Dead, fruitless attempts to dissuade the ignorant from researching the occult or even general surliness toward would-be trespassers.

Given this wish to inflict harm on others, one might think thrashers are little different from Spectres. Indeed, for many wraiths, indulging in thrashing charlatans leads inevitably to becoming one of the Shadow-eaten. It's difficult to ignore the dark commands of the Shadow while repeatedly wreaking havoc in the Skinlands — or during any violent activity, for that matter. Most wraiths who are thus overcome by inner darkness continue thrashing (at least until they're consumed by Oblivion), since it feeds Dark Passions so conveniently.

Still, there are many Restless whose Passions actually sustain them in their reprisals against ignorant mortals, and effectively hold the wraith's darker half at bay. These Passions can range from "higher" emotions such as justice or pride, to "baser" emotions, including arrogance, envy and hate. As the living show time and again, such passions are not solely the province of evil spirits.

There are a few rough patterns that thrasher wraiths tend to fit. A sizeable minority of thrashers (who don't label themselves such) led highly repressed lives and have carried that repression into their afterlives. Kept within rigid bounds during their lifetimes, they insist on keeping others within similar bounds, by violent means if necessary.

The other type of thrashers, the ones who actually answer to the name, tend to be territorial Renegades who died young and haven't been dead all that long. While not the most powerful wraiths out there, they are possessive of their "territory" and they instinctively resent anyone trying to meddle with it. And, while real mediums and older wraiths might not be susceptible to thrasher intimidation, charlatans make easy pickings for these bullies.

Arcanoi

As mentioned before, while thrashers' methods differ from those of tutors, both groups tend toward similar uses of Arcanoi. Still, most thrashers disregard those powers that have little immediate or detrimental effect on their subjects.

- **Inhabit:** Generally, the best use of this Arcanos is to play gags such as: possessing the charlatan's car as she's driving and guiding it directly into a tree; inhabiting the gun in her nightstand and firing it randomly; or even taking control of her electric toothbrush while she's using it and doing things too revolting to go into here. Depending on the circumstances, the results of a thrasher playing around with Inhabit can range from merely spooking the charlatan to causing him grievous injury.

- **Intimation:** An extremely effective Arcanos with a myriad of applications, Intimation is a deadly tool when used by the (extremely rare) thrasher who gets his hands on it. The thrasher could make any number of things desirable to a charlatan: the red-hot burner on a stove, the drain at the bottom of a pool, a piece of trash in the center lane of the interstate — the options are virtually endless, but the end result tends to be depressingly predictable.

- **Keening:** Keening is very effective at striking terror into a charlatan's heart (its result can be anything from severe fright to a heart attack). Many thrashers find panicking their subjects just as rewarding as smacking them about physically. Often, victims of a Keening are too busy recovering from a nervous breakdown to engage in any more spiritual dabbling.

- **Mnemosynis:** Thrashers often use this to plunge the charlatan repeatedly into a horrifying memory. And if the Quick doesn't have a suitably terrible past experience, the wraith can certainly give him one using any number of other Arcanoi. In fact, it's not unheard of for the thrasher to perform one brutal punishment on the target, then come back from time to time and refresh the memory. Alternatively, the thrasher can cut huge swaths out of the charlatan's memory, leaving only the awareness that something is gone. The degree of damage depends on both the wraith's Pathos supply and how thoroughly malicious she's feeling, but use of this Arcanos technically could leave the victim a partial amnesiac or even wipe out his entire life's memories.

- **Outrage:** While many tutors disdain using this Arcanos, it's proven to be an old standby for thrashers. The only real variations in Outrage use by thrashers are in degree, not kind; they range from petty things like breaking the charlatan's fine china to more severe applications such as beating the victim into the middle of next week. After being assaulted by an intangible assailant, most Quick leave off even the slightest occult pursuits (which is still no guarantee the thrasher won't be back for seconds — just to make sure).

- **Pandemonium:** Much like Keening or Outrage, this Arcanos is tailor-made for terrifying the living. If the thrasher really lets loose, the pyrotechnics possible with Pandemonium can be truly spectacular.

- **Phantasm:** Coming at the charlatan's mind from a slightly different angle than Mnemosynis, the thrasher can use Phantasm to flood her victim's dreams with all manner of horrifying images. It can provide weeks of fine entertainment for the wraith. Or, if he's feeling particularly brutal, the thrasher can simply attempt to rip out the charlatan's soul, to possibly lethal effect.

- **Puppetry:** Here's a fun thing to do: pop into a charlatan's body, take control for a few minutes, and proceed to destroy his life. Thrashers have been known to go around and alienate a charlatan's loved ones, torpedo his career and even terrorize strangers. Then, her job done, the wraith departs, leaving the hapless mortal to deal with the consequences. Of course, thrashers with little patience and an especially violent streak simply possess the charlatan and jump him in front of a truck.

BOO

A thrasher group with a malicious bent, BOO dedicates itself to humiliating and harming charlatans in new and exciting ways. BOO's members refrain from using lethal force, but don't hesitate to inflict physical and psychological damage if the mood suits them (which it often does).

BOO gets its name from the names of its founding members: Barbara Stalman, Orson Dulles and Otto Ferheis. The trio didn't so much form as fall in together; Barbara and Orson were a pair for some years when they stumbled across the then-living Otto. He was an especially malicious youth, and the two wraiths found him a strong source of Pathos (and Angst, which kept their burgeoning Shadows happy). When Otto finally died, Barbara and Orson were delighted to find his Caul-enshrouded form in the Shadowlands. They leapt at the chance to train their very own apprentice in the ways of thrashing.

The trio has had a surprisingly long run, due in part to Passions that easily sustain their interests, and a wide range of Arcanoi that has enabled the trio to avoid Hierarchy pursuit. Recently, Orson fell victim to his Shadow's whispering and vanished into a Harrowing, never to return. It didn't take long, however, for Barbara and Otto to find an excellent replacement in Philip Demarco. Although Otto suggested changing the group's name to "BOP," Barbara has thus far vetoed the option. While Barbara and Philip have reasons for focusing on charlatans, it was Orson who was most passionate about targeting them specifically. It remains to be seen if the new lineup will hew as tightly to the old agenda.

Barbara Stalman

Nature: Bravo

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Circle: BOO

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Streetwise 2



nation sex act/occult ceremony the band performed (for kicks, not out of any real belief in the supernatural). Reaped by an extreme group of Renegades, she continued her habits until the circle was attacked by a Legion patrol. Barbara escaped and struck out on her own. After her death, she realized how pathetic and fake the occult games she played with the band were. More angry at her own weakness for following others than at anything else, she used her abilities to destroy the band's career. She did so with such panache (killing one band member by using Outrage to choke him on his own vomit) that the affair brought her to Orson's attention.

Roleplaying Hints: After years of trying to fit in while simultaneously trying to stand out, you have finally come into your own. You're in charge of your own destiny, and you're determined to show people who think they're hot stuff what it's like to be treated like dirt. You feel you were used in life, and you get a kick out of getting back at anyone who lures the naive and defenseless into his control. The only people you respect are ones who feel like they don't fit in but just don't give a damn if they do or not.

Otto Ferheis

Nature: Jester

Demeanor: Jester

Circle: BOO

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2

Skills: Melee 4, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Computer 1, Occult 2

Backgrounds: Artifact (Orson's chains) 3, Haunt 3, Notoriety 1

Skills: Drive 1, Leadership 3, Melee 3, Performance 2
Knowledges: Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 3
Backgrounds: Eidolon 3, Haunt 3, Notoriety 2
Fetters: Mother's house 3, pair of handcuffs 2
Arcanoi: Argos 3, Inhabit 1, Intimation 2, Keening 4, Outrage 3
Passions: Humiliate the arrogant (Ego) 4, Show off (Pride) 3, Avoid failure (Fear) 3
Willpower: 7
Permanent Corpus: 8
Pathos: 9
Angst: 4
Shadow: The Abuser
Thorns: Pact of Doom, Trick of the Light, Shadowplay
Dark Passions: Point out shortcomings (Malice) 3, Put yourself in danger (Self-Hatred) 3, Ridicule anything constructive (Envy) 1

Image: Barbara appears as a woman in her late 20s with short, spiked blond hair and a rather severe expression. She looks like she might have been attractive once, but a lifetime of extreme pursuits has left her gaunt and pale. Small scars can be seen all over her Corpus, most notably a matching set around each wrist. She wears tight leather pants, a T-shirt and a bandana around the neck, all in styles popular during the early 1980s.

Background: Barbara was the youngest of a large, middle-class family. Because she always felt left out among her own relatives, she took to running with a "rough crowd." Barbara dabbled in music and the occult, hooking up as a steady groupie with a fairly successful heavy metal group. Her own life became tied to others' success, so to assert her individuality she took to disparaging others' accomplishments and performing increasingly outrageous stunts. She was accidentally killed during a strange combi-



Fetters: Collection of Roald Dahl books 3, Mortal remains 3, Mom 2, Dad 2

Arcanoi: Inhabit 1, Moliat 3, Pandemonium 4

Passions: Protect circle-mates (Loyalty) 4, Disturb others (Ego) 3, Have a good time (Pleasure) 3

Willpower: 6

Permanent Corpus: 10

Pathos: 7

Angst: 5

Shadow: The Monster

Thorns: Death's Sigil 2, Aura of Corruption, Freudian Slip

Dark Passions: Promote distrust in others (Hate) 3, Set yourself up for failure (Self-Hatred) 2, Hurt your friends (Spite) 2

Image: Otto doesn't much resemble the teenager he was in life. He has moliated himself extensively, growing large horns, removing his nose entirely and reshaping his mouth into a gigantic shark-toothed maw that takes up half his face. Otto's arms are unnaturally long, with an extra joint between his elbow and wrist; his toes have likewise been lengthened, allowing him full use of them to grasp things. He disdains clothes, as he has reformed his Corpus to appear covered with a shimmering, scaled hide. Otto tends to drool often, primarily to add to the overall effect of his appearance. It's not uncommon for Otto to modify this appearance in some way, just for variety's sake. The basics tend to remain the same, though.

Background: Otto was a maladjusted youth. It's unclear why; he simply liked to shock others. He spent most of his 15 years of life perpetrating elaborate practical jokes that became increasingly more grotesque. He was finally killed while setting up a bizarre deathtrap to be used on a neighbor's dog; not long afterwards, he was found by Barbara and Orson, and he assumed his place in their small Circle of fiends.

Roleplaying Hints: You have an extremely twisted sense of humor. There's certainly malice in it, but your intent is not necessarily to harm people, just to see how extreme you can get. You feel at home with Barbara and Philip; you'd never before met anyone who not only tolerated your disturbed activities, but who actively encouraged them.

Philip Demarco

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Survivor

Circle: BOO

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4

Skills: Drive 2, Melee 4, Repair 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Linguistics 1, Occult 3, Science 1

Backgrounds: Artifact 4 (chainsaw), Contacts 3, Eidolon 2, Notoriety 3

Fetters: Mausoleum 3, An old apple tree 2

Arcanoi: Argos 1, Embodiment 2, Fatalism 2, Mnemosynis 2, Usury 3

Passions: Seek vengeance on soothsayers (Hate) 4, Deny Oblivion (Pride) 4, Seek companionship (Fear) 2

Willpower: 8

Permanent Corpus: 9

Pathos: 8

Angst: 6

Shadow: The Pusher

Thorns: Shadow Traits 4, Shadow Life 5, Shadowed Face 3

Dark Passions: Undermine your actions (Guilt) 3, Drive away anyone close to you (Self-Hatred) 2, Dominate any relationship (Lust) 2

Image: A disturbingly tall, rail-thin Hispanic man, Philip is a study in contradiction. He looks gawky but moves with fluid grace. He is always impeccably dressed, yet he carries around a lumberjack's battered chainsaw. His eyes are blankly reflective but he has proved to be a keen observer.

Background: Little is known about Philip, except that he's been around a while. Some claim he's not really Hispanic, some say he is a former Ferryman, and others whisper that he's a Doppelganger. Whatever the case, he has attached himself to Barbara and Otto's little group, and the three seem to find it an amicable arrangement.

Roleplaying Hints: You like being a cipher. Frankly, you've somehow forgotten most of your past and have no desire to remember it. What keeps you going is existing in the here and now. There are only two clear things in your mind: one is an intense hatred for a Gypsy fortuneteller; the other is a feeling of kinship with Barbara and Otto. You're not certain why these things are so, but it's enough for you that they simply are.



Scholars: Notebooks Filled with Dust

Envoi: To love books, as I have loved them, and to dwell
among the voices of the dead!

— Lord Macaulay

It is my privilege to welcome you to this collection of lecture transcripts from the 1996 conference of the Virgilian Foundation for Thanatonic Research. Since the conference theme was "Tapping the Round Table: Toward an Ecumenical Approach," we were honored to hear from scholars from all seven of the Shroud Associations, representing all the major strands of thanatonic research, from ghost interviewing to posthumous art. I hope that this new feeling of fellowship within our discipline will continue in 1997 and beyond, spurred on by advances in the field and the wonder of desktop publishing.

Day One: Who Are We (Why Are We Here?)

by Dorothy Fox, Ph. D. (VFTR)

Despite a slight increase in the number of thanatologists crossing over or otherwise retiring, 1996 was still a year of great growth for our field. Of all the Associations, only the Cenotaph reported a membership decline. Otherwise, all groups report increased applications and new memberships, bringing combined membership to 224. This is the highest figure since the early 1920s.

Median levels of education within our discipline remain comparatively quite high, with the average researcher having at least one doctorate degree. Popular fields of study continue to be psychology (and parapsychology where appropriate), philosophy, anthropology, theology and the history of religions, archaeology/classics and history.

However, our younger members appear to be losing faith in the university lifestyle, preferring amateur research over completing their doctoral dissertations. Many drop out entirely. Those who do remain in the academy report feeling increasingly "frustrated" with departmental regulations, particularly the reluctance of many dissertation committees to accept ghost-interviews as valid scholarly evidence.

In general, the lifestyle of the thanatonic scholar remains humble, but rich in scholastic tradition. The typical thanatologist's income is somewhat lower than those of our colleagues in more mainstream disciplines. This disparity can be explained by the fact that Shroud Studies still struggle for acceptance within the university, and remain limiting avenues for academic advancement. Many of our finest researchers have meager incomes and are forced to support themselves as private investigators, researchers or writers of mass-market horror fiction. Few of us can afford to disdain the practice of charging small fees to the living friends and families of our clients — if nothing else, such assessments help to cover expenses.

Fortunately, many of us supplement our professional incomes with dividends from an inheritance or trust fund. These bequests are usually quite small (particularly by today's standards), but in many cases a gift from deceased relatives is all that allows us to follow our vocation. I recommend that those of you in this enviable position seek out the ghosts of your generous family members and try to find a way to repay their generosity.

As always, our discipline continues to draw a roughly equal ratio of men to women. Despite stereotypes, the median age of thanatologists continues to drop steadily — in 1996, the median age of VFTR members dropped to 41.2 years, and the Foundation's controversial decision to lower the age of vocation from 28 to 25 should continue this pattern. Although their methods of scholarship are sometimes outrageous, these young researchers enrich our community with their energy and intense devotion to our discipline.

Motivations

by Philip Satterwaithe, III (Vesalius)

In our fiercely individualistic vocation, it is not only rude but dangerous to make generalizations about our colleagues. When Dorothy invited me to prepare this topic, I am sure she did not wish for any harm to come to me, but the prospect is daunting nonetheless! Please, be merciful. If what I say offends you (or seems inapplicable), imagine I am speaking of your neighbor.

Certain types of intellectuals find the idea of survival beyond death fascinating. Granted, whole branches of academic research are devoted to the study of the ghosts of the past — literature, art history, musicology, and of course history, archaeology and the classics — but few scholars are brave enough to admit this openly. After all, what does it say about us if we spend less time with the living than we do in libraries attending to the words of dead writers and buried under footnotes?

We few scholars who make an open study of the soul beyond death tend to be an eccentric, solitary lot. Many of us have been ostracized by the academic establishment; the rest constantly face the threat of losing tenure and, even worse, library privileges. Others run afoul of Hierarchy agents who do not want the secrets of the grave to be revealed. Perhaps the cleverest of us keep our mouths shut about our discussions with the dead, avoiding the ridicule of those who do not understand and the wrath of those who want their secrets kept.

In time, the pressure of working closely and exclusively with the dead takes its toll on many of us. I have seen investigators grow so isolated that they find it nearly impossible to share their discoveries with even their closest colleagues. Sooner or later, we come to find more in common with the dead than with the living, and perhaps that is when we ourselves die, becoming informants instead of investigators.

So, if your colleagues in other fields of study ever asked why you devoted your career to the study of the dead, what would you say? The youngbloods of the CSS or the VFTR would say that we're all psychologically damaged, locked into some shared Gilgamesh complex that makes death both terrifying and somehow fascinating for us. We cannot accept the idea of death, they would say, and so we cannot keep from interrogating it, asking esoteric questions of it until death finally gives us a comforting answer. When explored, death is not so frightening, nor so absolute.

On the other hand, Professor Cepre and our colleagues in the Cenotaph would argue against this "demeaning" psychoanalysis. For them, we happen to be drawn to the dead world simply because it interests us. We are attracted to aspects of the post-thanatic experience that we cannot find in any of the disciplines devoted to the world of the living.

Perhaps, disparate as we are, we share a certain sense that change and novelty ("Oblivion," as it were) are horrifying. In our dead clients, we see an opportunity to participate in an unchanging, stable world, a world with its eyes eternally fixed on the past of immutable history.

We live in a world whose forgotten books, whose unremembered songs, are still loved by us and by our beloved ghosts. And that is why we talk to ghosts. They are still concerned — heartbreakingly so — with the things that concern us, the dead issues and dusty footnotes that the world outside our libraries has left behind. Living antiques.

I think that this is the underlying secret of our relationship with our clients. We are the same culture, separated from one another by the agonizing schism of time and heartbeats, and we and the ghosts share a secret native language. We are simply friends, colleagues in translation, counterparts.

Day Two: Tapping the Round Table of Thanatonic Research

Despite (or perhaps because of) our erudition, the shroud community has always been plagued by cliquishness, mistrust and infighting. Is it the uniquely intimate nature of our discipline that keeps us from cooperating with (or even learning from) one another? I would like to hope otherwise.

Organization

by Col. and Mrs. Terence M. Salem (American Association of Extra-Vital Research)

First, I would like to apologize for my husband, who is suffering his old throat complaint. I will be reading his prepared lecture this morning.

We Shroud researchers tend to be fiercely independent types. As befits our embattled status in an unsympathetic world where we do not quite fit into either dead society or the academic establishment, we prefer to do our



work quietly, efficiently and without much hand-holding. The typical Shroud researcher is a solo operative — think of the only member of a small university department who listens when the dead voices speak to him in the library, or the old man who still talks to his dead wife and who publishes her posthumous memoirs at his own expense.

These brave souls have to rely on their own resources because it's likely that nobody takes them seriously or, worse, everyone thinks that they're crazy. The reason we prefer to work incognito as dishwashers or faceless clerks is very simple: Our information is valuable, and we don't want it to be misunderstood or misused by civilians.

Yes, "civilians." That's another reason why we have to be careful. There's a war going on down in the grave that never ends. It's up to us to keep it from spreading into the world of the living. Our information about the political struggles of the dead is vital, and sometimes the ghosts come to get it back. As long as we stay fairly quiet about what we learn, the Hierarchy won't come after us or our informants.

The Shroud Associations

On the other hand, nobody can work alone all the time. That's what the Associations are for — loose organizations of Shroud investigators who think like you do (more or less) and who can share information and techniques with you. The privately printed "Shroud Journals" help us pool intelligence on what the Spectres or the Red Dead are up to down there in the shadows.

Our discipline currently recognizes a loose affiliation of seven groups devoted to the study of the world beyond the grave — the so-called "Shroud Associations." The Associations range from informal amateur gatherings to rigorous, scholarly cliques, united only by mutual interests and a shared scientific vocabulary. Although each has its own informants and political sympathies within grave society, we can generally work together. Many researchers belong to as many separate Associations as their schedules and wallets permit.

- **The Virgilian Foundation for Thanatonic Research (VFTR)** — Best known to the general public for its long-running series of magazine advertisements, the Foundation advertises itself as a nonprofit psychiatric research group "dedicated to the cataloguing and analysis of any theoretical societies or cultures that may exist beyond the grave." Although their archives are enviably extensive (especially in the field of spectral geography), the Virgilians' aggressive recruiting methods and eagerness to meddle in the actual Shadowlands make many independent investigators nervous.

- **The Cenotaph Society** — With its roots in pro-Stuart occult cells of 17th century Britain, the Cenotaph is the oldest (and richest) of the public Associations. Over the decades, the largely upper-class membership has lost all vestiges of its former political agenda and now concentrates on the preservation of haunted architecture. If one of your allies on the other side has trouble with urban renewal, the Cenotaph is the best group to call. Other members are engaged in artistic pursuits such as ghost portraiture or the dangerous pastime of spirit collaboration (an open invitation to unfriendly possession).

- **The American Association for Extra-Vital Researches (AAEVR)** — The only one of the Associations to take an activist stance in the political affairs of the dead realms, the AAEVR struggles tirelessly to keep the conflicts between various ghostly political factions (such as the "Renegade International" and the "Hierarchy Legions," not to mention the shadowy forces of "SPECTRE") from spilling over into everyday American life. As these brave squads of investigators often use their information to bring dangerous rogue ghosts to justice or otherwise influence the balance of power among the dead, the AAEVR is not always popular among the other Associations.

- **The Center for Shroud Studies (CSS)** — Best known for publishing the Shroud Journal *Proserpina* and various posthumous works of philosophy and music, the CSS tends to attract younger, more iconoclastic scholars. Many fellows of the CSS affect a casual, "bohemian" approach to our discipline that hurts our standing in the eyes of the general public. The continued use of CSS funds in operating the "underworld railroad" to bring parapsychologists and ghostly refugees across the Iron Curtain has led to continued accusations that the Center has been infiltrated by the Renegade International.

- **The Vesalius Scholars** — Formed by Dr. Christopher Austen and Philip Satterwaithe as an unofficial "honor society" of independent thanatonic researchers, the VS is still one of the best and most trustworthy information networks our discipline has produced. Membership is by nomination only, and many of the solitary investigators of the VS are among the greatest scholars in our field. Satterwaithe supports Vesalians with a generous monthly stipend, allowing them to pursue their investigations with some degree of freedom.

• **The New England Society of Hauntings, Manifestations, and Ectoplasmic Investigations (NESHMEI)** — NESHMEI takes an intensely rigorous “scientific” approach toward the questions of our discipline that recently sparked intense debate over the degree of “ethics” or “humaneness” that thanatologists should practice toward the dead. The NESHMEI methods for extracting information from ghosts do seem to get results, as the museum of “Fetter” artifacts at NESHMEI headquarters demonstrates.

• **The W Society** — A bit of a misnomer, the W “Society” is not an organization but an individual researcher, the surrealist poet and semiotician Georges Cepre. Despite its small size, the Society (Cepre) has contributed greatly to the theory and practice of thanatology, and Cepre’s comparatively wide-release publications continue to draw enviable interest from prospective new investigators in the general public. Now quite old (and rumored to be ill), Cepre is apparently considering opening the Society to a handful of new members in order to pass on what he has learned.

Since 1968, the Associations have extended an open invitation of cooperation to certain other organizations of like interests. Unfortunately, these organizations appear to make a policy of ignoring us and disparaging our work. These non-allied thanatological groups include:

• **The Arcanum Society** — A group dedicated to the generalized investigation of “supernatural” phenomena. Although the Arcanum appears to be a social club for bored dilettantes, membership is strangely exclusive, leading rejected thanatologists to wonder just why the Society requires such high standards. Members of the Associations who are invited into the Arcanum tend to stop publishing in the Shroud Journals and generally appear to retire from our discipline entirely.

• **The Society for Psychical Research** — The SPR’s efforts to appear respectably “normal” in the eyes of the public have led it to repudiate the thanatological establishment as “cranks” and worse. For all this, the SPR’s scholarship has become increasingly suspect over the years, particularly as the group accepts more of its funding from certain government agencies and political action groups. Treat all SPR conclusions as disinformation.

Despite reports of an “Agathic” or “Beacon Street Circle” in Boston, a “Seven Sisters Association” in Baltimore and an “Albingsly Group” in Cambridge, these organizations are apparently hobbyist-level in orientation and (as with other groups of this type) have little to offer a true scholar.

History: Impressions

by Dame Viola Ballardyne, CBE (Cenotaph)

It is remarkable how we can be so concerned with the preservation of the detritus of history, yet we have accumulated so little history of our own. Oh, we have our libraries lined with the collected correspondence of our members (privately printed, of course), our bound volumes of the *Graveside Journal* or *Hekatombe*, and our framed portraits of beloved colleagues who’ve gone over to the other side — but it’s not the same thing as a history, is it? We fill our notebooks with our histories of ghosts, not the stories of our own lives.

For what it’s worth, here’s what we do have. Although Georges would argue that the thanatological spirit has been around since people first began painting on cave walls, the first records of our studies we have are from antiquity. Our forebears sought the truth behind death in the mystery religions (Orphic and otherwise) or in natural philosophy and science. When the old imperial funerary cults and burial societies collapsed, proto-Shroud Studies went dormant and were banned by the Church as “necromancy.”

Our field was reborn as a rigorous intellectual pursuit with the publication of Andreas Vesalius’ famous book of autopsies. With our subject “laid bare,” as it were, individual scholars borrowed from esoteric Freemasonry, classical texts, and empirical science — whatever would help them answer the unanswerable question posed by death. This classical current sustained our young discipline well into the late 18th century.

Texts like the Wollstonecraft book and Corelli’s *Romance of Two Worlds* triggered a Romanticist transformation of our field and led us into spiritual humanism, a golden age of Shroud studies. In the 19th century, the mantle of thanatonic vocation passed equally from poet to scientist to philologist to archaeologist, a secret fraternity bound by lines of transmission vaguer and more ephemeral than any Masonic order or academic college. The *Graveside Journal* and *Hekatombe* began their long press runs, and for a time it must have seemed that every young educated person was contemplating urns and recording (in pentameter) their conversations with long-dead souls. Wherever the Romantics (especially the so-called “graveside school”) or the archaeologists (our sister discipline) were found, there we were.

The revived Cenotaph Society began as one of these graveside groups of aesthetes and later abandoned its old partisan baggage in favor of the voices of the dead. In America, Symbolist poets attempting to map the byways of the afterlife chartered the Virgil Foundation, while in Providence a group of transcendentalists laid the ground for what

would become the New England Society. All enjoyed the new discoveries in spirit photography and theoretical medium work.

In the 1880s, the fledgling Associations attempted to distance themselves from the spiritist hysteria, which they regarded as vulgar and highly embarrassing. Perhaps this was a mistake, as it was to be the last chance for our vocation to enjoy a "golden age" of sorts before the World Wars destroyed the lives and the nerve of those young people who would ordinarily have joined our community.

Those who survived the wars often were psychically damaged, leaving us with a neurasthenic, morbidly introspective community, and it was a decrepit group of scholars who attended the first comprehensive Shroud Association conference in 1947. There are those who argue that we have remained a decrepit, neurasthenic group — in that case, perhaps it is time that our researches died with us, like other sciences that outlived their world.

After the wars, a rich array of new groups appeared. In 1957, the AAEVR was founded, followed by the revival of NESHMEI in 1958, Monsieur Cepre's W Society in 1964 and the CSS in 1968. The 1960s were a particularly exciting time for our field, as the CSS not only took over the publication of *Proserpina* from the VFTR but proved the vitality of the new generation of shroud scholarship. Courses with thanatological interest were even taught at the Black Mountain School and New York's New School of Social Research.

Current Agendas

by Dr. Thomas Hinton (Center for Shroud Studies)

With all respect to my colleagues, the most exciting time to be a thanatological investigator wasn't in the past, it's right now. Perhaps if we could only learn to take the theme of this conference seriously and actually start working together on a more cooperative basis, we could enjoy more triumphs. In addition to the everyday success stories (the historical enigmas solved, the amnesiac ghosts identified, the data uncovered), the Associations expect the following projects to bear fruit in 1997:

- The continued incorporation of the revolutionary Shroud work from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The dead appear to be fleeing the East in record numbers, and their narrative will certainly be interesting when it is finally collected.

- This year, the CSS Kardec Press released the preliminary edition of the *Complete Posthumous Writings of Sigmund Freud*. Maya Deren's *Subtle Fire* continues to draw interest from our anonymous subscribers, as do Mervyn Peake's *Titus at Sea*, Virginia Woolf's *Furiosa A & B*, and the Raudive catalog of orchestral scores. Although our patrons' insistence on remaining anonymous is unsettling, the Kardec project would probably not have succeeded without their assistance.

- Investigation into the pioneering work of the late Dr. Stephen Ward of the Virginia Medical College continues. Although Ward's final notebooks are lost, his earlier publications on technological methods for enabling us to see into the Underworld still hold many unexplored avenues for future research.

- According to the VFTR, the centennial *Contemporary Edition of the Atlas of the Shadowlands* should be released late this year, only slightly behind schedule. Once all the "Byway" pathways to the deeper underworld have been mapped, we should be able to explore the deadlands more easily.

- I have just learned that the London branch of the Arcanum Society has accepted an invitation to the Cenotaph's 1997 conference. We can only hope that this is the first step toward the Arcanum joining the Shroud Associations as a participating member.

Day Three: Methodologies

In the pursuit of the questions of our field, we are no longer limited to the superstition and poetic intuition of our forebears. Technological advances make it much easier to record our encounters with the dead, while more "metaphysical" or psychiatric techniques continue to reveal new dimensions of usefulness.

Consolations for the Dead

by Professor Georges Cepre (W Society)

We have spent a great deal of talk discussing ourselves, but the fact remains that ultimately, our discipline is about our deceased informants. If the dead did not wish to speak with us, all the morbid nostalgia in the world could not

allow us to force them to do so. When your informants answer your questions, it is because they find the conversation useful in some way, or at least comforting. When, on the other hand, the informants are skittish or not forthcoming, perhaps they have determined you are no longer worth the effort.

Therefore, it behooves us to make sure our informants wish to continue conversing with us. Make yourself useful or comforting to them. How can you do this?

Uses

I. Be their hands, their agents in the waking world. They are denied any opportunity to influence the world — if you wish to befriend them, offer to serve as their proxies among the living. Help them accomplish their tasks, guard their treasures, pass on their secrets. Care for their children. If it is within your abilities and they ask it of you, make an effort to do it. If nothing else, it will be that rarest thing in many scholarly lives: an Adventure. In return, they will mark you as one of their own.

II. Publish the Perished. As academics, we are especially useful in propagating the art and literature of the dead. Many of our ghostly friends are desperate to share their visions from beyond the grave, and we are ideally suited to find them a sympathetic (albeit small) audience. If your informant has something he would like to say, something so terribly important that it consumes him (even if it might seem trivial to you), what does it hurt you to help him say it? Work with them. Offer editorial commentary (but be gentle!). Inspire them to express their deepest selves.

Comforts

I. Be amusing to them. This may seem difficult for such learned intellectuals, but do not worry. I am convinced that the dead find the antics of us library rats deeply comic, and so they play with us. A certain class of informant finds us irresistible, what with our dry fascination with the mundane facts of ghostly existence. They cannot help but play practical jokes on us, tell us lies. If they do so, indulge them. Try to play the good sport.

II. Be pitiful. Such learned intellectuals, again, may need some time to accept the notion that anyone could feel sorry for an academic. However, there are those among us who (sadly) lead their lives so ineptly that even the dead (who have no lives left to lead) cringe. If a ghost feels sorry for you, do not feel insulted. Look upon it as an opportunity to speak with an informant (and perhaps get some good advice). Perhaps your ghostly advisor will even help you solve your problems. After all, he indubitably has a lifetime of experience to offer.

III. Let them identify with you. This tends to be the easiest of all strategies, because, as we know all too well, we (as solitary, bookish scholars) already identify with the dead. They are always at least as hungry as you are to restore meaning to a world that has become strange and confusing, so greet your counterparts from the other side of the grave as fellow investigators, hungry to restore meaning to a world that has become strange and confusing to them. Collect the scattered teachings of their "Arcanoi," which are useless to you but valuable to the dead, and trade them for descriptions of ghostly culture. Tell them the news from loved ones or cities they remember from the waking world, and they will tell you the news from the grave.

IV. Listen to them. See them. This is a service which we, who are uniquely accustomed to interacting with the dead, can offer our counterparts, and one which they are often desperately eager to accept. Simply acknowledge their existence, their continuing importance to the world they left behind. I see over a dozen ghosts gathered with us in this room. How many do you see?

Investigative Method

by H.G. Lunt, Jr. (NESHMEI)

The lack of thought put into investigation horrifies me. Many of you appear to think — wrongly — that all you need to interview the dead is a motion detector and perhaps a high-energy camera, and the actual work will take care of itself! Worse are those who waste our time with occult gibberish, "psychic research" and other superstitious nonsense.

We are scientific observers, after all, and as such we have access to certain proven and intellectually rigorous techniques. However, until such time as we insist on using these techniques, we fully deserve the epithets with which we are labeled: "quack," "lunatic" and worse.

Research

I cannot recommend research enough. Read all you can; spend the greater part of every day reading. Seek out the dustiest, most neglected books in the libraries and antiquarian shops, especially those books which were once popular but have since been completely forgotten. In such books, you are more likely to find the names and words your informants remember, and this will help you understand them. These volumes will tell you which dead soul you are dealing with and how you can best persuade them to tell you what you want to know.

Keep Careful Notes

This is the Golden Rule of our field: every detail of your experience with the dead can be of absolute importance, no matter how small, trivial, or meaningless it may appear. Write it down.

Furthermore, since the Grave manifests everywhere, at all times, you might encounter traces or clues at any moment, even (and especially) where such contact is unexpected. To preserve vital details for future analysis, always carry a notebook and good pen (at the very least — I also carry spare notebooks and specimen containers for the collection of ephemera) and write down as much as you can. In case you are separated from your notebook, train your memory!

Without an accurate, detailed record of an encounter, you have gained nothing. The public and the scientific community will laugh at your conclusions. More importantly, you have nothing to share with other investigators in the event that you are silenced by the "hierarchs" or other creatures who do not wish you to know the truth.

Photography and Sound Recording

The dead adore recording technology. Take advantage of this exhibitionism by giving them the opportunity to tell their stories on tape, to pose for spectral photographs, or to otherwise make their mark on the material world. Many of the creatures are so eager to leave a permanent record of their existence that they will become absurdly cooperative, pouring out their entire memoirs as well as they can remember them. Even after you have left the room, they produce as much ephemeral evidence as you can process.

Collect Evidence

You should seek out items that have been in some way visibly altered by contact with the Grave. Most of these items will be "ephemera," objects which have either been inhabited by the dead or else remotely manipulated by them. Such objects are our only material evidence for the existence of the world beyond the grave, and so they are a valuable basis for experimentation. Many such ephemeral objects (particularly those that have actually been inhabited by a dead soul) may bear traces of the creature's passage, or even (theoretically) its particular character.

The most valuable of these items are those which have some emotional value to the dead, the so-called "Fetters." NESHMEI recommends that you collect and safeguard as many of these items as possible in order to coerce their owners to assist you. Once you are aware of a haunting, a brief trip to local libraries gives you some clues on the haunting creature's "Fetters." Exploit this information.

Persuasions

by Dorothy Fox, Ph. D. (VFTR)

The Associations neither condone nor prohibit any sort of psychic exercises, fringe science, or esoteric religious practice. We simply encourage thanatologists to learn whatever secondary skills they find appropriate to their research. In addition, there are certain aspects of the human condition that we find particularly useful, especially when an interview or information-gathering excursion goes awry:

Thanatic Awareness

This is the sole necessity of our field, a result of our being not frightened but instead fascinated by death. Since we look for traces of the dead in everything, we naturally find it easy to see the dead, hear their voices and interact with them as peers. Without this heightened awareness and special mindset, I doubt that you would have found your way to this conference.

The Contract (Do Ut Des)

First used by our classical forebears in thanatology, the Contract operates on quite simple (and possibly universal) psychological principles. Essentially, the Contract is a connection formed between a mortal investigator (who offers

some portion of her vital energy to the dead) and a dead informant. The bond so formed dulls the investigator's life force, visibly drawing her closer to death where she can better see and interact with the informants.

Moreover, by accepting this energy, the informant grows closer to the living world and becomes better able to manifest to the investigator. Then, with the conversational gap temporarily bridged, it is hoped that the informant will feel gratitude toward the investigator and will be better inclined to answer questions about the nature of the dead world, experience beyond the grave and so on. It is thought that a version of this psychic process (now lost) allowed the VFTR founders to explore the Deadlands themselves, temporarily leaving their lives behind.

Note that the modern Contract does not involve the donation of blood or other bodily fluids to the dead soul, as we see in the depiction of superstitious tradition in the *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, and so on. Indeed, this should be considered dangerous, vulgar, and, most importantly, inefficient — the spirits drawn to a blood Contract (Colonel Salem's "Spectres") are so uncooperative that such sacrifices are rarely useful. Instead, suggested donations include more emotional or internalized vital energies, such as emotional outbursts or highly charged memories.

Protocol

As scholars of the past, thanatologists tend to have access to a great deal of information about historical figures and social norms which have long since gone on to the deadlands. This information can be very useful to you in dealing with those ghosts affiliated with the "Hierarchy." Hierarchy ghosts have a rich and complex society bound together by nostalgia and antique customs that otherwise now exist only in the past. Your use of these antique protocols (the so-called "Hierarchy Lore") flatters these spirits and helps them communicate with you. Moreover, if you are dealing with a deceased historical personage such as Samuel Beckett or Horatio Alger, this information can help you gauge his or her personality and connections to the living world, his "Lifeweb" as it were.

The Confession

We can think of our technique for interviewing the dead as a variation on psychoanalysis. The passivity of the investigator encourages the dead soul to pour out its suppressed or buried thoughts and feelings, a sort of purgative "confession." In the process, the ghost may feel relief from the urgings of its unconscious guilts or fears.

This is in fact quite similar to a common therapy in the deadlands known as the "Purifying Castigation." While the thanatonic confessional requires more time (generally a week or more of interviewing) before showing results, it appears to produce equally profound effects in the ghostly psyche. In the right context, thanatological confessions can potentially defuse or even nullify shadowy passions and other deep-seated neuroses, allowing the ghost access to a more comprehensive psychic cure with none of the social obligations or fees involved with the "Castigation."

Contributors

Dame Viola Ballardyne, CBE. Dame Viola comes to us from a long and distinguished career in the performing arts. She is especially noted within thanatological circles for her scotograph recordings of piano duets with Richard Schumann, including the famous "Florestan," or Shadow Concerto.

Georges Cepre. Professor Cepre enjoys a cult following in the avant-garde literary world as something of a mischievous eccentric, but this, in fact, allows him to write openly about his thanatological researches. Those few who understand this material tend to dismiss it as a surrealist joke.

Dorothy Fox. No relation to the notorious 19th century medium of the same name, Dr. Fox has chaired the VFTR since 1946. We are grateful that she has taken time away from her intensive researches to moderate this conference after a long absence.

Thomas Hinton. Our young man in a hurry, Dr. Hinton is the editor and publisher of *Proserpina*. As always, unsolicited submissions are welcome and should be addressed to his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

H.G. Lunt, Jr. Mr. Lunt is the curator of the NESHMEI museum at Deer Isle, Maine. Although often plagued by nuisance hauntings and other phenomena, he is a tireless researcher and collector of evidence of survival after death.

Sharisa and Col. Terence M. Salem. A native of Virginia, Colonel Salem distinguished himself in the Korean Conflict, where he was gravely wounded. He would like to deny the malicious rumors that he is in fact dead and that Sharisa is his spirit channel.

Philip Satterwaithe, III. Co-founder and chief financier of the Vesalius Society, Mr. Satterwaithe is a tireless supporter of ghostly interests, often bankrolling small thanatological groups dedicated to the assistance of the dead among us. He is also a noted collector of antique toys.

The Contract

Certain mediums, while not “gifted” (or Gifted), do have the ability to make occasional contact with the dead. This interaction is achieved through a mechanism referred to by some as “The Contract.” To make a Contract, the medium must first be made aware of the wraith’s presence. In other words, the wraith must take the initiative, providing proof of her existence so that the medium can respond.

Once contact has been established, the medium can make an offer of his emotional energy to the wraith, in exchange for considerations (such as being able to see the wraith without assistance, etc.) from the other side. Assuming the terms get hammered out to the satisfaction of both parties — and a Contract will not take without agreement on both sides — the mortal donates his psychic energy and the Contract is made.

System: The mortal rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 9); success indicates that the Contract has been made. Making a Contract costs a mortal a point of Permanent Willpower, but also turns the medium into a walking point of Memoriam for the wraith. Furthermore, the Contracted medium can see and hear the wraith normally, even when he doesn’t wish to.

Negative Impact:

Crossing the Shroud for Fun and Profit



Despite Charon’s *Dictum Mortuum*, the plans of the Restless often involve the living. Since all wraiths have unresolved ties to the living world, the Quick have a powerful ability to affect — either knowingly or unknowingly — the fortunes and destinies of residents of the Shadowlands.

Thus, wraiths who find willing accomplices among the living are blessed with an improved ability to influence their fellow wraiths.

Mediums, with their talent for speaking with the Dead, are in a unique position to engage in the human power struggle on both sides of the Shroud. While many speak with the Dead as a scholarly pursuit or to satisfy their curiosity, mediums are human after all, and they have among their number individuals who

have no problem with using their talents for personal gain. Extortion through Fetters, threatening a wraith’s still-living loved The Misguided

As described above, a misguided medium typically seeks to help the Restless, but labors under a critical misunderstanding that causes him to harm wraiths instead. A medium must, of course, rely on his own human experience to fill the gaps in his limited Underworld knowledge. What seems logical to a living medium, however, is rarely accurate as regards life beyond the Shroud, and few mediums manage to deduce correctly the information they are lacking. Some are even deliberately misled by forces that would see their well-meaning acts bring harm to wraiths.

These mediums act out of a belief that they are helping the Restless, and the apparent results of their work support this belief. Should a group’s actions cause wraiths to materialize and frantically beg them to stop, it’s unlikely that the mediums would continue. Misguided mediums would typically be horrified to discover the true impact of their actions. If a Circle proved to a medium of this sort that her actions were harmful, she would likely stop and try to redress any damage she had caused. Of course, if the medium’s actions have brought about a wraith’s permanent dissolution, there isn’t much redressing that can be done.

Proving a misguided medium’s actions harmful might be a tall order, however, since it may be that no wraith has ever complained about the medium’s “service.” A wraith who raises objections might be seen as a wayward child, one who refuses to take his medicine even though he knows it is good for him. The medium’s convictions might be so strong that even the most persuasive wraith could not sway her from her course.

Tranquility, Inc.

I sit across the coffee table from them, watching the man put his arm around his sobbing wife. I can see moisture in his eyes, tears that come though he tries to prevent them. He takes a deep, ragged breath and blinks; a single tear rolls toward his chin. This is the hardest part. They want to lay the Dead to rest, but they’re never ready for the price.

I look at my colleague; she gives me a little pout, then braces herself and speaks.

“Mr. and Mrs. Mosely, I know this is hard. It isn’t easy to destroy things that remind us of loved ones who’ve died, but that’s exactly what you must do or your son will remain trapped as a ghost. Sometimes people leave behind things they can’t be without or that mean a great deal to them, and their spirits can’t pass on to what awaits. Only by destroying these things can we help them find peace. Your son’s spirit is tied to the picture frame he made for you as a child and to the championship trophy he won shortly before the accident. Once they are gone, he will find his final rest.”

I can see Mosely gathering his resolve while his wife sobs. He stands slowly, gives us a good, long look, then walks over to the mantle, which sports a collection of memorabilia, a shrine to their

lost boy. He takes down the trophy that is the centerpiece, caressing it as though it were his dead son's face. He stands still for a moment, then strides purposefully from the room. A moment later, I hear the crash of a hammer striking.

Based in Birmingham, Alabama, Tranquility is a small company that works to ease the passage of souls trapped between this life and the next. They know that wraiths have ties to physical objects and believe that these objects are the things that keep a wraith from the afterlife. These mediums are aware of Fetters, but do not know Fetters' true purpose. In their quest to help unquiet spirits, these mediums communicate with wraiths to learn the identities of these Fetters, then hunt down and destroy the objects. Once this act is done, the wraiths no longer haunt the land of the living. The loved ones who hire Tranquility find comfort in the knowledge that their dear departed are finally at rest. Of course, a wraith bereft of his anchors to the Skinlands cannot remain in the Shadowlands, and becomes trapped in Stygia or disincorporates into Oblivion. A wraith who cannot enter the Shadowlands cannot haunt the Skinlands, making it look as though the people of Tranquility have helped the wraith find the afterlife.

Tranquility, Inc. got started in 1992 when Thaddeus Williams saw the spirit of his wife Mabel standing in the living room, caressing a window ornament that she handcrafted while alive. Thaddeus overcame his fright and stepped toward her, but she turned at his approach and disappeared. Before she vanished, Thaddeus saw tears running down her cheeks. Thaddeus spent the following year trying to understand what he'd seen. After spending most of his savings on charlatans and fakes, he met Eleanor Gambaccini, a young, intense, dark-haired woman with real talent. Thaddeus' desire to learn moved her, and she taught him what she knew of the Underworld during his repeated visits to her bookstore in Birmingham.

After this training, Thaddeus and Eleanor held a seance at his home in Panola, Alabama and eventually contacted a spirit that claimed to be Mabel. When Thaddeus asked about the ornament, the spirit explained that it was something she loved in life and to which she retained an attachment in death. Thaddeus and Eleanor decided that destroying the ornament would sever the tie that prevented Mabel's spirit from resting. Unhappy about demolishing his deceased wife's favorite piece of handicraft, Thaddeus nevertheless dashed it to the floor, smashing it into thousands of tiny pieces. Further attempts to contact Mabel's spirit failed, and he never saw her ghost again.

Thaddeus felt profound relief at knowing that Mabel's spirit had finally found rest, and he decided to bring that relief to others. Though he doubted anyone would take him seriously — a middle-aged African-American man who claimed to speak to ghosts — Thaddeus decided to pursue his newfound abilities and invited Eleanor to join him. In 1993, Thaddeus sold his house and the pair formed Tranquility, Inc., working out of a small office cobbled together above the bookstore.

The first year was lean, and the fledgling enterprise was nearly bankrupt when Thaddeus and Eleanor heard of Margaret Worthingcroft, a wealthy widow living outside Hattiesburg, Mississippi. A dabbler in the occult, the widow Worthingcroft had seen her deceased husband frequenting the halls of their stately home. Though laying Mr. Worthingcroft's spirit to rest required the destruction of several valuable antiques, the widow was so grateful that she endowed Tranquility, Inc. with a trust fund that nets them \$50,000 annually. Mrs. Worthingcroft also tells her friends and associates about Tranquility, a source of one or two big-ticket clients per year for the company.

The company now takes up the entire floor of offices above the bookstore. It has hired a secretary to perform office functions and a part-time private investigator to help with research. Thaddeus and Eleanor travel together to meet clients and explain their work, typically handling 10 to 12 cases per year. They charge \$3,500 plus expenses, though their rates are higher for more "thorough" work. While they recognize the value of what they do, they also recognize their need to eat. If they cannot free a wraith, as has happened in cases where a wraith's Fetters included living people or public buildings, they charge only for their expenses. They have traveled throughout the country, and would be willing to travel overseas if contacted by a potential foreign client.

Tranquility is small enough to escape real notice, but thanks to Mrs. Worthingcroft's continued mention of them at exclusive social functions, they have come to the attention of Salem Forrestal, a frivolous jet setter who is secretly a member of the Orphic Circle. Salem is new to the Circle, but his incredible personal wealth gives his voice surprising weight. Though he has not yet decided how to use his knowledge, Tranquility could find itself in very deep, very hot water if they "assist" a wraith who is important to the Circle. On the other hand, Forrestal might decide to use Tranquility as a sort of hit squad to deal with ghostly political opponents. He's indecisive that way....

Thaddeus and Eleanor are susceptible to manipulation from beyond the Shroud. Any wraith with knowledge of another's Fetters could appear to the pair and claim the Fetters as his own, and the destruction of those Fetters would likely rid the wraith of his enemy. Tranquility has not yet come to the attention of the Hierarchy, but when they do it's anybody's guess whether the Hierarchy will try to shut them down or use them to get rid of troublesome Renegades and Heretics.

The Driven

The pursuit of knowledge, the advancement of science, the preservation of art, the protection of liberty, the defense of lives. If one asks a Driven medium why she does what she does, she might answer with any of the above. Whether she believes that wraiths really are the spirits of the deceased or just resonating energy left behind by someone's death, a medium of this stripe knows something of the existence of wraiths and has a specific purpose in mind for them.



These mediums put wraiths to a wide variety of uses. Some perform experiments to determine the nature of postmortem existence. Others channel the spirits of the Dead to fill gaps in known history or to answer questions of ancient literature. Some want to use the special advantages that wraiths possess to spy on rival companies or nations. Still others hope to distill the "essence" of a wraith and combine it with physical objects to produce unusual effects. (Note: Aline Eburn and her co-conspirators certainly fall into this category.) Furthermore, scientific groups that rely on machinery to detect and manipulate wraiths may not be mediums in the classic sense, but the purposes to which they put the wraiths they detect and capture puts them firmly in this camp.

The Phantom Division

I look around the darkened room at the uniformed. Some wear indecipherable expressions, though several are clearly interested in the chart projected onto the screen behind me. I allow a moment for my comments to sink in before I wrap up my presentation.

"In closing, let me say that while no concrete advances have come from our research, we have already gone far beyond the technology that was brought to us several years ago. I predict a significant breakthrough in the near future. Particularly promising is this alternate energy form, which suggests methods for operating equip-

ment and electronics that would otherwise be rendered useless by an electromagnetic pulse. If nothing else comes of this project, the ability to keep our military at least partly operational while nullifying every other force on the planet would certainly justify the continued investment of time and money."

As the lights come up I see thoughtful nods and meaningful glances. I'll get at least another two years worth of funding.

Headed by Colonel Leonard Stapleman, the Phantom Division is a secret U.S. military applied research program. It has built upon the experiments performed by the Paranormal Research Wing of the Alternate Energy Group, primarily by improving that organization's major achievement, the Ectoplasmic Converter Engine. ECEs detect wraiths, capture them and convert them into a form of energy that has yet to be identified. The Phantom Division has isolated each of these processes and created three separate devices, allowing for improved efficiency, accuracy and consistency of operation.

In addition to researching uses for the energy into which an ECE converts wraiths, the Phantom Division is looking for ways to use a wraith's physical form. At present, they conduct experiments into superconductivity and something called "ectoplasmic steel." Experiments into the former make literal the metaphorical connection between the cold of the grave and the cold temperatures associated with superconductivity.

The latter experiments seek a way to extract a wraith's essence and use it either to temper steel or as an ingredient in a new alloy. Since ghosts are largely invisible and are able to pass through physical objects, metal created in this way might exhibit similar characteristics. The thought of invisible missiles and weapons that can pass through friendly buildings and vehicles has Col. Stapleman's superiors demanding frequent progress reports. Unfortunately, so too are the people — and beings — that Stapleman's superiors report to.

The House that Wraiths Built

I stand in the garden by the north wall, where the windows look out over the wooded slopes, but my attention is not on the trees today. I look upon the roses that grow here, roses my mother planted before she died. Josef has carefully tended them for years, but despite his care, the roses fare poorly today. The petals drop off quickly; the buds are small and few in number.

When the ivy began to dry up and fall from the wall, I told myself that it was the vagaries of the climate, but I can no longer deny the truth. I sit and relax, turning my sight inward as my father taught me, until I can see the Otherworld. There, the misguided spirits of the unknowingly dead wander in search of truth. There I see the wall that has no physical presence, but which surrounds my home. The wall is dark and brooding, and it sounds to me as though it moans softly as I

stare at it. The wall seems to give off a faint sense of despair, and I think it is slowly killing my mother's garden.

Though it pains me deeply, such is the price of safety from my enemy.

Nestled in wooded hills outside the town of Judenburg in south-central Austria stands a dark stone house of sharp angles and severe lines. It is a home of notable quality, though it does not match the splendor of the stately castles scattered across Austria's countryside. An observer in the Shadowlands, however, would note a peculiar characteristic: the outer walls of the house are systematically being covered with an unbroken layer of soulforged bricks.

The house belongs to Nikolas Schoenfeld, a Benandante of the Redentori school of thought. He lives alone with a few servants; he has no wife and no children. Nikolas, the only son of a wealthy businessman who was also a Benandante, inherited his parents' estate when they died on December 26, 1969. They were visiting friends in England for the Christmas holiday when a fire swept through their rooms at the Rose and Crown hotel. Young Nikolas had remained home in Austria, and he was devastated by the loss. He spent much time searching for his parents in the Underworld, with no success.

A strong proponent of the belief that wraiths are confused spirits who do not know they have died, Nikolas came to be at odds with Giancarlo Sorrentino, a hotheaded Italian



Benandante of the *Dannati* tradition. These two took the debate over the nature of wraiths far beyond the bounds of polite discussion and into realms of personal insult and physical assault. Several gatherings they attended ended in streams of caustic vituperation, as an irrational hatred grew between the two men. Most observers agreed that Giancarlo instigated the worst of the confrontations, for Nikolas usually joined an argument only if provoked.

The two constantly worked against each other, sabotaging each other's credibility and attempting to devalue and debunk each other's work. This rivalry went on for a decade, until Giancarlo's recent death. Nikolas fears that his enemy may indulge his hatred from beyond the Shroud, since no earthly law can prevent him from doing so now. To protect himself, Nikolas struck an unusual bargain with a group of Artificers.

The wraiths are building a shell of soulforged bricks around the reflection of Nikolas' home in the Shadowlands, in exchange for certain acts in the Skinlands that will benefit their Circle. These acts include finding and protecting Fetters, creating and refurbishing memorials and bearing messages to living folk. When completed, the wall will be seamless but for a single gate and will bar passage to any wraith. Then, only significant effort will enable a wraith to reach Nikolas while he is inside his home.

Nikolas' *Redentori* beliefs make this arrangement unpleasant for him. Building this shell in the Underworld, he believes, fosters the wraiths' illusions that they have not died. By providing them work, Nikolas feeds the delusions he thinks wraiths have about their existence. His fear for his life is stronger than his unease at this course of action, however. Meanwhile, his home slowly grows colder and more unsettling as the collected misery of so many souls hammered into helpless forms slowly seeps across the Shroud.

The Self-Serving

These mediums see wraiths as just another way to make a buck. They're the people who happily swindle their neighbors out of every last dime, and under different circumstances they might well have turned their skills to more socially acceptable pursuits — like advertising or soliciting venture capital. Given their talents for communicating with the Dead, however, these mediums have turned their attentions toward shearing a different flock of sheep. They are the con men of the occult world.

Selfish gain in this world, however, requires taking advantage of the living as well as the Restless. The plans of the Self-serving medium attack those aspects of a wraith's existence that are tied to the Skinlands. These people may con a wraith's loved ones with information gained from the wraith, or use the wraith to scare money out of his still-living kin. They might seek wraiths with knowledge of secret weaknesses in important government computer systems or federal banks, or they might use information wrested from wraiths to blackmail the Quick. Individuals with larger dreams — and advanced magical knowledge — might

bind wraiths into their service to influence the decisions and actions of government figures and world leaders, slowly shaping the path of human history.

While these mediums might not bring lasting physical harm to wraiths, many Restless can attest to the unpleasant feeling of being victimized by a less-than-honest medium. Even worse is the inevitable scathing commentary from a wraith's Shadow. When a wraith inadvertently brings harm upon his still-living loved ones, what Shadow could resist the opportunity to point out his weakness or his stupidity? What Shadow would fail to describe over and over again, in painful detail, every tear shed and every dollar lost as a result of the wraith's involvement with a predatory medium? How long could a wraith resist the assault of a Shadow armed with such potent and personal weaponry?

One might expect word of a given medium's activities to get around and make it harder for him to prey upon the dead, but the Underworld is a large place, and wraiths are an untrusting, noncommunicative lot. The Hierarchy bans contact with the living, and those citizens who get burned while indulging in such activities are unlikely to find sympathy from the local Legions. Odds are, mediums of this bent will likely find victims until Judgment Day.

Selfish justice

"You got balls, lady. You know that?"

I give a quick snort of dismissal. "Just put the money in the safe deposit box by 3:00. If you don't, everything goes to the press. And don't think you can come after me and kill me, too. If I'm missing for more than a few days—"

"I know, everything goes to the press. If your husband had half the guts you do, he'd still be kicking around."

I hang up the phone with a shaking hand and hug myself to get my nerves under control. This is crazy, but exhilarating at the same time.

"Don't worry," comes the ghostly whisper, and I smile. David's dead, but he's not gone.

Mediums and psychics working with police departments to solve perplexing murder cases is nothing new. The police find themselves facing a case that has minimal evidence and no leads, when out of nowhere, a medium provides the police with a critical clue that reveals the murderer. It's a staple of supermarket tabloids, and the story can provide a nice bit of uplift for a populace trapped in a world in which the bad guys get away with it far too often. Victoria Wessler, of Indianapolis, Indiana, has turned this familiar story on its ear.

Several weeks after her husband David's accidental death, Victoria had vivid dreams about him, dreams in which he told her he'd been murdered and then led her to the proof. She had these dreams for several days, dismissing them at first as odd manifestations of her grief. The dreams haunted even her waking hours, however, and as she drove home from work



one evening, she found herself following the route David showed her in her dreams. At the end of her drive, she found the proof of the claims her husband had made in her dream. Confused and uncertain, she decided to take her proof to the police when she clearly heard David whisper the word "Wait." Mystified, she got back in her car and drove home.

That night, in her dreams, David described how Victoria should go about blackmailing the man who had murdered him, and protecting herself from retaliation. The evening's discovery had convinced her that David was really communicating with her, so she agreed to try. Two weeks later she was a quarter of a million dollars richer and had developed an unhealthy taste for blackmail.

Since then, she has been on the lookout for similar opportunities. David looks for new wraiths who were murdered, then gets information from them so that Victoria can find the proof she needs to blackmail the murderer. Of course, the murdered Enfants' families get a cut of Victoria's take; it's only fair. However, Victoria takes the lion's share, and David gets a huge shot of Pathos from "taking care" of his wife in this way. In truth, David sees this routine as the only way he can provide for Victoria now that he is dead, and he honestly believes that she is smart enough and tough enough to handle it. Of course, if worst comes to worst and she screws up, they'll be reunited on the other side of the Shroud.

This odd partnership is doomed to fail. Two detectives have noticed Victoria's presence at crime scenes around the city, and while they currently think of her as a "murder groupie," that view would change quickly if they knew her real intent. Blackmail would be just the first of her crimes, which would include obstruction of justice, concealment of evidence and accessory after the fact. However, she hasn't been caught yet. Yet.

The Serpentes

Sitting on the edge of her chair, Carmen gnaws at the corner of one thumbnail while she stares at the TV. The set is tuned to a C-Span broadcast of a Senate vote, and we're all engrossed, awaiting the results. I smile as I lean back in my chair and watch Carmen's anticipation. She worries too much.

The senators listen to the resolution they'll be voting on, a piece of environmental legislation mandating stricter pollution controls in factories and refineries, the kind of well-meaning law that would cost production magnates several hundred million dollars in renovations and equipment. No one in the media knows how the vote will go, as a small group of undecided senators stands poised between equally populated but opposed camps.

The vote tally in the lower right corner of the screen slowly increases toward the final decision. In the end, the resolution is voted down, 53 to 47. A collective sigh washes across the room. The phone rings in another room, and Carmen answers it.

"Alexandra, it's Kyle Thompson."

More to the point, it's Kyle Thompson, CEO of Sussex Petroleum, which has just dodged the bullet on spending most of next year's profits refitting its plants. I stand and take the phone.

"Hello Kyle, how are you?"

"Damn, Alexandra, I haven't felt better since my divorce went final. I'm not sure how you pulled it off, and frankly, I don't think I want to know. I owe you one hell of a lot."

"You're welcome, Kyle, but you can express your thanks in the manner we discussed."

"Three-point-seven million dollars, in the account of the Phoenix Gallery of Contemporary Art at the First National Bank of Arizona. I admire your confidence, not going Swiss or Cayman with this. Oh, and I trust you'll send me something to justify the funds?"

"Of course. With any luck, the pieces we've got picked out for you might even start a trend."

The Serpentes are a close-knit group of four women with genuine and remarkably advanced occult powers. Powerful psychics and mediums, they have devoted themselves to the acquisition of the things they consider truly important in life: influence, money and power.

These women got their first taste of political influence while training with the Seven Sisters. While they were working as assistants to full Sisters, they expanded and strengthened their natural occult talents. Eventually, they graduated to full sisterhood and learned about the workings of government and the subtle arts of persuasion and manipulation. The Seven Sisters take a patient and conservative approach to their goals, which makes them slow to gather personal wealth and influence. This path didn't sit well with a Sister named Alexandra Delacroix, who grew up poor and wanting wealth and power for herself. She was frustrated with the Sisters' slow path to influence and sought a quicker road. Unfortunately for many people, she found it.

Although the Seven Sisters avoid the arts of binding wraiths, their knowledge of Warding and Forbiddance includes the rudiments of binding rituals. Alexandra's research quickly exhausted the Sisters' knowledge, leading her to look elsewhere for additional training. When her studies interfered with her work, her superiors ordered her to cease them. This reprimand only prompted Alexandra to hide her extracurricular activities behind thicker curtains of secrecy.

Alexandra's work had allowed her to develop a network of personal contacts in numerous industries, including tobacco, oil, steel, lumber and computers. With the groundwork for her independent organization set, she approached three like-minded Sisters with an offer. They joined her for the sake of the wealth her schemes might bring. Armed with knowledge of binding ghosts, they experimented with direct manipulation of the American political arena. The Seven Sisters' skilled surveillance of political forces, however, uncovered Alexandra's tampering. The Sisters discovered the traitors in their midst and cast them out forever. Their names were struck from the rolls; their banishment included their progeny for three generations.

Truth be told, though, Alexandra and her cronies didn't care. Their banishment freed them to act more openly, and they pursued their political maneuvering without the benefit of the Seven Sisters' name and reputation. The Sisters have tried to discredit the Serpentes, which caused the four women significant difficulty, but there are enough unscrupulous individuals who want access to the Serpentes' resources that the four ex-Sisters make quite a nice living.

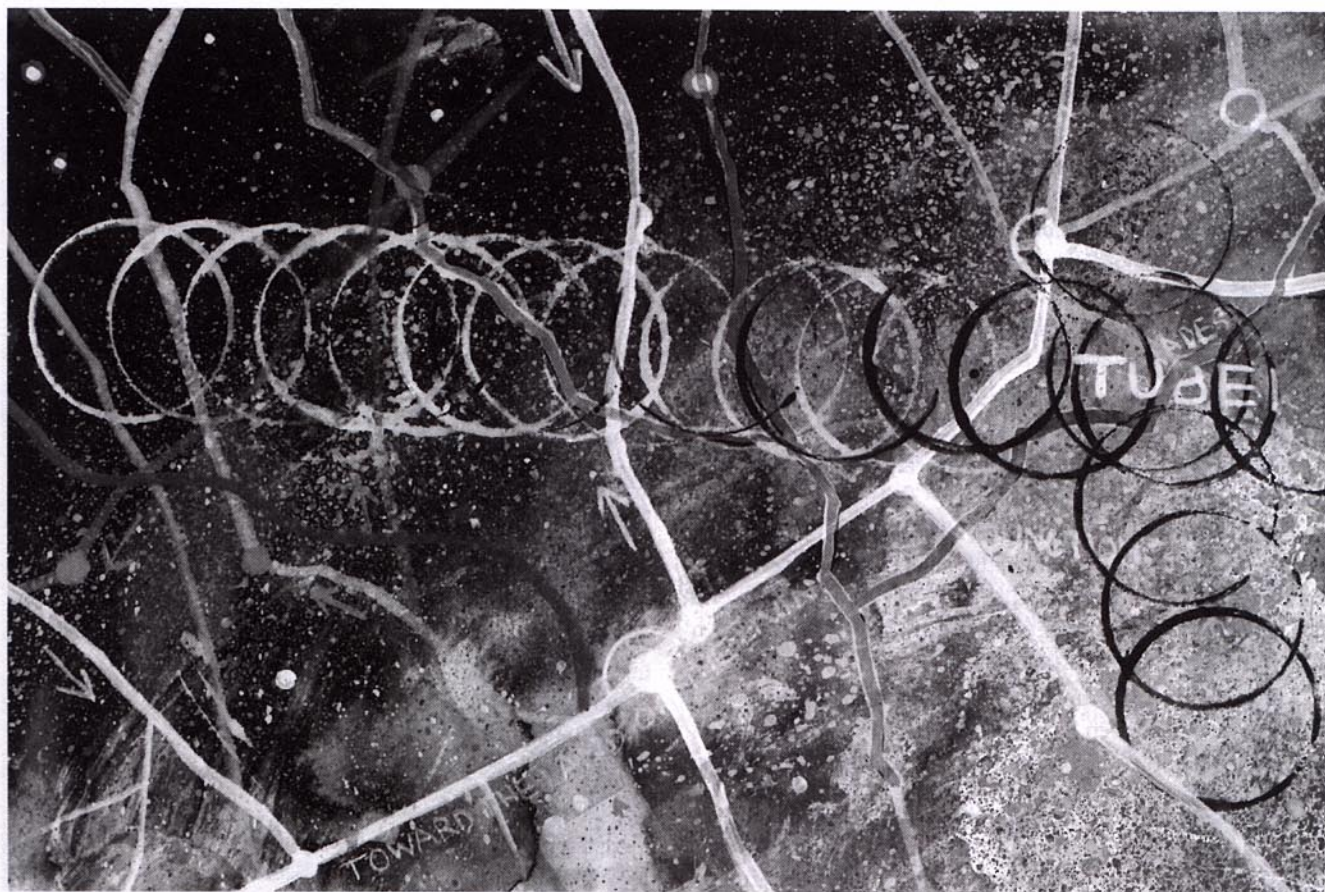
The Serpentes maintain a residence and an art gallery in Phoenix, Arizona. The gallery serves as a vehicle to legitimize their large monetary transactions, though the woman who manages it is neither a member of the Serpentes nor aware of their work. The actual members travel throughout the country maintaining contacts and developing new ones, catering to wealthy industry leaders and special interests who can pay for the political manipulation the Serpentes can bring to bear. They rarely rely on outright spiritual control to achieve their ends; they are quite skilled in more mundane techniques of industrial espionage, and such efforts are less expensive and risky than dealing with the Dead. When they resort to a mystical approach, the former Sisters primarily use the same information-gathering techniques and methods of prediction that their old colleagues do; usually, these means are enough.

On rare occasions, the Serpentes may summon a wraith and perform a binding to effect physical control of an event. In such cases, they seek a wraith skilled in Puppetry, then bind him to possess a person and perform a specific act (such as pushing a button to indicate a positive vote where the victim might have voted negatively). Bindings are difficult and dangerous, and the Serpentes attempt them only with all members present, only for great gain and only if there is no other way to influence a target. Alexandra is the only member skilled enough to bind wraiths, though the others are learning quickly.

The Unfathomable

What can you say about a group lumped together and dismissed as Unfathomable? The very name suggests that most people cannot understand why they act as they do, but closer examination reveals that this may not be precisely true. True psychotics are rare, and the vast majority of people categorized as "insane" actually have solid motivations for their actions — just ones that "normal" people might not want to admit that they recognize.

Blessed — or cursed — with the ability to speak with the Dead, these mediums can be nearly as frightening as their wraithly contacts, a fact that makes others less willing to look closely at them. This unwillingness comes from a subconscious understanding that, in many ways, these "lunatics" are nothing more than dark reflections of normal folks, ones who operate on macabre variants of everyday motivations. To realize this truth is to realize that *anyone* could easily become as they are.



Dixie's Vengeance

I hear John's truck pull up outside the motel room, and then there's some giggling that I know ain't Steve. I open the door, and there's John feeling up some local chick he's got pressed against the fender. I step out and pull him away from her, blocking his swing and smacking him in the head. "Dammit, John! How many times I gotta tell you? Don't make a scene and don't fool around with the local girls."

"Sorry Rutherford. Guess I just forgot." He smiles weakly, then turns and throws up all over the side of the truck. The girl squeals and steps aside; no surprise there.

Drunk bastard. I drag him into the room. Outside I can hear the girl asking how she's supposed to get home, yellin' about a ride. I shut the door and ignore her, until I hear her kicking the truck. A quick look is all it takes to get her moving, even though she's swearing like she was raised in a bar.

Of course, now we can't hit the local graveyard. Can't go gettin' caught because people remember us.

Pulling wings off flies, throwing rocks through windows and tying cherry bombs to frogs were the favorite recreational activities for the five members of Dixie's Vengeance when they were younger. Now that they're adults, their pastimes are drinking

themselves blind, driving while drunk and dropping lit dynamite into ponds to see the fish go belly-up. They have always been friends and troublemakers, and are generally acknowledged as the worst thing ever to come out of Appling County, Georgia.

Their leader is Rutherford May, a tall, balding, bearded man in his late twenties who drives a rusted blue Ford pickup and walks with a limp. During a late-night drive fueled by a couple of six-packs, Rutherford drove his old truck off the road, wrapped the vehicle around a tree, and struck his head on the steering wheel. While still reeling from the blow, he saw the ghostly figures of several Confederate soldiers camped a short distance away. Not understanding what he was seeing, he approached the camp to demand help. One of the wraiths turned to him and berated him for being a disgrace to his family and to the South. Recognizing the ghost from a portrait that hung in his mother's house, Rutherford realized that he was seeing one of his dead ancestors, said "Holy shit," and passed out.

When he awoke, there was no hint of the camp, but he clearly remembered the dressing-down the ghost had given him. Ashamed that his ancestor saw him as a disgrace, he vowed to do something to redeem himself, something to prove his loyalty to the South for which his forefather had fought and died. Rutherford gathered up his friends and explained what had happened and what he wanted to do. Though they

didn't believe his story about the ghost, they were happy to indulge in a campaign of vandalism and destruction.

Such a campaign is what came of Rutherford's brief moment of conscience. The men periodically drive northward in two pickup trucks, looking for cemeteries that house the remains of Union soldiers. When they find an appropriate graveyard, they steal into it the during the night and vandalize graves by destroying the tombstones, digging up the remains and scattering the bones around the cemetery. They have vandalized three graveyards in this fashion over the course of several months, disrupting the Fetters of a good half-dozen wraiths. Though they might otherwise have given up after the first time, Rutherford's sidekicks get a charge out of seeing their story on TV. Odds are, they're going to keep at it until they either get caught or the media gets bored with the story. In the meantime, the thrills are fresh and the raids are getting more frequent.

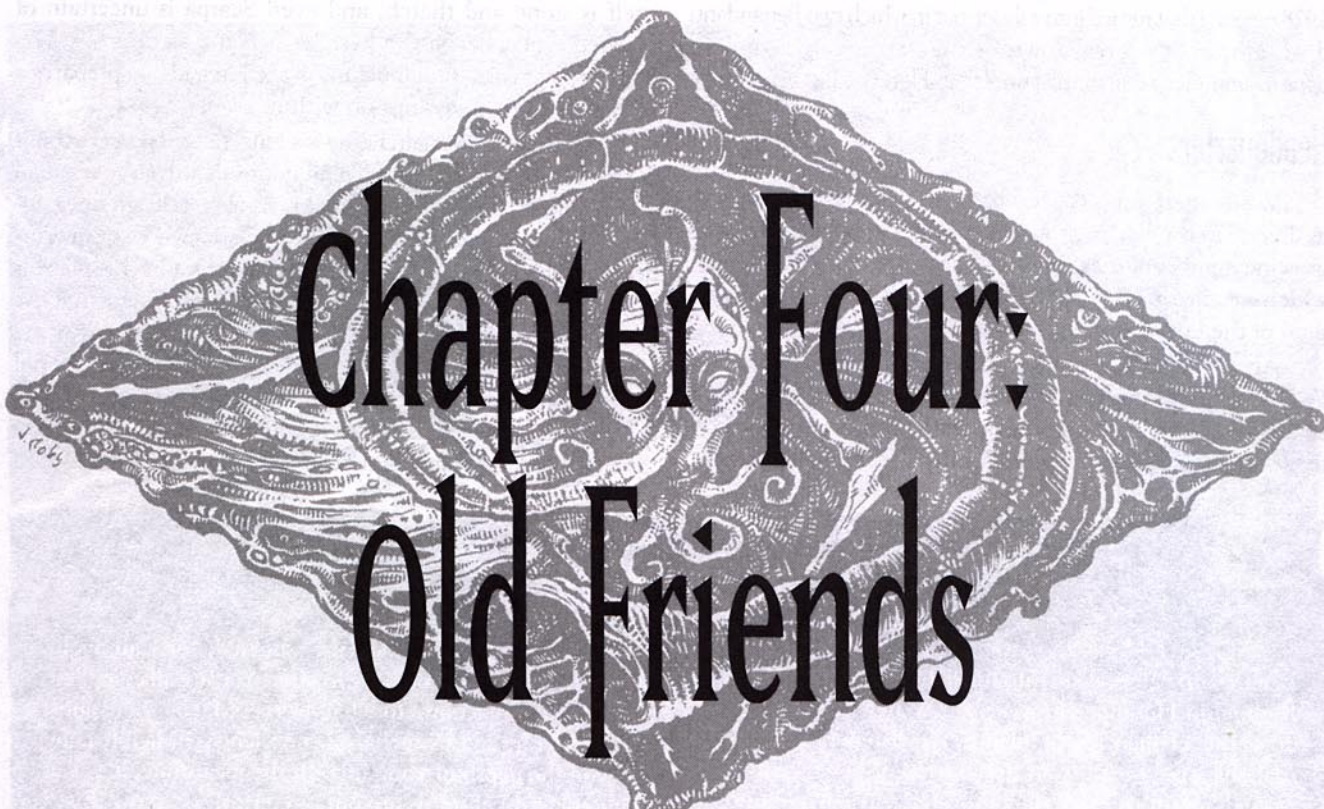
Dixie's Vengeance may present a minimal threat to most wraiths, but if Rutherford sees a wraith who is not connected to the Civil War hovering around a tombstone, he would probably interpret the vision as a sign from his ancestor and destroy the gravesite. Obviously, the group poses a serious threat to wraiths who died as Union soldiers in the Civil War. Many of these Restless now hold positions of authority in the Hierarchy, but whatever a wraith's rank, the destruction of one's Fetter is never pleasant.

Though the mundane authorities will catch them eventually, there is no telling how many graves Dixie's Vengeance will destroy before then. Rutherford's keeping careful count, though — you can be sure of that.

Note: Rutherford has completely misinterpreted his ancestor's message. If the old coot knew what his great-grandson is up to, he'd be appalled. Rutherford does have a limited ability to see wraiths, but due to his own psychological limitations this power works only in graveyards.







Chapter Four: Old Friends

The Benandanti

For 700 years, members of the Benandanti, a mystical sect with Gypsy origins, have passed down their traditions through generations of mentors and disciples. Membership in the order requires these informally organized explorers of the Shadowlands be born with a caul, and have the membrane removed by another Benandante. This ritual of Unhooding establishes the mentor-disciple relationship, one that lasts until the initiate reaches 20 years of age.

A wise Benandante keeps her caul on her person at all times, as this potent fetish cannot be replaced and is essential to performing the sect's key rituals. These rituals include Ekstasis, which is spiritual projection into the Underworld, and creation of the fennel sword, the weapon all members carry on such journeys. By drawing her caul across her eyes, a Benandante may see across the Shroud into the Shadowlands in her vicinity. This action, a minor Ekstasis sometimes called "eyelidding," may be performed at any time. True Ekstasis may be performed only between sunset and sunrise, however, for Benandanti still in the Underworld at

dawn are trapped there, often for years. (For further details on Benandanti rituals, see *The Quick and the Dead*.)

Mentors, called *sapienza* in Benandanti circles, instruct their disciples, or *novizios*, in matters of ritual, philosophy and history. Of course, the group's lack of unity means these courses of instruction take as many forms as there are teachers. For example, most mentors agree that the Underworld is too dangerous a domain for initiates to traverse unaccompanied. Still, several *sapienza* tout the effectiveness of deserting their young charges in the nearby Shadowlands as sunrise approaches. They claim this method inspires quick wits and respect for knowledgeable elders.

Similarly, there are differing Benandanti schools of thought concerning the nature of wraiths and how they should be treated. Newest among them are the *Isolatori*, who argue against any travel into the Shadowlands. The *Dannati* say all wraiths must be destroyed, lest they drag the living into perdition as well. The *Redentori* see wraiths as souls lost and needing guidance to another plane of existence. These groups — and others — gather at seasonal meetings called *Raduni*, where each faction proselytizes furiously. Benandanti seldom change one another's minds, but their full-contact approach to parliamentary procedure has kept dentists busy for years. Violence at *Raduni* has been limited to fisticuffs since a

1928 meeting that turned into a shoot-out in which two Benandanti died. However, a breakdown of the “no firearms” policy appears imminent due to the gunplay in Florence last year.

Headquarters

While there is no central base of operations for a group as diverse as the Benandanti, one place is known to an ever-growing number of these mystics: the home of Pietro Scarpa, which is called *L'Ospedale dei Viaggiatori Perduti* — the Hospital of the Lost Travelers.

An old sugar beet farm stands near a bend in the river Po. Poplars sway in the Lombardy breeze, and there is a road that passes close by, though little traffic does the same. The overwhelming feeling is one of chilly loneliness. The farm

itself is stone and thatch, and even Scarpa is uncertain of how old it may be. Nothing about its bland exterior — save, perhaps, a makeshift ambulance parked outside — prepares a visitor for the grim goings-on within.

Attached to the main house is a long, narrow addition built of wood by Scarpa and his foundlings. Inside this structure, laid out in military hospital style, are dozens of beds. Each one contains some unlucky and comatose Benandante whose spirit wanders the Shadowlands among the Restless Dead. This place is one of the dirty secrets of the Benandanti, for it is here that the bodies are “buried.” Which bodies? Why, those of unlucky travelers in the Underworld who don’t make it back to their mortal shells before sunrise. And because having one’s comatose *novizio* around the house tends to attract questions (and flies), most *sapienza* have no compunctions about shipping off such dead

The Great Betrayal

Magda D’Agostino dragged the ugliest secret of Benandanti paternalism into the light during a Pentecostal *Raduno* in Florence one year ago. When she rose to address the 11 men in attendance, her listeners knew only that she would read from the journal of her recently deceased mentor. Had they noticed the two younger Benandanti women who quietly entered the auditorium, some of the men might have suspected what was coming. D’Agostino, 40, read aloud in crisp Italian:

“With some hope for your mercy, though not your forgiveness, I commit now to paper what none among our fraternity even says more than once, and then only *sapienza* to *novizio*, man to man. For uncounted years, it was a common practice to bar women from our ranks. In the past, when most Benandanti were also trained in birthing, girls were stripped of their cauls and never told of our ways.

“My own crime was worse. What I write now I have told no one. Let it mark me as the cowardly monster I am.

“Dear Magdalena, you had a twin sister. The birth was complicated. Both infants had cauls, but one was tangled in her umbilical cord. In my vain concern for ‘protecting’ you both from our dangerous vocation, I lost your sister. Atonement could come in one form only. You are the living proof, and have been my daily reminder, of what is truly dangerous about Benandanti tradition.

“Do with this information what you will. But should you continue to use what I taught you previously, grant me one request: If you meet me in the Underworld, let your sword be swift.”

D’Agostino’s two compatriots joined her then on the dais. One of the men recovered enough to speak, but D’Agostino silenced him instantly with the jut of her hand.

“I do not want your denials,” she said, “or your apologies or anything else you have to offer. You are all complicit, and each of you knows to what degree. Maybe some ghost will wander by and spare you all conscience enough to comprehend the depth of your sins. In the meantime, it’s clear to me that you bastards are out of control, so know this: I am watching. None of you is God, but if I catch you pretending to be, you will think I am His avenging angel.”

A *sapienza* stood to protest and was greeted with three unwavering semi-automatic pistols. The trio of armed women walked backwards to the auditorium’s doors. As they were about to exit, a *novizio* stood, stepped away from his mentor and said, “He is a bastard! Take me with you! Please!” D’Agostino stared at him for a moment, then smiled and beckoned him. She questioned the young man as the four of them walked quickly through the hotel. What he told d’Agostino about his mentor made her gasp. By the time they reached her minivan however, all four were laughing. And planning.

Since then, D’Agostino and her band of *novizios* have remained on the move. Her income as an urban design consultant funds the group’s monitoring of the Benandanti throughout Italy. The group’s latest target is what its members believe to be a massive Resurrectionist operation in rural Lombardy. D’Agostino’s initial surveillance of the premises did suggest ongoing efforts to inhabit coma patients with wraiths. In Ekstasis, she gazed through a window of a horribly crude and unsanitary “hospital” filled with bedridden people. As D’Agostino watched, a wraith appeared on the far side of the building to peer in just as she did. She hurried to chase it away, and knew then that this madness must stop. She and her followers would begin with the ring-leader, a man named Scarpa....



weight to the always-gracious *Ospedale* staff. Occasionally, a *sapienza* may even come to visit — but not often.

The dominant aroma in the hospital is that of antiseptic, while the sounds are an unsettling symphony of hisses, wheezings, groans and hums, some human in origin, some mechanical. Several of the patients are connected to antiquated life-support machines and respirators that make the people linked to them resemble pilots in a sinister air force.

Despite the gravity of the work that goes on here, Scarpa and his crew manage to be generally upbeat in the face — and among the faces — of hopelessness. Unfortunately, discipline here is not all that it could be: Some of the *novizios* responsible for the night watch are prone to napping. Thus, even though the *Ospedale* has no visiting hours, it does have the occasional visitor....

Pietro Scarpa

Pietro Scarpa's brightest hour came the night he Unhooded his sister Cristina's newborn son, Salvatore. The *sapienza's* darkest days began 16 years later, on the morning he found his beloved *novizio* comatose on the couch the boy preferred when entering Ekstasis. The misfortune Scarpa always feared had finally come to pass: The boy's spirit was trapped in the Shadowlands by the rising sun and could wan-

der there forever. Nothing he'd taught his nephew through years of instruction could save Salvatore now. Scarpa knew, as he began to pray, that the matter was now in God's hands.

He wasn't able to tell Cristina the truth. Although she knew her brother was teaching Salvatore about some "hidden world," she had no idea that they actually *went* there to guide the souls of the misbegotten dead. Scarpa already felt responsible for Salvatore's condition, and he could not face Cristina's blame in addition to his own. He did persuade her to let him care for the boy, however. Scarpa then ceased his travels into the Underworld, disillusioned about his mission there. At *Raduni*, he became a forceful advocate for, as he said, "leaving death's realm to the Dead." After one especially impassioned recounting of the events that changed his life, Scarpa met an enfeebled *sapienza* whose protégé had suffered the same fate as Salvatore. The two made a pact and before long Scarpa's home was on its way to becoming a hospital.

After several years, Scarpa was known to many Benandanti, primarily because they possessed business cards bearing his name, telephone number and the words *L'Ospedale dei Viaggiatori Perduti*. Not all of Scarpa's brethren admired his activities, however. Alliances between Scarpa and other grief-stricken *sapienza* (plus several forlorn *novizios*) led him to form the *Isolatori*, an isola-



tionist faction of the Benandanti that questions the worth of gallivanting about the Shadowlands for any reason. Because the *Isolatori* oppose Ekstasis (except "eyelidding"), their methods perform are now more scholarly and meditative than is typical among Benandanti.

Because of their views and the haphazard nature of Benandanti communications, the *Isolatori* have made some dangerous enemies. Scarpa made more foes for his group at a recent *Raduno* in Milan. Lying through his teeth, he claimed to have found an "ultimate warding" — a spell that would allow only spirits of the newly dead to enter the Shadowlands and irrevocably halt all other "traffic" between worlds. After a stunned silence, an appalled Damnationist asked if Scarpa would truly condemn the souls of errant Benandanti, including young Salvatore's, to wander the other side forever. Scarpa replied, "Heaven help me, I may have *already* doomed my nephew. But I will not see another life destroyed by these fools' errands of ours! I will give no other warning, so tell all you meet: One day soon, a wall will rise between the worlds. If you go, be ready to stay!"

Scarpa told this outrageous lie in hopes of frightening the inexperienced and incompetent away from the Shadowlands. He had no idea that some Benandanti, young and old, would plot his death to protect their powers of otherworldly visitation. That day, with a fearlessness possessed only by the naive, he handed his card to every Benandante who requested one.

Image: Years and grief have lengthened Scarpa's face. His tanned features are deeply creased, and his white hair has entered retreat. He favors woolen trousers and cardigans. In Lombardy's coldest weather, Scarpa vanishes into a black greatcoat that looks as old as he is. Outside *Raduni*, he is quite soft-spoken, but he commands such respect around the *Ospedale* that he seldom must repeat himself.

Roleplaying Hints: Never give up hope, though the years and the failures weigh heavily on you sometimes. Be unfailingly polite, even to those who are less than polite to you. You know you're playing dangerous games, but you really don't understand how perilous those games can be — to you or your charges.

The Orphic Circle



millennial distemper grips the Orphic Circle. The members of this ancient cabal, which includes mages, vampires, wraiths and mortals, cannot agree upon when "the thousand years is over." Computer programmers dealing with the "Year 2000" fiasco and New Year's event coordinators facing the "2000 or 2001" question have it easy com-

Metamorphoses

A mystery surrounding political rivals Ada Pavon and the still-missing Duncan Lord continues to breed fear and suspicion throughout the Orphic Circle. During the most recent Great Festival, the group's annual mass debauchery, Pavon (as she tells it) found herself in a shadowy grove with Lord, her strongest competitor at the time for a seat on the Ebon Bench. Stoked by powerful aphrodisiacs, she behaved predictably, Pavon says, until she realized she was copulating with an uprooted oak. Pavon claims she fled then, believing she'd hallucinated Lord's presence.

However, Xerxes Jones says he saw the pair together in the grove. He paused to drink some wine before joining them, but when he looked again, in Pavon's place was the unearthly being Diké: "She was straddling Duncan," Jones says, "and her wings were spread maybe 20 feet wide. She started chanting in a language I didn't recognize. That's when I got scared and ran."

Duncan Lord's whereabouts since this incident remain unknown. Three Orphics impaneled to investigate Diké's prior appearances hold opposing theories. Despite Pavon's and Jones' willingness to undergo a ritual of truth, the panel's two Orgiophontes members suggest the pair conspired in Lord's vanishing. On the other hand, the lone Dikeia panelist suggests that Diké (also called "the Judge") manifested to pass a political judgment — basically, that Lord was "dead wood." This interpretation rallied Dikeia support to Pavon, who is now the faction's sole candidate for the Inner Circle. Interestingly, while many Orgiophontes suspect Pavon "disappeared" Lord, the same members of the faction also insisted the oak in question be replanted and closely monitored. The tree is currently thriving in one of the mansion's locked courtyards.

pared to the Orphics, who have long plumbed the mysteries of mortality and immortality with an eye toward the catastrophic events the millennium promises. Consensus (to the extent any exists on this subject) within the organization is that figuring the millennium's date imprecisely could have disastrous consequences for the group and its goals.

Calendars are one part of this problem, the Orphics themselves are another. The Circle's 300 members collectively hail from over 20 countries, many of them non-Western. It took an edict from the Ebon Bench, the Orphics' nine-member governing body, to have everyone abide by one modern calendar. However, some Orphics predate the institution of the Gregorian calendar and still consider it, at best, a clumsy and inelegant tool for marking time. The popular Antonio Giovanni, for example, has sharply criticized it as the work of "dull-witted monks who tried to measure the ages with their fingers and toes."

An Orphic scholar and hyperkinetic Void Engineer named Xerxes Jones has gone so far as to offer a system of his own devising, based on what he claims is "the clockwork regularity of the Underworld's storm seasons." A committee is currently appraising Jones' calendar, which derives from his lengthy (and ongoing) observation of the Tempest. Meanwhile, disagreement continues on how to calculate the time of the millennium's arrival. A few members consider the issue purely academic, but many recall the horrible end met by Nikos Safiropoulos, an Orphic

In the Cards

Antonio Giovanni now secretly performs tarot readings at least six times nightly. This obsession began with an event that occurred on the eve of his invitation to serve as the Orgiophontes candidate for the Ebon Bench. Giovanni decided to perform one of his infrequent tarot readings and began to lay out his 300-year-old cards in a modified cross. To his growing unease, each card he drew was the Hanged Man. By the third card, he was troubled, and by the eighth he felt terror unlike any he'd known since his Embrace.

Giovanni stared at the impossible array of nine identical cards from a deck he knew to contain only one Hanged Man. The portent, he knew, was dire, but he could make no sense of it.

Until the Orgiophontes' offer came.

The vampire felt that imminent destruction must surely await the *nine* members of the Inner Circle. He rejected the Orgiophontes and would not tell them why.

Since then, Giovanni has very nearly managed to wear out the tarot deck he'd used for three centuries. However, no card has made further multiple appearances — at least, not yet.



Preparations

"So," Smyre said, "they're actually going to search the Underworld for old Krilov."

Hideo Masaka was silent. The Euthanatos thought he might have angered his friend and ally, but finally the younger man spoke.

"It's unbelievable," Masaka said, "how relentlessly this bunch hangs on to the past. You can't take it with you, I say." He looked at the mage from the corner of his eye, and both of them began laughing.

After a while, Smyre said, "If it were me going, I'd watch out. There's all sorts of ways to buy it in the Shadowlands."

"True. But what a heroic way for some *kinighos* to die. What do you call it? 'A good death?'" Masaka was quiet again, then said, "Yes, it's a good thing you're *not* going. Who knows *what* may happen to that search party down there." He paused once more, then smiled and said: "'Buy it,' indeed."

The death mage leaned forward conspiratorially, steepled his fingers and smiled back.

He was simply missing, which could not be equated with incapacitation. Propriety — and the Orphic charter — demanded that his fate be determined before other actions were taken.

The Ebon Bench surprised many by granting this motion, as Dikeia members could have effectively defeated it with a tied vote. The Inner Circle ordered the *kinighi* to resolve the Krilov question before the next Great Festival, then only four months away.

Protocol

An irony of the Orphic Circle is its concentric secrecy. Far more information passes from the Outer Circle to the Inner Circle than vice versa. The Ebon Bench is often sphinx-like in its communications with the larger body. On some matters it offers no comment whatsoever, and the Bench never explains its silence on a given petition. Some questions, such as the Inner Circle's plans for the millennium (when, it's been speculated, the Bench intends somehow to dissolve the Shroud), simply are not asked.

This elaborate etiquette is mirrored throughout the Orphic Circle. Most members, human or otherwise, have much to hide. Many also belong to other organizations, including the Benandanti, the Arcanum and the Paranormal



Research Wing. Thus, Orphics collectively pursue knowledge, but they never individually seek more information about their fellows than they are offered. Only a few mortal members know the group also includes vampires, mages and even a shapechanger. Gossip is nearly unknown in the Orphic Circle, as it has sometimes proved a fatal commodity.

Of course, the Orphic Circle does not rely merely on protocol to preserve its secrets. Upon induction, each member swears an oath of secrecy, which is coupled with a binding spell. Any Orphic who violates the oath is compelled to reveal himself to the Ebon Bench. This security measure demonstrated remarkable durability recently, when an Orphic ran afoul of a strange, pheromone-enhanced spy who called herself "Sharon Miller." Although the victim, Stanford Poe, could not answer questions about his own name or gender without looking to Miller, he offered verbatim accounts of everything he'd involuntarily disclosed to her. She became a test subject for Hideo Masaka's new automated surgical theater (which he calls "Dr. Masaka's Wind-Up Surgery and Interrogatory Lounge") but failed to reveal her controller's identity before she expired.

Headquarters

Taenarus, the gate Orpheus used to enter the Underworld, is the Orphics' name for their mansion in Thessaly. This sprawling *epaulis* — Greece's version of a villa — nestles in a densely forested valley of the Pindus Mountains. The two-story whitewashed-stone structure would be inviting to any passersby (who are few), but for its daunting wrought-iron perimeter fence. More elaborate ironwork adorns and protects the mansion's main entrance. Although most Orphics of any tenure scarcely notice this gate, which stands fully open only during Great Festivals, it features a splendid representation of Orpheus' descent. It was fashioned on-site by an 18th-century Hermetic mage who supposedly incorporated a cosmogonic egg into his ornamentation. However, there are three identical "stones" integrated into the gate, and no Orphic has dared dismantle it to determine which of them (if any) is actually a sacred object of power.

Beyond the gate is a broad hallway flanked by guards' chambers and anterooms where business with outsiders (including prospective members) is typically conducted. More than a few murders have been committed along this corridor, which is why a network of secret passageways connects the rooms here to a hidden chamber dubbed "the Well." Its central feature is a smooth-walled chute that curves approximately 300 feet down to the cave system beneath the mansion. Many desperate individuals have tried to use the Well as an escape route, but none have survived the trip; remains of the luckless litter the cave at the base of the chute.

The main corridor terminates at an oblong central courtyard Orphics call "the Box." It gives access to the second story via wide, stone staircases along each of its sides; to several

smaller courtyards, many sealed by iron gates; and to the north, south and west wings of the mansion. Upstairs, there are studies and private rooms typically used for experiments, assignments and the occasional sacrifice (human and otherwise). The entryways to several of these rooms are impressively cobwebbed, signifying that their occupants are Restless — Orphics who frequented the rooms in life and now haunt them in death. There is one downstairs residence, that of Security Chief Caspar Bratovitch. Members still complain about the screams that sometimes issue from his quarters, but Bratovitch rightly points out that soundproofing the rooms would impede his work.

The north wing is dominated by a banquet hall where all 300 Orphics can simultaneously eat. Preferred seating is near the southern end, where members of the Inner Circle sit side by side and can look upon the assembled Outer Circle. At the hall's opposite end, Kerberos' 10 members sit beneath a large canvas commemorating the Great Festival of 1887. The painter, Polish Symbolist Tadeusz Witowski, died before completing the work but finished it later through a consort. The north wing also contains kitchen facilities and a wine cellar whose door bears the word "Veritas" — Truth.

Hidden in the wine cellar are subterranean passages known only to members of the Inner Circle. These tunnels connect to the west wing, which is reserved for use solely by the Ebon Bench. Outer Circle members are welcome only in the Auditorium, where they may present various petitions to their leaders. The metal dais, where a petitioner stands, has special features — some lethal — for upstarts who ask the wrong question or make an improper request ("I'd like to resign my membership—" *Zzzt!*) Other aspects of the west wing are as mysterious as the Ebon Bench itself.

The south wing houses projects not suited to underground placement (and a good thing, too — see below). Xerxes Jones' laboratory is here, as are Hideo Masaka's surgical theaters and the ground-level operations for salvage of the library. Also, all Outer Circle committees confer in this wing, Kerberos among them.

There are several important structures inside the security fence but separate from the house itself. Near the west wing are dual helipads, essential since the Orphics have systematically eliminated the valley's roads. Quarters for the estate's staff — all of whom are ritually bound to the premises — are adjacent to the north wing, as are pens for various sacrificial animals (fowl, sheep, the occasional ape...), and, also, a dilapidated stone barn.

This unassuming structure hides a platform elevator that descends nearly 200 feet to the fabled Caves of Orpheus, first explored by members of the Circle in the 10th century. Alas, instability in the cavern's lower chambers makes it an unlikely locale for activity in the 21st century. A collapsed floor in the library two years ago claimed the lives of three Orphics (and an undetermined number of volumes), even as they were removing books after fissures opened there. Thus, the library

and all subterranean ritual rooms are now off limits, except to members of the salvage team.

These days, the caves have only one regular denizen. His name is BlitzKrieg, and he lives in the dark near the terminal end of the Well, not far from the elevator shaft. Caspar Bratovitch bred him not to need light, which is probably for the best: BlitzKrieg is a guard dog — with two heads, one facing forward, the other backward. Antonio Giovanni still teases Bratovitch for lacking a sense of mythology, but the young ghoul has not taken the bait. He visits the beast daily but worries that the lack of traffic through BlitzKrieg's lair may impair the dog socially.

Finding a suitable cavern to replace the Caves of Orpheus is a challenge the organization doesn't even like to contemplate. Years of searching have proved fruitless. The latest disappointment came when an exploration party in the United States suddenly encountered a tourist group. Anni Besturo may have found hope, however, when she translated another portion of her so-called "Lazarus Fragment," and found reference to a lost subterranean city built entirely of bone: a place called Os.

Faces

Caspar Bratovitch

Despite being inbred backwoods cannibalistic ghouls, the Arkansas Bratovitches always had big dreams, and little Caspar was no exception. He knew that some of the top-dog Kindred started out as Sabbat revenants, just like him and his kin. And heck, aging a third as fast as regular folk was nice, but immortality was another pot of stew. Caspar wanted to live forever, and that meant being the best at everything he did.



Caspar's daddy discovered his baby boy's unique ability while they were hunting backpackers who'd trespassed on Bratovitch land. Clem Bratovitch noticed that Caspar's head would perk up just an instant before the hound's snouts did, so he leashed the dogs and let the toddler lead the way. In record time, they caught all three of the city-folk they were chasing. Back home, Clem helped tear one fellow limb from limb and rewarded Caspar with the head. The child plucked out an eyeball straightaway and popped it into his mouth. He grinned, and the eye peeped out. "That's m' boy," Clem said.

Caspar mastered Vicissitude early. He could fleshcraft warhounds for Tzimisce muckety-mucks as well as any Bratovitch (though he was a better tracker than even the ablest beasts he could breed). His pride and joy was a 180-pound chunk of muscle with sharp, bony spurs on its head, neck and back. Caspar called the dog "Muffin."

Caspar's life changed the night he first met a vampire. A big black helicopter landed in the Bratovitches' front yard. Out stepped Count Vladimir Rustovitch. His clothes and how he moved were different from anything Caspar had ever seen.

"You have my animal?" Rustovitch asked Clem. Caspar thought the Count talked funny — "*enemil*," he had said — but Caspar liked his voice anyway. Clem fetched Muffin for Rustovitch. Caspar was about to whine, but instead surprised himself by saying, "I'm gon' be just like you when I grow up."

Rustovitch turned and looked at Caspar for a moment. "You're an interesting young man," he said. "We'll meet again." The next night, Caspar ran away. Just as he somehow *knew* that what he'd said to Rustovitch was true, he also knew that the vampire wasn't coming back to Arkansas. So off he went in search of the ancient Tzimisce.

What he found instead was the Orphic Circle. Years of wandering and meeting vampires taught Caspar to recognize Kindred by scent, so when he detected that unique aroma one night in the Greek countryside, he followed it. He easily eluded a dozen guards, human and canine, and was stopped only by a magical trap just outside the Circle's enormous mansion. Caspar's skill, ambition and seeming youth — at the time, he appeared no older than 10 — so impressed the Ebon Bench that it presented him to Kerberos for membership consideration. In five years, Caspar went from fledgling *kinighos* to foremost of the *kinighi*, the Circle's hunter cadre. He also became resident chief of security for Taenarus, the Orphics' headquarters.

Lately, Caspar has tried to fleshcraft hounds sensitive to the presence of wraiths. Accompanied by a Benandante *kinighos*, he has taken these animals into the Spectre-infested caverns adjacent to the Caves of Orpheus. Repeated wardings had failed to purge these interlopers, so Caspar armed himself with Faust's Monocle (a talisman that allows the wearer to see wraiths) and the hunt was joined. But the two Orphics haven't been the only hunters: They've been stalked repeatedly by a sly Mortwright whose hideous form Caspar might

recognize if he saw it. The creature can only drag itself along, its body parts half-eaten and barely strung together, its eyes gouged out of a head marked by tiny teeth....

Image: Although he is now 36, Caspar's revenant origins make him resemble a fresh-faced 12-year-old. His appearance has caused intermittent trouble when some staff member hesitates to obey one of his orders. Caspar *has* mellowed, however, to the extent that he no longer eats the help in front of the help.

Roleplaying Hints: You love your work, especially the parts that involve making other folks scream'n'bleed. On an intellectual level, you understand that some folks don't take kindly to your hobbies, but it just doesn't register emotionally. As long as people obey your rules, you're perfectly polite — but you interpret those rules *real* strictly.

Sergei Krilov

1928: One moment, Sergei Krilov lay dying in bed at Taenarus, the Orphic Circle's mountain lair. The next, he was dropping headfirst through seemingly infinite blackness toward what looked like a jagged mountain range of pure obsidian. Then, the mountains split along their ridge and the dark world below him spoke:

"Heed the call of your master, worm. In life, you were legend, the striding doom of the Dead, destroyer of my minions who cast themselves on your spectral blade as I commanded. In life, you sought to stretch your eyeblink of an existence with the help of those who would follow Orpheus. In truth, *all* that you did in life, from the instant you named your sword of iron and fennel 'Death's Death,' you did because I permitted it. I could have called you here at any time. Let the charade end. Now, your true servitude begins."



Krilov saw an anthracite angel soar up from the titanic mouth to meet him. For a fraction of a second, he let himself hope she might be a rescuer, ready to lift him from this unspeakable pit. Then the gap between them closed, and Krilov saw the cruel glint of her wings, like huge scythes sprouting from her back. As she enveloped him in blackness, time broke into shards around him. In one tumbling fragment of the Benandante's past, a massively fat man peeled a translucent film from Krilov's newborn face. In another, Krilov was just learning to love the thrill of destruction as he hacked his way through an army of the Dead. In yet another, a heartbroken, eight-year-old Krilov watched as his homesick father, abandoning wife and son for Mother Russia, slipped into the Italian night. Then the terrible angel carried Krilov down, and he knew he had only begun to learn the meaning of darkness.

Krilov's eight fellows on the Ebon Bench were ecstatic when he manifested among them as one of the Restless. Even as he returned, debate was raging over distribution of the black ballots to nominate his successor. Although for his colleagues only days had elapsed since his death, Krilov had endured the passage of eons. Much of what he knew he understood to be hidden from the rest of the Inner Circle. Krilov knew that he would serve seven more decades on the Ebon Bench. He knew that, after his tenure there, he would return to the Labyrinth to lead the Spectral forces of his Malfean master, Zyras the All-Consuming, into war against the Shadow-eaten hordes of Lamachis the Devourer. He knew the true face of Diké, the Judge, who always appeared to the Orphics as a blond peasant girl with leathery demon's wings, not as a dark, steely destroyer. And every secret Krilov knew, he was powerless to tell.

Zyras' influence over him was irresistible because the Malfean had learned the name of Krilov's sword. To torment his Restless pawn, Zyras left him enough free will to do anything except destroy himself or betray the monstrous being's schemes. Krilov saw one option: Somehow, he would have to betray the Orphic Circle and hope that the power of their binding was equal to Zyras'. And that they'd let him "survive" his indiscretion....

Image: Tall and reedy in life, Krilov seems nearly insubstantial in death, a scarecrow with shoulder-length hair.

Roleplaying Hints: Too many terrible secrets burden you and push your sanity to the brink. Try to avoid any emotional attachments to anyone or anything, because you know the nature of the destruction that is coming. Others may perceive you as cold, but your distanced demeanor is a psychological necessity.

Hideo Masaka

Goldfish started Hideo Masaka down the path that made him a smiling tumor of a man. When he was seven, and precocious, his mother would arbitrarily discipline him by slicing up his beloved pet carp as he watched. Hideo was traumatized, but he was also fascinated by the multicolored wonders hidden beneath the creatures' glittering exteriors.



Hideo's Uncle Junichiro rescued him from this abuse. He fabricated evidence in order to get his sister-in-law committed (though, clinically speaking, she truly was a loon) and take custody of his nephew. Junichiro learned the consequences of her madness a year later, when Hideo admitted having drugged his mother's seaman lover and vivisected him. "I found the experience eye-opening," the boy said, "among other organs."

Junichiro knew exactly what to do: He sponsored the nine-year-old Hideo for membership in the Orphic Circle. The boy was a popular addition to the group from the start. Hideo's knowledge of the physical world, especially human anatomy, was quickly matched by his understanding of the spirit world, thanks to the Orphics' extensive occult library. His late-blooming talent for pranks increased his charm for many in the often somber assemblage. In one notable episode, at the most recent bacchanal, he spiked the purgatives, traditionally used before the celebration, with aphrodisiacs. What followed has since been dubbed the Long Great Festival.

Some Orphics ("Those who didn't get any," in the words of the inimitable Xerxes Jones) expressed displeasure with Hideo's disruption of tradition. A few members of the Outer Circle called for his censure, but the Ebon Bench remained silent on the matter. Complaints were launched at Junichiro, who was presumed to be accountable under the Orphic rules of sponsorship. He wisely pointed out that, by Orphic standards, his nephew had attained majority three days prior to his "little frolic." This meant, Junichiro added, that sanctions against Hideo could come only from the Inner Circle — a body the young man was now old enough to join.

Suddenly, the Ebon Bench's lack of response was viewed in a new light. Protests against Hideo evaporated. Days later, Orphics received via hand delivery the black ballots for nominating members to the Inner Circle. The prank and subsequent furor were widely

seen as part of an attention-grabbing scheme, but one that worked: Hideo won the Orgiophontes candidacy easily. The faction's leaders were not as confident as the majority, however. Hideo was infuriated when they postponed the final vote for the vacant seat, and stalled the election. While Hideo raged, Junichiro told him he should not take the decision personally, and that Orgiophontes political leaders had good reason to fear Dikeia control of the Ebon Bench.

Hideo replied that he never took anything personally. "I shall continue my campaigning, Uncle, and forge whatever alliances are required to win." He looked away as he thought, *I hope those alliances do not cost Uncle his life. I am rather fond of him.*

Image: A handsome young man in his late teens, Hideo is so thin as to be almost willowy. These days, he wears white, the Japanese color for mourning, due to the "tragic" drowning of his mother during hydrotherapy (Hideo watched). His intimates within the Circle comment regularly on the quality and variety of Hideo's suits, which complement his dark hair and amber complexion. In turn, it is difficult for Hideo to resist singing the praises of large inheritances.

Roleplaying Hints: You have the ambition of an Alexander and the morals of a great white shark, and those are your good points. While you can be charming, as far as you're concerned other people are only pieces in the great game of your destiny; while you may grow fond of individual pawns, any and all of them are ultimately expendable.

The Paranormal Research Wing/Alternate Energy Group



Scientists in the Paranormal Research Wing of the international think tank called the Alternate Energy Group hold one of two opinions about dead billionaire Jonas Cornell Pinch: Either the man was a saint, they say, or he was Satan. Unquestionably, Pinch forever altered the

PRW when he willed \$7 billion of his fortune into a trust benefiting the organization. Opinions on whether that money (and the substantial strings attached to it) improves the PRW's ability to explore the "physics of ghosts" depends on whom you ask and whether their response is on the record or not.

"The Paranormal Research Wing is very pleased to announce—" was the predictable and not altogether accurate preamble to the statement made by Executive Director Bert MacTavish at 1996's annual meeting. MacTavish himself was genuinely ecstatic, as were most of the group's directors, and rightly

so, given their new salaries. The most noteworthy exception to the mood of euphoria was Ruby Mather, whose promotion to Director of Research and Development was announced at the same meeting. It was common knowledge inside the organization, however, that the position was a sop; the terms of the Pinch Trust ensured that Mather's lifework was over.

In the old days of the PRW, the majority of the organization's research revolved around one instrument: the Ectoplasmic Converter Engine. ECEs trapped wraiths and transformed them into energy, albeit a type of energy PRW scientists have never been able to utilize. Mather formulated the device's theoretical underpinnings while she was still a graduate student at Duke University, and she supervised construction of a prototype after joining the PRW. For nearly a decade, ECE research destroyed countless wraiths in the name of science and with the blessings of commerce. Corporate dollars for new, cheap energy sources built most of the ECEs in existence, after all.

However, the Pinch Trust brought a new standard tool to the PRW: the Stochastic Extrusion Engine. Its inventor, Pro-

fessor D. Ernest Goodavage, was handpicked by J.C. Pinch himself to take the organization into the future. The device, known colloquially as the SEE (and to friends of Ruby Mather as "the Unholy SEE"), has been described as a kind of "chaoscope." With it, scientists can peer into the Shadowlands, and sometimes further, given proper conditions. Not surprisingly (and more than a little dangerously), the side effect of the SEE is to weaken the Shroud in the vicinity of operation. Thus, while a scientific laboratory normally has a high Shroud rating, PRW headquarters is spook central — and the ghost hunters are to blame!

Knowledgeable wraiths used to be wary of the PRW and its dread converter engines, but the Pinch Trust imposed a strict moratorium on all research using ECEs and on further construction of the devices. Scientists who violate these prohibitions risk million-dollar fines and immediate dismissal. Nevertheless, secret ECE experimentation still occurs (see *Aline Eburn*), but only off-site. The SEE, in contrast, is not portable. PRW scientists in Berkeley, California and Edinburgh, Scotland are install-

The Geneva Connection

Damson Ernest Goodavage became golden boy of the Paranormal Research Wing because of a waiter's error. J.C. Pinch was heirless and unsure of just how many billions he was worth when the two men met in a Geneva restaurant. Goodavage was attending a symposium on chaos sciences, while Pinch had finally made time for the Alternate Energy Group's annual board meeting. After an awkward moment when Goodavage returned from the lavatory to discover the older man mistakenly installed at his table, the two Americans agreed to share each other's company. Conversation eventually turned to their reasons for being in Switzerland.

"I've had corporate partnerships with AEG for years," Pinch said. "Lately, though, all they want is to calculate a million ways to do the right thing."

"How so?"

"AEG's paranormal division is chasing its tail around whether it's a sin to kill what's already died. Maybe."

"You've lost me," Goodavage said.

Pinch explained the debate over using Ectoplasmic Converter Engines to transform into energy what some Paranormal Research Wing scientists called ghosts, others called souls and still others considered mere "psychic residue."

"Well, you'd want the benefit of the doubt, wouldn't you? Someday, everyone in this room may be clots of 'psychic residue,' including you. And you'd be offended — if that's the right word — by somebody trying to use you to power his toaster."

"Good point. But there's got to be a way to figure out what this stuff is, whether it's worth all this navel-gazing."

"Funny you should mention it. My work in chaology has put me on an interesting track." Goodavage described the workings of his prototypical Stochastic Extrusion Engine. "Someday, it'll be possible to photograph the human soul with this machine."

"Why? What set you on that trail?"

Goodavage paused, then laughed. "I've never told anyone this story. My mother died on my ninth birthday, and my dad succumbed to Alzheimer's disease five years ago. While he was sick, I'd visit him and talk to him, but he went fast, so that toward the end he stopped responding. Then, one day, he spoke to me — but in my mother's voice. I called for the nurse, who came in and asked, 'Did I hear a woman's voice in here? Is something wrong?' I said that my father had spoken, and she said that was normal. It was anything *but* normal, so I sent her away. And Dad — Mom — started talking again. About the afterlife."

Although Pinch then asked many questions and seemed to listen very carefully, Goodavage wasn't sure how the old man reacted to this story. And although they agreed to meet again stateside, Goodavage's next encounter with Pinch came through the obituaries. Again, research pushed the old man out of the scientist's mind, until one of Pinch's lawyers called.

"Professor Goodavage," the woman said, "we'd like to make you an offer."

ing duplicate devices at their facilities. These new engines should be working by the end of 1998.

Apart from supervision of the PRW's board of directors by the Pinch Trust — namely J.C. Pinch's executor, Edward Oswald Olivet — the organization has seen little internal restructuring over the years. New scientists are assigned to a particular research group, each of which has its own director, and each group director reports to the board. Professor Goodavage directs five parallel groups, all concerned with various aspects of the SEE.

In past years, PRW's lack of basic information about the objects of its research impeded the group's progress. Nowadays, these scientists have perhaps the opposite problem: too much data. They have gazed unwittingly upon sleeping Malfeans, whose vastness researchers mistook for Underworld landscapes. But such ignorance won't survive long, given the caliber of individuals attracted by the Pinch Trust's dollars. As one wag put it, "PRW's paying these scientists like they're basketball players or something." The size of the paychecks the Pinch Trust is tossing around has led to resentment and jealousy elsewhere in the scientific community and has even attracted attention from several of the Technocracy's Conventions. The Void Engineers, in particular, are curious as to who's outbidding them for new recruits — and why.

Headquarters

Quarry Gap, the Paranormal Research Wing's fabulously expensive new headquarters, perches on a mountainside about 10 miles east of Rutland, Vermont. Seen from the abandoned marble pits (whence the name) in the valley below the facility, Quarry Gap resembles the upright, partially unearthed rib cage of some long-dead colossus. It appears far more modest when viewed from the other side, where a winding road terminates at the gates of the main building atop the mountain. There is a helipad on the roof of the postmodern structure. An elevator carries visitors down to the lobby, where security cameras hum and visitors must sign a logbook.

The atmosphere inside Quarry Gap is that of an antfarm on amphetamines. The actual stimulant, however, is money. PRW scientists are superbly compensated, and nearly all of them feel compelled to provide bang for their many bucks. Also, there is an unspoken air of competition here, as each bright light (and there are many) tries to outshine every other. No one here has turned to sabotaging a coworker's research yet, but this phase of the project is still new....

The facility's lowest levels — designated, parking-deck style, by letters, rather than numbers — house the massive SEE, which scientists operate from Level X. More than one visitor has wondered if Jack Kirby was an inspiration in its design ("Who?" is Prof. Goodavage's typical response), given the machine's techno-baroque appearance. However, compared to what the PRW's scientists are likely to witness through the SEE in coming months, the impressively gargantuan device may start to feel like an Erector Set.





Faces

Aline Eburn

The most powerful weapon in Aline Eburn's invisible arsenal is a secret even to her. Since childhood, her abundant brains, charm and beauty have been backed up by borderline telepathic abilities. Eburn's powers are slight, but they effectively attune her to the moods of others. This empathy meshes with her temperament to make Eburn intensely likable — and Eburn really, *really* likes to be liked. Her problem is that it's easy to target yourself with weapons you don't know you possess.

She took up sex as an extracurricular activity during high school. By the time the Paranormal Research Wing lured her away from postdoctoral work at Duke University, Eburn was voracious and gender-indiscriminate, and she preferred intellectual lovers. She has serially seduced a dozen of the PRW's junior scientists, many of whom now belong to her covert cell that pursues Ectoplasmic Converter Engine research. They have code-named themselves "Sector E." As one might guess, this "covert" group is prone to significant looks, giggles and bad acting, but thus far, all of this behavior has been chalked up to callow youth.

Eburn willingly risks many scientists' careers with these prohibited activities because she craves the approval of one scientist in particular: Dr. Ruby Mather. Mather, the ECE's chief architect, was Eburn's mentor. The younger woman perceived the Pinch Trust's restrictions against ECE experimentation as a personal affront to her heroine. Mather has no inkling of the way Eburn has chosen to honor her and her "brainchild." What her reaction may be if she finds out is anybody's guess.

Eburn's empathic powers have thus far insulated her from anyone who would betray the cell. She attributes this good fortune to her superiority as a judge of character. She's also unaware of the friends she has in low (and dark) places. The Hierarchy wants to keep ECEs in operation as a means of destroying Spectres and the odd Renegade. To protect its unwitting executioner, Stygia assigned a cohort of Legionnaires to accompany Eburn whenever possible.

These unseen guardians would endure a cruelly dull duty were it not for Eburn's hobby. Of course, proper enforcers of Charon's laws do not cavalierly Skinride the Quick, especially one in their care. That sort of unruly behavior is ruinous to a soldier's morale, which is why Eburn's 10-member contingent has an established schedule. It's not rigid, however, as "Aline's Assault Troops" (their little joke) have been known to trade slots in the rotation for oboli or other valuables. They spend a lot of time swapping "war stories" about their hostess's seemingly innumerable bedroom (and closet and kitchen) maneuvers and devote little attention to battle-readiness.

The true sufferer in all this hurly-burly is Eburn's pet Siamese, Catullus. The poor animal used to have a life of ease, even with all the goings and comings transpiring, but now he has to watch while monstrous beings force themselves into his mistress and her guests. He's tried to warn her by breaking things during her get-togethers, but Eburn thinks he's just airing feline jealousies. Maybe next time, he could claw one of the intruders into the open and show his owner what's been sharing her fun.

Image: Eburn is more handsome than she is pretty, with solid, almost blocky features, and a stern demeanor that evaporates during her leisure-time activities.

Roleplaying Hints: It doesn't matter whether you're working or playing, you go all-out, regardless. Insults to you or your work bounce right off you (half the time you don't even notice them), but slaps directed at people you admire send you right off the handle. You consider yourself a good people person — you just seem to *know* what people are about to do, and you take full advantage of that. Sex, as far as you're concerned, serves two purposes: It's a great way to gain a measure of control over people, and it's one hell of a lot of fun. Either motivation works for you.

Edward Oswald Olivet

Edward Oswald Olivet became a sleep-deprived, paranoiac-recluse shortly after he assumed supervision of the Paranormal Research Wing and the Pinch Trust. He came to the position as a superlawyer to billionaires and as a citizen of the world; while his friends called him "Oz," his staff at Olivet, Stern discreetly dubbed him "the Great-and-Powerful" (or simply "the G 'n' P"). Lately, he's become a citizen of his hi-rise midtown condominium, and his performance has been...erratic, to say the least. His friends whisper that drugs are to blame, and his associates fear he has AIDS, but in fact, Olivet is being haunted.



Olivet's troubles began after his most famous client, Jonas Cornell Pinch, created a trust benefiting the PRW. The octogenarian billionaire surprised his attorney by asking him to act as trustee. "I know you'll do a great job, Oz," Pinch said. "But I hope you won't mind if I look over your shoulder while you do it." The certitude of this remark initially annoyed Olivet, who had decided Pinch to be, like himself, not a religious man. At first, he thought he'd misunderstood his client's beliefs, but an event held on the first anniversary of Pinch's death presented another possibility.

To mark the occasion, Olivet, Stern named one of its conference rooms in Pinch's memory, complete with a portrait. While Olivet was addressing an assembly of PRW and Pinch Industries higher-ups, the chair Pinch had always used began to move slowly away from the table. Olivet stammered briefly and thought, *Don't they see this?* But he'd had their complete attention, and he seemed to be the only witness to the incident. He decided not to mention it.

The "banshee" incident three months later was not so easily ignored: A horrible, extended screech interrupted a quarterly meeting between Olivet and the PRW's board of directors. The noise shattered every window in the room.

PRW's Ruby Mather removed her still-intact glasses to inspect them and said, "I think it's safe to assume Mr. Pinch disapproves." Scientists laughed, but Olivet did not. He arranged not to use the Pinch Conference Room thereafter, a move no one questioned. No one living, anyway.

This business literally came home for Olivet a short time later. At 3:34 A.M., on the day of the next quarterly meeting, Olivet was awakened by a sound he thought to be a battering ram in use on his front door. He grabbed the phone to call building security, but the portable had no dial tone. Olivet panicked, imagining he was about to be murdered in his own home. Then, as suddenly as it began, the noise ceased. Olivet stood for a long time listening to the thud of his own heart. The sound of a dial tone issuing belatedly from the portable phone in his hand made him jump. Regaining a modicum of control, he called security and determined there had been no one outside his door all night.

The strain was already beginning to show on Olivet when he contacted his friend, Col. Victor Cardall. The retired Gurkha rifleman had saved Olivet's life in Burma when the two men served together during World War II, and the lawyer asked him to attempt an encore. The details of Olivet's request came as a surprise to the old warrior, as the Englishman had never made a secret of his skepticism. "The dog has to learn new tricks," Olivet told his friend, "or die." Cardall, whom Olivet had sponsored for U.S. citizenship, was happy to oblige: Cardall's mother had begun his instruction in Tantric magic before he could write, and he was well prepared to defend his friend against the ghost's depredations.

And so began Olivet's war of wardings in response to J.C. Pinch's hauntings....

Image: A silver-haired, mustachioed patrician, Olivet has always used money to make his life the best it can be. Before his troubles began, he was as healthy as men 30 years his junior, always clad in Egyptian cotton, cashmere and the like and renowned for his regal bearing. Lately, though, his seams and his age are starting to show....

Roleplaying Hints: The spitting image of stereotypical British colonialism, you're not cut out for dueling with the supernatural. While you once had a commanding voice and presence, you're slowly being broken by Pinch's war of attrition. Flashes of the old you still shine forth on occasion, but such instances are growing rarer and rarer as Pinch's assaults grow more and more frequent.





Chapter Five: The Godly and the Damned

Televangelists



efore Jesus Christ walked the earth, God was spirit, not flesh. But once Christ was born, the Lord was both spirit and flesh. Now, brothers and sisters, the Lord said, "The wages of sin is death." And Jesus was mortal, and He took the sins of the world upon His shoulders, and He died for those sins.

But Jesus Christ died so that we could be free, just as Christ Himself was free. Our bodies die, brothers and sisters — but our souls live forever. When we die, our spirits are free from Satan's torments, and we enter the embrace of the Lord. Even after Jesus died for our sins, His spirit could return to the mortal world, since He had once been flesh. And not just His spirit, brothers and sisters, but the spirits of every man and woman who ever lived!

You see, brothers and sisters, the angels watch over us in the world of the spirit, but the Lord sends our own loved ones to watch over us in the world of the flesh. Hallelujah! Our relatives, though they have passed on, are still here! They are our guardians, defending us from Satan's infernal temptations! Our parents walk among us, our children walk among us, our grandparents and husbands and wives all walk among us!

Find courage, brothers and sisters. We are not alone in the world. These guardian spirits are the answer to our prayers, they are our saviors. Yet, to be saved you must want to be saved. You must take the first step, brothers and sisters! You must give of your-

self; only then can God enter your heart. You must give; only then can His host lead you down the path of virtue.

If you give to the Church of the Divine Right, it's like a signal flare to God Himself. Every donation is a declaration: "Yes, Lord! I want to be saved!" For, not only are you giving selflessly to others, you empower myself and the rest of the Church of the Divine Right to hear other lost souls crying out for salvation.

The Devil's trying to get his hooks in you, brothers and sisters. Call the number at the bottom of your screen and give generously — it's just like calling God Himself, telling Him to dispatch the heavenly host to send ol' Satan packing!

— Excerpt from *The Reverend Marcus Bloom's Divinity Hour*

Old Time Religion in the Modern Age

As we progress further into the "modern era," society leaves an ever-increasing number of people feeling lost and powerless. The systems of government grind on mercilessly, having no time to spare for the needs of the common man. Old cultural taboos crumble and new ones are erected in their place, leaving individuals confused as to what is socially acceptable — or "right." Technology makes quantum advances in an eyeblink, giving us devices we can use but cannot understand. It is natural in such a situation for people to look for solutions, and good old-fashioned religion is the most reliable place



to go for answers to the hard questions the world keeps on asking. Of course, most people are willing to disregard the small detail of the accuracy of those answers, but that's a price they're willing to pay. In the end, they have at least *something* to believe in.

Tailoring itself perfectly to this widespread spiritual hunger, televangelism provides solutions and guidance, all in the immediate and readily accessible comfort of your own home. There's no need to dress up in your Sunday best and join the rest of the congregation in the church downtown. You can lounge at home in your easy chair, scratching yourself through your skivvies, and still receive the word of God just as well — and in Technicolor and stereo sound, to boot.

Whether rightfully or not, televangelists are often seen as being just as interested in passing the plate as they are in saving the sinful. While it's likely a number of TV preachers save money instead of souls, it's unfair to say all televangelists are money-hungry con men. Certainly, the lure of riches has captivated even the most powerful of holy men and women since time immemorial. Televangelists are no better or worse than any "traditional" religious practitioners in this regard.

Still, the immediate and constant access to religious programs via TV and the tendency to see them more as entertainment (lavish sets, glittering robes, light shows and studio audiences, all with the phone number plastered at the bottom of the screen) give the impression that televangelists are little more than crass entertainers. Then again, considering these broadcast preachers' pedigree, this perception isn't terribly surprising.

Origins of Televangelism

Like television itself, televangelism is a fairly recent development. The televangelists of today grew from both revival ministers and carny hucksters (though some observe that there's little difference even between those two types). The burgeoning medium of television was simply a new opportunity for holy men to spread the word to the masses — and collect a few donations from them in the process.

At first, "TV ministers" were relegated to local stations, buried in early Sunday morning time-slots. They preached the fire-and-brimstone sermons common to the traveling revivalists of the old South. What they lacked in finesse they made up for in flash — and that's exactly the sort of preaching that works best on television.

"Holiday Christians," lapsed religious practitioners who normally attended church only on Easter and Christmas, started tuning in the Sunday morning revivals. Watching televangelists gave them their weekly dose of religion and alleviated the guilt that some viewers felt over missing regular church services. The more devout also turned on the televised services as a lead-in and/or chaser to their weekly devotions. Even some bored agnostics found a bit of comfort in the shows. Audience numbers continued to rise.

Furthermore, the majority of viewers grew up learning at least a certain amount of obligation to the litanies and proceedings of church services, including the donation. Some of those watching

the shows further alleviated their guilt by holding to this portion of tradition at least; mailing off a check was as good as giving to the collection plate. A slow but steady trickle of money flowed to shows from the viewing audience, enough to keep many televangelists on the air and to enable the most successful to develop their shows into more solid, established productions.

Even so, this growth was slow and uneven at best. It was not until big-name evangelists like Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell took their ministries to television that the televangelism industry really took off. In just the past few decades, more and more varieties of programs — from gospel shows, shopping channels and talk shows to children's programs and even religious sitcoms — have appeared across dozens of channels, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Video preaching has grown from a handful of scattered, independent programs to an entertainment industry in its own right. And in modern society, entertainment is a powerful social force.

Preaching to the Choir

For the most part, televangelism is to religion what malt liquor is to alcoholic beverages. Most people, given an option, wouldn't choose it — but, on the other hand, you can pick up a six-pack real easy and the stuff gives you a quick fix until the next time you've got a jones on. Same thing goes for us wraiths.

— Jake "Two Cents" Worth, Artificer and DJ, Ectoplas-mic Broadcast Network

Despite massive industry growth, the general goals and methods of televangelists haven't changed much over the years. Televised ministers still preach about salvation and hustle for donations with the same red-faced, hoarse-voiced intensity as in decades past. Even so, as technology and television develop, so too do the techniques and styles of individual televangelists, as they strive to become more refined and to reach ever-wider audiences.

Televangelists have grafted pretty much any style of sermon one can imagine to every kind of entertainment, all in the name of spreading the Gospel. There's the guy standing in a bare studio, his only prop a Bible, as he tells psalm-spiced anecdotes from his own life. There's the couple cohosting a variety show, mixing sermons, hymns, and guests with conversational chats about the Lord. There's the fire-and-brimstone minister ranting about Satan's wickedness and the glory of God, all backed by a neon cross and a turbo-charged gospel choir. There's the group using the pretense of an action show format to show biblical parables, complete with a "God squadroom" and snappy spandex outfits (with high necklines).

All these programs share an in-your-face earnestness that is hard to get beyond. Televangelism doesn't yet possess the slick blend of message-hidden in-eye-candy that is the advertising industry's standard. It stands more readily with the entertainment found in professional wrestling, truck shows and syndicated action programs. Still, such programming has consistently proved its mass appeal, and the televangelists are quick to play off that desire for flashy, easily digested, immediate-gratification presentations. Religion has always been good at giving the people what they want.

Overall, televangelists are as common today as strip malls (and, many would say, possessed of a similar lack of character). However, it would be unwise to dismiss these TV programs out of hand simply because their production values aren't as slick as ad campaigns for beer or long-distance calling. Despite a general lack of subtlety in presentation, televangelism is still a billion-dollar industry, mainly centered on North America but with feelers extending throughout the modern world. The power wielded by these video preachers often equals that of corporations and governments, and tele-parishoners are often more loyal than any employee. With direct access to the masses through television, radio and now Internet media, televangelists possess a powerful tool for social control — and they're not afraid to use it.

Televangelists and Wraiths

I need a big fix of some holy salvation

Oh Lord give me money to burn!

— Big Pig, "Money God"

With all this energetic religion and effervescent piety to be had, one would think the ties between televangelism and denizens of the Shadowlands would be pretty strong. Indeed, such a thought is not far off the mark. The televangelical style of religious expression is still relatively new in the cosmic scheme of things, but it has already shown it can generate a great amount of emotional fervor — and thus Pathos — under the proper conditions. Don't think the Restless haven't noticed.

Still, at first televangelism and its potential uses by the Dead went unnoticed by the Domems and stodgier Gaunts of Stygia. It was some time before these older wraiths noticed many Lemures — still addicted to TV in general and religious programming in particular even after passing through the Shroud — hovering around the living who sat enthralled by gospel shows. It was an odd food chain: Quick soaking up the high-velocity sermons coming from the TV, and wraiths absorbing the Pathos generated by the emotions of the living. The potential was obvious to those Restless who thought about it even for a moment.

Wraiths already knew that hanging out with the Quick in church was a good way to soak up nice, strong emotions. Unfortunately, church services were usually held only weekly. Not only that, but there were also real dangers in going to a church, at least from a ghostly perspective. Often, the sheer faith of congregations warded church buildings against wraiths, but even if a wraith could get inside there were surprising numbers of priests and laity who could sense the presence of the Restless. The unlucky wraith who snuck into church, only to be spotted by a particularly devout mortal, was well on her way to starting a new career as a desk blotter. The Hierarchy sees little humor in breaking the *Dictum Mortuum*, particularly among mortals with the inclination toward ghosthunting and the faith to be effective at it.

Conversely, televangelism enabled wraiths to slip into a mortal's home during one of the numerous programs and draw in

the joy, sorrow or guilt radiating from the viewer. Thousands upon thousands of the Quick tuned in, and although the emotions didn't always come (and the ones that did weren't always strong), a wraith could still sate himself by flitting from house to house on Sunday morning. As long as the Restless avoided interactions with living viewers, no rules were broken and everybody got what they wanted.

Home viewers aside, many televangelists also had crowded studio audiences from whom Pathos could be drawn. While a fair number of the audience members weren't very religious (often they got a few dollars and a buffet to sit and cry "Hallelujah!" on cue), the majority of the crowd got into the sermons wildly. A rich flow of emotional energy emanated from such an audience, enough to sate even the most Pathos-hungry wraith.

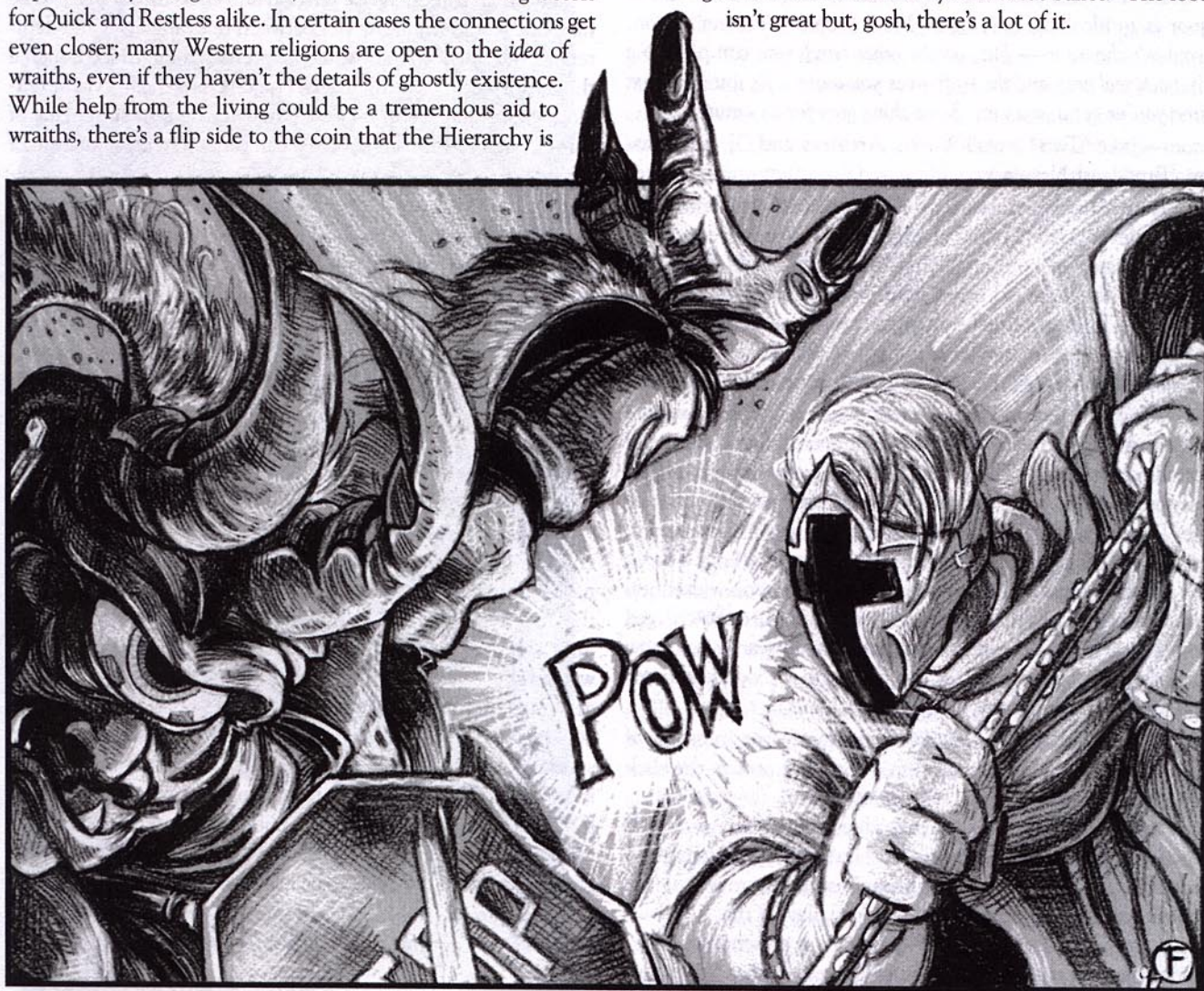
Gaining entry to these program tapings was also much easier for the Dead than going to a church. The studios themselves were almost never consecrated, let alone warded to prohibit wraiths. Like the vast majority of the Quick, televangelists really have no idea of the presence of the Restless.

Regardless of denomination, religion has always been a source of particularly strong emotions, one of its best sustaining factors for Quick and Restless alike. In certain cases the connections get even closer; many Western religions are open to the *idea* of wraiths, even if they haven't the details of ghostly existence. While help from the living could be a tremendous aid to wraiths, there's a flip side to the coin that the Hierarchy is

dreadfully aware of. Groups like the Sons of Tertullian are an extreme but all-too-real example of what can happen when Quick with information meet others with the inclination to act.

Religious programs offer a new possibility for the Restless, though. Televangelists preach to millions spread across the world, but the main intent of these sermons is to excite the viewer into continued watching (and, as always, into donating money). TV preachers aren't trying to guide their flock to a higher understanding; this is religion at the lowest common denominator. Beyond that, there isn't a reliable communication system between minister and flock beyond the donation line. Televangelists and their audiences rarely interact and share information, unlike a secret society or even a priest and his congregation.

These different factors boil down to one essential truth: Televangelists' programs produce existence-sustaining Pathos in the living. Due to the lack of cohesiveness among the participants, however, the danger of their sharing ideas and experiences — and so, the possibility of their discovering the real presence of wraiths — is minimal. In the end, wraiths look at religious programs as a sort of an "all-you-can-eat buffet." The food isn't great but, gosh, there's a lot of it.



Generating and Gaining Pathos

Using televangelists to generate Pathos may not seem like a big deal. So what if they get a bunch of people to be happy or sad? A wraith should be able to get Pathos from almost any living — or even another dead — person. All beings have emotions; it's just a matter of sucking them up, right?

True enough, but much of the time wraiths must hope people have the right emotions at the right time for the Dead to be able to convert them into Pathos. The powerful thing about religion is that very specific emotions can be encouraged rather blatantly. A sermon can be about love, hate, fear, despair, hope or joy — and it's not just one person feeling it, but an entire crowd. What results is a flood of sustaining energy that the Restless on hand can soak up.

Religious programs are great, then, because they streamline sermons to cut right to the emotions. Their goal is to trigger a strong sympathetic response in the viewer, most often with the intent of getting a donation, but whatever the reason, it still amounts to Pathos for the wraith. And with a steady supply of Pathos, a wraith's continued existence is assured.

Arcanoi

Given this situation, the most effective thing for a wraith to do is find a televangelist who encourages emotions that relate closely to the wraith's Passions. It's not unlike trying to choose a suitable house or a good restaurant. One may seem perfect at first glance, but upon closer inspection it just isn't what you're looking for. Rather than hunt throughout the Skinlands for just the right preacher, wraiths sometimes view a conveniently located religious program as a "fixer-upper."

The best tools for such a job are the wraith's Arcanoi. Some powers have little bearing on the Skinlands, and few can manipulate the living in a fashion that directly benefits the Restless. Still, some Arcanoi perfectly accommodate such an effort. Needless to say, the *Dictum Mortuum* forbids all of these techniques.

- **Embody:** A wraith giving a few ghostly touches, a gentle whisper — or even a more vulgar visual manifestation — usually sends the Quick into screaming fits. In the midst of a sermon, however, it can encourage joyful epiphanies or sorrowful outbursts. Even so, Embody must be handled subtly. Whispering a few "Amens" or "The Lord be with you's" to a likely subject in time with the preacher's words can be extremely effective in generating hope, joy, sadness or peace. A riskier ploy with a bigger Pathos payoff is to manifest onstage for just a few seconds in a "Biblical pose" (Jesus on the cross, Mary holding the Christ child). Moliating oneself to look like the stereotypical Christ figure helps the effect tremendously. There is a fine line here; poor timing or use of the wrong words may throw the subject into a fit of terror. Then again, if that's what you're going for....

- **Fatalism:** This one takes a bit more time and effort plus the use of other Arcanoi, but the results are often well worth it. Fatalism works best if used on the televangelist or one of his congrega-

tion to determine the subject's physical condition or some event in his future. By communicating this information to the televangelist through Embody, Keening or Phantasm, the wraith can develop the preacher's reputation as a seer, someone truly touched by God. People's emotional reactions to this "miracle" often stay strong for some time (days, months, years even), so long as the wraith keeps feeding his chosen mouthpiece tidbits of information. Furthermore, it is not necessary for the wraith to reveal his true nature; the clergy member may well think the wraith to be God, or the Goddess, or some other divine power speaking to him.

- **Inhabit:** Similar to Embody in that wraiths "make the spirit of the Lord known," Inhabit grows increasingly useful as religious programs take advantage of modern technology. Generating computer messages, changing TelePrompTer dialogue, adjusting the lights and kicking in sound effects at key moments, even crassly possessing a piece of equipment — all can help steer the show in the direction the wraith wants it to go.

- **Keening:** Perhaps the single most effective Arcanos in directing the Quick to generate the emotions a wraith needs, Keening can accentuate a preacher's sermon. Through proper application, this Arcanos can turn an audience's mild inspiration into a cathartic outpouring of faith (or, certainly, its worry into desperate despair). It can also inspire the televangelist to even greater ecclesiastical heights, thus creating an ever-growing cycle of emotional release. Wise Chanteurs cover up their efforts by turning up the juice only when there is background music or a full chorus going; otherwise, an awkward pause in the sermon can leave them hanging out to dry.

- **Outrage:** Similar to Pandemonium or Inhabit in certain respects, Outrage can perform basic "poltergeist" activities: playing with elements of the set or even supporting the weak and infirm so that they may walk again (at least long enough for the wraith to absorb their surprise and happiness). While Outrage certainly lends itself to violent effects, such use isn't conducive to repeat performances and tends to produce Angst instead of Pathos in the audience.

- **Pandemonium:** Really useful only if a wraith wants to generate darker emotions (fear, anger, despair), Pandemonium can wreak havoc on the set. The long-term effects are usually downward-spiraling ratings for the program and a visit by Legionnaires to the wraith. On the other hand, if the targeted show is a favorite smorgasbord for a wraith's enemies, it might well be worth it to upset the apple cart just once.

- **Phantasm:** By visiting an audience member (or, usually more effectively, the televangelist himself), the wraith can manipulate dreams into "holy visions" or "epiphanies," which the subject then joyfully (or fearfully, depending on the wraith's intent) recounts on the program. Such a telling generates not only the desired Pathos in the subject, but also a sympathetic emotional response from the audience. Phantasm is quite possibly the most effective Arcanos to use when dealing with televangelists, with the possible exception of Keening. In cases

where the Hierarchy may get involved, the use and origins of Phantasm can be difficult for Legionnaires to track.

• **Puppetry:** For wraiths not willing to sit idly by and let the living do all the work, Puppetry can get immediate results. There are two main options available here. The first is the "traditional possession," where the wraith is "driven out" of the host body through the televangelist's pious actions (during which the wraith keeps up the charade long enough to drink in the audience's feelings of hope, fear and relief). The second is to possess the preacher himself and take over the show. A wraith in such a position can dictate the program's direction (and, by extension, the audience's feelings). As always, wraiths engaging in Puppetry should be prepared for the results of their actions. Still, through clever handling, even after the wraith relinquishes control of the preacher she may still reap beneficial Pathos. It would not be surprising that a televangelist subjected to possession might milk the event for weeks, encouraging feelings of indignation, hate and triumph due to his victory over the forces of darkness.

Note: A well-established use of Puppetry involves taking over audience members, then having these consorts speak in tongues. Such an event is liable to bring the audience's fervor to a whole new level.

The Danger of Discovery

You know what bugs me most about televangelists? Okay, I'll tell you. They talk and talk — and believe me, if you think I talk a lot, I've got nothing on them — about the "hereafter" and "heaven" and all that happy crappy. They paint a real rosy picture for the slack-jawed masses sitting on the couch with one hand on the Bible and the other on the remote. I'm here to say that the afterlife ain't all it's cracked up to be. I'd love to see one of these guys tell it like it is; let the Quick know what's really in store for 'em when they go to their final reward. You bet your sweet ass we'd see some devotion and humility then.

— Jake "Two Cents" Worth

The threat televangelists pose to wraiths is admittedly slight. The chances of televangelists not only discovering the existence of spirits across the Shroud but also getting anyone to do anything about it is rather slim. The whole point of televangelism's success, after all, is that watching TV is easier than *doing* something. Still, as more and more Restless indulge in this religious Pathos-poaching, the likelihood of discovery increases.

A more immediate issue for wraiths is intervention by the Hierarchy. The Restless avail themselves increasingly of the Pathos-generating services offered through religious programming, confident that televangelists are intent only on bringing in money and performing and are unlikely to stumble onto any wraithly presence across the Shroud. These wraiths don't feel chowing down on Pathos from video congregations is even close to defying Charon's Code in the first place. The Restless sustain their existence by absorbing emotions, after all; what's the crime in experiencing (or even manipulating) the emotions of a televangelist and his audience?

Of course, the Hierarchy has its own opinions on this sort of behavior, and it tries to keep tabs on such deeds for breaches of the *Dictum Mortuum*. Despite the organization's best intentions ("best" being a subjective term), the Hierarchy's capabilities and resources are already at the breaking point. The increasingly flagrant abuses of Arcanoi in interactions with televangelists should be a clear signal that problems are going to arise sooner or later — if not between living and Dead, then between solo wraiths and the Hierarchy.

It's almost a mathematical equation. The more wraiths there are that hang around televangelists, the greater the likelihood of the Restless being discovered. Obviously, the temptation can be great for a wraith to manipulate a broadcast minister. This type of thing has been going on for centuries, incidentally, from ancient times through the Middle Ages; troupes of Restless or even solitary wraiths performed anything from subtle nudging to outright control of the Quick. Such abuses, of course, ultimately led to Charon's establishing the *Dictum Mortuum* and the opening of a new and different can of worms.

Nowadays, using a televangelist as a tool, wraiths have access to hundreds of thousands of souls when in centuries past, she would have had access only to thousands. Even if the wraith's possession or other manipulation of the Quick is done with good intentions — perhaps encouraging the living to make their lives better and so pass to Transcendence upon dying, instead of suffering in the limbo of the Shadowlands — the act of meddling itself is still a blatant violation of Charon's Code.

What makes this situation more potentially disastrous is that if televangelists do learn of the Shadowlands' existence, they have tremendous communication tools at their disposal with which to spread the news. Televangelists could proclaim across the airwaves that ghosts do indeed exist, thereby bringing the attention of millions to bear on the Shadowlands.

Certainly, the vast majority of the world's population doesn't take the words of televangelists seriously, but there are still millions of people who do, mostly concentrated in North America. The conservative forces that constitute most of the American religious programming networks have shown their political and economic power in the past over issues regarding abortion, free speech, gay rights and gun control. Despite scorn and derision from the rest of society, if enough respected figures from the religious right endorsed a campaign for the expulsion of "devils" from our mortal world, thousands of believers would likely swell the ranks in what could well lead to a new holy war against the Dead. Even though the people of today like to think they live in an age of enlightenment, the superstitions of our ancestors are not easily cast aside.

Even worse, once the ball got rolling on this ghost hunt other organizations, such as the aforementioned Sons of Tertullian, as well as the Benandanti or even the Paranormal Research Wing, would probably get in the act after televangelists started the show. Most dangerous of all for wraiths, with a less skeptical populace behind their efforts, these "ghostbusters" might even begin to operate in public, hunting down the Restless without fear of temporal reprisal. History has seen many instances when governments and private

forces have used religion as an excuse to promote their own agendas — and there are certainly enough supernatural beings with a dislike for wraiths who have their fingers in the political pie.

The largest saving grace televangelists have is that they are so completely oblivious to even the possibility that wraiths might exist. As long as the Restless aren't discovered by a truly pious minister with tremendous respect from his virtual congregation, the Shadowlands should be safe....

The Church of the Divine Right

I was once a man full of evil and wickedness. Then came the day that I drove, weak and blind from the devil's liquor, into a lake and drowned. I should have died! I had squandered God's gift of life on decadent pleasures, on sins of the flesh. I was not fit for Heaven; only Hell would take me. The world darkened one last time, and I felt the cold, clutching hands of Satan's minions intent on dragging me down.

Yet even for a wretch like me, the Lord still offers forgiveness. His angels came down and, swinging their bright swords and sundering the darkness with their holy light, they drove off the demons. Free of their hideous, chilling grasp, I felt myself drawn away from the light that beckoned me. I returned to my body, alive once again and in the care of kindly physicians. I remembered clearly one of the angels; she had raised one hand in farewell as I left limbo, and although I could make out no features on her face I knew she looked on me kindly.

It was all clear to me then. Even though I had wasted His gift, the Lord was giving me another chance at life. Then it was that I determined I would not let Him down again. At that moment, I dedicated my life to God and to helping others attain the peace that I have found.

— The Reverend Marcus Bloom, foreword to *The Right Path*

The Reverend Marcus Bloom, aka Marcus Blaylock, was a technical school dropout from Columbus, Georgia. He claims to have had a near-death experience when he almost died in a car crash. Since that time, he has started his own following with the Church of the Divine Right based in Atlanta and has written two books, *The Right Path* and *Angels of the Lord*. Bloom also has a weekly religious program called *The Reverend Marcus Bloom's Divinity Hour*. All of which would be unimportant save for one factor: Marcus Bloom can sense the presence of wraiths.

The Reverend's ongoing theme is that the Lord sends the spirits of dead relatives and loved ones to watch over the living. Bloom claims that he can see them all around us, guiding us and protecting us from harm. The rest of us, however, cannot see them because we are overcome with sin. We must "walk the right path" of compassion and love for ourselves and our fellow man. Only then may we see the goodness around us. Then, when we die, we may rejoin our loved ones in the afterlife and help those we leave behind.

This concept isn't terribly new to religion, but Bloom's approach has a frankness to it that many find appealing. His

manner and his program show the rough edges of his upbringing, but his message speaks to an increasing number of people.

The Atlanta Citadel has only recently learned of the Church of the Divine Right, although local Heretic cults have been attending Bloom's sermons for some time. His words concern the Necropolis greatly, but the bureaucracy there remains unsure of what to do about the situation. The only plus wraiths can see is that Bloom seems positively disposed toward them, but even that sort of attention is unwelcome. Most galling of all, it seems Grim Legion Doomslayers were the ones who liberated Bloom from Spectres upon his "untimely

demise," making the Hierarchy itself indirectly responsible for his return to the living and ability to pierce the Fog.

Stygia has not yet been informed of these events. The Atlanta Council of Anacreons is closely watching Bloom and frantically seeking a solution to the situation before it gets any worse.

In the meantime, Reverend Marcus Bloom continues to spread his weekly message of caring and light, and *The Right Path* is in its fifth printing.

Reverend Marcus Bloom

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Visionary

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Awareness 2, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Spiritual Awareness 3, Streetwise 1

Skills: Drive 1, Leadership 2, Performance 3

Spectres and Religion

Dealing with clergy has dire enough consequences for wraiths without any malevolent forces jumping into the mix. The potential threat here to wraiths, of course, is virtually an engraved invitation to Spectres. The entire goal of all Spectres is to spread Oblivion. With each wraith who is destroyed Oblivion grows a little more, and Spectres would be more than happy to lend a hand to televangelists if it might lead to widespread ghosthunting. With a few manifestations on camera, some choice possessions of ministers, and several audience members puking up plasm, a handful of Spectres could put the fear of God into the living right quick. These actions would prove to the Quick that spirits are malevolent boogums and would engender a "no mercy" attitude toward dispatching wraiths in any way possible.

All in a day's work for a Spectre....

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 1, Computer 2, Enigmas 1, Occult 2, Religion 3

Backgrounds: Resources 3, Status 3, Sidekicks (three at 2; his personal staff)

Numina: Clairvoyance 2, True Faith 1

Willpower: 7

Health: 7

Image: The good reverend is a tall, stocky African-American man in his mid-30s. He has an open, expressive face and an exuberant personality. Though he has his detractors, everyone who meets Bloom admits he's an eminently likable fellow. He wears cream-colored suits, all well tailored to flatter his tending-to-portly frame. Still, his clothing is not flamboyantly expensive. He accents each suit with one of his assortment of wildly diverse (and sometimes distracting) ties.

Roleplaying Hints: You're a people person. You greet each person with warmth and inquire about his day, with true interest in how it went. You've been given a new chance at life, and you're determined to make the most of it. Since the scales fell from your eyes and you became able to see the wonders that exist beyond this mortal coil, you've vowed to share the truth with the world. While most of the funds flowing into your ministry are cycled into various humanitarian pursuits, you see earthly riches as your just dues. You are a messenger for the Lord, and as such you are entitled to a certain privileged status.



The Giovanni

Now I know the perfect kiss

Is the kiss of death.

— New Order, "Perfect Kiss"



raiths who come in contact with the children of Caine are most likely to deal with the Giovanni clan. Though members of other, more esoteric bloodlines possess the means to contact wraiths (the Kiasyd, Samedi and Nagaraja also use the Discipline of Necromancy), there are hardly enough of these vampires around to field a softball team, let alone pose a serious threat to the myriad denizens of the Shadowlands. The Giovanni, however, are quite a different case.

From the Ashes

The Giovanni were originally members of a clan known as the Cappadocians, which spent much of its unlife struggling to obtain the "answer" to death. (As any wraith can attest, death doesn't have a single answer — it's not even a question — but the Cappadocians were nonetheless impassioned in their pursuit.) What the Cappadocians lacked was a consistent and reliable connection to the Shadowlands. Thus, their studies were almost universally mired in the temporal world of the Skinlands.

In the late 10th century, a cabal of Venetian Necromancers came to the attention of the Cappadocian vampires. Having grown rich on war profiteering, these Necromancers were simply a degenerate family who had grown jaded with all of the wealth they had accumulated. In their depravity, they engaged in the blasphemies of Necromancy, hoping to achieve a forbidden thrill and nothing more.

But they were good at it.

So good, in fact, that the Cappadocians, regarded by vampires as the Clan of Death, Embraced these Necromancers in hopes of gaining new insight through the Black Art the Giovanni practiced. In the long run, however, this act proved to be folly, as the scheming Giovanni turned like rabid dogs on their Cappadocian sires and hunted them to extinction during the early nights of the Renaissance.

The Family

Giovanni vampires are all Embraced from the Giovanni family, who even now enjoy the status of merchant princes. However, there are many different branches of the Giovanni family tree, not all of which bear the Giovanni moniker.

The main branch of the family is centered in Venice. Their "base of operations," as it were, is a gigantic, sprawling *loggia* known as the Mausoleum. Riddled with secret passages, hidden tombs and a crisscrossed labyrinth of subterranean tunnels, the Mausoleum bears an uncanny resemblance to the Labyrinth in the opinion of wraiths who have seen both. For wraiths who pass too

close to the Mausoleum, however, torment is imminent, as the Restless are the stock in trade of the Giovanni.

The Mausoleum is a strong Haunt (Memoriam: 5), though it is hardly a refuge for those wraiths unaffiliated with the clan. The great negativity of the area and the oppressive quantities of Angst that surround it make the Mausoleum unpleasant at best. It is even rumored that numerous "windows to Oblivion" open sporadically beneath its floors and that "trap doors" to the Tempest drag unsuspecting wraiths into the Sea of Shadows. Those few Giovanni vampires and family members who end up dwelling in the Shadowlands are expected to aid the clan after they "cross over," and, indeed, many of them, warped by their proximity to Oblivion, become Spectres. The aid they often lend takes the form of enticing other wraiths near to the Mausoleum, where Giovanni Necromancy gracefully snatches up the unsuspecting.

Giovanni who become wraiths are almost exclusively Renegades, and they avoid the Stygian Hierarchy altogether. That is, they become Renegades if they're not Doppelgangers, Mortwights or Nephwracks.

The Horrors of Necromancy

Necromancy is a vampiric Discipline that focuses on the manipulation of wraiths and their environment. Rumors of its power spread like balefire unleashed in the Shadowlands. At its very lowest levels of power, it can be used to command a wraith to act against her will; at higher levels of power, it may be used to bind wraiths to physical objects, prevent them from using their Arcanoi and even trap them in mortal bodies that are not their own. One of the rarely reported but greatly feared manifestations of Necromancy is its ability to "strike" wraiths physically from the Skinlands.

Giovanni vampires also commonly augment their Necromantic knowledge with other Kindred blood magics known as Thaumaturgy. By combining the best (worst?) aspects of their Disciplines, many Giovanni are able to create elaborate rituals that affect wraiths even when the vampire is not present. Grisly stories abound of severed heads magically enhanced to beam forth a light that draws wraiths like moths to flame. Other rituals include those that bind a wraith to a certain place in the manner of a mindless drone and terrifying rites that bring the Shadow to prominence.

The Endless Night

Throw your mind in the sea

Eternity doesn't last very long.

— Swans, "Mind/Body/Light/Sound"

The true aim of the Giovanni clan is one they jealously guard from their fellow Kindred. During the early nights of the family's involvement with the Cappadocians, several of them assisted that clan's founder with his deluded goal: to become God by consuming the soul of God. Over the centuries, many Giovanni became disillusioned with this absurd pursuit, and by the time the purge of the Cappadocians came to be, the Giovanni took their knowledge and applied it differently.

Whereas Cappadocius wanted to become God himself, the Giovanni want to remake themselves in the image of God on Earth.

Thus began the Giovanni aspiration toward the Endless Night. In their eschatological studies as the childer of Cappadocius, the Giovanni

managed to turn up several documents that alluded to the possibility of "peeling back" the Shroud between the lands of the living and the lands of the Dead. The most lucid of these documents ("doomsday prophecies" of this sort of tend to turn their authors into lunatics) is known as the Khazar's Diary, and it is mumbled about cryptically by those Restless old- or well-traveled enough to know of it.

In essence, the Endless Night is the utter removal of the Shroud. In this eventuality, the Skinlands and the Underworld would unite. As masters of Necromancy, the Giovanni would then become kings among a populace that could not, for the most part, manipulate the wraiths who would accompany the conjoining of the two worlds. Already, the Giovanni wield a terrible power over their foes. Were the Skinlands and the Underworld to integrate, that power would increase exponentially, as Necromantic command of wraiths would then have an even more tangible effect on its victims.

Needless to say, few wraiths are proponents of this plan (though very few actually know of its existence). Although they would find themselves united with their Fetters once again, the risk of those Fetters being destroyed at the hands of callous Giovanni is too much for many wraiths to bear — and that's before the question of eternal servitude gets raised.

Using Necromancy Without Vampire

Storytellers without access to Vampire source material on Necromancy are encouraged to create effects for it that would best enhance their stories. What follows is a rough system for emulating the functions of the Discipline. Simply assign Kindred antagonists (Giovanni or otherwise) an appropriate level of this pseudo-Trait as you see fit, in order to simulate the degree to which they may affect the Restless Dead.

Details on Necromancy may be found on page 282 of *Wraith: The Oblivion*. Further information on Necromancy may be found in the *Vampire Players Guide*, *Blood and Fire* and *Clanbook: Giovanni*. Rules for Necromancy in the Dark Medieval world may be found in *Clanbook: Cappadocian*.

Haunters, of course, are the notable exception. Giovanni frequently enlist the aid of this Guild's members, as the two groups desire the same result, if only superficially. Despite the fact that they share goals, Giovanni relations with Haunters are commonly as abusive and dictatorial as they are with other wraiths. After all, the Giovanni reason, why pay for what you can get for free?

Giovanni Among the Dark Kingdoms

Like lice, the Giovanni have spread everywhere within the World of Darkness. By extending its corrupt tendrils across the globe, Clan Giovanni has managed to exert some small influence over practically every bit of commerce that takes place on Earth. And of course, that commerce includes the traffic in souls that brings them ever closer to their dark goal.

Stygia — The Dark Kingdom of Iron

Western culture is the origin and the seat of power of Clan Giovanni. Their influence stretches from as far east as Greece to the west coast of the United States. Giovanni presence is strong in these places — most branches of the clan and family originate in or migrate to these locales.

Naturally, the "parent" Giovanni family is strongest, with interests in nearly every country. Among mortals, Giovanni are renowned for their financial investments, which are, in turn, known for their security, high yield and unscrupulousness. When it comes to business, Giovanni tend to be...flexible...with their morality. Among wraiths and Kindred, however, the true nature of the Necromancers is no secret, even if the details are a bit hazy. Most vampires, for instance, have no idea that the Endless Night is the real motivation of the Necromancers, though the Giovanni pursue this end with zeal. Wraiths who serve the Giovanni, on the other hand, are all too knowledgeable of the clan's goals. Unfortunately (for vampires other than the Giovanni, that is), wraiths who are forced into Giovanni servitude seldom survive the experience intact. Thus, very few wraiths are able to disseminate throughout Kindred society accurate details of Giovanni machinations. These "squealers" are also often pursued by malicious ex-Giovanni Spectres and members of the Haunters' Guild.

Giovanni from the mortal branch of the family known as the Rosselini practice a more bizarre version of Necromancy. Though its effects are the same as those of normal Necromancy, the Rosselini method may be said to "create" wraiths more reliably. Masters of torture and brutality, the Rosselini mortify the bodies of their subjects, sometimes killing them. When the poor victim dies, the Rosselini try to capture and bind the departing soul, though they are not always successful. Many wraiths who somehow escape sink almost immediately into Spectrehood following these grim practices, adding to the burgeoning ranks of the Mortwights.

A few minor branches of the Giovanni family, mostly lineages from which the clan elders make ghouls and recruit low-

ranking Kindred, also practice Necromancy, but these sorcerers are extremely rare. Though hardly as powerful or well-versed as the full-blooded Giovanni, such lesser Necromancers can still make things difficult for an unwitting wraith. In situations where the Necromantic caliber of a Giovanni affiliate is unknown, wise Restless flee for safety, as it is better to err on the side of caution than to end up a casualty of a bungled attempt at Spirit Mastery.

The Dark Kingdom of Obsidian

Members of House Ix Chel and House Xipe Totec speak of extensive dealings with a member of Clan Giovanni known as Pochtli. Hideously ugly, Pochtli is said to resemble the ancient Mesoamerican gods of the ancient Aztecs and Mayans. Pochtli, his brood and their ghoul servants (known as *camozotzes*) have better relations with the Restless of the Obsidian Kingdom than most other Giovanni have with the wraiths of their Underworld demesnes.

This symbiosis exists for a reason. The local Giovanni family, the Pisanob, are the descendents of Aztec and Mayan priests, who regularly practiced human sacrifice and primitive Necromancy during the days and nights of these empires. As such, they are tied into the ways and cultures of the ghosts of the Obsidian Kingdom in a way more "traditional" Giovanni could never imagine. For example, they know and revere Ometeotl, and they are versed in the history of Mixcoatl. They sometimes even help the New Sun defend itself from the depredations of the Stygian Heretics. The Pisanob are also avid researchers into the Endless Night; they envision the night when they may freely commune with spirits of ancestors long gone and learn the secrets of the ages.

Which is not to say that the wraiths of the Flayed Lands enjoy an idyllic relationship with the Pisanob. The latter are, after all, Giovanni, and the Giovanni empire is built on the backs of wraiths; this situation is doubly true in the often impoverished Skinlands of South America. People there regularly turn from the temporal to the spiritual as a route to power. The Restless of the Flayed Lands eke out dangerous existences by lurking perilously close to Pisanob death-rites. They hope to siphon a bit of the power released there for themselves without revealing their presence to the Necromancers.

Another group of Obsidian Kingdom Giovanni are the Hidalgo, who live in Mexico, the northernmost reaches of the Flayed Lands. These Necromancers are base and vile in their rites; they often mutilate their mortal sacrifices because of an earnest belief that it aids their sorceries. Though there are only one or two vampires drawn from the ranks of the Hidalgo, most of the extended family practices at least a rudimentary form of Necromancy.

The Dark Kingdom of Jade

Some wraiths are surprised when they learn of Giovanni activity in the Jade Kingdom, which many believe it to be the exclusive province of the *Kuei-jin*. Learning their error is often a lesson with unpleasant consequences for ignorant Restless.

The branch of the Giovanni that governs clan affairs in the Jade Kingdom is the della Passaglia family. They are masters of Asian culture, another fact that provides quite a shock to uninformed wraiths. The family has been active in the Orient since the days of Marco Polo; indeed, a della Passaglia supposedly served as a teamster in the trader-hero's caravan. It is in such a capacity that the della Passaglia best serve their clan — in mercantile interests first, as Necromancers in the Jade Kingdom second. They are unparalleled lords of the black market who import and export without the troublesome snooper of customs officials.

Della Passaglia Giovanni do still pursue Necromancy in Zhongguo, though. Of particular interest to them is the familial ancestor worship practiced in the Jade Kingdom, as they are themselves bound by similar traditions in their own family (though it is suspected by the wraiths of the Yellow Springs that Giovanni ancestor worship is actually more like familial guilt stoked by generations of stagnation). Also noteworthy is the seeming weakness of the Shroud in the Jade Kingdom — though very little is known about the supernatural residents of the East, it seems that the indigenous vampires and ghosts share a good deal more in common than their Western counterparts. The della Passaglia find it peculiar that these dark stalkers of the Jade Kingdom even share a name: the *Kuei-jin* are the Kindred of the East while the *kuei* are the Jade Kingdom's hungry ghosts.

Though they excel at assimilating the cultural and social mores of the Eastern folk, the della Passaglia are still Westerners — more specifically Europeans — at heart. They have not inter-

mingled with the local populace (at least not “officially”), and they seem to be doomed to remain forever outside the true paradigm of the Yellow Springs. While they do demonstrate phenomenal skill at manipulating the wraiths of the Jade Kingdom, they seem to lack comprehension of this world outside their own traditions.

It is this very ignorance that makes the della Passaglia so potentially dangerous to the Restless of the Jade Kingdom. These Necromancers usually resort to brutish, vulgar tactics when dealing with wraiths because direct results are the family's main concern, protocols be damned. Such rough treatment sometimes causes a wraith's *p'o* to shift out of balance and into prominence, which can prove disastrous for both parties.

Ultimately, nothing good can come of the della Passaglia presence in Zhongguo, at least from the perspective of the wraiths there. In the long term, these Giovanni also wish to hasten the Endless Night, which would of course place them in a position of dominance. Given that the rest of the clan is equally as deplorable as its Asian emissaries (if not more so), very few Jade Kingdom wraiths wish to aid them. Were the Giovanni to succeed, it would spell slavery for the Jade Kingdom's wraiths.

The Dark Kingdom of Ivory

Giovanni presence in Africa is maintained by a branch of the family known as the Ghiberti. They have fallen a bit into disfavor with several of the more hardline, mainstream



Giovanni for the Ghiberti habit of intermarrying with the local populace, a practice not viewed favorably by Giovanni who possess racist outlooks.

Nevertheless, the Ghiberti have contributed much to the Giovanni clan's knowledge of non-European Necromantic studies. It came as quite a shock to the Giovanni when they learned that wraiths from the Ivory Kingdom are less susceptible to Necromancy than Restless elsewhere. Ghiberti scholars attribute this discrepancy to the four-sided concept of the Ivory Kingdom wraith: Because other wraiths are governed by only two aspects (the Psyche and the Shadow), normal Necromantic practice has only to set one side of a wraith's being against the other to achieve its desired effect. In the Dark Kingdom of Ivory, *abambo* believe themselves to be four-part entities that include the soul (Psyche), the shadowself (Shadow), the dreamself (Emotion) and the heartlife (Fetters and connection to the Skinlands). This different paradigm clashes with the precepts of other Restless cultures, and although the difference is not radical, it is significant enough to demand a restructuring of Necromantic practice.

The Ghiberti pursue this practice, as they are responsible for keeping the clan aware of Restless activity in the Ivory Kingdom. They are also masters of the variant of Necromancy that allows control over the native *abambo*. Treacherous childer, the Ghiberti have not fully explained the nature of the *abambo* to their Giovanni sires — as few non-Ghiberti Giovanni actually have truck with the Ivory Kingdom, they have no need of the finer details of wraithly status there. Or so the Ghiberti reason....

The Ghiberti pursue the Endless Night as avidly as do the other families, but for a different motive. Once the effect is achieved, they should effectively be able to carve out a niche for themselves in Africa, as their own specialized Necromancy

should be much more potent than the "normal" Necromancy that Giovanni outside their bloodline practice.

Another minor family of the Giovanni, similar to the Hidalgo, are the Beryn. Although they do not specialize in Necromancy as do the Ghiberti, they are nonetheless active in the Africa as merchants and traders. The Beryn branch of the Giovanni family claims only six or seven Kindred, and even they

focus more on economic success than Necromantic insight.

Haunters and the Giovanni

While it may seem that the Haunters and the Giovanni have a common goal in wanting to unite the Shadowlands and the Skinlands, no two more truly disparate groups exist among the Quick, the Dead and the undead.

Haunters are the masters of Pandemonium, both as a concept and as an Arcanos. Their vision of the unification is one of chaos and mayhem populated by weirdness and incomprehensible "laws" of physics. Though not necessarily violent or dangerous, this conjoinment of worlds in which no physical law would be permanent and no outcome could be guaranteed would prove terrifying and inscrutable.

The Giovanni, on the other hand, see the Endless Night as a source of vast opportunity. As masters of Necromancy, their own power would achieve an untold level and they could exert their whims on the world as they liked. Their vision certainly would include cadres of subservient wraiths and Quick, hardly a promising future for members of either group.

Neither the Haunters nor the Giovanni wish to see the other faction succeed (not that they're wholly aware of each other's movements or goals), though they will work together on occasion. These relationships are typically short and utilitarian: As long as they are of use to each other, Haunters and Giovanni continue to exchange services. The moment ideologies and goals diverge, however, all bets are off and it's back to the trenches.

The Harbingers of Skulls

Of late, a few wraiths, particularly ones in the Flayed Lands and the Italian Skinlands, have observed a peculiar occurrence. Kindred calling themselves the "Harbingers of Skulls" have been seen wandering through the Shadowlands, canvassing the local Restless for any information they may have on the Giovanni.

These gaunt vampires wear skull-masks and are never seen in numbers; they are universally solitary. The few reliable accounts of their sightings attribute Necromantic powers to them as well, though it is of a different nature than that employed by the Giovanni.

What these vampires are after is a mystery, as is their origin. Precisely what their presence portends is unknown as well, but they are said to "burn with the fires of vengeance" when their ire is aroused.

The Giovanni and Wraith: Storytelling

Members of Clan Giovanni are among the most terrifying foes from the Skinlands that wraiths will ever face. As most denizens of the Skinlands lack the ability to contact the Restless Dead, wraiths do not typically have to fear the movements of anyone who dwells among the Quick. Unless a Fetter is threatened, wraiths can take or leave the events of the Skinlands.

This formula breaks down when the Giovanni are involved. A depraved family of once-mortal Necromancers, the Giovanni have

learned to affect the Underworld through the use of their vampiric Disciplines. They have no qualms about using these powers for their own benefit; in fact, clan policy encourages individual Giovanni to do so. The use of Necromancy has enabled the Giovanni to attain the position of wealth and unseen power that they currently hold, but they are never satisfied and continuously exert their metaphysical might to aid their success in the physical world.

Giovanni as Antagonists

The most common interactions between Giovanni and wraiths are quite adversarial in nature. As jaded as the Giovanni are, and as accustomed as they are to inflicting their whims upon whomever they wish, few Giovanni care that wraiths are still human souls. The Dead are the coin of the realm to the Necromancers, suitable for use as tools or sources of information and little more. Which is not to say that Giovanni take wraiths for granted — quite the contrary! Wraiths are vital to the continued success of the clan. Were the Giovanni suddenly to lose their one-sided rapport with the Underworld, they would be without a hope in the maelstrom of Kindred politics. Nonetheless, that same rapport is indicative of the relationships drawn between Giovanni and their “servants,” the wraiths.

When a wraith deals with a Giovanni, it will typically be from the business end of a pact of servitude. Such manipulations, of course, incense most wraiths, and Giovanni accordingly make excellent antagonists and foes. How does a Circle react to being at the beck and call of a certain Giovanni? What do they do when he seizes their Fetters in order to have greater command over them? His very presence may serve their Shadows’ Dark Passions by subjecting their Psyches to degradation and blatant manipulation. How do the wraiths eliminate the offending vampire once they have decided that his depredations are unbearable?

A Giovanni vampire also provides excellent opportunities to test the morality of the wraith he commands. What happens when the Necromancer forces a wraith to haunt the home of someone she loved in life? How does the wraith react when she is bound to the Necromancer and must accompany him on his missions of murder and treachery? How about when she is charged with the responsibility of providing information that she knows will be used to serve the Giovanni’s own villainous ends?

Giovanni as Allies

Not all Giovanni are incorrigibly evil or self-interested, just most of them.

That said, those few Giovanni with altruistic moralities can be valuable allies to a Circle of wraiths. Because they are actually physically present in the Skinlands, Giovanni can do things that most wraiths cannot. Who better to recover and protect a Fetter than someone who may readily touch and guard it?

The only problem with these relationships is that they can turn ugly at a moment’s notice. After all, a Giovanni has no need to actually reciprocate a wraith’s aid — she may simply resort to Necromancy and force the wraith to comply.

Necromancy and the Story

In the hands of a skilled Storyteller, Necromancy becomes a frightening force in direct opposition to the players’ characters. Necromancy is an excellent vehicle for invoking fear of the unknown, as it is uncommon enough for most wraiths to be ignorant of its evil lure. Simply revealing that a character *may* be a Necromancer is often enough to send a chill down the spines of the characters (not to mention the players), as they have no idea how powerful she may be or what effects she may invoke.

Necromancy is also a powerful force for Oblivion, as wraiths who find themselves under its sway typically lose the ability to act of their own volition. Bound by a will other than their own, many wraiths succumb to frustration, anger or despair, and it is these dark passions (and Passions) that can feed the power of the Shadow. More than a few Restless have been led into Oblivion by the subtle promises of a Shadow to free them from their Necromantic predicaments.

Finally (and less dramatically), Necromancy can be used to steer characters on the path the story demands. Are the characters avoiding the obvious? Do they refuse to talk to an important contact? Do they shy away from a locale they should, for the sake of the story, visit? Never worry! Simply have a Necromancer force them to do it against their wills! Guidance in this manner should never be blatant — no Necromancer is going to watch the

Ivory Kingdom Necromancy

To simulate the differences between the variant of Necromancy practiced by Ghiberti Kindred and other Giovanni, the Storyteller is advised to increase the difficulties of all Necromancy rolls by two for Giovanni unfamiliar with the Bush of Ghosts. Controlling the *abambo* without adequate knowledge of their quadripartite state is not something that most Giovanni can do.

Mechanical Differences

It should be noted that the *effects* of Necromancy in the Bush of Ghosts do not differ from those elsewhere. The only differences are in the *implementation*, which is the source of the disparity. There is no “alternate” Necromancy available to Ghiberti Giovanni; there is only an “Ivory Kingdom” specialization, which is available once the Necromancer achieves the fourth level of mastery in the Discipline.

Shadowlands vigilantly for errant player characters and set them on the right track. Very rarely is a Necromancer the "old man in the tavern" who gives the characters a map. He may, however, need to give a vital message to another denizen of the Underworld, perhaps one who resides in Stygia. It could be that the Necromancer coerces a wraith into revealing a secret that the others in her Circle did not know. Whatever form it takes, this guidance should never manifest as railroading the players: Make them appreciate their free will by stripping them of it temporarily, don't just arbitrarily send them down the right path.

Deals with the Devil: Spectre Cults



h, this ain't the worst I've seen."

This statement indicated to me that a long string of examples was soon to follow. Unfortunately, I was correct.

"I saw this one guy," the orderly continued, "who was so whacked he had '666' carved right into his forehead! Claimed he was some kind of vessel for an alien. If you ask me," — which I didn't — "all these guys are just plain nuts." Ah, I said to myself, a reasoned, professional diagnosis. No wonder this idiot was working the graveyard shift.

"Is that the strangest case you have seen?" I asked, hoping against hope that that would in fact be the case.

"No, no..." I could see the stress of actual thought forming deep ravines across this genius' forehead. "One guy spent five months here, and the whole time he was covered in blood from head to toe. Weird thing was that none of the blood was his and we couldn't clean it off. No matter how much we bathed this guy, the blood would just come back. Twenty minutes of work and it was back in five. Strange shit."

"Couldn't the doctors find a cause for this condition?"

"Well, they didn't find out what the cause was, but they found a cure. About 50,000 volts. The guy electrocuted himself down in the basement. Plugged himself direct into the main line." He chuckled silently to himself, probably remembering some humorous detail. "But the strangest one, the one that really gets me, is this new one. The guy you're here for. He don't talk much. He's real polite, doesn't yell or scream like some of the others, but that's the weirdest part. See, I could understand some of these freaks killing a bunch of people, but this guy is so nice it's hard to think he did those things you say he did. I mean, he says please and thank you and I'm sorry; I kinda have trouble seeing him cutting up a whole family like they was pot roast."

"Well, you know what they say about the quiet ones." I cracked a forced smile. "So, is there anything else weird about this guy?"

"Yeah. We have a hard time keeping track of him."

"How's that?" I said, feeling a growing sense of alarm.

"Well, this one time he was supposed to be out in the yard. You see, we give the patients some outdoor time if they behave. Anyway, he was supposed to be in the yard, but the orderly, Jimmy, said he couldn't find him anywhere. I spotted him later up in the administrative office. He apologized and said he had gotten lost."

"Don't you keep those offices locked?"

"Locked? Yeah, we even have a few guards in between the yard and the offices. I got no idea how he got up there." Shaking his head, the orderly continued to lead me down the hall. At a door marked 23, he stopped and gestured proudly. "Well," he said, "here's your boy."

I looked past him and saw what I'd expected to see, but that didn't make the view any more pleasant. "Have you kept this door locked," I asked. He nodded stupidly, then saw the look of horror on my face.

"Hey, what's wrong," he asked, before revelation finally forced its way into his thick skull. Room 23 was empty.

I could already hear the screaming from down the hall.

They can hear the grumbling of discontent from the slums and alleys of the inner city. They can smell the hopelessness of the poor, the insane and the desperate. From the depths of the abyss one can hear their laughter.

Across the globe and throughout history, the desperate and disenfranchised have called upon supernatural aid to advance their position in society. Religions of all manner have grown and thrived on the pleas of the masses, who fatten a faith's coffers with donations. However, most faiths posit themselves as being, at core, benevolent. Not so with those cults that orbit the Shadow-eaten.

Most mortals don't understand the difference between demons, devils and Spectres. While the first two lie outside the purview of this book, many of the rituals and rites designed to "catch" infernal creatures actually serve as emotional beacons for Spectres. Drawn by strong negative emotion, these Shadow-eaten wraiths can quickly recognize the opportunity such a buffet of misery and greed offers.

And so, the unholy deal is struck. Mortals, in exchange for whatever manifestations of power a Spectre promises, give themselves over to this monster's service. A Spectre (usually a Doppelganger or Nephwrack) is happy to satisfy his followers' requests, which are usually easy to accomplish, and often produce tremendous outpourings of negative emotional energy. For their part, the followers make "offerings" to their "demon" without realizing that it's not the sacrifices or murders that feed their master, but rather the pain and terror and lust that these actions generate.

Doppelgangers and Nephwracks are the usual culprits behind Spectre cults; most of them have Fetters and, therefore, can actually manifest before their followers. Often, the hidden agenda behind a Spectre cult is for the "deity" to prepare all of his followers to cross the Shroud as wraiths — who are promptly harvested and packed off to the Labyrinth for "conversion." Hence, the large numbers of apocalyptic mass suicides linked to these cults; the suicides allow a Spectre to gorge himself on Angst and amass plenty of souls to play with later.

The Devils

"Oh, I'm sorry. I must have dialed the wrong number."

"No, I don't think you have. You've reached exactly the right number."

"How's that? I don't recognize your voice and this certainly isn't Mama Luigi's pizza. Who are you?"

"I'm your newest, bestest friend. That is what you wanted isn't it? A new friend. Someone to talk to, cry on and confide in. Someone to wipe your bottom and feed you and take care of you. I can get you things, Robert. Things that you have only dreamed of having."

"How did you know my name? Who the hell is this? I don't know what you're talking about, jackass, but I'm hanging up!"

"Do that, and you'll never know."

"Never know what?"

"Ahh, now that would be telling. Are you ready to listen?"

Wraiths sustain themselves by vicariously experiencing the passions of others. While they can subsist off the passions of other wraiths, or even off their own current experiences, the passions of mortals go down much more smoothly. The dramatic outpouring of energies at a religious gathering can bloat a pious wraith like a summer tick. The Dark Passions that Spectres feed upon, however, do not normally surface at major gatherings of the faithful. Therefore, Nephwracks and their ilk have to find other means to cultivate this kind of power.

With this goal in mind, the forces of Oblivion corral naive and unwanted mortals into obscene cults with dubious intentions. These people, whether rejected from normal society or eager to be above it, worship Spectres as if the Shadow-eaten were gods — often with a tragic end. The Shadow-eaten, meanwhile, feed and feed well.

Rank Amateurs

In the darkest alleys, unholy congregations gather to perform unspeakable deeds for the sake of power. By the light of day they might be schoolteachers, street bums, beat cops or even clergymen. During the full moon, however (or whenever their astrological charts tell them the stars are right), they don their tacky robes of office and fire up the bubbling caldrons. They draw blood from sheep, burn holy books, destroy relics and speak the words of blasphemers, all to draw the attention of whatever dark powers they think are out there. The symbols and the words matter little; the intent — the passion — is everything. It's not the thought that counts, it's the feeling.

A Spectre who answers such a call may not even understand what in the world the humans are up to, but she'll understand the potential font of Angst clearly enough. At present, enough "summonings" have been made that the Hive-Mind has a pretty good idea of what's expected, and the Nephwrack or Mortwright who responds knows to use its Arcanoi to oblige. Blazing crucifixes, blood dripping from the walls, or any number of other special effects — these are examples of a Spectre giving its public what they want.





If all goes according to plan, the novice spirit-summoners usually fall to their knees to worship the “dark god” they have called up from the abyss. An experienced Spectre will fall right into character by prophesying the end of the world or simply by speaking in some useless, dusty language — Etruscan or something else equally unknown. Most would-be cultists buy the shtick hook, line and sinker.

Impressed by the obvious power of the “dark god from below,” the newly minted worshipers are eager to give up anything to claim some fleeting bit of infernal energy (and if they’re not, Spectres aren’t hesitant about imposing their will upon others). What good is a soul if you don’t know what horse will win the big race tomorrow? How can I worry about eternal life if I’m not sure my spouse is being faithful? The “demon” usually provides the correct information if it can — after all, it doesn’t really cost the Spectre anything to do so — but this exchange dooms the mortal. Once that first deal is struck the mortal has taken her first step on a dark spiral of guilt, regret and greed. Each little tidbit makes the worshiper greedy for more, until such time as she has nothing left to give her master and he “harvests” her to take what’s been promised him.

Once a Spectre wins the confidence of her congregation, her job is just beginning. After all, the audience is expecting a certain type of theatrics, lines like, “Obey me, or feel my wrath!” and, “Now your souls belong to the great Ghul’tgh! Kneel and obey!” suitably leavened with demonstrations of Pandemonium and Outrage. The one problem, at least from the Spectral perspective, is that occasionally the cost of providing these bells and whistles is greater than the emotional profit reaped from the observers. A clever and experienced Spectre (or one willing to make use of the Hive-Mind’s expertise) minimizes flash but maximizes effect, often by messily murdering a random cultist. After that sort of display, the worshipers almost inevitably scamper to fulfill the requests of the demanding fiend by providing a full range of favors for their new “master.” These favors include, but are certainly not limited to, gathering new members, destroying Fetters of annoying Legionnaires and the perennial favorite: ritual suicide.

The Dark Passions created by such ill-fated buffoons can glut a hungry Spectre, allowing him to gorge for days, months or even years. Often, Spectres have to fend off poachers — other Spectres who want to partake of the emotional sustenance. These battles can play themselves out as “schisms” in the body of the cult, with the winning side taking all — including the lives of the losers.

“Professionals”

In the absence of gifted leadership humans follow anyone who can lead them. Spectres, being a crafty lot, are aware of this weakness in the human condition and are quite willing to take advantage of the naiveté of mortals. All one really needs is a suitable level of expertise in certain Arcanoi and a suitably useful pawn. After all, it simply costs too much energy to manifest repeatedly in the Skinlands. No, a Spectre wishing to lead a cult must find himself a high priest, a mouthpiece and interpreter who can be at-



tuned as a consort and who, if properly invested with a touch of Angst, can be relied upon to keep the herd in line.

The pawn in question doesn't need experience or even a following of his own at the outset. He just needs some ambition, a touch of greed and a will of clay. However, once "gifted" by the Spectre, the fledgling high priest must be made to feel that he has obtained control over some infernal beast or other — that he is, in fact, the master. This part of the design is essential, otherwise the cult will crumble shortly. The pawn must have the confidence in himself to convince others that he commands the forces of darkness and deserves their fear and obedience. On the bright side, letting the mortal do the ground work takes so much effort out of corruption. Thus, with Spectral "service" the mortal gathers followers and occasionally reveals some of his powers (see below) to bring the doubtful into line. Soon enough, there's a buffet table of souls for the Spectre to feed from, organized into a rough cult.

Of course, such groups cannot simply come together spontaneously. Wouldn't serving Oblivion be a lot easier if they did? Certainly, but that's why Spectres have mortals do all the work. It may take a Spectre's pawn months of preaching on street corners and hundreds of dollars in flyers before the group grows to more than a dozen members. In the meantime, the Spectre needs only to lift her lazy fingers when the superstitious lot demands a demonstration of power; the rest of the time it's a matter of checking on the "high priest's" progress and skimming what Angst she can.

The dispossessed filter through all levels of mortal society. With one truly dedicated, power-mad pawn, a Spectre can cause grief for thousands. The flow of Angst from a well-placed pet can feed any number of Spectres. After all, it takes only one dedicated soul to plant a bomb, cause an accident or step into a crowded restaurant and start firing. As for the rest, they serve as shock troops and worker bees.

A Spectre's chief puppet, in return for her meritorious service, often gets less than she'd bargained for. Usually, the Spectre stretches out the terms of the deal for as long as possible and takes his time repaying the servant, while encouraging the mortal to accrue deeper and deeper "debts." In the meantime, the puppet is exposed to the tantrums of the supposedly tamed spirit, which can be deadly events. She might receive minor gifts from the Spectre, but more often ends up on the receiving end of the Spectre's outbursts and gratuitous uses of Arcanoi. And, typically, abused priests and priestesses then turn around and abuse their flocks, creating more pain and fear to batten the Spectre.

Of course, occasionally a puppet finds herself locked up for her crimes, or even stone-cold-dead. In these cases, the Spectre simply finds some new strings to pull. It's rarely worth it for a Spectre to rescue a mortal servant. Such cases are very rare and reserved for only the most useful of playthings. Sometimes, such tools are better off in prison anyway, where they can continue their work with an entirely new crop of potential converts.

Powers

Individuals desperate enough to sell their souls to a Spectre are often rewarded with powers beyond those of most mortals. There's a catch, of course, but in the meantime pawns cursed with gifts from a Spectre can impress the naive or the hopeless with the flick of a wrist.

Investments

In order to grant powers to their servants, Spectres must invest Being into their targets. Mortals have a limited tolerance for such unadulterated levels of emotion and tend to lose their minds if heavily influenced. On the other hand, there are plenty of humans around, so most Spectres don't hold back. If the investment takes, great. If not, another volunteer will be lining up shortly.

A normal mortal can absorb temporary Being up to her Willpower with only minor effects (skin irritation, facial tics, uncontrollable salivation). The Spectre must also reinvest the Being (or invest Permanent Being), as these invested powers tend to fade over time. On average, a point of Being fades every week. A mortal whose invested Being runs out loses her invested powers, but they can be regained with new investments. A permanent point of Being that is invested becomes exactly that — permanent. Then again, most Spectres prefer not to waste such precious resources on mere mortals.

If a mortal absorbs temporary Being greater than his Willpower, even for a moment, his sanity cracks like an eggshell. The invested powers remain, but the mind controlling them is gone.

Note: Any and all point costs of these powers (save Willpower) come from the invested human's borrowed Being rating. Any Angst the power produces immediately goes to feed the hovering Spectre. The Being costs listed below are the costs of "gifting" a mortal with the particular power. The mortal must use her pool of Being to activate the investment. Spectres can activate an investment only if it is specifically stated that they can do so.

Aura of Death (2 Being): The Spectre invests two points of Being into the puppet, who now appears to be a walking zombie. This cadaverous appearance (not to mention the fact that the "corpse" is still walking and talking) is more than enough to strike fear into most mortals (Willpower roll, difficulty 8, or they flee in terror). Mortals with this power can turn it on for a single Being point, or the Spectre can inflict it at will for the same cost once the

Keeping 'Em in Line

A handful of self-lighting candles and maybe an eerie voice from beyond settles the hash of most non-believers. The real skeptics need their heads bashed in with a free-floating brick. They may not live to recant their doubts, but rest assured that everyone who sees the incident will henceforth believe.

mortal has already been "gifted" with it. A favorite Spectral prank involves activating the Aura of Death while the invested mortal is engaged in sexual intercourse; the reaction usually produces enough Angst to make the joke worth it.

Visions from Beyond (2 Being): This simple power allows the mortal to see into the Tempest — not the Shadowlands. She can also reproduce these images in the minds of others with a successful Willpower roll (difficulty equals the target's Willpower). Images of the Tempest can disorient an inexperienced mortal, but can also be used to impress nonbelievers. Visions from Beyond costs a point of Being to use.

Preacher's Charm (3 Being): The mortal invested with this ability can easily influence the weak-willed members of her flock. When she calls upon this power, her face grows intense, her voice deepens to a commanding roar and all her words ring with an undeniable truth. The mortal adds three dice to any roll involving Leadership while using this Investment, which lasts for a single scene. It costs one point of Being for the mortal to call upon Preacher's Charm.

Limited Arcanos (5 Being): A Spectre can grant one of her servants the first level of any Arcanos the Spectre possesses. This investment includes the basic abilities inherent to all Arcanoi, but does not include those Arcanoi usable only in the Shadowlands (e.g., Argos). The mortal can possess multiple Arcanoi, but none beyond the first level.

Fires of Hell (7 Being): The mortal able to withstand the concomitant investment of Angst and still retain his sanity probably deserves this power. For every success on a Willpower roll (difficulty 9), the mortal can create one cubic foot of fire. The user can spread this baleful flame to cover a wall or engulf a target (requires a Perception + Alertness roll to hit). A mortal invested with this power must roll Willpower (difficulty 8) or lose a permanent Willpower point every time he uses this ability. After three or four uses the slave is completely insane, and she is consumed by her own fire if her permanent Willpower ever reaches zero. This investment costs three Being for a mortal to use.

Taints

Members of Spectre cults often manifest physical or psychological symptoms of their taint. These consequences are hardly surprising, as extended exposure to a Spectre can drastically affect an unprepared mortal. Many servitors of the Shadow-eaten actually welcome these effects as a sign of "infernal favor" and go out of their way to flaunt their deformities. Others become reclusive. The only certainty, however, is that the longer a mortal is exposed to a Spectre without taking some sort of precaution (wardings, hedge magics against evil and so on), the worse these taints become.

Mental Side Effects: Every time the cult holds a ritual in which the Spectre manifests or activates her Arcanoi, she must



roll her Angst (Difficulty 8). The number of successes indicates the number of days the mortals will be affected by one the following mental states: paranoia, hysteria, hallucinations, listlessness, depression, mania or even multiple personalities. The effects ease as time passes, but multiple rituals can reinforce these disturbed states of mind until they become permanent.

Physical Side Effects: For every two-week period that a Spectre manipulates a cult in the Skinlands, she must roll her current Angst (difficulty 8). The following chart indicates the effect her very presence has on one member of her brood. As the effects accumulate, both supernatural and mortal forces may well become suspicious.

Social Side Effects: Mortals who associate with Spectres are probably antisocial sorts anyway, and in most cases they have few friends. Spending extensive time in the company of a manifested Spectre isn't likely to help the situation. The mortal becomes reclusive, possessive and short-tempered, and has less and less tolerance for the company of individuals outside the cult. The result of this taint is that for every month a mortal spends in a Spectre cult, she must succeed on a Willpower roll (difficulty 9) or else suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to all friendly Social rolls. If this taint goes unchecked, before long the mortal becomes unable to interact with anyone outside the cult, except in the most rudimentary ways.

Notable Pawns

Doctor Christopher Petiach: Petiach, a professor in the religion department at the University of Buffalo, studies the paranormal. His research has led him to a reasonably accurate understanding of life after death. What Petiach's department head *doesn't* know is that most of this information has come from a Spectre, who was more than ready to educate the good professor in the lore of the Underworld. Rather than publish his findings, the Doctor, influenced by the Doppelganger who discovered *him*, began to recruit more and more students into his postgraduate studies programs. The Spectre has, in turn, influenced and twisted each of these students to his own ends.

The good professor and his master have subverted only eight students thus far, but their recruits are increasing geometrically. Neither the university authorities nor the Buffalo Citadel knows of the growing threat at the university, and as such Petiach and his mentor can operate with relative freedom. The professor earnestly believes that the Spectre will reveal the secrets of immortality to

him. In truth, the Doppelganger does intend to educate his human pawn — once Dr. Petiach crosses over into the Shadowlands.

Gimel Smiley: Equal parts charlatan, raw talent and fool, Gimel knows enough parlor tricks to have assumed leadership of an Atlanta coven of occult dabblers who call themselves "the Knights of Blood." This clutch of melodramatic insurance salesmen and investment brokers has met every new moon for the past three years, to revel in Smiley's accidental successes and generally make fools of themselves.

Unfortunately for himself and his followers, Gimel actually succeeded a little too well about eight months back. The Knights performed a ritual of summoning that somehow worked, calling forth from the Tempest a rather displeased Nephwrack. When the Spectre appeared, it immediately enthralled the entire order, then vanished back into the storm. It left behind a set of orders that Gimel and his

followers only vaguely understood.

These days, the Knights of Blood serve this creature with a diet of fear and pain wrung from young college students and clubhoppers whom the cult members abduct. Some of the Knights are discovering in themselves a taste for this sort of thing; others are struggling feebly to break free from the Spectre's control.

Alison Kind: While most Spectres control their mortal pawns, no Spectre has gotten the better of Alison Kind. The daughter of an Arcanum scholar, she discovered her late father's mystical tomes early in her life and studied them intensely. Alison wasn't content to sit on her father's laurels, however, and added to her collection of occult books until it rivaled any in North America.

Cautious and clever, Ms. Kind summons Spectres and wraiths alike to do her bidding. She prefers Spectres because of their tendency to obey quickly and fall in line with a minimum of struggle. What Alison doesn't realize, though, is that the members of the Hive-Mind are more than willing to lend themselves out to her, so long as she becomes theirs in the end.

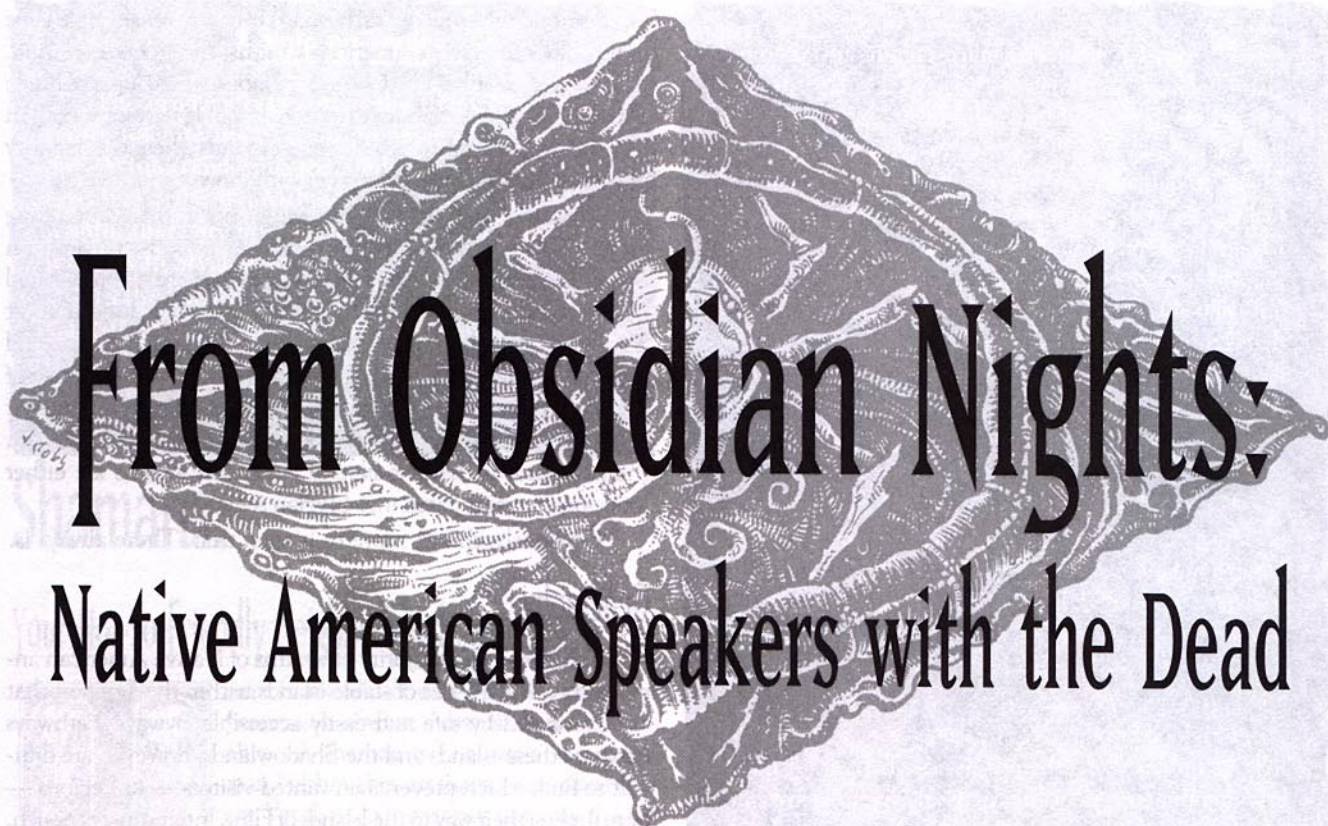
Alison is very jealous of her power, and removes any other supernatural influences from the western Massachusetts town where she lives. Even local hedge magicians have received visits from Kind's corps of Spectral hunters, and the survivors of such attentions invariably move out of town. However, she's calling on one particular Doppelganger of late, and this Maxwell Carpenter is whispering in her ear that Hadley isn't big enough for her, that she ought to be expanding her operations. Both the living and the Dead should worry that she's paying more and more heed to these unholy suggestions.

Exposure Effect Table

Successes	Effect
1	Minor Effects (small stigmata, nose bleeds, exhaustion)
2	Minor Illness (influenza, measles)
3	Disfiguring Illness (kuru, leprosy)
4	Major Illness (cancer, stroke, heart attack)
5	Sudden Handicap (blindness, cerebral palsy)
6 +	Death



LM 97



From Obsidian Nights: Native American Speakers with the Dead

In the beginning...

In the beginning, the elders say, everything was water. There was no life, no land, no living things. Then Coyote came, and he was bored by the water. He dived into the water, and from the mud he found at the bottom, he created land, mountains, the animals...and man.

And he made man mortal.

— Crow Creation Legend

Oh yes, I remember a spirit coming to me some years back — so desperate was he! He told me he needed my help, and he came to me each night for three moons. Normally, I contact a spirit myself when I need guidance or to converse with the Great One. I make peace at every sunrise and sunset with my guides. I leave food for them, then I sit quietly and wait for them to come to me. Sometimes I wait for hours, days... but they always come. Sometimes one needs me, but that is rare, for I'm not as strong as I was in my younger days. Back then I could command any number of spirits, I never waited. I was always sought after; they'd come for me at any time of day, seeking help or vengeance or some task only I could perform....

What? Oh yes, once a *wasichu* spirit came to me, like I was saying. He came to me every night for five moons, moaning and wailing; he was so loud! And so unhappy. *Murdered*, he said he was *murdered*, and he wanted me to help find his killer. Such a sight he was! Pale, even for a *wasichu*. He talked to me for hours and hours.

I took pity on him, for he came to me every night for five moons. Yes, I helped him. I chanted for him, bringing the powers of the earth and night to my aid. They came, yes, and carried him off to a peaceful place, put him to rest they did. I have slept soundly ever since then, knowing the boy is sleeping at peace.

— James Horn, Tlingit elder

There were ghosts across the North American continent long before the first European set foot here — and obviously long before the Legion of the Black Hawk first raised a Stygian standard in the New York Necropolis. Part and parcel of the existence of ghosts is ghostly interaction with the living, and Native Americans have long had their own ways of communicating with the Restless Dead. These methods, and indeed, the very perception of the Dead, vary from region to region across the continent, but one thing is certain: Dealings with Native American mediums are very different from what the average Stygian wraith might expect.

The Dark Kingdom of Flint



outsiders divide the American Shadowlands into three Dark Kingdoms, those of Gold, Obsidian and Flint. Stygian cartographers, when they create maps for this “ancient” history, assign to the Kingdom of Flint all of the lands north of the Rio Grande. Imposed as it is from outside, this division is, of course, arbitrary and inaccurate. In the Shadowlands above the Rio

Grande (and the Underworld beyond) there are roughly five large power blocs of Native American wraiths: the Iroquois Nation, the Council of Tribes, the Cherokee Nation, the People of Peace and the Inuit. These groups exist in reasonable harmony, both in the Shadowlands and on the Tempest islands where the majority of Native American wraiths have withdrawn.

However, there is no “Flint King,” nor is there a standing army of Native American Legionnaires poised to march on Stygia's Necropoli. Instead, these Deadlands are a complicated place, and a place not easily reached by outsiders. Indeed, most Stygian wraiths give no thought to the wraiths the Heretics (and later the Legions) displaced, and it frankly hasn't crossed most of their minds that there was anyone dead here before them. As for those few Stygian wraiths who do know something of history, the consensus is that the Native American wraiths are either long gone or assimilated into Stygian society.

Obviously, there's more to it than that. There always is.

Geography

Today, the vast majority of wraiths of Native American ancestry dwell on a series of stable islands within the Tempest that are connected by safe and easily accessible Byways. Pathways between these islands and the Shadowlands, however, are difficult to find, which prevents unwanted visitors — or Legions — from finding their way to the Islands of Flint. Interestingly enough, while these lands are ineluctably islands — many wraiths have sailed around them in the Tempest — there always seems to be just enough room on them to support the Islands' population.

The links to the Shadowlands that the Islands of Flint do maintain are kept up for the purpose of sustaining tradition and Fetters back in the Skinlands. There are few places, even on the Reservation Lands, where the Kingdom of Flint is strong: burial mounds, holy sites (often coincidental with Garou Caerns) and battlegrounds including Wounded Knee and the Little Big Horn River. Only the expanses of the Great Plains harbor a sizeable number of Native American wraiths; the rest of the continent has been thoroughly assimilated by the Stygian paradigm. Official Stygian policy holds that these places where the Native wraiths are strong are Spectre-haunted, and it advises Stygian citizens to avoid them. The reason is that Stygian troops who go in large numbers to such locales don't find anything, and when they go out singly or in small groups, they're never found again.

Because of this arrangement, however, it is highly unlikely that anyone — medium or wraith — is going to encounter a Native American wraith. However, there's a decent chance that a Stygian wraith is going to meet a Native American medium of one stripe or another. After all, these are men and women of real power, and there's nothing that says they have to speak to only one type of deceased soul. The trick is in making sure that the contact goes well enough for the wraith to survive it and speak with the medium again another day.

A Note on Souls

The primary reason that the five Councils currently tolerate the Stygian presence is an economic one. While rendering the soul of a member of the (greater) tribe is anathema to a Native American wraith, there are no such moral compunctions when it comes to Stygian ghosts.

In the language of the Islands of Flint, as in Navaho, there are two words for "soul." The first, which is used for human souls, refers to the word for "tribesman." The other means, literally, "meat."

Shamans:

Your Not-So-Friendly Neighborhood Mediums



here is a world of difference between the perception of what a shaman is and the reality. A shaman is not just a "medicine man," although most shamans are also healers. Yet they do more than just cure the infirm — true shamans contact spirits and ghosts for any number of reasons. Shamans go through lifelong training to deal with these powerful beings; they must learn to see and hear spirits, mainly through visions.

Aside from being healers, shamans are also protectors. They are responsible for appeasing the spirits, thus ensuring good crops and hunting for their tribes. At present, good hunting is perhaps not as necessary as it used to be, but the practice of appeasing spirits to provide for a tribe is still a vital one.

Shamans can also curse individuals, living or Dead, and they can visit their wrath on anyone who offends them. They can cause illness as easily as they cure it and can also inflict mental illness either temporarily or permanently.

Most Native American mediums have a particular spirit guide with whom they have a working relationship, and they may not want to go outside that arrangement. Furthermore, few enjoy being both-

Spirits, Dreamspeakers and Mediums

A true shaman is defined by her ability to contact spirits and ghosts, and by the ecstatic state she enters while making such contact. While some Native American shamans are also Awakened mages of the Dreamspeaker Tradition, such mages are far from a majority. Most shamans use what the Traditions would define as "hedge magic" or simple knacks (Merits and Flaws) to work their wills.

Doing Business with the Living

When approaching a shaman for help of any kind, you need to have prepared in *detail* your reasons for wanting to contact a spirit or wraith. Explain your cause and be patient, because you may not get your answer for days. If the shaman agrees to work with you, do exactly what he says, no matter what he asks for or how absurd his requests seem. Never argue, even if you're asked to stand on your head under the light of a full moon for three hours or something else that sounds equally ridiculous. Make sure to present an offering each time you see the medium and also bring something you can offer the spirit or wraith you want to contact. To do otherwise is to demonstrate disrespect, and you *must* show the greatest respect possible for both spirit and medium, which includes being honest in thought and deed. Shamans and their guides are adept at spotting a dishonest or flawed heart, so you may be required to purify yourself in some way before you can even begin the ceremony of contact. Again, don't argue. If you do, the arrangement will most likely be off — and that's if you're lucky.

Always remember that shamans contact spirits for important reasons only! Things like evoking protection, especially in battle, lifting curses and curing illnesses are sufficiently important reasons; asking pointless questions, exchanging gossip or passing along endearments are not. If the shaman or spirit gets offended, all bets are off and you may find yourself in a great deal of trouble.

ered by uppity spirits seeking minor favors, and a wraith who annoys a medium can find himself bound to a pile of corpse powder — or worse.

Tips to Remember When Dealing with a Shaman

1 — Be respectful

All shamans work hard to attain their power, and they usually have attitudes to match. Do not show them arrogance or impatience. Speak softly and politely. Laugh at any jokes they tell. Treat them like the powerful people they know themselves to be. Remember to bring offerings. If you've forgotten to bring a gift, give something that you have with you, or tell the shaman where to find something valuable if you don't have anything on you. *Always* offer something.

2 — Where you find shamans, you find wraiths

If you're alive, this doesn't matter so much. If you're dead, you could suddenly find yourself obliterated. Play nice! Re-

member, the wraiths of murdered Native Americans generally don't like white people, not even a little bit and not even dead ones. They never have, and may not ever like you, no matter how cute you think you are. Watch your mouth; it's easier than watching your back.

3 — Be careful

If you're out talking to a Native American shaman, odds are you're not on your home turf anymore. You must learn the rules and regulations of the Native American wraith world as you go. Failure to do so can get you expelled at best, obliterated at worst. Don't pretend to have knowledge you don't. A shaman who catches you in a lie will make you regret it.

General Beliefs and Customs:

Things You'd Better Know Before Venturing into Native Territory

*The sun is slowly departing,
It is slower in its setting,
Black bats will be swarming when the sun is gone,
That is all.
The spirit children are beneath,
They are moving back and forth,
They roll in play among tufts of white eagle down,
That is all.
— Papago, "The Sunset"*

Everything in the Native American's world, whether it be a human, an animal or even a tree, has a spirit. Weather, the Earth, the sky — all these things and more are considered spirits. Spirits take many roles as well; there are spirit guides, protectors, advisors and watchers. Spirits can take on any form, and most of these forms aren't human. A wraith could pass herself off as any one of these spirits, but a smart wraith knows better than to try. The consequences of getting caught are too dire. Other methods of contact, such as a formal presentation during a vision, are far less likely to draw a shaman's ire.

Ghosts occupy a rather lowly position in the Native American spirit pantheon, primarily because most tribes believe a ghost to be someone who was not buried properly or who died improperly, and is therefore trapped. There is little sympathy for anyone who so ignored the teachings of the living spirits of earth and water that either they or their family failed to observe the ritual aspects of death. As such, wraiths, especially *wasichu* ones, don't get much respect. However, many tribes also believe that death is just a door into a life much like the one they lead in the Skinlands. Members of these tribes either pity wraiths or fear them because of wraiths' reputed powers to cause sickness and disease maliciously.

Native American wraiths have a fairly relaxed attitude about all of this behavior. They know that many of their tribesmen will join them soon enough and learn on the other side those truths

that must be learned. Wraiths who cannot adopt this die-and-let-live attitude are the ones who cause the greatest problems for the living and create fear of the Restless among the Quick.

Legendry

For hundreds of years, Native Americans have passed down stories of life after death, of the places souls go when the body dies. After all, souls don't always stay at rest, nor are they always peaceful. Many legends tell of ghosts returning to protect family members, to warn of coming catastrophe or to punish deserving sinners. Others tell of enemies coming back for vengeance, to place curses on generations of families, and even to cause disease that wipes out entire family lines.

Many tribes have surprisingly accurate tales about the afterlife, and they spin stories in which everything belonging to ghosts is broken and destroyed. The Hopi, for example, tell the tale of the boy who went to Skeleton House to learn about the dead. He is given some medicine and his body is prepared for burial. Then he "dies" and finds himself on a road. The road leads to a place of smoke, where the dead are destroyed, and to the Skeleton House, where the good chiefs led their people after death. These skeletons live poorly, consuming only the scent or essence of food, but they are not unhappy. Their houses are broken and the ladders are made of sunflower stems so that the boy cannot climb them. He sees some dwellers in the Skeleton House carrying great burdens as punishment, and others whose chiefs have brought great medicine across to help them in the afterlife; this latter group is living well. The skeletons tell the boy that they can trade with the living. They ask the boy to go back to his people and make prayer offerings. They tell him that they can cause the rain to fall and the crops to grow. He does so. The Hopi make such offerings to this day.

Another tale, this one from the Chinook, tells of a ghost who buys a human wife and of her brother who follows her to the land of the Dead. The Ghost Village is rotting and covered in moss. The people are just piles of bones. When night falls, these skeletons come to life and the young man, who doesn't believe he is in the Ghost Village, plays tricks on them. He makes loud noises that frighten them, and during the day he rearranges their bones. His sister tells him, over and over, where he is and that these are ghosts, but he does not believe her, even as objects that he knows are dead — leaves, branches and logs — become fish and game in the hands of the Dead. Eventually, he leaves the Ghost Village, but because he does not listen to his sister, he dies crossing the burning prairies that divide the land of the living from that of the Dead. When he returns to the Ghost Village, he sees everything as being whole and complete there. The skeletons remember him and remember his teasing, and their magicians drive him mad.

Contact

A wraith who approaches a medium from a Native American culture will not have great difficulty explaining the afterlife to the shaman; odds are that the medium already has a pretty

good idea of what's on the other side. The shaman, however, may not trust the wraith's motives for coming to the Skinlands and asking for help. An enterprising wraith will do some research into specific beliefs and customs before he ventures into a foreign territory to seek help from these peoples. Remembering these general beliefs and customs will help.

Tribal structure is often similar among the Native American living and Dead, but a Native American medium of one tribe will have contacts among the Dead of a large group of tribes, as these souls have put aside their differences in the afterlife. This détente exists mostly as a response to the invasion by the Europeans; the different tribes, seeing factionalism's damage among the Quick, realize that survival depends on their ability to form common goals and to settle differences quietly. Also, Native mediums have contact with "reputable" spirits, such as the spirits of animals, trees, living animals and archetypes.

The basic groups of the Restless Tribes are geographical: the Southeast tribes include the Cherokee Nation; the Northeast tribes are mostly controlled by the League of the Iroquois; the Nomadic or Plains tribes have formed the Council of Tribes; among the desert people of the Southwest the philosophy of the People of Peace is predominant and the Northwest tribes are loosely associated as the Inuit.

Mediums of the Southeast

Notable Tribes: Cherokee, Catawba, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Natchez, Shawnee and Shoshone

So, you've decided to come down to the sunny Southeast, perhaps the coastline or the woodlands? Here you'll surely find someone to listen to you, but not necessarily someone who'll help someone like you. Perhaps you've come, as others have, chasing those rumors of great wealth and knowledge? Be prepared for disappointment. The shamans are strong here, true, but they don't necessarily like to share.

Members of many southeastern tribes do have a generalized fear of the Dead, but they're especially concerned about dead enemies. If a medium from one of these tribes has reason to be concerned about a wraith, he will immediately call on help from any friendly wraiths or guides in his vicinity. If he believes he has an enemy among the Dead, he has to deal with the possibility that this enemy may cause sickness in him or his loved ones. In such cases, a wraith who can deal with the threat becomes a friend to the shaman.

Cherokee mediums are possibly the shamans most receptive to visitors from the *wasichu* Netherworld. Many of them live and work among white people and do small cures and favors for their neighbors. The Cherokee are also the most populous of the southeastern tribes, meaning that there are simply more Cherokee mediums to be found.

Among the Cherokee, it is important that all spirits be treated extremely well, especially ghosts. According to tradition, even the



tinest slights may cause ghosts to become angry, so Cherokee shamans offer them tobacco or other herbs early and often. A Cherokee shaman welcomes such offerings from anyone who seeks his help, as such items are the currency he uses to deal with the Dead.

The Shoshone are talented exorcists. If a wraith has attached himself to a person who goes to one of these spiritualists, most shamans should be able to exorcise the ghost and banish its soul from the Shadowlands; they're extremely adept at finding and smashing Fetters.

Sally DancingRain

Though born to the Creek, Sally DancingRain is well known by all the tribes in the region. She's studied with each of them at various times in her life, and most folks who are in the know hold her in high regard. Mortals or wraiths can best contact her by dropping word into the grapevine at one of the many reservations in the area. She travels, so she's hard to follow, but once a client finds her, she'll usually help out. A wraith who offers her kind words and a promise to come to her aid if she ever needs it (she won't) gains a strong ally who is always willing to hear his wails.

Mediums of the Northeast

Notable Tribes: Delaware, Iroquois, Mohawk and Ojibwa

You must have been desperate to come up here, or maybe you're just lost? You will be hard-pressed to find a spiritualist willing to contact the Dead in this area. Few exist. Help is rarely given, in fact almost never. What's worse, these tribes don't really hear you, wraith. And they don't want to. It's just not done.

In order to obtain insight into the spirit realm, spiritualists of the Iroquois and their neighboring tribes often fast for days. They prostrate themselves before nature and beg the spirits to take pity upon them and grant them a vision. In this state, a competent shaman sees any spirits in the area, including wraiths.

These spiritualists are susceptible to supernatural intervention and prepare themselves mentally to see and hear the calls from beyond. Naturally, the wraith of a dead person, especially one not of their tribe, is not a welcome vision. A strong and experienced spiritualist already has many spirits protecting her and guiding her visions, which makes *wasichu* interference in her vision a chancy proposition at best. However, a weak or inexperienced shaman might well be fooled by a wraith and con-



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vinced to help the ghost. Abuses of Phantasm for purposes of altering visions are also useful in this sort of deception.

A ghost approaching a medium from this neck of the woods should disguise himself as any other kind of spirit — earth, water, sky, animal — besides human. Members of these tribes just don't pay attention to the human Dead, and a ghost attempting to get a shaman's attention is simply going to be ignored. Only those ghosts who successfully impersonate other kinds of spirits stand a chance of gaining aid from these mediums. Even then, the wraith can never reveal his true nature, or he risks losing his working relationship with the medium.

Renegade Mediums

There is supposedly a small band of Ojibwa spiritualists who have broken away from tradition in order to work with ghosts, and the legend of these mediums grows in the telling. According to rumor, these spiritualists are willing to work with wraiths who are demonstrably worthy of assistance, not to mention patient. A wraith seeking the assistance of this band of mediums must travel far from the Necropoli and spend a week or two in the Shadowland remnants of the northeastern forests. It is likely that shamans observe a wraith for the duration of his wait, so he better be polite. Any gratuitous effects he imposes on the surrounding environment mark the wraith as unworthy of help, even if it is the wraith's Shadow who commits those actions.

Rumor has it that these mediums trade mostly in visions — sharing, inducing and interpreting them. In return, they look for information, or wraiths willing to learn their traditions and work with them. It is believed that the latter is infinitely preferable but, understandably, there's no proof either way — nor is there likely to be any, at least not soon.

Mediums of the Southwest

Notable Tribes: Hopi, Navaho, Zuni

Looking for someone who traffics with the Dead in the Desert Southwest? Listen for the wailing of relatives who stand watch for Indians bearing large gifts. Look for corpses that have had their palms and the bottoms of their feet sliced off. These are signs that there is an Ilowaga in the area.

Among the tribes of the southwestern deserts, ghosts, mediums, visions, and spirit conversations are taboo subjects of conversation. The Navaho, in particular, fear the Dead, for they believe that to contact the Dead is to invite Ghost Sickness, insanity, and death. Which is not to say that an enterprising wraith or mortal cannot contact these people; it is just a question of finding the right one, or rather, the right shaman.

However, Navaho, Zuni and Hopi witches all expect the same thing from a ghost: information. After all, these mediums already have power: They can infect people with certain illnesses,

and, supposedly, some can even fly. It is rumored that among the witches there are even individuals who can change their form to that of a wolf or dog. Thus, these mediums are greatly feared, and among the Navaho, they are also hunted.

A wraith approaching a southwestern witch must offer the gift of information: where people are and what people are doing. The more information a wraith can provide, the better. *Do people around have any silver, and how much if they do? How did you find them and how did you know to come here? Most importantly, do other people know of their existence? Did someone tell you to come here? What are people saying about this area? Are you alone? Is there anyone else coming here? How exactly did you get here, anyway?* In exchange, the witch uses her powers to fulfill the wraith's requests, assuming the information is worth the trouble.

The danger of dealing with these people comes from their power. Among the Navaho, a ceremonial dance to cure someone of the Ghost Sickness takes the ghost from the person and disperses it to the Four Winds (in reality, the ceremony dumps the wraith right into a Harrowing). According to the Hopi, a witch can bind the soul of a person into a ceremonial item, such as a doll or beads of bone, and use it to cause suffering among his people through the power of the Dead. However, being so bound isn't exactly pleasant for the wraith, and is likely to feed the wraith's Shadow tremendous amounts of Angst.

Once again, in dealing with these Native American spiritualists, the trick is to pretend to be something other than the disembodied soul of a human being. The southwestern tribes aren't fond of ghosts, for by their reckoning, ghosts are vile, dirty beings. Then again, the living who deal with ghosts aren't much liked either. Witches are hated and feared, and they are often executed late at night, with accompanying ceremonies to clear the area of any lurking evil spirits.

Hopi and Zuni: The Pueblo People

The Hopi have four classes of *powaga*, or witches. All *powaga* bring misfortune to others and are best sought only by people who want to spread a little strife in the world. The first class is the least accomplished, and *powaga* of this type have no great power. They can cast minor curses (like a temporary illness), but otherwise they aren't worth the effort required to find them. Second- and third-class *powagas* are accordingly powerful, but not necessarily willing or able to help wraiths. And then there are the fourth-level *powagas*, creatures of fear and power.

Mediums of this level extend their lifetimes with the lives of other people. They must cause the deaths of their relatives in order to prolong their own lives (the death of a girl gives them four years of life and that of a boy, two years). Thus, these *powagas* are always looking to turn a wraith against their own kin and they cut any sort of deal with a ghost to obtain the services of the Dead. Of course, whether the *powaga* actually keeps his end of the bargain is a different matter entirely....

The Navaho

Among the Navaho, there are three groups of mediums: those who walk with beauty, the *yatali*; those who do not, the skinwalkers; and the crystal gazers.

The skinwalkers are witches, and not pleasant ones at that. Using corpse powder or bone beads, they infect people around them with the Ghost Sickness, driving their victims to insanity and death. Skinwalkers make corpse powder by slicing the palms of the hands, the soles of the feet and the glans of the penis (if applicable) from a corpse. These parts of the skin, which contain the imprint of the person's life, enslave the deceased's *chindi*, or Shadow, to the will of the skinwalker and channel and concentrate the *chindi*'s malice in physical form.

Corpse powder can be blown onto the victim, placed in food or drink or otherwise used to infect the victim with the Ghost Sickness. Bone beads, made from human bone, have a similar effect. When used properly, they are blown into the victim's skin and curse the victim.

Ghost Sickness is a wasting illness that generally kills its victim by destroying her soul. Once Ghost Sickness infects a victim, she loses Willpower at the rate of one point a day. This point goes to feed the *chindi* of the ghost who's tied up in the corpse powder or bone beads; each point of Willpower drained becomes a point of Permanent Angst for the *chindi*.

There are two means by which one gets rid of the affliction. The victim's family can summon a *yatali*; he can perform the proper ceremonial song, and the Ghost Sickness is either banished, which results in the recovery of the victim, or not. If the Ghost Sickness is not caused by corpse powder, the family can call a crystal gazer. The crystal gazer (if he knows what he's doing) cuts a slit in the victim and removes the infecting bone bead by sucking it out. To complete the cure, however, the bone bead must be blown back into the witch (preferably with a shotgun).

Skinwalkers offer a multitude of services to malicious-minded wraiths: they can infect victims with disease or bind the souls of others, and they have a knack for applying curses. However, wraiths of the Dark Kingdom of Flint tend to avoid skinwalkers; generally, only *wasichu* wraiths are unlucky enough to stumble upon these workers of evil.

Crystal gazers are not avoided, possibly because this pan-tribal medium group's methods are not considered traditionally powerful among the Navaho. The same tribesman who believes in the healing powers of a singer scoffs at a crystal gazer and dismisses her powers as superstition. However, superstition or not, crystal gazers have certain abilities, not the least of which is a mild gift for prophecy. Crystal gazers' ability to see ghosts is equivalent to the Merit: **Small Gift**.

A crystal gazer performs his art by looking into a bowl of water and allowing visions of trouble to appear to him. In many ways, these mediums are a combination of a gypsy fortuneteller and a traditional Plains-style shaman. Crystal gazers' powers are

limited, but they do not have the same problems with ghosts that other Native Americans might. An exchange of information with a crystal gazer might produce willingness on his part to act as a wraith's earthly agent. For example, a wraith who knows that someone has been infected by corpse powder might communicate with a crystal gazer to get his knowledge across the Shroud, and perhaps lead the victim to the witch, as well. In return, the crystal gazer might agree to use nonsupernatural means to communicate with others on the wraith's behalf.

It is said that among the Navaho *yatali*, or singers, there are individuals who can see the Dead and do not fear or hate them. A wraith or mortal who can find such mediums (they do not advertise their beliefs to outsiders) and follow a few simple rules may be able to convince them to perform a ceremony.

The rules are simple. First, never point at a Navaho or look directly into his face for too long. Second, whatever gifts you bring should be substantial and of benefit to all of his tribe (such as information or modern medical equipment). Third, do not expect an answer to your request immediately. It may be a few days before you get a response. The ceremonies of the Navaho have enormous healing power but also require tremendous preparation. A chant performed for a wraith works as well as a chant performed for a living person. Thus, a wraith who is having trouble controlling his Shadow or a mortal who believes that an inimical wraith is psychically attacking her can request an enemy way sing or a ghost way sing to be cured, at least momentarily.

For wraiths who don't wish to risk direct contact with a medium in this area, another tactic is to attend a sing and see what other wraiths arrive. Those wraiths who care about the individuals getting the sing are sure to show up and lend their help to the singer in effecting the cure. It is rumored that among these wraiths are found the spirits of great singers and other medicine men of the past. Sufficiently humble petitioners might learn from them dream mending or other, more arcane means of assisting the Quick.

Mediums of the Northwest

Notable Tribes: Aleuts, Chinook, Coos, Inuit, Kwakiutl, Lumni, Tlingit, Tshimshian and Yakima

If all you really want is a mortal friend, go on up to the Northwest. Among these tribes, a ghost is a very common sight. Everybody sees them, not just the shamans, and everyone believes in ghosts and their powers. Shamans ask them about the weather, about other dead relatives, about the animals, about the white man, about everything. For this reason, in order to get to a shaman in the Northwest, you have to wait in line behind all of the deceased relatives who might have a message to pass on or a task that they want performed. It's a trial, to say the least. Take a number, get comfy and prepare to wait your turn.

This territory is the best place to find sympathetic listeners willing to help wraiths. However, the living expect to get a little information in return or at least a promise to look into something. In exchange, a ghost can expect mundane tasks to be per-

formed, if his reasons are good enough. Huge tasks should be taken to other territories, unless the wraith is willing to wait months or possibly years for the entire process to grind to its completion. Still, if a ghost is patient, he can find more and easier assistance here than anywhere else on the continent.

The mediums of this area have numerous contacts among ghosts, many of whom were legendary hunters in life and now continue that tradition in death. Specific requests, such as searches for a particular Artifact or wraith, can be dealt with here; the medium just passes the request along to one of his deceased acquaintances. These mediums do expect payment in information up front (strictly as a gesture of good faith, of course), but once they have what they want, they get to work with a will.

Old Standing Fire

According to the legends, Old Standing Fire is still out there somewhere, waiting for anyone smart enough to find him and polite enough to ask him the right questions. The story goes that he is as old as the wind and twice as strong, but it's been so long since anyone's actually seen him that he may be capable of anything at this point — assuming he's still alive. The stories, however, claim that he's an extremely powerful medium, and that he is helpful and, more importantly, exceedingly fast when it comes to contacting the spirits of the Dead. He is highly sought after, not only for his ability to contact spirits with great ease, but also because he takes any task asked of him. A requester's motives and her reasons for these tasks don't matter

to him; if he likes someone, he'll take her job immediately, if only because she was able to find him. He won't ask many questions either, because he really doesn't care to know.

Because of his past dealings with some unsavory characters, not to mention his rather blasé attitude, he is not on good terms with his tribe, which means that he practices on his own. However, it's been more than ten years since anyone raised a complaint against him, so even his old tribe isn't actively looking for him anymore.

Despite the old stories, Old Standing Fire is not as dangerous as popular beliefs would make him out to be. His specialty is locating wraiths, no matter how far away an individual may be. All a postulant needs to offer him is part of anything she's carrying, and any information he may need, perhaps news on where he can find some needed article of clothing or a bottle of whiskey. He does have a great love for sugar, so if someone really wants to impress him, she should try to bring any kind of candy (or at least the rumor of where some is). If he does ask for a soul, be assured he's only joking; according to reliable sources he hasn't taken one in over two decades. He claims to have retired from the slave trade, anyway.

Mediums of the Plains

Notable Tribes: Apache, Arikara, Blackfoot, Crow, Hidatsa, Mandan, Osage and Sioux



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Do you need a stalker? Someone who has learned, over the centuries, to penetrate the city as if it were a forest and take a wraith as easily as if it were a deer? Go to the shamans of the Plains Indians and prepare to barter. Do you seek to become a spirit guide for your people (whoever they may be)? Go to the shamans, your one-stop shopping source for spirit contacts.

The Plains are the best place to trade souls for goods, or to find hired killers among the Dead. It is also the most dangerous of the territories for *wasichu* wraiths. Here, Necropoli are few and far between, and Native American wraiths are present in strength. Still, even here help is available from shamans and other mystics — assuming that help is asked for very, very politely.

Plains shamans traffic with wraiths on a regular basis, as these mediums have never been reluctant to contact the Dead. They have no deep-seated fears of ghosts and believe fully in wraiths' existence and (especially) their uses. They have no hesitations in trading with wraiths, and they are usually willing to help ghosts who show proper respect. Disrespectful wraiths, however, can expect obliteration at the hands of these shamans; they don't suffer fools or incompetents gladly.

The terms "shaman" and "medicine man" are loose ones here. They actually describe several categories of mediums in the Plains Indian religions: the priest or holy man, the doctor and the war chief. Each of these types of medium has a specific role and each is of use to a wraith or human only insofar as the details of his job description allow him to be.

The Ancients

Known in white history simply as the Three Tribes, the Ancients include the Arikara, Mandan and Hidatsa.

The Arikara are among the oldest Native American tribes, and they live on the same reservation they were moved to back in the early 1800s. They live with the Mandan and the Hidatsa, as, over the years, the three tribes have intermingled to the point where they're practically indistinguishable.

The Ancients' methods of dealing with ghosts are based in ceremony and ritual, and these tribes don't do anything without both. Visitors should be prepared to make many offerings, take part in a ceremony and perhaps even participate in a dance if they're lucky. Rare mortal visitors may have to make a burial structure out of wood and mud. The Mandan are especially fond of such projects. Being asked to take part in any of these things is a good sign; it indicates that the Ancients are likely to give whatever is requested of them — as long as the requester is properly respectful.

An interesting talent possessed by members of these tribes is "soul keeping." This ritual requires a hair plucked from the head of a corpse (that of the wraith to be "kept"). The ceremony binds the wraith to the single hair. This ritual binds the wraith so tightly that he is unable to stray from the spot where the hair is located, even to escape into the Tempest.

Furthermore, the magicked hair becomes a 5-point Fetter, which means that the wraith can't even attempt to destroy the source of his imprisonment without wounding himself grievously as well.

A variation on soul keeping is also used in the care of dead relatives. It is a gesture of respect, a way to appease the spirit and ensure its safe passage to the realms where relatives and happiness await. However, the vast majority of the soul keeping done by these mediums is done to bind and imprison wraiths, perhaps to press them into service as part of a rumored black market in the souls of the Dead.

The Wandering Tribes

For the wraith (or human) who is hounded by Spectres or other enemies, a medicine man of these tribes has the power to control or at least drive off bad spirits. He does so by communing with other spirits and asking that they lend their strength to his, or by using herbs to set up wards and interdictions against malefic wraiths. A wraith can gain the help of these shamans in several ways, such as leading the way to places where specific herbs grow, acting as a messenger or helping the shaman to fight other spirits. The best way to communicate with a medicine man is through his dreams and visions; contacts made in this fashion are generally more favorably received than those made through Embodiment or Pandemonium.

A Priest, on the other hand, does not merely deal with death or with disease. To his tribe, the Priest is the most powerful of all spiritualists, capable of returning a wraith to its body, finding lost children or buffalo, foretelling the future and other astounding feats of magic. Obviously, in order to accomplish all these things, the Priest must risk communication with a large number of wraiths and spirits, and for this reason a Priest is both an easier and a more dangerous contact for a wraith to have. For while the Priest is less likely to dismiss a wraith's overtures entirely, he is also more likely to regard any individual ghostly ally as replaceable, not to mention expendable.

Pan-Tribal Religions

There are three large pan-tribal religious groups extant among Native Americans today. These three groups are the Ghost Dance, the Native American Church (which combines elements of Native American and Christian beliefs), and the Sun Dance. Little is known about the Sun Dance, other than the fact that it is widely known and practiced.

Wraiths affiliated with these groups dwell in both Native and European sections of the Shadowlands. Furthermore,

powerful mediums are sometimes practitioners of these religions and have their own relationships with the Dead.

The Ghost Dance

The Ghost Dance, in its most general form, was a dance performed with the explicit goal of raising the Dead. Proponents of the dance believed that once the ritual was performed, the souls of Indians slain by whites would come back to help all tribes unify and live in peace with one another. The rumor that these ghosts were to be brought back to kill whites was an invention of the American Government and was the purest propaganda.

The dance was first practiced from the spring of 1890 until early 1891. The dancers wore "ghost shirts" — painted shirts covered with prayer symbols — that were supposedly impregnable to bullets (they weren't). The dance itself was performed in a continuing circle, but it was never completed as intended, due to the massacre on December 29, 1890 at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Whether or not it would have worked if completed is anyone's guess, though official Stygian policy is, not surprisingly, that the entire notion is hogwash.

It is rumored that, at times, you can still see long-dead dancers practicing at night near Wounded Knee. Stygia has long warned wraiths away from Wounded Knee and the site of the massacre, as there is supposedly a dangerous Nihil bubbling away there. Of course, that could be just a ruse to keep those lands clear of interfering *wasichu*....

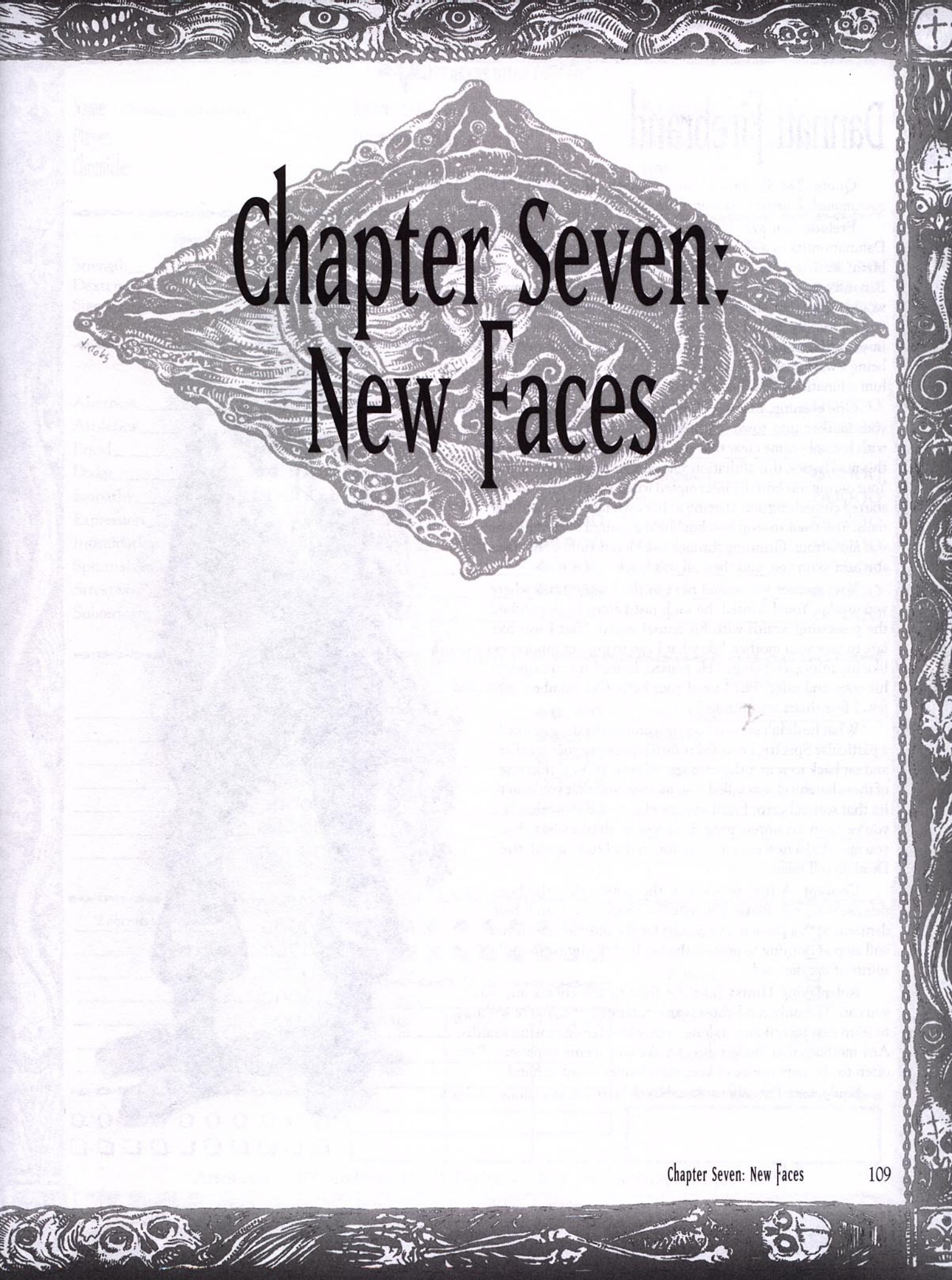
Note: The Ghost Dance is a highly revered event, not to be taken lightly. If you wish to include it in your games, please do so with appropriate respect.

The Native American Church

An enormous and complex organization, the Native American Church is split on the issue of whether or not non-Indians should be allowed to join. Different sects have different rules. Although technically the Native American Church of North America doesn't accept non-Indians, all peyotists consider themselves to be a part of the NAC.

Among sects with the least stringent requirements for membership, the NAC and its affiliated groups contain large numbers of people who are natural spirit mediums, but who have very little formal training. Such training is not a part of the NAC's doctrine, but direct communication with the Great Spirit is. The end result, however, is that these mediums can be contacted easily by both living and Dead, but such shamans are also not terribly powerful. The very nature of the organization and the occasional powerful spiritualist among its members make the NAC a crucial conduit for mortals and *wasichu* wraiths who seek contact with the Kingdom of Flint.





Chapter Seven: New Faces

Dannati Firebrand

Quote: *The Shadowlands are a sickness all around us. Until this contagion can be quarantined, I intend to slow its spread by any means available.*

Prelude: You were Unhooded by your great-grandfather, a man famed among Damnationists as a slayer of evil spirits. The ancient fellow died just after your birth, but he'd wisely appointed another *sapienza* to educate you in the Benandanti way. What your ancestor did not foresee was how utterly you would reject your entire heritage. As a teen you drifted into petty thievery and repeatedly landed in the reformatory. Your mentor remained a fixture in your life, as he would sometimes bail you out, always berate you for being a wastrel and constantly try to draw you into the fold. You called him a lunatic and said you hoped his insanity wasn't catching.

One evening, in a rare display of filial duty, you accompanied your mother into town. During the course of your conversation with her, it became clear that she alone understood your denial of this mad legacy, this affiliation you were never allowed to choose. Your outing was brutally interrupted when your mother suddenly started convulsing and clawing at her own face with her fingernails. You tried to stop her, but she'd acquired a strength that was monstrous. Grinning through the bloody ruins of her face, she turned on you, and then all was black.

Your mentor was seated next to the hospital bed where you awoke. You'd fainted, he said, just before he dispatched the possessing wraith with his fennel sword. "But I was too late to save your mother. I do what I can to protect innocents like her from such beings." He paused, looked at you through his tears and said, "But I need your help. Our numbers are few. I fear theirs are infinite."

What he didn't say was how he'd entered Ekstasis, stalked a particular Spectre, chivvied it into possessing your mother and sat back to watch the carnage. All you know is that one of these hateful ghosts killed your mother, and that you won't let that sort of horror befall anyone else. Since your tragedy, you've been an unrelenting destroyer of the Restless. But you may find a new enemy soon, for, in the Underworld, the Dead do tell tales....

Concept: A firm believer in the notion that the best defense is a good offense, you hate the Shadowlands and their denizens with a passion. A crusader for the ultimate good, you will stop at nothing to protect the lands of the living from the spirits of the damned.

Roleplaying Hints: Take the fight to the enemy any way you can. The only good ghost is an obliterated one. You're willing to learn new techniques, as long as they involve destroying wraiths. Any methods that are less direct make you openly impatient. Refer often to the importance of keeping a fennel sword at hand.

Equipment: Fennel sword, scabbard, heirloom whetstone, caulsack



MEDIUMS

SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

Name: *Dannati Firebrand*
 Player:
 Chronicle:

Nature: *Martyr*
 Demeanor: *Survivor*
 Concept: *Seeker of Vengeance*

Motivation: *Kill wraiths*
 Affiliation: *The Benandanti*
 Type:

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●●●○	Perception	●●●●○
Dexterity	●●●●○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●●●○
Stamina	●●●●○	Appearance	●●●●○	Wits	●●●●○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●○○○○	Body Reading	●●○○○	Bureaucracy	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	●●○○○	Law	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Melee	●●○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Spiritual Awareness	●○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Politics	●○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Technology	●○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Other Traits		Background		Merits & Flaws	
	○○○○○	<i>Allies</i>	●●○○○	<i>Small Gift</i>	
	○○○○○	<i>Mentor</i>	●●○○○	<i>Wanted</i>	
	○○○○○	<i>Contacts</i>	●○○○○		
	○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○		○○○○○		

Numina		Willpower		Health	
<i>Ephemera</i>	●○○○○		●●●●●●●●○○	Bruised	☐
	○○○○○		■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ □ □	Hurt	-1 ☐
	○○○○○			Injured	-2 ☐
	○○○○○			Wounded	-3 ☐
	○○○○○			Mauled	-4 ☐
	○○○○○			Crippled	-5 ☐
	○○○○○			Incapacitated	☐
	○○○○○				

Faith		Combat		Experience	
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○					
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Damage	Weapon	Difficulty

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

Renegade Researcher

Quote: *Truth may be stranger than fiction, but science is stranger than both.*

Prelude: By the time you had finished your grad work in quantum electrodynamics, science had begun to lose its luster for you. Modern research lacked romance, adventure, danger. Your cultivated work routine fell victim to distraction, your professors made dire predictions about your future and you found yourself contemplating a career as a forest ranger. Then, while trolling the Web, you discovered a scientific domain that your department head might not approve of: the hidden world being explored by the Paranormal Research Wing. You emptied your grant and attended their annual symposium in Geneva, where you made a real impression on several research directors. PRW offered you a job and you took it on the spot.

Aline Eburn befriended you early. Although she worked in a different research group, she always managed to be around you. One evening, she suggested an experiment of an entirely different sort, in an area where you had gathered no empirical data. The sex was intense and engulfing, but ultimately something you could take or leave. It opened a new door, however: Seemingly pleased at your performance, Aline hinted at a promising course of research that the organization was ignoring. She said *you* could do something about it.

One day she asked you to accompany her after hours for “a special experiment.” You traveled with her and two other colleagues to a ramshackle barn in the countryside. Inside was an Ectoplasmic Converter Engine — “forbidden” technology — being calibrated by three more PRW scientists. Aline designated partners for everyone and said, “Let’s get this show on the road.” You’d last heard her use that phrase in more intimate circumstances.

That night, you learned all there was to know about operating an ECE. An hour after the experiment started, indicators began fluctuating and someone yelled, “Here we go!” Suddenly, there was a flash and a noise unlike anything you’d ever heard. You could almost swear you heard a scream...but then the meters started screeching and you had your hands full as you tracked results. After a moment’s busy silence, people began reporting data to their teammates as excitement filled the barn. You’d found, once more, the thrill of research!

The enormity of your transgression didn’t hit home till the next day: You had compromised the most lucrative job you would ever get — and you didn’t care. You felt more alive than you had in years! Curiosity, you decided, was the only real aphrodisiac....

Concept: The thrill of discovery is more important to you than the scientific method. Hemmed in by the strictures of grant proposals and review committees, you infinitely prefer actually going out and doing work, any way you can. Truth be told, you’re something of an anachronism and probably would have fit in better during the days when scientists just headed out and hauled bones and treasures out of whatever desert was handy, but that’s okay with you. There’s a whole new frontier for you to explore now.

Roleplaying Hints: You’ve got a secret that could destroy you, but you feel invulnerable, in control, in the know. Stay aloof, even a little smug. If someone casually asks what’s on your mind, smile slightly and say, “The mysteries of the universe.”

Equipment: Labcoat, safety goggles, calculator



MEDIUMS

SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

Name: *Renegade Researcher*
 Player:
 Chronicle:

Nature: *Follower*
 Demeanor: *Scientist*
 Concept: *Boldly Going Where He's Told to*

Motivation: *The thrill of the chase*
 Affiliation: *The Paranormal Research Wing*
 Type:

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●●	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●●●●
Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●	Intelligence	●●●●●
Stamina	●●●●●	Appearance	●●●●●	Wits	●●●●●

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●●●●●	Body Reading	●●●●●	Bureaucracy	●●●●●
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Computer	●●●●●
Brawl	○○○○○	Drive	●●●●●	Enigmas	●●●●●
Dodge	●●●●●	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	●●●●●
Empathy	●●●●●	Firearms	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Linguistics	●●●●●
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Medicine	●●●●●
Spiritual Awareness	○○○○○	Stealth	●●●●●	Occult	●●●●●
Streetwise	○○○○○	Survival	●●●●●	Politics	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●●●●	Technology	●●●●●	Science	●●●●●

Advantages

Other Traits		Background		Merits & Flaws	
	○○○○○	Personal Library	●●●●●		
	○○○○○	Contacts	●●●●●		
	○○○○○	Allies	●●●●●		
	○○○○○	Home Base	●●●●●		
	○○○○○	Mentor	●●●●●		
	○○○○○	Resources	●●●●●		
	○○○○○		○○○○○		

Numina

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Faith

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Willpower

●●●●●●●○○○
 ■■■■■■■□□□

Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty

Health

Bruised ☐
 Hurt -1 ☐
 Injured -2 ☐
 Wounded -3 ☐
 Mauled -4 ☐
 Crippled -5 ☐
 Incapacitated ☐

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

Reader on the Run

Quote: *It's very important that I be able to leave town immediately, before they find me here. Who are they? Hold me up another 10 minutes and you'll find out.*

Prelude: The ghosts first visited you when you were 11. Momma had warned you that it might happen; up until the night Daddy died, she used to see ghosts, too. Momma claimed that Daddy chased the other ghosts away from her, but that didn't keep them from visiting you.

It was scary for a while, when they'd all come talk to you and some of them just wouldn't leave you alone. But then Momma brought a priest over to the house, and he chased off most of them. Not all — you warned the ones you liked so they could hide from the priest, but he drove away all the nasty ones.

Unfortunately, that cure was only temporary.

It's a decade later, Father Garcia is dead, and all the wraiths he drove off are looking for your blood. You had set up a shop, but it went to hell in a shower of glass shards; that was when you knew those long-banished wraiths had found you at last.

Now you're on the run, moving from town to town and trying to stay ahead of the ghosts who want to bring you over to the other side. Your old friends still help when they can, and there's the occasional kind stranger, but you can never settle in one place for more than a month or two before your old enemies find you. Usually, the cards tell you when things are about to get hairy, but they've been wrong twice lately, and you nearly paid in blood for those mistakes.

Concept: A truly gifted medium, you've had the misfortune of attracting the attention of a band of thrashers. At least, that's what they were all those years ago; now they seem more like Spectres. Regardless, they want your blood, and they've chased you all over the country trying to get it. When you can, you settle and use your talents to make a living, but your pursuers dictate a transient existence for you.

Roleplaying Hints: Repay kindness with kindness, but at this point you don't expect more than disbelief or hostility. You've made good friends among the living and the Dead, but you're reluctant to throw them in the way of your pursuers. Be as honest as you can afford to be, but you're well aware that telling the absolute truth has gotten you in trouble too many times.

Equipment: Tarot deck, .22 pistol (unregistered), pouch of salt, backpack, utility knife



MEDIUMS

SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

Name: *Reader on the Run*

Nature: *Survivor*

Motivation: *Stay alive*

Player:

Demeanor: *Rebel*

Affiliation:

Chronicle:

Concept: *Haunted Medium*

Type: *Boardwalk Medium*

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●●	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●●●●
Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●	Intelligence	●●●●●
Stamina	●●●●●	Appearance	●●●●●	Wits	●●●●●

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●●●●●	Body Reading	●●●●●	Bureaucracy	●●●●●
Athletics	●●●●●	Crafts	●●●●●	Computer	●●●●●
Brawl	●●●●●	Drive	●●●●●	Enigmas	●●●●●
Dodge	●●●●●	Etiquette	●●●●●	Investigation	●●●●●
Empathy	●●●●●	Firearms	●●●●●	Law	●●●●●
Expression	●●●●●	Leadership	●●●●●	Linguistics	●●●●●
Intimidation	●●●●●	Melee	●●●●●	Medicine	●●●●●
Spiritual Awareness	●●●●●	Stealth	●●●●●	Occult	●●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●●	Survival	●●●●●	Politics	●●●●●
Subterfuge	●●●●●	Technology	●●●●●	Science	●●●●●

Advantages

Other Traits		Background		Merits & Flaws	
<i>Normalcy</i>	●●●●●	<i>Contacts</i>	●●●●●	<i>Speaker with the Dead</i>	
	●●●●●	<i>Talisman</i>	●●●●●	<i>Spectre Meat</i>	
	●●●●●		●●●●●	<i>Extremely Depressing</i>	
	●●●●●		●●●●●	<i>Deathsight</i>	
	●●●●●		●●●●●		
	●●●●●		●●●●●		
	●●●●●		●●●●●		

Numina

<i>Ephemera</i>	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●

Willpower

●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
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Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty

Health

Bruised	☐
Hurt	-1 ☐
Injured	-2 ☐
Wounded	-3 ☐
Mauled	-4 ☐
Crippled	-5 ☐
Incapacitated	☐

Faith

○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

Experience

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Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

Priest of the Shadow-Eaten

Quote: *The world's turned its back on me. You should never turn your back on a wounded animal.*

Prelude: You stumbled your way through college to a useless Bachelor's degree and a crushing loan debt. While your ex-classmates were oozing their way into cushy corporate jobs, you found yourself working at the same retail stores you'd slaved away in back during high school. "Sure we'll take you back," all the store managers said, even as they failed to hide their condescension. "We're sure you won't be with us too long."

That was six years ago, and you're still trapped. You go from your hellhole of an apartment to your hellhole of a day job to your hellhole of a night job, and you never manage to do more than break even. Plus, there's no way out — no way it's ever going to get better.

That's why you answered the ad in the back of the local alternative paper, the ad that talked about money and power. But when you dialed the number in the advertisement, instead of getting "Destiny Enterprises," you heard a voice on the other end that froze your blood.

The voice talked to you. It told you what it could do for you — how it could help you get your revenge and how it could give you everything you ever wanted. All you had to do, it said, was feed it every once in a while. And it even promised to help clean up the messes....

Concept: You are a tool in the clutches of a Nephwrack, and you exist to do its will on Earth. So far, the glories and riches your master has promised haven't arrived, but you're patient. Maybe you just need to make a few more sacrifices. In the meantime, though, you've found a few like-minded souls who are willing to help out with the feedings. They all listen to you, though. You're the only one who talks to the boss.

Roleplaying Hints: The strain of maintaining a normal façade is starting to show. It's hard to take crap from the fat bastards you work for now that you've got real power backing you up. There are worse things than getting fired in your world all of a sudden, but you think you've got a handle on them. Meanwhile, play the good little employee. Everybody will get what they deserve soon enough.

Equipment: Bloody butterfly knife, matches, bottle of Everclear, dirty rag (for use as a gag)



MEDIUMS

SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

Name: *Priest of the Shadow-Eaten*
 Player:
 Chronicle:

Nature: *Follower*
 Demeanor: *Rager*
 Concept: *Spectre Puppet*

Motivation: *To cause mass destruction*
 Affiliation: *Spectre Cult*
 Type:

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●○○○○	Body Reading	●●○○○	Bureaucracy	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Drive	●○○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	●○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Expression	●○○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Melee	●●●○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Spiritual Awareness	●○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Occult	●●○○○
Streetwise	●●○○○	Survival	●●○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Technology	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Other Traits	Background	Merits & Flaws
○○○○○	<i>Allies</i> ●●○○○	<i>Preacher's Charm</i>
○○○○○	<i>Sidekick</i> ●●○○○	<i>Easy Consort</i>
○○○○○	<i>Home Base</i> ●●○○○	<i>Deathsight</i>
○○○○○	<i>Contact</i> ●○○○○	
○○○○○	○○○○○	
○○○○○	○○○○○	
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Numina

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Willpower

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Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty

Health

Bruised ☐
 Hurt -1 ☐
 Injured -2 ☐
 Wounded -3 ☐
 Mauled -4 ☐
 Crippled -5 ☐
 Incapacitated ☐

Faith

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
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Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

Intrepid Investigator

Quote: [Log Entry 10/24, 3:37 PM] *Judging by the sheer quantity of rugose stains on the carpet, the manifestation I am dealing with is of the subcategory known as Haunters, and it is one of considerable power. I must proceed cautiously; don't want to end up like good old Hawkins now, do I?* [click]

Prelude: They cut the funding to your alma mater's parapsychology department after your sophomore year, but you continued your studies anyway. After all, the true researcher doesn't give up at the first sign of adversity — or even the eighth or ninth. So by day you studied more mainstream psychology (specializing in abnormal psych, of course), and by night you pursued your own projects.

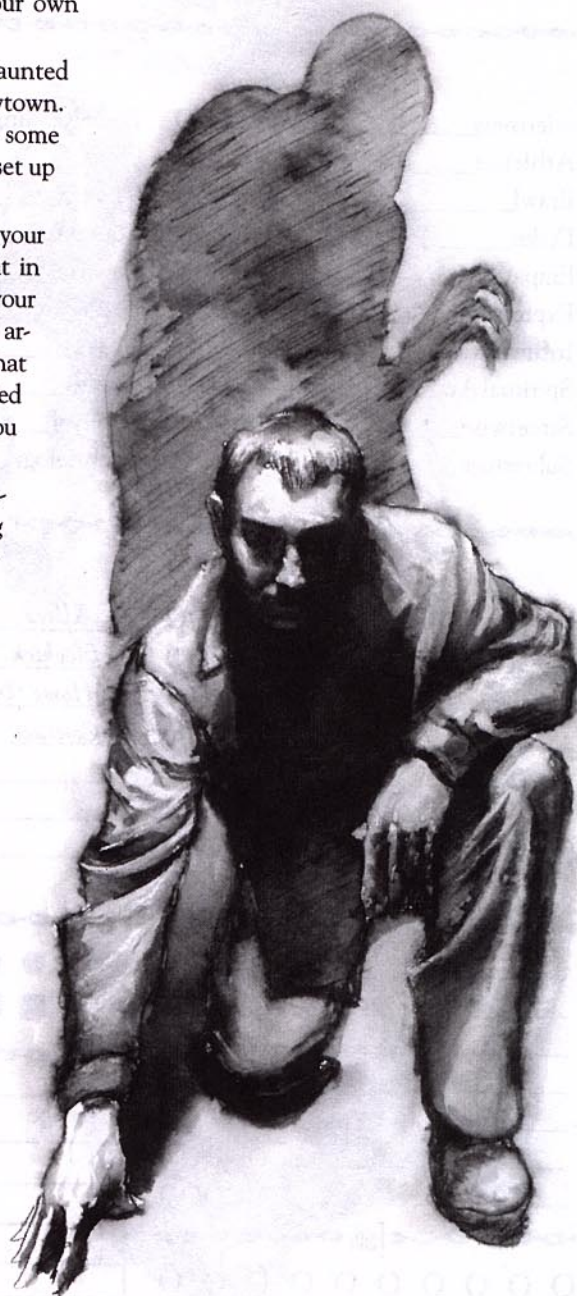
In between lectures, you dug up local ghost legends, explored haunted houses in the vicinity, and even made a day trip out to "haunted" Dudleytown. That excursion was the most "successful" from a certain perspective — some unnamed force literally chased you from the site before you could even set up your cameras.

Convinced of the importance of your studies, you started pursuing your ghostly avocation more and more avidly. Your other studies suffered, but in exchange you found like-minded souls out there willing to help you in your search for the supernatural. While *Proserpina* hasn't accepted any of your articles yet, you have high hopes for the last one you submitted. Now all that remains is getting past that angry Haunter, who's not pleased you've intruded on his Haunt — an acceptance letter for the article won't mean much if you don't make it out of the building alive.

Concept: The unknown beckons, and you must heed its call. Descended from old money, you have all the advantages for your hunting that a trust fund can buy. You prefer to work alone, and you meticulously record data that illuminate details of postmortem existence, but occasionally you run into things that you can't handle by yourself. So far, you've managed to survive all of those encounters, but you're getting the definite feeling that someone on the other side doesn't like you.

Roleplaying Hints: Observe everything very closely; you never know where pertinent information may turn up. Be very careful with your research, but always bear in mind that information's no good if you don't survive to get it published. You've done a lot of reading in your field, but nothing could have prepared you for the truth of what's out there, and your over-reliance on book learning has nearly gotten you killed. Still, even near-fatal encounters offer valuable information....

Equipment: Shiny new camera, motion sensor, handheld tape recorder, flashlight, notepad, eyeglasses



MEDIUMS

SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

Name: *Intrepid Investigator*
 Player:
 Chronicle:

Nature: *Explorer*
 Demeanor: *Scientist*
 Concept: *Seeker After Boojums*

Motivation: *To learn more*
 Affiliation: *NESHMET*
 Type:

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●○○○○	Body Reading	○○○○○	Bureaucracy	○○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Computer	●○○○○
Brawl	●○○○○	Drive	●●○○○	Enigmas	●●●○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	●●●○○	Law	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Spiritual Awareness	●●○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Occult	●●●○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Technology	●●●○○	Science	●○○○○

Advantages

Other Traits		Background		Merits & Flaws	
	○○○○○	Personal Library	●●●○○	Poltergeist Party	
	○○○○○	Resources	●●○○○	Creepy Fellings	
	○○○○○	Contacts	●●○○○		
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Numina		Willpower		Health	
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	○○○○○	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ □ □ □ □ □		Hurt	-1 ☐
	○○○○○			Injured	-2 ☐
	○○○○○			Wounded	-3 ☐
	○○○○○			Mauled	-4 ☐
	○○○○○			Crippled	-5 ☐
	○○○○○			Incapacitated	☐
Faith		Combat		Experience	
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○					
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Damage	Weapon	Difficulty

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

MEDIUMS

SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature:
Demeanor:
Concept:

Motivation:
Affiliation:
Type:

Attributes

Physical

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

Social

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

Mental

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

Abilities

Talents

Alertness ○○○○○
Athletics ○○○○○
Brawl ○○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○
Empathy ○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○
Spiritual Awareness ○○○○○
Streetwise ○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○

Skills

Body Reading ○○○○○
Crafts ○○○○○
Drive ○○○○○
Etiquette ○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Melee ○○○○○
Stealth ○○○○○
Survival ○○○○○
Technology ○○○○○

Knowledge

Bureaucracy ○○○○○
Computer ○○○○○
Enigmas ○○○○○
Investigation ○○○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ○○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Occult ○○○○○
Politics ○○○○○
Science ○○○○○

Advantages

Other Traits

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Background

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Merits & Flaws

Numina

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Willpower

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Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty

Health

Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -2 ☐
Wounded -3 ☐
Mauled -4 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Faith

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

MEDIUMS™

SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

They're Breaking on Through from the Other Side

The Restless Dead aren't silent. They're just bursting with thoughts and ideas that they'd love to share with the living. Unfortunately, they're not very good at communicating this sort of thing. It's one of the drawbacks of being dead, after all.

That's where you come in. Ready for the secrets of the Restless Dead? You'd better be.

Hear the Whispers From Beyond the Grave

Mediums: Speakers with the Dead is a guide to mortals who can speak with the Restless Dead — and not just those mortals who want to listen. From the Boardwalk to corporate boardrooms, from the mean streets where Spectre cultists huddle to the places where the Ghost Dance still continues, mortals who can see across the Shroud are everywhere.

And you just might be one of them.

Mediums: Speakers with the Dead contains:

- Rules and tips on creating a mortal character who can see across the Shroud
- Updates on old friends such as the Benandanti and glimpses at other groups that speak with the Dead
- The ins and outs of Spectre cults, ideas for using tarot in *Wraith*, the secrets of why wraiths love televangelists, and more!



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